

Central Asia: the European Union matches political commitment with further concrete support

To underpin the European Union's political commitment and kick-start the implementation of the [new EU Central Asia Strategy](#), High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica **Mogherini**, at the EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, today presented a set of EU funded regional programmes. These programmes will support the environment, climate action, sustainable consumption and production, energy, gender equality, counter-terrorism, and education.

Coming on top of over €1 billion of bilateral and regional assistance for the period 2014-2020, these programmes, worth €72 million, will benefit all countries of the region – Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

“The positive regional dynamics in Central Asia and a demand for closer cooperation with the European Union presents a significant opportunity for a closer, stronger partnership”, said High Representative/Vice-President, Federica **Mogherini**. *“Our new Strategy for the region will enable us to cooperate more closely with the countries of Central Asia in tackling the challenges they face: from sustainable development to economic diversification, strengthening civil society and human rights to providing expertise and financial support for reform processes. We are ready to build on the enormous momentum gained over the last five years, as a consistent and reliable partner, to foster resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation.”*

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** added: *“The EU's contribution worth €72 million boosts our strong partnership with Central Asia, for the benefit of our citizens. Together with national governments, civil society and the private sector we will work to create opportunities and shared prosperity, while protecting our planet for future generations.”*

The new programmes announced today cover:

- **Sustainable energy:** The EU will invest €20 million in a new hydropower plant in Tajikistan, with additional support from Germany. This hydropower plant will create new opportunities for Tajikistan to meet increasing demand, and to export excess electricity to neighbouring countries, including to northern Afghanistan.
- **Economic empowerment:** The EU will invest €2 million in the economic empowerment of women in the region. This project will be implemented together with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It will provide Afghan women with the skills they need to participate in the economic development of Afghanistan, and contribute to closer peaceful

ties with Central Asia.

- **Education:** The EU also launched a new €36 million programme in support of the education sector in Kyrgyzstan. This financing agreement will support Kyrgyzstan's education development strategy, in order to better formulate, implement and monitor education policy. It will help to improve resource allocation, ensure equitable access across gender, ethnicity and linguistic background, and enhance the synergy between skills and labour market needs.
- **Inclusive sustainable growth:** The EU has extended the activities of the SWITCH Asia Programme, with an amount of €14 million. The programme will support sustainable consumption and production and promote inclusive sustainable growth. It aims to reduce poverty and contribute to economic prosperity in Central Asia.

In addition to those programmes announced today, several others are in preparation:

- **Sustainable development:** The EU is preparing a contribution in support of the initiative of the Government of Uzbekistan to establish the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral Sea Region, under the auspices of the United Nations. The initiative will reduce vulnerability of the people living around the lake and advance sustainable development in the Aral Sea region.
- **Intra-regional trade:** The EU will launch an upgraded phase of the Border Management in Central Asia programme. With this new phase, the EU aims to increase security and facilitate intra-regional trade in Central Asia and Afghanistan through integrated border management.
- **Health:** The EU will furthermore launch the next phase of the Central Asia Drugs Action Programme. The goal is to work on integrated, balanced and evidence-based drug policies.
- **Counter-terrorism:** New technical assistance to support law enforcement capacities and regional cooperation in countering terrorism.

Background

The High Representative and the European Commission [set out a vision for a renewed partnership with Central Asia](#) in May 2019. This Joint Communication was [endorsed by EU Foreign Ministers](#) at the June Foreign Affairs Council. The new strategy comes at a key moment of fast-developing Euro-Asian connectivity, reform and opening up in some of the countries of Central Asia, and new momentum for regional cooperation.

The Strategy focuses the EU's engagement on strengthening resilience and enhancing prosperity, as well as investing in regional cooperation in Central Asia.

EU cooperation with Central Asia amounts to over €1 billion, including both bilateral and regional assistance, for the period 2014-2020.

For More Information

[Joint Communication – The EU and Central Asia: New opportunities for a stronger partnership](#)

[Council Conclusions on the New Strategy on Central Asia](#)

[EU-Central Asia relations factsheet](#)

EU-Kazakhstan relations [website](#); [factsheet](#)

EU-Kyrgyz Republic relations [website](#); [factsheet](#)

EU-Tajikistan relations [website](#); [factsheet](#)

EU-Turkmenistan relations [website](#); [factsheet](#)

EU-Uzbekistan relations [website](#); [factsheet](#)