



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2007/2102(INI)	Procedure completed
EU Strategy for Central Asia		
Subject 6.40.04.06 Relations with central Asian countries		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		17/04/2007
		Vers/ALE ÖZDEMİR Cem	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	DEVE Development		17/07/2007
		PSE BORRELL FONTELLES Josep	
	INTA International Trade		08/05/2007
		UEN MUSCARDINI Cristiana	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	2809	18/06/2007
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	External Relations	FERRERO-WALDNER Benita	

Key events			
06/06/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
18/06/2007	Debate in Council	2809	Summary
20/11/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
11/12/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0503/2007	
19/02/2008	Debate in Parliament		
20/02/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
20/02/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0059/2008	Summary
20/02/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2007/2102(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54

Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/6/49705

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		PE390.404	27/09/2007	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE396.481	29/10/2007	EP	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE394.032	06/11/2007	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE393.943	20/11/2007	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0503/2007	11/12/2007	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0059/2008	20/02/2008	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)1767	31/03/2008	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)1857/3	16/04/2008	EC	

EU Strategy for Central Asia

The Council approved a strategy for a new partnership with Central Asia (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), and agreed to submit it to the European Council at its meeting on 21 and 22 June (see Council document: 10113/07).

The strategy identifies the EU's strategic interests in the region, as regards both bilateral and regional cooperation, and suggests avenues for a partnership in areas such as: youth and education; human rights, the rule of law, governance and democratisation; economic development, trade and investment; energy and transport links; environmental sustainability and water; combating common threats and challenges.

EU Strategy for Central Asia

By adopting the own initiative report by Mr. Cem ÖZDEMİR (Greens/EFA, DE) on an EU Strategy for Central Asia, the Committee on Foreign Affairs recalls the key position of the 5 countries in this region (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) situated between Europe and Asia and their importance in terms of energy and trade.

While, overall, Members welcome the greater attention paid by the EU to Central Asia, they regret the sluggish implementation of the projects. Recognising the different objectives for each of the countries concerned, drawing on the general analysis of the region, they stress the importance of fair and sustainable economic development in the region, and the eradication of poverty as the main objective to ensure the sustainable emergence of this region.

Faced with the threat of terrorism, they recall the importance of cooperation in terms of security, but also the fight against radicalisation and extremism. This involves the promotion of good governance, human rights and democracy, as well as the strengthening of dialogue with all types of religious communities. In this context, Members call on the Council and the Commission to put the defence of human rights at the heart of cooperation, to the same extent as energy, security and trade.

Members, also in favour of a regional vision on certain issues (counter-terrorism, the eradication of human trafficking, counter-narcotics and water management) through EU technical assistance, consider it necessary to promote an individually tailored approach to cooperation, in order to take into account differences in culture and development in these countries.

Members are also in favour of the following measures to promote the economic and democratic development of these countries:

- reform of social sectors, health and food security;
- membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO);
- reform of banking and insurance systems, and the establishment of an efficient micro-credit system;
- provide better protection for foreign direct investment;
- make it easier for the countries of Central Asia to use the Generalised System of Preferences;
- strengthen local public structures, and establish a more efficient and diversified economic base;
- strengthen the cooperation of these countries on human rights, the rule of law, good governance and democratisation;
- set benchmarks in the area of human rights and the fight against all types of persecution of human rights defenders in these countries;
- reform of the judiciary and the fight against corruption;
- strengthening civil society;
- the fight against child labour (especially in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where children are exploited in the cotton harvesting, tobacco cultivation and coal mining sectors);
- the fight against the root causes of migration and the initiation of dialogue on this issue;

- the fight against the spread of HIV and avian flu.

In addition, Members highlight the geopolitical situation of Central Asia and the growing interest of economic and political powers, such as Russia, the United States, China and Turkey, in the region. Close cooperation with these countries is very important where interests coincide, but without conflicting with human rights concerns?. In this regard, they emphasise the key role of Turkey as an EU candidate country in Central Asia, and call on the Council to make the most of Turkey's historical, economic and cultural relations with certain countries in the region, to promote the implementation of the strategy.

Members regret, however, that the Council's strategy on Central Asia does not include Mongolia, especially in view of the substantial progress made by Mongolia in terms of democracy.

The report considers each of the countries concerned, focusing on the following points:

- Kazakhstan: in this country, priority should be given to the strengthening of civil society, with a view to promoting free and democratic elections. Trade and energy links should be strengthened with this country, which has the world's third largest uranium reserves. MEPs also await further progress on freedom of the press;
- Kyrgyz Republic: Members welcome the progress made by this country in terms of democracy. However, they are concerned about the new Kyrgyz Constitution, which could significantly alter the balance of power in the future;
- Tajikistan: Members note the positive development of Tajikistan, even though it is in a state of precarious stability, with a President who systematically represses all opposition. They call for the adoption of all necessary measures to respect the International Convention against Torture and express concern over the new draft religious law. They recall that this country is one of the 20 poorest countries in the world and call on those Member States which have yet to ratify the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Tajikistan to do so as soon as possible;
- Turkmenistan: Members regret the lack of progress made by this country in terms of respecting individual liberties. In particular, they regret the fact that several political prisoners remain imprisoned, despite the fact that the new President (Mr. Berdymukhammedov) recently decided to grant amnesty to 11 of them. Faced with the particularly disastrous situation in terms of human rights, MEPs insist that any further development in EU-Turkmenistan relations (including the possible conclusion of the PCA) must be closely linked to clear evidence of progress in democracy;
- Uzbekistan: Members confirm their full support for the sanctions imposed by the EU on Uzbekistan, following the Andijan massacre. They regret the very limited progress made in relation to human rights, in this country, and note the Council's decision of 15 October 2007 to extend the arms embargo for another 12 months. To move forward, they support the establishment of a human rights dialogue and stress the need for tangible results to promote all future cooperation with this country.
- Energy: Members recall, above all, the need for the EU to speak with one voice on energy policy. They support efforts by the European Union to boost gas and oil imports from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and to diversify energy transit routes. It is also necessary to further strengthen cooperation between Central Asia and the Black Sea region in the fields of energy and transportation, and to encourage responsible and sustainable use of the region's natural resources, bearing in mind that the environment and respect of the local ecosystem are as important as the issue of energy.

EU Strategy for Central Asia

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drawn up by Cem ÖZDEMİR (Greens/EFA, DE) on an EU Strategy for Central Asia. It recalls the key position of the 5 countries in this region (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) situated between Europe and Asia, and their importance in terms of energy and trade.

While, overall, Members welcome the greater attention paid by the EU to Central Asia, they regret the sluggish implementation of projects. Parliament is convinced that, while the values promoted by the EU remain the same, the EU's interests, as well as prevailing conditions and opportunities in the five countries, differ widely. It calls for the definition of clear priorities for the EU's relations with each of the five countries. It stresses the importance of sustainable economic development in the region, and the eradication of poverty as the main objective. With regard to the challenge posed by terrorism, Parliament states that enhancing cooperation on security is important, but that any approach to combating radicalisation and extremism that does not balance security needs with human rights and good governance is self-defeating. It calls on both the Council and the Commission to ensure that human rights issues should carry equal weight with the EU's robust approach to energy, security and trade.

Parliament is convinced that certain issues can only be dealt with effectively by means of regional approaches leading to regional solutions (e.g. counter-terrorism, the eradication of human trafficking, counter-narcotics, water management). It urges the EU institutions, therefore, to provide technical help where needed. It calls for the differentiation in the EU's policy regarding its approach to the countries of the region to be based in particular on the human rights situation in each country, their government's respect for OSCE commitments, their development needs and their government's commitments to improving the welfare of citizens, their current and potential importance to the EU as partners in trade, cooperation on energy and in other areas, and dialogue on international issues, and the prospects for success of EU actions, including various forms of assistance.

Members are in favour of the following measures to promote the economic and democratic development of these countries:

- reform of social sectors, health and food security;
- reform of banking and insurance systems, and the establishment of a micro-credit system;
- provide better protection for foreign direct investment;
- make it easier for the countries of Central Asia to use the Generalised System of Preferences;
- strengthen local public structures, and establish a more diversified economic base;
- strengthen the cooperation of these countries on human rights and the rule of law;
- set benchmarks in the area of human rights;
- reform of the judiciary and the fight against corruption;

-strengthening civil society;

-the fight against child labour (especially in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where children are exploited in the cotton harvesting, tobacco cultivation and coal mining sectors);

-the fight against the root causes of migration and the initiation of dialogue on this issue;

-the fight against the spread of HIV and avian flu.

In addition, Members highlight the geopolitical situation of Central Asia and the growing interest of economic and political powers, such as Russia, the United States, China and Turkey, in the region. Close cooperation with these countries is very important where interests coincide, but without conflicting with human rights concerns. In this regard, they emphasise the key role of Turkey as an EU candidate country in Central Asia, and call on the Council to make the most of Turkey's historical, economic and cultural relations with certain countries in the region, to promote the implementation of the strategy.

Members regret that the Council's strategy on Central Asia does not include Mongolia, especially in view of the progress made by Mongolia in establishing a state based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It calls on the Council and the Commission to seek a resolution at EU level and to prepare a statement about Mongolia's development.

Parliament considers each of the countries concerned, focusing on the following points:

Kazakhstan: Parliament stresses Kazakhstan's importance for the EU's trade in energy, as its main trading partner in Central Asia. Trade and energy links should be strengthened with this country, which has the world's third largest uranium reserves. The EU should continue its approach of positive engagement towards Kazakhstan but the development of EU-Kazakhstan relations cannot be disconnected from Kazakhstan's efforts to honour its international and OSCE obligations in the field of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy.

Kyrgyzstan: Parliament takes the view that all efforts should be made to consolidate the fragile democratic institutions in the areas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It calls on the Council and the Commission to step up assistance to this country so as to help to ensure that it undertakes and successfully implements the promised reforms.

Tajikistan: Members note that Tajikistan has been living in a state of precarious stability since 1997, with a President who systematically represses all opposition. They call for the adoption of all necessary measures to respect the International Convention against Torture and express concern over the new draft religious law. They recall that this country is one of the 20 poorest countries in the world and call on those Member States which have yet to ratify the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Tajikistan to do so as soon as possible, as unnecessary delays could send discouraging and unhelpful signals to Tajikistan. Parliament will, itself, aim to give its approval to the PCA in the near future.

Turkmenistan: Members note as a positive, albeit still very limited, sign of change in Turkmenistan the ambition of the new President, Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov, to carry out major reforms of the education system. It believes that the EU is right in responding to Turkmenistan's receptiveness to cooperation in this field. It welcomes the decision to grant amnesty to eleven political prisoners. Parliament draws attention to the urgent need for improvement as regards the dire human rights situation, especially in view of the grave position of small religious communities, and insists that any further development in EU-Turkmenistan relations, must be closely linked to clear evidence that a process of significant improvement in this area is under way, as well as genuine signs that it will continue.

Uzbekistan: Members confirm their full support for the sanctions imposed by the EU on Uzbekistan, following the Andijan massacre. They regret the very limited progress made in relation to human rights, in this country, and note the Council's decision of 15 October 2007 to extend the arms embargo for another 12 months. To move forward, they support the establishment of a human rights dialogue and stress the need for tangible results to promote all future cooperation with this country.

Energy: Members recall, above all, the need for the EU to speak with one voice on energy policy. They support efforts by the EU to boost gas and oil imports from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and to diversify energy transit routes. It is also necessary to strengthen cooperation between Central Asia and the Black Sea region in the fields of energy and transportation, and to encourage responsible and sustainable use of the region's natural resources, bearing in mind that the environment and respect for the local ecosystem are as important as the issue of energy.