



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Brussels, 10 September 2015

New EU action supporting development in the regions of Azerbaijan

The European Union is continuing to invest in business development, investment promotion and employment generation, with a total funding of €13.5 million, in order to improve quality of life in rural areas of Azerbaijan.

The programme, '**Integrated Regional Development of Azerbaijan**', addresses the institutional environment within which rural small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and family owned farms do their business. It will also provide dedicated business support services and carry out various outreach actions (e.g.: awareness campaigns, pro-entrepreneurial initiatives and investor attraction) to help create demand for agricultural products produced in Azerbaijan.

The initiative will support, for example, campaigns promoting local food heritage and regional identity, promoting an active role of rural women, events attracting young entrepreneurs to develop business models focused on local agro-food systems, direct-marketing initiatives around rural heritage, local brands, quality labels and biodiversity resources.

In addition, actions to support entrepreneurial development in rural areas are planned such as, for instance: private incubation services, business mentoring and coaching, start-up programmes, investment and seed funding, customer discovery strategies, mediation and arbitration services, business clubs, etc.

Background

Azerbaijan's economy has witnessed strong growth over the last decade, while making substantial progress in poverty reduction. Despite this achievement, important disparities remain, notably between the oil-rich capital agglomeration and the rest of the country, and more generally, between its urban centres and the rural areas. The EU intends to support the Government's efforts in the diversification of the economy while promoting a balanced and inclusive growth, decrease regional disparities and improve rural livelihoods.

The funding comes through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the main financial and cooperation instrument through which the funding is given to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries, including Azerbaijan.

The three main priorities of the current programming period (2014-2017) are: (i) regional and rural development, (ii) education and skills development and (iii) justice reform.

For more information

Website of EU Delegation to Azerbaijan:

http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/azerbaijan/index_en.htm

Eastern Partnership:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/eastern-partnership/index_en.htm

EU Neighbourhood Info Centre:

<http://www.enpi-info.eu/>