



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



INSTITUTE FOR
WAR & PEACE REPORTING



BRIDGING HORIZONS: STRENGTHENING COOPERATION BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIA AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Eldaniz Gusseinov

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eldaniz Gusseinov

Eldaniz Gusseinov specializes in European and international studies with an emphasis on the European Union's foreign policy and its engagement with Central Asian member states, alongside an analysis of the EU's internal political processes. He has pursued his education at Andrásy University Budapest, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, the University of Hamburg, and Kazakh-German University. His professional experience includes internships at the Hungarian Institute of International Relations and the Institute for Peace Studies and Security Policy, both based in Hamburg. Gusseinov has authored over 15 articles in his field of study.



CONTENTS

WHY IS DEEPENING TIES WITH CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE A STRATEGIC NECESSITY?	5
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COOPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIAN AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES	9
ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE	12
THE COOPERATION BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIAN NATIONS AND HUNGARY: AN EXEMPLARY MODEL OF BRIDGING HORIZONS	19
"BRIDGING HORIZONS" AS A POSSIBLE FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT FOR CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES	24
RECOMMENDATIONS	26
CONCLUSION	30
REFERENCES	31
ANNEX 1 – TABLES	34
ANNEX 2 – FIGURES	38



This policy analysis delves into the dynamic interplay between Central Asia (CA) and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), scrutinizing their political, economic, and diplomatic dimensions. Key observations reveal a surge in high-level political engagements and an expansion of trade connections, though marked by certain disparities. An analysis of the establishment and distribution of diplomatic missions underscores the mutual significance accorded by each region. Particularly, Hungary's adoption of an "Open to the East" policy framework is identified as pivotal in fostering diversified economic linkages with Central Asia.

The author proposes a multifaceted approach to enhance CA-CEE relations, integrating political dialogue, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange.

Conclusively, the brief outlines a set of actionable strategies to bolster this interregional relationship.

The publication is intended for experts and consultants of foreign policy departments of Central Asian states and Central and Eastern Europe, researchers, decision-makers, and a wide range of readers interested in politics and international relations in the Central Asian region.

The views expressed herein do not reflect the position of the CABAR.asia analytical platform.

IWPR is an international non-profit organization supporting independent media and civil society in countries in transition. It operates in 28 countries; in Central Asia IWPR began operations in 1999.

© All rights reserved by IWPR. Material may be copied, downloaded and printed for personal study, research and training for non-commercial purposes with proper acknowledgement to IWPR, the copyright holder.

This publication was made possible with financial support from the Government of Norway. The views expressed in the publication do not reflect the official position of the Norwegian Government.

WHY IS DEEPENING TIES WITH CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE A STRATEGIC NECESSITY?

Within the scope of this analysis, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) encompasses the 11 nations of the European Union (EU) that acceded post-2004, as delineated in the subsequent map. Given their shared historical trajectories, geographical contiguity, and political evolutions, these states are conventionally categorized as a distinct region. Owing to their strategic geographical positioning, these nations are pivotal in mediating relations between the European Union and Central Asian countries. Concurrently, both regions resonate with a parallel post-communist historical trajectory, laying the foundation for relationship-building, as exemplified by Hungarian foreign policy towards Central Asia, elaborated further in this study.



Figure 1: Geographical Depiction of Central and Eastern European Nations Addressed in This Analysis on the European Map.

From 2022 onwards, there has been a marked escalation in high-ranking diplomatic engagements between Central and Eastern European nations and their Central Asian counterparts. For instance, Prime Minister Petr Fiala of the Czech Republic embarked on inaugural visits to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan within this year, aiming to bolster ties as a strategic move to counterbalance China's predominant influence in trade.¹ Concurrently, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán journeyed to Turkmenistan for the first time, with the intent of investigating energy transit potentials to Europe.² An examination of the data provided by Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs underscores a substantial uptick³ in bilateral interactions in 2022 compared to the preceding year.

¹ Václav Smolka. «15.-25. dubna 2023: Premiér Fiala navštíví Filipíny, Indonésii, Singapur, Vietnam, Kazachstán a Uzbekistán.» Vláda České republiky, April 13, 2023, <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/ocekavane-udalosti/15--25--dubna-2023-premier-fiala-navstivi-filipiny-indonesii-singapur-vietnam-kazachstan-a-uzbekistan-204326/#>.

² Veres Szabolcs. «Magyar miniszterelnöki látogatás Türkmenisztánban.» Eurázsia Központ, accessed October 14, 2023, <https://eurasiacenter.hu/2023/06/15/magyar-miniszterelnoki-latogatas-turkmenisztanban/>



An examination of Kazakhstan's diplomatic dynamics reveals a marked shift towards augmented interactions with Central and Eastern European (CEE) nations, overshadowing engagements with Western European entities. This observation stems from a meticulous content analysis of official dispatches from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Notably, while 2021 prioritized interactions with nations such as Germany, France, and Belgium, 2022 has evidenced a pivot towards Poland and Hungary. Concurrently, mentions of Slovakia, the Baltic States, and Romania in the ministry's communications have seen a significant uptick. It is postulated that analogous trends might be observed upon scrutiny of communications from foreign ministries of other Central Asian states. This alignment with CEE nations can be attributed to their harmonized diplomatic strategies in the Central Asian region. This is further underscored by the pronounced diplomatic presence of CEE nations in Kazakhstan, frequently establishing it as the preliminary point of contact before extending diplomatic missions to other Central Asian countries.

The escalation in diplomatic interactions is largely attributable to mutual interest in logistics and the procurement of resources from the Caspian basin and Central Asian regions. Key players in this domain include the Visegrad Four nations (comprising Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia), along with the Baltic States and Romania. A case in point is the agreement signed on July 25 of the current year in Bucharest between Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, and Hungary. This pact aims to establish a joint venture dedicated to the transmission of "green energy" from the Caspian Sea to European markets.⁴ Concurrently, a multitude of other factors also contribute to the growing alignment between these two regions:

The semi-peripheral positioning of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Central Asian (CA) countries, situated between major economic hubs like China, Europe, and additionally Russia for CA nations, due to its escalating economic clout, assumes critical significance.

Amidst the Ukrainian conflict and ensuing geopolitical power tussles, the strategic importance of these semi-peripheral states has notably intensified, predominantly in economic contexts. For instance, Germany has witnessed a trend towards deindustrialization, characterized by the relocation of production facilities and supply chains from the nation to CEE countries. Initial findings from a survey involving 120 supply chain managers across mechanical engineering, industrial goods, automotive, and chemical sectors indicate a prevalent dissatisfaction with the business environment in Germany.⁵ Key issues identified include energy policies and labor shortages. Consequently, many corporations are contemplating shifting their production to other regions, with North America (56%), Eastern Europe (46%), Southeast Asia (29%), and India (21%) emerging as preferred destinations. The appeal of Eastern Europe lies in its lower labor costs, business-friendly legal framework, and strategic geographical position. This shift has culminated in a marked escalation in foreign direct investment from Germany into CEE nations, alongside a record creation of employment opportunities.⁶

³ Eldaniz Gusseinov. «Magyarország és a türk államok közötti együttműködés politikai és gazdasági lehetőségei: a jelenlegi tendenciák vizsgálata». KÜLÜGYI MŰHELY 5, 1–2 (Spring 2023): 486, DOI: 10.36817/km.2023.1-2.21.

⁴ Parviz Shahbazov «In #Bucharest, We Signed the #MoU with Counterparts from #Georgia, #Romania and #Hungary on the Establishment of a Joint Venture between 4 Countries for the Implementation of the Project, Which Envisages the #GreenEnergy Transmission from the #CaspianSea to #Europe.» X, accessed October 14, 2023, <https://twitter.com/ParvizShahbazov/status/1683759570512932864>.

⁵ Dominik Reintjes, «Auf ins Ausland?: Von wegen Panikmache: Die Gefahr der Deindustrialisierung in drei Grafiken.» Wirtschaftswoche, March 24, 2023, <https://www.wiwo.de/erfolg/management/auf-ins-ausland-von-wegen-panikmache-die-gefahr-der-deindustrialisierung-in-drei-grafiken/29054580.html>.

In parallel, Russian enterprises and Western firms formerly active in Russia are increasingly considering Central Asian countries for relocation. This trend indicates a potential for these nations to more effectively navigate through the prevailing economic challenges.

Promoting their own interests within the EU institutions. Within the European Union's institutions, it's common for states, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe with fewer resources, to advocate for their national foreign policy agendas. These states often seek to elevate their priorities to the EU level and assert their interests within the organization. Fabienne Bossuyt, an academic at the Ghent Institute for International and European Studies, describes this phenomenon as the "Europeanization" of the member states' foreign policies, particularly with regard to Central Asia.⁷ For member states like Latvia and Romania from the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region, Central Asia represents a significant area of interest. This interest is driven by potential economic collaborations and by security concerns, with the situation in Afghanistan being a particularly acute issue.⁸ For example, Latvia has been actively participating in the EU's Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) program, training Central Asian border guards and customs officers since 2007.⁹ Between 2015 and 2018, Latvia distinguished itself as an active participant among EU Member States in executing a program of interest. Meanwhile, Romania has been eager to lend its specialized expertise to the European Union's aid efforts in Central Asia. Notably, during its tenure at the helm of the Council of the EU, Romania prioritized Central Asia by featuring it as a distinct component of its agenda—a move not mirrored in the programs of the ten preceding Council presidencies.¹⁰ During the period leading up to the adoption of the EU Central Asia Strategy 2019, Romania actively engaged in discussions, seeking to make contributions in sectors such as water resource management, governance, education, and enhancing interconnectivity between the regions.

It should be added that the Central and Eastern European (CEE) nations are witnessing a gradual increase in their sway within the EU framework, a trend attributable to the rising count of their nationals employed within EU bodies. Approximately a quarter of the European Commission's workforce consists of individuals from CEE countries. Significantly, the representation of CEE staff in EU institutions exceeds their countries' population proportions within the EU bloc.¹¹ This indicates the strategic importance of these countries in the context of Central Asia's relations with the European Union.

⁶ Eldaniz Gusseinov, "Germany's Impact on the Socio-Economic Situation in Europe." HEARTLAND Expert Analytical Center, May 15, 2023, <https://heartland.asia/influence-of-germany-on-the-socio-economic-situation-in-europe/>.

⁷ Fabienne Bossuyt, «Between National and European Foreign Policy: The Role of Latvia and Romania in the EU's Policy towards Central Asia», Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 17, 3 (July 3, 2017): 444, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2017.1361897>.

⁸ Ibid: 446-447.

⁹ Ibid: 455

¹⁰ «Programme of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 1 January – 30 June 2019,» Council of the EU, accessed October 14, 2023, p. 19, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/56243/2019-jan-jun-ro-programme.pdf>

¹¹ Eldaniz Gusseinov. « Bridging Europe and Central Asia: Insights from EU Staff Analysis» Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting, July 24, 2023, <https://cabar.asia/ru/tsentralnaya-aziya-i-evropa-kak-analiz-sostava-sotrudnikov-es-mozhet-pomoch-navesti-mosty>

¹² "Kasym-Jomart Tokayev Participated in the Second Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia and the President of the European Council," Official Website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, June 2, 2023, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/kasym-zhomart-tokayev-prinyal-uchastie-vo-vtoroy-vstreche-glav-gosudarstv-centralnoy-azii-i-prezidenta-evropeyskogo-soveta-254825>.



The issue of trade ties with the European Union member states presents a two-fold challenge:

Firstly, nations within the region predominantly engage in commerce with EU countries through the exchange of their natural resources, while in turn, they import manufactured goods. This aspect of trade collaboration with the EU was tabled for discussion at the most recent Central Asia-European Union Summit.¹² The strategic significance of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) nations is increasingly evident, with major financial actors like China and South Korea viewing these countries as conduits for collaboration with larger EU economies, including Germany, France, and the Benelux nations. A prominent instance is Samsung, which operates manufacturing plants in Hungary and Slovakia, distributing finished goods across the EU. This presents an opportunity for Central Asian states; should they opt to pivot from trading resources to products with the EU, the CEE region stands as an advantageous partner to initiate such trade relations.

Secondly, the trade and investment relations between the EU and Central Asia, particularly involving some CEE countries, are characterized by a unilateral nature. This is exemplified by the pattern of cooperation with Hungary.¹³ The expansion of Central Asian (CA) nations' trade with Hungary is predominantly driven by imports from the latter. Given their geographic proximity, CEE countries are ideally positioned as initial destinations for Central Asian exports or as potential sites for establishing production. Attractiveness of the CEE region is not limited to location; the favorable working conditions there also add to their appeal. Illustratively, the Uzbek Chamber of Commerce and Industry is looking to establish a logistics center in Hungary to facilitate the entry of Uzbek commodities into the European Union market.¹⁴ Hungary boasts the European Union's most competitive corporate tax rate at 9%, a factor that, alongside high-quality human resources and relatively modest wage levels in Europe, makes it a favored destination for foreign firms to establish their manufacturing or logistics hubs.

Therefore, fostering ties with Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries is crucial for several key reasons. Positioned at the nexus of significant economic zones, CEE nations hold strategic value for trade and investment opportunities. Their escalating role within the European Union, coupled with their distinctive status as intermediaries linking Central Asia and the EU, positions CEE countries as vital allies in tackling economic challenges and forging synergistic partnerships in a dynamic global environment.

¹³ Eldaniz Gusseinov, "Hungary's Bilateral Relations with Central Asian Countries: A Comparative Analysis," XIV Annual International Scientific Student Conference of Kazakhstan-German University, "Modern Global Trends: Challenges and Risks for Central Asia," Almaty, Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan-German University, 2022, 46.

¹⁴ "Uzbekistan-Hungary: expanding cooperation in logistics", Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, July 28, 2023, <https://chamber.uz/ru/news/9065>.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COOPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIAN AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The current analysis will assess the degree of collaboration between Central Asian nations and the states of Central and Eastern Europe, relative to their interactions with other EU countries. The focus will be on key metrics such as diplomatic ties, economic exchanges, and academic-scientific partnerships.

Considering the diplomatic sphere, one should account for the reciprocal establishment of embassies and consulates, such as the presence of Kazakhstani diplomatic missions across the CEE region and, conversely, the presence of CEE diplomatic entities in Kazakhstan. Upon compiling the relevant data, it has been possible to represent this information visually on two distinct maps: Distribution of diplomatic representations of Central Asian countries by EU countries;¹⁵ 2. Distribution of diplomatic representations of the EU countries by Central Asian countries..¹⁶ When comparing both maps, it becomes noticeable that the Central Asian countries tend to emphasize more on the countries of Western Europe, namely Belgium, France, Germany and Austria. These countries are home to the diplomatic missions of almost all Central Asian countries. This can be partly explained by the fact that Brussels and Vienna are home to the headquarters of various international organizations, and France and Germany are the largest players in the European Union. Looking at the CEE countries separately, the largest number of diplomatic missions of the Central Asian countries are located in Hungary (embassies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), despite the relative proximity of Budapest to Vienna (2 to 3 hours away). This indicates the importance of cooperation with Hungary for the countries of the region. Next are Poland, Lithuania and Romania, which each have two embassies of CA countries, with Uzbekistan's embassy in the first two and Turkmenistan's embassy in

¹⁵ "Contacts of Kazakhstan Embassies Abroad," Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, accessed September 19, 2023, https://egov.kz/cms/ru/articles/kz_foreign_establishments.

"Diplomatic Missions and Consular Institutions of Turkmenistan," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tm/index.php/ru/consulates?breadcrumbs=no>.

"On Consular Districts of Diplomatic Missions and Consular Institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abroad," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://mfa.uz/ru/ru/pages/o-konsulskix-okrugax-diplomat>.

"Embassies of the Kyrgyz Republic Abroad," Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://cci.kg/o-kyrgyzskoji-respublike.html>.

"Diplomatic Missions of Tajikistan Abroad," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.mfa.tj/ru/main/ministerstvo/predstavitelstva-tadzhikistana-za-rubezhom>.


¹⁶ "Contacts of Foreign Diplomatic Missions and Consular Offices in Kazakhstan," Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, accessed December 5, 2022, https://egov.kz/cms/ru/articles/foreign_dip_missions_rk.

"Diplomatic Missions of Foreign States and International Organizations Accredited in Turkmenistan," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tm/ru/articles/64?breadcrumbs=no>.

"Embassies in the Republic of Uzbekistan," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://mfa.uz/ru/pages/diplomaticheskij-korpus>.

"Diplomatic Missions of Foreign States in the Kyrgyz Republic," Kyrgyz Republicasynyn Tyshky Ishter Ministerligi, accessed October 15, 2023, http://mfa.kg/diplomatic-missions-in-kr/dip-in-kr-2_ru.html.

"Embassies and Missions of International Organizations in Tajikistan," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, November 1, 2020, <https://mfa.tj/ru/main/view/114/posolstva-i-predstavitelstva-mezhdunarodnykh-organizatsii-v-tadzhikistane>.



Romania. Almost every CEE country has a Kazakhstan embassy, with the exception of Slovenia. It is difficult to identify the next most active countries; Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are active, with Uzbekistan slightly ahead of the other two countries.

Conversely, Central and Eastern European (CEE) nations are demonstrating greater initiative in establishing their diplomatic missions within Central Asia. Hungary and Romania each have three embassies, while Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, and Bulgaria maintain two embassies within three Central Asian countries. Other states, with the exception of Slovenia, which has no representation, maintain a single embassy in the region, located in Astana. This pattern indicates a more pronounced interest from CEE countries in engaging with Central Asia compared to the latter's traditional focus on established European powers like Germany, France, and Italy. Nevertheless, when the European Union is categorized into regions such as Western, Central and Eastern, Southern, and Northern Europe, the CEE region emerges as second to Western Europe in the count of diplomatic missions.

The comparative analysis reveals that Central Asian states tend to prioritize relations with key Western European nations such as Belgium, France, Germany, and Austria. On the flip side, CEE nations exhibit greater proactivity in setting up diplomatic posts in Central Asia. Notably, Romania and Hungary have become pivotal hubs for Central Asian diplomatic missions within the CEE bloc, reflecting a deeper engagement and interest from these CEE countries in forging stronger ties with Central Asia. When the European Union is regarded as a separate geographical entity, it is apparent that the CEE region follows Western Europe as the second most active in establishing diplomatic missions in Central Asian territories, highlighting the emergent role of CEE nations in enhancing diplomatic connectivity and fostering expanded partnerships with their Central Asian counterparts.

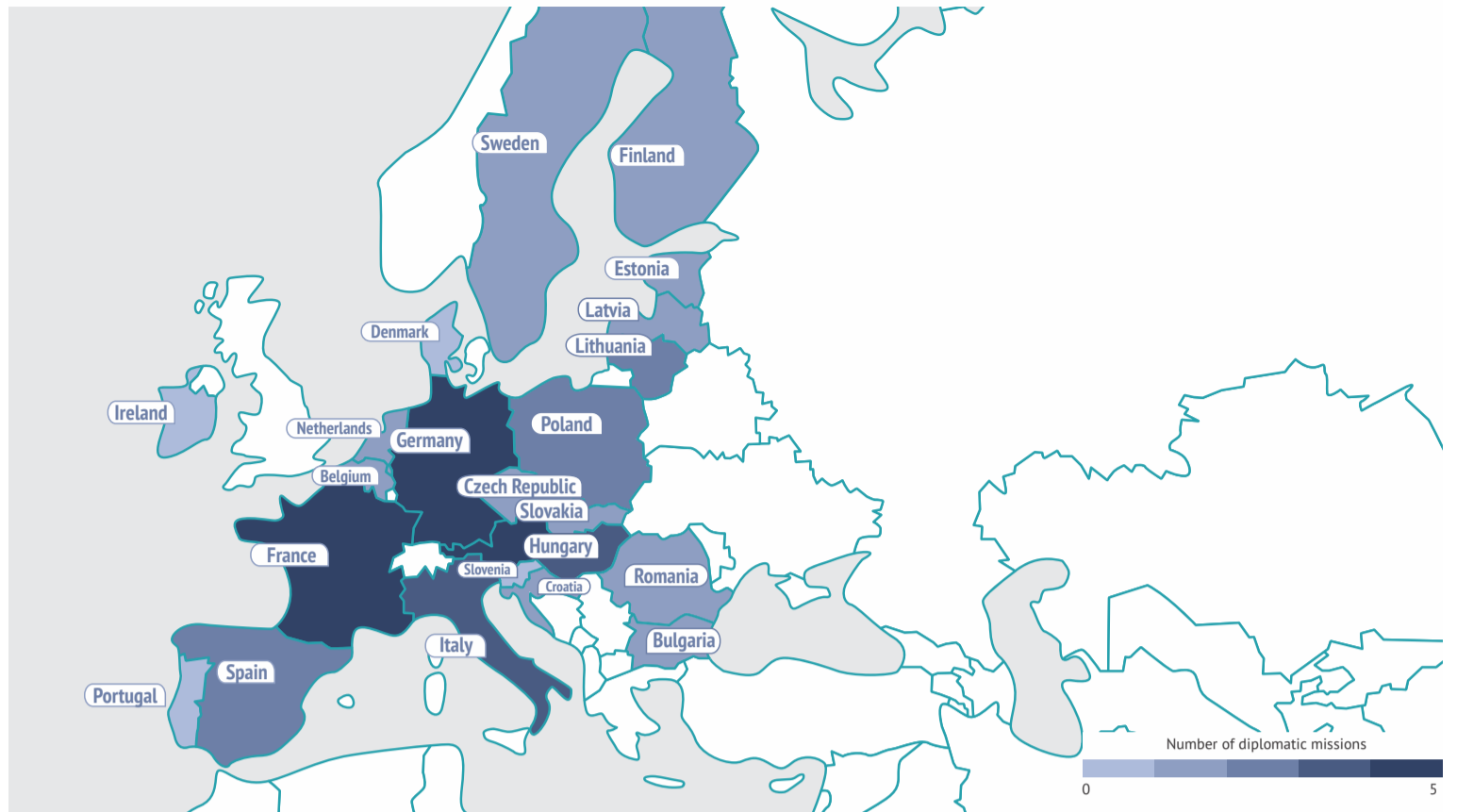


Figure 1: Distribution of diplomatic representations of Central Asian countries by EU countries.

Source: Data from Ministries of Foreign Affairs or other state institutions of Central Asian countries.

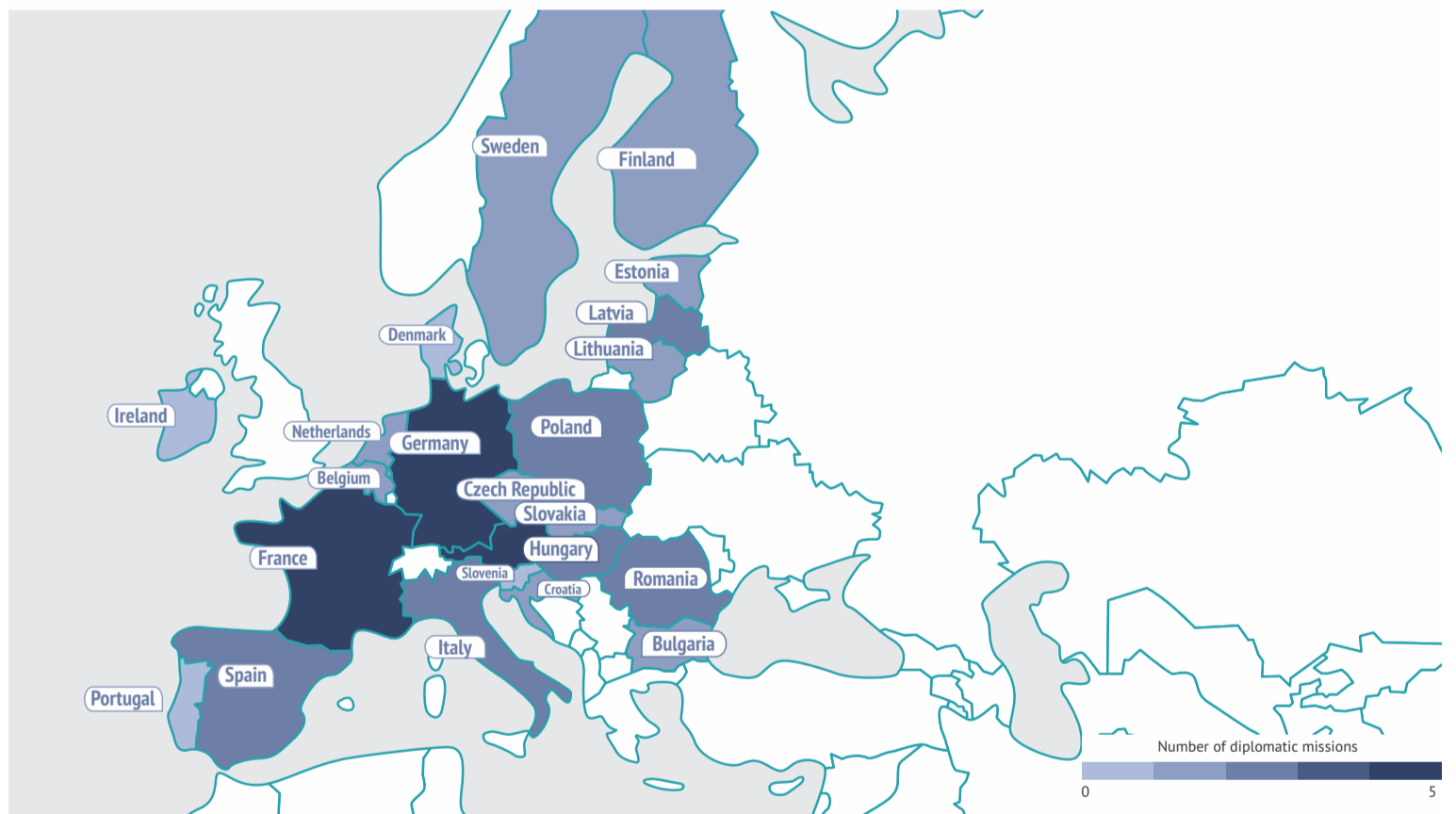


Figure 2: Distribution of diplomatic representations of the EU countries by Central Asian countries.

Source: Data from Ministries of Foreign Affairs or other state institutions of Central Asian countries.

ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

In examining the contours of economic cooperation, a fundamental approach is to analyze trade data, particularly exports and imports. To this end, trade figures for Central Asian countries with their Central and Eastern European counterparts were compiled from publicly available sources.¹⁷ The scope of the analysis encompasses a decade, from 2013 to 2022, allowing for a comprehensive review of the past ten years. This data, once collated and examined, enables the identification of key trading partners and the highlighting of specific areas of concern. Subsequent analysis will rely on data sourced from the International Trade Center.¹⁸

At an initial assessment, trade relations appear to be lopsided, with Central Asian states importing more from than exporting to the CEE region. Yet, the export dynamics of Central Asian countries to CEE nations show diverse trends. Notably, from 2019 to 2022, Kazakhstan boosted its exports to countries including Poland, Lithuania, and Hungary. Kyrgyzstan, however, experienced a downturn in exports to principal partners such as Poland and Lithuania in the same timeframe. Uzbekistan recorded an uptick in exports to nations like Poland and Lithuania. Turkmenistan's export story was uneven, with some destinations like Bulgaria seeing growth, while others like Hungary faced a decline. Exports from Tajikistan to Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland were on the rise throughout the period in question.

Examining imports, it is evident that numerous Central Asian nations are experiencing a rise in inbound shipments from Central and Eastern European countries. This trend signifies heightened demand for CEE goods in the Central Asian region (refer to Figure 3 and the annex tables). Notably, Kazakhstan observed a surge in imports from Poland and Hungary in the period spanning 2019 to 2022, while Kyrgyzstan experienced a similar increase in imports from Lithuania, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Imports from Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to Uzbekistan experienced a substantial increase from 2019 to 2022. Whereas Turkmenistan's imports from CEE countries have displayed irregularities, including instances of decline. A comprehensive review of the preceding data indicates that the importation pace and volume of Central Asian nations from CEE nations frequently outstrips exports, despite notable growth in both directions. Nonetheless, this does not imply "unilateral trade development" in every case. There is positive export growth in certain CEE countries from Central Asian nations like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. To obtain a conclusive statement regarding any trade imbalance, one must consider numerous factors such as the total value of

¹⁷ For visual comparison and utilization of the data, all the collected information is presented in the form of tables in the appendix of this paper.

¹⁸ «Trade Map - Trade statistics for international business development», International Trade Center, October 2, 2023, <https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx>.

Imports from Central and Eastern Europe to Central Asia (2013-2022) in thousand USD

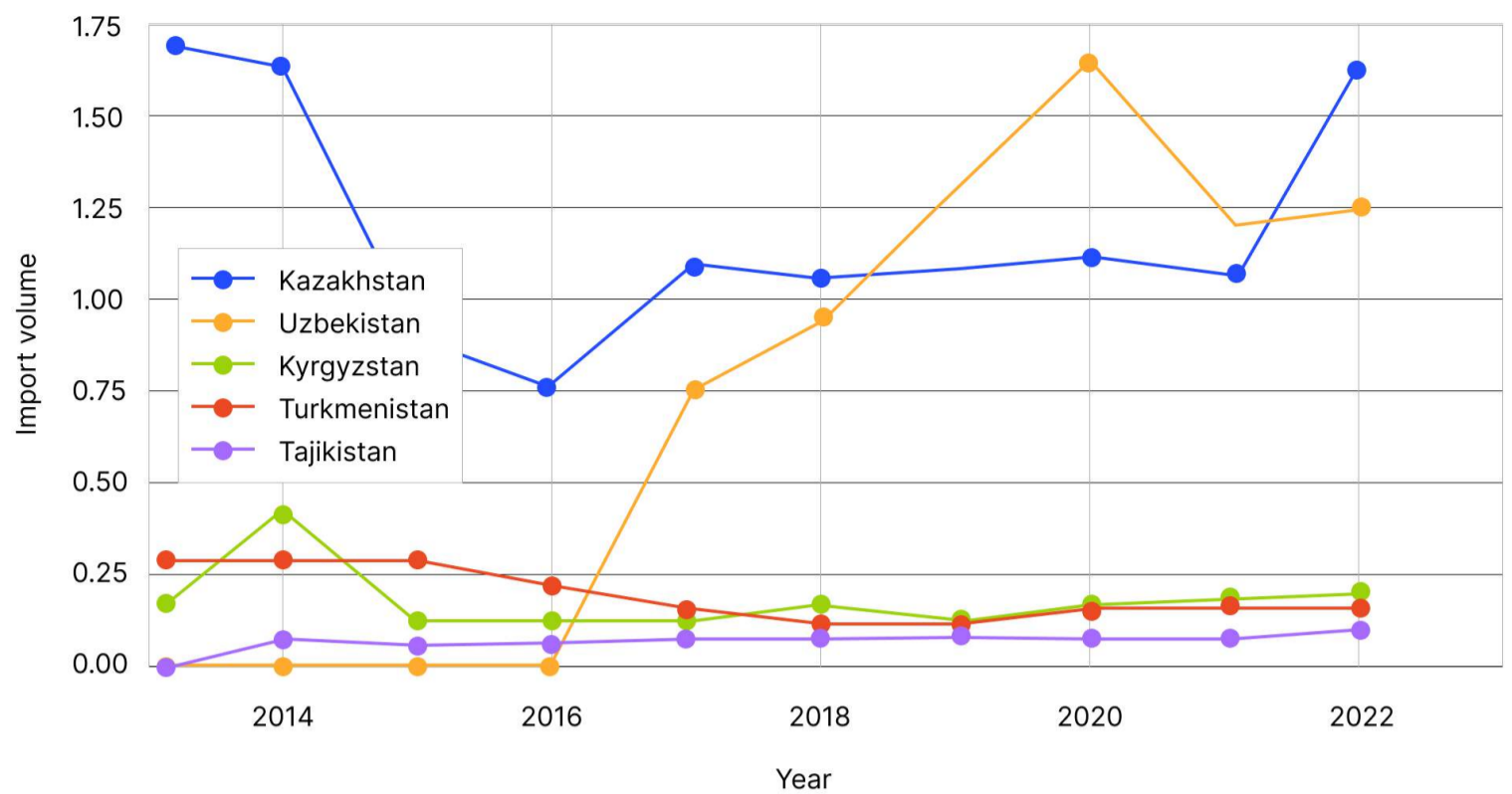


Figure 3: Imports from Central and Eastern Europe to Central Asia (2013-2022) in thousand USD.

Source: International Trade Centre

exports and imports, sectoral distribution, and non-tariff measures influencing trade. It is more accurate to state that certain relationships show signs or indicators of trade imbalances.

Conversely, export growth from Central Asian countries is marked by inconsistency when compared to imports, as illustrated in Figure 4 and the accompanying tables in the Annex. Kazakhstan's export patterns to CEE countries over nine years exhibit periods of both expansion and contraction. For instance, exports to Poland saw a substantial rise from 2014 to 2022, whereas trade with nations like Hungary demonstrated volatility. Kyrgyzstan's export trajectory has been variable, with a general uptick in exports to Lithuania within the nine-year span, despite intermittent dips. Uzbekistan's export data indicate a rising trend to destinations like Poland in recent years, though there have been declines followed by increases in other nations, including Lithuania. Analyzing a broader timespan reveals certain countries, such as Bulgaria, registering a net growth in imports from Turkmenistan, while others, like Hungary, faced a downturn. From 2014 onwards, Tajikistan's exports to Latvia initially surged until 2019, before entering a downward phase. This pattern of fluctuation is similarly observed across other CEE nations.

A thorough review of the trade data indicates that export growth from Central Asian nations to the CEE bloc is subject to significant ebbs and flows, rather than following a uniform upward or downward trajectory between 2014 and 2022. This underscores the inherently unstable and erratic pattern of trade ties between these regions.

**Exports from Central Asian countries to Central and Eastern European countries
(2013-2022) in thousand USD.**

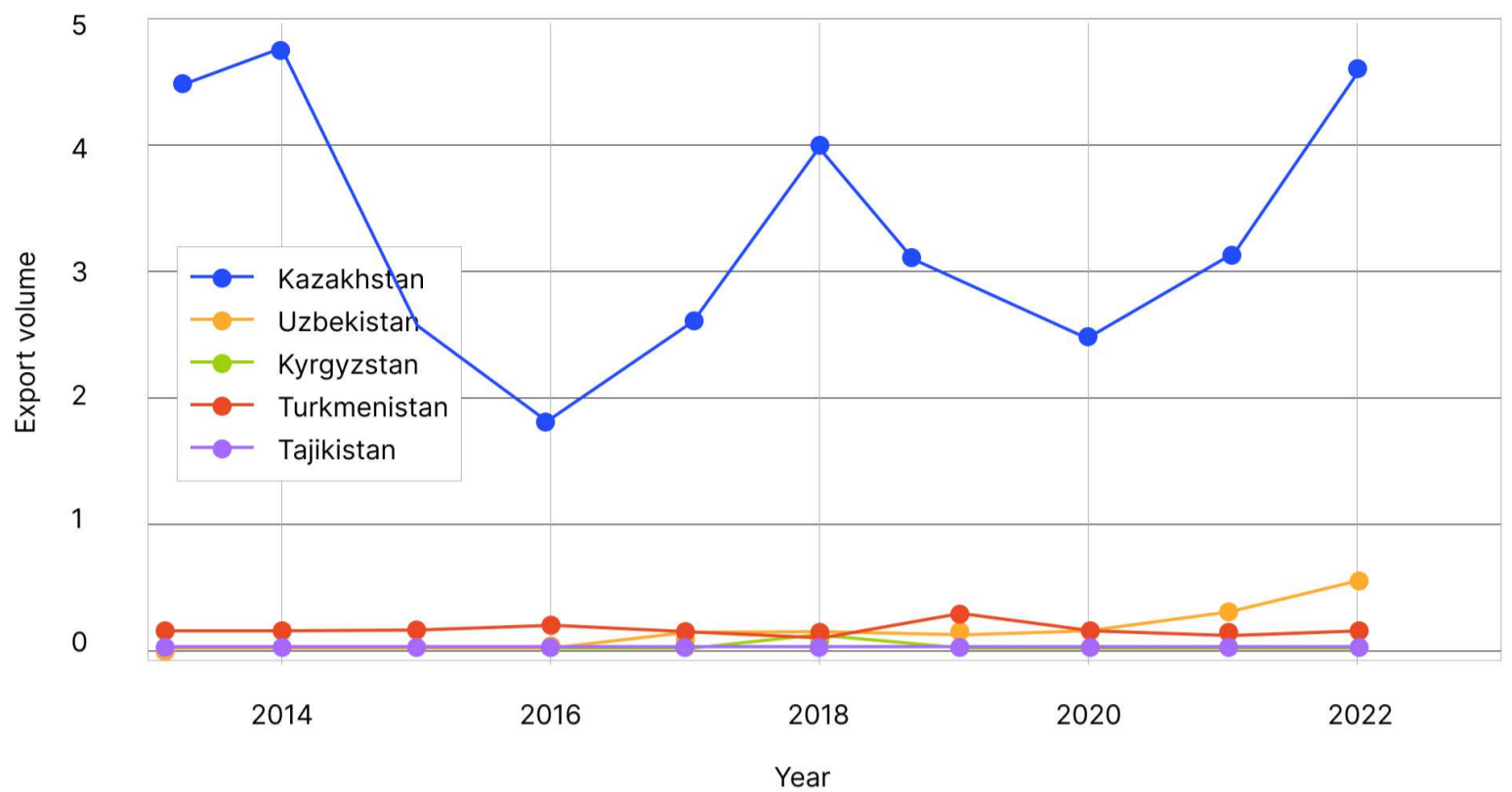


Figure 4: Exports from Central Asian countries to Central and Eastern European countries (2013-2022) in thousand USD.

Source: International Trade Centre

2019-2022 show a more stable and sustained increase in imports to most Central Asian countries from the CEE region. This denotes a shift, with Central Asian countries increasingly turning to CEE counterparts for their import requirements during this period. The 2022 data reveal that 25% of Central Asian imports from all EU countries originate from the CEE region, whereas CEE countries contribute 15% to the exports to Central Asia from the entire EU. These percentages not only reflect the current state of trade but also highlight the room for growth in cooperation between Central Asian countries and the CEE region.

Analyzing the trade patterns between Central and Eastern European countries and their Central Asian counterparts highlights discernible preferences and notable shifts over the past five years, as depicted in Figures 5 and 6. Focusing on Central Asian exports to the CEE region, it's apparent that Romania commands a significant portion, receiving nearly half of such exports, with its share in 2022 having increased by almost 12% from 2018. Kazakhstan dominates as the primary exporter, accounting for 91% of all Central Asian exports, with the surge in Romania's share largely attributed to the increased prices of energy commodities that Kazakhstan supplies to Europe. Conversely, the share of key trade partners like Poland and Lithuania has diminished, indicative of a broader downturn in commerce with the region.

An examination of import statistics reveals that Poland, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic are enhancing their standings in the import markets of Central Asian countries. This import-export ratio reiterates the issue of ballooning imports from CEE nations and the meager exports to them. Unlike exports, where Romania stands out as a singular favorite, imports display a variety of preferred partners, suggesting a keen interest from CEE countries in exporting their prod-

Share of Central and Eastern European countries in Central Asia's exports in 2018 and 2022 in %

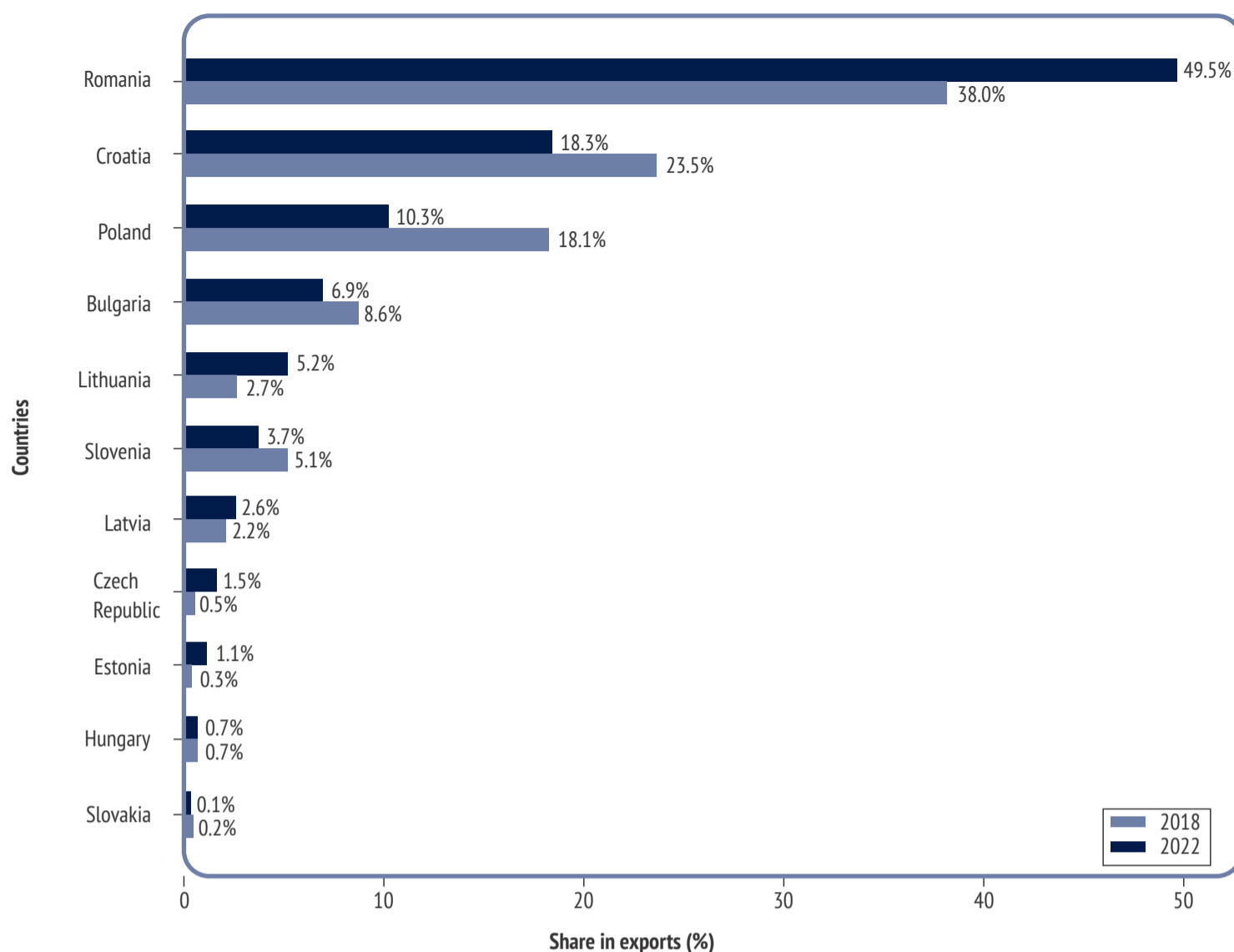


Figure 5. Share of Central and Eastern European countries in Central Asia's exports in 2018 and 2022 in %

Source: International Trade Centre

ucts to Central Asia. Notably, Latvia has seen a significant decline in its share, which could plausibly be attributed to sanctions against Russia and the ensuing logistical and transportation challenges experienced in 2022.

Drawing from this dataset, we can delineate the primary trade allies for Central Asian states:

1. Kazakhstan has identified Romania as its chief trading partner within the CEE over the last decade, with a generally positive trajectory in **exports**. Other noteworthy partners include Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Croatia. On the **import** side, Poland and the Czech Republic are principal partners, with an increasing trend suggesting bolstering economic connections.

2. For Uzbekistan, although the dataset is incomplete, indications from 2017 to 2022 point to Poland as a leading trade partner, followed by Lithuania and Latvia. In terms of **imports**, these three countries remain pivotal, with Poland being a consistent major exporter to Uzbekistan.

3. Kyrgyzstan engages in smaller export volumes, yet Lithuania has emerged as a significant partner, particularly in 2018. Import-wise, Lithuania and Poland are key, with Lithuania experiencing a notable upsurge in 2014.

4. Turkmenistan's export patterns show a substantial spike to Romania in 2019, albeit with fluctuations over the years. Bulgaria and Poland also stand out as

Share of Central and Eastern European countries in Central Asian imports in 2018 and 2022 in %

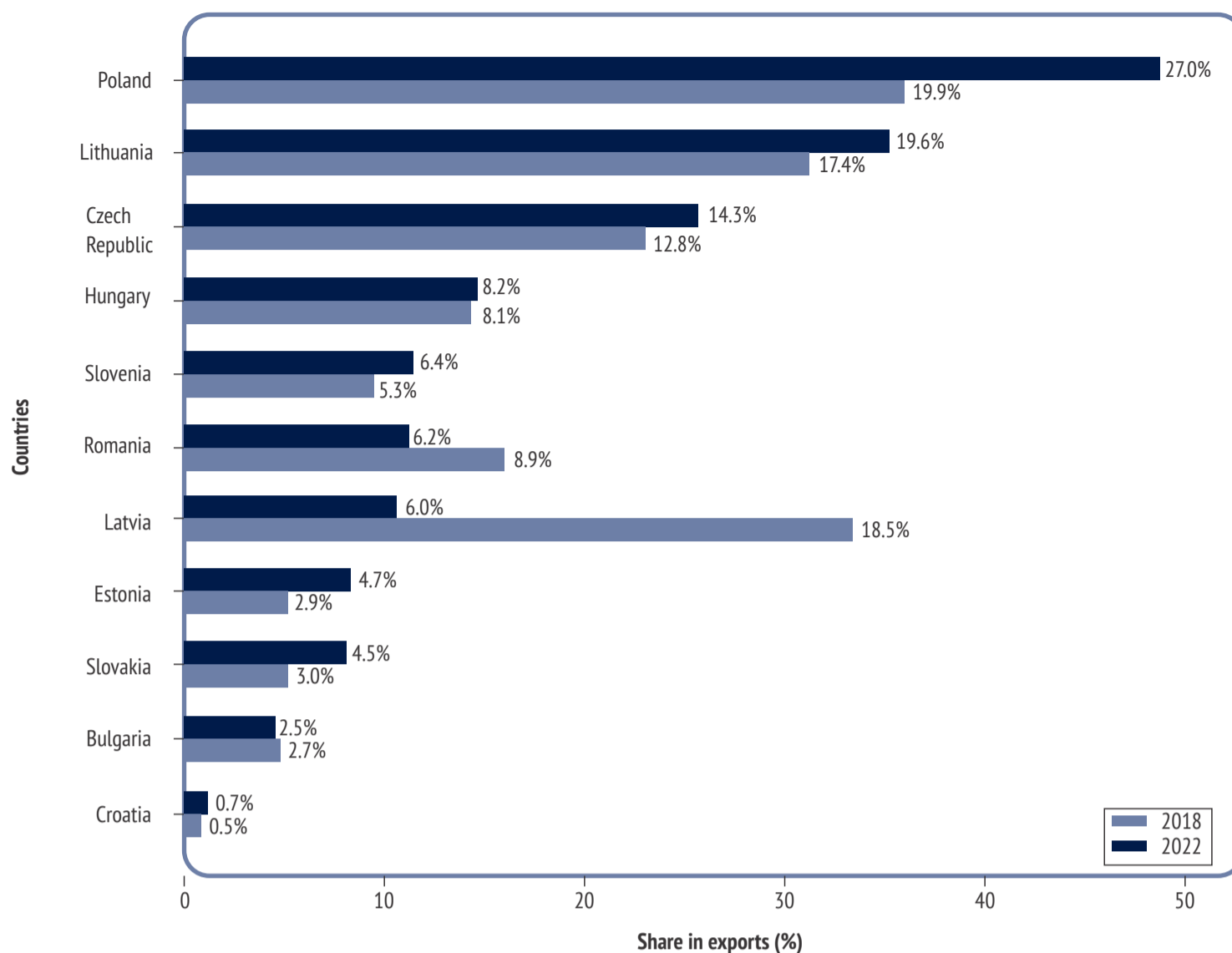


Figure 6. Share of Central and Eastern European countries in Central Asian imports in 2018 and 2022 in %


Source: International Trade Centre

significant partners. For **imports**, Poland, Lithuania, and Hungary are important, with Hungary recording high volumes, particularly in 2013.

5. Tajikistan directs a considerable portion of its **exports** to Latvia, especially marked in 2016, 2018, and 2019. Imports into Lithuania from Tajikistan notably increased in 2022, with Croatia also showing significant growth from 2019. On the **import** ledger, Lithuania has long been a significant source, peaking in 2022, while Poland's export to Tajikistan has been climbing, especially in the noted year.

Currently, Slovenia exhibits considerable potential for enhancing its collaboration with Central Asian (CA) countries. In 2022, Slovenia had the highest GDP among the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Notably, Kazakhstan's exports to Slovenia in 2022 surged almost sixfold compared to the previous year, while Uzbekistan's exports increased fourfold, as detailed in Figures 9 and 10 in the Annex. Additionally, after a period of inactivity or minimal levels, Turkmenistan's exports to Slovenia have begun to rise, in tandem with an uptick in Slovenian exports.

This burgeoning economic partnership is starting to resonate within the political sphere as well. A testament to this was the meeting on February 9, 2023, between the Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan, Laziz Kudratov, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, Tanja Fajon. Their discussions were aimed at exploring avenues to develop bilateral ties,



focusing on trade and economic ventures, investments, and the expansion of transport, logistics, and industrial cooperation.¹⁹ Meanwhile, reports indicate that representatives from Turkmenistan visited Slovenia at the invitation of their President and Prime Minister.²⁰ This indicates the nation's increasing interest in establishing collaboration with the region. Furthermore, it is crucial for Central Asian nations to assist their Slovenian counterparts in executing diverse initiatives.

Within the confines of this study, delving into the detailed commodity values underpinning trade between Central Asian (CA) and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries presents a challenge. Nevertheless, an examination of trade data with key CEE trading partners like Poland and Hungary is feasible. According to information from the International Trade Centre, Poland is actively exporting finished products such as machinery, mechanical appliances, and pharmaceuticals to Central Asian states. In return, Central Asian nations largely export commodities like hard coal, oil, gas, cotton, and fertilizers to Poland. A similar pattern is observed in trade with Hungary, where Hungarian exports to Central Asia are dominated by pharmaceuticals, medical products, and agrochemicals, while Central Asian exports to Hungary primarily consist of oil, petroleum gas, and cotton.

These trade patterns reveal a deeper issue within the trade dynamics between the two regions. CEE countries' exports are primarily finished goods, which could lend a more sustainable and incremental growth to their trade. Conversely, the Central Asian republics tend to export raw materials, a practice that subjects their trade stability to the volatility of resource pricing and fluctuating market demands.

Conclusions:

1. Trade Disparities: while trade between Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is on the rise, an imbalance is evident, with Central Asian nations importing more from CEE than exporting to it. Nonetheless, there are exceptions, as seen in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which have marked a substantial increase in their exports to certain CEE nations.

2. Export volatility: an analysis of export figures over several years reveals that Central Asian export patterns to CEE countries fluctuate, alternating between increases and decreases. Meanwhile, imports from CEE to Central Asia demonstrate greater steadiness and have shown continuous growth, particularly from 2019 to 2022.

3. Import Trend in Central Asia: there is a clear trend of Central Asian countries progressively turning to the CEE region for their importation needs. The 2022 statistics reinforce this trend, with imports from CEE making up 25 percent of all EU imports into Central Asia.

¹⁹ "Uzbekistan and Slovenia: Partnership for Sustainable Development", Government Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 10 February, 2023, <https://admin.portal.gov.uz/ru/news/view/36443>

²⁰ "Turkmenistan and Slovenia to Hold Intergovernmental Commission Meeting, Consider High Level Visits", News Central Asia (nCa), 1 February 2023, <https://www.newscentralasia.net/2023/02/01/turkmenistan-i-sloveniya-provedut-zasedaniye-mezhpravitelstvennoy-komissii-rassmatrivayut-vozmozhnost-vizitov->

4. Main Trade Partners:

Kazakhstan distinguishes Romania as its top export destination, whereas imports are predominantly from Poland and the Czech Republic.

Kyrgyzstan identifies Lithuania and Poland as its primary export and import partners, respectively.

Uzbekistan regards Poland as its foremost CEE trade ally, with Lithuania and Latvia also being key partners. Notably, Poland is the main exporter to Uzbekistan over these years.

Turkmenistan sees Hungary and Poland as major import sources, while its exports are mainly directed towards Poland, the Czech Republic, and Lithuania.

Tajikistan's exports are primarily destined for Latvia and Croatia, while Lithuania and Poland are the predominant exporting countries to Tajikistan.

5. Slovenia's Rising Profile: boasting the highest GDP in the CEE region for 2022, Slovenia is poised to significantly broaden its trade relations with Central Asian countries. Enhanced political engagement, underscored by high-level visits and dialogues, underpins this emerging trajectory.

6. Trade Commodity Breakdown: Central Asian states are largely exporting raw materials—like coal, oil, gas, cotton, and fertilizers—to countries such as Poland and Hungary. Conversely, these CEE nations are exporting predominantly manufactured products, including machinery, pharmaceuticals, and agrochemicals, to the Central Asian market.

7. Fundamental Trade Discrepancy: the trade pattern, wherein CEE countries export mainly finished goods and Central Asian countries predominantly raw materials, presents a core challenge. The export of manufactured goods often promises progressive and stable development due to consistent demand. However, the export of raw materials from Central Asian countries is susceptible to instability, driven by volatile price points and fluctuating demand for these resources.

Therefore, the trade dynamic between Central Asia and the CEE region over the past ten years presents a mix of prospects and obstacles. The possibility for expansion is clear, notably with nations like Slovenia showing promising signs. Yet, the reliance of Central Asian states on exporting natural resources could engender instability within their trade relationships. Looking ahead, strategic diversification of export commodities and the fortification of bilateral ties could be pivotal in securing a more consistent trajectory of trade development.

THE COOPERATION BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIAN NATIONS AND HUNGARY: AN EXEMPLARY MODEL OF BRIDGING HORIZONS

This study undertakes an analysis of Hungary's collaboration with Central Asian nations, highlighting it as a successful instance of convergence between Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. The insights gained will inform the development of recommendations aimed at enhancing the cooperative endeavors of Central Asian countries within this specific European region.

Post-2010, following the electoral triumph of the Fidesz party, led by the current Prime Minister, the Hungarian government has embarked on a strategic pivot known as "Open to the East" (Hungarian: "Keleti Nyitás").²¹ The aim of the strategy is to diversify Hungary's economic cooperation through the development of economic relations with China, Turkey, Central Asia, etc.²² During the inaugural session of the Uzbek-Hungarian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation in 2013, Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Peter Szijjártó elucidated that the "Open to the East" policy was essential for diversifying Hungary's previously skewed export structure, which had resulted in economic uncertainties.²³ A primary objective of this policy is to amplify Hungary's exports beyond the European continent.

Notwithstanding the skepticism of certain analysts about the efficacy of Hungary's "Open to the East" strategy,²⁴ the active Hungarian diplomatic engagements in Central Asia have yielded favorable outcomes. Since 2010, Hungary has been assertively expanding its diplomatic reach in the region. This resulted in the signing of strategic cooperation declarations with Kazakhstan in 2014, Kyrgyzstan in 2020, and Uzbekistan in 2021.²⁵ In 2023, the commitment to this diplomatic path was further underscored in Budapest when Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov and Hungarian President Katalin Novak ratified a joint declaration to reinforce and cultivate the strategic partnership between Kyrgyzstan and Hungary. Hungary stands out as either the initial or one of the select European Union countries to have inked strategic cooperation agreements with Central Asian states. The treaty-based framework for collaboration is further bolstered

²¹ Tamás Péter Baranyi, «Hungary's Role in the Organization of Turkic States as an Observer State: Limitations and Opportunities», PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs 27, 1 (26 июля, 2022): 126.

²² Tamás R. Mészáros, «As Hungary Lauds Its „Eastern Opening“ Policy, Statistics Fail to Show Benefits», EURACTIV, 12 мая 2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/as-hungary-lauds-its-eastern-opening-policy-statistics-fail-to-show-benefits/>.

²³ "Hungarian companies plan to invest about \$50 million in Uzbekistan", Podrobno.uz, 9 April, 2023, <https://podrobno.uz/cat/economic/uzbekistan-venngriya-razvitie-otnosheni/>.

²⁴ Gábor Sarnyai, «The Eastern Opening Policy Doesn't Appear to Be Profitable for Hungary», Hungary Today, October 10, 2018, <https://hungarytoday.hu/the-eastern-opening-policy-doesnt-appear-to-be-profitable-for-hungary/> / Lisa Irimescu, «Hungary's Eastern Opening: Political and Economic Impacts», KKI Policy Brief, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/41941492/Hungary_s_Eastern_Opening_Political_and_Economic_Impacts.

²⁵ Eldaniz Gusseinov, "Hungary's Bilateral Relations with Central Asian Countries: A Comparative Analysis," XIV Annual International Scientific Student Conference of Kazakhstan-German University, "Modern Global Trends: Challenges and Risks for Central Asia," Almaty, Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan-German University, 2022, 41-43.

²⁶ "Joint Declaration on Strengthening and Development of Strategic Partnership between Kyrgyzstan and Hungary Signed", Official Portal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, 13 February, 2023, <http://mfa.gov.kg/ru/osnovnoe-menyu/press-sluzhba/novosti/podpisana-sovmestnaya-deklaraciya-ob-ukrepleni-i-razviti-strategicheskogo-partnerstva-mezhdu-kyrgyzstanom-i-venngriy>

by the creation of multiple intergovernmental councils. There exist strategic councils linking Hungary with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, while business councils with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan aim to broaden commercial linkages. Additionally, intergovernmental commissions are in place to foster the growth of economic relations.

Concurrently, since 2018, Hungary has held the status of an observer within the Organisation of Turkic States. An analysis of Viktor Orbán's discourses reveals Hungary's ambition to be perceived as a pivotal European entity within the Turkic geopolitical sphere, serving as a conduit between Europe and the Turkic nations. This role is being shaped in the context of adapting to shifting political landscapes, including developments like Brexit, with a pronounced focus on fortifying economic collaboration via enhanced trade and investment. Hungary is committed to sharing knowledge and expertise across diverse sectors, aiming to support the advancement of the Turkic states. Broadly speaking, it is crucial to note that Hungary strives to establish itself as a nexus between the East and West.²⁸

Analyzing Hungary's diplomatic strategies within Central Asia, it is evident that the country is leveraging the concept of "Europeanisation" of its foreign policy to carve out a distinct role within the European Union's broader foreign policy framework. This strategy prioritizes bolstering Hungary's own interests and reinforcing its stature within the Union. The approach is characterized by a "politics-first, economics-next" agenda, as evidenced by the proactive establishment of strategic cooperation documents with Central Asian nations—a distinction that Hungary shares with few EU countries—and its observer status in the Organisation of Turkic States. However, when it comes to economic ties, particularly with Kazakhstan, Hungary does not rank among the foremost trading partners within the EU bloc. The export figures from Central Asian countries to Hungary, when compared with imports from Hungary, remain relatively modest and sporadic.

Following the consolidation of diplomatic ties through the execution of agreements and the inception of joint councils focusing on political discourse, Hungary is proactively transitioning towards amplifying economic cooperation and initiating new ventures. This proactive economic engagement sets Hungary apart from many EU nations that maintain active but less dynamically evolving partnerships within the region. Illustratively, the Hungarian Eximbank has extended credit lines to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, aimed at fostering the development of collaborative projects.²⁹

The National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity of Uzbekistan has successfully negotiated a credit line worth €50 million with the Hungarian Export-Import Bank (Eximbank). At the most recent Hungarian-Uzbek business forum held in March 2023, plans were unveiled for the establishment of a specialized indus-


²⁷ «Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the 7th Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States», <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/en/>, October 15, 2019, <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-7th-summit-of-the-cooperation-council-of-turkic-speaking-states/>.

²⁸ Gusseinov Eldaniz, «Kazahsztán és Magyarország kétoldalú kapcsolatai az ukrajnai háború árnyékában», Oeconomus Gazdaságkutató Alapítvány, 25 января, 2023, <https://www.oeconomus.hu/oecoglobus/kazahsztan-es-magyarorszag-ketoldalukapcsolatai-az-ukrajnai-haboru-arnyekaban/>.

²⁹ Nikolett Garai et. al., «Mire használható Magyarország megfigyelői státusza a Türk Tanácsban?», Budapest: Külügyi és Külgazdasági Intézet, 2021, 5

³⁰ «Magyar-Üzbég Üzleti Fórum», HEPA Magyar Exportfejlesztési Ügynökség, March 28, 2023, <https://hepa.hu/hirek/magyar-uzbeg-uzleti-forum>.

³¹ «Hungary's Eximbank to Allocate €50mn to Establish Kyrgyz-Hungarian Development Fund», 28 July, 2020, <https://economist.kg/novosti/2020/09/28/vengerskij-eksimbank-vydelit-e50-mln-na-sozdanie-kyrgyzsko-vengerskogo-fonda-razvitiya/>



trial zone near Tashkent, designated for Hungarian enterprises, which will enable them to invest under a preferential status.³⁰ The Hungarian Foreign Minister has also announced the impending creation of a fund to provide financial support to Hungarian businesses. In Kyrgyzstan, the Hungarian-Kyrgyz Development Fund has been operational since 2021 with an initial capital of US\$16 million, with intentions to augment this to US\$50 million.³¹ This fund is open to business proposals from both Kyrgyz and Hungarian companies seeking financial backing.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that Hungary's OTP Bank has acquired a significant stake in Uzbekistan's Ipoteka Bank, making it the fifth-largest banking institution in the country.³² Sándor Csányi, OTP Bank's Chairman and CEO, highlighted that Uzbekistan represents the first Central Asian market where the Hungarian bank has made an investment.³³

Consequently, Central Asia holds strategic interest for the EU, particularly for the development of alternate transport corridors and the region's wealth of mineral and energy resources, including oil and gas. Hungary is playing a proactive role as an intermediary in these matters, representing not only its own interests but also those of other EU member states. Illustrating this point, Viktor Orbán, on his 2022 visit to Tashkent, reported on efforts to explore opportunities for joint gas production.³⁴ Hungary's growing involvement in energy production is evident in other countries, including Azerbaijan, which plays a critical role in energy transportation from Central Asia. MOL, the largest Hungarian company, has invested USD 2 billion in Azerbaijan within the last 3 years during their operations in the country.³⁵ Thus, in 2022, Hungarian foreign direct investment in Azerbaijan constituted 1.8% of the total foreign direct investment in the country.³⁶

It is significant as Hungary is also advocating for the enhancement of Turkmen gas supplies to Europe. When Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimukhamedov visited Hungary, a political agreement on Turkmen gas supplies to Europe was finalised.³⁷ Hungary is one of the key proponents of the project, as it presents an opportunity to channel Turkmen gas supplies between two fields situated in the Caspian Sea: Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (Azerbaijan) and Livanov Bank (Turkmenistan). The two fields are in close proximity to each other, leading to discussions about the creation of an interconnector between them to supply Turkmen gas to Europe via Azerbaijan. Hungary is well-positioned to take advantage of this opportunity. The Hungarian company MOL possesses 9.57% of the shares in the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli block located in the Caspian Sea. The same block is also encompassed in the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli field mentioned previously.³⁸ Hungary's energy mission for the European Union is a significant factor in this scenario. Budapest's efforts to broaden its energy supply sources are crucial ahead of their upcoming Council of the European Union presidency. This role allows Hungary to establish the agenda and long-term objectives for the EU, as well as foreign policy, at the member state level. Diversification of energy suppli-

³⁰ "OTP Bank officially became the owner of Ipoteka Bank", Gazeta.uz, 13 June, 2023, https://www.ipotekabank.uz/uz/news/ipotekabank_otpgroup/.

³¹ «OTP Bank официально стал владельцем „Ипотека-банка“», Газета.uz, 13 июня, 2023, <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/06/13/ipoteka-bank/>.

³² "Trying to find opportunities with Uzbekistan for joint gas production" - Hungarian prime minister, Gazeta.uz, 10 November 2022, <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/11/10/orban/>.

³³ Emil Ismailov, "Investments of Hungarian company MOL in Azerbaijan reach \$2bn", Apa.az, 1 June 2023, <https://apa.az/energetika-i-promyshlennost/investigii-vengerskoj-kompanii-mol-v-azerbaidzan-dostigli-2-mlrd-523978?locale=ru>.

³⁴ «External Sector Statistics», Central Bank of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2022, <https://www.cbar.az/page-43/external-sector-statistics?language=en>.

³⁵ "Turkmenistan and Hungary sign 'political agreement' on gas supplies to Europe", Fergana News Agency, 22 August, 2023, <https://fergana.agency/news/131080/>.

³⁶ "Chevron sold all its assets in Azerbaijan", 17 April, 2020, <https://neftegaz.ru/news/shelf/543051-chevron-prodala-vse-svoi-aktivy-v-azerbaydzhane/?ysclid=ln92qer6p9877487187>.

ers will contribute substantially to Hungary's image before the presidency. Similarly, Central Asian nations can collaborate with Central and Eastern European nations to advance a shared Central Asian agenda.

An equally compelling dimension of Hungary's engagement with Central Asian nations is the realm of academic and scientific collaboration. Since 2013, Hungary has implemented the "Stipendium Hungaricum" scholarship program, enabling students from various countries, including those from Central Asia, to pursue their education at Hungarian state universities. As part of this initiative,

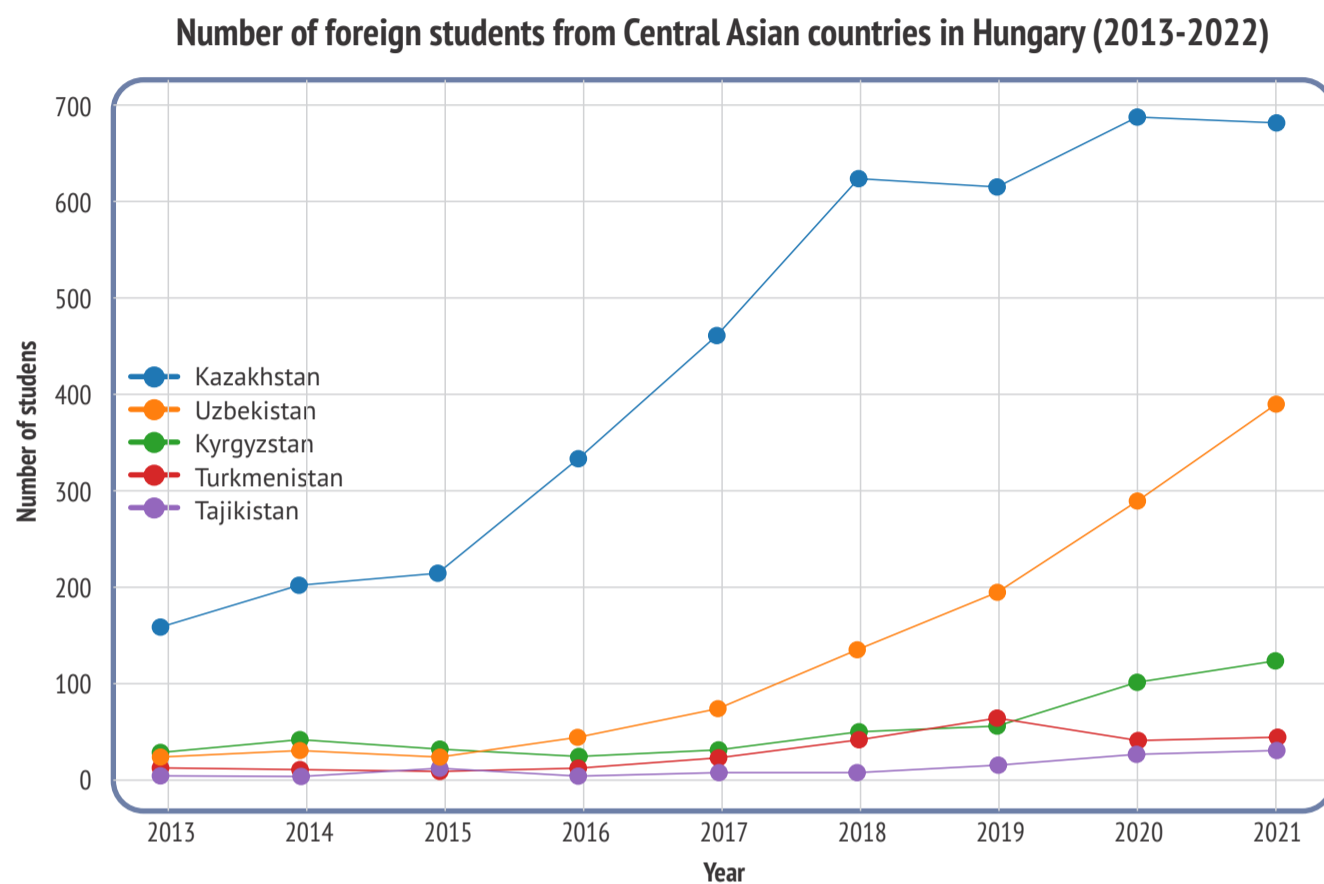


Figure 7: Number of foreign students from Central Asian countries in Hungary (2013-2022)

Source: Hungarian Central Bureau of Statistics.³⁹

Hungary allocates a specific number of university slots for international students, a figure that has been on the rise. For instance, the slots for Kyrgyzstani students expanded from 150 in 2020 to 200 in 2023, and for Uzbekistani students, the allocation increased from 100 in 2021 to 170 in 2023. The trend indicates a continual growth in student numbers (as shown in Figure 7). Beyond scholarships, these educational opportunities are laying the groundwork for deeper scientific and academic cooperation between Hungary and Central Asia.

In 2021, the Uzbek-Hungarian Scientific Centre for Potato Breeding opened in the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan. By utilizing the developments of the Centre, Uzbekistan aims to completely replace imported seed potatoes by 2024.⁴⁰

Furthermore, in 2022, the Hungarian National Office for Research, Development

³⁹ «Külföldi hallgatók száma országok szerint», Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, accessed October 15 2023, <https://statinfo.ksh.hu/Statinfo/haViewer.jsp>.

⁴⁰ "Leaders of Uzbekistan and Hungary visit joint scientific centre", Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 30 March, 2021, <https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/4267>.

⁴¹ Eldaniz Gusseinov, "Innovative Development in Hungary and R&D Cooperation with Central Asian Countries", HEARTLAND Expert Analytical Centre, 1 January, 2023, <https://heartland.asia/innovative-development-in-hungary/>.

and Innovation announced via its website a compilation of five collaborative ventures between Uzbekistan and Hungary that are slated to receive financial backing from the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Innovation. The grants for these initiatives vary, extending from USD 161,000 to USD 178,000. A majority of these projects are aimed at advancing agricultural and agro-cultural development (refer to Table 11 in the annex for details). Presently, numerous academic institutions in Hungary and Central Asia are initiating efforts to broaden their collaboration and introduce new joint academic programs.⁴¹

Embarking on a foreign policy shift in 2010, Hungary has been actively reinforcing its connections with Central Asian countries, a move propelled by its "Open to the East" strategy. This approach underscores Hungary's commitment to broadening its economic cooperation and lessening its reliance on established European counterparts. By forging strategic cooperation agreements with Central Asian states, Hungary is affirming its role as a distinct European actor in the region, fostering an environment conducive to heightened economic, scientific, and educational interchange. Hungary's diplomatic endeavors go beyond mere formalities, translating into tangible measures such as the establishment of intergovernmental councils, creation of development funds, and the securing of credit lines to finance collaborative ventures.

Hungary's strategy comprises two elements: creating a robust political foundation augmented by significant economic activity. The nation has successfully fused its national interests with those of the European Union, primarily regarding energy diversification. The active participation of Hungarian firms, particularly MOL, in Central Asian energy production highlights Budapest's aspiration to serve as a conduit between Central Asia and the European Union.

Furthermore, Hungary's educational and research initiatives highlight the potential of soft power in strengthening diplomatic relations. The Stipendium Hungaricum programme has not only facilitated educational exchanges but also paved the way for future cooperation in research and innovation, particularly in agriculture and agro-culture.

Central Asian countries can benefit from Hungary's systematic approach and gain valuable knowledge.



To establish partnership with Central and Eastern European states, it is vital to initiate political dialogues and develop them into sustainable economic partnerships.

Central Asian countries can adapt Hungary's balanced approach of combining political relations with concrete economic projects while identifying potential areas of cooperation. Furthermore, cultivating partnerships in education and science can establish the foundation for sustained collaboration, promote cultural exchange and establish trust between nations.

Hungary's active involvement with Central Asia underscores the significance of adopting a balanced approach that blends political dialogue, economic initiatives and cultural exchange. Central Asian countries interested in expanding their cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe could consider embracing a comparable all-encompassing strategy.

"BRIDGING HORIZONS" AS A POSSIBLE FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT FOR CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

The top recommendation emerging from this analytical document is the endorsement of a new foreign policy initiative termed "Bringing Horizons." This section of the paper calls for a closer examination of this directive. Analogous to Hungary's "Openness to the East" policy, "Bringing Horizons" symbolically represents the Central Asian countries' commitment to enhancing ties with Eastern counterparts. This strategy signals to Central and Eastern European nations that there is a genuine interest from Central Asia in forging partnerships, thereby elevating the agency of these states beyond merely being the subjects of external foreign policy agendas. While "Bringing Horizons" primarily suggests a focus on reinforcing connections with CEE countries, it could also indicate Central Asian ambitions to engage with other semi-peripheral regions on the global stage. The mere proclamation of this strategy doesn't necessitate any immediate or collective action from Central Asian governments; however, it broadcasts a clear intention to bolster regional collaborations. Even in the absence of a joint approach, individual governments have the latitude to cultivate analogous strategies. These tailored strategies are anticipated to solidify the foundation for augmented cooperation with other countries within Central and Eastern Europe.

Under the auspices of the "Bringing Horizons" concept, a series of initiatives could be launched to deepen collaborative efforts. Beyond conventional formats like business forums and conferences, one innovative approach could be the inauguration of a 'Year of Central Asian Countries' within Central and Eastern Europe. Drawing inspiration from successful precedents like "The Year of Kazakhstan in Germany" in 2009 and the reciprocal "The Year of Germany in Kazakhstan" in 2010, these thematic campaigns can be quite fruitful. Such events, encompassing cultural, academic, economic, and trade activities, have historically served to reinforce bilateral bonds. The array of exhibitions, festivals, and conferences organized during these years effectively congregated stakeholders from the business, academic, cultural, and artistic communities, providing a shared platform for interaction and partnership.⁴² These initiatives provided a significant boost to diplomatic ties. As articulated by the First President of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev, in 2012, the relationship between Kazakhstan and Germany was elevated to that of a "strategic partnership," culminating in the signing of over 50 commercial contracts.⁴³ During the Year of Kazakhstan in Germany in 2009, approximately 40 events took place, encompassing business forums, trade exhibitions, academic conferences, and student gatherings. Data

⁴² Nikita Zholkver, "Nazarbayev opens Kazakhstan's year in Germany", Deutsche Welle, 3 February, 2009, <https://www.dw.com/ru/a-3999931>.

⁴³ "Kazakhstan and Germany have become strategic partners", Tengrinews.kz, 9 February, 2012, https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazakhstan-i-germaniya-stali-strategicheskimi-partnerami-207779/

from the German Statistical Service indicate that in 2010, following these events, Kazakhstan's exports saw a 66% increase, and German exports experienced a 4% rise compared to the previous year—a year which had witnessed a notable decline in German exports to Kazakhstan. From 2011 onwards, a consistent growth of 16% and 25% in exports was recorded for Kazakhstan and Germany respectively (as depicted in Figure 8). Additionally, new investment deals were brokered, totaling €2.2 billion, involving major corporations such as Siemens, Metro, and Deutsche Bahn, as reported by Handelsblatt.⁴⁴ The commemoration of the Kazakhstan Year in Germany coincided with the initiation of the 2009-2011 "Pathway to Europe" program and the precursor to Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010.

In a similar vein, the prospect of a Central Asian Year in Central and Eastern Europe presents an opportunity for the people and governments of the region to enhance their understanding of Central Asia, as well as to explore the potential for cooperation with the Central Asian republics.



Figure 8: Exports and imports of Kazakhstan with Germany from 2007 to 2012.

Source: Federal Statistical Office of Germany.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ «Deutsche Unternehmen verdienen in Kasachstan», Handelsblatt, July 19, 2010, <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/kanzlerbesuch-deutsche-unternehmen-verdienen-inkasachstan/3493514.html%20/>

⁴⁵ «51000-0003: Aus- und Einfuhr (Außenhandel): Deutschland, Jahre, Länder», Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland - GENESIS-Online, 15 октября 2023 г., <https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis//online?operation=table&code=51000->

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the consideration of Advisors to the Heads of State of Central Asian nations regarding foreign policy and international cooperation, the following strategic actions are proposed:

1. Initiation of the "Bridging Horizons" Foreign Policy Concept: advisors are encouraged to evaluate the prospect of declaring the "Bridging Horizons" foreign policy framework during a subsequent consultative summit of Central Asian states. This concept, which is outlined comprehensively in the preceding section, aims to enhance regional foreign policy coordination.

2. Formation of a Central Asia & Central and Eastern European Cooperation Strategy: Drawing inspiration from Hungary's strategic engagement with Central Asia, it is recommended to craft a collaborative framework for Central Asian countries with Central and Eastern Europe. This strategic document should prioritize countries based on their clout within the European Union and their potential for economic expansion. To fortify this partnership, the following phases should be instituted:

2.1 Step 1: Initiate the strategy by setting up a cross-agency commission dedicated to economic collaboration.

2.2 Step 2: Proceed with the launch of synergistic business symposiums to encourage commercial dialogues.

2.3 Step 3: Draft and endorse a comprehensive cooperation roadmap to guide the collaborative efforts.

2.4 Step 4: Establish a financial pool to underpin joint initiatives, aimed at bolstering projects within Central Asia and extending to Central and Eastern Europe, thereby facilitating potential export opportunities from the Central Asian region.


2.5 Step 5: Culminate with the creation of collaborative industrial and trade hubs to solidify the economic interconnections.

3. Strategic Information Dissemination for Central Asian Policy Promotion:

In the event of resource limitations preventing a Central Asian (CA) country from effectively promoting a foreign policy initiative such as "Bridging Horizons," it is advisable to devise an informational campaign to engage decision-makers in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. The aim is to foster advocacy for policies that resonate with Hungary's "Open to the East" approach within CA states. Emphasis should be placed on the strategic use of social media and collaboration with think tanks to achieve this end.

3.1 Step 1: Media Landscape Assessment:

The primary measure involves a detailed examination of the media environment within the concerned CA country. Taking Uzbekistan as a case study, where there is an intent to expand cooperation with Romania in the transportation and logis-



tics sector, it is critical to identify the social media networks frequented by Romanian professionals involved in these industries.

3.2 Step 2: Online Presence and Sector Promotion:

The next step entails Uzbekistani organizations, particularly those with international cooperation mandates, to establish a digital presence highlighting Uzbekistan's sectoral prospects. This could take the form of specialized social media groups or pages such as "Friends of Uzbekistan" or "Logistics in Uzbekistan," or even through individual expert blogs. Creating interest-based groups focused on logistics, for instance, and regularly publishing content with a strategic emphasis on Uzbekistan or other CA countries, can enhance visibility. These online entities should consider producing content in both Romanian and English to maximize reach and engagement, especially when operating with limited resources.

3.3 Step 3: Targeted Engagement with Key Stakeholders:

The final step focuses on capturing the attention of CEE decision-makers towards the content disseminated through these digital platforms. Platforms like LinkedIn offer a conducive environment for connecting with relevant organizational personnel. The crucial aspect here is to gain visibility. Moreover, by engaging media personnel through deliberate social network publications, there's a potential to indirectly spur more active and widespread reporting on CA countries' events and opportunities.

3.4 Strategic Policy Communication via Think Tanks and Analysis Portals:

Incorporating think tanks and analytical publications into an information strategy is a vital component that could significantly **enhance the dissemination of knowledge about Central Asia to advisors within Central and Eastern European (CEE) governmental and semi-governmental bodies.**

3.5 Step 1: Identifying Cooperation Themes and Knowledge Centers:


The initial action should involve pinpointing key areas of potential collaboration with CEE entities and identifying think tanks and publication platforms pertinent to these themes.

3.6 Step 2: Establishing Publication Exchanges:

Subsequently, arrangements should be negotiated to facilitate the exchange of articles and mutual features on each other's websites, focusing on priority topics. For instance, as Hungary hosts the Oeconomus Foundation for Economic Research which actively features content on Central Asia, reciprocal publishing arrangements could be established between this entity and, say, the Institute of Economic Research of Kazakhstan.

3.7 Step 3: Monitoring and Evaluation:

The final step mandates a systematic assessment of the impact of these collaborative publishing efforts. Metrics for evaluation should include the frequency of citations and links to the published materials on think tank and portal websites, the utilization of this content in foreign media article preparation, and the trends in publications by the CEE expert community concerning Central Asian topics. Adjustments to the strategy should be data-driven, based on these performance indicators.



4. Strategic Enhancement of Bilateral Relations through Analytical Organizations and Forums: It is recommended to initiate the formation of bilateral analytical institutions dedicated to scrutinizing and fostering bilateral ties. An exemplar could be the establishment of a Kazakh-Hungarian Institute for the Study of Bilateral Relations. These organizations would serve as repositories and disseminators of contemporary data on the evolution of bilateral relations and exploratory areas for amplified cooperation.

5. The convening of a forum under the Central and Eastern Europe - Central Asia (CEE-CA) framework is advocated. This could be orchestrated at the echelon of state leaders or foreign ministry officials. Given the surge in multilateral engagement involving Central Asian states post-2022, the CEE-CA forum would offer a platform for exchanging perspectives on bilateral cooperation and the proclamation of forthcoming collaborative initiatives.

Recommendations for foreign policy agencies of Central Asian countries:


1. Cultivation of Central Asian National Brands: Central Asian foreign policy entities are advised to strategically cultivate and integrate their national brands within the informational spheres of Central and Eastern European (CEE) nations. Crucial to this endeavor is the nuanced alignment of these brands with the distinct local cultures of each CEE state. The communication should be indirect, aiming to pique interest as a 'byproduct' of cultural engagement, thereby garnering broader appeal and enhancing receptivity to cooperation. The ultimate goal is for CEE audiences to organically acquire a greater understanding and attraction to Central Asian countries, subsequently fostering robust cooperative ties.

1.1 Example of National Brand Integration: a case in point is the proposed conceptual branding for Kazakhstan in Poland, titled "Silk Wave: The Way of Friendship." This initiative would draw upon the shared historical and cultural connections between Kazakhstan and Poland, evoking the legacy of the Silk Road alongside the symbolic waves of Poland's Vistula River. The core message would encapsulate the spirit of camaraderie, collaborative spirit, and mutual cultural appreciation, fortifying the bilateral relationship.

2. Initiate Collaborative Media Ventures: it is proposed to orchestrate joint media campaigns with the objective of cultivating favorable mutual perceptions and deepening cross-cultural understanding. This could manifest in the form of co-produced television content, films, and documentary features.

3. Youth Engagement and Exchange Programs: there is a recommendation to set up programs that bolster youth-driven projects and initiatives, which are instrumental in promoting intercultural understanding and collaboration among young individuals from the two regions. These programs could encompass academic exchange programs, internship opportunities, and support for youth-led entrepreneurial ventures.

3.1. Formation of Central Asian Student Associations: the establishment of a Central Asian student association within Europe is suggested. This body would be responsible for organizing events and advocating for the cultural heritage of



Central Asian nations. The announcement and formation of such an association could be a highlight of the forthcoming "Central Asia - European Union" summit. Further, the conceptualization of bilateral student associations, such as a "Kazakh-Polish student association," should be explored.

4. Development of Regional Investment Proposals: the compendium of comprehensive investment proposals for the Central Asian region is recommended for promotion within CEE countries. These proposals may emphasize collaborative production initiatives that leverage the diverse supply chain capabilities across Central Asian nations, potentially involving two to five countries. These projects would be strategically situated along the Middle Corridor, offering export potential to larger markets such as Russia and China. A unified regional approach is anticipated to enhance the efficacy of these investment promotions.

Recommendations for quasi-state or state analytical centers of Central Asian countries:

1. 1. Establishment of European Study Centers: it is advocated that Central Asian analytical institutes inaugurate centers dedicated to European Studies, with a particular emphasis on Central and Eastern European (CEE) nations. Profound insights into the regional and national political dynamics of CEE countries are essential for the development of informed and nuanced relationships.

2. Implementation of Research Internship Exchanges: the inception of mutual internship arrangements for scholars from both Central Asia and CEE is recommended. Such programs are envisaged to facilitate direct familiarity with the respective regions and cultivate a network within the CEE scholarly community, thereby enhancing the caliber of region-specific research.

3. Formation of an EU Researcher Association: the creation of an association composed of researchers focusing on the European Union is proposed. The primary mission of this association would be to foster a sustained exchange of insights and expertise among local specialists on EU affairs. This exchange would be propelled through various scholarly activities, including discussions, symposia, and additional collaborative platforms.

CONCLUSION

In the shifting geopolitical landscape, the evolution of Central Asia's engagement with Central and Eastern Europe has become a subject of significant change and interest. The intricate nexus of political, economic, and diplomatic threads has informed the current state of their interregional relations. A surge in high-level diplomatic exchanges signifies an intensification of political rapport. Economically, trade volumes have swelled, yet there persists a trade imbalance—Central Asian nations frequently find themselves as net importers in their exchanges with CEE counterparts, a pattern reflecting a broader array of prospects and complications.

On the diplomatic front, the proliferation of embassies and diplomatic missions underscores a mutual acknowledgment of strategic significance. Central Asian states exhibit a nuanced diplomatic orientation, actively engaging with CEE nations while maintaining a preference for established Western European interlocutors like Germany and France. Within this context, the role of CEE countries is somewhat diminished in contrast to their Western European counterparts regarding diplomatic footprint.

Hungary emerges as a pivotal nation in this equation, adopting a proactive stance with its "Open to the East" policy, illustrating a commitment to diversify its economic linkages and carve out a substantial role within Central Asia. Hungarian overtures are not limited to declarative policy but are substantiated by concrete actions, ranging from energy collaborations to academic partnerships.

The unfolding Central Asia-CEE relationship is replete with opportunities for expanded cooperation, particularly as nations like Hungary take proactive stances. Nevertheless, addressing the complexities inherent in trade imbalances remains crucial. For a robust and enduring partnership, a strategy that marries political dialogue, economic engagement, and cultural diplomacy is imperative. Central Asian countries stand to gain from embracing a comprehensive approach that mirrors Hungary's methodical and strategic engagement with the region.

REFERENCES

1. "Chevron sold all its assets in Azerbaijan," April 17, 2020, ["Chevron prodala vse svoi aktivy v Azerbaydzhane", 17 aprelya, 2020.] <https://neftegaz.ru/news/shelf/543051-chevron-prodala-vse-svoi-aktivy-v-azerbaydzhane/?ysclid=ln92qer6p9877487187>.
2. "Hungary's Eximbank to Provide €50 million to Establish Kyrgyz-Hungarian Development Fund", July 28, 2020, <https://economist.kg/novosti/2020/09/28/vengerskij-eksimbank-vydelit-e50-mln-na-sozdanie-kyrgyzsko-vengerskogo-fonda-razvitiya/>.
3. "Programme of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 1 January – 30 June 2019". Brussels: Council of the EU, 2019.
4. Baranyi, Tamás Péter. "Hungary's Role in the Organization of Turkic States as an Observer State: Limitations and Opportunities". PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs 27, issue 1 (July 26, 2022,): 121–36.
5. Bossuyt, Fabienne. "Between National and European Foreign Policy: The Role of Latvia and Romania in the EU's Policy towards Central Asia". Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 17, issue 3 (3 July, 2017,): 441–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2017.1361897>.
6. Central Bank of the Republic of Azerbaijan. «External Sector Statistics», 2022, <https://www.cbar.az/page-43/external-sector-statistics?language=en>.
7. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic. "Embassies of the Kyrgyz Republic Abroad." Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/4t66pu2f>
8. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan. "Uzbekistan-Hungary: expanding cooperation in logistics", July 28, 2023, [Torgovo-promyshlennaya palata Uzbekistana. "Uzbekistan-Vengriya: rasshiraetsya sotrudnichestvo v sfere logistiki", 28 iyulya, 2023.] <https://chamber.uz/ru/news/9065>.
9. Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. "Contacts of Foreign Diplomatic Missions and Consular Offices in Kazakhstan," December 5, 2022, [Elektronnoe pravitel'stvo Respubliki Kazakhstan. "Kontakty zarubezhnykh diplomaticheskikh predstavitel'stv i konsul'skikh uchrezhdeniy v Kazakhstane", 5 dekabrya, 2022.] https://egov.kz/cms/ru/articles/foreign_dip_missions_rk.
10. Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. "Contacts of Kazakhstan Embassies Abroad," September 19, 2023, [Elektronnoe pravitel'stvo Respubliki Kazakhstan. "Kontakty posol'stv Kazakhstana za rubezhom", 19 sentyabrya, 2023.] https://egov.kz/cms/ru/articles/kz_foreign_establishments.
11. Fergana news agency. "Turkmenistan and Hungary sign 'political agreement' on gas supplies to Europe", August 22, 2023, <https://fergana.agency/news/131080/>.
12. Garai, Nikolett, Máté Szalai, Pál Gyene, Zoltán Egeresi, and Tamás Kozma. "Mire használható Magyarország megfigyelői státusza a Türk Tanácsban?" Budapest: Külügyi és Külgazdasági Intézet, 2021.
13. Gazeta.uz. "Industrial zone for Hungarian companies to be built in Tashkent", January 9, 2023, [Gazeta.uz. "Promzonu dlya kompaniy Vengrii nachnut stroit' v Tashkente", 9 yanvarya, 2023.] <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/01/09/industrial-zone/>.
14. Gazeta.uz. "OTP Bank officially became the owner of Ipoteka Bank", June 13, 2023, [Gazeta.uz. "OTP Bank ofitsial'no stal vladel'tsem 'Ipoteka-banka'", 13 iyunya, 2023.] <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/06/13/ipoteka-bank/>.
15. Gazeta.uz. "We are trying to find opportunities for joint gas production with Uzbekistan' - Hungarian Prime Minister", November 10, 2022, [Gazeta.uz. "Pytaemsya nayti s Uzbekistanom vozmozhnosti sovместnoy dobychi gaza" — prem'er Vengrii", 10 noyabrya, 2022.] <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/11/10/orban/>.
16. Government Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan. "Uzbekistan and Slovenia: Partnership for Sustainable Development", February 10, 2023, [Pravitel'stvennyy portal Respubliki Uzbekistan. "Uzbekistan i Sloveniya: partnyorstvo vo imya ustoychivogo razvitiya", 10 fevralya, 2023] <https://admin.portal.gov.uz/ru/news/view/36443>.
17. Gusseinov Eldaniz. "Kazahsztán és Magyarország kétoldalú kapcsolatai az ukrajnai háború árnyékában». Oeconomus Gazdaságkutató Alapítvány, January 25, 2023, <https://www.oeconomus.hu/oecoglobus/kazahsztan-es-magyarország-ketoldalú-kapcsolatai-az-ukrajnai-haboru-arnyekaban/>.
18. Gusseinov, Eldaniz. "Bridging Europe and Central Asia: Insights from EU Staff Analysis" Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting, July 24, 2023, <https://cabar.asia/ru/tsentralnaya-aziya-i-evropa-kak-analiz-sostava-sotrudnikov-es-mozhet-pomoch-navesti-mosty>.
19. Gusseinov, Eldaniz. "Germany's Impact on the Socio-Economic Situation in Europe." HEARTLAND

Expert Analytical Center, May 15, 2023, [Gusseinov, Eldaniz. "Vliyanie Germanii na sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie v Evrope". HEARTLAND Expert Analytical Center, 15 maya, 2023.] <https://heartland.asia/influence-of-germany-on-the-socio-economic-situation-in-europe/>.

20. Gusseinov, Eldaniz. "Hungary's Bilateral Relations with Central Asian Countries: A Comparative Analysis," 40-50. Almaty, Kazakhstan: Kazakh-German University, 2022. [Gusseinov, Eldaniz. "Dvustoronnie otnosheniya Vengrii so stranami Tsentral'noy Azii: sravnitel'nyy analiz", 40–50. Almaty, Kazakhstan: Kazakhstansko-Nemetskiy Universitet, 2022.]

21. Gusseinov, Eldaniz. "Innovative Development in Hungary and R&D Cooperation with Central Asian Countries." HEARTLAND Expert Analytical Center, January 1, 2023., [Gusseinov, Eldaniz. "Innovatsionnoe Razvitie v Vengrii i Sotrudnichestvo v Sfere NIOKR so Stranami Tsentral'noy Azii". HEARTLAND Expert Analytical Center, 1 yanvarya, 2023.] <https://heartland.asia/innovative-development-in-hungary/>.

22. Gusseinov, Eldaniz. "Magyarország és a türk államok közötti együttműködés politikai és gazdasági lehetőségei: a jelenlegi tendenciák vizsgálata = Political and Economic Opportunities for Cooperation between Hungary and Turkic States: An Analysis of Current Trends". KÜLÜGYI MŰHELY 5, issue 1–2 (2023,): 467–96.

23. HEPA Magyar Exportfejlesztési Ügynökség. "Magyar-Üzbég Üzleti Fórum", March 28, 2023, <https://hepa.hu/hirek/magyar-uzbeg-uzleti-forum>.

24. <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/en/>. "Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the 7th Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States", October 15, 2019, <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-7th-summit-of-the-cooperation-council-of-turkic-speaking-states/>.

25. International Trade Center. «Trade Map - Trade statistics for international business development», October 2, 2023, <https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx>.

26. Ipoteka Bank. «Tranzaksiya amalga oshdi: OTP Bank Ipoteka-bankni sotib oldi», June 13, 2023, https://www.ipotekabank.uz/uz/news/ipotekabank_otpgroup/.

27. Irimescu, Lisa. "Hungary's Eastern Opening: Political and Economic Impacts". KKI Policy Brief, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/41941492/Hungary_s_Eastern_Opening_Political_and_Economic_Impacts.

28. Ismailov, Emil. "Investments of Hungarian company MOL in Azerbaijan reached \$2 bln". Apa.az, June 1, 2023, [Ismailov, Emil. "Investitsii vengerskoy kompanii MOL v Azerbaydzhan dostigli \$2 mlrd". Apa.az, 1 iyunya, 2023.] <https://apa.az/energetika-i-promyshlennost/investicii-vengerskoi-kompanii-mol-v-azerbaidzan-dostigli-2-mlrd-523978?locale=ru>.

29. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. "Külföldi hallgatók száma országok szerint". accessed October 15, 2023, <https://statinfo.ksh.hu/Stainfo/haViewer.jsp>.

30. Kyrgyz Respublikasynyn Tyshky Ishky Ishter Ministerligi. "Diplomatic missions of foreign states in the Kyrgyz Republic". Accessed October 15, 2023, http://mfa.kg/diplomatic-missions-in-kr/dip-in-kr-2_ru.html.

31. Mészáros, Tamás R. "As Hungary Lauds Its „Eastern Opening“ Policy, Statistics Fail to Show Benefits". www.euractiv.com, May 12, 2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/as-hungary-lauds-its-eastern-opening-policy-statistics-fail-to-show-benefits/>.

32. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan. "Diplomatic representations of Tajikistan abroad". Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.mfa.tj/ru/main/ministerstvo/predstavitelstva-tadzhikistana-za-rubezhom>.

33. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan. "Embassies and Missions of International Organizations in Tajikistan", 1 November, 2020, <https://mfa.tj/ru/main/view/114/posolstva-i-predstavitelstva-mezhdunarodnykh-organizatsii-v-tadzhikistane>.

34. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. "Embassies in the Republic of Uzbekistan." Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://mfa.uz/ru/pages/diplomaticheskiy-korpus>.

35. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. "On Consular Districts of Diplomatic Missions and Consular Institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan abroad." Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://mfa.uz/ru/ru/pages/o-konsulskix-okrugax-diplomat>.

36. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. "Diplomatic missions and consular offices of Turkmenistan." Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tm/index.php/ru/consulates?breadcrumbs=no>.

37. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. "Diplomatic missions of foreign states and international organizations accredited in Turkmenistan." Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tm/ru/articles/64?breadcrumbs=no>.

38. News Central Asia (nCa). "Turkmenistan and Slovenia to Hold Intergovernmental Commission Meeting, Consider High Level Visits", February 1, 2023, [News Central Asia (nCa). "Turkmenistan i Sloveniya Provedut Zasedanie Mezhpravitel'stvennoy Komissii, Rassmatrivayut Vozmozhnost' Vizitov Na Vysshem Urovne", 1 fevralya, 2023.] <https://www.newscentralasia.net/2023/02/01/turkmenistan-i-sloveniya-provedut-zasedaniye-mezhpravitelstvennoy-komissii-rassmatrivayut-vozhnost-vizitov-na-vysshem-urovne/>.

39. Official portal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic. "Joint Declaration on Strengthening and Development of Strategic Partnership between Kyrgyzstan and Hungary Signed," February 13, 2023, <http://mfa.gov.kg/ru/osnovnoe-menyu/press-sluzhba/novosti/podpisana-sovmestnaya-deklaraciya-ob-ukreplenii-i-razvitii-strategicheskogo-partnerstva-mezhdu-kyrgyzstanom-i-vengriyey>.
40. Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. "Kasym-Jomart Tokayev participated in the second meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia and the President of the European Council", June 2, 2023, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/kasym-zhomart-tokaev-prinyal-uchastie-vo-vtoroy-vstreche-glav-gosudarstv-centralnoy-azii-i-prezidenta-evropeyskogo-soveta-254825>.
41. Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. "Leaders of Uzbekistan and Hungary visit joint scientific center," March 30, 2021, <https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/4267>.
42. Reintjes, Dominik. „Auf ins Ausland?: Von wegen Panikmache: Die Gefahr der Deindustrialisierung in drei Grafiken». *Wirtschaftswoche*, March 24, 2023, <https://www.wiwo.de/erfolg/management/auf-ins-ausland-von-wegen-panikmache-die-gefahr-der-deindustrialisierung-in-drei-grafiken/29054580.html>.
43. Sarnyai, Gábor. "The Eastern Opening Policy Doesn't Appear to Be Profitable for Hungary". *Hungary Today*, October 10, 2018, <https://hungarytoday.hu/the-eastern-opening-policy-doesnt-appear-to-be-profitable-for-hungary/>.
44. Shahbazov, Parviz. "In #Bucharest, We Signed the #MoU with Counterparts from #Georgia, #Romania and #Hungary on the Establishment of a Joint Venture between 4 Countries for the Implementation of the Project, Which Envisages the #GreenEnergy Transmission from the #CaspianSea to #Europe". X, July 25, 2023, <https://twitter.com/ParvizShahbazov/status/1683759570512932864>.
45. Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland - GENESIS-Online. „51000-0003: Aus- und Einfuhr (Außenhandel): Deutschland, Jahre, Länder“. October 15, 2023, <https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis//online?operation=table&code=51000-0003&bypass=true&levelindex=0&levelid=1697370103188#abreadcrumb>.
46. Tengrinews.kz. "Kazakhstan and Germany have become strategic partners", February 9, 2012, [Tengrinews.kz. "Kazakhstan i Germaniya stali strategicheskimi partnerami", 9 fevralya, 2012] https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazahstan-i-germaniya-stali-strategicheskimi-partnerami-207779/.
47. Václav, Smolka. "15.-25. dubna 2023: Premiér Fiala navštíví Filipíny, Indonésii, Singapur, Vietnam, Kazachstán a Uzbekistán". *Vláda České Republiky*, accessed September 26, 2023, <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/ocekavane-udalosti/15--25--dubna-2023-premier-fiala-navstivi-filipiny--indonesii--singapur--vietnam--kazachstan-a-uzbekistan-204326/#>.
48. Veres, Szabolcs. "Magyar miniszterelnöki látogatás Türkmenisztánban". *Eurázsia Központ*, June 15, 2023, <https://eurasiacenter.hu/2023/06/15/magyar-miniszterelnoki-latogatas-turkmenisztanban/>.
49. Zholkver, Nikita. "Nazarbayev opens Kazakhstan's year in Germany." *Deutsche Welle*, February 3, 2009, [Zholkver, Nikita. "Nazarbaev otkryl god Kazakhstana v Germanii". *Deutsche Welle*, 3 fevralya, 2009.] <https://www.dw.com/ru/a-3999931>.

ANNEX 1 – TABLES

CEE Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	98540	39066	80017	47314	203951	183430	285118	207497	354479	142395
Hungary	64086	53531	19654	14208	39178	26187	10260	9362	15351	10929
Latvia	357788	263399	121132	93506	74436	57336	48647	36164	33981	181952
Lithuania	126070	285109	100600	240905	554362	660789	318115	360637	356272	446374
Poland	679497	595684	789188	505031	575172	891254	529590	363135	386590	770763
Romania	2396490	3152960	1343375	724412	925560	1497674	1731915	1263683	1521128	2512756
Slovakia	40287	40454	7716	8332	14612	8284	1757	1798	1195	1897
Slovenia	23275	23998	18239	23848	26569	10859	17073	7346	9331	54164
Croatia	457402	232775	134801	11449	304087	341606	110433	311559	661843	340949
Czech RE	87615	95966	90722	65817	77266	80288	73209	70232	87230	123664
Estonia	4712	1411	14996	8275	11152	4768	5208	1358	4623	58663

Table 1: Kazakhstan's exports to Central and Eastern European countries from 2013 to 2022 in thousand USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	65604	56205	31756	20803	37337	29710	48618	36979	35881	38867
Hungary	144227	136895	68348	87274	117265	113027	92006	101568	123262	161297
Latvia	74178	60862	27606	23199	23795	26118	29755	22281	24335	34226
Lithuania	191041	150127	69719	53870	167927	66398	84498	111537	97569	137934
Poland	507910	429328	292245	227037	326953	283245	338069	312826	371299	587473
Romania	89998	119347	76485	78301	66754	177510	96215	73833	48415	142115
Slovakia	109318	146191	54616	18578	38456	53355	39964	67500	82764	118336
Slovenia	119875	95341	38114	56053	86217	65276	94446	68401	62807	75096
Croatia	16397	17686	11111	6547	12872	11483	8954	21252	19136	20484
Czech RE	358406	357317	172550	179502	190059	212084	241812	279027	165465	299380
Estonia	31359	56289	23774	23800	20534	22137	11258	10964	14231	63316

Table 2: Kazakhstan's imports from Central and Eastern European countries from 2013 to 2022 in thousand USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	4041	3213	4311	1812	13568	41479
Hungary	101	342	169	310	799	3161
Latvia	73624	34652	32856	31692	49319	76249
Lithuania	5294	10761	21666	31451	60200	70764
Poland	35333	36359	39936	56759	86851	127587
Romania	901	1150	1202	1699	5783	9754
Slovakia	275	71	1984	420	64	1412
Slovenia	639	119	83	118	336	1330
Croatia	63	192	0	194	256	504
Czech RE	5441	4350	4772	3144	4885	7353
Estonia	1640	15708	3665	3852	7776	16398

Table 3: Uzbekistan's exports to Central and Eastern Europe from 2017 to 2022, in thousands of USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	12956	17548	23393	23184	26710	34531
Hungary	53885	47784	70382	108700	113544	87993
Latvia	203000	382410	310165	326258	170494	145608
Lithuania	257749	276609	441907	471193	437062	397352
Poland	68654	120885	121618	128880	159120	214191
Romania	16355	21008	30139	16888	18277	47895
Slovakia	9611	9303	8970	11063	15168	22589
Slovenia	24806	34562	44726	56901	75180	103505
Croatia	461	169	377	111	640	635
Czech RE	78926	63595	147432	456151	128992	123131
Estonia	31553	24057	47349	41823	41405	74751

Table 4: Imports of Uzbekistan from Central and Eastern European countries from 2017 to 2022 in thousand USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	8678	5147	5475	4548	3732	7628	6419	5239	5139	1477
Hungary	98	93	108	216	28	149	74	293	200	567
Latvia	1411	3863	1969	2950	2649	5564	3001	2863	1839	1934
Lithuania	3428	4913	3794	7546	15401	46226	17134	3856	2102	5850
Poland	2094	4327	3063	1758	1936	1761	1337	879	2212	2950
Romania	747	769	1586	2329	374	728	968	840	464	5267
Slovakia	108	15	43	11	84	123	68	0	3	642
Slovenia	10	40	50	57	78	343	378	261	396	84
Croatia	107	11	21	72	28	77	30	181	186	358
Czech RE	364	1550	190	67	643	398	149	159	566	1070
Estonia	128	1	0	225	648	422	591	615	1197	678

Table 5: Kyrgyzstan's exports to Central and Eastern Europe from 2013 to 2022, in thousands of USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	8758	2955	7145	3841	9559	11651	11821	7083	6837	5132
Hungary	13096	18556	8660	10135	7486	10108	6824	7838	8063	7452
Latvia	14660	44509	9801	5602	6950	7114	5708	5719	5611	7448
Lithuania	18574	297894	15068	8139	27573	35967	25734	22761	32052	66688
Poland	35846	31596	23373	15350	22784	22199	23648	25069	22281	36779
Romania	8312	4182	7975	5498	5093	3866	3184	2029	3828	6419
Slovakia	2203	3444	1050	1486	710	2619	1700	2749	2859	4004
Slovenia	10037	17178	9195	10599	11694	11533	11098	13613	13234	13050
Croatia	816	990	206	390	414	347	222	471	392	514
Czech RE	12473	11469	7076	7417	12088	7162	8088	6381	5972	16642
Estonia	14708	13591	1344	731	659	1070	796	1941	1059	2200

Table 6: Imports of Kyrgyzstan from Central and Eastern European countries from 2013 to 2022 in thousand USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	71286	49689	6960	10539	9883	9125	16788	12269	36025	6417
Hungary	263	53	75	1536	22	47	0	555	963	22500
Latvia	69	44	35	0	0	23	68	15	44	2
Lithuania	3267	5050	274	830	396	305	1134	679	858	1907
Poland	5583	7290	3476	4342	1802	2573	1085	3476	4688	36051
Romania	3692	21863	92358	104086	48935	4143	164377	92718	17123	7588
Slovakia	208	99	37	25	31	1	35	62	1	1083
Slovenia	0	284	12	21	1	0	3	1	0	184
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	2	40754	0	0	10331
Czech RE	1969	850	295	614	593	517	656	192	47	5
Estonia	32	37	22	10	17	28	5	64	37	2208

Table 7: Exports of Turkmenistan to Central and Eastern European countries from 2013 to 2022, in thousand USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	7809	26439	11195	2873	2557	1844	4212	2362	1448	2664
Hungary	111590	26919	53201	30175	17620	14397	15047	14040	9181	6310
Latvia	10098	12271	22378	21091	10017	7688	3821	3200	3199	4520
Lithuania	34121	34532	33644	19813	11699	9422	17243	21115	21134	16307
Poland	44327	60441	48393	54533	38010	21604	23317	29831	34759	15818
Romania	14804	21592	16078	27642	5281	950	2301	4935	1562	4750
Slovakia	5402	2896	3288	1507	1857	1825	857	1125	293	933
Slovenia	15745	18620	17901	22179	11856	8415	10823	10353	4841	14074
Croatia	318	40918	39015	2291	1174	116	83	638	112	30
Czech RE	23748	27069	21024	24565	20054	6293	7064	8474	14376	18875
Estonia	8063	13632	29590	14710	12904	15750	1717	2083	5398	10296

Table 8: Imports of Turkmenistan from Central and Eastern Europe from 2013 to 2022, in thousand USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bolgaria	1243	516	793	663	765	3876	729	760	1237
Hungary	3363	2613	4920	1780	1448	2264	1482	934	1574
Latvia	8286	4806	1190	2365	1475	1173	3758	778	1501
Lithuania	13987	9978	8137	8349	10164	12747	10526	9860	16384
Poland	11398	6839	6413	6799	9081	10571	7618	9886	21062
Romania	1572	988	553	648	1189	3322	844	1253	1445
Slovakia	175	1303	421	261	751	1613	1255	929	631
Slovenia	1510	740	1587	795	1485	1590	1671	1561	1988
Croatia	57	58	85	246	49	15	21	168	29
Czech RE	7852	3769	3790	3229	4903	4020	3544	4602	5256
Estonia	1878	365	257	1733	3234	182	314	425	460

Table 10: Imports of Turkmenistan from Central and Eastern European countries from 2013 to 2022, in thousands of USD. Source: International Trade Centre

CEE Countries	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bulgaria	70	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
Hungary	0	3	0	0	0	25	11	0	0
Latvia	2899	3602	5122	2468	8879	12758	10094	5010	7361
Lithuania	774	228	1509	440	73	293	19	431	1680
Poland	651	656	153	143	264	388	839	1443	1865
Romania	0	0	162	91	0	0	0	0	0
Slovakia	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	9	
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	1656	4405	5353	3568
Czech RE	300	88	108	1	33	329	302	329	105
Estonia	0	151	586	0	134	0	0	0	0

Table 9: Exports of Turkmenistan to Central and Eastern European countries from 2013 to 2022, in thousands of USD. Source: International Trade Centre

Name of organization	Project name	Amount allocated in United States dollars
Natural Sciences Research Centre	Identification of enzymes with novel industrial potential for degradation of polluting hydrocarbons using artificial intelligence based methods	176 802
Hungarian University of Agriculture and Natural Sciences	Improving spray efficiency in crop production by recognizing plant growth periods using convolutional neural networks.	161 299
University of Obuda	Evidence-based digital health solutions to support local patient safety procedures	178 642
Nyiregyháza University	Supporting organic and conventional agriculture through geoinformatics	165 138
University of Debrecen	Bilateral R&D co-operation to develop prototypes of various herbal active ingredients and proposals for industrial scale-up	178 642

Table 11. Projects funded by the Ministry of Culture and Innovation under the call for proposals "Support for Hungarian participation in the Applied Research Programme and the Programme for the Development of Hungarian-Uzbek Cooperation".

Source: Hungarian National Office for Research, Development and Innovation

ANNEX 2 – FIGURES

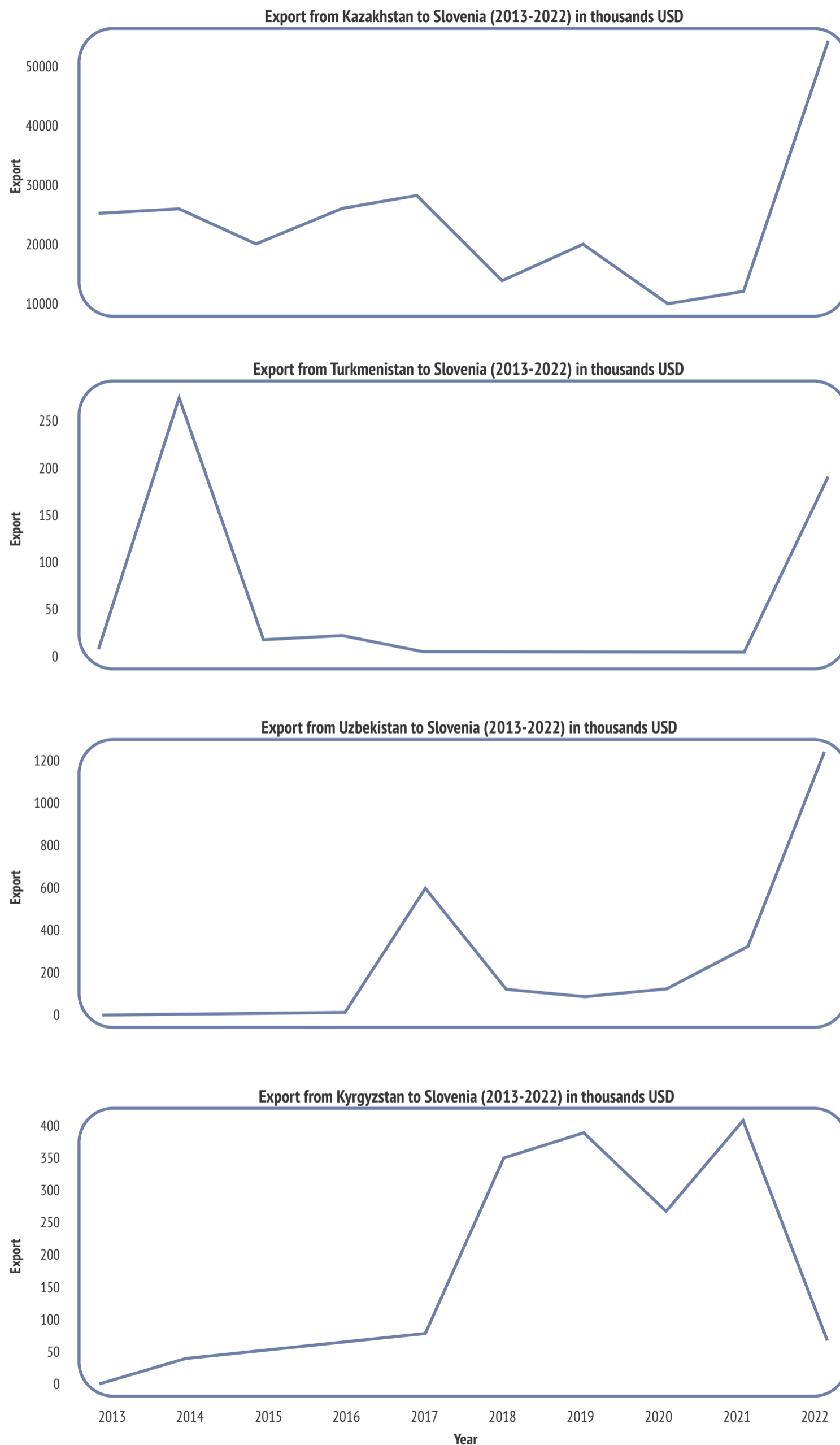


Figure 9: Exports from Central Asian countries to Slovenia (2013-2022) in thousand USD. Source: International Trade Centre

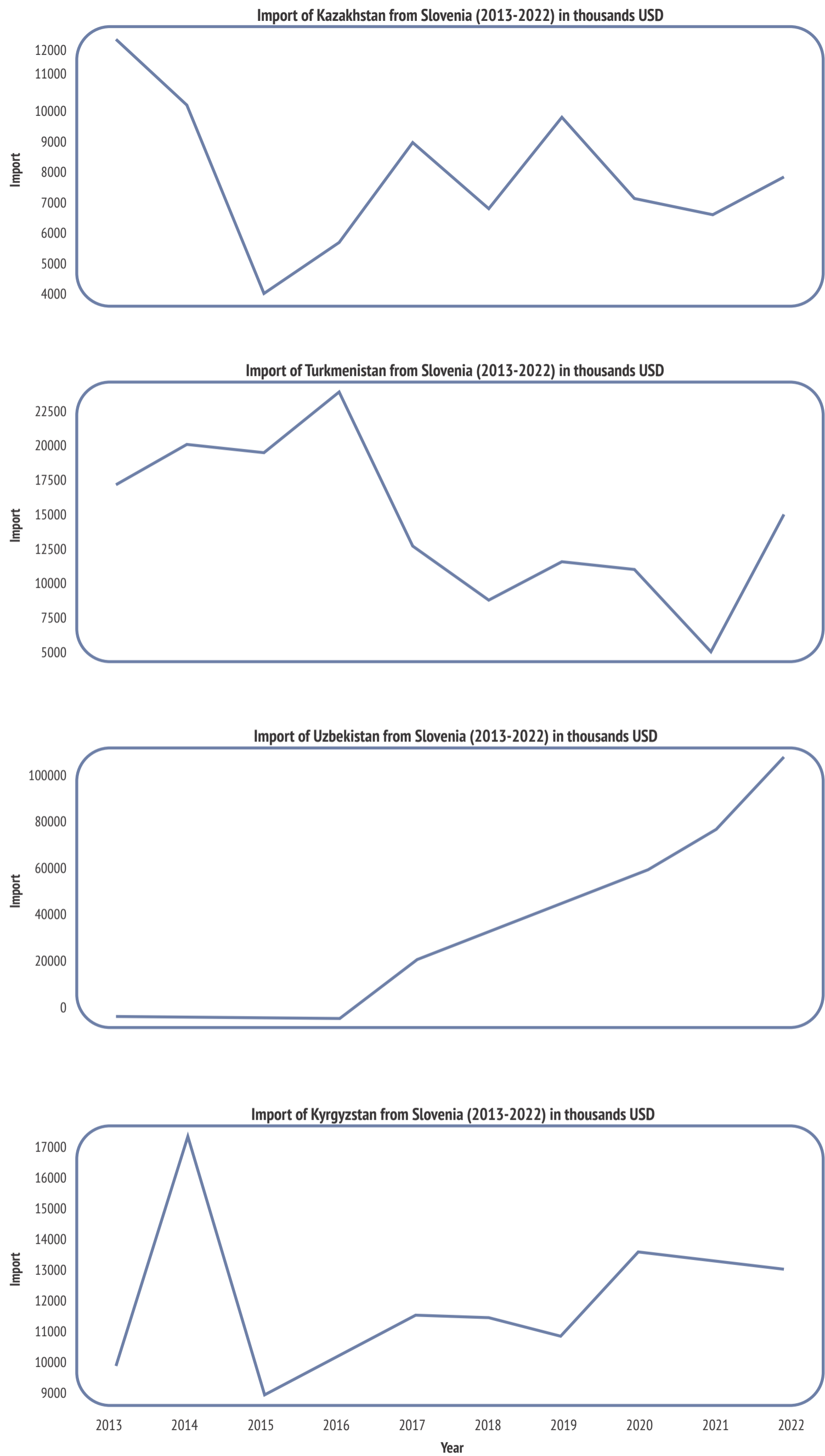


Figure 10. Imports of Central Asian countries from Slovenia (2013-2022) in thousand USD. Source: International Trade Centre



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting

INSTITUTE FOR
WAR & PEACE REPORTING

