

Getting to know each other: the EU and civil society in Central Asia

Forging links between European civil society organisations and their counterparts in Central Asia is no easy task. Delivering on EU financial support to NGOs and other civil groupings would appear to be even more of a challenge. The EU tries to achieve a lot in terms of assistance but it risks spreading limited resources too thinly, which could limit impact on all fronts. Assistance consists of a variety of instruments, mechanisms and support programmes, such as the Food Security Programme; 'Central Asia invest'; democracy promotion through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human rights and direct budget support in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Choices need to be made about where the EU should place its money. Not easy, since all subjects and programmes seem worthy at first sight. What about support for civil society?

In giving support to democracy development and defence of human rights, the US has a reputation of directly supporting civil society organisations, while the EU – due to its enlargement process with Central and East European countries – favours support for official democratic and judicial institutions. This seems to be changing in the case of Central Asia (and elsewhere) however, with Brussels understanding that it also has to reach out to civil society in order to have an impact and become recognised as a player. In some Central Asian countries this combination yields modest successes, such as Tajikistan, where government agencies and civil society can be found sitting at the same table working on joint EU-funded projects, or where state institutions ask NGOs for advice.

Assistance to civil society makes up for only a very small part of overall EU assistance, albeit a labour-intensive part. In essence the Commission, EIDHR and Delegation offices in Central Asia do not have sufficient staff to ensure that funds are delivered quickly to the right NGOs for worthwhile projects. It is almost impossible for the EU to map

out which civil society organisations are useful without sufficient 'eyes and ears' on the ground. It might make sense if the EU tried to channel larger annual amounts of funds to organisations that have the capacity to make good judgements on support for grass-root organisations; the OSCE is an obvious candidate here but advice might also be gained from organisations such as the Open Society Foundation or the Aga Khan Foundation, which both have expert presence on the ground in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Another difficulty is the complicated and lengthy procedures that NGOs have to go through to obtain even small EU grants. Some Delegation offices are planning to train civil society personnel on how to write proposals and do reporting, but it remains a daunting task for ill-equipped and non-experienced civil society actors. The whole bureaucratic process may be difficult to change, since European tax-payers want to have funds correctly accounted for. However, some burdensome requirements seem quite unnecessary and could be simply scrapped: for example the requirement for 20% co-financing from applicants' own or other sources, and the complicated restrictions on the origin of procurement of goods, even for small amounts in technical assistance projects. It was notable at our seminar in Almaty that NGOs considered that UKDFID and USAID procedures were much more reasonable than those of the Commission, even though these two donors are no less concerned with the need for financially correct procedures. These differences should be examined, and provide the basis for precise recommendations.

These burdens seem to explain why the EU is choosing to use other organisations to reach civil society. This may even increase the funds spent through EU programmes on expensive Western consultants, instead of trying to build capacity directly with Central Asians. This should not mean that the EU

will lose visibility. The projects will still carry the EU logo. Finally, it is important for EU officials from the Commission, Council, and the European Parliament to connect more regularly with civil society representatives during their visits to Central Asia.

This EUCAM Watch devotes special attention to the EU and co-operation with civil society in Central Asia. EUCAM organised a seminar on this topic in Almaty on 27 June with Central Asian NGO representatives and EUCAM experts. A report of this meeting is included here as well as that of another civil society meeting that the European Commission delegation to Kazakhstan organised a few days later, which dealt specifically with juridical reform. Alongside the report you will find two commentaries: the first by Bauke Snoep, who works as a consultant for the Dutch Centre for European Security Studies and writes about Security Sector Governance and the role the EU might play in assisting Central Asian republics to engage in meaningful defence, police and border control reform. The second is by Adil Nurmakov, who is the head of the Competitiveness Research Centre in Kazakhstan. He informs us about the amendments to the legislation regulating internet and online contents in Kazakhstan. This bulletin also updates readers on EU-Central Asia relations and the work related to the EUCAM project.

*Editorial by Jos Boonstra,
Senior Researcher FRIDE, EUCAM Co-chair*

EUCAM News

EUCAM Civil Society seminar in Almaty

The European Union and Central Asia: Searching for Synergies between Civil Societies

By Aigerim Duimagambetova EUCAM junior coordinator, Brussels

On 27 June in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the EU-Central Asia Monitoring (EUCAM) project organised a roundtable under the title 'The European Union and Central Asia: Searching for Synergy and Promoting Cooperation of Civil Societies'. There were participants from almost all Central Asian states, especially Kazakhstan, from the leading NGOs in the areas of security, human rights promotion and advocacy in the region, and a number of EU experts also took part.

Representatives of the leading Central Asian non-profit organisations were invited to share their views on the role and perspectives of the EU in upholding the efforts of local non-state agencies to develop fully functioning independent mass media, promote human rights and freedoms and monitor the transparency and accountability of governments.

Conclusions were drawn during the debates on a range of very substantive issues, including the legal and institutional framework for civil society in the EU, OSCE and Council of Europe; increased use of the official human rights dialogues for discussions on the violations of essential civil freedoms such as freedom of speech; closer cooperation with other major donors in the region; new approaches on technical

Table of Contents

Editorial.....	1
EUCAM News.....	2
Civil Society Seminar in Almaty.....	2
Central Asian Affairs.....	3
Security Sector Reform in Central Asia.....	3
Kazakhstan's Grip on Virtual Reality.....	3
EU and Central Asia.....	5
First EU-Kazakhstan Civil Society Seminar.....	5
First EU-Tajikistan Civil Society Seminar.....	5
EU Presidency Statement on Kyrgyz Elections.....	6
What results to expect after Civil Society Seminars?.....	5
EUCAM Missions to Central Asia.....	7
EUCAM visit to Dushanbe.....	7
EUCAM Publications.....	7

and financial assistance in this field, and a substantial rethink of its content. According to the representatives of the Central Asian civil community, these are all issues on which the EU could improve its standing in supporting the civil societies of Central Asia.

Participants raised a wide range of issues related to the functioning of the civil sector in Central Asia. It was a commonly held view that the EU's engagement in this sphere is less than it could be: much more could be done to bring about demonstrable change. Among the main problems, participants criticised the over-bureaucratised procedures for acquiring grants, the lack of long-term and coherent strategies, and the lack of approaches tailored to the situation of each of the Central Asia states.

NGO activists called upon the EU to support their efforts on the ground with more vigorous and robust positions at the political level, by raising sensitive issues in talks with Central Asian authorities, and by reacting promptly to new human rights violations in the region. The approaching chairmanship of Kazakhstan at the OSCE, as well as its growing interest in the involvement with the Council of Europe, are seen in the region as potential mechanisms for Europe to influence the situation in Kazakhstan. This will, in turn, positively impact the status quo in other states of the region.

It was stressed that the EU should focus more on promoting and supporting cooperation and networking between organisations within Central Asia, and collaborate more with other international actors present in the region. Most of the speakers believed that emphasis should be placed on the technical education and training of NGOs and their target groups, and on the qualitative assessments of the impact of such activities.

Central Asian Affairs

Security Sector Reform in Central Asia

By Bauke Snoep, Associate, Centre for European Security Studies, The Netherlands

Some people believe that security sector reform (SSR) in Central Asia cannot be done in a western style. It is argued that these countries have their own culture and values and that SSR should be approached differently; with other dimensions and, above all, at its own pace. This might be true but there are universal values to be considered. Values in the sphere of human rights are essential in establishing a healthy, well-functioning security system. All five countries in the region are signatories to the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and to the International Covenant for Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC) of the United Nations. They have ratified the Final Helsinki Act of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and three of them have also ratified the Charter of Paris (OSCE). Next to human rights, which should be shared by all, the five Central Asian countries also face security threats that are of a broad nature; drug trafficking, radicalisation and regional tensions over natural resources. In that sense a well-functioning security sector would be to the benefit of all five, though developed in their own manner. We have much more in common than we think at first sight!

SSR in its classical form used to focus on two parties: the main power structures and the 'overseers' checking up on them. Nowadays, the security *family* is defined more broadly, including customs enforcement, financial management, the judiciary and correctional system and, last but certainly not least, civil and political society organisations. Also, we now realise that security begins with human security – clean water, proper healthcare, a clean environment, social security and respect for human rights – which is indivisible from security in the streets and the security of the State. These issues lie at the heart of a new concept: Security System Reform, developed by the EU under the aegis of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In this policy, a 'Whole of Government Approach' and an 'All-Encompassing Condition' lead to a holistic approach that is essential for a successful reform of the *System*. It also aims to strike a balance between making security systems more efficient and accountable, while at the same time achieving rigorous democratic oversight.

Whereas the European Union takes a keen interest in SSR, there is no policy or clear approach to these matters in the case of Central Asia. Of course, there is the EU programme on Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) and the EU Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP). Also other countries, such as the United Kingdom, run their own programmes but there are barely programmes available that offer a concerted approach to reform of the security system. At a seminar of the European Union Central Asia Monitoring (EUCAM) in Almaty, Kazakhstan, June 2009, the Central Asian civil society representatives from the region complained that the topic was barely addressed and ill-defined by the EU and partners. Increased attention to SSR by the EU and member countries in relation to Central Asia would be

welcome. It would be in line with the objectives of democracy, good governance, rule of law and human rights that the EU set out in the political Strategy for Central Asia. But it would also relate directly to the overarching interest of countering joint security threats and strengthening stability outlined in the same 2007 Strategy.

A unique SSR example – the CESS programme with Kazakhstan

Since the early 1990s NATO has operated a network of contact point embassies (CPEs) in order to support the Alliance's partnership and public diplomacy activities. In every partner country, an embassy of one of the NATO member states serves as CPE and operates as a channel for disseminating information about the role and policies of the Alliance. In 2008 the Dutch Embassy fulfilled that role in Kazakhstan. Considering that Kazakhstan would take over the Presidency of the OSCE in 2010, the Centre for European Security Studies (CESS) developed a training programme (STARLINK) on Democratic Governance in the Security Sector, implemented with Kazakhstan in 2008-2009. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded the initiative while CESS worked closely together with civil society partners in Kazakhstan – Civil Alliance, the Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law and the Al-Farabi University – which in turn were able to find genuine interest among Kazakh ministries to participate.

CESS has given a total of seven training sessions focusing on Defence, Law Enforcement and Emergency and Disaster Control in both Astana and Almaty. For each session, some 20 to 25 trainees from ministries, parliament, NGOs, universities and the media participated. Each had a module on understanding democratic governance, particularly in the security sector. Further modules focused on issues such as organised crime, defence planning, community policing, disaster control, human rights in the armed forces and integrated border management. During each session, one day was devoted to role-playing exercises where the trainees were to practise the theory of democratic governance. There it proved that theory and practice are not the same!

This training programme did not qualify as 'technical' SSR, but it contributed to an awareness of what security system reform means and how it can contribute to strengthening human security and state security alike. It is programmes like these that can bring Europeans and Central Asians together to jointly work on and discuss highly sensitive issues of common interest. These issues are in line with the objectives of the EU Strategy: governance, security and intercultural exchange.

Kazakhstan's Grip on Virtual Reality

By Adil Nurmakov, Head of the Competitiveness Research Centre, Kazakhstan

As the world considers how best to regulate the 'virtual reality' of online information exchange and communication, Kazakhstan has taken a tough and clearly disproportionate step to tighten its grip on the internet.

The news that amendments to the legislation regulating

internet and online content were under consideration by the authorities first appeared in August 2008, but public attention towards the initiative of the Agency for Informatization and Communications (AIC) was only aroused when the draft law was submitted to the parliament in January 2009. The law-making process, which is traditionally rather closed in Kazakhstan, was particularly opaque this time; there was very little coverage of the parliament's discussions or participation of civil society in this process – even the final text of the adopted law was published two weeks after it had been signed by the president.

The main target of public indignation was the equation of blogs, chat-rooms and other websites, which used to be deemed a user's private territory, with mass media outlets, imposing the same liability for libel, calumny, violation of privacy and other breaches, which are subject to criminal prosecution in Kazakhstan. However, this novelty is just an upgrade of the existing legislation, tailored to the booming web2.0 'prosumer' technologies by changing the word 'websites' to the broader term 'internet resources'. Both legal experts and IT specialists repeatedly pointed out the lack of clarity about notions and mechanisms – and this makes the law too susceptible to 'creative' enforcement. For example, liability for illegal content rests upon the owner of an internet resource, but it is not specified whether it is going to be the blogger, the community moderator, or the blogging platform proprietor.

Previous legislation already enabled the authorities to effectively shut down a number of internet newspapers by court decisions on the basis of alleged incitement to social/national discord or extremism in the user comments sections. Therefore, a more crucial novelty was, probably, the state's prerogative to block any web-resource ("to stop dissemination of its content on the territory of Kazakhstan") by court decision, in the case of a breach of legislation. This measure used to be applied to the Kazakhstani websites. The new law allows a filtering of the worldwide web *in absentia* of the defendant, even without the need to notify the outlawed website or blog of the decision to block it in Kazakhstan. The law does not require the authorities to report on or explain the blockage to the local users. Moreover, if before only the national operator Kazakhtelecom JSC was obliged to directly implement a ban, now a special body will supervise observation of the court's ruling by all ISPs.

The government's rhetoric has changed significantly. At the beginning of discussions it cited the need to prevent online extremism, terrorism and pornography. As it turned out, officials acknowledged that the major purpose was to "restrict the level of information penetration" and to "have a leverage to manage the information flow" in order to avert scenarios similar to the protests in Moldova or Iran, which were staged via the internet or gained international backing due to the internet-based channels of information delivery. Although the new legislation empowers the government with wide opportunities to filter the internet, thus spreading its censorship power much further than the already controlled traditional media sector, it will hardly lead to a ubiquitous surveillance of the blogosphere and routine restriction of online discussions. More likely, the new law will be applied in an uneven way and target only the most dangerous anti-regime content.

The law is definitely loaded with certain implications, however,

above all, for the freedom of speech in Kazakhstan; especially against the current background of the poor level of rule of law, lack of judicial independence and the tradition of treating dissent, it is therefore highly probable that opinions and commentaries will be considered as defamation or calumny etc. Obviously, this situation may further constrain political expression and promote self-censorship, exacerbating the climate of fear and the decline in civil motivation and awareness. Experts have repeatedly noted that the law is too rudimentary and allows the blocking of, for example, the whole blogging platform on the basis of an illegal comment in one of the blogs. Such an approach will directly hamper access to other sorts of information and (often paid) services for users that have nothing to do with the outlawed content. Serious concerns are voiced by the web businesses, access and hosting providers, which will now have an additional supervisor – newly created Service for ICT Incidents – and will also be obliged to incur extra costs due to the requirement to store all user-related data (including IP and reference addresses, identifiers and billing details) for two years. The new legislation has been criticised several times by the OSCE and by Sweden's EU presidency, which expressed the fear that the law considerably limits the internet and media in general. The US Mission to the OSCE also urged Kazakhstan to bring the law into line with democratic standards on the freedom of expression.

Obviously, the state's desire to control this powerful information resource is not justifiable, but it is understandable from the point of view of the political system's instinct for survival. On the other hand, the suggested mechanism is certainly the most primitive approach to regulation, equal to the on/off censorship switch. Long before the law was submitted to the parliament, the authorities blocked the popular blogging network Livejournal.com, and only half a year later they acknowledged the fact of filtering, by a court decision, due to nationalist comments in one of the blogs, which appeared five months after the implementation of the block. Another point of concern is that implementation of the law will require substantial budgetary outlay, meaning that the tax-payers will have to pay for the rather arbitrary filtering of online content.

It could be that these legal novelties could herald early elections or major shifts in power, taking into account that the model case studies – Iran and Moldova – faced public protests in the aftermath of elections. Besides, logically, in order to ensure the fully-fledged implementation of the law, all circumvention tools (proxy servers, anonymizers, Tor etc.) should be outlawed too, thus putting Kazakhstan in the same boat as the most repressive states. The fragmented groups of legal experts, internet professionals and enthusiasts are currently trying to understand the new rules of the game and develop better approaches to putting the virtual reality into legal frameworks without the violation of free speech or hampering ICT development. This is taking place against the background of increased interest on the part of the state, the general public and international donors in the internet and the development opportunities it offers, so the EU could play a creative role in support of constructive dialogue between the players in this field.

Related: EU Statement on Internet legislation in Kazakhstan, http://www.eu2009.se/polopoly_fs/1.9630!menu/standard/file/OSCE_EU%20Statement%20on%20Internet%20legislation%20in%20Kazakhstan.pdf

EU and Central Asia

First EU-Kazakhstan Civil Society Seminar

By Aigerim Duimagambetova, EUCAM junior coordinator, Brussels

Following the agreements between the European Union and Astana in 2008, a joint EU-Kazakhstan pilot civil society seminar on human rights and the rule of law took place on the 29-30th of June in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Entitled "The judicial system and places of detention: towards European standards", this seminar focused on the so-called 'soft' issues of human rights protection relevant to Kazakhstan, such as aspects of domestic penal law, reform of the penitentiary and judicial system, and the rights of prisoners.

The seminar attracted extensive and diverse representation among local human rights activists and lawyers from the Kazakh NGO sector, public officials, experts from the EU member states, Russia and Ukraine. Altogether, more than 80 participants came to share their views on the functioning of the Kazakh judicial system, the human rights situation at all stages of criminal law application and alternatives to imprisonment and conditions of detention.

Under particular scrutiny was Kazakh legislation, measured against internationally recognised standards and judicial concepts. For instance, participants debated the concept of administrative responsibility, which is widely applied throughout the post-Soviet space and diverges dramatically from internationally used definitions. Whereas in Western legal systems administrative responsibility is defined as a responsibility of the authorities towards individuals, in CIS countries it means the responsibility of individuals towards the government and constitutes the basis for laws on administrative responsibility – giving rise to grave violations of human rights. Procedures such as administrative arrest or administrative detention exist under the umbrella of laws on administrative responsibility, and hence no civil rights are guaranteed by the criminal law in these cases. Following intensive discussions, the participants of the seminar called upon the Kazakh authorities to abolish the concept of administrative responsibility in its current formulation.

Particular emphasis was also placed during the seminar upon topics such as the independence of judges, the effectiveness of courts, trial by jury, alternatives to detention as well as monitoring of the places of detention. As a result of two days of debate, two plenary sessions and discussions on the platform of two working groups, an 8 page document was drafted, which included recommendations to the government of Kazakhstan on the humanisation of its judicial and penitentiary sectors. This document is to be submitted to the parties of the second EU-Kazakhstan official dialogue on human rights in October in Brussels, Belgium.

The Almaty seminar was organised within the framework of the official human rights dialogues initiated by the EU with all five Central Asian states, with the first such EU-Kazakhstan top-rank discussions held in Astana in October, 2008. The objective of this Almaty seminar, the first of its kind, was to enhance high-level talks and enrich its agenda by giving

stronger voice to Kazakh academic and NGO communities, and to create a space for them, together with their European colleagues, to formulate recommendations to the government for future reforms. It is planned that such seminars will precede all official human rights dialogues with Central Asian governments. Recommendations drafted within the framework of these seminars shall be taken into account during official debates.

First EU-Tajikistan Civil Society Seminar

Extract from the official EU-Central Asia website

On the 10-11 July 2009, the European Commission, in partnership with the government of Tajikistan, held the first EU-Tajikistan Civil Society Seminar on Human Rights entitled "The right to a fair trial and independence of judiciary". This seminar was organised to complement the official Human Rights Dialogues between the European Union and Dushanbe.

The seminar brought together judges, lawyers, academics, NGO representatives from Tajikistan and 12 European states, public officials and representatives of the international organisations. At the core of the discussions were the issues of independence of judges and defence lawyers, equality of arms during criminal proceedings, fair trial guarantees during trial, post-trial rights, conditions of detention and public monitoring of places of detention, as well as the right of individual complaints to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Tajikistan.

As a result, a list of recommendations was drawn up and agreed upon. It is expected that they will be taken into account during the ongoing reforms, including the reform of the legal profession and the elaboration of the new Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Tajikistan. The recommendations will be sent to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and followed up during the next Tajikistan-EU Human Rights Dialogue, to be held in Dushanbe in September 2009.

Source: EU-Tajikistan 1st civil society seminar on human rights concluded with the list of recommendations, http://delkaz.ec.europa.eu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=639&Itemid=43&lang=en

EU Presidency Statement concerning the Kyrgyz Presidential Elections

The EU Presidency closely followed the course of the Presidential elections held on 23 July 2009.

The Presidency shares the evaluations in the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, issued by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). The Presidency is concerned that, notwithstanding some positive elements, including distinct choices of presidential candidates and the continuing engagement of civil society, the 23 July presidential elections failed to meet key OSCE commitments for democratic elections, including the commitment to maintain a clear separation between the ruling party and the state. Election day was marred by many

problems and irregularities, including evidence of ballot box stuffing, inaccuracies in the voter lists and some evidence of multiple voting. The process further deteriorated during the counting and tabulation.

The EU stands ready to assist Kyrgyzstan in its efforts to bring the election process into line with OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. The Presidency urges Kyrgyzstan to continue working closely with the ODIHR.

Source: http://www.eu2009.se/en/meetings_news/2009/7/24/presidency_statement_concerning_the_kyrgyz_presidential_elections

Related: EUCAM Commentary No. 2, *The Kyrgyz Republic Presidential Elections: No surprises but few opportunities for democratisation*, Nicolas de Pedro: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Commentaries/EUCAM_Commentary2.pdf

Human Rights in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan: How realistic is to expect further results after an EU open debate with civil society?

By Jiří Kopal, Deputy Secretary General, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

The EU-Kazakhstan and EU-Tajikistan civil society seminars on the themes of the judiciary and detention organised at the end of June in Almaty and in mid-July in Dushanbe, demonstrate how difficult it is to improve the situation in these key areas of the rule of law and human rights protection.

The problems that were addressed are quite common to all the countries with no democratic history and mass media under the control of oligarchy closely cooperating with the government. Let's start with the use of ill-treatment and torture at police stations, mostly in pre-trial detention to the Soviet-style power of prosecutors in criminal cases and the lack of human potential and financial resources in all the spheres of judiciary and prison services. The greater amount of money that could be invested in reforms in the much wealthier Kazakhstan compared to Tajikistan does not play any particularly significant role. But the common tendency is clear. In both countries there is a motivation to gradually improve some features in the field of criminal justice. There is also a certain openness to some advice from EU experts. However, there is evidently no discussion involving the people working in the judiciary or state administration, not to mention politicians, on how to improve the notoriously unprincipled application of criminal law in highly political cases, including those of human rights defenders, which is always a factor in authoritarian regimes like those in Kazakhstan or the more unstable Tajikistan. Until this important element is changed in practice, there will be no trust in the judiciary among the local population, despite the huge sums of money being invested in overall reform by foreign funders. This predictable outcome has to be taken into account when deciding priorities in future funding.

A notable feature of the seminar was the openness of the debate and the sincere criticism driven by courageous lawyers and other actors from local civil society. This was an important

point in both of the seminars and the main improvement on the seminar organised in Uzbekistan in 2008. The honesty of the debate could also have been the result of an absence of high-ranking government officials, partly intended by the seminars' organisers on behalf of the EU as these representatives will be part of official dialogues. Their presence is of course not that useful in trying to influence the recommendations that have to serve as elements of a frank discussion with the government. Despite this partial absence, the participants nevertheless witnessed some heated exchanges of opinion between representatives of the judiciary or state prosecution and NGO lawyers. This was the evidence that the state and judicial authorities were represented in some way.

The overall focus presented by the local civil society could be deemed to be very legal and based on the international human rights standards. There is however a certain distinction to be made between the slightly wider practical use of international mechanisms by Kazakh NGOs as compared to Tajik ones. It should be noted that the understanding of the interconnectedness and the importance between the rule of law and human rights is clear for both countries only by seeing the names of the two most prominent human rights NGOs in both countries.¹

It should be stressed that the EU focus on Central Asian states is worthy of the practical support of international human rights NGOs. Simply criticising human rights problems all the time and commiserating the victims is simply not enough. In the case of Tajikistan, the government is not able to secure even the most basic needs for its population such as a permanent supply of electricity in winter etc. so the population does not expect much from such a government. This is, however, evidence of the need for greater involvement by international experts; otherwise all attempts to improve the rule of law will be undermined, simply by the enormous lack of human capacity and resources.

As both seminars were firsts of their kind, the pages of recommendations on how to continue with the rule of law reforms should be welcomed. Although perhaps a little too long, they nevertheless provided the space for the creative suggestions of principal civil society leaders and further work with them for EU representatives. These should be put on the table over and over again in the official dialogues that have to take place in the coming years. What is more necessary is prioritisation within them in order to achieve realistic shifts and results, given the political situation in each particular country. Similarly, as UN human rights bodies do, EU representatives should raise the priority issues patiently and follow their implementation regularly.

It is quite sure that it will not be enough to simply finance various projects and be sceptical about their results from the very start. If Central Asian governments become too accustomed to being given money for reforms that won't be implemented, except in the form of Potemkin villages, the EU will lose credibility as an actor that is able to achieve strategic goals by providing money and expertise.

¹ Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (www.bureau.kz); Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law (www.hrt.tj).

EUCAM Missions to Central Asia

EUCAM Visits Dushanbe, Tajikistan

By Nafisa Hasanova, EUCAM coordinator, Brussels

Following the EUCAM's civil society seminar on 27 June, 2009 in Almaty, the EUCAM co-chair, Jos Boonstra, and coordinator, Nafisa Hasanova travelled to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan on a research trip. Dushanbe owes its name to the bazaar which once attracted great numbers of merchants from neighbouring towns every Monday, hence Dushanbe (Monday in Tajik). It turned out to be quieter than Almaty, the former capital of Kazakhstan or Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. In my opinion, Dushanbe is a charming place owing in part to a palpable Soviet influence and provincial feel. There are ATM's everywhere, and wireless Internet is expanding to the capital's numerous cafes and restaurants. These places are packed with foreigners of all descriptions – hence the prohibitive prices for locals! What's more, most if not all private cars double up as taxis. In fact, there are quite a few cars that operate officially/nominally as taxis but that do not have official licenses to operate as such. They will bring you anywhere once you tell them the restaurant, bazaar, or shop you need to get to. Don't bother asking for street names – they don't know! As one of the drivers in Dushanbe put it, "Who cares about the names of the streets? The names change daily and nobody can follow them any longer!" How lucky we were to have our Tajikistani expert, Parviz Mullojanov! He saved us on several occasions, guiding the taxi drivers to our destination in one piece.

From 23 June to 3 July we arranged a number of meetings in Dushanbe with local stakeholders and European officials, among them the British and German Ambassadors, coordinators from German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the German Development Service (DED), representatives of Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the OSCE, and the Chargé d'Affaires of the European Commission Delegation. In addition, we had an opportunity to speak with and to listen to the representatives of the Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs, local representatives of Open Society Institute – Tajikistan (OSI), and leading experts on Islam.

We found that almost all of the European countries and organisations present in Dushanbe agreed that the number one priority in Tajikistan is poverty alleviation and, by implication, sustainable economic development. By contrast, in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan the EU's objectives are energy and trade related. Only three European countries have an embassy in Tajikistan, namely the United Kingdom, Germany and France. To compound matters, Sida and Department for International Development (DFID) are planning to pull out from the country (and the region in general) in the next 2-3 years. By the end of this year, European Commission office in Tajikistan will be upgraded to a fully-fledged delegation with the diplomatic staff that will bring about an increased EU presence.

The general consensus among these organisations is that the major security threat in Tajikistan is in the social sphere such as in education and health services. Indeed one of the

representatives put it thus, "If you want security deal with social protection, health and education..." This is an especially acute problem given the recent global economic downturn and its impact on the demographics of the country. For instance, thousands of migrants are returning home, and the reduced flow of remittances is further weakening an already unstable economy. This problem is compounded by the fact that the Tajik government is understaffed and underqualified. That said, the government is aware of the problem and is committed to cooperating with the international donors in this regard. As is all too common in countries such as Tajikistan, however, corruption and poor institutional capacity militate against speedy reform and change. Matters are not helped by the fact that the EU lacks a clear vision. If the EU is interested in helping Tajikistan reform it has to think long-term, maintain its presence and continue its dialogue with the country and, finally, focus on one sector (e.g. social, agriculture) and expands its focus into other sector gradually thereafter.

New Publications

EUCAM Policy Brief No. 8 - *The EU and Uzbekistan: short-term interests versus long-term engagement*, Sukhrobjon Ismailov, Balazs Jarabik, July 2009: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/PB-8-eversion.pdf (also available in Russian, EUCAM website)

EUCAM Policy Brief No. 9 - *The EU's Rule of Law Initiative in Central Asia*, Rico Isaacs, August 2009: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/PB9.pdf

EUCAM Commentary No. 2 - *The Kyrgyz Republic Presidential Elections: No surprises but few opportunities for democratisation*, Nicolas de Pedro, August 2009: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Commentaries/commentary2.pdf

EUCAM Commentary No. 3 - *Kazakhstan's grip on virtual reality*, Adil Nurmakov, August 2009: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Commentaries/EUCAM_commentary3_Nurmakov.pdf

EUCAM Working Paper No. 2 - *The EU and Central Asia: Commercialising the Energy Relationship*, Michael Denison, July 2009: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Working_Papers/WP2_e-EN.pdf (also available in Russian and Spanish)

Editorial staff:

Jos Boonstra, EUCAM co-chair (FRIDE)

Michael Emerson, EUCAM co-chair (CEPS)

Nafisa Hasanova, EUCAM coordinator

Aigerim Duimagambetova, EUCAM junior coordinator

Anne Harrington, CEPS editor

Jackie West, CEPS editor

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.



EUCAM
EU-CENTRAL ASIA MONITORING

www.eucentralasia.eu

FRIDE
FUNDACIÓN PARA LAS RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES Y EL DIÁLOGO EXTERIOR

www.fride.org



www.ceps.eu