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**CAPS**  
COMPETITIVE ARMENIAN PRIVATE SECTOR

## SUCCESS STORY

# Armenia's promotion in the Italian travel market

**Through promoting tourism development USAID contributes to the economic growth of the country and enables that growth to spread to the poorer regions outside the capital.**



Armenia's banner at BIT travel fair in Milan.



Italian journalists at a roundtable at the ATDA office.

***For two years the USAID CAPS project has worked to foster tourism development in Armenia. The approach involves building capacity across all key stakeholders in the industry. The government, educational institutions, business associations, business service providers and individual enterprises all have a crucial role to play and are all included in CAPS tourism development activities.***

Armenia is welcoming more Italian tourists than ever before. The number of Italian visitors to the tourism information center in Yerevan in 2007 has increased by more than 62% compared to 2006. Growth rates, in terms of tourist arrivals, are the third highest amongst EU countries and top the list amongst EU countries that lack direct air connections.

In the past year alone, Armenia has appeared in more than 50 articles in trade and consumer magazines in the Italian market gaining visibility amongst over 1 million readers and 13,000 travel companies. Moreover, the number of Italian tour operators selling trips to Armenia has increased by 20% and is expected to increase by a further 30% next year.

Such success was made possible through CAPS support for a holistic approach to targeted geographical marketing; matching the demands of the Italian travelers with the tourism opportunities that exist in Armenia. Cost-effective and professional promotional techniques were then employed to let Italian travelers and the travel trade learn more about the country throughout the year. Prior to CAPS interventions, promotion of Armenia consisted solely of attendance at one travel fair during the year, the impact of which was unclear.

With the assistance of Nadia Pasqual, a short-term Italian tourism advisor to the CAPS project, Armenian tour operators were firstly trained in the basic needs and requirements of the Italian tourists. Participation was then arranged at two international travel fairs in Milan and Rome for those tour operators most interested in capturing the market. Tour operators were provided with one-on-one business advice and given assistance in developing promotional materials. Press releases were issued to hundreds of travel trade and media representative and invites sent out to attend PR-related events. As a follow-up to the fairs, familiarization trips were organized for 11 Italian journalists and 9 tour operators in June 2007, resulting in significantly increased numbers of tour packages offered and articles published.

"Hosting the Italian journalists and tour operators in Armenia has been a tremendously useful event to show off Armenia's tourism possibilities to one of Europe's most important source markets for tourists. We can foresee strong ties developing with the Italian outbound tourism industry and this proves the efficiency of a relatively low cost, targeted promotional approach," commented Hayley Alexander, CAPS Chief of Party.