


16th session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies

International Policy Dialogue

**Unleashing the Power of Innovation for Climate Action:
AI for Net Zero and Climate-Resilient Infrastructure**

 19-20 November 2024

 Room XXIV, Palais des Nations, Geneva



Tuesday, 19 November 2024

Palais des Nations, Building E, Room XXIV

SIDE EVENT

14:00 – 15:00

Smart regulation for digital circular economies – How to create an enabling environment for businesses?

Emerging digital technologies can play a crucial role in decoupling economic activity from natural resource use and their environmental impacts. Digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, blockchain, the internet of things and cloud computing, can facilitate the transition to a more resource-efficient and circular economy and support greener business models. At the same time, digital technologies, especially artificial intelligence systems, can use massive computational resources and raise serious environmental concerns.

Governments have a crucial role to play in creating the legal and regulatory framework for digital circular economies. This includes, on the one hand, identifying and removing existing regulatory obstacles; on the other hand, enacting legislation that supports the transformation to the circular economy and stimulates innovation.

Whereas environmental benefits of a digital circular economy are often taken for granted, potential unintended consequences that might counteract some of the benefits of the digital transition are less discussed. An enabling environment for digital circular economies therefore fosters circularity and sustainability of products and services (such as life span, reparability, reuse, recyclability, secondary raw material use, waste prevention) while at the same time mitigating rebound effects stemming from digital technologies, where initial efficiency gains are offset by an increasing demand for energy and critical resources.

This side-event discusses the complexities of a digital circular economy, how to mitigate the environmental impact of digitalization and aims at identifying solutions to create an enabling environment for businesses.

The Permanent Mission of Austria to the UN in Geneva kindly offers a light lunch to participants before the event.

Panellists

- Representative of **Austria**
- **Khaled Soufani** and **Samsurin Welch**, Circular Economy Centre, University of Cambridge
- **Pilar Fajarnes Garces**, Economic Affairs Office, UN Trade and Development, UNCTAD
- **Csilla Szilvia Kopitkó**, Ministry for Innovation and Technology, Hungary (tbc)
- **Marija Čebular Zajec**, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Slovenia (tbc)