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Policy and diplomacy

King Philippe leads 110-member delegation on first Belgian state visit to Kazakhstan ([10 October 2026, The Astana Times](#))

King Philippe and Queen Mathilde's visit to Kazakhstan on 11–14 October is the first Belgian state visit to Central Asia. The programme features talks with President Tokayev in Astana and a stop in Almaty. The 110-member [delegation](#) includes four federal and regional ministers, around 25 chief executives and seven university rectors. The two foreign ministries are expected to sign a **2026–2029 roadmap**.

Relevance: The visit could strengthen Kazakhstan's bilateral relationship with Belgium and open new opportunities for cooperation in transport, critical raw materials, research and technology. As Belgium is home to major EU institutions and important logistics and industrial facilities, deeper bilateral engagement could also complement Kazakhstan's broader economic partnership with the European Union.

Central Asia and the EU hold second counter-terrorism dialogue ([9 October 2026, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan](#))

Ambassador-at-Large Stanislav Vassilenko represented Kazakhstan at the second **Central Asia–EU Dialogue on Counter-Terrorism** in Brussels on 8 October. Talks covered the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters, online extremist propaganda and the prevention of radicalisation. Kazakhstan stressed a comprehensive approach that combines security measures with prevention, rehabilitation and social reintegration. Expert consultations on returnees were held on 7 October.

Relevance: The dialogue demonstrates the security dimension of Kazakhstan–EU relations beyond trade and investment. Continued cooperation could strengthen information exchange, counter-terrorism coordination and the development of approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration, contributing to regional stability and closer institutional ties between Central Asia and the EU.



Kazakhstan ratifies Council of Europe convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters ([7 October 2026, The Times of Central Asia](#))

On 6 October, President Tokayev signed the law ratifying the Council of Europe's 1959 **European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters**, which parliament approved on 23 September. The convention offers a standard channel for gathering evidence and serving judicial documents. Search and seizure requests can be executed only where the conduct is an offence in both countries. Accession takes effect 90 days after Kazakhstan deposits its instrument.

Relevance: Accession could strengthen Kazakhstan's legal cooperation with European countries by providing more standardised procedures for cross-border criminal investigations and evidence gathering. It may also support international asset recovery efforts and improve institutional cooperation on transnational crime.

Transport, logistics and connectivity

EU-funded rail link to the Bulgarian border opens at the Middle Corridor's western end ([9 October 2026, The Brussels Times](#))

Türkiye opened the 153-km Çerkezköy–Kapıkule section of the Halkalı–Kapıkule railway, which links Istanbul to the Bulgarian border, on 9 October. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and European Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos attended. The EU contributed **€275 million** through its Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance; the Commission calls the railway the largest infrastructure project in EU–Türkiye cooperation to date. [Annual freight capacity](#) is expected to rise from 1.5 to 9.5 million tonnes.

Relevance: The railway could improve the European end of transport connections associated with the Middle Corridor by increasing capacity and reducing bottlenecks between Türkiye and the EU. For Kazakhstan, more efficient western connections could strengthen the competitiveness of Trans-Caspian freight routes and support the EU's broader objective of diversifying Eurasian transport links.



President Tokayev proposes talks on linking the Middle Corridor to a planned route through Armenia ([8 October 2026, President of Kazakhstan](#))

At the Consultative Meeting of Heads of State of Central Asia and Azerbaijan in Awaza, Turkmenistan, on 8 October, leaders adopted a [joint statement](#) naming East–West and North–South corridors as priorities. President Kassym–Jomart Tokayev proposed expert talks on integrating the Middle Corridor with the **Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP)** through Armenia, and a plan to raise intraregional trade from about \$13 billion to at least \$20 billion.

Relevance: Potential integration with TRIPP could provide an additional connection between the Caspian region, the South Caucasus and Türkiye, expanding route options for Kazakhstan's exports and transit traffic. For the EU, greater connectivity across the South Caucasus could complement its efforts to develop diversified and resilient transport networks. The proposal remains at an exploratory stage.

Critical Raw Materials

Greek group Metlen plans to recover critical metals from Kazakh metallurgical waste ([10 October 2026, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan](#))

Deputy Foreign Minister Ardak Zebeshev met a delegation from Greek industrial group **Metlen Energy & Metals** to discuss progress on its project to process metallurgical waste in Kazakhstan and recover copper, zinc, nickel, cobalt and other metals. Talks covered a phased approach, logistics and state support, and the national investment company Kazakh Invest offered support at every stage. Zebeshev invited Metlen to the Kazakhstan Global Investment Roundtable on 22 October.

Relevance: The project could support Kazakhstan's transition from raw material exports towards higher-value-added processing and resource recovery. It also aligns with the EU's interest in diversifying critical raw material supply chains and developing circular economy solutions. If implemented, the investment could



create opportunities for European technology transfer and more sustainable industrial production in Kazakhstan.

Digitalisation, AI and innovation

Trans-Caspian fibre-optic cable between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan due in October ([6 October 2026, Report.az](#))

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development Zhaslan Madiyev said the subsea fibre-optic line linking Aktau with Sumgayit in Azerbaijan will be commissioned in October. Kazakhtelecom and AzerTelecom have laid about 390 km of cable on the Caspian seabed. The line is designed to carry more than **400 terabits per second** and forms part of the Digital Silk Way through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye to Bulgaria.

Relevance: The cable could strengthen Kazakhstan's role as a digital transit hub between Asia and Europe by providing an additional high-capacity international data route. For Kazakhstan–EU cooperation, the project may contribute to digital connectivity, telecommunications resilience and the development of cloud services, data centres and other digital infrastructure.

Trade and investment

Kazakhstan and Belgium prepare a transport, green energy and raw materials agenda for the state visit ([7 October 2026, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan](#))

On 6 October, ahead of King Philippe's state visit, Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Belgium, Roman Vassilenko, met Belgian Mobility and Climate Minister Jean-Luc Crucke, who will join the royal delegation. They discussed transport, the Middle Corridor, renewable energy, industrial decarbonisation and critical raw materials. Vassilenko said Kazakhstan produces **21 of the 34** raw materials on the EU's critical list and wants deeper processing and technology transfer with Belgian and European partners.



Relevance: The meeting identifies practical areas where Belgian industrial expertise and investment could support Kazakhstan's economic diversification. Cooperation in critical raw materials, clean technologies and transport infrastructure could also contribute to EU supply-chain resilience and advance the objectives of the EU–Kazakhstan strategic partnership.

Brussels meeting promotes Global Gateway investment tools for Kazakhstan ([Z October 2026, Embassy of Kazakhstan in Germany](#))

The 47th session of the Berlin Eurasian Club, held in Brussels on 7 October, focused on the **Global Gateway Investment Hub** and other tools for implementing the EU's Global Gateway strategy. Deputy Foreign Minister Ardak Zebeshev presented Kazakhstan's investment priorities. Pēteris Ustubs, the European Commission's Director for Asia and the Pacific, said the EU wants to support more small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by mobilising private investment and providing guarantees.

Relevance: The discussions illustrate how Global Gateway's financial and institutional instruments could be used to develop investment projects in Kazakhstan. Greater access to guarantees, private capital and European partnerships may help Kazakhstan diversify infrastructure financing and encourage more private-sector participation in strategic transport and industrial projects.

People-to-people connections

Kazakh universities discuss a proposed Central Asia–EU research network on renewable energy ([6 October 2026, EU Delegation to Kazakhstan](#))

Nazarbayev University and Satbayev University were among seven Central Asian universities at the 25th Wind & Solar Integration Workshop in Porto on 29 September–2 October, supported by a renewable energy project co-funded by the EU and Germany. Participants discussed a proposed **Central Asia–EU research network** for renewable energy that would share research infrastructure



and data, run joint study and exchange programmes, and match researchers for joint projects.

Relevance: The proposed network could strengthen Kazakhstan's research capacity in renewable energy and electricity-grid integration while expanding academic cooperation with European institutions. It may also support the development of technical expertise needed for Kazakhstan's energy transition and create new opportunities for joint research and researcher mobility.

Kazakhstan ratifies Council of Europe convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters ([7 October 2026, The Times of Central Asia](#))

On 6 October, President Tokayev signed the law ratifying the Council of Europe's 1959 **European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters**, which parliament approved on 23 September. The convention offers a standard channel for gathering evidence and serving judicial documents. Search and seizure requests can be executed only where the conduct is an offence in both countries. Accession takes effect 90 days after Kazakhstan deposits its instrument.

Other relevant developments

Kazakhstan and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) prepare water projects ([7 October 2026, Prime Minister of Kazakhstan](#))

At a meeting of the government's Coordination Council for Cooperation with International Financial Institutions, chaired by Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov, officials presented a project with the EBRD to restore 56 canals totalling **676 km** in the East Kazakhstan and Abai regions. Reliable irrigation water would reach 92,300 hectares, up from 80,600. Industry and Construction Minister Yersaiyn Nagaspayev also reported plans with the EBRD to rebuild wastewater treatment plants in Ridder.

Relevance: The projects demonstrate the EBRD's role in financing Kazakhstan's environmental and municipal infrastructure. Improved irrigation and wastewater systems could strengthen water security, support agricultural productivity and



reduce environmental pressures. The cooperation also illustrates how European development finance institutions can contribute to Kazakhstan's infrastructure modernisation and climate adaptation priorities.

Tengiz and Kashagan shareholders study a Trans-Caspian oil export route ([Z October 2026, The Times of Central Asia](#))

The eight shareholders in the Tengiz and Kashagan fields have commissioned a feasibility study on shipping up to **35 million tonnes** of crude a year across the Caspian to Baku, by subsea pipeline or a larger tanker fleet, and onward through the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline. The study is due in November. In 2025, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) carried 64.8 million of Kazakhstan's 78.7 million tonnes of oil exports.

Relevance: A higher-capacity Trans-Caspian export route could reduce Kazakhstan's dependence on the Caspian Pipeline Consortium and improve the resilience of its energy exports. For European energy markets, additional export capacity through Azerbaijan and Türkiye could contribute to supply diversification. However, the project's commercial feasibility, infrastructure requirements and environmental implications remain to be assessed.