# **Newsletter Special Edition**

BUSINESS FORUM Eurasian Development Bank 27–28 June 2024, Almaty

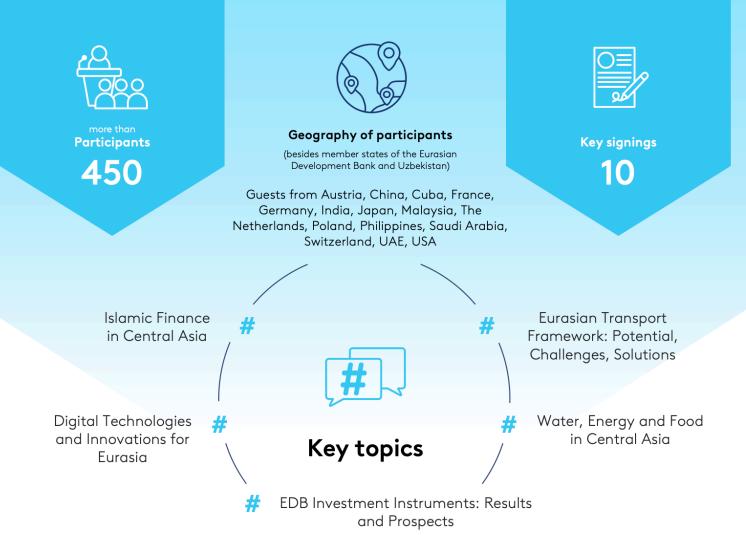
Annual Meeting and Business Forum Eurasian Development Bank 2024

27-28 June 2024

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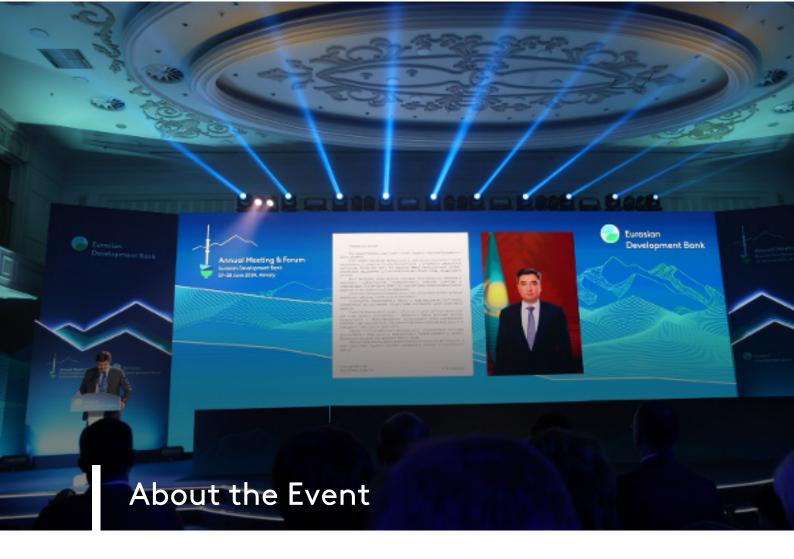
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**65 media representatives** participated in the EDB Annual Meeting and Business Forum, with **24 media outlets** serving as official information partners for the event.





On 27 June 2024, the Eurasian Development Bank's (EDB) Annual Meeting and Business Forum was inaugurated in Almaty. This large-scale event took place in a ceremonial setting at the Rixos Hotel.

The meeting brought together heads and top managers of financial institutions from Eurasian countries, representatives of multilateral development banks, public officials, business leaders, experts and journalists.

The participants received a greetings message from Olzhas Bektenov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, delivered by Deputy Finance Minister Dauren Kenbeil. The address highlighted that the Annual Meeting's agenda reflected "the most relevant issues for the region, including rational, balanced use of water and energy resources in Central Asia, food security and better transport connectivity."



"In its activities, the Bank follows the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ESG principles, serving as a catalyst to key cross-border projects in energy, infrastructure, industry, agriculture and digitalisation. At the same time, the EDB has become a leader among international development banks in non-sovereign financing", the Prime Minister noted in his message.

Olzhas Bektenov commended the EDB for its role as a multilateral development bank operating in the Eurasian space for more than 18 years. The Prime Minister wished all participants in and guests of the Annual Meeting and Business Forum interesting discussions and productive work. He expressed confidence that the discussions and meetings would unlock the full potential for cooperation between the countries of the Eurasian region and the private sector in addressing critical challenges.



Opening of the Annual Meeting and Business Forum: Glocalisation

### The EDB – A Non-Sovereign Financing Leader Among International Banks

At the Annual Meeting and Business Forum opening ceremony, Nikolay Podguzov, Chairman of the Eurasian Development Bank, expressed his gratitude to all those who had accepted the Bank's invitation. He highlighted the key challenges facing the Central Asian region and outlined how the EDB is helping in addressing these issues.

Mr Podguzov emphasised that successful and effective solutions to these challenges are impossible without taking into account the local specifics of each area. Global approaches need to be adapted locally, a concept aptly termed "glocalisation."

The primary challenge is to provide for rapid economic growth in the Central Asian region. The second is transport connectivity, so the EDB is promoting the concept of a Unified Transport Framework.

The third interconnected challenge involves water, energy and food security.



"The most urgent question is: "What must be done to eradicate poverty, provide clean drinking water, improve transport connectivity, implement innovations and build a new transport infrastructure?" Additionally, it's crucial to determine how to provide the people with access to water and roads while achieving sustainable economic growth in countries with resource-based economies."

Nikolay Podguzov, Chairman of the EDB Management Board

To address these issues, by 2026, the EDB plans to invest \$11 billion in regional and crossborder projects.



During the session "Water, Energy and Food in Central Asia: Partnerships and Projects for Sustainable Development", participants addressed the growing water scarcity problem. The region urgently needs to optimise use of existing water resources at the regional level, better coordination in managing cross-border rivers being of critical importance. From a technical standpoint, significant water savings can be achieved by adopting modern water-saving technologies and modernising irrigation channels.

The session featured representatives from international organisations (IFAS, UNIDO, UNDP, the World Food Programme), the Government of Kazakhstan, multilateral development banks (Asian Development Bank, Eurasian Development Bank), and project institutes (FSBI Research Institute "Raduga"), all of which are already deeply involved in addressing the water shortage in Central Asia.



"Currently, over 80% of the water available in Central Asia is used for irrigation, 40% of this being lost every year during water delivery and directly on the fields. Furthermore, with visible changes in river hydrology and a steady increase in water consumption, the water shortage problem is expected to become even worse in the coming years. Water conservation is seen as the only viable solution, with the aim of reducing losses estimated at 43 cubic kilometres a year."

Yevgeny Vinokurov, session moderator, EDB Vice-Chairman of the Board and Chief Economist

It is impossible to address water shortages without adequate financing. The necessary modernisation of the irrigation infrastructure is highly capital-intensive, highlighting the vital role of multilateral development banks (MDBs).

During the event, a trilateral cooperation agreement was signed between the Ministry for Water Resources and Irrigation of Kazakhstan, UNDP and the EDB. Under the agreement, initiatives worth USD 5.3 million are planned, focusing on digitalisation of the water sector, development of training centres for modern irrigation technologies, and implementation of water-saving technologies and innovations.

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Session "Eurasian Transport Framework: Potential, Challenges, Solutions"

Основу Евразийского портного каркаса

EDB Analysts Present Opportunities for Strengthening the Eurasian Transport Framework

Governments of the region, international organisations and multilateral development banks have been tasked with building the Eurasian transport framework, which is expected to support sustainable socio-economic development of Central Asia.

The main results of developing the Eurasian transport framework corridors and routes will be improved regional connectivity, improved infrastructure, reduced delivery times, expanded logistics capabilities and a broader trade geography.

Before the session opened, a new EDB Analytical Report was presented on the concept and potential for developing the Eurasian transport framework.



"The inland regions of Eurasia suffer from having no direct access to the sea, which imposes an "economic growth penalty" of 40%, as seen from international experience.

Notably, traditional "East-West" transport links are now being complemented by emerging "North-South" corridors and routes. This is a historic breakthrough and a unique opportunity, especially for Central Asia."

Yevgeny Vinokurov, EDB Vice-Chairman of the Board and Chief **Economist** 

Integration of 'East-West' and 'North-South' corridors and routes within the Eurasian transport framework creates a synergy, with freight flows expected to increase by up to 40%. Another important outcome is a boost to the agro-industrial potential of the region's countries. Improvements in soft infrastructure, such as digitalisation and streamlined border-crossing procedures, help reduce goods and vehicle downtime at borders, allowing Central Asian countries to increase their exports by 18%.

In the next three years, the EDB plans to invest approximately USD 2 billion in Eurasian transport framework projects.

Session: "Islamic Finance in Central Asia"

DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC FINANCE IN CENTRAL ASIA

The Forum discussed the future prospects for Islamic banking in Central Asia

Participants in this session agreed that Sharia-compliant investment project financing is currently experiencing rapid growth, second only to the automotive market. Islamic banking now covers about 90 countries, yet this financial instrument is still not adequately supported by authorities and requires legislative backing.

The session was moderated by Yahya Rehman, Deputy Governor of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). The first speaker at the forum was Ruslan Dalenov, Vice-Chairman of the EDB Management Board.



"Islamic finance is based on several principles that have contributed to its success, including rationality, partnership, asset-backed financing, profit and loss sharing, a ban on speculation, deterioration in the borrower's financial condition being precluded, and a prohibition of hidden charges. These principles create a stable social environment."

Ruslan Dalenov, Vice-Chairman of the EDB Management Board

By 2025, the EDB will have fully integrated Islamic finance processes, with a pilot "Islamic Window" already in operation. This is expected to add an additional \$2 billion to the Central Asian financial services market by 2028. According to the Vice-Chairman,

turasian Developme the global Islamic finance market reached \$4.5 trillion in 2023, having doubled in seven years. This figure is projected to grow to \$6.7 trillion by 2027.



"Development of Islamic banking in Kazakhstan is in need of enablement of Islamic banking possibilities through traditional universal banks."

Olgas Kisatov, Vice-Chairman of the Agency for Regulation and Development of the Financial Market (ARDFM)

Olgas Kisatov supported the idea of developing "Islamic Windows" and allowing conversion of Islamic banks into traditional banks with an "Islamic Window."

In his speech, Dauren Kenbeil, Deputy Minister of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan, endorsed the EDB's proposal to increase use of Islamic finance in investment projects, including through issue of Islamic securities.



Conrad Albrecht Discusses the EDB's Integration of Environmental and Social Standards in Central Asia

During the Annual Meeting and Business Forum of the Eurasian Development Bank, Conrad Albrecht, Managing Director and Head of the EDB's Sustainable Development Division, gave a presentation on integration of environmental and social standards in project evaluation across Central Asia. He emphasised that rapid urbanisation and climate change are necessitating a new approach to regional infrastructure development and shared the Bank's experience in assessing projects from a sustainability perspective.

The speaker highlighted key aspects of incorporating environmental and social factors into the EDB's investment policy. He stressed the importance of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) in project implementation, risk assessment and longterm mitigation, compliance with regulatory requirements and stakeholder engagement.

"The Bank is actively developing tools for collecting and analysing data on the positive and negative impact of projects throughout the investment cycle", stated Conrad Albrecht, describing a three-stage process that includes preliminary assessment, project analysis and subsequent monitoring. These new procedures allow the Bank to protect investments against environmental and social risks, acquire data on positive effects on the regional economy and achieve a balance between best practices and international standards in order to avoid overburdening clients. The first five months of testing the new E&S risk analysis system revealed that most clients are at a medium level in implementing ESG practices. Participants Discussed Global Experience, Challenges and Tasks of Supporting Digital Startups

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The discussion involved representatives from the International Telecommunication Union, the Astana International Financial Centre, National Information Technologies JSC, the EDB's FCI project developers, and winners of the FCI EDB 2024 Digital Project Competition.

Participants explored how digital startups can be supported by national and international financial institutions. They also discussed the potential for implementing venture capital tools at the Eurasian level for financing digital projects, exporting and rolling out the best digital solutions across Eurasia.



"We need to capture the right feedback loop: the industry and startups are not only beneficiaries of the EDB Digital Initiatives Fund's activities but also sources of change to our agenda and activities. We always take notes and analyse what our partners are saying so that we might make it systematic and continually refine our programmes."

Tigran Sargsyan, Vice-Chairman of the EDB Management Board During the session, EDB Digital Initiatives Fund-supported projects were showcased, including the BEE-ONLINE.ru digital platform for light industry, which won the ADFIAP Sustainable Awards 2024 in the "Trade Development" category, the international tele-rehabilitation ecosystem ATTILAN, and the National Investment Platform of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. The audience was also introduced to a project for establishing a "Certification Centre" for advancing e-government systems in the Republic of Tajikistan.

Additionally, the event provided those present with an opportunity to view presentations from the winners of the FCI EDB 2024 Digital Project Competition, including Clean Games NGO's IT platform for eco-volunteering events and Impulse LLC's educational LMS system for corporations and EdTech companies. Annual Meeting & Forum Eurasian Development Bank 27–28 June 2024, Almaty 🍦 Eurasian Development Bank

Annual Meeting & Forum

### Key Signings

## The EDB and Istkomtrans LLP Collaborate to Advance Islamic Finance in Kazakhstan

During the Eurasian Development Bank's Annual Meeting and Business Forum, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the EDB and Istkomtrans LLP on implementing the "Murabaha" project. The document was signed by Ruslan Dalenov, Vice-Chairman of the EDB Management Board, and Marat Sarsenov, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Istkomtrans LLP.

Murabaha is a unique financing method under which the bank not only grants a loan but also participates actively in the client's business. Instead of charging interest, the bank and the client share the profits and risks from joint projects. This approach encourages both parties to engage in responsible business practices and fosters trust between them.



"The signing of this MoU signifies launch of our venture into Islamic finance. In the future, we aim to offer more products and services through the 'Islamic Window', expand our partner network and contribute to the region's economic prosperity."

Ruslan Dalenov, Vice-Chairman of the EDB Management Board

Marat Sarsenov noted that "The primary goal of this collaboration is to develop new transport infrastructure and logistics sector projects that will enhance trade and contribute to the economic development of the Republic of Kazakhstan."

Istkomtrans LLP is a private rolling stock operator in Central Asia and ranks among Kazakhstan's top 50 private companies. It is represented in 11 cities across Kazakhstan and Russia, and manages a fleet of over 12,500 railway wagons, roughly half of which are oil tankers.

Murabaha is a widely used Islamic financing instrument. It consists in a sales contract, the price of the goods including an agreed profit margin. The bank purchases the goods at the client's request and sells them at a markup, specifying the actual price and profit, while the client pays the amount in instalments.

Eurasian Development Bank

Annual Meeting & Forum Eurasian Development Bank

Eurasian Development Bank

Memorandum of Understanding Signed Between the Islamic Development Bank Institute and the EDB for Developing Islamic Finance in Central Asia

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Another Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the event, this time between the Islamic Development Bank Institute (IDB Institute) and the Eurasian Development Bank, to advance Islamic finance in Central Asia. Under the MoU, the parties agreed to collaborate on a variety of initiatives aligned with the mandates and strategies of the IDB Institute and the EDB, including development of Islamic finance. Nikolay Podguzov, Chairman of the EDB Management Board, expressed gratitude to the IDB Institute partners for their support for Islamic finance initiatives in the Eurasian region.



"We have already initiated a joint study called 'The Future of Islamic Finance in Central Asia', results being expected by the end of 2024. Our plans include jointly developing Islamic finance in the region, providing technical assistance, proposing legislative improvements, holding seminars, enhancing the potential and financial literacy of the public, developing Islamic debt instruments, and more."

Nikolay Podguzov, Chairman of the EDB Management Board

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At the Annual Meeting and Business Forum of the Eurasian Development Bank, an agreement was signed between the EDB and Dar Al Sharia. The EDB Chairman noted that this agreement would strengthen and expand the partnership between the two parties.



"We have agreed on long-term collaboration, focusing on development of Islamic finance banking products and consultations on portfolio transformation. This will enable us to create unique financial products, boost Islamic investments and support sustainable development of the Central Asian region."

Nikolay Podguzov, Chairman of the EDB Management Board

The agreement will enhance the EDB's efforts to establish an Islamic banking market in Central Asia. In early 2024, in collaboration with Dar Al Sharia, the EDB will start developing the "Islamic Window" project. The company will assist the EDB in setting up the required procedures and processes.





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Denis Ilyin, Senior Managing Director of the Eurasian Development Bank, Nanna Skau, Representative and Country Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in Armenia, and David Yeremyan, Founder and CEO of Yeremyan Projects, signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) to expand the "Milk in Schools" programme in the Republic of Armenia.

Launched in December 2022, the pilot "Milk in Schools" programme aimed to include milk in the daily diet of both children and adults in Armenia. The programme was implemented from January to December 2023 in School No. 1 in Jermuk and School No. 1 in Yeghegnadzor, Vayots Dzor.



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"Three years ago, the EDB and Yeremyan Projects initiated a crucial process to establish a milk supply chain for schools. From a business idea to an investment project, from launching construction to delivering milk to store shelves and for social needs, we have made significant progress. It is gratifying that our project has also received UN support. We look forward to continuing the project with the same team."

Denis Ilyin, EDB Senior Managing Director



### МЕМОРАНДУМ О ВЗАИМОПОНИМАНИИ

Между Евразийским банком развития и Всемирной Продовольственной Программой Организации Объединенных Наций



Eurasian Development Bank



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### The EDB and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Sign a Memorandum of Understanding

The document's main aim is to support the member states in ensuring food security and improving the food supply chain system.

The Bank is actively involved in supporting projects related to agricultural production, the modernization of infrastructure and logistics, as well as the creation of a unified commodity distribution system at the regional level.

The agreements enables the expansion of cooperation on technical assistance, the implementation of joint initiatives, support for public-private partnerships and the adoption of innovative solutions.

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#### МЕМОРАНДУМ О ВЗАИМОПОНИМАНИИ

Между Евразийским банком развития и Всемирной Продовольственной Программой Организации Объединенных Наций



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### The EDB Digital Initiatives Fund Supports Development of the ATTILAN Platform

During the Business Forum, the Eurasian Development Bank and Motorika LLC signed an agreement on grant funding to support development of the ATTILAN international tele-rehabilitation platform.

With the grant support from the EDB's Digital Initiatives Fund (DIF), Motorika LLC will develop the ATTILAN platform for creating a more accessible environment for individuals with disabilities using upper and lower limb prosthetics, as well as wheelchairs.

Tigran Sargsyan, Vice-Chairman of the EDB Management Board, highlighted that the project is integrative and cooperative in nature. He noted that manufacturers of bionic prosthetics and wheelchairs, prosthetics centres, medical professionals, charitable organisations and other entities involved in rehabilitation may be located in various countries. The project involves specialised organisations from Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

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# Winners of the DIF EDB 2024 Digital Projects Competition Announced

During the session "Digital Technologies and Innovations for Eurasia", the awards ceremony for the winners of the Digital Projects Competition of the EDB Digital Initiatives Fund 2024 was held.

The winners of the 2024 Competition were the Interregional Public Organisation for Environmental and Patriotic Education "Clean Games" and Impulse LLC. "Clean Games" is developing an IT platform for organising eco-volunteer events.

Impulse LLC is developing an educational LMS system for corporations and EdTech companies for a monthly subscription. This system addresses business process optimisation, engagement and customer repeat sales through detailed product analytics, flexible system customisation and integration of all the necessary tools.

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The session "EDB Investment Instruments: Results and Prospects" featured signing of a Partnership Agreement between the Eurasian Development Bank and Qarmet JSC. The signing ceremony was attended by Ruslan Dalenov, Vice-Chairman of the EDB Management Board, and Dmitry Muz, Chief Financial Officer of Qarmet JSC.

The Bank actively supports implementation of big investment projects in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan. Collaboration with local industries and private businesses maximises the economic, social and environmental benefits. For instance, active cooperation with various industrial sectors accelerates adoption of ESG approaches for sustainable regional development.

Qarmet JSC is a leading systemic steel and mining company in Kazakhstan with the strategic goal of increasing its production efficiency and raising steel output more than 1.5-fold by 2028.



During the session, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to support the Servolux Group's investment programme. The signing ceremony was attended by Yaroslav Mandron, Vice-Chairman of the EDB Management Board, and Alisher Adylov, CEO of Servolux. The MoU is aimed at modernising, optimising and expanding production, including establishing a new production facility in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

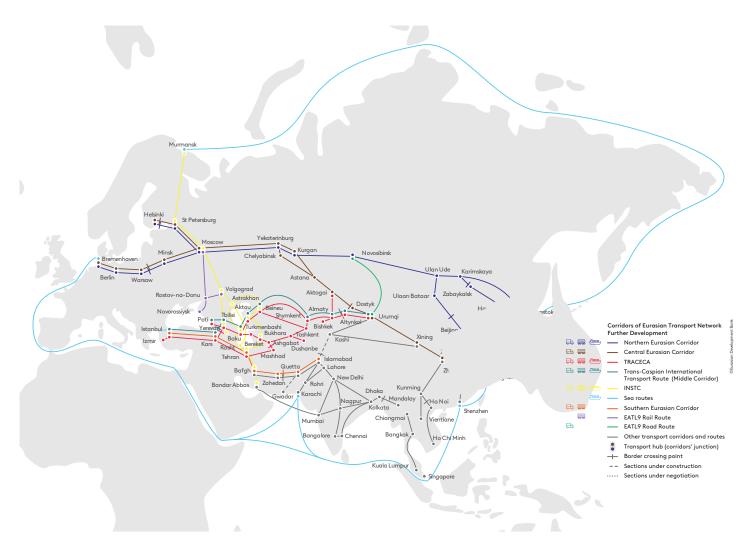
Investment in the agro-industrial complex accounts for 3.4% of the Bank's investment portfolio, demonstrating interest in and readiness to support projects in this sector.

Servolux is the biggest producer and operator on the agro-industrial market of Belarus, with established distribution channels across all EAEU countries. As a recognised expert in poultry farming and food production, the group encompasses over 20 brands and employs a staff of 10,800. The EDB has already supported the group's export development: in 2022, a credit line was opened to finance working capital and capital expenditures for the group's companies.

#### Analysis

# The EDB Develops Ten Systemic Elements for the Eurasian Transport Framework

The EDB has analysed the current state of transport arteries in the Eurasian region and, on the basis of the results, presents a report titled "Eurasian Transport Framework". The primary goal of the study is to develop a new conceptual perspective on the prospects for developing the Eurasian transport framework.

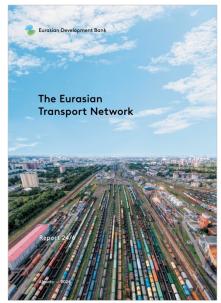


The Concept aims to create and enhance sustainable, accessible and efficient transport links for the Eurasian space.

• The Eurasian Transport Framework includes five key international transport corridors: the Northern, Central and Southern Eurasian Corridors, the TRACECA corridor, and the North-South corridor, supplemented by branches and regional routes.

- The total volume of international freight transported in 2023 along the five corridors of the Eurasian Transport Framework was 260 million tonnes, including by 3.6 million containers.
- Compared to 2013, the volume of international container transport has more than tripled. Since 2013, the number of container trains to and from China through the EAEU and Central Asia has increased 200-fold.
- The Eurasian Transport Framework Concept includes ten systemic elements.
- The EDB forecasts that freight volumes along the three key corridors passing through Central Asia will increase 1.5-fold to 95 million tonnes by 2030. Container traffic is expected to grow even more significantly—by nearly two-thirds by 2030, reaching 1.7 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units).
- Up to 15% of transport costs could be saved by implementing integrated multimodal logistics technologies.

For more detail on the "Eurasian Transport Framework" report, please visit the Bank's website. <u>Open  $\rightarrow$ </u>.



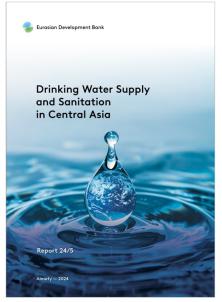
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### Analysis

# According to EDB Research, Central Asia Needs an Additional \$12 Billion in Investment to Ensure Safe Drinking Water Access by 2030.

In Central Asia (CA), ten million people have no access to safe drinking water. To address this issue, the sector requires an additional \$2 billion in annual investment between 2025 and 2030. The new EDB study "Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation in Central Asia" outlines a set of practical steps for addressing this challenge.

- According to the UN, 2 billion people have no access to safe drinking water and 3.6 billion lack access to safe sanitation. Over 40% of the world population lives in regions experiencing severe water scarcity. More than 80% of wastewater in developing countries is discharged into rivers and seas without being treated.
- By 2050, 33% of the world's river sub-basins are expected to face water shortages, primarily owing to water pollution, as well as hydrological and climatic factors.



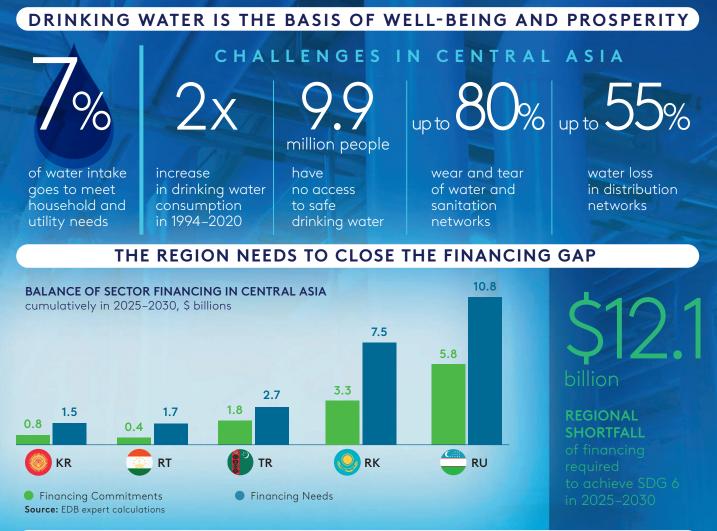
- In CA, the issue of providing access to clean water and treating it is even more acute. The deterioration in the water supply and sanitation networks in CA is estimated to be up to 80%. Technological and commercial water losses in distribution networks are estimated as up to 55%. The region faces a funding shortfall of over \$12 billion, or approximately \$2 billion annually.
- Among the countries in the region, Uzbekistan is expected to face the highest funding shortfall — \$826 million a year, or nearly \$5 billion from 2025 to 2030. Kazakhstan is projected to experience a significant funding gap of \$700 million a year, or \$4.2 billion over the same period. In Tajikistan, the funding shortfall will be considerable for the country's economy, reaching \$209 million a year, or over \$1.2 billion from 2025 to 2030.

For more detail on the report "Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation in Central Asia", please visit the Bank's website. <u>Open  $\rightarrow$ </u>

### DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

### KEY CONCLUSIONS

#### ANALYTICAL REPORT'24



#### AN INTEGRATED APPROACH IS RECOMMENDED TO DEAL WITH THESE CHALLENGES

#### Regulatory Solutions

- INTERSECTORAL COORDINATION mechanism (government bodies, local authorities, water utility companies)
- Restoration of the R&D POTENTIAL (including by creation of a design company)
- Training of ENGINEERING AND TECHNICAL PERSONNEL (including within the IFAS ASBP-4 framework)
- Prioritization of **PROTECTION OF SURFACE AND GROUND WATERS** in national strategies

#### Financial Solutions

- Adaptation and expansion of PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP institutions
- Engagement of large OPERATING
  COMPANIES
- INVOLVEMENT OF IFIs in sovereign and non-sovereign financing
- Improvement of TARIFF PRACTICES with preservation of the existing state support mechanisms (subsidies, soft loans, provision of assistance to socially disadvantaged groups of the population)

#### Technical Solutions

#### **RURAL AREAS**

- Focus on protection of small rivers
- Transition of intake facilities to underground water sources
- Deployment of local water treatment, decontamination, and conditioning systems
- Shared water supply systems
  CITIES
- Focus on construction of water treatment facilities
- Use of long-lasting materials
- Digital monitoring and reporting
- Localisation of equipment manufacturing





Full version of the analytical report

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