

TERMS OF REFERENCE

E317: Promoting innovation policy capacities in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

I. Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNECE project E317 “Promoting innovation policy capacities in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus” were achieved.

The evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project in enhancing innovation policy capacities in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (EESC) countries.

The evaluation will also assess any impacts the project may have had on progressing human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion, climate change and disaster risk reduction in the context of this engagement. The evaluation will finally look at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and assess, to the extent possible, UNECE’s COVID-19 early response through this project.

II. Background

Launched in November 2018, the project aimed to improve the competencies of policymakers in designing, running, reforming, and monitoring effective innovation policies and institutions that make measurable contributions towards long-term economic sustainable development.

The project looked at the six Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (EESC) member States because of their shared features including a common historic legacy (predominance of central planning, a strong role for public research institutions; history of strong, at times frontier research), economic structure (strong manufacturing tradition; a legacy of state ownership of the economy; focus on heavy industries), geography (proximity to the EU and CIS), and factor conditions (high levels of education in the workforce; high labour participation rates among women). These shared traits enabled the Innovation Policy Outlook (IPO) and other project work streams to build a strong basis for policy learning and enable benchmarking.

The project was implemented by UNECE Subprogramme 4 Economic Cooperation and Integration/Economic Cooperation and Trade Division and reflected UNECE’s mandates in the sphere of innovation, competitiveness and public-private partnerships. In particular, the objectives of the project were:

- (a) Improved policy dialogue on promoting sustained economic growth, innovative development, and greater competitiveness in the UNECE region;
- (b) Improved understanding at the national level of policy options to promote sustained economic growth, innovative development, and greater competitiveness; and
- (c) 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.

To achieve the project objective, UNECE engaged in several core activities which were agreed-upon in consultation with national focal points:

1. Sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook

UNECE developed the methodology, conducted primary research, and published a pilot Sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook (IPO) study benchmarking innovation governance performance across all six EESC member States. Later, UNECE also conducted an Interim IPO (IIPO) on topics of interest to the countries.

2. Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews

Second, UNECE carried out national-level Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews (I4SDR) of Georgia (2021), the Republic of Moldova (2022), Armenia (ongoing), and Ukraine (ongoing – publication date is to be determined). Complementing the sub-regional level assessment, the I4SDR examines national innovation systems in greater detail and includes in-depth analysis elective topics.

3. Capacity Building

The third element of the project was conducting capacity-building activities supporting specific reform efforts to put recommendations from national reviews into practice. UNECE also engaged in sub-regional capacity building in follow-up to the IPO. For example, UNECE conducted a capacity-building program focused on innovation-enhancing procurement (IEP) for Georgia. As a follow-up to the I4SDR of the Republic of Moldova, UNECE also developed a roadmap on Innovation and Technology Transfer and implemented two trainings for Moldova.

4. IPO Policy Dialogue Sessions

To provide a platform to share policy recommendations and findings from the studies, UNECE organized several IPO policy dialogue sessions.

The project involved the following focal point institutions: Armenia: Ministry of High-Tech Industry; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. Azerbaijan: Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies. Belarus: Belarusian Institute of System Analysis and Information Support of S&T Sphere (BELISA), under the State Committee for Science and Technology of the Republic of Belarus. Georgia: Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA), under Ministry of Economy. Moldova: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research; National Institute for Economic Research (NIER), under Ministry of Economy. Ukraine: National Academy of Sciences; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Education and Science.

III. Evaluation objectives, scope and questions

The evaluation will be guided by the objectives, indicators of achievement and means of verification established in the logical framework of the project document. The evaluation will be conducted in Q1-Q2 of 2023 at the request of the donor. It will cover close to the full implementation of the project, from November 2018 to March 2023 in six countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine). The project is currently planned to be completed by August 2023, with a possible extension till February 2024 currently under discussion with the donor. The majority of activities will have been completed by March 2023.

The final evaluation of the project has the following specific objectives:

- Determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project results in light of its goals and objectives;
- Assess how the project activities contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the realization of human rights, with an emphasis on 'leaving no one behind' and, if needed, it will make recommendations on how these considerations can be better addressed in future activities of the subprogramme.
- Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project and formulate action-oriented, forward-looking recommendations addressed to the subprogramme for improving future interventions.

The evaluation criteria are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Relevance

1. To what extent was the project design appropriate for meeting the needs of beneficiary

- countries?
2. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities and needs of the participating countries? How relevant were they to the countries' needs and priorities?
 3. To what extent was the project aligned with the SDGs?
 4. What takeaways are there for ensuring relevance of future UNECE projects?
 5. To what extent were gender, human rights and disability perspectives integrated into the design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions? How can gender and human rights perspectives be better included in future the projects design and implementation?

Effectiveness

6. To what extent were the project objectives and expected accomplishments achieved?
7. To what extent did the project improve the competencies of innovation policy makers in the participating countries to design, develop, implement, reform, and evaluate national innovation policies?
8. To what extent are the project activities coherent and harmonized with those of other partners operating within the same context, particularly those of other UN system entities?
9. What were the challenges/obstacles (including COVID-19 and sub-regional instability) to achieving the expected results? How successfully did the project overcome these?
10. What (if anything) has prevented the project from achieving the desired results?
11. How effectively has the project tackled its underlying objective of improving the competencies of innovation policy makers to support environmental sustainability, gender equality, good governance, and economic growth in the participating countries?

Efficiency

12. Were the resources adequate for achieving the results?
13. Were the results achieved on time and were all activities organized efficiently?
14. To what extent were the resources used economically and how could the use of resources be improved?

Sustainability

15. What measures were adopted to ensure that project outcomes would continue after the project ended and to what extent have these measures addressed the existing risks for sustainability?
16. To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work? How is the stakeholders' engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated, or institutionalized?
17. To what extent are the objectives of the project still valid? How can the project be replicated in other UNECE sub-regions, in particular the Western Balkans?

IV. Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with: the ECE Evaluation Policy¹; the Administrative instruction guiding Evaluation in the UN Secretariat²; and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation³. Human rights and gender equality considerations will be integrated at all stages of the evaluation⁴: (i) in the evaluation scope and questions; (ii) in the methods, tools and data analysis techniques; (iii) in the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the final report. The evaluator will explicitly explain how human rights, gender, disability, SDGs, and environmental considerations will be taken into account during the evaluation.

The evaluator is required to use a mixed-method approach, including qualitative as well as quantitative data gathering and analysis as the basis for a triangulation exercise of all available data to draw

¹ [UNECE Evaluation policy](#)

² ST/AI/2021/3

³ [UNEG 2016 Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#)

⁴ In line with UNEG Guidance contained in [Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#)

conclusions and findings. The evaluator shall conduct online surveys and interview a wide range of diverse stakeholders from both the private and the public sector, academia, international organisations, and, where applicable, the diaspora and civil society. To ensure representativeness, the evaluator shall speak to a large sample of stakeholders including high-level government interlocutors whom UNECE has worked with. UNECE also strongly suggests that the evaluator organises in-person visits to the countries under review to conduct interviews and gather data.

The evaluation should be conducted based on the following mixed methods to triangulate information:

1. A desk review of all relevant documents, including the project document and information on project activities (monitoring data); materials developed in support of the activities (agendas, plans, participant lists, background documents, donor reports and publications); Proposed programme budgets covering the evaluation period; project reports to the donor.
2. Online survey of key stakeholders and beneficiaries: the survey will be developed by the consultant on her/his preferred platform.
3. Interviews (in-person and by telephone/video): the evaluator shall interview a wide range of diverse stakeholders and beneficiaries from both the private and the public sector, academia, international organisations, and, where applicable, the diaspora and civil society. To ensure representativeness, the evaluator shall speak to a large sample of stakeholders including high-level government interlocutors whom UNECE has worked with. UNECE also strongly suggests that the evaluator organises in-person visits to one or more countries of project implementation to conduct interviews and gather data.
4. Case Study/ies, which will include a detailed examination of the project intervention in one or more of the six countries of project implementation (the selection criteria will be included in the inception report).

The evaluator will further elaborate on the evaluation methodology in the Inception Report that will among others include the survey questions, travel plans and whether any of the six countries will be selected for an in-depth assessment. The evaluation report will be written in English, will consist of approximately 30 pages and will include an executive summary (max. 2 pages) describing the evaluation methodology, key findings, conclusions and recommendations. The evaluator will also produce an evaluation brief summarizing key evaluation findings, lessons learned and recommendations, including through images and infographics.

V. Evaluation schedule⁵

January 2023	ToR finalized
March 2023	Evaluator selected
April 2023	Contract signed. Evaluator starts the desk review
End-April 2023	Evaluator submits inception report including survey design
May 2023	Launch of data gathering, including survey and interviews
Early June 2023	Evaluator submits draft evaluation report and evaluation brief
End-June 2023	Evaluator submits final evaluation report and evaluation brief

VI. Resources and Management of the evaluation

An independent consultant will be engaged to conduct the evaluation under the management of the PMU. The assignment will involve travel to selected countries among the six beneficiary countries to conduct an in-depth assessment. Payment will be made upon satisfactory delivery of work.

The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will manage the evaluation and will be involved in the following steps: Selection of the evaluator; Preparation and clearance of the Terms of Reference;

⁵ Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator

Provision of guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design and methodology; Clearance of the final report after quality assurance of the draft report.

The Project Manager, in consultation with the Division Director, will be involved in the following steps: Provide all documentation needed for desk review, contact details, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation; Advise the evaluator on the recipients for the questionnaire and for follow-up interviews; Process and manage the consultancy contract of the evaluator, along the key milestones agreed with PMU.

VII. Intended use / Next steps

The results of the evaluation will be used in the planning and implementation of future activities of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Integration Subprogramme. Findings of this evaluation will be used when possible to:

- improve direct project's follow up actions, implementation of products by project beneficiaries and dissemination of the knowledge created through the project;
- assess the gaps and further needs of countries in the area of this project;
- formulate tailored capacity building projects to strengthen the national capacity in enhancing innovation.

The results of the evaluation will be reported to the inter-governmental Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies and the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships.

Following the issuance of the final report, the Project Manager will develop a Management Response for addressing the recommendations made by the evaluator. The final evaluation report, the management response and the progress on implementation of recommendations will be publicly available on the UNECE website.

VIII. Criteria for evaluators

The evaluator should have:

1. An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines.
2. Specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social statistics, advanced statistical research and analysis.
3. Knowledge of and experience in working with intergovernmental processes, innovation, sustainable development.
4. Relevant professional experience in design and management of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, project planning, monitoring and management, gender mainstreaming and human-rights due diligence.
5. Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations. Demonstrated experience in conducting questionnaires and interviews is an asset.
6. Fluency in written and spoken English. Knowledge of Russian will be an advantage.

Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to UNECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.