



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Ministries welcome achievements of regions at the EU-funded *Kazakhstan Regional Development* project Closure Event

**ASTANA – Over 150 participants from ministries, state agencies, as well as international and non-governmental organisations welcomed the achievements of East Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda and Mangystau regions at the EU-funded *Kazakhstan Regional Development* project Closure Event that took place on 1 February 2017. Since February 2013 the Project has provided advise and technical assistance to the Ministry of National Economy and pilot regions on the implementation of the regional development policy.**

Speaking at the event, representatives of the Ministry of National Economy and the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan highlighted the achievements in the areas of *territorial strategic planning, development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), regional tourism, regional innovation, local self-government, results-based budgeting, agriculture and improvement in quality of public services*. Much discussion was given over to how the regions, ministries and agencies will sustain these achievements after the Project's closure.

Mr Zoltan Szalai, Charge d'Affaires of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan, noted: *"It is clear that the ministries, regions and agencies of the Government of Kazakhstan have been excellent partners. We note the excellent results: nearly 63 strategic documents worked on of which 53 adopted by relevant authorities; 1000 persons trained to high levels of competency in regional development and associated areas; over 20 regional, local or rural inclusive planning processes undertaken and plans developed; 9 strategic territorial and thematic partnerships established and developed; over 50 investment projects and business plans in tourism, innovation and agriculture prepared for investments worth well over KZT 30 billion, a full training programme on regional and local scale developed and piloted"*.

Speaking about the success of the Project in Mangystau, Deputy Head of Mangystau region Ms Sholpan Ilmukhanbetova stressed that the region had focused on SMEs development to increase their share in the gross regional product (GRP): *"In this area the Project provided recommendations on conditions to attract investment and improving the quality of business support services. So, for example, today in Mangystau and Kyzylorda regions, district level business service centers have been set up and are operating now. Standards for business support services have also been developed and approved to ensure continuous and seamless support to SMEs. The Project gave important recommendations to reduce administrative and economic barriers for SMEs in order to improve the access to the support instruments under government programs. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of projects under the "2020 Business Road Map" programme from 41 in 2013 to 179 in 2016 in Mangystau region. The share of SMEs in GRP increased from 18.3% in 2013 to 33.2% in 2016"*.

Over the four years *Kazakhstan Regional Development* project experts developed skills among staff of regional administrations and several non-governmental organizations. The Project also worked closely with the Academy of Public Administration (APA) under the President of Kazakhstan to develop an extensive *Regional and Local Development and Governance* modular training programme. At the event, the first graduates from this programme were awarded certificates jointly by APA and the Project.

Ms Saule Ulakova, Deputy Head of Economy and Budget Planning Division of East Kazakhstan region, highlighted the work done in the region to prepare implementation of forthcoming local self-governance reforms. She explained how the regional administration had supported districts and rural administrations to prepare for implementation through training and planning exercises. This involved inclusive planning process in five rural districts – Tavriya, Shulbinsk, Pervorossiisk, Ainabulak and Satpayev involving three working groups and around thirty persons in each. The plans also included proposed projects to regenerate rural areas.

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