



UNECE

Innovation for the Circular Economy: Empowering Start-ups to Achieve More with Less

UNECE Study Tour for SPECA Participating States



Date

20-21 December 2023
(Tbilisi)

Format

In person

Background

Following member States' decisions at the [69th Commission session](#) on "Circular Economy and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources", the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) provides a variety of tools that facilitate the widespread adoption of this approach. The shift to a circular economy offers a unique catalyst for cross-cutting progress toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the Fourth Session of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development that took place on 19 October 2023, SPECA participating States endorsed the continuation of work on the circular economy as a crucial element contributing to sustainable development and resource efficiency within the SPECA subregion. Member States also underscored the importance of capacity-building and technical assistance initiatives to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship in the circular economy in the context of the SPECA* Network of Business Incubators and Accelerators for Sustainable Development (NBIASD).

NBIASD aims to provide entrepreneurship support institutions in the SPECA sub-region with a platform for peer learning and [capacity building](#). The Network is dedicated to catalyzing circularity by inspiring new circular ventures and start-ups, while also assisting business incubators and accelerators in the integration of circularity principles into their operations.

In this context, UNECE will organize a NBIASD study tour to Georgia, providing participants with the opportunity to gain practical experience, visit relevant organizations and institutions, and engage with experts and innovation policymakers who are actively involved in supporting the private sector's circular agenda.

Circular economy start-ups have demonstrated their potential in addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, through scalable business models and innovative solutions. However, entrepreneurs with transformative ideas may face obstacles, such as a lack of capital, resources, or enabling networks to replicate and scale up their solutions. Supporting such start-ups is essential to drive sustainable innovation in SPECA participating States.

*Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

The central objective of this training program is to enhance the administrative capacity of SPECA participating States, enabling them to effectively incorporate circular principles into their innovation programs and actively promote the adoption of the circular economy concept within business incubators and accelerators.

Through this training, participants will have the opportunity to bolster their expertise and hands-on abilities in implementing innovative policy tools aimed at achieving the SDGs. This will be accomplished through a case study focused on the practical application of a circular economy approach.

Theory of change:

- NBIASD accelerates the transition to a circular economy in the SPECA sub-region by inspiring new circular ventures and start-ups.
- It supports companies in transformative innovation of their business models towards the circular economy, which is designed to diminish waste and mitigate the depletion of natural resources.

Programme

The training is primarily intended for **NBIASD members**, including managers and employees of business incubators and accelerators, innovation policymakers, and academia representatives.

For more information, please contact Christopher Athey at christopher.athey@un.org.

Programme	
20 December 2023 Capacity-Building Training	
09:00 - 09:05	Gathering of the training participants at the meeting point
	<i>Venue: Near the Graf Hotel (the exact location point will be communicated before the event day)</i> <i>Address: 11 Gia Abesadze Street, 0105 Tbilisi City, Georgia</i> Google Maps
09:45	Arrival of the training participants at the venue
	<i>Venue: Business and Technology University</i> <i>Address: Tbilisi 0162, Georgia I. Chavchavadze Avenue N82</i> Google Maps <i>Room: 4th floor, event room</i>



Programme	
10:00 - 10:15	<p>Opening statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christopher Athey, Secretary to the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development, UNECE • Ani Chelishvili, Director of Development and International Relations, Business and Technology University of Georgia
10:15 - 12:30	<p>Part I. Synergizing Innovation and Circular Economy Policies</p>
<p>Trainer: Anastasia Pankova, International Consultant, Innovative Policies for Sustainable Development Section, UNECE</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental principles and concepts of the circular economy. • Circular economy applications across industries. • Structured approach to innovation for the circular economy. • Aligning innovation policy with the goals of a circular economy (practical case studies). 	
Work in groups (1)	<p>Mapping exercise: potential innovation policy tools for the circular economy in SPECA participating States and missing opportunities</p>
12:30 - 13:30	<p>Lunch Break</p>
13:30 - 16:00	<p>Part II. Development of Circular Economy Incubation and Acceleration Programmes in SPECA participating States*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market exploration and strategy. • Business development and support. • Leadership and management. <p>* The conclusions and recommendations in this part of the training sessions are shaped to address the needs and challenges that exist in the SPECA participating States, as identified during the previous NBIASD training session in 2021-2023.</p>	
Work in groups (2)	<p>Evaluating exercise: Accessing innovation and impact of circular economy start-ups</p>
16:00 - 17:00	<p>Presentation of SPECA Handbooks on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business incubators and accelerators for sustainable development; • Innovative high-growth enterprises; • New innovation policy.



Programme	
<p>Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christopher Athey, Secretary to the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development, UNECE • Ekaterina Guznova, Expert, Innovative Policies Development Section, UNECE 	
17:00 - 17:15	Conclusion of Day 1
17:20	Return of the training participants to the meeting point
	<p><i>Venue: Graf Hotel</i> <i>Address: 11 Gia Abesadze Street, 0105 Tbilisi City, Georgia</i> Google Maps</p>
<p>21 December 2023 Introducing the Georgian Start-up Support Ecosystem for Sustainable Development</p>	
09:25 - 09:30	Gathering of the training participants at the meeting point
	<p><i>Venue: Near the Graf Hotel (the exact location point will be communicated before the event day)</i> <i>Address: 11 Gia Abesadze Street, 0105 Tbilisi City, Georgia</i> Google Maps</p>
09:45	Arrival of the training participants at the venue
	<p><i>Venue: Impact Hub Tbilisi</i> <i>Address: Fabrika, 8 Egnate Ninoshvili Str, 0102, Tbilisi, Georgia</i> Google Maps</p> <p><i>Room: Main meeting room</i></p>
10:00 - 12:30	Part III. Development of Incubation and Acceleration Programmes for Sustainable Start-Ups in Georgia
<p>Moderated by Christopher Athey, Innovative Policies Development Section, UNECE</p>	
Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ketevan Ebanoidze, Co-founder, Impact Hub Tbilisi
Framing Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irakli Kashibadze, Managing Partner, Future Laboratory Ventures



Programme	
Start-up Pitches	Presentations and practical talks with green and circular economy start-ups supported by Impact Hub Tbilisi.
Interactive Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering youth to make a sustainable impact. • Elements of effective support programs for start-ups. • Practical exercise: participants are invited to map tools and programs for start-ups in SPECA participating States and compare them with those presented by Impact Hub Tbilisi.
12:30 - 14:00	Conclusion of the Study Visit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants share their feedback, lessons learned, and suggestions. 	

