



SUSTOUKA

Sustainable Tourism in Kazakhstan

SUSTOUKA Project Newsletter 4 — December 2022

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Welcome to the fourth edition of the SUSTOUKA Newsletter, which we hope will contain interesting information on the most important progresses and news about the project development achieved during the last 6 months.

SUSTOUKA Project in a Nutshell

The main objective is to **accelerate the transformation of Kazakhstan towards a Green Economy by enhancing the sustainability and competitiveness of the Tourism Sector** of Kazakhstan.



Summary of the semester

The SUSTOUKA Project has significantly progressed in the last semester of 2022. The main action has been the close collaboration between project partners and local MSMEs of the Tourism Sector to **implement SCP practices and sustainability management systems**.

Additional training sessions and events have been organised face-to-face and online. Events have been addressed to companies and representatives of the Tourism Sector of Kazakhstan in order to expand project outcomes involving a high number of interested parties. Local project partners have also **participated in national and international exhibitions** such as Green Destinations fair in Athens, Greece, in order to share best practices and conduct networking activities with foreign managers.

SUSTOUKA project is funded by the European Union through SWITCH-Asia Grants Programme.



Funded by the European Union

SUSTOUKA project has been extended one additional year until 2024.

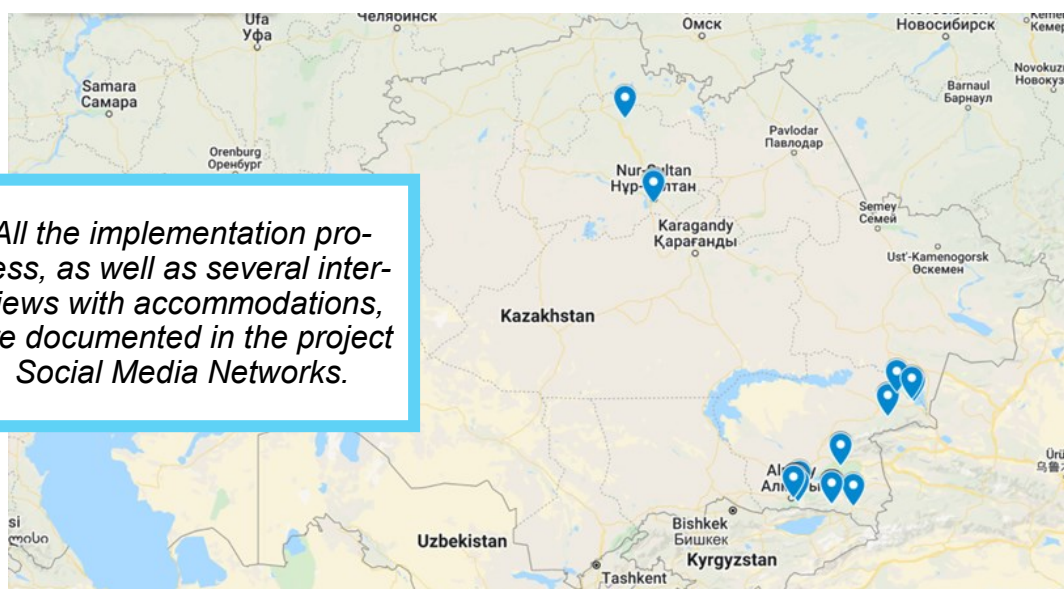
Start date	01/03/2020
Duration	48 months

Implementation of SCP Practices — Monitoring visits

During the last 6 months, project partners have **visited a group of 50 accommodations to help them reduce their environmental footprint through the implementation of SCP practices**. This action is framed in the main output of the project: Improved sustainability and resource efficiency of the Tourist Accommodation Sector in Kazakhstan.

Through a series of events and training sessions, the project consortium has capacitated managers and staff of these accommodations, as well as employees from additional tourists enterprises, in sustainable management, implementation of SCP practices, Travelife certification system and the minimisation of environmental impacts.

Location of the accommodations



All the implementation process, as well as several interviews with accommodations, are documented in the project Social Media Networks.

The majority of the recruited MSMEs are located in Almaty City and the Almaty-Jetisu Region, which is the area of the country where SUSTOUKA Project focuses its actions. This is the area with the highest number of tourist attractions according to the Bureau of the National Statistics of the Government of Kazakhstan.

In the City of Almaty, project partners are collaborating with 15 hotels to improve their sustainability. This group of accommodation ranges from no-rating guest houses to high-level hotels (more than 30% of the 4 and 5-star-rating hotels of the city are included). Additionally, several recreation centres close to the touristic Alakol Lake and various guest houses inside Kolsay–Lakes National Park and Altyn-Emel National Park have been working with the consortium. Hotels from the Shymbulak ski resort have also been involved in project activities. Already identified hotels of the Capital City Astana will be a primary asset for the project to expand its action to other areas.

As the project progresses, **the knowledge and lessons learned will be transferred to other regions to foster the overall sustainability of the Tourism Sector in Kazakhstan**. For instance, natural resort areas in the Pavlodar and North Kazakhstan regions, beach tourism of the Mangystau region or MICE tourism of Astana City are areas in which the project experience will be replicated.

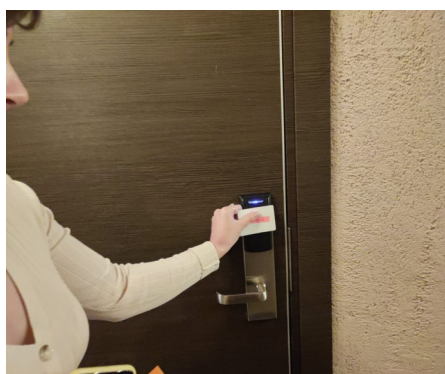
First monitoring visits — Initial assessment of the situation

The first group of monitoring visits was carried out during the summer to make a preliminary evaluation of accommodations.

Project partners explained face-to-face to local staff the overall procedure for the implementation of SCP practices. Furthermore, an evaluation of characteristics and services offered by the accommodations, as well as an assessment of their current situation was carried out. For that, a comprehensive checklist was used to collect all required indicators, which will be compiled at different project phases and thus, measure achieved improvements.



These initial visits were also used to identify already implemented SCP practices by accommodations based on the information received during the training sessions. These practices were classified in three areas: energy (e. g. Key-cards, motion sensors, energy-saving lights, LED bulbs), water (e. g. Towel reuse programme, water-saving signs, tap aerators) and waste management (e. g. segregation bins, food monitoring, reusable food containers).



Second monitoring visits — Identification of areas of improvement

After analysing the information collected during preliminary visits, a second round of monitoring visits was prepared. These visits were carried out from the beginning of November and until the end of the year. Members of the project were accompanied by environmental experts in order to improve the scope of these visits.

Project partners and experts, together with accommodations managers analysed in detail the facilities to evaluate the environmental footprint reduction potential of participating hotels and guest houses. Based on available budget and human resources, the experts identified the main areas where the environmental performance could be improved through the implementation of SCP practices. Materials and instructions on sustainability management were provided, as well as advice to implement practices and reduce the environmental, economic and social impacts of their daily activities.

After studying collected information, project consortium and experts will design a clear road map for each of the accommodation towards the implementation of SCP practices and sustainability improvement.

Roundtable with policymakers on mechanisms for collaboration

On 23 June, a conference entitled “Mechanisms for Collaboration between Government Bodies and Business Community” was organised with the objective of promoting SCP practices and sustainable tourism in Kazakhstan.

The governmental bodies of Kazakhstan, whose involvement is crucial to support sustainable behaviours in the tourism sector, have lately adopted a transition path towards a green economy through establishing sustainable policies and standards. However, there is still a significant gap in the coordination and communication between the government and the tourism agents.



Members of the tourism departments of universities (e. g. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Narxoz University and Turan University), experts from environmental associations (e. g. Atameken, ECOJER and UNDP) and directors of tourism companies were put in contact with officials from the Committee of Tourism Industry of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan with the objective of sharing their opinions and initialise a discussion to improve the tourism sector.

With this event, participants exchanged **views on current and future governmental incentives**, discussed about **public-private partnerships** between policy-makers and the business community of the tourism sector, and shared **successful case stories** for the implementation of SCP practices .

Mr Johannes Stenbaek Madsen, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan: *“The EU supports Kazakhstan in green transition. We are happy to help accelerate the uptake of sustainable consumption and production practices in the tourism sector through this project. It is crucial to facilitate a frank and open-minded dialogue with all relevant stakeholders to build a truly sustainable tourism sector to preserve the natural wealth of your country and create new jobs for local people”.*

Mr Yerzhan Yerkinbayev , Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan: *“The need to exchange information between governmental institutions and the business community of the tourism sector and thus promote public-private partnerships. This will boost the implementation of SCP practices in the sector and move towards its sustainability”.*

Follow-up meeting in Almaty



During the second part of June, members of EKOTEK as project coordinators travelled to Kazakhstan to carry out a project follow-up meeting.

The meeting was hosted at the offices of KTA and KAGIR in Almaty. During the meeting, **future actions and activities of the project were discussed and planned, and important information exchanged in order to enhance the outcomes of SUSTOUKA.**

Training seminars within SUSTOUKA Project

Training sessions with Juris Smalinskis

Juris Smalinskis, an environmental expert from the Latvian Rural Tourism Association, provided several seminars on sustainable tourism during November.



These seminars were held in different locations of the South-Eastern regions of the country and were addressed to the different agents of the whole tourism value chain of the corresponding areas.

The 2-day training sessions comprised 4 main themes, and were delivered in a different location. The programme reads as follows:

Date	Location	Topic
14 & 15 Nov.	Almaty City	Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism
17 & 18 Nov.	Saty Village (Almaty Region)	Tourism in Specially Protected Areas — National and Nature Parks
24 & 25 Nov.	Turkestan	Involvement of small and medium-sized tourism companies in Tourism Product Development
24 & 25 Nov.	Ust-Kamenogorsk (East Kazakhstan)	Product Development of active, natural, rural and cultural Tourism

Each of the 2-day training sessions lasted 14 hours. The first day the main topic was introduced, including a comprehensive description about the role of resources and infrastructure for sustainable development. Then, the principles to create sustainable products/services were presented, along with the methods to develop them by the local community, stakeholders and entrepreneurs.

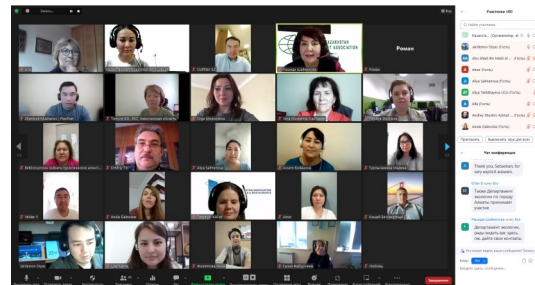
The second day started with good examples and practices in Central Asian countries, Baltic States, Europe and worldwide. Later on, the expert exposed several marketing strategies for the promotion of the developed sustainable products and services. The final part of the seminars consisted on practical work, in which participants worked together on the information received.

In total, **131 participants** attended the sessions: university professors, tour guides, representatives of national parks, owners of guest houses and employees from travel agencies and tour operators. After the sessions, the attendees received a diploma for their participation.



Conference on the reduction of the carbon footprint

On 25 November, the project consortium organised an online conference entitled “Reducing the carbon footprint in the tourism industry in Kazakhstan”. The objective was to present business cases and practices on waste management and sustainable tourism development in the hospitality industry. The event was addressed to a wide range of stakeholders, such as managers of local accommodations and tour operators, representatives of the government (e. g. Tourism Department of Almaty City, Visit Center of Jetisu Region), members of universities and employees from environmental associations (e. g. KazWaste, Kazakh Geography, Greenup), among others.



The conference started with the introduction of sustainable tourism development by Ms. Alla Peresolova (international expert and ex-head of the UNWTO Silk Road Programme), and followed by a talk on the current situation of waste management in Kazakhstan by Ms. Aizhan Ryskulova (Deputy Director of the Kazakhstan Waste Management Association KazWaste). In the second part of the conference, successful cases and examples on sustainable tourism were presented by Novotel Almaty City Hotel and Lufthansa Group, as well as practices on waste management by KazWaste.

Due to the great feedback received from participants, the project consortium will continue organising practical conferences periodically for interested parties.

Networking activities

Tour Green Destinations

A representation of local project partners along with tourism representatives and policy-makers of the Republic of Kazakhstan participated in the **Green Destinations & Future of Tourism Summit 2022**. This 3-day long event was held in September in Athens, Greece, and brought together more than 240 delegates from 43 countries in order to identify, share and promote initiatives, tools and solutions for sustainable tourism destinations.

The Kazakh delegation attended conferences and panel discussions on the latest tendencies and best practices of the tourism sector. Additionally, the delegation finalised the study tour by visiting Hydra Island. This Greek island served as an example of a sustainable tourist destination: local community is involved in policy-making, accommodations regularly implement SCP practices, public transport use is encouraged, waste recycling programmes are supported by the government, etc.



HOREX Exhibition

As happened last year, the local partner KAGIR participated in **HOREX — Central-Asian International Exhibition “Everything for hotels, restaurants, supermarkets”** - during November. HOREX was held together with other international exhibitions, such as WorldFood, ArgoWorld, KazUpack and CleanExpo Kazakhstan with the objective to incentivise sustainable tourism industry all in a single event.



KAGIR held a stand in the exhibition, where the attendees got to know the work SUSTOUKA project is doing towards sustainability of the Tourism Sector of the country.

Sustainability capacity building to future National Experts

SUSTOUKA Project has organised a **25-hours capacity building programme on Sustainable Tourism Management**. The programme will be delivered from 16 to 20 January 2023 in Almaty, in a face-to-face format and will feature experts in the field of sustainable tourism, environmental management, green financing and legal framework, among others.

The programme aims to capacitate Future National Experts in diverse topics such as sustainable tourism standards, energy and waste management, socio-cultural and socio-economic responsibilities, available financial schemes, environmental regulations, etc. to promote the development of a Sustainable Tourism Sector in Kazakhstan.

The assistance of roughly 30 participants is expected that will be capacitated to become the future national experts on sustainability topics linked to the tourism sector. The profile of participants range from head of tourism associations and programme managers, to hotel managers, directors of travel companies and national academics, including also

Day	Topic
16 January 2023	Sustainable management and development: introduction, key concepts and environmental management.
17 January 2023	Socio-cultural and socio-economic responsibility of a business; internal policies and sustainable tourism management.
18 January 2023	Health & Safety; Customer rights & protection. Financial schemes for sustainable tourism .
19 January 2023	Legal framework: laws and regulation in KZ.
20 January 2023	Sustainable tourism certification and auditing. Introduction to Travelife.

The creation of this panel of experts in the country will allow that, once the project action is finished, stakeholders interested in incorporating sustainable practices in their activities can count on a well-structured group of experts in several fields for receiving support.

Main results achieved

- More than 200 agents of the Tourism Sector have received information about SCP and Travelife certification system during project training sessions and workshops.
- 50 accommodations have started the procedure to implement SCP practices to reduce their energy and water consumption and improve their waste management.
- 50 MSMEs have started the implementation of Travelife certification system.
- More than 600 people, of which more than 60% are women, have participated in the events carried out since the beginning of the project. The percentage of participants with a high degree of satisfaction surpasses 91%.

Project consortium

Coordinator:



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SUSTOUKA social media profiles



[Website](#)



[Facebook profile](#)



[Instagram profile](#)



[Youtube channel](#)

Representative of the Tourism Sector:

“Sustainable Tourism considers the economic, social and environmental impacts of the Sector while supporting the local communities, spreading the local culture, fulfilling the needs of tourists and helping the industry”.

ABOUT

switchasia



The overall objective of the EU funded SWITCH-Asia programme is to promote sustainable and inclusive growth, contribute to the economic prosperity and poverty reduction in Asia and Central Asia and to a transition towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient and circular economy.

www.switch-asia.eu/