

Reinforcing the innovation ecosystem in the ECE region to promote transformative innovation and digital technologies for sustainable development and for the circular economy transition

Narrative Report 2022-2023

Project ID: E-388 – MI-32ECE - 000228

Geneva, November 2023

Project overview

Project Title	Reinforcing the innovation ecosystem in the ECE region to promote transformative innovation and digital technologies for sustainable development and for the circular economy transition
Project ID	E388 – MI-32ECE - 000228
Start/End Dates	Activities start date: 16.12.2021 Activities end date: 31.12.2024
Reporting period	This narrative report covers the period of 1 January 2022 to 31 October 2023.
Location	Geneva, Switzerland
Contribution Amount	Euro 1,998,600 (the “Contribution”)
Contributing Agency	The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (Germany)
Recipient Agency	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Nature of Activities	Research, policy dialogue, capacity building
Purpose	The objective of the project is to build the capacities of the ECE member States to play a productive role in building innovation ecosystems that can harness innovation and digital technologies for sustainable development, in particular, for the circular economy transition.
Expected outcome	<p>Strengthened capacities of the ECE member States to play a productive role in building innovation ecosystems that can harness innovation and digital technologies for sustainable development, in particular, for the circular economy transition.</p> <p>Expected Accomplishment 1: Strengthen understanding among policy makers and stakeholders in ECE member States of the potential of and a productive role for government to promote transformative innovation and digitalization for sustainable development and the circular economy transition.</p> <p>Expected Accomplishment 2: Strengthen capacities among ECE member States to enable and promote, including through direct financing mechanisms, transformative innovation for sustainable development and the circular economy transition.</p> <p>Expected Accomplishment 3: Strengthen capacities among ECE member States to implement tools and processes for systematic and iterative transformative innovation forecasting and market scouting to detect opportunities and constraints that can be addressed through targeted interventions.</p>

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Summary

The transition to a sustainable society is increasingly emerging as one of the most significant socio-political projects of our generation. Considering the increasingly complex structural challenges arising from pandemics, poverty, rapid technology developments, and war, along with the expected consequences of climate change, there is a growing awareness of the need for more systemic transformations our economies and societies. This will not only require that consumption and production patterns become more sustainable (SDG 12) but, perhaps more importantly, that these efforts are somehow coordinated to enforce one another, leveraging emerging opportunities, while at the same time mitigating and addressing potential socio-economic risks and challenges.

Addressing these increasingly complex challenges will require innovation at an unprecedented scale (SDG 9). More importantly, it adds a new dimension to our understanding of innovation itself. In this context, innovation is not only about new products, services, processes, and methodologies for everyday challenges. It is also expected to support and accelerate larger transformations in and of society at large. **This means that any effort to stimulate innovation, in addition to technology development and innovation management, also will have to consider the surrounding ecosystem's capacity to assimilate, and even contribute to, new innovations.** The latter has little to do with technology development but emphasizes, instead, the need for synergetic links between different innovation processes. This ambition, to promote an adaptive society, capable of assimilating and promoting innovation for its proper transformation, implies the development of supporting framework conditions, new and appropriate incentives, along with the allocation of alternative capacities and resources both in the public as well as the private sector.

There is a growing need for concerted and structured dialogues on these issues. How does this ambition to transform entire systems change the way we understand and promote innovation? What new policies and measures are needed to spur transformative innovation that accelerates a sustainable transition of our societies in line with UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

Responding to this clear need for concerted, structured dialogue, tools, and joint initiatives, this project **has set up the UN-ECE¹ Transformative Innovation Network (ETIN)**. ETIN brings together policy makers, innovation agencies, think tanks, entrepreneurs and experts in the field of transformative innovation from the ECE region. Within ETIN these stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss, cooperate on, and develop tools and publications around the nature of, trends around, and the role of government to enable and promote broader and more systematic experimentation with ideas that have the potential to catalyse transformative innovation, including around societal challenges.

In response to the challenges and needs identified, ETIN's work agenda and respective activities focus around two broader work themes:

¹ According to official UNECE rules, the term "ECE" is used for official documents that were submitted to UNECE normative machinery, whereas "UNECE" is used for external communication and documents.

1. Assessing and strengthening the **adaptive and responsive ecosystem development** supporting transformative innovation.
2. **Strategic learning** as a means to integrate innovation, experimentation and learning for transformative innovation, incorporating and considering past, present and future trends and developments.

Each work stream involves a range of regular events, joint activities, and podcasts on different topics. As indicated in the Expected Achievements (EAs) of the project, these activities aim to strengthen the understanding of transformative innovation (EA1) among ECE member States. This will also contribute to building their capacity to facilitate and promote transformative innovation (EA2), for example by implementing relevant tools and processes that help identify and address challenges and realise opportunities for transformative innovation (EA3).

The project is based on certain set of principles to ensure ETIN is sustainable and as beneficial to members as possible. In this vein, the project foresees substantial flexibility to ensure that activities are relevant, engaging, and informative, will create strong linkages and complementarities across activities and outputs, are based on demand and common challenges, overall serving as a useful and impactful platform for knowledge exchange and peer learning. Project resources will be used in a flexible manner depending on the engagement, support and initiative of ETIN members, with the aim of streamlining activities and processes and relying more on ETIN member support as the project progresses.

Brief overview of ETIN activities to date:

UNECE-internal activities
Conceptualisation of ETIN strategic objectives and approach
Set up of ETIN online portal
Set up of ETIN interim core group
Planning and discussions on the formalisation of the final ETIN core group, to be put in place at the third consultation meeting
Set up of ETIN task force on circular platforms (a work stream under work theme 1)
Set up of ETIN task force on strategic learning (guiding activities for work theme 2)
Activities organised for ETIN members
First ETIN consultation meeting
Launch of podcast series “Innovation Matters”
High-level ETIN launch
Seminar entitled “Platforms, circular economy, and transformative innovation: a cross-industry comparison”
Two virtual policy dialogues on the broader topic “Pathways to transformative innovation”.
ETIN Innovation Days
Virtual side-events at the UNECE Commission Session in 2023 with the theme of “Green and Digital Transformations for Sustainable Development”
Second ETIN consultation meeting
Technical meeting on the “Role of Transformative Innovation in Supporting the Green and Digital Transition of the Western Balkans”
Launch of the live podcast series “Innovation Circle”

ETIN participation at external events
Handelsblatt event on “Platforms and ecosystems: new opportunities for growth, digitization and sustainability”
The NTWK Summit 2023 – “From physical to digital experiences”
The MIT Platform Strategy Summit
The Nordic Circular Summit

Source: UNECE.

Introduction

This narrative report covers the period of 1 January 2022 to 31 October 2023. UNECE has made comprehensive progress in delivering on this project, including establishing the ETIN core group, identifying the niche that ETIN is filling with regard to existing support to transformative innovation, and concretizing the conceptual rationale and linkages of the two main ETIN work themes that address two central questions:

1. How can local, regional, national and international players facilitate the emergence of a **dynamic and adaptive ecosystem that supports transformative innovation**?
2. How can we best leverage **strategic learning** to ensure effective coordination and integration of innovation experimentation and learning?

Conceptualising and building a solid foundation for the work to be conducted under ETIN required extensive consultations, both bilateral and multilateral, with government representatives, international experts, academics, private sector stakeholders and (inter-) national partner organisations, such as the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), among others. One of the main challenges was to find the best way to complement ongoing, existing initiatives in the field of transformative innovation, build on the knowledgebase that is available and finding a concrete niche which ETIN can fill on an international, regional and local level.

The network, including the first work theme, was launched at the 14th Session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies (ToS-ICP) in November 2022 in Geneva. The second ETIN work theme will be launched at the 15th Session of ToS-ICP in November 2023.

The following report elaborates on three elements. The first element is the updated conceptual rationale of ETIN, including the role, vision, purpose, strategic objectives, functions, principles and the governance of the network. The second element will provide more details on the specific ETIN activities and outcomes between January 2022 and October 2023. The last section outlines the activities that are currently in planning for 2024.

I. Conceptual foundation for ETIN

1. Innovation as a vehicle for sustainable societal transformation

The world is changing rapidly. Over the last decades, new technology has provided solutions to many socio-economic problems and improved the lives of millions. In parallel, it is also redefining industry structures by creating alternative business models and trade patterns that alter and extend the sources of competitive advantage. Disparate areas of innovation are increasingly intertwined and becoming critical drivers of economic growth. The result is a **growing competition between** leading knowledge-intensive regions. Many countries, not least in Asia, are investing heavily to become **innovation-based economies**. Their advancement in global value chains, and the new partnerships emerging from this dynamic, is **of increasing strategic concern to UNECE member States**. For the latter to remain competitive, it is vital to understand and master the transformative dynamic of innovation itself.

At the same time, **the UNECE region is not on track to achieving the SDG targets**. Additional contextual factors, such as the global pandemic, poverty, hunger, and military conflicts are, along with the expected consequences of climate change, putting increasing pressure on our societies and resources, highlighting the need to do more with less – and faster. The important facilitating factor for this dynamic is the transboundary coordination between actors, sectors, and countries, to ensure that transformations are catalytic.

To that end, **a new set of policies** is currently being rolled out in Europe, **promoting innovation as a unifying component for change**. The common denominator of initiatives such as the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, the EU Green New Deal, and Horizon Europe is that all take a more systemic perspective on transitions than previous policies, introducing innovation as an element *to reconcile increased competitiveness and economic growth with sustainability concerns*. Moreover, they regard societal challenges also as opportunities for continued or even accelerated development and economic growth. The key is to stimulate innovation-driven competitiveness around broader societal concerns, in which numerous innovation processes individually and jointly accelerate a sustainable transformation of our societies. This view of innovation as a vehicle for societal change constitutes the essence of transformative innovation.

2. Characteristics of transformative innovation

The notion of innovation as a tool for societal transformation also has implications for how innovation is understood and pursued, mainly by adding new layers to already established conceptions and practices. With this emerges at least four different images of what transformative innovation is or possibly could entail.

1. First, transformative innovation may be seen as a **normative outcome**. Put simply, it is *innovation that generates larger societal changes in line with the SDGs*. This perspective highlights the fact that not all innovations are necessarily sustainable. Quite the contrary, many of them only consolidate existent practices by making them even more

efficient. Transformative innovation, on the other hand, imposes a new **directionality** in doing things that in this case generate more profound systemic sustainable changes.

2. Second, transformative innovation can also be regarded as a **process** to which we now add a new layer. If innovation hitherto has been understood as 1) the ways in which *research and technology development* generate new products and services; and 2) the dynamics by which a combined set of actors in the adjacent *innovation system* brings the latter to the market; transformative innovation puts additional attention to 3) the importance of preparing *the surrounding ecosystem*, or **demand-side**, to better assimilate new products and services.
3. Third, with this transformative innovation also brings new aspects of **governance and coordination**. In practice, sustainable transformations are rarely brought on by one single disruptive innovation but, instead, the *combination and orchestration of several parallel innovation processes*. Consequently, there is an accentuated need for *transversal and cross-sectoral policies and measures* to create synergies and spill-over effects between sectors and systems. With this, processes for transformative innovation also involve a high degree of *seamless interaction*, in which; public and private actors cooperate across national borders and legislations; administrative units increasingly work across established silos; different professions come together to solve joint problems; and new actors participate in different parts of the innovation process. This organizational aspect of transformative innovation has so far received surprisingly little attention.
4. Finally, transformative innovation can also be seen as **strategic learning**. While transformations, on the one hand, require ongoing and abundant experimentation at all levels, they are also complex and uncertain processes, characterized by long time frames, in which results and impacts only emerge after many years. Thus, to make strategic choices along the way there is an increasing need for new metrics and more integrated approaches to learning, in which 1) present activities are continuously assessed; in view of 2) a strategic consideration of the future; as well as 3) an honest appraisal of historical and past experiences.

Further exploring the concept of transformative innovation will be necessary, because of its high degree of complexity and uncertainty, not least due to the multiplicity of actors whose participation is needed, but also because of its non-linear, spurious, and multivariate relationships that ultimately define the conditions for governance and management of transformative innovation.

3. Two fundamental challenges to transformative innovation

Building on the above, transformative innovation presents two challenges that *complement* and add to more established ways of working with innovation. One concerns the policies and measures needed to **develop adaptive and responsive ecosystems** – involving citizens, addressees, clients, and users – that is ready to absorb and create synergies between different innovations. Another is to **create supporting processes for strategic learning** that support the beforementioned ecosystem development.

4. The role of ETIN in addressing these challenges

The complex nature of transformative processes, along with increasing pressure for swift and sweeping results called for by emerging policies, are currently creating considerable concern at all levels of society. To date, there is little established practical and comprehensive knowledge on how to govern processes of transformative innovation. Instead, many actors still struggle to find viable solutions in a time- and resource constrained world.

With this, there is a growing need for mutual learning and sharing of experiences among peers. Evidence-based **insight** and stringent **foresight** exercises are fundamental to the development of future strategies. But transformative innovation also requires extended **consultation** and **collaboration**, along with a joint exploration and **co-creation**, to develop supporting policies and measures. The learning process around these interacting activities is ideally orchestrated by independent bodies, specifically dedicated to the task. In practice, this integrated effort requires a curated dialogue, involving an active exchange of ideas among the broader group of stakeholders that produce, consume and/or facilitate transformative innovation. Presently, there are only a handful initiatives providing this assistance. It is ETIN's ambition to fill this void.

5. The strategic foundation of ETIN

Defining the strategic foundation of ETIN has been an essential part of the initial work conducted by UNECE in 2022. This comprises conducting around 30 bilateral meetings with external stakeholders and the donors, as well as several internal discussions. Based on these, UNECE developed the strategic foundation, which was reviewed and commented on by several ETIN members. The results of these deliberations and efforts are outlined in the following text.

Building on the above, the strategic foundation of ETIN is defined by its expressed 1) vision and purpose; 2) strategic objectives; 3) strategic functions; and 4) guiding principles.

a. ETIN's vision and purpose

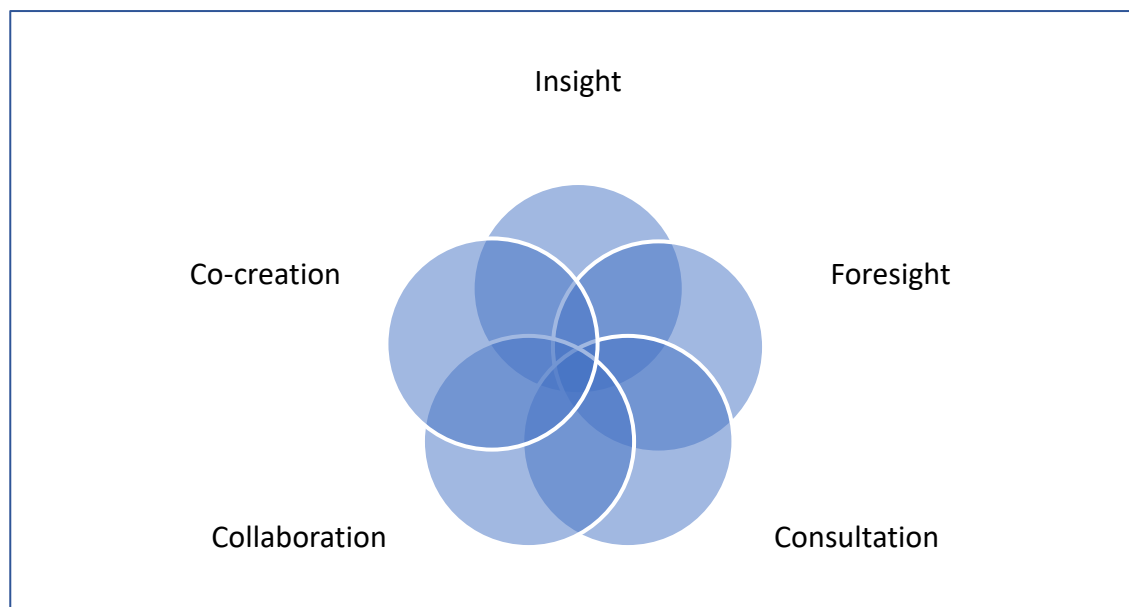
ETIN is a UNECE-coordinated strategic platform and meeting place for peer learning and a joint exploration of policies and practices for transformative innovation. Through evidence-based analyses and shared national and international experiences, ETIN aims to create additional value to its affiliated members in their effort to promote innovative processes in the UNECE region, ultimately increasing competitiveness and accelerating a societal transformation in line with Agenda 2030.

Source: UNECE.

b. ETIN's strategic objectives

To support this vision ETIN activities serve five complementary strategic objectives.

Figure 1 – ETIN's strategic objectives



Source: UNECE.

Insight – examining past experiences and present development to better understand existing challenges and opportunities related to transformative innovation. ETIN activities serving this objective include discussions regarding the history of transformative innovation, evaluation and assessment of previous and ongoing developments, as well as the identification of opportunities and challenges.

Foresight – applying future looking, horizon scanning methods to anticipate and determine future potential trends and opportunities for transformative innovation. The ETIN activities serving this objective will use different strategic forecast methodologies, along with the information gathered through insight exercises, to identify potential pathways towards transformative change.

Consultation – leveraging the experience of peers and partners to build on the experience made elsewhere and bring the progress towards transformation forward. Activities serving this objective will focus on gathering insights and input from a wide variety of stakeholders, both public and private, that are engaged in and/or impact transformative innovation.

Collaboration – ensuring the cross-fertilisation and spill-over effects between ongoing transformative innovation initiatives, in order to combine efforts and ensure synergies and complementarities between these. Activities serving this objective will focus on bringing together stakeholders that typically do not have access to or who are unaware of potential partnerships in the field of transformative innovation.

Co-creation – providing the opportunity for transformative innovation stakeholders to come together to discuss and pursue new ideas, projects and related initiatives that facilitate innovation-led transformation towards the SDGs and Agenda 2030. Activities under this objective provide the opportunity for stakeholders to pool resources, leverage knowledge transfer and exchange and come up with new and relevant activities and formats that maximise the impact of transformative innovation initiatives.

c. ETIN's functions

To achieve the abovementioned objectives, ETIN will exert a set of complementary functions.

Meeting place and discussion forum

ETIN shall be a strategic meeting place, where national and regional policy makers may meet with peers from an extended transboundary innovation system to reach insight and foresight on common challenges and opportunities related to transformative innovation between all parties and stakeholders of the innovation system and share good practices. ETIN's function as a gathering point for the representatives of governmental innovation agencies, academia, and the private sector is fundamental and of great value in terms of experience.

ETIN shall be a meeting place and discussion forum to:

- Gather national and international policymakers from all sectors of society around new opportunities and common goals.
- Establish and strengthen strategic partnerships and core member activities in relevant areas by bringing together relevant actors.
- Share knowledge and best practices on the processes that accelerate transformative innovation.
- Discuss relevant evidence-based content as a basis for discussion and initiatives.

Collaboration platform with systems perspective

ETIN provides an independent platform for peers to consult, collaborate and explore policies and measures that accelerate transformative innovation and to provide a collaboration space for international and national experts. These activities apply a comprehensive perspective – involving actors from academia, private sector, and society as peers – to provide the environment conducive to transformative innovation. ETIN's function as an independent peer learning platform is critical to exploring the capacities that accelerate transformative innovation.

ETIN shall be a collaboration platform to:

- Apply a comprehensive perspective – involving actors from academia, the private sector, and society as peers and provide an environment conducive to transformative innovation.
- Engage innovation experts to utilize the power of regional collaboration for advocacy work at national and international levels.

- Test new ideas, initiate pilot projects and try activities of common interest to all members, with the aim to collaborate on processes that accelerate transformative innovation.

Facilitator of discussions, strategic alliances, and explorative work

ETIN supports, initiates and mediates ongoing discussions of specific relevance to transformative innovation and, similarly, assists in the creation of strategic alliances and transboundary networks. The purpose is to gather insight and foresight regarding transformative innovation in general, as well as situation-specific needs and opportunities, and with evidence-based data build the knowledge about measurements to accelerate transformative innovation both generally and more specifically. Upon request, ETIN also facilitates processes intended to explore and develop policies and measures to accelerate transformative innovation. ETIN's function as a facilitator is crucial for mitigating the transformative innovation debate with strategic partners.

ETIN shall be a facilitator to:

- Contribute to the ongoing discussion on transformative innovation, including a focus on translating theoretical discussions and findings into practical implications.
- Identify gaps and opportunities in the borderland between academia, business and society and facilitate discussions to propose and implement improvement measures in a given context.
- Involve its members to discuss and collaborate in relevant areas with external stakeholders from academia and private and public sector.
- Facilitate processes intended to explore and develop policies and measures to accelerate transformative innovation.

Clearing house for information, debates, networking, and activities

ETIN shall distinguish itself as a trustworthy entry port for anyone interested in transformative innovation, by administrating and providing guidance on; specific and quality-assured information; curated discussions; and specific activities and initiatives related to transformative innovation. By providing a stamp of approval, ETIN provides a message board for members to scale up their activities. ETIN's function as a trustworthy partner for transformative innovation is essential for its members' involvement.

ETIN shall be a clearing house to:

- Identify and disseminate trustworthy sources and information on transformative innovation to share best practices and knowledge on the topic.
- Ensure the reliability and relevance of resources on transformative innovation shared amongst ETIN members to scale up their activities and promote their work on the ETIN platform.
- Gather trustworthy experts from governmental innovation agencies, academia, and the private sector and collaborate with them on the ETIN activities.

d. ETIN's guiding principles

Based on the principles identified in the project's inception report, submitted in June 2022, and the ongoing discussions, exchanges and other ETIN activities since, the UNECE secretariat has updated and refined the project principles:

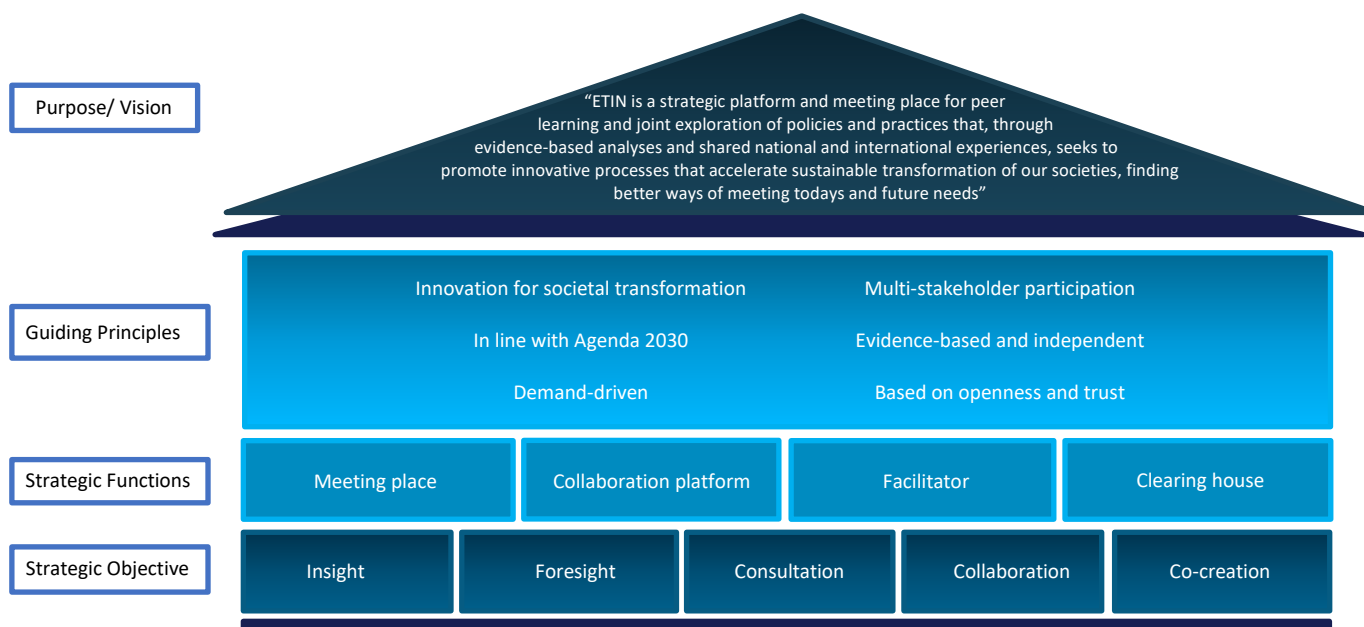
Principles based on updated conceptual framing of ETIN functions and objective
<p>Innovation for societal transformation: The focus of ETIN is on transformative innovation, i.e., the ways in which innovation may contribute to large societal transformations. In doing so, ETIN activities <i>complement</i> and <i>add to</i> the established and more sector-oriented innovation debate.</p>
<p>Evidence-based and independent: ETIN activities shall be based on best possible evidence and up-to-date knowledge. The express ambition is for ETIN to be a trustworthy and independent knowledge broker.</p>
<p>In line with Agenda 2030: All ETIN activities should be in line with or aiming to support Agenda 2030. The latter also involves trying to understand the dynamic behind these processes.</p>
<p>Multi-stakeholder participation: It is an express purpose of ETIN to break down existent silos and promote a multi-stakeholder participation in its peer learning activities. Consequently, a peer is not defined by institutional affiliation, or professional background, but by being someone directly involved in transformative innovation processes.</p>
<p>Demand driven: The express purpose of ETIN is to facilitate learning around contemporary challenges and opportunities related to transformative innovation. Accordingly, ETIN activities shall to the largest extent possible reflect the needs and concerns expressed by its members.</p>
<p>Based on openness and trust: A key principle to all ETIN activities is openness and corresponding trust. The key to true learning is to create a safe space in which all participants feel comfortable sharing not only success stories but also doubts, uncertainties, and failures.</p>

Source: UNECE.

e. The ETIN model 2023-2024

The figure below summarizes the previous discussion through the notion of ETIN as house hosting both formal and informal conversations and activities around transformative innovation. More specifically, it illustrates the purpose and vision that the ETIN strategic house covers, while simultaneously displaying the overall objectives, corresponding functions, and guiding principles it rests on.

Figure 2 – ETIN’s strategic house



Source: UNECE.

6. ETIN’s governance structure

ETIN is a network, which consists of closely connected organizations, and individuals, that through active participation meet common needs and create value for its affiliated members. The network provides a forum intended to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences that benefit society in general. ETIN is not a forum for a political decision-making nor the lobbying of specific interests. Further details on the governance structure, including membership requirements, roles and responsibilities are outlined in annex I.

II. *ETIN outcomes and activities 2022-2023*

1. *Activities in 2022*

The conceptual basis for ETIN activities was developed based on a range of initial ETIN activities conducted in 2022. These activities also had the aim of setting up the right processes and infrastructure within the network, on which subsequent activities under both work themes are being executed. These initial ETIN activities include the (a) first ETIN consultation meeting and the (b) high-level launch of ETIN.

a. Consultation meeting

To discuss the general approach towards transformative innovation and collect feedback from the experts that UNECE reached out to in the first half of 2022, UNECE organised the first ETIN consultation meeting on 5 May 2022. This was a first, informal meeting of potential ETIN members that aimed to identify common concerns, needs, and priorities where ETIN and project activities could play an important and relevant role in supporting member States and providing initial momentum for ETIN to evolve into a vibrant platform for exchange and joint initiatives beyond the scope of the project.

b. High-level ETIN launch

The network was officially launched at the 14th session of ToS-ICP in November 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland.² The ETIN launch session built on the discussions from the first two panels of the session and helped explore how ETIN can best contribute to promoting transformative innovation in the UNECE region in support of the SDGs. The meeting brought together various leading experts, international partners, government representatives and private sector stakeholders that are engaged in transformative innovation. This was also the first opportunity for ETIN members to meet in-person, which positively impacted the trust and incentives to collaborate amongst ETIN members. ETIN also gained new members following the event. A summary of the event is provided in annex II.

c. Innovation matters podcast series

In 2022, UNECE launched the ETIN podcast series called “Innovation Matters”, where UNECE invites leading academics and experts to discuss various aspects, including challenges, opportunities and approaches to transformative innovation. The episodes delve into the transformative power of innovation, examining how the exploration and experimentation of ideas contribute to value creation. Focused on driving progress towards the SDGs in the UNECE region and beyond, this podcast serves as a valuable resource for policymakers and stakeholders. It provides insights into the profound impact of innovation on various fronts, including the platform economy, the fourth industrial revolution, and the emergence of autonomous vehicles. By engaging with leading experts, the series aims to enhance understanding of the evolving landscape of innovation, offering perspectives on both

² For more information on the 14th session of ToS-ICP, please visit this website: <https://unece.org/info/Economic-Cooperation-and-Integration/events/369706>.

opportunities and challenges that lie on the horizon. A list of released podcast episodes released to date is available in annex V.

2. Activities in 2023

Administrative and support activities

Following the successful high-level launch, the UNECE secretariat focused on further developing the necessary infrastructure needed for the regular ETIN activities. This included (a) the set up and population of the ETIN online portal and (b) setting up the ETIN core group, a steering group to guide and shape ETIN activities throughout the project duration, (c) organising the second consultation meeting, and (d) participating in external events. Each of these activities are outlined below.

a. ETIN online portal

To facilitate the engagement of ETIN members in the network's activities, the UNECE secretariat has set up the ETIN online portal, where ETIN members can stay up to date on ETIN activities, have access to ETIN working documents, can share resources and articles as well as directly engage with each other.

The process of setting up the ETIN online portal was quite elaborate. To ensure that the platform caters to the various needs to support the exchanges and activities of ETIN, the UNECE secretariat made sure to reach out to ETIN members to ask for their input and feedback on what they would expect from such a platform, focusing on accessibility, content and output. Based on these discussions, the UNECE secretariat then had extensive internal discussions to find the best possible in-house technical solution that would provide the most value to members and fulfil the necessary functions. In Q3 of 2023, the UNECE secretariat then soft-launched the ETIN online portal among interim core group members to test the functionalities and collect feedback. This resulted in an updated version of the portal which is being continuously updated and populated with relevant materials, events and has a function for direct communication between ETIN members.

Access to ETIN online portal

The portal is accessible here: <https://wiki.unece.org/display/ETIN/UN-ECE+Transformative+Innovation+Network>.

To receive access to the portal, interested colleagues need to register here: <https://wiki.unece.org/display/ETIN/ETIN+User+Registration>.

b. Establishment and formalization of the ETIN core group

Following the launch of the network, and some initial ETIN activities in Q1 2023, the UNECE secretariat was approached by several interested ETIN members who expressed explicit interest in engaging in the network more closely. Upon this initiative, the UNECE secretariat established the ETIN interim core group in May 2023. See annex III for a complete list of Interim core group members. The objective of this group was to explore and identify specific focus areas, create coordinated and decentralized work streams, as well as expand the network.

Throughout 2023, the interim core group met six times (on a monthly basis), where the UNECE secretariat and selected ETIN members presented their work and progress on the various activities. Questions on the ETIN portal, the network expansion and the formalization of the ETIN core group were raised and comprehensively discussed. The interim core group provided feedback on the alpha version of the ETIN portal, allowing the UNECE secretariat to better cater to the accessibility and needs of the ETIN members.

In 2023, the UNECE secretariat initiated the process of formalizing the ETIN core group, presented to and approved by the larger ETIN network. At first, an ad hoc task of ETIN members discussed potential approaches to expanding the ETIN core group to ensure diversity of perspective and stakeholders, as well as how best to go about nominating and electing members.

c. Consultation meeting

In April 2023, ETIN held its second consultation meeting. The main objective of this meeting, briefly providing an overview of the latest developments and activities of the network, was to present ETIN's strategic plan for 2023 and the proposed governance structure of ETIN. ETIN members provided verbal feedback and comments on the governance plan, which was then adapted. The main outcome of this meeting was the approval of the ETIN governance structure (see below section on ETIN governance) and the impetus to create the ETIN Interim core group. It was agreed that this interim core group would then act as the core group, while the UNECE secretariat sets up the final core group. At the third ETIN consultation meeting on 7 December, to be held online, the UNECE secretariat will present the nominated candidates for the ETIN core group and the broader ETIN network will be able to comment on and approve their candidacies.

d. ETIN conference participation

The UNECE secretariat has also participated in various externally organized events to increase visibility of the network, further develop the conceptual work done under ETIN and expand the network with leading experts and industry representatives across various areas of transformative innovation and across geographical regions. These events included:

- Handelsblatt event on Platforms and ecosystems: new opportunities for growth, digitization and sustainability, October 2022
- The NTWK Summit 2023 – From physical to digital experiences, May 2023
- The MIT Platform Strategy Summit, July 2023

- The Nordic Circular Summit, October 2023

For more details on these events, please consult annex VI.

Project and performance indicators

EA1:³ Strengthen understanding among policy makers and stakeholders in ECE member States of the potential of and a productive role for government to promote disruptive innovation and digitalisation for sustainable development and the circular economy transition.

IA1:⁴ Strengthened understanding among policy makers and stakeholders in at least 6 ECE member States (counted by number of representatives in the meetings) of the potential of and a productive role for government to promote disruptive innovation and digitalization for sustainable development and the circular economy transition.

e. Innovation Circle podcast series

The “Innovation Circle” podcast is a sub-series of the UNECE “Innovation Matters” podcast that aims to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and community engagement with and between ETIN members. Through live discussions with experts, in an informal setting, which only ETIN members can participate in, this podcast series complements the ongoing discussions and activities of ETIN. It provides ETIN members with the opportunity to seek out new ideas, raise discussions and debate around certain topics as well as reflect on and learn from the outcomes of previous activities and initiatives. The objective of the series is to facilitate the exchange ideas, experiences, and best practices, creating a vibrant and collaborative community within ETIN. More information can be found in annex V.

Work theme 1 – Ecosystem development for transformative innovation

This work theme was initiated at the launch of the network in November 2022. Under this theme, ETIN has and continues to organise activities in line with the **insight** and **foresight** strategic objectives of the network (see above). Such activities will take the form of seminars, policy dialogues and similar events. This will help ETIN in exploring the current developments and trends within a certain focus area with the larger topic of the work theme as well as identify the main challenges and opportunities that show the biggest potential and can create the most value for ETIN members. In this vein, ETIN organised two policy dialogue sessions exploring different policy pathways to support ecosystem development and directionality for transformative innovation (annex VI).

ETIN members are continuously invited to suggest and/or lead on additional work streams. Some ideas have been suggested, such as a work stream on green energy transformations, indicators for transformative innovation and on governance in cities. The UNECE secretariat

³ EA = Expected achievement.

⁴ IA = Indicators of achievement.

will continue to hold bilateral and multilateral discussions with potential ETIN members that would like to bring this and other work streams forward.

Based on the developments and discussions under ETIN over the past year, ETIN has, thus far, created one work stream (1) on circular platforms under this work theme.

a. Work stream 1 – Potential of platforms in driving the circular economy transition and transformative innovation

This work stream was developed based on the demand expressed by active ETIN members and has since led to the establishment of a ETIN task force to guide the work stream activities. A list of the ETIN task force members is in annex IV. The ETIN task force has had three meetings to date. The objective of these ETIN task force meetings is to discuss upcoming activities and coordinate organisational matters for this work stream. ETIN has started off by organising activities that target **insight** and **foresight** activities, such as the initial seminar on the large potential that platforms play in facilitating the transition to the circular economy (annex VI).

The discussions under this work stream are become increasingly significant in today's context. In an era marked by rapid digital transformation and digitalization trends, digital platforms have emerged as a catalyst for more efficient, digitally enabled marketplaces. The platform economy, characterized by giants like Google, Amazon, and Airbnb, holds the promise of creating new value by reducing transaction costs, scaling up market reach, and lowering barriers of entry to buyers and sellers for markets trading an array of products and services. With the ongoing technological advancements, universal connectivity, and the proliferation of mobile internet, this economic model has laid the foundation for innovation and transformation across various sectors.

However, despite their immense success in select industries, the platform economy has yet to fully unleash its potential to drive economic circularity. For platforms to deliver real resource circularity, they need to go beyond the traditional concept of matchmaking, offering a pathway to entire new business models which not only facilitate linear transactions, but also enable value preservation and recapture of materials streams.

The awareness of the potential of platforms in spurring the circular economy is still relatively low. Closely engaging the ETIN task force and ETIN membership more broadly, ETIN has made a first big step in spreading awareness and facilitating discussions on what these broader trends imply for transformative innovation policy and activities. It will be important to keep gaining momentum around this topic in the months and years to come.

Project and performance indicators

EA2: Strengthen capacities among ECE member States to enable and promote, including through direct financing mechanisms, disruptive innovation for sustainable development and the circular economy transition.

IA2: Strengthen capacities of at least at least 6 ECE member States (counted by number of representatives in the meetings) to enable and promote, including through direct financing

mechanisms, disruptive innovation for sustainable development and the circular economy transition.

Work theme 2 – Strategic learning for transformative innovation

Since the launch of the first work theme on ecosystem development for transformative innovation and based on the continuous discussions and exchanges with the interim core group during Q2 and Q3 of 2023, ETIN has also decided to create a second work stream on strategic learning for transformative innovation. The rationale behind this effort is that ecosystem development (work theme 1) also requires alternative processes of strategic learning to support the development of new and complementary policies and measures.

As one of the initial activities under this work theme, in line with the strategic objectives of **insight** and **foresight**, ETIN organised a technical meeting on the Role of Transformative Innovation in Supporting the Green and Digital Transition of the Western Balkans, in Montenegro (annex VI). The aim of this meeting was to explore the emergence and importance of transformative innovation as a pathway for sustainable growth, with a particular focus on different ways to monitor and support these efforts through strategic learning, inter alia using an existing UNECE analytical framework.

The event was inspired by and leveraged the initial success of the [Sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook \(IPO\)](#), a UNECE flagship publication which provides a comprehensive assessment of innovation policies, identifying best practices and areas for improvement. The main outcome of this meeting was the updated IPO methodology. Compared to the first IPO iteration for Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (2020), the updated methodology includes an additional dimension on transformative innovation across IPO indicators and is adapted to the specificities and challenges of the Western Balkan region.

Project and performance indicators

EA3: Strengthen capacities among ECE member States to implement tools and processes for systematic and iterative disruptive innovation forecasting and market scouting to detect opportunities and constraints that can be addressed through targeted interventions.

IA3: Strengthen capacities at least 6 ECE member States (counted by number of representatives in the meetings) to implement tools and processes for systematic and iterative disruptive innovation forecasting and market scouting to systematically detect opportunities and constraints that can be addressed through targeted interventions.

ETIN initiated events back-to-back to UNECE flagship events and outputs

Adding to the above, ETIN also held a series of events back-to-back to UNECE flagship events (annex VI). The ambition was to create synergies between the network and UNECE by having its members participating in, contributing to and learning from ongoing UNECE debates.

The first **ETIN Innovation Days**, organized in conjunction with the UNECE Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (RFSD) (29-30 March 2023), constituted an on-site meeting that highlighted the international dimension of transformative innovation – a topic that is gaining surprisingly little attention in the debate. The discussions were organized around a series of meetings and encounters in direct relation to, but also outside, the RFSD. Moreover, several ETIN members participated in the peer-learning roundtable, “Out of the box – innovative pathways to accelerate sustainable development” that the network co-organized at the RFSD.

Similarly, ETIN was actively involved in both the design and completion of some of the **virtual side events (4-5 April 2023) leading up to the 70th session of the Commission** (18-19 April 2023). Several ETIN members participated in the activities around “The future of regulation in the pan-European region: Horizon-scanning for a sustainable and equitable future”. Also, on another session, the ETIN coordinator moderated a discussion on the topic “Leveraging digital solutions for the circular economy”.

The ETIN secretariat also developed the **policy report**, “Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe”, that served as input to the 16th session of the UNECE Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP) (31 May – 2 June 2023).

III. Planned ETIN activities for 2024

Administrative and support activities

a. ETIN core group meetings

After the third consultation meeting on 7 December, the UNECE secretariat plans to continue to engage with the ETIN core group on a monthly basis, providing regular updates and allowing for continuous feedback on ETIN activities and objectives. The exact operation and the interval of meetings of the ETIN core group will be decided on at the first meeting. The exact dates of these meetings will be discussed and set once the core group has been officially elected in December 2023.

b. Network expansion

The UNECE Secretariat, together with the ETIN core group, will continue to seek out potential ETIN members to ensure the effective expansion of the ETIN membership. This will be done through several networking channels, which are not (mutually) exclusive:

- Through the engagement of select experts and speakers for planned ETIN activities
- Through the outreach and engagement of UNECE focal points and experts attending regular UNECE intergovernmental meetings
- Through the participation of ETIN members at external, non-ETIN events
- Through ETIN regular updates, outreach and communication efforts, including through the collaboration with other UNECE teams working on similar topics

Work theme 1 – Ecosystem development for transformative innovation

Following the initial ETIN task force meetings (see above), the work stream on circular platforms (work stream 1) has several activities that are currently in planning. A summary of the planned activities is included below. As mentioned above, ETIN will continue to seek out opportunities to enhance the insight and foresight dimensions of various sub-topics of this work theme, such as on policy design and directionality (in follow-up to the policy dialogue organised in March 2023), digitalisation and energy, to name a few.

As mentioned above, the ETIN secretariat will continue to explore additional work streams with ETIN members.

a. Work stream 1 – Circular Platforms for economic transformations and sustainable development

Ideas for activities and outputs under the work stream will be continuously discussed within the dedicated task force, with regular updates on the work to the ETIN core group. As the work under this work stream progresses, activities will shift from focusing on insight and foresight to encouraging **consultations**, **collaboration** and ultimately **co-creation**. To date, the following activities are in the pipeline:

- Brownbag Session – Circular Platforms for Sustainable Economic Transformations, December 2023
- Call for Companies: Circular platforms for cross-sectoral collaboration, January 2024 (tbc)
- Workshop on Multilateral Bank support for Circular Platforms – Finance mechanisms and metrics (tbc), Q2 2024
- Side event at the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF), April 2024 (tbc)

Project and performance indicators

EA2: Strengthen capacities among ECE member States to enable and promote, including through direct financing mechanisms, disruptive innovation for sustainable development and the circular economy transition.

IA2: Strengthen capacities of at least at least 6 ECE member States (counted by number of representatives in the meetings) to enable and promote, including through direct financing mechanisms, disruptive innovation for sustainable development and the circular economy transition.

Work theme 2 – Strategic learning for transformative innovation

This work theme will be officially launched at the 15th session of ToS-ICP in November 2023 in Geneva.⁵ In the run up to this event, the UNECE Secretariat has brought together several ETIN members to form the ETIN task force on strategic learning, see annex IV. Under the guidance of the core group, the ETIN task force is organizing a dedicated ETIN side-event at ToS-ICP, where meeting participants, speakers and ETIN members will get together and reflect on the main outcomes and highlights of the expert discussions on strategic learning. This will then feed into shaping the main objective and planned activities for the work theme in the subsequent months. The focus of the initial activities under this work theme, similar to work theme 1, will be to organise events, such as seminars, policy dialogues, among others, to gather **insight** and **foresight** about relevant trends and developments. Depending on how these activities progress, UNECE aims to also organise activities on **consultation**, **collaboration** and **co-creation** towards the end of 2024 (annex VI).

Project and performance indicators

EA3: Strengthen capacities among ECE member States to implement tools and processes for systematic and iterative disruptive innovation forecasting and market scouting to detect opportunities and constraints that can be addressed through targeted interventions.

IA3: Strengthen capacities at least 6 ECE member States (counted by number of representatives in the meetings) to implement tools and processes for systematic and iterative disruptive innovation forecasting and market scouting to systematically detect opportunities and constraints that can be addressed through targeted interventions.

⁵ For more information on the 15th session of ToS-ICP, please visit this website: <https://unece.org/info/Economic-Cooperation-and-Integration/events/381397>.

IV. Risks and challenges

Risk/challenge	How this was addressed
<p>Finding a common narrative and understanding of transformative innovation and its implications on policy. When initially reaching out to stakeholders and potential ETIN members, many were unsure about the essence of the concept of transformative innovation.</p>	<p>Through continuous exchanges, discussions and consultations with ETIN members, international leading experts and scholars. In the next months, this will be complemented by other written outputs, collectively drafted and reviewed by ETIN members, and subsequent ETIN activities.</p>
<p>Ensuring the network reaches the critical mass needed to become a substantive network.</p>	<p>Engaging the initially most active members and attracting new members through them as well as produce results that people can be inspired by and build on, ensuring buy-in from members.</p>
<p>Managing and engaging with ETIN members from different professional backgrounds with different ambitions and constraints.</p>	<p>Ensuring transparency and clear communication, highlighting and reinforcing processes for seamless interactions. Ensuring that various, diverse perspectives are accurately integrated and representative across all activities and discussions. The UNECE secretariat also consistently asks for feedback on ideas and events as they develop.</p>
<p>Ensuring leadership support within an established system while at the same time taking novel approaches to activities.</p>	<p>Constantly communicating with and integrating leadership into ETIN and its activities, identifying complementarities with other initiatives and work.</p>
<p>Setting up the ETIN online portal given the importance of following UN rules and regulations for IT related issues and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Building the centralized portal based on the experience of colleagues and leveraging available and popular social media platforms, such as LinkedIn and Slack, to complement the platform.</p>

Source: UNECE.

V. Conclusion and way forward

Taking stock of the project's achievements and its current operational efficiency, it is evident that meaningful activities have been initiated and delivered. This includes launching the network and gaining a critical mass of ETIN members, setting up the ETIN online portal to facilitate collaboration, building a conceptual foundation based on which the network will carry out its events and outputs, and initiating a series of demand-based activities, among others. The project is running smoothly and promises to deliver expanded activities over an extended timeframe. ETIN beneficiaries, partners and the UNECE secretariat are eager to build on this strong base and ensure full sustainability of the ETIN network for the long-term. To achieve this vision, work beyond the current project will be necessary and UNECE will start discussions with current partners about future cooperation. Looking ahead, UNECE is dedicated to facilitating a continued journey of growth and success of ETIN, and exploring collaborative opportunities that align with key objectives will be key to ensuring the sustained impact of our efforts.

Annex I – Governance structure⁶

a. Members

ETIN applies a principle in which a broader community of peers across public, private, and non-governmental stakeholders, willing to accept the operational codes outlined above, will be able to actively solicit membership in the network. This group of members will have access to closed and more exclusive ETIN events, not available to the public.

b. Eligible entities

Eligible stakeholders for ETIN's affiliated membership include:

- 1) **National innovation agencies** in UNECE member States,
- 2) **Other national ministries** in UNECE member States working on transformative innovation,
- 3) **International organizations** with a brief on innovation policy active in the UNECE region, such as European Commission, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and other entities from the UN system,
- 4) **Networks and partnerships** with interest and/or activities in transformative innovation, such as European Network of Innovation Agencies (TAFTIE), Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium (TIPC), Climate Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), etc,
- 5) **Academic and research institutions** with research programs relevant to transformative innovation,
- 6) **Industry and professional associations** with relevant work programs, such as World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD), European Business Angels Network (EBAN), etc,
- 7) **Sub-national entities**, such as cities and civil society associations, and
- 8) **Individual actors and leading experts** with a declared interest in and proven track record of working on transformative innovation.

The UNECE Secretariat, together with the ETIN core group, reserve the right to accept/decline ETIN membership.

c. Terms of membership

ETIN's membership is **free of charge** and **granted via application or invitation** by the core group or the ETIN Secretariat. To become a member the applicant must meet several criteria:

- 1) Be active in the UNECE region, and
- 2) Show substantial interest in transformative innovation, as evidenced by at least one or more of the following criteria:
 - a. existing work program(s) on transformative innovation,

⁶ This governance structure was developed jointly by the UNECE secretariat and ETIN members. It was presented and reviewed at the second ETIN consultation meeting in April 2023.

- b. existing mandate/strategy calling for the development of relevant work on transformative innovation, and
- c. credible resources to be able contribute to ETIN work.

Membership can be **suspended** by the core group or the UNECE Secretariat.

d. Terms of reference

As an ETIN member, stakeholders are expected to:

- 1) Host webinars and other events,
- 2) Participate in the discussions at ETIN and ETIN related events,
- 3) Publicize ETIN activities through their channels, and
- 4) Actively contribute to work streams according to their (organisation's) interest and expertise.

e. Modus operandi

The ETIN members will hold dedicated **consultation meetings** (2 times a year) to explore and agree on the ETIN activities under both work streams and continuously determine new strategic directions for ETIN.

f. Core group

The strategic direction(s) of ETIN activities are shaped, planned and executed by the ETIN core group consisting of 1) **ex officio members**; and 2) up to **fifteen rotating core members** invited or elected to participate on a rotative basis with a limited term of one year. The ambition is to ensure that ETIN activities are 1) integrated with the UNECE agenda; 2) well-coordinated with other international initiatives; 3) responding to interests and concerns of the private sector, civil society, and member States; and 4) communicated to the donor for continuous input.

g. Terms of membership

The **ex officio members** consist of:

- 1) The ETIN project coordinator,
- 2) BMWK representatives,
- 3) Chair of the Bureau of UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policy (ToS-ICP).

The inclusion of these stakeholders will help integrate ETIN activities within the UNECE agenda, give the donor an opportunity to stay updated and provide a relevant input, and obtain valuable input from key international stakeholder. This level of representation of stakeholders will allow for good levels of representation among stakeholder groups. This constellation will allow ETIN to continue its work once UNECE's involvement in the network discontinues.

The **rotating ETIN core group members** include:

- 1) One or more representatives from a government entity in an advanced economy,

- 2) One or more representatives from a government entity in a transition economy,
- 3) One or more representatives from the private sector, and
- 4) One or more organizations or networks pursuing transformative innovation.

The above constellation allows ETIN to integrate various perspectives from a range of stakeholders across industries and countries.

h. Terms of reference

The principal tasks of the ETIN core group are to support the UNECE Secretariat in:

- 1) **Growing the network**, including non-government stakeholders and facilitate contact with them,
- 2) **Identifying, collecting, and synthesizing ideas**, demands, needs from network members,
- 3) Based on the ideas collected among ETIN stakeholders, **developing, and refining the work plan**,
- 4) Leading in **organising ETIN events**,
- 5) **appointing leaders and overseeing activities of the task forces**, that will chair and lead on ETIN activities around dedicated topics selected among core group members; and
- 6) **Developing and overseeing administrative ETIN task and rules**, e.g., duration of service and elections to core group.

i. Modus operandi

The core group will operate **pro bono** with full support from UNECE Secretariat. The ETIN core group will be required to:

- 1) Participate in monthly ETIN core group coordination meetings. In line with the ETIN work plan 2023.
- 2) Co-organise and participate in ETIN consultation meetings, and participate in annual sessions of CICPPP, ToS-ICP to inform UNECE member States about ongoing ETIN activities and developments and create complementarities between ETIN activities and other UNECE work streams.

Annex II – Summary of high-level ETIN launch on 15 November 2022, Geneva, hybrid

Professor Jason Potts highlighted in his keynote address that transformative innovation refers to more than a change in technology, processes, or production techniques. Transformative innovation fundamentally changes societies and, as such, becomes a means of the fourth industrial revolution transition rather than an ends in and of itself.

Directionality is crucial when approaching transformative innovation and ensuring that it serves the SDGs. ETIN aims to provide a platform for peer learning and exchange to support member States in sharing opinions and overcoming common obstacles in governing transformative innovation for sustainable development.

Innovation is essential for digital and green economy transformation. Yet, bringing innovative ideas to the market requires introducing new and disruptive business models. Having faced this challenge, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action in Germany founded the German Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation (SPRIN-D) in 2019 and, as an extension of this effort, decided subsequently to fund the ETIN network.

Another obstacle to innovation lies in poor coordination. This issue manifesting in the lack of connection between people, ideas, and resources. True success will come once the coordination between regulators, innovators, governments, private sectors, and other stakeholders appears. This is the larger goal for ETIN – connecting people, and allowing them to discuss, analyse, and harness innovation for the better good.

The example of Estonia further shows the need for such coordination to produce groundbreaking innovation, such as the internet. Although the public and the private sector operate very differently, Estonia shares digital infrastructure across the government and the private sector to support digitalization. Without the involvement and uptake from the private sector, for example, Estonia would not be able to provide, use, and maintain its digital identification system. Thus, cooperation between sectors, but also between countries, is crucial. In 2016 Estonia joined forces with Finland and Iceland in building cross-border digital solutions allowing the three countries to share resources, experiences, and skills. The value of the network is vast—especially given that all countries share common needs and problems. The example of Estonia could serve as inspiration for the members of ETIN struggling to improve cross-sectoral and cross-border coordination.

The panellists also flagged the importance of developing instruments to transfer scientific research into innovation outputs. Currently, a substantial portion of science and research initiatives do not translate into products and fail to maximize their social benefits. Transforming science and research outputs into products that improve lives is crucial. The mechanisms to achieve this currently used by governments need to be applied more efficiently. Moreover, regulations need to adjust to small companies and not focus exclusively on large corporations. Finally, inviting teams of experts in specific innovation areas to partake in policy-making dialogue is essential for designing effective and relevant policies. These lessons must be taken aboard by ETIN members seeking to support transformative innovation.

Networks such as ETIN will be instrumental as policymakers embark on the path of transformative innovation. For many years, innovation has been seen as a technical phenomenon focused on R&D, product development, and product properties. Later, the view on innovation focused on its commercial potential and its role in fostering competitiveness and growth within the companies and countries. Even though there is still a struggle in defining and governing innovation, the concept of transformative innovation remains much more problematic. This innovation becomes a social phenomenon, it requires directionality and a change in policies and systems. ETIN can play a vital part in it by gathering experts and collaboratively analysing what works and does not and share best practices.

The panellists also stressed the importance of changing the perception of funding and risk amongst scientists to promote science-business linkages and research commercialization. Supporting science-business linkages requires new agencies and institutions willing to identify potential, take on the risk, and accept the possibility of failure associated with research commercialization. Facilitating conversation between the different economic sectors is also essential to accelerate transformative innovation, enable thinking outside the box, and promote the exchange of ideas interchanging between stakeholders that would usually not cooperate.

The panellists concluded that ETIN could allow for a comparative analysis of national ecosystems and exchange of national best practices to address the issues associated with transformative innovation.

UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies

Exploring the power of transformative innovation



Launch of the UN-ECE Transformative Innovation Network (ETIN)

14th November 2022, 16:00-17:00 CEST, Room XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva (in person and online)

Speakers:



H.E. Nele Leosk
Ambassador-at-Large for
Digital Affairs, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs,
Estonia



Marco-Alexander Breit
Deputy Director-General,
Ministry for Economic
Affairs and Climate
Action, Germany



Rafael Laguna de la Vera
Founding Director, Federal
Agency for Disruptive
Innovation,
Germany



Kjell Håkan Närfelt
Chief Strategy Officer,
VINNOVA,
Sweden



**Mar Fernández-
Méndez**
Co-Founder,
Seafields



Mikael Román
Coordinator, UN-ECE
Transformative
Innovation Network
(ETIN)

Moderator:



Source: UNECE.

Annex III – List of ETIN core group members

Agency/organisation	Focal point
SPRIN-D (Germany)	Ms. Anna Förster
BMWK (Germany)	Mr. Christoph Mönningmann
UNECE	Mr. Mikael Román
Compete 2020 (Portugal)	Mr. João Borga
Innovation Growth Lab, NESTA (United Kingdom)	Ms. Alex Glennie
Innovation Agency (Israel)	Mr. Sagi Dagan
The NTWK (International)	Ms. Marina Planas
Innovation and Digital Development Agency (Azerbaijan)	Ms. Yevgenia Bikmurzina
FutureBoats (Germany)	Ms. Stefanie Engelhard
Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium (TIPC) (International)	Ms. Victoria Shaw
Vinnova (Sweden)	Mr. Kjell-Håkan Närfeldt
ISI Fraunhofer (Germany)	Mr. Hendrik Berghäuser (tbc)
Georgia	Ms. Annie Vashakmadze (tbc)

Source: UNECE.

Note: the final list of ETIN core group members will available after the third ETIN consultation meeting, 7 December 2023 (see above).

Annex IV – List of ETIN task force members

ETIN task force on circular platforms

Agency/organisation	Focal point
McFayden Digital (USA)	Mr. Peter Evans
UNECE	Ms. Immanuela Badde
Mixi (Finland)	Ms. Alisa Mick
EllenMcArthur Foundation (International)	Mr. Joss Blériot; Mr. Kenny Arnold
UNCTAD (International)	Mr. Henrique Pacini
EBRD (International)	Ms. Ela Yilmaz
The NTWK (International)	Ms. Marina Planas
ABN AMRO	Mr. Bob Gravestijn
Expert	Ms. Serena Bonomi

Source: UNECE.

ETIN task force on strategic learning

Agency/organisation	Focal point
UNECE	Mr. Mikael Román
Compete 2020 (Portugal)	Mr. João Borga
Innovation Growth Lab, NESTA (United Kingdom)	Ms. Alex Glennie
Innovation Agency (Israel)	Mr. Sagi Dagan
The NTWK (International)	Ms. Marina Planas
Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium (TIPC) (International)	Ms. Victoria Shaw
Vinnova (Sweden)	Mr. Kjell-Håkan Närfeldt
Ramboll (Sweden)	Mr. Martin Flack, Mr. Erik Brattström

Source: UNECE.

Annex V – List of recorded and planned podcast episodes

1. Innovation Matters

	Title	Guest	Date of release
1	The Platform Economy - Revolutionizing How we Produce, Consume and Interact?	Michael Munger	31.05.2022
2	Post-Socialist Transition 30 Years on: the Importance of Furthering Broad Innovation to Progress Towards Agenda 2030	Aleksandr V. Gevorkyan	09.06.2022
4	The Rise of the Global Digital Economy & Lessons from East	Carin Holroyd & Ken Coates	07.07.2022
5	The Innovation Paradox - Innovation in Transition Economies	William Maloney & Xavier Cirera	22.07.2022
6	Holistic Innovation Policy and the Governance of National Innovation Systems	Charles Edquist	10.08.2022
7	Regional & Local Innovation Hubs to Accelerate Sustainability Shifts	Cristina Chaminade	06.10.2022
8	The Innovation Commons	Jason Potts	02.11.2022
9	Cities as Testbeds of Innovation for Sustainability	Susan Borrás	14.12.2022
10	Transformative Innovation & Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development	Barbara Diehl	06.02.2023
11	Openness to Creative Destruction - Lessons from History	Arthur Diamond	24.02.2023
12	The Role of Governments	Josh Lerner	13.07.2023
13	Shaping Long-Term Societal Development	Philip Auerswald	16.08.2023
14	Automation and Utopian Futures?	John Danner	07.09.2023
15	Converging Technologies and Transformation	Steven Kotler	13.10.2023

Source: UNECE.

Note: episodes are available on [SoundCloud](#), [Spotify](#), [Apple Music](#), and [Amazon Music](#) and here: <https://unece.org/eci/icp/innovation-matters-podcast>.

1. Innovation Circle

Topic	Guests/Moderator	Date
Sustainability transformations: what are they?	Professor Björn-Ola Linnér, Linköping University (guest) / Immanuela Badde (moderator)	16:00-17:00 CET 15 November 2023 24 attendees.
Strategic Learning: an emerging topic for transformative innovation	2-3 participants at ToS-ICP (guests) / Mikael Román (moderator)	tbc
Fossil-free steel: cross-industrial innovation in practice	Göran Nyström, Ovako (guest) / Elisabeth Türk (moderator)	tbc

Source: UNECE.

Note: Gender balance and diversity will be continuously kept in mind when selecting potential podcast guests. This series was officially launched on the 15 November 2023 with the first episode.

Annex VI – Overview of ETIN activities

2023

ETIN Conference participation		
Events	Description	Date
Handelsblatt event on “Platforms and ecosystems: new opportunities for growth, digitization and sustainability”	The event brought together a range of experts and scholars on the topic of platform economy and ecosystems for digitalisation and sustainability. The attendance at this event was one of the initial events that brought ETIN’s attention to the power of the platform economy, which later lead to the creation of the work stream (1) on circular platforms. https://veranstaltungen.handelsblatt.com/plattform-oekonomie/platforms-and-ecosystems/	25-26 October 2022, Düsseldorf, in person
The NTWK Summit 2023 - “From physical to digital experiences”.	The event, organised by ETIN collaborator The NTWK, brought together a range of experts and industry representatives in the field of digital platforms and marketplaces, ecosystems, sustainability and circular economy, and other digital business models. https://www.the-ntwk.com/summit	18-19 May 2023, Barcelona, in person
The MIT Platform Strategy Summit	The event focused on the future of platforms with leading business leaders, entrepreneurs, policy makers and scholars, mainly from the US and EU. Main takeaways from the conference included the importance of AI integration into platforms, the growth of circular platforms and their important role in strengthening sustainability across sectors, and the significance of platform regulations, specifically in the example of the US and the EU. https://ide.mit.edu/events/2023-mit-platform-strategy-summit/	13 July 2023, Boston, in person
The Nordic Circular Summit	This event brought together a broad range of experts on circular economy from the Nordic countries. The main theme focused on the human factors of circular economy and how the circular transition can be used to increase equality and equity and to build safe and future-ready societies and industries. https://www.nordiccircularsummit.com/	18-19 October 2023, Reykjavik, in person

General ETIN events		
Activity	Description	Date
Two virtual policy dialogues on the broader topic “Pathways to transformative innovation”.	Co-organized with the Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems, Vinnova (7 March) and the UK's innovation agency for social good, Nesta (14 March), these policy dialogues brought together participants and experts to jointly discuss the opportunities and pitfalls with different models currently emerging to govern and organize work processes for transformative innovation.	7 March and 14 March 2023, online
ETIN Innovation Days	Organized in conjunction with the UNECE RFSO for ETIN members to engage with local, regional and international players in the field of transformative innovation for sustainable development.	28 – 30 March 2023, Geneva, in person
UNECE Commission Session in 2023 on the topic of “Green and Digital Transformations”.	Contributed to virtual side-events.	4 – 5 April 2023, Geneva, hybrid
Work theme 1 activities		
Activity	Description	Date
Seminar on “Platforms, circular economy, and transformative innovation: a cross-industry comparison”.	This seminar explored and married insights from two ongoing debates – i.e., platform economy and circular economy – to explore potential synergies.	3 March 2023, 10:00 – 16:00 CET, Geneva, hybrid
Work theme 2 activities		
Activity	Description	Date
Technical meeting on the “Role of Transformative Innovation in Supporting the Green and Digital Transition of the Western Balkans”.	This event brought together international experts, ETIN members and representatives from the Western Balkan economies to discuss the role of transformative innovation and innovation policy in shaping the innovation ecosystem, promoting research and development, incorporating foresight and future analysis approaches, and fostering collaboration between businesses, academia, and government entities for long-term prosperity.	21-22 September 2023, Montenegro, hybrid

Source: UNECE.

2024

Work theme 1 activities		
Activity	Description	Planned date
Brownbag Session on “Circular Platforms for Sustainable Economic Transformations”.	This event will delve into the profound implications of the platform economy, and its ability to redefine the way we approach economic circularity. The event connects themes being developed by various departments across various UN agencies, on digital economy, environment, trade and consumer protection and competition issues. The brownbag session also serves as a thought-provoking avenue to foster ideas and collaborations among UN agencies.	12 December 2023, 16:00-17:00 CET, Geneva, hybrid
Call for Companies: “Circular platforms for cross-sectoral collaboration”.	This call will be launched early next year in run up to the side-event at the World Circular Economic Forum.	January 2024 (tbc), online
Workshop on “Multilateral Bank support for Circular Platforms – Finance mechanisms and metrics”. (tbc)	Tbc	Q1-2 2024, hybrid
Side event at the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF)	Organised by Sitra, the WCEF is an annual event that brings together experts and companies that work in the field of circular economy. ETIN plans to organise a dedicated side-event on circular platforms.	April (tbc) 2024, Brussels, hybrid

Source: UNECE.