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EU4Environment

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine

EU4Environment welcomes the launch of Industrial Waste Mapping activities in Azerbaijan

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With the support of the European Union (EU) funded EU4Environment Action and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Azerbaijani industries are one step closer to fully embracing the practices and benefits of Circular Economy (CE) through the active use of industrial waste mapping (IWM).

Concretely, thanks to the kick-off stakeholders meeting on IWM activities held in Azerbaijan on Tuesday, 16 November 2020, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) owners, key Government representatives, financial institutions, as well as relevant national agencies (such as the Small and Medium Business Development Agency, SMBDA) gathered together to learn more about the “Circular Economy and New Growth Opportunities” Component within EU4Environment.

Efficient use of resources is one of the main parts of the EU Green Deal – the new EU economic growth strategy, which also encourages Eastern Neighborhood countries to increase productivity and reduce the impact of economic activities on the environment. As regards waste management, there is a large number of interested parties ready to engage in this very topical issue (with a number of developments having been recently materialized in our cooperation with Azerbaijan). An example is the ESP (Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership) project where one of the first joint undertakings will be the renewal of the waste management system in Azerbaijan’s second-largest city, Ganja. Later this week, we are also welcoming a very important mission from Brussels to discuss a new EU financial instrument launched under the EU Economic and Investment Programme – this will give our cooperation with the EaP countries a new financial dimension, as it provides blending and guarantees as identified within the flagship projects. Specifically in Azerbaijan, most of these projects have a strong focus on environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation. We also note that the SMBDA Agency is involved to provide support today and on the subject in general. The SMBDA is one of our main partners for cooperation and we are currently discussing how to support the Agency to further develop and have a strategy for greening SMEs in the country (effort also flanking with the work of EU4Environment), said Mr. Rainer Freund, Programme Manager, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

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The online event started off with presentations on the Action's Component and its applicability nationwide, followed by the introduction of industrial waste mapping (IWM) as a means to improve waste management. In this sense, the main beneficiaries of the initiative, the national Ministries of Economy and Environment, and other relevant agencies, have demonstrated their proactive support for Azerbaijani enterprises.

The Ministry of Economy and of Ecology and Natural Resources supports this programme (EU4Environment), as the opportunities related to the Circular Economy (CE) Component are in line with the demand of the modern age. Promoting resource efficiency among the SMEs, and specifically piloting the IWM is beneficial for the country. As you know, there are the National Priorities for Socio-economic Development for 2030, approved by presidential decree in 2021, with the fine priorities including a sustainable and dynamic economy, competitive human capital, as well as achieving a clean and green environment for all, said Ms. Aytakin Guluzada, Deputy Head of Department of Cooperation with International Organizations, Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan.

UNIDO's mandate within the Action is to work directly with industries and enterprises to support their green transition. Hence, it is one of the priorities of UNIDO not only because it demonstrates the possibilities to implement CE in Azerbaijan, but also because it gives the opportunity for UNIDO to speak about industries as a driver for economic growth - a positive driver from both environmental and resource-efficiency points of view, said Ms. Tatiana Chernyavskaya, EU4Environment Project Manager, Industrial Resource Efficiency Division, Directorate for Environment and Energy, UNIDO.

64 participants, of which 23 (36%) were women, engaged in the online discussion. At the end of the event, enterprise owners and representatives from the private sector posed important questions, developing dialogue and trust. The discourse revolved around current plans to invest in recycling means or methods to reduce the companies' carbon footprint. To advance in such endeavours, SMEs need long-term support that includes financing and inclusion of the banking sector to make the green transition feasible and smooth.

Background

EU4Environment Action, funded by the European Union, aims to support Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to preserve and better use their natural capital, increase people's environmental well-being, and grasp new development opportunities. With a budget of some EUR 20 million for all six countries, EU4Environment is carried with implementation support by five international partners: OECD, UNIDO, UNEP, UNECE and the World Bank. For further information about the Action, visit: www.eu4environment.org. For information about RECP in Azerbaijan, please visit: www.recpaz.wordpress.com

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