

Closing Ceremony to recognise the participants of the Academic School on Environmental Economics

30 April 2021, 15:00-16:00, Zoom

Welcome Speech by

Mr Johannes Stenbaek Madsen, Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan

Dear Vice-Rector Barbara Janusz-Pawletta,

Dear participants, ladies and gentlemen,

- I am very pleased and honoured to welcome you on behalf of the EU Delegation in Kazakhstan to today's Ceremony to recognize the participants of the Academic School on Environmental Economics.
- Environmental economics is a relatively new field of study. As you know, its importance has increased dramatically in this century due to the growing environmental concerns of the modern society.
- **Climate change, rapid biodiversity loss and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic are strong signals that we must change our relationship with nature.** In this regard, protecting and restoring natural capital is directly relevant to the economy, providing up to 30% of the climate solution and with around half of the GDP depending on it, according to recent OECD studies.
- Under the **European Green Deal**, the European Union recognises that climate and environmental protection is a driver for green growth, a healthy planet and improved wellbeing for all life on Earth. That is why green recovery has also been embedded in the **EU's recovery measures** from the COVID pandemic to revitalise the EU economies and to 'build back better'.
- The EU has already succeeded in breaking the link between greenhouse gas emissions and the economic growth: in the period of 1990-2018, the greenhouse gas emissions in the EU fell by 23%, while the GDP grew by 61%.
- **Key EU target for 2030** is at least 55% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, compared to the 1990 levels.
- **By 2050, Europe aims to become the first climate-neutral continent** – an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. This objective is also in line with the EU's commitments under the **Paris Agreement** and to achieve the **2030 Sustainable Development Goals**.
- The EU is advancing towards a regenerative growth model, decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation, and accelerating the transition to a circular economy. We encourage our international partners to do the same and stand ready to share the EU experience and expertise.
- In line with the Green Deal, as well as the EU Strategy on Central Asia, the EU continues to cooperate with Central Asian states to strengthen their capacity to deal with the impacts of

climate change and to support their transition towards circular economy, as well as to sustainable consumption and production.

- The COVID-19 recovery offers us new opportunities to rethink the way we produce and consume. Moving from linear to greener and more circular economies is essential. Our new approach “**Reduce, Reuse and Recycle**” envisages that not only businesses, but also citizens, regular consumers, must act with a more responsible approach to preserve our Planet for future generations
- Within the framework of its development cooperation, which since 2014 has amounted to **more than EUR 1 billion for Central Asia**, the EU promotes **sustainable economic development and a more rational use of natural resources**. The EU has **15 ongoing regional programmes** covering the sustainable use of water, energy, environment and the water-food-energy nexus for the total amount of **about €100 million**.
- As you know, the countries of the region are very interdependent when it comes to environment, water and energy. Through projects like WECOOP, the EU works together with its Central Asian partner countries to enhance national environmental, climate change and water policies to approximate them to EU standards. Through WECOOP we also promote informed green investments in the relevant sectors with the ultimate goal of contributing to measurable reductions in man-made pollution.
- Economic and environmental objectives had often been perceived as contradictory. It was believed that a choice must be made between one and the other. This perception proved to be wrong. Economy and environment can and should go together.
- In this regard, the academia’s role in promoting sustainable development and green growth among the youth is indispensable.

Dear teachers,

- You educate and train the future generation of environmental leaders. Their decisions will determine the future of our planet, our environment and the lives of our children.
- I hope that the knowledge and new skills you gained from the Academic School on Environmental Economics would enrich your valuable work. I wholeheartedly congratulate you on the successful completion of your studies.
- I want to thank the organizers – the Kazakh-German University for this initiative to hold the Academic School on Environmental Economics for the university teachers and the WECOOP Project team for supporting this School.
- I wish you all good health, best of luck and all the inspiration and determination you need on your professional journey.

Thank you!