

EU and Central Asia deepen trade and economic ties

BY: Zhanna Nurmaganbetova - Kazinform

A high-level event marked the achievements of two regional projects in Central Asia funded by the European Union (EU): the ITC Ready4Trade Central Asia and the OECD Policy Component of the EU Central Asia Invest Programme. These initiatives have supported Central Asian countries' efforts to advance trade reforms, enhance competitiveness, foster connectivity and strengthen regional cooperation, Kazinform News Agency cites the Press and information team of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan.

The event brought together policymakers and key stakeholders from the private and public sectors in Central Asia, as well as representatives of the European Union, the International Trade Centre (ITC), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The high-level event began with opening remarks from H.E. Mr Kestutis Jankauskas, Ambassador of the European Union to Kazakhstan: "The European Union has long been supporting the governments of Central Asian countries in their business environment and trade and transport connectivity reform efforts together with international partners, including ITC and the OECD. Going forward, we will endeavour to develop the potential of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor together with our Central Asian partners to make it a competitive, multimodal and sustainable corridor that can bring Central Asia and Europe closer together. We look forward to the new EU-funded Prosperity Programme to be implemented by ITC and the OECD to support the implementation of this goal".



Ms Zhanel Kushukova, Vice-Minister of Trade and Integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan: "We are grateful for the OECD's and ITC's support for Central Asia's improved trade and transport connectivity. We look forward to further working with them on making the region more connected and competitive".

The ITC Ready4Trade Central Asia project has made significant progress in enhancing intra-regional and international trade across five Central Asian countries. Collaborating closely with the governments, the project addressed obstacles to cross-border trade by simplifying and digitalising trade procedures, making them more transparent, less costly, and less time-consuming. Recognising the need for SME support, the project established national SME Trade Academies and provided tailored on-the-job coaching, enhancing the capacity of SMEs to participate in the global market.

The OECD has supported reforms in areas such as private sector development, internationalisation, digitalisation, trade and transport connectivity, and resilience to shocks. The OECD has built on its core strengths: high-level policy dialogue to enhance EU-OECD-Central Asia economic co-operation, share best practices, and seek further reform commitment; country-level workshops to foster public-private dialogue, collect data and build capacities; and, evidence-based publications containing policy assessments and advice, private sector survey results, and country case studies of good practices. Overall, under the Policy Component of the EU Central Asia Invest Programme, the OECD has delivered: three in-person and four on-line ministerial events, over 65 workshops, and 12 analytical publications.



Zhanel Kushukova, Vice-Minister of Trade and Integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan



The forthcoming EU Prosperity Programme to be implemented by ITC and the OECD, is expected to play a crucial role in this endeavour, driving further connectivity and economic integration between Central Asia and the EU.

The European Union is an economic and political union of 27 European countries. It is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. It acts globally to promote sustainable development of societies, environment and economies, so that everyone can benefit.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the Aid-for-Trade agenda and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.



The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that works to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all. The organisation draws on 60 years of experience and insights to better prepare the world of tomorrow. Together with governments, policy makers and citizens, it works on establishing evidence-based international standards and finding solutions to a range of social, economic and environmental challenges, providing a unique forum and knowledge hub for data and analysis, exchange of experiences, best-practice sharing, and advice on public policies and international standard-setting.