

# EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Committee



The European Union (EU) and Kazakhstan held their 18th meeting of the Cooperation Committee, online, on Friday, 25 September 2020.

The EU is Kazakhstan's first trade and investment partner, representing over one third of Kazakhstan's external trade and over a half of total foreign direct investment in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is the first Central Asian country with which the EU signed an Enhanced Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (EPCA), which entered into force on 1 March 2020. Both the EU and Kazakhstan expressed their strong support for strengthening relations.

The Cooperation Committee discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of strengthened multilateralism. The EU and its Member States have mobilised €123 million for Central Asia. In July, the EU launched a comprehensive €3 million Central Asia COVID-19 Crisis Response Solidarity Programme, with a primary focus on Kazakhstan. The programme, implemented by the World Health Organisation, will provide support over a period of two years to mitigate the current outbreak of the pandemic and contribute towards longer-term resilience of the national health systems. The EU commended Kazakhstan for playing its part in providing humanitarian assistance to its neighbours and to some EU Member States.

The EU and Kazakhstan reviewed their cooperation in the following fields covered by the EPCA: the rule of law, good governance, the protection of human rights, economic developments and reforms, energy, transport, environment, climate action, mobility and people-to-people cooperation, education, science, civil society and regional cooperation.

The EU recalled that in the current COVID-19 pandemic, emergency measures, in Europe and elsewhere, should not be used to limit the democratic space, to censor freedom of expression and access to information online and offline, to limit the work of human rights defenders, journalists or other professionals. In relation to the new law on freedom of assembly adopted in May, the EU stressed that the implementation of this law should uphold the fundamental rights of the citizens of Kazakhstan.

The EU congratulated Kazakhstan for its progress on the path to a full abolition of death penalty, which is a cruel, inhumane and degrading punishment that violates the right to life. Kazakhstan's ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is in process. Furthermore, in 2020, Kazakhstan substantially increased its voluntary contribution to the International Commission against the Death Penalty.

The Cooperation Committee discussed the progress made in the framework of the high-level EU-Kazakhstan Business Platform set up in June 2019. The EU welcomed efforts undertaken to improve the investment climate while encouraging further sustainable implementation of planned reforms, in particular the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommendations in relation to strengthening private sector development and protection of investments.

The EU welcomed Kazakhstan's National Strategy towards a Green Economy and stressed that the European Green Deal would be at the heart of EU recovery efforts. The EU is prepared to offer expertise, finance projects, exchange on regulations and principles for sustainable finance and development.

Under Erasmus+, €115 million was earmarked for higher education cooperation with Central Asia for the 2014-2020 period. Kazakhstan has been the major beneficiary of this funding. By the end of 2020 some 3,400 Kazakh students and staff will have come to Europe to study or teach, while Kazakh institutions will have hosted over 1,500 Europeans. These Erasmus+ opportunities will continue in the 2021-2027 programme. The EU recalled that Kazakhstan is welcome to participate in the remaining calls for research proposals, in particular the upcoming Horizon 2020 "European Green Deal" call for research & innovation proposals.

The Cooperation Committee also discussed EU-Central Asia regional cooperation including in the field of security, counter-terrorism, fighting drug trafficking and border management.

Today's Cooperation Committee will contribute to the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council, at ministerial level, to take place in the near future. Both the EU and Kazakhstan look forward to continuing the close cooperation in the framework of the EPCA.

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Margulan Bakytuly Baimukhan, and acting Managing Director for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional cooperation and OSCE, European External Action Service, Luc Devigne.

### **Further Information**

[EPCA Factsheet](#)

[EU Delegation to Kazakhstan website](#)