

Rule of Law support for Central Asia

Rule of Law or law of the ruler?

Every leader, whether authoritarian or democratic, would agree that the rule of law is needed in managing a state. They might disagree, however, on the precise meaning and purpose of 'rule of law'. In developed democracies, the basis of the state is Montesquieu's separation of the executive, legislative and judicial powers. Judicial independence is even seen as the most important asset for ensuring the wellbeing of the state and its people. Nonetheless, checks and balances also exist, in which the three powers interact and carry out oversight of the others. Where judicial power or rule of law is not sufficiently independent from the executive or the legislature and cannot exercise oversight over executive power, the rule of law becomes the law of the ruler. This is the underlying problem affecting the judicial sector in Central Asia, where courts and judges often serve at the pleasure of the powers that be rather than as an independent force acting for the state and its people.

Questions about the nature of rule of law, the ways in which it relates to government and parliament, its form and its function also apply to Central Asia but the most urgent problem is the significant discrepancy between theory and practice. Judicial systems and the laws on which they are built have developed considerably over the last two decades, although they are far from perfect. But if laws are not applied in practice, rule of law remains weak. The reasons for the lack of good practice are numerous. On a broader level, implementation of the rule of law is affected by authoritarian rule, bad governance, endemic corruption, absence of respect for human rights, weak education systems, brain drain and citizens' lack of awareness of their legal rights. On a more practical level, courts are under-resourced and judges and lawyers are inexperienced, under-skilled and insufficient in number.

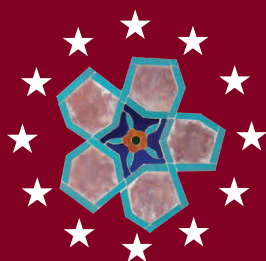
Several external donors have chosen to make rule of law a priority area in Central Asia. In doing so, they mainly focus on concrete, practical problems, by training judges and advising on the establishment or revision of laws and codes. Sometimes they try to engage civil society actors, which is also aimed at helping to build people's awareness of their rights. But most assistance is state-centred. This would not be a problem if the issue of rule of law were embedded in a broader approach incorporating democratisation, good governance and human rights. More importantly, it would require a genuine political will from recipient countries to pursue in-depth reform. Even then, the task would be lengthy and difficult, as can be seen from the experience of some East European and South Caucasus countries. In Central Asia, European donors run the risk of reducing rule of law to the lowest

common denominator, since authoritarian governments recognise the need for a system of laws, but are largely averse to democratisation and do not act on criticism about human rights.

In further fine-tuning support for the rule of law in Central Asia, donors should continue to offer training and advice on legislative reform but this should not be seen as separate from broader concerns about democratic reform. Moreover, it must be recognised that promoting the rule of law will be a long-term process – as most donors understand, both those who have been active in offering rule of law support for close to two decades, and newcomers who plan to invest over the long haul. Top-down initiatives will not suffice; a bottom-up approach, which would raise public awareness on specific matters, would probably be more effective. Helping states to develop written laws is important, but a longer-term, practical impact could be achieved by taking up issues such as ensuring the access of women and vulnerable groups to local courts, or working out fair and effective solutions to disputes over land. A bottom-up approach should also be applied to the rule of law as opposed to the law to rule on a local level, by increasing awareness among the police about their rights, duties and role in society. This could help to create healthier relations within communities. All this is easier said than done, especially since reform must be implemented in an unfavourable political landscape. So, it is essential to build donor coordination and promote debate among donors on what they seek to achieve over the coming decade.

This EUCAM Watch presents an overview of donor activities and assessment of rule of law problems in Central Asia through three interviews with experts on rule of law in Central Asia. Firstly, EUCAM talks with Mikko Puumalainen, Deputy Chancellor of Justice in Finland, who explains the Finnish government-funded 'Equal Before the Law – Access to Justice' programme. Next, we hear from Jörg Pudelka, programme manager of the GIZ regional rule of law programme, who sheds light on the German experience in rule of law support. Xavier Barré, team leader of the EU Rule of Law Platform, talks about EU programming in the rule of law field. Finally, Steve Swerdlow, Central Asia Analyst of Human Rights Watch, explains the link between rule of law support and the need for stronger EU human rights approaches to Uzbekistan.

Editorial by Jos Boonstra, Head EUCAM Programme, and Tika Tsertsvadze, EUCAM Programme Manager



Newsletter



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Interviews

Mikko Puumalainen, Deputy Chancellor of Justice of Finland

What is the 'Equal Before the Law: Access to Justice' (EBL) programme and what are its main objectives?

The main objective is to enhance the access to legal services of people in Central Asia, and, specifically, of vulnerable groups like handicapped people, women in rural areas and children. These services could be public authorities, legal aid, police, courts and so on. The research conducted before the launch of the EBL programme showed that, in order to increase access to justice for vulnerable groups, it is necessary to address deficiencies with courts, law enforcement and legal advocates. And it is also essential to support interventions outside the court system, such as raising awareness of legal rights and providing assistance in securing legal documents. The programme would ideally have covered all five countries. However, due to the limited resources of the programme, the capacities of the countries concerned and their differing willingness to participate, the EBL mainly focuses on Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Engagement on governmental level

Ambassador Mikko Kinnunen, the Finnish ambassador in Astana who is also accredited to Bishkek, and Tuula Yrjölä, Roving Ambassador to Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have held meetings in Central Asian capitals to present the Equal Before the Law programme to state authorities. Dr. Pekka Hallberg, former president of the Finnish Supreme Administrative Court, has held discussions with his colleagues in Tashkent and in Dushanbe to draw their attention to the project. Similar meetings were planned this autumn in Astana. Last March, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a conference in Helsinki for Central Asian Ombudsmen, which was a good occasion for Central Asian Ombudsmen to meet and exchange views.

What are the most severe problems in access to justice in Central Asia?

The lack of services in general, and the lack of skilled lawyers and efficient courts, especially in rural areas. Linked to this is the low quality of services in the legal system because of corruption and an undeveloped working culture. So, there are both concrete barriers

to justice and mental blocks due to public mistrust of the system.

How do you work with the governments of particular counties?

The governmental level is not a major part of the programme, because its focus is on the grassroots level, on civil society organisations. One of the ways is to create hubs around strong civil society actors, where civil society and legal actors can meet and work together and empower each other. The aim is to bring about improvements in the legal system through awareness raising, networking, research, education and building capacity of NGOs and active lawyers. Work with the governments has been conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a separate but closely coordinated action.

What are the main components of the EBL?

It involves weblogs of selected civil society activists, webpages of the EBL, university courses in Finland and Central Asian countries on relevant subjects, videos including interviews on access to justice problems. We help train lawyers, especially in rural areas, and address questions of vulnerable groups, improving university curricula in Central Asian countries, and so on. Over the period 2011-2013, €5 million was allocated to the programme.

Jörg Pudelka, Programme Manager, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Regional Rule of Law Programme

What activities does Germany undertake in support of rule of law in Central Asia?

GIZ has been working on the rule of law in Central Asia since 1996. The main focus of the programme has been support for the development of justice systems in partner countries. A strong judiciary is a crucial prerequisite for the application of laws in accordance with the rule of law and for the progress of reforms. GIZ, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), is implementing a regional programme ('Promotion of Rule of Law in Central Asia'), which is active in all five countries of the region. We are now primarily focusing on the administrative process and on procedural law reforms, because this is one of the areas that have been untouched by any reform in post-Soviet Central Asia.

What are the main achievements of GIZ and the most important lessons learnt so far?

The main achievement of the previous programme was the support that it gave to legal reform. It provided advice on numerous laws, in cooperation with the partner countries. In Tajikistan, a revised version of the Code of Civil Procedure and a new execution law were elaborated. In Uzbekistan, draft laws were developed for administrative procedure and for changes in family law and the Economic Process Code. Another achievement was the support given to commentaries and other popularisations of law. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the programme supported the first commentary on the Code of Civil Procedure. In Turkmenistan, the first volume of commentary on the civil code is nearly completed, the first such document ever compiled in independent Turkmenistan. In addition, numerous seminars for judges and lawyers have been conducted, which have contributed to better quality judgments, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

What areas will GIZ focus on the future?

One important aspect of the current programme is the implementation of the legal reforms that have already been adopted. The second focus is on legal advice for administrative proceedings and administrative procedural law. GIZ is also planning to provide model laws for both process and procedural code, based on the main principles of European law. It plans to support the working groups on laws in each country.

How does GIZ combine technical aspects of the programme with the broader political landscape in Central Asian countries that are authoritarian?

GIZ works in Central Asia on the basis of bilateral state agreements between Germany and the partner states. A strong relationship of trust between the GIZ law programme and the national partner (through the Constitutional Court, Higher Courts, Ministry of Justice, etc.) is the essential precondition for activities in the area. The main objective of GIZ is to ensure that the judiciary, legislature and administration are in a position to perform their work in accordance with the constitution. This objective has to be in line with the ideas of the partner countries. In order to support them, we should not dictate laws from outside, but provide a basic understanding and framework that matches the needs of the respective countries.

What would you identify as the most challenging aspects of rule of law in Central Asia?

There are many. One of the aspects is the 'human capital', which is often too small because of emigration over the last 20 years, the civil war of the 1990s in Tajikistan, and so on. We are working on this aspect with a specific instrument for human capacity development. Another challenge is widespread corruption in the judicial system.

Do you cooperate with the EU's Rule of Law platform and the Equal before the Law programme coordinated by the Finnish MFA and Eurasia Foundation?

We are cooperating with the EU Rule of Law Platform in the sphere of administrative law. Also, GIZ organises a big regional conference every year in Astana on administrative law, and this year, we are hosting it along with the platform. Initial talks have taken place with the Finnish MFA, but areas of cooperation have not yet been settled. GIZ's 'Promotion of Rule of Law' programme is always interested in cooperating with others to help achieve the goals of development of rule of law in a more effective way.

Xavier Barré, Attorney and Team Leader, EU Rule of Law Platform

What is the Rule of Law Initiative and what are its main objectives?

The Rule of Law Initiative constitutes the overarching regional network for enhanced cooperation in the rule of law area, and is aimed at supporting reform and good governance in judicial systems. The initiative is carried out on a joint multilateral and bilateral basis, similar to other focal areas of EU engagement with Central Asia. To further the goals of the regional initiative and political dialogue, the Rule of Law Platform project supports Central Asian partners with core legal and judicial reforms, contributing to the development of a stable and democratic political framework,

as well as to the proper functioning of economic structures and promotion and respect of human rights.

What do you see as the most severe shortcomings in the rule of law in Central Asia?

The judicial systems of Central Asian countries continue to face many challenges, which vary in degree depending on the country. These include lack of technical skills and financial resources, lack of independence of the judiciary, insufficient specialisation of judges and attorneys, corruption and insufficient access to justice, especially for the most vulnerable parts of the population. Judges and court staff are inappropriately trained and equipped, inefficiencies exist in court management and allocation of cases, and judges are overloaded, resulting in lack of public confidence in the court system. Fair and effective courts, operating with a view to ensuring quality, form part of the basis of democracy and rule of law, and play a critical role in fostering development and investment. Furthermore, substantive and procedural law has undergone substantial changes in the region in recent years, sometimes several times in a few years, and judicial and legal professionals need time to adapt. There is goodwill towards learning European best practices, but old habits die hard.

What do you envisage as the main challenges in cooperation with Central Asian governments and authorities?

A lot of efforts have been made to enable the Rule of Law Platform to start operating in the five countries, mostly to deal with administrative issues and the unusual regional format of the platform. As successful dialogue has been engaged, with clear messages and proposals for cooperation, the platform is ready to activate working groups of Central Asian and European experts and to deploy activities that should result in productive exchanges and cooperation in all five countries.

We feel there is now a better level of understanding. The authorities of the Central Asian countries are asking for support: for instance, to provide training and behavioural guidelines to enforcement personnel to cut the number of infringements of the law at the stage of pre-trial proceedings. If the platform proposals and the quality of expertise provided respond to the needs, the platform will contribute to building trust and to advancing the rule of law.

Is a role foreseen for civil societies from Central Asia in the activities of the Rule of Law Platform?

In June and September 2012, fact-finding missions were carried out in the five Central Asian countries. We met with heads of NGOs and defence lawyers/members of Bar Chambers in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Independent lawyers have been invited to regional seminars on Administrative Law, on Judicial Capacity and on Fair Trial (to be held in spring 2013). They have been asked to deliver presentations and participate in the working groups that have issued recommendations, which have already been endorsed by the Ministers of Justice of the countries of Central Asia and the European Union. These include benchmarks for legal and judicial reform by the countries of Central Asia over the next two years (the lifetime of the platform) and beyond.

A large number of training events will be organised in Central Asia by the platform in 2013-14. Depending on the objectives and expected audience for particular events, representatives of civil

society could play a central role as target groups and possibly as trainers. National seminars for dialogue will also be organised. Civil society is expected to play a crucial role in these forums.

Alongside rule of law, the EU also lists democracy, good governance and human rights among its 'values' priorities. Will this link also feature in the Rule of Law Platform's agenda?

With our ambitious objectives, these values are at the core of the platform's philosophy and activities. Moreover, the platform can associate with institutions such as the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe to provide specialised legal expertise in these areas. Democracy, good governance and human rights are transversal issues we cross constantly in our work: the platform's common agenda concentrates on administrative law and administrative procedure, criminal law and criminal procedure and judicial reform. We will also associate with professional networks with a high level of expertise in these values: the International Union of Judicial Officers, the European Judicial Training Network, Universities Western Bars and the Consultative Council of European Bars, which regroup the 27 democratic traditions of the Member States. Additionally, one of the tasks of the platform is to create links between the EU and Central Asia, involving academia, NGOs and lawyers to consolidate already existing networks such as the League of Central Asian Lawyers.

The platform will remain attentive to the needs of the civil societies and its other partners in Central Asia and will maintain a flexible approach to adapt its offer of activities and services.

Expected results as agreed during the ministerial meeting in Brussels in November 2008:

- Experience, lessons learned, best practices shared between EU and Central Asian actors
- Knowledge of legal and judicial international standards and practices strengthened
- Training of legal professions improved
- Better understanding of the judicial/legal reform processes and the needs of Central Asian countries
- A network of experts/institutions with closer linkages between Central Asia and EU created and mutual understanding enhanced
- Coordination and synergies between the three EU platforms established under the 'EU and Central Asia Strategy for a New Partnership'

Article

Uzbekistan: Effective EU Rule of Law Programmes Depend on a Principled Human Rights Policy

Steve Swerdlow, Central Asia Researcher, Human Rights Watch

In early 2012, as part of its overall rule of law programming in Central Asia, the EU launched a programme to 'reform the criminal justice system' in Uzbekistan. According to diplomats who spoke with Human Rights Watch, the programme is being implemented primarily by a leading German legal institute. It will send up to eight legal experts from Germany, the United Kingdom and France to consult with Uzbekistan's Justice and Interior Ministries, Supreme Court and General Prosecutor's Office. The programme is expected to run for three years and will cost an estimated €10 million – a

substantial investment on the part of EU taxpayers.

Uzbekistan's atrocious rights record is well known. It has a legal system notorious for systematic torture, lack of an independent judiciary, and, more recently, 'reforms' that abolished the formerly independent bar association and disbarred leading independent criminal defence lawyers. Without doubt, Uzbekistan's most pressing rule of law challenges are rooted in hard-core human rights abuses. Any attempt by the EU to support the establishment of the rule of law there will require tackling those core abuses head on. However, before this can be done, Brussels should acknowledge that its policy of muting public criticism over Uzbekistan's worsening rights record has failed the rule of law at a time when victims of abuse have more than ever needed the EU to speak up and speak out.

Unfortunately for the ordinary people of Uzbekistan, the EU has abandoned the firm stance it adopted in the aftermath of the massacre by government forces of hundreds of largely peaceful civilians in the eastern Uzbek city of Andijan in May 2005. Faced with an intransigent president, Islam Karimov, who flatly rejected calls to conduct an independent investigation into the Andijan massacre or improve the rights situation, the EU backed away from its demands for rights improvements rather than attach meaningful policy consequences. Instead of making the fulfilment of human rights benchmarks a condition for deeper economic, political and military ties, the EU, like the U.S., fully embraced policies of 'quiet diplomacy' and 'constructive engagement' with a Tashkent that is increasingly uninterested even in the pretence of improving the human rights situation.

This policy shift took several years to emerge. But the West's increasingly soft approach on Uzbekistan became even more pronounced in 2011, when it contrasted starkly with the stance of EU officials during the Arab Spring on the need to support the freedom of peoples who had struggled under repressive and long-serving authoritarian rulers. At that moment, Andijan's Bobur square and Cairo's Tahrir square could not have seemed further apart.

Advocates of 'constructive engagement' have argued that public criticism is ineffective, since it only serves to alienate the target government. But an objective look at Uzbekistan's record demonstrates that wide-ranging abuses such as the crackdown on independent civil society have only worsened during the last several years. Indeed, constructive engagement has looked more like a policy of 'engagement without strings'. Sadly, the result of abandoning pressure has been to leave Uzbekistan's beleaguered human rights community and ordinary victims of abuses even further isolated.

More than three years since sanctions were dropped in late 2009, the EU-Tashkent rapprochement has failed to produce meaningful improvements in the rule of law. Apart from a rhetorical commitment to promote rights as part of the relationship, the policy has essentially boiled down to the so-called human rights dialogues that the EU pursues with each Central Asian government. But these are closed talks that have produced no public announcement of any commitment to make improvements by the Uzbek government, and they appear to have no bearing on the overall relationship.

Furthermore, the dialogues have often been used by Uzbek officials to avoid rights concerns raised in other, more significant settings.

This weakens the EU's human rights policy rather than strengthens it. Significantly, after three years, Uzbekistan's rights defenders report that the EU-Uzbekistan human rights dialogues have done nothing to improve conditions for them on the ground. And they report that the lack of any public commitments leaves them with no sense of the specific improvements the EU is pressing Tashkent to make. In the long term, the Uzbek government's continued disrespect for the rule of law could be a major source of instability when a leadership transition inevitably comes.

Given this sobering state of affairs, EU donors should recognise that rule of law programmes do not exist in a vacuum apart from overall human rights policy. Programmes cannot be effective without a more proactive, principled policy that emphasises the centrality of human rights in the overall relationship, beginning with High Representative Catherine Ashton down to the head of delegation in Tashkent.

In June 2012, EU foreign ministers made a powerful pledge to prioritise human rights in EU policy at home and abroad when they adopted a comprehensive human rights package. It consists of a 'strategic framework' on human rights and democracy, an EU action plan and a decision to appoint an EU Special Representative on human rights. The document commits the EU to promote human rights, democracy and rule of law 'in all areas of the EU's external actions without exception' and says the EU will 'place human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries'.

Upon adoption of the package, Catherine Ashton stated, 'Human rights are one of my top priorities and a silver thread that runs through everything that we do in external relations'. This commitment to prioritising human rights means the EU should take a principled, public position on Uzbekistan's abysmal rights record, and make good on the promise to throw its 'full weight behind advocates of liberty, democracy, and human rights'.

In 2013, the EU should overcome its hesitation to establish clear benchmarks on human rights and set out the specific reforms it wants to see from Tashkent. In the case of Uzbekistan, the EU does not have to look far. EU foreign ministers earlier established clear benchmarks in the context of the sanctions process, most recently in October 2010, which included immediately releasing dozens of imprisoned rights activists. But those calls for basic reform were never fulfilled. This year, the EU should set a clear timeline for Tashkent to heed these key demands once and for all, or face concrete consequences, including targeted restrictive measures. The EU can only successfully improve the rule of law on the ground by implementing a policy that is prepared to impose meaningful policy consequences when they are warranted.

With respect to the rule of law programmes themselves, the challenges of implementation are numerous. Over the last ten years, Tashkent has become increasingly adept at undermining the central objectives of programmes they perceive to be subversive. It has done this through a variety of means, including bureaucratic obstacles, the forced closure of authentic rights groups and the promotion of government-organised non-governmental organisations, better known by their acronym, GONGOs.

Given this reality, it is crucial for EU donors to set clear ground rules for such programmes and not waiver from them, including on the issue of those to be included in Uzbekistan. So, for example, a programme that is aimed at promoting 'dialogue' between officials

and civil society, but which does not include Uzbekistan's most active rights activists, runs the risk of being irrelevant, or worse, a vehicle for propping up the status quo. Similarly, a rule of law programme that provides for the monitoring of criminal trials or hearings and does not guarantee attendance by independent Uzbek lawyers or Western observers will fail to make a dent in a justice system that is deeply resistant to change.

Of course, insisting on these 'fundamentals' will inevitably lead to push-back from Uzbek officials and could potentially derail the programme. But 'presence for presence's sake' is not a policy. A principled approach is required – one that ensures the meaningful participation of independent civil society as the beneficiaries of and participants in rule of law programmes. Programmes will only be useful to the extent that they include exercises in actual, uncomfortable reform. Without this, EU taxpayers could be footing the bill for programmes that legitimise, or even perpetuate, an authoritarian system.

The EU's programme on criminal justice reform in Uzbekistan would be an appropriate project in which to implement a more robust human rights policy. Unfortunately, however, there is still no indication that this substantial programme will allow for meaningful participation of independent rights activists and criminal defence lawyers or independent international human rights organisations.

Given Tashkent's resistance to reform, one must question how programmes that consist solely of trainings and seminars for judges and prosecutors handpicked by the authorities will promote the rule of law over the long term. Moreover, the EU should avoid making Tashkent's mere participation in such programmes a substitute for meaningful improvement. Even a successful rule of law programme will only complement, not replace, the Uzbek government's obligation to meet its commitments under international human rights law.

New EUCAM Publications

Working Papers

Thinking security, doing development? The security-development nexus in European policies towards Tajikistan

Jos Boonstra and Natalia Shapovalova,

EUCAM Working Paper No. 12, December 2012

Tajikistan is a poor and underdeveloped country that is partly dependent on external donor support. The country faces a series of threats to its stability. Some of these threats are locally driven, such as poverty, unemployment, migration, corruption and bad governance. Others are externally driven, such as the tense relationship with Uzbekistan and the potential increase of negative spillover from Afghanistan. This paper assesses European donor approaches to Tajikistan within the context of a security-development nexus. It also compares European donor policies to those of the broader donor community.

Download: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Working_Papers/EUCAM-WP12-Tajikistan-EN.pdf

Policy Briefs

OSCE Police Reform Programmes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: Past Constraints and Future Opportunities

Erica Marat, EUCAM Policy Brief No. 27, October 2012

The OSCE and other donors have been actively engaged in assisting Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in police reform. But the reform process has been slow and has failed to meet donor expectations. This brief argues that if police reform is to be effective, international donors should focus their efforts on engaging actors outside the Ministry of Internal Affairs by facilitating public debate among community leaders, NGOs, local governments and political leaders.

Download: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/EUCAM-PB-27-EN-OSCE-Police-Reform.pdf

The EU Needs a New Values-Based Realism for its Central Asia Strategy

Neil Melvin, EUCAM Policy Brief No. 28, October 2012

Five years after the launch of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, most of the Strategy's original goals have not been achieved. If the EU is to emerge as a significant player in this important region, it should build its strategy around what it does best: promoting liberal-democratic forms of modernisation and comprehensive approaches to security.

Download: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/EUCAM-PB-28-EN-CA-Future.pdf

European National Policies Series

Even as the European Union has consolidated its approach to Central Asia, many European countries, including non-EU members, have developed national policies towards Central Asia or towards specific countries in the region. The European National Policies Series seeks to map the policies of European states towards Central Asia in the fields of politics, democratic and human rights values, trade and energy, and security and development. What are the approaches of France and Finland?

France and Central Asia

Sébastien Peyrouse, EUCAM *National Series* Policy Brief No. 9, November 2012

Download: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/National-PB9-FR.pdf

Finland and Central Asia

Tatjana Lipiäinen, EUCAM *National Series* Policy Brief No. 10, November 2012

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Established in 2008 as a project seeking to monitor the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, EUCAM has grown into a knowledge hub on broader Europe–Central Asia relations. Specifically, the project aims to:

- Scrutinise European policies towards Central Asia, paying specific attention to security, development and the promotion of democratic values within the context of Central Asia’s position in world politics;
- Enhance knowledge of Europe’s engagement with Central Asia through top-quality research and by raising awareness among European policy-makers and civil society representatives, as well as discuss European policies among Central Asian communities;
- Expand the network of experts and institutions from European countries and Central Asian states and provide a forum to debate on European–Central Asian relations.

Currently, the broader programme is coordinated by FRIDE, in partnership with the Karelian Institute and CEPS, with the support of the Open Society Institute and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main outputs of the project are a series of policy briefs and comprehensive reports on key issues facing the Europe–Central Asia relationship.

Please follow our work on www.eucentralasia.eu. If you have any comments or suggestions, please email us at email.eucam@gmail.com



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Founded in 1971, the Karelian Institute is a unit of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Business Studies of the University of Eastern Finland. It engages in basic and applied multi-disciplinary research, supports the supervision of postgraduate studies and researcher training, and participates in teaching. It focuses mainly on three thematic priorities: Borders and Russia; Ethnicity and Culture; and Regional and Rural Studies.



The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels is among the most experienced and authoritative think tanks operating in the European Union today. It aims to carry out state-of-the-art policy research leading to solutions to the challenges facing Europe today and to achieve high standards of academic excellence and maintain unqualified independence. CEPS provides a forum for discussion among all stakeholders in the European policy process.