

EURACTIV

A BUSY EU-KAZAKHSTAN AGENDA

SPECIAL REPORT | MAY 2021

<https://eurac.tv/9SXF>



With the support of





A BUSY EU-KAZAKHSTAN AGENDA

SPECIAL REPORT

<https://eurac.tv/9SXF>

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, relations between the EU and Kazakhstan have continued to develop, with a milestone in-person EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council on 10 May expected to draw the lines of cooperation for the 2021-2027 period.

Contents

.....

EU prioritises climate, connectivity, regional cooperation in its Kazakhstan relations	4
Kazakhstan invests in human capital to a void brain drain	6
Aigul Kuspan: Most MEPs have only a rough idea of Kazakhstan	8
Analyst: Central Asian 'patient' is ready for deeper cooperation	11
Oettinger: It's time to take EU-Kazakhstan relations to a new level	13

EU prioritises climate, connectivity, regional cooperation in its Kazakhstan relations

By Georgi Gotev | EURACTIV.com



The 2017 Expo in Astana was devoted to the future of energy. Its legacy is the Green plan aiming to transform Kazakhstan into a climate-neutral country by 2060. [Georgi Gotev]

Ahead of the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council on 10 May, EURACTIV spoke to an EU official to gather information about the EU's expectations for the cooperation with Kazakhstan and with Central Asia in the years to come.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mukhtar Tileuberdi is expected to come to Brussels on Monday to physically co-chair the [Cooperation Council](#) meeting with EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell.

The visit appears to mark the end of a slow period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, although virtual meetings had been held in various formats,

including the EU-Kazakhstan business platform.

At the core of the meeting is the implementation of EPCA, the [Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement](#) between Kazakhstan and the EU, labelled as “unique” and as a model for other countries. The European Commission says the EU's relationship with Central Asia in general and Kazakhstan in particular “has never been any stronger or any better”.

HUMAN RIGHTS

However, the issue of human rights has been an irritant lately. In February the European Parliament passed a

[resolution](#) highly critical of the human rights situation in Kazakhstan and of the way the recent parliamentary elections were held there. There were also [hints of heavy lobbying among MEPs by an organisation with a political agenda](#).

Asked if EU diplomats were happy with such harsh resolutions, the EU representative, who asked not to be named, appeared to take his distance, saying that the European Parliament was “completely independent and not controllable”.

“Their motivations are sometimes political, their sources of information are diverse, the resolution is also the result of discussions between different

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

groups, between people with different agendas and the result is a bit unpredictable”, the EU representative said.

“This resolution doesn’t represent the view of the EU as such. It’s not the view of the EU27”, he made clear, adding that “the only positive aspect I would see in this resolution is that it draws attention to the government of Kazakhstan to show progress in the field of human rights”.

He said the EU was aware that the resolution was not received well in Nur-Sultan. In his words, the meeting of the Cooperation Council would provide the opportunity to the Kazakh government to explain what they are doing in this respect.

GREEN AGENDA

Another big aspect of the bilateral agenda, in the EU representative’s words, is the Green agenda that the government of Kazakhstan is developing to facilitate a gradual transition of the fossil-rich country to green energy.

“It could be a quite promising cooperation,” the EU official said.

He added there will be “a quite big EU-Kazakhstan climate conference” in Nur-Sultan on 3 June, which would prepare COP26 in the context of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev’s pledge that Kazakhstan would become climate neutral by 2060.

In December 2020, Tokayev said that as a landlocked and developing country, Kazakhstan was highly vulnerable to climate change. He acknowledged that the country was still heavily relying on fossil fuels but was strongly determined to phase them out, decarbonise the economy and reach carbon neutrality by 2060.

Regarding trade, the EU official called the meetings of the EU-Kazakhstan business platform a “very helpful process”. The latest was chaired by Prime Minister Askar Mamin and the one will take place in Brussels on Monday.

The official added that “we understand that President Tokayev would like to visit Brussels when the conditions allow. We look forward to this visit, although the date is not set yet”.

CONNECTIVITY

The EU official said that another priority for the EU was the issue of connectivity.

In contrast with China’s ‘Belt and Road’ initiative, the EU promotes the idea of building corridors as a way to increase ‘connectivity’ with Asia on the basis of a rules-based approach. In the EU’s view, connectivity is not only about infrastructure but about internal reform, economic modernisation, promoting sustainable productivity, digital and human contacts.

The EU representative said Uzbekistan will be hosting in Tashkent in July a big regional conference on connectivity, for Central Asia and South Asia, which includes Afghanistan.

“We would like to boost our cooperation on connectivity with this part of the world,” the EU representative said, adding that the Commission is discussing, in the context of the 2021-27 EU budget period, the possibility to launch some projects on digitalisation.

“We would like to discuss this with Kazakhstan, because the COVID pandemic has exposed the digital divide at the global level, but also

within Central Asia, and the EU would like to share its expertise,” he said.

Visa facilitation is certainly an important issue for Kazakhstan, but the EU representative made it clear that nothing new was happening in this field.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Asked about regional issues, and some negative developments, such as [the recent clash at the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan](#), the diplomat said the EU was looking forward to the development of cooperation in Central Asia, being ready to share its own expertise in regional cooperation, by “helping Central Asia to invent its own way of cooperating at the regional level”.

The recent clash, he said, “is damaging the common efforts to project a positive image of Central Asia”.

The EU side is also interested to hear from the Kazakh side about the plans for a new regional summit. Kazakhstan hosted the first summit of this kind in 2018, and the EU official said that this was indeed “a historical event with a powerful message”.

“We really hope that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will push for a Central Asia summit to take place this year, with the purpose of sending a message that despite the marginal tensions between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the region is on a constructive, cooperative path,” the EU official said.

The EU is also said to be keen to promote cooperation in water management. Projects already exist, but the EU ambition is to streamline this process during the 2021-2027 budgeting period.

Kazakhstan invests in human capital to avoid brain drain

By Vlagyislav Makszimov | EURACTIV.com



shutterstock_1273103506 [Shutterstock/LightField Studios]

Kazakhstan continues to rejuvenate its public administration in a drive to keep talented youth at home and achieve two major goals: modernising the Central Asian country and avoiding brain drain.

Kazakhstan's capital Nur-Sultan prepares for the second round of selection for the president's elite programme designed to inject fresh talent into public administration as the country presses on with reforms despite the pandemic.

The second intake of the Presidential Youth Personnel Reserve should address Kazakhstan's emigration problem. [According to the](#)

Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting, 366,000 people have left the 19-million post-Soviet country in the past ten years, most of them educated professionals.

The number may appear high, but it is much lower than in countries in Eastern Europe such as Bulgaria or Romania, which have lost millions of people, mostly young and educated.

To avoid such trends, Kazakhstan banks on reforming administration and getting young talent into decision-making positions, which may alleviate pressure at the root of the migration flows.

Reforming the administration is

indeed key. Of young Kazakhs living abroad, 51.3% mentioned "corruption, bureaucracy at all levels, impunity and irresponsibility of officials, and inefficient government" as reasons for leaving, while 31.3% said it was "professional lack of demand, lack of prospects for self-realisation and career," according to an [online survey](#) by the International Organisation for Migration.

During the first intake back in 2019, only 300 of the more than 13,000 citizens who showed interest were selected, about a third of the people from the presidential reserve coming from the private sector. By the end of 2020, 166 were employed.

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

Offered employment covers a wide range of positions, including very top public sector jobs, such as [deputy ministerial](#) and [head of stock exchange posts](#).

With an average age of 31, the members of the presidential reserve are required to have a higher degree, as well as at least five years of work experience.

The second intake, scheduled to start before summer 2021, will be more competitive and targeted, [according to](#) Anar Zhailganova, chair of the reformed Civil Service Affairs Agency, appointed by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

“It will be focused on the real needs of government agencies. At the same time, for the purpose of high-quality implementation of the [president’s] order, it is proposed to involve government agencies themselves in the selection process, which have needs for industry specialists,” Zhailganova said last fall.

The reforms may be working: In 2020 only 21,000 people, a 49% drop compared to the same period the previous year, according to a [report](#) of the Eurasian economic committee, though the change could be attributed to the global health crisis.

“The process of renewal is one of the priorities of my domestic policy,” Tokayev said at the beginning of last year.

“We need a team of managers of a new formation in different areas, who are not afraid to take responsibility and make innovative and effective decisions,” he added.

The problem of brain drain from

Central and Eastern Europe to the West has been a challenge within the EU as well and has recently become an important feature in the bloc’s policy towards its eastern neighbours.

At home, the EU has also been pushing to provide more opportunities for young people through initiatives like the Youth Guarantee, a commitment by all member states to ensure that everyone under 30 receives a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

In Kazakhstan, the presidential candidate pool is part of a wider push to include more young people and women in governance.

Before the parliamentary elections at the beginning of the year, the constitution and party laws were amended to mandate a 30% quota for women and youth representatives on electoral party lists.

On January 15, 2021, President Tokayev announced a third package of political reforms, which will include the introduction of the Youth Development Index supposed to help authorities assess the activities of local executive bodies in the youth policy implementation.

At the same time, Tokayev has pushed to cut redundant staff, mandating to reduction the number of civil servants by a quarter. By the end of last year, 10% have been cut, the remaining 15% reduction foreseen by the end of this year.

Meanwhile, the administration is pushing for upping the qualification of public sector employees, through

the introduction of policies such as civil servants’ [internships in international organisations](#).

However, commentators such as Daniyar Ashim point out it is too early to tell whether the reforms will bear fruit.

“The way these people show themselves will be an indicator of the programme’s performance,” the analyst [told](#) Turan press.

“If in the next three to five years none of them get caught on corruption offences, [and] they will cope with leadership work with dignity – this will be an indicator of the programme,” he added.

INTERVIEW

Aigul Kuspan: Most MEPs have only a rough idea of Kazakhstan

By Georgi Gotev | EURACTIV.com



Aigul Kuspan: 'Among the MEPs there are about 100 people who have been to Kazakhstan, who know our people well and respect our values. But at the same time, most of the deputies have a very rough idea of our country.' [Council Newsroom]

Aigul Kuspan, former head of the Kazakh mission to the European Union and current chair of Kazakhstan's parliamentary committee on international affairs, says the bloc often comes across as self-assured and borderline ignorant in terms of global affairs.

Aigul Kuspan is a career diplomat and former professor of foreign languages. She served as ambassador to Belgium from 2018 until earlier this year. After being winning a seat in Kazakh elections

in January, she was appointed chair of the country's parliamentary committee on international affairs.

She spoke to EURACTIV Senior Editor Georgi Gotev on Thursday (6 May).

How do you feel in your new role as chair of the international affairs committee? What are the biggest challenges, especially when it comes to relations with the EU?

It has been almost four months

since I moved from the diplomatic to the parliamentary sphere.

The activity of a parliamentarian is both new and familiar to me. On the one hand, it is new to work with legislation, interact with the government, civil society and the press on a daily basis. On the other hand, as [committee chair] I actually continue to engage in the same line of work, with the only difference that it is now parliamentary, and its geography is more extensive, it covers the whole

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8

world.

I see as my main goal in parliament the application of my knowledge and experience for the benefit of my country. The years I spent in Europe will be useful to me in the development of laws, for example, the law on the Ombudsman for Human Rights, which I was recently invited to co-author by my colleagues from the Senate. My experience has already been useful to me in the work on the amendments to the Election Law adopted by the lower house on Wednesday (May 5) according to which the position of akims [mayors] of villages and districts now becomes elective.

In the Mazhilis [Kazakhstan's lower house of parliament] I was entrusted with the leadership of groups for parliamentary cooperation with a number of countries. Among them are France, Belgium, Lithuania. I plan to develop fruitful interaction with colleagues in the inter-parliamentary assemblies of the CIS, CSTO, OSCE, CE, TurkPA and others.

As far as cooperation with the European Parliament is concerned, the Kazakhstan-European Union Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, a regular bilateral structure, which I will co-chair, together with the MP Fulvio Martusciello (EPP, Italy), will be the obvious track.

The European Parliament (EP) resolution of February was undoubtedly received with disappointment in your country. What is your message to those MEPs who are so critical of your country on the issues of human rights and media freedom?

During my work in Brussels, I met

many MEPs. I can say that I am well versed in this "European UN". Among the MEPs there are about 100 people who have been to Kazakhstan, who know our people well and respect our values. But at the same time, most of the deputies have a very rough idea of our country. There are also those who allow themselves to be manipulated by fugitive Kazakh criminals who dress up like political martyrs, victims of the struggle for human rights. I am absolutely sure that the EP resolution is the product of precisely this kind of "toxic" cooperation that undermines trust between Europe and Central Asia, and indeed trust in European parliamentarism, which is also in the process of transit and evolution. ...

However, it should be noted that a number of deputies were categorically against the adoption of the resolution. And we are very grateful to the latter for their adherence to principles and a better understanding of our country and its specifics.

I remember well how at the very beginning of Kazakhstan's independence, the Europeans who visited our country gave very useful advice to Kazakh politicians. Moreover, they did it with infinite delicacy, every now and then assuring us that they are not mentors for our country, and that their advice is not dogma. Their behavior fully corresponded to the ideal image of a European that each of us on this side of the Iron Curtain created for himself, reading European writers and philosophers.

I would advise my colleagues in the EP who criticize Kazakhstan to always keep in mind the special civilizational mission of Europe. One of its main features is the respect for other cultures by studying and

understanding them.

Kazakhstan is a country of the Great Steppe, with an ancient history and rich culture, the cradle of the Turkic states. Openness, patience and courage are genetically inherent in Kazakhs. Otherwise, they would not have held the ninth largest territory in the world. Our recent history also contained tragic pages: the horrors of famine and repression, militant atheism, nuclear tests, the death of the Aral Sea.

On the other hand, we are a young state, which in 30 years of independence has successfully overcome a long and thorny path, switched to a market economy, preserved inter-ethnic peace and interfaith harmony, and built friendly relations with all states of the world.

Recently, a European diplomat confessed to me that in 1991 he was sure that the Kazakh state would not last even 10 years. We ourselves have read with anxiety in our hearts more than a dozen works of European and American strategists who made the most apocalyptic forecasts for our state. Thank God, first President Nursultan Nazarbayev did not allow such a gloomy scenario, and President Tokayev consistently continues a verified multi-vector foreign policy and deep modernization of the spheres of politics, the economy and the social sphere. This is our choice, our Kazakh way. And all our partners should recognise and respect it.

How do you expect to help improve relations in the parliamentary dialogue between Kazakhstan and the EU?

I think that for a genuine and constructive dialogue, its participants must know and understand each

Continued on Page 8

Continued from Page 9

other well. The knowledge of the overwhelming majority of my compatriots about Europe is advanced, and their attitude is very respectful. I would like the same attitude on the part of our European colleagues. Unfortunately, many of them are at the mercy of stereotypes which remind me former Soviet propaganda.

I look forward to an effective dialogue within the framework of the Kazakhstan-EU Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, and the Friendship Group with Kazakhstan functioning in the European Parliament, which managed to organise several events before the coronavirus pandemic, including a conference on the life of Catholics in Kazakhstan.

By the way, this year marks the 20th anniversary of the state visit of Pope John Paul II to Kazakhstan. The pontiff came to us in 2001 to thank the Kazakh people, who hosted hundreds of thousands of Catholics – Poles, Germans, Lithuanians – and also to support Kazakhstan in the year of the decade of its independence.

I would like to conclude my answer with the words of the great European humanist Romain Rolland from his article “A Warning to America”, written in 1926.

“If the United States considers itself called upon to influence the world, then the more it is obliged to understand the true essence, the true needs, the true ideals of other peoples of the world, for the duty of the strong is to help the less powerful to self-determine, and not to oppress him, forcing him to lie

to his own soul. It would be a disaster for all mankind if any one race, one people, one state, however significant they may be, tried to impose on the magnificent diversity of the universe a straightforward and boring monotony of their own individuality.”

He who has ears, let him hear!

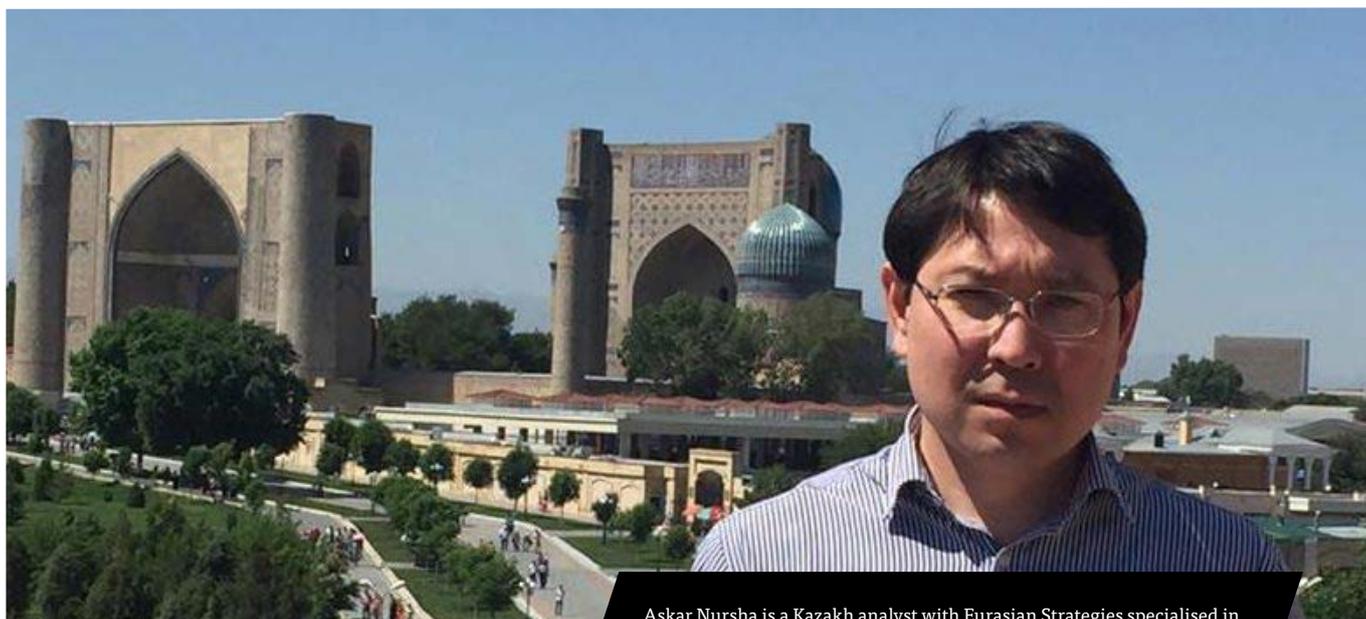
A bon entendeur, salut!

INTERVIEW

Analyst: Central Asian 'patient' is ready for deeper cooperation

.....

By Vlagyislav Makszimov | EURACTIV.com



Askar Nursha is a Kazakh analyst with Eurasian Strategies specialised in security and the post-Soviet space. [Askar Nursha]

Even though unresolved border disputes stand in the way of further economic integration of Central Asia, this vast region is ready to deepen ties, according to Askar Nursha.

Askar Nursha is a Kazakh analyst with Eurasian Strategies specialised in security and the post-Soviet space.

“As far back as the 90s, attempts were made to create a full-fledged integration grouping in Central Asia... What was the main mistake of that old era? It was an attempt at a top-down integration”, Nursha said.

According to the analyst, even though there was a political will at the time, back then it lacked a strong social, cultural and, most importantly, economic foundation in the context of a wider trend of the Soviet disintegration.

“The [Soviet] republics aspired to become states. Now we are seeing interest in strengthening the economic foundation, namely a real sincere interest in expanding economic cooperation”, he said.

“We can see that for about more than 15 years, a number of major

international players have begun to formulate a strategy towards Central Asia as a unified region, while the countries of the region themselves have shown passivity in this case.”

However, in the analyst’s view the winds are changing in Central Asia, home to five states — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan.

“There was a consilium of doctors who decided that the region should be in a five-party format, but the patient himself was not yet ready for it. But we can see that the patient has started to

Continued from Page 11

‘ripen’, so I think that all the efforts that have been made by the European Union, by the US, they are beginning to bear fruit.”

Nursha pointed out that cooperation has regional security implications, especially in light of unresolved border disputes, which need to be worked on in parallel to economic cooperation.

He said “Central Asia will be more successful both economically and in terms of security if it is united,” adding that “in this regard conflicts as the one that happened between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is a certain disappointment, because it throws the region back to some extent.”

The clashes at the end of April, which are not occurring for the first time, resulted in numerous casualties.

“The whole situation is in a way a legacy of the Soviet era, a result of the partition of the territory. This problem didn’t exist when the two countries were part of the Soviet Union, but when they became independent, the administrative boundaries between the republics became national borders,” Nursha said, adding that similar issues permeate the region. Kyrgyzstan has a similar problem with its Western neighbour, Uzbekistan, for example.

“I think the most successful Central Asian negotiator so far is Kazakhstan, which has, along its perimeter, completed the necessary phase of negotiations with its neighbours. It took 30 years,” he said.

The analyst pointed to several factors underlying the clashes, including internal political pressure

on the authorities, economic instability and unemployment woes of workers who returned home from abroad, especially Russia, as a result of the pandemic.

“There is an unresolved issue of water-energy complex there, since a significant part of this region is mountainous area and deserts and semi-deserts and the issue of water distribution is very acute. The same as in Europe, for example, at one time, the European Coal and Steel Community organisation restored relations between Germany and France [after World War II]. They became the locomotives of European integration on the basis of coal and steel. It is often said in our region that if there is going to be a regional association, it should take place on the basis of water and energy issues,” according to Nursha.

“To some extent the conflict has caused a setback, because the trust has been broken, it will have to be rebuilt, the work that’s been done, many things will have to be revisited. Especially as the region is now moving more slowly than expected in forming the institutions of cooperation in a five-sided format. It has been a long time since the last summit [in 2019],” he said.

At the same time the analyst believes the border issues should primarily be resolved in a bilateral format, though international partners “can and should play a role.”

“I know that Kazakhstan has expressed its willingness to provide a platform, Russia, neighboring Uzbekistan, are ready to help countries to resolve the situation. In general, the international community is ready to help and is not

going to leave these processes to their own devices.”

Asked if there is a role for the EU, Nursha said Europe should bolster the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which “has become very passive in recent years.”

“And we know that border issues, political settlements, that was the role of the OSCE, and now I think it is not fulfilling that role, not in Central Asia and not in, say, eastern Ukraine”, he said.

“Second is the European Union’s strategy for Central Asia. The environmental cooperation component needs to be strengthened. Most strategies developed by international organizations in the region are reactive in nature, following what happened, either positive or negative experiences of the past. But now we need analytic-forecasting tools and full-fledged studies with a forecasting element.”

Nursha said that climate change is one of the top-three factors that may complicate life in the region, in addition to security and economic factors.

“We are observing melting of glaciers where water is coming from in these countries. These desertification processes will be intensified. The countries of the region need to start working on this now and move from national studies to more involvement in regional, global studies and cooperation on this issue. In my opinion, the water problem in Central Asia will worsen from year to year.”

Oettinger: It's time to take EU-Kazakhstan relations to a new level

.....

By Georgi Gotev and Vlagyislav Makszimov | EURACTIV.com



Fiule photo. Gunther Oettinger as EU Commissioner for budget and human resources, 12 September 2018. [EPA-EFE/PATRICK SEEGER]

Former European Commission Vice President Günther Oettinger called on Monday (10 May) for elevating the EU-Kazakhstan relations to “a new level”, inviting the European business to invest more in added-value products manufactured in the Central Asian country.

Oettinger spoke as an online guest at a conference in Brussels organised by the Berlin Eurasian Club, a business association of mostly German and Kazakh businesses, which coincided with the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation

Council that took place in person in the Belgian capital on the same day.

The former EU Commissioner argued that time was ripe for Kazakhstan, a producer of raw materials among which he mentioned copper, nickel, iron, manganese, gold, and also oil and gas, to process these raw materials into added-value products necessary for industrial production, naming the chemical industry, the automotive sector and the pharmaceutical sector.

Such cooperation with firms from the EU would result in a win-win situation, he argued. In his words, more partnerships with European industries were needed for training skilled workers. Also, the EU Erasmus+ program should give more young people from Kazakhstan the opportunity to come to Europe to learn about the EU's economics, democracy, market economy, he said.

Kazakhstan is rich in minerals and fossil fuels, but the country aims to diversify its energy sources

Continued from Page 13



and become carbon-neutral by 2060. Agriculture Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski, who attended the event, said the Kazakh national program for transition to a green economy was in line with the European Green deal objectives.

Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mukhtar Tileubedri, stressed the important role of the EU in the Kazakh economy. As a bloc, the EU27 ranks first among Kazakhstan's trade and investment partners, accounting for 27.7% in terms of Kazakhstan's foreign trade last year.

Over the last 15 years, 44% of the foreign capital invested in Kazakhstan came from the EU27, he said, adding that from 2005 to 2020, the Kazakh economy has attracted more than \$157 billion foreign direct investment from EU countries.

Tileubedri also stressed Kazakhstan's geographic advantages, as it borders

China and the Russian Federation. Tourism was another accent of the conference, the aim being, according to the deputy PM, to increase its share in the national economy.

As Gabidulla Abdrakhimov, the Kazakh vice minister of tourism, explained, the current share of tourism was 5% of GDP and the aim is to raise it to 8% in 2025, thanks to investments to the tune of \$2.5 billion.

He invited EU investors to seize the opportunities of the several special economic zones and flagged the big interest of several world-known investors in Aktau, on the Caspian Sea shore.

Michael Siebert, managing director for Russia, Eastern Partnership and Central Asia in the European External Action Service, congratulated Kazakhstan for the development of its national COVID-19 vaccine.

He also spoke highly of the interest of the Kazakh side in the revamped EU-Central Asia strategy, which focuses on connectivity.

Later on Monday, Tileubedri met with his Portuguese counterpart Augusto Santos Silva for the meeting of the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council, where the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the bloc and Kazakhstan that entered into force in March 2020 was at the top of the agenda.

The EPCA sets a legal framework for cooperation in 29 areas, from international and regional security to trade, investment, development of infrastructure as well as

innovation in culture, sport and tourism sectors.

Silva, whose country currently chairs the EU Council's rotating presidency, said that "even in a year as difficult as last year, the EU has consolidated its position as Kazakhstan trade partner and first foreign investor."

As part of political dialogue, good governance, the promotion and protection of human rights, and engagement with civil society were also part of the agenda.

"The European Union strongly supports Kazakhstan in its reform processes and modernisation processes and hopes these reforms will be effectively implemented," Silva told journalists.

Tileubedri highlighted the third package of reforms of Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, unveiled in January and supposed to enhance the government's engagement and dialogue with the civil society.

"Implementation of these reforms is a vivid demonstration of our continued commitment and efforts to strengthen human rights protection, civic participation, parliamentarism and multi-party system," Tileubedri said.

He also emphasised that visa liberalisation is high on Nur-Sultan's agenda and that Kazakhstan hopes to launch negotiations on this issue.

However, the topic was not included in the [main conclusions](#) posted on the European Council website following the meeting.



ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫҢ ПАРЛАМЕНТІ



For information on
EURACTIV Special Reports...

Contact us

Georgi GOTEV
Senior Editor
georgi.gotev@euractiv.com
tel. +32 4 99 528 725

Teresa DOMINGUEZ
EU Affairs Senior Manager
teresa.dominguez@euractiv.com
tel. +32 (0) 47 601 78 26