



## Key highlights of the Council of Europe Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities with Kazakhstan 2024-2027

### Introduction

Since 2014, Kazakhstan received assistance in the framework of the Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities for Kazakhstan. Under the **Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities 2024-2027**, the Council of Europe and the Kazakh authorities have agreed to build on the achievements of the co-operation implemented since 2014, in particular by encouraging accession to Council of Europe conventions and initiating co-operation in the priority areas covered by the national reforms' agenda in the field of human rights, rule of law and democracy. The Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities are based on the 2011 Council of Europe policy towards its immediate neighbourhood, aimed at promoting dialogue and co-operation with the countries and regions in the vicinity of Europe which express the will to co-operate with the Council of Europe.

Kazakhstan showed willingness to enter into new commitments with the Council of Europe, especially by requesting accession to a number of its conventions. In April 2020, Kazakhstan was invited to accede to the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and requested technical assistance to advance in the accession process to the respective convention. Kazakhstan was also invited to accede to the Convention on Corruption (ETS No. 173) in July 2022 and to the Convention on Cybercrime (ETS No. 185) in April 2023.

### *The Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities 2024-2027*

The Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities are a strategic, flexible and dynamic co-operation framework that sets out the priorities for co-operation between Kazakhstan and the Council of Europe for the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2027. The main co-operation areas are human rights protection, judicial reform, anti-corruption, anti-money laundering, cybercrime, action against trafficking in human beings, and democratic governance.

This summary describes the main outcomes of the first year of implementation of the Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities with Kazakhstan 2024-2027 in three cross-cutting components outlined below.

## 1. Facilitating the creation of a common legal space between Europe and Central Asia and enhancing human rights protection

### *Raising awareness about the benefits of a common legal area between Europe and Central Asia based on key Council of Europe conventions open to non-member States and other international standards*



The Council of Europe has continued to support Kazakhstan's integration into **a common legal space with Europe** by promoting accession to key conventions open to non-member States. Kazakhstan is already a party to several Council of Europe conventions, and since 2020 has received several **invitations to accede to important treaties**, including the Istanbul Convention, the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, and the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime. As a result of joint efforts under the previous EU/Council of Europe Central Asia Rule of Law Programme, Kazakh institutions identified further conventions, such as those on the protection of children from sexual exploitation and on action against trafficking in human beings, as relevant to ongoing reforms. The Council of Europe is working with the Kazakh authorities, members of parliament, and civil society to build understanding of the content and added value of these legal instruments. In April 2025, Kazakhstan was officially invited to accede to the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (CETS No. 198, Warsaw Convention), marking another important step toward deepening its engagement with European legal standards.



## *Enhancing the knowledge on European human rights standards of legal professionals via the European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) methodology*



The Council of Europe has been actively supporting the promotion of European and international human rights standards in Kazakhstan through the **European Human Rights Training Programme for Legal Professionals (HELP)**. In June 2024, the HELP course on “Prohibition of Ill-Treatment” for law enforcement officials and prosecutors of Kazakhstan was launched. In parallel, more than 60 civil servants and representatives of civil society organisations participated in seminars on the protection of women’s rights, and around 30 prosecutors took part in targeted sessions on the prohibition of ill-treatment and torture. The HELP course “Ethics for judges, prosecutors and lawyers” has been translated into Kazakh and made available on the platform. The programme continues to support national training institutions in delivering tutored HELP courses and plays a vital role in strengthening legal professionals’ capacity to apply national human rights legislation in line with European and international standards.

## **2. Promoting transparency and action against economic crime**

### *Fight against corruption*



The Council of Europe co-operates closely with Kazakhstan in the fight against corruption, building on the country’s significant reform efforts in the area of economic crime, money laundering, and terrorist financing. Following Kazakhstan’s accession to the Council of Europe’s **Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)** in 2020 and the subsequent joint first and second round evaluation, the Council has been actively supporting the implementation of the recommendations published in June 2022. Support is ongoing in three key areas: first, helping authorities address existing and upcoming GRECO recommendations by improving legislative and policy frameworks and enhancing institutional capacities; second, improving the legal and institutional environment for the transparency of political party and campaign financing and aligning anti-corruption incriminations with the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, which Kazakhstan has been invited to join by 2027; and third, reinforcing the institutional capacity of the Anti-Corruption Agency of Kazakhstan to implement preventive tools, including asset declaration systems, conflict of interest management, risk analysis, and whistle-blower protection. The insights into international practices in implementing codes of ethics was provided by the Council of Europe experts, managing conflicts of interest, and advancing the liability of legal entities, as identified by the GRECO evaluation report. This assistance supported the relevant institutions in Kazakhstan to make measurable progress toward meeting GRECO recommendations, thereby enhancing the country’s overall corruption prevention framework.

## **3. Promoting efficient functioning of state institutions and public administration**

### *Developing and strengthening rule of law-based institutions*



The Council of Europe, through the European Commission for Democracy through Law (**Venice Commission**), supports Kazakhstan’s constitutional and institutional reform efforts. Building on long-standing co-operation and Kazakhstan’s full membership in the Venice Commission since 2012, the Council has engaged in sustained dialogue with national authorities on aligning reforms with European and international standards. Since the entry into force of the revised Constitution in 2023 and the establishment of the Constitutional Court, co-operation has intensified through bilateral activities, legal analysis, and high-level events with Kazakhstan’s Constitutional and Supreme Courts. The Venice Commission has supported the development and adoption of legislation in key areas related to the rule of law, separation of powers, and the judiciary, ensuring alignment with international standards. It has also contributed to the development of new legislation in the field of administrative law and justice, including reforms in public administration and the promotion of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Additionally, professional capacities of representatives of public administration and the judiciary have been enhanced through targeted capacity-building activities. The Venice Commission remains actively engaged in providing expertise, particularly in the areas of administrative law and justice, while also supporting capacity building for senior officials and the judiciary to strengthen access to justice, improve constitutional complaint procedures, and promote inclusive protection of rights.