



Brussels, December 2015

## FACT SHEET

### EU-Turkmenistan relations

Bilateral relations between the European Union and Turkmenistan are governed by an **Interim Agreement on trade** and trade-related matters, which entered into force in August 2010, pending ratification of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) by the EU countries and the European Parliament.

#### Strengthening ties between the EU and Turkmenistan

The EU wishes to increase its dialogue and cooperation with Turkmenistan, and hopes to strengthen its institutional framework of cooperation with the ratification of the PCA. The entry into force of the PCA would allow for additional dialogue in all sectors and a Cooperation Council at Ministerial level. The visit of European Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič to Ashgabat in May 2015, recent travels of President Berdimuhamedov to several EU countries and increasing official and business delegations visiting Turkmenistan signal a strategic **interest on both sides to intensify relations**. Turkmenistan recently initiated a series of **socio-economic reforms** and updated numerous laws in line with international standards, notably in the judicial sectors (on Media and on Internet, on Youth Policy, the revised Administrative and Penal Codes, new regulations on NGOs and on the right of Assembly) while allowing the creation of two new political parties. Implementation of these new laws is now a priority of EU-Turkmenistan cooperation.

EU development cooperation focuses notably on capacity-building of the Turkmen **public administration**, further improving **public finance management**, supporting the development of the **private sector** and of sustainable **energy and agricultural policies**. New projects will focus on consolidating the general and professional **education** systems.

#### FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

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## **Supporting efforts in implementing human rights and fundamental freedoms**

Human rights are an important aspect of our bilateral relations with Turkmenistan. The EU has already held seven annual meetings of the **Human Rights Dialogue** with Turkmen authorities since 2008, allowing for constructive discussions on sensitive issues related to human rights and democratisation. Turkmenistan organised a visit to the Dashoguz women's prison for EU/UN/US diplomats on 28 September 2015 and the EU welcomed the participation of Deputy Foreign Minister Hajiyeu at the Warsaw OSCE Human Dimension meeting in September 2015.

The President of Turkmenistan has also announced a Constitutional reform to be finalised in 2016 that will strengthen the protection of fundamental rights and create an Ombudsman institution. Moreover, the first **National Action Plan on Human Rights** has been prepared by Turkmen authorities, and is about to be adopted by the end of 2015. The EU supported the development of the Institute of Human Rights of Turkmenistan and of a draft Action Plan on Human Rights, and organised training and exchanges in Ashgabat on the Ombudsman institution and governance issues through the **EU Rule of Law Platform for Central Asia**.

## **Energy cooperation**

The EU has also been engaging with Turkmenistan (along with Azerbaijan) on negotiations for developing the **Trans-Caspian Pipeline** and linking Turkmen gas to the Southern corridor. The **Southern Gas Corridor** should transport gas volumes ranging from at least 45 to 90 bcm/a (which constitutes 10-15% of EU total consumption) to have a significant impact on gas supply diversification in the EU as a whole. On 1st May 2015, the Commission Vice-President Šefčovič met President Berdimukhamedov in Ashgabat and, in a further meeting with Energy Ministers of Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey, agreed to extend the TCP Working Group to other countries of the Southern Corridor. The first meeting of this **Ashgabat Declaration Enlarged Working Group** (EU plus Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia) took place on 14 July 2015 in Brussels.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Energy, signed between the EU and Uzbekistan in 2008, there is an information exchange on energy policies, the diversification of transit routes and the **promotion of renewables** and energy efficiency.

## **Development cooperation and EU financial assistance**

Funding for development in the country is provided by the EU's Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). In this context, bilateral cooperation projects focus on economic reforms and privatisation, education and capacity building, good governance and the rule of law, and sustainable energy. EU assistance for 2011-2013 was approximately EUR 39 million, the main focus being on education and legal reforms, the promotion of human rights, and economic

and social sector reforms for sustainable development. **2014-2020 EU bilateral assistance** will focus on education and vocational training (EUR 37 million for the period 2014-17). The EU and Turkmenistan also cooperate in the framework of the **regional approach** which includes all five Central Asian republics: the EU Strategy for Central Asia. Regional cooperation projects focus on **education, rule of law, water and environment, border management and the fight against drug-trafficking**.

### **Turkmenistan's contribution to regional stability**

In 2015, Turkmenistan celebrated the 20th anniversary of its permanent neutrality as declared by the UN General Assembly Resolution of 12 December 1995. This status contributed to raise the role of Turkmenistan in promoting regional stability and in tackling common threats such as **terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, and transnational organised crime**. The existence of ethnic Turkmens (between 200,000 and 1 million) living in the Northern provinces of Afghanistan is an important factor of relations with Afghanistan. Turkmenistan has also been active in facilitating the smooth management of shared water resources in the region, notably in the framework of IFAS (International Fund for Aral Sea). The presence of the UN Centre for Preventive Diplomacy (UNRCCA) in Ashgabat is a result of this policy of **promoting regional dialogue and conflict prevention**. This approach is supported by the EU through the High-Level Security Dialogue, the Central Asia Border Security Initiative and several related projects (such as BOMCA, CADAP) implemented at regional level.