



Kazakhstan-EU Weekly Briefing

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Highlights

Middle Corridor

New Almaty bypass rail project: International financiers (IFC, AIIB, MIGA, Standard Chartered) agreed on 13 Jan to fund a \$300 million, 130 km electrified Almaty Railway Bypass. The project will alleviate congestion around Almaty, cut freight transit times by up to 24 hours, and increase capacity along the Trans-Caspian (Middle) Corridor from China through Kazakhstan to Europe. Implications: Accelerated construction of the bypass will improve the reliability and efficiency of the Middle Corridor, making Kazakhstan's route a more competitive alternative to northern rail routes. Faster transit and higher throughput can attract greater Eurasian cargo flows and support Kazakhstan's role as a logistics hub.

Expansion of rail terminal capacity: Germany's Rhenus Group announced (19 Jan) that it has acquired and opened a new rail-connected intermodal terminal at Bayserke (Almaty region), operating as "QAZContargo Almaty". This terminal adds container-depot and block-train handling services, directly linking local and international rail networks to serve China–Europe and Central Asia trade. Implications: The terminal significantly boosts southern Kazakhstan's container-handling capacity, reinforcing the country's gateway status on east–west routes. Such investments by global logistics firms indicate rising demand for flexible, multimodal transport via Kazakhstan and are likely to further integrate Kazakh rail infrastructure into Eurasian supply chains.

Critical Raw Materials

EU critical minerals strategy: The EU's international raw-materials drive continues to involve Kazakhstan. Brussels announced 13 new overseas critical minerals projects to reduce dependence on China, including projects in Kazakhstan among other countries. This underscores Kazakhstan's role as a source of metals needed for batteries, renewables and defense.



Highlights

Digitalisation

Kazakhstan's AI Law takes effect: Kazakhstan has rolled out new AI regulations and cooperation. On Jan. 18 the government's new AI law took effect. It categorises AI systems by risk level, placing those used in critical sectors (e.g. government, energy, finance) under strict cybersecurity rules. The law bans harmful uses of AI (such as political manipulation, covert emotion-recognition, or discrimination) and requires that AI-generated content be clearly labelled. Copyright is granted only when a human contributes creatively to the work. These measures aim to foster a trusted digital ecosystem as Kazakhstan races to become a "digital power." The regulations should also smooth interoperability with EU data standards and boost confidence for Western tech partners.

EU-related digital cooperation is expanding: Kazakhstan's ambassador to Slovenia announced that Ljubljana will host a Kazakhstan–Slovenia Digital Forum in March 2026, as part of the 5th Intergovernmental Commission. The forum will focus on AI, ICT, pharmaceuticals and energy efficiency – sectors highlighted in recent EU–Central Asia agendas. Officials noted the importance of Kazakhstan's transit role, discussing participation of Slovenian firms in the Middle Corridor and logistics projects.

Trade

Drone attacks on oil tankers: On 13 January, Kazakh authorities reported that three oil tankers en route to the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) Black Sea terminal were struck by drones. The Foreign Ministry stressed Kazakhstan's non-involvement in conflicts, reaffirmed its role as a reliable energy supplier, and urged international partners to enhance security of hydrocarbon transport routes. Implications: The incidents underscore vulnerabilities in Kazakhstan's main export corridor (which carries ~80% of its crude exports). European energy markets – heavily reliant on CPC shipments – may face supply concerns. In response, Kazakhstan and partners may accelerate efforts to secure maritime routes or further develop alternate routes to diversify export channels and mitigate geopolitical risk.

News Sources

- 1) IFC, MIGA, AIIB and Standard Chartered Support Almaty Railway Bypass with \$300 Million Investment in Kazakhstan Temir Zholy ([IFC](#))
- 2) International Logistics Player Expands Rail Footprint Along Trans-Caspian Route ([Astana Times](#))
- 3) ERG Increases Investment in Kazakhstan ([Astana Times](#))
- 4) EU picks 13 new critical material projects, including in Greenland ([Reuters](#))
- 5) Kazakhstan Adopts its First AI Law ([Caspian Post](#))
- 6) Kazakhstan, Slovenia to Hold Digital Forum This Year ([Caspian Post](#))
- 7) Kazakh MFA issues statement on incidents involving tankers in the Black Sea ([QazInform](#))



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