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BOOSTING SMALL BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

## PRESS RELEASE

### ACTED launches 2 EU-funded projects boosting renewable energy and investments in small rural tourism enterprises

Tashkent, 17 September 2020 – two new ACTED projects – “Promoting Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in the Community Based Tourism Sector” (Sustainable Energy for Tourism - SET Project) and “Silk Road CBT Initiative: Connecting Central Asian Community-Based Tourism and European Markets” funded by the European Union’s SWITCH-Asia and Central Asia Invest Programmes, aim to strengthen business development support to the Community-Based Tourism sector, and widen their access to sustainable energy. ACTED and partners will implement the two projects in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan until 2023.

International tourist flow to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has been growing at unprecedented rates in recent years, more than doubling between 2017 – 2019. The growth of the tourism industry has the potential to bring new opportunities and sources of income and prosperity to some of the most remote and marginalized communities. However, rapid tourist development also has the potential to further increase greenhouse emissions and carbon footprint, contributing to environmental degradation in Central Asia, a region that is already severely vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change.

*“In the wake of COVID-19, it’s particularly important to support those small businesses who are the lifeblood of the tourism sector in Central Asia. We also need to prepare to build back our economies in a greener, fairer way after the crisis. That’s really the essence of these two projects”,* said Peter Ormel, Country Director of ACTED in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

These new projects will notably strive to improve the competitiveness of small rural enterprises and support a long-term reduction of the carbon footprint in the tourism sector in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. They will be implemented by ACTED, as well as partners: the Association of Private Tourism Organizations of Uzbekistan (APTA), the Kyrgyz CBT Association “Hospitality Kyrgyzstan” (KCBTA), the Tajik CBT Association (TCBTA); Microfinancing Associations NAMI Uzbekistan, AMFOT Tajikistan and AMFI Kyrgyzstan; as well as BizExpert (Kyrgyzstan), TAJNOR (Tajikistan), Mascontour GmbH (Germany), and the European Centre for Eco- and Agro-Tourism (ECEAT).

Innovation, inclusion and sustainability are the keywords of these new projects, that will include business and financing support for green energy companies, policy recommendations for Governments, activities to promote regional branding and marketing of the Silk Road, eco-certification schemes, international forums, training for community-based and eco-tourism businesses, and promotion of rural and eco-tourism in Central Asia, especially among European tourists. The projects are implemented over 36 months (January 2020-January 2023), with a total budget of nearly 4 million EUR (2,68 million EUR for Sustainable Energy for Tourism – SET Project and 1,28 million EUR for Silk Road CBT Initiative).

The Public Launch event of the projects will take place on September 18, 2020, in the presence of all Government officials, European Union representatives and civil society and private sector stakeholders. The event will be carried out online in compliance with COVID-19 protection measures, setting up a platform for sharing more information on the projects, sharing ideas, and for developing a joint strategic vision for the projects until 2023.





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Websites and social networks:

- <https://www.switch-asia.eu/project/promoting-energy-efficiency-and-renewable-energy-production-in-the-community-based-tourism-sector-in-central-asia/>
- <https://eu-cai.org/about-the-eu-central-asia-invest-programme/cai-grantees/currently-ongoing-projects/silk-road-cbt-initiative-connecting-central-asian-community-based-tourism-and-european-markets/>
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