

HELP Annual Conference 2022
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SLIDE 1 / COVER SLIDE

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address such a **diverse and impressive audience** from all the Council of Europe Member States, and well beyond our Member States, significantly beyond that, which is **emblematic of the impressive reach and, in fact, global relevance of HELP**. I would like to thank and congratulate Eva and the wonderful HELP-team for yet another great event and success in the last two days, - and in fact in the last weeks, months and years. It is a genuine pleasure for us in the Cooperation Programmes Division to work so closely together with Eva and her formidable team.

Now, the topic of my presentation is focused **on one particular and fascinating region of our world**, namely **Central Asia**. In this context, I had the privilege earlier this week of **welcoming a big and devoted delegation from Central Asia** here to Strasbourg. I was particularly happy to note the progress made already from last year, namely, last year only **4 delegates** managed to come here, while now we have **15 delegates representing all five Central Asian countries**. This significant rise in attendance is already indicative of the progress made, - and I would like in particular to note the presence of the Central Asian delegation here today. I know I speak on behalf of both the HELP team and Cooperation Programmes Division when we thank you for our cooperation so far and thank you for being with us.

We decided to share this session with 2 other speakers so that you would not only hear from me and the Cooperation Programmes Division **but also directly from a couple of our Central Asian Partners**, so I will myself be very brief and focus only on noting some of our positive activities so far.

Now, first let me say that the Council of Europe's work in the region has a **long history, a much longer history than some of us might imagine**. Our Organisation has developed co-operation with some of the countries in Central Asia since the late 1990s. This co-operation has been greatly enhanced through the implementation of the **Policy for Neighbourhood Regions established by the Council of Europe in 2011**.

This Policy promotes dialogue and co-operation with countries and regions in the vicinity of Europe. **The partnership with the European Union** is, of course, extremely important in this regard and highly valued.

SLIDE 2: In this context, as of the end of 2019, the Council of Europe implements the European Union and Council of Europe joint Programme call the **"Central Asia Rule of Law Programme"** (2020-2023).

The programme consists of three main Actions. We here on our side are implementing the first component, namely **“Facilitating the creation of a common legal space between Europe and Central Asia and enhancing human rights protection”**. We call this the **“HELP in Central Asia”** project and pursue it as such.

SLIDE 3: After some delays due to the pandemic, Project implementation is now in full swing. The HELP Platform now counts **423 registered users** from the region. This number is quite significant considering the limited time period of Project implementation.

SLIDE 4: To date, we already have **25 certified HELP tutors** and two weeks ago we held the **second Training of Trainers for 36 legal professionals**. We have now trained 72 legal professionals in total from all 5 states.

Now, let me then turn to just several examples of what has already been done through this component in Central Asia.

SLIDE 5: In Uzbekistan we translated 3 HELP courses in the Uzbek language, namely: **The Rights of persons with disabilities; Combatting Trafficking in human beings and Violence against women**.

The course “Rights of persons with disabilities” **has been adapted to the national context** and launched for **25 judges** of the School of Judges in Uzbekistan. The other two courses are under national adaptation in co-operation with **the Academy of the General Prosecutor’s Office**.

International co-operation in criminal matters – is also to be translated and adapted

SLIDE 6: In Kazakhstan we have translated the HELP course **“Ethics for judges, prosecutors and lawyers”** and plan to launch it in Autumn 2022 **with the General Prosecutor’s Office**. We are also working closely with **the Human Rights Commission under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Institute Sorbonne-Kazakhstan**. We have organized seminars raising awareness of legal professionals on European standards, particularly in respect of the current reforms launched in Kazakhstan. We inter alia held a seminar **on European human rights standards in law enforcement** for **235 legal professionals** including prosecutors, police officers, lawyers, professors, and law students.

SLIDE 7: In Tajikistan we organised a **Seminar for lawyers on the Right to a fair trial** in light of the case law of the European Court for Human Rights where we had very positive feedback from participants. We also introduced a Public lecture on the European Convention on Human Rights for law students and the law faculty of Tajikistan National University just this last May.

SLIDE 8: In **Kyrgyzstan** we are organising seminars and workshop in **July 2022** for judges and prosecutors with a view to present, translate and adapt the HELP course on **“Child friendly justice”**. There was also recently a Round table on Rule of law in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz

Republic and the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where the HELP Programme, among others, was presented.

SLIDE 9: We are likewise planning more activities in **Turkmenistan**, where safety measures due to the pandemic have just been lifted and we are in dialogue with our partners there on activities. Representatives from national training institutions have participated in the HELP Training-of-Trainers and we are looking forward to engaging further and following up on this.

SLIDE 10: Our task now overall in all the countries, with all partners, is to not only fortify the use of HELP in Central Asia but to strengthen **the sustainable impact of our cooperation** in the field of human rights, rule of law and democracy by offering a wide array of other **opportunities** and avenues of support on a wide range of topics. **Of course, ultimately, projects are not about activities but results.** We need to show results in real life, we need to show that there has been an actual change in behaviour, change in professional approach and change in law and in practice.

In this context, as we already implement **a great number of cooperation projects on a wide array of topics relating to judicial reform and human rights in numerous countries**, we are of course very much looking forward to engaging further with our Central Asian stakeholders. In this context, there **are** extensive reforms on the table in the region which are, of course, of great interest to the Council of Europe. For example, **constitutional changes are to be introduced in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan**, and **Tajikistan is about to introduce an anti-discrimination law** – the first specialised law of the kind in the region. This is a significant development and **we at the Cooperation Programmes Division look very much forward to accompanying and further supporting our Central Asian partners on this route**, with added impact and value ensured through tying them directly to a number of our other projects and experts on the same topics in other countries.

SLIDE 11: On that note, it is my honour to now give the flower to two other speakers, first **Mr Uigun Nigmatzhanov**, Deputy Director of the General Prosecutor's Academy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, who will briefly share their experience of co-operation; and then **Ms Ainur Sabitova**, Member of the Human Rights Commission under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Director of the Sorbonne-Kazakhstan Institute

