

# Evaluation of Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Subprogrammes 4 and 6

26 April 2022

Assignment No: IED-22-003



## INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

Function *“The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organization. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organization;”* ([General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B](#)).

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## I. Introduction

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division (IED) of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) for evaluation based on a risk assessment conducted in 2020 to determine the UN Secretariat programme evaluation priorities for 2021-2022. Following a preliminary scoping process, subprogrammes 4 (Economic Cooperation and Integration) and 6 (Trade) were identified as the subject of this evaluation.
2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is General Assembly (GA) resolutions 48/218B, 54/244, and 59/272, as well as ST/SGB/273, which authorize OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfill its responsibilities. OIOS evaluation is provided for in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, and Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (PPBME).<sup>1</sup>

## II. Background

### A. Mandate and context

3. The Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was created on 29 March 1947 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) through its resolution 36(IV). This was in response to a unanimous recommendation by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 11 December 1946 to give effective aid to countries devastated by the war. The primary objective of UNECE was to support post-war reconstruction and promote integration and economic cooperation of European countries.
4. Initially, the UNECE was composed of 18 member states from Europe plus the United States. By 1995, the membership had increased to 54 countries including Canada, Cyprus, and countries from eastern Europe. With the most recent addition of Montenegro,<sup>2</sup> the final count of UNECE membership stands at 56 member states. Additionally, over 70 international professional organizations and other NGOs take part in UNECE activities. The UNECE membership is economically and culturally diverse, with high degree of variation in human development index<sup>3</sup> (HDI) and gender equality<sup>4</sup> which has been further affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>5</sup>
5. The diversity of UNECE membership according to their respective HDI, HDI rank, Global Gender Gap Index, and income group classification is presented in Table 1 below.

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<sup>1</sup> ST/SGB/2018/3, p. 15, Regulation 7.1 notes that the objective of evaluation is: (a) To determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives; (b) To enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives.

<sup>2</sup> Joined on 28 June 2006 after disintegration of Former Yugoslavia and declaration of independence by Montenegro on 3 June 2006.

<sup>3</sup> 2020 Human Development Index, UNDP. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>

<sup>4</sup> Global Gender Gap Index 2021, World Economic Forum. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2021.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> UN Secretary-General's policy brief: the impact of COVID-19 on women, 2020. Accessed on 9 March 2022 at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>

**Table 1: UNECE Membership with corresponding HDI, HDI rank, and Income group classification<sup>6</sup>**

Member States	HDI Rank (2019)	HDI (2019)	Income group (WDI 2021)	Global Gender Gap Index Rank (2021)	Member States	HDI Rank (2019)	HDI (2019)	Income group (WDI 2021)	Global Gender Gap Index Rank (2021)
Albania	69	0.795	Upper-middle income	35	Liechtenstein	19	0.919	High-income	NA
Andorra	36	0.868	High-income	NA	Lithuania	34	0.882	High-income	8
Armenia	81	0.776	Upper-middle income	114	Luxembourg	23	0.916	High-income	55
Austria	18	0.922	High-income	21	Malta	28	0.895	High-income	84
Azerbaijan	88	0.756	Upper-middle income	62	Moldova	90	0.75	Upper-middle income	28
Belarus	53	0.823	Upper-middle income	33	Monaco	NA	NA	High-income	NA
Belgium	14	0.931	High-income	13	Montenegro	48	0.829	Upper-middle income	48
Bosnia and Herzegovina	73	0.78	Upper-middle income	76	Netherlands	8	0.944	High-income	31
Bulgaria	56	0.816	Upper-middle income	82	North Macedonia	82	0.774	Upper-middle income	73
Canada	16	0.929	High-income	24	Norway	1	0.957	High-income	3
Croatia	43	0.851	High-income	64	Poland	35	0.904	High-income	75
Cyprus	33	0.887	High-income	140	Portugal	38	0.88	High-income	38
Czech Republic	27	0.9	High-income	78	Romania	49	0.828	Upper-middle income	88
Denmark	10	0.94	High-income	29	Russian Federation	52	0.824	Upper-middle income	25
Estonia	29	0.892	High-income	76	San Marino	NA	NA	High-income	NA
Finland	11	0.938	High-income	2	Serbia	64	0.806	Upper-middle income	19
France	26	0.901	High-income	16	Slovakia	39	0.86	High-income	77
Georgia	61	0.812	Upper-middle income	49	Slovenia	22	0.917	High-income	15
Germany	6	0.947	High-income	11	Spain	25	0.904	High-income	14
Greece	32	0.888	High-income	98	Sweden	7	0.945	High-income	5

<sup>6</sup> World Development Indicator, World Bank, 2021. <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html>

Hungary	40	0.854	High-income	99	Switzerland	2	0.955	High-income	10
Iceland	4	0.949	High-income	1	Tajikistan	125	0.668	Lower-middle income	125
Ireland	2	0.955	High-income	9	Turkey	54	0.82	Upper-middle income	133
Israel	19	0.919	High-income	60	Turkmenistan	111	0.715	Upper-middle income	NA
Italy	29	0.892	High-income	63	Ukraine	74	0.779	Lower-middle income	44
Kazakhstan	51	0.825	Upper-middle income	80	United Kingdom	13	0.932	High-income	23
Kyrgyzstan	120	0.697	Lower-middle income	108	USA	17	0.926	High-income	30
Latvia	37	0.866	High-income	20	Uzbekistan	106	0.72	Lower-middle income	NA

Source: UNDP; World Economic Forum; World Bank

Note on HDI Rank and HDI columns: The lighter the color the higher is the standard of living in each country

Note on Income Group column: High-income countries are indicated in green; upper-middle income - in yellow; lower-middle income - in red

6. UNECE primary objective is to promote pan-European economic integration through pursuing sustainable development and regional cooperation. This is achieved through three interrelated functions:

- **Policy Dialogue:** a neutral platform for dialogue on economic, social and environmental issues based on sound research and analysis;
- **Normative work:** facilitate the development and negotiation of new regulations or norms, standards and international legal instruments; and
- **Technical cooperation:** promote the integration of member countries to the world economy and promote the exchange and application of best practices and technical expertise, especially for countries with economies in transition.

7. UNECE is ruled by the terms of reference<sup>7</sup> and rules of procedure defined by the ECOSOC. It is governed by the Commission which meets biennially. The work of UNECE is executed through its eight sectoral committees, one each for the subprogramme (SP)/areas of work, as follows:

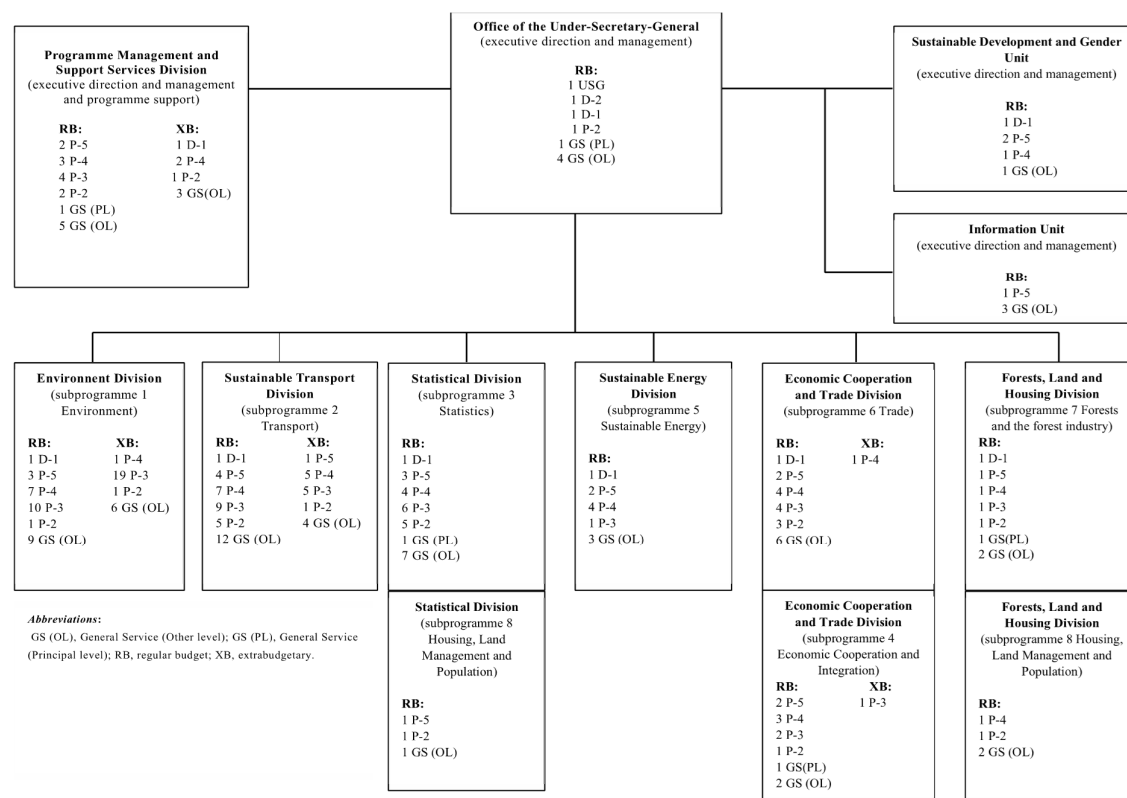
- i. The Inland Transport Committee;
- ii. The Committee on Environmental Policy;
- iii. The Conference of European Statisticians;
- iv. The Committee on Forests and Forest Industry;
- v. The Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public Private Partnerships;
- vi. The Committee on Sustainable Energy;
- vii. The Committee on Housing and Land Management; and
- viii. The Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

<sup>7</sup> [https://unece.org/DAM/oes/mandate/Commission\\_Rev5\\_English.pdf](https://unece.org/DAM/oes/mandate/Commission_Rev5_English.pdf)

## B. Leadership and structure

8. UNECE is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and is headed by the Executive Secretary, an Under-Secretary-General, who is responsible for its overall direction and management supported by one Deputy Executive Secretary. The organization is structured across six Divisions overseeing eight subprogrammes. The Office of the Executive Secretary is supported by the Programme Management and Support Services Division, the Sustainable development Gender Unit and the Information Unit under executive direction, management, and programme support. The organizational structure of UNECE is provided below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: UNECE organizational structure**



Source: UNECE Programme budget 2021; A/76/6 (Sect.20)

## C. Resources

9. As of 2021, UNECE had 241 staff members. As noted above, it comprised of office of the executive secretary and the eight substantive subprogrammes implemented by the six divisions. The staff members, as per their post categories are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Staff members across UNECE**

Division	Subprogramme	RB Posts	XB Posts
Programme Management and Support Services Division	(Executive direction, management and programme support)	17	7
OUSG	(Executive direction and management)	9	0
Sustainable Development and Gender Unit	(Executive direction and management)	5	0

Information Unit	(Executive direction and management)	5	0
Environment Division	Subprogramme 1: Environment	31	27
Sustainable Transport Division	Subprogramme 2: Transport	38	16
Statistical Division	Subprogramme 3: Statistics	27	0
Statistical Division	Subprogramme 8: Housing, Land Management and Population	3	0
Sustainable Energy Division	Subprogramme 5: Sustainable Energy	11	0
Economic Cooperation and Trade Division	Subprogramme 6: Trade	20	1
	Subprogramme 4: Economic Cooperation and Integration	11	1
Forests, Land and Housing Division	Subprogramme 7: Forests and Forest Industry	8	0
	Subprogramme 8: Housing, Land Management and Population	4	0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>189</b>	<b>52</b>
		<b>Total = 241</b>	

Source: UNECE Programme budget 2021; A/76/6 (Sect.20)

10. The budget cycle for the Secretariat changed from biennial to annual in 2020. For UNECE, there was a reduction of overall resources from 2016-17 to 2021<sup>8</sup>. Over the six-year period of 2016-2021, most of the budget (on average 60 per cent) came from the Regular Budget (RB), while the remaining came from the Extrabudgetary Resources (XB), Development Account (UNDA) and Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC) appropriations. Figure 2 shows planned resources for the last two biennial and years 2020-2021.

**Figure 2: UNECE biennium and yearly budget (million USD, 2016-2021)**



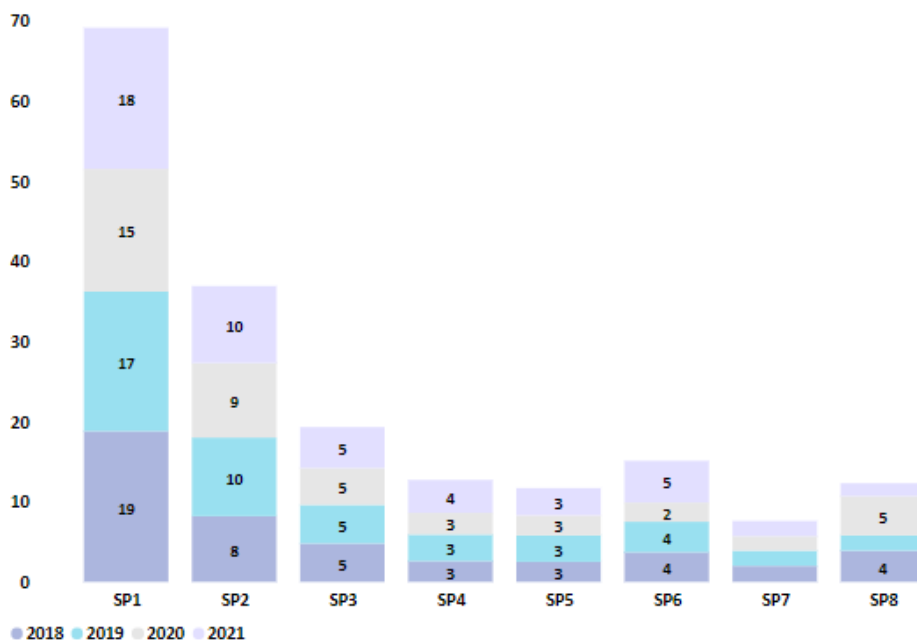
Source: UNECE budget documents 2018-2021; A/ 72/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/74/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/75/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/76/6 (Sect. 20)

<sup>8</sup> The slight increase in budget from 2020 to 2021 is due to recosting of staff costs, primarily driven by the appreciation of Swiss franc (CHF) against United States Dollars (USD)



11. Among the eight subprogrammes, Environment (SP1) and Transport (SP2) had the largest budget share in 2018-2021, followed by Statistics (SP3) and Trade (SP6). The distribution of overall budget across the eight subprogrammes are shown in Figure 3 below:

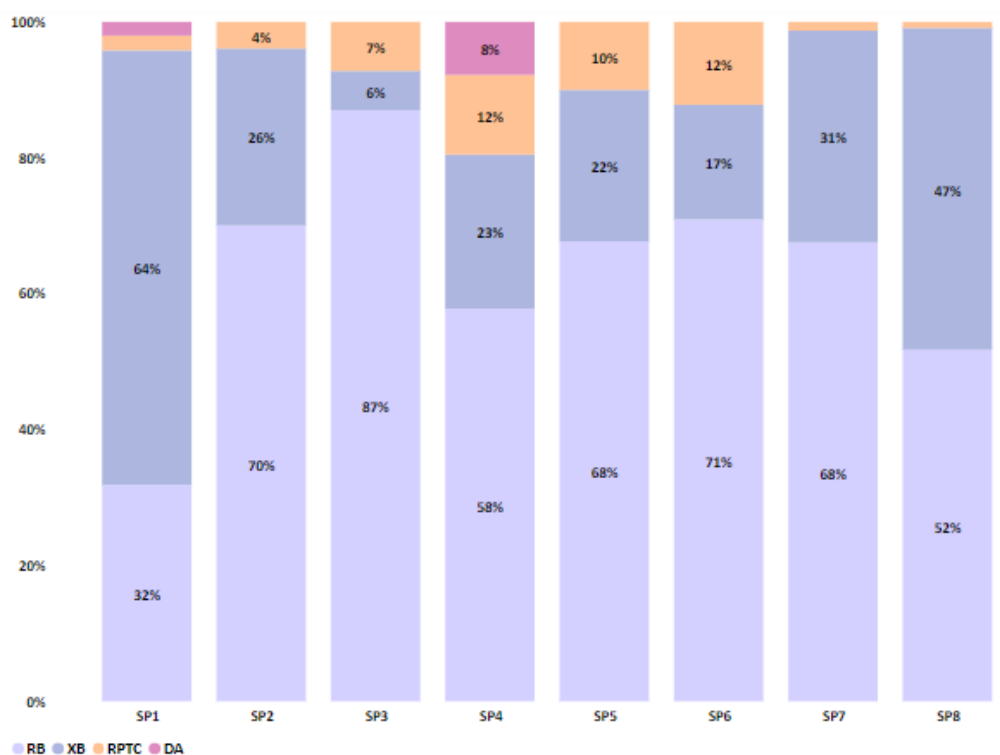
**Figure 3: UNECE budget distribution across subprogrammes in 2018-2021 (millions USD)**



Source: UNECE budget documents 2018-2021; A/ 72/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/74/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/75/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/76/6 (Sect. 20)

12. The average annual budget allocated to the eight subprogrammes in 2018-2021 was USD 47.8 million. Of that, USD 26.9 million was funded through the RB, USD 18 million through XB, USD 0.6 million from UNDA, and another USD 2.4 million from the RPTC. The subprogrammes budget varied significantly in terms of their funding sources. Although Environment (SP1) had the highest budget of all the subprogrammes, it had the lowest share of RB and highest share of XB funding. Conversely, Statistics (SP3) had the highest share of RB and lowest share of XB funding. The distribution of funding sources across the eight subprogrammes are shown in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: UNECE subprogramme budget by funding sources**



Source: UNECE budget documents 2018-2021; A/ 72/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/74/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/75/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/76/6 (Sect. 20)

#### D. Monitoring, evaluation, and oversight

13. UNECE has a relatively strong self-evaluation function among the Secretariat entities as assessed in the 2018-2019 OIOS United Nations Evaluation Dashboard.<sup>9</sup> Its evaluation function is headed by a P-5 (Chief of Unit) reporting to the Director of Programme Management and Support Services Division (D-1). In 2018-2021, UNECE commissioned 36 evaluations, including six subprogramme-, two programme-wide-, and 10 UNDA project evaluations. During the 2018-2019 biennium, it spent approximately USD 0.8 million on evaluation reports which amounted to 0.8 per cent of total programme budget. UNECE spent an estimated USD 1.5 million on Monitoring & Evaluation, representing 1.5 per cent of its total budget. UNECE evaluation policy, plan and related procedures were assessed by OIOS as of high quality. The Dashboard report noted an opportunity for UNECE to more fully meet UNEG quality standards, including greater integration of gender and human rights considerations. The report also stated the need to make UNECE evaluation recommendations more actionable and targeted.

14. OIOS oversight coverage of UNECE subprogrammes is presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Recent oversight coverage of UNECE (April 2016 – 2021)**

Date	Subprogramme	Evaluation /Audit	Conducted by
October 2021	Thematic	Audit of mainstreaming of SDGs and COVID-19 response into the programme of work of the UNECE	OIOS-IAD
March 2019	SP2: Transport	Audit of management of the Transport International Router Trust Fund at the UNECE	OIOS-IAD
September 2018	Program level	Audit of the management of trust funds at the UNECE	OIOS-IAD

<sup>9</sup> OIOS Assignment No: IED-21-011

May 2016	SP1 and SP2	Audit of selected subprogrammes and related technical cooperation projects in the UNECE	OIOS-IAD
April 2016	Organization	OIOS evaluation of UNECE	OIOS-IED
March 2020	Organization	Triennial review of the implementation of recommendations on the Evaluation of the Economic Commission for Europe	OIOS-IED

### III. Scoping Process and Results

#### A. Risk assessment and scoping process

15. Starting in 2020, OIOS-IED began focusing its evaluation on the achievement of outcomes at the subprogramme level. Beginning in December 2021, the evaluation team conducted an extensive scoping exercise to determine the UNECE subprogramme(s) that would most benefit from evaluation, towards the twin OIOS evaluations' objectives of accountability and learning.

16. The scoping exercises included:

- **Document review** of all relevant and key outputs related to UNECE mandate, its programme of work, core functions, resolutions, oversight and performance reports, as well as clarification on the evaluation utility and timeliness. This also included extensive review of all key subprogramme level documents and outputs including publications, and self-evaluation reports.
- **Interview** with senior UNECE management (13 in total) including the Executive Secretary (ES), the Deputy ES, and Directors of all the Divisions and the programme management unit. This also included extensive discussion with the UNECE focal points.
- **Brainstorming session** within OIOS-IED and consultation with IAD counterparts;
- **Briefing** of the OIOS-IED Director and OIOS OUSG on the preliminary scope and objectives; and
- **Briefing** of the evaluand on the preliminary scope and objectives.

17. The scoping exercise to determine subprogramme(s) considered the following:

- Budget and human resource allocation across subprogrammes;
- Individual subprogrammes' niche among other actors working in respective thematic areas;
- Subprogrammes' results in UNECE region and beyond;
- Extent of oversight activities across subprogrammes;
- Subprogrammes' importance for specific sub-regions and countries (e.g. SPECA);
- Utility of the evaluation for UNECE management;
- Evaluability assessment (e.g. availability of performance data, absence of prior evaluation); and
- Extent of individual subprogrammes' interlinkages with other subprogrammes and with global issues such as 2030 Agenda and Covid-19

18. Based on the scoping exercise, subprogrammes 4 (Economic Cooperation and Integration) and 6 (Trade) were selected as the subject of OIOS-IED evaluation. The rationale for the selection of subprogrammes 4 and 6 was as follows:

- Both subprogrammes are located within the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division (ECTD) and are the core of UNECE mandate;
  - About one-fifth (17 per cent or 33 staff) of UNECE personnel work in the two subprogrammes. They jointly accounted for 15.7 per cent (USD 30 million) of the total subprogrammes budget in 2018-2021 and 10 per cent of subprogrammes deliverables;
  - Substantial share of XB funding (37 and 26 per cent in subprogrammes 4 and 6 respectively in 2021) suggests operational activities on the ground, which presents an opportunity for OIOS-IED to observe tangible deliverables and outcomes of UNECE support to Member States;
  - Nearly one-fourth (22 per cent) of outcomes mentioned in UNECE annual reports can be attributed to both subprogrammes; and
  - In terms of utility for UNECE senior management, more than half (7 of 13) interviewees consulted during the scoping stage were in favor of evaluating the two subprogrammes. This was primarily because the two subprogrammes were not evaluated in recent years, and inter-alia, had issues with Centres of excellence.
19. Additionally, the work of subprogrammes 4 and 6 is important for highly interlinked thematic topics such as circular economy and sustainable development. Considering the diverse actors engaged in these fields (e.g., OECD, World Bank, UNDP, UNCTAD, WTO, ITU, FAO and WIPO), OIOS-IED evaluation would provide an opportunity to reflect upon UNECE specific niche among those. Moreover, the subprogrammes' special focus on the economies in transition such as SPECA Member States (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan)<sup>10</sup> expands the Commission's interactions through technical assistance and makes the selection of these subprogrammes more relevant to promoting development issues.
20. Subprogrammes 1 (SP1, Environment) and 2 (SP2, Transport) were the two biggest subprogrammes in terms of staff size and 2021 budget. However, they were not selected because the two subprogrammes were the subjects of several recent evaluations commissioned by UNECE, specifically:
- SP1 had a subprogramme level evaluation conducted in 2019 and had one planned for the year 2022.
  - SP2 had a subprogramme level evaluation conducted in 2018, an OIOS audit of Routier Trust Fund in 2020, and a programme wide evaluation on Road Safety in 2021.

## B. Subprogrammes 4 and 6

### Objectives and key areas of work

21. The objective of subprogramme 4 (Economic Cooperation and Integration) is to strengthen policies on innovation, competitiveness, and public-private partnerships in UNECE region, thus contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8, 9, 12 and 17. The subprogramme aims to achieve its objective through the following approaches:
- Improved international policy dialogue on promoting sustained economic growth, innovative development and greater competitiveness in the UNECE region;

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<sup>10</sup> The United Nations Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) is jointly managed by the UNECE and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

- Improved understanding at the national level of policy options to promote sustained economic growth, innovative development, and greater competitiveness; and
  - Enhanced national implementation of UNECE policy recommendations and standards on promoting a policy, financial and regulatory environment conducive to sustained economic growth, innovative development and greater competitiveness.
22. The objective of subprogramme 6 (Trade) is to improve trade facilitation and electronic business, regulatory cooperation and standardization policies, agricultural quality standards and trade-related economic cooperation in the UNECE region and beyond. The subprogramme aims to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8, 9, 12 and 17. The subprogramme is to achieve its objective through the following approaches:
- Increased consensus on and strengthened implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines, and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business;
  - Increased consensus on the development of UNECE recommendations and guidelines for regulatory cooperation; and
  - Increased consensus on and strengthened implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for agricultural quality standards
23. The UNECE assessed the work of and reported on the two subprogrammes through the following Results-Based Budgeting (RBB) indicators (see Table 4 below):

**Table 4: Subprogrammes 4 and 6 indicators (2018-2021) and key results (2018-2020)**

Subprogramme	Key results reported (2018-2020)	Indicators (2018-2021)
<b>SP4</b>	<p>2018-2019: 19 new policy measures taken by member States to implement UNECE policy recommendations and standards in the areas of innovation, competitiveness, and public-private partnerships.</p> <p>2020: Endorsement of findings and recommendations from the review by the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies and the publication of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review for Georgia.</p>	<p>Number of new international best practices and standards resulting from policy dialogue among member States</p> <p>Number of new national assessments and sets of tailored policy recommendations developed in cooperation with recipient member States</p> <p>Number of new measures taken by member States to implement UNECE policy recommendations</p> <p>Number of national innovation policy measures taken by pilot project member States</p> <p>PPP evaluation methodology was endorsed by member States for piloting</p> <p>Improved capacity of member States to use innovation to achieve their sustainable development objectives</p>
<b>SP6</b>	<p>2018-2019: Adoption of 32 new and/or revised recommendations, norms, standards and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business by the UN/CEFACT. In addition, adoption of 25 new or revised recommendations and standards on agricultural produce and 2 recommendations and guidelines for regulatory cooperation. Furthermore, four new measures were introduced by member States to implement UNECE trade recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines, and tools, as a follow-up to UNECE studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.</p> <p>2020: Access by member States to analytical information on the impact of COVID-19 on trade, including a study, with recommendations, on non-tariff measures affecting the imports and exports of crucial materials and on the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on international trade and logistics in Georgia, and two webpages containing COVID-19-related resources on trade facilitation and food outlook for the member States.</p>	<p>Number of new and/or revised recommendations, norms, standards and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business adopted by UNECE intergovernmental bodies</p> <p>Number of new measures introduced by member States to implement UNECE trade recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines, and tools</p> <p>Number of new and/or revised recommendations and guidelines for regulatory cooperation adopted by UNECE intergovernmental bodies</p> <p>Number of new and/or revised recommendations and standards on agricultural produce adopted by UNECE intergovernmental bodies</p> <p>Increased number of implementations of UNECE agricultural quality standards by member States</p> <p>Average trade facilitation implementation rate of Central Asian member States of the UNECE</p> <p>Member States have increased access to analytical information on the impact of COVID-19 on trade</p> <p>Implementation of the transparency and traceability system by three countries</p> <p>Average implementation rate of digital trade facilitation measures of UNECE member States</p>

## Structure, budget, and projects

24. Subprogrammes 4 and 6 are implemented by the Division on Economic Cooperation and Trade (ECTD), headed by a D-1, Division Director, and engaging 12 and 21 personnel respectively, 33 in total. In 2018-2021, subprogrammes 4 and 6 jointly accounted for 15.7 per cent (USD 30 million) of overall subprogrammes budget, as shown in Figure 5 below. Most of subprogrammes' resources are dedicated to development of parliamentary documentation, substantive servicing of meetings, and capacity building events.

**Figure 5: Share of SP4 and 6 budget in overall subprogrammes budget in 2018-2021 (millions USD)**



Source: UNECE budget documents 2018-2021; A/72/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/74/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/75/6 (Sect. 20, 23), A/76/6 (Sect. 20)

25. Additionally, both the subprogrammes have received significant UNDA funding (Figure 4 above) and implemented the following projects in 2018-2021:

### Subprogramme 4 :

- Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the ECE region (budget: USD 483,316; duration: 2021-2024); and
- Strengthening innovation policies for SPECA countries in support of the 2030 Agenda (budget: USD 549,000; duration: 2020-2023).

### Subprogramme 6 :

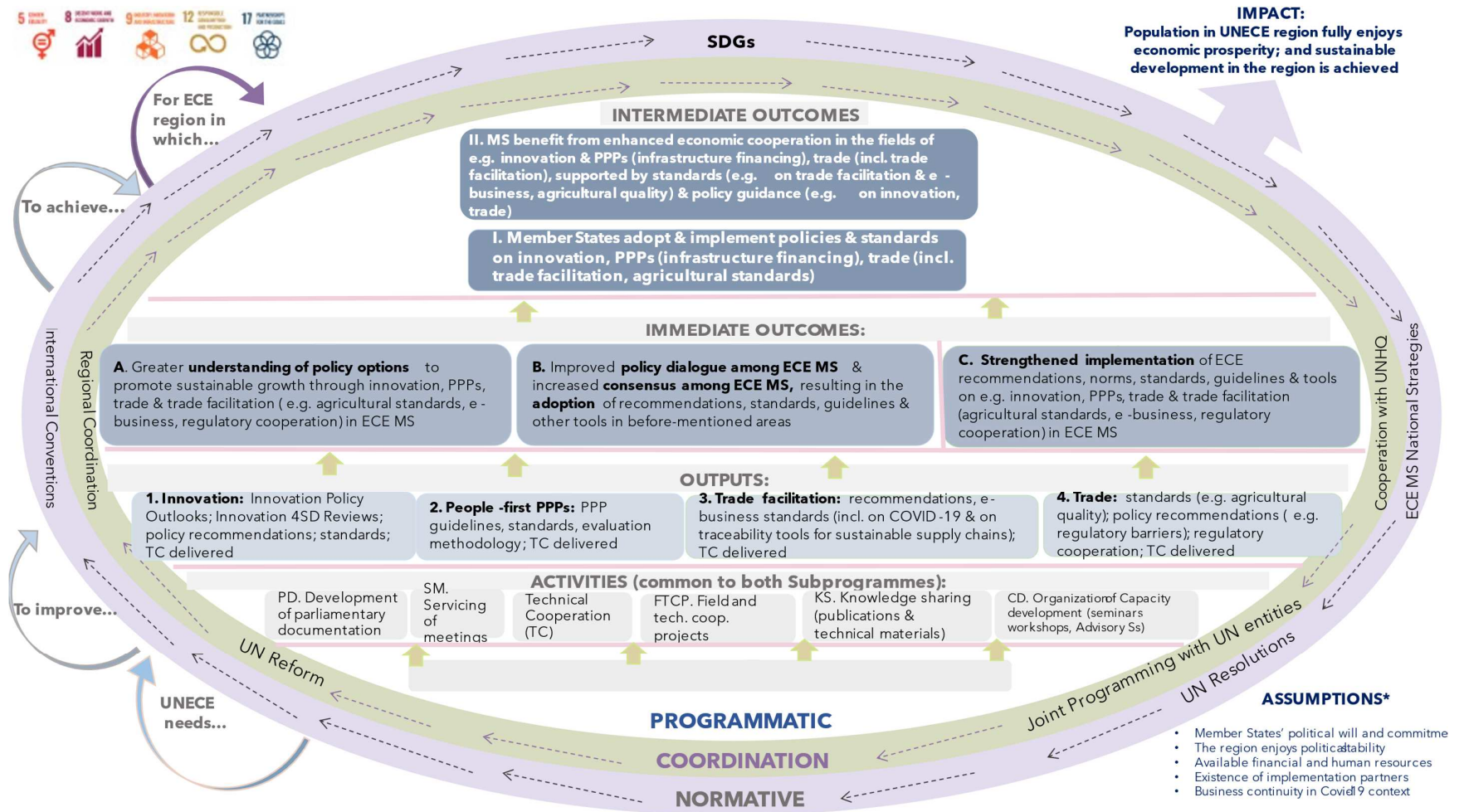
- Increased policy coherence and sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in North-South and South-South agriculture trade (budget: duration: 2018-2021); and
- Evidence-based trade facilitation measures for economies in transition (budget: duration: 2018-2021).

### C. Theory of Change

26. The subprogrammes' theory of change (TOC), as interpreted by OIOS-IED, is presented in the Figure 6 below. In addition, OIOS-IED has embedded the assumptions pertaining to subprogrammes' work towards achievement of objectives. While the evaluation team will refer to the TOC throughout the evaluation process, primary attention will be given to ECTD achievement of immediate outcomes as it appeared to be more directly within the realm of its operational control. The evaluation team will also attempt to answer intermediate outcomes, acknowledging ECTD lesser control and assumptions made, wherever outcome data can be validated, and secondary data is available. Additionally, the evaluation team will provide an analysis of UNECE contribution to immediate and intermediate outcome in the evaluation report, especially as it relates to policy adoption and implementation and to the extent possible the benefits that have accrued as a result of their operationalization.



Figure 6: Theory of Change for UNECE Subprogrammes 4 and 6



\*Assumptions reflect those pertaining both to external and internal contexts around UNECE

## IV. Evaluation Terms of Reference

### A. Evaluation objective and approach

27. The evaluation objective is to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the extent to which outcomes of UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division (ECTD) --through its two subprogrammes 4 and 6; Economic Cooperation and Integration (ECI) and Trade-- were achieved and the extent to which its interventions were relevant and responsive to the needs of the region.
28. The evaluation will have a two-fold purpose in terms of accountability (first and foremost, in keeping with the OIOS mandate) and learning (in keeping with its commitment to help entities to learn and improve). The evaluation will cover the work of subprogrammes 4 and 6, including interlinkages and synergies across other subprogrammes in UNECE.
29. To ensure that assessed outcomes are due to the subprogrammes' activities, the evaluation will use qualitative contribution analysis and process-tracing of intended outcomes. The UNECE theory of change (Figure 6) presents the logical approach and results chain of the two subprogrammes. It will form the basis for the evaluation to assess intended outcomes through stated inputs/activities, outputs and outcomes. Given the level of UNECE control on necessary assumptions, the evaluation will primarily focus on the ECTD contribution towards immediate and intermediate outcomes. The evaluation team will take a highly collaborative approach and closely consult with UNECE and ECTD to clarify its activities and intended outcomes. This will inform subsequent data collection approaches, tools, and analysis. The evaluation will also review the extent to which gender, human rights, environmental and disability inclusion considerations were integrated in ECTD activities.

### B. Evaluation Scope and Questions

30. The evaluation will cover all the activities conducted by ECTD during the period of 2018-2021. This will allow the evaluation team to collect information about outcomes achieved over a sufficient period, including challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and ways through which ECTD adapted its activities.
31. The evaluation will answer an overarching question through a series of sub-questions across the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, coherence, sustainability, and cross-cutting issues. They are presented in the Table 5 below. Additionally, the evaluation sub-questions, indicators and methods of data collection are outlined in the detailed Evaluation Design Matrix (EDM) in Annex I.

**Table 5: Evaluation question and sub-questions by criteria**

<b>Evaluation Question:</b>	
To what extent has ECTD enhanced the capacity of Member States and facilitated and/or influenced their decision and action to meet their commitments towards increased regulatory cooperation, strengthened policies, and standards on innovation, public-private partnerships, trade facilitation, market access, and agricultural standards in line with the 2030 Agenda?	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evaluation Sub-question</b>
Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To what extent have operational activities of ECTD aligned with mandates provided the Commission and/or the Sectoral committees as well as approved UNECE strategic framework and programme budget?</li> <li>2. To what extent have ECTD responded to the needs and priorities of Member States?</li> </ol>

	3. What unique contribution (value added) has ECTD brought, compared to other entities providing similar services (i.e., UNCTAD or WTO on Trade, and EU or OECD for Economic Cooperation/Integration)?
Effectiveness	<p>4. To what extent have deliberations among Member States contributed to improving policy dialogue and increased consensus among Member States on the promotion of growth, innovation, trade facilitation, regulatory cooperation, e-business and agricultural quality standards?</p> <p>5. How have ECTD knowledge products contributed to greater understanding of options and supported decisions by UNECE intergovernmental bodies,</p> <p>6. How have ECTD normative work and proposals been translated and operationalized through demonstrated actions on national policies by Member States in ECTD thematic areas?</p> <p>7. What unintended outcomes, if any, have emerged from ECTD interventions?</p>
Coherence	<p>8. How well was ECTD activities well aligned and coordinated with other relevant activities in UNECE undertaken by other Divisions, especially the ones contributing to similar SDGs, Circular Economy and Digitization?</p> <p>9. How well was ECTD operational activities and knowledge products aligned and coordinated with other UN entities such as UNCTAD including country level coordination with RCs, UNCTs and ESCAP (for SPECA region), and non-UN entities?</p>
Sustainability	<p>10. How sufficient was ECTD support to ensure Member States participation and contribution, including on diversity and richness in deliberations in ECTD normative, policy dialogue and technical cooperation activities to make lasting changes in the landscape of economic cooperation and trade in UNECE region?</p> <p>11. To what extent was ECTD support and scale of its operational activities sufficient in enabling Member States capacity in effecting policy changes at the national or regional levels?</p>
Cross-cutting Issues	<p>12. To what extent were gender, human rights, environment, and disability inclusion considerations integrated into the design and implementation of the activities by the Division? What outcomes did they contribute toward?</p> <p>13. To what extent did ECTD adapt its operational activities in the context of COVID-19 pandemic to maintain the level of assistance to enhance the capacity of Member States address related economic cooperation and trade issues, including those that might have increased vulnerability among population?</p>

### C. Evaluation Methodology

32. The evaluation will employ a mixed-method approach, relying on a diligent combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions outlined in Table 5. By triangulating a wide range of data sources, the evaluation will have a strong evidence base upon which to maximize the credibility of its analyses. The inception phase identified the most feasible methods for answering the evaluation questions, considering methodological advantages as well as time, resources and data availability constraints.
33. The evaluation will seek to ensure that consultations with various stakeholders during the evaluation will be inclusive, participatory and professional. All efforts will be made to consult marginalized and traditionally disadvantaged stakeholders. Wherever possible and relevant, data will be disaggregated by gender.
34. Based on the considerations, the following methods are identified for this evaluation:
- **Key informant interviews or focus groups:** The evaluation will conduct interviews and focus group discussions with staff members and key stakeholder groups. This will include

partners, government, and representatives from the private sector. Interview questions will be derived from the evaluation design matrix in Annex I.

- **Case studies:** The evaluation will select countries to conduct case studies on important areas of work or specific project implementation. The selection of countries will be done using a purposive sampling approach and in consultation with UNECE and ECTD focal points. The objective of the case studies will be to identify outcomes at the level of intended beneficiaries, trends, good practices, and gaps from which the evaluation team can assess the work of the Division.
- **Online survey:** The evaluation will also deploy an online survey to collect feedback from key interlocutors across the UNECE region on the work of ECTD. Survey questions will be derived from the evaluation sub-questions outlined in the evaluation design matrix. The intended survey participants may include Member States, thematic experts, representatives of national and local governments, external partners, and representatives from the private sector, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia. Every effort will be made to make the survey responses anonymized.
- **Analysis of secondary data:** The evaluation team will review available monitoring and reporting data, including those in performance and budget reports, reports to the Commission, including Sectoral committees, project progress and self/internal evaluation reports, donor reports, and any post-intervention survey data. The team will also review and utilize various dataset, if publicly available, on economic integration, trade, and trade barriers, including data on recommendations made by various UNECE panel and expert groups, and status of policy adoption and their implementation at the national level.
- **Structured content analysis:** The evaluation will conduct a systematic and structure analysis of the content of key documents such as publications, national policies or guidelines, standards, technical cooperation project documents, and meeting minutes of the Commission and Sectoral Committees to establish documentary evidence to support the analysis and triangulation.
- **Direct observation:** The evaluation team will seek to observe key selected events and meetings supported and serviced by ECTD.
- **Digital media analysis:** The evaluation team will conduct media analysis of key UNECE and ECTD handles in prominent social media platforms. The purpose of the analysis will be to assess the level of online presence and interaction with beneficiaries and/or stakeholders.
- **Contribution analysis and/or process tracing:** The evaluation team will use contribution analysis to identify reasonable contribution of ECTD in achieving mandated outcomes. This will be aided by using process tracing of an outcome to relevant ECTD activities.

#### D. Risk Management

35. The conduct of the evaluation may face several potential risks to its timely completion. The primary risk is related to the ongoing war in Ukraine and the resulting EXCOM decision L.6 and L.7 of the 24<sup>th</sup> of March entailing cancellation of events, and introduction of vote in decisions instead of consensus. Additionally, there are risks related to the restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. While the situation has recently improved and global travel resumed, there are still restrictions related to testing, social distancing and mandatory quarantine requirements. This will likely limit the evaluation team's ability to freely travel for data collection purposes, conduct in-person interviews or focus group discussions. Every effort will be made, with active support from

the UNECE focal points, to identify relevant stakeholders for online survey or phone interviews. The evaluation team will tailor the data collection tools accordingly.

36. Another risk may be the ability to reach enough policymakers and stakeholders whose input will be critical to assessing outcomes. This also includes low survey response rate or unavailability for virtual interviews. The team will consult UNECE management to identify most relevant stakeholders and effective ways to reaching them and will similarly triangulate the information collected with other data sources. Insufficient or shortcomings in program performance data may pose another risk to the evaluation. Every effort will be made to identify and triangulate performance data from secondary sources.

#### E. Evaluation Consultation with Stakeholders

37. While OIOS maintains its independence, the evaluation team will consult with the UNECE focal points throughout the evaluation to keep them informed, seek data and clarification on related queries. OIOS-IED will also brief the UNECE management and evaluands at key milestones of the evaluation i.e., inception phase, scoping, travel/logistics for data collection, preliminary results, and drafting of recommendations.
38. Throughout the data collection phase, the evaluation team will consult with key ECTD stakeholders, including staff, UN partners, implementing partners, civil society organizations, and Member States.
39. The primary expected beneficiaries of the OIOS-IED evaluation are duty bearers with the authority to make decisions related to the subprogrammes: UNECE, its Member States, the UN Regional Commissions including the Regional Commissions New York Office. Secondary intended beneficiaries are UNECE implementing partners such as specialized government entities, private sector and analytical centers. The evaluation will also be of use to rights holders - population of UNECE Member States, in particular entrepreneurs; as well as to development actors (UN Country Teams, UN agencies' regional offices in Europe and Central Asia, ESCAP, European Commission, OECD and others) working on sustainable development issues.

#### F. Human Rights, Gender, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Environment and Disability Perspectives

40. According to the report of the Secretary General (A/51/950) and as mandated by General Assembly resolutions A/RES/71/243 and A/RES/75/154, human rights, gender and disability inclusion must be mainstreamed into all United Nations policies and programmes. UNEG guidance states that "an evaluation that is Human Rights and Gender Equality responsive addresses the programming principles required by a human rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming strategy."<sup>11</sup> Annex I incorporate one specific evaluation question related to these areas. The evaluation will ensure that consultations are inclusive, participatory, and respectful of all stakeholders, which includes a deliberate effort to consult marginalized and traditionally excluded stakeholders. Data collection and analysis methods will be human rights-based and gender sensitive. Where relevant, applicable, and feasible, data will be disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age, and disability. It will additionally seek to determine whether gender and human rights perspectives were integrated into the main activities and outputs of the subprogramme, such as publications, and training materials, as well as the extent to which national policies designed by Member States factored in ECTD guidance.

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<sup>11</sup> *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation -- Towards UNEG Guidance*, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG/G (2011)2), para 20.

41. SDGs and environment: Given the substantive focus of ECTD work on supporting Member States in achieving the SDGs, with particular emphasis on Economic Cooperation and Trade related issues, the evaluation will essentially focus on the contribution made by UNECE in these areas, especially as it relates to the SDGs identified in paragraphs 20 and 21 above.
42. Disability inclusion: The evaluation will seek to assess whether and how the division’s capacity building work and knowledge products integrated a disability inclusion perspective in general and in the context of its work on sustainable urban development.
43. The evaluation team will adhere to ethical standards throughout the evaluation and will treat all stakeholder groups with integrity and respect for confidentiality.

#### G. Timeline and Work Plan

44. OIOS-IED will conduct the evaluation in four phases as follows:

- **Phase 1: Scoping/Inception** (January – March 2022). Document review, development of theory of change, scoping consultations and interviews. The phase concludes with issuance of the Inception paper and evaluations terms of reference.
- **Phase 2: Data collection and analysis** (April – August 2022). Mixed-method data collection, document review, interviews, case studies, surveys, and data analysis.
- **Phase 3: Initial results and draft report** (August – October 2022). Identification of evaluation results, evidence base, recommendations and drafting of the evaluation report.
- **Phase 4: Final report** (November – December 2022). Drafting and reviews of the final evaluation report. Sharing of report with UNECE for informal and formal comments, revision of draft report and formal issuance.

**Table 6: Evaluation work plan and schedule (January – December 2022)**

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Scoping/Inception phase</b>												
• Inception Paper	■	■	■									
<b>Data collection and analysis</b>				■	■	■	■	■				
• Desk reviews				■	■	■						
• Interviews					■	■	■	■				
• Survey					■	■						
• Case studies						■	■	■				
• Travel					■	■	■	■				
<b>Data analysis</b>						■	■	■				
<b>Preliminary results</b>								■	■			
<b>Report drafting</b>									■	■		
<b>Report review</b>											■	■
<b>Formal report issuance</b>												■

#### H. Dissemination and Follow-up Strategy

45. The detailed evaluation report will be shared with UNECE their formal response. UNECE will prepare and informal set of comments and afterwards a consolidated management response to the evaluation including an action plan, in which it will indicate – for each accepted recommendation – anticipated action(s) and target date(s) for completion. OIOS-IED will assist

UNECE with refining the action-plan, ensuring that the anticipated actions are in line with the recommendations. The management response will be appended to the report, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/263.

46. Upon finalization, this inception paper and the evaluation report will be posted on the OIOS-IED internet and intranet. OIOS-IED might further choose to disseminate the evaluation report on iSeek and through other means. A short abstract of the report will be shared with UNECE for review and comment before such wider dissemination. In addition, OIOS-IED will disseminate a link to the report in a post-evaluation client satisfaction survey administered to all participants in the evaluation e.g., focal points, interviewees, and key stakeholders.



## Annex I: Evaluation Design Matrix

<b>Evaluation Question:</b>			
To what extent has ECTD enhanced the capacity of Member States and facilitated and/or influenced their decisions and actions to meet their commitments towards increased regulatory cooperation, strengthened policies, and standards on innovation, public-private partnerships, trade facilitation, market access, and agricultural standards in line with the 2030 Agenda?			
Criteria	Evaluation Sub-question	Indicators*	Methods/Source
Relevance	1. To what extent have operational activities of ECTD aligned with mandates provided the Commission and/or the Sectoral committees as well as approved UNECE strategic framework and programme budget?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of alignment between mandated and operational activities of ECTD</li> <li>Feedback from key stakeholders with the alignment between UNECE mandates and the programme of work and the operational activities of ECTD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Survey</li> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Desk review of commission and/or sectoral committee meeting notes, resolutions or demand notes by Member States</li> <li>Interviews with key external partners</li> </ul>
	2. To what extent have ECTD responded to the needs and priorities of the Member States?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record of expressed needs or demands by the Member States</li> <li>Percentage of ECTD outputs and activities that are implemented in line with requests and needs of MS - Timely and relevant response by ECTD outputs or activities that address those needs/demands</li> <li>Percentage of key stakeholders that assess the response from ECTD as timely and addressing their needs</li> </ul>	
	3. What unique contribution (value added) has ECTD brought, compared to other entities providing similar services (i.e., UNCTAD or WTO on Trade, and EU or OECD for Economic Cooperation/Integration)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of stakeholders who value the work of ECTD as valuable and different from that of similar entities in the spheres of economic cooperation and trade, including themes/topics of meetings serviced by ECTD</li> <li>Regional and subregional priorities in relation to economic cooperation and integration, and trade in Commission resolutions</li> <li>Extent to which ECTD outputs were aligned with the regional and subregional priorities</li> <li>Proportion of beneficiaries and key stakeholders who identify ECTD unique contributions in economic cooperation and trade</li> </ul>	



Effectiveness	4. To what extent have deliberations among Member States contributed to improving policy dialogue and increased consensus among Member States on the promotion of growth, innovation, trade facilitation, regulatory cooperation, e-business and agricultural quality standards?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Member States or representations from Govt. or private sector/individuals that participated in related deliberations</li> <li>• Number of decisions, actions, resolutions taken by the respective Sectoral Committees in the relevant ECTD thematic areas</li> <li>• Proportion of Member States expressing satisfaction with ECTD interventions/activities and outputs</li> <li>• Proportion of Member States indicating change in awareness, knowledge, and skills in designing policies related to economic and trade issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document and literature review</li> <li>• Review of key analytical outputs</li> <li>• Review of Sectoral Committee reports and decisions</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Case Studies</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
	5. How have ECTD knowledge products contributed to greater understanding of options and supported decisions by UNECE intergovernmental bodies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of recommendations and guidelines made, instruments adopted, or standards developed, including other related outputs, by ECTD</li> <li>• Proportion of Member States who attribute ECTD support for policy and standard recommendations, scenarios, programme design and implementation</li> </ul>	
	6. How have ECTD normative work and proposals been translated and operationalized through demonstrated actions on national policies by the Member States in ECTD thematic areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of support provided to Member States in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</li> <li>• Number of related policy changes, or standards accepted and/or implemented by Member States</li> <li>• Proportion of Member States expressing satisfaction with ECTD support, and the utility and feasibility of the policy options and standards proposed by ECTD</li> <li>• Level of satisfaction of other UNECE subprogramme managers with ECTD work in the context of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</li> <li>• Changes (positive or negative) on issues and/or areas where UNECE influenced standards or policy implementation has been plausible</li> </ul>	
	7. What unintended outcomes, if any, have emerged from ECTD interventions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of associated changes in behavior, condition, knowledge or skills identified that had not previously been planned (either positive or negative)</li> </ul>	
Coherence	8. How well was ECTD activities well aligned and coordinated with other relevant activities in UNECE undertaken by other Divisions, especially the ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of alignment, coordination and collaboration between operation activities undertaken by other subprogrammes or outputs produced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document and literature review</li> </ul>

	contributing to similar SDGs, Circular Economy and Digitization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which (number of) suitable mechanism exist within UNECE for subprogrammes or Divisions to share insights and solicit collaborations for programmatic activities</li> <li>• Proportion of UNECE staff members and relevant stakeholders' perception of possible collaboration or duplication of workstreams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with other SP staff</li> <li>• Staff surveys</li> <li>• Case Studies</li> </ul>
	9. How well was ECTD operational activities and knowledge products aligned and coordinated with other UN entities such as UNCTAD including country level coordination with RCs, UNCTs and ESCAP (for SPECA region), and non UN entities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of alignment, coordination and collaboration between operation activities undertaken by other UN entities or outputs produced</li> <li>• Extent to which (number of) suitable mechanism exist between UNECE and other UN entities to share insights and solicit collaborations for programmatic activities</li> <li>• Number of partners engaged in the development and dissemination of knowledge products and activities</li> <li>• Proportion of relevant stakeholders' (within other UN entities) perception of possible collaboration or duplication of workstreams</li> </ul>	
Sustainability	10. How sufficient was ECTD support to ensure Member States participation and contribution, including diversity and richness in deliberations, in ECTD normative, policy dialogue and technical cooperation activities to make lasting changes in the landscape of economic cooperation and trade in UNECE region?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of diversity in Member States participation in ECTD activities</li> <li>• Evidence of effective design and adjustments to ensure sustainability of outcomes</li> <li>• Staff and stakeholders' perception on the effectiveness of intervention design and availability of funding to ensure sustainability</li> <li>• Scalability of interventions/activities to other countries or region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document and literature review</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Case Studies</li> </ul>
	11. To what extent was ECTD support and scale of its operational activities sufficient in enabling Member States capacity in effecting policy changes at the national or regional levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of fundings available to ECTD for operational outputs including projects activities</li> <li>• Percentage of operational activities implemented in support of the normative work (comparison of the percentages with number of policies implemented)</li> <li>• Percentage of funding sources over time for primary outputs – (is there over reliance on XB and DA funding?)</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which source of XB funding is concentrated to a select groups of countries</li> <li>• Percentage of key stakeholders assessing the scale of ECTD resources as sufficient to enable sustainable action at the country level</li> </ul>	
Cross-cutting Issues	12. To what extent were gender, human rights, environment, and disability inclusion considerations integrated into the design and implementation of the activities by the Division? What outcomes did they contribute toward?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of articulation of gender, human rights, environment and disability in various knowledge outputs and meetings deliberations serviced by ECTD</li> <li>• Degree of incorporation of gender, human rights, environment, and disability in interventions, including selection of female participants or beneficiaries</li> <li>• Staff and stakeholders' perception about level of integration of gender, human rights, environment, and disability in the program of work of ECTD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document and literature review</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Case Studies</li> </ul>
	13. To what extent did ECTD adapt its operational activities in the context of COVID-19 pandemic to maintain the level of assistance to enhance the capacity of Member States address related economic cooperation and trade issues, including those that might have increased vulnerability among population?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which outputs were timely</li> <li>• Extent to which outputs were relevant and found to be useful by national governments</li> </ul>	

Note: Further indicators might be developed as evaluation work progresses, and any indicators for which data does not exist will be replaced by proxy measures. Any such modifications will be discussed with ECTD.