

EUCAM WATCH

EU-CENTRAL ASIA MONITORING

Newsletter

Czech Presidency overwhelmed by challenges: Is Central Asia one of them?

Editorial

Every member state that chairs the EU Council must strike a balance between the policies it wants to develop and the immediate crises that need to be dealt with. The active French EU chairmanship served to increase the visibility of France and its president, which also helped the EU to be seen as a more active and influential player on the international stage. However, this has not made matters easier for the Czechs, who are at the EU helm until mid-2009. Whereas Sarkozy's main immediate crises were of a financial nature, preceded by the August Russia-Georgia war, the Czechs have already been confronted with two major EU foreign policy matters from the outset: the Israeli Gaza strip offensive and the Russia-Ukraine gas dispute. The Czech team may well end up continually dealing with one crisis after another instead of pushing ahead with further European integration, increasing the effectiveness of the Brussels institutions and developing foreign and energy policies.

This is bad news for the EU's relations with Central Asia, especially since the Czech programme does not mention Central Asia as a key interest, understandably, since the programme is already ambitious as it is. The development of relations with the long-ignored region of five former Soviet republics was not a priority until 2007, when Germany became the driving force behind establishing the Strategy for Central Asia. Successive presidencies have helped prepare the way for implementation of the main facets of the Strategy's priorities, but have not given it the attention this novel document deserves. However, each presidency does organise at least one or two key events that should bolster the growing ties. For example, the French Presidency organised a security conference in September that welcomed Central Asian ministers of foreign affairs to Paris to discuss a host of security challenges, with Afghanistan at the top of the agenda. Later in 2008 a ministerial conference was organised by the French Presidency and Germany to start off the Rule of Law initiative, which is coordinated by both countries.

The Czech Presidency might not organise high-level Central Asia-related conferences, but it will devote ample attention to the region through the energy security priority it has set and its aim to inject new life into the Nabucco gas transport project. A high-level meeting of Caspian littoral states and transit countries is scheduled for spring. Meanwhile, on a more modest scale, the EUCAM team has been in discussion with Prague about a meeting on EU-Central Asia relations and energy security, to take place in mid-April.

The time is obviously right for the Czech Republic to highlight energy security issues. Several serious challenges remain in relation to Central Asia. The first is related to Russia, which supplies the EU primarily with Central Asian gas. Secondly, the Czechs are likely to continue building relations with Turkmenistan,

which has the potential to be one of the largest gas exporters in the region, but does not have the capacity to bring the commodity directly to Europe or anywhere else other than Russia and remains a political question mark. Kazakhstan constitutes the third challenge. Astana has positioned itself as a regional powerhouse with a strong multi-vector policy, but has been hit hard by the financial crisis and tumbling oil prices. A fourth energy challenge in Central Asia which is not likely to receive high priority by the EU concerns stability in and the development of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The problems these countries face can to some degree be traced back to these countries' energy shortages last autumn and this winter.

Central Asia's main hydro-power providers – Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – are going through a rough winter as they prove unable to provide enough electricity to warm households, especially in the countryside. Obsolete energy infrastructures, widespread corruption and rising prices for imported energy could lead to public unrest and are already blocking economic development. The EU might not be able to assist both countries directly this winter, but could help bring about positive changes in the medium term by redoubling efforts to help Bishkek and Dushanbe modernise energy infrastructures; working on jointly agreed governance programmes to counter mismanagement; and, most importantly, using its leverage as a broker in regional disputes between water-rich and fossil fuel-poor Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the one hand, and energy-rich but water-dependent Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on the other. The EU would do well to gather its Central Asian partners and get them to reach an agreement on vital regional energy questions – easier said than done, but a necessity to foster the EU's objective of stability and security in the region.

This second EUCAM newsletter devotes special attention to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Our Expert Working Group member Gulnura Toralieva explains why media and freedom of speech are under threat in Kyrgyzstan and, on a more positive note, Aibek Tilebaliev of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs explains how relations between Bishkek and Brussels have grown and where the challenges lie. Tajik Expert Working Group member Anvar Kamolidinov provides a contribution on his country's energy challenges and Dushanbe-based EU Commission representative Charlotte Adrian gives an in-depth view on EU projects in Tajikistan. In addition to this country-based focus, this newsletter is meant to update readers on the state of affairs in EU-Central Asia relations and the work related to the EUCAM project.

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EUCAM News

EUCAM organises a Roundtable on Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

On 12 December 2008, a group of 25 researchers, academics, human rights activists, NGO representatives and Spanish policy-makers gathered in Madrid for a EUCAM roundtable on Euro-Atlantic approaches towards Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the field of democracy and human rights. Over three sessions, the roles of the European Union, NATO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Central Asia were discussed, as well as the current human rights situation in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Participants touched on a variety of questions going beyond the issues of democracy promotion and human rights and debated the EU's security and energy relationship with Central Asia. With regard to the European Union and Central Asia (and specific reference to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), the following conclusions were reached:

1. The EU has come a long way in a short time in upgrading its relations with the countries of Central Asia. This is part of an ongoing process and Spain can play an important role in upgrading and strengthening the EU Strategy for Central Asia, especially during its EU Council Chairmanship in the first half of 2010. Indeed, building an effective and broad engagement will ultimately require the activity and interest of a wide range of member states.

2. The moves by the EU to strengthen its role in Central Asia should take account of the experience of other organisations (such as the OSCE) and countries (Turkey for instance) that have been active in the region for a longer period of time. In particular, a general lesson learned from these other approaches is the need for a clear political vision for the region to guide engagement and to avoid one-off projects becoming the driving force of relations. This will be especially important to keep in mind for the difficult cases of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

3. The question of security and energy interests in the region needs to be carefully considered as the basis for engagement. While the region faces a number of security challenges, the single-largest security threat to the region's stability is the violence being inflicted against the population by the political regimes themselves. Security and energy interests are a legitimate basis for EU engagement in

Central Asia, but attention should also be paid to the long-term impact of focusing on these interests and the damage that this could cause in terms of stability and development, which in turn may require the EU to become involved in complex and expensive efforts to address conflict and instability.

4. The EU has a number of potential partners for its engagement in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Turkey. More should be done to identify common areas of interest and to build mutually beneficial and coordinated approaches.

5. The EU Strategy should seek in the near future to focus its broad and programmatic engagement in the region on the emerging challenges of Central Asia. The focus should be on the likely challenges of the next 3-5 years with political engagement concentrated on these challenges. While the principal aim of this focused engagement should be to promote stabilisation, this should not result in stagnation, but rather putting in place the institutions, policies and support that can promote reform and development across the region, also in the sphere of democracy and human rights.

6. The regional approach has much to recommend it but this should not diminish the importance of directing attention to individual countries and issues. Indeed, the EU should be looking for ways to build links between the Strategy and other EU initiatives in the east – notably the Eastern Partnership, the Baku Initiative, Black Sea Synergy and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

7. An immediate key task is to improve the communications strategy of the EU in relation to its policies in Central Asia. This should aim to alert interested parties in Europe but also to reach out and inform individuals, groups and networks in Central Asia of the EU and its policies.

8. The EU has now identified the issues of dialogue and engagement as the principal means to approach the countries of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. To be successful, thought needs to be given to the aim of this dialogue and engagement. How much time is needed to achieve these goals and what resources will be required? What are the costs of dialogue with the authoritarian regimes of the region, e.g. the loss of credibility with opposition groups and civil society or the risks of actually supporting the oppressive governments? How wide should dialogue be drawn – should opposition figures be included, such as Islamists?

9. The EU still has insufficient capacity and institutional memory in its dealings with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This allows the regimes of these countries to outwit the EU on key issues such as monitoring of human rights. The EU should seek to develop stronger and long-term expertise within its institutions on these countries.

Source: Download the full report at: <http://www.fride.org/publication/541/defending-human-rights-and-promoting-democracy>

New EUCAM Team Member on the Need for Regional Cooperation in Central Asia

Natalia Mirimanova has recently taken up the position of senior researcher and coordinator within the EUCAM team in Brussels. She is a conflict analysis and resolution scholar-practitioner and has extensive experience in research, cross-conflict project design and management, dialogue and mediation, mass media and policy work in the conflict zones in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. Her research interests lie in the interplay between political, cultural and psychological aspects of nation-states and regionalisation in Eurasia. Natalia received her PhD from the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, near Washington D.C. Within the

EUCAM framework, Natalia will focus on the challenges of regional cooperation in Central Asia and the role of the EU.

The issue of regional cooperation needs to be translated into a set of hypotheses in order to design a sound multi-entry contingency approach to be pioneered by the EU in the region: analysis needs to precede solutions. External economic actors in Central Asia, such as Turkey, China and Japan as well as Asian economic institutions, regard regionalisation as a necessary approach to the expansion and modernisation of Central Asia as a market and as a transit region. Hence the weakly developed network of modern roads and railways and the deterioration of civil and freight aviation and communications are viewed as the main obstacles to regional cooperation, and thus technical solutions and investments are proposed as the remedy. However if the root causes of the fragmentation and hostility that currently mark inter-state and inter-communal relations in Central Asia are not identified and addressed, economic and hardware solutions may not hold the region together. The diplomatic, economic, humanitarian and cultural aspects of the EU operation are guided by a common vision, shared values and specific policies. Hence its strategy for the promotion of regional cooperation in Central Asia requires comprehensive multi-disciplinary analysis of the current state of regional cooperation in Central Asia and of the EU specifically defined interest in the promotion of the cooperation.

The promotion of regional cooperation in Central Asia should not be taken as an imperative for the EU merely because it is a good idea in general: the challenges facing Central Asia are regional if not global in their scale (water mismanagement, environmental degradation, drug trafficking, the spread of radical Islamic movements and epidemics) and any attempt to seal off one's own borders in the hope of isolating one or another of these problems to the territory of one's neighbours only aggravates the situation within and beyond the region. Historical and newly emerged rivalries between states and peoples, the policies of isolation promoted by elites, rampant nationalism, the power games of third parties, poverty and corruption all need to be factored into the assessment of the prospects of regional cooperation.

The analysis of the challenges and prospects for the promotion of regional cooperation in Central Asia by Brussels complements the security and stability and the energy and natural resources areas of EUCAM monitoring. Fostering regional cooperation in the areas of democracy and human rights is a particularly challenging yet necessary task. The promotion of cross-national solidarity between genuine civil society groups ranging from human rights activists to academics to social assistance organisations is a valid strategy to be pursued at the society and community level, thus breaking the state-centred approach to regional cooperation. In the areas of education and social exchange, analysis and forecasts of horizontal, intra-Central Asian ties in the spheres of basic education, academic work, arts and crafts will be the cement for regional cooperation in the future.

Making Friends: A View from the European Parliament

By Ona Juknevičienė, Chair of the Inter-parliamentary Delegation to Central Asia and Mongolia, European Parliament, Brussels

The inter-parliamentary delegation for relations with Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and Mongolia, which I have chaired since 2004, is working to reinforce the presence of the EU in this region. The work is both demanding and interesting. The countries of the region are emerging on the international stage and face many challenges as they seek to modernize in an increasingly globalised world. The EU stands ready with its full support and to assure our Central Asian partners that we have a strong desire to play a more active role in

the region - both politically and economically. The EU set out its policy in the Central Asia strategy for 2007-2013, which it adopted in June 2007. This process will be of benefit to both sides, and the European parliament's delegation is one of the key players, having been fully involved in the preparation of the strategy and now playing a specific and vital role in monitoring the policies launched and promoting their further development. We seek to hold annual meetings with as many as possible of our counterparts in the six countries. In the case of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, these meetings take place within the framework of the partnership and cooperation agreements (PCAs) that came into force in 1999. There have been particular difficulties in relations with Uzbekistan since the tragic events that took place in Andijan in May 2005, when a demonstration was put down by the authorities with a significant loss of life. Nevertheless, we went to Uzbekistan in 2007 for a meeting with the Uzbek parliament, and were able to visit Andijan. We believe that the European parliament must continue to call for an independent investigation into the circumstances of this event. We also hold inter-parliamentary meetings with the other three countries. The process of ratification of the PCA with Tajikistan is underway. An agreement on trade and economic cooperation between the EU and Mongolia has been in force since 1993. However, concerns over human rights have meant that the ratification of the PCA with Turkmenistan has been severely delayed. The European commission has proposed that, in the meantime, a trade agreement be concluded with the country. Until now, the European parliament has opposed such an agreement, as we place a high importance on Turkmenistan meeting certain criteria on human rights and democratisation. However, there have been changes in the country and signs that President Berdymukhammedov is opening up to the world. This could clear the way for the trade agreement to become a half-way point for the PCA. The EU has to offer its full support to the process of democratization in Turkmenistan and should certainly not let the door be closed. Our mutual interest in economic cooperation is often at the centre of our discussions. We also have a common goal of preventing global warming and preserving our environment. The fight against terrorism and against organised crime can bring results if we work together. However, the main emphasis during our dialogue is on human rights and democratisation. We want to promote and share the universal values that are the cornerstones of the EU: democracy, good governance, the rule of law and the defence of human rights. Discussions on these topics are not always straightforward, as we do not always share the same views. Nevertheless, we will seek to share our experience without appearing to preach to anyone. Our approach must be to gain a better understanding of the needs of our Asian friends and to seek to respond to it.

Source: the article was first published in The Parliament, on 8 December, 2008, pages 35-36, the magazine is available at: <http://www.e-pages.dk/dods/88/fullpdf/1.pdf>

Tajik President visits Brussels

Tajik President Imomali Rahmon's visited the European Union capital last week. President Rahmon met with the President of the European Commission Barroso, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Secretary General of the European Council Solana, and the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Saryusz-Wolski. President Rahmon also delivered a statement at the European Parliament on state and prospects of further expansion of cooperation between Tajikistan and the European Union. Rahmon told European Union officials, including Jose Manuel Barroso, head of the European Commission, and Javier Solana, the High Commissioner for Foreign and Security Policy, that stability in Central Asia was the key to success in Afghanistan. Without it, Europe could face "a

10-fold struggle against global threats,” During the talks with the President Barroso the two sides discussed issues related to the regional economic cooperation in Central Asia and development of hydropower engineering and transportation as a main direction of cooperation of the CA countries and Afghanistan with the EU. Mr. Barroso noted that taking into consideration role Tajikistan played in providing regional security, the EU would provide EUR 34 million for mitigation of effects of the global financial crisis and enhancement of the agrarian sector. President Rahmon, for his part, expressed gratitude to the European Union for assistance and noted that the overall volume of assistance the EU had provided to Tajikistan exceeded EUR 500 million.

Source: http://delkaz.ec.europa.eu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=523&Itemid=43

Launch of the European Union's Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia

An EU-Central Asian Ministerial Conference, co-organised by the French Presidency and Germany, entitled “Rule of law – cornerstone of development” was held in Brussels on 27-28 November 2008. This was the launch of the European Union's Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia within the framework of the EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia adopted by the European Council on 21 June 2007. High representatives from the judicial and political institutions of the EU and Central Asia expressed their determination to strengthen the rule of law through the support for and cooperation on the modernization of constitutional courts and other legal institutes, professional training for law students and young lawyers, and the overall progress in the legal, judicial and administrative reforms. The participants agreed to organize regional thematic conferences in Central Asia in the course of 2009 and to convene again in Central Asia in 2010 to discuss progress and shape future steps in the development of the EU's Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia.

Source: Council of the European Union, Press Release: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/104377.pdf

Joint communiqué on “Rule of Law – Cornerstone of Development”: http://www.eu2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/1127_conference UE Asie centrale/EU-Central Asia Conference%20 Joint communique rule of law Asia EN.pdf

Message from Bishkek

By Aibek Tilebaiev, Head of the Multilateral Cooperation Unit, Department of Western Countries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyz Republic

Today we can state with confidence that cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and the European Union is experiencing a new stage of development in the format “Central Asia – EU”, as well as on a bilateral basis. This mainstream has become a practical implementation of the close attention paid by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic to the European vector of foreign policy.

A Roadmap of our cooperation for the period 2007-2013 was established with the adoption of the EU Strategy for CA in June 2007. Since that time, the EU and Central Asian countries have moved from a conceptual basis of relations to the practical realization of mutually beneficial projects in the framework of the abovementioned Strategy.

In the context of the EU's assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic joint work on selection and effective realization of projects is currently underway. These projects will aid the Kyrgyz Republic with 55 million Euro during the 2007-2010 period.

At the same time, the intensity of contacts between European and Kyrgyz official bodies has been growing. In October 2007 the General Secretary of the European Council, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana visited Kyrgyzstan for the first time. The visit of the Director General of Directorate General for External Relations of the European Commission Eneko Landaburu took place in June 2007.

The meetings of Cooperation Councils and Committees, Trade and Investment Subcommittee are conducted on an annual basis. In June 2008 the Minister for Foreign Affairs H.E. Ednan Katabaev visited the EU institutions in Brussels. In October 2008, a delegation of the European Parliament visited Kyrgyzstan and participated in the work of a regular session of the Kyrgyz Republic - EU Committee of parliamentary cooperation. The Special Representative of the EU, Pierre Morel regularly visits Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan.

The most important events within the framework of the EU Strategy for Central Asia in 2008 were the first Forum on Security in Central Asia on a level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Paris in September, the first meeting of EU – Kyrgyz Republic Human Rights Dialogue in Bishkek in October, the first meeting on Rule of Law with participation of Ministers of Justice of EU and Central Asia in Brussels in November.

Participation of the Kyrgyz delegation in the meetings between the EU Troika and Foreign Ministers of the Central Asian states deserves a special mentioning. Meetings in such a format have already become a good tradition with a wide range of cooperation issues between the region and the EU being discussed during them.

Considering a particular importance of water-energy sector for Central Asia, let us share with our vision of some issues of

The EU welcomes the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture by Kyrgyzstan

On 16 February 2009, the Council of the European Union published a press release to mark the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture by the Kyrgyz Republic:

[Extract]

The EU welcomes the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention

against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by the Kyrgyz Republic on 29 December 2008.

The EU encourages the Kyrgyz Republic to take early steps towards implementing its obligations under the Optional Protocol by establishing a National Preventative Mechanism and cooperating with the Subcommittee on Prevention.

The EU urges all countries that have not already done so to become parties to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and to consider signing and ratifying its Optional Protocol.

Sources: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/106084.pdf

regional cooperation, where, we think, the participation of the EU is desirable. As it is well known, the energy sector is one of the foundations of the national economy and, as a result, the basis for intergovernmental relations. Each state formulates its own energy policy, that is why the term “energy diplomacy” has become an instrument of foreign policy. Energy interests are the foundation of international relations and have a binding effect on the formation of the world order.

Today there is a strong need to elaborate a consolidated decision for the use of water-energy potential of the region the gives due consideration to the interests of each state. In this relation, the Kyrgyz Republic has proposed to hold a meeting on water-energy issues in Central Asia on a high level, which will create a platform for discussions and elaboration of a consistent policy on reasonable and effective use of water-energy resources. The possible results of such meeting include discussions and the elaboration of a complex approach in defining and solving issues in energy industries, the formation of regional water-energy policy, including issues of exporting energy to South Asia. This event is planned to be held on a high level with participation of all interested states and representatives of international organizations.

It is a high time for Central Asia to solve scientific-applied tasks of using water-energy resources in the region. Thus, it is essential to create a scientific and educational center for training personnel who will be managing cross-border water resources between the CA countries. In order to realize this task, the Kyrgyz Republic initiated the creation of the Regional Water-energy Academy. Kyrgyzstan appreciates the support of the European Parliament, which in its resolution from 20 February 2008 supported the idea of the creation of such an academy in Kyrgyzstan for all states in Central Asia.

I would like to particularly to underline that the issue of the rational and mutually beneficial use of water-energy resources in Central Asia has a profound effect on prospects of development, security and stability in the whole region. In terms of globalization and interdependency there is a strong need to make joint efforts to solve emerging difficulties. Therefore the cooperation with the EU on this issue is of particular importance.

The latest trends in Media development in Kyrgyzstan

Commentary by Gulnura Toralieva, EUCAM Expert Working Group member, Regional Media Coordinator, BBC World Service Trust, Kyrgyzstan

The development of an independent media and of freedom of speech in Kyrgyzstan have taken a wrong turn over the last few years. The country runs the risk of losing its reputation as the freest country in the region. Last year showed an increased number of cases of violence and pressure towards independent media. International human rights watch dogs and Kyrgyz civil society have started to report in a negative way about Kyrgyzstan's level of media freedom. Not without reason as the following trends suggest:

First, the murder of independent journalist Alisher Saipov, editor of Osh-based Uzbek language newspaper Siyesat in 2007 put Kyrgyzstan in the unfavourable list of states where freedom of speech can cost a journalist's life. It remains unclear what precisely happened and who is behind the murder.

Second, since the overthrow of the regime of the former President Akayev in 2005, public protests have had a tendency to turn violent. The physical security of journalists reporting at the many demonstrations over the last three years has not been guaranteed in any way. Journalists run the risk of attacks both by demonstrators

as well as by police and they have been injured in many cases. For the first time journalists are leaving the country out of fear for their lives and the security of their families and are seeking political asylum.

Third, the number of lawsuits against journalists has significantly increased, despite the efforts of civil society to introduce pre-court methods of dispute regulation between the potential claimants and media representatives. The court cases and pressure against two opposition Kyrgyz language media outlets – Alibi and De Facto newspapers – demonstrated the further narrowing of the Kyrgyz media landscape. Both media outlets were forced to close their doors when it turned out they were unable to pay a fine (an amount way out of proportion to the Kyrgyzstan economic level). The latest cases involved the interruption of BBC Radio and Azattyk Radio (the Kyrgyz Service of Radio Free Europe) broadcasts last October (with a full suspension beginning in December). This suggests that the authorities have chosen a path of strict control of media and don't shy away from targeting international broadcasters.

Fourth, in June 2008 a new law was adopted on ‘TV and radio broadcasting’. According to the new legislation, electronic media must produce at least half of their broadcasts themselves and at least half should be in the Kyrgyz language. Currently broadcasters do not obey the provisions of this law and it is not being enforced yet. Media companies are unable to meet the new requirements due to shortage of funds and personnel and the need to import programmes from Russian and Kazakh TV and radio companies. This law also implied that the earlier “National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation (NTRC)” would be invalid. As a result, the main provisions about public sector broadcasting by the NTRC were lost. Civilian control over the activities of public television and broad participation in the election of the NTRC Supervisory Board were abolished as well. This bill seems to have ‘buried’ the idea of independent public television in Kyrgyzstan which was strongly supported by civil society, opposition and international donor organisations.

Fifth, at the moment there are no restrictions on Internet journalism although a debate is unfolding if this sector should be regulated by the same laws as newspapers, radio and TV. If that would be the case they could also face restrictions and harassment. Information through the Internet is the only alternative left to the pro-governmental sources.

The economic crisis that has hit Kyrgyzstan has led to rising prices for basic commodities and serious inflation. In addition to this large parts of the country have no access to electricity while the related water shortages are another pain being felt by the public. Under these circumstances the government is nervous about international reporting about Kyrgyzstan and might clamp down further on local independent media. In a country that went through a political revolution in 2005 as a result of massive popular unrest, the current elites are easily startled by negative reporting. However, the Kyrgyz authorities would do well in trying to help improve the quality of media instead of curtailing it. Kyrgyzstan has not fully lost its positive reputation of being open and free in comparison with neighbours. It is not too late for the authorities to demonstrate the continuing truth of this reputation by proving to the public that it is not afraid of criticism and that it is ready to introduce genuine reforms to further strengthen freedom of speech and quality of media.

Winter in Tajikistan and Tensions in the Region

Commentary by Anvar Kamolidinov, Freelance consultant, Water Resources and Policy, EUCAM Expert Working Group member, Tajikistan

Worsening living conditions in Tajikistan rarely reach the international headlines, but they might this winter due to several natural and man-made factors that were set in motion in the winter

of 2007/08. During that harsh winter, food prices rose considerably which had a severe impact on people's living standards and the already weak Tajik economy. Low levels of electricity generating capacity and the lack of financing to purchase imported gas, oil and electricity forced the National Energy Company to increase the use of Tajikistan's main water reserve, the Nourek reservoir, to meet the basic needs of the population and industry. Nonetheless, the severe frost forced many enterprises to stop work, which resulted in revenue losses.

The spring of 2008 brought further problems. Inadequate rainfall led to a disappointing harvest and insufficient growth of water levels in Tajikistan's rivers and reservoirs. Last summer saw a further substantial rise in wheat prices, also due to Kazakhstan's decision to impose temporarily restrictions on the export of wheat. Last year's dry and hot summer had a further negative impact on the Nourek reservoir. Tajik, Uzbek and Turkmen agriculture was hit by a lack of water to irrigate crops and when water did arrive at its final destination it was often too late to save the harvest.

Mountainous Tajikistan does not boast a large agricultural sector. Most food is imported: wheat from Kazakhstan, rice from Uzbekistan, potatoes from Pakistan, etc. There are not enough funds however to cover these imports. While the government has decided to increase the number of areas designated for grain production, this is unlikely to suffice. A more drastic overhaul of the Tajik agricultural policy is necessary to tackle the shortages.

Another threat to Tajikistan's economy and living standard is the worldwide financial crisis. Tajik migrant workers, often employed in Russia, are currently returning to their homes with less money. Moreover, the Russian government has decided to reduce the number of migrant labourers by half. Many Tajik workers will need to find employment closer to home with bleak prospects.

The primary challenge this winter for the Tajik authorities is to provide its citizens with heating. Electricity remains the main source of heating, particularly in the urban areas. This challenge is not only related to harsh winters and hot summers but foremost to the precarious energy relationship between the countries in Central Asia.

Tajikistan-Uzbekistan: an unhealthy energy relationship

The shortfall this winter in electricity in Tajikistan is about 3.5-40 billion kWh. A part of this deficit is normally covered by Uzbek and Kyrgyz exports. The Kyrgyz government was able to reach an agreement with Turkmenistan for the supply of electricity through Uzbekistan that for years had opposed the transit of Turkmen electricity through its transmission lines. Profits derived from transit and the precarious water/energy relationship between Tashkent and Dushanbe made the Uzbeks agree to the transmission of 1.2 billion kWh of Turkmen electricity to Tajikistan for this winter. This would help to restore the water level in the Nourek reservoir which in turn would lead to an increase of hydroelectric power generation in Tajikistan and increased irrigation water for Uzbekistan. However, in mid-January of this year, Uzbekistan unilaterally stopped transmission of Turkmen electricity via its territory due to technical problems (at least this is the official Uzbek reading).

But there is more. Over the last year tension has grown between both countries both over water and gas. Uzbekistan is the major exporter of gas to Tajikistan while the latter is unable to pay all of its debts on previously imported gas. As a result, Uzbekistan has reduced the flow of gas to Tajikistan. Some substantial gas consumers in Tajikistan such as the Dushanbe cement plant and the state aluminum company TALCO have difficulty in reaching normal levels of output. But also the average person has noticed the impact of reduced gas imports. The shortages vary widely from area to area however, and even from neighbourhood to neighbourhood within cities depending on what energy source is used for heating.

Tajikistan has tried to solve its energy supply problems for many

years. With 4% of the world's hydropower capacity being attributed to Tajikistan, it has been unable to make good use of this capacity. One key reason has been the so far incomplete construction of the Rogun hydroelectric power station and reservoir, which was launched in 1976 and should have been completed in 1989. Uzbekistan has objected to this project and tries to block international investors to help Tajikistan complete this mega project. Tashkent fears that with the completion of the Rogun power station, Dushanbe will have increased command over the flow of water and could become an energy-independent state, joining Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in this sense. Moreover Tajikistan would have more leverage over the quantity of water that would flow to Uzbekistan and irrigate its cotton fields.

Tajikistan has tried without success to reassure its neighbours that the Rogun hydroelectric power station will not dramatically alter the current water regime of the Amu Darya River and will not harm the ecology of the downstream countries. Moreover it will improve water supply for agricultural lands in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Uzbek representatives have justified their position at various international forums reminding officials of the principles of the 'international convention on transboundary rivers and water management' that safeguards the rights of downstream countries. However, questions have been raised by Tajikistan on this position. It is true that Uzbekistan's water needs should be safeguarded but using more than 50% of these water resources for irrigation with an efficiency of below 35% doesn't make sense. Especially if one bears in mind what happened to the Aral Sea which has largely been destroyed by the diversion of its water sources for the sake of inefficient irrigation.

In spite of these rising tensions, both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan do understand that they are interdependent when it comes to energy and water questions. Unfortunately, this understanding has not yet led to constructive and long-term solutions. What is more, outside actors such as Russia and the EU are now drawn into the rows by suspicions that these actors would prefer one Central Asian state over the other. This situation needs to be reversed into one in which a positive role is played by outside actors to try and foster regional cooperation.

EU Activities in Tajikistan

By Charlotte Adriaen, Charge d'Affaires a.i., Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan

Relations between the EU and Tajikistan are still based on the legal framework of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement and an Interim Agreement of Trade-related matters, pending ratification of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 2004, which should occur in 2009 and which aims to foster a more comprehensive political and economic cooperation. In this context, the policy objectives for Tajikistan are set in the Regional Strategy Paper for EC Assistance to Central Asia 2007-2013:

- i) Promote regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations,
- ii) Reduce poverty and increase living standards and
- iii) Promote good governance and economic reform.

With the adoption of a new EU Strategy for Central Asia in June 2007, the EU's political dialogue with the region and Tajikistan has increased significantly across key areas, such as human rights, the rule of law and good governance, energy and transport, water and environment, education, trade and economic cooperation, and combating regional threats.

In April 2008, Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner visited Tajikistan before heading to the EU-Central Asia Ministerial Troika meeting in Ashgabat. The EU Special Representative Pierre Morel has visited Tajikistan on several occasions, one of these being the Dushanbe Ministerial Conference on Border Management and Drug

Control in Central Asia in October 2008. Tajikistan has participated actively in all EU initiatives on the Rule of Law, Education and Water/Environment, and notably hosted in Dushanbe the first meeting of the EU-Tajikistan Human Rights Dialogue which took place in October 2008.

The European Community's assistance to Tajikistan has also increased and is carried out at different levels. At a bilateral level (€66 million for 2007-10), the focus is on sector support for social protection, public finance management, trade-related and private sector development technical assistance, enhancing living standards in rural areas and other NGO projects (EIDHR, NSA). More support is given through regular thematic programmes, but also ad hoc initiatives like the Global Food facility, from which Tajikistan will benefit for support to social safety nets and development of agriculture (€15.5 million). Tajikistan also benefits from activities carried out at the regional level in areas including education, environment, energy, border management and drug control (BOMCA/CADAP). Currently, the Delegation is managing more than 100 programmes and projects which are all in line with the scope and objectives of the EU Strategy for Central Asia.

An important development is that the EC and EU Member State activities are now seen as complementing each other within the wider aim of an efficient implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia. It is also important to see the increased use of feedback from certain projects (e.g. EIDHR or NSA) into the policy dialogue, in instances such as the Human Rights Dialogue. The linkage between the dialogue and the action, between the EU initiatives and the EC activities is made possible and enhanced by the new EU Strategy. This has reinforced the EU's presence in Tajikistan.

EU Assistance in agricultural sector

About 60% of Tajikistan's population earn their living in the agricultural sector. Tajikistan's agriculture output is dominated by the cotton sector, which absorbs vast amounts of agricultural inputs but produces only 14% of agricultural output. It suffers from substantial domestic inefficiencies and inequities. (World Bank figures 2008 for Tajikistan). In 2008 Tajikistan experienced the lowest cotton harvest since 1991. Only 349,500 tonnes instead of a planned 552,500 tonnes were harvested in 2008. According to Fergana.ru (news agency), "these days, raw-cotton production in Tajikistan is down to one-third of the average yield recorded in the Soviet past when it approached one million tonnes". Cotton and aluminum provide about 9% of the country's GDP.

Under its Food Security Programme (FSP), the European Union has been supporting the agricultural sector in Tajikistan. The FSP promotes long-term food security, by improving agricultural productivity and competitiveness, whilst alleviating the impact of

transition and reforms. The FSP focuses on the poorest sectors of the population through budget support and technical assistance to the Ministries of Agriculture and the Ministry of Social Protection of Tajikistan. The FSP is also supporting a number of agricultural projects with European NGOs. From January 2009, EU will be supporting another project to improve agricultural sector in Tajikistan.

[Extracts]

The European Union has awarded the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), a Paris-based NGO, a 1,346,000 EUR contract to increase agricultural productivity and improve local governance in the Panj and Konibodom districts of Tajikistan over a 24-month period starting January 2009. The new project is called "improving the Livelihoods of Vulnerable, Rural Populations in Sughd and Khatlon Oblasts, Tajikistan in a Participatory and Sustainable Way" and is part of the EC programme "Enhancing Individual Incomes and Improving Living Standards in Khatlon and Sughd Regions".

The new project will enhance capacities of local governance structures to jointly plan and carry out community-driven development initiatives and will improve agricultural livelihoods by promoting farmers' organisational capacity, access to financial and technical means, and knowledge of farm business management. In total, 90 villages in 11 Jamoats of Panj (Khatlon) and Konibodom (Sughd) comprising 207,804 inhabitants will be covered. Rural farming populations as well as representatives of local governance structures are the core beneficiaries. New agricultural interest groups and cooperatives will be created; farmer's knowledge of best agricultural practices and farm business management will be strengthened.

For this action ACTED will partner with the Advisory Information Network, a Tajik extension service provider, the International NGO & Training and Research Centre and the Association of Microfinance Organisations of Tajikistan. The total budget of the project is 1,682,638 EUR with 80% contribution from the European Commission."

Source: http://delkaz.ec.europa.eu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=38

NATO PA report on "Democracy and Security in Central Asia: NATO and EU cooperation?"

During the annual NATO Parliamentary Assembly gathering that was held in Valencia in November, elected representatives debated a report submitted by Luxemburg MP Marc Angel on how NATO and the EU can join forces to further the cause of democracy and security in Central Asia. The detailed report makes several recommendations for increased cooperation between these two

EUCAM Research Visit to Kyrgyzstan

In late November Jos Boonstra, Co-chair of the EUCAM Expert Working Group, paid a visit to Bishkek to promote the EUCAM programme and learn more about developments in Kyrgyzstan. He had meetings with diplomats from the EU and Kyrgyzstan as well as with several NGO leaders and journalists. Experts from the EU Commission explained their projects and bilateral support structures. Bilateral assistance comprises about 14 million euro on an annual basis which partly goes to joint projects but largely to direct budget support on identified annual priorities. In the coming spring the Commission Office will be turned into a full-fledged Delegation when an EU Ambassador will be appointed and additional staff will start working in Bishkek. The EU is also involved

in an overarching country strategy that was concluded with the Kyrgyz authorities and in which seven international donors such as the Asian Development bank, World Bank, UNDP and the Swiss coordinate their work. At the latter's Embassy, the Swiss Ambassador explained Switzerland's longstanding involvement in supporting Kyrgyz reform and development, foremost in the governance sector and water management. The OSCE has its biggest field mission in the region in Bishkek that implements media projects and police training as two focal points of attention. The regionally orientated OSCE Academy is another asset that is active in offering a yearly curriculum to Central Asian students as well as organising short courses on a variety of security-related subjects.

During the visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it became apparent that the MFA takes a keen interest in EUCAM. One diplomat explained that Kyrgyzstan has gone through a difficult period since the 2005 abrupt change of power but that the Kyrgyz political climate is softer now which in turn creates a window of opportunity to make headway in further democratisation and making governance effective. In several meetings with NGO's and journalists in Bishkek a range of concerns were discussed that will also be taken up by the EUCAM project's research effort: water management, corruption, media development (and freedom) and the increase of radical Islam in Kyrgyzstan.

Brussels-based organisations.

[Extracts]

99. The EU and NATO both have a clear interest in stable, prosperous and democratic states in Central Asia. Both also have a major need to cooperate with these states in terms of security (regional and global) and energy. At the same time, NATO and the EU are facing common challenges in their relations with these states. They have to define a perspective that is appealing to governments that do not intend to join either of the organisations, but are expressing a degree of interest in limited co-operation in a number of specific areas. NATO and the EU have also been faced with the difficulty of finding a suitable balance between, on the one hand, the strategic and economic interests of their member states and, on the other, the long-term objective of promoting fundamental political reform in the states of the region. Furthermore, they have had to reconcile regional and bilateral approaches to take into account the highly divergent interests of very different states. Finally, and not the least of the challenges, they have had to deal with growing competition from other actors, notably Russia and China, with whom co-operation may sometimes seem more attractive and less conditional.

100. Despite these common interests and challenges, for the present there is no real coordination between NATO and the EU in Central Asia. While the European Strategy mentions NATO as one of the EU's potential intergovernmental partners in the region, it may be noted that the June 2008 follow-up document omits all reference to the Alliance. In the light of the challenges listed above, it is important to avoid sending ambiguous or contradictory signals. By acting in concert, NATO and the EU can create a positive synergy and amplify the effects of their respective policies. Together they can also have a more nuanced and subtle approach, since they can then call on a more varied range of instruments. The lack of a formal forum for political discussion between the two organisations should not prevent informal contacts and exchanges of ideas in order to bring closer the two organisations' policies in Central Asia. This requires, in particular, a closer co-ordination of European and American policies in the region.

101. What, then, should the pillars of such a coordinated strategy be? Generally speaking, it is important for the two organisations to design their action for the long term and to clearly define their strategic interests in the region. Furthermore, an individualized approach, one that takes into account the specific features and interests of each country, seems the most effective instrument. It would be utopian and counterproductive to try to develop a dialogue of equal depth and in the same terms with states whose ambitions and paths are so different. On the contrary, it may be preferable to favour those states which demonstrate a genuine desire for reform and to encourage them to abide by the standards to which they have committed themselves. This means, for example, co-operating more actively with Kazakhstan on the basis of the commitments it undertook with a view to the presidency of the OSCE and the interest that it shows in a deeper partnership with NATO (involvement in the IPAP programme) and the EU (interest expressed in participation in the ENP).

102. More specifically, with regard to the promotion of democracy and human rights in the region, it appears particularly important for the EU and NATO to have clear and transparent objectives in order to avoid misunderstandings or suspicions. The West's action in this sphere is often perceived in the states of the region as an aggressive policy, which seeks to bring about regime change. The EU and NATO should avoid listing non-negotiable demands, and rather place emphasis on a step-by-step, flexible approach, developing at the same time, if possible, a dialogue both with the authorities and with independent groups and civil society. It would also be useful to re-evaluate the impact of conditionality and sanctions, and to adopt a coordinated, consistent policy.

103. The establishment of more direct links between democratic governance and security would be useful for both organisations

in their relations with the states in the region. The development of democratic institutions and the rule of law should be seen as a way to better guard against possible internal and regional instability and to respond to it more effectively.

104. In the long term it would perhaps be in the interests of both organisations to clarify the link between security and democracy in their respective partnership policies. The adoption by NATO of a Charter on Atlantic Security at the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit in April 2009, as well as the preparation of a new strategic concept, might serve to better define the place of democratic reforms within NATO partnerships, and more specifically in Alliance interests in Central Asia. This review should be coordinated with that of the EU's European Security Strategy. It is interesting to note that the current version of the strategy, which dates from 2002, does not even mention Central Asia once.

105. Similarly the EU and NATO should explain more clearly what their added value is relative to the other regional powers, emphasising how they can assist states in the region to respond to common security challenges, as well as their role in facilitating thorough, sustainable modernisation based on democratic principles. There are signs of renewed interest from governments in the region in response to the conflict in Georgia. However, a clarification of what the EU and NATO can each offer must go hand in hand with the search for areas of agreement with Russia on Central Asia, in order to dispel the impression of a zero-sum game in the region and instead to create a positive process, beneficial to all.

106. Another area of agreement between the EU, NATO and the Central Asian states is their common interest in ensuring a stable, prosperous Afghanistan on good terms with its neighbours. Although Afghanistan cannot aspire to be included within the framework of the partnerships that have been developed with Central Asia, at least for the time being, the EU and NATO have shown that they can play a useful part in facilitating the organisation of regional co-operation projects on matters of common interest, such as border management, combating drug-trafficking, or even civil emergency planning.

The full report can be downloaded at: <http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=1479>

Kazakhstan and the OSCE

In November 2007 at the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Madrid, Kazakhstan was granted the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010. Granting the Kazakhs the chairmanship had been a point of dispute between a few OSCE members that believed that Astana did not meet OSCE commitments and was thus unfit to lead the organisation and a majority of members that argued that a Kazakh chairmanship would increase the stake 'eastern' members have in the troubled organisation as well as spur democratic reform in Kazakhstan. At the Madrid gathering Kazakhstan pledged to actively cooperate with the OSCE and ODIHR to make changes in the (internationally criticised) electoral law as well as implement reforms in laws on political parties, media and local self-government.

Since then Freedom House has been closely watching Kazakhstan on meeting the reform challenges. Together with a group of Kazakh NGO's they have produced a series of reports that takes a critical though in-depth view on Astana's efforts. Three timely reports have been produced so far: and can be downloaded at:

September 2008 report: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/KazakhstanProgressReview.pdf>

December 2008 report: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/KazakhstanStatusUpdate.pdf>

EUCAM upcoming events:

Date	Event/Conference	Venue
Feb 27-28, 2009	Second Meeting of EUCAM Expert Working Group	Brussels
March 2-3, 2009	A conference on "Promoting Regional Cooperation and Development in Central Asia"	Brussels
April 16-17, 2009	"The European Union and Central Asia: Building an Energy Security Relationship"	Prague
June-July, 2009	Third meeting of EUCAM Expert Working Group and conference in Kazakhstan	Almaty/ Astana

Key dates of EU-Central Asia activities

(To be confirmed)

March
Relations with Turkmenistan (GAERC) 16/17 March followed by EU-Turkmenistan cooperation council in the margins
Energy Security (GAERC) 16/17 March
ASEM Energy Security Ministerial Conference Brussels (European Council – Minister level) 30 March
April
Central Asia Troika (COEST, Council working group level), 23 April
May
Relations with Tajikistan – Establishment of EU position for the Cooperation Council (GAERC), Brussels, 18/19 May
EU-Central Asia (Troika visit, Council, FM level), Regional Political Dialogue: Dushanbe, 29-30 May.
EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Council linked to troika visit, Dushanbe
June
EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights Dialogue, Tashkent, 10 June
EU-Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue, Brussels, 22 June
EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council, Prague, 25 June

New Book on Central Asia

*Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: a local perspective***Nicolas De Pedro and Mario Esteban (eds.)**

The Observatory of Foreign Relations at Fundacion Alternativas published a book on Central Asia entitled «Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: a local perspective». Nicolas de Pedro, co-editor of the book is the EUCAM Expert Working Group member.

The present volume is a collection of papers originally presented in an international seminar jointly organized by Fundación Alternativas and the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research in Almaty on 12 September 2008.

<http://www.falternativas.org/content/download/13847/420335/version/7/file/politica+exterior.pdf>

New Publications

Kazakhstan and the South Caucasus Corridor in the wake of the Georgia-Russia War, Nargis Kassenova, EUCAM Policy Brief No. 3, (January 2009) available at: <http://www.eucentralasia.eu/files/Policy%20Brief-3-NK.pdf>

Facing Challenges of Separatism: The EU, Central Asia and the Uyghur Issue, Sebastian Peyrouse, EUCAM Policy Brief No.4 (January 2009), available at: <http://www.eucentralasia.eu/files/Policy-Brief-4.Peyrouse.pdf>

Energy Emergency in Kyrgyzstan: Causes and Implications, Shairbek Juraev, EUCAM Policy Brief No. 5, (February 2009), available at: <http://www.eucentralasia.eu/files/PB5.pdf>

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About EUCAM

The Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), Spain, in co-operation with the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Belgium, has launched a joint project entitled "EU Central Asia Monitoring (EUCAM)". The (EUCAM) initiative is an 18-month research and awareness-raising exercise supported by several EU member states and civil society organisations which aims:

- to raise the profile of the EU-Central Asia Strategy;
- to strengthen debate about the EU-Central Asia relationship and the role of the Strategy in that relationship;
- to enhance accountability through the provision of high quality information and analysis;
- to promote mutual understanding by deepening the knowledge within European and Central Asian societies about EU policy in the region; and
- to develop 'critical' capacity within the EU and Central Asia through the establishment of a network that links communities concerned with the role of the EU in Central Asia.

EUCAM focuses on four priority areas in order to find a mix between the broad political ambitions of the Strategy and the narrower practical priorities of EU institutions and member state assistance programmes:

- Democracy and Human Rights
- Security and Stability
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Education and Social Relations

EUCAM will produce the following series of publications:

- A bi-monthly newsletter on EU-Central Asia relations will be produced and distributed broadly by means of an email list server using the CEPS and FRIDE networks. The newsletter contains the latest documents on EU-Central Asia relations, up-to-date information on the EU's progress in implementing the Strategy and developments in Central Asian countries.

- Policy briefs will be written by permanent and ad hoc Working Group members. The majority of the papers examine issues related to the four core themes identified above, with other papers commissioned in response to emerging areas beyond the main themes.

- Commentaries on the evolving partnership between the EU and the states of Central Asia will be commissioned reflecting specific developments in the EU-Central Asian relationship.

- A final monitoring report of the EUCAM Expert Working Group will be produced by the project rapporteurs.

This monitoring exercise is implemented by an Expert Working Group, established by FRIDE and CEPS. The group consists of experts from the Central Asian states and the members countries of the EU. In addition to expert meetings, several public seminars will be organised for a broad audience including EU representatives, national officials and legislators, the local civil society community, media and other stakeholders.

EUCAM is sponsored by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project is also supported by the Czech Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

About FRIDE

FRIDE is a think tank based in Madrid that aims to provide original and innovative thinking on Europe's role in the international arena. It strives to break new ground in its core research interests – peace and security, human rights, democracy promotion and development and humanitarian aid – and mould debate in governmental and nongovernmental bodies through rigorous analysis, rooted in the values of justice, equality and democracy.

As a prominent European think tank, FRIDE benefits from political independence, diversity of views and the intellectual background of its international staff. Since its establishment in 1999, FRIDE has organised or participated in the creation and development of various projects that reinforce not only FRIDE's commitment to debate and analysis, but also to progressive action and thinking.

About CEPS

Founded in Brussels in 1983, the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) is among the most experienced and authoritative think tanks operating in the European Union today. CEPS serves as a leading forum for debate on EU affairs, and its most distinguishing feature lies in its strong in-house research capacity, complemented by an extensive network of partner institutes throughout the world.

CEPS 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 also provides a forum for discussion among all stakeholders in the European policy process and builds collaborative networks of researchers, policy-makers and business representatives across the whole of Europe.



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