



CENTRAL ASIA

The EU recognises the strategic importance of Central Asia, which links the huge Asian continent with Europe. In 2019, the EU updated its Central Asia strategy to focus on resilience (covering areas such as human rights, border security and the environment), prosperity (with a strong emphasis on connectivity) and regional cooperation. Parliament highlights the importance of human rights, good governance and social development, underlining the role of parliamentary diplomacy. Parliament strongly supports democracy and the rule of law with concrete initiatives such as democratisation in Central Asia. In the light of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in August 2021, Central Asia has become crucial for security and stability. While Tajikistan has expressed reservations, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have recently begun engagement cooperation with the Taliban. The January 2022 riots in Kazakhstan (which ended after the Collective Security Treaty Organization sent Russian-led troops) and the current clashes between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan show the risk of instability in a region under Russia's influence. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the concentration of troops at the front, Moscow's influence in Central Asia is weakening. However, Russia remains a key security provider in the region, with facilities in three of the five Central Asian countries, and it controls two thirds of arms' imports and supports the region's governments.

LEGAL BASIS

- Title V of the Treaty on European Union (TEU): 'external action';
- Articles 206-207 (trade) and Articles 216-219 (international agreements) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU);
- Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) covering bilateral relations, with the exception of Turkmenistan for which an interim trade agreement is in place. The new Enhanced PCA (EPCA) with Kazakhstan fully entered into force on 1 March 2020. The EPCA with Kyrgyzstan was initialled in July 2019 and negotiations with Uzbekistan are under way. Tajikistan has also expressed an interest in an EPCA.

THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES AND EU-CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS

For years, relations between Central Asian countries were generally poor, owing to border and resource disputes. Nevertheless, the situation has changed rapidly



following the change of leadership in Uzbekistan in 2016, opening up new possibilities for regional cooperation. The first Central Asian leaders' summit on regional cooperation since the 1990s was held in Astana in March 2018 and a second summit took place in November 2019 in Tashkent. Renewable energy sources are another focus of attention in view of the enormous potential for regional cooperation and investment. The regional economy strongly declined in 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, then expanded in 2021 with growth of 3.9%, and the current outlook is uncertain due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, global inflation and the rise of commodity prices.

All the Central Asian countries follow multi-vector foreign policies, seeking to balance ties with Russia, China, the EU and the US in particular. Relations with Turkey and Iran are also important. Turkmenistan has been largely closed to the outside world, and its 'permanent neutrality' status is even recognised by the UN. EU trade, mainly in mineral resources, is noteworthy with Kazakhstan, and is rising with Uzbekistan, not least following the adoption of the EU-Uzbekistan Textiles Protocol, to which Parliament consented in 2016. The EU has also welcomed the accession of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of the Eurasian Economic Union.

In [2016](#), Parliament supported the EU's Central Asia strategy, calling for it to be more focused. The [EU Central Asia strategy](#) was endorsed by the Council in [June 2019](#). The scope of the EU's relations is linked to the readiness of individual Central Asian countries to undertake reforms and strengthen democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, as well as to modernise and diversify the economy, including by supporting the private sector and small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular, in a free market economy.

The importance of a regional approach and regional cooperation has also been stressed at the EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meetings. The 17th EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting took place in November 2021 to support a green and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery and to encourage collaboration to tackle some of the challenges emerging from developments in Afghanistan.

Parliament's activities with Central Asia are conducted mainly by the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), the Committee on International Trade (INTA), the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE); the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), the Delegation for Relations with Central Asia (D-CAS), and through the Parliamentary Cooperation Committees (PCCs) and the Delegation for relations with Afghanistan (D-AF), among other bodies. PCCs with the majority of Central Asian countries meet every year. MEPs oversee the implementation of the agreements and focus on human rights issues, the political situation, economic and development cooperation and electoral processes.

EU-Central Asia high-level political and security dialogues have taken place regularly since 2013 on high-level political matters and security involving the EU and Central Asian countries. These dialogues have led to discussions around the EU Central Asia strategy priorities, as well as the promotion of EU-Asia connectivity.



There are EU delegations in all Central Asian countries, since the Delegation to Turkmenistan was opened in July 2019. The EU Delegation to Mongolia was opened in 2017.

In 2020, two-way trade in goods amounted to EUR 22.3 billion with a EUR 4.1 billion trade surplus in favour of Central Asia. Central Asian countries received EUR 1.02 billion in funding for 2014-2020 from the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), which included both bilateral assistance and regional programmes (EUR 360 million). The assistance focused on education, regional security, sustainable management of natural resources and socio-economic development. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are no longer eligible for the bilateral parts of the instrument since they have gained upper-middle-income-country status, but they continue to have access to the regional programmes. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) operates in all the Central Asian states except for Turkmenistan, where civil society organisations are too few in number, too poorly organised and too strictly controlled. Horizon Europe is the EU's new key funding programme for research and innovation, with a budget of EUR 95.5 billion worldwide available over a period of seven years under the 2021-2027 multiannual indicative programme.

The EU has been upgrading the older PCAs with the Central Asian partners.

The 10th meeting of the EU-Central Asia Working Group on Environment and Climate Change(WGECC) took place on 4 and 5 October 2021. The EU-Central Asia Civil Society Forum was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 6 October 2021, centring on the theme 'Building a Better Future: Involvement in Sustainable Post-COVID Recovery'.

Following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the situation in Afghanistan has become not only a global issue but also the leading concern of Central Asian governments. The entire Central Asian region has become a crucial area for containing religious extremism and terror networks, together with drug trafficking within its borders. Individual Central Asian republics (and notably Tajikistan) remain reluctant to pursue any substantial engagement with the Taliban in spite of the fact that the Taliban appear to have simultaneously launched a diplomatic offensive aimed at reassuring Central Asian neighbours. Because of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, Central Asia has become a destination for large numbers of Afghan refugees, who are therefore potential recipients of additional EU support, with bilateral and regional programmes as part of the 2021-2027 EU multiannual indicative programme.

A. Kazakhstan

On Kazakhstan, Parliament gave its consent to the EPCA in [2017](#), stressing the importance of the 'more for more' principle to stimulate political and socio-economic reforms.

Former President Nursultan Nazarbayev resigned in March 2019 after three decades in power, but as 'Supreme Leader' and 'Father of the Nation' maintained significant influence and formal powers under the new President Tokayev, including serving as chair of the National Security Council. Kazakhstan held parliamentary elections in January 2021 to elect the 107-seat Mazhilis. The ruling Nur-Otan party retained



its majority while the opposition party All-National Social Democratic Party (OSDP) boycotted the election, claiming fraud by the political elite.

Parliament adopted a [resolution on the situation in Kazakhstan in January 2022](#), after protests broke out there following an unexpected spike in liquefied gas prices, which had been price-fixed by the Kazakh Government. The protests escalated after violent actions were provoked by unknown, well-trained and organised armed persons. President Tokayev ordered urgent measures to be passed and declared a state of emergency. In response to President Tokayev's request, the [Collective Security Treaty Organization \(CSTO\)](#), a military alliance led by Russia, agreed to send soldiers ('peacekeeping forces') to Kazakhstan from Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

President Tokayev has used the crisis to blame the previous administration, consolidate his power and end the dual-power arrangement forced on him by Nazarbayev. Tokayev assumed the office of the Chair of the Security Council and appointed a new Prime Minister. Key important members of Nazarbayev's family lost their positions of influence. In September 2022, [Kazakhstan's Parliament renamed the nation's capital from Nur-Sultan to Astana](#), the latest move to distance the country from the former Soviet republic's first president Nursultan Nazarbayev.

On 11 January 2022, President Tokayev announced a package of substantial reforms. Kazakhstan has recorded high economic growth in the past, becoming an upper-middle-income country in 2006. This economic progress was challenged by the heavy impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and by its growing political and economic dependence on China. In April 2021, Kazakhstan announced its own COVID-19 vaccine, QazVac, and prepared to increase productivity to make it available to all citizens. GDP growth is expected to decline in 2022, owing to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The year 2022 will also mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Kazakhstan-China diplomatic relations, while Kazakhs have recently protested against China's increasing influence and economic power.

In January 2021, Kazakhstan abolished the death penalty after ratifying the UN's Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in so doing became the 88th signatory to the covenant. The European External Action Service (EEAS) lauded the step in a [statement](#). In 2020, Kazakhstan joined the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a multilateral treaty that is included in the International Bill of Human Rights.

On 5 June 2022, Kazakhstan held a constitutional referendum that introduced substantial changes to the existing institutional balance of power, including by decreasing the power of the president and strengthening the role of the parliament. Official turnout was high (68%) and 77.1% of those who cast ballots voted in favour of the changes.

The [19th EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council](#) took place in June 2022 to review the progress made in implementing the EU-Kazakhstan EPCA. During the meeting, the EU welcomed the advanced level of economic relations that had developed between the EU and Kazakhstan. The EU is Kazakhstan's largest trade partner and foreign investor, and Kazakhstan remains the EU's main trade partner in Central Asia. In 2021, the



trade balance reached EUR 12 billion in favour of Kazakhstan. The EU also welcomed the successful cooperation under the EU-Kazakhstan High-Level Business Platform launched in 2019, and in particular the constructive spirit shown by Kazakhstan in addressing concerns shared by EU investors.

Parliament has not observed elections in Kazakhstan since 2005. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/OIDHR) has sent election observers to Kazakhstan. OSCE/OIDHR found shortcomings in the January 2021 parliamentary elections, including a lack of genuine opposition to the Nur-Otan party and as non-compliance with OSCE/OIDHR recommendations relating to fundamental freedoms, impartiality of election administration and eligibility, among others. The EEAS also noted that while Kazakhstan had undergone important political reforms, the elections were a missed opportunity to show their effective implementation.

Parliament's resolution of 11 February 2021 on the alarming human rights situation in Kazakhstan called for respect for the legal framework for holding elections. Parliament underlined the OSCE recommendations guaranteeing fundamental freedoms, ending the arbitrary detention of human rights activists and members of political opposition movements, ensuring the rights of LGBTI people and ensuring the safety of Kazakhs and other ethnic minority groups. Moreover, it called for possible individual sanctions against Kazakhstan's officials who are directly responsible for human rights abuses.

B. Kyrgyzstan

An EPCA with Kyrgyzstan was signed in July 2019. The EU is one of the main sponsors of sustainable development and reforms in Kyrgyzstan. Between 2014 and 2020, the EU allocated EUR 174 million in grant-based development assistance directed at three main sectors and support measures: the rule of law, integrated rural development and education. Additionally, the EU also supports a democratic transition and democratic elections via a rule-of-law programme and has committed EUR 20 million towards stabilisation and democratisation support. [The 2021-2027 multiannual indicative programme](#) responds to the Kyrgyz national development strategy for 2040, which sets out a long-term roadmap to emerge as a strong, self-sufficient and prosperous country by 2040.

The OSCE/OIDHR regularly observes parliamentary elections and presidential elections. The most recent parliamentary elections were held in Kyrgyzstan in October 2020 and were subsequently invalidated following mass protests against irregularities and vote buying. Kyrgyzstan's President, Sooronbay Jeenbekov, resigned in October 2020 and the country held presidential elections in January 2021, after which Sadyr Japarov took office as Kyrgyzstan's sixth president. The EU noted low voter turnout, the lack of a level playing field for candidates, violations regarding campaigning procedures and an abuse of administrative resources, as reported by the OSCE/OIDHR. The EU also called on the president to commit to the universal obligations on fundamental freedoms and human rights and urged respect for the constitution and for parliamentary elections in cooperation with the OSCE/OIDHR. The parliamentary elections took place in November 2021. The European Parliament Delegation for relations with Central Asia (D-CAS) visited the country.



In a referendum held on 11 April 2021, voters approved a new constitution to reduce the size of the parliament by 25% to 90 seats. It also gave the president the power to appoint judges and the leaders of law enforcement bodies and replaced the law allowing the president one term in office in favour of re-election for a second term. The EU [issued a statement](#) on the constitutional reform in Kyrgyzstan in April 2021, expressing its regret at the lack of inclusive dialogue involving civil society. However, the EU insisted that it would continue its support in advancing the reform agenda.

In June 2021, the [EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Peter Burian, arrived in the Kyrgyz Republic](#) to hold bilateral meetings with President Japarov and other relevant leaders, to discuss bilateral cooperation, the state of play as regards human rights issues and challenges in the implementation of the EU strategy for Central Asia.

The 18th EU-Kyrgyz Republic Cooperation Council of 4 June 2021 discussed the strengthening of the rule of law, progress in judiciary and electoral reforms, good governance, cooperation with civil society and human rights. The 11th EU-Kyrgyz Republic annual Human Rights Dialogue took place on 6 September 2021 in Brussels. The EU expressed its concern about the COVID-19 restrictions resulting in an increase in gender-based violence, restrictions on independent media and controversial legislative initiatives. Kyrgyzstan hosted the first EU-Central Asia Economic Forum on 5 November 2021 in Bishkek.

On Kyrgyzstan, Parliament expressed concern at the LGBTI ‘propaganda’ draft laws in [2015](#). In [January 2019](#), it issued recommendations for the negotiation of a new bilateral agreement. Following clashes on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in April 2021, Chair of Parliament’s AFET committee David McAllister and D-CAS Chair Fulvio Martusciello [issued a statement](#) on 3 May 2021 welcoming the ceasefire and called on both sides to hold diplomatic discussions instead of engaging in military clashes. The ceasefire has not been respected and the ongoing border conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has killed and injured hundreds of people, and has displaced thousands. The conflict intensified further in September 2022.

Parliament is deeply concerned about human rights in Kyrgyzstan. An investigation into the death in custody of human rights defender Azimjon Askarov in July 2020 was closed and then re-opened. Several foreign human rights activists and foreign media correspondents remain banned from Kyrgyzstan. Domestic violence remains widespread.

C. Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan became the ninth beneficiary country when it joined the EU’s sustainable development and good governance (GSP+) arrangement in April 2021. By joining this scheme, Uzbekistan receives additional economic benefits due to the cancellation of tariffs for two thirds of the product lines covered by the GSP+. The instrument is a boost to the country’s exports and its ability to attract foreign investment. In turn, Uzbekistan is expected to implement 27 core international conventions on good governance, human and labour rights and environmental and climate protection.



In its recommendation of March 2019 [on the new comprehensive agreement between the EU and Uzbekistan](#), Parliament asked to be allowed to exercise proper scrutiny over the negotiating process.

On 6 July 2022, the EU and Uzbekistan initialled the new EPCA, which will provide a new, modern and ambitious framework to step up the EU-Uzbekistan partnership. In addition, the EU and Uzbekistan held their 18th annual Cooperation Committee meeting. The two sides reviewed developments in their bilateral relations over the past year, and their prospects for the coming year. The EU raised the recent violent events in Karakalpakstan and called for an independent investigation to take place into the circumstances around the protests as soon as possible. The EU stressed the importance of defending the right to peaceful demonstration.

The 18th annual Cooperation Committee meeting provided an opportunity to discuss trade and economic relations, including Uzbekistan's membership of the EU's GSP + scheme. The discussion also covered technical cooperation; the EU's support for Uzbekistan's development strategy; cooperation in the energy sector, with an emphasis on sustainability and the green transition; human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially with regard to constitutional reform and the reform of Uzbekistan's criminal code; and the regional situation in Central Asia, including the situation in Afghanistan. The two sides looked ahead to the EU-Central Asia Sustainable Connectivity Conference to be held in November 2022 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

Since Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev took office in 2016, wide-ranging and rapid democratic changes have been ongoing, including several ambitious reforms and internal changes, such as the release of a number of political prisoners, which reflect some positive developments. The foundations for these changes were laid down in Uzbekistan's 2017-2021 national development strategy.

In February 2021, Mirziyoyev signed a law to move presidential elections to October 2021. The OSCE/ODIHR reiterated its recommendations on political parties' financing, expediting vote-counting and cutting state resources for electoral campaigns. There were concerns in the run-up to the October 2021 elections that there would be no genuine opposition. Uzbek authorities denied the registration of a new party, Haqiqat va Taraqqiyo (Truth and Progress Social Democratic Party) on the grounds that many signatures collected by the opposition politician Khidirnazar Allaqulov were invalid.

In May 2021, an Uzbek court sentenced blogger Otabek Sattoriy to 6 years' imprisonment on libel and extortion charges. Sattoriy's videos often criticised top government officials in his province of Termez, and highlighted corruption cases. Rights and journalist advocacy groups called the sentencing an attempt by the leadership to frighten the press ahead of the elections.

Uzbekistan has recently begun engagement cooperation with the Taliban. In October 2021, Uzbekistan's Deputy Prime Minister met with Taliban delegates in the Uzbek border town of Termez to discuss trade issues and economic interaction, ensuring border security and cooperation in energy, transportation and international cargo, as well as the railway project connecting Termez to the Pakistani city of Peshawar via Afghanistan's Mazar and Kabul.



Parliament approved the EU-Uzbekistan Textile Protocol in December 2016 following an effective commitment by the country, in close cooperation with the International Labour Organization, to eradicate the use of child labour during the annual cotton harvest. In [March 2019](#), it issued recommendations for the negotiation of the EPCA.

Parliament was invited to observe legislative elections in Uzbekistan for the first time in December 2019, but these elections were only monitored by the OSCE/ODIHR. Parliament refused to observe the elections on the grounds that they were neither free nor fair, pointing to the fact that members of the Uzbek Parliament came from pro-regime parties only.

However, Parliament accepted the invitation to monitor the 24 October 2021 presidential election even though the five candidates accepted and registered by the Central Election Commission were allegedly pro-government, while two credible opposition candidates from the Liberal Democratic Party and the Truth and Progress Social Democratic Party had been denied registration.

Relations between Uzbekistan and Russia have been strengthened under President Mirziyoyev. The two countries signed an agreement on the extension of military-technical collaboration with a commitment to jointly procuring military goods, military equipment, research and assistance and to renewing outdated weapons. Russia is one of Uzbekistan's biggest trading partners and Russian investors are particularly interested in Uzbekistan's oil and gas sector. Russia's Gazprom cooperates with hydrocarbons producer Uzbekneftegaz on gas production in Uzbek gas fields, and it also purchases Uzbek gas. On 15 September 2022, Uzbekistan hosted the bilateral meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Samarkand.

D. Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan remains a repressive country under the authoritarian rule of President Berdimukhamedov. Recent developments show that democratic development has not progressed and the human rights situation has not improved. In 2021, Turkmenistan introduced some constitutional reforms, including the creation of an Upper House. However, the role of the Turkmen Parliament is still extremely limited.

Formal EU-Turkmenistan relations emerged in 1997, and the two parties signed a PCA in 1998. Although, since 2004, all EU Member States and Turkmenistan have already ratified the PCA, ratification by the European Parliament is the final remaining requirement to finalise it. Parliament has repeatedly refused to give its consent to ratify the EU-Turkmenistan PCA because of its deep concern over the short-term benchmarks for Turkmenistan's progress on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, EU-Turkmenistan bilateral relations are currently governed by the 2010 [Interim Trade Agreement](#).

Apart from the EU-Central Asia regional frameworks, the EU and Turkmenistan maintain annual bilateral dialogues: the EU-Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue and the EU-Turkmenistan Joint Committee. The 20th Joint Committee was held in October 2021 to further develop partnership and cooperation, in particular on economic



development, trade and investment as well as to develop joint projects on environment, agriculture, education and health protection.

The EU has reaffirmed that the rule of law and respect for human rights are essential aspects of the EU-Turkmenistan relationship.

The 13th annual EU-Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue took place on 6 July 2021. Discussions centred on Turkmenistan's fulfilment of its international legal obligations, in particular respect for human rights, socio-economic issues and cooperation on multilateral platforms. Parliament has consistently expressed concerns about Turkmenistan's poor human rights record and, accordingly, has blocked the entry into force of the PCA so far. In [March 2019](#), it set out recommendations to be addressed before it would consider giving its consent. Parliament has never been invited to observe elections in Turkmenistan. The sixth EU-Turkmenistan Interparliamentary Meeting is set to be held in December 2022.

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, EU countries are trying to increase Turkmenistan's gas resources to ensure their energy security. As a result, Turkmenistan and the EU are currently working on a gas deal, as Turkmenistan wants to diversify its energy exports, while the EU wants to diversify its energy imports. In November 2014, Turkmenistan signed a framework agreement with Türkiye to supply its gas through the Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline, which now receives gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz field in the Caspian Sea. In 2021, Trans Caspian Resources presented its project for the Trans-Caspian Interconnector, a smaller gas pipeline (compared to the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline) from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan. Once completed, it will supply between 10 and 12 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year.

E. Tajikistan

The EU's engagement with Tajikistan has developed significantly since the country's independence from the USSR in 1992. The current legal framework for EU-Tajikistan relations is the [PCA](#) that was signed in October 2004 and into force in January 2010. Parliament consented to the conclusion of the PCA in 2009, but called for improvements in human rights, corruption, health and education. The PCA contributed to the enhancement of bilateral cooperation and raised the EU's profile in Tajikistan, setting out a platform for political dialogue and aiming to promote bilateral trade and economic relations. It also includes articles on cooperation on migration and on the fight against money laundering, drugs and terrorism.

Tajikistan is an important EU partner that is currently facing several challenges, such as the impact of international sanctions and the return of many Tajik migrants from Russia following its invasion of Ukraine, the critical human rights situation and a strong interest in joining the GSP+ trade preferential scheme. Following the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, Tajikistan has been hosting thousands of Afghan refugees. The country is committed to fighting against the spreading of extremism and radicalism in Central Asia.

[The ninth meeting of the EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Council](#), held in February 2021 under the EU-Tajikistan PCA, discussed ways to upgrade relations. Since then, contacts have been initiated to begin negotiations for an EPCA, following the example of other Central Asian countries. Along with discussions on the impact of COVID-19,



the EU encouraged Tajikistan to improve its record as regards fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights. The 12th Human Rights Dialogue took place in November 2020 and concerns were expressed regarding human rights violations.

In March 2020, parliamentary elections were held in Tajikistan. The ruling People's Democratic Party won by overwhelming majority. The presidential election was held in October 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As expected, Emomali Rakhmonov (Rahmon) easily won the election, securing him another seven years as President.

In June 2016, the European Parliament adopted a very critical [resolution on the situation of prisoners of conscience](#) in Tajikistan, expressing deep concerns about the deterioration of human rights, the increased number of detentions and arrests of human rights activists, political opponents and their family members and severe restrictions on independent media.

Parliament has repeatedly expressed concern about the clashes at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border and welcomed the ceasefire agreement reached in April 2021. However, in September 2022, violence increased between border guards along various sites at the border. Such escalation is detrimental to regional stability.

F. Mongolia

Mongolia, though not covered by the EU's Central Asian strategy, is classified by Parliament as part of the region within the framework of its standing delegations. Mongolia shares many cultural, historic and economic aspects with the former USSR republics of Central Asia. During the last three decades, Mongolia has distinguished itself as an 'oasis of democracy' with solid economic growth, even though developments in 2019 raised concerns about democratic erosion. In [2017](#), Parliament gave its consent to the EU-Mongolia PCA.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mongolia still held its regular parliamentary elections and saw Ukhnaa Khürelsükh elected President. As the new, amended constitution requires the President not to be affiliated to a political party, in June 2021, Ukhnaa was replaced as leader of the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) by incumbent Mongolian Prime Minister Luvsannamsrai Oyun-Erdene. Mongolian politics are currently dominated by the consolidation of the MPP party with a supermajority in the Mongolian Parliament and presidential control.

The EU- Mongolia annual Joint Committee meeting was held in June 2022 to reaffirm the partnership based on shared values such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law and respect of the principles of the UN Charter. Mongolia and the EU agreed on the need to combat climate change and protect the environment, fully supporting the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The EU congratulated Mongolia on being among the five priority countries with whom the EU is currently setting up a forest partnership, as Mongolia and the EU share a common interest in promoting sustainable green development, a key objective under the 2021-2027 multiannual indicative programme. Previously, the EU-Mongolia Working Group on Development Cooperation met in March 2022 to discuss development and investment priorities, as well as the 2021-2027 multiannual indicative programme. The EU-Mongolia Subcommittee on trade and investment was held in March 2022, identifying potential areas of



cooperation, the start of negotiations for an agreement on the protection of geographical indications and opportunities in the field of renewable energy and geology.

Parliament's statements on Mongolia have largely been related to economic issues, but also to the country's development and humanitarian needs, linked to extreme weather conditions. A Parliament delegation observed Mongolia's 2017 presidential elections and 2016 parliamentary elections and noted that the country is developing a solid democracy. However, Parliament did not observe the June 2020 parliamentary election because of the COVID-19 pandemic, nor the June 2021 presidential election.

The 15th EU-Mongolia Interparliamentary Meeting took place in June 2022 in Brussels.

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