

EU reinforces Central Asian strategy

Organizations aid in security, government, human rights reform

As globalization makes the world grow smaller, Central Asia draws closer to Europe. Security, energy and human rights issues in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are now affecting the European Union.



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The union's 2010 report, "Into EurAsia — Monitoring the EU's Central Asia Strategy," states that problems such as terrorism and arms smuggling cannot be managed purely by military means. The report analyzes the Council of the European Union's 2007 "Strategy for a New Partnership."

"Into EurAsia," published by the EU Central Asia Monitoring office, or EUCAM, outlines European desires for closer ties and more integration with Central Asia. In the 2010 update, the authors concluded that "concretely Central Asia

An ethnic Uzbek registers at a polling station in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, in June 2010. The minority Uzbeks turned out to vote in Kyrgyzstan's constitutional referendum that supporters hope will usher in Central Asia's first parliamentary democracy.



An employee of a police laboratory tests confiscated heroin at the Drug Control Agency headquarters in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in January 2010.

REUTERS

presents no direct security threats to the EU.” The reports cite indirect threats to Europe, such as insecurity of energy supplies, al-Qaida, radicalization and drug trafficking. Equally important to security are law enforcement, democratization, poverty reduction and respect for the rule of law.

Accordingly, in 2007, the EU Council, working in conjunction with the United Nations, began a program of engagement and assistance for Central Asia, adding a regional strategy for aid. European leaders ordered a review of existing programs, convening experts to monitor progress and make recommendations.

“The EU is working actively to promote our values in Central Asia,” said Pierre Morel, the EU’s special representative for Central Asia. “For that purpose, we have launched regular human rights dialogues with all Central Asian countries. At the same time, we have embarked on new spheres of cooperation, addressing security and stability issues in multilateral format.” The EU’s presence in Central Asia is gradually getting stronger, he said. EU nations and the European Commission are opening new embassies and sending in delegations.

Security reform

For the EU, security is a paramount concern and the foundation for reform. Many criminals and terrorists enter Europe through Central Asia, which makes border control assistance the key to stopping problems at the source. Poor border control has opened the door to drugs, illegal immigration and human trafficking. Corruption makes things worse.

While EU aid to Central Asia is varied, two programs specifically target drug trafficking and crime. The Border

Management Programme for Central Asia, or BOMCA, launched in early 2004, is one of the largest EU assistance programs in the region. BOMCA works toward the gradual adoption of modern border management methods in Central Asia, including enhanced border security and the encouragement of legal trade and transit.

The Central Asia Drug Action Programme, or CADAP, provides countries with policy, legal and technical expertise and knowledge of European and international standards and practices in drug prevention, control and trafficking. CADAP works closely with BOMCA, focusing on both supply and demand reduction in line with the recommendations in the European Union drugs strategy endorsed in 2004. Since 2003, the EU has spent more than 25 million euros on these programs. BOMCA paid for new technology such as X-ray machines and passport readers at border-crossing stations, training for border control officers and the construction of three new border outposts in Tajikistan. CADAP paid for drug rehabilitation for inmates, drug profiling at airports and train stations and anti-drug and HIV media campaigns.

Good governance

Good governance and the rule of law are sometimes taken for granted in the West, where corruption and graft are considered outside the norm and unacceptable. EU assistance to Central Asia in targeting corruption and emphasizing the rule of law is expected, over time, to change the perception of corruption and to allow Central Asian nations to deal with the West on an equal

footing. For example, the doors to trade might widen if Western businesses think they can conduct business openly and with less corruption. Business expenses are often unpredictable in countries where bribery and protection rackets are common.

The World Bank defines good governance as “predictable, open and enlightened policy-making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law.”

EUCAM and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE, are assisting Central Asia with good governance and security issues. The OSCE has a longstanding presence in Central Asian countries, with offices in all but Uzbekistan. The offices focus on border security and management, rule of law, good governance, legislation, environmental protection and regional cooperation.

“Security Sector Reform, or SSR, is the ideal link between ... human rights, democracy, good governance and rule of law,” Jos Boonstra, co-chairman of the EUCAM Expert Working Group, said in the November 2009 report, *Security Sector Reform in Central Asia*.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee defines SSR as “seeking to increase partner countries’ ability to meet the range of security needs within their societies in a manner consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of governance, transparency and the rule of law. SSR includes, but extends well beyond, the narrower focus of more traditional security assistance on defense, intelligence and policing.”

The Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform, a British think tank, said there is a link between corruption, human rights and security. “Violence and security are a priority concern of those suffering from poverty and other vulnerable groups, especially women and children, who are often subject to bad policing, weak justice and corrupt militaries,” the group stated in its 2007 report, *A Beginner’s Guide to Security Sector Reform*. “Security is also intrinsic to personal and state safety, access to government services and participation in political processes. SSR contributes to the development of appropriate structures to help prevent instability and violent conflict.”



GUINCHA NEPESOVA/OSCE

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe assists training for the State Border Service of Turkmenistan on the Turkmen-Afghan border as part of its promotion of good governance and security in Central Asia.

EU-Central Asia strategy

The EU Central Asia monitoring office’s February 2010 report, “Into EurAsia: Monitoring the EU’s Central Asia Strategy,” summarizes EU-Central Asia relations since 2007. The report recommends ways the two regions can better evaluate issues, increase diplomatic relations, improve human rights and create a stronger standard for evaluating the rule of law.

The report was an 18-month research and awareness-raising initiative launched in October 2008 by two European think tanks, Spain’s *Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior* and Belgium’s *Centre for European Policy Studies*.

For the full report, visit www.frilde.org and click on More FRIDE books at the bottom of the page, then click on “Into EurAsia.”



Human rights

The international community wants Central Asia to promote human rights. Organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International monitor Central Asia. But the EU's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, or EIDHR, which supports democracy and human rights in non-EU countries, is not yet deeply involved in the region. The United Nations has a Central Asia Regional Office and country teams in all these nations. The goal is to bring the countries into alignment with international norms.

"I have a broad responsibility — mandate — to protect and promote human rights," U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told Euronews in April 2010. "Human rights are universally valued. I have urged, in unambiguous terms, all the leaders of Central Asia to protect human rights, to protect vulnerable people and to implement all the conventions and the international agreements to which they have signed." He said leaders have a moral obligation to recognize universal human rights.

The U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, or OHCHR, focuses on ending torture, stopping violence against women and promoting human rights. Its Central Asia office is raising awareness of economic, cultural and social rights and showing people how to file human

rights protests at the U.N. All of the Central Asian countries except Uzbekistan have ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention that defines a refugee, their rights and the obligation of host nations.

Compliance has been sporadic, if not lacking, in Central Asia. But recent developments in the region have been positive. Uzbekistan has granted citizenship to Tajik refugees, and Turkmenistan has revised refugee and citizenship laws. Bringing their laws in line with international standards will benefit their citizens and their economies, the EU reports. Adopting standard international business practices will make it easier for Central Asian and European nations to connect. Europe's need for Central Asian energy is a case in point. The building of oil and natural gas pipelines skirting Russia will ease Europe's dependency on Russian fossil fuels.

However, until Central Asian countries meet international standards for government accountability and human rights they will remain unequal partners in the international community. The EU and the U.N. are working to strengthen ties between Central Asia and the West. Doing so will make Europe more secure and Central Asia more appealing as an international business partner. □

Turkmen officials learn how to identify forged documents in Dashoguz, Turkmenistan, in April 2009.