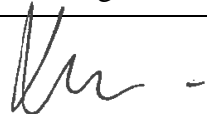




MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Evaluation Title:	Evaluation of the UNDA Project 2023N: Strengthening Innovation Policies for SPECA Countries in Support of the 2030 Agenda		
Period of Review:	2020 - 2023		
Date of Evaluation Report:	31/07/2024		
Approved by:	Chief, PMU Nicolas Dath-Baron	Date	Signature
		18/06/2025	
Cleared by:	Director, ECTD Elisabeth Türk	18/06/2025	
Prepared by:	Project Manager Anders Jonsson	18/06/2025	

Recommendation 1:

The evaluation recommends continuing to apply participatory and agile management modalities in future project design and implementation to allow the project teams to get real-time insights into project progress and potential issues.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow-up actions and responsibilities:

The ability to pick up on momentum, respond to emerging needs and priorities, and tweak activities and approaches to maximize potential for creating impact is very important, especially in projects on innovation. ECTD intends to strengthen elements of flexible project design and agile management, building on lessons learnt from this and other projects, including:

- Develop, strengthen, and refine agile management and flexibility in further proposals for UNDA and for donors requesting extrabudgetary funding (2025); and
- Develop ideas for and raise funding for a similar regional project for SPECA countries (2025-2027).

For instance, elements in line with this ambition include: frequent, demand-driven, informal online capacity building discussions focusing on specific reforms and operational challenges and opportunities through the Innovation Circle discussion series to complement formal capacity building; more flexibility in the content of I4SD reviews determined in discussion with beneficiaries; formulation of results-based frameworks to ensure operational flexibility and inclusion of learning and unexpected impact of different kinds; and activities centred around concrete commercial opportunities, such as potential latent demand for services from European and global value chains posing opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Responsibility: Anders Jonsson, Chief, IPDS

Timeline: 31 December 2027

Recommendation 2:

The evaluation strongly advises continuing engaging the private sector, associations, and non-state actors in project activities to strengthen in-country and regional collaboration across sectors and secure a better balance of political support and a sense of ownership with industry-specific insights.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- Integrate elements of private sector engagement for future regional projects (Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, Western Balkan, SPECA), especially around innovation around concrete opportunities for trade, cooperation, and investment, prominently;
- Enhance private sector engagement in activities, potentially as part of further engaging Central Asian countries in the ECE Transformative Innovation Network (ETIN);
- Consider approaches such as Calls to Action for the private sector and entrepreneurs;
- Further strengthen the potential of procurement to incentivize and boost innovation and positive spill-over effects, such as through impact procurement, pre-commercial procurement, challenges in working with programme countries; and
- Stress links between innovation, service and goods trade, infrastructure innovation and financing, transport (such as innovation around autonomous vehicles).

Engaging the private sector should observe relevant UN rules and regulations.

Responsibility: Anders Jonsson, Chief, IPDS

Timeline: 31 December 2027

Recommendation 3:

The evaluation also heavily recommends revising the formulation of outcome and output level indicators of future projects to avoid overlap and ensure that complex concepts are broken down into measurable components at the outcome level. Furthermore, the evaluation recommends incorporating gender, human rights, disability, and climate change indicators into the results framework to enable continuous reporting on progress made.

Management Response:

UNECE partially accepts the recommendation.

Follow-up actions and responsibilities:

This is important and part of standard expectations among potential donors. However, in some instances, innovative and pragmatic compromises and solutions are important. This concern balancing the need for quantitative, measurable indicators and related commitments with the need for agile management, responsiveness, adaptability and flexibility. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative indicators and case studies will help retain and formulate commitments and help capture broader, often unplanned impact of activities. On incorporating gender, human rights, disability, climate change and similar cross-cutting themes, we stress that activities should be demand-driven and that our efforts to mainstream them should take place within that context. However, we see innovation broadly to create opportunities, diversification, and jobs for all: and demand for labour will also benefit those facing challenges.

- For future XB proposals, strengthen intervention logic and reflect more clearly in results frameworks links between activities, deliverables, outputs, outcomes, results, and impact;
- Integrate systematically appropriate indicators related to gender, human rights, disability, and climate change;
- Integrate cross-cutting themes such as gender, human rights, disability, and climate change indicators into intergovernmental meetings and other activities where feasible and welcomed by member States and beneficiaries.

Responsibility: Anders Jonsson, Chief, IPDS

Timeline: 31 December 2027

Recommendation 4:

The evaluation recommends the development of online webinars (for general capacity building activities at the national level) with face-to-face meetings (those addressing regional, strategic and more advanced knowledge sharing). However, face-to-face regional meetings and site visits would be more relevant for the sort of capacity building activities that would potentially lead to cross-sector strategic partnerships and provide first-hand experience of the practical implications and challenges of the approaches applied in the host countries.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- Integrate regular, frequent, informal online discussions into XB project activities systematically, using the format and approach of ETIN Innovation Circle informal discussion series;
- Develop clear links and complementarities with physical and hybrid meetings in XB projects and also RB activities;
- Systematically monitor opportunities for and exploit IPDS contributions to online events by the UN, other IGOs, and programme countries;
- Explore opportunities for using AI and digital technologies for interactive online sessions, simultaneous interpretation, and engagement;
- Develop a strategic, flexible approach to balance the need for and utility of capacity building and analysis among countries in sub-region, such as the Western Balkans and Central Asia, and for activities engaging a broader range of member States, including those with developed economies; and
- Given the immediate shortage of and expected future scarcity of both XB and RB resources, develop ways to optimize synergies and complementarities among different meeting formats and modalities, including in-person, online, and hybrid, across all activities as a priority.

Responsibility: Anders Jonsson, Chief, IPDS

Timeline: 31 December 2027

Recommendation 5:

The evaluation recommends reconsidering project staffing patterns to align their level of engagement to the lifetime of the project. The ECE Secretariat needs to include administrative support and professional-level staff in the project proposals to ensure the smooth continuity of new project activities. This is particularly crucial, taking into account the level of effort required for quality assurance of the

developed concept papers and assessment notes and for organizing cross-country and regional face-to-face capacity-building activities, workshops, and side events.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

It should be noted that ECTD faces reduced staffing, XB and RB resource decline, and uncertainty. As there is little room in UNDA budgets for securing necessary in-house support, it would be essential to find ways to fund and allocate resources required for coordinating activities:

- Ensure inclusion of required XB funded staff and consultants to support project activities in future proposals; and
- Identify and exploit synergies among XB projects within the division systematically, including joint meetings, pooling of G staff, reduce number of consultant contracts, and outreach.

Responsibility: Anders Jonsson, Chief, IPDS

Timeline: 31 December 2027