



EU-TURKMENISTAN RELATIONS

Bilateral relations between the European Union and Turkmenistan are governed by an Interim Agreement on trade and trade-related matters, which entered into force in August 2010, pending ratification of a **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)** by the European Parliament. The **EU Strategy on Central Asia** of June 2019, together with the related Council conclusions of June 2019, provide the EU's overall regional framework for engagement.

STRENGTHENING TIES BETWEEN THE EU AND TURKMENISTAN

The European Union is looking to increase its dialogue and cooperation with Turkmenistan, and hopes to strengthen its institutional framework of cooperation with the ratification of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The entry into force of the PCA would allow for enhanced discussion and cooperation in all sectors, and would establish a formal **Cooperation Council**, held at Ministerial level. The **opening of a fully-fledged EU Delegation in Turkmenistan** in July 2019, and the number of business and official delegations visiting Turkmenistan, signal a mutual strategic interest to intensify relations.

SUPPORTING EFFORTS IN IMPLEMENTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Human rights are an essential aspect of our bilateral relations with Turkmenistan. The European Union and Turkmenistan hold an annual **Human Rights Dialogue**, allowing for discussions on sensitive issues related to human rights and democratisation. A Turkmen delegation also participated in the Warsaw **OSCE Human Dimension meetings** in 2015, 2016 and 2018 and in the Human Dimension Conference in 2022.

In May 2021, Turkmenistan presented its second **National Action Plan for Human Rights**, which attaches importance to the further development of the Ombudsperson's Office and the expansion of its cooperation with international organizations. The EU advocated the drafting of this Action Plan and the development of the National Institute of Human Rights and Democracy of Turkmenistan. The Turkmen authorities have also adopted several other National Action Plans dealing with political and social rights of its citizens on:



GENDER EQUALITY



COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS



CHILD RIGHTS

Since 2017 Turkmenistan has a **Commissioner for Human Rights** (Ombudsperson), whose mandate was renewed in 2022. Effective implementation of these action plans and functioning of new institutions remain a priority in the EU-Turkmenistan cooperation.

The European Union is strongly committed to the **prevention of enforced disappearances**, and has consistently advocated in favour of Turkmenistan's ratification of the **Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture**, and the **International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances**. The European Union will closely follow the Universal Periodic Review of Turkmenistan by the United Nations in 2023, and expects Turkmenistan to effectively implement all accepted recommendations.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND EU FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Within the EU Strategy for Central Asia, Turkmenistan benefits from the EU regional programmes in the fields of governance, disaster risk management, trade, support to the private sector (mainly small and medium enterprises), border management and fight against drug trafficking. Particularly relevant is the new regional Global Gateway flagship Team Europe Initiative on Water, Climate Change and Energy, through which the EU supports the Sustainable Energy Connectivity in Central Asia (SECCA) programme, regional energy integration, and renewable energy reforms.

Given its Upper Middle Income Country status, Turkmenistan will in **2021-2027** benefit from a **cooperation facility**, focusing on the following areas:



**GREEN ASPECTS
OF THE ECONOMY**



**IMPROVING THE BUSINESS CLIMATE WITH A FOCUS ON AGRICULTURE/
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT TO TRADE DEVELOPMENT.**
EMPHASIS WILL BE PLACED ON SUPPORT TO YOUTH- AND WOMEN-LED MICRO,
SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES.

ENERGY COOPERATION

The Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of energy, signed between the EU and Turkmenistan in 2008, provides a framework for an information exchange on energy policies, discussions on the diversification of transit routes and the promotion of renewables and energy efficiency. The EU will continue to discuss with Turkmenistan all energy-related issues including methane gas emissions and renewables whilst staying true to the **European Green Deal**. Following the successful joint conference on green energy in November 2022 in Ashgabat, preparations for the next meeting of the joint working group on energy have started.

TURKMENISTAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO REGIONAL STABILITY

Turkmenistan's status of permanent neutrality has contributed to its role in promoting regional stability and to tackling common threats such as:

terrorism

drug trafficking

violent extremism

transnational organised crime

The existence of ethnic Turkmens living in the Northern provinces of Afghanistan is an important factor in its relations with Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan has also been active in facilitating better management of shared water resources in the region, notably in the framework of the **International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea**, which it chaired from 2017 till 2019.

The **UN Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA)** has been present in Ashgabat since 2007 in order to promote regional dialogue and conflict prevention. The EU supports this approach through the **High-Level Political and Security Dialogue**, the **Central Asia Border Security Initiative** and several related projects (such as Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA), Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP), and LEICA (Law Enforcement in Central Asia) implemented at regional level.

