Dear readers,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of our Ready4Trade newsletter in Tajikistan! 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 Tajikistan 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, Tajik, 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 generous donor, the European Union, for its generous support and constructive collaboration. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and the Customs Service, who have always been very supportive of ITC’s work in Tajikistan, as well as the Tajik business associations, who will be key in assisting us to identify the main challenges SMEs face in Tajikistan and that need to be addressed through Ready4Trade. This list is of course not exhaustive! We are looking forward to continuing working will all stakeholders for an evermore thriving Tajik economy.

Last but not least, I would like to say Happy Navruz and wish all of you every success and happiness for the traditional Tajik New Year!

Saidmumin Kamolov
ITC National Programme Manager in Tajikistan

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'. 
The International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Customs Service of the Republic of Tajikistan introduced the first Commentary to its Customs Code thanks to the Ready4Trade Central Asia project.

The Customs Code of Tajikistan has undergone numerous changes and gained some additions since its original adoption in 2004. Nevertheless, it was missing a key part until now: the Commentary, which details the official interpretation of the Customs Code’s articles, and which has recently been published. To mark this milestone, the new Commentary was presented during a launch event on 25 November 2020 in Dushanbe in front of the public and private sectors, as well as the international donor community.

The Commentary, developed and published both in Tajik and Russian, unifies the interpretation of the Customs Code’s articles. An electronic version of the Commentary will be available on the official website of the Customs Service where it will be downloadable for free.

Members of the core working team developing the first e-commerce strategy for Tajikistan met for the first time in Dushanbe on 23 December 2020. This core team includes relevant government bodies’ representatives. The objective of developing such an e-commerce strategy is to further improve the digitalization of the Tajik economy.

Opening the event, H.E. Mr Abdurahmon Abdurahmonzoda, Deputy Minister of the Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan:
- noted that the recent COVID-19 pandemic once again showed the importance of digitalization, including in particular the development of e-commerce, and
- informed the participants of the current steps the Tajik government is taking to harness the benefits of the growing digital economy.

During the meeting, ITC’s experts shared the current progress made on the strategy, detailed the methodology they are using to develop it, and presented the preliminary findings and suggestions they received during their various online meetings and interviews with Tajikistan’s public and private sectors.
Women as changemakers: leading a training company in Tajikistan

To celebrate International Women’s Day, Ready4Trade would like to introduce you to its lead business management coach: Farzona Tilavova.

This year actually marks a new milestone for Farzona, a self-made woman and the face of business consultancy services in Tajikistan, who has shattered many glass ceilings in her path. She has reached the next level in her international career, as she is now training coaches in export management skills outside of Tajikistan, in other beneficiary countries of Ready4Trade, namely Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. These coaches will in turn pass on their newly acquired knowledge to local entrepreneurs, thus creating a domino effect of the capacity-building activities of Ready4Trade.

Her advice for this International Women's Day?
"Nothing in life comes easy. Success requires daily hard work; it challenges your ambition and your abilities, and it pushes you to the limit. One of the keys is to always seek more knowledge. So, I call on young girls to never stop dreaming to be the best in any area they like, and to let knowledge be their first passion".

Fast-Track to improved cross-border trade in Central Asia

Illustrative. Customs Clearance process at a Tajikistan customs point.
Photo by the Customs Service

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on trade, Tajikistan is taking great strides to remove regulatory and procedural barriers. As of last August, companies can apply to become an “Authorized Economic Operator” (AEO) through an innovative mechanism set up by the local authorities. This new trade facilitation regulation aims to enhance international supply chains security and facilitate legitimate trade in Tajikistan.

The new changes introduced to the Customs Code of Tajikistan allow companies, which meet pre-defined criteria that prove they conduct their business in a transparent and trustworthy manner, to apply for the AEO status. This new regulation to facilitate import, export, and transit formalities in Tajikistan is part of the country’s WTO obligations on the simplification of trade procedures and contributes to its compliance with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

To introduce both the private and public sectors to these latest developments in expedition of import, export, and transit of goods formalities and procedures, as well as to exchange points of view views to shape further the new trade facilitation measures in the country, a dedicated webinar on economic feasibility and features of the legal status of Authorized Economic Operators was organized on 29 May 2020.
A training for trainers (ToT) on export management was conducted by Ready4Trade experts in Dushanbe from 18 to 22 January 2021. The 6 local coaches who had been selected to participate in the training learned about five primary areas of export management and can now in turn deliver their newly acquired knowledge to Tajik entrepreneurs. These areas of major importance for the exporters are:

• Packaging and Labelling;
• Mandatory and Voluntary Certifications and Buyer’s Standards;
• Customs and Duties;
• International Transportation by Road, Rail and Air; and
• Export planning and pro-forma invoices.

This training is an introductory stage of the Export Management Coaching Initiative, a key component of our Ready4Trade project. This component is to be implemented jointly with the National Association of Small and Medium Businesses of the Republic of Tajikistan.
Happy Navruz from the Ready4Trade team!

This past year has been quite challenging as the COVID-19 wreak havoc on our daily lives and our economy. But with the blooming of the first flowers this spring, symbolizing the New Year, we wish to leave behind the bad memories and start afresh. Let’s all embrace Navruz with much-needed hope and happiness. Let’s spread some kindness and optimism!

This Navruz, we wish you and your loved ones good health, happiness and prosperity. May your heart blossom like cherry flowers and may you have an ocean of reasons to smile this year! May you fill the New Year with new adventures, accomplishments, and learnings!

Have a wonderful Navruz surrounded by all your loved ones!

ABOUT READY4TRADE CENTRAL ASIA

With the project ‘Ready4Trade Central Asia’, 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.

intracen.org/Ready4Trade  Ready4Trade@intracen.org