



# EU – KYRGYZ REPUBLIC RELATIONS

The European Union and the Kyrgyz Republic have been partners since the country's independence in 1991. **The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)**, in force since 1999, outlines three main pillars of cooperation: political dialogue, economic relations and cooperation in a variety of sectors, such as socio-economic, social, finance, science, technology and culture.

In July 2019, the EU and the Kyrgyz Republic concluded negotiations of a **new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA)**, which will provide a new legal basis for stronger bilateral cooperation in a number of new areas. Following the necessary decision-making procedures, the new agreement is expected to be signed in late 2022. At the regional level, the EU Strategy on Central Asia (2019) provides the overall framework for regional engagement.

## EU-KYRGYZ POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The PCA provides a framework for reinforced political dialogue, comprehensive sectoral cooperation, and the promotion of mutual trade and investment. A dedicated, annual human rights dialogue addresses the promotion and protection of human rights in the Kyrgyz Republic and the EU. The dialogue provides the context to discuss specific concerns raised by civil society.

In general, **economic activity** between the EU and the Kyrgyz Republic decreased in 2020, due to Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. Total trade with the EU amounted to approximately €310 million in 2020, a sharp decrease compared to €1.152 billion in 2019.

Since 2016, the Kyrgyz Republic benefits from the EU's Generalized Scheme of Preferences plus **(GSP+)**, the special incentive arrangement for **Sustainable Development and Good Governance**, which offers Kyrgyzstan zero customs duties on over €6,200 tariff lines. In exchange, Kyrgyzstan has committed to the effective implementation of 27 core international conventions on human and labour rights, environmental protection and good governance. The Kyrgyz Republic has been a member of the WTO since 1998.

## THE EU AND THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC: PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

The European Union is **one of the main contributors to sustainable development and reforms** in the Kyrgyz Republic. For the timeframe 2014-2020, the EU has allocated **€174 million** development assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic.

This support is primarily directed at three focal sectors and support measures: integrated rural development (€61.8 million), education (€71.8 million) and the rule of law (€37.8 million).

The **new Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027** is expected to respond to the Kyrgyz National Development Strategy 2040 (NDS), adopted in November 2018, which sets out a long-term roadmap for the country to emerge as a strong, self-sufficient and prosperous state by 2040.

In addition to the bilateral programmes, in the framework of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, the Kyrgyz Republic benefits from EU regional programmes in the fields of governance, energy,

environment, climate change, disaster risk management, trade, support to the private sector (mainly for SMEs), border management and the fight against drug trafficking.

The EU also contributes to **chemical biological radiological and nuclear risks mitigation** and has initiated the creation of an EBRD-managed fund that is pooling donor contributions to assist the remediation of some of the most dangerous uranium legacy sites in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. With EUR 36,95 million invested, the EU is by far the main contributor to the fund.

### EU SUPPORT TO DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Actions supporting the **consolidation of democracy** and helping to **preserve and build peace** form a core part of the EU's external action. In the aftermath of the ethnic clashes of 2010, the EU quickly mobilised funds for support of institutional reform and democracy consolidation, and has remained engaged in this area ever since.

**A substantial rule of law programme** (€13.5 million for 2016-2022, €13 million for 2022-2025) helps to enhance the quality of legislation and increase the efficiency, independence, professionalism and capacities of the judiciary.

In addition, the EU provided support to people affected by the violence and financed a large number of projects aiming at increasing human security, building trust and preventing future conflicts. Around €20 million has been committed for stabilisation and democratisation support.

### RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has prepared a dedicated support package for Kyrgyzstan totalling more than €36 million. It is a comprehensive response directed towards supporting **macro-financial stability, social protection and food security, health, crisis management, and support to the private sector.**

The first batch of vaccines provided through the COVAX facility, 226.500 doses of Astra Zeneca, out of 2.6 million doses allocated, reached the country in July 2021. A second batch of 44.400 doses arrived in August. Apart from budget support, the EU reallocated €5.2 million within existing projects to cover urgent needs such as the distribution of personal protective equipment or food packages.

**In addition to bilateral support,** Kyrgyzstan benefits from the EU's €3 million Central Asia COVID-19 Crisis Response solidarity package, which addresses challenges to the health system across the Central Asian countries.

### EU HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS AND SUPPORT TO CRISIS RESPONSE

Central Asia as a region, and Kyrgyzstan in particular, is prone to natural hazards, including earthquakes, floods and landslides. Kyrgyzstan is at risk from the impact of climate change, which has the potential to intensify the vulnerabilities and exposure to hazards in the coming years.

The EU supports national institutions' and local communities' **capacity to prepare for and respond to disaster.**

