

Review of the EU Strategy for Central Asia

In June 2007, the EU adopted an EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia ('EU Strategy for Central Asia'), in recognition of the region's increasing importance for the Union's security, stability, governance and energy diversification. The strategy provides a framework for EU relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The European Parliament is due to discuss the implementation and review of the strategy during the April plenary session.

Increased EU interest in Central Asia

The EU's main reasons for creating a strategy for Central Asia were the security challenges posed by the Afghanistan war on the one hand, and energy security, which became one of the EU's key concerns in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine gas row in 2005-2006, on the other. Moreover, the European Neighbourhood Policy brought Europe and Central Asia closer to each other. In that context, in June 2007 the European Council adopted its 'EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia', which identified seven priority areas for closer partnership with the region: democratisation, human rights and rule of law; youth and education; economic development, trade and investment; energy and transport; environmental sustainability and water; common threats and challenges; and inter-cultural dialogue. The strategy recognised that the EU has an interest in a peaceful, democratic and economically prosperous Central Asia. In its [resolution](#) of 20 February 2008, the Parliament considered its adoption as a clear expression of the EU's increased focus on Central Asia.

Council of the EU calls for further cooperation with Central Asian countries

The [Council conclusions](#) of 22 June 2015 on Central Asia noted that the main objectives and priority areas of the strategy remain pertinent. Highlighting the significant mutual interest in increased cooperation, the Council reaffirmed the EU's commitment to fostering stable, secure and sustainable development in the region. Eight years after the adoption of the strategy, the Council welcomed the substantial progress achieved in developing the EU's relations with the Central Asian countries as well as with the region as a whole. The Council called for strengthening trade and energy links between the EU and Central Asian countries, and reinforcing cooperation on security and stability, including on sustainable management of natural resources. It emphasised the fundamental importance of democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and socio-economic development, all of which are among the priority areas of the strategy. The Ukraine crisis, since 2014; an increased need for energy import [diversification](#); the [challenges](#) facing Central Asia (for instance, radicalisation); and the ramifications of Afghanistan's instability, all render further cooperation essential.

Committee on Foreign Affairs report on the strategy's implementation and review

Following the fourth [progress report](#) on the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia in 2015 (previously reviewed in [2008](#), [2010](#) and [2012](#)), Tamás Meszerics (Greens/EFA, Hungary) prepared the [AFET Committee's report](#) (A8-0051/2016) on the implementation and review of the strategy. The report stresses the strategic, political and economic interest of the EU in strengthening its relations with the Central Asian countries. Noting that the EU's strategic approach to date has demonstrated only limited viability and success, the report agrees that the strategy and the long-term priority areas defined therein remain relevant and necessary for concrete European engagement in the region. If the motion for a resolution is approved, this will be the second time the Parliament has adopted a resolution on the implementation of the strategy.

Parliament's first [resolution](#) on the implementation of the Central Asia Strategy was adopted on 15 December 2011. It noted that Central Asia holds significant importance for the EU in terms of trade potential and energy security. It furthermore underlined the EU's strong interest in strengthening its relations with Central Asian countries and recognised that the EU needs to maintain a high level of engagement in the region.

