



# **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPROVEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

## **IN THE FIELD OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

**switchasia**



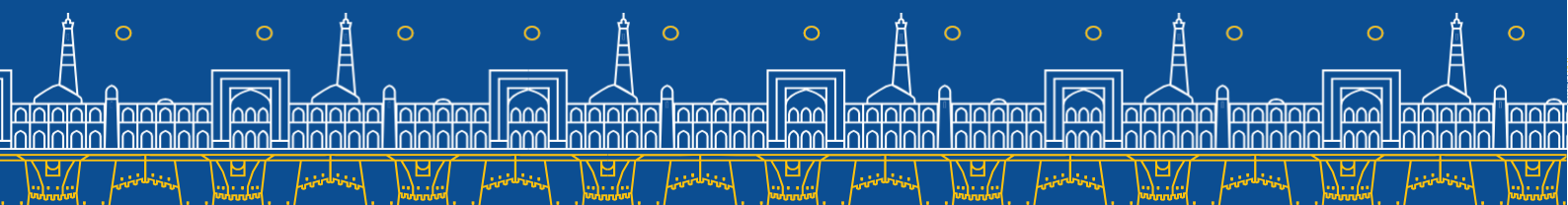
Funded by  
the European Union

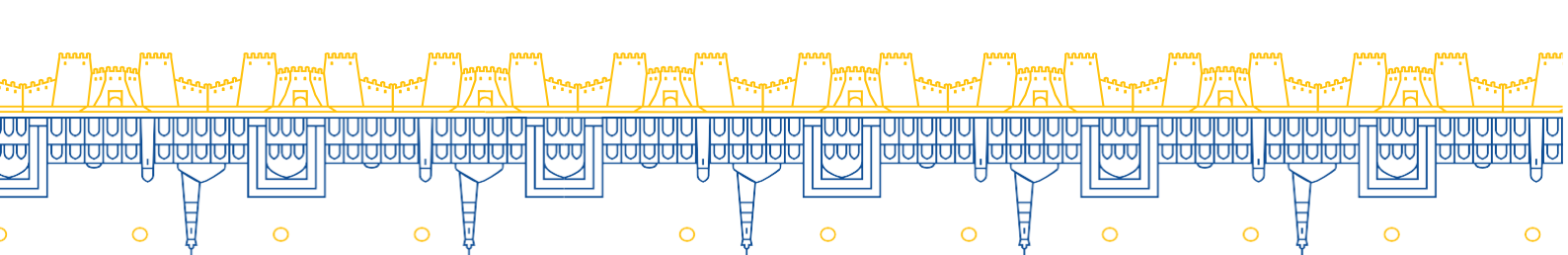


**most**

Model for  
Sustainable Tourism  
in Central Asia

GRANT CONTRACT N. ACA/2019/412-065





## PARTNERSHIP

### Coordinating Partner



### Project Partners



For more information visit our website: <https://mostcentralasia.eu/most/>

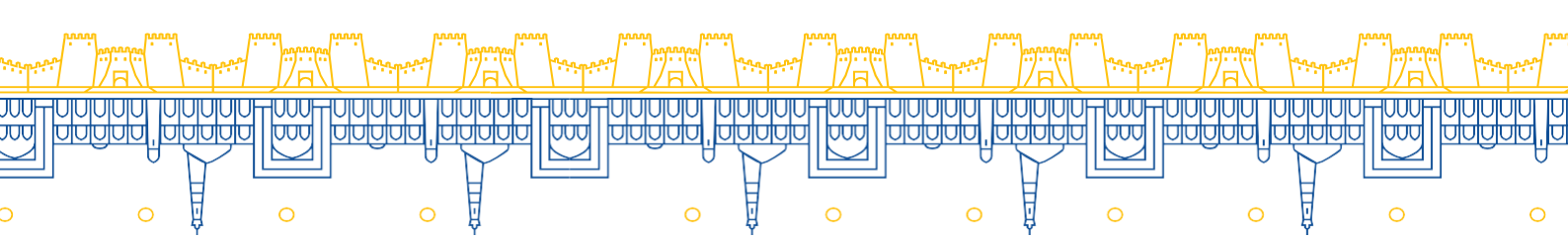
And our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MOSTSwitchAsiaProject>

**switchasia**



Funded by  
the European Union





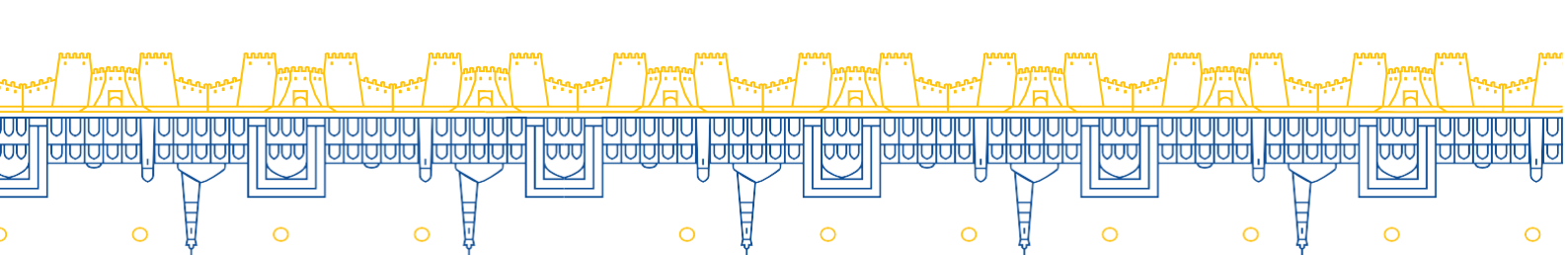
## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **IN THE FIELD OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

A study produced for the SWITCH-ASIA Programme by  
Lead Partner Heraklion Development Agency  
under sub-contractor PLOIGOS

Heraklion, September 2022





## DISCLAIMER

“This publication was created and maintained with the financial support of the European Union, under SWITCH-Asia Programme. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Heraklion Development Agency and MOST project partners and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union”.





# FOREWORD

A policy recommendation is a written policy advice prepared for a specific group that has the authority to make or even to influence policy decisions, whether is a member of parliament, a local authority, parliamentary committee or other public body. These policy recommendations serve to inform the beneficiaries countries of the MOST project who are facing with policy choices on sustainable tourism about how best practices, evidences and research can help to make the decisions.

Getting a recommendation accepted depends on many factors but a recommendation which is taking into account international best practices has a better chance of being implemented.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper of Policy Recommendation in Sustainable Tourism of the beneficiaries' countries in the Central Asia Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was prepared by Educational - Development Company PLOIGOS on behalf of Heraklion Development Agency (AnHer) for the purposes of Task 3.3 "Policy recommendations, improvement of legislative framework" under Work Package 3: Strengthening the role of regional and local authorities in sustainable development and enhancement of the public dialogue for the Project "A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN CENTRAL ASIA: BUILDING CAPACITIES, CREATING AWARENESS, INTRODUCING TECHNOLOGY" under the SWITCH-Asia and Central Asia II – Promoting Sustainable Consumption and Production Programme.

The content of this deliverable is based on extensive online research and developed with inputs from:

- Educational - Development Company PLOIGOS
- European Profiles S.A
- APINTECH
- Association of Private Tourism Agencies of Uzbekistan (APTA)
- Eurasian Tourism Association
- Lauku ceļotājs
- Tajik Association for Promotion of Tourism Development (TATO)



# CONTENTS

<b>9</b>	<b><u>SECTION 1</u></b> <b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>11</b>	<b><u>SECTION 2</u></b> <b>BEST PRACTICES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM</b>
<b>21</b>	<b><u>SECTION 3</u></b> <b>CURRENT SITUATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM</b>
<b>30</b>	<b><u>SECTION 4</u></b> <b>SWOT ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMEDATION FOR THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN</b>
<b>40</b>	<b><u>SECTION 5</u></b> <b>CURRENT SITUATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM</b>
<b>57</b>	<b><u>SECTION 6</u></b> <b>SWOT ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMEDATION FOR THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN</b>
<b>67</b>	<b><u>SECTION 7</u></b> <b>CURRENT SITUATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM</b>
<b>72</b>	<b><u>SECTION 8</u></b> <b>SWOT ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMEDATION FOR THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN</b>
<b>84</b>	<b><u>SECTION 9</u></b> <b>CONCLUSION</b>



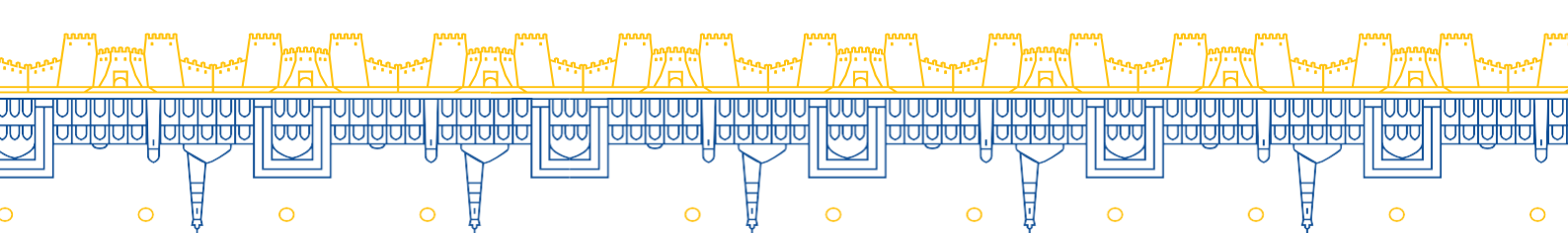


# 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism incorporates many industries, including accommodation, transport, attractions, travel companies, and more. In its broadest sense, tourism is defined as when people travel and stay in places outside of their usual environment for less than one consecutive year for leisure, business, health, or other reasons. Considering how profitable the industry is, many countries have an incentive to invest in policies that enable the development of travel and tourism.

## **The global context and sustainable tourism**

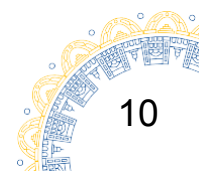
Undoubtedly, tourism is one of the biggest economic industries on a global scale. Global travel and tourism were an \$8.9 trillion (US\$) business in 2019. Moreover, though the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced that number to roughly a quarter of its previous value, all signs point to tourism continuing to grow, expand, and evolve. Every country on Earth has something to offer to visitors, from the pyramids in Egypt to the rainforests of Brazil or the sidewalk cafes of Paris. Most of the countries with the highest tourism rates are located in Europe, whose rich history, architecture, and cultural influence make it an appealing destination for many travelers. Although, tourism is one of the most important and developing sectors both in the EU and to global economy, there are steps forward so as the contribution to a large degree in achieving the objectives of maintaining high and stable levels of economic development, employment and social progress that could recognize the needs of all and effectively protect the environment and the use of the natural resources. Thus, in order to support this position actors must understand the requirement of such engagement.

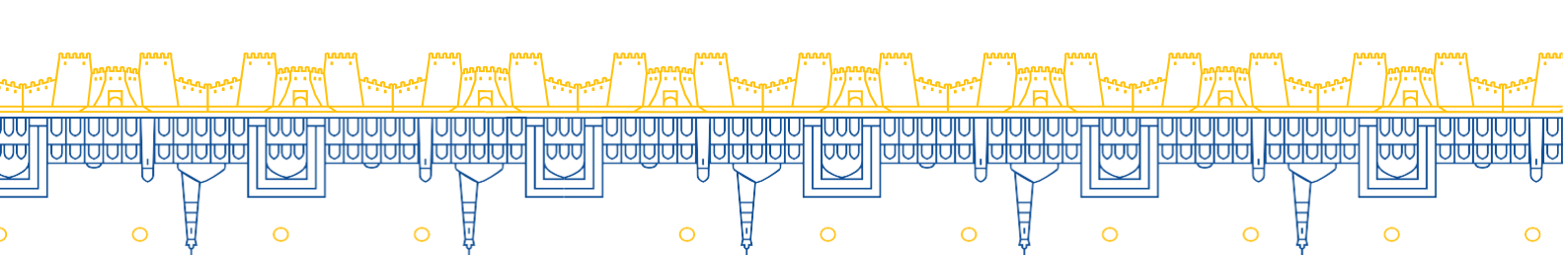


Tourism as any other economic field not only brings some economic benefits to states, but it also creates some serious problems such as excessive energy consumption and increasing negative environmental effects including climatic change. Also, due to tourism and travel expansions, nature is being wasted, tourist destinations suffer from high tourist flows and the life quality of the local people is also negatively affected.

Sustainable development is the main concept of development. Tourism has enormous economic, environmental and social impact, as mentioned, in the modern world therefore the development of this sector is linked with all dimensions of sustainability announced by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the year 2017 – the year of sustainable tourism, in which all countries were invited, to follow the principles of sustainable tourism and to turn to local communities (UNWTO, 2017). As the global economy, social and technological development processes are still expanding, the analysis of new and specific forms are necessary in tourism as well, in order to achieve sustainable development of tourism. Studies and surveys worldwide show the world's shift to alternative types of tourism.

In light of the above, this paper is a policy recommendation to further enhance the efforts made so far in the suggested countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan where rich in biological, cultural, and natural resources can be found. These resources could further contribute in the development of tourism enterprises and mostly in alternative ways of tourism; as massive tourism has not reached these areas yet.





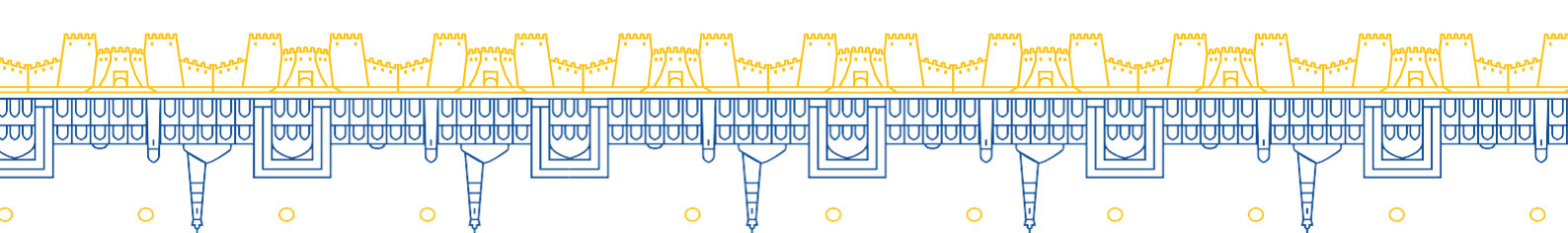
## 2. Best Practices of Sustainable Tourism

Famous destinations in Europe have rapidly increased the number of their visitors in the past 30-40 years and as attractive as it sounds for the economy this situation of mass tourism has led to some serious issues among the local people, the cultural heritage and the environment. It is important for the future to have a plan so that the arrival of tourists continues in a higher quality context that will have greater sustainability and will protect both the visitor and the country that welcomes him. Most of the European countries are running projects and have developed strategies that will give to tourism sector a sustainable and more green future. Hence, EU countries have altered their strategy to more sustainable and green development in order to safeguard their environment and provide social equity. These projects are examples to be followed since they are implemented in Europe and other countries and have already presented results in more sustainable world.

### **“Social Tourism” – Greece**

To begin with, a great example is a program called “Social Tourism” that is running in Europe Greece. The Greek Government is implementing an annual project to support internal tourism as for social tourism. It is a subsidy program for the accommodation and travelling of beneficiaries and their benefiting members inside the country. The project is running by the Public Employment Service organization (DYPA). Beneficiaries and their family members must hold a “Social Tourism Voucher”. The program is drawn up and

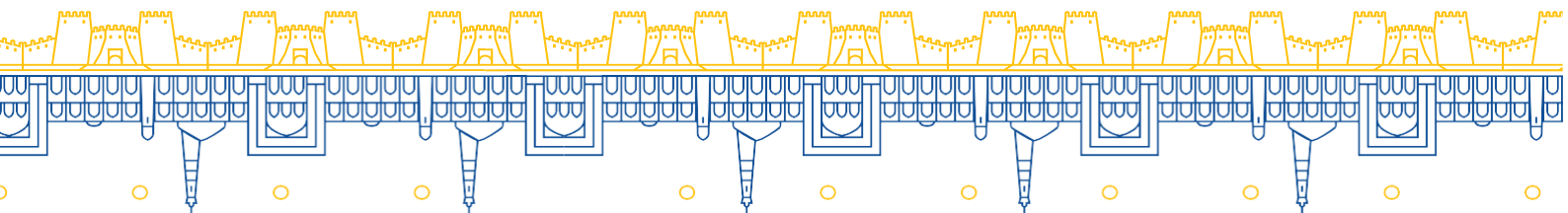




issued every year by the relevant governmental organizations, based on which, the Organization's Public Call is published with its detailed terms and conditions. The Public Call is posted on the Organization's website (DYPA). The program lasts twelve (12) months. The specific start and end dates are set out in the Public Invitation. Beneficiaries can spend from one (1) to six (6) nights, whenever they wish during the implementation of the program, in an accommodation that they choose freely from the "Register of Providers" of the DYPA, after their consultation with the provider, of the accommodation, who is willing to participate in the program and have been included in the "Register of Providers". A project like that, not only give the opportunity and initiative for people to travel, but also reinforces the local economy.

### **How valuable is transportation?**

The domestic tourism has highlighted the need of good local transportation system within a country. Europe's public-transportation system consist on trains, subways, trams, and buses (plus the occasional taxi). Most European cities coordinate their train and bus systems pretty efficiently. The tickets can be easily purchased from automated ticket kiosks at stations that also usually provide tourist information and maps. Moreover, in Europe there are intercity trains that connects all the major cities within a country. Intercity trains feature across much of Europe, providing many invaluable, long-distance domestic services. But there are also some Intercity trains that cross borders, such as the IC services from Amsterdam to Berlin, from Stuttgart to Zurich and from Hamburg to Copenhagen.

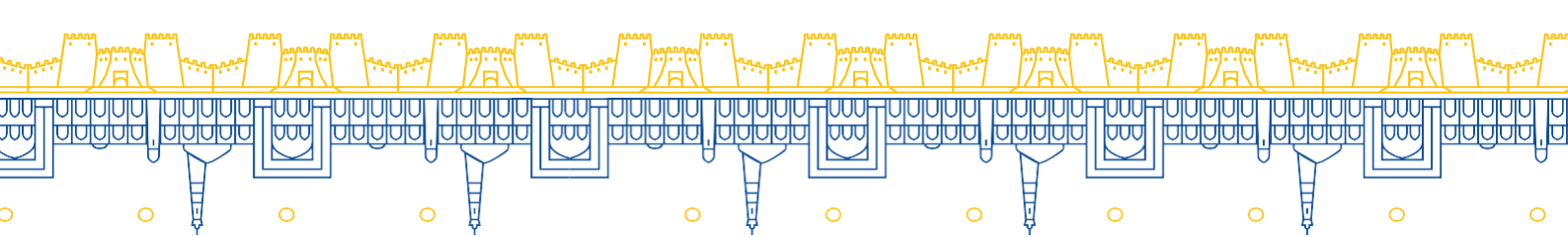


## Cycling in France

Within a city though, it has been proved that the most sustainable and green way of transportation is cycling, so many cities in Europe are running programs and supporting companies promoting the use of bicycles to reduce road trafficking and fuel emissions. In the most famous tourist destinations in Europe such programs promoting cycling are for France the “Vélib’ Métropole project” which is Paris's public bike system that was started in July 2007 by one of the world's leading advertising agencies, JCDecaux. This was a bid by the city administration to improve the transportation system for Parisians. JCDecaux modeled Velib after its successful bike sharing program, Velo'v that had been launched in Lyon, France, in May 2005. The “Montpellier new cycling routes project” which is a new project of 230 km cycling routes in Montpellier, one of the green projects in France, is to expand cycling in whole country and promote sustainable ways of transportations with 100 million euros have been released in order to create around fifteen secure routes that will connect the municipalities of the metropolis to Montpellier. Furthermore, there is the “Riding into the future project” that promotes cycling in everyday use through the famous cycling race “tour de France”. In advance with all the above French parliament decides that all car commercial should promote the message “For short trips, consider walking or cycling”.

## Cycling in Italy

Following France, Italy has the example of the “Florence cycling sharing project” The project is about hiring and sharing Mobiles, the innovative “free flow” bike sharing program that allows locals and tourists to move around the city with ease, managed 100% through

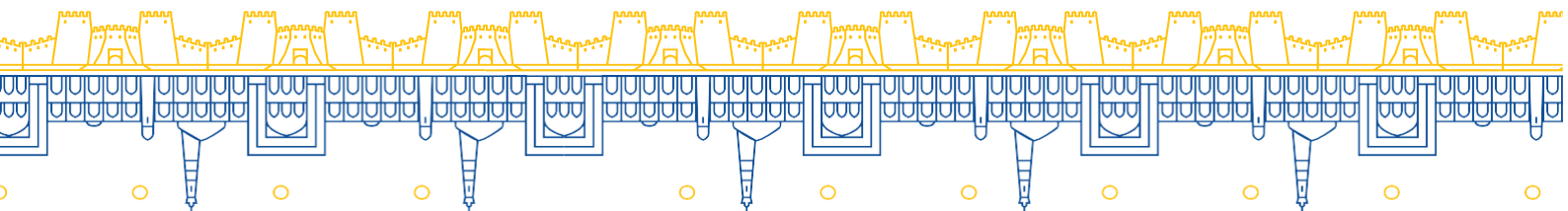


an application. Now general for transportations for France and Italy, innovative projects are on the way. In Italy the “Green mobility project in Rome” provides for tourists Segways scooters and offers ecologically green car and vehicle hire in Rome. Also, Rome has started the usage of new electric buses, more trams, trolleybuses which will increasingly compensate for the lack of a large subway infrastructure and they are part of the city’s sustainable mobility overhaul that in recent years has been helping Rome to align with EU environmental goals. The Italian government has established an office of transportation and environment in 2017 with aims to provide policymakers in finding sustainable alternatives that can satisfy mobility needs. Finally, a very important project is the “Zero Victims Project” which is a project of the ministry of transportation for zero victims in road accidents. Which by 2050 promoting Italy as a safe tourism destination through the “feel safe driving and traveling in Italy”.

### **Accessibility and rescue**

For many years, tourism for people with special needs was quite difficult. In recent years worldwide and especially in Europe, measures have been taken to increase their accessibility both in cities and in the region. In France “Destination pour tous (DPT)” is a state brand that promotes an accessible tourist destination, allowing an inclusive stay for all inhabitants of the territory as well as external visitors. Also, Nouvelle-Aquitaine is the first region of France to be awarded “Tourisme et Handicap” status for its recognition of the needs of disabled visitors, and the region is fully committed to serving them with a comprehensive range of facilities and offers tailored to the needs of those with reduced mobility. General in Europe “Sage Traveling” is Europe accessible trip planner



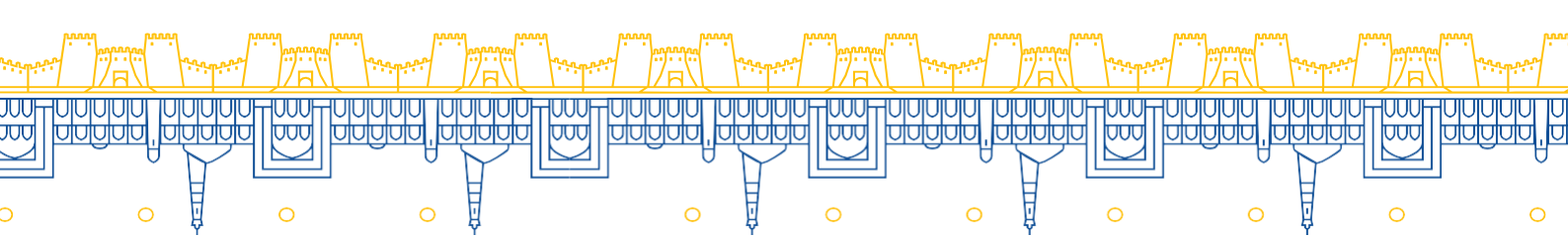


expertise in European accessible travel to create custom accessible holidays for people with all types of mobility issues, including wheelchair and scooter users, cane and walker users, and senior travelers. In light of the above, the European network for accessible tourism “ENAT” which is a non-profit association for organizations that study, promote and practice accessible tourism, is leveraging the knowledge and experience of the network. The members are improving the accessibility of tourist information, transport, infrastructure, designed for the service of visitors with all kinds of access needs, providing models of excellence in accessible tourism for the whole of the tourism industry.

To support this notion, in many cities they have been created things than can help physical accessibility in different kinds of areas. For example, in outside areas there are parking spaces clearly designated for people with reduced mobility, drop-off area for motor vehicle passengers at or near the front entrance, access routes that are flat (without steps) and with a stable surface, ramps as alternative routes to steps and handrails where necessary, entrance doors with level access, sheltered from rain and well lit, and tactile and high-contrast route markings. For internal access routes, they have created door handles that are easy to reach and operate, or automatic opening/closing, ramps as alternative routes to steps and handrails where necessary, wide doors, passageways, corridors and space to pass between dining tables, display stands, clear turning spaces in rooms, meeting rooms, entrance halls, lifts (elevators) that are wide and deep with tactile buttons; visual and audible indication of floors, clear general signage and understandable pictograms signage indicating accessible areas and features. For toilets and bathrooms, it is very crucial to exist support handrails







beside toilets, baths and overhead showers free space beside toilets for side transfer, wheel-in shower (no step) and non-slip floor surfaces in bathrooms. Generally speaking, Europe consists a great example in the use of technology to facilitate everyday life. Moreover, other things that can make the accessibility even better are sufficient lighting levels, without glare or reflections, glass doors and large windows marked with contrast warning signs or patterns, easy- to-use window fastenings, temperature controls, no smoking policy or designated non-smoking zones in all service areas, guestrooms with non-allergenic bedding and cleaning materials and provisions for service animals.

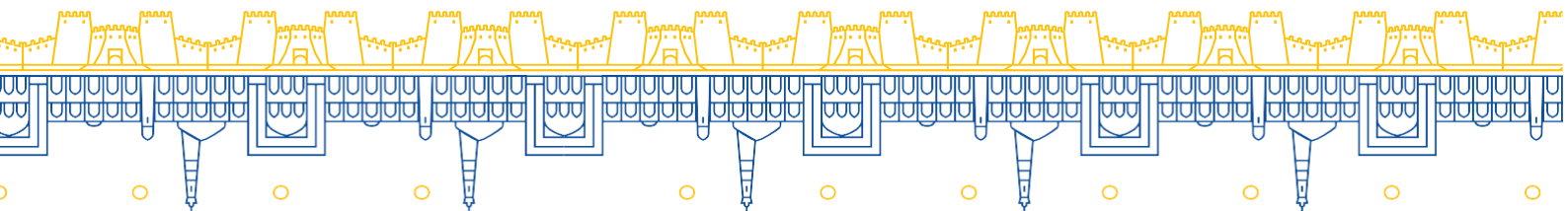
One also very important service that can improve the quality of tourism in a country is search and rescue services, and this is because the visitor who will either choose a more remote destination in the country or engage in alternative and sports tourism activities, will be able to feel more secure. In most European countries there are rescue teams that their cost is covered by insurance companies and include mountain rescue services, helicopter costs and repatriation to the country of residence or possible transfer to neighboring countries for treatment.

### **Visa Policies**

Another significant example that must be taken into consideration is the visa policy in Europe. Visa policy is the process by which countries decide how noncitizens should enter a country either as short-term travelers, international students, temporary workers, or permanent immigrants. Beyond setting quotas and outlining which characteristics are most important in immigrant selection, visa





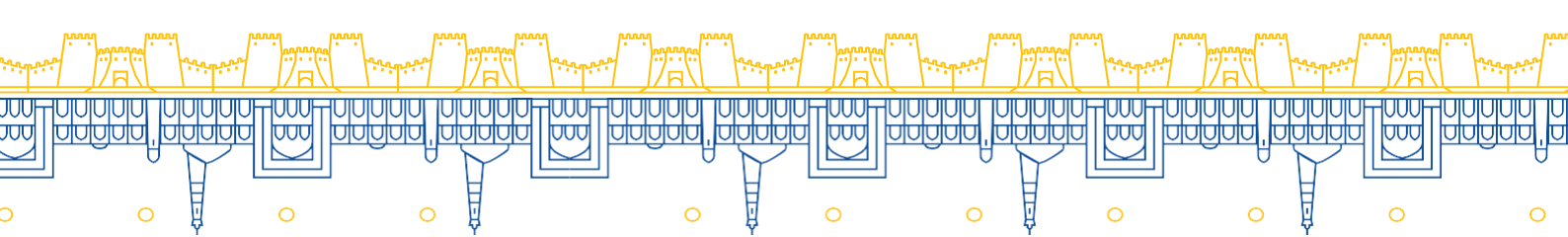


policy also has a public diplomacy aspect, with visa facilitation, for example, serving as a sign of the strength of bilateral relations. The research here examines the permutations of visa policy around the world. The visa policy of the Schengen Area functions as a single jurisdiction under a common visa policy for international travel purposes and set by the European Union and applies to the Schengen Area and to other EU member states except Ireland. This stands for Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland. Also, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City are not members of the Schengen Area but still have open borders with the area. The visa policy allows nationals of certain countries to enter the Schengen Area via air, land or sea. Nationals of certain other countries are required to have a visa either upon arrival or in transit.

### **Eno-gastronomy**

The three pillars of sustainable tourism are employing environmentally friendly practices (reduce, reuse, recycle); protecting cultural and natural heritage. By cultural heritage term, the cuisine of the country can be easily included. Food tourism refers to traveling to taste local and authentic foods, join food festivals and experience local and international cuisine. It is also referred to culinary, gastronomy and gourmet tourism. Food tourists are profiled under different groups ranging from those who are not interested in food to those who travel exclusively to taste local and unique cuisines. The majority of travelers recognize local cuisines as a major factor that effect their destination selection, travel experience and decision to return to the same destination.



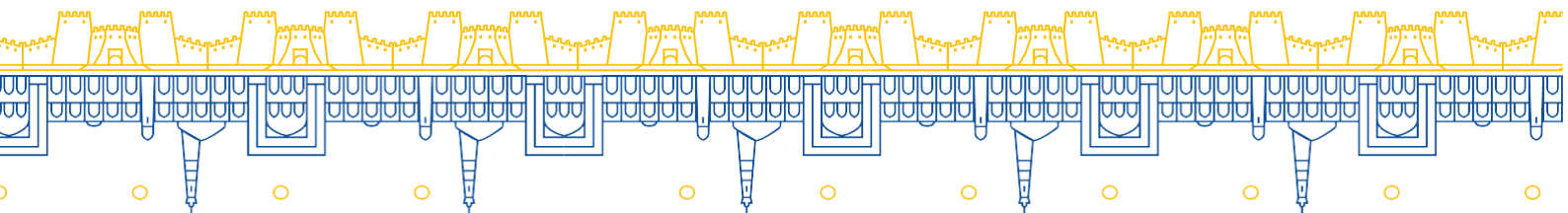


The culinary products, services and food culture at a destination can be seen unique strategic resources, with few substitutes that cannot be easily imitated by other destinations. First, food as a defining social marker represents the region and its local citizens. Second, tourists may seek indigenous, ethnic and local foods. Although some travelers may avoid eating local foods (i.e., food neophobia), they may still be curious about the local foods and food experiences. Tangible elements of local and international foods (e.g., taste and ingredients) can contribute to cognitive and affective elements (e.g. emotions and experiences) of the destination image. Tourists' decision making to travel a destination and trying local cuisines would be greatly influenced by information sources. Given this, in Europe, food-related content on websites and in brochures have gained in importance. Marketers value and utilize images and a textual description of food in their destination marketing efforts. When integrated into marketing a destination, such promotional materials are effective in informing and attracting culinary tourists. Local foods are often featured in text and images in promotional materials. Distributing promotional materials (e.g., brochures, booklets, maps, video clips, and flyers) are frequently used by destinations. Promotional materials are widely used in travel fairs, visitor centers, and direct marketing campaigns.

### **Food Tourism in Turkey**

Turkey consists an attractive destination in food tourism. Turks have interacted with diverse cultures throughout history. Middle-Eastern, Asian, African, Indian and European cuisines have influenced Turkish cuisine. This resulted in the invention of various dishes. For example, the first ready-made soups (i.e., tarhana) and yogurts were reinvented by the Turks. Various climate and



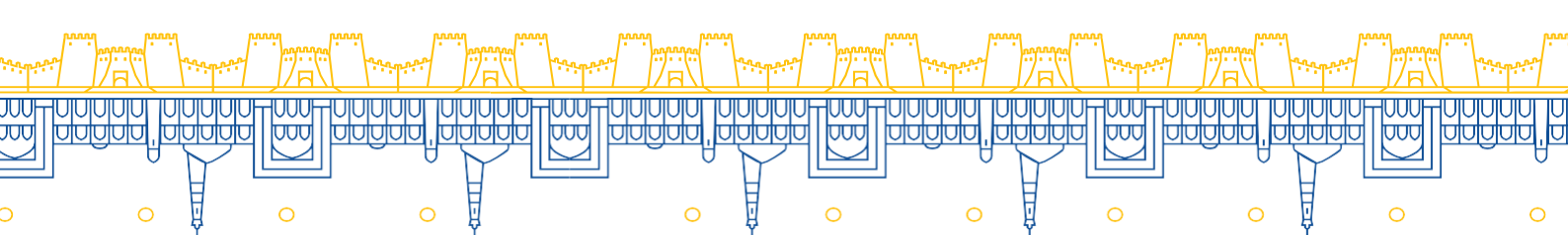


geographic characteristics in Turkey provide plentiful sources of raw materials for unique gastronomy to develop. Most raw materials are still bought from individual farmers, who grow their foods and breed their livestock using traditional methods rather than utilizing technology and chemicals, which can also be a strength. Over 100 Turkish food items are patented, some of which are registered as UNESCO Cultural Heritages items, including Mesir Macunu, Turkish Coffee and Ceremonial Keskek (UNESCO, 2015). Mezes including dolma, kebabs and baklava and yogurt are some of globally renowned Turkish foods. Turkish food is making the country a destination in food tourism.

### **Food Tourism in Slovenia**

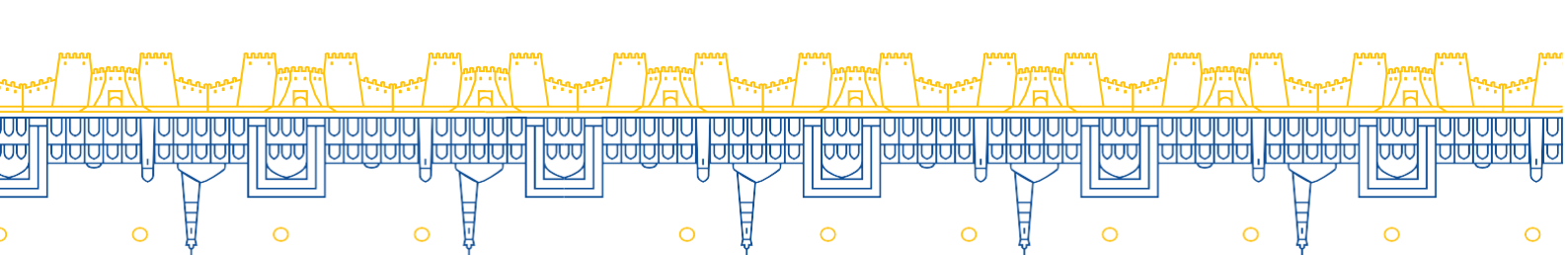
In addition, the example of Slovenia can be characterized as leading and change maker in terms of sustainable tourism, despite being a very small country in both geographic and population terms. Slovenia is working to enhance the competitiveness of its tourism sector in international markets. Since 2010, several pro-tourism resolutions have been passed to grant a priority status which allows the sector to have a priority treatment in future, including priority access to research financing. As a result, there is growing interest in the cultural heritage of its towns and cities, and the country's gastronomic specialties have begun to form an integral part of the tourist experience, thus increasing the visibility of this destination in the international tourism market, especially since the country's entry into the European Union. The National Tourism Organization has developed several strategies for Slovenia's most important tourism products, including gastronomy. In this regard, the Strategy of Gastronomy Development (2008) has been widely





applied. The Tourist Association of Slovenia has played a key role in the protection and promotion of Slovene culture and culinary heritage through the organization of wine festivals and a large number of culinary innovations. One of the efforts being made in this direction is the introduction of certified quality labels. According to the European Commission, since September 2011 many traditional Slovene restaurants satisfy strict criteria and standards of the Quality Label “Gostilna Slovenia” the “Quality Label Award”. This trademark of the Slovene catering industry respects the cultural heritage and traditions of Slovene cuisine and hospitality. The standards to be met to achieve this recognition are traditional local architecture, traditional internal and external ambient design, food and beverages of local and regional origin with an emphasis on organic food and local wines provided by local producers, traditional music and folklore scenery, high quality service, and a variety of other required components that justify the certificate. Slovenia has also, geographically recognizable culinary cultures and regions. Traditional Slovene cuisine is a compendium of innovation, the influence of various historical moments, and tradition. Foods are produced or prepared only within a given geographical area and the country has protected five foods within this group. These include the Bovec (Bovški sir), Tolmin (Tolminc), and Nanos (Nanoški sir) cheeses; Kočevje wild honey; and extra virgin olive oil produced in the Slovenian Istria region.





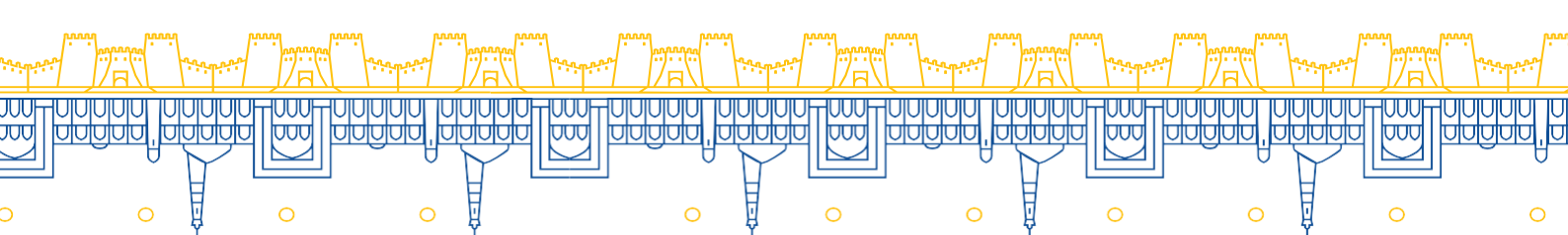
### **3. Current Situation of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Sustainable Tourism**

This chapter discusses the current situation of sustainable tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and more specifically the areas of particular needs or opportunities, the highest priority of intervention and the areas of apparent strengths that can reinforce the industry and develop the local economy. International tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan is a top priority. The main purpose of the development of international tourism in Kazakhstan is the creation of a modern, effective and competitive tourist complex on the basis of which there will be provided conditions for development of further international cooperation in the field of tourism and furthermore, for the development of a sustainable environment for the country, according to the global frameworks and legislations.

In the history of the ancient world, the first travels to the area of modern Kazakhstan were connected the Great Silk Way, which was routes crossing in ancient and middle age time Eurasian continent from Mediterranean Sea to China and influencing the emergence and development of trade and cultural ties between people and statehoods located along the way. The first tourist places in the area of Kazakhstan were connected with the conquest and migration of Turkish tribes.

#### **Tourism Policy and Governance**

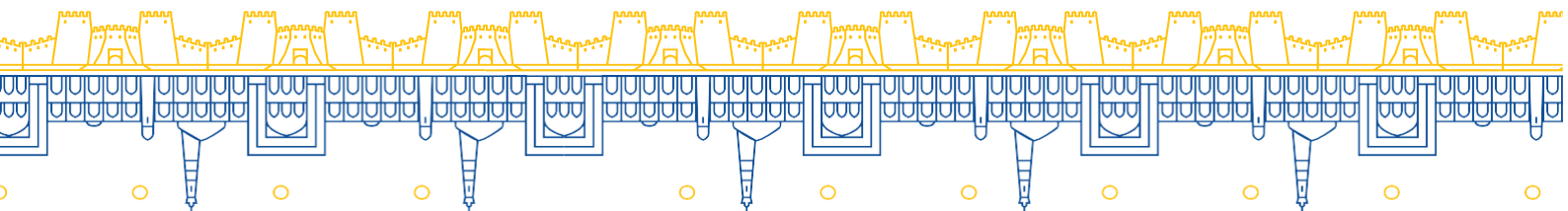




To begin with, the tourism industry needs to have a strong position in the development of policies and programs. According to Kazakh stakeholders, there is a state program for the development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2019-2025. Tourism is included in the list of priority sectors of the economy in Kazakhstan and to the state program for the development of regions for 2020 – 2025. This program aims to have a colossal socio-economic effect, since it is expected to have an increase in the number of the employed. Also, the number of foreign tourists is expected to be three million people, and domestic - 9 million people, hence, the share of tourism in the country's GDP will grow from \$ 9.6 billion to \$ 16 billion. The state program will ensure a complete departure from the dependence of the country's tourism industry on the state budget and, through the active participation of business and investors, will put the industry on a self-sustaining track. As a result, Kazakhstan will be included in the top 50 attractive travel countries. The tourism industry possesses a position in development policies, and there a high priority for action. The main factor that may be inhibiting the recognition afforded to tourism is the low contribution to the country's economy, providing jobs and attracting investment. In addition, the Republic of Kazakhstan has a low population taking into consideration the large area that it covers.

The State Program includes tourism policies and strategic plans but they are not fully committed to the elements of sustainable tourism. The Global Code of Ethics is not applied in the tourism policies but some main of its concepts are covered in other policies and quality standards. Although, due to Covid-19, the strategic plan is not



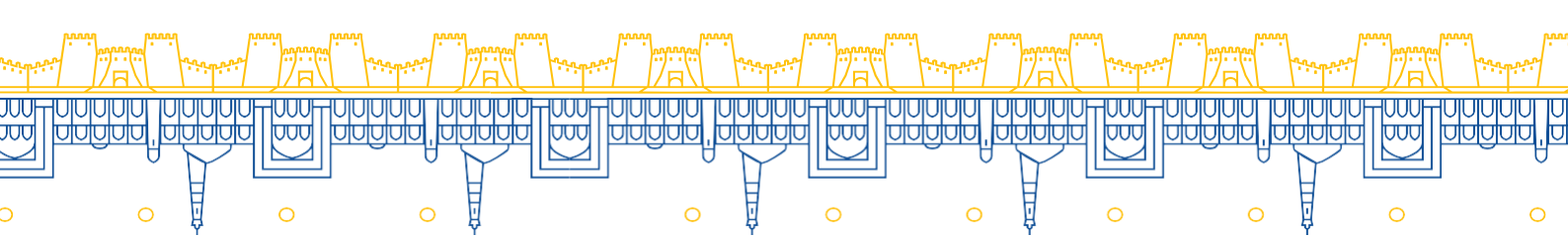


being effectively implemented since there was a reduction of budget in all other sectors but health.

In the context of Switch Asia, the two major projects that are running in order to assist the sustainable tourism development in Kazakhstan are MOST (a Model for Sustainable Tourism in Central Asia) and Sustouka (Sustainable Tourism in Kazakhstan). Switch Asia was launched in 2007 and has achieved more than a decade of progress on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in 24 countries in the region. Those projects have been proven successful; hence they raise the awareness and interest among stakeholders. Those projects aim not only to equip enterprises of the tourist accommodation sector with the necessary knowledge and tools to embrace opportunities for green business development but also to recommend policies and promote green consumption and better-informed public and private consumers by elaborating practical guides and developing awareness raising campaigns.

It is broadly known that the adequacy of legislation and regulations can affect the tourism sector. In the Republic of Kazakhstan there is a legislation framework on Touristic Activity but it is not fully implemented, since there are some issues that are still not regulated according to law, such as tourist guides, training services in tourism industry, Destination Management Organization (DMO) etc. There is a high priority for conducting a legislation framework that can meet the needs of sustainable tourism and to be enforced in the sector. The Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Culture and Sports is considered as the dedicated tourism ministry department within the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan alongside with the “Kazakh Tourism National Company” JSC, which was established





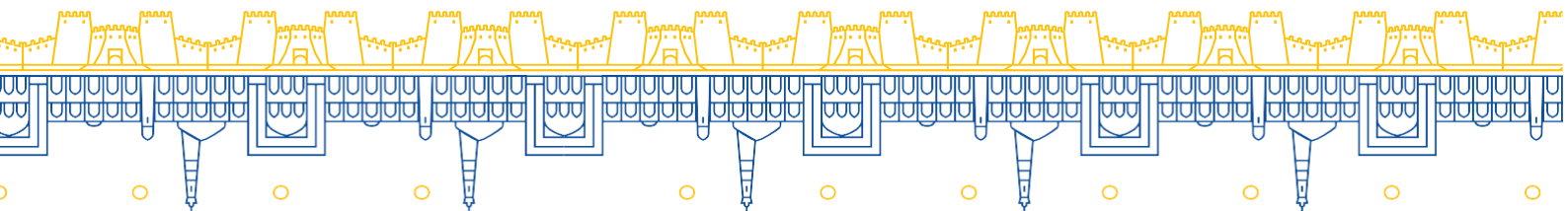
in 2017, they have organized successful events held in the country in order to continue promotion of Kazakhstan globally as a travel destination.

### **Economic Performance, Investment and Competitiveness**

Another significant factor that must be taken into consideration is the tourism measurement and the contribution of tourism to the economy. In order to improve the system of statistics and obtain information about tourists and their activities, the E-Qonaq digital platform has been developed as part of the state program for the development of the Republic of Kazakhstan tourism industry for 2019-2025, which allows the collection of all data of the incoming foreign tourists and consolidates information in one place. More specifically, the system allows to study the profile of any tourist by collecting information like the age, gender, nationality, country of residence, number of days spent in the country, etc. All this information is collected and analyzed by the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic planning and reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The data collection usually meets some difficulties in the collection of the information due to lack of technologies, knowledge and budget. The Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency uses the Trial Sequential Analysis (TSA) in the formation of the Tourism Satellite Account and the calculation of the main indicators of the tourism industry. This methodology takes into account all UNWTO proposals when forming the TSA. The Bureau of National Statistics publishes data for the Tourism Satellite Account annually. In this regard, work on the formation of the TSA is carried out on an ongoing basis. There is a platform in the Republic of Kazakhstan, where the Bureau of National Statistics of



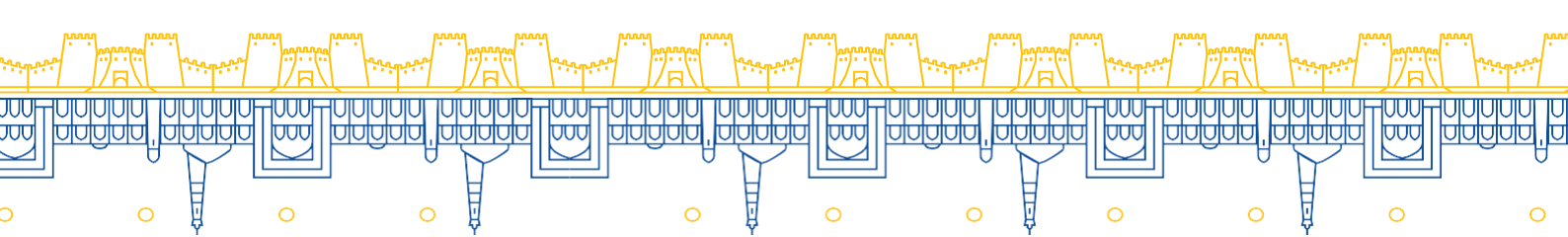




the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms places the main statistical data, including in the field of tourism. In addition, JSC “NC “Kazakh Tourism” has developed an information system on which they keep the records of tourism activities in Kazakhstan and it provides analytics of the tourist flow in various sections.

The importance of all the data that can be collected is also significant in order to recognize the contribution of tourism in trade and investment policies and commitments. The tourism industry is one of the most promising sectors in the National Investment Strategy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. To support this notion, the Republic of Kazakhstan officially joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2015 and made the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) commitments. During the accession, a number of documents were signed, including a package of obligations of the Republic of Kazakhstan on access to the markets for services and goods. In addition, the country has also made international trade commitments by joining the Eurasian Economic Union which is an international organization for regional economic integration. The member states of the Eurasian Economic Union are the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation and it provides free movement of goods, services, capital and labor.

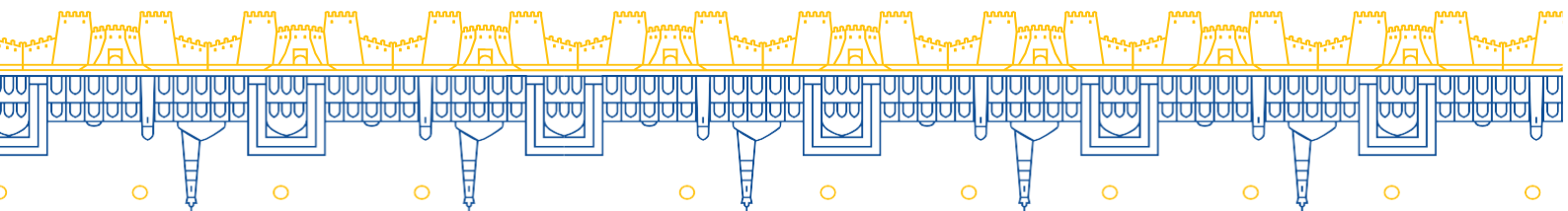
Another significant factor that may affect the tourism industry is the accessibility in a country and how easy the entrance can be. More specifically, the visa-free regime for the Republic of Kazakhstan has been resumed for 74 countries, and land borders have been opened. Currently, 74 countries are available for entry in Kazakhstan without visa, included EU Member States, of which 54



countries are unilaterally. Moreover, 20 countries are under bilateral agreements and in the near future, the task is to further liberalize the visa regime.

Furthermore, analyzing the current situation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the extent of tourism investment and conduciveness of the business environment should be noted. Since 2019, 98 projects worth 181.1 billion have been financed, of which construction and installation work on 47 projects has been completed up to date. In 2021, 50 projects worth 63.5 billion were financed and 23 projects worth 53.4 billion tenge were financed in 2022. More attention is paid to the development of engineering and communication infrastructure projects. Generally, the airports, railway stations, roads, beach areas have been reconstructed with local budgets or private investments. In addition, for the period from 2019 to 2022, 290 investment projects worth more than 400 billion were implemented in the accommodation sector and tourism facilities.

On one hand, in order to promote and support investments in the Republic of Kazakhstan, there are state measures for business entities in the tourism industry such as reimbursement for the construction of tourist facilities, compensation for the construction of roadside service facilities, compensation for the purchase of equipment for ski resorts, compensation for the purchase of tourist buses etc. On the other hand, many investment projects are not being implemented, due to the insufficient development of state support mechanisms and the lack of "long" and affordable money for industry entities. The main obstacle to increasing investment in the tourism industry is the infrastructure which is lagging behind (engineering and communication, transport) in certain regions of

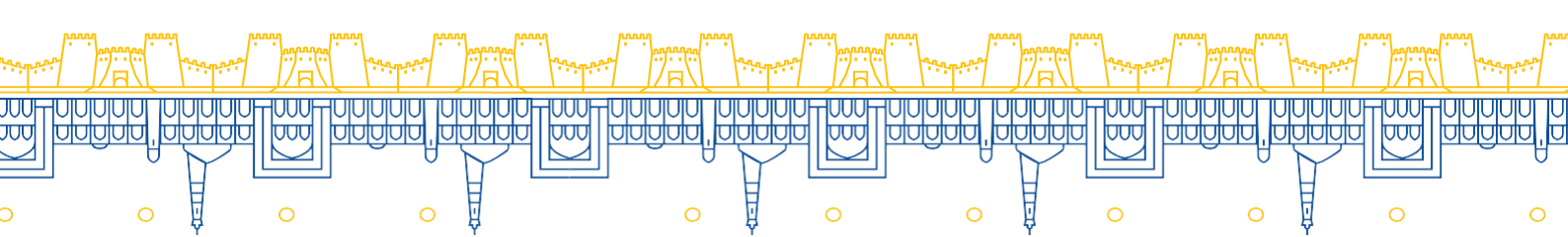


the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as the lack of interest of entrepreneurs in investing in tourism.

Investments in the tourism industry can help the establishment of the Republic of Kazakhstan as an attractive destination, by creating a brand, marketing and product positioning. A high priority must be given to this establishment, in order to improve the quality of tourist services. To support this notion, a program called “quality mark” has been developed, according to which subjects and objects of tourism receive distinctions if they meet the requirements. The implementation of this program is currently underway. Within the framework of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, there is a system of voluntary certification, which is not popular with business entities. This compliance with quality standards is voluntary and hence the “quality mark” program provides encouragement and stimulation of entities that meet the standards.

### **Employment, Decent Work and Human Capital**

The definition of sustainable tourism contains the existence and scope of a Human Resources policy, plan and actions, that is discussed and agreed with the private sector and other stakeholders in the industry. The Labor code of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the current legislation framework that supports and respects workers’ rights and meets the conditions of decent work. Once a year, the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs with associations organize a meeting with the Ministry of Labor in order to address any HR related issue. Moreover, there is a program that provides subsidies for employers and it concerns the employment of young people, people with disabilities, people of pre-retirement age. Also, in order

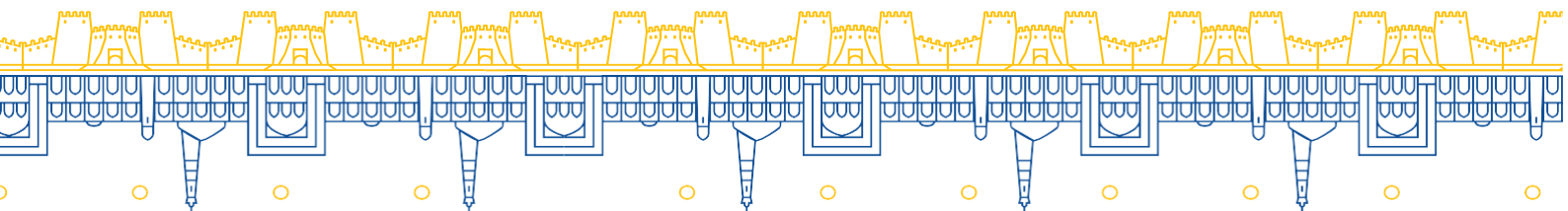


to support and provide a systematic assessment of tourism training provision, the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs every year checks the educational programs of the Universities and rates them. Although, the lack of available labor with necessary skills have been perceived to be cooks, waiters and hotel maids.

The tourism training institutions and courses in the Republic of Kazakhstan are subject to quality accreditation since the independent accreditation is carried out by accreditation bodies included in the National Register. It should be noted that in accordance with the Bologna Declaration, which Kazakhstan signed in 2010 the accreditation procedure is mandatory condition for fulfilling the obligations assumed by Kazakhstan. Sustainable tourism as a discipline that must be followed, is offered only from a few Universities in Kazakhstan, hence, this notion has to be established in all universities that provide tourism courses.

### **Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion**

One of the goals of sustainable tourism is also poverty reduction that must be included in National Strategy Papers. In the Republic of Kazakhstan there is not such a strategy and the poverty reduction is not mentioned in the State program for the development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2019-2025. In order to strengthen the approach to low-income households' tourism, the JSC Kazakh tourism made research on rural tourism and has free online course about the operation of guest houses but there is nor any consideration or identification of priority destinations for low-income households' tourism initiatives neither particular destination have been established low-income households' tourism strategies or initiatives. Kazakhstan has a great



diversity of natural conditions, ecosystems and species. In several regions and villages are close to national parks and to agriculture, hence it can be noticed that there is informal trading by the locals in tourist areas.

### **Sustainability of the Natural and Cultural Environment**

Another significant goal of sustainable tourism that must be taken into consideration is the protection of natural and cultural heritage. In order to address any issue regarding the sustainability of the natural and cultural environment the State program for the development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2019-2025 has measures for ecological tourism development and also the Legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan on specially protected natural territories covers the responsibilities of Tourism Committee and rules for tourism activities. In order for tourism to be effectively planned and managed in national parks and other natural heritage areas, the JSC Kazakh Tourism is working on attraction investments to natural parks and management organizations. Overall, the country's natural heritage is being supported by tourism, since Ecotourism is one of the main tourism products in Kazakhstan. In addition, there is an existing Legislation on the protection and use of historical and cultural heritage sites but still there is a high priority of action in order for the tourism development respects the sustainability and for tourism operations to meet the sustainability standards.

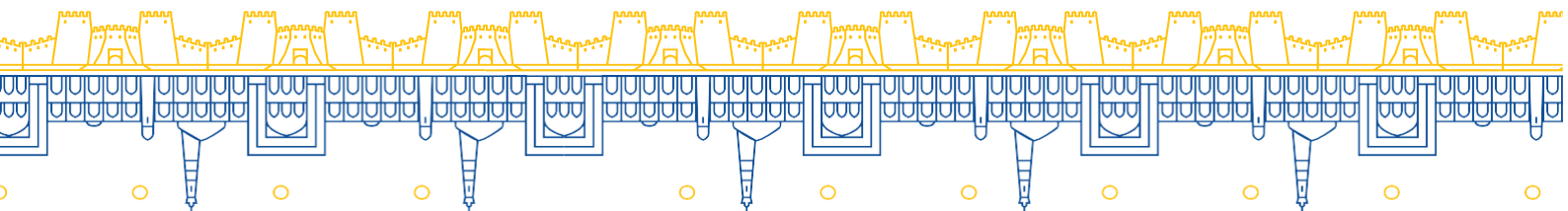


## **4. SWOT ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMEDATION FOR THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

In recent years, the tourist infrastructure has developed to a great extent. Alternative forms of tourism give the opportunity to the countries, to develop their own infrastructure in order to empower the industry, by promoting the natural and cultural assets of a country. Most important is that alternative ways of tourism aim to ensure that there is something for everyone to do. There are many diverse ways of tourism. Here are some examples: Sport tourism, Rural tourism/ agritourism, culinary tourism, health and wellness tourism and many more.

### **SWOT Analysis**

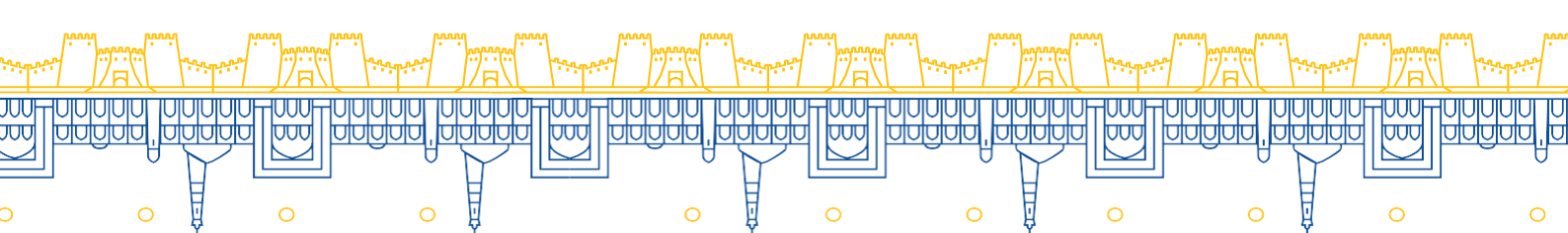
Taking into consideration the aforementioned best practices that have been applied in EU countries and meet the sustainable standards and also the current situation of Kazakhstan in this sector, a SWOT analysis has been conducted in order to help the tourism sector of Kazakhstan to develop a full awareness of all the factors involved in making a policy recommendation. A SWOT analysis has to be performed in order to explore new initiatives, revamp internal policies, consider opportunities to pivot or alter a plan midway through its execution. This analysis aims to help to the discovery of recommendations and strategies, with a focus on



leveraging strengths and opportunities to overcome weaknesses and threats in order to propose a successful policy.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Natural diversity</li> <li>○ State Programs</li> <li>○ Development policies</li> <li>○ Investments</li> <li>○ Existence of Projects</li> <li>○ Legislation framework on Touristic Activity</li> <li>○ Statistical organization for data collection</li> <li>○ Cooperation with other countries and participation in global treaties and commitments.</li> <li>○ Visa-free regime</li> <li>○ Constructions</li> <li>○ Quality mark establishment</li> <li>○ Labor code establishment</li> <li>○ Sustainable development practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Low job opportunities in tourism</li> <li>○ Massive tourism due to the expectation of 9M tourists</li> <li>○ Lack of guideline Code of Ethics in tourism</li> <li>○ Lack of technologies, knowledge and budget</li> <li>○ Lack of interest of entrepreneurs in investing in tourism.</li> <li>○ Insufficient development of state support mechanisms</li> <li>○ Lack of all goals of sustainability</li> </ul>





## Opportunities

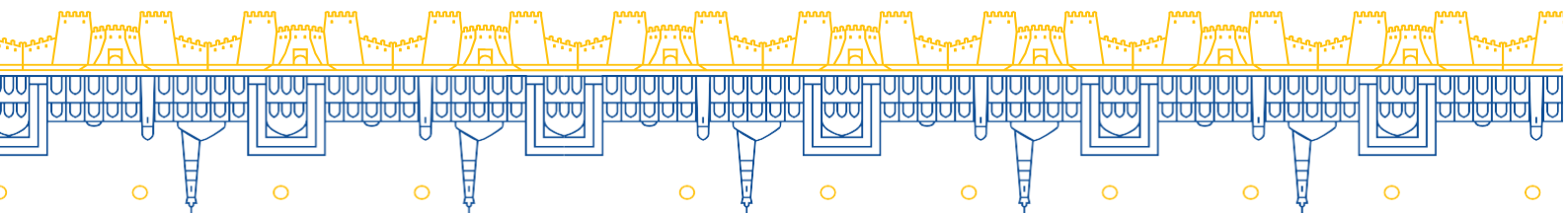
- Development of experience tourism due to the natural diversity
- Economic growth and knowledge transfer due to state program and international programs
- Economic growth due to private and public investments
- Legislation framework can be used as a compass for sustainable tourism development
- Data can be used in artificial intelligence to support and promote specific tourist activities in specific kinds of tourists
- International relationships are important to education diplomacy and the process of building mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships between countries in the education arena
- Easier entrance and attracting new tourist of different nationalities due to visa-free regime
- Creation of new tourist facilities can create
- By creating quality marks can improve the services provided
- Labor code establishment can create safe environment with good working conditions that can attract more employees in the tourism sector
- Sustainable development practices provide high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists

## Threats

- Danger of understaffing in hotels and tourism facilities
- Risk factor of massive tourism due to the expectation of 9M tourists
- Slow assimilation of good practices
- Danger of limited investments
- State support mechanisms could be a barrier for development
- Tourism industry should follow the sustainable goals



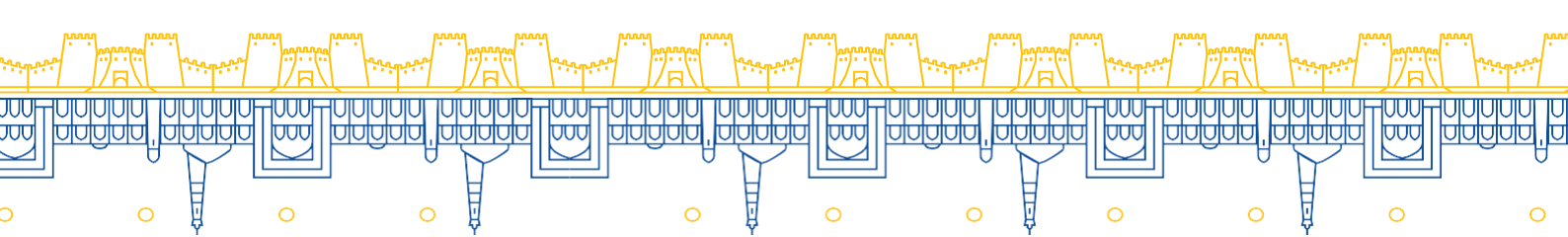




The tourism product of Kazakhstan is rich and diverse and offers a unique opportunity for development in almost all forms of tourism from the cognitive-related visits to cultural and historical ones as well as other alternative forms of tourism and ecotourism. The states programs and the international affairs can strengthen the knowledge transfer and can attract investors but also, they are important to education diplomacy and the process of building mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships between countries in the education arena. By attracting investors can achieve the desirable economic growth but there is also a need of targeted action in order to avoid massive tourism activities and support more sustainable ways of investments. These investments can be used for the creation of new sustainable and green tourist facilities that can attract visitors with more sustainable way. The existing legislative framework with the constant update can create a fertile ground for sustainable tourism development. Moreover, with the establishment of the Labor Code, safe environment with good working conditions can be created in order to attract more employees in the tourism sector and cover the gaps that already exist. With the assistance of statistics, all the collected data can be helpful to the situation analysis, and be used in artificial intelligent to support and promote specific tourist activities in specific kinds of tourists. All these sustainable development practices can provide high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists. In addition, the visa-free regime in the Republic of Kazakhstan, can provide an easy entrance in the country and attract new tourist of different nationalities.

Despite the positive aspects of the development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan, there are still a number of unsolved

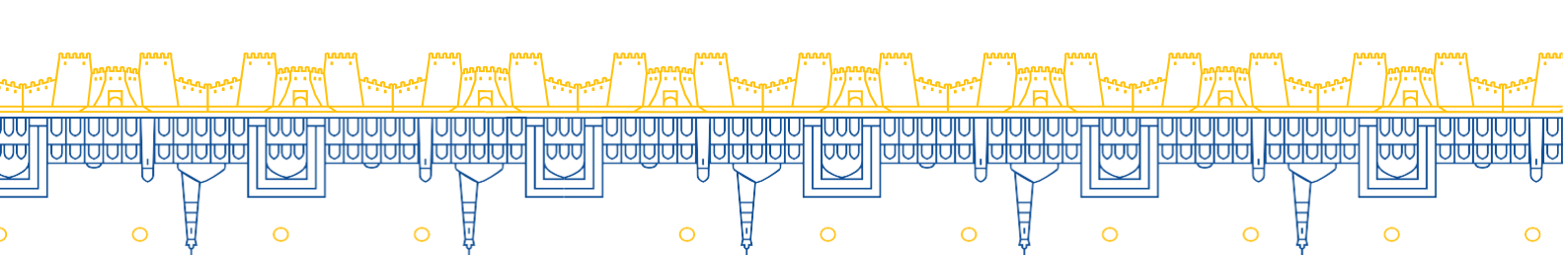




problems. Today Kazakhstan has all the foundations needed for the attraction of both foreign and local investors in the tourism industry, enabling joint ventures to a great extent. Moreover, it is observed that there is a lack of interest of entrepreneurs in investing in tourism, however, investments must be carefully designed and the need for legislation and supervision by the state is crucial. Negative environmental impacts of tourism could occur as tourism through private investments sometimes puts enormous stress on local land use, and can lead to soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss, and more pressure on endangered species. The insufficient development of state support mechanisms could produce a massive weak state control in the tourism sector and lead to arbitrariness and lack of control. Besides, the state and experienced stakeholders in the tourism industry are needed in order to establish and monitor the guidelines of Code of Ethics in tourism.

### **Policy Recommendation**

All things considered, the Republic of Kazakhstan still needs to develop the “sense” of sustainability in order to start developing tourism sector with fundamental bases in order to avoid mistakes and practices that cannot meet the sustainable standards.



The recommended policies are:

### **A. Social tourism**

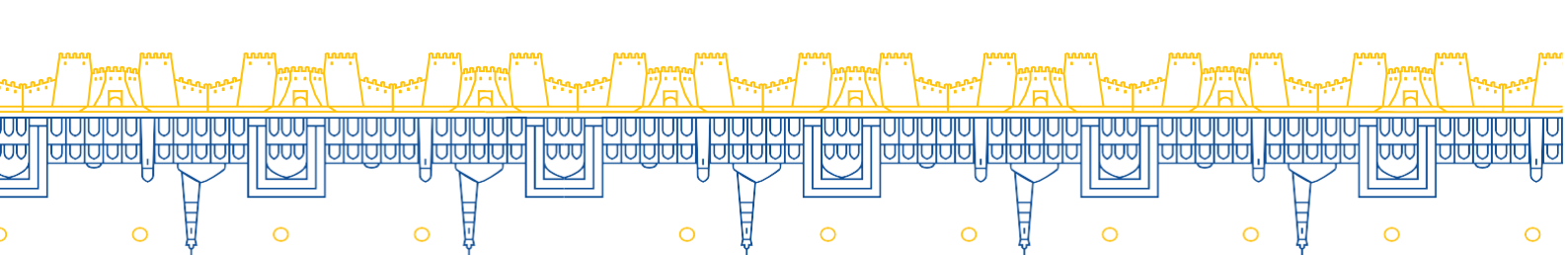
The state needs to provide with vouchers for accommodation and traveling to beneficiaries and their benefiting members inside the country in order to promote the domestic tourism and support the local economy. This policy will accomplish the development of the rural areas and it will create new job opportunities to the provinces. This policy will support the mission of sustainability, and it will keep the cultural heritage alive. This project can be monitored by a public service and it can be enforced by promoting the positive outcomes to the beneficiaries. The “Social tourism” can have an impact also in attraction of foreign tourists, since it will be a growth in those rural destinations. In addition, in order for this project to be achieved it needs time for the accommodation providers to be prepared and the government to ensure the necessary funding in order to accomplish it.





## B. Local Transportation System

There is no economically thriving city in the world that does not depend heavily on its mass transit. To support this notion, it needs to rebuild mass transit and to boost multimodality. Moreover, increasing electrified transport will lead to improved air quality, reduced emissions, and lower noise levels, and it is a relatively straightforward way for cities to make themselves more sustainable. The technology already exists for rail, buses, and small vehicles like cars and trucks, but a big challenge for cities moving forward will be to ensure that regional electrical grids can accommodate the increased demand for power from the transportation sector. This policy meets the sustainable goals because it effects the environment in a positive way and it can create new job opportunities. Cities also need to foster bike and scooter-sharing services. To help make sure micro mobility supports a strong mass transit system, cities need to allow bicycles on subways and buses and encourage the installation of bike- and scooter-sharing docks adjacent to transit stations. This policy can be monitored and enforced by public and private services that can invest in new technologies that reduce emissions and have an impact on attracting more people to use them. The transportation system in Kazakhstan has developed railway system that promotes international and regional trade connecting Asia and Europe but still it needs an effort and funding in order to be more sustainable.



### **C. Accessible tourism**

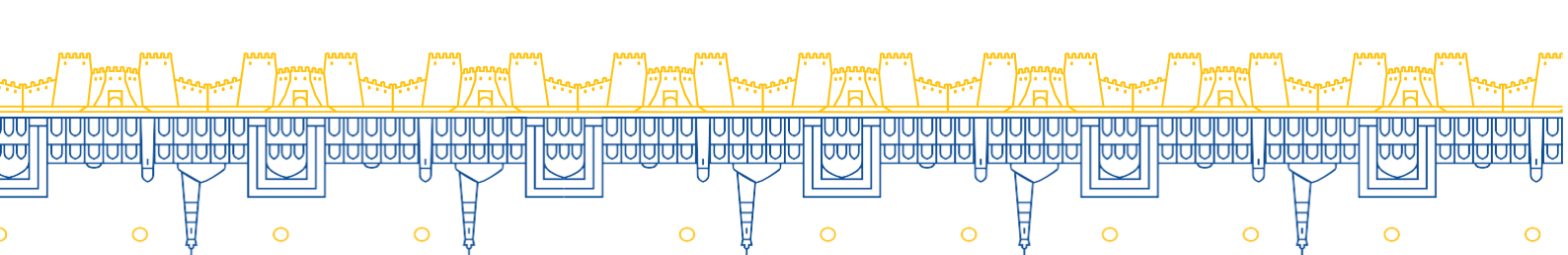
The accessible tourism caters the needs of a full range of tourists including people with reduced mobility, older people and cross-generational families. This is one of the most important policies that must be taken into consideration and make the country an attractive and comfortable destination for all people. It entails removal of attitudinal and institutional barriers in society, and encompasses accessibility in the physical environment, in transportation, information and communications and other facilities and services. It encompasses publicly and privately owned tourist locations. This policy can be applied as a “Quality Mark” that all the facilities that will fulfill the requirements and get a financial support from the government. The national standards in tourism industry have requirements for accessibility but still, this policy has a high priority for action since it needs to be applied right away.





#### **D. Search and Rescue Services**

As it is already discussed, any visitor should feel safe in the visited destination and for that reason, rescue teams should be created. Those cost should be covered by insurance companies and include mountain rescue services, helicopter costs and repatriation to the country of residence or possible transfer to neighboring countries for treatment. Since Kazakhstan has natural diversity, it can enhance the “experience tourism”, and attract tourists for sports and other activities. So far, there is a national standard for adventure tourism but still it has to be developed in more efficient way.



## **E. Avoid massive tourism**

There always a risk factor of massive tourism in the investments, since it usually aims to the large share of the market by creating large hotel and other facilities in order to attract many people. The investments should focus on greener practices in order to be promoted by the government and try to meet the sustainable standards. In order to avoid mass tourism Kazakhstan is developing 10 destinations according to the State program for the development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2019-2025. This policy can accomplish the greener development of tourism sector by its fundamentals and has an impact of attracting tourists that seek for alternative tourist activities. The government needs to emphasize in those investments that aim to economic growth and creation of new job opportunities.



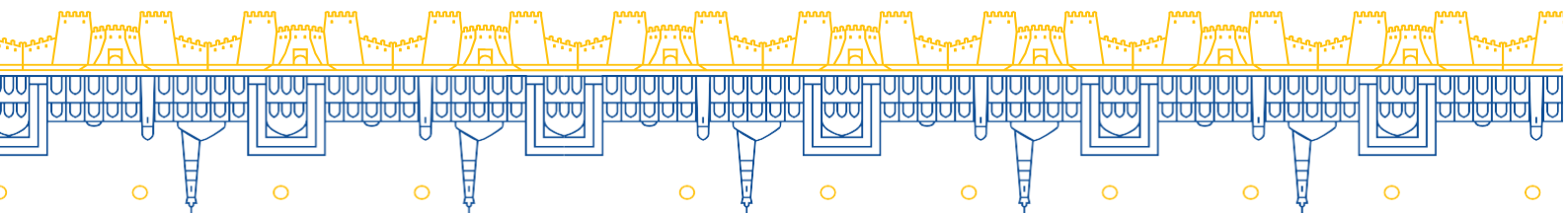
## 5. Current Situation of the Republic of Tajikistan in Sustainable Tourism

This chapter discusses the current situation of sustainable tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan, and more specifically the areas of particular needs or opportunities, the highest priority of intervention and the areas of apparent strengths that can reinforce the industry and develop the local economy.

### **Tourism Policy and Governance**

To begin with, the tourism industry needs to have a strong position in the development of policies and programs. According to Tajik partners, plenty of studies have been conducted in the tourism sector. Tourism is considered as a priority sector by government and the initiatives of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan related to the announcement of 2018 as the “Year of Development of Tourism and Folk Crafts” and 2019-2021 as the “Years of Development of the Village, Tourism and Folk Crafts” served as an incentive for the development of the tourism industry. The main goal of the state policy in the field of tourism is the creation of favorable legal conditions for the organization of the effective functioning of the subjects of tourism activities and, in this context, the creation of an efficient and competitive tourism market in the Republic of Tajikistan, which provides an opportunity to meet the needs of domestic and foreign citizens in various high-quality tourism services.

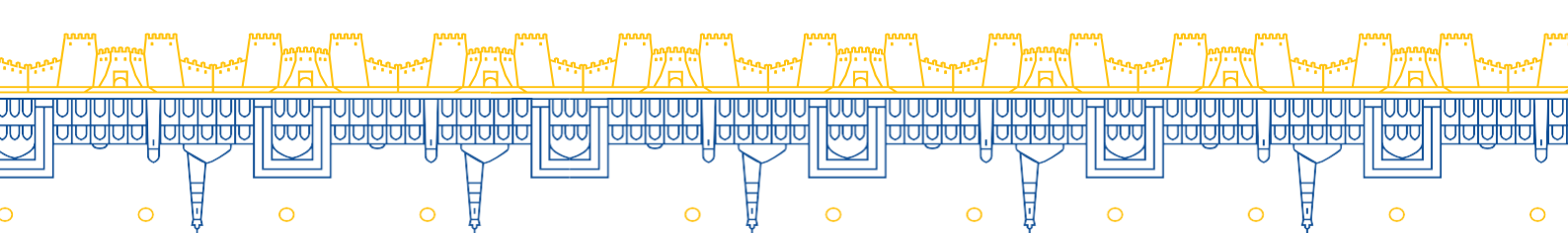




Tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan receives support from the national budget, since the Tourism Development Program has an action matrix that provides the deadlines for implementation and financial resources allocated from the budget of the Republic of Tajikistan, Development Partners and the private sector. The programs of socio-economic development of the regions of cities and regions provide for the allocation of funds for the development of tourism. In addition, the Tourism Development Programs in the regions, cities and districts provide for the development of tourism funds from local budgets, private sector funds and Development Partners. Moreover, the government of Tajikistan is member of the World Tourism Organization, and other international tourism organizations. Also, it functions the office of the Committee for Tourism Development under the Government of Tajikistan and local tourism structures. Even though the tourism industry possesses a strong position in development policies, there is still a high priority for action.

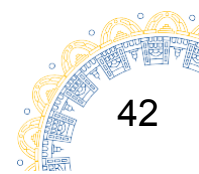
There are many projects regarding sustainable tourism in Central Asia (including the Republic of Tajikistan) that have received assistance from international agencies, such as World Bank Group Project with a project up to USD 30 million called "Improving the resilience of Khatlon and GBAO (Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region) by activating local economic growth, developing tourism, creating jobs and economic opportunities for the local population, especially for the vulnerable groups, including youth, women, returning labor migrants". Another important project was the "Tourism Development Project" by Asian Development Bank which coordinates the actions of partners, promotes the implementation of market indicators for the tourism sector and the development of

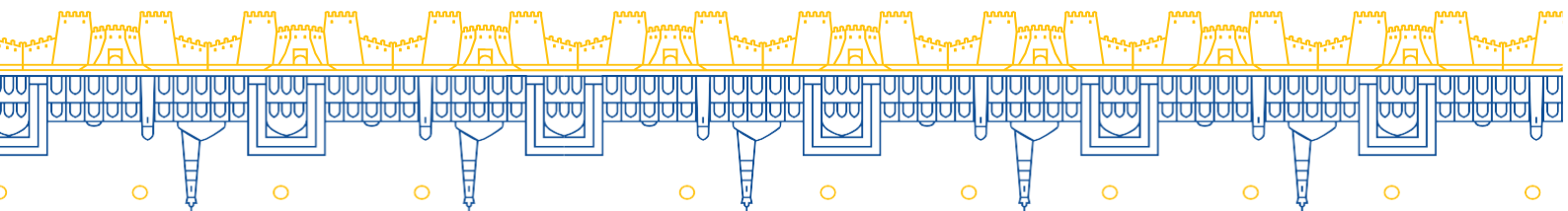




strategic priorities for various categories of tourism and geographic regions. In addition, within the framework of the European Union SWITCH-Asia Programme, the project “Community Based Tourism Initiative: Creating Links between Community Based Tourism in Central Asia and the European Market” is being implemented, which aims to develop business in the tourism sector at the community level in the countries of central Asia, including Tajikistan. In the context of the European Union's SWITCH-Asia Programme, the project "Promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy production in the tourism sector at the community level" (or Sustainable Energy for Tourism - SET Project) is being implemented, aimed at the use of sustainable energy. Moreover, sixteen local community projects were implemented in the field of ecotourism and the introduction of energy efficient technologies and renewable energy sources by United Nations Development. In general, the assistance projects can be considered successful and plenty of lessons have been learned, hence there is sufficient coordination between international agencies in their support for sustainable tourism.

In 2016, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan adopted the National Development Strategy until 2030. Moreover, in 2021, the Medium-Term Development Program for 2021–2025 was adopted for a period of 5 years. These documents are interconnected and complementary to the Agenda for Sustainable Development, defining the main directions for achieving the SDGs in Tajikistan. The documents are aimed at diversifying and competitiveness of the economy, sustainable jobs, improving energy supply and transport links, ensuring food security, strengthening public administration and developing human resources, including in the tourism sector.



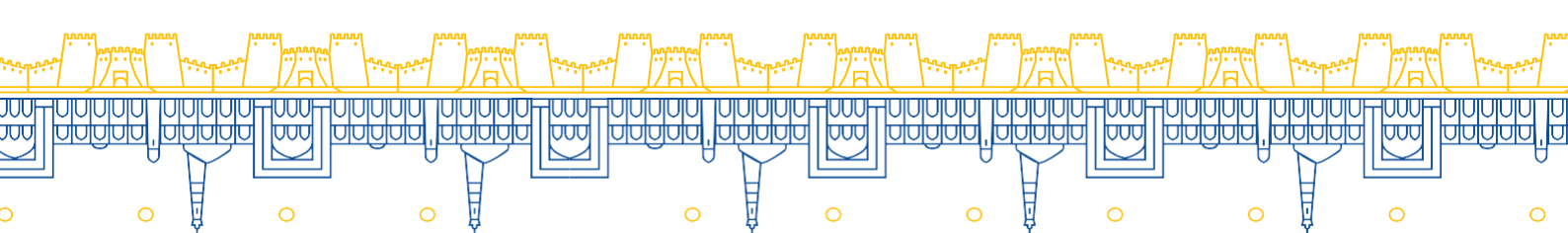


The Tourism Development Strategy 2030 explicitly mentions sustainable tourism. Although in many policies documents the word sustainable tourism is not mentioned directly, the term "tourism" in the Republic of Tajikistan means "sustainable tourism" since it implies the preservation of nature, cultural and historical heritage and other elements inherent in sustainable tourism.

The Republic of Tajikistan joined the World Tourism Organization in 2009, hence, it supports all adopted and developed documents of the WTO, including the Global Code of Ethics. This fact can be also confirmed by the entry of the capital city of Dushanbe into the World Federation of Tourist Cities, the announcement of the city of Dushanbe as the tourist capital of the Economic Cooperation Organization for 2020-2021, the inclusion of UNESCO tangible cultural heritage: the historical site "Sarazm", "National Park" and intangible cultural heritage: "Chakan - the art of embroidery of the Republic of Tajikistan", "Go Navruz", "Oshi Palov" and "Music by Shashmakom".

Tajikistan is recognized as a potential tourism hotspot because of its mountainous topography, natural assets, culture, and history as an important link along the old Silk Road. However, this potential remains largely untapped for various reasons, including poor connectivity, inadequate infrastructure, the absence of a comprehensive tourism ecosystem to ensure quality service delivery, weak institutional and regulatory capacity, and a poor business environment. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. It assists its members and partners by

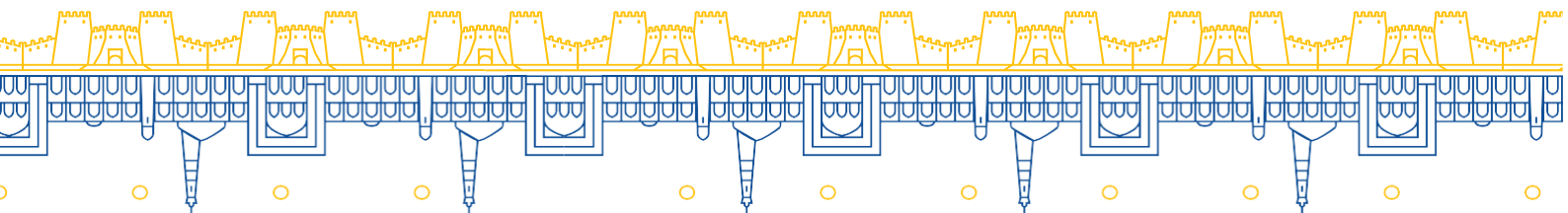




providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to promote social and economic development. ADB's Tourism Development Project will introduce market indicators for the tourism sector and develop satellite accounts for tourism to take into account the contribution of the tourism sector to budget revenue in developing strategic priorities for various categories of tourism and geographic regions. Due to the COVID pandemic, the contribution of tourism to the country's GDP has decreased from 2.5% in 2019 to 1% in 2020. According to this indicator, other countries of the post-Soviet space are ahead of Tajikistan (Georgia 27.1%, Azerbaijan 14.6%, Armenia 14%, Kazakhstan 6.2%). In developed countries, this figure is approximately 40-55%. As part of the Tourism Development Strategy, it is planned to increase the contribution of tourism to GDP to 8%, the contribution of tourism to exports to 15%, the share of capital in the tourism industry in the investment complex to 10%, the share of tourism in the budget revenue to 3%, and the increase employment in the tourism industry to 10%.

The Tourism Development Program for 2018-2020 was adopted as a resolution of the government of Tajikistan on March 01, 2018 No. 80 and this Program was extended until 2022 and in 2023 a new Tourism Development Program for the next 2 years will be adopted. The Strategy for the Development of Tourism until 2030 is a resolution of the Government of Tajikistan dated August 1, 2018, No. 372 that was adopted, the main goal of which is to ensure the sustainable development of tourism in the country.

With the resolution of the Government of Tajikistan "On issues of state support for the development of ecotourism, mountain sports

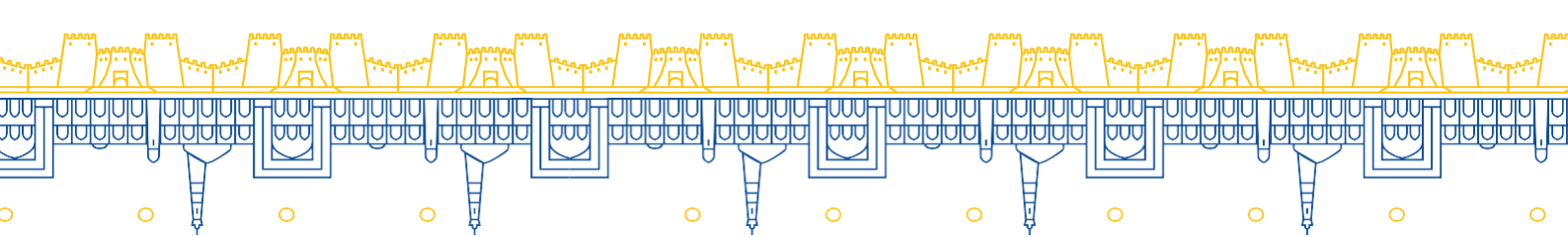


tourism and mountaineering in the Republic of Tajikistan” No. 80 dated March 24, 2005, the aforementioned types of tourism are now recognized as priority areas of the industry. Moreover, there are strategies and policies that have been prepared for specific destinations in order to promote specific places with alternative types of tourism. For example, there is a decree from the government “On the comprehensive program for the development of the Varzob region as a recreation area, sanatorium treatment and tourism” for 2000-2010, No. 461 of November 9, 2000. In addition, a resolution of the government “On declaring the Romit Gorge as a recreation and tourism area” No. 358 dated September 18, 2000 and “On the Comprehensive Program for the Development of the Baldzhuvan Region as an International Tourism Zone for 2002-2012” No. 276 dated July 3, 2002. Also, the executive bodies of state power of regions, cities, and districts adopted programs for the development of tourism for specified periods.

The tourism plan is being implemented effectively by all stakeholders, the Government, executive bodies of state power in cities and regions, local governments, development partners, the private sector, civil society etc. The progress and results of the planning are analyzed based on the results of periodic reports provided by the executors of the Programs by higher authorities, and field visits are carried out.

It is broadly known that the adequacy of legislation and regulations can affect the tourism sector. The law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Tourism” was adopted on September 3, 1999; additions and amendments were adopted in 2018. Afterwards, additional laws have been developed, for example, the Law of the Republic of

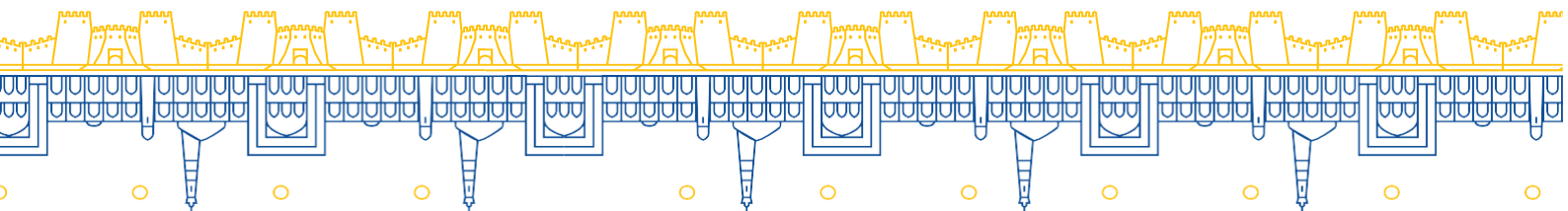




Tajikistan "On craft", the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On public-private partnership". To support the notion of sustainability and promote different types of tourism, the government of Tajikistan adopted a resolution "On the peculiarities of licensing certain types of activities (as amended)" No. 172 dated April 3, 2007 that regulates the licensing of tourism activities and "On measures to ensure a simplified procedure for processing and issuing visas of the Republic of Tajikistan to citizens of a number of foreign countries" No. 134 dated April 3, 2006 in order to facilitate the movement in the country.

The Department for Tourism, Youth and Sports is considered as the dedicated tourism ministry department within the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan alongside with the Tourism Development Committee which is under the government of the Republic of Tajikistan. Also, they have been established and structures responsible for tourism development have been created in the regions and districts under the executive bodies of state power. Under the auspices of the Committee for Tourism Development, it is planned to create a Public Council of civil society organizations and the private sector to involve in tourism management. In addition, the Collegium of the Committee for the Development of Tourism, the supreme governing body, included a representative of civil society representing other interests.

As a result of the constant support of the State, the private sector is currently developing steadily, and today its share in the gross domestic product is more than 70%, and in providing the population with jobs, its contribution reaches 68%. In the process of privatization of state property and the implementation of individual



projects for the reconstruction of the structure of natural monopoly entities and large state enterprises, up to 90% of state assets are provided to the private sector. The private sector in tourism is interested in preserving the environment because for it it is a source of permanent income, a tool for reducing poverty. The introduction of renewable energy efficient sources of electricity, which is spreading in Tajikistan with the help of Development Partners, will help preserve the natural environment and reduce emissions.

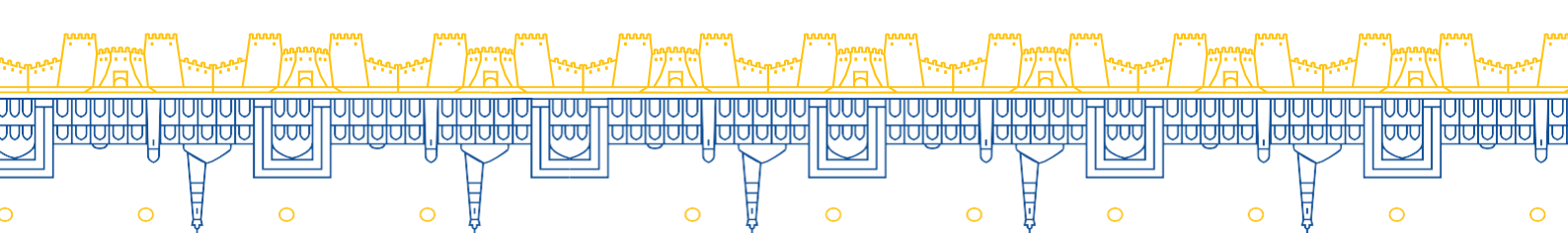
### **Economic Performance, Investment and Competitiveness**

Another significant factor that must be taken into consideration is the tourism measurement and the contribution of tourism to the economy. In order to improve the system of statistics and obtain information about tourists and their activities, Asian Development Bank and the Tourism Development Committee are implementing an effective data collection system within the framework of the Tourism Development Project. The collected data are being analyzed and according to the calculations of the Agency on Statistics, Tajikistan has the lowest GDP from tourism among the CIS and Central Asian countries (1% of GDP for 2020).

As part of the Tourism Development Strategy, it is planned to attract investors for the construction of tourism infrastructure facilities. In order to improve the investment climate and encourage foreign entrepreneurs who invest more than \$1 million in the economy of Tajikistan, a five-year multiple-entry visa is provided, and a three-year multiple-entry visa is issued to facilitate the movement of compatriots born in Tajikistan. In order to maximize

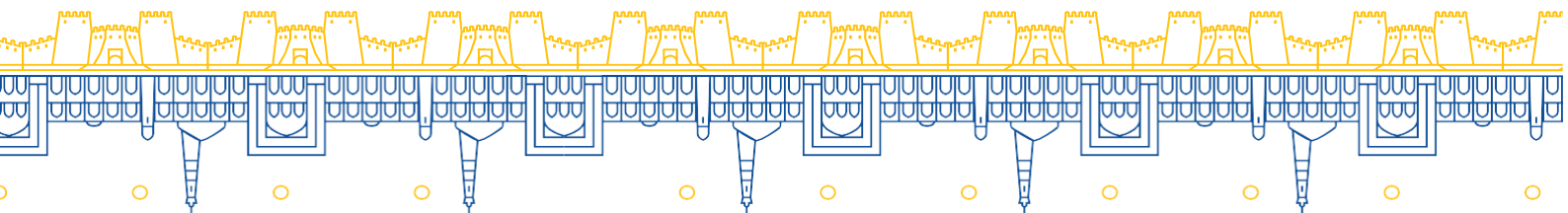






the attraction of tourists and citizens of foreign countries, a multiple-entry tourist visa up to 60 days was created. Another significant factor that may affect the tourism industry is the accessibility in a country and how easy the entrance can be. To support this notion, in the Republic of Tajikistan, an electronic visa and visa-free regime with 12 countries of the world has been introduced and also a simplified visa regime with 126 countries, as well as the abolition of internal registration of tourists will allow tourists and other foreign citizens to apply online at [www.evisa.tj](http://www.evisa.tj), without contacting the consulates of Tajikistan to obtain e-visa and come to our country. From January 2022, a visa-free regime with 52 countries of the world begins to operate. According to international assessments, the electronic visa system of Tajikistan is among the top five visa systems and ranks fourth. As part of the adopted state programs for the development of tourism, an electronic visa system for foreign citizens has been introduced. There is a visa-free regime with the CIS countries (except Turkmenistan). The period of registration of foreign citizens in Tajikistan has been increased from three to thirty days.

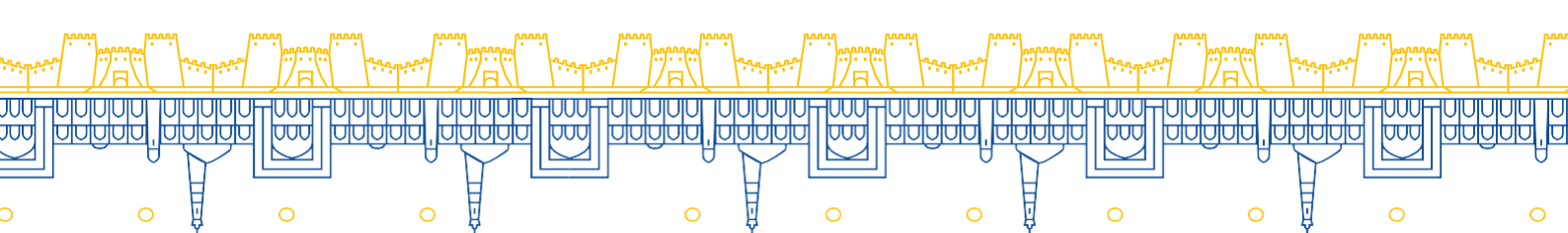
In addition, in order to access world markets for the export of Tajik goods and services, the Republic of Tajikistan officially joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2013 and embraced the Program of adaption of the economy of the Republic of Tajikistan in connection with membership in the WTO Tajikistan. The e-commerce system is developing and one of the key problems for its development is the insufficient and expensive digital connection, which is a necessary prerequisite for any online transaction. The inflow of foreign investments into the economy of Tajikistan in 2021 increased by 1.7 times and amounted to more than \$700 million.



This figure is \$280 million more than in 2020. Development Partners aimed at building the necessary tourism infrastructure, which will create a favorable environment for attracting more tourists, improving the welfare of rural areas and creating new jobs and, in general, the sustainable development of tourism in the country. The Government of Tajikistan is consistently working to improve the investment climate and further promote reforms in the economy. The Investments Law regulates public relations related to investment and defines the organizational, financial, legal, economic foundations for stimulating and state support of investments by providing an equal legal regime and guaranteeing the protection of investors' rights (Law of August 03, 2018, No. 1547). The Laws of the Republic of Tajikistan on "Foreign Investments in the Republic of Tajikistan", "Foreign Economic Activity", "Joint Stock Companies", "Concessions" ensure the protection of the rights and interests of property of foreign investors, create a solid legal basis for commercial activities, stimulate the participation of foreign investors in the privatization of objects of the national economy on an equal footing with the citizens of Tajikistan. Foreign investors and enterprises with foreign investments are granted the right to carry out any activities not prohibited by the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan, reinvest profits, and are granted the rights to use land, including its lease.

Although the Country has achieved some success in improving the business climate, significantly reducing the number of taxes and permits for obtaining licenses, performing export-import procedures, further reform is needed. The tax rates are still considered high, the level of corruption is high, and the existing benefits for investors and producers are considered insufficient. The

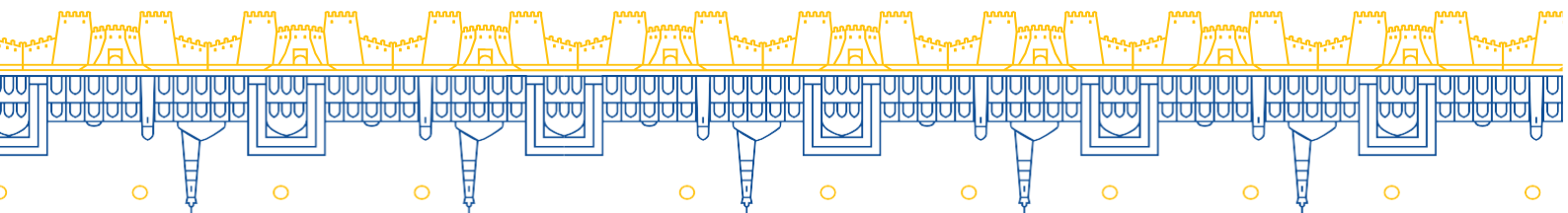




barrier is bureaucratic and financial hurdles, widespread corruption, a largely dysfunctional banking sector, an opaque tax system, and countless inspections. Moreover, the financial resources for the development of tour business are provided in the framework of banking and microfinance programs, as well as grant resources for small and medium-sized businesses within the framework of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) projects, the World Bank, etc.

The conditions for business development in the tourism sector are quite favorable since the government of Tajikistan represents number of tax and customs benefits, in particular, exemption from income tax for newly established travel companies in the first 5 years of their activity, exemption from value added tax and customs duties for the import of equipment, machinery and building materials for the construction of tourist facilities, including hotels, resorts, health centers, tourist service centers and other facilities, as well as a 50% reduction in customs duties on the import of new passenger cars used for tourism purposes. In addition to these reforms, with the direct support of the President, the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan dated April 12, 2018 approved the list of tourist sites exempt from value added tax and customs duties.

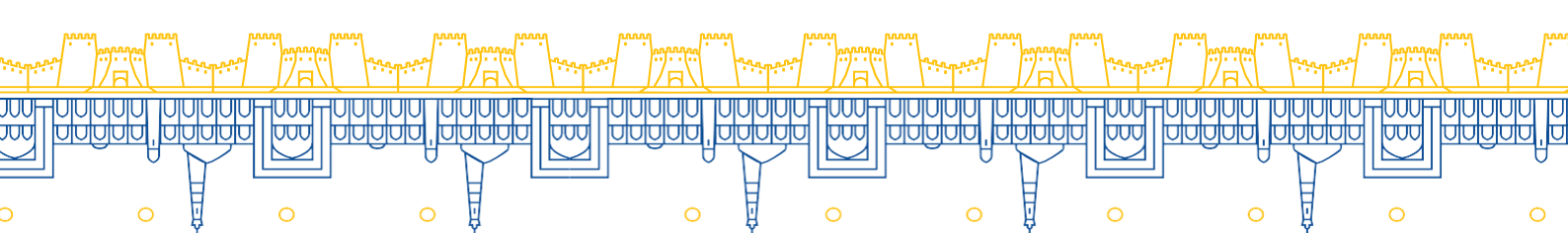
Investments in the tourism industry can help the establishment of the Republic of Tajikistan as an attractive destination, by creating a brand, marketing and product positioning. A high priority must be given to this establishment, in order to improve the quality of tourist services. Nowadays, there are not any effective systems for setting, inspecting and reporting on quality standards. However,



within the framework of hotel projects, similar standards are being developed and implemented. The formation of a modern marketing strategy for the development and further promotion of a tourist product in the domestic and foreign markets based on a national brand is an important task for the development of tourism in the country at the present stage. It should be noted that Tajikistan is taking its first and sustainable steps to develop the tourism sector, and in this process, it is very important to study the global experience of other tourism powers, as well as to promote the tourism resources of the country. For this purpose, an Internet portal, or the National Tourist Site of Tajikistan, has been created in Tajik, Russian and English. The site is also expected to be available in German, French, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese in the near future.

In Tajikistan, the contribution of law enforcement agencies to ensuring the safety of domestic and foreign tourists is significant, and ensuring safe recreation and tourism for tourists is always in the spotlight. For these purposes, the Department of Tourist Police under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan has been operating since 2018. There is direct cooperation and communication between this department and travel companies, which helps to meet the needs of tourists.

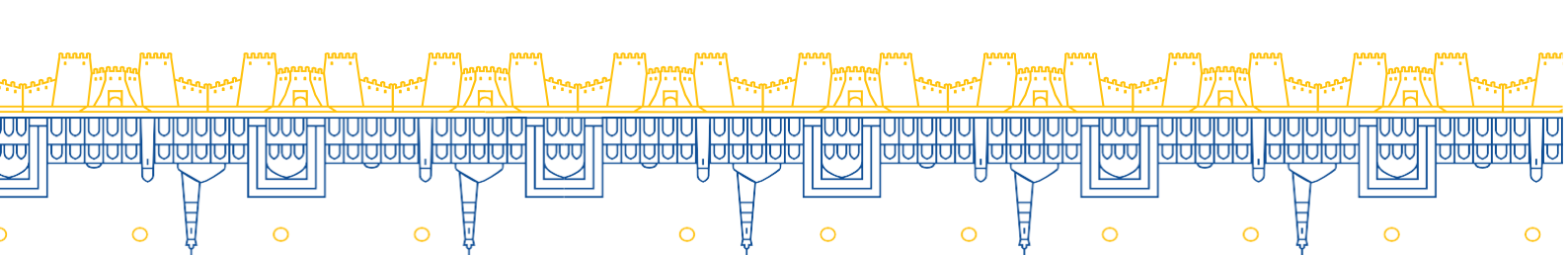
In order to handle emergencies and crises, in the framework of the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Law “On the protection of the population and territories from natural and man-made emergencies” was adopted. Moreover, the Ministry of Emergency Situations has developed and adopted a national emergency risk reduction plan and also a national action plan on climate change



mitigation was developed by the Main Directorate for Hydrometeorology and Observation of the Natural Environment by the Committee for Environmental Protection.

## **Employment, Decent Work and Human Capital**

The definition of sustainable tourism contains the existence and scope of a Human Resources policy, plan and actions, that is discussed and agreed with the private sector and other stakeholders in the industry. The Labor code of the Republic of Tajikistan is the proving legislation that supports and respects workers' rights and meets the conditions of decent work. In order for tourism to be reflected in overall Human Resources policies and plans, the Law "On Education" was adopted and also the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2030. In Tajikistan, there are 20 educational institutions that train specialists in the field of tourism and services. In order to create modern educational conditions for training specialists in the field of tourism in the country, the Institute of Tourism, Entrepreneurship and Services was established on the basis of the Institute of Entrepreneurship and Service. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Tajikistan and (USAID) are working to increase the capacity of civil servants in the field of tourism. Development partners provide assistance to professional associations in the field of tourism to improve the skills of employees of tour enterprises. In addition, the state trains personnel for the tourism sector through universities. The system of skills standards and qualifications relevant to the needs of the tourism sector that is used in Tajikistan is the Bologna system of education enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching is a core mission.



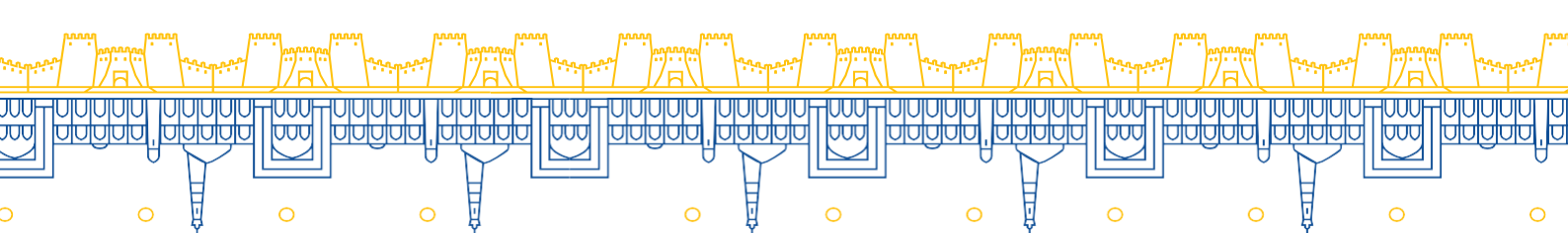
## **Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion**

One of the main goals of sustainable tourism is the poverty reduction that must be included in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Over the past 20 years, 3 strategic documents to reduce poverty have been created, 2 programs to improve the living standards of the population and a long-term development strategy have been adopted and are being successfully implemented. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper contains a section on the tourism sector, which creates jobs, including for vulnerable communities. There are also 176 state programs in this area in the country. The Tourism Development Committee initiates the development of rural tourism and this issue is included in the Tourism Development Strategy until 2030. The World Bank Group project “Building Resilience in Khatlon and GBAO” is being implemented to enhance local economic growth, tourism development, job creation and economic opportunities for the local population, especially for vulnerable groups, including youth, women, and returning migrant workers. Projects are aimed at assisting local communities in the creation of income-generating activities, including tourism as an alternative to the use of local resources. Within the framework of projects of UNDP Development Partners, the World Bank and private business, initiatives are being taken to promote employment in tourism to local communities

## **Sustainability of the Natural and Cultural Environment**

Another significant goal of sustainable tourism that must be taken into consideration is the protection of natural and cultural heritage. In order to address any issue regarding the sustainability of the

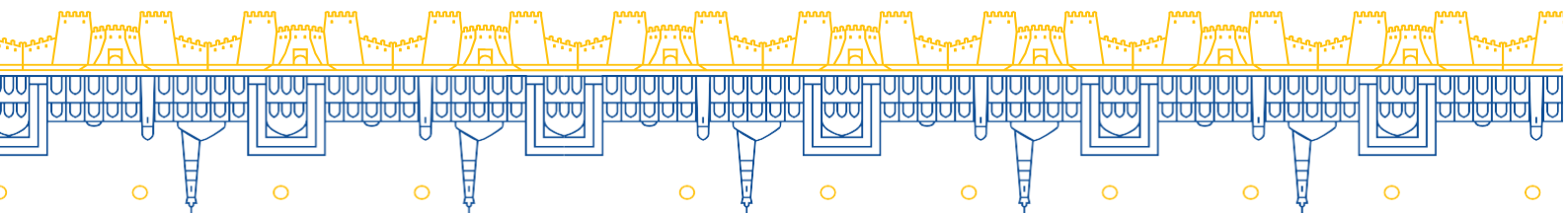




natural and cultural environment, an Environmental Code of the Republic of Tajikistan has been developed by the By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan in 2018. This code includes experienced specialists, lawyers, and representatives of state bodies. To support this notion, the Law "On Environmental Protection" dated August 2, 2011 No. 760 defines the legal framework for state policy in the field of environmental protection and is aimed at ensuring sustainable socio-economic development, guaranteeing human rights to a healthy and favorable environment, strengthening the rule of law, preventing the negative impact of economic and other activities on the environment, organizing the rational use of natural resources and ensuring environmental safety. Moreover, a resolution of the government of Tajikistan "On the State Cadastre of Tourism Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan" No. 460 dated November 9, 2000, that includes the main cultural, historical, health-improving sites and natural and recreational areas that form the basis of the national tourism product. In addition, the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On Hunting and Game Management" was adopted, which defines the legal and economic foundations for hunting management, regulates social relations related to the sustainable use, protection and reproduction of game animal resources, their habitat, as well as the rights of citizens and their communities for hunting.

Protected areas play an important role in the development of ecological and scientific tourism, which has recently attracted tourists. Special legislation is aimed at the preservation and rational use of the cultural heritage of Tajikistan, which is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan and includes the Laws "On Culture" of 1997, "On the Protection and Use of Objects of Historical

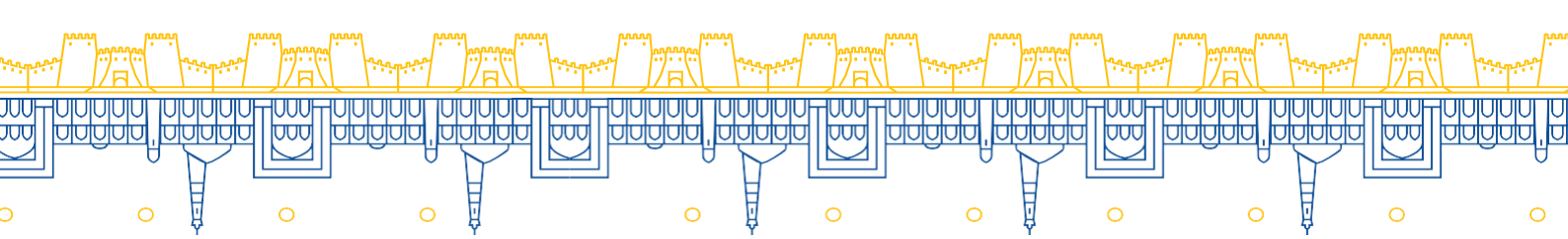




and Cultural Heritage" of 2006 (valid as amended by the Law of 28 December 2012 N 921), "On the National Archival Fund and Archival Institutions" 1998, "On Library Activities" 2003, "On Museums and the Museum Fund" 2004, "On the Import and Export of Cultural Property" 2001 d., as well as codified normative legal 7 acts, decrees of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, resolutions of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. At cultural heritage sites, structures have been formed that are financed from the national budget, the budgets of local government bodies, and which are engaged in the protection of natural heritage and the organization of tourism at cultural heritage sites.

The UNESCO's tangible cultural heritage sites are the historical site "Sarazm", "National Park" and intangible cultural heritage: "Chakan-embroidery art of the Republic of Tajikistan", "Go Navruz", "Oshi Palov" and "Music Shashmakom" thanks to which the tour of Tajikistan became known all over the world. At cultural heritage sites, it is planned to organize tourism, taking into account the preservation of cultural heritage. Tajikistan, within the framework of climate change, pays special attention to the importance of the practical implementation of the goals of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028" and the joint promotion of other global initiatives, voiced by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan at the UN high-level thematic discussion "Implementation of action in the field of climate" (27.10.2021) and high-level meeting on water and climate (02.11.2021).

In this context, an appeal was made to the international community to take urgent measures to reduce the risk of disasters and adapt to climate change and to fully support the proposal of the President of



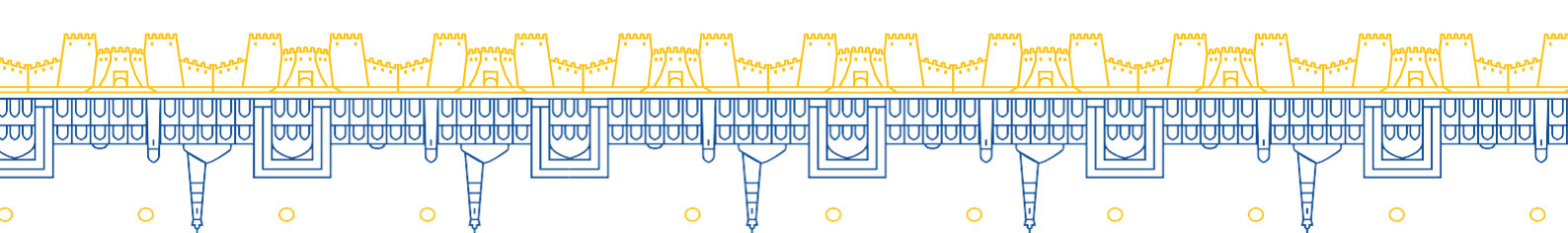
Tajikistan to declare 2025 the International Year of Glaciers and establish a Special International Fund for the Protection of Glaciers as a vital resource to ensure sustainable development in the Central Asian region and beyond.



## **6. SWOT ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMEDATION FOR THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN**

### **SWOT Analysis**

Taking into consideration the aforementioned best practices that have been applied in EU countries and meet the sustainable standards and also the current situation of Tajikistan in this sector, a SWOT analysis has been conducted in order to help the tourism sector of Tajikistan to develop a full awareness of all the factors involved in making a policy recommendation. A SWOT analysis has to be performed in order to explore new initiatives, revamp internal policies, consider opportunities to pivot or alter a plan midway through its execution. This analysis aims to help to the discovery of recommendations and strategies, with a focus on leveraging strengths and opportunities to overcome weaknesses and threats. In order to propose a successful policy.

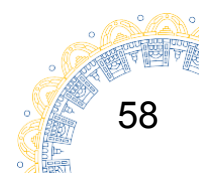


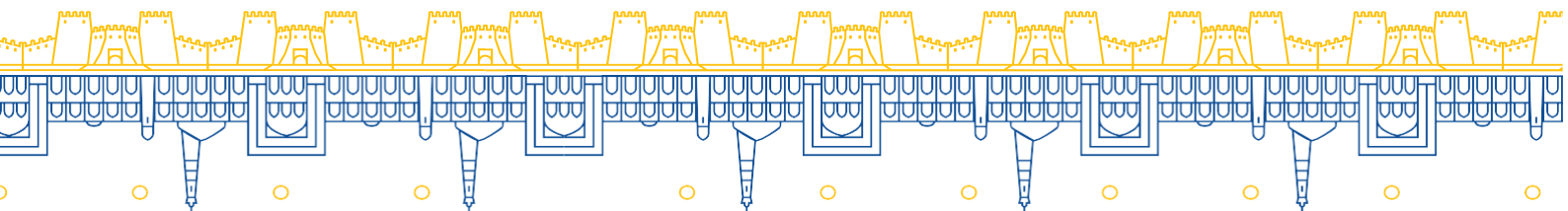
## Strengths

- Tourism receives support from the national budget
- Very high level of infrastructure investments
- International and local development projects
- Projects implementation and knowledge transfer regarding ecotourism, energy efficient technologies and renewable energy sources
- Five-year multiple-entry visa for entrepreneurs who invest more than \$1 million
- Visa-free regime and electronic-visa
- Provision of tax and custom benefits in tourism sector
- Marketing Plan and product positioning of the country
- Adaption of a national emergency risk reduction
- Sustainable development practices for protection of natural and culture heritage

## Weaknesses

- Poor connectivity and inadequate infrastructure
- The absence of a comprehensive tourism ecosystem
- Weak institutional and regulatory capacity, and a poor business environment
- Low contribution of tourism to the country's GDP
- Lack of investments interest in tourism sector
- Insufficient and expensive digital connection
- Corruption and inappropriate financial expenditures
- Bureaucratic and financial hurdles, a largely dysfunctional banking sector, an opaque tax system, and countless inspections
- Inexistence of effective systems for setting, inspecting and reporting on quality standards



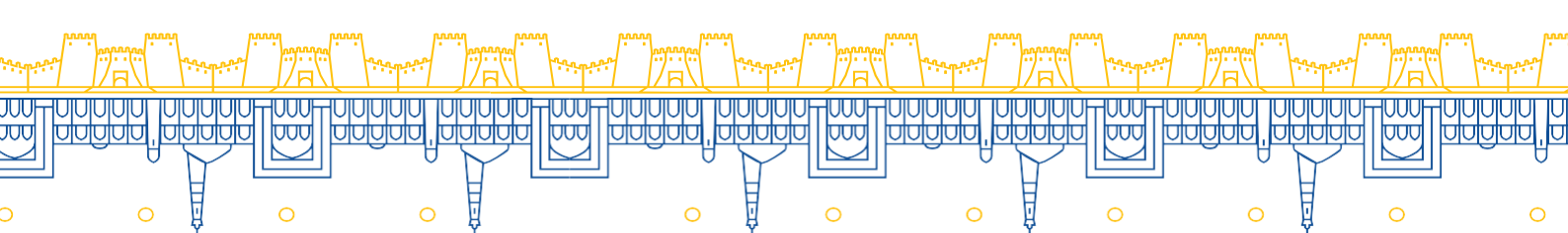


## Opportunities

- Economic growth due to private and public investments
- Economic growth and knowledge transfer due to state program and international programs
- Tourism can be considered as a source of a permanent income and a tool to reduce poverty
- Increase of the investments by providing initiatives
- Easier entrance and attracting new tourist of different nationalities due to visa-free regime
- Tax and custom benefits can attract entrepreneurs from other industries to invest in tourism
- The brand of Tajikistan as an attractive destination can be established, well-articulated and maintained
- Covid-19 pandemic has proven that the adaption of a national emergency risk reduction is necessary
- Sustainable development practices provide high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists

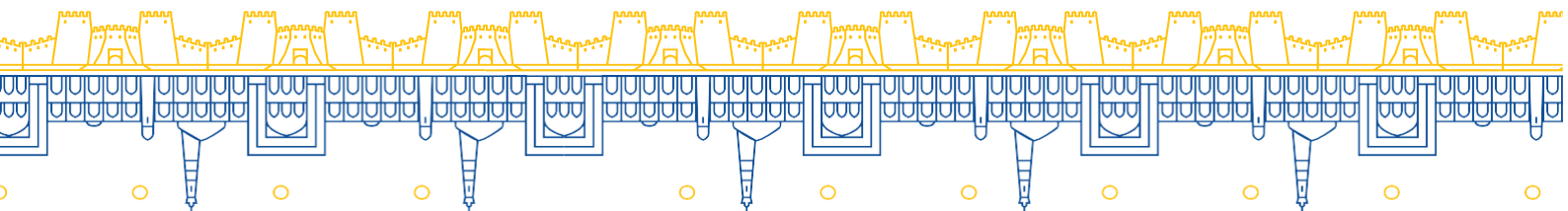
## Threats

- Danger
- Risk factor of the development of domestic tourism due to poor connectivity and inadequate infrastructure
- Due to the absence of a comprehensive tourism ecosystem, the quality service delivery cannot be ensured
- Slow assimilation of good practices due to weak state support mechanisms could be a barrier for development
- Danger of limited investments in tourism sector
- Weak digital connection can affect the online transactions, hence the foreign investments
- Risk factor of misapplication of projects and policies that may harm sustainable tourism
- State support mechanisms could be a barrier for development and for attraction of foreign investments



The tourism product of Tajikistan is rich and diverse and offers a unique opportunity for development in almost all forms of tourism from the cognitive-related visits to cultural and historical ones as well as other alternative forms of tourism and ecotourism. The support of tourism for the national budget, the state's programs and the international affairs can strengthen the knowledge transfer and can attract investors but also, they are important to education diplomacy and the process of building mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships between countries in the education arena. By attracting investors can achieve the desirable economic growth but there is also a need of targeted action in order to avoid massive tourism activities and support more sustainable ways of investments. Moreover, tourism can be considered as a source of permanent income and a tool to reduce poverty by providing new job opportunities and development of the local economy. These investments can be used for the creation of new sustainable and green tourist facilities that can attract visitors with more sustainable way. The existing legislative framework with the constant update can create a fertile ground for sustainable tourism development. In addition, the visa-free regime in the Republic of Tajikistan, can provide an easy entrance in the country and attract new tourist of different nationalities. In addition, the provision of a five-year multiple-entry visa can function as an initiative to increase of the investments. Moreover, the tax and custom benefits can attract entrepreneurs from other industries to invest in tourism. All these sustainable development practices can provide high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists.

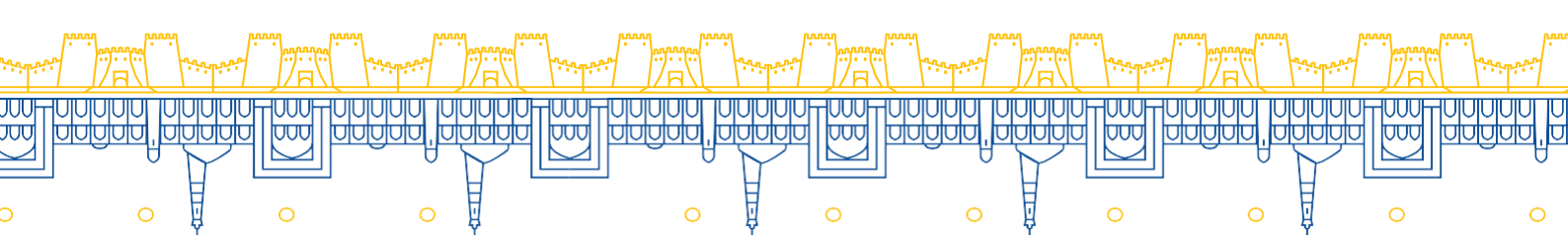
Despite the positive aspects of the development of the tourism industry in Tajikistan, there are still a number of unsolved



problems. To begin with, the poor connectivity, the inadequate infrastructure, the absence of a comprehensive tourism ecosystem, the weak institutional and regulatory capacity, and a poor business environment can consist risk factors of the development of domestic and the quality service delivery cannot be ensured. Also, with those barriers for development, the weak state support mechanisms and the low contribution of tourism to the country's GDP, can make the assimilation of good practices slower and prevent the entrepreneurs to invest in the tourism industry of Tajikistan. Although, Tajikistan has all the foundations needed for the attraction of both foreign and local investors in the tourism industry, enabling joint ventures to a great extent. However, investments must be carefully designed and the need for legislation and supervision by the state is crucial. Negative environmental impacts of tourism could occur as tourism through private investments sometimes puts enormous stress on local land use, and can lead to soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss, and more pressure on endangered species. The insufficient development of state support mechanisms could produce a massive weak state control in the tourism sector and lead to arbitrariness and lack of control. Besides, the state and experienced stakeholders in the tourism industry are needed in order to establish and monitor the guidelines of Code of Ethics in tourism. Finally, the insufficient and expensive digital connection can affect the online transactions, hence to prevent foreign investment. The importance of online platforms is high since Tajikistan is facing with bureaucratic and financial hurdles, a largely dysfunctional banking sector, an opaque tax system, and countless inspections that must to be issued.







## Policy Recommendation

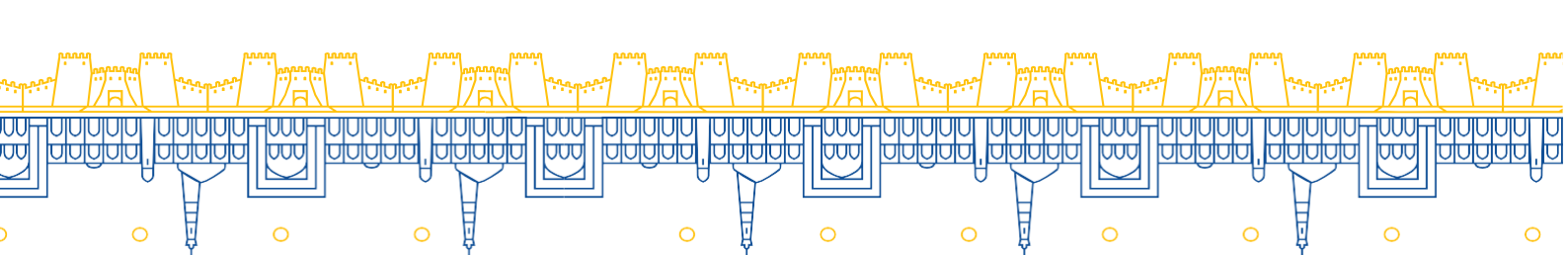
All things considered, the Republic of Tajikistan still needs to develop the “sense” of sustainability in order to start developing tourism sector with fundamental bases in order to avoid mistakes and practices that cannot meet the sustainable standards.

The recommended policies are:

### A. Mountain tourism

Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia and its mountains stretch across more than 90% of the country. The Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan which is an award-winning green tourist destination give the boost to promote mountain and experience tourism. This kind of tourism has a high potential to strengthen the local economic growth and social change because it consists a powerful attraction for visitors, it can be complementary with other touristic activities, jobs can be created and it can be promoted not only in the seasonal period but all year long. Moreover, sustainable tourism can offer mountain communities a path to prosperity and inclusion and it can serve as an important driver of socio-economic development in mountain areas, since for many mountain communities, tourism is their livelihood.





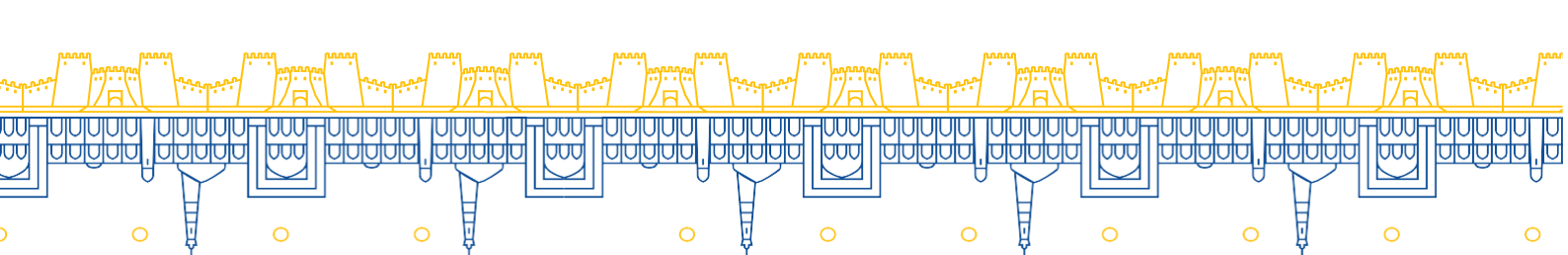
## **B. Social tourism**

The state needs to provide with vouchers for accommodation and traveling to beneficiaries and their benefiting members inside the country in order to promote the domestic tourism and support the local economy. This policy will accomplish the development of the rural areas and it will create new job opportunities to the provinces. This policy will support the mission of sustainability, and it will keep the cultural heritage alive. This project can be monitored by a public service and it can be enforced by promoting the positive outcomes to the beneficiaries. The “Social tourism” can have an impact also in attraction of foreign tourists, since it will be a growth in those rural destinations. In addition, in order for this project to be achieved it needs time for the accommodation providers to be prepared and the government to ensure the necessary funding in order to accomplish it.



### C. Local Transportation System

There is no economically thriving city in the world that does not depend heavily on its mass transit. To support this notion, Tajikistan has already rebuilt mass transit and boosted multimodality. Moreover, the increasing electrified transport will lead to improved air quality, reduced emissions, and lower noise levels, and it is a relatively straightforward way for cities to make themselves more sustainable. The technology already exists for rail, buses, and small vehicles like cars and trucks, but a big challenge for cities moving forward will be to ensure that regional electrical grids can accommodate the increased demand for power from the transportation sector. This policy meets the sustainable goals because it effects the environment in a positive way and it can create new job opportunities. Cities also need to foster bike and scooter-sharing services. To help make sure micro mobility supports a strong mass transit system, cities need to allow bicycles on subways and buses and encourage the installation of bike- and scooter-sharing docks adjacent to transit stations. This policy can be monitored and enforced by public and private services that can invest in new technologies that reduce emissions and have an impact on attracting more people to use them. The transportation system in Tajikistan has developed in a very satisfied level the latest years but it has to meet the sustainable goals in order for the country to offer a wide range of transport services for a greener future.



## D. Online Platforms

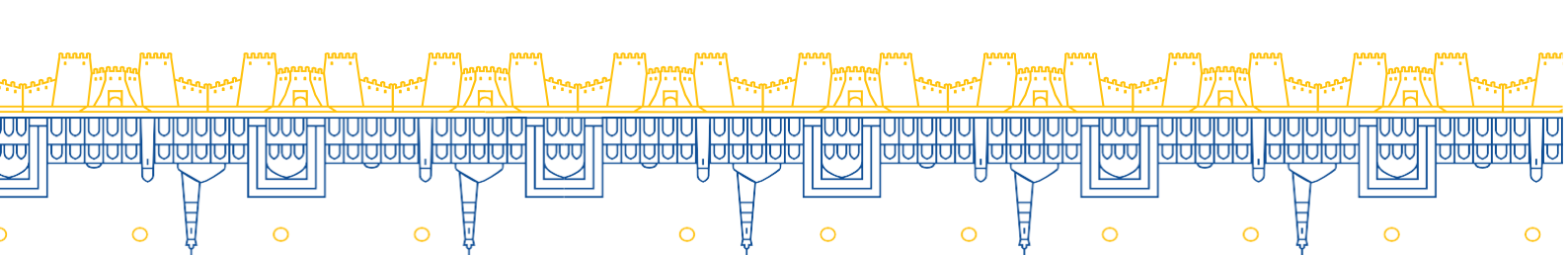
Online platforms in tourism and hospitality will continue to evolve followed by interesting repercussions. While many online platforms in hospitality are in their maturity stages, the industry still lacks bigger platforms in other services such as rent a car, chauffeur service, catering, attractions booking, and event management and so on. Moreover, platforms can be used in order to analyze data statistically and this data to be used in artificial intelligence in order to support and promote specific tourist activities in specific kinds of tourists. However, effective integration of technology in online platforms will let the AI handle mundane tasks, freeing humans to focus on bigger issues and creativity.





## **E. Avoid Massive Tourism**

There always a risk factor of massive tourism in the investments, since it usually aims to the large share of the market by creating large hotel and other facilities in order to attract massive people. The investments should focus on greener practices in order to be promoted by the government and try to meet the sustainable standards. This policy can accomplish the greener development of tourism sector by its fundamentals and has an impact of attracting tourists that seek for alternative tourist activities. The government needs to emphasize in those investments that aim to economic growth and creation of new job opportunities. To support this notion, new tourist regions have to be developed in order to reduce the pressure on the natural resources of other places and to create new facilities for receiving and servicing domestic and foreign tourists. New legislation framework for sustainable socio-economic development, protecting human rights, preventing the negative impact of economic and other activities on the environment, using renewable energy systems and water saving policies.



## 7. Current situation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Sustainable Tourism

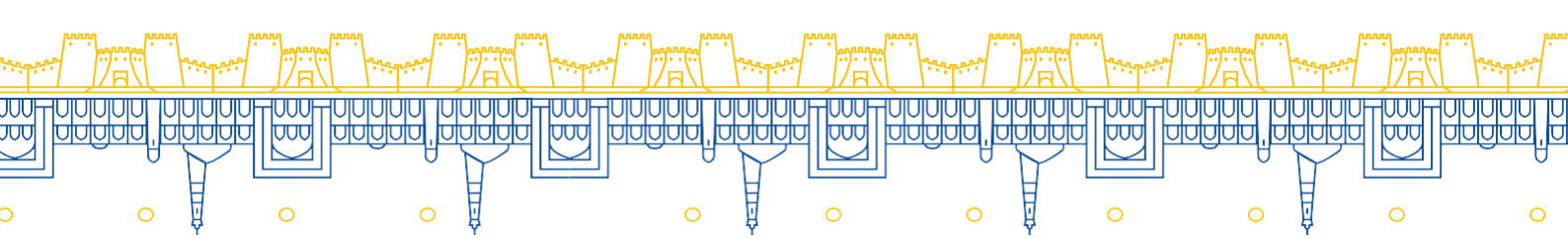
This chapter discusses the current situation of sustainable tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan, and more specifically the areas of particular needs or opportunities, the highest priority of intervention and the areas of apparent strengths that can reinforce the industry and develop the local economy.

### **Tourism Policy and Governance**

To begin with, the tourism industry needs to have a strong position in the development of policies and programs. According to Uzbek stakeholders, tourism is taken into account in the development programs and is a priority for the government with the creation of dedicated administrative structures and within local government, where funds are allocated annually from the state budget for the development, subsidization and support of the tourism sector. As for the implementation and monitoring of the tourism policies and strategies, there are certified structures conducting control and analysis of the adopted resolutions, and all relevant stakeholders, both state and non-state sector, government bodies ranging from national to local government are involved in the development of the strategy but with mismanagement and inappropriate financial expenditures holding back the implementation.

Now the adequacy of legislation and regulations affecting tourism is covered by law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Tourism” with



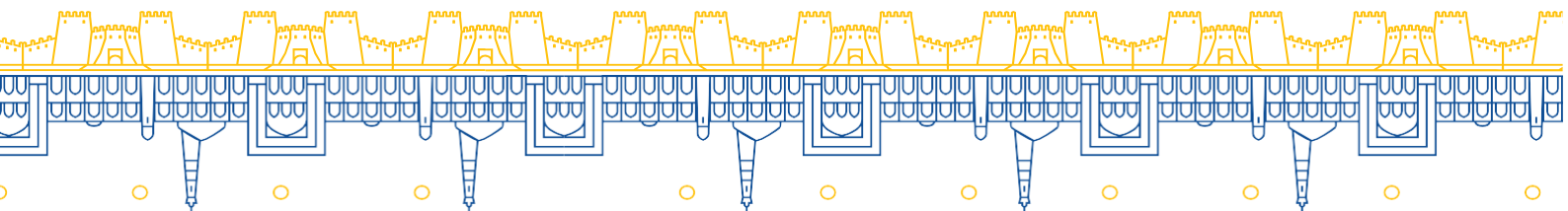


related legislation that also contribute to the development of tourism and Regulations of general and special purpose are adopted for the benefit of tourism development based on systematic issues arising in specific cases. Also, there is a process for engagement of other ministries in tourism and involvement of a range of tourism stakeholders in tourism governance. Additionally, NGOs, educational and other civil society bodies are engaged in national tourism governance structures. Multi-stakeholder structure/ body needs more financial strengthening and there are ongoing works of incentives in various forms of actions of interested parties to promote stakeholder participation and wider public interest.

### **Economic Performance, Investment and Competitiveness**

The private sector is involved by 15-30% in the implementation of sustainable tourism policy and there are various non-governmental associations of tourism industries with participants of big business are mainly involved in tourism governance. Public-Private Partnership used in tourism development and management is at a moderate to medium level with other forms of business models and structures being encouraged. Finally, there are local tourism management bodies whose coordination is carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and they form proposals for the further development of tourism, increasing competence and reducing administrative regulations will help to improve the activities of structures at the local level.

Measuring tourism quality data collection and analysis about domestic and foreign tourists' data collection is carried out by several state structures. Although, the system requires some improvements and development. Tourism policies take account of



the trade and investment policies of the country by an investment program in the field of tourism, with the direct investments in tourism always taking into account the conditions of sustainable tourism, following which investment obligations for investors are established. Moreover, the visa-free regime for the Republic of Uzbekistan allows to more than 70 countries to enter the country for 30 days. These procedures conducive to encouraging tourism and gradually this policy is improving in favor of tourism.

As for the Brand, marketing and product positioning the country has an established brand identity and it is well-articulated and maintained. The moto is “Uzbekistan for tourism” and there is a marketing plan but not for all types of markets. Marketing plans are conducted from all key public and private stakeholders. Quality and diversity of the product offer increases with the number of tourists and the effectiveness of systems for setting, inspecting and reporting on quality standards; the system requires improvement.

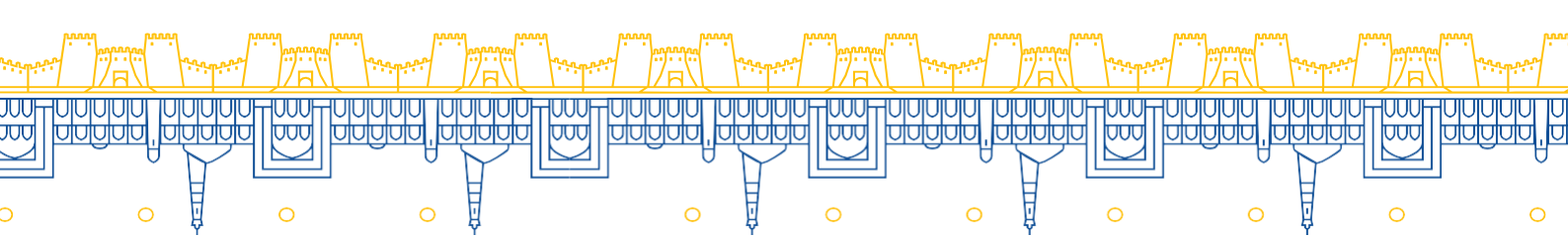
Marketing activity is making use of new technology, social media and other e-marketing opportunities with different marketing tools. Finally, there is risk management and there is a special fund for support in crisis situations with marketing plans always taking into account the risks generated from the tourist product.

### **Employment, Decent Work and Human Capital**

There is a discernible Human Resources policy and plan for tourism, linked to an overall Tourism Policy/ Master Plan which is a general employment policy, of which the tourism industry is a part. Trade unions of the industry or other workers’ representatives are active in the sector. It is important that the tourism sector respects workers’ rights and meets the conditions of decent work, and that



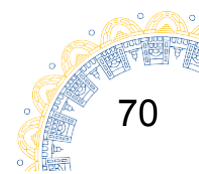


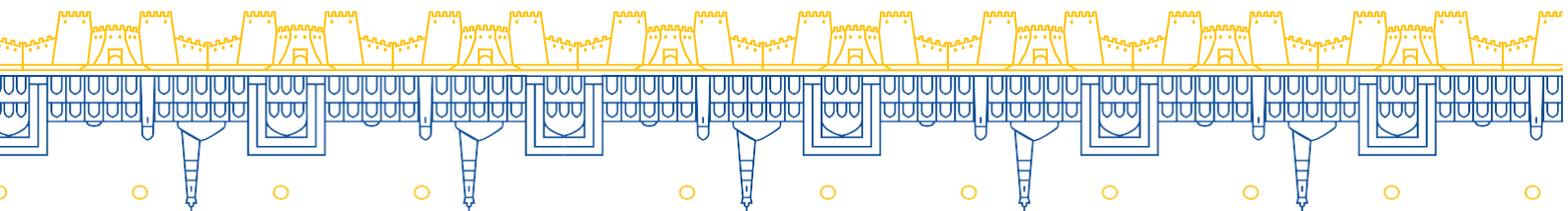


these rights are respected with labor legislation covering almost all workers' issues. Finally, it has to be mentioned that there is a lack of necessary skills amongst current tourism workers which is planned to be filled by the creation of a dedicated university. The training institutions have sufficient resources, including qualified staff and equipment at an average level. The training institutions have sufficient resources, although having own equipment can be proven very expensive, hence, the existing resources of tourist organizations can be used for trainings. The courses are available to everyone. The existing gap in accessibility is universal for the field of education (not quite an affordable amount of training for ordinary specialists). The tourism industry is being promoted as a professional activity for both young people and the unemployed, in particular in rural areas. Unlikely there are no separate trainings on sustainable tourism, this subject is presented within the framework of general subjects and also there are training centers in the private sector and representatives of the private sector in the field of tourism are attracted to study in public educational centers.

### **Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion**

One of the goals of sustainable tourism is the poverty reduction that must be included in National Strategy Papers. In the Republic of Uzbekistan there is a strategy of poverty reduction which includes the creation and organization of guest houses in the villages and the rural area, and the simplification of the activities of guide and for the purpose of social support of the population, local residents are hired to work in tourism. At national level the development of rural tourism provides for the involvement of local residents in the tourism industry and as for example, when building tourist routes in





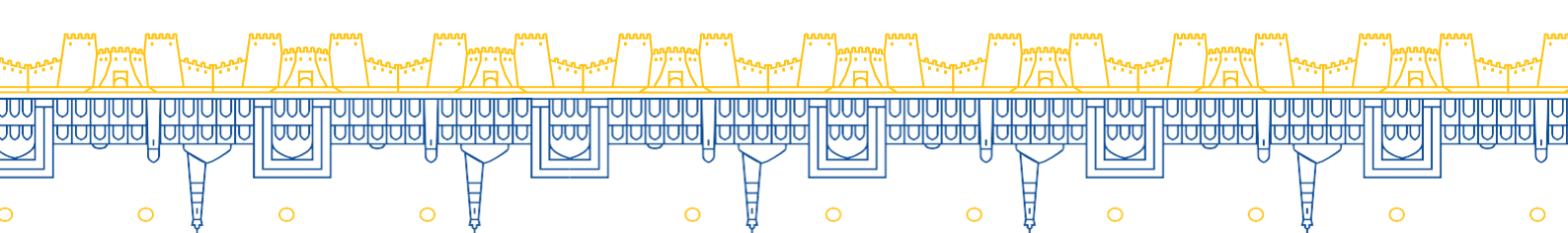
rural areas, the guide's preferences are given to the local population and as for tourism business development for local minorities, operation and promotion by local authorities of the state tourism sector providing consultations on an equal footing with everyone who wants to be involved in this sector.

The government also has taken actions for the disadvantaged people in tourism industry. Special jobs are being created for people with disabilities, women have equal opportunities in the tourism industry, older people are integrated into the industry as mentors, special business development programs for young people and there are special tourist programs (packages) created for ethnic minorities to spread their culture and lifestyle. Finally, the tourism development initiative starts with local communities and is considered by the State. Development does not negatively affect the opinion of local communities but their opinions are taking into consideration and they are being studied without any significant result or outcome so far. As for private sector there are no negative social impacts, local communities are positive about the development of tourism, so there are no special concerns.

### **Sustainability of the Natural and Cultural Environment**

Another significant goal of sustainable tourism that must be taken into consideration is the protection of natural and cultural heritage. In order to address any issue regarding the sustainability of the natural and cultural environment, representatives of various ministries and departments responsible for the preservation of natural resources, together with representatives of environmental parties took part in the development of the tourism development strategy and policies on culture, covering the issues and



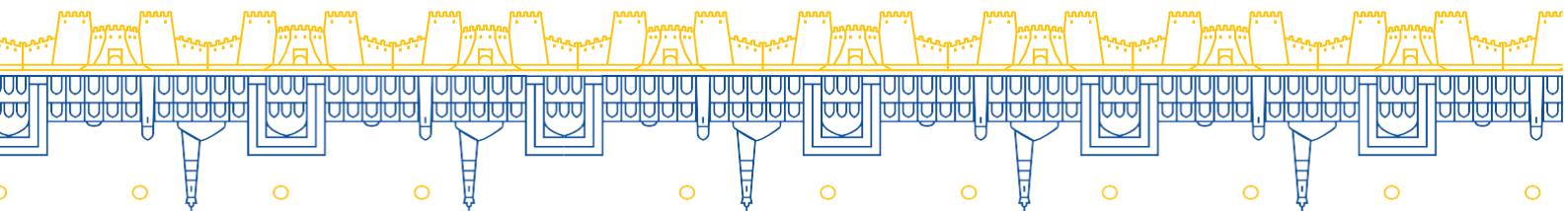


opportunities related to tourism. Also, climate change is considered with action plans to mitigate its effects. Protection of the coastal zone is included in the nature conservation action plan and a well-established tourism product on the Aral Sea, the Ustyurt desert and the Mountain ranges of Uzbekistan are considered as the best practices.

## **8. SWOT ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMEDATION FOR THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN**

### **SWOT Analysis**

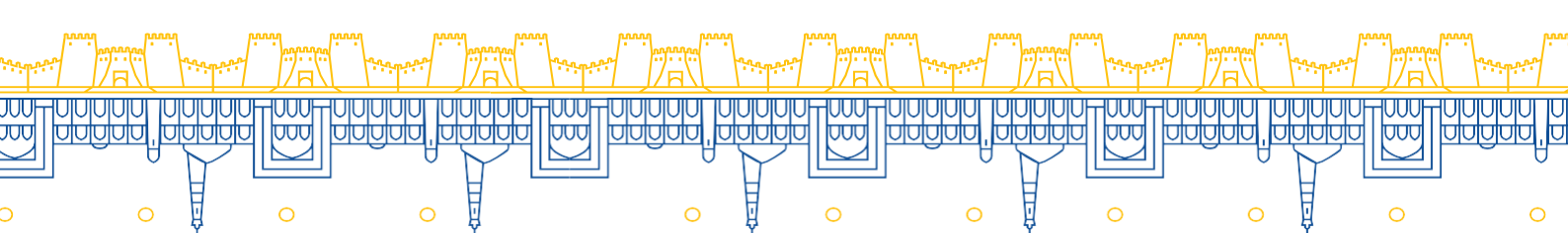
Taking into consideration the aforementioned best practices that have been applied in EU countries and meet the sustainable standards and also the current situation of Uzbekistan in this sector, a SWOT analysis has been conducted in order to help the tourism sector of Uzbekistan to develop a full awareness of all the factors involved in making a policy recommendation. A SWOT analysis has to be performed in order to explore new initiatives, revamp internal policies, consider opportunities to pivot or alter a plan midway through its execution. This analysis aims to help to the discovery of recommendations and strategies, with a focus on leveraging



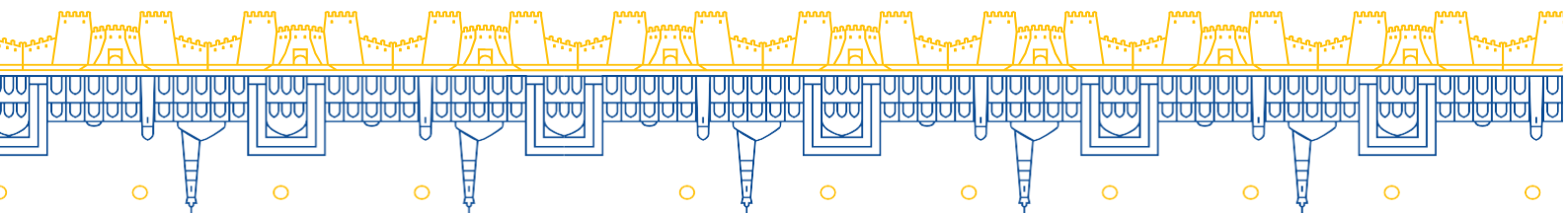
strengths and opportunities to overcome weaknesses and threats in order to propose a successful policy.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ State Development Programs</li><li>○ Development policies</li><li>○ Existence of Projects</li><li>○ Marketing Plan and product positioning of the country</li><li>○ Training institutions with sufficient resources, equipment and qualified staff</li><li>○ Cooperation with other countries and participation in global treaties and commitments</li><li>○ Sustainable development practices for protection of natural and culture heritage</li><li>○ Rich cultural heritage and natural diversity</li><li>○ Richness in natural textiles fibres</li><li>○ Visa policies are improving</li><li>○ Labor legislation existence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Low job opportunities in tourism</li><li>○ Corruption and inappropriate financial expenditures</li><li>○ No separate trainings on sustainable tourism</li><li>○ Lack of technologies, knowledge and budget</li><li>○ Lack of interest of entrepreneurs in investing in tourism.</li><li>○ Insufficient development of state support mechanisms</li><li>○ Lack of all goals of sustainability</li></ul>



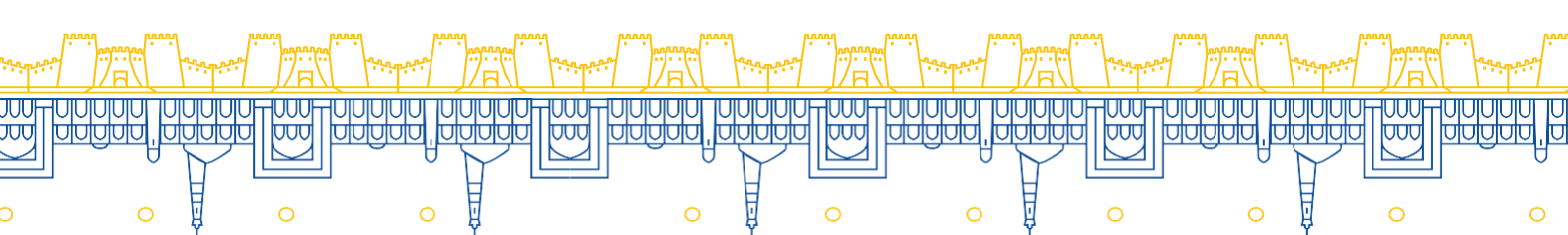


Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Economic growth and knowledge due to state program and international programs</li><li>○ The brand “Uzbekistan for tourism” can be established, well-articulated and maintained</li><li>○ Training institutions are attractive for training and they can promote sustainable courses for tourism</li><li>○ International affairs are important to education diplomacy and the process of building mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships between countries in the arena</li><li>○ Sustainable development practices provide high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists</li><li>○ Development of experience tourism due to the natural diversity</li><li>○ Textile commerce as a leverage for tourism</li><li>○ Easier entrance and attraction of new tourist of different nationalities due to visa-free regime</li><li>○ Labor legislation establishment can create safe environment with good working conditions that can attract more employees in the tourism sector</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Danger of understaffing in hotels and tourism facilities</li><li>○ Risk factor of misapplication of projects and policies that may harm sustainable tourism</li><li>○ No clear discrimination between tourism and sustainable tourism</li><li>○ Slow assimilation of good practices</li><li>○ Danger of limited investments</li><li>○ State support mechanisms could be a barrier for development</li><li>○ Tourism industry should follow the sustainable goals</li></ul>



The tourism product of Uzbekistan is rich and diverse and offers a unique opportunity for development in almost all forms of tourism from the cognitive-related visits to cultural and historical ones as well as other alternative forms of tourism and ecotourism. The states programs and the international affairs can strengthen the knowledge transfer and can attract investors but also, they are important to education diplomacy and the process of building mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships between countries in the education arena. The training institutions have sufficient recourses, equipment and qualified staff and are very attractive and be used in the promotion of the sustainable tourism in the education area. In addition, by attracting investors, the government of Uzbekistan can achieve the desirable economic growth but there is also a need of targeted action in order to avoid massive tourism activities and support more sustainable ways of investments. These investments can be used for the creation of new sustainable and green tourist facilities that can attract more visitors. Moreover, with the establishment of the Labor legislation, safe environment with good working conditions can be created in order to attract more employees in the tourism sector and cover the gaps that already exist. All these sustainable development practices can provide high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists. In addition, the visa-free regime in the Republic of Uzbekistan, can provide an easy entrance in the country and attract new tourist of different nationalities.

Despite the positive aspects of the development of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan, there are still a number of unsolved problems. It is observed that there is a barrier of entrepreneurs in investing in tourism, however, investments must be carefully

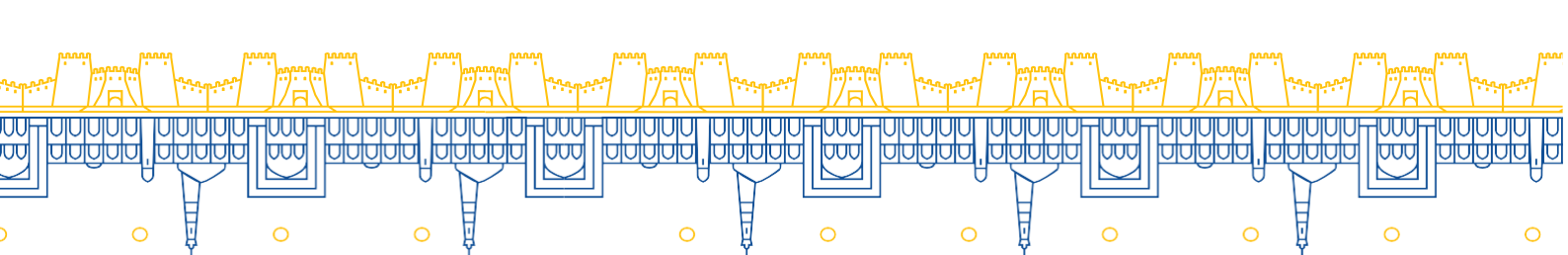


designed and the need for legislation and supervision by the state is crucial. Hence, there is not a sustainable local authority that can ensure the green investments. Negative environmental impacts of tourism could occur as tourism through private investments sometimes puts enormous stress on local land use, and can lead to soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss, and more pressure on endangered species. Moreover, the development of rural tourism can provide the involvement of local residents in the tourism industry by creating new job opportunities in the tourism sector. Although, they are not separate training on sustainable tourism which contains a risk factor of misapplication of projects and policies of sustainable tourism. In addition, the insufficient development of state support mechanisms and also the mismanagement and inappropriate financial expenditures could produce a massive weak state control in the tourism sector and lead to arbitrariness and lack of control. Besides, the state and experienced stakeholders in the tourism industry are needed in order to establish and monitor the guidelines of Code of Ethics in tourism.

### **Policy Recommendation**

All things considered, the Republic of Uzbekistan still needs to develop the “sense” of sustainability in order to start developing tourism sector with fundamental bases in order to avoid mistakes and practices that cannot meet the sustainable standards.

The recommended policies are:



## A. Cultural tourism

The cultural heritage of a people is one of the essential components of its entire history, culture, and identity. Given the extraordinary cultural heritage of Uzbekistan, specific effort should be put at policy level into strategies to encourage domestic and foreign tourism centered on the discovery of Uzbeki's culture and traditions. The main objective of the policy is to strengthen the contribution of culture to sustainable development, notably through heritage-based tourism development, diversifying tourism products, safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage, and delivering high-quality visitor experiences along the Silk Roads heritage corridors. Furthermore, the policy will improve the livelihoods of the communities in the region, including youth and women through capacity building and creating new income-generating opportunities.

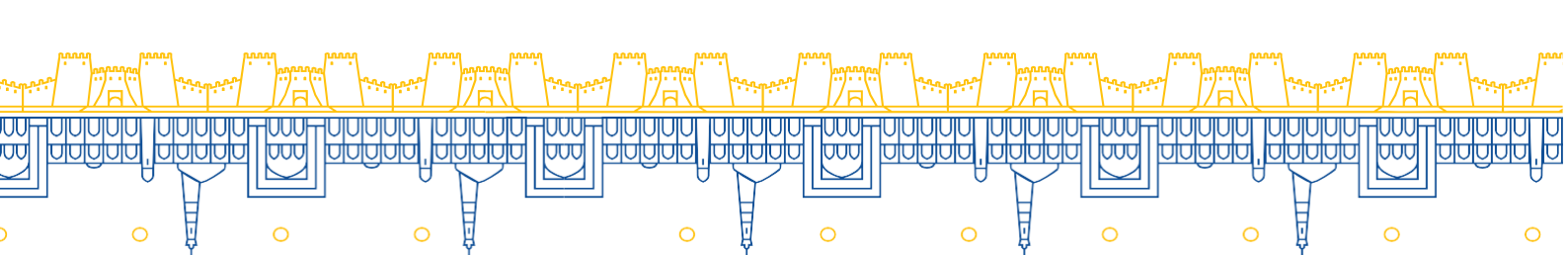






## **B. Social tourism**

The state needs to provide with vouchers for accommodation and traveling to beneficiaries and their benefiting members inside the country in order to promote the domestic tourism and support the local economy. This policy will accomplish the development of the rural areas and it will create new job opportunities to the provinces. This policy will support the mission of sustainability, and it will keep the cultural heritage alive. This project can be monitored by a public service and it can be enforced by promoting the positive outcomes to the beneficiaries. The “Social tourism” can have an impact also in attraction of foreign tourists, since it will be a growth in those rural destinations. In addition, in order for this project to be achieved it needs time for the accommodation providers to be prepared and the government to ensure the necessary funding in order to accomplish it.



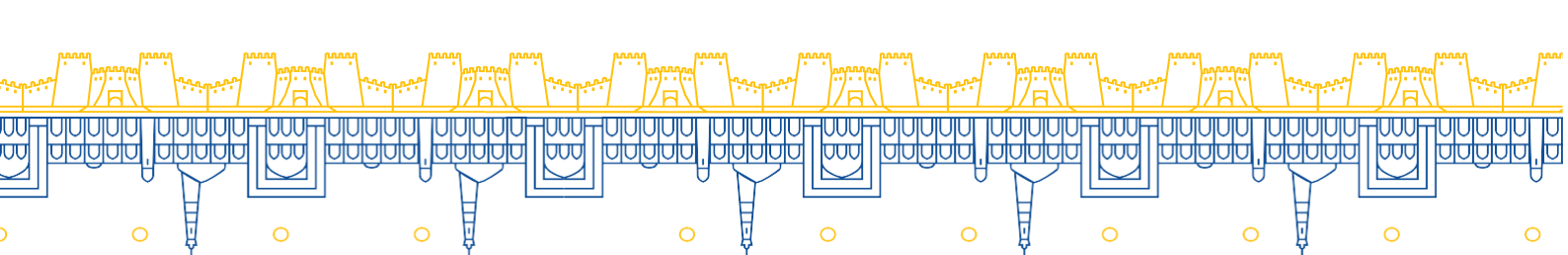
## C. Local Transportation System

There is no economically thriving city in the world that does not depend heavily on its mass transit. To support this notion, it needs to rebuild mass transit and to boost multimodality. Moreover, increasing electrified transport will lead to improved air quality, reduced emissions, and lower noise levels, and it is a relatively straightforward way for cities to make themselves more sustainable. The technology already exists for rail, buses, and small vehicles like cars and trucks, but a big challenge for cities moving forward will be to ensure that regional electrical grids can accommodate the increased demand for power from the transportation sector. This policy meets the sustainable goals because it effects the environment in a positive way and it can create new job opportunities. Cities also need to foster bike and scooter-sharing services. To help make sure micro mobility supports a strong mass transit system, cities need to allow bicycles on subways and buses and encourage the installation of bike- and scooter-sharing docks adjacent to transit stations. This policy can be monitored and enforced by public and private services that can invest in new technologies that reduce emissions and have an impact on attracting more people to use them.



## D. Accessible Tourism

The accessible tourism caters the needs of a full range of tourists including people with reduced mobility, older people and cross-generational families. This is one of the most important policies that must be taken into consideration and make the country an attractive and comfortable destination for all people. It entails removal of attitudinal and institutional barriers in society, and encompasses accessibility in the physical environment, in transportation, information and communications and other facilities and services. It encompasses publicly and privately owned tourist locations. This policy can be applied as a “Quality Mark” that all the facilities that will fulfill the requirements and get a financial support from the government. The national standards in tourism industry have requirements for accessibility but still, this policy has a high priority for action since it needs to be applied right away.



## **E. Search and Rescue Services**

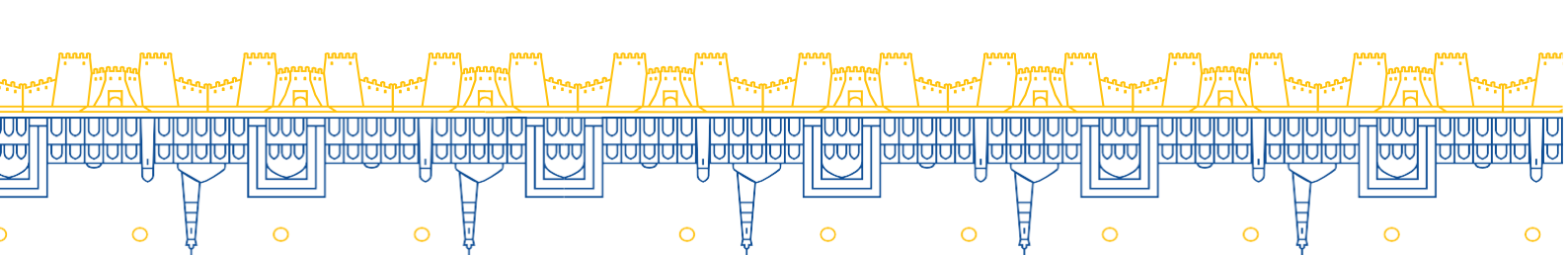
As it is already discussed, any visitor should feel safe in the visited destination and for that reason, rescue teams should be created. Those cost should be covered by insurance companies and include mountain rescue services, helicopter costs and repatriation to the country of residence or possible transfer to neighboring countries for treatment. Since Uzbekistan has natural diversity, it can enhance the “experience tourism”, and attract tourists for sports and other activities.





## **F. Avoid massive tourism**

There always a risk factor of massive tourism in the investments, since it usually aims to the large share of the market by creating large hotel and other facilities in order to attract massive people. The investments should focus on greener aspects and be promoting by the government on how much they meet the sustainable standards. This policy can accomplish the greener development of tourism sector by its fundamentals and has an impact of attracting tourists that seek for alternative tourist activities. The government needs to emphasize in those investments that aim to economic growth and creation of new job opportunities.



## G. Online Platforms

Online platforms in tourism and hospitality will continue to evolve followed by interesting repercussions. While many online platforms in hospitality are in their maturity stages, the industry still lacks bigger platforms in other services such as rent a car, chauffeur service, catering, attractions booking, and event management and so on. Moreover, platforms can be used in order to analyze data statistically and this data to be used in artificial intelligence in order to support and promote specific tourist activities in specific kinds of tourists. However, effective integration of technology in online platforms will let the AI handle mundane tasks, freeing humans to focus on bigger issues and creativity.



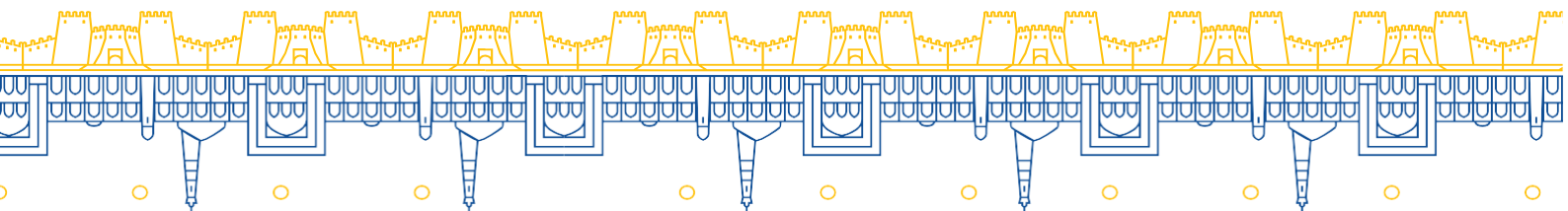


## 9. Conclusion

The continued and substantial growth of the sustainable tourism, refers to sustainable practices by the countries and by the tourism industry. In this respect, relevant governments, tourism industries, professionals in the field of tourism, need to acknowledge all impacts of tourism, both positive and negative, in order to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones. Negative impacts to a destination include economic leakage, damage to the natural environment and overcrowding. On the other hand, the positive impacts to a destination include job creation, cultural heritage preservation and interpretation, wildlife preservation landscape restoration, and more. In order to achieve the above, relevant countries and their stakeholders must take into full account of their current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and mostly, their host communities.

Yet, there is an urgent need to develop policies and measures that are not only theoretically sound but also practically feasible. Without the development of effective means of translating ideals into action, sustainable tourism runs the risk of remaining irrelevant and inert as a feasible policy option for the real world of tourism development.

On a more practical note, one is drawn to the conclusion that the implementation of sustainable tourism requires an effective framework for planning the long-term future development of an area, with a successful holistic strategy. This must ensure that local development policies and objectives, across all sectors, are found



within broader sustainable development goals at regional and national levels. The instigation of such a strategic planning framework is the responsibility of local and national governments, and not of private and public organizations working within the tourism (or any other) sector. Governments must create the climate whereby sectoral interests can be overcome and accommodated. As yet, effective regional planning and management is a rarity. Should this become more widespread, however, the tourism sector must be willing to move away from narrow self-interest towards a position more concerned with how tourism can contribute to sustainable development.

For all these reasons, it is important that the cooperation between the EU and the Republic of Kazakhstan is strengthened also in the field of sustainable tourism policies.