







EU CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY FOR CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN

The four pillars of connectivity

 Digital	 Energy	 Transport	 People-to-people
Increased access to digital services with high protection of consumer and personal data as well as advanced regulatory frameworks	More interconnected regional energy platforms, greener and modern energy systems	Diversified and better-linked trade and travel routes, shorter transit times and simplified customs procedures	Advanced cooperation in education, research, innovation, culture and tourism

Central Asia and Afghanistan: prospects for better interconnection

Given its geographical location, Central Asia plays a **strategic role** in global efforts to promote Euro-Asian connectivity.

Regional dialogue and international support have created a **strong positive momentum and a renewed interest** in enhancing connectivity within the region and beyond.

Connectivity has a potential to foster cooperation across borders and bring socio-economic benefits that contribute to **peace and regional security**.

Enhanced and sustainable connectivity will play a key role in the **post-Covid recovery**, and help to **build back better and greener**.

The European approach to connectivity

Promoting **sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity**, in order to enhance the prosperity, safety and resilience of people.

Engaging with partners on a non-exclusive basis, to develop **common objectives** and strengthen **mutual interests**.

Offering EU **expertise, investment and state-of-the-art norms and standards** to promote better and more sustainable connectivity, intra-regional trade and market integration.

EU tools and instruments

2021 Council Conclusions on Connectivity

2020 Council Conclusions on Afghanistan

2019 EU Strategy on Central Asia

2018 EU Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia

For the period 2014-2020, the EU has allocated **over €2.5 billion to cooperation with Afghanistan and Central Asia**.

EU regional programming for 2021-2027 will support connectivity within the region, including Afghanistan

whenever possible, with **digitalisation and energy** as priorities.

The EU has a **strong track-record of connectivity-related programmes**, combining financing from EU institutions, Member States and multilateral development banks, as well as creating opportunities for private sector participation.

Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA)

European Fund for Sustainable Development + (EFSD+)



The EU is Central Asia's main **trading partner**.



€28,6 billion **trade in goods** with Central Asia in 2019 & €324,6 million with Afghanistan.



A significant **market potential** of 114 million people.



Since 2014, **more than 6,100 Central Asian and Afghan students and staff** benefitted from Erasmus+ funding for mobility.

Examples of EU support to connectivity projects

Cross-border cooperation

The **Border Management Programme in Central Asia** (BOMCA), extended to Afghanistan (€21.7 million) facilitates the movement of people and goods, promotes the economic development and human rights of border communities, harmonises customs procedures and helps tackle illegal trafficking and organised crime.

Energy connections

The European Investment Bank (EIB) enables the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to sell their electricity surplus to Afghanistan and Pakistan through the **"CASA 1000" project** (€150 million).

The programme **Sustainable Energy Connectivity for Central Asia** (SECCA, €8 million) aims to stimulate sustainable practices in the energy sectors and to boost investments.

The **"Hydro4U" project** (€9,9 million) promotes innovative and sustainable hydropower solutions to develop unexplored small-scale hydropower potential in Central Asia.

Regional trade facilitation

The **Ready4Trade** and **Advancing Afghan Trade programmes** (€31,6 million) seek to strengthen trade capacities and to remove obstacles to regional trade.

Human & cultural connectivity

Erasmus+, the project on **Empowering Afghan Women** (€6 million) and the **Silk Road Heritage Corridors** (€4.4 million) help strengthen education and cultural connections across the region and support economic empowerment for social cohesion, job creation and sustainable tourism.

Environmental initiatives

The **Water, Environment, Climate Change Cooperation Programme** (WECOOP, €3 million) facilitates the development of green infrastructure projects as part of a more structured policy dialogue.

The upcoming **Technical Assistance to the Aral Sea project** (€15 million) will aim to develop an integrated water resources management plan for the Amu Darya River Basin.