

# Evaluation brief

Evaluation of UNECE project titled  
“Promoting innovation policy capacities  
in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus”

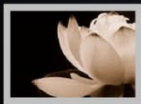


**Submitted by:**

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## **Results summary**

The UNECE project received excellent scores across its four evaluation categories. The project was highly effective, with a stakeholder satisfaction score of 82%. It accomplished all seven expected accomplishments, such as National Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews (I4SDRs) for Armenia, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova or developing the sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook (IPO). Stakeholder satisfaction reached 88% for the project's relevance and coherence and 86% for its efficiency, given the excellent UNECE project management and implementation. The sustainability of project results was also very high, with 83% stakeholder satisfaction due to high results ownership. The most direct impact has occurred through the implementation of the I4SDR and IPO recommendations.

## **Project background**

The project was launched in November 2018 and is set to conclude in June 2024 after no-cost extension. As per the project document, the project's main aim was to improve innovation policymakers' competencies in the Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (EESC) region. The total budget for the project was the equivalent of US\$ 2,215,026.

## **Evaluation purpose and scope**

The evaluation assessed the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability in enhancing innovation policy capacities in EESC countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine.

Dr. Tania Tam undertook the evaluation. She is a senior international and independent development project evaluator. She was selected by the Programme Management Unit, which is an oversight body that ensures overall coordination of UNECE programme management (planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation) of all UNECE activities funded from regular and extra budgetary resources.

## **Evaluation methodology**

For this evaluation, the evaluator used a theory-based evaluation methodology to address the timeline between the project activities, such as capacity building, data collection and analysis, and, for example, changes in policy capacities.

The evaluation reached 74% of the project stakeholders identified by the project team, 49 in total, through in-person interviews during a field visit to Armenia and Georgia (11), telephone and video interviews (20) and an online survey (an additional 18). Thirty-one in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted, each consisting of 45-60 minutes. During these 31 interviews, all respondents were also asked for survey responses, thus providing 31 quantitative survey responses in addition to 18 respondents filling in the online survey.

Regarding the gender of participants, 20 of the 49 respondents were female (41%), and 29 were male (59%). The field visits to Yerevan and Tbilisi took place in the week beginning June 5, 2023. The online survey launched in mid-July yielded a response rate of 60%, based on the 18 responses received. The evaluation reach is very satisfactory, given other UN Secretariat evaluation response rates range between 15% and 30%.

The infographic below summarizes project data such as duration and budget, the evaluation process, main evaluation results, factors influencing the project performance and evaluation recommendations for UNECE.



# Evaluation of the UNECE project E317 "Promoting innovation policy capacities in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus"

## Evaluation process

Project duration: 11/2018 to 05/2022, extended till 06/2023. Project budget: US\$ 2,215,026, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)

### 49 stakeholders consulted

41% female, 59% male



### Evaluation period: 05/2023 - 09/2023



Briefing meetings, document review, virtual interviews, field visits to Armenia and Georgia, online-survey

### Evaluation users

UNECE, Participating Member States, donor Sweden



### Evaluation purpose



Relevance and coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project in six countries

## Evaluation results



88%

● Achieved ● Not achieved

### Relevance & coherence

- UNECE project gave visibility to the region
- Sida funding filling a critical gap, e.g. sub-regional approach to innovation policies index
- Project addressed previously poor coordination between national stakeholders
- Project took Leave No One Behind approach seriously, but this was supply-driven



82%

● Achieved ● Not achieved

### Effectiveness

- Multi-stakeholder dialogue for developing the IPOs leveraging UNECE's neutrality as a UN body
- Improved the understanding of policy options at the national level based on thorough research
- Recommendations are actionable. But Implementation of recommendations is too early to tell.



86%

● Achieved ● Not achieved

### Efficiency

- Well-executed project: adequate funding for mobilizing experts, national focal points and highly professional project team in UNECE
- COVID-19-related restrictions and 2 wars affected the project implementation
- COVID-19 mitigation: involvement of local experts for energizing local stakeholders



83%

● Achieved ● Not achieved

### Sustainability

- Ownership of results, institutionalization, and up-scaling are evident in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova
- Holding for national strategies and policies is required.
- Project's methodology can be replicated in other sub-regions

## Key results

### Multistakeholder dialogue

Innovation ecosystem stakeholders' policy dialogue in 6 countries. First time in Armenia

### Procurement law

Aligns with EU directives, as in the case of Georgia (2023)

### Minimizing potential corruption

e-Procurement platform in Georgia: potential to enable real-time monitoring, evaluation, and auditing of procurement activities

### IPO results in new laws

Draft normative legal act (support mechanisms for innovative projects and start-ups) and a draft law on innovation activities in Azerbaijan

### Legal reform

Moldova: national road map for innovation and technology transfer; ongoing review of law on innovation & technology parks

## Factors influencing results

### Positive



- UNECE convening power
- Acceleration of using virtual technology
- Over 4 year's project duration

### Negative



- COVID-19: meeting and travel restrictions
- Volatile political situation in the sub-region
- Economic downturn
- Unclear or overlapping mandates of government stakeholders

"One of the unexpected findings was the lack of coordination (...) and low collaboration among stakeholders. Thanks to the [UNECE] review, we were able to identify these gaps and take necessary actions to improve the situation".

## Recommendations for UNECE

1

i) Seek continuation funding to support further EESC countries (especially for ensuring sustainability); ii) seek new funding to replicate for other regions,

2

Increase awareness among national stakeholders in Member States about the importance of the Leave No One Behind approach across policy making.

3

Encourage Sweden and other donors to continue to invest in projects with a systems change approach, leading to the implementation of research recommendations (...). A project duration of 5 years is recommended for projects with such an approach.

4

Using local experts to gather intelligence on the ground is recommended for similar future projects at the country level. At the same time, national focal points should be appointed for centralized project coordination in project countries.

5

Use limited regular budget resources to monitor the implementation of recommendations and keep engaging with the network of focal points to share good practices for developing and implementing national innovation-related strategies and policies.

6

Senior management should use this external evaluation report as a robust evidence base to lobby for replicating the project approach in other sub-regions, for example, the Western Balkans, with high relevance for donors like the EU and Sweden.

