



Global Gateway: Team Europe launches two initiatives in Central Asia on energy and on digital connectivity

Samarkand, 18 November 2022

Today, High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell co-hosted the EU-Central Asia Connectivity Conference for Sustainable Development in Samarkand where he announced the launch of two EU Global Gateway flagship initiatives on Water, Energy and Climate, and on Digital Connectivity. These Team Europe initiatives have the potential to contribute greatly to Central Asia's sustainable economic and human development and will contribute to resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation, set out in the EU Strategy on Central Asia.

Team Europe supporting the green transition: Water, Energy and Climate Change

The Team Europe Initiative on Water, energy and climate change will contribute to managing water and energy resources sustainably, addressing environmental challenges and tackling climate change in five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Team Europe Initiative includes infrastructure projects, including in the fields of water supply, sanitation and waste management, as well as hydro power.

The EU, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will pool an initial contribution of €700 million, including 200 million from the EU budget. This includes new projects such as a Regional Action for Central Asia in 2023 Europe, and the two bilateral programmes with Tajikistan for 2021 and 2022 on Water and Energy.

The focus will be on developing an integrated regional power market, transboundary water governance, and the inclusion of climate change in the regional political dialogue on water, energy and the environment.

EU-financed technical assistance will help Central Asian countries manage and share their limited water and energy resources sustainably and fairly, while balancing the needs of upstream hydroelectricity generation and downstream water needs for agricultural production. For this, this initiative will support the reform of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, transforming the National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management in Central Asia and exploring innovative solutions to improve the water-energy nexus management.

Increased investment for the green transition will come from the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), which will offer financing in partnership with a range of development financial institutions. There will be a co-ordinated approach to promoting food security, jobs, growth and sustainable development in the region, while aiming at regional solutions for climate neutrality and environmental sustainability.

Digital Connectivity

The Team Europe Initiative on Digital Connectivity will enhance Central Asian businesses and citizens' access to a secure, internet through trusted satellite connectivity. Earth stations with integrated Internet Exchange Points and Green Data Centres will be positioned across the territory of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, linking to existing broadband infrastructure.

The initiative will reduce digital divides in the region and promote inclusive, last-mile digital services. Alongside investments in infrastructure, the EU will promote reforms in digital governance, including in the telecoms sector, in personal data protection, cybersecurity, and respect of human rights, bringing the EU's high standards and best practices to the region, in line with the EU's Digital Diplomacy. The EU will also integrate Central Asia into programmes and initiatives designed for the EU. This initiative will also be the first concrete implementation of the Digital4Development Hub branch for Asia-Pacific.

The EU will fund both the technical assistance for governance and infrastructure investment with a contribution of at least €40 million, with the additional participation of Member States and International Financing Institutions. Technical assistance will support the development of the

countries' governance in sectors including telecoms reform, cybersecurity, and personal data protection.

Secure and reliable end-to-end connectivity for citizens and businesses is expected to have a transformative impact on sectors like industry, health, education, finance and agriculture.

The new satellite-linked data infrastructure will increase the technological sovereignty and resilience of partner countries and is expected to enhance the attractiveness for private sector investors.

World Bank studies show that a 10% increase in broadband penetration adds around 1% to economic growth in Central Asia, while a 1% increase in internet connectivity corresponds to 4.3% of export growth.

Central Asian countries will benefit from EU expertise on trusted connectivity, cybersecurity and green data centres, where Europe is recognised as a global leader. The approach of improving existing policy frameworks and investment possibilities could create the conditions for the private retail telecom sector to offer last-mile services to businesses and citizens.

Background

The Team Europe initiatives were launched on the occasion of the Samarkand Conference on 18 November 2022. The conference is a follow-up to the International Conference on Connectivity in Central and South Asia held in Tashkent in July 2021, and draws on the outcomes of last year's EU-Central Asia Economic Forum in Bishkek.

The Conference supports the strengthening of digital and energy connectivity, e-commerce, and transport between the EU and the five Central Asian countries and the outcomes will feed into the next EU-Central Asia Economic Forum planned in Kazakhstan in 2023.

For More Information

[Global Gateway](#)

[What is Team Europe?](#)

[Digital Diplomacy](#)

[Digital4Development Hub](#)

[Opening remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the EU-Central Asia Connectivity Conference: Global Gateway](#)

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Members of the college said:

The EU has a long-established presence in Central Asia and a history of building links for greater trust and shared goals that promote growth and stability. At this time of intense geopolitical competition, new security threats, and challenges to the rules-based international order, it is important that we show determination in our efforts to advance our mutual cooperation. I am glad that the EU's Global Gateway strategy continues to deliver in the region – two new Team Europe Initiatives are being launched on Water, Energy and combatting Climate Change and on Digital Connectivity. Both Team Europe Initiatives will build on synergies and cooperation opportunities with EU Member States and European Development Finance Institutions – a real European team effort.

Today marks an important milestone in the partnership of the EU and Central Asian countries to build a sustainable and just, blue and green transition. These Global Gateway investments will foster regional cooperation and help Central Asian governments to strengthen their resilience. The EU has worked with partners in the region in the water sector for years and will prioritise its cooperation in key sectors such as energy and human-centered digitalisation. Sustainable connections will lead to increased prosperity for the people of Central Asia and Europe.

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