

SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (webinar)

SPECA participating countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

30 July 2020

SURVEY ON INNOVATION STRATEGY

The Perception Based Survey on Innovation Strategy aimed to sense the overall trends and opinions of the respondents on the areas for potential cooperation on innovation between the SPECA member countries. The results of the survey would contribute to identification of priority areas for cooperation under SPECA Strategy for Sustainable Development and inform the preparation of the dedicated Action Plan. The questionnaire of Survey is comprised of 14 questions with multiple choice answers ranging from “-2” to “2”, where “- 2” indicates the lowest level of national capacity, “0” is neutral or “I don’t know”, and “2” indicates the highest level of opinion.

14 responses were received from representatives of SPECA participating countries: 2 from Afghanistan, 1 from Azerbaijan, 1 from Kazakhstan, 2 from Kyrgyzstan, 3 from Tajikistan, 1 from Turkmenistan, and 2 from Uzbekistan and 2 from representatives of International organizations.

Based on the Survey results’ analysis the following policy recommendations can be brought to the attention of the national policy makers:

- Facilitate the diffusion of innovations and the transfer of technologies addressing common sustainable development challenges in the sub-region, including through establishment of the regional technology transfer office and promotion of the technology transfer practices and mechanisms.
- Enhance institutional framework for regional cooperation for implementing innovation policies addressing sustainable development challenges of common interest, including through establishment of the network of innovation support and research institutions of the SPECA sub-region.
- Promote the discussion of suggestions for regional cooperation in other areas of interest as expressed in the survey, including in the framework of the SPECA workshop on science, technology and innovation (STI), where the results of the regional STI gap assessment will be presented and potential areas for cooperation under the SPECA Strategy on Innovation for Sustainable Development will be discussed (including recommendations to support a sustainable post Covid-19 recovery and the transition to a circular economy).

In general, SPECA countries attach great importance to cooperation on innovation for achieving sustainable development, as all the responses are well above 1.

The area for cooperation that stands out is the inclusive digital economy (1.7 on average), with the

majority of respondents attributing 2 as an answer.

The second priority area is the establishment joint regional technology transfer office to boost intra-regional technology transfer, with the majority of respondents attributing maximum score to this question.

Supporting the development of a network of research institutions in areas of common interest has also a strong potential in terms of cooperation, the average answer amounting to 1.57. Such a cooperation can help promote innovative approaches to economic diversification and overcome common sustainable development challenges.

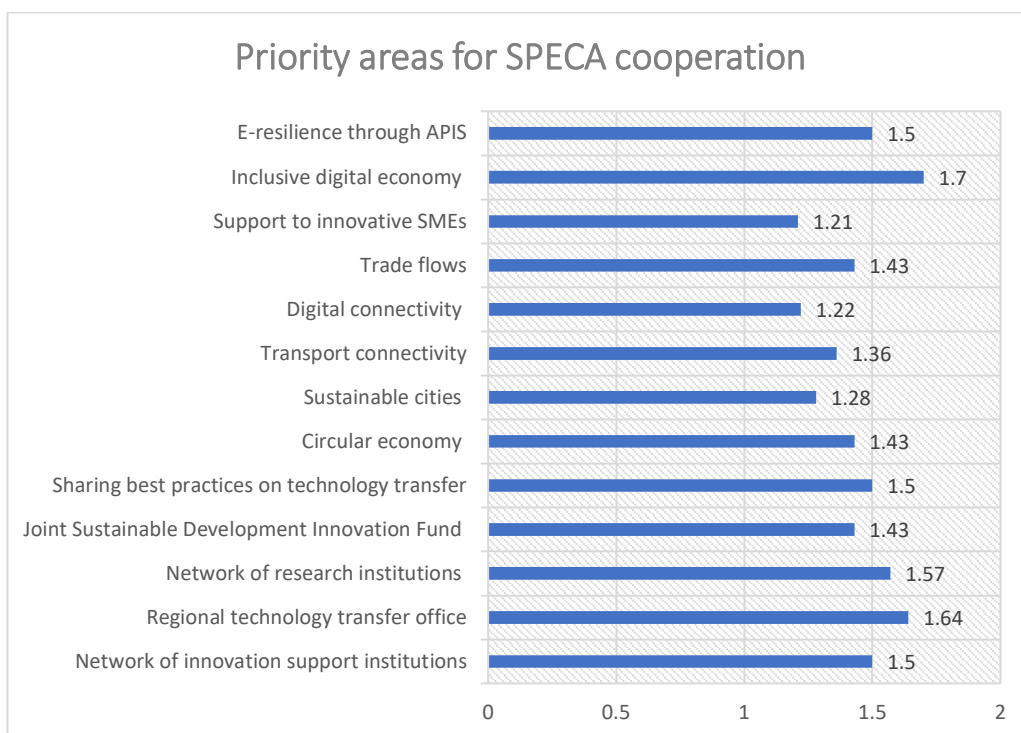
Strengthening the innovation ecosystem in the region through promotion and sharing of best practices on technology transfer and innovation support institutions was strongly identified as priority for the sub-region. Thus, respondents have agreed on the need to advance in sharing best practices on technology transfer, promoting wide /international multi-stakeholder collaboration and drawing on best practices of technology transfer, including with the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism (score: 1.5.). In addition, SPECA member-countries' representatives rated quite high the proposal on establishment of a SPECA network of innovation support institutions (business incubators, technoparks, technology transfer centres, etc.) and strengthening cooperation with existing initiatives (1.5 on average).

Other potential areas suggested for the SPECA sub-regional cooperation include cooperation on innovation financing (establishment of Joint Sustainable Development Innovation Fund, 1.43) and transition to circular economy (1.43), as well as boosting intra-regional trade flows (also 1.43).

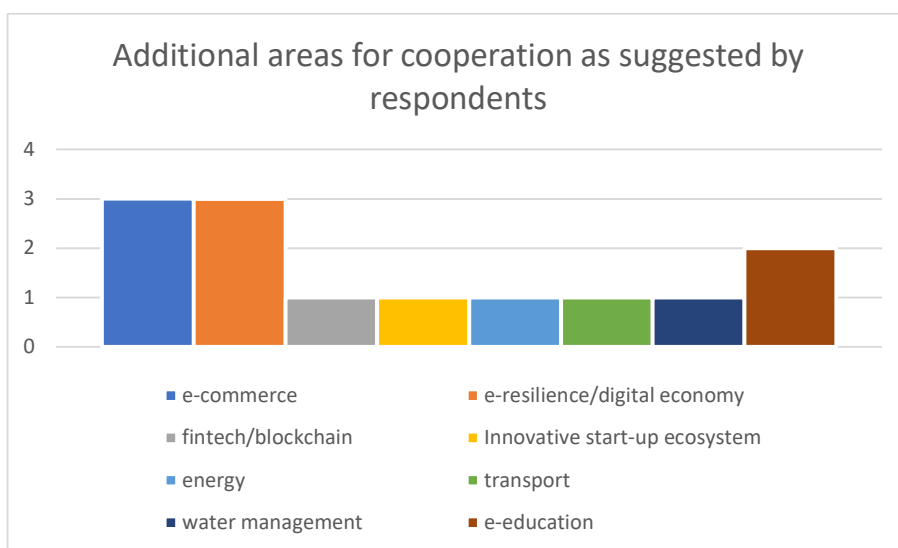
Contributing to the development of sustainable cities and enhancing transport connectivity seems to be on the radar of the SPECA member countries, even if to a less extent than the previously mentioned initiatives. This could be explained by the fact that both of these areas are quite cross-sectoral and could benefit from advances in other sectors (e.g. trade flows, strengthening of innovation ecosystem, digital connectivity) and building of the digital economy per se, which itself is rated high by the respondents.

Cooperation on digital connectivity and assistance to innovative SMEs of the sub-region did not yield extensive support among the respondents scoring 1.22 and 1.21 respectively. The respondents have already attributed important place to the establishment and strengthening of the innovation support institutions, which include support to innovative firms (e.g. incubators, technoparks), thus the low score does not necessarily mean the missing focus on fostering innovative SMEs in the sub-region. As inclusive digital economy, which by definition comprises investments into digital connectivity in a way which leaves no one behind, occupies high rank in the survey, we would consider that countries do attach enough importance to digital connectivity within the sub-region, in particular, taking into consideration SPECA cooperation under Asia Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative (score 1.5).

The results of the survey are presented below for more details:



When given the opportunity to provide their own suggestions for potential areas of cooperation between SPECA member states, respondents have stressed on the need to enhance SPECA sub-regional cooperation on e-commerce, digital economy (3 points) and e-education (2 points), as well as mentioning the potential for increased cooperation in fintech, innovative startups, energy, transport and water management. One suggestion per each sector is one point, the summary table with suggestions is presented below.



List of Questions

Among the suggested initiatives on regional cooperation below which, in your opinion, would most effectively contribute to strengthening the innovation ecosystems of the SPECA countries.

34. Consider establishing a SPECA network of innovation support institutions (business incubators, technoparks, technology transfer centres, etc.) and strengthen cooperation with existing initiatives in this area.
35. Consider establishing a joint regional technology transfer office to support the synergistic transfer of innovative technologies in the region (e.g. through cross-border technology brokerage and/or joint use of technology).
36. Support the development of a network of research institutions in areas of common interest to promote innovative approaches to economic diversification and overcome sustainable development challenges.
37. 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.
38. 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.
39. To your mind, to what extent is cooperation with other SPECA member states on circular economy (e.g. elaboration of circular requirements for specific products/services) a priority for achieving sustainable development in line with UN Agenda 2030?
40. To your mind, to what extent is cooperation with other SPECA countries to promote sustainable cities (e.g. cross-border waster/water management initiatives using innovative technologies/approaches; creation of a platform for dialogue between sustainable city stakeholders; etc.) a priority for achieving sustainable development in line with UN Agenda 2030?
41. To your mind, to what extent is cooperation on enhancing transport connectivity with other SPECA countries a priority for achieving sustainable development in line with UN Agenda 2030?
42. To your mind, to what extent is cooperation on enhancing digital connectivity with other SPECA member countries a priority for achieving sustainable development in line with UN Agenda 2030?
43. To your mind, to what extent is cooperation on enhancing trade flows with other SPECA member countries (via integration of novel approaches and ICT technologies) a priority for achieving sustainable development in line with UN Agenda 2030?
44. To your mind, to which extent is cooperation on supporting the development of innovative small and medium sized firms with other SPECA member countries (e.g. collaboration on a regional programme of technical assistance to innovative entrepreneurs and grassroots innovative initiatives) a priority for achieving sustainable development in line with UN Agenda 2030?
45. Please, identify any other areas for regional cooperation you see as a priority given the national policy agenda and the commitment on achieving the sustainable development (leave a line for the participant to add).

46. To your mind, to what extent is cooperation with other SPECA countries to promote inclusive digital economy is a priority and can create a solution during pandemic and be instrumental for its recovery?
47. To your mind, to what extent is cooperation with other SPECA countries through Asia Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative and e-resilience toolkit could be instrumental in development of e-resilience in the countries?