



IN DIALOGUE WITH HE. DR CRISTIAN TUDOR, AMBASSADOR, DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE STATE OF QATAR



Q

As the first European Union resident Ambassador to the State of Qatar, you have held a number of senior diplomatic posts in various policy areas. How has your experience contributed to the role you now play?

A

In my years of diplomatic service, I've had the privilege of getting to know the Middle East well, thanks to my studies and work. Since 2015, I've been working closely with Qatar. I started as Romania's Ambassador to Qatar, and then in 2019, I became the EU's non-resident Ambassador to Qatar while I was based in Kuwait. And now, since 2022, I have the honour of being the first EU Ambassador living in Qatar.

I've had the unique opportunity to present my credentials to His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar, three different times. This has allowed me to build a strong and lasting relationship with the leaders, businesses, and people of Qatar. I understand what makes this country tick and the best ways for us and them to work together, both politically and in business.

Sometimes we have different views, but because of the trust and friendships I've formed here, we can talk things through and find common ground. I care deeply about the bond between the EU and Qatar and use that to help both sides benefit and grow together.

Q

As global issues such as climate change, and technological leaps demand collaborative international action, what opportunities do you envisage for strengthened cooperation between the EU and Qatar?

A

The EU and Qatar have their perspectives on how energy can play a part in fighting climate change. Despite these differences, we're always looking for new ways to work together. A big part of this collaboration is finding the best technology to lower or capture CO2 emissions, which helps us take care of our environment.

It's key to mention that Qatar's major energy partners are European companies like TotalEnergies, ENI, and Shell. These companies are focused on facing these global challenges. With their help, and through our joint efforts in technology, science, and education, I'm positive that we're creating strong partnerships. These will not only help the EU and Qatar but also make a real difference for our planet.

Q

What role do sporting events such as the recent 2022 Football World Cup play in Qatar's economic diversification programme and how can they be leveraged to attract both direct visitors and indirect visitors to the country based on its raised international profile?

A

It has been a truly distinguished honour to serve as the first resident EU Ambassador to Qatar, a role I stepped into after three years as the EU Ambassador to Qatar while based in Kuwait. Arriving in Doha just two months before the FIFA 2022 World Cup afforded me a unique vantage point to appreciate the fervour and grand plans the Qatari leadership had for this world-class event.

My interactions with the upper strata of Qatar's leaders and key players in the business sector reinforced my view that the World Cup marked not a culmination but a springboard for a much broader and deeper transformation of the country's economic landscape. The strides toward realizing Vision 2030, particularly through the third National Development Strategy, are commendable. This strategic blueprint spotlights fostering the private sector's organic growth as a pivotal objective.

We're already seeing the fruits of Qatar's ambitious agenda, notably in the tourism sector's sustained expansion. The region is fiercely competitive, yet Qatar's seasoned expertise in orchestrating large-scale sporting events, coupled with the exemplary services of Qatar Airways, have become instrumental to its economic vitality.

During the World Cup, visitors from Europe and beyond were enthralled by the exceptional standards of service, robust security measures, and the overall ease of their stay. This event was more than just a tournament; it was a celebration of Qatari hospitality and a showcase of the country's rich cultural tapestry, which resonated widely with the international community. This success, I believe, is only the beginning, setting the stage for Qatar to emerge as an increasingly coveted destination on the global stage.

Q

What emerging trade and investment opportunities are enhancing the EU-Qatar bilateral relationship following the release of the EU's vision for a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf?

A

Some believe the EU hasn't given the Gulf region the attention it deserves. However, the EU's Joint Communication for a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf has changed that perception by outlining a clear and ambitious vision for our engagement with this vibrant area. This strategy recognizes the region's importance on multiple fronts, including geopolitics and economy.

A key part of our strategy aligns with the Gulf states' own plans to diversify their economies. Take Qatar, for instance, where the government is investing in culture, tourism, education, science, and supporting local businesses. These are sectors where EU states excel and can offer valuable expertise and investment.

As Qatar rolls out its third National Development Strategy, I'm confident that European companies will become even more involved, strengthening EU-Qatar economic ties.

Q

The establishment of the EU Delegation in Doha in 2022 marked a significant moment for EU-Qatar relations. In your view, how will the Delegation continue to contribute to shaping policies that enhance the business environment in Qatar, and what impact do you foresee on the broader EU business community?

A

The opening of the EU Delegation in Doha in 2022 has deeply enriched our engagement with Qatar's vibrant business community. My presence at numerous local events has underscored the value of having EU representation directly involved in policy and partnership discussions.

While we're thankful for the assistance from our colleagues in Riyadh who oversee EU-Qatar trade relations, the consensus among EU member state embassies in Doha is clear: we need to step up our economic game. Establishing a dedicated trade office in Doha is essential. It will not only benefit the EU and its member states but also empower European businesses eager to engage with Qatar's diversifying and expanding market.

Furthermore, Qatar's current role as the GCC chair opens the door for Doha to host significant EU-GCC economic and trade events, boosting the EU's profile in the country and showcasing the reciprocal advantages of our cooperation.

Q

How has the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification project supported the EU Delegation in Qatar specifically in fostering climate-friendly trade and investment initiatives, considering the project's focus on promoting sustainable economic practices?

A

Despite being the smallest team in the EU's External Action Service network, our delegation has achieved significant milestones with essential support from the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification. Our inaugural year saw a highly successful collaboration with M7 on monetising cultural and creative products—a key interest for Qatar's government and business sectors. The EU-GCC project's backing was vital.

Now, we are eagerly anticipating an upcoming event focused on food security and the sustainability of the food chain. This is not just a global concern but a shared priority for both the EU and Qatar.

In addition, the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification project is planning to organise its yearly flagship event, the 8th EU-GCC Business Forum in Qatar scheduled for November this year. I am enthusiastic about the promising opportunities that will arise from these events and deeply grateful for the EU-GCC Dialogue project's unwavering commitment and efforts in bringing it to fruition.