



## PRESS-RELEASE

### **Experts address a Resolution to the heads of Central Asian countries for enhancing handicraft sector in the region**

**Bishkek, 01 October 2014** - Twelve experts and stakeholders addressed a common Resolution to the Presidents of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to draw attention towards the needs of the handicraft sector in Central Asia. The joint statement was an outcome of the International Conference "Regional Cooperation as a key instrument for promoting Central Asian Handicraft into International Sales Markets", held in Bishkek within the framework of the EU-funded project "Handicraft and Business through Regional Integration and Fair Trade Market". The Conference, organized by the Public Association "Bishkek Business Club" (BBC) with the support of partner organizations, was attended by the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism of the Kyrgyz Republic, civil society organizations, artisans and experts from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, as well as international experts from Sweden and Italy.

The final Resolution identifies nine critical issues that should be addressed to improve the interaction between Central Asia countries and presents a number of concrete proposals for developing the potentials of the handicraft sector. The signatories of the document, conscious that "many issues are better addressed at regional rather than national level" and "deeply convinced that Central Asia, a vast Region rich in history [...] would significantly benefit from a better integration at the Regional level", reaffirm that "handicraft is not only a valuable form of folk art and the expression of unique cultural heritage, but also a strategic business opportunity".

The experts "call for the definition of clear public policies regulating the handicraft sector" and request that such policies "reaffirm handicraft sector as a strategic component of the economy". Moreover, the Resolution calls upon the "determination of the legal status of the artisan at the level of national regulations", demands the "official approval of the list of handicraft products widely produced in each country" and requires "multilateral intergovernmental agreements on the unification of customs duties on the borders between Central Asia countries for better transportation of handicraft products and raw materials". Issue such as State assistance in the formation of urban craft centers, taxation system and intellectual property protection should also be carefully considered.

The Governments of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan are asked to express their position and put forward concrete road-maps for the implementation of the actions proposed by the 1<sup>st</sup> of October.

The BBC, together with the Italian Ngo Cesvi, is implementing in Kyrgyzstan the 2-year project "Handicraft and business through Regional Integration and Fair Trade Market". The project, funded under the third edition of the EU Central Asia Invest Program, will reinforce the cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, contributing to the development of their private sector, with a specific focus on the handicraft sector.

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