

Business incubators for sustainable development in the SPECA subregion



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Business incubators for sustainable development in the SPECA subregion

UNECE Policy Handbook



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FOREWORD

Innovation – or the systematic experimentation with new ideas – is essential for the sustained economic growth and enhanced competitiveness of the seven SPECA countries (i.e. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) to achieve sustainable development in line with the UN 2030 Agenda. Innovation will be critical for the long-term inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery of economies worldwide from the COVID-19 pandemic, including those in the SPECA subregion.

The SPECA countries have increasingly prioritised innovation to drive their transition to a knowledge-based economy in recent decades and as a tool to meet national economic and societal challenges, including poverty alleviation and access to basic infrastructure and services, as well as the transition to circular economy principles.

Policymakers of the SPECA countries have worked to develop and strengthen their respective national innovation ecosystems, reforming policies, institutions and processes in the areas of research, education and entrepreneurship while more generally strengthening public sector governance and the framework conditions within which innovation takes place.

Innovation support institutions including incubators, technoparks, science parks and technology transfer offices, among others, play a specific role in delivering efficient innovation ecosystems: they are important places for experimentation with new ideas, the diffusion and commercialisation of new knowledge as well as helping create the culture of innovative entrepreneurship that is needed for economic transformation.

Business incubators are crucial elements of this innovation support infrastructure, supporting the initial stages of the innovation life cycle – pre-seed, seed, start-up, and scale-up – and providing the incentives, support, networks and enabling environment needed by would-be-innovative entrepreneurs.

This Handbook aims to guide policymakers in the SPECA countries, step-by-step, through the process of setting up, running, and evaluating business incubators to support entrepreneurship and catalyse innovation-led growth.

The Handbook is an important part of UNECE support to the SPECA countries to improve their innovation policies and achieve sustainable development in the framework of the United Nations Development Account project “Strengthening innovation policies for SPECA countries in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, carried out jointly with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Olga Algayerova

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
Executive Secretary of the United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe

PREFACE

The findings in this publication draw upon UNECE work in the SPECA subregion¹, and research by the International Business Innovation Association (INBIA), the Fund for the Development of Innovation and Business Incubation (FIBI) and the MGIMO Business Incubator. This handbook reflects upon the lessons learned from incubator practices from around the world and in transition economies, with examples of initiatives in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, including the respective roles of universities, government, and the private sector.

The recommendations and tools in this handbook target national and local governments, universities, as well as those developing and running business incubators (BIs) and similar institutions, such as pre-incubators, accelerators, and entrepreneurship support centres in the SPECA countries.

The handbook covers the key steps and considerations to set up, run, and evaluate business incubation programmes. **Section 1** outlines the defining characteristics of BIs and their effectiveness in transition economies. **Section 2** describes the stages of business incubator creation, namely: BI feasibility assessments based on environmental factors; setting the goals that determine the type or model of BI; developing a package of client services; designing a financial model and assessing BI's sustainability; detailing the BI's organizational structure; choosing a location and planning the premises; activities and events to attract residents to the BI; monitoring the activities of the BI and conducting impact assessment. **Section 3** presents two BI models: state and university BIs and their respective peculiarities, while **Section 4** deals with incubation programmes and also refers to the experience of the MGIMO "Business Incubator" and the business incubator located at Technopark Strogino (Annexes 2 and 3). **Section 5** outlines future perspectives for the development of additional BI services and programmes. Finally, **Section 6** provides some examples of BIs from Kazakhstan (NURIS, MOST).

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This publication was written under the leadership of Elisabeth Tuerk, Director of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division and under the overall supervision and guidance of Anders Jönsson, Chief of the UNECE Innovative Policies Development Section. Christopher Athey, Economic Affairs Officer and Secretary to the SPECA WG on ITSD in the UNECE Innovative Policies Development Section, led on this project. Professor Yelena Kalyuzhnova, Vice-Dean (International), Henley Business School, was the lead author for the publication who coordinated the drafting process and ensured the coherence of inputs from co-authors. Other authors included Professor Olga Khotyasheva, Director, Moscow State University of International Relations (MGIMO) Business Incubator (Chapter 3 and overall coordination support), Maxim Slesarev, Manager, MGIMO Business Incubator (Chapter 2), Daniyar Medetov, Research Advisor, Association of Business Incubators in Kazakhstan (Chapter 1, Chapter 6), Anastasia Krasenkova, Manager, MGIMO Business Incubator (Chapter 4), and Lyudmyla Tautiyeva, UNECE consultant, Innovative Policies Development Section (introductory chapter on the potential of innovation to drive sustainable development in the SPECA countries, and contributions to Chapter 2 (stage 6 and 10)). Lyudmyla Tautiyeva also supported the review of the draft and coordination of the project while Ludmila Boichuk and Mijidgombo Oyunjargal provided administrative assistance.

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Ian Silver edited the review, and Marie-Christine De Sa created the graphic designs and infographics.

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