



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. The EU is also preparing to engage in Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) negotiations with Tajikistan.

At the regional level, the Tajik Republic is a partner within the European Union's new **Strategy on Central Asia**, which was adopted in June, 2019 and outlines the overall cooperation objectives and priority fields for the EU's engagement in the region.

The EU is also enhancing the capacity of civil society in the country, in partnership with local and international Non-Governmental Organisations. The **new EU Strategy on Central Asia**, provides the overall regional framework for this engagement. It will be an excellent tool to accompany and support EU principles and values: good governance, human rights, rules-based regional cooperation.

TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL COOPERATION THROUGH BILATERAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

EU bilateral development assistance has increased from around €20 million annually in the early 2000s to around €33 million today. For 2014-2020, the funds have been focused on **improving education, health and rural development**:

- ◇ **Education** (€70 million): improving the quality and relevance of secondary education and vocational education and training, leading to

a more effective school-to-work transition for graduates;

- ◇ **Health** (€57.2 million): strengthening governance and leadership in the health system; improving the availability, affordability and quality of health services, especially for vulnerable populations and at primary health care level;
- ◇ **Rural Development** (€100 million): ensuring the development of rural communities through inclusive wealth creation while encouraging a sustainable use and management of natural resources and ecosystems and improving resilience to extreme climatic conditions.

The EU's financial assistance for 2021-2027 will be developed by the European Union in consultation with Tajikistan to address needs and provide necessary support to the country.

REGIONAL AND THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

The EU's main interest in Central Asia is to support long-term stability and to promote gradual economic and political reforms to ensure the region's prosperity, with the aim to increasingly include Afghanistan. The EU also supports regional level in the fields of **energy, environment, socio-economic development, education, border management** (most notably with Afghanistan), the **fight against drugs and crime**.

Tajikistan also benefits from thematic support through the **European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights** for migration and asylum, funding channelled through global initiatives like **Global Partnership for Education**, and the Instrument for **Nuclear Safety Cooperation**.



The **Erasmus+** programme for Central Asia totals €115 million and aims to support actions in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020. Tajikistan will continue to benefit, under the Instrument for Stability and Peace, from support to address narcotics and the fight against organised crime.

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**. Preferential imports from Tajikistan are heavily concentrated in the **textiles sector** but also include **industrial products**. In 2019, EU imports from Tajikistan amounted to €44 million. EU exports to Tajikistan amounted to €169 million. The EU exports mainly machinery, motor vehicles and pharmaceuticals to Tajikistan.

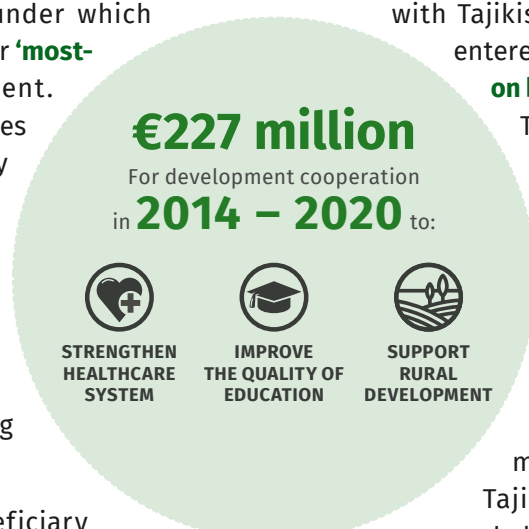
Tajikistan has recently committed to join the EU's **special incentive arrangement for**

sustainable development and good governance, the Generalised Scheme of Preferences+ (GSP+). GSP+ is a trade and development instrument supporting EU foreign policy objectives, beyond creating economic opportunities. It serves as a tool to foster human and labour rights, as well as environment and good governance objectives. By switching from standard GSP to GSP+, Tajikistan could achieve five times higher tariff savings (€1.8 million instead of €360,000).

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are a central aspect of the EU's external action, including in its bilateral relations with Tajikistan. The EU and Tajikistan entered into an **enhanced dialogue on human rights** in October 2008.

This dialogue offers a platform for discussion on questions of mutual interest, and serves to enhance cooperation on human rights in multilateral fora such as the OSCE and the United Nations. Officials from the European Union meet their counterparts from Tajikistan's government on a yearly basis to address concerns in the field of human rights (latest Human Rights Dialogue in November 2020), while a yearly **"Civil Society Seminar"** brings together Non-Governmental Organisations, academics and practitioners from the EU and Tajikistan to discuss specific questions and exchange best practice. In this framework, open discussions regarding the treatment of and the approach towards civil society organisations and political opposition parties are conducted.





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.

Through its **Disaster preparedness programme**, the Commission is funding community-based initiatives to increase the resilience of local populations in Tajikistan and across Central Asia. Since 1994, the Commission has provided **over €222 million in humanitarian funding to Central Asia**.

The EU provides direct humanitarian aid to assist the Tajikistan population in times of need. Recently, in response to the floods that wreaked havoc across large parts of Tajikistan in mid-May 2020, the EU provided €80,000 in humanitarian aid funding through the International Committee of the Red Cross to assist the most vulnerable communities.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The EU stands by the Tajik people in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and has allocated **€51 million** as part of its **Team Europe Package**. The areas of support included both an immediate emergency response as well as a top-up of

funding in critical areas where the EU is already providing substantive support as part of its ongoing medium to long-term programme, to mitigate the socio-economic impacts. For instance, strengthening the health and education sectors, strengthening 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 July, as part of its Team Europe Global Response, the European Commission announced €112.2 million support to strengthen health, education and social services in Tajikistan and assist the country in its coronavirus response

The package consists of three interlinked programmes:

- ♦ Health Development Program (€52.2 million);
- ♦ Quality Education Support Program II (€50 million);
- ♦ Support to Civil Registry System Reform (€10 million).

The first two programmes contain elements (worth €46.2 million in total) that will be directly supporting the emergency response to the pandemic, as well as boost efforts to mitigate its negative socio-economic impacts.

The European Investment Bank has made a €20 million loan available for crisis response, to support Tajikistan's health sector modernisation and SMEs.

€112.2 million

Development cooperation support package consists of



HEALTH
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM



QUALITY
EDUCATION
SUPPORT
PROGRAM II



SUPPORT
SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC
REFORMS