



# EU – TAJIKISTAN RELATIONS

The European Union's engagement with Tajikistan has developed significantly the country's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The current basis for our relations is the **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)**, in force since its ratification in 2010. Cooperation under the PCA is comprehensive and includes support for the economic transition of Tajikistan, and the promotion of inclusive, sustainable human and economic development. The EU is also preparing to engage in Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) negotiations with Tajikistan, which are likely to start in 2022.

At the regional level, the **EU Strategy on Central Asia** (2019) provides the overall framework for regional engagement.

The EU is also enhancing the capacity of civil society in the country, in partnership with local and international Non-Governmental Organisations. The Strategy is an excellent tool to accompany and support EU's founding principles and values, i.e. good governance, human rights, and a rules-based regional cooperation.

## DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

In the area of development cooperation, the Country Strategy and the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for 2014-2020 had an allocated bilateral financial envelope of **€231million**, equivalent to an average annual budget of €33 million per year and representing an 80% increase compared to previous financial framework.

The objectives of the specific sector support focused on:

- ◇ education, in particular improving quality and relevance of secondary education;
- ◇ vocational education and training (VET);
- ◇ health;
- ◇ rural development.
- ◇ Health Development Program (€52.2 million);

The new Multiannual Indicative Programme for the period 2021-2027 is expected to run in parallel with the Tajik National Development Strategy 2016-2030, which has the over-arching goal of improving living standards through sustainable economic development.

## REGIONAL AND THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

In addition to the bilateral programmes, in the framework of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, Tajikistan benefits from EU regional programmes in the areas of governance, energy, environment, climate change, disaster risk management, trade, support to the private sector (mainly SMEs), border management, and the fight against drug trafficking.

The EU also contributes to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear risks mitigation. The EU has in particular initiated the creation of an EBRD-managed fund that is pooling donor funds to assist remediation of some of the most dangerous uranium legacy sites in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. With €36.95 million invested, the EU is also by far the main contributor to the fund.

Tajikistan also benefits from thematic EU support through EIDHR, CSO NSA, migration and asylum, and funding channelled through global initiatives like the **Global partnership for education, Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria** and **GAVI Alliance** where the EU and its member states are the major donors.

Specific projects are implemented under the Instrument contributing to **Stability and Peace (IcSP)** and the **Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation**.

### TRADE RELATIONS

Trade and economic relations between the EU and Tajikistan are governed by Tajikistan's World Trade Organisation membership and by the bilateral Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The agreement provides for a non-preferential agreement under which the parties grant each other '**most-favoured nation**' treatment. The agreement also envisages progressive regulatory approximation of national legislation and practices to the most important EU trade-related standards. This should lead to better practical access to the EU markets for goods originating in Tajikistan.

Tajikistan is also a beneficiary of the **EU's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)** a bilateral trade arrangement through which the EU offers preferential access to its market for developing countries and territories, in the form of reduced tariffs for their goods when entering the EU market. Preferential imports from Tajikistan are heavily concentrated in two sectors, industrial products such as base metals, and textiles.

Tajikistan is the **smallest trade partner of the EU in Central Asia**. In 2020, the EU exported €186 Million to Tajikistan (+11.3 %) and imported €87 Million (+96 %), mainly aluminium and textiles. Since joining the WTO in 2013, Tajikistan has benefited from a sharp increase in its exports,

which have doubled from 527 million dollars in 2014 to 1.06 billion dollars in 2019 (source: IMF).

Tajikistan has recently become committed to join the **special incentive arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance (so-called GSP+)**. GSP+ can act as a **positive political and economic signal** to the international community and business that the country is binding itself to international law and continuous, transparent monitoring of the implementation of 27 international core conventions pertaining to human rights, labour rights, good governance, and the environment.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

The EU and Tajikistan hold an annual human rights dialogue to discuss the promotion and protection of human rights and democratisation. This dialogue also boosts cooperation on human rights in multilateral fora such as the OSCE and the United Nations. An annual "**Civil Society Seminar**" brings together Non-Governmental Organisations, academics and practitioners from the EU and Tajikistan to discuss topical questions, such as the empowerment of women and girls and exchange best practices.

### HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION

Given Central Asia's proneness to natural hazards, including earthquakes, floods and landslides, as well as its vulnerability the effects of climate change, **EU humanitarian action in the region** is largely focussed on improving the capacity of national institutions and local communities to prepare for and respond to disaster.

In response to the floods, that wreaked havoc across large parts of Tajikistan in May 2020 and 2021, the EU provided support in humanitarian aid to assist the most vulnerable communities.

The EU also offered such support in response to conflict in the region, such as the border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan related to water distribution.

### **RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

The EU allocated **€48 million** to Tajikistan as part of its **Team Europe Package** adopted in April 2020. Support included both an immediate emergency response as well as a top-up of funding in critical areas where the EU is already providing substantial support as part of its ongoing medium to long-term programme.

This support included, for example, strengthening the health and education sectors, reinforcing the resilience of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) in the agricultural sector, improving employability of youth, and improving the use of water with an additional focus on sanitation systems.

In March 2021, the first batch of 192 000 doses of the Astra/Zeneca COVID-19 vaccine was delivered to Tajikistan. In addition, 60.000 Astra Zeneca vaccine doses through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism will be delivered through the COVAX facility.

### **AFGHANISTAN**

Tajikistan is currently doing contingency planning for the possibility of a mass arrival of Afghan refugees. In parallel, the EU is mobilising resources within the relevant regional and bilateral programmes to increase the capacity of Tajik border guards and other institutions to respond to a possible increased flow of migrants in compliance with international standards. Existing programmes include e.g. **BOMCA**, **LEICA** and programmes funded through the Instrument contributing to **Stability and Peace** (IcSP).