Central Asia has a centuries-old tradition of bringing Europe and Asia together. It lies at the crossroads between the two continents and the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have renewed this role for the region since attaining independence.

The European Union's engagement with the region has significantly expanded since the early 1990s. Both regions share a common goal of achieving stability and prosperity through peaceful means.

**New challenges, new opportunities, new approaches**

The EU Strategy for Central Asia, which was first adopted in 2007, embodies the long-term commitment of the European Union to regional and bilateral cooperation with its Central Asian partners. The main goal of the EU Strategy is to increase the resilience of the region as a whole as well as the resilience of individual states. The Strategy foresees a reinforced regular political dialogue at ministerial level and enhanced cooperation in key initiatives: rule of law, education, environment and water. Specific attention is devoted to the region’s security and stability, notably to common threats related to border management and drugs trafficking.

Ten years after the adoption of the first Central Asia Strategy the European Union and its Member States reaffirmed (in June 2017) its commitment to develop a strong and durable relationship, based on joint ownership and aimed at fostering peaceful, prosperous, sustainable and stable socio-economic development of the Central Asian region in line with the EU Global Strategy and the joint commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

A renewed EU Strategy towards the Central Asian region will be adopted in 2019 and synchronised with the adoption of the next 2020-2027 multi-annual development assistance budget for the region. The Strategy will be more flexible on how to implement its goals whilst being more focused and result-oriented.
The European Union as a partner for sustainable development

The European Union's development priorities in Central Asia, in line with our joint commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, aim at meeting the increasing needs from growing and young populations and at providing economic opportunities in a region lacking economic diversification.

Assistance provided by the European Commission combined with assistance provided by EU Member States individually makes the European Union the number one donor in the region. The global envelope for EU assistance to Central Asia (through the Development and Cooperation Instrument) increased to €1 billion for the period 2014-2020, which is up from €750 million in the prior financing period. In order to better fit development programmes to each country's specificities, such as their existing level of development and an assessment of needs, the European Union employs a differentiated approach to its assistance, with a focus on the poorest and the most fragile countries.

Regional programmes aim at supporting a broad-based process of dialogue and collaboration between the five Central Asian countries. Regional cooperation is important for energy, the environment, water and socio-economic development. The rational use of natural resources is a key factor for the development and political stability of the region. Addressing the needs of a rapidly growing young population through the provision of jobs and better education and research opportunities is also key.

Regional dialogue and actions also support the legal capacity of the Central Asian countries and contribute to the reform of their legal and judiciary systems. Regional cooperation aims at strengthening cross-border co-operation through integrated border management, in order to facilitate cross border training and to improve people's mobility, while also intensifying the fight against drug trafficking. The EU Action Plan on Drugs is the key policy reference document on drugs-related issues. New impetus has been given to our very important programmes on border management (BOMCA) and the fight against drugs (CADAP).

Other EU external instruments complement EU support to the region, when appropriate. Within the Development Cooperation Instrument, the thematic programmes “Global public goods and challenges”, “Civil Society and Local Authorities”, the “European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights”, the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation and Non-State Actors and Local Authorities are particularly important. Certain measures, particularly in the area of conflict prevention and crisis management, may also be supported under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, which aims at responding to situations of crisis or political instability, and can include preventive long-term actions to global and trans-regional threats.

See also

Factsheet on EU-Central Asia relations
Factsheet on EU-Kazakhstan relations
Factsheet on EU-Tajikistan relations
Factsheet on EU-Uzbekistan relations
Factsheet on EU-Kyrgyz Republic relations
Factsheet on EU-Turkmenistan relations
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