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**KAZAKHSTAN EU
GATEWAY**



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Policy and diplomacy

Kazakhstan steps up engagement with Denmark, Italy and Belgium ahead of Belgian state visit (18 September 2026, [Kazakhstan Today](#))

Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Issetov received copies of credentials from Denmark's new Ambassador Lars Thuesen, also Special Representative for Central Asia; talks covered energy, transport, education and artificial intelligence. With Italy's Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation



Maria Tripodi, he discussed the Kazakh-Italian strategic partnership and joint projects with Italian companies. Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Belgium Roman Vassilenko met Brussels Mayor Philippe Close and, in Wallonia, representatives of John Cockerill and FN Browning Group.

Relevance:

Contacts with three EU member states in one week could complement Kazakhstan's EU-level relationship. Denmark combining its ambassador and Central Asia envoy roles may point to growing regional attention. The most concrete business angle is John Cockerill, which already works with Qarmet on a hot-dip galvanising and polymer coating complex; talks also covered green hydrogen and industrial decarbonisation. The upcoming state visit of King Philippe and the 35th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2027 offer natural milestones. However, the meetings were largely introductory, and no agreements or figures were announced.

Kazakhstan sets out nuclear industry strategy to 2050 at IAEA General Conference (18 September 2026, [Kazakhstan Today](#))

At the 70th session of the IAEA General Conference in Vienna, Gumar Sergazin, Deputy Chairman of Kazakhstan's Atomic Energy Agency, presented a strategy to 2050 creating a national nuclear cluster spanning energy, industry, science, education and high-technology manufacturing. Marking 35 years since the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site, he called for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to enter into force and highlighted the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Bank hosted in Kazakhstan.

Relevance:

Sergazin presented Kazakhstan as a link in international nuclear fuel supply chains, and the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Bank on its territory gives it a role in fuel security that matters to EU utilities. The cluster concept mirrors the shift from extraction towards processing that Kazakhstan is pursuing in critical raw materials. This is strategic framing rather than commercial commitment, and Kazakhstan signed a memorandum with South Korea on the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the same week.



Trade and investment

Italy and Central Asia launch B5+Italy business platform (18 September 2026, [The Astana Times](#))

Government and business representatives from Italy and the five Central Asian states met in Astana on 16 September to launch B5+Italy. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed the platform to complement the Central Asia plus one (C5+1) political dialogue. Italy was Kazakhstan's third-largest trading partner in 2025, with trade of nearly \$17 billion. Kazakhstan estimates \$307.5 million in additional export potential in metallurgy, petrochemicals, food, chemicals and machinery.

Relevance:

Italy is positioning itself on the Middle Corridor, formally the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. Undersecretary of State Maria Tripodi said Italy wants to be "the driver of this new road to Europe". Kazakhstan presents Central Asia as one interconnected market, an approach that could align with the EU's regional engagement. Trade remains unbalanced: Kazakh exports made up \$9 billion of \$9.79 billion in January–July 2026. Minister of Trade and Integration Arman Shakkaliyev pointed to the large role of commodities. The identified export potential equals under 2% of annual trade, which suggests diversification will be gradual. Italian interest in critical minerals and renewable energy could open further areas of cooperation.

Astana rises eight places in the Global Financial Centres Index (16 September 2026, [AIFC](#))

Astana climbed from 65th to 57th of 117 centres in the 40th Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI), with its score rising 18 points to 702. It moved from 55th to 51st in the FinTech ranking and remained the leading centre in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 15 places ahead of Cyprus (72nd) and 21 ahead of Warsaw (78th). The gain came as the region's average rating fell by 1.09%.

Relevance:

Rising while the regional average fell suggests Astana's gains are not just part of a wider trend. Its two closest regional competitors, Cyprus and Warsaw, are both in



the EU, which gives European investors a direct comparison. Survey respondents also ranked Astana ninth among centres expected to become more significant over the next two to three years. The index combines 144 quantitative measures with 39,531 assessments from financial professionals, so the result partly reflects perception. The results were announced by the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Authority, which has an interest in presenting them positively.

Kazakhstan seeks wider role for Belgium's John Cockerill in renewable energy
(18 September 2026, [Trend](#))

Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Belgium Roman Vassilenko met John Cockerill Chief Executive Jean-Luc Maurange to discuss renewable energy, green hydrogen, industrial decarbonisation, metallurgy and infrastructure, according to a Kazakh foreign ministry release. The ministry highlighted the group's work with steelmaker Qarmet on a hot-dip galvanising and polymer coating complex, and its potential participation in renewable, hydrogen and conventional energy projects. Renewables supplied about 7% of Kazakhstan's electricity in 2025, against a 15% target for 2030.

Relevance:

The Qarmet project shows that John Cockerill already has a track record in Kazakhstan, which gives these talks a practical base. Its interest in green hydrogen links to the EU–Kazakhstan strategic partnership on sustainable raw materials, batteries and renewable hydrogen, agreed in November 2022. The gap between the current renewables share and the 2030 target could create demand for European energy technology. However, the release reports only expressed interest, with no agreements or investment figures.

Transport, logistics and connectivity

Tokayev proposes a Korea–Central Asia–Europe transport chain via TRIPP (16 September 2026, [Trend](#))

At the first Central Asia–Republic of Korea summit in Seoul, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed linking the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, or Middle Corridor, with the United States–brokered Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) across Armenia, forming "an end-to-



end transport and logistics chain from Korea through Central Asia to Europe". Korean cargo would transit the Kazakhstan–China terminal at the Chinese port of Lianyungang. Tokayev cited a fivefold rise in corridor volumes over six years and a 20 million tonne capacity goal.

Relevance:

The proposal would make the Middle Corridor, which the EU supports through Global Gateway, the western end of a chain starting in East Asia, raising traffic on infrastructure Europe is helping to fund. TRIPP comes from the Washington declaration of 8 August 2025 between Azerbaijan and Armenia, brokered outside EU formats, so it would tie European connectivity plans to a route shaped elsewhere. The remarks come from the presidential press service and set out a proposal: no agreement with Korea or the TRIPP parties has been announced, and the capacity targets remain aspirational.

Eurasian Development Bank finds 85% of China–Europe overland transit runs through Kazakhstan (17 September 2026, [The Astana Times](#))

The Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) counts 114 transport projects worth about \$72 billion across Central Asia, with roads taking roughly \$46 billion. Kazakhstan accounts for 55 projects worth \$32.6 billion, nearly half the regional total, and for 85% of overland China–Europe transit. Investment spans the Middle Corridor, the Central Eurasian Corridor and the North–South route. The EDB values Chinese-linked projects at around \$7 billion, more than all tracked international development banks combined.

Relevance:

The concentration of transit through Kazakhstan helps explain why EU connectivity efforts centre on the country. Aidos Omarov of the EDB's Center for Integration Studies calls China the region's largest foreign investor; the \$4.7 billion China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan railway, half financed by a Chinese loan, shows the pattern. His colleague Alexander Zaboev warned that a corridor needs comparable conditions along its whole length, making border crossings rather than construction the limiting factor. The EDB was founded by Russia and Kazakhstan, so its stress on north–south links reflects its membership.



Critical Raw Materials (CRM)

EU Ambassador says 21 of 34 critical raw materials for the EU's green transition are present in Kazakhstan (16 September 2026, [The Astana Times](#))

At the third Regional Central Asian and European Decarbonisation Forum, EU Ambassador to Kazakhstan Aleška Simkić said Kazakhstan has 21 of the 34 critical raw materials the EU considers important for its green transition, and that cooperation should extend to local processing rather than extraction alone. Deputy Energy Minister Sanzhar Zharkeshov said new legislation requires renewable energy projects to include battery storage, and named metallurgy, chemicals, ammonia and refining as potential uses for green hydrogen.

Relevance:

Simkić's emphasis on local processing matches the EU–Kazakhstan memorandum on sustainable raw materials, batteries and renewable hydrogen signed in November 2022, and her remark that investment is needed now "even though it's not commercially viable" points to a long-term approach. The battery-storage requirement gives European suppliers a defined market. On hydrogen, Hendrik Meller of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) said the realistic five-year milestone is one operating project with a committed buyer, which suggests exports to the EU remain some way off. A proposed Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan–Azerbaijan green energy corridor could add routes to European markets, though no financing was announced.

First Korea–Central Asia summit puts critical minerals on a regional footing (17 September 2026, [The Times of Central Asia](#))

The first South Korea–Central Asia summit in Seoul produced more than 70 agreements and memorandums, with leaders agreeing to meet every two years and creating a C5+1 forum for industry ministers. Kazakhstan hosts the next summit in 2028. It upgraded relations with Seoul to a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed a memorandum on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, offering Korean companies rare metals, nuclear and clean energy, artificial intelligence and the Alatau Smart City project.

Relevance:



Seoul is making much the same offer as the EU: exploration, processing and manufacturing technology in return for access to critical raw materials. The EU already holds raw materials partnerships with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, so Korea joins China, the United States and Japan as a competing source of financing. Commitments differ in kind: the US letters of interest of up to \$700 million for the Severniy Katpar tungsten project are exploratory, while the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development put €3 million into Sarytogan graphite for feasibility work. Chinese companies are furthest along, operating the Boguty tungsten mine.

Digitalisation and innovation

Kazakhstan approves joint action plan on the digital assets industry (15 September 2026, [Prime Minister of Kazakhstan](#))

Kazakhstan's government, at a session chaired by Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov, approved a plan with the National Bank of Kazakhstan comprising 65 measures across 10 areas, implementing a presidential decree on digital assets. It covers the digital tenge as central bank-issued legal tender, tokenisation of infrastructure, real estate and raw materials assets, and a shift in digital mining towards energy-consumption control and transparent taxation. The National Strategic Crypto Reserve has reached \$700 million, and 34 projects have passed the National Bank's regulatory sandbox.

Relevance:

The plan aims to bring capital back into the regulated domestic economy and to export digital financial services, which would require alignment with the EU's Markets in Crypto-Assets Regulation (MiCA), a question the plan does not address. Tokenising infrastructure and raw materials assets could open a financing route for projects European investors are considering, though the National Bank has yet to name eligible assets. The instruction to the Ministry of Energy, with the Ministry of Artificial Intelligence, to power mining centres from gas and coal generation sits awkwardly with Kazakhstan's decarbonisation agenda. The account comes from the Kazakh government's own press service and sets out intentions rather than results.



Kazakhstan builds Data Center Valley in Ekibastuz (15 September 2026, [The Astana Times](#))

The Data Center Valley in Ekibastuz, to be operated by KT-Telecom, a subsidiary of Kazakhtelecom, is designed to expand in stages to one gigawatt, backed by \$10 billion from US company Firebird and Nvidia. Project estimates put annual export revenue from its 100,000-GPU cluster at at least \$3 billion. A first 50-megawatt facility is under construction, with commissioning due in May 2027 and operations from June.

Relevance:

The project is a digital counterpart to Kazakhstan's transport and energy corridors and, together with the Trans-Caspian fibre-optic cable to Azerbaijan, touches EU digital connectivity interests along the Middle Corridor. The capital and technology are American, and Kazakhstan has joined both the US-led Pax Silica initiative and the China-backed World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization, leaving the EU without a comparable position. Alexandre F. Gomes of the Clingendael Institute notes that the Netherlands and Japan supply critical chipmaking equipment, so European leverage lies upstream rather than in computing capacity. Half of Kazakhstan's 254 generating facilities are coal-fired, out of a combined 27.1 gigawatts of installed capacity, which raises the question of whether a coal-powered campus can meet global technology companies' sustainability expectations.

Human capital and people-to-people connections

Louvre exhibition discussed during Days of Kazakh Culture in France (20 September 2026, [Kazakhstan Today](#))

Culture and Information Minister Arman Kyrykbayev met Louvre President Christophe Leribault in Paris to discuss showing works from the museum in Kazakhstan as part of a new museum project. Talks with his French counterpart, Catherine Pégard, covered reciprocal theatre tours and cooperation on training, internships and masterclasses. The meetings took place during the Days of Kazakh Culture in France, which included a gala concert at the Théâtre Marigny.



Relevance:

Cultural and educational cooperation falls under the EU–Kazakhstan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA), in force since March 2020, and an exchange with an institution of the Louvre's standing would give that strand unusual visibility. The training and internship component is the more durable element, since it builds professional links rather than a single event. Nothing has been agreed: the Kazakh ministry describes the exhibition as a possibility.