



## European Union and Central Asia



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
External Relations

### EU Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia

Since their independence, the states of Central Asia have initiated various reforms to strengthen the rule of law. Such reforms are crucial for the effective protection of human rights, for socio-economic development, as well as for the further development of trade and investment links with Europe.

The reform processes underpin the common values to which all Central Asian and EU Member States have subscribed in the framework of the OSCE.

#### Sharing EU experience

With its shared legal traditions and experience gathered over many decades, the EU is in a unique position to support the Central Asian countries in their reforms. All Central Asian countries have declared their willingness to cooperate and exchange experience with the EU so they can further develop their legal systems, benefiting for example from the experience of those EU Member States in central Europe which underwent a similar process in the 1990's.

The *European Rule of Law Initiative* for Central Asia is one of the key elements of the 2007 EU Strategy for a new partnership with Central Asia.

The Initiative, led by two EU member states, Germany and France, aims for a concerted and balanced regional approach which takes into account particular national situations. Core challenges such as developing a judicial system, law enforcement, modernisation of commercial legislation and the accountability of national administrations are shared among the five Central Asian states.

After the launch of the Rule of Law initiative, the EU-Central Asia Ministerial conference in November 2008 confirmed the common determination to closely cooperate on the enforcement of the Rule of Law. The Initiative supports legal reforms and the sharing of experience, including how to reform the judiciary or draw up effective legislation, for example on constitutional, administrative, commercial or criminal law.

#### The EU-Central Asia Rule of Law Platform

Ministerial-level meetings bring together the European Commission, the EU Presidency, EU Member States, and the partner countries in Central Asia to review policy developments related to legal reform, including training for the legal profession. These Ministerial conferences deal with:

- meetings looking at priority areas for the region as a whole;
- a dialogue on domestic legal reform with the individual countries.

#### Training seminars

Two seminars at expert level will take place in 2009 on:

- legal practice training for judiciary staff and lawyers, in cooperation with Germany and the European Commission in the Kyrgyz Republic;
- compliance with defence rights in criminal proceedings, in cooperation with France and the European Commission in Uzbekistan.



## Long-term programmes

Given the delicate nature of legal reform and the special importance of mutual trust in this field, the EU is developing long-term programmes that develop tools for legal reform.

These tools are based on programmes provided by EU Member States or by the European Commission, as well as by twinning arrangements which establish partnerships between institutions such as constitutional and regular courts and national parliaments.

These programmes provide two sorts of support:

- assistance to judicial systems and to the legal profession, based on training, support for the reform of professional legal education, and exchanges between practitioners in the region;
- advisory services and regional exchanges in the field of legislation.

The people who are involved in these programmes include staff from justice and interior ministries, judicial councils, parliamentary committees, courts, lawyers and their associations, legal training institutions and other civil society organisations, as well as international organisations, particularly the OSCE.

In addition, under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe will work together with Supreme and Constitutional courts of the five countries, Ministries of Justice and other public institutions to help develop legislation and to bring legal practice up to international standards, in conformity with the countries' international obligations.

