

Fifth Ministerial Conference on Rule of Law successfully held in Brussels on 7 December 2017



The Fifth Conference on Rule of Law of the Ministers of Justice of Central Asia and the European Union was organised in the framework of the Rule of Law Initiative under the EU-Central Asia Strategy in close collaboration with France and Germany as the coordinators of the Initiative. The Conference took place on 7 December in Brussels with the support of the European Commission's Rule of Law Platform project. The Ministerial Conference followed up on the implementation of the [Joint Ministerial Declaration](#) adopted in 2014 by the EU-Central Asian Ministers of Justice.

Central Asian countries and in the EU, and expressed their interest in improving access to law and justice, notably by providing legal aid, and ensuring the availability of laws and regulations, including by developing and disseminating legal commentaries, the wider availability of legal literature, raising people's awareness about their rights and increasing public trust in the judicial system, and introducing best practices in providing free legal aid to the individual.



Front row from the left: Francisco Fonseca Morillo, Deputy Director General, Directorate-General Justice and Consumers, European Commission, Peter Burian, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Urmas Reinsalu, Minister of Justice of Estonia, Kai Härmand, Deputy Secretary-General, Ministry of Justice of Estonia

The Ministers took stock of recent development in Access to Justice in



Ruslanbek Davletov, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Dilmurod Kasimov, Commissioner for the Protection of Rights and Legal Interests of Entrepreneurship of the Republic of Uzbekistan

The Ministers acknowledged the need for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (ADR) as a most valuable component of a modern and effective judiciary, including arbitration, mediation, conciliation, ombudsmen, and complaints boards. ADR reduces thresholds for access to justice for

all citizens, provides a wider variety of dispute resolution mechanisms, renders rights enforcement more effective and thus contributes to legal stability. Out-of-court dispute settlement does not compete with state courts of justice, but is intended to supplement them in a meaningful way.



Rustam Shohmurod, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan and Mahmadali Vatanzoda, Legal Adviser of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and Commissioner under the President in the Parliament

The attractiveness of central Asian countries for international investors (also SMEs), and thus for economic stability, is strongly linked to an attractive legal framework and to legal certainty, which particularly includes ADR mechanisms. ADR is widely accepted and of high interest in the CA countries, especially in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (where a court of arbitration was installed last year). This explains why the political momentum was used to address this topic at a high level.



Marie Luise Graf-Schlicker, Director-General for Judicial System, Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection of Germany

The five Central Asian partner states all sent high-level delegations. The Ministers of Justice of Bulgaria, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Malta, Tajikistan and

Uzbekistan attended. The following EUMS were represented at high level: Austria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania and Romania. The delegations were eager to engage in substantive exchange of views addressing their current challenges and looking for practical solution from EUMS and experts. Central Asian participants confirmed their interest to deepen the dialogue and cooperation in the framework of Rule of Law Initiative and they gave suggestions on concrete follow-up for cooperation.



Marat Beketayev, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Representatives of the European Parliament, UNODC, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, and the International Union of Judicial Officers attended the conference. At the outset of the conference, the Minister of Justice of Estonia, the EU Council Presidency, presented its [Conclusions](#).



Tsetska Tsacheva, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria, the upcoming Presidency of the EU Council and Owen Bonnici, Minister of Justice, Culture and Local Government of the Republic of Malta