

Delegation to the EU-Kazakhstan, EU-Kyrgyzstan, EU-Tajikistan and EU-Uzbekistan Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, and for relations with Turkmenistan and Mongolia (DCAS)



Brief history of the delegation

The Delegation to the EU-Kazakhstan, EU-Kyrgyzstan, EU-Tajikistan and EU-Uzbekistan Parliamentary Cooperation Committees and for relations with Turkmenistan and Mongolia (DCAS) evolved from the Delegation for relations with the republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which established a working group for Central Asia in 1993. The DCAS was constituted in 1994.

This coincided with the growing importance of Central Asia for the EU, an interest that was soon formalised in a series of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs):

- 1999: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan;
- 2010: Tajikistan;
- April 2013: Mongolia (not yet ratified).

The PCA forms a contractual basis for the relations between a third country and the EU. It is a complex document covering virtually all areas of relations and cooperation. The PCA establishes a framework for the EU and the third country to develop closer political, economic and cultural ties, and to cooperate in many areas.

The political dialogue is led through the Cooperation Council (CC), a ministerial body established in accordance with the PCA to supervise its implementation and to take the action needed to attain its objectives. It meets once a year, hosted and presided over in turn by the EU and the third country. It brings together members of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the third country.

A Cooperation Committee (CCT) assists the CC in the performance of its duties. Its composition is the same as that of the CC (Council, Commission, Foreign Ministry), though at senior civil servant level. The PCAs also provide for the creation of sub-committees to review cooperation on issues such as trade or justice, liberty and security and human rights.

The parliamentary dialogue is led through the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC), in which Members of the European Parliament and of the third country parliament meet on a regular basis, usually once a year, hosted and presided over in turn by the EU and the third country. Its key role is to monitor and review the implementation of the PCA. To that end, the PCC may request the CC to provide relevant information; it may also make recommendations to the CC.

The primary responsibility of the DCAS is to arrange PCCs with the relevant countries in accordance with the established rules. PCCs have taken place on a regular basis with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan since 2000 and with Tajikistan since 2010.

In the absence of a PCA, inter-parliamentary meetings (IPMs) take place with third countries at the convenience of both parties. This has been the case with Mongolia and Turkmenistan.

Summary of activities during the 7th parliamentary term (2009-2014)

On 29 September 2009 the constitutive meeting of the DCAS drafted a long-term working plan, with focus on PCC and IPM meetings.

In this respect, the PCCs with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have proved to be a useful conduit for the development of an all-encompassing dialogue on politics, economy, trade and investment, culture and bilateral cooperation.

EU assistance covers a wide range of fields, encapsulated in the regional strategy (see below). The DCAS has devoted specific attention to projects dealing with:

- the development of democracy, the rule of law and human rights;
- customs and border monitoring (common threats and challenges include drug trafficking, terrorism and money laundering);
- environment and energy (tensions among Central Asian countries over natural resources could hamper the stability of the region as a whole).

At regional level, EU cooperation in Central Asia (i.e. all DCAS countries except Mongolia) is structured around the 2007 EU-Central Asia Strategy for a New Partnership (the progress of which was last assessed in the June 2012 ‘Progress Report on the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia-Implementation Review and outline for Future Orientations’, which confirmed the continuing relevance of both the strategy and the chosen priority areas for cooperation) and the Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013 whereby EU Member States and the Commission have made commitments to collaborate closely in the following areas:

- human rights, the rule of law, good governance and democratisation;
- investing in the future: youth and education;
- economic development, trade and investment;

- strengthening energy and transport links;
- environmental sustainability and water;
- combating common threats and challenges;
- building bridges: intercultural dialogue.

The strategy puts a clear focus on three main areas of intensified policy dialogue and enhanced co-operation: the rule of law, education and the environment.

In the course of the 7th parliamentary term (2009-2014), the DCAS used all means of ‘parliamentary diplomacy’ at its disposal to control the implementation of the four PCAs currently in force (with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan).

Important issues discussed with concern and interest at DCAS meetings include such global challenges as the fight against drug trafficking, and terrorism and money laundering, as well as questions such as how to increase coordination and integration for the transport, energy and environment sectors. The DCAS wants to facilitate both EU-Central Asia transport flows and the resolution of environmental and energy issues that could hamper the stability of neighbouring countries and the region as a whole. Its main priority in recent years, however, has been to give political support to the Central Asia countries in the framework of security and customs board assistance, in order to underpin the reviewed EU Strategy for Central Asia as a platform for closer bilateral and multilateral cooperation and a key tool for promoting long-term stability, peace and security in the Central Asia region.