



Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships

Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies

Informal consultations, 21, 23 and 27 October 2020

To be held virtually through three webinars starting at 1 p.m. on Wednesday 21 October 2020¹

Annotated provisional agenda

I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. International policy dialogue: “Building Back Better after COVID-19: Promoting Innovation for a Sustainable Future”.
3. Review of the work of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies since the twelfth session:
 - (a) Discussion of the results and recommendations of the Innovation Policy Outlook;
 - (b) Discussion of the results and recommendations of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia;
 - (c) Other work since the twelfth session.
4. Inter-sessional implementation plan for 2020-2021.
5. Any other business.

¹ Due to the current COVID-19 epidemic and travel restrictions the official annual session of the Team of Specialists cannot be held. To advance the work of the Team, informal consultations will be held through a series of webinars. Participants can register for the consultations at [this link](#). They will receive by e-mail instructions on how to access the webinars a few days prior.

II. Annotations to the provisional agenda

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>For information/discussion</i>
Agenda	Information
Summary of recommendations from the Innovation Policy Outlook	Discussion
Summary of recommendations from the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia	Discussion
Progress report of the Task Force on Innovation Policy Principles for Sustainable Development	Discussion
Inter-sessional implementation plan for 2020-2021	Discussion

1. Adoption of the agenda

6. The informal virtual meeting will adopt its agenda.

7. The objective of the informal consultations of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies is to:

(a) Discuss and address topical, substantive issues related to the programme of work of the Team of Specialists;

(b) Review the outputs and activities carried out since the twelfth session and discuss the implementation plan for the period until the thirteenth session in 2021.

2. International Policy Dialogue: “Building Back Better after COVID-19: Promoting Innovation for a Sustainable Future”

8. The international policy dialogue on “Building Back Better after COVID-19: Promoting Innovation for a Sustainable Future” will discuss how the power of innovation can be harnessed to turn the pandemic into an opportunity to build more resilient, more sustainable and more productive economies, and how Government policy can support this transition. The policy dialogue will be held through two thematic webinars.

9. In addition to the direct and indirect health impact, the consequences of pandemic-related restrictions and shifts across the ECE region on short- and medium-term growth and sustainable development will be substantial. The direct negative effects of restrictions on services such as travel, tourism, hospitality, and retail trade had also negative spill- over effects in the manufacturing sector resulting in a slump in demand that put downward pressures on commodity prices, disrupted global and regional supply chains and decreased demand for exports. Early indications point to a severe recession in the region².

10. Once the health crisis is under control, fiscal packages and structural reforms need to be put in place to stimulate the innovation necessary to manage the economic and social consequences of the pandemic and to build a more sustainable economy and society – in other words, to “Build Back Better³”.

² World Bank Group, “Fighting COVID 19: Europe and Central Asia Economic Update”, Office of the Chief Economist, spring 2020.

³ The term “Building Back Better” was first used in the aftermath of the 2004 Asian tsunami. In 2015 it was incorporated into the priorities of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and

11. The first webinar will be dedicated to “Building Back Better: Using Platforms to Enable Sharing and Progress towards the Circular Economy”. It will explore innovation policies for the “platform economy” in the context of the transition towards a circular economy. The platform economy may be central to the challenge of how to make production and consumption more sustainable while at the same time creating opportunities and making goods and services increasingly affordable. A strikingly large range of products, from cars to power drills, are unused most, or in some cases almost all of the time. Digital platforms can turn those products into services, accessible according to needs – what many refer to as the sharing economy. Leasing, sharing, recycling and re-using allow to increasingly decouple GDP growth from resources use, ultimately reducing resource use, environmental degradation and pollution along the whole product lifecycle, while increasing quality of life⁴ and creating new economic opportunities.

12. The second webinar on “Building Back Better: Innovation Enhancing Procurement for Sustainable Development” will explore how countries can better use the potential of public procurement to catalyse innovation for the circular economy transition and for sustainable development more broadly. In the ECE region businesses often cite lack of demand for innovative products and services as a major reason for not investing more in R&D and innovation. Public procurement can be a powerful policy lever to accelerate the adoption and dissemination of innovation. It contributes to the promotion and diffusion of innovative goods and services by making them available to the society and thus helping to meet the societal and environmental needs that the market is not able to address. As several pilot projects demonstrate, procurement can also spur innovation by aligning revenue streams with the impact created, rather than technical specifications. Yet, this does not come without challenges and difficulties. Governments need to work towards reducing risk aversion, improving skills and capacity of public procurement officials, enhancing data collection and monitoring results, as well as setting up new forms of partnerships and co-ordination mechanisms.

13. Issues for discussion include, inter alia, the following:

(a) What are some good responses and effective measures taken in the ECE region to stimulate innovation to “Build Back Better” Post COVID-19?

(b) What policy measures, rules, and institutions could enable and promote the emergence of digital platforms to promote and create opportunities for sustainable production and consumption in the context of the circular economy transition? What is the potential, and what do early experiences in exploiting this potential show us?

(c) How can countries use the potential of public procurement to enable, trigger and support innovation for sustainable development in the ECE region? What do on-going experiments among policy makers and entrepreneurs show us?

14. This policy dialogue will serve as the basis for a policy paper on “Building Back Better after COVID-19: Innovation Policies for a Sustainable Future” for endorsement at the next session of the ECE Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships scheduled for 26-28 May 2021.

3. Review of the work of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies since the twelfth session

(a) Discussion of the results and recommendations of the Innovation Policy Outlook;

commonly used by the Disaster Risk Reduction community. It refers to the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase after a disaster to increase the resilience of communities through the restoration of physical infrastructure and societal systems.

⁴ OECD, “Tackling Coronavirus (COVID 19), contributing to a global effort”, June 2020.

15. In the third webinar, the members of the Team of Specialists will discuss the results and recommendations of the draft of the first iteration of the Innovation Policy Outlook following a presentation by the Secretariat.

(b) Discussion of the results and recommendations of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia;

16. The members of the Team of Specialists will also discuss the results and recommendations of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia following a presentation by the Secretariat.

(c) Other work since the twelfth session.

17. The members of the Team of Specialists will review the outcomes and highlights of other work since its twelfth session, including:

(a) In September 2020, a webinar served to discuss the final report of the work of a ECE-Belarus Task Force for developing a roadmap for piloting a public-private venture capital mechanism for innovative projects in Belarus, in co-operation with the State Committee on Science and Technology. The roadmap shall serve to guide future efforts to put such a mechanism into practice. This webinar concludes the capacity building programme agreed with the government of Belarus to support reforms based on the recommendations of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Belarus.

(b) Two follow-up sub-regional webinars on policies for innovative, high-growth enterprises in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus were held on 15 and 17 September 2020, in co-operation with the OECD.

(c) A Handbook on policies for Innovative High Growth Enterprises was developed by ECE with contributions from OECD and presented to and reviewed by countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. It will be published in Russian and English by early 2021.

(d) The twelfth session of the Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was held jointly with UNESCAP in an online webinar format on 30 July 2020. The session discussed next steps for implementation of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, as well as enhancing seamless digital connectivity for e-resilience under the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative.

(e) To support implementation of the SPECA Strategy on Innovation for Sustainable Development, ECE and UNESCAP initiated a Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) gap analysis covering the SPECA countries to identify priority areas for cooperation between the SPECA countries. The results will be discussed at a sub-regional workshop provisionally planned before the end of 2020.

(f) The first flagship publication of ECE's Smart Sustainable Cities nexus was completed in cooperation with other ECE divisions.

18. Delegates will be invited to take stock of past activities and to discuss effective dissemination of the outputs of the Team of Specialists.

4. Inter-sessional implementation plan for 2020-2021

19. The 2020 session of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships originally scheduled for March 2020 had to be cancelled due to the lockdown measures imposed by the host country in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. An inter-sessional implementation plan for 2020-2021 was approved by silence procedure.

Implementation Plan for 2020-2021

20. The members of the Team of Specialists will discuss proposals for work to be undertaken in the remainder of 2020 and in 2021 in accordance with the inter-sessional implementation plan for 2020-2021 of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships. Proposals include:

Events

(a) A possible substantive contribution to the 2021 session of the Economic Commission for Europe on the topic of “Innovation for the Circular Economy”, subject to the final decision of ECE member States on the agenda of the session.

(b) The annual session of the Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development of SPECA will be organized together with UNESCAP in 2021. A policy conference will be organised back-to-back with the session. The precise location and date remain to be decided.

(c) A regional workshop will be organised, provisionally planned before the end of 2020, to present and discuss the STI gap analysis carried out in SPECA countries under the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development.

National Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews

(d) The national Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia will be launched in Georgia in late 2020. The fact finding and research for a new review of Moldova will be carried out in close cooperation with the Government, within the constraints of COVID-19-related restrictions. Reviews of Armenia and Uzbekistan will be initiated in early 2021.

Innovation Policy Outlook

(e) The pilot sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook will be launched in a series of physical or online events and submitted for publication in English and Russian before the end of 2020.

Capacity building

(f) In line with the recommendations of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia, a capacity building programme to support implementation of specific recommendations of the review will be agreed with the Government of Georgia for a period of two years, with initial physical or online events planned in 2021.

(g) Following-up on the study tour to the Russian Federation on technology parks and incubators in October 2019 and building on additional expert work on the topic, ECE will develop a policy handbook on incubators for the SPECA member countries, to be published in Russian and English.

(h) Sub-regional capacity building, through a series of webinars replacing the intended event in Belgrade cancelled due to COVID-19 related restrictions, on selected aspects of innovation policy will be organized in the framework of the Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development.

(i) Additional regional and national policy advisory and capacity building events on specific issues subject to demand from member States and extrabudgetary funding.

(j) Delegates are encouraged to express any intentions by ECE member States and other stakeholders to provide extra-budgetary support (such as funds or in-kind contributions, including expert contributions and hosting events) to these activities.

Others

(k) A collection of good policy practices developed by the Team of Specialists in recent years will be published.

5. Any other business

21. Chairperson’s conclusions will be submitted as an official document to the 2021 session of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships.

Annex

Provisional timetable

<i>Time</i>	<i>Agenda Item</i>
Wednesday 21 October	
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Item 1. Adoption of the agenda Item 2. International Policy Dialogue: “Building Back Better after COVID-19: Promoting Innovation for a Sustainable Future” Webinar 1: “Building Back Better: Using Platforms to Enable Sharing and Progress towards the Circular Economy”
Friday 23 October	
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m.	Item 2: International Policy Dialogue (cont’d) Webinar 2: “Building Back Better: Innovation Enhancing Procurement for Sustainable Development”
Tuesday 27 October	
10:00 a.m. – 13:00 a.m.	Item 3: Review of the work of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies since the twelfth session Webinar 3: Innovation Policy Outlook Webinar 3 (cont’d) Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia Webinar 3 (cont’d) Other Work Webinar 3 (cont’d) Item 4. Inter-sessional implementation plan for 2020-2021 Item 5. Any Other Business
