



The SDGs and EU projects in Central Asia: Estimation of SDG regional progress and contributions from EU projects

Analysis report

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1. Introduction

The countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) have committed to achieving the SDGs, and to support this effort the EU and UNDP have joined forces and launched a project for setting up a regional SDGs platform. To this purpose, the UNDP Country Office in Kazakhstan has mandated a research on SDG-related KPIs to document how regional EU-funded projects contribute to meeting the SDGs. To this effort, a first research on best practices on monitoring framework for estimating regional progress and the contribution of EU projects was carried out.

The present document builds on the aforementioned research to provide a qualitative estimation of contribution to SDGs in Central Asia. Using a sample of 43 EU-funded projects, an analysis has been carried out to estimate how EU-projects contribute to achieving the SDGs. The estimations have been done with data available from the SDG Index, UN Stats, UN Women, and a sample of 43 EU-funded projects provided by the UNDP Country Office in Kazakhstan. This research documents also obstacles, gaps, and methodological issues (also referring to EU-project KPIs) and provides an initial set recommendations for possible improvements¹.

2. The 2030 Agenda performance indicators

There are many ways of estimating the level of progress of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Although it would be ideal to use the 2030 Agenda's main results monitoring framework (the SDG targets and indicators), often times data on SDGs indicators is not readily available, be this due to a lack of monitoring on specific indicators, limited periodicity, or limited access to where the up-to-date and reliable information is being stored. This section aims to provide an estimation of the progress of the 2030 Agenda in Central Asia through two of the main open data sources of SDG-related indicators: The SDG Index and UN Stats.

2.1. Estimation through proxies: SDG Index

As indicated in its own website, '*The Sustainable Development Report (formerly the SDG Index & Dashboards) is a global assessment of countries' progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a complement to the official SDG indicators and the voluntary national reviews*' (SDSN, 2024b). This global assessment uses proxies to estimate the status of progress and the trend (evolution) of the SDGs. This means that the SDG Index estimates progress on the SDGs, but without basing that estimation on SDG indicators². The reason for this is the availability of the chosen proxy indicators in most countries, with allows for an easier comparison of SDG progress among countries.

¹ An extended, more detailed, and more insightful set of recommendations for improving project KPIs and better linking KPIs with SDGs and simplifying of EU M&E system (including suggestions for reporting formats for regular submission and simplification of the M&E system and processes ensuring appropriate focus on measurable KPIs) is expected in the final deliverable of the ongoing research and analysis consultancy.

² The SDG Index uses fewer proxy indicators (97) than the total number of unique SDG indicators (231).

The SDG Index includes country profiles, from which a qualitative compilation of progress has been derived for Central Asia (see Annex 1 in this document to see the status and trend levels for each of the Central Asian countries), shown here as Table 1:

| | Central Asia | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| | Score | 70.97 |
| | Status | Trend |
| SDG 1: No poverty | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 2: Zero hunger | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 3: Good health and well-being | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 4: Quality education | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 5: Gender equality | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation | Significant challenges remain | On track or maintaining SDG achievement |
| SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 10: Reduced inequalities | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 13: Climate action | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 14: Life below water | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable |
| SDG 15: Life on land | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |

Table 1. Estimated SDG achievement status and trend in Central Asia based on data from the SDG Index initiative.

Table 1 presents aggregated qualitative results for an estimation of progress of the SDGs in Central Asia. For reference, if the average score of Central Asia was to be compared with other national scores, Central Asia would be placed 70th in the SDG Index ranking (SDSN, 2024; see /rankings), just above Morocco and Algeria, and just below the Maldives and Uzbekistan. According to this methodology (and the derived qualitative aggregation for Central Asia), there are four SDGs that still face major challenges (SDGs 3, 7, 15, and 16), with particular emphasis on SDGs 15 and 16, which also show an insufficient rate of improvement.

2.2. Estimation through SDG indicators: UN Stats and UN Women

Another way of estimating SDG progress in the Central Asian region can be done through official sources for SDG indicators, where the level of progress can be inferred by comparing development performance around 2015 (the beginning of the 2030 Agenda) and the latest data available. For this purpose, UN Stats hosts a compilation of SDG indicators, organised by country profiles³. This estimation builds on the data available in UN Stats⁴ and draws conclusions based on the UNDP analysis methodology for the Indicator-based Performance Review (IPR)⁵. The overall results for Central Asia can be summarised in Figure 1 below:

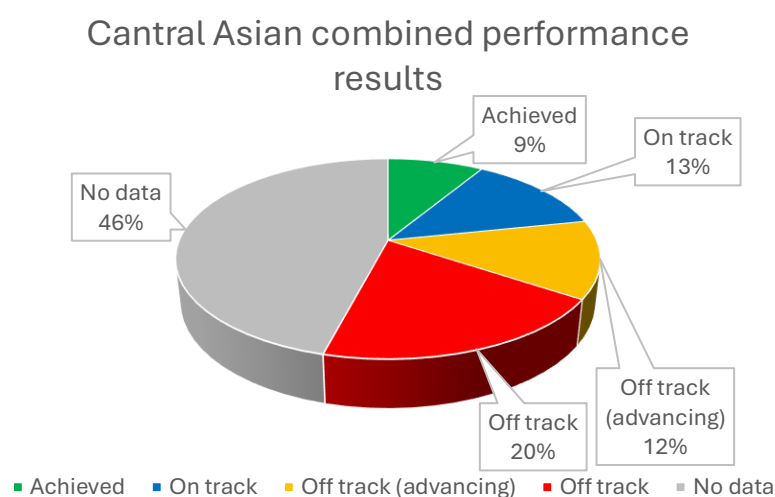


Figure 1. Combined SDG indicator-based performance for all Central Asian countries based on available data from UN Stats.

Out of 207 applicable indicators for Central Asian countries, 9% are estimated to be achieved, 13% are estimated to be on track to being achieved by 2030, and 32% are estimated to be off track to be achieved by 2030. Almost half of the applicable indicators for Central Asian countries (46%) are not being compiled in the UN Stats database, which suggests that they might not be available (not being measured or with enough periodicity).

The aggregated results for Central Asia, by SDG, are summarised on Table 2 below:

| | Achieved | On track | Off track (advancing) | Off track | No data |
|--|----------|----------|-----------------------|-----------|---------|
| SDG 1: No poverty | 13% | 0% | 0% | 25% | 63% |
| SDG 2: Zero hunger | 8% | 31% | 8% | 15% | 38% |
| SDG 3: Good health and well-being | 25% | 21% | 14% | 14% | 25% |
| SDG 4: Quality education | 33% | 0% | 8% | 0% | 58% |
| SDG 5: Gender equality | 0% | 8% | 23% | 38% | 31% |

³ For an example of an SDG Country Profile, see the one for Kazakhstan (UN DESA, 2024).

⁴ The initial idea was to compile available SDG indicators from UN Stats and the latest Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), but the information available on the SDG Country profiles for Central Asia was comprehensive and consistent enough among all Central Asian countries. Adding information available in some VNRs and not in others would have complicated the compiled estimation for Central Asia.

⁵ For a technical definition of the IPR methodology, see the previous deliverable of the present consultancy titled 'Implementation of the SDGs in Central Asia: best practices on monitoring framework for estimating regional progress and the contribution of EU projects'.

| | Achieved | On track | Off track (advancing) | Off track | No data |
|---|-----------|------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation | 0% | 36% | 27% | 36% | 0% |
| SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy | 20% | 40% | 20% | 20% | 0% |
| SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth | 0% | 13% | 27% | 20% | 40% |
| SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure | 18% | 36% | 9% | 36% | 0% |
| SDG 10: Reduced inequalities | 0% | 0% | 17% | 33% | 50% |
| SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities | 7% | 0% | 0% | 7% | 87% |
| SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production | 0% | 0% | 8% | 17% | 75% |
| SDG 13: Climate action | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| SDG 14: Life below water | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| SDG 15: Life on land | 8% | 0% | 23% | 15% | 54% |
| SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions | 0% | 10% | 10% | 10% | 70% |
| SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals | 0% | 13% | 0% | 31% | 56% |
| Total | 9% | 13% | 12% | 20% | 46% |

Table 2. Estimated SDG progress in Central Asia based on data from UN Stats and derived from the UNDP IPR methodology.

The SDGs that show most progress (achieved or on track) SDG 3 (46% achieved or on track), SDG 7 (60% achieved or on track), and SDG 9 (54% achieved or on track). At the same time, the SDGs that show most challenges (off track, advancing or not) are SDG 5 (61%), SDG 6 (63%), SDG 7 (40%), SDG 8 (47%), SDG 9 (45%), and SDG 10 (50%). Interestingly, SDGs 7 and 9 are suggesting both significant progress in some of their indicators and not enough in others. At the same time, those same SDGs 7 and 9 (along with SDG 6) are the only ones that have a 0% of their indicators without data gaps. With an overall 46% of applicable SDG indicators with data gaps, these two examples from SDGs 7 and 9 show how the availability or not of relevant data might point to different (and biased) conclusions on development performance.

Another type of estimation, this time by focusing gender issues, comes from UN Women (UN Women, 2024). The compilation of gender-related performance indicators for the five Central Asian countries and for the region as a whole can be found in Table 3 below:

| | KAZ | KGZ | UZB | TJK | TKM | Central Asia |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| High performance | 16% | 11% | 12% | 10% | 11% | 12% |
| Medium performance | 18% | 21% | 12% | 12% | 7% | 14% |
| Low performance | 15% | 7% | 16% | 10% | 3% | 10% |
| Missing data | 52% | 61% | 60% | 69% | 79% | 64% |

Table 3. Level of SDG-based performance on gender issues in Central Asia based on data from UN Women.

Table 3 shows that while only a combined 26% of the gender aspects relevant to the applicable SDG indicators for Central Asia show a high or medium performance, there is a remaining 74% of the gender aspects relevant to the applicable SDG indicators that have low performance or missing data, which is also a challenge in itself, as gender-specific data is key to identifying and tackling development challenges.

3. Estimation of contributions from EU projects

3.1. Contributions from project outcomes and budget allocation

The previous section suggests some development performance figures for the Central Asian countries using different estimates from proxies and SDG indicators. To complement that analysis, the current section focuses on the SDG thematic priorities from a sample of 43 EU-funded projects in Central Asia. The main results from this analysis are shown on Table 4 below:

| | Budget amount (funded by the EU) | % Budget | Impacted targets with potential for synergies | Impacted targets with risk of trade-offs |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------|---|--|
| SDG 1: No poverty | € 4,300,000 | 2% | 0 | 0 |
| SDG 2: Zero hunger | € 4,277,232 | 2% | 3 | 14 |
| SDG 3: Good health and well-being | € 6,818,182 | 2% | 5 | 1 |
| SDG 4: Quality education | € 2,507,816 | 1% | 1 | 0 |
| SDG 5: Gender equality | € 5,750,000 | 2% | 8 | 0 |
| SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation | € 3,850,000 | 1% | 0 | 0 |
| SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy | € 16,617,067 | 6% | 0 | 0 |
| SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth | € 59,912,410 | 22% | 0 | 0 |
| SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure | € 2,000,000 | 1% | 8 | 0 |
| SDG 10: Reduced inequalities | € 29,877,377 | 11% | 1 | 0 |
| SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities | € 8,329,609 | 3% | 1 | 0 |
| SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production | € 42,600,734 | 16% | 0 | 0 |
| SDG 13: Climate action | € 5,248,000 | 2% | 1 | 0 |
| SDG 14: Life below water | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| SDG 15: Life on land | € 14,498,000 | 5% | 0 | 0 |
| SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions | € 26,261,068 | 10% | 0 | 0 |
| SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals | € 39,934,277 | 15% | 1 | 0 |
| | € 272,781,772 | | | |

Table 4. Identified project budget allocation priorities and potential synergies and trade-offs from a sample of 43 EU-funded projects.

The aggregated results from the 43 EU-funded projects analysed show that the SDGs that receive most investment in Central Asia are SDG 8 (22% of the total investment), SDG 12 (16%), SDG 17 (15%), SDG 10 (11%), and SDG 16 (10%). By SDG target⁶, there are five SDG targets with a joint investment of over EUR 20 million, namely:

1. SDG target 12.4, about the management of hazardous chemicals and waste (joint investment of EUR 41.8 million).
2. SDG target 8.3, about the promotion of businesses (EUR 30 million).
3. SDG target 10.7, about the safe, responsible, and orderly management of migration flows (EUR 27.4 million).
4. SDG target 16.a, about the international cooperation against organised crime (EUR 21.5 million).
5. SDG 8.10, about the promotion of financial services for MSMEs (EUR 20.5 million).

⁶ For more in-detail tables with results from the analysis of the 43 EU-funded projects, see Annex 4.C. EU Project Analyses.

These five SDG targets show indirectly the main perceived accelerators for SDG progress from a portfolio perspective, as they combine the investments on those SDG targets from several projects.

Table 4 shows also how many impacted SDG targets within the 43 EU-funded projects have potential for synergies or trade-offs. These figures derive from crossing mapped SDG targets within the EU projects with the documented SDG interlinkages in Nilsson (2017). The impacted SDG targets from SDG 5 and SDG 9 show the highest potential of synergies with 8 cases each, while the impacted SDG targets from SDG 2 show the highest risk for trade-offs with 14 cases. No synergies nor trade-offs were found within any of the 43 EU-funded projects analysed. These results are however unreliable as the amount of documented synergies and trade-offs between SDG targets from Nilsson (2017) is limited to a few examples, and those documented examples might not be fully applicable to Central Asia. For that reason the analysis of interlinkages will not be explored further in the current report.

3.2. Contribution from performance from project KPIs

The analysis of the previous subsection refers to where budget/financing priorities are in relation to SDGs. The current subsection focuses on whether the sample projects are implementing their specific outcomes, by SDG. To do so, the KPIs associated with the specific outcomes⁷ of the 43 EU-funded projects included in the analysis are assessed on whether they have already been achieved or not, and if they have not been achieved, whether the project has finished implementation or if it is still ongoing. Table 5 below summarises these results:

| | Budget amount | % Budget | % KPIs implemented | % KPIs not implemented (project still ongoing) | % KPIs not implemented |
|--------|----------------------|----------|--------------------|--|------------------------|
| SDG 1 | € 4,300,000 | 2% | 25% | 0% | 75% |
| SDG 2 | € 4,277,232 | 2% | 57% | 0% | 43% |
| SDG 3 | € 6,818,182 | 2% | 15% | 38% | 46% |
| SDG 4 | € 2,507,816 | 1% | 21% | 64% | 14% |
| SDG 5 | € 5,750,000 | 2% | 0% | 57% | 43% |
| SDG 6 | € 3,850,000 | 1% | 75% | 0% | 25% |
| SDG 7 | € 16,617,067 | 6% | 30% | 70% | 0% |
| SDG 8 | € 59,912,410 | 22% | 57% | 20% | 23% |
| SDG 9 | € 2,000,000 | 1% | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| SDG 10 | € 29,877,377 | 11% | 33% | 58% | 8% |
| SDG 11 | € 8,329,609 | 3% | 38% | 24% | 38% |
| SDG 12 | € 42,434,068 | 16% | 25% | 0% | 75% |
| SDG 13 | € 5,248,000 | 2% | 60% | 0% | 40% |
| SDG 14 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| SDG 15 | € 14,498,000 | 5% | 39% | 50% | 11% |
| SDG 16 | € 26,261,068 | 10% | 58% | 2% | 40% |
| SDG 17 | € 40,100,944 | 15% | 41% | 14% | 45% |
| | € 272,781,772 | | 45% | 22% | 33% |

Table 5. Identified project implementation levels derived from analysing the KPIs of the sample of 43 EU-funded projects.

⁷ In the case of this research, project KPIs are the indicators associated to the specific outcomes of the 43 EU-funded projects included in the analysis.

As indicated in Table 5, from the sample of 43 EU-funded projects, the SDGs facing the most challenges of implementation are SDG 1 and SDG 12, both with 75% of their project KPIs not implemented. On the other hand, the SDGs that are encountering fewer problems for implementation are SDGs 7, 9, and 10, all with less than 10% of their connected KPIs not implemented.

4. Aggregated results

4.1. On the status of progress of the 2030 Agenda

The results from the estimated level of SDG progress by following the SDG Index (using proxy data) show four SDGs that still face major challenges in Central Asia (SDGs 3, 7, 15, and 16). Comparatively, when using data from UN Stats (with available SDG indicators) the SDGs facing most challenges (off track, advancing or not) are SDG 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. Based on this, **SDG 7 is the SDG where both methodologies coincide on the fact that there are still major challenges for its implementation**⁸.

Interestingly, SDG 3 faces major challenges according to the SDG Index methodology, while it is one the highlighted as having achieved most progress based on the estimations made with data from UN Stats (46% of applicable SDG indicators achieved or on track). And as per the other two SDGs facing most challenges according to SDG Index (SDGs 15 and 16), they show large data gaps in UN Stats, with 54% and 70% of applicable SDG indicators with data gaps respectively. **This limited availability of data of applicable SDG indicators should be considered a challenge in itself**⁹.

As per gender issues, for comparison, following data from SDG Index, SDG 5 show that challenges remain, and the progress trend is stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate. According to data from UN Stats, 61% of the applicable SDG indicators of SDG 5 would be off-track. And as per UN Women's estimations, 12% of the applicable SDG indicators (all relevant SDGs) would show a high performance on gender issues, 14% would show a medium performance, 10% a low performance, and 64% would have relevant missing data to carry out a gender performance assessment. As mentioned earlier, data gaps are in themselves a development challenge to be taken into account.

4.2. On the contribution of EU-projects

By SDG, the thematic priorities within the 43 EU-funded projects are SDGs 8, 12, 17, 10, and 16. When comparing these results with the ones from SDG Index, **SDG 16 should be a priority for investment, and when comparing with data from UN Stats, SDGs 8 and 10 should be a priority for investment**.

The combinations of results above suggest that the EU-funded projects are accurately identifying most the SDGs that require most attention for improvement (namely SDGs 8, 10, and 16), while

⁸ Especially in reference to renewable energies.

⁹ Especially considering that by using data from UN Stats, 46% of the applicable SDG indicators for Central Asia would not have enough data to carry out an indicator-based performance assessment (see Table 2).

SDG 17 is often expected to be highlighted in projects' thematic scope as most projects include in their logframes partnerships and data capacity building activities.

SDG 12 stands out when making these comparisons between estimated development performance and project priorities as it is not particularly flagged as a challenge by SDG Index, and due to a 75% of applicable SDG indicators with data gaps it is not considered a development challenge when using data from UN Stats. The reason for the substantial weight of SDG 12 within the analysed projects, and particularly in the case of target 12.4 (amounting to a total of EUR 41.8) is the issue of nuclear waste management, prevention, and remediation. These issues around 12.4 involve large investments to be effective, and cannot 'leverage' resources from smaller projects to generate development acceleration and 'snowball effects'. Restored and clean ecosystems, safe from nuclear contamination, are a key pillar for sustainable development, and such investments are key for the success of other projects and development initiatives connected to environmental, security, agriculture, water, or transboundary issues.

Regarding the success rate of implementation of project KPIs, the KPIs with more challenges for implementation are connected to SDGs 1 and 12, (75% of their related project KPIs not implemented). On the other hand, the KPIs with fewer challenges for implementation (less than 10% of their related KPIs not implemented) are connected to SDGs 7, 9, and 10. Following on previous conclusions, **SDG 7 can be a key accelerator for the Central Asian region**, as:

- It is an SDG that still faces major challenges according to data from SDG Index and UN Stats.
- It is not yet overfunded in the EU-project portfolio (it receives around 6% of the projects' budget according the 43-project sample).
- It has proven to be efficient in its implementation, with none of their connected KPIs failing to be implemented thus far.

SDG 9 could be another interesting candidate for SDG acceleration, as it has been identified to have challenges for implementation according to data from UN Stats, it is relatively underfunded in the Central Asian project portfolio (around 1% of the budget), and so far it has a 100% KPI implementation success rate. **SDG 10 could also be good candidate in which to maintain investment** (currently around 11% of the budget), as it is not encountering many obstacles for implementation (only 8% of KPIs not implemented) and it is one of the SDGs facing most challenges according to data from UN Stats.

5. Challenges and methodological issues

The present analysis aims to provide an overview of the SDG progress in the Central Asian region and how EU-funded projects contribute to that progress. Although simple in theory, such analysis can prove to be challenging as there are different data sources and methodologies to use in different parts of the analysis.

5.1. Obstacles and gaps

As mentioned before, the main challenges have to do with data sources and the diversity of methodologies used. The first challenge to highlight is the fact that SDG-related information is not fully available to be able to perform a full analysis based on SDG indicators performance. With this in mind, different sources are explored to find approximate ways to estimate SDG progress. The SDG Index initiative is comprehensive enough to suggest main development challenges and trends, but with 97 proxy indicators it does not cover the full thematic scope of the SDGs. On the other hand, the selection of 97 proxy indicators is done to favour comparability among countries, which allows for easier benchmarking, scoring, ranking, and results aggregation.

The analysis of country profiles of UN Stats takes official sources to document progress based on SDG indicators (not proxies), which gives a more accurate overview of the SDG indicator-based performance. The fact that data in UN Stats for all Central Asian countries had a similar level of availability allowed for a more accurate comparison and aggregation of results, without the need of searching other data sources to complete the data gaps found in UN Stats, as it could have skewed the results in favour or against any Central Asian country that had more complete data contained in additional sources. A big challenge found with the data of UN Stats is the numerous data gaps (in total 46% of applicable SDG indicators for all Central Asian countries). This figure of data gaps might be lower in reality if additional SDG data sources are explored, but it nevertheless suggests that data collection and processing capacities should be expanded. Apart from data availability, data reporting periodicity should be taken into consideration to be able to make policy decisions based on up-to-date data. And in general, even if SDG data was fully complete and updated with a reasonable frequency, if it has to be explored in different databases to be fully available, makes it hard to process and to draw insights from comparing different SDG indicators. **Data availability, update frequency, and fragmentation are three key aspects to work on for the future. A regional SDG Platform can be the most effective tool to guarantee such availability, periodicity, and concentration.**

When it comes to methodological issues, the SDG Index has its own system of assessment of status and trends for the indicators included in the methodology, as well as for the specific numeric score for a given country¹⁰. This methodology and the specific selection of proxy indicators to SDGs allows for more comprehensive (with more available data) and easier comparison among countries analysed with that methodology, but it makes it more difficult to analyse in comparison to other methodologies that base their assessment on SDG indicators such as the one used in subsection 2.2. On the other hand, the analysis based on SDG indicators is more accurate when it comes to assessing SDG implementation performance, but it is highly exposed to data gaps and the unavailability to draw conclusions from such data gaps.

¹⁰ For more details about the SDG Index methodology, see SDSN (2024a).

Additionally, there are still methodological assumptions that are made when aggregating SDG indicator-based performance from several countries¹¹.

Regarding the analysis of the 43 EU-funded projects, they were analysed at the specific outcome level, by matching those to specific SDG targets. Only one SDG target (the most relevant) was matched with each of the projects' specific outcomes, which facilitates the SDG and budget allocation tagging, but does not consider the nuance when some specific outcomes could be contributing to more than one SDG target.

When it comes to SDG target interlinkages (either as synergies or trade-offs), when mapping the interlinkages documented in Nilsson (2017), there were no relevant interlinkages found at the project level. Although some SDG targets mapped in the analysed project were found to have potential for synergies or trade-offs were found (see Table 4), it seems that the limited number of documented interlinkages in Nilsson (2017) requires a dedicated analysis of SDG interlinkages specific for Central Asian countries.

5.2. About EU-funded projects' KPIs

Despite the 'research on SDG-related KPIs to document how regional EU-funded projects contribute to meeting the SDGs' was a key mandate for the current work, upon analysis of the 43 EU-funded sampled projects, **it was not possible to systematically match project KPIs to SDG indicators**. This is due to two main reasons:

1. The themes included in SDG targets are not always reflected in their set of SDG indicators. For example, SDG target 8.3 includes issues such as the promotion of entrepreneurship or access to financial services to MSMEs. However, the only SDG indicator assigned to SDG target 8.3 is indicator 8.3.1 which refers only to the "proportion of informal employment in total employment". Many KPIs from the EU-funded project were in-line of supporting MSMEs and with that theme they could be matched against SDG targets but not SDG indicators.
2. The level of detail of project KPIs is often times higher and more 'project-oriented' than the SDG indicators. For example, one of the project's KPI was about '2.1 Number of rural producers reached by supported enterprises as a result of the Action by country, type of good/service, sex, region', and that kind of result hard to map¹² with topics contained in SDG indicators.

KPIs could also not be matched with budget amounts: Since project specific outcomes (matched with SDG targets) do not indicate their specific budget allocation, project KPIs (derived from project specific outcomes) cannot be matched with specific budget amounts either. Budget allocation for specific outcomes was assumed to be evenly distributed, which might skew the results. If budget allocation among KPIs is assumed to also be evenly distributed, the chances of further skewing the results to a point of irrelevancy are substantial.

¹¹ As explained in subsection 2.2., for the SDG indicator-based analysis, the IPR methodology was followed. However, the IPR methodology is designed to be applied to single countries and not a combination of countries, such as the ones of Central Asia. To be able to aggregate such results, assumptions were made (see 4.B. Brief IPR analysis for Central Asia).

¹² In this case it could be suggested to map this KPI with SDG target 2.3 and SDG indicator 2.3.2, but those refer exclusively to food producers, while the rural producers intended to support with the project are also 'crafts and apparel, hospitality, as well as technology savvy firms'.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The current analysis has the following main conclusions:

- Regarding the status of SDG implementation in Central Asia, according to SDG Index (using proxy data), four SDGs still face major challenges in Central Asia: SDGs 3, 7, 15, and 16. When using data from UN Stats (with available SDG indicators) the SDGs facing most challenges (off track, advancing or not) are SDGs 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.
- On gender issues, according to data from UN Women, only a combined 26% of the gender aspects relevant to the applicable SDG indicators for Central Asia show a high or medium performance, there is a remaining 74% of the gender aspects relevant to the applicable SDG indicators that have low performance or missing data.
- As per the contribution of EU-funded projects, the thematic priorities within the 43 EU-funded projects are SDGs 8, 10, 12, 16, and 17. When comparing these results with the ones from SDG Index, SDG 16 should be a priority for investment, and when comparing with data from UN Stats, SDGs 8 and 10 should be a priority for investment.
- The KPIs with more challenges for implementation are connected to SDGs 1 and 12, while the ones with fewer challenges are connected to SDGs 7, 9, and 10. Following this, these three SDGs (7, 9, and 10) could be candidates for which to increase or maintain budget allocation.
- Combining all insights, **the SDGs that would be better suited for SDG acceleration in Central Asia through EU projects, for different reasons, would be SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10, and 16.** Comparing this to the current priorities based on the sample of 43 EU projects (8, 10, 12, 16, and 17), it shows a **match between current priorities and best candidates for acceleration in SDGs 8, 10, and 16.**

Although these conclusions are robust enough to inform further conversations about the status of SDG progress in Central Asia and budget funding priorities for the EU, **there are some methodological assumptions and data gaps** (46% of applicable SDG indicators and 64% for gender issues) **that should be taken into account to produce more accurate results in the future.**

Additionally, these results suggest some initial recommendations to be considered for future development and portfolio design in Central Asia:

- ❖ The SDGs Platform for Central Asia should include an up-to-date section on SDG indicator-based development performance for the five Central Asian countries and for Central Asia as a whole to avoid data fragmentation and to allow for better programming and thematic project prioritisation.
- ❖ Projects' specific outcomes should be phrased as thematic outcomes (not operational), and they should be mapped against their most relevant SDG target.
- ❖ Project KPIs should be mapped against their most relevant SDG target, and if possible, to their most relevant SDG indicator.
- ❖ **A thorough analysis of SDG target interlinkages should be carried out for Central Asia** to be able to flag opportunities for synergies and risks of trade-offs within and among projects and other development initiatives.

7. Reference list

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8. Annexes

Annex 1: SDG Index – combined table for all Central Asian Countries

Table 6. Estimated SDG achievement status and trend in Central Asia based on data from the SDG Index initiative (extended version, including source score, status and trend values from SDG Index for all five Central Asian countries).

| | KAZ | | KGZ | | UZB | | TJK | | TKM | | Central Asia | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| | Score | 71.65 | Score | 74.41 | Score | 71.15 | Score | 69.19 | Score | 68.47 | Score | 70.97 |
| | Status | Trend | Status | Trend | Status | Trend | Status | Trend | Status | Trend | Status | Trend |
| SDG 1: No poverty | SDG achieved | On track or maintaining SDG achievement | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | On track or maintaining SDG achievement | SDG achieved | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 2: Zero hunger | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 3: Good health and well-being | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 4: Quality education | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Trend information unavailable | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 5: Gender equality | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | On track or maintaining SDG achievement | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | On track or maintaining SDG achievement | Major challenges remain | On track or maintaining SDG achievement | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | On track or maintaining SDG achievement | Significant challenges remain | On track or maintaining SDG achievement |
| SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score decreasing | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |

| | KAZ | | KGZ | | UZB | | TJK | | TKM | | Central Asia | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| | Score | 71.65 | Score | 74.41 | Score | 71.15 | Score | 69.19 | Score | 68.47 | Score | 70.97 |
| | Status | Trend | Status | Trend | Status | Trend | Status | Trend | Status | Trend | Status | Trend |
| SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 10: Reduced inequalities | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | On track or maintaining SDG achievement | Significant challenges remain | Trend information unavailable | Significant challenges remain | Trend information unavailable | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | SDG achieved | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 13: Climate action | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | SDG achieved | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |
| SDG 14: Life below water | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable | Information unavailable | Trend information unavailable |
| SDG 15: Life on land | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate |
| SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal | Major challenges remain | Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate | Significant challenges remain | Score moderately improving, insufficient to attain goal |

Annex 2: UN Stats-based estimation on SDG progress performance for Central Asia

Table 7. Estimated SDG progress in Central Asia based on data from UN Stats and derived from the UNDP IPR methodology (extended version, including percentages of non-applicable SDG indicators and applicable indicators with available baseline from the information contained in UN Stats country profiles):

| SDG | Achieved | On track | Off track (advancing) | Off track | No data | N/A | with Baseline |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| 01 | 13% | 0% | 0% | 25% | 63% | 38% | 13% |
| 02 | 0% | 38% | 8% | 15% | 38% | 7% | 38% |
| 03 | 25% | 21% | 14% | 14% | 25% | 0% | 57% |
| 04 | 33% | 0% | 8% | 0% | 58% | 0% | 8% |
| 05 | 0% | 8% | 23% | 38% | 31% | 7% | 8% |
| 06 | 0% | 36% | 27% | 36% | 0% | 0% | 36% |
| 07 | 20% | 40% | 20% | 20% | 0% | 17% | 100% |
| 08 | 0% | 13% | 27% | 20% | 40% | 6% | 33% |
| 09 | 18% | 36% | 9% | 36% | 0% | 8% | 64% |
| 10 | 0% | 0% | 17% | 33% | 50% | 14% | 25% |
| 11 | 7% | 0% | 0% | 7% | 87% | 6% | 7% |
| 12 | 0% | 0% | 8% | 17% | 75% | 14% | 8% |
| 13 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 63% | 0% |
| 14 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 0% |
| 15 | 8% | 0% | 23% | 15% | 54% | 7% | 31% |
| 16 | 0% | 10% | 10% | 10% | 70% | 17% | 10% |
| 17 | 0% | 13% | 0% | 31% | 56% | 33% | 25% |
| Total | 8% | 14% | 13% | 20% | 46% | 18% | 29% |

Annex 3: List of EU-funded projects included in this report's analysis

Table 8. List of the sample of 43 EU-funded projects included in the present analysis.

| Project ID | Project title | Project budget (funded by the EU) |
|------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| INTV-10839 | BOOST - Businesses and Organisations in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan operate sustainably | € 1,015,632 |
| INTV-10841 | Expansion of Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek local smallholder organic agriculture and forest-based food products to EU Markets | € 990,000 |
| INTV-10961 | Border Management in Central Asia -BOMCA Phase 10 | € 21,650,000 |
| INTV-11729 | A model for sustainable tourism in Central Asia: Building Capacities, Creating Awareness, Introducing technology | € 1,607,927 |
| INTV-11739 | Resource Efficiency in Agri-food Production and Processing (REAP) | € 2,367,097 |
| INTV-1222 | Border Management in Central Asia - Phase 9 (BOMCA 9) | € 6,606,380 |
| INTV-14072 | Critical Maritime Routes Programme Monitoring, Support and Evaluation Mechanism | € 2,000,000 |
| INTV-14168 | EU4Energy - Improving Energy Sector Statistics and Policy Development in countries of Eastern Partnership and Central Asia | € 12,100,000 |
| INTV-14580 | Regional Integration and Capacity Building to Boost Agribusiness MSMEs Competitiveness and Trade Promotion in Central Asia -CANDY V | € 1,100,000 |
| INTV-14582 | Reviving Uzbekistan and Tajikistan's sustainable Ikat and Silk (RUTSIS) | € 1,610,237 |
| INTV-15259 | Subscription and Management in the name of KfW and for the account of the European Commission of a participation in the Microfinance Initiative for Asia (MIFA) as well as a contribution to the ancillary TA Facility. | € 9,220,000 |
| INTV-15687 | Stakeholder Engagement Uranium Legacy Remediation Central Asia. Phase II | € 1,000,000 |
| INTV-15690 | Water Monitoring System Central Asia | € 3,000,000 |
| INTV-16069 | European Union – Central Asia Water, Environment and Climate Change Cooperation (WECOOP) | € 2,996,000 |
| INTV-16071 | PROMHOUSE - Promoting professional housing management in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan | € 866,609 |
| INTV-16073 | Central Asia COVID-19 Crisis Response (CACCR-1) | € 3,000,000 |
| INTV-16076 | Central Asia Nexus Dialogue Project: Fostering Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus and Multi-Sector Investment (Phase II) | € 1,000,000 |
| INTV-16077 | Supporting Rule of Law in Central Asia | € 8,889,000 |
| INTV-16079 | Promoting international trade in Central Asia | € 15,000,000 |
| INTV-16080 | Central Asia Invest: 4th Phase of Policy Component | € 4,800,000 |
| INTV-16085 | EU Support to Sustainable Energy Connectivity in Central Asia | € 6,800,400 |
| INTV-16087 | Sustainable Private Sector Programme in Central Asia | € 5,320,000 |
| INTV-16089 | Central Asia SDG's Platform | € 1,000,000 |
| INTV-16093 | Central Asia Energy Water Development Program (CAWEP) Multi Donor Trust Fund | € 7,000,000 |
| INTV-16094 | Strengthening Financial Resilience and Accelerating Risk Reduction in Central Asia | € 4,300,000 |

| Project ID | Project title | Project budget (funded by the EU) |
|------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| INTV-16095 | Phase 2: Supporting the Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women through Education and Training in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan | € 4,000,000 |
| INTV-16096 | Supporting the Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women through Education and Training in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan | € 2,000,000 |
| INTV-16097 | Strengthening disaster resilience and accelerating implementation of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia | € 3,750,000 |
| INTV-16439 | European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia | € 600,000 |
| INTV-16618 | Accelerate Prosperity in Central and South Asia (AP-ASIA) | € 10,000,000 |
| INTV-16741 | Silk Roads Heritage Corridors in Central Asia and Iran, International Dimension of the European Year of Cultural Heritage | € 3,400,000 |
| INTV-17614 | EU-UN Support to the States in Central Asia for their citizens returned from conflict zones, primarily Syria and Iraq – Component 1 | € 1,435,490 |
| INTV-18320 | Contribution to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) | € 13,000,000 |
| INTV-20887 | Environmental Remediation Account for Central Asia (ERA) 369-085 | € 39,974,000 |
| INTV-21373 | PROTECT/ICMPD: Improving Migration Management & Migrant Protection in selected Silk Route countries (_intv) | € 5,000,000 |
| INTV-21444 | Dialogue and Action for Resourceful Youth in Central Asia (DARYA) | € 10,000,000 |
| INTV-21454 | Central Asia COVID-19 Crisis Response (CACCR) - Phase II | € 3,000,000 |
| INTV-4457 | EU Action on Drugs and Organized Crime (EU-ACT): Enhanced Cooperation and Capacity Building to address Drug-Related Organised Crime along the Heroin Route | € 12,000,000 |
| INTV-4668 | IFCA contribution to the SME Finance Facility in Central Asia | € 11,240,000 |
| INTV-4708 | Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries | € 12,380,000 |
| INTV-5243 | Regional Programme for Promoting Counter Narcotics Efforts in Afghanistan & Neighbouring Countries (second phase) | € 3,000,000 |
| INTV-5777 | The SME Finance Facility for Central Asia - Phase 2 | € 7,850,000 |
| INTV-985 | Supporting the implementation of aviation agreements in the Eastern Partnership countries and upgrading civil aviation safety and security standards in Central Asia | € 4,913,000 |

Annex 4: List of attached documents to the present deliverable

4.A. SDG Index and UN Women aggregated results

4.B. Brief IPR analysis for Central Asia

4.C. EU Project Analyses