

Methodology for undertaking national for science, technology and innovation (STI) gap assessments of the SPECA countries

1. Background

Selected national consultants will conduct science, technology and innovation (STI) gap/needs assessment of each SPECA country on the basis of a uniform pattern and methodology as described below. The proposed methodology and the way of presenting the outcomes of the study should be followed strictly in order to ensure cross-country comparability of the results.

The results of the national studies will serve as inputs for the compilation of a cross-country comparative STI needs assessment and gap analysis report for the whole SPECA region. This report would focus on the main existing problems in the current STI development in the region and would identify key common STI challenges and gaps that the SPECA countries are facing. The report will also serve a basis for discussion on specific key performance indicators (KPIs) to help tract the strategy implementation drawing from relevant KPIs of the UNECE SDG Dashboard and SDG Index and Dashboards Report (Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network) where possible. The KPIs would be complemented with additional ones from other sources, as appropriate and should include a baseline (current status), milestones, objectives, and sources of verification. These KPIs will serve as the basis for an evaluation of progress in strategy implementation planned for 2022. The study would also formulate recommendations about possible solutions and policy measures for closing or reducing the existing STI gaps, while drawing on opportunities provided by economic sectors with high innovation potential in the countries and existing good practices in the region and in other countries of the world.

2. Methodology

Each country study should contain two main parts: *A. Overview of some main aspects of national STI governance*, which would contain an analytical overview based on factual information about selected aspects of the national innovation system; and *B. Key challenges and problems in fostering innovative development*, which would summarise the results of a stakeholder survey conducted by the local consultant.

More specifically, the country study and its two parts should cover the following issues:

Part A. Overview of some main aspects of national STI governance

Part A should comprise an analytical text based on factual information and its critical assessment. It should cover the following main aspects:

- National STI priorities

The text in this section should review existing official strategic policy documents that specify the national policy priorities in the areas of science, technology and innovation (STI) in his/her country and should prepare a list of such priorities in terms of scientific disciplines, technological areas and/or technological upgrading/transformation of economic sectors that have been identified as national policy targets.

- Key STI policy documents

The text in this section should briefly describe the system of legislative acts (laws and similar), strategic policy documents, governmental ordinances, regulations, etc. in the area of science, technology and innovation management (e.g. law on science and technology, law on innovation, law on academy of sciences, law on higher education, law on SMEs/entrepreneurship, socio-economic development strategy, strategy for education and science, strategy for technological development, innovation strategy, strategy for ICT development, regulation of intellectual property protection, etc.). Each such document should be presented by a brief summary (1-2 paragraphs) of its content (objectives, area that it covers, main postulates).

- STI governance structure

This section should contain a description of innovation governance in the respective country: which are the main public bodies (ministries, agencies, committees, councils, etc.) tasked with functional responsibilities in science and innovation management; description of the functional responsibilities of each governance body; description of the hierarchical governance structure (levels of governance and subordination).

- STI policy formulation

This section is expected to describe the process in which the main policy documents governing STI (such as laws, strategies, national priorities, etc) in the respective country are being formulated: who (individuals and institutional bodies) take part in the process, what is their role and how these documents are being adopted.

- STI policy instruments, policy implementation and coordination

The text in this section should describe the system the policy instruments that are being used in the country to support and stimulate STI (such as, for example, grants for R&D projects; innovation vouchers; grants for innovation projects/technological development; tax credits for R&D undertaken by businesses; credit subsidies for innovative SMEs, non-financial support instruments, etc.). It should also point out which are the bodies tasked with the implementation of these instruments and how these bodies coordinate among themselves the implementation process. The text in this section should also briefly describe the system of existing innovation support institutions (such as business incubators, science parks, technology transfer offices, etc.) and their role in the innovation process.

- Insights on the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on the ST&I development in the sub-region

This section will present brief overview of the key measures implemented by the SPECA governments in response to the pandemic, covering the following questions : how the pandemic influenced the ST&I policy (state of art and forecasts) and how ST&I was able (or not) to provide solutions to tackle challenges related to the novel coronavirus.

Part B. Key challenges and problems in fostering innovative development

This part will be based on the results of a *stakeholder survey* with key national innovation stakeholders covering all main stakeholder groups: government officials and experts; experts from the academic community; representatives of the business community; representatives of civil society. Altogether, the survey should cover *some 10-15 stakeholders* from different groups. *The survey should be organized and conducted by the local consultant* either through an *interview* with the stakeholders or through a *questionnaire* to be filled by the stakeholders (or a combination of the two). The interview/questionnaire should cover the following main issues:

- Opinion about the economic sectors with high innovation potential in the country;
- Appraisal of the effectiveness of STI policy and the policy instruments supporting STI development and the relevance of the current STI governance and management relative to the economic sectors with high innovation potential;

- Appraisal of the framework conditions and business environment in the country: to what extent they are conducive to innovative development; appraisal of the system of private funding of STI in the country;
- Opinion about the key existing problems hindering innovative development in the country;
- Opinion about the most important changes (in legislation, in policy making and implementation, in framework conditions, etc.) that need to be introduced in order to invigorate innovative development in the country.

The recommended format and structure of the interview questions/questionnaire is presented in Annex 1. If the collection of information takes place in the form of a live interview, the local consultant should conduct the interview following the same formulation of the questions and should raise them in the same sequence as in the written questionnaire.

3. Composition and structure of the report

Each local consultant should compile a report reflecting the results of his/her study. The structure of the report should follow strictly the structure of the study as follows:

Part A. Overview of some main aspects of national STI management

This should be a succinct analytical text under a structure that follows the bullet points specified in section 2 above. The analysis should focus only on the key issues, avoiding non-essential details. The approximate size of Part A should be around 8-10 pages in Word (500 words per page).

Part B. Key challenges and problems in fostering innovative development

The local consultant is expected to prepare an analytical note summarising the results of the stakeholder survey. The analytical overview should be accompanied by tables summarising the processed results of the interviews/survey as follows.

The local consultant should first describe the survey itself: how many stakeholders were covered; to which stakeholder groups they belong; how the survey was conducted (interview or questionnaire), etc.

The actual results of the first part of the survey should be presented in the form of tables as follows:

Table 1. Opinion about economic sectors/industries with high potential for technological upgrading and innovative development

No.	Economic sector/industry	Percentage of respondents who indicate the sector
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

The last column of the table should contain a number computed on the basis of all interviews/questionnaires and reflecting the percentage of those surveyed who have indicated the respective sector as having high potential for innovative development. Example: if 6 out of 10 surveyed experts have mentioned a specific sector/industry, then the number to be placed in the last column should be 60%.

Table 2. Opinion about the effectiveness of science, technology and innovation (STI) policy and of the policy instruments supporting STI development in the country

No.	Policy aspects	Average rank
1	The national authorities assign high importance to the development of science, technology and innovation (STI)	
2	The national STI priorities and strategic directions of STI development are well formulated and widely publicised	
3	The officially proclaimed national STI priorities correspond to sectors and businesses with high innovation potential	

4	There is clear division of responsibilities between the public bodies tasked with STI governance	
5	There is good coordination in the functioning of the different public bodies tasked with STI governance	
6	The functioning of the main R&D institutions in the country is well guided and managed	
7	The authorities allocate sufficient public funds to the support of STI activities	
8	The policy instruments used to support STI activity are efficient and well managed	

The last column of the table should contain a number computed on the basis of all interviews/questionnaires and reflecting the arithmetic average of the score computed on the basis of all responses to the interview/questionnaire. Example: if 5 out of 10 surveyed experts have indicated rank 2 for a given aspect and another 5 have indicated rank 3 then the number to be placed in the last column should be 2.5

Table 3. Opinion about the framework conditions and business environment in the country: to what extent they are conducive to innovative development

No.	Aspects of the environment	Average rank
1	The authorities make efforts to reduce the administrative hurdles to doing business	
2	The authorities assign high priority to SME development and SMEs have access to different forms of public support	
3	Entrepreneurship is encouraged and the development of entrepreneurial culture is supported by the authorities	
4	It is relatively easy for entrepreneurs to start and develop a new business	
5	Businesses cooperate with R&D and academic institutions for the commercialization of their R&D results	
6	Universities encourage the establishment of startups and spin-offs for the commercialization of innovative ideas	
7	The intellectual property rights of innovative entrepreneurs are well protected by law and regulations	
8	Innovative entrepreneurs and SMEs have access to public funds to support the initial stages of commercializing their ideas	
9	There exist adequate private funding sources to support innovative entrepreneurs and SMEs in the initial business stages	
10	SMEs have relatively easy access to bank credit and other commercial funding for the development of their business	

The last column of the table should contain a number computed on the basis of all interviews/questionnaires and reflecting the arithmetic average of the score computed on the basis of all responses to the interview/questionnaire. Example: if 5 out of 10 surveyed experts have indicated rank 3 for a given aspect and another 5 have indicated rank 4 then the number to be placed in the last column should be 3.5

The survey results on *Question “4. In your opinion, which are the main existing problems, obstacles and bottlenecks that hinder innovative development in your country?”*, they should be presented in the form of text summarising the answers. One appropriate form of presenting the results would be a list of bullet points describing the problems/obstacles, starting with problems identified by a greater number of respondents.

The survey results on *Question “5. In your opinion, which are the most important changes (in legislation, in policy making and implementation, in framework conditions, etc.) that need to be introduced in order to invigorate innovative development in the country?”*, should be presented in a similar form, e.g. as a list of bullet points describing the proposed changes, starting with changes proposed by a greater number of respondents.

The approximate size of Part B should be around 8-10 pages in Word (500 words per page).

The source information obtained with each interview/questionnaire should also be submitted separately in electronic form (as an Excel file, in accordance with the *attached template*).

4. Envisaged follow-up

The results of the national country studies and the cross-country analytical report devoted to STI gap assessment in the SPECA region should identify some key common issues and problems for the SPECA region as a whole. This information will be provided to the Governments of the SPECA countries with a view to supporting their joint efforts in identifying possible future cooperative actions in areas of STI promotion and innovative development that are of common interest to all countries.

It is expected these issues will be taken up for deliberation in the context of the programme of work of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development and, subsequently, of the SPECA Governing Council. In particular, these results should inform and support the joint efforts of the Governments of the SPECA countries in developing an Action Plan for implementing the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development and identifying a set of KPIs based on the UNECE SDG Dashboard and SDG Index and Dashboards Report (Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network) to track the strategy implementation where possible. The KPIs would be complemented with additional ones from other sources, as appropriate, and should include a baseline (current status), milestones, objectives, and sources of verification. These KPIs will serve as the basis for an evaluation of progress in strategy implementation planned for 2022.

Annex 2 contains the SPECA Innovation Strategy as approved by the SPECA Governing Council at its 14th session held in Ashgabat on 21 November 2019.

A N N E X 1

RECOMMENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

**for identifying key challenges and problems in fostering innovative development
in (country)**

*This survey is being conducted as part of the international project on “**Strengthening innovation policies for SPECA countries in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**” supported by the United Nations Development Account and the United Nations secretariat. The project is being implemented by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) following the decisions of the SPECA Governing Council which adopted the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development at its 14th session held in Ashgabat on 21 November 2019. This strategy is a policy document of the SPECA countries, jointly agreed by their Governments, to guide their cooperative efforts and regional cooperation in promoting innovation for sustainable development. The international project on “**Strengthening innovation policies for SPECA countries in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**” aims to support these efforts by developing and launching an Action Plan for implementing the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development.*

*The Action Plan should be demand-driven, reflecting the main common needs of the SPECA countries. In view of this, the project aims to start its own activity by identifying key challenges and problems in fostering innovative development in each SPECA country in order to plan joint implementation activities that would better reflect and suit the needs of the countries. For this purpose, the organizers of the project are conducting a **needs assessment survey among key innovation stakeholders in each country** covering the main stakeholder groups: government officials and experts; experts from the academic community; representatives of the business community; representatives of civil society.*

The organizers of the project address you as an esteemed member of the science, technology and innovation (STI) stakeholder community in the SPECA region with a kind request to share your expertise and knowledge in the area of innovation management. By responding to the questions that follow in the context of this survey you will provide a valuable contribution for designing the future implementation action of the SPECA Innovation Strategy and thus an important support to the efforts to invigorate innovation activity in your country and in the SPECA region as a whole.

1. In your opinion, which economic sectors/industries in your country have high potential for technological upgrading and innovative development? (Please list them in descending order: 1) “sector with highest potential”, 2) “... next in order...” and so on)

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

..... (add more if needed)

2. Please give your opinion about the effectiveness of science, technology and innovation (STI) policy and of the policy instruments supporting STI development in your country (Please rank your opinion by ticking (X) a box in each line of the table below where “1” stands for “fully agree/fully adequate” ... and “5” stands for “completely disagree/unsatisfactory”)

No.		1	2	3	4	5
1	The national authorities assign high importance to the development of science, technology and innovation (STI)					
2	The national STI priorities and strategic directions of STI development are well formulated and widely publicised					
3	The officially proclaimed national STI priorities correspond to sectors and businesses with high innovation potential					
4	There is clear division of responsibilities between the public bodies tasked with STI governance					
5	There is good coordination in the functioning of the different public bodies tasked with STI governance					
6	The functioning of the main R&D institutions in the country is well guided and managed					
7	The authorities allocate sufficient public funds to the support of STI activities					
8	The policy instruments used to support STI activity are efficient and well managed					

3. Please give your opinion about the framework conditions and business environment in your country: to what extent they are conducive to innovative development (Please rank your opinion by ticking (X) a box in each line of the table below where “1” stands for “fully agree/fully adequate” ... and “5” stands for “completely disagree/ unsatisfactory”)

No.		1	2	3	4	5
1	The authorities make efforts to reduce the administrative hurdles to doing business					
2	The authorities assign high priority to SME development and SMEs have access to different forms of public support					
3	Entrepreneurship is encouraged and the development of entrepreneurial culture is supported by the authorities					
4	It is relatively easy for entrepreneurs to start and develop a new business					
5	Businesses cooperate with R&D and academic institutions for the commercialization of their R&D results					
6	Universities encourage the establishment of startups and spin-offs for the commercialization of innovative ideas					
7	The intellectual property rights of innovative entrepreneurs are well protected by law and regulations					
8	Innovative entrepreneurs and SMEs have access to public funds to support the initial stages of commercializing their ideas					
9	There exist adequate private funding sources to support innovative entrepreneurs and SMEs in the initial business stages					
10	SMEs have relatively easy access to bank credit and other commercial funding for the development of their business					

4. In your opinion, which are the main existing problems, obstacles and bottlenecks that hinder innovative development in your country? (Please list them in descending order: 1) “biggest problem/obstacle”, 2) “... next in order...” and so on)

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

..... (add more if needed)

5. In your opinion, which are the most important changes (in legislation, in policy making and implementation, in framework conditions, etc.) that need to be introduced in order to invigorate innovative development in the country? (Please list them in descending order: 1) “most important”, 2) “... next in order...” and so on)

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

..... (add more if needed)

Personal information (*optional, will be treated confidentially, if provided*)

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Position/job title: _____

***** THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND OPINION!*****

A N N E X 2

Strategy for Cooperation and Strengthening the National Capabilities of SPECA Countries to Develop and Implement Innovation Policies for Sustainable Development

(SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development)

*Approved by the 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council
Ashgabat, 21 November 2019*

Background

The 2017 SPECA Economic Forum “Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the SPECA region” (Dushanbe, 5 December 2017) reviewed the role of innovation as a vehicle for pursuing the SDGs in the SPECA countries and discussed a possible policy agenda to this effect. The Conclusions and Recommendations of the Forum outlined a broad framework for promoting innovation policies for sustainable development in the region. The 12th session of the SPECA Governing Council (Dushanbe, 6 December 2017) endorsed the outcomes of the Forum and underscored the importance of elaborating an innovation strategy for the SPECA region to support the governments’ efforts towards the SDGs.

A draft outline of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development was discussed at the Regional Workshop on “Innovation Strategy, Technology Applications and Infrastructure for the SDGs” in conjunction with the 10th session of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (WG KBD) held in Baku on 5 July 2018. The 13th session of the SPECA Governing Council (Almaty, 21 September 2018) welcomed the work done so far and endorsed a Roadmap for finalizing the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development. In accordance with this Roadmap, the SPECA Regional Workshop on Innovation and Technology Applications for Sustainable Development held in conjunction with the 11th session of the SPECA WG KBD (Bishkek, 26-27 June 2019) discussed supplements to the draft as well as proposals for concrete activities to be considered for incorporation in the Strategy and suggested that the draft Strategy be submitted for discussion and endorsement at the 2019 session of SPECA Governing Council.

Rationale

Achieving the SDGs is a challenging task to which the United Nations member States, including the SPECA countries, have committed themselves. To achieve these goals, governments and societies need to mobilize adequate resources and capabilities and engage all relevant stakeholders. Innovation can and should be a key driver for implementing this ambitious agenda as it can contribute to both technological progress and rising prosperity. Given the broad set of intertwined sustainable development goals and targets, their pursuit requires novel approaches and solutions and the formation of the innovation capabilities needed to address these challenges. Innovation covers not only technological changes, but also changes in organizational, labour and social practices and, as such, it has a strong potential impact on the switch to sustainable development in the SPECA region.

The SPECA countries aspire not only to meet the expectations of their societies in ensuring sustainable development in the region but also to be in the forefront of the global

effort in the pursuit of the SDGs. Given the transboundary nature of many regional sustainable development challenges, such as those related to water, energy, environment and transport, the SPECA countries will aim to join forces in the pursuit of cooperative innovative solutions to such challenges to the mutual benefit of all countries in the region.

Innovation can be a powerful engine for economic development in general and can serve as an engine for structural transformation and diversification of the economies of the SPECA countries. It can also help them to accelerate their regional integration and their integration into the world economy. For this purpose the SPECA countries need to create and strengthen linkages at all levels: within each individual economy; with neighbouring countries and linkages to global value chains. They also need to build a tangible critical mass of productive capabilities and related institutions and infrastructure.

The ambition of the SPECA countries is to develop and consolidate the national capacity and capabilities to design and implement innovation policies for sustainable development taking into account not only the national context and existing constraints but also recognizing their possible transboundary effects. The SPECA countries will aim to work together to strengthen the institutional framework for regional cooperation in implementing innovation policies for sustainable development with possible cross-border effects. Such capabilities will allow the SPECA countries to promote innovation for sustainable development both within and across national borders in the region and achieve regional synergies.

Acknowledging the scope and scale of the problem, the Governments of the SPECA countries agree to join forces in their efforts to consolidate the national capabilities for developing innovation policies for sustainable development and strengthen regional cooperation in promoting innovation that addresses common sustainable development challenges. The SPECA programme is a practical and effective platform for such regional cooperation.

The Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development is a policy document of the SPECA countries, jointly agreed by their Governments, to guide their cooperative efforts towards the accomplishment of the above mission. It targets objectives and activities of common interest and will be implemented with the joint efforts of the SPECA countries. UNECE and ESCAP, the two UN regional commissions that jointly support SPECA, will also support the implementation of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development. The SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development can provide a platform for regular intergovernmental and expert consultations on the implementation of the Strategy.

Objectives

The overall objective of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development is to achieve a sustained improvement in the national capacity and capabilities of the SPECA countries to formulate and implement innovation policies for sustainable development and to raise the level and quality of regional cooperation in the implementation of innovations that target and support sustainable development.

This would be achieved by following a set of specific objectives as follows:

1. Upgrade the knowledge and skills base of key stakeholders in the SPECA countries to match the challenges of addressing SDGs with innovative solutions;
2. Facilitate the diffusion of innovations and the transfer of technologies addressing sustainable development challenges in the region;
3. Enhance the institutional framework for regional cooperation for implementing innovation addressing sustainable development challenges of common interest;
4. Contribute to improved performance of the SPECA countries in the degree of SDG achievement.

To achieve these objectives the SPECA countries will be applying the following key cooperation mechanisms:

1. Strengthening the regional policy dialogue and the sharing of good policies and practices, including the attraction of leading international expertise in innovation for sustainable development;
2. Working together in identifying regional and transboundary sustainable development challenges of high priority and common interest that call for innovative solutions;
3. Raising awareness in the SPECA countries on the role of innovation in the efforts to achieve the SDGs.
4. Strengthening cooperation with existing platforms and mechanisms for international collaboration in promoting innovation for sustainable development within the United Nations family of organizations.

Activities

To address these objectives, SPECA countries will consider a set of wide-ranging, collaborative activities, including:

Objective 1. Upgrade the knowledge base and practical skills of innovation stakeholders in the SPECA countries to match the challenges of addressing SDGs with innovative solutions

1.1 Undertake national and/or regional knowledge sharing and capacity-building seminars, with the participation of leading international experts, on innovation policies for sustainable development for key policy-makers and stakeholders in the SPECA countries

1.2 Conduct national and/or regional hands-on skill-building workshops, with the participation of leading international experts, for innovation practitioners and stakeholders on key issues related to the implementation of innovation policies for sustainable development (such as early stage financing of innovative startups and SMEs)

1.3 Organise study tours and exchanges for policymakers and key stakeholders to share best practices on how to set up effective policies and institutions to promote innovation-driven sustainable growth

1.4 Conduct technical assistance missions by leading international experts to help policy makers and stakeholders in SPECA countries in addressing existing weaknesses in the national innovation systems

1.5 Organise promotional campaigns for the broad public in each SPECA country to enhance the awareness on technology and innovation in society and the creation of a culture of innovation

1.6 Conduct promotional operations for awareness raising among the broad public on the objectives and activities of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development

Objective 2. Facilitate the diffusion of innovations and the transfer of technologies addressing sustainable development challenges in the region

2.1 Strengthen efforts in undertaking regular national Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews and learn from the each other's experience

2.2 Agree on a set of coordinated policy measures supporting international linkages of SPECA countries with global technological value chains, including coordinated strategic approaches to FDI

2.3 Consider establishing a joint regional technology transfer office to support the synergetic transfer of innovative technologies in the region (e.g. through cross-border technology brokerage and/or joint use of technology)

2.4 Promote wide international multi-stakeholder collaboration as well as sharing and drawing on best practices of technology transfer, including with the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism.

2.5 Identify possible joint innovation for sustainable development projects, where international cooperation can generate regional synergies and economies of scale, and approach international donor agencies regarding possible funding of prefeasibility and feasibility studies for pilot projects

2.6 Consider establishing a joint Sustainable Development Innovation Fund for early stage support to innovative entrepreneurs in sustainable development undertakings in SPECA countries with the participation of SPECA countries and the international donor community

Objective 3. Enhance the institutional framework for regional cooperation for implementing innovation policies addressing sustainable development challenges of common interest

3.1 Agree on a set of innovation policy issues of common interest of high priority to the SPECA countries and where international cooperation can generate regional synergies and economies of scale

3.2 Establish a dedicated stakeholder network and mechanisms for regular consultations among SPECA countries on innovation policies of common interest, including regional seminars for sharing of good policies and practices and common lessons from the national Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews

3.3 Support the development a network of research institutions dealing with innovation in the areas of the SDGs

3.4 Consider establishing a SPECA network of innovation support institutions (business incubators, technoparks, etc.) and strengthen cooperation with existing initiatives in this area

3.5 Launch a joint regional online support service for innovative entrepreneurs, startups and SMEs (consulting, mentoring, match-making, etc.)

3.6 Set up a joint SPECA competition for innovation projects targeting sustainable development.

3.7 Consider establishing of SPECA Innovation Partnerships, drawing on the successful example of EU's European Innovation Partnerships, to bolster cooperative regional innovative solutions to sustainable development challenges

3.8 Discuss possible joint measures to support the establishment of regional supply chains, which help share innovative technologies and organizational methods of production and trade, notably in innovative products

Objective 4. Contribute to improved performance of the SPECA countries in the degree of SDG achievement.

4.1 Identify through consultations sustainable development challenges that are of high priority to the SPECA countries and call for trans-border/regional cooperation and approaches

4.2 Identify national and regional obstacles to cross-border cooperation in implementing innovation policies for sustainable development and agree on measures for eliminating or reducing these obstacles

4.3 Report periodically on progress against relevant SDGs, targets and indicators, and share good practices in pursuing these goals

4.4 Share experience and good practices in applying the methodology for sub-regional innovation policy outlook and using it to measure progress in upgrading national innovation policies

4.5 Support cooperation with existing global initiatives such as the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism, the UN Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and the Inter-Agency Task Team for Science, Technology and Innovation for SDG

4.6 Liaise with relevant international donors for mobilising additional expertise and resources in support of innovation for sustainable development undertakings

Timeline and resources

The SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development has a tentative implementation horizon of some 5 to 7 years, subject to consultations among the governments of the SPECA countries which would also agree on its starting point. The starting implementation date may also depend on the available and accessible resources to be allocated for strategy implementation.

The SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development is a framework for regional cooperation and international technical cooperation and assistance. Implementation will require the allocation of adequate resources by the SPECA countries as the owners of the Strategy for undertaking its activities, including the organization and hosting of events and support to networking among stakeholders. The main resource input expected from the SPECA countries will be human resources in terms of expertise and effort. Ideally, each country would nominate a core national team led by a National Focal Point who will be responsible for implementation.

Additional resources could be mobilized from international donors such as the World Bank, USAID, the EU (through its SWITCH-Asia initiative); the Eurasian Development Bank, the Agha Khan Development Network, ADB, CAREC and others. Some of these organizations and structures may also be invited to join and assist the implementation of the Strategy.

UNECE and ESCAP will consider their support to the Strategy within their available budgetary and extrabudgetary resources. UNECE and ESCAP may also approach other development partners for eventual support to activities envisaged within the Strategy. The implementation of the Strategy can also count on support from UNDP which has offices in all SPECA countries.

The implementation timing of different Strategy actions should be aligned with their internal logic. Thus it is reasonable to plan capacity development actions (such as knowledge sharing and skill building actions) in the early implementation phases so that the capabilities that would be developed through these actions would be applied in the subsequent actions. On the other hand, actions that require significant lead time in cross-country consultations and/or the possible allocation of funds (or their mobilization from donor support) would be envisaged for implementation in the later phases of the Strategy.

The Roadmap for finalizing the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development endorsed by the SPECA Governing Council envisages that the SPECA countries would develop and agree on an Action Plan for implementation of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The tentative implementation timeline and the possible international partners and donors for implementing the Strategy are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Tentative Strategy timeline and possible partners

Objectives	Strategy actions	Timeline					Possible international partners&donors
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
1. Knowledge and skills	1.1 Knowledge-sharing seminars	X	X	X			UNECE, ESCAP
	1.2 Skill-building workshops	X	X	X	X		UNECE, ESCAP
	1.3 Study tours	X	X				UNDP, EU, USAID
	1.4 Technical assistance missions		X	X			UNECE,ESCAP,UNDP
	1.5 Awareness raising – S&T and Innovation	X	X	X	X	X	UNDP
	1.6 Awareness raising - SPECA Innovation Strategy	X	X				UNDP
2. Technology transfer	2.1 Innovation for SD Reviews	X	X	X	X	X	UNECE
	2.2 SPECA international linkages			X	X	X	World Bank; USAID
	2.3 Joint SPECA/regional technology transfer office				X	X	World Bank; Eurasian DB
	2.4 Global collaboration on technology transfer		X	X	X		UNECE, ESCAP
	2.5 Joint innovation for SD projects		X	X	X	X	UNECE
	2.6 Joint SD Innovation Fund				X	X	World Bank; EU
3. Regional cooperation	3.1 Policy issues of common interest	X	X				UNECE
	3.2 Stakeholder consultations and networking	X	X	X	X	X	UNDP; USAID
	3.3 Network of research institutions		X	X	X	X	Aga Khan DN
	3.4 Network of innovation support institutions		X	X	X	X	UNECE, ESCAP, UNDP
	3.5 Regional online support service				X	X	ESCAP
	3.6 SPECA competition - innovation for SD projects		X	X	X	X	UNECE
	3.7 SPECA Innovation Partnerships			X	X	X	EU
	3.8 Support to regional supply chains			X	X	X	World Bank; USAID
4. SDG performance	4.1 Cooperation on common SD challenges	X	X	X			UNECE
	4.2 Eliminate obstacles to SPECA cooperation	X	X	X			
	4.3 Report progress on SDG achievement		X	X	X	X	UNECE
	4.4 Subregional innovation policy Outlook	X	X	X	X	X	UNECE
	4.5 Cooperation with UN global initiatives		X	X	X		UNECE, ESCAP
	4.6 Liaise with international donors		X	X	X		UNECE, ESCAP

Governance

Oversight of progress in implementing the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development will rely on existing intergovernmental structures such as the SPECA Governing Council and the SPECA Thematic Working Groups (in the first place, the Working Group on Knowledge-based Development). There may be a need to update the terms of reference of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development, subject to approval of the SPECA Governing Council.

Implementation at the national level would require the participation of different national bodies. In order to ensure their smooth and efficient participation it would be desirable for SPECA Governments to appoint national Focal Points who would be in charge of implementation in the respective countries. Focal Points would be individuals delegated with the relevant mandate and responsibilities and would also be supported by national teams (or an institutional body) in performing their functions.

The national Focal Points in the SPECA countries would be expected to lead and coordinate the process of Strategy implementation at the national level. In view of this, they would liaise with relevant national stakeholders, consult them on the most appropriate ways and means of undertaking the individual Strategy activities and would initiate concrete national implementation actions as envisaged in the Strategy in consultation with UNECE and ESCAP. They would also promote national fundraising efforts needed for Strategy implementation and would also liaise with international donors for this purpose. In addition to that, in the process of Strategy implementation, the national Focal Points in different countries would coordinate among themselves the most efficient ways and means of implementing cooperation activities of cross-border nature.

To ensure effective governance, the Governments of the SPECA countries will organize monitoring on the basis of periodic Monitoring and Evaluation Reports which will be submitted to and reviewed by the SPECA Governing Council. In the first instance, these may be based on progress checks against the targets and indicators of SDG9 and other relevant SDGs, and may over time develop additional indicators based on an innovation policy outlook adapted to the region. The national Focal Points and their teams will be responsible for preparing the inputs for these reports which will be compiled with support from the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development and will take the form of national reviews of progress in implementing the SPECA Innovation Strategy. On the basis of the implementation outcomes reported in the periodic Monitoring and Evaluation Reports, the Governing Council may decide to introduce changes in the Strategy.