



# Evaluation of EU regional-level support to Central Asia (2007-2014)

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Consortium composed by  
LA, Particip, ECDPM, Ecorys  
Leader of the Consortium: Lattanzio Public Sector Advisory SpA (LA)  
Contact: info@lattanziogroup.eu

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## **Evaluation of EU regional-level support to Central Asia (2007-2014)**

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(European Commission)**

*This report has been prepared by*



Merzhauser Str. 183  
79100 Freiburg, Germany  
Phone: +49 761 790 740  
Fax: +49 761 790 7490  
E-mail: info@particip.de  
Web: www.particip.de

### **Evaluation Team**

Kris Prasada Rao (Team Leader)  
Karen Roberts  
Jörn Dosch  
Matjaz Saloven  
Simon Dietrich

***The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors' points of view  
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# Evaluation of EU regional-level support to Central Asia (2007-2014)

## Final Report

The report consists of three volumes:

Volume I: Main report

Volume II: Detailed information matrix

Volume III: Annexes

### VOLUME I: MAIN REPORT

1. Introduction
2. Background and context of regional-level EU support to Asia
3. Key methodological elements
4. Answers to the evaluation questions
5. Conclusions
6. Recommendations

### VOLUME II: DETAILED INFORMATION MATRIX

1. EQ1 on strategic orientation
2. EQ2 on dialogue
3. EQ3 on the regional dimension and complementarity
4. EQ4 on environment
5. EQ5 on border management
6. EQ6 on SME development
7. EQ7 on higher education

### VOLUME III: ANNEXES

1. Annex 1: Terms of Reference
2. Annex 2: Inventory
3. Annex 3: Project sample
4. Annex 4: List of documents

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Background and context of regional-level EU support to Asia .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Context.....	2
2.2 EU development co-operation rationale with Central Asia .....	7
<b>3 Key methodological elements .....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Key methodological elements .....	11
3.2 Data collection and analysis.....	11
3.3 Country coverage.....	12
3.4 Challenges and limitations .....	12
<b>4 Answers to the evaluation questions .....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 EQ 1 on strategic orientation.....	15
4.2 EQ 2 on dialogue .....	20
4.3 EQ 3 on the regional dimension and complementarity .....	25
4.4 EQ 4 on environment .....	31
4.5 EQ 5 on border management .....	40
4.6 EQ 6 on SME development.....	48
4.7 EQ 7 on higher education .....	55
<b>5 Conclusions .....</b>	<b>64</b>
5.1 Relevance and appropriateness of strategic and programmatic approach .....	64
5.2 Outcomes and sustainability .....	68
<b>6 Recommendations.....</b>	<b>71</b>
6.1 Regional and strategic orientation .....	71
6.2 Implementation and results .....	74

## List of tables

Table 1	Basic data Central Asia .....	2
Table 2	Evolution of Human Development Index of CA countries since 1990 .....	3
Table 3	Rank of Corruption perception index, 2005-2014 .....	4
Table 4	Overview of country coverage per evaluation question .....	12
Table 5	The evaluation questions .....	14
Table 6	Coverage of the evaluation criteria by the evaluation questions .....	14

## List of figures

Figure 1	GDP per capita PPP (in 2011 constant USD) .....	2
Figure 2	Timeline of EU policy and legal framework in EU-CA co-operation .....	7
Figure 3	Data collection process in this evaluation .....	11

## List of boxes

Box 1	Eurasian Economic Union .....	5
Box 2	Overview of dialogue mechanisms .....	21
Box 3	Significant change: Enhanced integrated water resource management in the transboundary Isfara Basin (KG and TJ) .....	33
Box 4	Significant change: Moving towards improved national policy and institutional frameworks for integrated water resources management and enhanced stakeholder participation (KZ, KG, TJ, TM) .....	36
Box 5	Significant change: EU's integrated border management concept has been fully adopted in KG .....	42
Box 6	Significant change: Improvements to the Business enabling environment for SMEs in key sectors of the economies particularly in KG and TJ .....	50
Box 7	Significant change: Increased alignment of quality assurance in HE in CA with EU/EHEA standards and good practice .....	58
Box 8	Significant change: Modernised national HE degree systems .....	60

## List of acronyms and abbreviations

BIO	Business Intermediary Organisation
BLO	Border Liaison Offices
BM	Border Management
BOMCA	Border Management in Central Asia
CA	Central Asia
CABSI	Central Asia Border Security Initiative
CADAP	Central Asia Drug Action Programme
CAEP	Central Asia Education Platform
CAI	Central Asia Invest
CANQA	Central Asian Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in KG, KZ, TJ
CAREC	Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia
CARICC	Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
DCI	Development Co-operation Instrument
DG	Directorate-General
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for Development Co-operation
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education and Culture
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
DPU	Drug Profiling Unit
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EAMR	External Assistance Management Report
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECP	Eurasia Competitiveness Programme
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
ENVSEC	Programme for Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegation of the European Union
EURECA	Regional Environmental Programme for Central Asia
EUSR	EU Special Representative
EUWI EECCA	EU Water Initiative for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
FLEG	Forest Law Enforcement and Governance
FLERMONECA	Subcomponent of EURECA addressing forest and biodiversity governance

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GSP	Generalised Scheme of Preferences
HDI	Human Development Index
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HLSD	High Level Security Dialogue
HQ	Headquarters
IBM	Integrated border management
IFAS	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
IFCA	Investment Facility for Central Asia
IP	Indicative Programme
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
JC	Judgement criterion
KFW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
KG	Kyrgyz Republic
KZ	Kazakhstan
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MIFA	Microfinance Initiative for Asia
MIP	Multi-annual Indicative Programme
MS	Member States
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPD	National Policy Dialogue
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSOER	National State of the Environment Report
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAMIR	Poverty Alleviation through Mitigation of Integrated high mountain Risk
PAMP	Public Employment for Sustainable Agriculture and Water Management Project
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PSD	Private Sector Development
QUADRIGA	Qualification Frameworks in Central Asia: Bologna-Based Principles and Regional Coordination
QUEECA	Quality of Engineering Education in Central Asia
RoL	Rule of Law
ROM	Results-oriented Monitoring
RSP	Regional Strategy Paper
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEIS	Shared Environmental Information System
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
TJ	Tajikistan
TM	Turkmenistan
TUCAHEA	Towards a Central Asian Higher Education Area
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US Dollars (currency)
UZ	Uzbekistan
WELOOP	Subcomponent of EURECA supporting the development of an Environment and Water Co-operation Platform
WG	Working Group
WMBOCA	Water Management and Basin Organisations in Central Asia

Note: The Evaluation uses the common acronym "EC" to refer either to the "Commission of the European Union" (post-Lisbon Treaty) or to the "European Commission" (pre-Lisbon Treaty), as applicable.



## Executive Summary

### Scope and Methodology

The evaluation covered **EU regional-level support to Central Asia (CA)** in the period **2007-2014**. Based on the Terms of Reference, the following were assessed:

- Relevance and coherence of EU's co-operation strategy and programmes;
- Impact, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of EU support;
- Consistency between programming and implementation;
- Value added of EU's interventions.

The evaluation covered four focal sectors, namely environment, border management, Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) development, and higher education. In addition, the evaluation considered the co-ordination and complementarity of the EU's regional-level interventions with EU's bilateral interventions in the five CA countries as well as other donors' regional-level interventions, and the coherence between the EU's interventions and overarching EU policies.

The **methodology** applied for this evaluation is based on the methodological guidelines developed by the Evaluation Unit of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO). During the evaluation, information was gathered at multiple levels:

- **Inventory analysis** at the overall level covering the whole regional-level EU support to CA.
- **Desk assessment** of selected interventions within the focal sectors of the evaluation (document review, analysis of External Assistance Management Reports, cross-utilisation of ongoing thematic evaluations, interviews with key stakeholders).
- **Field visits** to four of the five CA countries, namely Kazakhstan (KZ), Kyrgyzstan (KG), Tajikistan (TJ), and Uzbekistan (UZ).

### Analysis and main findings for each evaluation question

**EQ 1 on strategic orientation:** *Has the regional-level EU programme strategy for support responded to the priorities and needs of the partner countries in CA while being in line with the overall EU development and policy framework?*

EU regional co-operation has supported official CA government priorities as articulated in their respective national development strategies.

Over the evaluation period, EU co-operation has shifted towards a more modular approach to regional support. Instead of aiming at involving all five CA countries to the same degree, support concentrated on KG, KZ and TJ, countries that proved to be more open to external co-operation.

EU regional co-operation was in line with the EU policy framework, but provided support to a large number of sectors – six in total: environment, border management and rule of law, SME development, higher education, transport, and energy. This meant the available funds were spread thinly in a political context that is not conducive to regional co-operation.

The overall goals articulated in the 2014 Multi-Annual Indicative Programme are more modest and realistic than in previous programming documents, reflecting the challenging context for regional co-operation in CA as some CA countries have strained relations with each other and most prefer bilateral to regional interventions.

There are major discrepancies between the aspirations in the 2007 and 2010 Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes on the one hand and actual interventions implemented on the other. While programming and implementation were well aligned in the environment sector, this was not the case in the border management, SME development, and higher education sectors.

**EQ 2 on dialogue:** *Have EU-CA policy and political dialogue and regional interventions reinforced each other in the fields of environment, higher education, rule of law and security?*

The link between the EU-CA high-level dialogue and regional programmes was good in the environment sector and they were in general mutually reinforcing. The high-level dialogues provided some overall strategic direction for regional programmes and to some extent created a stronger appreciation of regional co-operation. Programme support also facilitated other regional dialogue processes and enhanced stakeholder capacity to engage. At the national level, the programme-dialogue inter-linkage under the EU Water Initiative for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EUWI EECCA) contributed to building commitment to national water sector reforms.

In the border management sector, programme-based regional dialogues rather than the EU-CA high-level dialogue provided strategic guidance for the Border Management

Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA). BOMCA, in return, facilitated a conducive dialogue environment through the Issyk-Kul Initiative on Border Security, but dialogue-programme inter-linkages and synergies were not as prominent as in the environment sector.

In the SME sector, the regional and national dialogues facilitated by the OECD-led Eurasia Competitiveness Programme and Central Asia Invest grant projects contributed to important legislative and regulatory reforms. Both the high-level policy dialogues and roundtables facilitated by the Eurasia Competitiveness Programme and Central Asia Invest regional networking events created stepping stones for closer dialogue and regional co-operation on SME development. However, although both are components of Central Asia Invest, the Eurasia Competitiveness Programme was not linked to the grant projects and synergies were not achieved.

In the higher education sector, the dialogue mainly took place under the programmes. The EU-CA high-level dialogue as foreseen in the Regional Strategy Paper and EU-CA Education Initiative did not take root during the evaluation period.

While there are only few examples of tangible results stemming from EU-CA high-level dialogues as well as from programme-based regional dialogues, without EU support there would have been significantly less dialogue between the countries. UZ and Turkmenistan (TM) showed less commitment toward participating in the regional high-level dialogues than KG, KZ and TJ.

**EQ 3 on the regional dimension and complementarity:** *Has the EU regional-level support complemented and added value to EU's bilateral co-operation and the interventions of other EU DGs and EU Member States?*

The scope for synergies between regional and bilateral interventions was limited, since they generally focused on different sectors, or, in the case of education, on different subsectors, with only regional interventions focusing on higher education.

The only sector significantly covered by both regional and bilateral interventions was SME development. However, while there were no direct contradictions and incoherencies between the SME development projects under the EU's bilateral and regional support, the approaches were not designed to create direct synergies.

The main value added by the regional programmes compared to the bilateral EU support was that they, a) allowed for regional

dialogue, sharing of experience and transfer of approaches (such as in the case of the harmonisation of standards in the tourism sector in KG and TJ), and b) enabled the EU to engage in important environment, border management and higher education reform issues, since these sectors were not accommodated under the focal sectors for the EU's bilateral actions.

Regional interventions only partly addressed issues with a transboundary or regional dimension, and primarily did so in the environment (transboundary water resources) and border management sectors (e.g. drug trafficking, free movement of people and goods). Across all four sectors, only few tangible results were achieved at the regional level, since a) there were no, or only weak, regional institutions and thus no regional-level entry points for EU support, and b) there was only a limited willingness of the CA countries to engage in regional co-operation. Regional interventions were often implemented with some involvement of a number of EU Directorates-General, but their inputs were not always well-co-ordinated – and synergies with interventions led by other Directorates-General were mainly achieved in relation to the EUWI EECCA-led national policy dialogues on water.

Regional interventions proactively and successfully ensured co-ordination with the actions of other donors – and, in some cases, these interventions played a leading role in ensuring donor co-ordination. However, co-ordination mainly took place at the national level, and rarely at the regional level.

**EQ 4 on environment:** *Has regional-level EU support to CA contributed to enhancing regional collaboration on environmental governance?*

EU support together with other development partners made a significant contribution to improving national environmental policy frameworks and institutional capacity. This was especially done in relation to managing water resources sustainably and more productively and with greater public/stakeholder participation, improvements which will potentially facilitate future co-operation on transboundary basins. EU support also made important contributions to policy reforms and institutional capacity building in relation to biodiversity conservation, pasture management and forest governance, and thereby promoted enhanced stakeholder participation as an important element of sustainable natural resource management.

EU support strengthened the integration of the provisions of multilateral environmental agreements in national policy frameworks and

enhanced the institutional capacity to implement commitments to these agreements.

Interstate co-operation between KG and TJ was significantly improved in relation to the management of the transboundary Isfara Basin, which is the most prominent case of tangible results achieved at the interstate level. Other contributions to interstate co-operation were few and more limited in scope.

No tangible results in terms of overall CA regional co-operation were achieved. This is due to conflicting national priorities, the tense relations between some of the CA countries and a lack of strong regional environmental institutions. The EU's original intentions to strengthen the capacity and improve the performance of existing regional institutions, particularly the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), could not be implemented due to the limited commitment to these institutions from CA governments, and difficulties related to complex government procedures in UZ (the current host country of the IFAS Executive Committee). Instead, the regional programmes embraced a more pragmatic and feasible approach, focusing on transboundary co-operation in a few specific basins, national reform processes, and regional sharing of experience.

**EQ 5 on border management:** *Has the regional-level EU support to CA contributed to improving legal flows of passengers and goods and enhancing the fight against organised crime in CA?*

EU efforts to initiate institutional reforms achieved tangible success in KG and partly in TJ. Both KG and TJ adopted integrated border management strategies and action plans outlining institutional and legal reforms in the border management sector. However, while KG has made considerable progress in the implementation of these reforms, this is not the case in TJ, where insufficient national resources and lack of political will hampered the reform process.

EU support contributed to improving the technical and professional skills of CA border service staff. EU support also somewhat helped enhancing the fight against organised crime by sharing detection and investigation knowledge and experience.

EU support contributed to a certain extent to an improved border crossing experience. However, the goal of making borders more secure, yet user-friendly remained elusive. EU support contributed only little to improving legal flows of persons/goods. Lack of political will, thorny relations governing CA diplomacy and different geopolitical interests undermined the

effectiveness of EU interventions. KG and KZ turned towards Russia; whereas TM and UZ (suspicious of external interference in national security) adroitly absorbed EU assistance via BOMCA, but only met a few of the programme objectives such as adoption of the EU Integrated Border Management principles.

BOMCA and the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP) did not develop sufficient strategies for ensuring sustainability of programme benefits/outputs. After the conclusions of BOMCA 8 and CADAP 5, many achievements of both programmes collapsed. Generally, BOMCA and CADAP delivered on an activity-by-activity basis and were more output than outcome-oriented.

**EQ 6 on SME development:** *Has regional-level EU support to CA contributed to improving the business climate for SMEs and their competitiveness (emphasis on the non-extractive sectors)?*

The EU contributed markedly to policy development for the private sector with a particular emphasis on legislative and regulative reforms, especially in the cases of KG, KZ, and TJ. This achievement is mainly the result of, first, reforms designed and implemented within the context of the EU-supported OECD Eurasia Competitive Programme, and, second, Central Asia Invest grant projects.

EU support significantly contributed to enhancing the capacities of business intermediary organisations to support SMEs. Initially, projects struggled to achieve the dual objective of strengthening the private sector by strengthening business intermediary organisations. However, after some adaptations to the programme design and implementation, business intermediary organisations were able to establish good outreach to SMEs, and the objective of developing the capacity of selected organisations to support SMEs was achieved to a great extent.

EU support through the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA) and the Microfinance Initiative for Asia Debt Fund (MIFA) enhanced the competitiveness of selected SMEs, which received direct funding. However, it did not contribute to improving the general access to financing options for SMEs in CA or to establishing a more conducive structural environment for SME financing.

EU regional support focused on the national level and cross-border actions involving two or three countries, as there was limited scope for regional-level action due to significant differences in the macro-economic, political

and legal contexts and strained relations between the CA countries.

**EQ 7 on higher education:** *Has EU regional support to CA contributed to enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education provision?*

The EU provided indispensable technical support for the implementation of national reforms and modernisation of higher education in CA at institutional level in terms of quality and relevance: It contributed to the reform of quality assurance systems and practice, an enhanced reflection of socio-economic demands and developments by higher education providers and in state education standards, the modernisation of academic education provision (teaching, learning, assessment and study programmes) at higher education institutions which participated in EU programmes, and innovations in higher education governance and management.

However, EU regional assistance had a limited and mostly indirect impact on system reform, i.e. national strategic reform design and/or decisions in higher education in the CA countries. The CA countries themselves determined the overall strategic direction and scope of (aspired) convergence with EU standards in higher education. Nonetheless, the longevity of the EU programmes in CA, the critical mass of EU-funded projects and the Tempus and Erasmus programmes' bottom up approach contributed to a changing attitude among national stakeholders, increasing support for reforms in line with standards of the European Higher Education Area and good practice, and strengthened capacities to design such reforms.

The impact of EU support in the individual countries was limited when the application/implementation of project results required changes in the policy framework. The capacity or readiness of national systems and decision-makers to absorb, follow-up and capitalise on EU-funded initiatives at policy level was not always sufficient even where government representatives were formal partners of project consortia.

EU regional assistance was successful in inducing regional co-operation and exchange between higher education institutions and government representatives of the five CA countries in the course of project activities and other EU initiated regional events. Still, the primary appeal of the regional programmes for CA partners was the opportunity to co-operate with EU partners; regional co-operation was not a priority for CA countries. Regional academic networks and networking heavily relied on incentives from external donors (EU

and other). Proactive communication and interaction between CA partners in the course of EU projects required sustained support and encouragement. Substantial changes in terms of regional policy dialogue, agreements or policies for enhancing quality and relevance of the provision of higher education were not observed.

## Main conclusions

### **Cluster 1 – Relevance and appropriateness of strategic and programmatic approach**

**Conclusion 1: EU regional strategic documents were generally relevant but ambitious and broad in scope, and did not provide adequate strategic guidance for the regional programmes.**

The Regional Strategy Papers and Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes were aligned with the EU policies as well as the CA countries' national development strategies. However, the 2007-2014 Regional Strategy Paper was broad in its focus and without a strong prioritisation within the sectors and, while the Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes should ideally provide strategic guidance for the programmes, in reality, they were adjusted to fit the existing programmes. Also, the 2007 Regional Strategy Paper pursued closer regional co-operation and deepened political co-operation, something which cannot currently be achieved in CA.

**Conclusion 2: EU regional strategic documents and programmes did not fully reflect the growing linkages between CA and the rest of Asia.**

The EU's classification of CA as a region different from the rest of Asia made sense in the past, when the CA countries emerged from the Soviet Union. However, the post-Soviet sub-regions have since developed in different directions, and CA countries' economic links to other parts of Asia are growing. The two regional strategies (for CA and Asia, respectively) did not sufficiently allow for the facilitation of cross-regional co-operation (e.g. CA countries were prevented from participating in regional programmes for Asia), which would have been particularly beneficial for the SME development sector.

**Conclusion 3: EU regional programmes were pragmatic and adapted to a challenging context and limited CA interest in regional co-operation.**

The interest in regional co-operation in CA is limited and the evaluation found a strong preference for national programmes over

regional ones, and within regional programmes a preference for national rather than regional-level activities. Another major limitation for EU's regional support was the absence of strong regional institutions, which the EU could have used as entry points for regional action. In this challenging context, EU's regional programmes demonstrated flexibility, adapted their approaches, and sought out entry points they could utilise. To a large extent, regional activities focused on informal dialogue, sharing, learning and transfer of experiences/approaches between the countries, rather than on formalised co-operation. However, most activities at the regional/interstate level, such as networking, remained largely driven by EU and the implementing international organisations.

**Conclusion 4: The regional approach added value by promoting dialogue, sharing and transfer of approaches (between CA countries and from EU Member States and Neighbourhood countries), but also by creating interstate co-operation on specific transboundary issues.**

Despite the challenging context, the regional approach in the four sectors added significant value in different ways. Firstly, the regional approach, at least to some extent, enabled the EU support to address important transboundary issues, even if in a patchy manner and not to the level originally anticipated. It also allowed for awareness raising, learning, sharing of experiences and even transfer of approaches between the CA countries – overall, this appears to have been the main value added by using a regional approach. Finally, a less quantifiable added value is the diplomatic role the regional programmes and policy dialogues played in terms of bringing representatives at the political and in particular technical levels together.

**Conclusion 5: EU's regional dialogue, regional programmes and bilateral engagement were not always well-co-ordinated and some opportunities for potential synergies were missed.**

The extent to which regional dialogue, regional programmes and bilateral action took place in a co-ordinated manner varied significantly across the sectors. The major regional programmes often engaged in regional and/or bilateral dialogue, mainly at a more technical level or in a more informal manner; where the dialogue and implementation components usually were mutually reinforcing. A major limitation for ensuring synergies between bilateral programmes on the one hand, and regional dialogues and programmes on the

other, was the limited involvement of EU Delegations, except when they managed the regional programmes.

#### **Cluster 2 – Outcomes and sustainability**

**Conclusion 6: At the regional level, the value added by EU support was mainly a contribution to enhancing the dialogue between CA countries, although some outcomes were achieved at the interstate level.**

Regional dialogues and regional-level programme activities mainly added value by providing opportunities for dialogue and sharing, and for awareness creation. Nonetheless, the diplomatic role could potentially have been stronger. Both the EU-CA high-level dialogues and the programme-facilitated dialogues sometimes suffered from insufficient prioritisation from CA countries as well as staff and financial constraints from the EU side. Similarly, the EU Member State chair role was not utilised to its full potential. The regional results achieved most often only involved two countries at a time, mainly KG and TJ and to a lesser extent KZ, and had a limited geographic scope.

**Conclusion 7: EU regional programmes achieved tangible national level outcomes, especially in KG and TJ – e.g. in relation to sector reforms or promoting new practices, which enhanced stakeholder participation.**

Results were in particular achieved in KG, TJ and KZ, where the programmes in general had a stronger presence than in TM and UZ, and where there was more openness to reforms. Moreover, EU's regional programmes achieved some tangible outcomes at a more localised or pilot level. However, the outcomes of BOMCA and also Erasmus and Tempus are not always entirely clear due to an output rather than outcome-oriented approach.

**Conclusion 8: Impact and sustainability were more likely to be achieved when there was continuity in the support, or the support was part of a larger process in synergy with support from other donors.**

An important lesson from the regional programmes is that change takes time in CA. As such, many, if not most, of the processes initiated under the regional programmes are yet to be completed and consolidated. In BOMCA and CADAP, the change of implementing partner as well as a prolonged gap between two phases clearly demonstrated the detrimental effects of disruption and lack of continuity.

## Main recommendations

### **Cluster 1 – Regional and strategic orientation**

#### **Recommendation 1: Sharpen the focus of EU support to better reflect CA's position in Asia and Eurasia.**

Adjust the CA regional strategies and programmes to better capitalise on CA's emerging economic opportunities in Asia.

#### **Recommendation 2: Enhance the interstate dimension in regional programmes.**

In the regional programmes, increase the prominence of actions which promote active co-operation between two or more CA countries.

#### **Recommendation 3: Establish an EU-CA high-level dialogue and platform on private sector development.**

Enhance the EU-CA and regional dialogue by introducing an EU-CA high-level dialogue and platform, building on the experience from the regional private sector development/SME programmes.

#### **Recommendation 4: Enhance the profile and regional ownership of the EU-CA high-level dialogues and platforms.**

Pursue a more consistent high-level representation in the high-level conferences and enhanced continuity in the participation in the platforms.

### **Cluster 2 – Implementation and results**

#### **Recommendation 5: Seek to establish an integrated approach to EU support for CA.**

Establish modalities and practices to maximise synergies between dialogue and programmes, and between regional and bilateral action, in order to ensure that EU support is integrated, comprehensive, and co-ordinated.

#### **Recommendation 6: Enhance efficiency and EU visibility through integrating EU support with implementing partners' long-term programmes.**

Reduce transaction costs and enhance EU visibility by co-funding the larger regional programmes of international implementing partners as much as possible, instead of establishing separate but interrelated EU programmes.

#### **Recommendation 7: Enhance the focus on impact and sustainability in border management and higher education programmes.**

In the border management programmes, discontinue the current output-oriented focus

and enhance the focus on impact, outcomes and sustainability; in the higher education programmes, manage ambitions and keep them realistic.

## 1 Introduction

This **Final Report** presents the findings of the *Evaluation of EU regional-level support to Central Asia*, as required by the Terms of Reference (see volume 3).

The Final Report consists of the following elements:

1. Section 1 provides an overall introduction to this report.
2. Section 2 presents the socio-economic and institutional context of Central Asia as well as the EU co-operation rationale with the region.
3. Section 3 presents the main methodological elements of the evaluation.
4. Section 4 presents the answers to the evaluation questions.
5. Section 5 presents the conclusions.
6. Section 6 presents the recommendations.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) point out the main objectives of this evaluation:

- To provide the relevant external co-operation services of the EU and the wider public with an overall independent assessment of the EU's co-operation strategy, on regional level, with Central Asia between 2007 and 2014, its delivery and impact.”; and
- To identify key lessons and forward-looking recommendations.

Based on the ToR, the following were assessed:

- Relevance and coherence of EU's co-operation strategy and programmes;
- Impact, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of EU regional support to Central Asia during 2007-2014, and taking into account the new programming period in thematic focus;
- Consistency between programming and implementation;
- Value added of EU's interventions, both at strategic and implementation levels.

It is important to emphasise that the evaluation focuses on EU regional-level support to Central Asia. In addition, the evaluation considered the co-ordination and complementarity of the EU's regional-level interventions with EU's bilateral interventions in the five Central Asian countries as well as other donors' regional-level interventions, especially the EU Member States, and the coherence between the EU's interventions and policies that are likely to affect the partner region. The assessment also integrated the aspects of co-ordination and coherence of the different aid modalities and instruments at regional and bilateral level, including the relevance and efficiency of the various instruments in the Central Asian context.

## 2 Background and context of regional-level EU support to Asia

### 2.1 Context

Central Asia (CA) comprises five countries, Kazakhstan (KZ), Kyrgyzstan (KG), Tajikistan (TJ), Turkmenistan (TM), and Uzbekistan (UZ) and is home to a quickly growing, but still small, population of a little over 60 million. Despite their common Soviet history, these countries have embarked on different development paths, as is becoming increasingly apparent in social, economic, political and foreign policy orientation. KZ has emerged as the economic engine of the region boasting high growth rates that are fed by its oil industry; UZ is the most populous country in the region and central to the region's stability; TM, which is rich in gas reserves, is the most authoritarian and closed country; KG is poor but has continuously been the most open country; while TJ, the poorest country in the region, is also a developing country affected by many security threats due to the proximity to Afghanistan.

Table 1 Basic data Central Asia

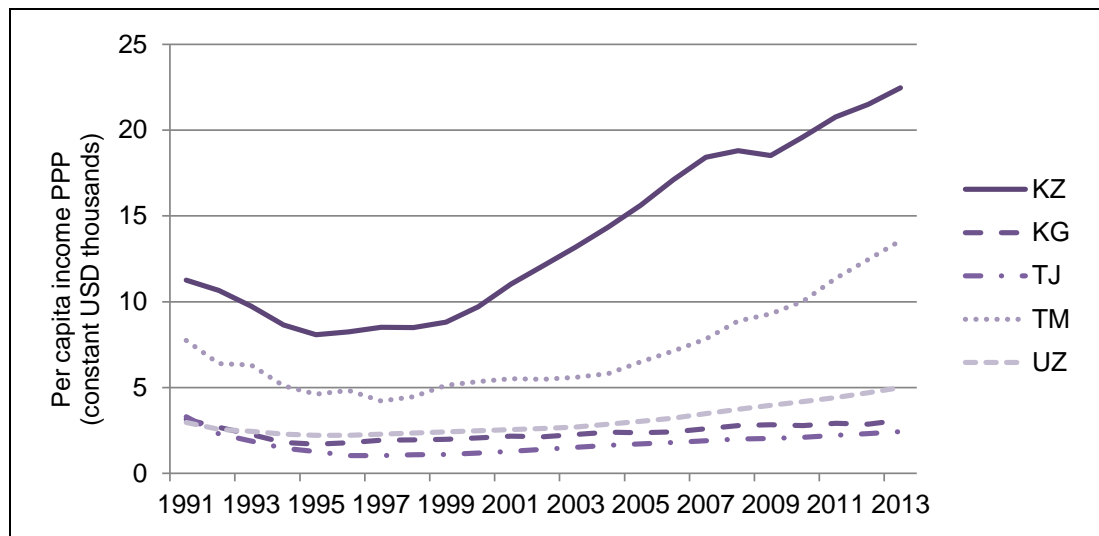
Country	Total Population (thousands)	Surface area in km <sup>2</sup>	Unemployment, (% of total labour force) <sup>1</sup>	GDP per capita (2011 PPP <sup>2</sup> USD)
KZ	17,035	2,724,900	5.2	21,506
KG	5,720	199,949	8.0	2,847
TJ	8,208	142,550	10.7	2,320
TM	5,240	488,100	10.6	12,460
UZ	30,243	447,400	10.7	4,705

Source: <http://data.worldbank.org>; Data from 2012 and 2013.

#### 2.1.1 Socio-economic situation

CA is a diverse region with regard to the socio-economic situation of the five countries, with oil and gas rich KZ being by far the best performing country in terms of economic and human development. KZ shows the highest GDP per capita in the region and is classified as an upper middle income country, followed by TM that was recently also classified as an upper middle income country.

Figure 1 GDP per capita PPP (in 2011 constant USD)



Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

UZ and KG are classified into the lower middle income group and TJ ranks among the low income countries. Not surprisingly, on the Human Development Index (HDI), KZ is the only CA country in the

<sup>1</sup> This is a modelled ILO estimate by the World Bank.

<sup>2</sup> Purchasing Power Parity



'high human development' category, while the others fall under the 'medium human development' category underlining the significant development gaps in the region. More broadly the region's countries, most severely in the rural areas, suffer from decline, especially with respect to infrastructure, education and healthcare systems. Particularly, in KG and TJ the situation is dire as the social system and infrastructure mostly consist of obsolete Soviet making.<sup>3</sup>

Table 2 Evolution of Human Development Index of CA countries since 1990

Country	HDI rank		HDI value					
	2013	change 2008-13	1990	2000	2005	2008	2011	2013
KZ	70	-1	0.69	0.68	0.73	0.74	0.75	0.76
KG	125	-2	0.61	0.59	0.61	0.62	0.62	0.63
TJ	133	-2	0.61	0.53	0.57	0.59	0.60	0.61
TM	103	-	-	-	-	-	0.69	0.70
UZ	116	2	n/a	n/a	0.63	0.64	0.65	0.66

Source: UNDP: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-2-human-development-index-trends-1980-2013>.

Similarly, when looking at the investment climate in the region, KZ again scores best (77<sup>th</sup>) in the World Bank's Doing Business Report in comparison to the other CA countries, leaving the KG (102<sup>nd</sup>), UZ (141<sup>th</sup>), and particularly TJ (166<sup>th</sup>) far behind.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, foreign direct investment also plays a considerably bigger role in KZ than in the other republics, KZ receiving by far the highest amount of foreign direct investment, primarily in the oil and gas sector.

Labour migration to Russia, and to a lesser extent KZ, plays an important role in KG (remittances are about 40% of GDP), TJ (about half of GDP) and UZ (about 10% of GDP).<sup>5</sup> Due to low oil prices and Russia's economic downturn some migrants return home, which increases already high unemployment rates even further. Meanwhile, the labour migration has a severe effect on societies (about 40% of TJ's labour force is in Russia), where families are torn apart, people leave rural areas for overcrowded cities, etc.

The present agricultural productivity in the region is limited due to land degradation and modest water supplies, threatening the food security of rural communities. Widespread and rapid land degradation was induced by the Soviet-built inefficient irrigation schemes, built to provide water to UZ's and TM's water intensive cotton production, while also in general water wastage is high.<sup>6</sup> The limited arable land is being depleted by over-use and outdated farming methods. Due to the arid nature of the region, CA is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change in the future, which poses serious threats to the environment and ecological system of the region.

### 2.1.2 Governance and human rights

As the CA republics became independent in the early nineties, most states continued with leaderships that were largely identical to the Soviet bureaucracies: Today's President Islam Karimov of UZ and President Nursultan Nazarbayev of KZ were already at the helm of the Soviet republics before 1991. Only TJ saw substantial changes due to a civil war that devastated the country (1992-97), although the current leadership headed by Emomali Rahmon also has a Soviet heritage footprint.

None of the five countries has developed as a democracy and human rights are under threat in all five. Over the last decade CA regimes have further entrenched their position. Freedom House's 2014 Report on 'Nations in Transit' considers the CA countries, except KG, as 'consolidated authoritarian regimes', with UZ and TM among the ten worst scoring countries worldwide. KG is the only CA country viewed as a 'semi-consolidated authoritarian regime': the country has always been more open to free media and civil society while revolutions in 2005 and 2010 have toppled dictators. The post-2010

<sup>3</sup> Also see: 'Central Asia: Decay and Decline', *International Crisis Group*, Asia report No. 201, February 2011.

<sup>4</sup> TM was not covered by the recent Doing Business Report.

<sup>5</sup> Irina Malyuchenko, 'Labour migration from Central Asia to Russia: Social impact of the societies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan', *OSCE Academy*, Central Asia Security Policy Briefs No. 21, February 2015.

<sup>6</sup> 'Water Pressures in Central Asia', *International Crisis Group*, Europe and Central Asia Report No. 233, September 2014.

hopes for genuine democratisation have been largely countered by a negative trend of freedom restrictions and continued ethnic tensions.

The CA countries have weak bureaucracies with little capacity and experience. KZ is the exception as the bureaucracy has become a separate group within the elites that manage the country (next to oligarchs and the President's family).<sup>7</sup> In TM, the bureaucracy is weaker, while the security agencies wield most power by securing the incumbent regime. In TJ the elites use a mix of security agencies and business to stay in power though with much less resources compared to UZ, which is much bigger, and TM and KZ, which are much richer. KG in 2010 adopted a new constitution and is now the only (semi-) parliamentary system in the region (the others have presidential systems), although different elite groupings linking politics and business still play first fiddle.

Public sector corruption is a major challenge in CA, with all countries scoring poorly in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). TM and UZ are among the ten most corrupt states (out of 175) in terms of administrative and political corruption. Even though KZ performed considerably better than the other four countries in the CPI, 63% of Kazakh respondents of the recent 2013 Global corruption barometer (conducted by Transparency International) felt that the judiciary were corrupt/extremely corrupt and 66% felt that the police were corrupt/extremely corrupt. Corruption is deeply ingrained in all levels of societies and is used by the regimes to enrich themselves and entrench their positions.

Table 3 Rank of Corruption perception index, 2005-2014

Country	Corruption Perceptions Index – Rank				
	2005	2007	2010	2013	2014
KZ	107	150	205	140	126
KG	130	150	164	150	136
TJ	144	150	154	154	152
TM	155	162	172	168	169
UZ	137	175	172	168	166

Source: Transparency International: <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>.

### 2.1.3 Security

The CA region faces a series of national, regional and international security threats.

On a *national level* the authoritarian rule, mismanagement and human rights offences are a continuous threat to the region's population. This in combination with poverty, unemployment and the social consequences of labour migration has created the bases for potential instability. Another factor is islamisation, which is fiercely countered by the secular regimes and that in a way which creates resentment among segments of the population. So far CA populations have not been much attracted by radical Islam, although the region is increasingly a recruitment area for Daesh. Another threat is ethnic strife, which largely became apparent in Southern KG in 2010 in clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. As CA countries become more nationalistic (their leaderships in the future not being able to lean on a Soviet heritage) as a way to forge unity and strengthen sovereignty, the risk of ethnic conflicts increases, especially in KG, TJ and UZ.

On a *regional level* there are disputes over natural resources, especially between water rich KG and TJ with water dependent UZ. The tensions between TJ that plans to build the highest dam in the world (Rogun) increasing its capacity to generate hydro-electric power but also its control over water flows and UZ, which is dependent on these water flows for their cotton industry remain a risk. Several border incidents between KG and TJ over disputed land also have the potential to grow in seriousness. As relations between CA states remain weak and co-operation and regional integration is foremost externally driven, the risk of conflict cannot be fully excluded.

On an *international level* the conflict in Afghanistan features highly as a security threat to the region. The fear of CA governments that the withdrawal of NATO's<sup>8</sup> ISAF<sup>9</sup> mission would lead to a rise of

<sup>7</sup> Jos Boonstra and Marlene Laruelle, 'Uncharted waters: Presidential successions in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan', *EUCAM Policy Brief*, no 33, April 2014.

<sup>8</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization

<sup>9</sup> International Security Assistance Force

extremism and spillover in CA plus a rise in drug trade has come true to a certain extent. Drug trafficking from Afghanistan through CA republics (foremost TJ) to Russia and Europe remains a security threat to the latter and CA alike.<sup>10</sup>

#### 2.1.4 The geopolitical situation

Located between China, Russia, Afghanistan and Iran, the CA region is landlocked. Often the region is portrayed as the scene of a new Great Game where Russia, China and to a lesser extent the EU and the United States (US) vie for influence. Whereas there is some competition over natural resources (foremost gas but also oil, uranium and rare earths), there is little ambition among external actors to take on the region's many problems.

Russia remains the primary external actor. Whereas it has seen a decline in its economic clout (due to increased Chinese influence but also the EU's presence), it plays first fiddle in security. Russia is probably the only state that can reasonably quickly intervene in the region, although it declined an invitation by KG to do so in 2010, when the Fergana Valley was affected by ethnic turmoil. Russia's equivalent of NATO, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, can count on Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Tajik membership (alongside Armenia and Belarus). The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), established in January 2005 has the same members except for TJ, which remains hesitant towards even stronger Russian influence (see box below for more details on the EEU).

##### Box 1 Eurasian Economic Union

The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is an economic union of Russia, Belarus, Armenia, KG and KG and was established in January 2015.

**History of the integration process:** After the dissolution of the Soviet Union the Commonwealth of Independent States was created in 1991 by Belarus, KZ and Russia, which became the driving forces of the integration process. In 1994, KZ suggested to create a regional trading bloc and in the following years, founding treaties were signed by some of the current EEU members. In 1995 Belarus, KZ, and Russia signed the first agreements on the establishment of a customs union. In 2000, further economic convergence and co-operation was achieved by establishing the Eurasian Economic Community by Belarus, KZ, Russia, the KG and TJ, and joined by UZ in 2006. In 2010, the Customs Union of Belarus, KZ, and Russia came into existence, as a first step towards forming a broader single market. In 2011, Vladimir Putin, the then-Prime Minister of Russia, announced his support for Nazarbayev's idea for the creation of the EEU. In the same year, Belarus, KZ, and Russia agreed to establish the EEU by 2015 and established the Single Economic Space in 2012. By October 2014, the treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union received parliamentary approval from all three states and a treaty to enlarge the EEU with Armenia was signed. KG signed the treaty end 2014. The EEU treaty came into effect on 1 January 2015. TJ has expressed interest to join the EEU, but there is no timeline for its accession.

**Governance structure:** The EEU consists of the following institutions:

- The Supreme Eurasian Economic Council is composed by the Heads of State of the Member States. It takes strategic decisions and approves the budget.
- The Eurasian Economic Commission takes decisions on customs policy, anti-trust regulations, economic and fiscal policy and energy policy. It consists of the Council, composed of the Vice Prime Ministers of the Member States, and the Collegium, composed of 14 commissioners appointed by the Member States.
- The Court of the Eurasian Economic Union is tasked with resolving disputes and guaranteeing the parties' compliance with the agreements signed.

China has steadily expanded its economic influence in CA. Beijing is not playing a security role in the region, although it sees possible links between CA and its own Xinjiang region (populated by the Uyghurs and often seen as geographically part of CA) as a security concern. China has built extensive energy infrastructure throughout CA, also bringing large quantities of Turkmen gas to China. In 2014 Beijing has pledged USD 40 billion to a fund for a Silk Road Economic Belt (foremost aimed at linking China via CA to Europe) and a Maritime Silk Road (directed at China's littoral neighbours to the south). These funds will also benefit CA.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile China is leading (with Russia) in the Shanghai

<sup>10</sup> Jos Boonstra, Marlene Laruelle and Sebastien Peyrouse, 'The Impact of the 2014 ISAF Forces' Withdrawal from Afghanistan on the Central Asian Region', *EUCAM*, report No. 16, February 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Jos Boonstra, 'Reviewing the EU's approach to Central Asia', *EUCAM* Policy Brief No. 34, February 2015.

Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that also includes the CA states<sup>12</sup>. The SCO seeks to be an alternative to Western-driven organisations. Whereas the organisation remains ambitious, there are limits to its impact, as China and Russia have difficulty leading in tandem and deciding to emphasise either security or economic co-operation.

The United States' role in CA is modest and has mostly focused on the ISAF mission in Afghanistan – in essence the region is seen as an appendix of Washington's Afghanistan policy. In that sense, the US has been keen to have military bases in CA (KG is the only country that has hosted both Russian and US military bases at the same time) with a view to transit of troops and material to, and more recently from, Afghanistan. The US remains active in development aid and democracy promotion, the latter mostly in KG.

The EU expressed a broad range of interests in the region through its CA Strategy of June 2007. The EU and its Member States have overtaken the US as the third external actor in the region in all sectors except, hard security. For EU Member States, KZ is the main priority in terms of trade relations and the EU is by far the biggest trade partner of, and investor in, the country.<sup>13</sup>

Other external actors that play a significant role in the region are Japan (development aid and trade), Turkey (kinship relations and trade), India, Pakistan and Iran. The latter holds close cultural and kinship ties with TJ; the possible lifting of international sanctions could lead to an increase of Iran's role in the region.

### **2.1.5 Key contextual factors to consider in relation to EU Regional Development Co-operation**

The overall CA context as described above has two basic implications for the evaluation:

Firstly, the region is evolving rapidly but not necessarily in a positive direction. Each of the five states is developing in its own way, but all are eager to strengthen their sovereignty and identity. As the challenges to democratic and inclusive governance are increasing in the CA countries, the risk of instability is growing. Current governments lack experience and capacity in dealing with the challenges of poverty, deteriorating education and healthcare systems, migration, religious radicalisation and ethnic strife, that are likely to intensify over the coming decade.

Secondly, not all CA countries have good relations with each other and some of the countries are even at odds over borders and resources. Almost all regional co-operation is externally driven: genuine local regional co-operation is lacking as CA leaderships remain distrustful of each other and hesitant to come to an agreement through compromise. This landscape gives a primary role to external actors. Several of these actors, foremost Russia (but also the EU), bring their own prescriptions for regional integration and affiliation. Whereas this situation gives outside actor's substantial influence over the region's development trajectory, local regimes also benefit from a certain level of geopolitical competition in playing one external actor against the other, also at the expense of any potential for regional co-operation.

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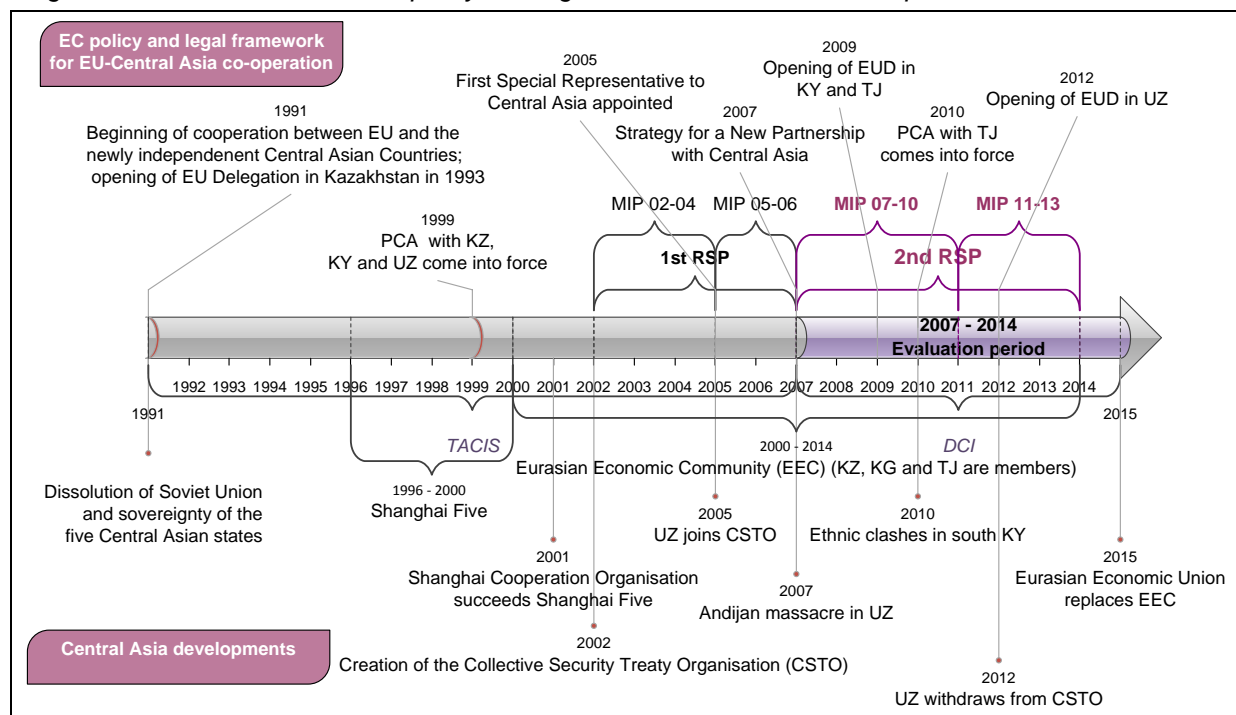
<sup>12</sup> In addition to that, India and Pakistan are in the process of joining the SCO as full members and are expected to become full members in 2017. Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia currently hold observer status.

<sup>13</sup> Jos Boonstra, Marlene Laruelle and Sebastien Peyrouse, 'Security and development in Central Asia. The EU compared to China and Russia', *EUCAM Working Paper No. 11*, May 2012.

## 2.2 EU development co-operation rationale with Central Asia

The graph below depicts the major milestones of the EU-CA co-operation. The milestones are further described in the subsequent sections.

Figure 2 Timeline of EU policy and legal framework in EU-CA co-operation



### 2.2.1 Global EU development policy strategic objectives and priorities

#### The Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) and the European Consensus (2005)

Article 177 of the Amsterdam Treaty (entry into force 1st of May 1999) defines the EU development policy priorities, as follows:

- Sustainable economic and social development in favour of developing countries;
- Progressive and harmonious integration of developing countries in the world economy with a particular emphasis on the most disadvantaged countries; and
- Fighting poverty in developing countries.

The European Consensus on Development signed 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 is intended to guide both Community and Member State development co-operation and sets out common objectives and principles for development co-operation.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Treaty of Lisbon (2009) and Agenda for Change (2011)

The Treaty of Lisbon states that the reduction and the eradication of poverty is the primary objective of the EU's development co-operation policy. This goal must be respected when the EU implements policies likely to affect developing countries. This implies also that development policy is a policy in its own right, and not an accessory of common foreign and security policy.

The Treaty of Lisbon classifies development co-operation and humanitarian aid as "shared parallel competences": this means that the EU conducts an autonomous policy, which neither prevents the Member States from exercising their competences nor makes the Union's policy merely "complementary" to those of the Member States.<sup>15</sup>

The Agenda for Change, presented by the European Commission (EC) in October 2011, stipulates that EU development aid spending should target countries that are in the greatest need of external support and where it can really make a difference, including fragile states. Co-operation should take

<sup>14</sup> The European Consensus on Development, 20 December 2005, p. 4

<sup>15</sup> Treaty of Lisbon. Taking Europe into the 21st century, [http://europa.eu/lisbon\\_treaty/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/index_en.htm)

different forms for countries which are already experiencing sustained growth or which have sufficient resources of their own.

EU assistance should focus on two priority areas:

1. Human rights, democracy and other key elements of good governance, and
2. Inclusive and sustainable growth for human development.

The EU aims to help create growth in developing countries so they have the means to lift themselves out of poverty. Aid will therefore target particular areas:

- Social protection, health, education and jobs;
- The business environment, regional integration and world markets; and
- Sustainable agriculture and energy.

The EU should also try to further improve the effectiveness of the aid it delivers. Furthermore, the EU will explore innovative ways of financing development, like the blending of grants and loans. It should also improve the coherence of its internal and external policies: A significant share of EU aid is delivered in the form of budget support.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.2.2 Main financing instruments

#### Council Regulations concerning the provision of assistance to Partner States in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the relation between the EU and the CA countries developed rapidly, based on a series of partnership and co-operation agreements and council regulations concerning the provision of assistance to partner states in Eastern Europe and CA.<sup>17</sup> Pursuant to the European Council in Dublin and in Rome in 1990, the Community introduced a technical assistance programme in favour of economic reform and recovery in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The countries involved were Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, **KZ**, **KG**, Moldova, Mongolia, Russian Federation, **TJ**, **TM**, Ukraine and **UZ**.

The Community's Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) programme encouraged democratisation, the strengthening of the rule of law and the transition to a market economy. In addition, the programme aimed to promote interstate, inter-regional and cross-border co-operation between the partner states themselves, between partner states and the European Union and between partner states and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

#### DCI regulations 1905(2006) and 233(2014)

The regulation 1905(2006) establishing the Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI) was adopted on 18 December 2006 and valid until 2013. The geographic part under Article 8 replaced the Tacis regulations for countries in CA, placing an emphasis on the following sectors and issues: rule of law, private sector development, border management, fight against drugs, fight against HIV/AIDS, and promotion of regional co-operation.

The new DCI regulation 233(2014) was adopted on 11 March 2014 and covers the period 2014-2020. Annex B IV of the regulation indicates that particular attention should be given to the following areas of co-operation: Food and energy security as well as water and sanitation, good governance and rule of law, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, border management, bilateral and regional co-operation, access to basic services.

### 2.2.3 Strategy for a new partnership with Central Asia

The year 2007 marked a turning point in the co-operation between CA and the EU. The European Council adopted the "Strategy for a new enhanced partnership with Central Asia" in June 2007. The main objectives outlined in the strategy are as follows:

- Establish a regular regional political dialogue at Foreign Minister level;
- Start an "European Education Initiative" and support
- CA countries in the development of an "e-silk-highway";

<sup>16</sup> European Commission (2011): Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change, COM(2011) 637 final,

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/development-policies/documents/agenda\\_for\\_change\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/development-policies/documents/agenda_for_change_en.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Council Regulation No 2157/91, 2053(1993), 1279(1996) and 99(2000) concerning the provision of technical assistance.

- Start an “EU Rule of Law Initiative”;
- Establish a regular, result-oriented “Human Rights Dialogue” with each of the CA States;
- Conduct a regular energy dialogue with CA States.

The strategy is reviewed biannually by the EU Commission and Council. Four joint progress reports have been adopted up to date, the last one in June 2015.

#### 2.2.4 Regional strategic objectives and priorities with CA

##### Regional Strategy Paper for CA 2002-2006

In 2002, the EU adopted the first *Regional Strategy Paper* (RSP) for CA, outlining the objectives for the EU development co-operation in the region for the 2002-2006 period. The strategy recognised that while each country may face specific challenges, the countries of CA face common development problems which present opportunities for developing mutually beneficial relations.

Consequently, the core objectives have been “*to promote the stability and security of the countries of Central Asia and to assist in their pursuit of sustainable economic development and poverty reduction*”. (p.3) Along these lines, Tacis has pursued a three tracks programme:

- A regional co-operation programme aiming to promote good neighbourly relations and concerted work between the CA countries in the areas of transport and energy networks, sustainable use of natural resources and implementation of international environmental conventions, and justice and home affairs.
- A regional support programme, implemented at national level to address the main common challenges related to sustainable economic development.
- A poverty reduction scheme.

The Tacis CA Indicative Programme (IP) (2005-2006) adopted on 20 August 2004, continued to work along the three-track approach and pursuing the priority areas as defined in the Tacis Regulation 99(2000) and in the RSP 2002-2004. However, the IP identified several challenges which continued to underline the contentious character of regional issues, such as lack of mutual trust, increased border restrictions which further reduced opportunities for intra-regional trade, and sustainable economic activities by neighbouring countries.

##### Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to CA for the period 2007-2013

In 2007, Tacis was replaced by the new Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI), whose strategic objectives were defined in the RSP 2007-2013. The RSP 2007-2013 reiterates the fact that “*a large number of important issues facing Central Asia can only be addressed at regional level.*” Consequently the RSP considered regional co-operation and good neighbourly relations as a core priority for action in the EU strategy towards the region. Overall, the RSP has outlined three priority areas:

1. CA regional co-operation and good neighbourly relations (30-35% of the total budget), focusing on i) networks; ii) environment, iii) border and migration management, the fight against international crime and customs, and iv) education, scientific and people-to-people activities;
2. Reduce poverty and increase living standards (40-45% of the total budget);
3. Promote good governance and economic reform (20-25% of the total budget).

While the first priority was in line with EU priorities for regional-level assistance with its neighbours under the new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and ensuring continuity with preceding RSP, bilateral assistance for each of the CA countries has been pursued for the second and third priority area.

##### CA Indicative Programme 2007-2010

The IP 2007-2010 discusses in greater detail the impacts and objectives to be achieved by the different focal priorities. For the priority area which covers the regional support, the IP laid down the following principal objectives (IP 2007-2010, p.6ff):

- To facilitate and advance co-operation in areas of mutual interest and benefit between the CA countries themselves and with the EC and partner countries. This complements the objective of developing increasingly closer relationships with CA partner countries and encouraging their gradual democratic and economic transition within the respective national programmes.
- To provide assistance in order to achieve common objectives in synergy with those pursued under the European Neighbourhood Programme and Common Spaces (with Russia) policy

where there is clear benefit to be had from regional-level assistance. These benefits can be of a long-term nature, and include fostering greater co-operation within the region, which results from complementarities and pull effects as well as from economies of scale and the avoidance of duplication of effort.

The IP also highlighted the fact that CA countries may benefit from funding through ENPI Eastern Regional Programmes to achieve synergies among the different actions in the areas of energy, transport and environment.

### **CA Indicative Programme 2011-2013**

The Mid-term Review of the RSP again emphasised one of the main challenges of the region, more precisely it noted an *“exacerbation of tensions among the countries of the region over shared resources and common challenges on energy, environment and water, and trade.”* (p.2) Against this background the core objectives identified under the RSP remained valid and required only some minor modifications at the country level in view of recent political and economic developments.

The IP further noted that *“regional programmes have been useful as multipliers of know-how, for valuable actions and reforms carried out in one national context were often also relevant for another country. Past experience has shown the importance of sharing lessons learned and best practices from countries that are undergoing similar post-communist transitions in terms of facilitating effective reforms and stimulating convergence.”* (p.10)

### **Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) Regional CA 2014-2020**

The new MIP 2014-2020 for Regional CA identifies two focal sectors, for which support for policy reforms and institutional development, with capacity building programmes will be provided. While the overarching focal sectors for regional assistance are split in two compared to only one focal priority in the previous IP, the underlying sectors remain unchanged to a large extent:

- Regional Sustainable Development focusing on energy, environment/water and socio-economic development,
- Regional Security for Development focusing on integrated border management, fight against drugs and crime, regional security – rule of law.

The two focal sectors will be supplemented by the blending mechanism operating through the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA) and the Multi-country Technical Assistance Facility. Support to higher education through the new programme Erasmus+ will also be financed from regional funds but managed separately not via the MIP.



### 3 Key methodological elements

#### 3.1 Key methodological elements

The methodology applied for this evaluation is based on the **methodological guidelines** developed by the DG DEVCO Evaluation Unit.<sup>18</sup>

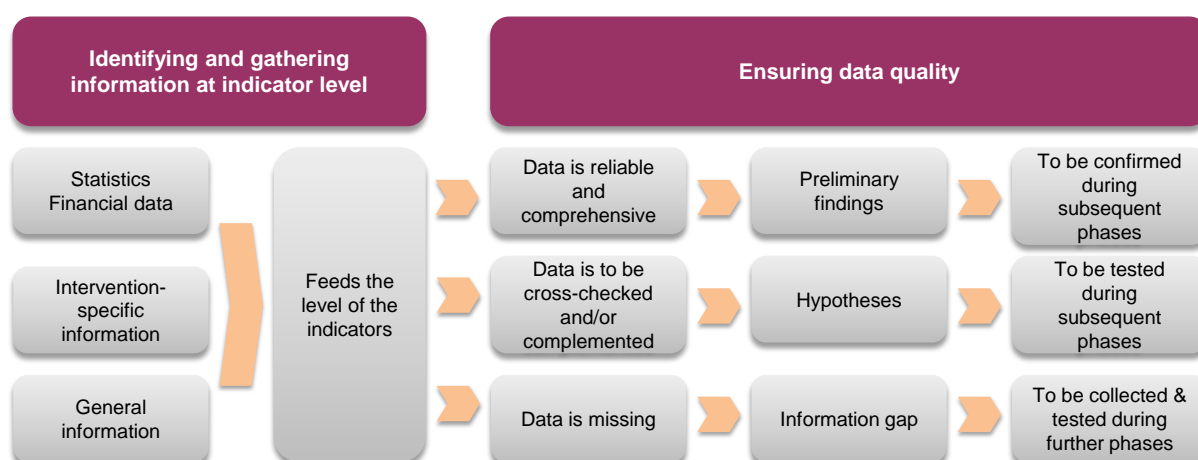
The evaluation adopted a **systematic approach** that uses different **building blocks** to gradually construct an answer to the EQs and to formulate key conclusions and forward looking recommendations. The various phases coincide with different methodological steps undertaken within the framework of the evaluation:

- During the **inception phase** the Evaluation Team gained a clear understanding and overview of the object of the evaluation, mapping the actions of the regional-level EU support to Central Asia.
- In the **desk phase**, the team drafted the desk report based on evidence from the documentation available and phone interviews.
- During the **field phase**, the team completed the data collection and collected information on how outputs have been used to validate or revise the preliminary findings and hypotheses formulated in the desk report.
- The **synthesis phase** was devoted to constructing answers to the evaluation questions and formulating key conclusions and forward-looking recommendations on the basis of the data collected throughout the process.
- The final step was a **dissemination seminar**. The purpose of the seminar was to present results, and validate and discuss conclusions and recommendations.

#### 3.2 Data collection and analysis

During the whole evaluation, the evaluation team has followed a structured data collection process as outlined in the figure below.

Figure 3 Data collection process in this evaluation



During the evaluation, information was gathered at multiple levels:

- **Comprehensive global review** at the overall level (general literature review, interviews at HQ, EAMR analysis focusing on issues relevant for EQ 1-7) covering the whole regional-level EU support to Central Asia.
- **Desk activities** for selected interventions within the focal sectors of the evaluation:
  - Document review and analysis for selection of projects (e.g. project evaluations, mid-term reviews as described above);
  - EAMR analysis on sector specific results;

<sup>18</sup> General information on these guidelines can be found online at: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/methods/mth\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/methods/mth_en.htm)

- o Cross-utilisation of ongoing thematic evaluations (e.g. Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries, Evaluation of the EU support to research and innovation for development in partner countries, Evaluation of Blending);
- o Interviews with key stakeholders involved in the selected interventions.
- **Field visits** to four of the five Central Asian countries.

### 3.3 Country coverage

The team visited four of the five Central Asian countries, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The team leader covered three and each sector expert two countries. The team made an effort to conduct joint missions to take advantage of synergies and reduce the burden for the EU Delegations (EUDs) of the respective countries. The table below presents the coverage by country, sector and evaluation question.

Table 4 Overview of country coverage per evaluation question

Sectors/ Countries	EQs 1-3 Transversal Aspects	EQ4 Environment	EQ5 Border Management	EQ6 Private Sector Development	EQ7 Higher Education
Kazakhstan					
Kyrgyzstan					
Tajikistan					
Uzbekistan					

The selection of countries reflected the following considerations:

- The **team leader and environment expert** went to both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, as both EUDs implement important regional programmes and are members of the Reference Group. In addition, he also went to Tajikistan, because the country hosts important environment projects.
- The **border management expert** went to Kyrgyzstan, as BOMCA is managed by the EUD in Bishkek. As a second country, he covered Tajikistan, because BOMCA has been very active in the country as well as the IfS intervention on border monitoring activities.
- The **SME development expert** went to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as Central Asia Invest has been most active in these two countries and some of its interventions target both countries jointly, thus having a regional dimension.
- The **Higher Education (HE) expert** went to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which hosted a large number and volume of HE projects. This also ensured that Uzbekistan was covered by the evaluation

### 3.4 Challenges and limitations

During the process the evaluation faced a number of challenges:

- Information available in EU databases and from other DGs was not always easily retrievable. This made the inventory exercises and other analyses relatively time-consuming. Furthermore, the availability of documents on relevant interventions differed considerably. For some interventions, CRIS<sup>19</sup> information was sketchy, while others were well documented.
- Very limited information was available on interventions which have only recently started, i.e. in 2013 or 2014. Evidence is thin in these cases.
- The EU programmes in HE consisted of portfolios with numerous projects (74 Tempus projects, 21 Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects), with broad and diverse scopes and results. A summarisation of results would be too lengthy and their synopsis too general. To reflect the interventions' nature in the HE sector, the significant changes described for the HE sector are selective, while seeking to reflect more widely applicable developments in the CA countries.

<sup>19</sup> Common RELEX Information System

- Distance interviews have been carried out with staff from different DGs, but due to staff turnover it is not feasible to locate the former staff at these DGs working there at the time of the design of the regional interventions.
- Non-availability of staff of some development partners and government agencies.

## 4 Answers to the evaluation questions

As requested by the ToR, the present evaluation assessed regional-level EU co-operation in CA. A total of seven evaluation questions (EQs) were formulated and for each EQ a number of judgement criteria (JCs) and indicators were defined. The EQs were discussed and agreed upon with the Evaluation Unit and the Reference Group and hence reflect choices that were taken jointly. For example, it was decided to not cover transport and energy, as EU co-operation in these sectors is covered by another evaluation, and to only cover Rule of Law lightly, because most of the respective interventions are of a bilateral nature.

Table 5 The evaluation questions

No.	Evaluation question	Coverage
EQ 1	Has the regional-level EU programme strategy for support (RSP, MIP) responded to the priorities and needs of the partner countries in Central Asia while being in line with the overall EU development and policy framework?	Strategic orientation
EQ 2	Have EU-CA policy and political dialogue and regional interventions reinforced each other in the fields of environment, higher education, rule of law and security?	Dialogue
EQ 3	Has the EU regional-level support complemented and added value to EU's bilateral co-operation and the interventions of other EU DGs and EU Member States?	Regional dimension & complementarity
EQ 4	Has regional-level EU support to CA contributed to enhancing regional collaboration on environmental governance?	Environment
EQ 5	Has the regional-level EU support to CA contributed to improving legal flows of passengers and goods and enhancing the fight against organised crime in CA?	Border management
EQ 6	Has regional-level EU support to CA contributed to improving the business climate for SMEs and their competitiveness (emphasis on the non-extractive sectors)?	SME development
EQ 7	Has EU regional support to CA contributed to enhancing quality and relevance of HE provision?	Higher education

The EQs can also be linked to one or several of the five OECD DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability), the coherence and EU added-value criteria and other key issues (3Cs or cross-cutting issues) identified in the ToR of this evaluation. These linkages are illustrated in the following table, and further detailed in the individual EQs.

Table 6 Coverage of the evaluation criteria by the evaluation questions

Question	Evaluation criteria							Other key issues	
	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability	Coherence	Added value	3Cs	Cross-cutting issues
EQ1 on strategic orientation	✓✓					✓✓		✓✓	
EQ2 on policy dialogue	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓	✓	✓✓	
EQ3 on the regional dimension and complementarity	✓	✓	✓✓		✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
EQ4 on environment	✓	✓✓	✓	✓				✓✓	✓✓
EQ5 on border management	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓			✓✓	
EQ6 on SME	✓	✓✓	✓					✓✓	
EQ7 on HE	✓✓	✓✓						✓✓	

✓✓	The criterion is largely covered by the EQ
✓	The criterion is partially covered in the EQ

## 4.1 EQ 1 on strategic orientation

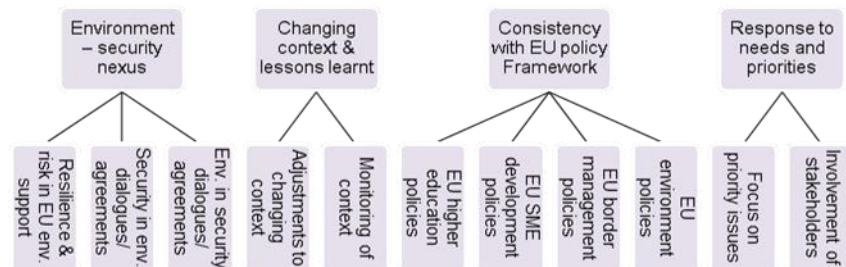
*Has the regional-level EU programme strategy for support (RSP, MIP) responded to the priorities and needs of the partner countries in CA while being in line with the overall EU development and policy framework?*

### Summary answer to the evaluation question

- EU regional co-operation has supported official CA government priorities as articulated in their respective national development strategies.
- Over the evaluation period, EU co-operation has shifted towards a more modular approach to regional support. Instead of aiming at involving all five CA countries to the same degree, support concentrated on KG, KZ and TJ, countries that proved to be more open to external co-operation. This way of operating was particularly pronounced for SME development and border management, whereas for environment it mainly concerned the EU engagement in activities of a transboundary or interstate nature. For HE, this was less of a trend.
- EU regional co-operation was in line with the EU policy framework, but provided support to a large number of sectors – six in total: environment, border management and rule of law, private sector development, higher education, transport, and energy. This meant the available funds were spread thinly in a political context that is not conducive to regional co-operation.
- The overall goals articulated in the 2014 MIP are more modest and realistic than in previous programming documents, reflecting the challenging context for regional co-operation in CA.
- There are major discrepancies between the aspirations in the 2007 and 2010 MIPs on the one hand and actual interventions implemented on the other. While programming and implementation were well aligned in the environment sector, this was not the case in the border management, SME development, and HE sectors.

### JCs and indicators of the evaluation question

*This question is articulated through four judgement criteria and eleven indicators, as shown in the figure on the right, and with detailed reporting in Volume 2.*



### Rationale and coverage of the evaluation question

The EU is a signatory of the Paris Declaration, which specifies that support should take departure in national priorities of the partner countries. While this in principle is reasonably straight-forward for bilateral support, it is more complicated at the regional level in CA, where there are significant differences between the countries in terms of economic development, democratic governance, and environment. But even at the national level, the priorities defined by governments may not always fully reflect the needs on the ground and of all segments of the population, or sufficiently address emerging issues – for example, environment is a sector that has historically been under-prioritised. It should also be kept in mind that the context in the region is not static but evolving, so needs and priorities may change, requiring reorientation of the support. Moreover, EU has clear policy priorities and objectives for its support to third countries, so ideally the strategic focus of support should balance the above.

This EQ explores the extent to which the regional programme responds well to the actual needs and priorities in CA while being aligned with EU development policy goals.

## Answer to the evaluation question

*The level of consultation with CA partners in programming varied.*

While CA stakeholders interviewed generally indicate that they were consulted in an adequate manner in the design of the majority of the interventions, this was not the case for all of them. In the environment sector, according to Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) reports, CA stakeholders complained that they were not consulted in the preparation of some of the EURECA<sup>20</sup> components (namely WECOOP<sup>21</sup> and WBOCA<sup>22</sup>), but these findings were disputed by interviewees. In the border management sector, stakeholders were consulted only after the main elements of the intervention had already been decided upon. (I-111)

*The priorities of the regional EU support were generally aligned with national development strategies of the CA governments.*

In the SME development and higher education sectors, EU support was in line with national development strategies of KZ, KG, TJ, TM and UZ. In the case of environment, some interventions supported the reform of current policies and the partner countries made efforts to adapt the legislation accordingly. Border management was not considered a development issue by CA government and thus not a priority in any of the CA national development strategies. (I-112)

*EU regional support was allocated to many sectors over the evaluation period leading to thinly spread resources.*

According to the Paris Declaration, EU donors should aim at concentrating their involvement to three sectors in a particular country. The EU regional support alone included a total of six sectors – the four sectors covered by this evaluation as well as energy and transport. This meant spreading the available funds and human resources thinly in a political context that is not conducive to regional co-operation. In addition to that, the regional strategy included seven bilateral focal sectors, five in TJ and KG, four in KZ and three in UZ and TM. In the new programming period, the number of sectors has been reduced to five at the regional level (support transport was discontinued) and three (TJ and KG), respectively one (UZ and TM), at the bilateral level.<sup>23</sup> (I-112)

*Overall, the RSP and MIPs (regional programming documents) were consistent with the EU policy framework.*

In the environment and SME sectors, the priorities of the RSP and MIPs were in line with the priorities articulated in the respective sector policies. The RSP and MIPs were also consistent with the integrated border management concept as outlined in the *Guidelines for Integrated Border Management in EC Cooperation* (the border management sector lacks an overarching policy). In the HE sector, the regional programming documents were in line with the EU policy for the sector. However, the RSP and MIPs do not contain an approach for mainstreaming environment into the other sectors. (I-121, I-122, I-123, I-124)

*Relationship between RSP/MIPs and the EU-CA Strategy for a New Partnership*

The RSP and MIPs were also fully consistent with the EU-CA Strategy for a New Partnership but the relation between the different strategies remains unclear. While the EU-CA Strategy for a New Partnership is quite detailed in the environment and border management sectors, SME development and higher education are only covered very lightly. (I-121, I-122, I-123, I-124)

*The regional*

The 2007 RSP highlights the importance and potential benefits of fostering

<sup>20</sup> Regional Environmental Programme for Central Asia

<sup>21</sup> Subcomponent of EURECA supporting the development of an Environment and Water Co-operation Platform

<sup>22</sup> Water Management and Basin Organisations in Central Asia

<sup>23</sup> KZ does not receive bilateral support anymore as it has graduated to upper middle income country status.

*programmes promoted exchanges between CA and Eastern Europe*

exchanges and strengthening co-operation between CA and Eastern Europe in the implementation of the regional programmes. The extent to this was applied very much depended on the sector. In environment, the EUWI EECCA programme enabled some cross-fertilisation and learning from Eastern European countries outside EU, e.g. through bringing in participants from other countries in national policy dialogue (NPD) meetings and organizing study tours. In border management there were limited activities involving Eastern European countries during the evaluation period, but the current phase of BOMCA is implemented by the Latvian State Border Guards, which will provide for ample opportunities for exchange. The EU's support to the HE sector provided a range of opportunities for co-operation networks involving partners from other Eastern European Countries, a total of 34 projects under Tempus involved CA and Eastern European partners. In the PSD/SME sector, there were no activities involving Eastern European countries and OECD Paris Roundtable 2015 showed that CA governments are interested rather in Turkey's experiences.

*The overall objective of EU regional support has become more realistic over time.*

Over the evaluation period, the principal EU objectives for the regional support to CA have evolved and become more modest. While the 2007 RSP pursued greater economic integration and deepened political co-operation, the 2014 MIP states that the EU aims at supporting dialogue to promote a non-confrontational environment in the region. This more pragmatic and realistic approach reflects the challenging regional context. (I-131 and I-132)

*EU regional support evolved gradually, responding to lessons learnt and changes in the context.*

The regional programme for assistance to CA has shown a large degree of continuity over the evaluation period, and necessary adjustments were made in responses to lessons learned and overall developments in the regional context. The focal co-operation sectors remained the same, with the notable exception of SME development, which was introduced in the 2010 MIP. Within the sectors, programming was adapted, responding to changes in the context, recommendations provided in evaluations and other lessons learnt. In the environment sector, there were mostly gradual adjustments linked to the implementation of the projects but also in the 2014 MIP a toning down of the ambition to promote regional co-operation, seemingly in response to the lack of windows of opportunity to engage, while the border managements sector saw the introduction of the High Level Security Dialogue to address pressing security issues such as the situation in Afghanistan and the threat by international terrorist organisations. In SME development, Central Asia Invest (CAI) changed its approach quite significantly based on the experience in the first phase of the intervention. In HE, the approach to establish a forum for higher level policy dialogue was adjusted several times between 2008 and 2014, albeit with limited success. (I-132 and I-733)

*Monitoring of context trends was comprehensive.*

The progress reports on the implementation of the EU-CA Strategy comprehensively monitor the CA context. However, it is unclear how the conclusions of these reports were followed up on and integrated in the design and implementation of EU support in CA. All stakeholders involved in the implementation of EU-funded PSD/SME support, most importantly OECD, GIZ, KFW, EBRD, have systematically monitored "context trends". (I-131)

*EU strategic aspirations and actual*

A comparison of the MIPs and the implemented programmes shows discrepancies between programming and implementation. While the

*programme implementation were not aligned in all sectors.*

programmes in the environment sector were fairly aligned to the MIPs, the same does not hold for the border management, SME and higher education sectors. In border management, the strategy was more ambitious than the implemented programmes, which covered only some of the areas laid out in the strategy. In higher education and SME development, the early MIPs (2007 for HE, 2010 for SME) covered different areas than the programmes that were actually implemented. This changed with the following version of the MIP (2010 for HE, 2014 for SME), which might indicate some retrofitting of programming documents to actual implementation.

*The environment-security nexus was generally not addressed in regional dialogue.*

Environmental aspects with security implications, such as transboundary disputes over water resources, were not a theme in the high-level security dialogue, nor did they feature significantly in the high-level environment dialogue, regional working group meetings or national policy dialogues. The sharing of shared water resources, which are of major importance to both the upstream countries (KG, TJ) for power generation and particularly for the water-scarce downstream countries for irrigation (KZ, TM, UZ) is already a politically sensitive issue, which the CA countries are yet to tackle. Moreover, economic development, population growth and climate change will further increase the pressure and increase the scarcity of water resources in the future. It is thus an issue that has the potential to escalate rapidly and addressing it is of high importance to the region, despite limited political will. However, since water resource disputes is a sensitive issue, which is also perceived to relate to national security, and bringing in this theme could potentially have blocked the dialogue process. The intended co-operation between the environment and security platforms never materialised, so a potential opportunity to address this important but difficult issue was lost. (I-141, I-142)

*Conflict prevention over shared transboundary water resources was addressed by EU support in the Isfara Basin.*

While the regional dialogues and programmes did not engage at the regional level in the sensitive issues related to the sharing of transboundary water; EU support did play an instrumental role in improving the dialogue and co-operation between Kyrgyz and Tajik stakeholders in the Isfara Basin. EU support through WMBOCA and the UNDP implemented *Toward a sustainable management of water resources in Central Asia* project helped creating the capacity and institutional framework for enhanced co-operation on water resource management and peaceful resolution of disputes. The KG-TJ framework agreement which has been facilitated will, if signed by KG, create a supportive framework for expanding the lessons and model from the Isfara Basin to other shared basins. (I-142, I-143)

*EU's regional support contributed to reducing risk and vulnerability and to enhancing resilience to natural hazards and the impact of climate change.*

WMBOCA, the UNDP project, PAMIR<sup>24</sup> and the ENVSEC<sup>25</sup>-implemented *"Climate change and security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus project"* all addressed risk and resilience and climate change adaptation issues. WMBOCA, UNDP and PAMIR in particular focused on enhancing resilience to natural hazards, such as floods and mud-flows in specific locations (e.g. Isfara Basin, Chu-Talas Basin and selected villages in the Pamir mountains), where the knowledge and capacity of local stakeholders in relation to disaster management and climate change

<sup>24</sup> Poverty Alleviation through Mitigation of Integrated high mountain Risk

<sup>25</sup> Programme for Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus



adaptation was enhanced through analytical work, training and development of plans. The ENVSEC project was still in early stages of implementation but is anticipated in the future to enhance the capacity to manage risk and security more broadly in the region. (I-143)

## 4.2 EQ 2 on dialogue

*Have EU-CA policy and political dialogue and regional interventions reinforced each other in the fields of environment, higher education, rule of law and security?*

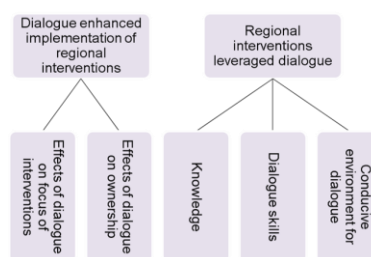
### Summary answer to the evaluation question

- The link between the EU-CA high-level dialogue and regional programmes was good in the environment sector and they were in general mutually reinforcing. The high-level dialogues provided some overall strategic direction for regional programmes and to some extent created a stronger appreciation of regional co-operation, although this did not fully lead to a tangible commitment from CA countries to regional-level activities under the regional programmes. Programme support also facilitated other regional dialogue processes and enhanced stakeholder capacity to engage – a particularly notable result was the establishment of a fruitful dialogue and co-operation between KG and TJ on managing the Isfara Basin. At the national level, the programme-dialogue inter-linkage under EUWI EECCA contributed to building a national commitment to national water sector reforms.
- In the border management sector, programme-based regional dialogues rather than the EU-CA high-level dialogue provided strategic guidance for the BOMCA programme. BOMCA, in return, facilitated a conducive dialogue environment through the Issyk-Kul Initiative on Border Security, but dialogue-programme inter-linkages and synergies were not as prominent as in the environment sector.
- In the SME sector, the regional and national dialogues facilitated by the OECD-led Eurasia Competitiveness Programme (ECP) and Central Asia Invest (CAI) grant projects contributed to important legislative and regulatory reforms. Both the high-level policy dialogues and roundtables facilitated by the Eurasia Competitiveness Programme and Central Asia Invest regional networking events created stepping stones for closer dialogue and regional co-operation on SME development. However, although both are components of CAI, the ECP was not linked to the grant projects and synergies were not achieved.
- In the HE sector, it is hard to differentiate between regional programmes and regional dialogue. The EU-CA high-level dialogue as foreseen in the RSP and EU-CA Education Initiative did not take root during the evaluation period. Both the Central Asia Education Platform (CAEP) project and the Tempus IV programme facilitated regional dialogue. Activities under CAEP (launched in 2012) sought to reflect results and lessons from Tempus (launched in CA in 1994). However, CAEP had not taken sufficient root during the evaluation period to generate strategic guidance for the programmes.
- While there are only few examples of tangible results stemming from EU-CA high-level dialogues as well as from programme-based regional dialogues, without EU support there would have been significantly less dialogue between the countries. In the environment sector, tangible dialogue-related results were achieved in relation to the Isfara Basin (KG and TJ) and national water sector reforms, but not at the overall regional level. The interest in regional dialogue on border management was somewhat limited, although it improved over time and in 2015 led to the endorsement of the *EU-CA Action Plan on Drugs* and the *Joint Plan of Action for the implementation of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy in CA*. UZ and TM showed less commitment toward participating in the regional high-level dialogues on HE than KG, KZ and TJ, and while the five countries showed commitment to the EHEA<sup>26</sup>/Bologna process, their interest in regional collaboration was modest.

<sup>26</sup> European Higher Education Area

## JCs and indicators of the evaluation question

This question is articulated through two judgement criteria and five indicators, as shown in the figure on the right, and with detailed reporting in Volume 2.



## Rationale and coverage of the evaluation question

Regional EU-CA development co-operation is characterised by two main elements: a) programmatic support and financing, and b) policy dialogue, both taking departure in the *European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership*. Regional policy dialogues have been established for environment and water, security, rule of law, and higher education (but notably not for private sector development). However, while distinct, policy dialogue and programmatic support should not be seen in isolation from each other, as they are mutually supportive. Indeed, some of the EU programmes are supporting policy dialogue directly by providing financing for policy work, studies and process facilitation for policy dialogues. On the other hand, policy dialogues can mobilise ownership and high-level commitment to programmes, and provide strategic guidance and direction, thereby enhancing their prospects for impact and achieving sustained change.

The EQ explores the synergies between regional policy dialogue and programme support.

### Box 2 Overview of dialogue mechanisms

This box describes the major elements of the EU-CA framework for dialogue and co-operation, which has been established in the context of the EU-CA strategy for a New Partnership.

**EU-CA high-level dialogues** are ministerial conferences that include ministers from CA and the EU:

- Environment: five ministerial conferences were held in 2008 (twice), 2009, 2013, 2015
- Education: the first and only ministerial conference was held in Riga in June 2015
- Rule of Law: four ministerial conferences were held in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014
- Action Plan on Drugs: high-level meetings were held in 2013 and 2015
- Prague Process on Migration: ministerial meetings were held in 2014 and June 2016
- High Level Security Dialogue (HLSD): meetings were held in 2013, 2015 and 2016

**Working groups (WGs)** bring together senior officials from the EU, CA, EU MS and international organisations annually. These meetings are complemented by regional or bilateral expert meetings which are organised four to five times a year. The following working groups have been established:

- Environmental Governance and Climate Change (WG-EGCC)
- EU Water Initiative Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EUWI EECCA WG)
- Judicial capacity
- Tempus and Erasmus+ Working Groups
- INOGATE (energy) and TRACECA (transport)
- Prague Process (migration)
- Eurasia Competiveness (PSD): investment, human capital development, access to finance

The EU-CA **dialogue platforms** are implemented through service contracts with consulting firms to provide technical and logistical support to the preparation of the high-level dialogues and working group meetings, organise expert seminars and workshops, and conduct studies. There are three dialogue platforms in CA: the Central Asia Education Platform (CAEP), the Rule of Law Platform, and the Water and Environment Cooperation Platform (WECOOP).

The dialogue efforts in each sector are chaired by the respective line ministries of **EU Member States**. The environment sector is chaired by Italy, education by Latvia and Poland, Rule of Law by France and Germany, and water (EUWI EECCA WG) by Romania.

### Answer to the evaluation question

*In the environment sector, regional EU interventions have played an important role in creating a more conducive framework for EU-CA and regional dialogue.*

In the environment sector the regional programmes facilitated dialogue processes and enhanced the capacity of stakeholders to engage. EU interventions provided important knowledge and analytical inputs at the national level, but only to a limited extent at the regional level. WECOOP's main role was to plan and facilitate the EU-CA High-Level Dialogue and the EU-CA Joint Expert Working Group on Environmental Governance and Climate Change, but this working group did not sufficiently live up to the expectations of “*providing guidance on cooperation activities between EU and CA*”, due to a lack of continuity in the participation and insufficient level of seniority of a number of participants. WMBOCA played an instrumental role in establishing dialogue and co-operation between KG and TJ on the Isfara Basin. At the national level, EUWI EECCA played a central role in creating National Policy Dialogues on water sector reforms. (I-211, I-212, I-213, EQ4)

*Regional EU interventions on border management/rule of law/security only to a moderate extent succeeded in creating a conducive dialogue environment.*

While BOMCA, through the Issyk-Kul Initiative on Border Security, contributed to creating a conducive dialogue environment, the programme did not to a significant extent seek to enhance the capacity of regional policy-makers to engage in dialogue or provide knowledge inputs to dialogue processes. Moreover, the regional interest in the EU-CA high-level dialogue on security was limited with some meetings being cancelled and some countries sending representatives, which were not sufficiently high-level. TM participated only on a few occasions in the Rule of Law Platform activities and UZ did not engage in the Rule of Law Platform or high-level dialogue at all. The CA states are more interested and engaged in the Shanghai Security Cooperation Organisation and the Commonwealth of Independent States, which both have dealt with border management and security issues. Nonetheless, the interest appears to have increased towards the end of the period under evaluation, e.g. with deputy minister level participation in the 2015 High-Level Dialogue, the endorsement of the *EU-CA Action Plan on Drugs*, and the agreed *Joint Plan of Action for the implementation of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia*. (I-211, I-212, I-213).

*EU funded regional interventions have to a moderate extent contributed to creating a conducive environment for EU-CA and regional dialogue for the PSD/SME sector.*

The OECD Eurasia Competitiveness Programme (ECP) arranged high-level regional meetings for the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and CA region and established regional working groups, which produced the Central Asia Competitiveness Outlook Report and country-specific Policy Handbooks. The Central Asia Invest (CAI) Programme had national level policy dialogue components and fostered regional dialogue through three regional network meetings involving CAI stakeholders and policy makers. Thereby, EU support provided opportunities for dialogue between the CA countries but capacity support was not provided to enhance the dialogue, nor was it linked to the programmatic activities implemented. (I-211, I-212, I-213)

*Regional HE interventions funded by EU provided several opportunities for regional dialogue, but some CA countries only engaged to a*

The EU-Central Asian Education Platform (CAEP) was established specifically to facilitate regional dialogue and arranged regional dialogue workshops. Tempus also arranged a wide range of regional and national activities (e.g. seminars, workshops, conferences and analyses) of regional concern in HE reforms at individual, institutional and system level. However, there is no evidence of the capacity developed being used in high-level regional or EU-CA policy dialogue, but one study was carried out by Tempus on Human Resources management in HE, and CAEP did a study on quality

*limited extent in these.* in HE and VET<sup>27</sup>, which fed into policy dialogue organised under Tempus and CAEP (conferences & workshops). However, UZ (and to some extent TM) did not demonstrate a strong commitment towards participation and was not represented by high-level officials in CAEP dialogue activities. (I-211, I-212, I-213)

*The examples of tangible results and commitments emanating from EU-CA and regional dialogues are scarce, but without EU support there would have been significantly less regional dialogue. Bringing the countries together to discuss was an achievement in its own right.*

In the environment sector the most prominent example of committed interstate co-operation is between KZ and KG on the Chu-Talas Basin and KG and TJ on the Isfara Basin, but otherwise the progress on joint management of the major river basin in the region remains limited and the regional institutions have limited credibility. For border management, a recent result is the aforementioned *EU-CA Action Plan on Drugs*. For HE, there is a strong commitment towards the EHEA/Bologna Process, but less so towards regional co-operation and there appears to be no prominent examples of tangible agreements and commitments emanating from regional dialogues. Nonetheless, EU support was successful in bringing the CA countries together despite the distrust between the countries (in relation to water resources and border security) or a feeling the regional dialogue was not very important (in relation to HE), and in creating a better understanding of the positions of the other countries (especially in relation to environment and border management). This is an important contribution, which can help the CA countries in tackling some major challenges, which can only be tackled with a regional or transboundary approach, such as climate change and the increasing pressure on the shared and scarce water resources, counter-terrorism, and organised crime/illegal trade in drugs. Moreover, and in combination with the regional interventions, the EU-CA dialogues (where they took place) created important opportunities for the CA countries to learn from the EU's world leading experience on regional integration and collaboration on transboundary challenges. For the HE and PSD/SME sectors the need for regional co-operation is perhaps less vital than for the other three sectors, but the dialogue with EU and the regional interventions helped the countries to learn from EU and enhance HE quality in CA. For the PSD/SME sector, the results of the EU supported dialogues were more limited, but in the absence of other regional co-operation forums, particularly the ECP high-level policy forums/roundtables are an important diplomatic tool. (I-211, EQ4, EQ5, EQ7)

*The EU-CA high-level dialogue helped shaping the strategic orientation of the regional environment interventions, and enhanced the appreciation of the value of regional approaches – but it only to a modest extent led to a*

The EU-CA High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change led to the establishment of the EU-CA High-Level Platform and the EU-CA Joint Working Group on Environmental Governance and Climate Change. These three bodies provided some strategic guidance for the focus and orientation of the design and implementation of the interventions under EURECA, and thereby made a contribution to ensuring the relevance and focus on regional priorities. The dialogue processes also strengthened the general appreciation of the value of engaging in regional co-operation and sharing. However, this only partly resulted in a commitment to the regional aspects of EURECA, as evidenced by a strong preference towards allocating most of the funding under FLERMONECA<sup>28</sup> for national level activities, leaving only a minor proportion of the funding for regional activities and also by the

<sup>27</sup> Vocational Education and Training

<sup>28</sup> Subcomponent of EURECA addressing forest and biodiversity governance

<i>commitment to engage in regional action.</i>	unwillingness to establish a formal regional FLEG (Forest Law Enforcement and Governance) working group. (I-221, I-222, I-411)
<i>The regional dialogues on border management created an enhanced commitment to co-ordinated approaches – but it is unclear whether this led to a stronger commitment to the regional interventions.</i>	The Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI) was established to provide a forum for co-ordination and discussion of BOMCA activities and as such it provided oversight and guidance for BOMCA implementation. The annual CABSI conferences were an important tool for the promotion of integrated and co-ordinated approaches to border management. It is important to note that no similar regional border management dialogue has taken place since the end of BOMCA 8 in 2014. However, the extent to which this translated into a strong commitment to the regional activities of BOMCA and CADAP is not clear. The Rule of Law Platform to a limited extent contributed to the regional dialogue; UZ did not take part in the platform and no activities took place in UZ, and TM only on very few occasions participated in the activities. There is no evidence of an enhanced commitment to regional approaches as a result of the dialogues. (I-221, I-222)
<i>In HE and PSD/SME the regional dialogues did not significantly support the implementation of interventions.</i>	In HE, regional dialogue mainly took place within regional interventions under Tempus, and only to a limited extent under the CAEP project (which started later in the evaluation period). Therefore, one cannot speak of an impact in this sector. The EC-CA high-level policy dialogue for education did not materialise during the evaluation period. No evidence was found of the regional dialogue within regional Tempus projects guiding the implementation of Tempus. Similarly, the link between regional and national policy dialogue facilitated under ECP and CAI did not appear to have a link to programme implementation, although ECP did report that the policy dialogue facilitated the implementation of technical programme activities. (I-221, I-222)

### 4.3 EQ 3 on the regional dimension and complementarity

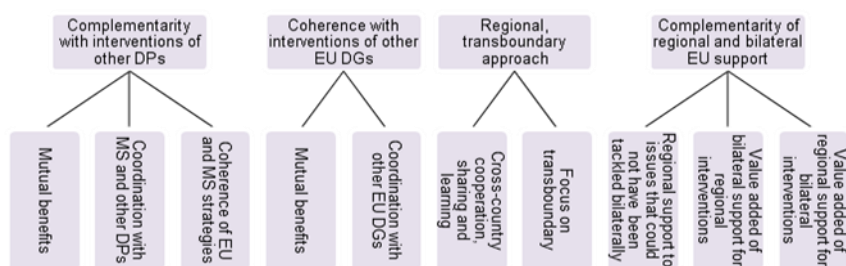
*Has the EU regional-level support complemented and added value to EU's bilateral co-operation and the interventions of other EU DGs and EU Member States?*

#### *Summary answer to the evaluation question*

- The scope for synergies between regional and bilateral interventions was limited, since they generally focused on different sectors, or, in the case of education, on different subsectors, with only regional interventions focusing on higher education. Border management was mainly covered by regional programmes, whereas other rule of law themes were addressed by bilateral programmes. Environment was addressed almost exclusively through the regional programmes.
- The only sector significantly covered by both regional and bilateral interventions was SME development. However, while there were no direct contradictions and incoherencies between the SME development projects under the EU's bilateral and regional support, the approaches were not designed to create direct synergies.
- The main value added by the regional programmes compared to bilateral EU support was that they, a) allowed for regional dialogue, sharing of experience and transfer of approaches (such as in the case of the harmonisation of standards in the tourism sector in KG and TJ), and b) enabled EU to engage in important environment, border management and HE reform issues, since these sectors were not accommodated under the focal sectors for EU's bilateral actions.
- Regional interventions only partly addressed issues with a transboundary or regional dimension, and primarily did so in the environment (transboundary water resources) and border management sectors (e.g. drug trafficking, free movement of people and goods). Regional HE interventions touched on the transboundary issue of recognition of individual degrees, study periods, study programmes, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the region. Some components of the regional SME development interventions strengthened transboundary business opportunities (i.e. exports, albeit on a small scale).
- Across all four sectors, only few tangible results were achieved at the regional level, since a) there were no, or only weak, regional institutions and thus no regional-level entry points for EU support, and b) there was only a limited willingness of the CA countries to engage in regional co-operation. The regional results achieved mainly involved only two countries at a time (mainly KG and TJ and to a lesser extent KZ) and had a limited geographic scope (e.g. a small transboundary basin or a single border crossing). Most regional programmes mainly achieved results at the national level.
- Regional interventions were often implemented with some involvement of a number of EU DGs, but their inputs were not always well-co-ordinated – and synergies with interventions led by other DGs were mainly achieved in relation to the EUWI EECCA-led national policy dialogues on water.
- Regional interventions proactively and successfully ensured co-ordination with the actions of other donors – and, in some cases, these interventions played a leading role in ensuring donor co-ordination. However, co-ordination mainly took place at the national level, and rarely at the regional level. This co-ordination led to joint activities, synergies and also enhanced results, but perhaps not to the full potential.

## JCs and indicators of the evaluation question

This question is articulated through four judgement criteria and ten indicators, as shown in the figure on the right, and with detailed reporting in Volume 2.



## Rationale and coverage of the evaluation question

The regional-level interventions managed by DEVCO are not the only support provided to CA, the EU is also providing bilateral support directly to each of the CA countries. Moreover, the EU is providing support to CA through other instruments (one example is ECHO) and managed by other EU DGs. Furthermore, EU Member States as well as other donors (multilateral and bilateral) are providing programme support to the countries in CA at both regional and country levels.

The EQ assessed whether there is a) a justification for having a regional programme with regional-level interventions, and b) whether the regional interventions are well-co-ordinated with other interventions and synergies are obtained and duplication (and perhaps even contradiction) is avoided.

## Answer to the evaluation question

*The scope for synergies and reinforcement between the regional and bilateral EU interventions was limited for the environment, border management and higher education sectors, but some synergies were achieved.*

The primary modality used for EU support for environment, border management and higher education was regional programmes. Only few bilateral interventions covered the environment sector. While there were several bilateral rule of law actions (mainly in KG), only one of these covered border management (in the Fergana Valley, KG). Higher education was only covered through regional interventions, whereas bilateral interventions covered primary, secondary, and vocational education. It is thus not surprising that there is only limited evidence of synergies and co-ordination between the regional and bilateral interventions for these sectors. Nonetheless, the EUDs do report that there were some synergies, but the nature and extent of these are often not clear. Synergies were achieved in TJ; the EUD has since 2013 led the water sector dialogue and provided bilateral grants (under DCI-ASIE, DCI-FOOD, and DCINSAPVD) that generated lessons, which informed the national policy dialogue process established under EUWI EECCA. Limited involvement of EUDs (except when they had the programme management responsibility) and the lack of a regional presence of some regional programmes also posed a limitation for achieving synergies; e.g. between the EU-CA Rule of Law Platform and the bilateral Rule of Law programmes. This also meant that EUDs could often not use regional programmes in their policy dialogue with governments. (I-311, I-312, I-331)

*Synergies and interactions between the several EU-funded bilateral private sector development/SME*

Reportedly, CAI was complemented by the country-specific interventions TAFF<sup>29</sup>, ECTAP<sup>30</sup> and Non-State Actors Programme, but these complementarities did not play any role in the implementation process. CAI stakeholders were unaware of bilateral projects and no evidence emerged that stakeholders involved in regional-level and bilateral interventions had

<sup>29</sup> Tajik Agricultural Finance Framework

<sup>30</sup> Enhanced Competitiveness of Tajik Agribusiness Project



*interventions and the regional interventions appear to have been limited.*

*Regional programmes covered themes of importance, which were mostly not accommodated under the country-level focal sectors, with the exception of PSD, which was increasingly also covered at the country level.*

*The challenges in all four sectors justified using a regional approach.*

*The main value added by EU's regional support was that it allowed for dialogue, sharing of lessons and transfer of approaches between CA countries – but in particular from the EU.*

*Some of the EU's regional interventions addressed important transboundary/cross-border environmental and border management issues, but others were largely*

interacted. Hence, synergies were not achieved. Coherence and synergies between ECP and national-level interventions were created and fostered in an indirect way, because of GIZ's central role as an implementing agency for both central parts of ECP and several bilateral projects. (I-311, I-312)

Environment was not a focal sector for bilateral action in any of the countries during 2007-2013. Rule of law was a bilateral focal sector in all countries (in TJ only in 2007-2010), except KZ, but border management was only included in TJ and KG in 2007-2010. Private sector development (PSD) was also generally not a focal sector for bilateral actions in 2007-2010, except energy sector market and regulatory reform in KG and TJ, but in 2011-2013, PSD including SMEs became a focal sector in KZ, TJ, and UZ – as reflected in the large number of related bilateral actions. Education was not a focal sector in any of the countries in 2007-2010, but while it was so in KG and TM (and partly so in KZ and TJ) 2011-2013, this did not include HE. Hence, the scope for bilateral actions in these sectors was limited, except for PSD/SMEs. In the case of environment and border management some of the most critical challenges are transboundary in nature (e.g. management of shared water resources, drug trafficking). (I-311, I-313, EQ4)

For the environment and border management sector the choice of focusing on regional programmes was logical considering the transboundary nature of many of the challenges faced in CA (e.g. transboundary water resources, climate change, a weak regional framework, smuggling), which cannot be handled effectively by a single state in isolation. For the private sector development regional (OECD-ECP) and cross-border components (CAI) achieved results that could not have been delivered at the country-level alone, such as harmonisation of standards and facilitation cross-border trade between KG and TJ. Indeed, private sector development was supported by both regional and bilateral interventions. In higher education, the regional approach added value by promoting regional harmonisation of national degree systems and quality criteria, transferability of qualifications, and recognition of degrees. (I-321)

An important focus of all regional programmes was to bring sector stakeholders together in workshops and events to share experiences and engage in dialogue. Moreover, the regional approach allowed for development, testing and refining implementation approaches in several countries, thereby creating co-benefits in terms of countries benefitting from the lessons learned from implementation in other countries. CA stakeholders widely appreciated the opportunities for dialogue and sharing. Moreover, the exposure to EU approaches and experiences and international best practice was particularly appreciated by CA stakeholders – even more so than learning from other CA countries. (I-322, EQ4, EQ5, EQ6, EQ7)

In the environment sector, WBOCA and the *Toward a Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Central Asia* project engaged in joint management of shared river basins. But they also had several activities with a purely national or sub-national focus, due to the lack of entry points in some countries in the shared basins (e.g. UZ did not participate in EU-funded regional programmes on water resources). FLERMONCA engaged to some extent in regional-level biodiversity conservation, but worked mainly at the national level, since the CA countries had a strong preference for

*clusters of national level projects. Overall, EU support focused mainly on national activities.*

national activities and less interest in regional activities. EUWI EECCA by design mainly engaged in national level activities. BOMCA had a significant focus on enhancing the capacity to collaborate on cross-border collaboration on sharing of information and intelligence, especially in KG and TJ. In the PSD sector the policy dialogues within the context of ECP were of a genuine regional nature, while CAI grant projects applied cross-border approaches (involving two to three CA countries). IFCA worked primarily as a cluster of national level projects – despite being a regional programme. Some projects under Tempus engaged in regional education activities on transboundary environmental issues (e.g. water resources management). Moreover, Tempus significantly promoted regional and interstate co-operation, e.g. on educational and academic degree programmes, quality accreditation and assurance, and academic recognition. In general, the regional interventions applied their implementation approach in more than one country, thereby creating the opportunity for the implementation in one country to benefit from lessons learned in other CA countries. (I-321, I-322, EQ4, EQ5, EQ6, EQ7)

*The scope for achieving tangible results at the regional level was hampered by the lack of strong regional institutions and the limited interest of CA countries in regional co-operation.*

Overall, all CA countries' primary interest in participating in regional projects was to advance nationally, and they found limited added value of regional co-operation. All countries put pressure on GIZ to mainly focus on national level activities under FLERMONECA. While the regional co-operation on higher education generally worked well in the joint programmes under Tempus, the co-operation remained donor driven. The results in the environment and border management sectors were more limited and localised in specific areas (e.g. Isfara River Basin in KG and TJ) or on specific themes (e.g. capacity in countering drug-trafficking). UZ and to some extent TM did not show a strong interest in regional co-operation and participated selectively in the regional programmes (BOMCA, CADAP and particularly Rule of Law Platform); and UZ did not participate at all in WMBOCA and WECOOP. Another major limitation for the ability of the programmes to engage at the regional level was the absence of regional institutions, which had the capacity and buy-in from CA countries to provide an entry point at the regional level for EU support. The above seems to confirm the point put forward by some stakeholders and analysts that a regional approach is not always the most appropriate for CA, due to reluctance of CA countries and their strained relationships, as well as the increasing diversity in the region. Most donors in CA increasingly engage at the national rather than the regional level due to the greater impact that can be achieved (in higher education no change was observed, but only few donors were engaged at the regional level). (I-321, EQ4, EQ5, EQ7)

*A number of regional interventions required inputs from several DGs; these inputs were in some cases, but not always, well-co-ordinated. Overall, the involvement of other DGs was*

In the environment sector, both DG ENV and DG CLIMA could only engage to a somewhat limited extent in CA; due to limited staff and financial resources they cannot cover all countries, and hence focus their attention on major international players (e.g. in international climate negotiations), such as the BASIC countries<sup>31</sup>. Nonetheless, the EU-CA high-level dialogue required inputs from several DGs; the dialogue process was led by Italy and EEAS, DEVCO supported it through financing the WECOOP component of EURECA, the EUD in KZ was responsible for the management of EURECA, and both DG ENV and DG CLIMA provided some policy inputs. This

<sup>31</sup> Brazil, South Africa, India and China

*modest.*

required substantial co-ordination, which took place under the leadership of EEAS. However, this co-ordination did not always materialise to an entirely sufficient degree (due to capacity constraints and differing levels of engagement), and this, as well as different views on the role of WECOOP, affected implementation. However, in the case of the EUWI EECCA (DG NEAR managed) led national policy dialogues on water, the co-ordination with WMBOCA (EUD KZ managed) and the *Toward a Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Central Asia* (EUD KZ managed) worked very well. In relation to border management, BOMCA was a shared responsibility of DEVCO, DG Relex (EEAS) and the EUDs, but here different visions of the programme and the need to balance security, economic development and justice aspects created tensions. For private sector development, apart from ongoing exchanges between DEVCO and EEAS, there was co-ordination between DEVCO, DG Trade and DG TAXUD on a study on the introduction of GSP/GSP+ (EU's General Preferential Scheme for Sustainable Development) in KG. In relation to higher education, the co-ordination of EACEA, DG DEVCO, DG EAC and EEAS appears to have worked well for Tempus IV and Erasmus Mundus. The intended co-ordination between the Environment Platform/WECOOP, the Rule of Law Platform and the Education Platform/CAEP did not materialise to a significant extent. (I-331)

*Synergies and mutual benefits between actions of different DGs were mainly achieved in relation to the EUWI EECCA-led national policy dialogues (NPDs) on water sector reform.*

Significant added value was achieved in relation to the EUWI EECCA-led national policy dialogues (NPDs) on water sector reform, where the experience from WMBOCA and the *Toward a Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Central Asia* project as well as PAMP<sup>32</sup> under the Global Food Facility Programme project provided valuable inputs to the dialogue process in TJ. Synergies achieved between BOMCA and interventions of other DGs appear limited; the only example found is that both BOMCA and the Border Monitoring Activities in the Republic of Georgia, Central Asia and Afghanistan project (DG JRC-led) provided equipment to the border services in TJ and UZ, with the latter providing specialised equipment to curb trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials. There is no evidence of such synergies in relation to private sector development/SME interventions. The higher education programmes in CA were a joint effort of the relevant DGs: financed by DEVCO and managed by EACEA, and DG EAC and EEAS provided policy input. (I-332)

*EU's regional interventions proactively ensured co-ordination with other donors at regional and national levels – but co-ordination at the regional level was ad-hoc.*

At the regional level, co-ordination was affected by the absence of regional institutions which could assume a co-ordinating role. Hence, there were no formalised co-ordination mechanisms, so the regional programmes engaged proactively in co-ordination with other initiatives, albeit in an ad-hoc manner, through participation in each other's events, sharing of information and also bringing in international organisations in the programme steering committees (e.g. for BOMCA and CADAP), or giving them observer status (IFCA). In some cases, EU's regional interventions even played a lead role in the donor co-ordination at both regional and national levels. For example, the National Policy Dialogues established by EUWI EECCA deliberately functioned as national level fora for sector and donor co-ordination for the water sector. The BOMCA initiated CABS (the Central Asia Border Security Initiative)

<sup>32</sup> Public Employment for Sustainable Agriculture and Water Management Project

provided a forum for regional co-ordination with other donors, and BOMCA also acted as secretariat for the Inter-Agency Working Group in UZ. CAI established Regional Policy Networks to avoid overlaps between donor interventions in relation to private sector development. EUDs actively consulted other donors in the formulation of programmes. In HE there were only few regional interventions by other donors, and thus little need for concrete co-ordination. Nonetheless, the National Tempus Offices maintain a solid network with relevant actors and are perceived as an information resource and consulted on an ad-hoc basis. (I-342)

*The EU's Regional interventions and those of other donors complemented and added value for each other – this was particularly pronounced for the environment sector.*

Several regional programmes engaged in joint activities (e.g. training, technical expert inputs, and workshops) with other programmes, which enhanced their outreach and enabled a more comprehensive engagement with their beneficiaries. One example is BOMCA, which carried out joint training sessions and workshops with OECD, OSCE and IOM in KZ and TM. In addition to this, BOMCA and CADAP established a conducive environment which subsequent programmes of other donors (e.g. UNDP, UNODC) benefitted from. FLERMONECA in particular achieved several synergies through joint actions and co-ordinated division of labour with a number of other programmes, especially in relation to pasture management and forest management. The other regional programmes in the environment sector were also able to collaborate and co-ordinate with other initiatives to achieve synergies with other programmes. By supporting business intermediaries, CAI added value by filling a gap not addressed by other private sector development/SME initiatives.

A number of implementing agencies of EU's regional programmes (e.g. GIZ, CAREC and UNDP) strategically pursued synergies between their EU-funded projects and their projects funded by other donors, where subsequent programmes would build on the results of previous programmes, and where programmes would support in different aspects, which in combination would form a comprehensive support package. For example, WMBOCA and FLERMONECA built on work initiated under the first phase of GIZ's regional programme and the processes initiated by WMBOCA are continued under the next phase of GIZ's regional programme (BMZ funded). Another example is that WMBOCA supported the "soft" component of establishing basin plans and basin councils in Isfara, whereas GIZ with German funding supported "hard" infrastructure rehabilitation. This strategic approach added value by creating continuity and an ability to provide more long-term support to follow processes through, thereby enhancing the outreach and impact as well as the likelihood of achieving sustainability – but it also to some extent came at the expense of EU visibility as CA partners would not always know which project/donor paid for a given activity. (I-3.4.3)

#### 4.4 EQ 4 on environment

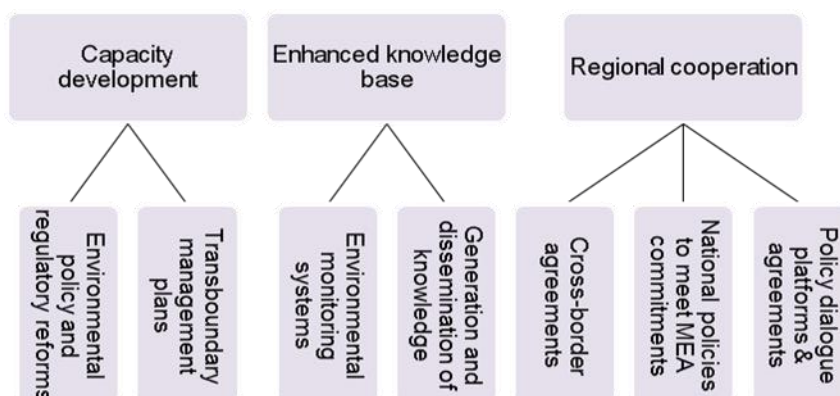
*Has regional-level EU support to CA contributed to enhancing regional collaboration on environmental governance?*

##### Summary answer to the evaluation question

- EU support, together with other development partners, made a significant contribution to improving national environmental policy frameworks and institutional capacity. This was especially done in relation to managing water resources sustainably and more productively and with greater public/stakeholder participation, improvements which will potentially facilitate future co-operation on transboundary basins. EU support also made important contributions to policy reforms and institutional capacity building in relation to biodiversity conservation, pasture management and forest governance, and thereby promoted enhanced stakeholder participation as an important element of sustainable natural resource management.
- EU support strengthened the integration of the provisions of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) (multilateral environmental agreements) in national policy frameworks and enhanced the institutional capacity to implement MEA commitments.
- Interstate co-operation between KG and TJ was significantly improved in relation to the management of the transboundary Isfara Basin, which is the most prominent case of tangible results achieved at the interstate level. Other contributions to interstate co-operation were few and more limited in scope.
- No tangible results in terms of overall CA regional co-operation were achieved. This is due to conflicting national priorities, tense relations between some of the CA countries and a lack of strong regional environmental institutions. In short, the current environment is not conducive for regional-level co-operation. Nonetheless, EU's regional support strengthened regional dialogue and sharing of experiences, thereby contributing to creating more trust between the countries and thus a foundation for regional co-operation.
- The EU's original intentions to strengthen the capacity and improve the performance of existing regional institutions, particularly the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), could not be implemented due to the limited commitment to these institutions from CA governments, and difficulties related to complicated government procedures in UZ (the current host country of EC-IFAS, the IFAS Executive Committee), which prevented activities supporting EC-IFAS. Hence, there were no regional-level entry points for EU support. Instead, the regional programmes embraced a more pragmatic and feasible approach, focusing on transboundary co-operation in a few specific basins, national reform processes, and regional sharing of experience.

##### JCs and indicators of the evaluation question

*This question is articulated through three judgement criteria and seven indicators, as shown in the figure on the right, and with detailed reporting in Volume 2.*



### Rationale and coverage of the evaluation question

Sustainable management of transboundary resources requires integrated approaches and close interstate co-operation and co-ordination. EU's regional support for environment in 2007-2013 thus focused on environmental governance, dialogue and sharing, knowledge generation, capacity building, and awareness-raising. The focus was in particular on the environmental sub-sectors of water resources, climate change, forests, and habitats and biodiversity. The main regional programmes were: a) EURECA; b) EUWI EECCA; c) Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus (ENVSEC); and d) Toward a sustainable management of water resources in Central Asia (PP). IFCA provided significant resources for environmental actions in the region, but mainly for infrastructure for water supply or waste management, hence these were generally not actions with a clear regional dimension, but rather with a sub-national focus.

### Answer to the evaluation question

*At the regional level, it remained difficult for EU to influence the agenda of CA countries to an extent that resulted in tangible improvements in regional co-operation to address environmental issues.*

Different national interests and tensions in the relations between some CA countries, and, as a result, limited political will has been a significant challenge for EU actions at the higher regional level (this issue is described in several documents and reports and consistently confirmed through interviews with stakeholders from government, EUDs, international agencies and civil society). Moreover, as expressed by a number of government stakeholders interviewed, CA countries in general have a preference for national projects and a more limited interest in interventions at the regional level. Moreover, the main regional institutions related to IFAS remain weak and disputed by some of the member countries (especially by KG and to a certain degree by TJ). Hence, there was an absence of a regional institution, which the EU could use as an entry point for regional-level co-operation, and instead the EU's regional programmes mainly engaged at the transboundary (basin) and national levels. Progress at the regional level has thus been limited and tangible results largely absent. Nonetheless, the EU has been able to facilitate small steps forward in terms of enhancing awareness and trust, which, over time, can pave the way towards genuine commitment to collaborate. (I-411, I-413, I-431, I-432)

*The existing key regional institutions for environmental/water governance could not be significantly strengthened by EU support – as there was no window of opportunity for engagement.*

The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) was initially hoped to become the regional nexus for co-ordination on all regional environmental issues, and thus intended to serve as regional interface for the EU-CA Joint Expert Working Group. The WECOOP programme engaged in capacity building for the working group, ministry staff and IFAS staff. However, UZ did not want to participate in neither WECOOP nor WBOCA, which could thus implement activities in UZ, thus severely limiting the support that could be given to IFAS, as support could not be given to EC-IFAS (Executive Committee of IFAS) during the Uzbek chairmanship in 2013-2015. Moreover, the current IFAS structure and credibility as a regional organisation is criticised by TJ and especially KG; KG is currently not participating in EC-IFAS. While KG and TJ are pushing for a reform of IFAS, UZ is not interested in a major reform. This challenge also made it difficult and politically sensitive to engage in support for IFAS. (I-411, I-413, I-431)

*EU support was instrumental for enhanced interstate co-operation between KG and TJ on the management of the transboundary Isfara Basin.*

The most significant result achieved at the transboundary level by EU's regional support during the period under evaluation is the enhanced co-operation between KG and TJ on managing the transboundary Isfara Basin (see Box 3). The Isfara Basin is considered a model for future replication in both countries and potentially also in other CA countries; as the support both demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of a participatory integrated water resource management (IWRM) approach and basin planning, as well of the value added by interstate co-operation in the management of shared water resources. Indeed, both countries are now committed to transboundary co-operation on shared rivers. KG and KZ have for many years been supported by several donors, including the EU, in relation to the management of the Chu-Talas Basin; but during the period under implementation, the support from EU (through UNDP<sup>33</sup> and EUWI EECCA) to this process was less comprehensive and less instrumental for regional co-operation than the support for the Isfara Basin.

**Box 3**      *Significant change: Enhanced integrated water resource management in the transboundary Isfara Basin (KG and TJ)*

Step 1: Description of the significant change

In 2013, two basin councils were established in the Isfara Basin, one in KG and one in TJ. These advisory bodies created a forum for broader stakeholder participation and co-operation in water management, with members from local authorities, water resource experts, and water users. Such stakeholder involvement in the decision processes is a novel concept for both countries, as is the use of the basin, rather than administrative boundaries as the basis for planning. The Water Codes in both countries<sup>34</sup> call for a basin approach, but this is generally not implemented in practice. In TJ, the Isfara Basin Council is the first of its kind. Each basin council has developed a basin plan for their part of the Isfara Basin (published in May 2014), providing the foundation for integrated water resource management. For TJ, this is the first basin plan ever developed. The basin councils in the two countries co-operate informally, are represented in each other's meetings, and have joint meetings twice a year. This has enabled co-operation between the two countries at the basin level with tangible results. For example, in March 2013 there were water shortages in Isfara River, and KG allowed TJ to use water from KG's reserves. In 2014 a mudflow damaged sections of a canal shared by KG and TJ, which affected TJ farmers. The Kyrgyz brought in machinery and repaired the canal for the benefit of the Tajik farmers.

Co-operation was also strengthened at the interstate level with the creation of an inter-ministerial KG-TJ working group on the Isfara River, and a framework agreement on shared rivers between the two countries was drafted and signed by TJ in 2013, but not yet by KG as KG would like some changes to the agreement format. The plan is to establish a single joint KG-TJ basin council for the Isfara River and a single basin plan in order to formalise and further strengthen the co-operation, once the agreement has been signed by both countries.

Step 2: Mechanisms/points of interaction with EU regional support and dialogue

The EU-funded WMOCA (2011-2014, implemented by GIZ and CAREC) and the *Toward a Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Central Asia* project (2008-2012, implemented by UNDP) both engaged in establishing institutions for IWRM in Isfara Basin. The UNDP project facilitated the establishment of six local water user associations in each country and a water user federation in TJ, and enhanced their capacity<sup>35</sup> to manage water resources efficiently at the irrigation

<sup>33</sup> The *Toward a Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Central Asia* project.

<sup>34</sup> KG Water Code from 2005, TJ Water code from 2013

<sup>35</sup> Through technical and organisational training, demonstration plots, rehabilitation of water infrastructure, and the installation automated gates for water distribution

scheme and farm levels. In TJ, a local government unit for operation and maintenance of drinking water supply systems was created, capacitated and provided with equipment. Moreover, UNDP prepared an IWRM review of the Isfara Basin, which was later used by WMBOCA as a baseline input.

Where UNDP mainly focused at the local level, WMBOCA mainly focused on the basin level, by facilitating the creation of basin councils and developing their capacity and supporting the preparation of the basin plans in both countries<sup>36</sup>. Public hearings were also carried out, thereby ensuring a holistic and transparent planning approach for Isfara Basin. WMBOCA also facilitated the establishment of the KG-TJ Inter-Ministerial Working Group on the Isfara River and supported in the preparation of the draft interstate framework agreement.

#### Step 3: Influence of EU regional support in relation to the significant change

The institutions and capacity necessary for engaging in IWRM, basin planning and transboundary management of the Isfara Basin were specifically created with the EU's support – at the local level (water user associations), the sub-basin level (basin councils), as well as the inter-governmental level (inter-ministerial working group). While a piece is still missing at the transboundary/basin level (the joint KG-TJ basin council and joint basin plan), the structure established has already been successful in improving co-operation between the two countries, at the ministerial level as well as the basin level.

Moreover, the technical capacity to manage water resources effectively as well as the collection of water fees was enhanced in project sites, thereby by providing a model for the implementation of IWRM. For example, the establishment of water user associations, led to a 30% reduction in water use, while crop yields were increased by 20-35%.

Overall, the evidence supporting the findings is comprehensive; it is described in progress, ROM and evaluation reports and confirmed in interviews with water user association, basin council and local authority representatives. Moreover, the basin plans were made available for the evaluation team.

#### Step 4: Alternative explanations

There is no doubt the EU support has been instrumental for establishing IWRM, basin planning and interstate co-operation in the Isfara Basin. Nonetheless, both UNDP and GIZ have implemented projects with funding from other donors. GIZ's regional water management programme (funded by Germany) engaged in Isfara prior to, during, and after WMBOCA, and initiated the work on preparing the KG-TJ agreement and carried out important work on water infrastructure<sup>37</sup>; such infrastructure work is a priority for local stakeholders, and helped strengthening the commitment towards engaging in the EU supported "soft" components related to management and planning. UNDP carried out conflict management training under another programme, which is an important element of IWRM and stakeholder participation. Helvetas (SDC funded) also implemented activities in the Isfara Basin.

*EU support contributed to improving the engagement of CA countries in MEA processes, incl. the capacity to integrate MEA commitment in national policies.*

CA countries have entered into several regional environmental agreements, but in some cases they have been very slow at endorsing such agreements and implementation of the agreements is often lagging behind. The EU's regional programmes supported in different ways processes, which over time should strengthen the implementation of a range of MEAs (as described in progress and evaluation reports and validated in stakeholder interviews).

FLERMONECA played an important role in relation to strengthening the implementation of biodiversity conventions in CA, for example by facilitating the accession of KG to the *Convention on Migratory Species* (CMS) in 2013, as well as the development of the national and regional programmes of work

<sup>36</sup> Capacity building was provided on IWRM, basin planning and economic instruments, and equipment was provided for the basin councils. Electronic databases were created, and GIS maps of the key hydrological, physical and socio-economic features were made, which enabled informed planning and decision-making.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. by rehabilitating the Isfara headworks.



for the Central Asian Mammals Conservation Initiative and the International Argali Action<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, the implementation of the commitments under different MEAs to improve biodiversity conservation was piloted at community level in KG and KZ. FLERMONECA's support for forest and pasture sector reforms respectively helped with the integration in CA legislation of the principles of the *St. Petersburg Declaration on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in Europe and North Asia* (FLEG principles) and creating a conducive policy and institutional framework for reducing land degradation in line with the objectives of the *UN Convention for Combatting Desertification* (UNCCD). The support provided for strengthened environmental monitoring both strengthened the implementation of the Aarhus Convention on access to information, as well as the reporting on biodiversity to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and in the case of TJ also to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Through the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) process, EU support facilitated the accession of TM to the UNECE Water Convention in 2012. (I-412, I-421, I-422, I-432)

*EU support significantly contributed to ongoing national environment sector reform processes, improved policy and institutional frameworks.*

The main thrust of the regional environment programmes has been to support national environment sector reform processes aimed at improving policy institutional frameworks to make them more effective in ensuring sustainable development and management of natural resources. EU support has been particularly prominent in relation to supported sector reforms in relation to the water sector and IWRM (see Box 4).

Moreover, EU support through FLERMONECA contributed to institutional and policy reforms in relation to biodiversity conservation, forest governance, and pasture management. Reforms generally had an emphasis on decentralisation of responsibilities and increased stakeholder (community and private sector) participation<sup>39</sup>. Support was provided through technical advisory/expert inputs for the preparation and amendments of a range of laws and policies<sup>40</sup>, analytical work to inform reform processes<sup>41</sup>, and capacity development for government staff<sup>42</sup>. Community-based protected area management was piloted at the local level in KZ and KG. FLERMONECA thus played an important role in the development of new laws, plans and strategies, according to progress reports and consistently confirmed by stakeholders interviewed from CA governments and international agencies. For example, the support enabled the inclusion of FLEG principles in forest sector strategies, action plans and/or programmes. Moreover, public consultations, stakeholder dialogue and co-ordination were facilitated<sup>43</sup>; this enhanced inter-ministerial co-operation (in KG and TJ) and increased transparency and public participation.

<sup>38</sup> Approved at the 11<sup>th</sup> COP of CMS in 2014.

<sup>39</sup> E.g. in the new or amended forest legislation in KZ (2012), TJ (2013, 2015) and TM (2015), new hunting legislation in KG (2014) and TJ (2014), and new and amended pasture management laws in KG (2009, 2011, 2012, 2014) and in TM (2015).

<sup>40</sup> Such as: a) codes under the Law on Amendment to Legal Acts Related to Flora and Fauna (KZ), b) hunting legislation (KG and TJ), c) pasture management laws (TJ and TM), and d) forest sector legislation and policies (codes, procedures, programmes, strategies) (KZ, KG, TJ and TM).

<sup>41</sup> e.g. of the institutional setup for pasture management in TJ.

<sup>42</sup> Training courses were conducted, e.g. on participatory forest management in KG, TJ, and UZ. Exchange visits enabled TJ and TM to learn from KG's pasture sector reform process and all CA countries to learn from the forest sector experiences in Germany and Caucasus.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. in relation to the hunting sector reform in KZ, and pasture reform in KG and TJ.

**Box 4**                      *Significant change: Moving towards improved national policy and institutional frameworks for integrated water resources management and enhanced stakeholder participation (KZ, KG, TJ, TM)*

Step 1: Description of the significant change

KG, KZ, TJ and TM have all made good progress in reforming their water policy, legal and institutional framework to make them more conducive for IWRM, basin approaches, and stakeholder and private sector participation, even if there is still much more to be done, e.g. in relation to implementing the new legislation and introducing economic instruments for cost recovery. The water codes and policies in all four countries are now promoting IWRM and basin management principles<sup>44</sup>, and responsibilities are transferred to the basin level (in TJ the devolution in the 2015-26 Water Sector Reform Programme is partial). Basin councils and plans have not yet been established for most basin (e.g. in KG councils have so far only established for the Chu and Isfara Basins), except in KZ where eight basin councils have been established for the larger basins (but two are not fully functional) and sub-basin committees have been set up for the Aral-Syr Darya Basin. A National Water Council has been set up in KG and in TJ the national council has been revived.

Step 2: Mechanisms/points of interaction with EU regional support and dialogue

The EU-funded EUWI EECCA (2008-2014, implemented by OECD and UNECE), WMBOCA (2011-2014, implemented by GIZ and CAREC), the *Toward a Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Central Asia* project (2008-2012, implemented by UNDP) and to a lesser extent WECOOP (2012-2015, service contract with Landell Mills) all provided inputs to the water reform processes. The programmes contributed with technical and analytical inputs on a range of IWRM related topics<sup>45</sup>, expert inputs and policy advice for the revision and drafting of policy and legal documents<sup>46</sup>, study tours and regional exchanges (incl. visits to EU MS)<sup>47</sup>, and IWRM pilot interventions in selected river basins<sup>48</sup>. EUWI EECCA provided fora for sector dialogue and co-ordination of sector stakeholders through the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) processes, which played an important role in terms of information sharing and co-ordination among stakeholders, for example in KG and TJ, where there was no other water sector or donor co-ordination platform. Moreover, IFCA financed water infrastructure projects; thereby contributing to the implementation of national policy aspirations.

Step 3: Influence of EU regional support in relation to the significant change

EU-funded regional interventions have contributed to the national water and environment policy frameworks and reform process, e.g. with inputs to specific elements. As described in progress, ROM and evaluation reports and confirmed through stakeholder interviews, there are notable examples of policies, where EU support has had an influence in terms of promoting IWRM and enhanced participation of a broad range of stakeholders. The new Water Code in TM was inspired by the WMBOCA experience in the Murgab Basin and facilitated by the participatory stakeholder dialogue approach/inter-ministerial expert group promoted by EUWI EECCA, which also marked a shift away from the traditionally centralised approach in TM (TM is now replicating the dialogue approach in the drafting of other environmental laws). EUWI EECCA<sup>49</sup> also made a substantial contribution to the draft National Water Sector Strategies Reform in TJ by analysing the needs for legal amendments to promote IWRM and drafting irrigation sub-sector development strategy. The experience with basin planning in Isfara generated important lessons (see box 2), which together with the exposure to EU

<sup>44</sup> The water codes in KG and KZ introduced IWRM and basin management prior to the period under evaluation. In TJ, the Water Code was amended in 2013, but the amendment process is still ongoing.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. analyses of needed changes in legislation in relation to IWRM in TJ (EUWI) and IWRM principles in the water sector reform in KG (UNDP project).

<sup>46</sup> E.g. for the development of regulations for the establishment of Chu River Basin Council in KG (EUWI), for the drafting of the development strategy for the irrigation sub-sector for the sector strategy reform in TJ (EUWI), for the revision of the law on dam safety in TJ (UNDP project).

<sup>47</sup> E.g. a study for CA water managers to learn from Germany's basin management experience under the European Water Framework Directive (WMBOCA).

<sup>48</sup> WMBOCA and the UNDP project.

<sup>49</sup> [European Union Water Initiative](#) in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

experiences influenced the reform process in TJ, and the Isfara experience is planned to be replicated in other basins. WMBOCA made an important contribution to the implementation of KZ's IWRM policy framework through the establishment of two sub-basin councils in the Syr Darya Basin, which inspired KZ to pass a new law related to basin management and establish a third sub-basin council with government funding.

#### Step 4: Alternative explanations

In KG and TJ, EU support was part of a larger process, to which several national actors as well as a number of donors contributed<sup>50</sup>. Moreover, the EUD in TJ mobilised its bilateral funding for TJ in 2011-13 for a framework contract to help drive the reform process. Both UNDP and GIZ implemented their projects in an integrated manner, with each of their projects carrying out different activities (or even co-funding activities), which contributed to the same higher level results. Hence, the progress in the reform processes are difficult to attribute to a specific donor or actor, especially in KG and TJ, whereas the attribution is easier in TM.

*EU regional support, mainly engaged in national policy and institutional processes and only to a lesser extent at the transboundary and regional levels.*

While EUWI EECCA was a regional programme, and it promoted sharing of experience between countries, its main focus was on strengthening national policies through its National Policy Dialogues (NPD), although in KG and TJ one element was to enhance the capacity to negotiate with neighbouring countries over shared water resources. WMBOCA supported the development of institutional frameworks and capacities, thereby enabling the implementation of IWRM and a basin approach in the lower Aral-Syr Darya basin in KZ and the Murgab Basin in TM, and in the Isfara Basin, support was provided to promote transboundary (KG-TJ) co-operation on basin management (see Box 2). Nonetheless, even where the focus was on national policies, IWRM, basin approaches, and stakeholder participation was promoted – concepts, which are also an important foundation for transboundary basin management.

FLERMONECA also mainly operated at the country level, supporting reforms and strategy development in the forest, pasture and biodiversity sectors, and building national environmental monitoring capacity – although it supported the development of the regional Argali Action Plan, and to some extent also engaged in facilitating regional experience sharing. (I-431, I-432)

*EU support strengthened environmental monitoring and public access to environmental information*

FLERMONECA introduced indicators, data collection methods, databases and websites for environmental monitoring and online reporting for National State of the Environment Reports (NSOER) as well as for regional monitoring by the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) and the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD). The support enabled the CA countries to move away from environmental monitoring methodologies introduced during Soviet times and implement current international best practice and in accordance with the EU's SEIS<sup>51</sup> principles, in relation to biodiversity, air pollution, and climate change<sup>52</sup>. For the latest National State of the Environment Reports (NSOER) completed in 2015,

<sup>50</sup> Donors to the water sector in KG: Norad, the World Bank, SDC (e.g. funding Helvetas projects), UNDP-GEF, GIZ/Germany (GIZ Regional Programme), Finnida (Finwater project) and USAID.

Donors to the water sector in TJ: UNDP (with funding from EU and other donors), UNECE (with funding from EU and other donors), GIZ ((with funding from EU and Germany), the World Bank, ADB, SDC, FAO, USAID, OSCE, JICA, and EU bilateral support.

<sup>51</sup> Shared Environmental Information System

<sup>52</sup> All five countries were supported in relation to biodiversity, four countries (except TJ) in relation to biodiversity, and only TJ in relation to climate change.

significant improvements were made in all five CA countries vis-à-vis indicator quality, data collection and management. Data is now more accurate and harmonised between different government agencies and even between the five CA countries. Moreover, transparency and public access to environmental monitoring data improved significantly, with open online access provided in KZ, KG, TJ, and UZ and planned to be provided in TM by end 2015. Government and civil society stakeholder interviews uniformly revealed a strong interest in expanding the SEIS principles into other sub-sectors. Another result emanating from the EU support is that KG and UZ have amended their legislation on environmental monitoring and public access to data, and UZ passed a new law on access to environmental information in 2014. (I-421, I-422)

*EU support provided relevant new knowledge, tools and approaches on basin management, biodiversity and land management; mainly the national level but also to some extent at the transboundary level.*

The regional programmes carried out several studies and produced knowledge products and tools<sup>53</sup>, especially in relation to IWRM/basin management, biodiversity conservation, and land management. However, most of these did not deal with transboundary issues, but generated new knowledge and made information available mainly at the national level. Nonetheless, some of these generated knowledge at the transboundary level, WBOCA in particular significantly enhanced the transboundary knowledge base on the Isfara Basin (KG and TJ) with analytical work and thematic maps on water resources<sup>54</sup>, climate change, land use and hazards (see Box 2). All four regional projects disseminated the knowledge products developed, e.g. as publications, as inputs to national policy dialogues, and through the establishment of web databases for public access to information and data or for experience sharing. The evidence is very clear; not only is the knowledge generation described in progress and evaluation reports as well as in several stakeholder interviews; many of the products were made available to the evaluation team. However, the EU's regional programmes generally focused more on capacity building and promotion of international/EU best practice and approaches than on the generation of new knowledge. (I-421, I-422)

*High-level dialogue conferences and other regional dialogues supported by the EU contributed to improving the mutual understanding and dialogue between CA countries.*

At high-level conferences, CA countries have consistently confirmed that they see a need for regional dialogue and sharing of experiences and information, and expressed an appreciation of the opportunities the EU-CA High-level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change, EU-CA working groups<sup>55</sup>, and the regional programmes have provided for such sharing, which is also seen as having helped improving the relations and enhancing the trust between the countries.

A number of other actors have also engaged in promoting regional dialogue, especially in relation to water resources<sup>56</sup>, and the unique value added by the EU-CA dialogue in particular is that it has contributed to strengthening EU-CA relations and has promoted EU's experiences and approaches to environmental governance and management. All interviewed participants in EU-supported regional dialogue also found it useful to be exposed to EU and

<sup>53</sup> E.g. policy and institutional reviews, databases, training, materials, and handbooks.

<sup>54</sup> In relation to basin planning, preparation of inventories of water user associations, introduction of economic instruments, and the development databases on basin water resources.

<sup>55</sup> *The EU-CA Joint Expert Working Group on Environmental Governance and Climate Change*, and *Working Group on Water* established under EUWI EECCA

<sup>56</sup> Including Germany (Berlin Process), Switzerland (Basel Conference), Japan, and the World Bank.

international practice. Moreover, EU support also provided a rare opportunity for civil society to engage in dialogue with CA governments at the regional level. (I-411)

## 4.5 EQ 5 on border management

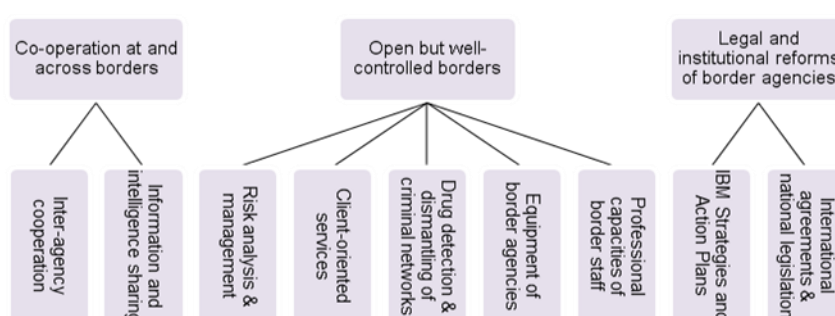
*Has the regional-level EU support to CA contributed to improving legal flows of passengers and goods and enhancing the fight against organised crime in CA?*

### Summary answer to the evaluation question

- EU efforts to initiate institutional reforms achieved tangible success in KG and partly in TJ. Both KG and TJ adopted integrated border management (IBM) strategies and action plans, outlining institutional and legal reforms in the border management sector. However, while KG has made considerable progress in the implementation of these reforms, this is not the case in TJ, where insufficient national resources and lack of political will hampered the reform process.
- EU support contributed to improving the technical and professional skills of CA border service staff.<sup>57</sup> EU support also somewhat helped enhancing the fight against organised crime by sharing detection and investigation knowledge and experience. TM and UZ particularly appreciated BOMCA assistance in cynology and promotion of drug profiling units, which helped improve their drug detection capacities.
- EU support contributed to a certain extent<sup>58</sup> to an improved border crossing experience. However, the goal of making borders more secure, yet user-friendly, remained elusive. EU support contributed only little to improving legal flows of persons and goods. Lack of political will, thorny relations governing CA diplomacy, and different geopolitical interests undermined the effectiveness of EU interventions. KZ and KG turned towards Russia; whereas TM and UZ, suspicious of external interference in national security, adroitly absorbed EU assistance via BOMCA, but only met few of the programme objectives.
- BOMCA and CADAP did not develop sufficient strategies for ensuring sustainability of the programmes' benefits and outputs. After the conclusion of BOMCA 8 and CADAP 5, many achievements of both programmes collapsed. Generally, BOMCA and CADAP delivered on an activity-by-activity basis and were more output- than outcome-oriented. The verifiable objectives for expected results were not clearly formulated, and data on the quality of outcomes of professional capacity-building interventions was not collected systematically.

### JCs and indicators of the evaluation question

*This question is articulated through three judgement criteria and nine indicators, as shown in the figure on the right, and with detailed reporting in Volume 2.*



<sup>57</sup> This conclusion is based on the BOMCA project reports and the statements provided by various national stakeholders during the interviews in KY and TJ. Moreover, the representatives of the beneficiary institutions emphasised the added value of training courses during the Project Steering Committee's Reports which is also reflected in the PSC Reports. (more references can be found in Vol 2). Examples include workshops, round-tables, expert meetings and other BOMCA activities that facilitated sharing of experience/expertise between EU and CA experts at operational/managerial levels.

<sup>58</sup> Examples are building/equipping border facilities, transferring skills, enhancing staff capacities, etc.

## Rationale and coverage of the evaluation question

The evaluation question is focused on border management and the fight against organised crime since these two areas have an impact on the facilitated movement of persons and goods across borders and influence security in the region. In addition to this, border management has a particular regional dimension, while border security is also of great importance regionally and for the EU in terms of the *High Level Security Dialogue*. The main focus of this evaluation question will be on the improvement of border management and the fight against organised crime in the regional cross-border dimension.

The evaluation question covers BOMCA and to a lesser extent CADAP<sup>59</sup>.

*The accession of KZ and KG to the Eurasian Customs Union had a significant negative effect on EU support to border management.* After more than 20 years of independence, the CA countries have reached different levels of economic development, participated in different trade regimes and joined different political and military blocs<sup>60</sup>. These differences and overlaps placed constraints on, and created varying environments for, cross-border co-operation between the CA countries, thus influencing the degree to which movement of people and goods across the region is facilitated and hence the results of BOMCA.<sup>61</sup>

*The object of open borders could not be achieved to any significant degree as EU support was hampered by regular cross-border disputes between CA countries.* Cross-border disputes over natural resources and territory led to a number of protest measures being taken by various CA governments and even to outbreaks of armed violence.<sup>62</sup> For example, UZ imposed a blockade of the movement of all rail freight into TJ (UZ strongly opposes the construction of the Rogun Dam and hydro-electric power-station in TJ since it may endanger the Uzbek agricultural sector). As another example, Tajik registered vehicles are not allowed to enter UZ while Uzbek registered vehicles entering TJ are subject to taxation. As UZ is located at the geographical heart of CA, its unilateral decision to close six out of 12 border control posts on the border with TJ (some of them reconstructed by BOMCA) caused difficulties for the entire region, created economic hardship for border communities and hampered progress on the facilitation side of border management. Additionally, UZ destroyed some roads and bridges connecting the country with TJ, resulting in the increase of illegal border crossing. Territorial disputes and related border incidents between TJ and UZ, TJ and KG, and outbreaks of armed violence between enclaves in the Fergana Valley severely hampered cross-border co-operation and thus prevented greater impact of the EU support aimed at the facilitation of cross-border co-operation (I-522, I-524)

*Significant legal reform took place in KG through EU support but not in other CA* Tangible national legal reform, initiated and supported by BOMCA<sup>63</sup> only took place in KG where the *Law on the State Border* was amended and some other regulations were drafted. Other CA countries amended some

<sup>59</sup> The IfS border monitoring intervention has also been looked at in terms of the equipment it provided for border services.

<sup>60</sup> For example, the Eurasian Customs Union, the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* and the *Collective Security Treaty Organisation*.

<sup>61</sup> For example, the Eurasian Customs Union has changed political and trade relations in the region and to some extent negatively affected border management. Specifically, customs controls between KZ and KG, and KZ and Russia have been abolished, whereas exporting from TJ to these countries has become more difficult due to higher taxes and costs. (I-511, I611)

<sup>62</sup> This finding was confirmed by various interviewees as well as documented in various BOMCA's reports and other sources. More information and references can be found in VOL2, I -232 (page 53 – external factors).

<sup>63</sup> Promoted through a range of vehicles including regional and national events, high-level meetings, study visits, etc.

<i>countries.</i>	legal acts, particularly criminal codes and criminal procedure codes. (I-511)
<i>EU support significantly contributed to the development of an IBM Strategy in KG and to a lesser extent in TJ.</i>	EU support related to the development of IBM Strategies and their linked Action Plans was most successful in KG. In this, BOMCA provided advisory support and organised awareness-raising events in order to introduce EU expertise on IBM and foster institutional reform in the border management sector. As a result, the IBM National Strategy enacted in KG launched a comprehensive reform of the border management system with some radical changes to the legal framework (amendment to the <i>Law on the State Border</i> ) <sup>64</sup> (see box 6). An IBM Strategy was also developed in TJ, primarily by OSCE, but with advisory support from BOMCA. After its adoption, BOMCA provided advisory support to the development of the Tajik IBM Action Plan. However, the implementation of both the IBM Strategy and Action Plan stalled in TJ due to the discontinuation of EU support. (I-512).
<i>Border management reform was not achieved in KZ, TM and UZ due to lack of political interest to initiate institutional reforms in border management.</i>	Though the representatives of KZ, TM and UZ participated in BOMCA activities, their commitment to reform border management practices varied from weak to non-existent; these countries did not own the IBM reform processes being promoted. KZ, TM and UZ did not want BOMCA to interfere with their institutional border processes or to advocate the amendment of legislation. <sup>65</sup> Apart from KG, no substantial institutional reforms took place in CA countries. Hence, only the training and infrastructure components were implemented in these countries, while wider institutional reform based on the EU principles, took place only in KG. Additionally, continued Russian financial and advisory support remained a pull factor for most CA border services. (I-512)

**Box 5**                      *Significant change: EU's integrated border management concept has been fully adopted in KG*

Step 1: Description of the significant change

In 2004, none of the CA countries had an IBM Strategy and Action plan; these were later developed and introduced in KG. On 16 March 2012, the Kyrgyz government adopted Resolution no. 183 on the adoption of the *National Strategy for the Establishment & Introduction of Integrated Border Management System in the Kyrgyz Republic until 2022* (IBM Strategy) and the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy* (IBM Action plan). The IBM Strategy in KG launched a reform of the whole border management system with radical changes to legal framework (I-522) and border management structure (I-524). The Kyrgyz border guard service has become an independent structure and commenced a decentralisation process based on EU examples.

Step 2: Mechanisms/points of interaction with EU regional support and dialogue

Beginning in 2009, BOMCA has to a significant extent promoted the IBM approach in the region. Numerous awareness-raising events and study visits were conducted in order to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of EU IBM methods to all CA government bodies. A number of meetings of a specially created working group were organised by BOMCA in KG in order to develop the IBM Strategy and Action Plan. BOMCA also organised and chaired meetings with government representatives to provide legal advice, consultant inputs and other support to ensure the development and approval of the IBM Strategy (2012). Additionally, BOMCA provided technical

<sup>64</sup> Institutional reforms included decentralisation of border services responsibilities, improved co-operation between law-enforcement agencies, state agencies and local self-governments and the introduction of joint teams for early warning near the border.

<sup>65</sup> This finding was confirmed by various interviewees as well as documented in various BOMCA's reports and other written sources. More information and references can be found in VOL2, I -211 (page 36 – external factors).



expertise supporting the work of the National Coordination Centre. Finally, BOMCA organised an IBM evaluation mission to KG (2012) in order to further assist the government to implement the IBM Strategy and Action plan, as well as to provide recommendations on further steps in implementation and development.

#### Step 3: Influence of EU regional support in relation to the significant change

EU regional support significantly contributed to the promotion and development of the IBM Strategy and Action Plan in KG. Their subsequent adoption and implementation resulted in major institutional and legal reforms. The EU IBM approach has been introduced in KG as a result of the EU advocacy efforts and promotion of the concept<sup>66</sup>. Further, a strategic planning department was established within the Kyrgyz border guard service, with the aim of ensuring effective implementation; a decentralisation process was also initiated<sup>67</sup>. The adoption and implementation of the IBM Strategy confirmed the commitment of the Kyrgyz government to adhere to the Partnership Declaration (2008) recognising the necessity of developing and implementing national border management strategies.

#### Step 4: Alternative explanations

Overall, the improvements made through the introduction of the IBM concept in KG can be attributed specifically to EU support, as can the development of the IBM Strategy, amendment of national border legislation and the introduction of the decentralisation process, all based on EU examples. Though many other donors provided support to border management in KG, none of them appear to have been engaged in the development of these outputs.

*Regional dialogue was increased to a degree through EU support.*

The High Level Security Dialogue (HLSD) between the EU and CA (June 2013 and March 2015) provided a forum to address security issues of shared concern (e.g. terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, and border management)<sup>68</sup>. The annual ministerial conferences of CABS allowed for discussions of key topics such as recent CA border security developments. The annual regional steering committees of BOMCA and annual meetings of the Commanders of CA border guard services both facilitated expert dialogue at the highest level regarding border management developments in CA. These regional co-operation fora also provided a conducive environment for the development of bilateral cross-border agreements between border services, particularly between KZ, KG, TJ and UZ, leading to strengthened co-operation at operational level<sup>69</sup>. BOMCA also strengthened co-ordination mechanisms at national, regional and international levels which established some good working partnerships; a good example is the annual regional meeting of commanders of CA border services (*Issyk-Kul Initiative on Border Security in Central Asia*) where bilateral agreements between the Kazakh and Kyrgyz border troops and Tajik and Turkmen border guard services were developed (2011). (I-511, I-513)

*Bilateral agreements were concluded in KZ, KG and TJ. EU*

BOMCA support enabled and financing the meetings that ultimately led to the signing of the *Joint Integrated Plan of Interaction & Cooperation up to 2013* between the KZ and KG border services and the *Joint Integrated Plan*

<sup>66</sup> Reported by Kyrgyz and Tajik representatives during case study/field visit interviews and documented in BOMCA project reports

<sup>67</sup> Reported by Kyrgyz representatives during case study/field visit interviews

<sup>68</sup> As a negative, the HLSD did not take place in 2014.

<sup>69</sup> This finding was confirmed by various interviewees as well as documented in various BOMCA's reports and other written sources. More information and references can be found in Vol 2, I-511 and I-513. Additionally, according to BOMCA reports, BOMCA initiated and enabled the annual regional meeting of commanders of the CA border services (*Issyk-Kul Initiative on Border Security in Central Asia*) where bilateral agreements between the Kazakh and Kyrgyz border troops and Tajik and Turkmen border guard services were developed (2011).

*support to some extent contributed to this.* of Interaction & Cooperation up to 2013 between the Border Forces of the State Security Committee of the KG and Border Forces Chief Department of the National Security Committee of the Republic of TJ. However, BOMCA did not provide any technical support to the elaboration of these agreements, which was exclusively done by the CA countries themselves. (I-512)

*The EU regional programme approach managed to include the five CA countries in a regional border security programme.* The fact that the five CA countries agreed to participate in a regional border management programme is an important achievement, taking into account the regular tensions among them and their individual sensitivities over border and security issues. BOMCA created a rare opportunity for national experts to meet in a neutral environment, diffuse tensions and discuss technical issues rather than those of politics. Beyond knowledge transfer, BOMCA events allowed the participants of each country to become better acquainted with one another and to establish informal communication and support networks. However, since national security issues invariably prevailed over the co-operation objectives of EU support, the impact was limited.<sup>70</sup> (I-511, I-532)

*There was increased information and intelligence sharing at and across borders, which the EU supported, but only to a limited extent.* BOMCA delivered a range of national and regional activities promoting cross border sharing of information/intelligence. However, CA law enforcement agencies showed reluctance in pursuing the matter due to mutual mistrust, sensitivity of security issues and political agendas; information/intelligence sharing internationally is happening only occasionally and usually by formal request. Nonetheless, BOMCA supported CARICC<sup>71</sup> efforts by enabling various expert meetings aimed at strengthening information exchange and thus to a certain extent facilitated an increase in information/intelligence exchange. Additionally, the EU-funded *Heroine Route Programme* complemented BOMCA activities with its own aims of strengthening cross-border co-operation, especially in regard to information and intelligence exchange. In addition to this, the *Heroin Route Programme* reinforced the intra and transregional co-operation by the development of networks and platforms and by improving information handling. CARICC continues in this role, facilitating the most important information/intelligence exchanges in major cross-border criminal operations and investigations (even if some exchanges also occur directly particularly between TJ and Afghanistan).<sup>72</sup> (I-531)

*Inter-agency co-operation between border guards,* BOMCA promoted inter-agency co-operation and joint border activities through awareness raising activities<sup>73</sup> in all CA countries. Inter-agency co-operation improved mainly in KG and TJ, due to the commitment of the

<sup>70</sup> TM and UZ were very suspicious of any external interference in security matters, while KZ was more committed to the Russian-led Customs Union (EU 2009, BOMCA 8 – identification fiche – page 4) and this was also confirmed during the interviews with various interviewees.

<sup>71</sup> Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors

<sup>72</sup> In collaboration with CARICC and EU-funded project Heroin Route II – Information Networks, BOMCA held a regional workshop (2014) focusing on information exchange between law enforcement agencies. During the 10th Conference of the Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI), supported by the EU, ministers and senior officials of the five CA countries acknowledged that CABSI was an important forum for information exchange, co-operation and co-ordination of regional activities. The ministers also recognised CARICC as an effective mechanism to promote regional co-operation, enhance cross-border co-operation, exchange best practices and information amongst CA authorities responsible for countering illegal drug trafficking, detection of chemical precursors and enhancing cross-border co-operation.

<sup>73</sup> Examples include conferences, workshops, study visits, etc.

*customs services and other border management services was facilitated through EU support, but mainly in KG and TJ.*

governments to implement BOMCA-driven IBM reforms (IBM Strategies and IBM Action Plans). In TM and UZ some advances in inter-agency co-operation were made, including the development of joint Action Plans, although practical and sustainable application at the cross border level did not take place.

*EU support was not able to contribute to the introduction of the joint patrols.*

Joint border patrol activity between two neighbouring countries does not take place. Despite a number of BOMCA activities<sup>74</sup> devoted to the presentation and promotion of the EU models regarding joint patrols and joint controls, a model border was only introduced for a very short period in 2007 at the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border, but did not continue due to lack of political and institutional will. Nonetheless, joint border checks<sup>75</sup> performed by domestic border services have been introduced with BOMCA support at some border control posts, implemented in the framework of joint border facilities where border guards and customs officers perform their duties in a shared building/area. (I-532)

*The professional skills of border service staff have been improved with EU support, thus contributing to better controlled borders.*

BOMCA invested considerable human and technical resources in enhancing the operational capacity of CA border services. In excess of 5,000 border staff were trained<sup>76</sup>. Additionally, in an attempt to achieve beneficiary ownership of this support and ensure its sustainability, BOMCA 7 and 8 worked directly with training centres/academies.<sup>77</sup> Finally, the integration of appropriate sections/topics of EU border management training programmes in some national training curricula was a positive step towards the successful transfer of EU good practices and understanding of the EU IBM approach. EU support through training has significantly increased the professional skills of border staff in areas such as detection of forged documents, weapons and drugs, thus improving the overall quality of border controls and contributing to the effort against cross border crime. However, BOMCA lacked a systematic way to measure qualitative improvements in border control while the level of improvement based on EU support varied from country to country and from beneficiary to beneficiary. (I-521)

*CA border crossing infrastructure and the technical capacities of the border services have significantly improved via EU support, particularly in KG and TJ.*

Starting in 2004, BOMCA contributed to improving border control facilities by constructing, refurbishing and providing equipment for 52 border posts across all CA countries. In addition, the EU provided specialist equipment to improve the quality and effectiveness of border checks and surveillance<sup>78</sup>, and gave technical and infrastructure support to 6 border guard training centres. For phases 7 and 8 of BOMCA, EU support continued to strengthen border infrastructure, but focused mainly in KG and TJ. There was a distinct shift in strategy between BOMCA 7 and 8, with movement away from infrastructure and equipment support, towards soft components such as policy (IBM) and capacity building. EU support has to a certain extent helped to improve the border services technical capacities. However, the infrastructure and equipment funded by the EU was not always properly used

<sup>74</sup> E.g. study visits and conferences

<sup>75</sup> *Border Check* - passport, identity checks, etc., conducted at a border crossing point

<sup>76</sup> Related operational handbooks were drafted and donated in order to support the training

<sup>77</sup> Training curricula and material was jointly drafted and training of trainers took place.

<sup>78</sup> Vehicles, high frequency radios, binoculars, generators and drug detection kits in the case of BOMCA; radiation detection equipment in the case of the IfS project on border monitoring.

or maintained and in some cases, it remained unused due to border disputes and/or national security concerns. Additionally, in some cases, equipment has not been correctly used and sometimes, there has been misappropriation for private purposes. However, the extent to which the donated equipment was used appropriately or inappropriately is unclear, because of the lack of effective monitoring of the use of donated equipment. (I-522)

*Border crossing procedures were improved to a limited extent through EU support, thus facilitating the flow of goods and persons through the borders in some cases.*

Across CA, the continued complexity of various formalities often dissuades legitimate travellers and traders from crossing borders<sup>79</sup>. The combination of rigorous, bureaucratic and slow procedures and (despite significant EU support and promotion of the EU best practices), the lack of modern equipment at many border control posts often resulted in time-consuming manual processing of passenger data, documents, vehicles and possessions. In TM and UZ institutional reforms (see JC 21) and amendments of standard operating procedures did not take place. Nonetheless, the promotion of the EU principles contributed to improved border crossing procedures in some CA countries (e.g. border checks in KG were smooth and efficient as observed during the field mission) and in other CA countries (e.g. TJ) the border check equipment, provided by the EU, also to a certain extent facilitated border control procedures. However, security concerns hampered the introduction of more advanced EU IBM principles and best practices (e.g. joint border checks, etc.), that would otherwise have more significantly facilitated cross border movement.

*Risk management methods have been introduced to a certain extent through EU support.*

Although BOMCA significantly raised awareness concerning the importance and added value of risk management and risk analysis amongst CA border services, there is still a lack of strategic approach to its implementation. Institutional application, making the use of risk management a routine and embedded part of day-to-day operations, has taken place in a few cases only (e.g. in KG)<sup>80</sup>. With no risk analysis information available, working procedures have not and cannot be streamlined and improved; this weakens efforts to strengthen border controls and facilitate legitimate cross border movements. (I-513)

*BOMCA and CADAP complemented each other and achieved synergies in drug prevention and fight against drugs*

CADAP 4 and BOMCA achieved some synergies in relation to the fight against drug trafficking, complementing one another in the establishment of the Drug Profiling Units (DPU) and in the delivery of joint activities, mainly training. CADAP managed to engage all CA countries in contributing to the CA regional reports on the drug situation, thus enhancing drug-related data analysis and data collection. By the collection of the drug related data<sup>81</sup>, CADAP also complemented the BOMCA's efforts in the fight against drugs. There was a very clear distinction in assistance policy between the CADAP phases with phase 4 focusing on the fight against drug trafficking and phase 5 on drug demand reduction. (I-523)

*CADAP drug*

While drug prevention programmes were generally well received, drug

<sup>79</sup> For example, visas are often required, only available in national capitals and expensive for local people to purchase.

<sup>80</sup> The interviewees in KG indicated that the risk management methodology in KG had been introduced upon the EU models presented by BOMCA.

<sup>81</sup> E.g. statistics on the drug confiscations in the CA countries.

*treatment activities had only limited success*

treatment activities were less successful, partly due to the different approaches in dealing with addicts and the lack of resources for funding such treatment programmes. Most of the pilot projects introduced under CADAP 5 have been curtailed due to the discontinuation of EU support.

*Seizures of drugs increased with the contribution of EU support*

BOMCA provided drug detector dogs and trained their handlers, supported the establishment of DPUs in KG and TJ, and delivered a range of national and regional drug detection training events in all CA countries. Interviews conducted with various representatives of border authorities in KG and TJ and the limited written sources available<sup>82</sup> indicate significantly improved CA border services capacity for drug detection, leading to higher numbers of seizures. However, accurate and quantitative information and statistics are rarely available and this in turn means it is difficult to establish whether anecdotal evidence of genuine improvement is correct. It is for this reason that the EU – CA Action Plan on Drugs 2014-2020 advocates the introduction of measurable indicators regarding the reduction of availability of illicit drugs. (I-523)

*A conducive environment for development and implementation of other border management projects was created with EU support.*

BOMCA created a conducive environment for the development and implementation of new border management assistance projects. The UNODC programme *Countering the trafficking of Afghan opiates via the northern route by enhancing the capacity of key border crossings points and through the establishment of Border Liaison Offices (BLO)* built on previous BOMCA investments and capacity building activities; the establishment and development of the UNDOC memoranda of understanding (MoU) on BLO between CA countries, used the MoU on the establishment of DPU, developed under BOMCA, as its basis. The good working contacts among the CA beneficiaries and changed mind-sets developed under BOMCA, enabled other donors to build upon these achievements, further promoting cross-border and inter agency co-operation. (I-531)

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<sup>82</sup> Some of BOMCA's national and regional project steering reports contain quotations of the CA beneficiary representatives about the improvement of the drug seizures and enhanced detecting capacities.

## 4.6 EQ 6 on SME development

*Has regional-level EU support to CA contributed to improving the business climate for SMEs and their competitiveness (emphasis on the non-extractive sectors)?*

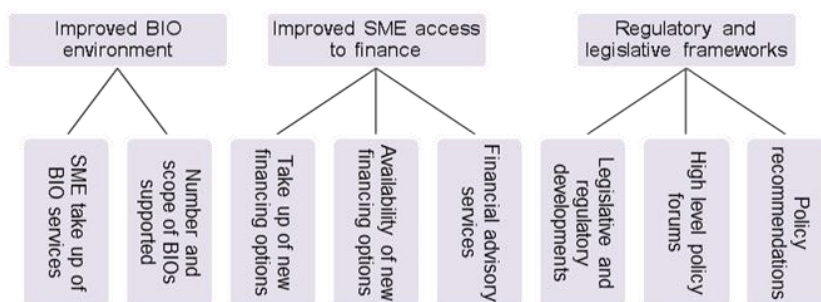
### Summary answer to the evaluation question

- The EU contributed markedly to policy development for the private sector with a particular emphasis on legislative and regulative reforms, especially in the cases of KG, KZ and TJ. This achievement is mainly the result of reforms designed and implemented within the context of the EU-supported OECD Eurasia Competitive Programme (ECP) and Central Asia Invest (CAI) grant projects.
- EU support significantly contributed to enhancing the capacities of Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs) to support SMEs. Initially projects struggled to achieve the dual objective of strengthening the private sector by strengthening BIOs. However, after some adaptations to the programme design and implementation, BIOs were able to establish good outreach to SMEs, and the objective of developing the capacity of selected BIOs to support SMEs was achieved to a great extent. The sustainability of activities was achieved particularly in case of BIOs that participated over consecutive grant periods.<sup>83</sup>
- EU support through the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA) and the Microfinance Initiative for Asia Debt Fund (MIFA) enhanced the competitiveness of selected SMEs that received direct funding. However, it did not contribute to improving the general access to financing options for SMEs in CA or to establishing a more conducive structural environment for SME financing.
- EU regional support focused on the national level and cross-border actions involving two or three countries, as there was limited scope for regional-level action due to significant differences in the macro-economic, political and legal contexts, and strained relations between the CA countries. However, both the high-level policy dialogues and roundtables facilitated by the EU-supported OECD Eurasia Competitiveness programme (the CA Component is co-chaired by the EU and KZ) and CAI regional networking events created stepping stones for closer dialogue and regional co-operation on SME development.
- There was a lack of co-operation and co-ordination between the ECP and the CAI grant projects. This is a missed opportunity and better collaboration between the two EU-funded dialogue mechanisms could have enhanced effectiveness in terms of improving the business environment for SMEs. While CAI 4 (since 2015) has acted upon many lessons learned from previous project phases, this lack of synergy remains unaddressed.

<sup>83</sup> *The EU defines a BIO as follows: "It is a public or private sector operator representing SMEs. It could be a chamber of commerce, regulatory body promoting trade, investment or commercial activity, sector-specific trade, industrial and professional association (including local associations of European businesses), an employers' federation or agency promoting trade, investment and commercial activities, non-governmental organisation, or a sector-based agency concerned with working with SMEs" (EU 2015. Central Asia Invest. Boosting small business competitiveness, p. 7.)*

## JCs and indicators of the evaluation question

This question is articulated through three judgement criteria and eight indicators, as shown in the figure on the right, and with detailed reporting in Volume 2.



## Rationale and coverage of the evaluation question

The CA Governments recognise the need for economic diversification to generate employment and raise living standards across the region. A competitive SME sector plays a key role in this regard. The evaluation question focuses on whether the EU regional support has contributed to improving the SME business climate and SME competitiveness in the region. Two programmes are covered: 1) Central Asia Invest (CAI) and 2) the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA).

## Answer to the evaluation question

*The EU has contributed to policy development in general and legislative and regulative advances with a main emphasis on KZ, KG and TJ.*

According to a broad range of documents, including previous evaluations, documents by governments and international organisations,<sup>84</sup> and confirmed by most stakeholders interviewed in KG and TJ, the EU contributed to policy and legal improvements to the business climate for SMEs through both components of CAI. Firstly, the CAI-supported Eurasia Competitiveness Programme (ECP), which is led by the OECD, produced several policy handbooks for – so far – KZ, KG and TJ. The KZ and the KG governments have actively advanced the reform process based on these policy handbooks. As a wide range of government and private sector stakeholder interviews confirmed, strong emphasis has been given to the implementation of “warehouse receipt funding”<sup>85</sup> in agriculture as a major contribution to easing access to finance for SMEs in the food-processing sector. However, TJ has not yet started implementing the agreed reforms.

Secondly, CAI grant projects were instrumental in contributing to legislative and regulative reforms in key areas of the economy, e.g. food-processing, handicraft, and tourism (see box 7) through lobbying, advocacy, and capacity building. (I-611, I-612, I-613)

*EU-supported high-level policy dialogues*

In the absence of other regional co-operation mechanisms in the field of PSD and SME support, regular (usually annual) high-level policy dialogues –

<sup>84</sup> See for example EU 2011, Mid-Term Evaluation of the Central Asia Invest Programme, EU 2014, *Mid-Term Evaluation of Central Asia Invest*; World Bank Group, Doing Business Country Reports Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, 2015; OECD 2011: Competitiveness and Private Sector Development central Asia. Competitiveness Outlook; World Bank Group, *About the World Bank Group Doing Business Annual Reports*, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/~media/GIAWB/Doing%20Business/Documents/Methodology/Foreign/DB15OnePagerEnglish.ashx>

<sup>85</sup> Warehouse receipt financing allows farmers to obtain credit by using inventory, i.e. agricultural products, as collateral. The inventory is stored in warehouses, and warehouse receipts can be used as collateral to get bank credit. The credit is thus conducted as a three-party arrangement between a bank, a borrower and a warehouse operator. The main benefit of this instrument is that farmers can access financing for their working capital without selling their agricultural production. It allows them to sell their production at a time of their choosing, thus giving them a stronger negotiating position to achieve a better price.

*and forums under IFCA and CAI provided first opportunities for regional discussions on PSD.*

facilitated by the OECD as part of the Eurasia Competitiveness programme and supported by CAI – provided a unique opportunity for discussions on policy and legislative reforms among CA governments that would not exist otherwise. Many interviewed state and private sector stakeholders consider these high-policy forums (known as Roundtables and taken place in Paris since 2013) as a potential stepping stone or even a suitable substitute for a regional policy dialogue on private sector development.

The Roundtable approach is further strengthened by the fact that the Central Asia Component of the Eurasia Competitiveness Initiative is co-chaired by the EU and KZ and engages all key stakeholders in a broad PSD/SME development policy dialogue. Yet, the current initiatives do not include participants at the minister level preventing the emergence of a true high-level dialogue. As interviews with a large number of government and international stakeholders in TJ and KG confirmed, the involvement of deputy ministers is a suitable starting point, but the policy impact is limited as deputy ministers in the region do not hold much influence over decision making. Furthermore the visibility of the EU is perceived as being low as activities are mainly associated with the OECD.

The CAI project component facilitated a dialogue on PSD among EU stakeholders, CA BIOs involved in CAI and policy makers, by organising three CAI networking events *within* the region: in 2009, 2011 and 2014. While these events were not *high-level* policy dialogues, they nonetheless created a first opportunity for thinking about improvements to business climates in a regional context. (I-612, I-613)

*ECP and CAI did not co-ordinate their efforts to improve the policy and legislative environment for SMEs.*

The EU supported policy dialogues on PSD through both the OECD-ECP and the grant project components of CAI. However, ECP operated largely as a standalone intervention without a clear link to the CAI grant projects. Hence, an opportunity to achieve synergies between the two policy dialogue mechanisms was missed as many interviewees and the CAI mid-term evaluations noted. The lack of cross-linkages between OECD-ECP and CAI grant projects was the main shortcoming of EU support. CAI did not establish any formal systems or structures for co-operation and co-ordination between its components. However, some interviewed stakeholder stated that collaboration had improved recently. (I-612, I-613)

Box 6

*Significant change: Improvements to the Business enabling environment for SMEs in key sectors of the economies particularly in KG and TJ*

Step 1: Description of the significant change

In all five countries the business enabling environment improved (albeit to varying degrees) due to legislative, regulatory and policy developments in support of PSD in general and SMEs in particular.

Step 2: Mechanisms/points of interaction with EU regional support and dialogue

EU support was mainly provided through the grant project component of the Central Asia Invest (CAI) programme, which supported Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs). CAI is based on a cross-border approach, e.g. BIOs in one country have closely interacted with BIOs from other CA countries. This has worked particularly well in projects involving BIOs from KG and TJ – countries with similar challenges in the sectors covered by CAI. Often, BIOs in TJ saw policy/legislative reforms in KG as the blueprint or at least point of reference for TJ and received active advice from BIO counterparts in KG. The cross-border approach facilitated an exchange of best practises and mutual learning. Since Kyrgyz BIOs were often more advanced and experienced than their Tajik counterparts, the former provided capacity building and generally expertise for the latter. In the tourism sector, TJ not only took



the existing tourism structures in KG as a reference point but even adopted Kyrgyz standards in tourism. In addition to a transfer and knowledge from KG to TJ, CAI strongly supported BIOs in analysing regional and international market opportunities for SME, increased the presence of SMEs in external markets and facilitated close co-operation with state authorities. According to a larger number of government and private-sector stakeholder interviews as well as CAI ROM and evaluation reports, this cross-border approach created important synergies and ultimately more “legitimacy” than a bilateral EU-TJ project would have.

#### Step 3: Influence of regional support in relation to the significant change

Although it would be too far-fetched to suggest that the EU has single-handedly improved the support service environment for the entire SME and micro enterprises sector, CAI was instrumental in significantly improving the business climate and enabling environment for food processing (mainly dry fruits), handicraft and tourism enterprises, and women entrepreneurs in general. For example, according to extensive programme and project documentation, CAI mid-term evaluations, ROMs as well as government and private sector stakeholder interviews, the CAI-supported BIOs in TJ has made a strong contribution – though lobbying and advocacy – to:

- a **law regulating the handicraft sector** that tackles some of the existing hurdles. The law has been passed by the Lower Chamber of the Tajik Parliament;
- **changes in export procedures** by reducing the number of documents required and consequently encouraged the export of Tajik food products;
- new and improved legislative frameworks for the food processing and handicraft sectors but no results have been achieved yet.

In KG CAI-supported BIOs were instrumental in achieving :

- a **change to the taxation code for handicraft products** which increased the competitiveness of SMEs in this sector;
- the adaptation of a **visa-free regime** that was extended to EU Member States;
- an administrative reform that resulted in the **transfer of competence for the tourism sector** from a Ministry to separate governmental agencies with more resources, eliminating some bureaucratic obstacles.

In both countries and as the result of co-operation within CAI projects, a significant contribution was made to the **introduction and implementation of the HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) standards** in food production.

#### Step 4: Alternative explanations

Given the uniqueness of the CAI grant projects and the absence of other donors in providing support to BIOs (with the partial exception of USAID) the changes outlined under step 3 are attributable to EU support.

*EU support for SME development under CAI improved significantly over time and eventually contributed to an improved business enabling environment for SMEs.*

CAI focused on empowering BIOs, which could be described as “middlemen organisations”, rather than strengthening SMEs directly. As several ROM reports and the Mid-Term Evaluation of the early CAI phase as well as interviewees involved in the implementation of grant project stressed, CAI projects initially struggled to achieve the programme objective of strengthening the private sector by strengthening BIOs. The empowerment of BIOs became a goal in itself. This was largely related to the fact that the concept of a BIO was virtually unknown in CA at the time of CAI 1 and needed to be developed first. Overall, CAI went through a steep learning curve. Since CAI 2, service development by local BIOs has been much better linked to the service delivery to SMEs and thus contributed to improved business enabling environment for entire sectors (for example tourism in KG and TJ). At the same time, CAI grant became more focused

and coherent addressing a limited set of sectors such as agribusiness, handicraft and tourism; and subjects such as certification and export development. In sum, lessons learned during one project phase were applied in the next one. This also applies to CAI 4<sup>86</sup> which made improvements from CAI 3 as a result of stakeholder feedback. For example, stakeholders requested longer project durations. Consequently, projects under CAI 4 will now be approved for three instead of previously two years.<sup>87</sup> (I-631, I-632)

*Sustainability was especially achieved in the case of BIOs which participated in consecutive grants.*

Several of the 29 Central Asian BIOs which participated in CAI (all three phases) were involved in more than one project and over two or even three CAI funding cycles. Interviewed stakeholders involved in the implementation of grant projects and observers from the private sector left no doubt that this clearly contributed to their professionalisation which, in turn, increased the sustainability of their activities. Several Kyrgyz and Tajik BIOs, which have been involved in CAI projects, have reached a level of sustainability that allows them to continue to provide services to SMEs without EU support. Many get funding from other sources as well and generate steady revenues through the provision of advisory services, training and capacity building.<sup>88</sup> (I-632)

*The EU's compartmentalised strategic approach to Asia has separated CA as a small region from the rest of Asia, preventing CA BIOs from co-operating with South Asian counterparts.*

One factor that has prevented CAI from being even more relevant for CA BIOs and SMEs is related to the EU itself. EU support to Asia is based on two regional strategies, for CA and Asia (South, Southeast and Northeast), respectively. The Eastern Partnership also covers parts of Asia. This approach has separated CA as a small region from the rest of Asia and created an artificial dividing line, for example, between TJ (CA strategy) and Afghanistan and Pakistan (both under the Asia strategy). However, TJ and Afghanistan have a long tradition of economic exchanges and interaction which is reinforced by the same language and other shared cultural features. Since TJ has no access to the sea and no navigable inland waterways, Pakistan's sea ports provide the shortest distance for TJ trade shipments to distant markets. While regional projects on PSD/SME support involving TJ and Afghanistan and/or Pakistan would therefore make sense, the EU cannot currently support them, as the two regional strategies do not interact with each other. Nonetheless, according to EU sources, a cross-border programme between TJ and Afghanistan is under preparation, addressing this issue and showing that a certain degree of flexibility exists to finance projects which are deemed relevant for both regions, i.e. CA and South Asia. Equally important, as several government and non-state stakeholders explained, regional economic co-operation is unlikely to take place within CA but will mainly be driven by the dynamics of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). While the treaty establishing the EEU was only signed in May 2014,

<sup>86</sup> Under the Central Asia MIP 2014-2020

<sup>87</sup> EU 2015. Action Document for Central Asia Invest IV, <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/aap-financing-central-asia-c-2015-5877-annex2.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> Examples in KG include the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Association of Fruit & Vegetable Processing, Kyrgyz International Business Council, Kyrgyz Community Based Tourism and Kyrgyz Association of Tour Operators; and in TJ the Association of Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia, National Association of Small and Medium Business of TJ and National Association of Business Women Association. The latter, for example, was able to – within the context of the project *Tajik Women Economic Empowerment* (CAI 3) – establish a business incubator for female entrepreneurs for which the government provided the space and full hardware equipment. This is a good example of sustainability.

the Russian-led union had been looming on the horizon for several years. Again, since the EU's CA strategy has strictly focused only on the five countries of the region, the EU support to PSD in general and BIOs/SMEs in particular could not flexibly respond to new emerging challenges for the private sector. One of these challenges is the full integration of KG into the EEU which has limited the country's options for the expansion and diversification of external economic relations. (I-632).

*The cross-border approach stimulated an exchange of best practises and mutual learning and contributed to growing regional consciousness.*

CAI did not require the involvement of all CA states and most projects involved BIOs only from two or three countries. While CAI is a cross-border project which aims at bringing together stakeholders from different CA countries, it was not designed to foster regional integration but, as an indirect effect contributed to a growing regional consciousness. The cross-border approach facilitated an exchange of best practises and mutual learning. This was particularly the case for TJ and KG, countries with similar challenges in the sectors covered by CAI. Since Kyrgyz BIOs were often more advanced and experienced than their Tajik counterparts, the former provided training, capacity building and generally expertise for the latter. In the tourism sector TJ even adopted Kyrgyz standards. (I-632, I-633)

*EU support directly enabled selected SMEs to obtain financing to enhance their enterprises.*

Since it was established in April 2010, main objective of the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA) has been to improve access to financing for SMEs at the different stages of enterprise development and expansion, e.g. creation, restructuring, and modernisation. The IFCA-supported SME Finance Facility for CA, led by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), has since 2012 provided SMEs with the opportunity to fund investments where funding cannot (yet) be obtained on the financial market.<sup>89</sup> Established at the same time, the EU co-funded Microfinance Initiative for Asia Debt Fund (MIFA), spearheaded by the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), supports microfinance institutions (MFIs).<sup>90</sup> The objective of the Fund is to provide credit and equity products in USD and local currency on commercial terms to micro and small enterprises and low income households.

As project documents and other reports show,<sup>91</sup> MIFA made a contribution to the strengthening of the MFI sector as an important alternative to bank lending, increased the financing volume and options available to SMEs and fostered the up-scaling of micro and small enterprises into medium-sized enterprises which fosters the further development of the overall economy. However, while MIFA investments enabled MFIs to provide more suitable loan products to SMEs and micro-enterprises as end-borrowers than banks

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<sup>89</sup> After only two years of implementation, the EBRD has already provided financing to 21 capital investment projects for SMEs (10 in 2013 and 11 in 2014) under the SME Finance Facility. The total amount of EUR 31.3 million of EBRD financing was supported by EUR 4.46 million in EU risk-sharing funds (in TJ for 2 SMEs, in KG for 9 SMEs and in TM for 10 SMEs). In turn, this financing supported a total of EUR 77.2 million of project costs, thereby alleviating difficulties in accessing funds for these SMEs.

<sup>90</sup> Until the end of 2014, eight MFIs had benefitted in TJ and three in KG (out of a total number of 33 supported MFIs in Asia).

<sup>91</sup> See for example, *BlueOrchard Finance 2015: Microfinance Investment (Debt) Fund for Asia (MIFA). 2014 Social and Environmental Performance Report (SEPR); EU 2014: Ex-Ante Evaluation of the Investment Facility for Central Asia; KfW 2012: 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Narrative Report, MIFA.*

(smaller loans, longer durations and lower interest rates), only a very small number of MFIs (11) in CA had been supported by the fund by 31 December 2014. (I-621, I-622, I-623)

*There is no indication that EU-support contributed to a better and improved structural environment for SME financing.*

Overall, there can be little doubt that EU support through the SME Finance Facility for CA has made a difference to the companies which benefitted directly from the Facility's financing options, mainly in TJ, KG and TM. However, the EBRD's approach is too small in financial terms and ultimately not designed to generate broader effects and systemic and sustainable changes in relation to the access to financing in CA.<sup>92</sup> (I-622, I-623)

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<sup>92</sup> According to project reports, until the end of 2014 MIFA had supported (through MFIs) an estimated 24,000 small and micro enterprises in TJ and KG, the only two CA countries where the fund has operated so far. While this looks like a substantial figure at first glance, the number represents only an estimated 2% of all SMEs in TJ and KG.

## 4.7 EQ 7 on higher education

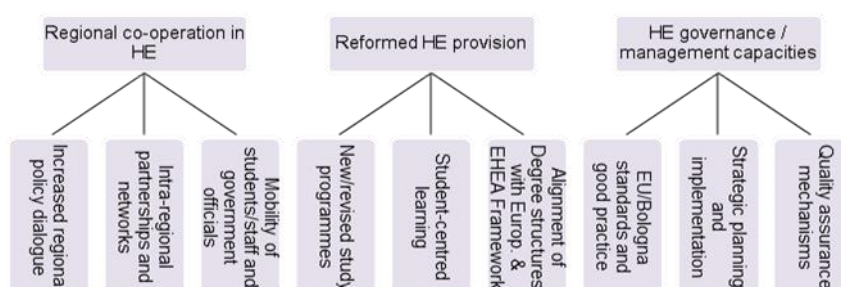
*Has EU regional support to CA contributed to enhancing the quality and relevance of HE provision?*

### Summary answer to the evaluation question

- The EU provided indispensable technical support for the implementation of national reforms and modernisation of higher education in CA at institutional level in terms of quality and relevance. It contributed to the reform of quality assurance systems and practices, to enhanced reflection of socio-economic demands and developments by HE providers, to state education standards, and to the modernisation of academic education provision (teaching, learning, assessment and study programmes) at higher education institutions which participated in EU programmes, and innovations in HE governance and management.
- EU regional assistance had a limited and mostly indirect impact on system reform, i.e. national strategic reform design and/or decisions in HE in the CA countries. The CA countries themselves determined the overall strategic direction and scope of (aspired) convergence with EU standards in higher education. Nonetheless, the longevity of the EU programmes in CA, the critical mass of EU-funded projects, and the Tempus and Erasmus programmes' bottom up approach contributed to a changing attitude among national stakeholders, increasing support for reforms in line with EU/EHEA standards and good practice, and strengthened capacities to design such reforms.
- The impact of EU support in the individual countries was limited when the application/implementation of project results required changes in the policy framework.<sup>93</sup> The capacity or readiness of national systems and decision-makers to absorb, follow-up and capitalise on EU-funded initiatives at policy level was not always sufficient even where government representatives were formal partners of project consortia.
- EU regional assistance was successful in inducing regional co-operation and exchange between HEIs and government representatives of the five CA countries in the course of project activities and other EU initiated regional events. Still, the primary appeal of the regional programmes for CA partners was the opportunity to co-operate with EU partners; regional co-operation was not a priority for CA countries. Regional academic networks and networking heavily relied on incentives from external donors (EU and other). Proactive communication and interaction between CA partners in the course of EU projects required sustained support and encouragement. Substantial changes in terms of regional policy dialogue, agreements or policies for enhancing HE quality and relevance of HE provision were not observed.

### JCs and indicators of the evaluation question

*This question is articulated through three judgement criteria and nine indicators, as shown in the figure on the right, and with detailed reporting in Volume 2.*



<sup>93</sup> such as for example new study programmes, the recognition of foreign degrees and study periods, or quality assurance approaches.

### Rationale and coverage of the evaluation question

The CA countries require a continued enhancement of skills, expertise and governance systems to plan and manage sustainable socioeconomic development. It is important for the countries to improve the quality and relevance of HE provision, and to this end, modernise the systems of HE governance in the region. The EU interventions in the HE sector were tailored accordingly.<sup>94</sup>

Therefore, the evaluation question focuses on the enhancement of quality and relevance of HE provision. The chosen indicators refer to reforms in HE governance and in the delivery of HE qualifications, and the effectiveness of the regional approach towards the objective of raising educational standards in HE across the region.

The question covers the two EU HE flagship programmes, Tempus and Erasmus Mundus, as well as the Central Asia Education Platform (CAEP)

### Answer to the evaluation question

*All CA countries have with EU support made progress with familiarising and aligning their HE policy frameworks, governance and management systems with EU standards and good practice.*

All CA governments seek a certain alignment with EU and EHEA standards and good practice in HE, albeit with a differing scope and pace. KZ has been taking the lead, followed by KG, TJ, UZ, and TM at the rear.<sup>95</sup> While the CA countries themselves determined the overall strategic direction and scope of (aspired) convergence with EU standards in higher education, the longevity of the EU programmes in CA and the critical mass of EU-funded projects contributed to an enhanced awareness and understanding of EU/EHEA policies and good practice, a changing attitude and increasing support among national stakeholders (government and academic community), and strengthened capacities to design such reforms. (I-711, I-712, I-713, I-721)

*EU regional co-operation helped CA countries enhance their institutional capacities with a view to labour market relevance, quality assurance and internationalisation along EU standards and good practice.*

Tempus projects have helped with improving the coherence of HE with labour market needs for example by supporting HEIs to co-operate with enterprises, consult social partners for curriculum design and for defining learning outcomes for study programmes. In this context Tempus project results also fed into revised state standards and helped establish new consultation mechanisms for revising such standards<sup>96</sup> (I-721, I-722). Tempus and Erasmus Mundus (Action 2) have supported the internationalisation of HE by boosting the opportunities and experience of individuals and institutions for international co-operation, exchange and international reference/relevance of academic teaching and research<sup>97</sup>. Tempus projects and the CAEP project reviewed quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms at institutional and sector level (see Box 7) and Tempus projects developed and piloted good practice and strengthened individual and institutional capacities of HEIs and government institutions. (I-711, I-712, I-713, I-723)

*The impact of EU*

Impact of EU interventions at system level was limited where the

<sup>94</sup> MIPs 2007-2010 and 2011-2013

<sup>95</sup> KZ has joined the Bologna Process/EHEA in 2010, KG attempted to formally join in 2007, KZ, KG and TJ ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and KG and TJ implemented Bologna-compatible reforms on a voluntary basis under the supervision of the respective Ministry of Education. KG and TJ have adapted the first two cycles of their degree system (Bachelor and Master), KZ and UZ have done so for all three cycles (including PhD level). KG, KZ, TJ, UZ introduced (differing) credit systems, and all five countries have taken steps towards reforming and/or reviewing their quality assurance systems and developing a qualifications framework for HE (see

Box 7).

<sup>96</sup> Evidence was established in interviews (with the EACEA, NEOs and HEIS/project partners), individual project documentation and programme reports and the CAEP study.

<sup>97</sup> Finding confirmed in interviews with project partners, authorities, NEOs and Higher Education Reform Experts, individual project documentation, programme reports and the Tempus IV mid-term review.

*interventions at national policy and system level was limited, in particular in regional projects.*

application/implementation of project results required changes in the national policy framework. While government officials highly appreciate opportunities for orientation along EU standards and good practice, little direct cause and effect relationship between EU interventions and the reform of policy frameworks can be established<sup>98</sup>. The effectiveness of regional interventions at system level appeared particularly fragile<sup>99</sup>. Here the capacity or readiness of national decision-makers to absorb, follow-up and capitalise on EU funded initiatives was not always sufficient even where government representatives were formal partners of project consortia. EU co-ordinators of larger scale regional projects faced additional challenges: the co-ordination of activities with up to 45 partners absorbed too much time leaving little room for follow up with national decision makers.

On the positive side accompanying measures under Tempus (such as the network of national Higher Education Reform Experts) and the CAEP project provided opportunities for analysis, policy advice and peer-to-peer consultations, and have reportedly fed into policy design and reforms on certain occasions<sup>100</sup>. (I-711, I-712, I-713, I-723)

In this context it is also important to note that the European/EHEA policy framework largely evolved in Western European societies, and models are built on Western European notions of democratic culture<sup>101</sup>. The context and conceptions in CA differ substantially and require context-specific responses, for example with a view to the division of responsibilities and tasks in quality assurance. Hence, EU project objectives such as the establishment of independent quality assurance agencies, of regional qualifications framework networks, and national and regional education standards were formulated with an ambition that was difficult to fulfil. Measuring the EU assistance's impact against such objectives does not necessarily do justice to the effectively achieved results. The projects have nevertheless provided CA partners with essential capacities, models and experience to develop context-specific responses, which are perhaps not always in line with, but increasingly informed by EU standards and good practice, such as in standards, principles and mechanisms of quality assurance in HE (see Box 7). (I-711, I-712, I-713)

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<sup>98</sup> Evidence found in project and programme reports, interviews and the Tempus IV mid-term review.

<sup>99</sup> As became obvious with projects such as CANQA and TUCAHEA (projects under Tempus) and the CAEP project.

<sup>100</sup> Finding confirmed through interviews and project reports, e.g. participation of HERE experts in drafting of legislation.

<sup>101</sup> As reflected in the autonomy of universities, academic teaching and research, and student self-government and active participation in decision-making.

**Box 7**                      *Significant change: Increased alignment of quality assurance in HE in CA with EU/EHEA standards and good practice*

Step 1: Description of the significant change<sup>102</sup>

All countries revised objectives, priorities and/or standards, and tested or introduced new mechanisms or models for enhancing quality in HE<sup>103</sup>. Notable progress in all five countries includes:

- Introducing new aspects for the evaluation of study programmes and HEIs, such as internationalisation or employer feedback, and integrating these aspects in state standards for study programmes. (KG, KZ, TJ, TM, UZ)
- Strengthening the involvement of academics, students, external stakeholders and foreign experts in evaluation processes. (KG, KZ, TJ, TM, UZ)

Of all CA countries, KZ has engaged in the most comprehensive reform of its national quality assurance system, seeking compliance with the *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance* in the European Higher Education Area by 2020. During the evaluation period it had gradually introduced new independent quality assurance agencies. By 2014 government authorities determine the standards and criteria that have to be met by HEIs, independent (national and foreign) agencies review HEIs and programmes, and government authorities issue state attestations/licenses based on the (national) agencies' conclusions and recommendations.

Step 2: Mechanisms/points of interaction with EU regional support and dialogue

The EU-funded programme Tempus IV (implemented by the EACEA) and to a lesser extent the CAEP project (2012-2015) supported the reform of quality assurance standards and practice in HE across the region. For example, Tempus projects such as CANQA, DOQUP, QUEECA and others<sup>104</sup> developed and piloted models for internal quality assurance at HEIs in CA, prepared roll-out plans, established quality assurance offices at HEIs, established quality standards for study programmes and qualifications in specific disciplines at institutional and sector level, strengthened the international dimension in quality standards and practice in HE.

Step 3: Influence of regional support in relation to the significant change

The EU – in particular through the Tempus programme – provided valuable technical support for<sup>105</sup>:

- Improving the quality, relevance and coherence of HE delivery with labour market needs and the revision of state education standards.<sup>106</sup>
- Enhancing internationalisation of HE.
- Strengthened capacities among academics, students, government officials, external stakeholders, foreign experts and agencies for developing and implementing new principles and mechanisms for internal and external quality assurance, and engaging in evaluation

<sup>102</sup> The EU programmes in HE were portfolios with numerous projects (74 Tempus projects, 21 Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects), with broad and diverse scopes and results. A summarisation of results would be too lengthy, their synopsis too general. To reflect the interventions' nature in the HE sector, the significant changes described for the HE sector are selective, while seeking to reflect more widely applicable developments in the CA countries.

<sup>103</sup> CAEP study on quality in HE and VET; Tempus Study 'State of Play of the Bologna Process in the Tempus Partner Countries (2012); Tempus Study 'The main achievements of the Tempus Programme in Central Asia 1994-2013'; Tempus CANQA project reports

<sup>104</sup> QUEECA: Quality of Engineering Education in Central Asia in KG, KZ, TJ, UZ

DoQuP: Documentation for Quality Assurance of Study Programmes in KG, KZ, TJ

CANQA: Central Asian Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in KG, KZ, TJ

DEQUE: Development of Quality Assurance System in Turkmenistan on the base of Bologna Standards in TM

UNIQTTOOL: Implementing tools and policies for quality work at institutional level in UZ

<sup>105</sup> Evidence found in project documentation, the CAEP study on quality assurance in HE and VET, the Tempus IV mid-term evaluation and interviews during country visits with government officials, Higher Education Reform Experts, NEOs, HEIs and other project partners.

<sup>106</sup> Through a wide range of projects for curricular development and reform, strengthening interaction between HEIs and 'the world of work', defining cutting edge learning objectives in consultation with the appropriate employers and enterprises;



processes.

While stakeholders in KZ and UZ<sup>107</sup> generally denied direct influence of EU regional support on reforms of the national HE system, most of them acknowledged that the sustained and substantial support by and co-operation with EU partners (since the 1990s) had firstly contributed to the strategic reform direction in CA countries, and was secondly crucial for the implementation of prescribed system reforms in a relatively short period of time.

#### Step 4: Alternative explanations

In particular KZ, KG and UZ have taken important policy decisions<sup>108</sup> and relevant steps for their implementation on their proper initiative while a positive influence by development partners was noted.

In addition to EU assistance in the area of higher education quality assurance in the region, the British Council provided bilateral support for the enhancement of quality assurance in HE in UZ and KZ through its “Internationalisation of Higher Education” programme. This programme expanded on earlier co-operation of UK partners with UZ and KZ partners in the frame of Tempus projects. Authorities and HEIs in CA considered this initiative as complementary to the EU’s support. They also considered it crucial since it allowed an extended and highly appreciated support to the UZ and KZ partners in the course of implementing new quality assurance policies, notably through training courses and regular exchange with partners in the UK.

*EU support demonstrated good practice in student-centred learning, but an effective shift towards this across national HE systems has not yet taken place.*

Some CA countries have introduced learning outcomes to describe competencies to be obtained by the learner upon successful completion of a study programme. However, learning outcomes are not yet used to introduce student-centred learning, i.e. as a tool for result-oriented curricular design, student-centred education delivery and learning assessment at HEIs. An effective shift towards student-centred learning across national HE systems has not yet taken place. Nonetheless, the EU has demonstrated good practice in terms of introducing student-centred learning in a number of curriculum development projects. (I-722)<sup>109</sup>

*The EU contributed to reforms of individual study programmes in line with EU standards and good practice and with existing national policy frameworks.*

Evidence during the desk and field phase confirmed that EU interventions were successful if/where their outcomes were compatible with existing national policy frameworks and state standards for study programmes. Challenges occurred when the implementation of outcomes required revisions of overarching standards and/or frameworks. These were not always overcome.

Joint projects for governance reform and structural measures projects under Tempus addressed the reform of HE degrees and their delivery at programme level by developing and (in parts) piloting new sectoral standards and competences for HE study programmes and qualifications in specific fields. Some of these standards were developed in all five countries (e.g. QUADRIGA<sup>110</sup>, TUCAHEA<sup>111</sup>, CANQA and QUEECA projects) and in some cases integrated in the state standards by the national authorities.

<sup>107</sup> interview partners such as government officials, HEI and project representatives, NEO staff and Higher Education Reform Experts

<sup>108</sup> KZ in its State Programme of Education Development 2011-2020, KG in its Education Development Strategy 2012-2020 and UZ in its state programme for the period of 2011-2016

<sup>109</sup> With learning outcomes as a tool curricular design and education delivery at HEIs we mean, for example, the use of learning outcomes to engineer a shift from input-oriented teaching to output-oriented student-centred learning; defining the learning outcomes of course modules and individual study programmes, and linking ECTS, student work and methods of assessment to learning outcomes.

<sup>110</sup> Qualification Frameworks in Central Asia: Bologna-Based Principles and Regional Coordination

<sup>111</sup> Towards a Central Asian Higher Education Area

Joint projects under Tempus further established and interlinked national committees and proposed national general regulations on education standards (e.g. the QUADRIGA project). However, little evidence for the standards' full integration/application and committees' continued existence was available. (I-721, I-722, I-723)

A substantial number of joint projects for curriculum reform under Tempus supported the development of individual study programmes, the introduction of new teaching, learning and assessment methodologies, and strengthened the relevant capacities of institutions and authorities (e.g. CIBELES and SWAN projects). Degree system reform and the modernisation of HE delivery was further reinforced by Erasmus Mundus II Action 2 partnerships sharing knowledge and good practice of teaching methodologies with CA partners through student, teacher and staff mobility. (I-722)

*EU interventions were an important tool for CA countries and HEIs to reform and adapt individual degree programmes. They were less successful with informing the consistent reform of national degree systems.*

HEIs have little flexibility in programme design, between the adoption and revision of the corresponding state standards. The strong regulative power by state authorities was an impediment to reform at institutional and course level. The adaptation of individual degree programmes, courses, teaching, learning and assessment methods often requires approval by the authorities, e.g. by the 'Council of Methodology' in T112J<sup>1</sup>, which hampered initiative at institutional or individual level. Nevertheless, some Tempus projects have resulted in new study programmes, while others reformed elements in study programmes, which were not explicitly regulated in the state education standards, such as elective courses and details in compulsory courses. While national degree systems have undergone certain changes during the evaluation period<sup>113</sup> there was little evidence for direct impact of EU support at system level (see Box 8). (I-722)

#### Box 8

#### *Significant change: Modernised national HE degree systems*

##### Step 1: Description of the significant change

KG, KZ, TJ and UZ revised and/or modernised their national HE degree systems, and all CA countries modernised provisions for HE delivery.

Notable progress includes the alignment of the national structure for PhD studies with the EHEA framework in KZ and UZ in 2012<sup>114</sup>. One single doctorate level is now replacing the former two-tier postgraduate education. Implementation in UZ is still underway while it has been accomplished in KZ in 2014.

Notable progress further includes a strengthened labour market relevance of tertiary qualifications. Labour market relevance has become a requirement for an increasing number of State Education Standards in CA. KG (since 2009), KZ (since 2011), and UZ (since 2011) have been revising and integrating these in the form of 'competence-based learning outcomes'.

The CA countries are further pursuing a modernisation of their national HE degree systems by seeking alignment with the European Qualifications Framework, and developing and possibly implementing national qualifications frameworks (NQF).<sup>115</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Lennart Ståhle: Evaluation Report of Target and Target II

<sup>113</sup> for example by introducing new style third cycle (PhD) degrees in KZ and UZ

<sup>114</sup> All CA countries except TM have adapted the first two cycles of studies (undergraduate and graduate) to the EHEA framework prior to the evaluation period.

<sup>115</sup> **KZ** adopted an overarching NQF in 2012 and pursued its implementation. **UZ** has been revising its state classifier and state education standards for HE in an attempt to harmonise its system with the European Qualifications Framework. **KG** has been developing its framework, so far with a priority on vocational education

### Step 2: Mechanisms/points of interaction with EU regional support and dialogue

The EU-funded programmes Tempus IV and Erasmus Mundus (implemented by the EACEA) and to a lesser extent the CAEP project (2012-2015) provided inputs to the modernisation of national HE degree systems. For example, a range of *Joint Projects for Curricular Reform* and *Structural Measures Projects* under Tempus contributed to the reform of the degree system and of individual degree programmes in all three cycles of study in line with the EHEA framework, with European practice, quality standards and socio-economic needs. In all five countries the EU and the European Training Foundation (ETF) have been supporting the promotion and development of the overarching qualification frameworks in CA with emphasis on Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training, which has increased understanding and support among stakeholders and decision makers. Domestic experts trained and supported under Tempus participated in devising new national policy frameworks for reformed degree structures. Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects further supported the implementation by providing good practice examples, international co-operation opportunities and strengthening teaching and research experience through student and staff mobility to partner institutions in EU Member States.

### Step 3: Influence of regional support in relation to the significant change

Even though stakeholders in KZ and UZ<sup>116</sup> consider the direct influence of EU regional support at system level to be limited, they generally acknowledge that the sustained and substantial support by and co-operation with EU partners (since the 1990s) had firstly contributed to the strategic reform direction in CA countries, and was secondly crucial for the implementation of prescribed system reforms in a relatively short period of time.

The EU – in particular through the Tempus programme – provided valuable technical support to engineer significant changes in terms of degree structure, curricular reform, teaching capacities, labour market relevance, and research and development<sup>117</sup>. Dozens of projects facilitated the alignment of concrete bachelor, master and doctoral degree programmes with the **two/three-cycle system**<sup>118</sup> and EHEA framework<sup>119</sup>. Other projects strengthened the interaction between education, research, and innovation (knowledge triangle) and **between** HEIs and socio-economic partners (employers, industry). They **innovated academic teaching**, learning and assessment, enhanced **responsiveness to labour market demands** and improved **state education standards**. While the extent to which these results are absorbed in the countries' policy frameworks remains unclear they have substantially strengthened the countries' technical capacities to take the reforms forward at individual, institutional and sector level.

### Step 4: Alternative explanations

Policy decisions were domestically driven but stakeholders confirm these decisions are informed by the increasing number of national experts who gained relevant expertise and insight through participation in EU-supported activities. Only in exceptional cases do national stakeholders confirm a direct influence of EU support, such as the Higher Education Reform Experts' expertise when preparing the reform of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle.

*The EU initiated and facilitated regional* Tempus brought regional stakeholders together in conferences, workshops, seminars, training sessions, study courses in CA, Istanbul and the EU,

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and training. **TJ** has taken the decision to establishing a National Qualification Framework in 2012 and started its development. **TM** has signaled its interest in the development of a national qualifications framework when introducing it to its national priorities in the 2012 Tempus call for proposals and engaging in the regional Tuning Project TUCAHEA.

<sup>116</sup> Government and HEI representatives, Higher Education Reform Experts and NEO staff

<sup>117</sup> Evidence found in project documentation, the Tempus IV mid-term evaluation and interviews during country visits with government officials, Higher Education Reform Experts, NEOs and HEIs/project partners.

<sup>118</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> cycle: Bachelor studies/degree, 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle: Master studies/degree, 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle: PhD studies/degree

<sup>119</sup> e.g. TUCAHEA through a regional tuning exercise, QUADRIGA through proposing a methodology for devising education standards, and promoting the **national qualifications frameworks**

*contacts, dialogue, co-operation and exchange between governments, government officials, academic and administrative staff, and students.*

where they shared experiences, developed tools, networks and study programmes. The interaction faced a range of difficulties in terms of an often stifling bureaucracy, technical travel constraints, political/cultural relationships and differences, difficulties with the mutual recognition of study periods for academic purposes, language and accommodation capacities, and a certain scepticism expressed by some stakeholders. EU regional projects faced delays, e.g. with piloting a regional mobility scheme in the frame of the TUCAHEA project, or partners failed to participate in important regional project activities. At the same time, project partners have learned to overcome a range of difficulties in practice (for example the TUCAHEA project) and it appears that the regional dimension is gaining value among a number of involved people and institutions in CA. Given the EU is the only donor promoting and actively encouraging regional exchange and mobility on a larger scale EU funded regional co-operation provided an important opportunity and achieved considerable results, which would otherwise not have materialised. (I-731, I-733)

*The EU stimulated regional co-operation in HE where it concerns matters of shared interest and benefit.*

With EU support, regional co-operation was stimulated in relation to HE provision and academic research in specific subject areas of national as well as regional relevance, such as Education/pedagogy, Law, Good governance, Water, Energy, Environment. Regional co-operation was also stimulated in relation to structural reforms when these coincided with national reform priorities, such as strengthening quality assurance, international relations, development of career centres and partnerships with enterprises, qualification frameworks. Given all countries' interest in aligning their HE systems with EU standards and the Bologna Process/EHEA, the latter has proven a suitable meta-framework for encouraging regional co-operation. (I-713, I-721, I-723 and I-733) Regional academic networks and networking heavily relied on incentives from external donors (EU and other). Proactive communication and interaction between CA partners in the course of EU projects is supported and encouraged in the context of concrete projects. However, substantial changes in terms of regional policy dialogue, regional agreements or policies for enhancing HE quality and relevance of HE provision were not observed. (I-731, I-732, I-733)

*The EU stimulated regional co-operation in HE where it concerns matters of shared interest and benefit.*

With EU support, regional co-operation concerned HE provision and academic research in specific subject areas of national as well as regional relevance such as education/pedagogy, law, good governance, water, energy and environment. Regional co-operation further concerned structural reforms where these coincided with national reform priorities, such as strengthening quality assurance, international relations, development of career centres and partnerships with enterprises, qualification frameworks. Given all countries' interest in aligning their HE systems with EU standards and the Bologna Process/EHEA, the latter appears to be a suitable meta-framework for encouraging regional co-operation. (I-713, I-721, I-723 and I-733)

*The EU did not*

The EU-CA policy and political dialogue as foreseen in the RSP and EU-CA Education Initiative<sup>120</sup> did not take root during the evaluation period. Regular

<sup>120</sup> E.g. with regular regional and bilateral high-level meetings between the Commission and ministerial representatives from CA, with technical working groups chaired by individual countries reviewing education sectors, developing agreed policy responses, stimulate policy discussion at the national level;

*succeed in establishing a high-level EU-CA policy and political dialogue on education within the evaluation period.*

regional and bilateral high-level meetings between the Commission and ministerial representatives from CA did not materialise. In 2012 the EU launched the CAEP project with the specific objective to initiate a regional platform for facilitating such dialogue. The CAEP project sought to add value by absorbing priority issues identified under Tempus, providing comparative analysis of relevant topics, and facilitating policy dialogue based on earlier findings. The CAEP project encountered various difficulties during the evaluation period but managed to launch a number of activities with participation of CA countries. However, in the absence of a functional dialogue process during the evaluation period it was not possible to use these inputs for regional dialogue. (I-733)

*Regional programmes provided important opportunities for regional dialogue.*

In the HE sector, the regional programmes served as vehicles for dialogue, both within individual regional projects and through other programme components. In particular Tempus and its regional structural measures projects involved national authorities, addressed matters of structural HE reforms, and facilitated a joint consultation of models and tools for national implementation across countries, CA and with other regions. Such activities facilitated regional dialogue by addressing issues of national interest in the course of joint activities, in particular where project grants required the authorities' support and participation<sup>121</sup>. As part of the Tempus accompanying measures the Executive Agency EACEA also organised studies and regional workshops on HE reform issues, and the national networks of Higher Education Reform Experts participated in and informed national and regional dialogue and exchange on issues of HE policy. (I-731, I-732, I-733)

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<sup>121</sup> even though the authorities' involvement was not always adequate.

## 5 Conclusions

### 5.1 Relevance and appropriateness of strategic and programmatic approach

#### 5.1.1 Conclusion 1: EU regional strategic documents were generally relevant but ambitious and broad in scope, and did not provide adequate strategic guidance for the regional programmes

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1 and 3*

The RSP and MIPs were aligned with the EU-CA Strategy for a New Partnership, EU's sectorial policies and overall policies for EU development assistance. Moreover, they were well aligned with the priorities spelled out in the CA countries' national development strategies. The EU strategic documents also addressed the fact that a number of the major issues faced are transboundary in nature (especially in relation to water resources and border management) and that, for historical reasons, the countries face many similar challenges and share similarities (e.g. in terms education systems and the traditional centralised approach to governance), and thus have a need for similar reforms and scope for mutual learning and replication of experiences.

However, the 2007-2014 RSP was broad in its focus and without a strong prioritisation within the sectors. Moreover, while there was a good alignment in the environment sector between the MIPs and the regional programmes, this was not entirely the case for the border management, SME development and higher education sectors. In the case of border management, a number of areas in the 2007 and 2011 MIP were addressed by neither BOMCA nor CADAP – and these themes were discontinued in the 2014 MIP. In relation to SME development, none of the themes under the 2007 MIP was actually implemented in the regional programmes, and the only implemented theme in the 2010 MIP was support to BIODs. Similarly, in higher education, there was little alignment between the 2007 MIP and the regional programmes, but the 2010 MIP was adjusted to cover the same themes as the programmes. Hence, while the MIPs should ideally provide strategic guidance for the programmes, in reality, the regional strategic focus was adjusted to fit the existing programmes.

The 2007 RSP pursued closer regional co-operation and deepened political co-operation, something which cannot currently be achieved in CA (see conclusion 3). Taking the challenges with regional co-operation in CA into account, the objectives in 2014 MIP are more modest and realistic, specifying that the EU aims at supporting dialogue to promote a non-confrontational environment in the region. The 2014 MIP also introduced a High Level Security Dialogue to address pressing security issues, such as the situation in Afghanistan and international terrorism.

#### 5.1.2 Conclusion 2: EU regional strategic documents and programmes did not fully reflect the growing linkages between CA and the rest of Asia

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 5, 6, and the context analysis*

The EU's classification of CA as a region different from the rest of Asia made sense in the past, when the CA countries emerged from the Soviet Union. At that time, CA faced similar challenges as other former Soviet States in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe; a context which was different from the rest of Asia, particularly South and Southeast Asia. However, the post-Soviet sub-regions have since developed in different directions, and CA countries' economic links to other parts of Asia are growing, with an increasing role of China and India, as well as the re-emerging prominence of TJ's historical cultural and economic ties to Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. The classification of CA as a relatively small region separate from the rest of Asia has prevented EU support to CA from latching onto the new opportunities the increased integration into Asia has created for CA. The two regional strategies (for CA and Asia, respectively) did not sufficiently allow for the facilitation of cross-regional co-operation, which would have been particularly beneficial for the SME development sector. Regions are in a constant process of evolution and a state of reshaping themselves. Experience from CA as well as the Asia region suggests that a lack of flexibility in responding to new trends in international co-

operation at the sub-global level creates a risk of losing out against stakeholders with less rigid approaches to the geostrategic definition of regions.

The establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (mid 2014,) the Eurasian Economic Space (2012), and Eurasian Customs Union (2010); and the implications for regional co-operation and possible entry points for EU's regional engagement, are not fully reflected in the strategies. Although BOMCA's support for open borders between KZ and KG was affected by the abolishment of customs control within the Customs Union, the impacts were not taken into account in the development of the next phase of BOMCA. The Eurasian Economic Union is currently dividing CA (KZ and KG are members, TJ is aspiring to become a member, while neither TM nor UZ intend to join), and the implications of this for EU-CA regional co-operation cannot be ignored, especially in relation to border management and SME development. Any potential regional economic integration of KZ, KG and possibly TJ will only take place in the context of the Eurasian Economic Union, of which Russia is the economic powerhouse. However, for geopolitical reasons, it may not be feasible for the EU to support CA countries in relation to their participation in the Eurasian Economic Union.

As described in conclusion 4, the EU's regional support has also added value by enabling CA countries to learn from the experiences from other former Soviet States in EU's Eastern Neighbourhood as well as Eastern European EU MS. Similarly, CA countries could potentially benefit from learning from other Asian countries and especially from the approaches and lessons from EU development co-operation with Asia.

### **5.1.3 Conclusion 3: EU regional programmes were pragmatic and adapted to a challenging context and limited CA interest in regional co-operation**

*This conclusion is based on EQs 1-7 and the context analysis*

After the post-Soviet independence, CA could be regarded as a region with a common history and similar challenges. Moreover, the CA countries depend on the same major river basins (Amu Darya and Syr Darya). However, the countries have gradually moved in different directions, and the economic situation varies significantly. There are also tensions in the relationships between some of the countries, especially over shared water resources, but there have also been some border disputes and ethnic strife in the Fergana Valley. Hence, the general trend is moving away from, rather than towards, regional integration and co-operation, and, for KZ and KG, the main thrust towards interstate integration is the Eurasian Economic Union, which TM and UZ do not intend to join (see conclusion 1). The notion of CA as a distinct region appears to be external, rather than one the CA countries subscribe to.

Indeed, the interest in regional co-operation in CA is limited and the evaluation found a strong preference for national programmes over regional ones, and within regional programmes a preference for national rather than regional-level activities. Indeed, there is sometimes even resistance towards regional co-operation, due to mistrust, different perspectives and perceived national interests, as exemplified by UZ's decision not to participate in some of the regional programmes (e.g. WECCOP, WMBOCA), and the only partial participation of TM and UZ on other programmes (e.g. BOMCA, CADAP) – or, as seen in FLERMONECA, countries put pressure to ensure that as much as possible of the funding under regional programmes is spent on national activities. The regional programmes in water management and border management were in particular affected, since these are the most sensitive sectors in the EU's regional support.

Another major limitation for the EU's regional support was the absence of strong regional institutions, which the EU could have used as entry points for regional action – in other parts of the world, regional institutions play a central role for regional co-operation in general and for the EU's regional-level support. For example, the only appropriate regional institution in the water and environment sector is IFAS, but this institution has insufficient capacity and KG is disappointed with the current IFAS structure and thus not willing to engage in any regional IFAS action.

In this challenging context, the EU's regional programmes demonstrated flexibility, adapted their approaches, and sought out entry points they could utilise. Activities mostly took place at the national

level, and were country-driven and adapted to national priorities and capacities (for example, the MONECA<sup>122</sup> component of FLERMONECA had climate change as a pilot sector in TJ instead of air pollution, which was the pilot sector in the other sectors). Indeed, some programmes were largely clusters of country projects (e.g. EUWI EECCA, IFCA) rather than fully regional programmes. The programmes engaged mainly in the countries, which demonstrated an interest in participating; and environment, border management and SME development programmes generally had their strongest presence in KG and TJ (e.g. BOMCA, CAI, WMBOCA), but limited or no presence in UZ.

To a large extent, regional activities focused on informal dialogue, sharing, learning and transfer of experiences/approaches between the countries, rather than on formalised co-operation. Moreover, those regional activities, which did promote tangible co-operation, focused on specific issues for which there was a shared interest and with a limited geographic scope (e.g. joint management of the Isfara Basin, co-operation between border guards on specific border crossings, co-operation between individual universities or SMEs). Such collaborative actions mainly took place in KG and TJ, with the exception of the higher education sector where KZ and UZ participated to a significant extent in this type of actions. Due to the lessons from previous phases, CAI over time focused its grants projects on KG and TJ.

However, most activities at the regional/interstate level, such as networking, remained largely driven by EU and the implementing international organisations. The only exception appears to be the collaborate management of the Isfara Basin. Moreover, while there is an appreciation among stakeholders of the value of dialogue, sharing and learning from the experiences of other countries, the interest in co-operation with, and learning from, EU was much higher than within the CA region. Some CA countries regard themselves as far more advanced and see little value in learning from those they find less advanced. Moreover, there is a general acknowledgement that the EU is more advanced than CA and applies international best practice across a wide range of themes. For example, in the higher education sector, the primary appeal of EU's regional support was the opportunity to co-operate with EU partners. This is reflected in the aspirations of all CA countries to align with certain EU standards.

#### **5.1.4 Conclusion 4: The regional approach added value by promoting dialogue, sharing and transfer of approaches (between CA countries and from EU MS and Neighbourhood countries), but also by creating interstate co-operation on specific transboundary issues**

*This conclusion is based on EQs 2-7*

CA government stakeholders display a strong preference for bilateral programmes over regional programmes, and some question the effectiveness of the regional programmes. Indeed, as outlined in conclusion 3, engaging at the regional level is challenging and results are more difficult to achieve. Moreover, with a mainly national focus of programme activities, it is tempting to deduct that bilateral programmes could have been more efficient and effective. However, the regional approach in the four sectors added significant value in different ways.

Firstly, the regional approach, at least to some extent, enabled the EU support to address important transboundary issues, even if in a patchy manner and not to the level originally anticipated. This is obviously true for a) the environment sector in terms of the management of transboundary water resources and to a lesser extent protecting migratory species, and b) for the border management sector, which by nature handles transboundary issues. But it is even true for the SME sector where SME exports between KG and TJ could be addressed and standards could be harmonised, and not least for the higher education sector, where harmonisation of national degree systems and transferability of qualifications could be promoted.

It also allowed for awareness raising, learning, sharing of experiences and even transfer of

<sup>122</sup> Subcomponent of FLERMONECA to strengthen environmental monitoring



approaches between the CA countries – overall, this appears to have been the main value added by using a regional approach, given that the ability to engage in interstate co-operation was often limited. For example, forest and pasture management sector reforms in KG were adapted and replicated in TJ and TM. The multi-country approach and use of international/European organisations as implementing partners added value by further promoting the transfer of lessons and best practices developed in other countries, whether within the region or from other regions – and especially from Eastern European (in EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood) and Caucasian countries, which have undergone similar post-Soviet transition processes, an example being the national policy dialogue processes initiated and facilitated by EUWI EECCA. Moreover, the use of international and European organisations (e.g. UN agencies, OECD or GIZ) also enabled the programmes to tap into their international/European state-of-the-art knowledge and capacity. For example, the regional programmes promoted European approaches to integrated border management, higher education reforms, and transboundary basin management – or at least raised the awareness about European approaches, e.g. to environmental impact assessment or strategic environmental assessment.

Finally, a less quantifiable added value is the diplomatic role the regional programmes and policy dialogues played in terms of bringing representatives at the political and in particular technical levels together, thereby contributing to fostering better relations and increased trust and hence, to some extent, countering the general trend of declining regional integration (see conclusion 3). For example, the dialogues initiated under the regional programmes provided a first step towards promoting a more regional approach to SME development in CA.

Nonetheless, the regional programme approach also had some weaknesses compared to bilateral programmes. Some programmes and implementing partners had a limited in-country presence in all or some of the CA countries, which posed a limitation to their ability to follow and engage in national processes and maintain a good visibility – this in turn could affect national ownership and commitment to the programmes, as evidenced in TJ, where there is only very limited appreciation of WECCOOP. In the case of WECCOOP, the Rule of Law Platform and CAEP, which were service contracts aimed at supporting the EU-CA dialogues, a significant limitation was that they focused exclusively on facilitating dialogue and raising awareness without a direct link to tangible implementation activities, and were thus not perceived to provide any real benefits, so in turn the interest in engaging was limited. Other regional programmes were not affected by these limitations (e.g. those implemented by GIZ or UNDP).

#### **5.1.5 Conclusion 5: EU's regional dialogue, regional programmes and bilateral engagement were not always well-co-ordinated and some opportunities for potential synergies were missed**

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 2 and 3*

The extent to which regional dialogue, regional programmes and bilateral action took place in a co-ordinated manner varied significantly across the sectors. In the environment sector, the high-level dialogue in general linked well to the programmes under EURECA, and to some extent provided guidance which informed programme development. Moreover, there was a good correlation between the aspirations from the high-level dialogue and the focus of the regional programmes. However, in the rule of law/border management sector, this linkage was not there. The rule of law high-level dialogue had no linkage to the regional programmes, as it focused on different issues. The education high-level dialogue had major challenges due to the lack of an EU Member State chair and only became functional in 2015. The high-level dialogue on security was also recently established; so for these two sectors it is too early to assess the extent to which there will be synergies with the regional and bilateral programmes. However, the service contract projects established to facilitate the EU-CA dialogues were not sufficiently present in the countries, nor were they adequately linked to the implementation activities under the other regional programmes. This could have enhanced the linkage and also strengthened regional ownership of the dialogues (even if CAEP sought to reflect lessons and results from Tempus). Finally, in TJ there was a widespread perception of WECCOOP adding little

value. Such a linkage could perhaps also have helped ensuring more continuity in the participation of CA governments in the technical working groups which were established to strengthen the dialogue and the implementation of the results emanating from the dialogues, in which they had little success.

The major regional programmes often engaged in regional and/or bilateral dialogue, mainly at a more technical level or in a more informal manner; where the dialogue and implementation components usually were mutually reinforcing, such as events under WMBOCA or FLERMONECA – and for EUWI EECCA, where the backbone of the programme was to facilitate national dialogue on sector reforms. In some cases, the regional programmes created opportunities for dialogue at the political level, such as the OECD facilitated dialogue on private sector development under CAI. In the case of BOMCA, this dialogue provided strategic guidance for the implementation. However, under CAI, the dialogue and implementation components were unlinked from each other, and there was also no linkage to the Eurasia Competitive Programme (ECP), so opportunities for dialogue-programme synergy were lost. Moreover, in the private sector development sector, the only sector where the EU also provided significant support at the country level, no evidence was found of any co-ordination or synergies between the regional and bilateral programmes.

A major limitation for ensuring synergies between bilateral programmes on the one hand, and regional dialogues and programmes on the other, was the limited involvement of EUDs, except when they managed the regional programmes, like the EUD in KZ which managed EURECA and the EUD in KG that managed BOMCA and CAI. EUDs could often not use the regional programme results and lessons in their bilateral policy dialogues, even if relevant, due to their limited knowledge of these.

## 5.2 Outcomes and sustainability

### 5.2.1 Conclusion 6: At the regional level, the value added by EU support was mainly a contribution to enhancing the dialogue between CA countries, although some outcomes were achieved at the interstate level

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 2 and 4-7*

Regional dialogues and regional-level programme activities mainly added value by providing opportunities for dialogue and sharing, and for awareness creation about the experiences and best practices within the region, in EU and globally (e.g. on sector reforms, access to information, and public participation). This, in turn, helped sparking interest in engaging in reforms at the national level. Moreover, regional dialogues mainly had a diplomatic function, and, while they did not lead to any tangible changes beyond statements of shared problems and interests and a need for more co-operation, the value of this should not be ignored. There is a widespread agreement that EU provided important and valuable opportunities for dialogue which would otherwise not have been there, and that this in turn led to a better mutual understanding and more trust among the countries – as well as closer EU-CA relations. So while EU could not help the countries to embark on a path towards enhanced co-operation, one could argue that the EU at least to some extent contributed towards reducing the trend of the countries drifting away from each other. In the SME development sector, EU support provided the first forum ever for regional dialogue and transfer of models, and enjoyed a strong government buy-in.

Nonetheless, the diplomatic role could potentially have been stronger. Both the EU-CA high-level dialogues and the programme-facilitated dialogues sometimes suffered from insufficient prioritisation from CA countries; for example, the policy/decision-maker level was not always represented at the high-level dialogue meetings, which affected the ability to reach agreements, and in the higher education dialogues, some countries only engaged to a limited extent. However, from the EU's side, staff and financial constraint meant that not all the relevant DGs were able to fully engage, for example, the technical DGs only engaged to some extent in the environment high-level dialogue. Similarly, the EU Member State chair role was not utilised to its full potential, and the high-level dialogue on higher education was significantly hampered and delayed by the difficulties with mobilising an EU Member State to assume the chairing role.

The regional results achieved most often only involved two countries at a time, mainly KG and TJ and to a lesser extent KZ, and had a limited geographic scope (e.g. a small transboundary basin or a single border crossing), although in higher education, there was also cross-border co-operation with institutions in UZ and TM. KG and TJ were brought together towards more joint management of the Isfara Basin, although this was never formalised. KGs and TJs border agencies co-operated, which to some extent facilitated the flow of goods and people and the sharing of intelligence. Moreover, BIOs or SMEs worked together (e.g. on exports between the countries).

### **5.2.2 Conclusion 7: EU regional programmes achieved tangible national-level outcomes, especially in KG and TJ – e.g. in relation to sector reforms or promoting new practices, which enhanced stakeholder participation**

*This conclusion is based on EQs 4-7*

Considering the challenges with engaging at the regional level, it is not surprising that results were mainly achieved at the national level (see conclusion 3 and 6). Outcomes were in particular achieved in KG, TJ and KZ, where the programmes in general had a stronger presence than in TM and UZ, and where there was more openness to reforms. Moreover, KG and TJ are also the countries where the contribution of donors vis-à-vis the national economy is highest. In particular, EU's regional programmes contributed to sector reform processes, which, in the case of the environment sector, promoted decentralisation and enhanced stakeholder participation (communities, private sector and civil society) in the management of water, forest, and pasture resources. However, with several donors engaged in the sectors, the reform progress cannot be attributed exclusively to the EU. EU support also contributed significantly to SME development policy reforms in KZ, KG, and TJ. In border management, the contribution to reforms was more modest; only in KG was the integrated border management approach embraced. Similarly, EU support only made a modest contribution to system level changes in the higher education sector – although it did support the implementation of governmental reforms and provide orientations for future reforms. In relation to reforms, the regional approach allowed the programmes to transfer and adapt successful reform experiences from other CA countries, such as replicating tourism standards as well as pasture management policies from KG to TJ.

Moreover, EU's regional programmes achieved some tangible outcomes at a more localised or pilot level; for example: the competitiveness of selected SMEs was increased, education programmes at specific universities were modernised, and farmers achieved higher yields from their irrigated lands, and some border posts were capacitated to carry out their duties more effectively. However, the outcomes of BOMCA and also Erasmus and Tempus are not always entirely clear due to an output rather than outcome-oriented approach.

### **5.2.3 Conclusion 8: Impact and sustainability were more likely to be achieved when there was continuity in the support, or the support was part of a larger process in synergy with support from other donors**

*This conclusion is based on EQs 3-7*

An important lesson from the regional programmes is that change takes time in CA. As such, many, if not most, of the processes initiated under the regional programmes are yet to be completed and consolidated. This is even true for processes that had been initiated prior to 2007. The implementing agencies of the regional programmes often implemented the EU support as part of their larger, more long-term engagement in the region. Processes that had been initiated earlier under some of their other programmes (funded by other donors) would be continued with the EU support, and unfinished processes supported by the EU would be taken over by new programmes funded by other donors. Moreover, EU support would be used for certain components (e.g. capacity building), whereas support from other donors would be used for other elements (e.g. infrastructure), which, in combination, would form a comprehensive package. Similarly, the implementing partners proactively and significantly co-

ordinated and co-operated with other donors and programmes, especially in the environment sector. Thereby, important synergies were achieved in terms of ensuring a substantial engagement and continuity, e.g. in relation to sector reforms or enhancing institutional capacities. These approaches ensured much needed continuity, necessary both for achieving significant outcomes and for ensuring that these are consolidated and become sustainable, the flipside being that this happened sometimes at the expense of EU visibility. It appears that in the case of the programmes implemented by GIZ, it would have been easier and perhaps more efficient simply to co-fund GIZ's German-funded regional programmes rather than establishing separate EU programmes with separate planning and reporting structures.

In BOMCA and CADAP, the change of implementing partner as well as a prolonged gap between two phases clearly demonstrated the detrimental effects of disruption and lack of continuity. Due to a hiatus as well as an absence of other donors taking over, several achievements subsequently collapsed or did not lead to the intended outcomes. In CAI, the experience with the grants provided to BIOs is that sustainability was mainly achieved when they were provided with consecutive grants.

## 6 Recommendations

### 6.1 Regional and strategic orientation

#### 6.1.1 Recommendation 1: Sharpen the focus of EU support to better reflect CA's position in Asia and Eurasia

*Adjust the CA regional strategies and programmes to better capitalise on CA's emerging economic opportunities in Asia.*

**This recommendation is linked to:**

- **Conclusion 1**, which indicates that the regional strategies did not fully provide strategic guidance.
- **Conclusion 2**, which indicates that the regional strategies for CA and Asia did not sufficiently allow for the facilitation of cross-regional co-operation. The separation of CA as a relatively small region from the rest of Asia has prevented CA from benefitting from regional EU support to Asia (especially in the SME development sector).
- **Conclusion 3**, which indicates that the notion of CA as a distinct region is not entirely accurate and that the countries have strong links to countries which are in their vicinity, but outside CA.

**Main implementation responsibility:** DEVCO HQ, EEAS

**Possible actions include:**

	Env	BM	SME	HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include when relevant CA countries in EU's regional programmes for Asia or establish inter-regional CA-Asia programmes (e.g. on SME development and trade).</li> </ul>			■	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include CA countries in EU-Asia dialogue when relevant.</li> </ul>	●	▲	■	◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If feasible and appropriate vis-à-vis EU's political priorities, include (by 2020) CA in the strategy and programmes of the Asia Region instead of having CA as a separate region – but at the same time maintain the possibility of having programmes and dialogue with a CA-specific focus (as EU is also doing in other sub-regions), as well as opportunities to learn from EU MS (especially those in Eastern Europe) and ENPI East countries.</li> </ul>	●	▲	■	◆

#### 6.1.2 Recommendation 2: Enhance the interstate dimension in regional programmes

*In the regional programmes, increase the prominence of actions which promote active co-operation between two or more CA countries.*

**This recommendation is linked to:**

- **Conclusion 3**, which indicates that regional programmes have been good at identifying and utilising available windows of opportunity.
- **Conclusions 4 and 6**, which indicate that it is possible for regional programmes to successfully engage CA countries in co-operation and that this improves their relations – especially when the topic is not controversial and the countries have shared or similar interests.

**Main implementation responsibility:** DEVCO HQ, EUDs, EACEA, implementing partners

Possible actions include:	Env	BM	SME	HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse pros and cons of regional/interstate versus country-specific approaches in various sectors and for various interest groups in CA and the EU, based on lessons from the regional and bilateral programmes.</li> </ul>	●	▲	■	◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage more strongly in transboundary or interstate issues and opportunities, where countries have similar interests (e.g. SME co-operation and exports, migratory species and transboundary ecosystems) – and try to involve other countries than KG and TJ in such non-controversial themes, which are of interest to them (e.g. KZ-UZ on saiga antelope conservation).</li> </ul>	●		■	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate, in co-operation with EUSR, UN partners and GIZ, opportunities for supporting strengthening and reforming IFAS under the Turkmen chairmanship. This should be initiated immediately, this window of opportunity is opening right now and only for a limited period of time.</li> </ul>	●			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the focus of EU assistance on the specific context and capacities of CA in supra-regional education programmes, avoid over-ambition, ensure approaches are realistic, and secure involvement and commitment of decision makers.</li> </ul>				◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider using the Rule of Law Initiative (or BOMCA) to provide advisory support for the introduction of solutions for addressing border disputes (e.g. international arbitrary procedures, mediation processes, practices of the International Court of Justice in settling interstate disputes).</li> </ul>		▲		

### 6.1.3 Recommendation 3: Establish an EU-CA high-level dialogue and platform on private sector development

*Enhance the EU-CA and regional dialogue by introducing an EU-CA high-level dialogue and platform, building on the experience from the regional SME programmes.*

#### This recommendation is linked to:

- Conclusion 4**, which indicates that the programme-based dialogue on SME development enjoyed a strong interest from CA countries, and that SME development is an area where it is relatively easy to promote interstate co-operation.
- Conclusion 5**, which indicates that the service contract model had limitations in terms of insufficient in-country presence and link to regional programme activities

**Main implementation responsibility:** EEAS, DEVCO HQ, implementing partners

Possible actions include:	Env	BM	SME	HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse/verify the interest in CA for establishing a new high-level dialogue and platform.</li> </ul>			■	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in discussions with different DGs about the feasibility and capacity to initiate a new high-level dialogue and platform.</li> </ul>			■	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the feasibility of transforming/elevating the current dialogue under the regional programmes into a full-scale EU-CA high-level dialogue with a supporting platform.</li> </ul>			■	

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|--|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate whether the policy dialogue under CAI can be enhanced to function as a platform and facilitate EU-CA high-level dialogue, which has a clear nature of being an EU dialogue and not mainly an OECD dialogue (as is currently the case).</li> </ul> |  |  | ■ |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|

#### 6.1.4 Recommendation 4: Enhance the profile and regional ownership of the EU-CA high-level dialogues and platforms

*Pursue a more consistent high-level representation in the high-level conferences and enhanced continuity in the participation in the platforms.*

##### This recommendation is linked to:




- Conclusion 3**, which indicates that there is an absence of strong regional institutions
- Conclusion 4**, which indicates that the regional dialogues played an important diplomatic role, but only led to few tangible results/changes.
- Conclusion 6**, which indicates that the diplomatic role could have been stronger if CA had given more priority – and EU DGs had allocated more staff resources – to the dialogues and to the platforms.

**Main implementation responsibility:** EEAS, DEVCO HQ, EUDs, EUSR, EU Member States chairs

##### Possible actions include:

	Env	BM	SME	HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue supporting the EU-CA dialogues for one more phase with a clear objective to see if the dialogues and platforms can move beyond the diplomatic function and towards more tangible agreements and co-operation. If the dialogue does not evolve further, then consider phasing out the dialogue processes.</li> </ul>	●	▲		◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss with the EUSR, how/whether the role of his office can be enhanced, e.g. in terms of aligning EUSR and DEVCO workstreams, and in terms of mobilising EU Member States as well as high-level representation and seniority and continuity in technical working group participation.</li> </ul>	●	▲	■	◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss with EU Member State Chairs how their role could be further utilised/enhanced and how the value of Member State chairing can be maximised.</li> </ul>	●	▲		◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage EUDs in dialogue with CA governments on the importance of ensuring the right level of, and continuity in, participation in technical working groups.</li> </ul>	●	▲		◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the environment high-level dialogues and technical working groups, invite participants from line, sector and planning ministries, which have a strong influence and/or dependency on environmental resources and integrity.</li> </ul>	●			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance co-ordination and co-operation with dialogue efforts led by other parties (e.g. Germany's Berlin Process). Joining forces, especially with dialogue efforts pursued by EU MS, could potentially be a means to strengthen the dialogue while sharing the financial burden and workload.</li> </ul>	●			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of assessing the scope for supporting EC-IFAS (see recommendation 2), consider if the EU-CA environment dialogue can gradually be transferred to be hosted and led by EC-IFAS.</li> </ul>	●			

- Focus high-level dialogues and platforms on a few, carefully selected topics, which are not too sensitive and which are of interest to the CA countries. For example, the Rule of Law Platform could focus on options for enhancing the business environment in CA.

			
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## 6.2 Implementation and results

### 6.2.1 Recommendation 5: Seek to establish an integrated approach to EU support for CA



*Establish modalities and practices to maximise synergies between dialogue and programmes, and between regional and bilateral action, in order to ensure that EU support is integrated, comprehensive, and co-ordinated.*

#### This recommendation is linked to:

- **Conclusion 4**, which indicates that the regional programmes added value, but were not always sufficiently linked to the national level, and that the service contract projects established to facilitate the EU-CA dialogues and platforms were insufficiently linked to programme implementation.
- **Conclusion 5**, which indicates that co-ordination between EU's regional and bilateral engagement, as well as between regional dialogue and programme implementation was not always sufficient and opportunities for synergies were lost.

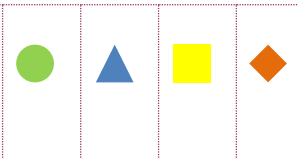
#### Main implementation responsibility: DEVCO HQ

#### Possible actions include:

	Env	BM	SME	HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish internal strategic sector groups for provision of oversight of regional programmes and dialogues – DEVCO HQ, all EUDs in CA, EEAS, EUSR, and other DGs (as relevant) should participate.</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance linkages between platform service contracts and other regional programmes through:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Joint activities and coordinated efforts, where regional programmes engage in more comprehensive capacity building and pilots/demonstrations of concepts promoted under the platforms (e.g. of Strategic Environmental Assessment);</li> <li>○ Involvement of the same key stakeholders in platforms and regional programmes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test on one platform the use of one of the existing regional programmes for platform facilitation and assess the pros and cons of this vis-à-vis service contracts (see recommendation 3).</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure to the extent possible/feasible (taking staffing and financial constraints into consideration) that EUDs participate in high-level conferences, technical working group meetings and programme-based dialogue events.</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use EUDs as the default entity for managing regional programmes (unless they are supra-regional). Consider: a) evolving a selected EUD into the focal point for all regional programmes, and b) including the other EUDs in programme steering committees (e.g. as observers).</li> </ul>				



- Explore potential for cross-sector engagement and collaboration between regional programmes (e.g. linking Erasmus+ to the programmes in the other sectors explore synergies between research, education and application).



### 6.2.2 Recommendation 6: Enhance efficiency and EU visibility through integrating EU support with implementing partners' long-term programmes

*Reduce transaction costs and enhance EU visibility by co-funding larger regional programmes of international implementing partners as much as possible, instead of establishing separate but interrelated EU programmes.*

**This recommendation is linked to:**

- **Conclusion 8**, which indicates that implementing partners enhanced outcomes and sustainability, by co-ordinating and integrating EU support with their existing, more long-term programmes funded by other donors. However, this came at the expense of EU visibility, since it was impossible for regional stakeholders to make a clear distinction between the programmes.

**Main implementation responsibility:** DEVCO HQ, EUDs

**Possible actions include:**

	Env	BM	SME	HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide in the environment sector co-funding with shared logframes and reporting with existing regional programmes implemented by the same international partners (but funded by other donors), instead of establishing separate projects. Ensure that the EU is specifically accredited for its funding contribution.</li> </ul>	●			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate if other donors (especially EU MS) have regional programmes in the same sectors as the EU, or are interested in engaging in such regional programmes, and assess whether there is scope for pooled funding/joint programmes. This could either be to attract other donors to co-fund EU's regional programmes (e.g. BOMCA and CADAP), or for EU to co-fund their programmes.</li> </ul>	●	▲	■	◆

### 6.2.3 Recommendation 7: Enhance the focus on impact and sustainability in border management and higher education programmes

*In the border management programmes, discontinue the current output-oriented focus and enhance the focus on impact, outcomes and sustainability; in the higher education programmes, manage ambitions and keep them realistic.*

**This recommendation is linked to:**

- **Conclusion 7**, which indicates that BOMCA had an output-oriented focus; and the supra-regional programmes in higher education only made a modest contribution to system level changes in the sector.
- **Conclusion 8**, which indicates that a lack of continuity and a prolonged gap in the implementation of BOMCA and CADAP led to a collapse of some of the achieved results.

**Main implementation responsibility:** EUD in KG, implementing partners

**Possible actions include:**

	Env	BM	SME	HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out a comprehensive outcome-impact evaluation of BOMCA</li> </ul>		▲		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesign BOMCA 9 with a strategic focus on achieving outcomes and sustainability (backed with a comprehensive analysis of training needs vis-à-vis institutional needs and gaps, equipment needs, and maintenance capacity)</li> </ul>		▲		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus border management efforts on KG and TJ, and on supporting the implementation of their integrated border management strategies and action plans</li> </ul>		▲		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for more realistic programme and project designs in higher education.</li> </ul>				◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce outcome-oriented reporting against defined indicators and ensure that CA partners provide monitoring data.</li> </ul>		▲		◆