

# Kazakhstan- EU Weekly Briefing

**Issue 18**

**March 16-22, 2026**

# Highlights

---

## Middle Corridor

On March 17, 2026, Astana hosted the 9th session of the Kazakhstan-European Union Subcommittee on Energy, Transport, Environment, and Climate Change. Co-chaired by Kazakh and European External Action Service (EEAS) officials, the session prioritized the operationalization of the Middle Corridor and regional energy integration. A major focus was placed on the Uzbekistan–Kazakhstan–Kyrgyzstan consortium for the Kambarata Hydropower Plant, with the EU reaffirming its role as a key financial and technical partner. Simultaneously, the 'Time for a Sea Change' report released on March 20 highlighted new regional logistics agreements that aim to synchronize port operations between the Caspian and Black Seas to handle the record-breaking freight volumes reported earlier this month.

**Implications:** This session moves the Middle Corridor from being a transport-only project to a comprehensive energy-transport nexus. By integrating the Kambarata Hydropower project into the Gateway framework, the EU is securing a long-term source of clean electricity that can eventually power the very rail and port infrastructure used for trade. For the EU, this reinforces 'strategic autonomy' by creating a self-sustaining green energy loop in Central Asia that reduces carbon footprints for European supply chains.



Credit: Ministry of Energy of Kazakhstan

# Highlights

---

## Critical Raw Materials

This week, Kazakhstan successfully translated its participation in the PDAC 2026 mining convention into concrete capital commitments. On March 20, 2026, details emerged regarding a \$1.1 billion project with Cove Kaz Capital Group to develop the North Katpar and Upper Kairakty tungsten deposits. This project is a flagship for the EU-Kazakhstan CRM Roadmap as it mandates the construction of two domestic processing plants, ensuring that value is added within Kazakhstan rather than simply exporting raw ore. Furthermore, the government announced on March 20 that it has allocated \$81 million in state funds for early-stage geological exploration to 'de-risk' sites for Western investors.

**Implications:** The shift toward domestic downstream processing marks the end of the 'resource-export' era for Kazakhstan. For the European Union, the \$1.1 billion tungsten deal is a major win for the aerospace and defense sectors, which are heavily dependent on this material. By funding early-stage exploration, Kazakhstan is adopting 'Australian-style' regulatory transparency, which significantly lowers the barrier for cautious European private capital to enter the Central Asian mining market.

## Trade

The geopolitical foundation of the Gateway was reinforced this week following the National Referendum results. On March 17, 2026, President Tokayev signed the new Constitution, which enshrines rule-of-law principles designed to protect long-term foreign investment. Parallel to this, on March 18, Kazakhstan ratified a readmission and transit agreement with Austria. This is a critical legal prerequisite for the broader EU-Kazakhstan Visa Facilitation Agreement, which entered its final negotiation stretch this week. These reforms are part of a broader 'legal overhaul' aimed at creating a stable, predictable trade environment.

**Implications:** The constitutional update serves as a 'trust signal' to the European Commission, addressing previous concerns about governance and investment safety. The agreement with Austria is a major 'soft infrastructure' win; by settling readmission protocols, Kazakhstan is removing the final hurdles for visa-free or facilitated travel for business professionals. This mobility is essential for the 'people-to-people' pillar of the Global Gateway.

# Highlights

---

## Digitalization

On March 16, 2026, President Tokayev officially declared 2026 as the 'Year of Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence,' launching a new strategy titled 'Innovation over Bureaucracy.' This week, the government announced the launch of three new data centers with a total capacity of 12.9 MW, specifically designed to support AI-driven logistics along the Middle Corridor. A key milestone highlighted this week was the deployment of high-speed internet to an additional 1,900 rural villages, supported by EU-linked technology partners.

**Implications:** Kazakhstan's aggressive AI adoption is designed to solve the 'bureaucratic bottleneck' that often plagues transcontinental trade. By digitizing 90% of logistics data, the country is creating a transparent, corruption-resistant environment that appeals to European ESG mandates. The implication for the EU is a significantly more efficient 'Smart Corridor' where data processing times are reduced to minutes, making the overland route as reliable as modern air freight.



Credit: Akorda

# EU-Centric Trends: Brussels' Point of View

---

## **Overview:**

Building on the 17 March Subcommittee session, mentioned in highlights, EU-Kazakhstan cooperation is evolving into a more integrated energy partnership. Discussions expanded beyond traditional energy cooperation to include sustainable value chains for raw materials, batteries, and renewable hydrogen. And this paired with Kazakhstan's target of reaching 15% renewable energy by 2030. Regional energy connectivity, gas infrastructure, and the Kambarata Hydropower Plant were also central, reinforcing the potential for electricity exports to Europe via the Trans-Caspian corridor.

## **Why it Matters:**

Together, these developments signal a shift from hydrocarbon-based engagement toward a broader clean-energy framework under the EPCA and the Samarkand 2025 roadmap, with direct implications for upcoming bilateral projects, financing, and regulatory alignment. For the EU, this positions Kazakhstan as a key partner in diversifying energy supply and advancing green electricity corridors, with progress on the Trans-Caspian framework and follow-up projects serving as the main indicators of implementation.

# Kazakhstan-Centric Trends: Developments on the Ground

---

This week, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev reviewed **Kazatomprom's 2025 performance** as CEO Meirzhan Yussupov confirmed an 11% rise in group sales to 18,500 tons out of a 25,800-ton national output, ensuring stable deliveries despite market volatility. To secure long-term capacity, the company is assembling six new prospective sites across 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> and has earmarked 75-85 billion tenge for exploration through 2030. Commercial diversification accelerated with new offtake agreements with AxpoPower AG (Switzerland) and ČEZ Group (Czechia), alongside advanced negotiations for a long-term supply contract with India. These expansion efforts are supported by a new science and technology strategy to 2034 focused on operational efficiency and a commitment of over 11 billion tenge in social investment to maintain regional resilience.

## Trend Analysis:

The trend indicates a shift toward resource-backed de-risking, where Kazakhstan is locking in multi-year demand while accelerating reserve replacement to stay ahead



Credit: Kazatomprom

# Kazakhstan-Centric Trends: Developments on the Ground

---

of a structurally tighter market cycle. By moving from a focus on pure volume to a leadership position based on quality and reliability, driven by R&D and environmental performance, the country is recasting itself as a systemically dependable node in the global nuclear fuel supply. This coupling of state-level oversight with a diversified buyer base and a codified innovation roadmap signals a durable multi-vector hedging strategy rather than a series of opportunistic trades.

## **Why it Matters:**

EU-Kazakhstan cooperation could be significantly strengthened as predictable offtake to European utilities and expanded resource development bolster long-term energy security and decarbonization. This alignment might create necessary headroom for longer-tenor supply agreements and joint initiatives focused on lower-impact extraction and traceability. By integrating technology plans with European procurement needs, these developments have the potential to sync reliability with ESG metrics. Ultimately, such cooperation could establish a more stable financing structure that secures Kazakhstan's role as a critical, high-standard supplier within the European energy value chain.

## **What to Watch:**

Key indicators over the coming quarters could include the potential signing of the India long-term contract and the disclosure of interim milestones under the 2034 science and technology plan. Updates on resource additions across the six new exploration sites and production guidance set against tightening market indicators might further signal Kazakhstan's strategic direction. Ultimately, steady on-time deliveries alongside visible community and environmental outcomes may serve as the clearest barometers that this supply-security strategy is translating into durable market leadership.

# News Sources

---

- 1) Kazakhstan and EU map out new horizons of energy partnership ([Kazinform](#))
- 2) Tokayev Signs New Constitution, Announces Legal Overhaul and New National Holiday ([Astana Times](#))
- 3) Kazakhstan and EU move closer to visa facilitation agreement ([Travel Tomorrow](#))
- 4) How Kazakhstan Is Seeking to Attract Global Capital to Critical Mineral Extraction ([The Times of Central Asia](#))
- 5) Innovation over bureaucracy: Kazakhstan's new digital strategy ([Trend.az](#))
- 6) Kazatomprom Boosts Sales 11% in 2025, Expands Resource Base ([Astana Times](#))
- 7) The head of state accepted the chairmanship of the board of Kazatomprom ([Kazatomprom](#))



**KAZAKHSTAN-EU**  
GATEWAY

**Become Our Friend**

Fostering cooperation, innovation, and understanding between

Kazakhstan and the European Union

EU Transparency Register No. 5985685100745-21h