

The Partnership for Economics Education and Research Support (PEERS)

The Partnership for Economics Education and Research Support is being established by organizations that support economic research in the SPECA region. Its overall objective is to improve the coordination of international assistance to local research institutes, empower local researchers to design their research agenda thus making local research less donor-driven and support policy-business-research dialogue in order to promote evidence-based decision-making in SPECA member countries.

UNECE plans to participate in PEERS through the SPECA Network of Economic Research Institutes, launched in December 2005 at the Baku meeting of the SPECA Coordinating Committee.

SPECA Network of Economic Research Institutes (SNERI)

Objective of the initiative:

SNERI aims at supporting local policy-oriented research on key issues of sub-regional economic cooperation in the SPECA region by more actively involving local researchers in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of regional cooperation programmes and strengthening this capacity through regional team research projects, better research dissemination mechanisms, increased interaction between policy-makers, the business community and researchers and specific capacity building activities catering to the needs of researchers and research institutions. SNERI is expected to take full advantage of the SPECA Economic Forum for intensive dialogue with policy makers and the business community and dissemination of research.¹

Strategy

To achieve the long-term goal of enabling government policy makers to more effectively formulate and implement policies aimed at strengthening sub-regional economic cooperation, SNERI is going to engage in the following activities:

1) Research

SNERI and its members are expected to produce high quality research and analysis on selected issues of sub-regional economic cooperation. The SNERI research programme, approved by policy makers (the SPECA Governing Council or the Coordinating Committee) on an annual basis, is expected to consist of short and long-term studies on topics of key importance for sub-regional economic cooperation. These might include a) trade facilitation and its impact on trade and investment flows b) the importance of sub-regional cooperation for the rapid and sustainable economic development of SPECA member States and their ability to effectively implement poverty reduction strategies 3) economic impact of improved sub-regional cooperation in the areas of transport, water, energy and ICT 4) strategies to strengthen

¹ See: Concept paper of SNERI

sub-regional economic cooperation in the era of high energy prices. Members might suggest other topics for consideration and approval by policy makers.

2) Dissemination

Research by SNERI and its members is expected to be disseminated through various means, including a dedicated website, an electronic newsletter, policy briefs and publications. The annual sessions of the SPECA Economic Forum are expected to provide researchers and policy makers as well as representatives of private business with an opportunity to exchange information, share ideas, review and refine research findings.

3) Capacity Building

SNERI is to strive to strengthen research capacity in SPECA member States through the implementation of regional team-based research studies, organizational of technical training workshops for researchers from member institutes and facilitating their participation in conferences, seminars and workshops organized by the UNECE, UNESCAP, their partner organizations and institutions as well as academies of economic research and economic research institutes of neighbouring countries or other member countries of UNECE and UNESCAP.

Structure

The Technical Cooperation Unit and the newly established Division of Economic Cooperation and Integration of UNECE – working closely with the relevant divisions of UNESCAP – would serve as the Secretariat of SNERI. SPECA would provide the link between research institutions (members of the Network) and policy makers at regional level through its Governing Council and Coordinating Committee. The Networks should take full advantage of the existing partnerships of UNECE and UNESCAP with other organizations and institutions, in particular members of the CAREC group, WTO and UNCTAD. It would adhere to the universally recognized principle of neutrality embodied in the UN rules.

To provide the expertise required for the development of SNERI and formulation of its research programme an Advisory Board is going to be set up from representatives of seven leading economic research institutes of the sub-region (one from each SPECA member State). Members of SNERI from each country are expected to nominate one research institute to represent them in the Advisory Board.

SNERI membership

Research and academic institutions from SPECA member States with an interest in sub-regional economic cooperation would be invited to apply for SNERI membership. Potential benefits of being a SNERI member include: 1) improved regional dissemination of own research 2) access to other member's research 3) enhanced opportunity to participate in sub-regional research programmes and technical training workshops 4) opportunity for a direct dialogue with policy makers of the sub-region.

