

Alona Lebedieva: Central Asia – can the EU make swift strategic decisions

KYIV, UKRAINE, April 29, 2026

[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- The European Union is increasingly looking at Central Asia as a strategic region for trade, transport, energy, and new routes between Europe and Asia. After the EU–Central Asia summit and the announcement of the €12 billion Global Gateway package, this attention has ceased to be merely declarative and has moved into a phase of concrete expectations from Brussels.



Alona Lebedieva

“In 2026, the question is no longer whether the EU sees Central Asia’s potential. The question is different – whether Europe is capable of acting at the speed required by the new geoeconomic reality. Strategies do not create influence on their own – influence is created by investments, infrastructure, and presence on the ground,” says Alona Lebedieva, owner of the Ukrainian diversified industrial and investment group Aurum Group.

Central Asia is effectively becoming a test of the European Union’s geoeconomic agency. The winner here is not the one who formulates the best strategies, but the one who builds railways, modernizes borders, invests in energy, and creates new logistics routes.

The region has already ceased to be a periphery. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and other countries are becoming increasingly integrated into global economic processes, while Russia’s war against Ukraine and the transformation of logistics have sharply increased the importance of alternative corridors.

“For Europe, Central Asia is not only about trade. It is about critical raw materials, energy diversification, alternative routes to Asia, and the ability to compete with China not through declarations, but through concrete projects,” emphasizes Alona Lebedieva.

At the same time, the EU’s weakness lies in speed. Brussels works well with rules and strategies, but often loses where fast investments and swift decisions are needed. In this sense, China acts

much more pragmatically, entering the region through specific infrastructure and industrial projects.

That is why the region is becoming not just a new area of cooperation for the EU, but a test of its ability to be a real geoeconomic player.

“If the EU wants to be a geoeconomic player, it needs to learn how to shorten the distance between a political decision and a real project. In Central Asia, the winner is not the one who spends longer coordinating documents, but the one who builds faster,” concludes Alona Lebedieva.

Central Asia will not wait for Europe to complete all its internal approvals. The region is already moving, looking for partners, building routes, and diversifying its economic ties. That is why this window of opportunity for the EU may be limited in time.

If Brussels can quickly turn political statements into financing, infrastructure, and business presence, Europe will gain a new strategic space of influence. If not, Central Asia will remain important for the EU in documents, but economically its future will be shaped by other players.

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