



and Central Asia

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EU supports **well-managed** borders in Central Asia

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the five Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have had to manage their newly established borders amongst themselves, as well as previously existing borders with China, Afghanistan and Iran.

Effective border control is an important security issue in the region, which has seen a significant rise in cross-border crime and trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings.

Properly managed borders can promote legitimate trade and transit in the region and develop the security, stability and prosperity of the five Central Asian states.

EU assistance for new challenges

After gaining independence in 1991, the Central Asian countries were faced with the task to both build an entire border management infrastructure and, more importantly, to train the people that service these borders to the appropriate level. Among the many challenges faced in the region are:

- thousands of kilometres of new international borders;
- high levels of opium and heroin production in nearby Afghanistan;
- weak border control capacity and a Soviet-era approach to border management and drug control;
- lack of coordination between the different national law enforcement services;
- lack of coordination between governments of the region;
- lack of coordination between donors and international organisations when providing assistance.

To help address these needs, the EU launched the Border Management Assistance Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) in 2002.

Capacity-building and reform

The underlying strategy of the EU's support is to build up local capacity and skills and bring about gradual institutional reform through training and the exposure of local border and customs officials to European best practice in border management.

The programme has set out to introduce European-style Integrated Border Management (IBM) methodologies, built around improved intra-Agency cooperation to enhance communication channels within a law enforcement service.

It also promotes increased inter-Agency coordination to ensure intelligence-sharing for law enforcement and the phasing out of double checks that slow down the movement of persons and goods.

These approaches are supported by improved cooperation with international agencies and between the countries themselves.

Trade corridors

Enhanced cooperation is important to adequately deal with transnational security threats and to establish trade corridors that are vital to the economic development of these landlocked countries. Therefore, the EU is helping to set up new trade and customs regimes at the borders and, in turn, facilitate the legal circulation of goods and people.

The EU is working to develop a north-south and an east-west trade corridor. It is constructing or renovating border crossing points along the route, supplying appropriate equipment and providing training to all border agencies present.



This will help develop legitimate trade and transit, which is at the heart of the EU's strategy for Central Asia.

Improved border management

The EU assistance programme has already made a significant contribution to border management in the region.

Following an in-depth assessment of border guard capacities, the first training programmes for border guards started in 2002-2003.

Specific training modules were developed and key border management personnel were identified to carry out the project.

The programme supports the renovation and equipping of training centres for border agencies in all five countries, introducing IBM components to national training curricula and developing national training capacities through a "training-of-trainers" approach that utilises the best of European expertise.

Legal and institutional reform

To maximise local political support for the EU's border management programme, all possible stakeholders in the region – including the governments concerned – are brought together at an annual conference: the Central Asia Border Security Initiative.

Inter-Ministerial Commissions and Inter-Agency Working Groups have been set up in several countries to bring decision-makers on board, and to launch the necessary legislative and regulatory reforms.

Pilot site trials

The EU assistance programme is also providing infrastructure, equipment and on-the-job training in key skills to border agency staff at selected airports, seaports and stretches of 'green border' in Central Asia, with a view to national governments running integrated border management trials in these pilot sites.

Under the current phase, institutional reform is being pursued in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, and work continues in strengthening training capacity along with infrastructure capacities along trade and transit corridors in Central Asia.

Drug trafficking

Issues such as drug smuggling have direct consequences for the citizens of the European Union.

Several training centres for drug-detecting dogs have been set up or re-equipped in all five partner countries, and dozens of dogs and handlers have already been trained.

Drug Profiling Units have been established at key border crossing points at airports and railway stations in the region.

The BOMCA border management programme is funded by the EU and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). It is one of the biggest Commission assistance programmes in the region with a 2003-2010 budget of over €27 million (approx. 10% contributed by UNDP).

