Dear readers,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of our Ready4Trade newsletter in Kyrgyzstan! In this issue, we are delighted to introduce the Ready4Trade Central Asia project, as well as share some of our recent achievements. This project funded by the European Union provides targeted trade development support to five Central Asian countries, and we are happy to see Kyrgyzstan among them.

In line with the implementation of the EU Strategy on Central Asia: “New opportunities for a Stronger Partnership” and the need to ensure a stronger regional integration, Ready4Trade supports the development of intra-regional and international trade by enhancing the transparency of cross-border requirements, removing regulatory and procedural barriers, strengthening business capability to comply with trade formalities, as well as by improving cross-border e-commerce.

Our newsletter will keep you informed of important steps in our activities and plans, achievements and challenges. Each issue will be available online in English and Russian on our website: intracen.org/Ready4Trade.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the organizations and entities who made this project possible. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the central role of our donor, the European Union, for its generous support and constructive collaboration. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Economy and Finance, who has always been very supportive of ITC’s work in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the Kyrgyz business associations, who will be key in assisting us to identify the main challenges SMEs face in Kyrgyzstan and that need to be addressed through Ready4Trade. This list is of course not exhaustive! We are looking forward to continuing working with all stakeholders for an evermore thriving Kyrgyz economy.

Indira Kadyrkanova
ITC National Project Manager in Kyrgyzstan

ITC Executive Director and United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Pamela Coke-Hamilton:

‘This ambitious project signals a renewed effort to boost trade-led growth in Central Asian countries. ITC is pleased to work with policymakers and the business community to support a more inclusive and sustainable approach to economic development particularly by modernizing certain strategic areas such as trade facilitation and e-commerce’.
How Ready4Trade Central Asia supports Kyrgyzstan transform its economy

Smoother trade and new business opportunities: that’s what businesses in Kyrgyzstan can look forward to with the activities organized under the Ready4Trade Central Asia initiative.

With this project, the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Kyrgyzstan, the European Union (EU) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) have joined forces to provide Kyrgyzstan with the necessary impetus for an inclusive and sustainable economic development through an increased intra-regional and international trade. Ready4Trade’s activities will in turn help minimize the negative impact of COVID-19 on the economy of Kyrgyzstan.

During a high-level online event held on 31 March 2021, stakeholders reviewed the initial outcomes of Ready4Trade in Kyrgyzstan as well as scheduled next steps. Ready4Trade plans to achieve its goal by enhancing cross-border requirements transparency, removing regulatory and procedural barriers, strengthening business capability to comply with trade formalities and standards, as well as improving cross-border e-commerce. Activities under Ready4Trade are organized around 2 key areas, i.e. trade facilitation and e-commerce.

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Towards an improved e-commerce ecosystem in Kyrgyzstan

E-commerce can be a driver of economic growth, inclusive trade and job-creation; taking this on board, Kyrgyzstan is launching an ambitious programme to better harness the potential offered by the digitalization of trade through the E-Commerce Development Programme for 2021-2025, with the support of Ready4Trade. In this endeavor, the Kyrgyz government is working closely with all relevant local e-commerce associations.

To get the programme on track, an interagency working group (called Core Team) was created in December 2020 by the Government’s Order # 386-R to:

• lead, champion and guide the Programme design process;
• create visibility for the programme at the national level;
• engage and consult all key public and private national stakeholders and high-level authorities having a bearing on trade development, to ensure an inclusive and participatory design process.

Digital transformation and e-commerce have been given priority within the larger context of the national development strategy 2018-2040 (Vision 2040) and related five-year development programmes. The objectives set in this Vision 2040 include enabling a digital transformation for traditional sectors of the Kyrgyz economy, such as industrial production, tourism, agriculture, light industry and construction, and facilitating the creation of opportunities for the private sector to expand to new sales markets.

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Building the capacity of SMEs to comply with procedural formalities, technical regulations, quality standards and other requirements related to cross-border trade is key to enable more SMEs in Kyrgyzstan to participate in regional and international value chains and generate new export flows. This is why increasing the SMEs’ awareness of international market requirements and cross-border procedures is at the heart the Ready4Trade project.

Through ITC’s Export Management Coaching Initiative (EMCI), Ready4Trade provides on-the-job advisory and capacity building services to SMEs. The EMCI was developed by ITC as a practical and action-oriented initiative to help business-owners solve day-to-day problems faced in the management of their export operations.

To develop the ability of selected local Export Management Coaches to provide tailored consulting and training services to SMEs in the specific area of cross-border procedures management, Ready4Trade organized for the chosen coaches a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) in early December in Kyrgyzstan.
SMEs in Kyrgyzstan to benefit from e-commerce

“Being able to work with an e-commerce coach has been a tremendous opportunity to help me grow my business. Together we analyzed the company’s existing online channels and defined the profile of our final consumer. Our company produces hand-made carpets and rugs, woven in the traditional Kyrgyz way, which is what also makes our company stand out in this sector. Following our coach’s advice, we adjusted our channels (Instagram, Facebook, Website) to our targeted audience. We set many ambitious goals and we can already see the first results of our joint work”, says Aibarcha Bekova, Art Director of Datka Kilem company.

Just like the Datka Kilem company, 83 MSMEs, mainly from the textile, garments, food and beverages and handicrafts sectors, benefit from the advice and coaching of 18 national advisors in Kyrgyzstan trained by ITC. These trainers mentor and accompany the selected MSMEs through the different stages of e-commerce development, from market research and e-commerce strategy to the digitalization of content, the selection of an online channel, the use of online payment solutions, and understanding of the logistics of e-commerce. The MSMEs will also benefit from individual consultations on social media marketing and digital marketing techniques.

Ready4Trade will also implement several e-labs to provide specific support to the most advanced companies. These e-labs combine testing, measuring and learning. By testing different online channels and digital marketing techniques, and by measuring their performance, the more advanced companies will be able to develop their own e-commerce strategy and consecutively share lessons learned and best practices with beginners.

ABOUT READY4TRADE CENTRAL ASIA

With the ‘Ready4Trade Central Asia’ project, the European Union (EU) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) are joining forces to contribute to the overall sustainable and inclusive economic development of Central Asia by boosting intra-regional and international trade in the region.