

# EU-Kyrgyz Republic Human Rights Dialogue



The European Union (EU) and the Kyrgyz Republic held their tenth round of the annual Human Rights Dialogue on 24 September via video conference.

An open and constructive discussion covered a broad range of issues. The parties discussed developments in the human rights situation in the Kyrgyz Republic and in the EU since the last Dialogue and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU expressed concern as regards restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly and information, as well as the high increase of gender-based- and domestic violence during the peak of the pandemic.

The EU reiterated its concern over controversial legislative initiatives, namely on Trade Unions; Non-Commercial Organisations; Manipulation of information; revision of the Criminal Procedure code, which would contravene Kyrgyzstan's obligations under the relevant international conventions. Individual cases were also discussed, including the ongoing investigation as regards the death in prison of the human rights defender, Azimjan Askarov.

The EU welcomed the important work carried out by the national human rights institutions, in particular the Ombudsman and the National Preventive Mechanism. The EU reiterated the need to ensure the uninterrupted work of these institutions, particularly in times of the coronavirus crisis. The EU and the Kyrgyz Republic also elaborated on the progress in measures and mechanisms to prevent the use of torture and ill-treatment.

The EU and Kyrgyzstan discussed the freedom of expression, including freedom of the media. The EU called on the Kyrgyz authorities to maintain and protect an open media environment as an important enabler for free, competitive and transparent parliamentary elections on 4 October. The parties addressed cooperation with civil society, as well as issues of good governance, including the rights of the members of minority groups and the fight against corruption.

The Kyrgyz Republic has been member of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences,

the GSP+, since January 2016. The parties reviewed the monitoring process related to the implementation of 27 GSP+ relevant international conventions on sustainable development and discussed areas where EU assistance would be needed for the Kyrgyz Republic to fully benefit from the scheme.

The parties reviewed their cooperation in the relevant multilateral fora, in particular within the UN system, as well as bilateral cooperation programmes funded by the Development Cooperation Instrument of the EU and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

The Kyrgyz Republic delegation was led by Mr Azizbek Madmarov, First Deputy-Minister for Foreign Affairs. The EU delegation was led by Mr Boris Iarochevitch, Head of the Central Asia Division in the European External Action Service. The next round of the EU-Kyrgyz Republic Human Rights Dialogue will be held in Brussels in 2021.