

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



*Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Human Rights*

Meeting 3 June 2010 (9.30h-10.30h)

Programme

Hearing on Rule of Law in Central Asia

Experts from Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Uzbekistan call for Better Access to Basic Services in Central Asian Republics

This hearing is to contribute to the 2010 EU-Central Asia Strategy review. Main issues under discussion with experts from Central Asia are the rule of law, civic and human rights related concerns. Civil society representatives from Kirgizstan will report on the latest developments following the overthrow of the Kirgiz government on 7 April 2010. In particular, the harsh consequences arising from the post-soviet registration system for vulnerable groups such as labour migrants, their children and elderly will be addressed. Policy recommendations, based on legal analysis and practical experience will be presented.

Moderation: **Heidi HAUTALA**
MEP, Chairwoman of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights

Speakers:

Mr Vadim NI
Executive Director, Law and Environment Eurasia, Kazakhstan

Mrs Cholpon JAKUPOVA
Director, Legal Clinic "Adilet", Kirgizstan

Mrs Umida NIYAZOVA
Director, Uzbek German Human Rights Forum, Germany/Uzbekistan

Mr Victor ANDRES MALDONADO, Unit Central Asia, European Commission, DG RELEX,

Background:
After the April 7 uprising in Kirgizstan which ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and left at least 85 people dead, the interim government is preparing a referendum on

a new constitution on 27 June. According to interim deputy prime minister, Omurbek Tekebayev, the new constitution will reduce the powers of the president and make Kirgizstan a parliamentary republic with strong checks and balances between the branches of government. Joint parliamentary and presidential elections are envisaged for early October. Meanwhile social stability remains highly fragile.

In Bishkek, the capital of Kirgizstan, almost 20% of the population is deprived of basic civic and human rights, as shown in a recent study conducted by the American University Central Asia in cooperation with the Social Research Center and DanChurchAid. Forced to earn their livelihood in the city, families leave their homes and thereby accept to live without registration. As a result, these labour migrants, children and elderly, lose their access to basic services: health care, education, courts, elections etc. They become subjects to the arbitrariness of authorities offering their “protection”. The situation in Kirgizstan is paradigmatic for many post-soviet countries, which inherited a registration system that was designed for the Soviet Union in the 1930ies. Reports from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will add to the picture and demonstrate the full regional dimension of this problem.

NGOs in Central Asia and Russia are facing the harsh consequences of this registration system in their daily work with vulnerable groups, migrants, children or elderly. Together with legal experts from local research institutes they analysed the current registration praxis and identified entry points for reforms of their national registration systems. In their recommendations, they are referring to ongoing reforms in new EU member states such as Lithuania and Poland, which are currently in transition from registration systems similar or identical to the Central Asian ones, as well as to the registration system in Denmark, which was one of the first to introduce a modern system of vital records in Western Europe.

The European Union has a vital interest in the stability of the Central Asia region. Stability, therefore, became the underlying objective of the EU-CA Strategy launched in 2007. To achieve more stability, rule of law has been identified as a priority for EU’s political engagement and practical assistance in the region and is pursued in one of three flagship initiatives. As a “Cornerstone of Development”¹ EU’s Rule of Law Initiative is intended “to support on-going modernisation of the legal sector, as part of a more comprehensive strategy to foster and consolidate stability, prosperity and respect for human rights in Central Asian countries”².

By mid-June 2010, the European Commission will present its second review of the EU-CA Strategy implementation. EU Special Representative for CA, Pierre Morel, announced in February 2010, this “three-year review will be completely different to what we saw in 2008”. The Progress Report of June 2008 had been criticised for its lack of substance, which was not surprising considering the early date after the launch of the Strategy in 2007. The review in 2010 is supposed to “mark the start of a new phase” of the EU-CA Strategy, Morel said, also referring to the new possibilities for EU foreign policy introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. In the same vein, Luis Felipe Fernández de la Pena from the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the

¹ “Rule of Law – Cornerstone of Development”, Joint Communiqué presented at Ministerial Conference of European Union and Central Asian countries, Brussels, 27-28 November 2008.

² “EU Rule of Law Initiative in Central Asia”, concept paper presented at EU-Central Asia ministerial Troika in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 9-10 April 2008.

wish of the Spanish Presidency not only to assess, but to “re-energise” the EU Strategy for CA.

This Hearing in the Subcommittee on Human Rights will be followed by public expert discussions.

On 4 June 2010, an **Expert Discussion on the EU-CA Rule of Law Initiative** will take place at the APRODEV premises, Bd. Charlemagne 28, 13:00-15:00 (light lunch from 12:30).

For more information on these Expert Discussion and registration for this additional event please contact:

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