



Brief overview: SWITCH-ASIA TourLink Project

Rapid economic growth in Asia has lifted many countries out of poverty. However, this progress has come at a cost of increased use of natural resources, growing GHG emissions and amounts of waste. Sustainability today is about making fundamental changes in the way business is done and the way that the world consumes. Results can only be achieved by rethinking our business models and supply chains and designing new consumption patterns. To tackle these challenges, the EU funded, **SWITCH-ASIA facility** is working with over 130 projects across Asia to promote sustainable development, contribute to economic prosperity and poverty reduction in Asia and contribute to a transition towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient and circular economy. Thailand is a regional leader in tourism.

Prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, tourism was the largest and fastest growing sector of the global economy, and a crucial export service for Thailand, accounting for about a fifth of GDP and 20 percent of employment (IMF, 2021). Thai tourism stakeholders have a proud history of significant efforts and achievements in sustainable tourism, at policy and operational level. This includes the inclusion of sustainability principles across Thai government tourism policies, world class green hotel programs, and pioneering Community Based Tourism (CBT), which is recognised globally as a success story. Nevertheless, many opportunities remain for a more systematic and scaled uptake of socially and environmentally responsible practices among Thai tourism businesses. This is essential for building destination resilience and ensuring a profitable and sustainable future for Thai tourism.

Funded by **SWITCH-ASIA**, **TourLink** (2020-2024) is a tourism supply chain initiative, linking EU buyers with Thai tour operators and suppliers. **TourLink** will raise sustainability performance along Thai tourism supply chains and boost market demand for sustainable product choices. The project unites the experience, expertise and energy of Thai-EU sustainable tourism pioneers: the European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism (ECEAT), Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Thai Eco and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA), and Thai Hotel Association (THA). Faced with the realities



of climate change, systematic sustainability management will be a required mark of quality, safety and professionalism, and a key to doing future business with EU outbound tour operators. In the post-COVID tourism landscape, tourism professionals with the skills to deliver positive results for profit, planet and people will also be more employable.

Tourlink will “green the Thai tourism supply chain by a business led approach, involving EU buyers, Thai tour operators and their suppliers;” facilitating end to end, B2B sustainable supply chains partnerships, from Thai communities and MSME’s through to European markets.

The project’s innovative approach includes mobilizing and mentoring tour operators, accommodations and other tourism supply chain providers in Thailand to achieve minimum standards for sustainable consumption and production (SCP). Specific criteria include using local suppliers, purchasing environmentally friendly products, conserving natural resources, applying socially responsible ways of interacting with local communities, and providing staff welfare. Tour operators adopting these sustainable practices will be coached, certified and awarded by the Travelife programme, which has been developed by ECEAT in partnership with EU travel associations; and is recognized internationally as the leading sustainability management system for tour operators and travel agents in the tourism industry. The TourLink project will also improve Thai tourism businesses’ access to Green Finance initiatives; and make specific contributions to the key challenges of plastic and food waste, and reducing carbon emissions.