

And yet, despite its strong dependence on fossil fuels, Kazakhstan has scored many energy transition firsts in the region. It was the first to launch a national emissions trading system, set renewable energy targets, introduce a functioning support mechanism for renewables, develop utility-scale solar and wind projects, and to set a carbon neutrality target (by 2060). Today, Kazakhstan boasts 957 MW of installed wind power capacity and 1.149 MW of solar, with many more projects under development. By 2035, the country plans to deploy as much as 11.7 GW of new wind and solar capacity.

There is a strongly held view in Kazakhstan that any further development of renewable energy should go hand in hand with an increase in balancing capacity and/or the deployment of expensive storage systems. However, as experience from European countries shows, much higher shares of renewable energy can be successfully integrated through a combination of different mechanisms, including increased regional trade, demand response, grid capacity improvement, better forecasting and so forth.

Another controversial issue is the potential role of nuclear power in Kazakhstan's energy mix. The Central Asian republic is the world's largest producer of uranium but has no nuclear capacity in operation. The possible construction of a large nuclear power plant has been the subject of longstanding public debate, with a national referendum scheduled for autumn 2024. While the idea is supported by the government (and welcomed by Russia, whose state nuclear corporation Rosatom would likely build the plant), Kazakh society remains highly polarised on the issue.



Astana solar industry

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