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UDE leads EU project on Central Asia relations

While they are situated thousands of kilometres apart and characterised by different political values, Central Asia and the European Union have become important partners. In the Horizon 2020-project "SEnECA – Strengthening and energizing EU-Central Asia Relations" researchers and think tanks will analyse how the relationship between the EU and the Central Asian countries can be further intensified. Prof. Dr. Michael Kaeding, professor for European politics at the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE) and Dr. Katrin Böttger, Deputy Director of the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) are coordinating the project conjointly with financial support from Brussels: The EU is funding the project with about 1.5 million Euros in the following two years.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan: For ten years now, the EU has been pursuing its 'Strategy for a New Partnership' in this region. Intersecting Asia and Europe, these countries are of high geopolitical importance. The development and consolidation of stable and democratic societies in these countries is essential to the European Union.

"The five former members of the Soviet Union have a rich political history marked by a variety of conflicts. The EU is keen to strengthen its ties with Central Asian countries, both for economic and security reasons, such as energy trade and counter-terrorism.. An additional goal is the stabilization of the very diverse political situations. From a researcher's point of view, we would like to support Central Asian research organisations in cooperating on an international level", explains Prof. Kaeding. "We are looking forward to strengthening and shaping the future cooperation between EU and Central Asia."

The aim of the SEnECA project is threefold: Firstly, an interdisciplinary network of researchers working on Central Asia in Europe and European integration in the Central Asian region will be established. In the spirit of scientific cooperation, the project consortium involves ten partner organisations, five from Europe and five from Central Asia, in addition to UDE and IEP.

Secondly, the researchers will accompany the revision of the EU-Central Asia Strategy. In 2015 the strategy was updated and a proposal for the new strategy should be presented in 2019. The SEnECA team will provide policy recommendations for Europe's future policy towards the region and will cooperate closely with Mr. Burian, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia.

Thirdly, the consortium wants to contribute to intensifying the existing relations. Therefore, the partners will analyse the current relations and will interview stakeholders from politics, economics and culture from Brussels and the EU member states as well as from Central Asia in order to identify future forms of cooperation and give recommendations.

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