



Agenda

EU-Central Asia Economic Forum

5 November, 2021

“Ala-Archa” State Residence of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic

Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

■ CONTEXT

The EU has been actively supporting **Central Asia's transition towards a sustainable, climate-neutral growth model** and is working to help Central Asia's governments diversify their economies, boost trade, modernise regulatory frameworks for businesses with particular focus on SMEs, and reinforce the rule of law. Given the common history and challenges faced by the region's economies as well as their interconnectedness, closely **co-ordinated regional responses will bring additional value** when pursuing these objectives. The European Union-Central Asia Economic Forum ('the Forum') provides a platform for intra- and inter-regional dialogue on shared solutions, that will help translate the goals of resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation, set out in the EU Strategy on Central Asia, into action.

■ OBJECTIVES

The Forum aims at discussing and **developing a co-ordinated economic response in support of green and resilient recovery from the devastating socio-economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, building on the value-added of increased regional integration**. Concrete solutions and new approaches will be examined/reviewed to help Central Asian partners build back better. The Forum will allow to strengthen sustainable connectivity and promote regulatory approximation in the economic area between the EU and Central Asia countries, which is so vital for better business environment and safe investment climate. It will also provide an opportunity to display all the efforts underway in the region to create a more integrated and interconnected regional market. The discussion will be based on the outcomes of last year's Online Economic Forum. An EU supported research document prepared by the OECD on the main challenges and solutions for private sector development in post-COVID-19 Central Asia as well as discussions organised by the EU Member States in view to the Forum will feed into the Forum's exchanges and deliberations.

■ WHO WILL BE THERE?

The event will draw high-level policy-makers and experts from:

- **Central Asian governments;**
- **the European Union (EU);**
- **partners implementing EU-funded projects;**
- **business associations** from Central Asian and European countries;
- **EU Member States' embassies** to Kyrgyzstan; and
- **development partners.**

■ DELIVERABLES

The Forum will focus on challenges and opportunities in **three priority areas – green recovery, digitalisation, better business environment** – based on the EU initiatives, including the European Green Deal, Digital Agenda, EU regional and bilateral programmes in line with the new programming cycle for 2021-2027 as well as initiatives and technological solutions offered by the EU private sector. The discussion will build on national strategies developed by Central Asian governments highlighting a number of crucial areas for future reforms.

■ EVENT CONTACTS

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EU-Central Asia Economic Forum

Friday, 5 November

13:30 Big conference Hall	Opening Session
15:20-15:30 Front steps of "Ala-Archa"	High-level photo
15:30-16:40 Press Centre	Thematic session: Transitioning to a green, sustainable, climate and ecological friendly-neutral economy
16:40-17:50 Press Centre	Thematic session: Digitalisation
17:50- 18:00	Coffee break
18:00-19:10 Press Centre	Thematic session: Creating a sound business environment
19:10-19:30 Press Centre	Concluding remarks

Moderator: H.E. Mr. Arzybek Kojoshev, First Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic

Opening: H.E. Ambassador Terhi Hakala, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, European External Action Service

Welcoming remarks:

H.E. Mr. Sadyr Japarov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic

H.E. Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission (video)

Keynote speech: H.E. Mr. Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission

Speakers:

- H.E. Mr. Askar Mamin, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan
- H.E. Mr. Akylbek Japarov, Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic
- H.E. Mr. Abdulla Aripov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- H.E. Mr. Usmonali Usmonzoda, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan
- H.E. Mr. Chary Gylyjov, Deputy Prime Minister of Turkmenistan
- H.E. Dr. Stanislav Raščan, State Secretary/Acting Minister of Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia, Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU
- H.E. Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary
- H.E. Mr. Michael Linhart, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria
- Ms. Odile Renaud-Basso, President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- Mr. Luca Lazzaroli, Director General, Deputy Head of Operations, European Investment Bank
- H.E. Mr. Kyriákos Mitsotákis, Prime Minister of Greece (video)

Thematic Session I: Transitioning to a green, sustainable, climate and ecological friendly-neutral economy

Low-carbon energy generation, more energy-efficient agricultural and industrial production with the implementation of environmental protection measures, and better water and waste management can support green and inclusive economic recovery and adaptation to climate change. After decades of insufficiently addressed industrial and agricultural pollution, there is a need to ensure that public and private investment helps Central Asia green some of its most valuable sectors. Over 80% of the European Investment Bank's engagements are now combined with climate change objectives, which is indicative of the European Union's determination to mainstream climate objectives into its development priorities for Central Asia.

Moderator: Mr. Shameer Khanal, Head of the Kyrgyz-German-Swiss GIZ Programme “Green Economy and Sustainable Private Sector Development”

Introductory words by Mr. Grégory Lecomte, Head of Unit, OECD Eurasia Division

Speakers:

- **Mr. Sadykov Kanatbek**, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Technical Supervision, Kyrgyz Republic
- **H.E. Mr. Ville Skinnari**, Minister for Development and Foreign Trade, Finland **(on-line)**
- **Mr. Ilhom Norkulov**, First Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, Uzbekistan
- **H.E. Mr. Erzhan Kazykhan**, Special Representative of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan for International Cooperation
- **Ms. Zsuzsanna Hargitai**, Managing Director, Central Asia, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- **Ms. Atsuko Hirose**, Deputy Secretary-General of the Energy Charter

Q&A / Open discussion

Thematic Session II: Digitalisation

16:40 / Hybrid

A coherent approach to digitalisation can enhance regional integration, help business recovery, and support the greening of regional economies. One silver lining of 2020 was that it demonstrated the value of digitalisation to governments and businesses. To achieve successful digitalisation, the region needs more investment into digital infrastructure, interoperable and harmonised IT systems, and digital upskilling programmes.

Moderator: Ms. Sarah Rinaldi, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for International Co-operation and Development, European Commission

Introductory words by Ms. Talisa zur Hausen, Policy Analyst, OECD Eurasia Division

Speakers:

- **Mr. Dastan Dogoev**, Minister of Digital Development, Kyrgyz Republic
- **Ms. Zaritsa Dinkova**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bulgaria **(on-line)**
- **Mr. Hannes Astok**, Member of the Board and Managing Director of E-Governance Academy, Estonia
- **Mr. Aidyn Abjanbekov**, CEO Central Asia and Mongolia at Ericsson
- **Mr. Naveed Hassan Naqvi**, Country Manager in Bishkek, World Bank

- **H.E. Mr. Per-Arne Hjelmborn**, Director-General for Trade of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden (video)

Q&A / Open discussion

Coffee break

17:50 / Hybrid

Thematic Session III: Creating a sound business

18:00 / Hybrid

Stalled structural economic reforms have undermined the region's business climate. Despite recent efforts by governments, the regulatory framework needs to be further simplified, digitalised, and enforced to become attractive to business and investment, including foreign investment. Economic empowerment of women and youth, development of decent work and jobs are also critical, for reasons of both equity and efficiency. In addition, effective structural and regional co-operation will be essential to improving the business environment and facilitating faster income/productivity convergence. In some cases, the implementation of joint projects could promote this end.

Moderator: Mr. Aigars Rostovskis, Eurochambers

Introductory words by Ms. Amélie Schurich-Rey, Policy Analyst/ Economist, OECD Eurasia Division

Speakers:

- **H.E. Mr. Konstantinos Fragkogiannis**, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Greece
- **Mr. Adkham Ikramov**, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Uzbekistan
- **H.E. Mr. Daniyar Amangeldiev**, Minister of Economy and Commerce, Kyrgyz Republic
- **H.E. Mr. Danut Neculăescu**, State Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania (on-line)
- **Mr. Stefan Füle**, Consultant to the President of Uzbekistan, Member of the International Advisory Council
- **Mr. Kunio Mikuriya**, Secretary General of the World Customs Organisation
- **Mr. Timo Hammaren**, Deputy Head of Unit, Trade relations with Southern neighbours, Middle East, Turkey, Russia and Central Asia, Directorate-General for Trade, European Commission
- **Mr. Robin Ord-Smith**, Business Ombudsman, Kyrgyz Republic
- **Mr. Yernur Rysmagambetov**, Chairman of the Management Board of "Astana International Financial Centre" Authority, Kazakhstan

Q&A / Open discussion

19:10 Concluding remarks

- **H.E. Mr. Aziz Aaliev**, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Kyrgyz Republic
- **Mr. Luc Devigne**, Deputy Managing Director for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional cooperation and OSCE, European External Action Service