

# Uzbekistan opening? Warming to democratic reform and neighbours

Thursday, 14 June 2018  
9.00-14.00

Open Society European Policy Institute  
Rue du Trône 130, 1050 Brussels

*The event is by invitation only and will be held under the Chatham House rule.*

## Background

This roundtable will discuss current openings in Uzbekistan toward democratic reform and regional integration. It will feature views from EU officials on the scope for deepening bilateral relations and analysis by experts from Central Asia of the depth of current political transformations and the spheres that offer the most potential for international and regional reengagement. The meeting is organised by the Europe-Central Asia Monitoring (EUCAM) programme of the Centre for European Security Studies (CESS) in Groningen, the Netherlands, the European Neighbourhood Council (ENC) in Brussels and the Open Society Europe Policy Institute (OSEPI).

## Agenda

09.00 – 09.30	Registration and welcome coffee
	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>
09.30 – 10.30	<b>Words of Welcome</b> <b>Iskra Kirova</b> – Senior Policy Analyst, Open Society European Policy Institute (OSEPI), Brussels <b>Samuel Doveri Vesterbye</b> – Managing Director, European Neighbourhood Council (ENC), Brussels <b>Jos Boonstra</b> – EUCAM Coordinator, Centre for European Security Studies (CESS), Groningen  <b>Presentations</b> <b>Peter Burian</b> – European Union Special Representative for Central Asia, Brussels

	<p><b>Alisher Ilkhamov</b> – Programme Officer, Open Society Foundations, United Kingdom</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What are the prospects for EU-Uzbekistan relations?</i></li> <li>2. <i>What are the new opportunities and spheres for co-operation as a result of Uzbekistan's more open stance toward reform?</i></li> <li>3. <i>How can the EU play a role in coordinating or leading on renewed donor engagement in Uzbekistan?</i></li> </ol>
<b>Toward Democratic Reform</b>	
10.30 – 11.45	<p><b>Moderator</b> <b>Iskra Kirova</b> – Senior Policy Analyst, OSEPI, Brussels</p> <p><b>Panel</b> <b>Alisher Siddique</b> – Director of RFE/RL's Uzbek Service, Prague: Democracy and Media <b>Zaynab M. Dost</b> – Head Deal Reporter / Relationship Manager for CEE and FSU, Mergermarket London: Education <b>Sevara Khamidova</b> – EUCAM Fellow, Groningen: Civil society and youth</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What are the priorities of democratic reform in Uzbekistan?</i></li> <li>2. <i>What foreign initiatives are most welcome and which are premature at this stage?</i></li> <li>3. <i>How to avoid problems of absorption capacity by the Uzbek society and state?</i></li> </ol>
11.45 – 12.00	<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>Towards regional cooperation?</b>	
12.00 – 13.15	<p><b>Moderator</b> <b>Andreas Marazis</b>, Head Researcher for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, European Neighbourhood Council (ENC), Brussels</p> <p><b>Panel</b> <b>Diana Mamatova</b> – former Central Asia Program (CAP) fellow: Bishkek <b>Sergey Marinin</b> – EUCAM Fellow, Groningen: Kazakhstan <b>Nushofarin Noziri</b> – EUCAM Fellow, Groningen: Tajikistan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>How is Uzbekistan's domestic and foreign policy regarded in neighbouring countries?</i></li> <li>2. <i>Are there new opportunities to solve disputes in the region over resources and borders?</i></li> <li>3. <i>Are there new possibilities for home-grown regional cooperation?</i></li> </ol>
13.15 – 14.00	<b>Networking lunch</b>

## Biographies



Ambassador **Peter Burian** was appointed as the EU Special Representative for Central Asia on 15 April 2015. His responsibilities include promoting good and close relations between the Union and the countries of Central Asia. Prior to this appointment Ambassador Burian served from 2012 as State Secretary and First Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and was responsible for areas of security policy, economic diplomacy, development assistance, international organizations and the territories of the EU Eastern Partnership, Africa, Asia and Pacific, and Americas. From 2008 to 2012 he served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Slovakia to the United States, in Washington D.C. He was the Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York from 2004 to 2008 when Slovakia held one of the non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council. Ambassador Burian held the post of Head of Slovakia's Mission to NATO in Brussels from 1999 to 2003. He earned his degree in Oriental Studies at St. Petersburg State University. He continued his diplomatic and international studies at the University of Cairo, Comenius University in Bratislava and the Diplomatic Academy in Moscow.



**Jos Boonstra** is coordinator of the EUCAM initiative at CESS ([www.eucentralasia.eu](http://www.eucentralasia.eu)). Before joining CESS, Boonstra worked as head of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia programme and head of EUCAM at FRIDE, a think tank with offices in Madrid and Brussels. He completed MAs in Contemporary History and International Relations at the University of Groningen. His work focuses on Eurasian and transatlantic security issues (in particular EU, NATO and OSCE policies) as well as on development policies and democratisation in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Boonstra is member of several internal research networks and regularly comments on Eurasia matters in the media.

**Alisher Ilkhamov** is a program officer in the Eurasia Program at the Open Society Foundations and former executive director of the Foundations' office in Uzbekistan.



**Iskra Kirova** is a senior policy analyst at the Open Society European Policy Institute, responsible for EU policy advocacy and analysis on Eurasia. She supports the Open Society Foundations in advancing human rights and the rule of law through EU policies, legislation, and political influence. From 2009 to 2014, Kirova worked for the International Crisis Group as EU advocacy and research analyst, conducting and helping develop Crisis Group's advocacy activities on conflict prevention and resolution. Previously, she served as research associate and later a fellow at the USC Center on Public Diplomacy in Los Angeles, publishing on EU affairs, media, civil society, and conflict resolution. Kirova also has experience working for the European Commission's Directorate-General Parliamentary Assembly on non-proliferation issues and conflict resolution in Eastern Europe.



**Samuel Doveri Vesterbye** is Managing Director of European Neighbourhood Council (ENC) with a specialty in Turkey and the Middle East. He oversees ENC research projects and events, including Academic Council Members and regional research coordination. He has worked with EU projects related to foreign affairs and research on Turkey since 2012 through partnerships and cooperation with the European Parliament, business associations, the European External Action Service and various international think tanks. Prior to that he was a journalist in Turkey and Belgium covering Foreign Affairs, Energy and the Middle East.



**Andreas Marazis** is Project Manager and Researcher specializing in the Eastern Partnership countries and in Central Asia at the European Neighbourhood Council (ENC). His research is concerned with the post-Soviet space, particularly socio-political developments in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Andreas Marazis is also affiliated researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and associate researcher for EUCAM. Before joining ENC, Andreas worked as a Junior Researcher and EUCAM Programme Officer for FRIDE, and as Project Manager for Eurasian Dialogue.



**Alisher Siddique** is the Director of RFE/RL's Uzbek Service, overseeing the Service's pioneering efforts to use the latest digital platforms to break the information blockade in one of the world's most closed societies. Siddique reported on the Andijon massacre in Uzbekistan in 2005, and earlier worked for the BBC's Uzbek service in Tashkent and London. He was named "Journalist of the Year" by the media watchdog Reporters Without Borders-Stockholm in 2005. He has been quoted as an expert by the International Crisis Group, and frequently invited to speak about developments in Uzbekistan by international media and think tanks. Siddique holds an M.A. and B.A. in Middle East Politics and Arabic from the University of Oriental Studies, Tashkent, although his M.A. diploma was withheld because of his association with the BBC.



**Zaynab M. Dost** specializes in post-Soviet Central Asian politics and international relations. She has a particular interest in social affairs and politics of Uzbekistan. She holds a postgraduate diploma of SAIS Johns Hopkins University and a Master's Degree in International Relations and Contemporary Political Theory from the University of Westminster. Zaynab used to work as Assistant to the Drug Liaison Officer at the Embassy of Italy in Uzbekistan. She also had experience as a journalist and editorial consultant for the Open Central Asia magazine. Zaynab is a regular contributor for Central Asian Analytical Network (CAAN) and Cabar.Asia. She is an associated member of Bilim Karvoni, Tashkent-based non-governmental research center. Zaynab also works for the Research department of Mergermarket, global business intelligence provider in London.



**Sevara Khamidova** is EUCAM fellow and researcher from Uzbekistan. Throughout the years I have been working in different social projects focused on community development, civil society and gender issues in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. My academic background is in social and policy oriented research. I graduated from Lancaster University obtaining my Master's degree in Media, Culture and Society, and completed an Executive Masters in Development Policies and Practices – Central Asia at the Graduate Institute of International and Development studies, Geneva.



**Diana Mamatova** is a former Central Asia Program (CAP) fellow from Bishkek. She has more than five years of professional experience in peacebuilding and development. She holds a Master of Arts in Political Science with a focus on Central Asian politics from the OSCE Academy in Bishkek (Kyrgyz Republic) and a Masters of Letters in Peace and Conflict from University of St. Andrews (United Kingdom). She worked with international NGO ACTED following the June 2010 inter-ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, and later with the United Nations in Kyrgyzstan, where she managed a nationwide research project on gender issues and peacebuilding. More recently, Diana completed a research fellowship supported by OSF within the George Washington University - Elliott School of International Affairs' Central Asia Program. She produced a research with policy recommendations on grassroots peacebuilding and the cross-border cooperation in the Ferghana Valley.



**Sergey Marinin** is an EUCAM fellow and independent researcher from Kazakhstan. Most of his career so far has been connected to the OSCE broader network. He

graduated from the OSCE Academy in Bishkek with a Master's degree in Politics and Security in Central Asia. He worked with OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation missions in Kazakhstan. He was also a Research Fellow at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Secretariat in Copenhagen working on election observation and human rights issues in Central Asia and Eastern Partnership countries. Prior to that, he worked for Kazakhstan's Human Rights Commissioner's Office as a consultant on National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) dealing with problems of ill-treatment and torture.



**Nushofarin Noziri** is an EUCAM fellow from Tajikistan, working at the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In 2013 she graduated from the Herbert H. Lehman College in New York in Business Administration with a specialization in finance. In 2016, she earned her Master's in Gender and International Relations from the University of Bristol as a Chevening scholar, sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In 2014, she joined the Migrant Assistance Unit of IOM. Prior to that, she interned for Congressman Engel, and worked for American Councils (ACCELS) in Tajikistan. Currently, in her work with IOM she focuses on labour migration, countering human trafficking and preventing violent extremism.