








Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2023/2106(INI)	Procedure completed
EU strategy on Central Asia		
Subject 6.40.04.06 Relations with central Asian countries		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Foreign Affairs		18/07/2023
		 LUCKE Karsten	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 KUBILIUS Andrius	
		 GROŠELJ Klemen	
		 VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL Viola	
		 MARIANI Thierry	

Key events			
12/07/2023	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/11/2023	Vote in committee		
06/12/2023	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0407/2023	Summary
17/01/2024	Results of vote in Parliament		
17/01/2024	Decision by Parliament	T9-0027/2024	Summary

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2023/2106(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54

Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/9/12573

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		PE752.889	14/09/2023	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE754.712	11/10/2023	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0407/2023	06/12/2023	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0027/2024	17/01/2024	EP	Summary

EU strategy on Central Asia

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Karsten LUCKE (S&D, DE) on the EU strategy on Central Asia.

Since the adoption of the EU strategy on Central Asia in 2019, the region has been affected by significant external factors, such as Russias illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and Chinas increasingly assertive foreign policy.

EU engagement with Central Asia

Members underlined that the EU and Central Asia are facing profound global and regional geopolitical shifts and challenges, which provide significant impetus for them to work towards long-term, structured and mutually beneficial cooperation in matters of common interest. They strongly encouraged the EU to intensify its engagement with Central Asia, given the geostrategic importance of the region, and to promote a strategic partnership with these countries by expanding cooperation at political and economic level. The report encouraged the EU to continue promoting political and economic reforms that strengthen the rule of law, democracy, good governance and respect for human rights. Members noted that Parliament is ready to promote parliamentary cooperation with Central Asia. They also considered that a review of the EU-Central Asia strategy is necessary in order to update it in the light of the geopolitical events that have taken place in recent years.

Regional cooperation

The report underlined the great potential of mutually beneficial cooperation on sustainable development, connectivity, energy, critical raw materials and security, with Central Asia being a key region for connectivity between East and West. The Commission is called on to investigate the possibility of the European Investment Banks support for investments in infrastructure development in Central Asian states, especially in the Middle Corridor.

Members are concerned with the creation of dependency on Russia as a result of the signing of the natural gas deal between Gazprom and Uzbekistan through Kazakhstan.

Noting the increasing strain on water resources in Central Asia, the report stressed the need for closer regional cooperation on this matter between upstream and downstream countries in order to prevent conflicts over the distribution and use of water resources.

The report underlined the importance of the delimitation and demarcation of disputed border areas between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to prevent further military clashes between the two countries and welcomed the steps taken by both sides in this regard.

Democracy and human rights

Members insisted that respect for human rights and compliance with international obligations are important for the EUs relations with Central Asia. They urged the Central Asian states to adhere to their democracy and human rights obligations. They are also concerned about the lack of accountability for serious human rights violations on a large scale, including the employment of harsh measures by authorities to end mass protests.

Moreover, the report noted the need to boost Central Asias resilience against disinformation by promoting independent media and content in local languages, increasing media literacy and organising targeted courses for local journalists. It stressed the need to strengthen media independence and pluralism and freedom of expression in Central Asia in line with the highest democratic standards.

EU strategy on Central Asia

The European Parliament adopted by 543 votes to 42, with 4 abstentions, a resolution on the EU strategy on Central Asia.

Central Asia is a region of strategic interest to the EU in terms of security and connectivity as well as energy and resource diversification, conflict resolution and the defence of the multilateral rules-based international order.

EU engagement with Central Asia

Members underlined that the EU and Central Asia are facing profound global and regional geopolitical shifts and challenges, which provide significant impetus for them to work towards long-term, structured and mutually beneficial cooperation in matters of common interest. They

strongly encouraged the EU to intensify its engagement with Central Asia, given the geostrategic importance of the region, and to promote a strategic partnership with these countries by expanding cooperation at political and economic level. The resolution port encouraged the EU to continue promoting political and economic reforms that strengthen the rule of law, democracy, good governance and respect for human rights.

Members underlined the EUs interest in increasing economic relations and intensifying political ties with the countries of Central Asia, in part to minimise the circumvention of sanctions against Russia and Belarus. They invited the authorities of the Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, to cooperate closely with the EU, in particular its Sanctions Envoy, in order to intensify their efforts to prevent sanctions circumvention.

Parliament also considered that a review of the EU-Central Asia strategy is necessary in order to update it in the light of the geopolitical events that have taken place in recent years.

Regional cooperation

The resolution underlined the great potential of mutually beneficial cooperation on sustainable development, connectivity, energy, critical raw materials and security, with Central Asia being a key region for connectivity between East and West. The Commission is called on to investigate the possibility of the European Investment Banks support for investments in infrastructure development in Central Asian states, especially in the Middle Corridor.

According to Members, the EUs policy towards Central Asia in the fields of energy, connectivity and resource diversification should be inspired by the European Green Deal and based on mutually beneficial strategic partnerships that take into account the peculiarities of each of the Central Asian states. Members are concerned, in this regard, with the creation of dependency on Russia as a result of the signing of the natural gas deal between Gazprom and Uzbekistan through Kazakhstan.

Parliament underlined the importance of a positive investment climate for the economic development of Central Asia and EU-Central Asian trade and cooperation. It highlighted that a positive investment climate leading to the creation of quality workplaces with adequate salaries and decent working conditions depends on stable democratic institutions, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as the capacity of businesses and civil society for due diligence application.

Members noted the Central Asian states, with the exception of Tajikistan, long-standing approach of maintaining relations with Afghanistan and their evolving pragmatic engagement with the Taliban, which they nevertheless do not recognise, since the takeover in 2021. They encouraged the EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan to continue cooperating closely with counterparts in the Central Asian states as part of the EU-Central Asia dialogue on Afghanistan.

Noting the increasing strain on water resources in Central Asia, the resolution stressed the need for closer regional cooperation on this matter between upstream and downstream countries in order to prevent conflicts over the distribution and use of water resources.

Democracy and human rights

Members insisted that respect for human rights and compliance with international obligations are important for the EUs relations with Central Asia calling for regular human rights dialogues with Central Asian states. They are also concerned about the lack of accountability for serious human rights violations on a large scale, including the employment of harsh measures by authorities to end mass protests. Members underlined the fundamental democratic shortcomings in Central Asia, with regard to democratic governance, the rule of law and human rights protection, which still persist and have worsened in several respects recently. The stressed the need to make election processes more transparent, open and fair for all political actors.

Moreover, the resolution noted the need to boost Central Asias resilience against disinformation by promoting independent media and content in local languages, increasing media literacy and organising targeted courses for local journalists. It stressed the need to strengthen media independence and pluralism and freedom of expression in Central Asia in line with the highest democratic standards.

Lastly, Members are concerned that, even though gender equality is supposedly protected by law in all countries, gender-based violence, domestic violence, child marriage, discrimination and harassment of ethnic and religious minorities and LGBTIQ people are still widespread in Central Asia. The Central Asian governments are urged to prevent these human rights violations.

Transparency				
MARIANI Thierry	Shadow rapporteur	AFET	16/11/2023	Conseiller de la mission d'Ouzbékistan à Bruxelles
MARIANI Thierry	Shadow rapporteur	AFET	13/11/2023	Membres du Parlement Kazakh et de l'administration du Parlement (Mazhilis)
LUCKE Karsten	Rapporteur	AFET	09/11/2023	Human Rights Commissioner of Kazakhstan
MARIANI Thierry	Shadow rapporteur	AFET	08/11/2023	Commissaire aux droits de l'homme en République du Kazakhstan
GROßELJ Klemen	Shadow rapporteur	AFET	07/11/2023	Deputy ambassador of Kazakhstan
LUCKE Karsten	Rapporteur	AFET	04/10/2023	Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan
LUCKE Karsten	Rapporteur	AFET	18/09/2023	Human Rights Watch

LUCKE Karsten	Rapporteur	AFET	13/09/2023	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.
LUCKE Karsten	Rapporteur	AFET	19/07/2023	Botschafter Kirgistans in der EU