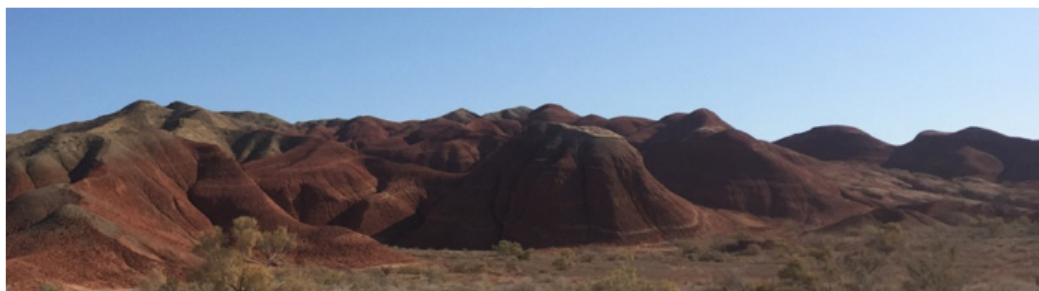


SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects Launch Event in Central Asia

MEETING REPORT

Tashkent, Uzbekistan • 3-4 March 2020



The SWITH-Asia Grant Projects Launch Event has been organised in close coordination with the EU DEVCO and the EU Delegations in Central Asia.

ACRONYMS

AREC	Austria Recycling - Verein zur Förderung von Recycling und Umweltschutz in Österreich
AUCA	American University for Central Asia
CAREC	Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
DG DEVCO	European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
EC	European Commission
EE	Energy Efficiency
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegation of the European Union
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HELVETAS	Swiss Association for International Cooperation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KAGIR	Kazakhstan Association of Hotels & Restaurants
MSC	Multi-stakeholders Consultation
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NFP	National Focal Point
RE	Renewable Energy
REAP	Resource Efficiency in Agri-food Production and Processing
RUTSIS	Reviving Uzbekistan and Tajikistan's sustainable Ikat and Silk
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SCPF	SWITCH-Asia Sustainable Consumption and Production Facility / SCP Facility
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPP	Sustainable Public Procurement
STENUM	Asia Sustainable Development Society
SUSTOUKA	Sustainable tourism in Kazakhstan project
VNR	Voluntary National Review

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BACKGROUND

Many developing countries in Asia and Central Asia are undergoing a rapid industrial transformation, which is having a significant impact on the environment. Activities of the industrial sector, amongst others the burning of fossil fuels, contribute to an increasing amount of greenhouse gas emissions and waste, affecting climate change and natural disasters. The change of production and consumption patterns, decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and natural resources depletion is an urgent challenge. For this reason, in 2007 the European Commission launched the SWITCH-Asia - Promoting Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) programme to support the transition towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient and circular economy.

SWITCH-Asia is the largest Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) programme supported by the European Union involving 24 countries from Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Mongolia and China. In line with the priorities of the European Green Deal, the programme aims to promote sustainable and inclusive growth in Asia decoupling it from environmental degradation and to support Asian countries in their transition towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient and a more circular economy while contributing to poverty reduction. The programme promotes mainstreaming sustainable consumption and production in relevant national policies and supports the transition towards a green economy, poverty reduction and climate mitigation.

Through its grants scheme, the programme funds pilot projects helping companies to test and adopt cleaner technologies and more sustainable industrial practices as well as consumers to adopt more sustainable consumption behaviours and lifestyles. The evidence provided by projects is meant to feed into policy and regulatory discussions with national governments supporting them in adopting SCP national plans and regulatory frameworks. SWITCH-Asia will ultimately contribute to help governments in adopting measures to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, in line with their engagements and targets set within the Paris agreement on climate change.

The second phase of SWITCH-Asia was launched in 2018, and in June 2019, the programme was extended to the five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Central Asian countries have participated in the grants programme in 2019 and 7 projects were selected, to be implemented from 2020.

So far, the EU has invested nearly EUR 280 million towards promoting SCP and funded about 130 projects. Through the grant scheme, the programme successfully reached out to more than 400 Asian and European non for-profit partners, 100 private sector associates, and 70,000 Asian MSMEs. The replication and scaling-up effect of projects results, together with access to finance and public private investments for green products, services and technologies, will be key elements within the programme in the next years in order to achieve a greater impact in the region.

On 3rd and 4th March 2020, the **SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects Launch Event in Central Asia** organised by the SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility in close coordination with the EU DEVCO and the EU Delegations in Central Asia, took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The event brought together 60 participants, including representatives from implementing organisations of the seven newly awarded grant-funded projects in Central Asia, the EU Delegations in Central Asia, SWITCH-Asia National Focal Points within ministries in the respective countries, and media professionals working on issues related to SCP and the environment.

The SWITCH-Asia programme in Central Asia is framed around two strategic components that provide support to its implementation:

- The **Grants Scheme** of the programme funds pilot projects helping Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to adopt cleaner technologies and more sustainable industrial practices as well as helping consumers to act

more responsibly in their daily choices. The last call for proposal was launched in 2019. 23 new projects were awarded, seven of which in Central Asia;

- The GIZ-led consortium implementing the **Sustainable Consumption and Production Facility (SCP Facility)** aims at providing technical assistance to eligible countries by supporting them in the elaboration and implementation of their national policies related to SCP and green economy. Through the analysis of the outcomes of the pilot projects, the Facility aims also at providing guidance in improving the access to finance and to private-public investments in order to replicate and/or scale-up SCP approaches in the region. Finally, it aims at creating an internal dialogue between the components of the programme ensuring coherence and synergies of activities.

The objectives of SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects Launch were to:

- Gather together the implementing organisations of the newly awarded SWITCH-Asia projects in Central Asia in order for them to discuss about common challenges and opportunities, providing cross-fertilisation among projects within the same or different sectors;
- Analyse their contribution to policy dialogue with national governments as well as opportunities for scaling up and replication of their SCP practices at country or regional levels;
- Present relevant EU and Regional Policies, as framing context for the Central Asia Grant Projects, as well as SWITCH-Asia programme priorities;
- Present projects with the aim to better highlight SCP related issues and synergies;
- Present the EU reporting and other administrative requirements to ensure adequate understanding of the needs and challenges for an efficient delivery;
- Introduce SWITCH-Asia Communication Guidelines and web platform.





OPENING SESSION

The meeting was opened by Ambassador **Eduards Stiprais**, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Uzbekistan. He stressed the importance of the SWITCH-Asia programme, recently expanded to Central Asia, in further supporting the countries' ongoing work and achievements, in particular in the context of the European Green Deal. "The European Green Deal puts a strong emphasis on supporting the transition to clean energy in line with a more ambitious climate policy. It also sets the principles for the EU commitment with its partner countries in this regard. "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle" has become the new phrase in Europe.

Francois Begeot, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Uzbekistan focused in his introduction on the provision of information on SWITCH-Asia Programme's priorities which are in line with the new EU priorities. The SWITCH-Asia programme was launched in 2007 for 19 countries in Asia and **extended to Central Asia in 2019**. It was conceived as the contribution of the EU to the support the achievement of SDG12 – Responsible Consumption and Production – in its partner countries in Asia and in Central Asia. The programme aims at contributing to the UN 2030 agenda on SDGs

and to promote collaboration on climate change mitigation and adaptation (Paris Agreement). The new Commission sets five political priorities (Green Deal, Digital Economy, Jobs and Growth, Migration and Governance and Security). The European Green Deal is the new growth strategy for Europe aiming at making the EU the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and to promote the shift towards a greener economy. SWITCH Asia contributes to the external dimension of the European Green Deal, notably to the uptake of circular economy and to the development of sustainable agri-food value chains. A new Circular Economy Action Plan was adopted on 10th March, including resource-intensive sectors: textiles, constructions, electronics and plastics. The EU is committed to work across these value chains around the world, therefore also with its partners in Central Asia.



INTRODUCTION SESSION

SWITCH-Asia Programme for delivering SCP

Zulfira Zikrina, Key Expert for Central Asia, on behalf of Arab Hoballah, Team Leader, EU SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility opened the first session. In order to effectively deliver SCP, it would be critical to provide an adequate enabling capacity aiming at supporting not only concerned government entities but also MSMEs and local communities, during both project implementation and its termination, allowing access to (green) finance, among other mechanisms. Connecting with other relevant projects will ensure better impact, replication and scaling up. It is essential to ensure that the thematic focus of each grant project is well embedded in the SCP system, connecting both production and consumption aspects, even when projects are conceived more from the production or the consumption side. It has to be clear for project partners that the SWITCH-Asia National Focal Points (NFPs) are well informed about project's activities, even if the project is being implemented in collaboration with other Ministries/stakeholders. All grant themes are cross-sectoral, so creation of a useful platform will be considered for connecting concerned stakeholders. Furthermore, the individual project's communication strategy

should be well structured and defined, setting clear outcomes and impacts of the project. This is a critical part of the success of any project, for which the SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility can provide support.

Regional policies related to SCP

In this session, Zulfira Zikrina introduced the regional policies relevant to SCP. All five countries in Central Asia have ratified major conventions related to SCP (Rotterdam Basel, Stockholm, the Paris Agreement, among others). Three countries, namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, have already approved the Green Economy Concept on the national level and the SCP Facility will promote the implementation of related policies at national level through appropriate technical assistance for further mainstreaming and delivering SCP. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have already delivered the Voluntary National Review (VNR), and the other three countries have started preparing VNRs. All five countries are committed to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is recognised that some of the SDGs like 7,8,9,11,13 are interconnected to SDG 12 and contribute to its successful implementation. The total number

of indicators for achieving the listed SDGs in the global indicator framework is 232. The group of the indicators (20) for achieving SDG 12 was presented and further discussion with grantees took place.



KEY MESSAGES

1

Importance of establishing a platform for collaboration between grant projects to which the SCP Facility could provide technical support.

2

Ensuring close cooperation with all stakeholders, coherence and synergy with project partners that are implementing similar projects in South and Southeast Asia.

3

Stating necessity to monitor achievements of SDGs indicators related to SCP during the project implementation.

PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSES OF AWARDED PROJECTS



The first grant project "**Resource Efficiency in Agri-food Production and Processing**" (REAP) was presented by **Rajat Batra**, STENUM Asia Sustainable Development Society and **Markus Moeller**, Austria Recycling (AREC). The project promotes SCP practices in the agri-food production and processing industries along the entire supply chain. Furthermore, it develops business case for resource efficiency measures by MSMEs, while promoting eco-efficiency based on international standards and supporting companies in presenting bankable projects to financial institutions. It also provides training to MSMEs on suitable financial instruments for SCP solutions.

REAP's project expected results include:

- 20 consultants from financial institutions trained on financial instruments for SCP solutions;
- 10% of participating MSMEs prepared bankable projects;
- Four clusters are prepared to support SCP after the project completion;
- Local consultants trained on SCP practices and enabled for replication.

The second grant project "**Reviving Uzbekistan and Tajikistan's sustainable Ikat and Silk**" (RUTSIS) was presented by **Aman Munnolimath**, project manager, adelphi. The project contributes to the revival and upgrade of traditional silk and ikat production through integrated value chain services, sustainable production practices and design of

textile products based on international sustainable performance requirements. The project will enhance recognition of sustainable silk and ikat products from Central Asia in the international market through the use of eco-labeling and branding instruments. MSMEs, local authorities and executive agencies will be the main beneficiaries of the project. Mitigation of environmental impacts will also be achieved through adoption of sustainable production improvements across the sericulture/ikat manufacturing supply chains, including natural dyeing technics and zero waste designs.

RUTSIS' project expected results include:

- Creation of partnership with Government institutions in the field of implementation of ISO standards like eco-labeling, and energy efficiency;
- Preparation of universities' curricula and teaching students/practitioners;
- Providing B2B opportunities thereby encouraging cross-border business interactions;
- Mobilizing private sector funding across silk and ikat value chains.



The third grant project “**Implementation of SCP practices and sustainability schemes in the MSMEs of the tourism Sector in Kazakhstan**” (SUSTOUKA) was presented by **Tatyana Khodorovskaya**, Kazakhstan Association of Hotels and Restaurants (KAGIR). The project enhances sustainability and competitiveness of the tourism sector through support to MSMEs by developing green business approaches and access to green finance. It also contributes to resource efficiency in the tourism accommodation sector and supports implementation of sustainability certification systems. MSMEs, tour operators as well as Government and finance institutions are main beneficiaries of this project.

fosters the creation of new financial schemes and promotes access to finance for MSMEs. Targeted beneficiaries include Kyrgyz tour operators, hotels, local suppliers and producers, local communities, and the Tourism Department under the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism.

GREENTOUR project expected results include carbon emissions reduction on 15% of GHG, saving 12% energy (6mln KWh), waste saving of 20% (86 tons), and the creation of green jobs, with 250 additional green jobs established.

SUSTOUKA project expected results include:

- Implementation of SCP practices in 50 MSMEs of the tourist accommodation sectors;
- Provision of training to the staff of 200 MSMEs for the implementation of SCP practices;
- Elaboration of a practical guide and a network platform to promote and replicate the SCP practices. A certain part of activities relate to the promotion of green commercialisation and consumption of sustainable tourism products, the certification of 50 MSMEs in the Travelife Sustainability System.

The fourth grant project “**GREENTOUR - Replicating tourism industry sustainability best practices into the Kyrgyzstan and wider Central Asian tourism supply chain through an integrated business led approach**” was presented by **Damira Raeva**, HELVETAS, Kyrgyzstan. The project integrates green services and products in the tourism supply chain and develops waste management approach for hotels, restaurants and destinations, in particular for food waste and plastics reduction standards. It also



The fifth grant project “**Promotion of energy security and sustainable growth through increased energy and resource efficiency tourism SMEs in Kyrgyzstan**” (PERETO), was presented by **Kanat Sultanaliev** and **Boshil Kondev**, American University for Central Asia (AUCA). The project fosters the adoption of SCP and energy and resource efficiency measures through the introduction of different tools and training while promoting the adoption of voluntary green certification. It also develops an online Self-Assessment Tool for MSMEs and promotes access to green finance for MSMEs of the tourism sector in order for them to adopt SCP and resource efficiency measures, while creating

appropriate enabling environment for related policies. Targeted beneficiaries include the national government, SMEs, tourists, consumers, ministries and tourist agencies.

PERETO's project expected results include:

- Adoption of SCP and energy and resource efficiency measures through the introduction of different tools and training modules;
- Promotion and adoption of voluntary green certification;
- Development and launch of an online self-assessment tool for SMEs;
- Increased access to green finance for tourism SMEs to adopt SCP and efficiency measures, creating the appropriate enabling environment for related policies.

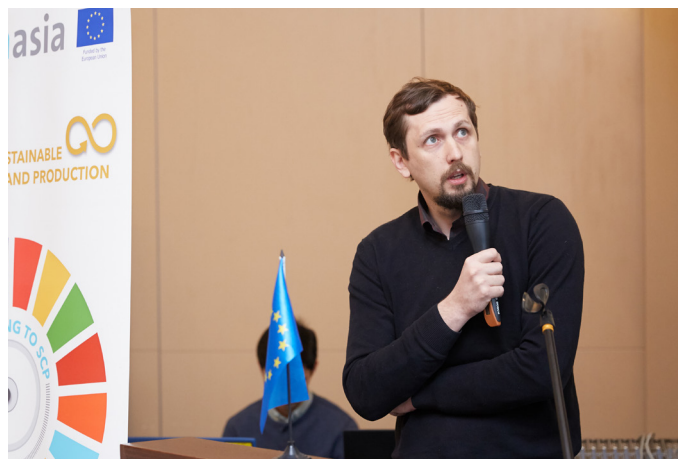


The sixth grant project “**A model for sustainable tourism in Central Asia: Building Capacities, Creating awareness, Introducing Technology**” was presented by **Gulchihra Israilova**, Chairman of the Tourism Organizations in Uzbekistan. This project promotes sustainable tourism in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan through implementation of ISO standards related to green procurement and eco-labeling. It also elaborates Guidelines on sustainable consumption, including usage of water, energy and recyclable waste. Furthermore, it promotes the sharing of the EU best practices such as legislative frameworks and regulations, while applying needed ICT and marketing tools. SMEs, local authorities, as well as users of ICT are the main beneficiaries of the project.

The project's expected results include:

- Strengthened dialogue between authorities, SMEs and end users related to SCP;

- Promotion of sustainable tourism in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan through the implementation of ISO standards related to green procurement and eco-labeling;
- Elaboration of guidelines on sustainable consumption, including the usage of water, energy and recyclable waste;
- Implementation of EU best practices such as the legislative framework and regulations, while applying needed ICT and marketing tools.



The seventh grant project “**Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy production in the community-based tourism sector in Central Asia**” was presented by **Peter Ormel**, Country Director for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, ACTED and **Sergey Chutkov**, Country Director of Tajikistan, ACTED. The project promotes transition of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to a low carbon economy by adapting and introducing new resource and energy efficiency solutions by technology providers and facilitating access to green finance to scale up this new technologies and SCP solutions in the touristic sector. It also develops a “Green hostels” model by implementation of SCP practices such as local eco-standards, eco-certification scheme, value-chain approach and resource efficiency. Target beneficiaries are 120 MSMEs in the energy efficiency and renewable energy sectors, 315 MSMEs in the Community Based Tourism Sector, together with 1 million tourists per year.

The project's expected result is:

- Increased capacity of MSMEs in the RE-EE sector to develop business and technical skills, allowing for better access to finance to develop business and invest in energy efficient and renewable energy technologies while increasing offers of eco-tourism services to tourists in Central Asia.

Panel discussions

The subsequent panel discussion was moderated by **Zulfira Zikrina**, Key Expert for Central Asia, EU SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility

The highlights of the discussion and questions from the audience focused on the achievement of the results and targets, establishing partnerships with all interested stakeholders, the need to conceptualise training programmes together with the implementation of SCP low-cost measures (2000). Participants also discussed the definition of sustainable tourism and green tourism.

Identified challenges:

- Reducing resource consumption, including water, energy, carbon emissions by 25%, which should be carefully calculated and measured;
- Putting such targets as involving 400 MSMEs, 225 MSMEs, 50 MSMEs in different tourism grant projects, 1,200,000 tourists visiting Central Asian countries every year contribute to overlapping of the number of tourists and MSMEs reported in grant projects.

Identified opportunities:

- Implementing a smart metering systems and ISO standards in the tourism sector;
- Hiring a highly qualified pool of experts for effective project implementation, including the development of curricula for students;
- Creating a partnership among grantees and Government to achieve tangible results.

Actions to be taken:

- Building a “green hostel” model, with three green hostels per country packaged in line with implementation activities related to “green” passive house;
- Developing an on -line platform to share information among all projects;
- Reviving Ikat through the involvement of the local community and the possibility of interconnection with tourism sector to present a branded product.



KEY MESSAGES

1

Measurement of resource efficiency and reduction of carbon footprint in tourism sector.

2

Adaptation of SCP practices in agri-food and textile sector with creation of a clusters approach.

3

Commitment to the realisation of SDGs targets and indicators.



GRANT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

EU Reporting and administrative requirements, and reporting feeding to policy discussions

Michel Van Hecke, Head of Finance & Contract Section of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan informed grantees on the EU procedures they are expected to comply with when implementing projects, as well as the roles of beneficiaries and project coordinators.





EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

SWITCH-Asia Communications: Guidelines and Tools

Narghiza Alikulova, EU Delegation Uzbekistan presented the session on SWITCH-Asia Communications on behalf of Sara Gabai, Communication and Knowledge Expert, SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility. Communication is an important aspect of the SWITCH-Asia Programme. The main objectives of the SWITCH-Asia Communication Strategy were presented, as well as the SWITCH-Asia Quick Branding Guidelines based on the Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action (2018). The analysis of the performance of the programme’s social media channels was also introduced to the audience in order to clearly understand the demographics of SWITCH-Asia followers and the geographical scope of the programme’s reach. Finally, key SWITCH-Asia knowledge products were introduced to the audience, as well as the website and the ways in which audiences can actively contribute to this platform. This platform serves multiple purposes, Narghiza explained:

- Helps us manage knowledge more effectively and in synergy;
- Serves as a hub for resources on SCP and related themes relevant to Asia and Central Asia;
- Showcases SWITCH-Asia work and grants funded projects;
- Provides access to latest news and events on SCP and related themes in Asia and Central Asia.





CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

In the closing session, the Head of Cooperation EU Delegation to Uzbekistan **Francois Begeot** noted the importance of launching grants projects for Central Asian countries to create a platform for exchanging information, best practices and accelerating activities in the agri-food, tourism, and textile sectors. This is a great opportunity for scaling-up and replication of good practices.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- The tourism sector should adopt a smart metering system including overcooling and overheating in order to reduce resource consumption and carbon emissions.
- Trained tourism specialists and students enrolled in tourism academic programmes should be involved in project activities.
- A green package for hostels should be implemented at regional level, with replication of good practices to all Central Asian countries.
- Agri-food - implementation of low-cost SCP measures and trained MSMEs, creation of clusters approach, supply/value chain throughout the life cycle of the product and testing it during the project realisation.
- Reviving silk and Ikat and traditional practices on the processing, branding product to the market, involving local community with creation a new jobs on the national level.

- Awareness raising campaigns are strongly recommended at all stages of the activities with adequate information made accessible to concerned stakeholders.
- Creation of possible networking tools would be highly welcomed to bridge Central Asian projects with the rest of Asia, for exchange of information and best practices.
- Projects should understand that they are part of a bigger programme and that they should clearly align their action to the national country strategies/policies/SDGs indicators, and contribute as much as possible to both the Central Asia and European Union's sustainability objectives.

Follow-up Activities

Follow-up activities might include, but are not limited to:

- Creation of an on-line platform based on the cluster approach for exchange of information among projects on good practices and green technologies throughout their implementation;
- Ensure the engagement of all concerned stakeholders during the implementation of projects, including Ministries, EU and local chambers of commerce, representatives of the private/business sector and other concerned actors from local, national and regional levels;
- Involvement of students studying in the field of tourism in the implementation of projects.

ANNEXES

- Annex 1: [Brochure and Agenda](#)
- Annex 2: [Presentations](#)
- Annex 3: [Photos](#)



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