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BORDER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN CENTRAL ASIA – PHASE 9 (BOMCA 9)

The European Union New Strategy for Central Asia: Support to Border Management

OPINION

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This opinion is prepared upon kind request of Ms. Benita Ferrero - Waldner on behalf of the Eurasian Council on Foreign Affairs (ECFA)

I. Background

Geopolitical rivalries between external actors continue to shape Central Asia regional projects in which the economy is placed at the service of strategic concerns. Four broad axes may be identified: 1) the Eurasian or post-Soviet axis, in which Russia plays a major role, with Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan at its core (and Tajikistan in the future, maybe); 2) the Chinese axis, which is constantly turning the CA region more towards Asia-Pacific hemisphere; 3) the Western axis, which is softly pushing for the development of pan-European values; 4) and the Islamic axis, which is increasingly encouraging Central Asia's integration into the Turkish-Iranian-Afghan world in particular.

In such geopolitical environment, since the early 90-s of the last century, the European Union increasingly sees Central Asia as one of the strategically important regions for cooperation and development assistance. Trans-regional challenges such as trafficking of drugs, organized and serious crime, trafficking in human beings, and violent extremism/terrorism coming from and through the CA region influence the EU interests. On the other hand, CA is very important from China – EU transit corridor development point of view. Therefore, the EU has been supporting five Central Asian states through various development and cooperation mechanisms. The current basis of the EU approach towards the Central Asian States is described in the document “EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership” that was adopted by the European Council in June 2007 and later on revised several times.

By keeping in mind aforementioned, it's worth to have an insight into the past. Because border security is one of the key elements for stability of the whole region, in 2002 - 2003 the EU developed a short-term BOMFER¹ Programme (for 3 CA countries) which proceeded into more sustainable

¹ See: Evaluation of Council Regulation 99/2000 (TACIS) and its implementation: Synthesis Report. 2006. /.../ **1.3.2.1. Support to institutional, legal and administrative reform.** Regional Cooperation (Track 1). Allocations to combat drug trafficking were included in the 2002 and 2003 CA RPs. By providing assistance to the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP) and it was intended to complement other activities such as the National Drug Information Network (NADIN), the ADMIT project (Anti-drug measures in Tajikistan) and the SCAD programme (Southern Caucasus Anti-Drug Programme). Border management was the theme of a second allocation under Track 1 for the same years and included improving border management in the Ferghana Valley (BOMFER that had the aim of improving cross-border co-operation between the border and customs guards of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). The project contained four main components, namely: establishment of training academies/facilities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; a technical feasibility study to develop a communication strategy and network plan for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; the procurement of border management-related equipment; and a pilot project on the Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan border to improve cross-border co-operation. Allocations for Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) was also included in

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regional scope support instrument - the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA). At its early phases, BOMCA aimed at enhancing security, supporting fight against illegal trafficking of drugs, and facilitating trade in Central Asia. Since its inception, the Programme has been specifically linked to a number of the EU objectives set forth in its strategic documents. Since 2003 BOMCA's purpose mostly was to improve the capacity of border guard agencies, customs, and anti-drug services, in order to enable them to fight more effectively against cross-border criminality and trafficking of drugs, weapons, and THB. The core goal of the BOMCA Programme is to support the transition from an *interdiction* to a *service* approach of border management. Besides improving border security and facilitating trade and migration, this should contribute to conflict prevention / tension deflation in region with severe problems connected to borders.² However, what travellers and observers notice at Central Asian borders is that *interdiction* and *securitisation* approach is still in use at large.

Launched officially on 23 April 2003 by signatures of BOMCA 1 kick off, the Programme has been implementing its further phases targeting capacity building and institutional development, developing trade corridors, improving border management systems and eliminating drug trafficking across the Central Asia region. During its earlier phases, the Programme focused its resources on creating a modern border management infrastructure with equipment – that were aimed at facilitating more professional and efficient security, law enforcement and trade operations at selected border crossing points (BCPs) on trade corridors, and enhanced security and improvement of working conditions at border outposts. With time running forward, the horizons of BOMCA became broader and the actions of the Programme not only targeted border guards, but also other authorities working in the area of Customs, migration, drug control, etc. The Programme has always followed the concept and principles of the Integrated Border Management (IBM)³, with the view to improve cooperation and communication channels among CA border-related agencies. The IBM concept is not only built on the EU good practices, but is also aimed at tackling the issue of coordination and consolidation of actions of the Central Asian border management institutions – one of the challenges that BOMCA had to face.

BOMCA played a significant role in Central Asia in terms of raising awareness of the potential role that Integrated Border Management approach can play in terms of stability and development. Mainly in 2005 – 2012, BOMCA enabled CA states to acquire modern equipment for border crossing points, build new infrastructure, and access specialised training programmes. BOMCA focused on securing borders and border-related facilities, and this was replicated in substantial 'hard component' of BOMCA 4 – BOMCA 7 budget. BOMCA 9 faced considerable change of approach with not only a new implementing EU-based Consortium and comparably small budget, but also with significant cut of funds for 'hard component'.

the 2004 CA RP that had the overall objective of helping Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan improve the effectiveness of the management of their borders with particular reference to, among others, coherence through harmonising approaches and methodologies.

Accessed: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/evaluation_reports/reports/2006/728_vol4_en.pdf

² ECORYS Evaluation of BOMCA Programme, Final Draft, 30 June 2006 (not published).

³ Concerning IBM concept, the Programme constantly promotes the EU four-tier access control philosophy which was present and is still included into the EU IBM concept. It would be too hard to promote the EU 'IBM 5 dimensions' concept (as of 2006) or 'IBM 11 components' concept (as of 2016) in Central Asia.

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The total EU funding and two its Member States (Latvia, Lithuania) co-funding for BOMCA Programme is going to reach EUR 40 161 784 during 2003 – 2019 (*amount except UNDP co-funding for BOMCA 4 – BOMCA 8 (those were additional EUR 2 740 000)*).

Summing up BOMCA's service in the CA region so far, one major conclusion should be made: over the last decade BOMCA was diligently looking for the best and progressive ways to strengthen the capacities of its CA Final Beneficiaries via institutional capacity development and enhancement of professional skills of officials. During 2004 – 2018, more than 9000 officers of CA border-related agencies have received varying types of training, such as Document Security, Veterinary-Phyto-Sanitary and Sanitary-Epidemiology issues, Dog Handling, Customs and Trade Facilitation, Irregular Migration and THB, Integrated Border Management, Risk Analysis, and many others. As one of its consistent values, BOMCA Programme keeps the EU Integrated Border Management (IBM) concept and related good practices at the core of Action in Central Asia. All the Components are embraced by earlier mentioned IBM philosophy. In the field of modern IBM in CA there is still large space for improvement in the future at the strategic, operational, and tactical level. Thus diversification of the CA countries cooperation and sustainable role of the EU policies can be better achieved if BOMCA Programme⁴ remains operational in the region also after 2020. After more than 15 years of BOMCA Programme presence in Central Asia, for the EU it's still early to leave this niche of support to Central Asia. Such step would limit the array of EU influence instruments and not become a benefit for so far still comparably modest role of the EU in the region.

During the last years, the intra-region border security situation in Central Asia has improved at certain extent. Skirmishes between border guards are rare cases, and bilateral/multilateral dialogues tend to reduce level of tensions in border areas. Changes in Uzbekistan foreign policy in the end of 2016 brought positive impetus to the whole regional security environment and border conflicts resolution. Thus, the period of 2017 – 2018 brought some positive changes in general thinking of decision makers in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The density of high level bilateral and multilateral contacts regarding border security and border management increased.⁵ In trade facilitation and social-economic sector the changes were at lower speed and CA region still lacks inter-linkages and transport infrastructure capabilities. The labor force circular migration remains and will remain important (with exception of Turkmenistan if its policies stay as they are). Unstable security situation along Afghanistan – Central Asia borders will persist.

⁴ 'BOMCA' has become a well-known brand in Central Asia, and not only. So it's not advisable to end the use of this EU-associated brand / EU visibility tool.

⁵ See: KABAR. Встреча рабочих групп по кыргызско-узбекской госгранице прошла в духе дружбы и добрососедства. 15.01.2018., <http://kabar.kg/news/vstrecha-rabochikh-grupp-po-kyrgyzsko-uzbekskoi-gosgranitcy-proshla-v-dukhe-druzhby-i-dobrososedstva-mid-ruz/>; KABAR. Президенты Кыргызстана и Таджикистана обсудят вопросы по делимитации госграницы. 31.01.2018., <http://kabar.kg/news/prezidenty-kyrgyzstana-i-tadzhikistana-obsudiat-voprosy-po-delimitacii-granicy/>; AKIPRESS. Список документов о сотрудничестве, подписанных во время визита С.Жэнбекова в Таджикистан. 01.02.2018., <http://kg.akipress.org/news:1429440>; KABAR. Президенты КР и РТ дали конкретные задания по ускорению работы по делимитации госграницы. 02.02.2018., <http://kabar.kg/news/prezidenty-kr-i-rt-dali-konkretnye-zadaniia-po-uskoreniuu-raboty-po-delimitacii-gosgranitc-iskandarov/>; CA-NEWS. Таджикистан и Узбекистан приступают к разминированию общей границы. 17.04.2018., <http://ca-news.org/news:1443149>; AKIPRESS. Пограничники Кыргызстана и Узбекистана изучили меры по недопущению конфликтных ситуаций на госгранице. 19.05.2018., <http://kg.akipress.org/news:1449371>; CA-NEWS. Таджикистан и Кыргызстан договорились не применять оружие в случае инцидентов на границе. 07.06.2018., <http://ca-news.org/news:1453081>

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For international donors it's not easy to work in Central Asia.⁶ For example, international community (donors) is not allowed and is not directly engaged as a participatory side in border disputes resolution in Central Asia. Only political level advising (like UNRCCA activities), attempts of mitigation, and small scale capacity building are being carried out by many international actors. Central Asia states constantly keep position that border delimitation issues are solved on exceptionally bilateral basis without external involvement. In long-term, the situation may change in the field of border demarcation as it is lengthy and costly work, thus international community (donors) may be allowed to step in with support into the border demarcation issue in some CA countries. But first, it requires political consultations and decisions.

II. Delimitation: State of CA Borders

After **Uzbekistan - Kazakhstan** local scale border incidents in January 2000, the political reaction was swift and first round of bilateral border delimitation negotiations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan took place in Tashkent in February 2000. The Kazakhstan - Uzbekistan Agreement on Border Delimitation and Demarcation signed in Astana on 16 November 2001 resolved majority of disputable issues at more than 2150 km long borderline. This Agreement covered around 96% of border. Since then, the cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan has been developing in the spirit of good neighbourliness, fraternity and mutual respect that was confirmed by visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan in March 2017, where the Joint Declaration on further enhancing the strategic partnership and strengthening good-neighborliness between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan was signed. The full legal resolution of Uzbekistan – Kazakhstan border delimitation was politically declared to be closed by the end of 2017 but time showed this was an ambitious political goal. The border delimitation process led by three demarcation groups is ongoing.

The Almaty Declaration of 21 December 1991 reiterated the principle of territorial integrity and respect to independence of states in the new-born Commonwealth of Independent States geographical area. Both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan inherited problematic issues along their not-defined boundaries. The border dispute at Baghys village (south of Kazakhstan) which was triggered in January 2000 after attempts of Uzbekistan side to unilaterally demarcate a borderline in disputable area⁷ may be suggested as a starting point of very active political processes to resolve Uzbekistan - Kazakhstan border issues. The security situation in Central Asia (Ferghana Valley area) at that time

⁶ Laruelle M., Peyrouse M. 2012. *Regional Organisations in Central Asia: Patterns of Interaction, Dilemmas of Efficiency*. University of Central Asia, Institute of Public Policy and Administration. Working Paper No.10, 2012. Bishkek. <http://www.ucentralasia.org/Publications/Item/455>

⁷ See: <http://e-history.kz/media/upload/1466/2014/06/26/4ab1192b49709b2684e26d3353921f41.pdf>; also - Сейдин Н.Б. *Делимитация казахстанско-узбекской границы: проблемы и решения*. 09.04.2002., at <http://kisi.kz/ru/categories/geopolitika-i-mezhdunarodnye-otnosheniya/posts/delimitaciya-Kazakhstanahstansko-Uzbekistanekskoy-granicy-problemy-i->; Radio Azattyk. 23.12. 2015. *Ветшающее село Багыс на границе с Узбекистаном*, <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/selo-bagys-granitsa-s-Uzbekistanekistanom/27444132.html>; Мирзохид Рахимов. 23.04.2016. *Взаимоотношения Узбекистана и Казахстана: основные тенденции*, <https://camonitor.kz/22861-vzaimootnosheniya-Uzbekistanekistana-i-Kazakhstanahstana-osnovnye-tendencii.html>; **Иван ЛАРИН**. *Узбекистан в «квартирном» вопросе Центральной Азии*. 05.02.2017., <https://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2017-02-05--Uzbekistanekistan-v-kvartirnom-voprose-centralnoj-azii-28217>; *Делимитация казахстанско-узбекской государственной границы*, 29.08.2017., <http://www.Kazakhstanportal.kz/delimitatsiya-Kazakhstanahstansko-Uzbekistanekskoy-gosudarstvennoy-granitsyi/>

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was fragile, and appearance of potentially new conflict areas was a point of high concern, which obviously required certain urgent steps.

However, according to some scholars' opinion, the border disputes at local level actually 'silently' already started in Soviet time when sporadic administrative decisions on new boundaries creation in Central Asia districts were far from ideal, taking into account the landscape and diverse historical and ethno-cultural features.

The state border delimitation between **Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan** was challenging issue for many years. But nowadays the Uzbek - Kyrgyz relations can be characterized by progressive implementation of the reached agreements in the sphere of bilateral cooperation on the basis of equality and respect of mutual interests. So the Uzbekistan - Kyrgyzstan borders issue is in flux.

On 3 October 2016 a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) which obligates to solve promptly border issues was signed between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan during the [Kyrgyz delegation's trip](#) to Andijan, Uzbekistan. The visit of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Mr. Almazbek Atambaev to Uzbekistan on 24 December 2016 set up new horizons of partnership (see: <https://mfa.uz/en/press/news/2016/12/9848/>). In August 2016 – August 2017, Joint Border Delimitation Commission of both countries held extensive 15 rounds (2-weeks each) of negotiations, including borderline description work during field visits at the borderline.⁸ Further positive velocity for border delimitation resolution was achieved during the Uzbekistan Prime-Minister visit to Kyrgyzstan on 16 August 2017. It was reiterated that Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan Joint Border Delimitation Commission has reached mutual understanding and described borderline in the length of 1170,53 km out of total 1378 km of borderline (about 84%). An intention to sign a Preliminary (Intermediate) Border Demarcation and Delimitation Agreement was announced by the Presidents of both countries.⁹ During the visit of Uzbekistan President to Kyrgyzstan on 5 – 6 September 2017, the Preliminary (Intermediate) Border Demarcation and Delimitation Agreement was signed as well as other 10 bilateral agreements, including an Agreement on Work of Plenipotentiary Border Representatives. Shortly after, during the visit of Kyrgyzstan President to Uzbekistan on 5 – 6 October 2017, in total 18 bilateral agreements were signed, including an Agreement on Trust Measures in the State Border Area (*Соглашение между Кыргызской Республикой и Республикой Узбекистан о мерах доверия в районе государственной границы*).¹⁰

⁸ AKIPRESS. 30.01.2017. *Утверждено 47 участков на кыргызско-узбекской госгранице, - вице-премьер Ж.Разаков.* <http://kg.akipress.org/news:1361023> ; also: 11.04.2017. *Кыргызстан и Узбекистан начали очередные переговоры по границам.* <http://www.ritm Eurasia.org/news--2017-04-11--kyrgyzstan-i-Uzbekistanekistan-nachali-ocherednye-peregovory-po-granicam-29521> ; CA-NEWS. 07.08.2017. *В кыргызско-узбекских переговорах по границе «есть подвижки»* <http://ca-news.org/news:1398053>

⁹ KABAR. 17.08.2017. *Кыргызстан-Узбекистан. Прорыв в отношениях и реальные перспективы сближения.* <http://kabar.kg/news/kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistanekistan-proryv-v-otnosheniakh-i-real-nye-perspektivy-sblizheniia/>

¹⁰ KABAR. 05.09.2017. *Совместное заявление президентов Кыргызстана и Узбекистана.* <http://kabar.kg/news/sovместное-zaiavlenie-prezidentov-kyrgyzstana-i-Uzbekistanekistana/> ; AKIPRESS. 05.09. 2017. *Кыргызстан и Узбекистан подписали 10 совместных документов. Подписание завершилось овациями.* <http://kg.akipress.org/news:1403112> ; KABAR. 05.10.2017. *По итогам переговоров глав Кыргызстана и Узбекистана подписаны 13 документов.* <http://kabar.kg/news/po-itogam-peregovorov-glav-kyrgyzstana-i-Uzbekistanekistana-podpisany-13-dokumentov/> ; KABAR. 06.10.2017. *В рамках госвизита Атамбаева в Узбекистан подписан второй пакет кыргызско-узбекских документов.* <http://kabar.kg/news/v-ramkakh-gosvizita-atambaeva-v-Uzbekistanekistan-podpisan-vtoroi-paket-kyrgyzsko-Uzbekistanekskikh-dokumentov/>

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The change of Uzbekistan leadership in 2016 brought a positive impetus for Uzbekistan cross-border relations improvement, as well as positive signs in many other areas at regional scope. Action Strategy in five priority areas of Uzbekistan's development for 2017 - 2021 was adopted by the President of Uzbekistan in February 2017. As underlined in this Action Strategy for 2017 - 2021, the foreign policy on strengthening ties with neighbouring countries is the guarantee of future prosperity and stable development not only for Uzbekistan, but also for the whole Central Asia region. The 5th priority area of this Strategy is to insure the sphere of security, inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance, and implementation of prudent, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy that includes the issue on resolution of the issues of delimitation and demarcation of the state border of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

It is worth to notice that not only Uzbekistan – Kyrgyzstan border delimitation questions have got positive velocity for resolution after Mr. Mirziyoyev became the President of Uzbekistan. Also, border issues with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have got new impetus for solutions, i.e., the re-opening of BCP 'Shavat' on Uzbekistan - Turkmenistan border for local border traffic in January 2017¹¹ after 4 years of closure, and intention to finalise Uzbekistan – Kazakhstan several remaining border delimitation issues by the end of 2017.¹²

Ill-defined borders have led to regional tensions since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, and this is the case of **Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan** also. In the circumstances that border delimitation was not resolved issue since 90-s, for both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the land and water resources are vital to the economies and border regions along so called '*Ferghana Valley axis*'. A cross-border exchange of fire occurred on the border of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (*area of the Vorukh border settlement, - Tajik enclave within the Batken Province of Kyrgyzstan*) on 11 January 2014, but amid bad consequences, also left understanding for both countries that border delimitation resolution needs further sustainable and efficient efforts. The length of Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan borderline is about 971 km. After steady contacts of politicians and work of border delimitation commissions, by the end of 2017 there was a solution achieved on 519.9 km of borderline, thus about 41% of borderline is not agreed so far. According to public sources, one of core issues is that Tajikistan proposals are based on maps of 1924 – 1927 while Kyrgyzstan side proposals are based on maps produced in 1958 – 1959, and 1989. Also, there is different interpretation of the Almaty Declaration of 21 December 1991. The political consultations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are in process.

¹¹ 30.01.2017. *Границу между Узбекистаном и Туркменистаном открыли накануне визита Мирзиязева в Хорезм.* <http://www.chrono-tm.org/2017/01/granitsu-mezhdu-Uzbekistanekistanom-i-turkmenistanom-otkryili-nakanune-vizita-mirziyaeva-v-horezm/>; 07.03.2017. *Узбекистан и Туркменистан – стратегические партнеры.* <http://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2017/03/10342/>; 08.03.2017. *Узбекистан–Туркменистан: добрососедские и братские отношения укрепляются.* <http://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2017/03/10351/>; 02.04.2017. *Туркменистан и Узбекистан возобновили переговорный процесс по демаркации границ.* <http://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2017-04-02--turkmenistan-i-Uzbekistanekistan-vozobnovili-peregovornyj-process-po-demarkacii-granic-29336>; 08.05.2017. *Узбекистан и Туркменистан обустривают совместную границу.* <http://ca-news.org/news:1381467>; 10.07.2017. *Узбекистан и Туркменистан обсудили вопросы демаркации границ.* <http://ca-news.org/news:1393647>

¹² 09.02.2017. *Узбекистан и Казахстан решат все вопросы по границе в этом году.* <http://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2017-02-09--Uzbekistanekistan-i-Kazakhstanahstan-reshat-vse-voprosy-po-granice-v-etom-godu-28318>; 04.03.2017. *О заседании Совместной узбекско-казахстанской демаркационной комиссии.* <http://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2017/03/10327/>; 09.04.2017. *Астана - Ашхабад: что обсуждали Назарбаев и Бердымухамедов.* <http://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2017-04-19--astana-ashhabad-cto-obsuzhdali-nazarbaev-i-berdymuhamedov-29687>; 09.05.2017. *Закрытые девять лет назад посты на границе Казахстана и Узбекистана вновь заработали.* <http://ca-news.org/news:1392804>

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III. Practice-based Future Considerations

1. In regard to BOMCA after-2020, the time gap that occurred between BOMCA 8 and BOMCA 9 (in reality, spring 2014 – autumn 2015) is highly welcome to be avoided as it had negative consequences both for the EU policies in Central Asia, and for BOMCA Programme sustainability. Many achievements of BOMCA previous phases collapsed¹³ because of such gap.
2. Regional Central Asia scope for BOMCA is welcome to remain without excessive intention to divide activities and funds equally among Central Asian countries. Partial de-fragmentation is unavoidable. The diversity of CA countries development in the BOMCA Programme traditional areas is significant with mid-term perspective that diversities and different speed of progress will remain. CA countries have reached different levels of economic development, they participate in different trade regimes and joined distant political and military blocs.¹⁴ Their engagement in BOMCA Programme is dissimilar.
3. In case of political decision about non-regional scope of BOMCA (not 5 CA countries embraced but 3 or 4), the support to CA – Afghanistan border sector would require considerable efforts to design the new phase of BOMCA. Partly this would be a recurrence to BOMCA 6 and BOMCA 7 specific objectives to assist Tajikistan in strengthening security along the Tajik - Afghan border. In such case closer cooperation of the EU-BOMNAF and BOMCA may increase the EU efforts to assist both countries to withstand border security and counter-radicalisation challenges. It is not expected that Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan will change its position and allow the BOMCA Programme engage more deeply in the border management and highly militarized security of their part of Afghan border.
4. The Multi-annual Indicative Plan for Central Asia 2014 - 2020 aims to strengthen cross-border cooperation through Integrated Border Management (IBM) with a specific objective to support more efficient border and migration management and law enforcement cooperation conducive to trade and enhanced mobility of people, tackling trafficking in human beings and the fight against drugs and establishing an IBM system.

Being a constant niche of the EU-BOMCA, the concept of IBM and supremacy of IBM values should remain at the very core of BOMCA Programme thus substantially supporting basis for the EU long-term policy in CA, BOMCA activities and Intervention Logic. BOMCA after-2020 Programme is welcome to continue thematic interventions into IBM fields.¹⁵

¹³ See: ‘... 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: Evaluation of EU regional-level support to Central Asia (2007-2014), Final Report, Volume 1, September 2016 (Conclusion 8, page 70).

¹⁴ Compare: ... Central Asia is not a homogeneous region in terms of politics or economics. All the Central Asian countries follow multi-vector foreign policies, seeking to balance ties with Russia, China and the West. In: European Parliament. Central Asia Factsheet. March 2017. ; European Parliament. Russia's role in Central Asia. At a Glance, March 2017.

¹⁵ Compare: ‘... Regarding border management, the CA countries differ strongly in their willingness to reform their policies in line with EU's IBM principles. While Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are open to reform, authorities in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not. However, BOMCA applied a flexible approach, providing adjusted support to various beneficiaries' needs. The Uzbekistan government has expressed its preference for hard components, such as infrastructure and equipment, compared to the BOMCA approach mostly focused on soft components.’ In: Evaluation of EU regional-level support to Central Asia (2007-2014), Final Report, Volume 2, September 2016, page 3. ; also: Thematic global evaluation of the European Union's support to Integrated Border Management and fight against Organised Crime, Final Report, Volume 1, April 2013.

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5. For a Regional Programme to achieve good outputs, respective timeframe and budget should be available.¹⁶ Taking into account the 6-month length of Inception phase and Final phase, just two years are not enough for a complex regional programme to achieve sustainability of results. To promote multi-actor partnership and invest in a value-driven synergy at regional multi-country level it is welcome to have respective length of BOMCA Programme. The EU Member State-led Consortium approach is advisable to remain.
6. For the future BOMCA Programme, at least 15% of budget may be considered for 'hard component' to support respective 'soft component' activities within buy-in approach. Such step would also expand the EU visibility. Decrease of budget for 'hard component' in BOMCA 8 and BOMCA 9 was quite sharp and triggered certain misunderstanding between CA Final Beneficiaries and BOMCA 9.
7. Depending on BOMCA funding source from the EU respective future budget instrument and its modality¹⁷, it may become worth to consider and timely discuss with CA countries their moderate co-financing for BOMCA. This would not only increase the budget and prospective for BOMCA but also ensure stronger engagement of CA Final Beneficiaries, buy-in and sustainability of results. Also, on the basis of such approach it may be easier to advertise CA countries more conceivable policies towards IBM concept efficient implementation.
8. It is expected also for BOMCA that the EU permanently keeps position regarding no support to militarised approach in principle to border security to avoid lingering many remnants of Soviet-style border management approach.
9. Prior consultations with Central Asia agencies about EU-BOMCA content are highly advisable. This can take place during various events in 2018 - 2019. Without this the risk of reluctance and refusal to accommodate and own results of activities is very high. The velocity of political dialogues shows that border delimitation talks among CA countries will further reach certain progress by 2020, and as a consequence border demarcation will become high in CA countries agenda.¹⁸
10. Nevertheless trade facilitation sector is quite rich with international donors in CA, in particular circumstances the EU-BOMCA Programme can continue support in this field. Exception can be in case if a separate EU Programme on Trade Facilitation for CA is developed. Considerable efforts are required in the future to increase Ca integration in terms of trade relations and export potential. The support area to avoid is the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The sustainability and workability of Turkmenistan economy model is a concern in upcoming years.
11. In case Tajikistan will join the EAEU during 2019 – 2020, the relevance of Trade Facilitation as overall objective (component) is supposed to lessen. First, like in case of Kyrgyzstan the primary focus of Tajikistan agencies for several years almost exclusively would be to achieve compliance with the EAEU requirements. Second, for BOMCA the Trade Facilitation support related efforts would face difficulties to stay aside from the EAEU issues if not just two but three CA countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) are the EAEU members.

¹⁶ See also: Implementation and review of the European Union-Central Asia Strategy: Recommendations for EU action. 2016. In-Depth Analysis upon request of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

¹⁷ On 14 June 2018, the European Commission proposed to increase the external action budget to €123 billion for the period 2021-2027. Up from €94.5 billion in the period 2014-2020, this represents an increase of 30% (taking into account deduction of yearly inflation up until 2027, the increase would be 13%). [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-18-4124_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-18-4124_en.htm)

¹⁸ Border delimitation and demarcation processes in Central Asia are expected to be quite closed for international donor assistance also in the future, and operate mostly on intra-country and bilateral platforms.

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12. It is welcome to include Gender Mainstreaming into BOMCA as the EU external development assistance mandatory cross-cutting requirement.¹⁹ Taking into account mostly military and law enforcement environment of BOMCA Final Beneficiaries in CA, not much can be expected but attempts towards gender mainstreaming are prudent.
13. Necessity of international donor closer cooperation is repeatedly reiterated in numerous political announcements. It is welcome to identify and, if reachable, decide timely on EU-BOMCA synergies with other international stakeholders. At the regional level consistent synergy with OSCE²⁰ is worth to consider, especially in the field of support to Passenger Name Record (PNR) / Advance Passenger Information (API) introduction in CA²¹ during 2020 – 2025, to fight terrorism and serious organized crime as well as for purely law enforcement (Border Guards, Customs) purposes. In Turkmenistan synergy with the UN agencies in certain areas has perspectives.
14. In case analytical capabilities are considered to be a permanent part of BOMCA, first it is advisable to conduct SWOT analysis of such instrument. One of risks is that CA states may treat BOMCA as ‘a watchdog’ so confidence building (and not only) may face difficulties. Issues of border management are sensitive in Central Asia and closely cross-linked with politics. In case of positive decision some EU-based think tank services would be the best solution. But, it costs.

IV. Possible Overall Objectives after 2020

To keep consistency, EU-BOMCA overall objectives are welcome to be very close to BOMCA 9, with some changes addressing steadily ongoing CA region security sector reforms which have influence on border management. The overall objectives along components of BOMCA after-2020 may be:

- 1) To support institutional capacity building and improve security situation in the region;
- 2) To encourage CA states to gradually adopt the principles and practices of Integrated Border Management approach²²;
- 3) To contribute toward the facilitation of legitimate trade and transit, thus reduce illicit movement of goods and people.

¹⁹ See: Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Partner Countries - Executive Summary. April 2015.

²⁰ See: European Parliament resolution of 13 April 2016 on implementation and review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy (2015/2220(INI)), 13 April 2016, point 118. ; Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI) 2012 Ministerial Declaration

²¹ See: OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 6/16 enhancing the use of Advance Passenger Information (API). Hamburg, 9 December 2016; also: UN Security Council Resolution 2309 (2016), Report S/2015/377, and UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014); UN Security Council Report S/2016/501 (31 May 2016, Point 63, Point 83) and Report S/2017/97 (2 February 2017, Point 29) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat.

²² Following international donors large advocacy, Tajikistan has Government-approved IBM Strategy & Action Plan 2010 – 2025, and Kyrgyzstan has IBM Strategy & Action Plan 2012 -2022. But, content and efficiency of those IBM Strategies implementation is an issue. Other CA countries currently do not have strategic planning documents which may be named ‘IBM Strategy’.

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V. EU-BOMCA Management after 2020

Below mentioned proposals for consideration regarding EU-BOMCA management are very limited since there is a lack of necessary input information. So the management mode proposals, *inter alia*, are based on the Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions (PRAG_Vers_2016). Indirect management modality like in case of BOMCA 9 can be used also in the future. It is welcome to keep in mind always that BOMCA is a complex and administratively demanding Regional Programme.

1. The priority for the EU should be to focus on few areas where it could have a tangible impact. Also, very short term Technical (expert) Assistance single activities should be very limited as they cannot provide long lasting sustainable results. Instead, a package of several Technical (expert) Assistance continuous activities is welcome to consistently target the planned result. Despite considerable costs, the management tools like Long Term Expert or Chief Technical Advisor (Officer) are welcome to be present in EU-BOMCA operability.
2. BOMCA after-2020 is welcome at its beginning to develop sufficient internal strategies for ensuring sustainability and achievement of Programme outcomes (results). The verifiable objectives for expected results should be identified and clearly formulated in the Logical Framework, and data on quality of outcomes/outputs of professional capacity-building interventions collected systematically. The Assessment Missions should concentrate on this at the very beginning of the Programme as well as on identifying baselines, current values, and targets. Continuously, the Results Based Management (RBM) Description of EU-BOMCA should be created during the Inception phase and later on presented together with the 1st Progress Narrative Report.²³
3. Each National Office of the Programme should consist of at least 2 staff members.

VI. Conclusion

It was widely announced at political level that a new EU – CA Partnership Strategy is going to be agreed in 2019.

In June 2017, the Council of the European Union recognized the importance of effective border control in ensuring the facilitation of cross-border trade, the fight against illegal trafficking of persons and goods and for managing migration flows, and reiterated it is determined to continue its support to strengthening cooperation among Central Asian countries on their border management.²⁴ So there is respective room for consideration both at the EU level and in EU – Central Asia format how to proceed concerning the EU support for border security and border management in Central Asia and along Central Asia – Afghanistan axis after 2020. The European Union New Strategy for Central Asia is welcome to contain a general political message in this area.

www.bomca-eu.org

²³ Compare: European Court of Auditors. Review of the risks related to a results-oriented approach for EU development and cooperation action. Special Report, 2015. <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=34793>

²⁴ Council of the European Union. 2017. Council Conclusions on the EU strategy for Central Asia. Doc. 10387/17, Brussels, 19 June 2017.

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