

The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan¹

On 30 June 2006, the OSCE participating States established a new form of co-operation with the Republic of Uzbekistan when the OSCE Centre in Tashkent became the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan.

The Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan was tasked with assisting the government in its efforts to ensure security and stability, including combating terrorism, violent extremism, illegal drug trafficking, and other transnational threats and challenges; supporting the government in the areas of socio-economic development and environmental protection; and assisting the government in the implementation of OSCE principles, including those related to the development of civil society.

The field presence continued the OSCE's work of assisting the authorities in fighting terrorism and drug trafficking. It strengthened its efforts in the economic and environmental fields, focusing particularly on the promotion of entrepreneurship and good governance in local communities. The OSCE also encouraged gender equality and took steps to fight trafficking in human beings.

Priorities and Projects

Capacity-Building

The Project Co-ordinator facilitated the participation of Uzbek officials in a number of workshops organized under OSCE auspices, focusing on issues such as combating terrorism, travel document security, and suppressing illicit drug trafficking. As a follow-up measure, the Uzbek authorities presented their recommendations for future joint activities with the field presence.

Internet Café for Journalists

The field presence provided free internet access for media representatives during the first part of 2006. Journalists, media professionals, and students of journalism used the resources of the internet café and training courses offered to improve their computer and internet skills.

¹ The opinions expressed in this article are the author's alone and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the OSCE or any of its institutions.

Legal Clinic for Journalists

The field presence organized consultations and legal support for journalists and media representatives. The lawyers of the OSCE-supported legal clinic briefed journalists and media representatives on media-related legislation, advised journalists on compliance with national legislation before publishing their articles, and provided legal defence and representation in courts.

Information Training Centre

In co-operation with EuropeAid,² the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan established an information training centre for the deputies in the lower house of parliament and provided equipment, assistance in daily operation, and guidance in elaborating an appropriate curriculum for the centre. In addition, the Project Co-ordinator and EuropeAid published a book on the “Legislative Chamber of Parliament of Uzbekistan” and organized a study tour for parliamentarians to the EU countries and Russia.

Labour Migration Management

In January 2006, the field presence facilitated the participation of an Uzbek delegation in a workshop on “Labour Migration Management in Central Asia” that was held in Almaty. The delegation included representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Centre for Effective Economic Policy under the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, and the Centre for Social and Marketing Research.

Promoting Entrepreneurship

The field presence held training courses on the basics of entrepreneurship for young people jointly with the National Youth Social Movement and offered a series of business training courses for women in co-operation with the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan. Under the project “Promoting Development of Arbitration and Supporting Farmers in Uzbekistan”, the OSCE, the Farmers’ Association of Uzbekistan and the NGO Legal Problems Research Centre implemented training courses to educate local lawyers in the development of arbitration and on farmers’ rights. Based on the participants’ comments, the OSCE developed recommendations to help them deal with the obstacles they face in running their businesses.

2 EuropeAid is the Directorate General of the European Commission responsible for external aid programmes and projects across the world.

Fight against Illicit Drug Trafficking

The OSCE's field presence funded the publication of 1,000 copies of the information bulletin regarding the drug situation in Central Asia in 2005, which was prepared by the National Information Analytical Centre on Drug Control under the cabinet of ministers of Uzbekistan. It is drawn from information received from the national centres on drug control in neighbouring countries.

Security Issues in Regional Transport

The Project Co-ordinator supported the participation of an Uzbek delegation in the OSCE's 2006 Economic Forum, which focused on transportation issues. As a follow-up, the office of the Project Co-ordinator published a guidebook which contained international road transport rules and regulations and practical tips for locally based international truck drivers.

Promoting Good Governance in Local Communities

During the first half of 2006, around 150 representatives of the self-governing communities or *mahallas* from the Ferghana Valley participated in a pilot training course on the basics of budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting initiated by the Republican Mahalla Foundation. This course, organized by the Project Co-ordinator, provided participants with the tools needed to manage communities efficiently and raised awareness about the representatives' rights, opportunities, and responsibilities.

Environmental Education

The OSCE supported the working group that is drafting a secondary school curriculum on environmental education focusing on water conservation issues.

Empowering Women

The field presence, together with governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations, followed up the training course "Improvement of the National Mechanism on Gender and Development" with a series of regional training events that reinforced participants' capacity to promote gender equality issues. The office also supported two television profiles of Uzbek women leaders, organized two round-tables in the regions on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and supported publication of 100 copies of the Handbook on National and Monitoring Reports on CEDAW Implementation in Uzbekistan.

Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings

From February to July 2006, the field presence focused its activities on the prevention of human trafficking with two awareness-raising campaigns conducted in close co-operation with regional law enforcement authorities. The field presence translated the ODIHR Handbook on National Referral Mechanisms into Uzbek.

Building Capacity at the Ombudsman Institution

In February, the OSCE field presence supported the ombudsman institution by organizing seminars on the ombudsman's work and related workshops in the regions. The OSCE funded the publication of 1,000 copies of the handbook *Ombudsmen of the World*, which details a number of countries' experiences in developing ombudsman institutions. In co-operation with the Uzbek ombudsman, the field presence organized a conference on "Strengthening Co-operation between the Ombudsman and the Legislative Chamber of the National Parliament" with the participation of international experts.

Support for Legal Education

The field presence supported the development, publication, and distribution of the manual "Legal Remedies at Civil Courts".

Prison Reform

In 2006, the field presence provided 1,100 Russian- and Uzbek-language books as well as free access to the internet to teachers and trainees of the Prison Training Centre's Resource Unit, which was established by the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan in co-operation with the Ministry of the Interior in 2005. About 400 staff members from penitentiary establishments throughout Uzbekistan took advantage of these opportunities.