



ԵՎՐՈՊԱԿԱՆ ՄԻՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՄԱՐ  
EUROPEAN UNION FOR ARMENIA

EU4Business



Գերմանական  
համագործակցություն  
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

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CHILDREN  
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FUND

Press Release

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## **COAF, the EU, the BMZ and GIZ to Bolster Tourism in the Lori Region**

COAF in cooperation with the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) is harnessing and promoting the Lori region's tremendous natural and cultural assets to increase the flow of tourists, creating economic growth and employment opportunities. Among the efforts of this initiative is building an outdoor observation deck over the Debed Canyon, the expansion of the region's tourism information spot, COAF's Visitor Center, while threading modern art installations through the SMART Campus.

The initiative is carried out in the scope of the EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia (ITTD)" project implemented by GIZ, with the financial support of the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The new initiative extends the efforts of the "Visit Debed Canyon" project, carried out in 2020 in partnership with the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA). By enhancing Lori's tourism potential with new hiking trails, rental equipment, and a growing media presence while improving worker qualifications through on-site training, COAF has laid solid foundations to nurture the region's tourism industry.

COAF has a long record of successes in transforming Lori into a tourism hub that began with the launch of an innovative education hub, the COAF SMART Center, in the heart of the region, which quickly became a sought-after venue for conferences and other professional gatherings. Conveniently allotted a walking distance from the Center, the Concept Hotel offers a modern overnight accommodation that meets international standards, while COAF's Visitor Center welcomes and guides tourists entering the region, providing them with necessary travel information, equipment, and snacks.

The cooperation between COAF and the GIZ will complement the ongoing efforts in event tourism by building new attractions that enhance the region's appeal to adventurous travelers and culture enthusiasts. On the one hand, the open-air, transparent observation deck over the Debed Canyon will offer visitors an unforgettable view of the Canyon's slopes while new hiking and biking paths will

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open new possibilities for exploring the region's unique fauna and flora. On the other hand, modern art and architectural installations across the SMART Campus will offer new aesthetics and complement centuries-old cultural remnants with contemporary artwork. Finally, expanding the existing Visitor Center will add a new, high-class gastronomy facility to the area and meet guests' parking, navigation, and travel supply needs. Improved guidance will be provided through a travel application which will combine all necessary travel information in one place. Parallel to these novelties, special attention will be paid toward elevating the professional capacities in local gastronomy and hospitality industries.

### **About COAF**

*The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that employs community-led approaches aimed at improving the quality of life in rural Armenia, with a particular focus on children and youth. COAF's target development areas are education, healthcare, social and economic development. COAF launched its programs in 2004, starting in one village and expanding to 64 villages in Armavir, Aragatsotn, Lori, Gegharkunik, Shirak, and Tavush regions, impacting more than 107,000 beneficiaries.*

*Since 2015, COAF has developed and started implementing the SMART Initiative. COAF SMART is designed to advance a generation across the rural world through education that will benefit individuals, societies, and the environment. As an exemplary model of development, COAF SMART will be replicated in other regions and communities throughout Armenia. The first COAF SMART Center was inaugurated on May 27, 2018, near the village of Debet, Lori Region.*

### **About the EU4Business “Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia (ITTD)” project**

*The EU4Business “Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia (ITTD)” project is ongoing in Armenia. It is co-funded by the European Union (EU) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by German Development Cooperation (GIZ). It has an overall objective to ensure shared and balanced inclusive growth in tourism and innovative industries. This will be achieved through innovative tourism ventures in the Northern regions of Armenia, support to high-tech and innovative entrepreneurs, international knowledge exchange for high-tech researchers as well as networks to enable entrepreneurship culture for students and the general population.*

*Within the framework of the project, more than 100 ventures have already been supported, assistance has been provided in sustaining and/or creating 400 jobs, and more than 800 people have undergone various trainings.*