



Kazakhstan Joins Bologna Process, Deepens Educational Integration

(Country pursues efforts to catch up with the global trends in education)

Government Reshuffled in Line with Industrial and Innovational Program

(New Ministries of Industry & New Technologies, Oil & Gas, Communications)

OSCE Chairperson's Special Envoy Calls for Stronger Dialog in Tirana

(Zhigalov visits Albania, is set to visit Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Land Transport Security, Environmentally Sustainable Transport in Focus

(Issues part of the OSCE second dimension, priority for Kazakh Chairmanship)

Kazakhstan Parliament Considers Bill to Institutionalize Lobbying

(Government's second attempt since late 1990s draws intense debates)

Kazakhstan Joins Bologna Process, Deepens Educational Integration

Kazakhstan officially joined the Bologna declaration, which aims to create the European higher education area by making academic degree standards more comparable and compatible throughout the continent. This happened at the Second European Forum of Education Ministers in Budapest on March 11, 2010.

Speaking at the forum in the Hungarian capital, Kazakhstan's Minister of Science and Education Zhanseyit Tuimebayev said signing of the Bologna declaration had special significance in the context of the country's efforts for deeper integration into the international community.

"From now on, Kazakhstan is the first Central Asian state recognized as a full-fledged member of the European Higher Education Area," the Minister said. According to Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education, 30 out of 145 Kazakh universities had earlier signed the Great Charter of Universities, which forms the basis of the Bologna declaration.

The Central Asian nation inherited the Soviet system of higher education, which was considered very strong in natural and technical sciences but weaker in social studies.

After independence in 1991, Kazakhstan began its integration into the international system of higher education, which required more compatibility of programs and degrees. During the last decade,



By joining the Bologna Process, Kazakhstan undertakes to implement Bologna basic principles in its education system.

Kazakhstan's Minister of Science and Education
Zhanseyit Tuimebayev

Photo by Government.kz

one of the key priorities was to join the Bologna process, which was launched by the Bologna declaration of 1999.

Application for membership and Kazakhstan's national report prepared by the country's Ministry of Education and Science was submitted in December 2004.

Finally, last week, representatives of 46 current signatories, members of the European Higher Education Area unanimously supported Kazakhstan's bid to join their ranks. An important role in the forum's decision has been played by the country's recent embracement of the European Cultural Convention, which is a prerequisite for joining the Bologna Process.

The purpose of the Bologna process is to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by making academic degree standards and quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe, in particular under the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

It is named after the place it was proposed, the Italian city of Bologna, whose university hosted the conference where the declaration was signed in 1999 by ministers of education from 29 European countries. This was opened up to other countries signatory to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe. Further governmental meetings have been held in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London in spring 2007.

The Bologna Process was created with the goal of providing responses to issues such as public responsibility for higher education and research, higher education governance, social dimension of higher education and research, and values and roles of higher education and research in modern, globalized, and increasingly complex societies.

Contrary to popular belief, the process was not based on a European Union initiative. It constitutes an intergovernmental agreement, between both EU and non-EU countries. Also, as the Bologna Declaration is not a treaty or convention, there are no legal obligations for signatory states. The extent of participation and cooperation is completely voluntary.

Kazakhstan's joining the Bologna Process allows adjusting the national educational programs to European standards and guarantees the exchangeability of Kazakhstan's degree certificates in Europe. This opens wide opportunities for employment of Kazakh graduates in any of the states - signatories of the Bologna declaration.

Integration of the country's education into the European zone of higher education will promote raising its efficiency, reaching equitable position in the world community for educational institutions and citizens of Kazakhstan, addressing the problems of recognition of Kazakh degrees abroad, and strengthening positions on the international market of educational services.

The objectives of building the European Higher Education area require Kazakh universities and educational institutions to re-engage with the overall purposes of the reform in order to ensure a stronger student focus, employability, mobility, attractiveness and social inclusion, and engagement with the social partners for developing lifelong learning.

Accepting structural reforms within the Bologna process, Kazakhstan has made significant steps toward internationalization of higher education. The country's Ministry of Education and Science is creating conditions for expanding the mobility of Kazakh students and teachers, inviting more foreign students to the country.

Nearly 19,000 Kazakhs were studying in 35 countries of the world last year. The total number of foreign students from other countries of CIS and far abroad studying in Kazakhstan is 9,000.

During the last decade financing of education in Kazakhstan has grown nearly seven-fold. The budget for education in 2009, despite the global financial crisis, increased in comparison with the previous year by 10.7%, amounting up to 709.9 billion KZT (US\$ 1 = 147 KZT).

Government Reshuffled in Line with Industrial and Innovational Program

The early start of implementing the Intensified Industrial Innovation Development program brought a serious reshuffle in the Kazakhstan government last week with several key agencies reorganized in order to secure efficiency of their work toward advancing the goals of the abovementioned program.



The Government reshuffle intended as a boost to diversifying economy and industrial and technologic development. Asset Issekeshov was appointed Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Industry and New Technologies.

Photo by the Foreign Ministry

The list of newly established central government bodies includes Ministry of Industry and New Technologies, Ministry of Oil and Gas, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Communications and Information, and Ministry of Culture.

A number of political commentators argue that establishing a special ministry dealing with new technologies is a major element of the reshuffle, as its chief manager, Asset Issekeshov, 38, now combines the Minister's job with that of a Deputy Prime Minister that supervises implementation of the Intensified Industrial and Innovational Development Program. The new Ministry of Industry and New Technologies will bear responsibility for the country's electricity and nuclear energy, mining and manufacturing industries, and a

few other fields of economic activities.

As President Nazarbayev stated at the government meeting last Friday where he announced the reshuffle, securing a sustainable economic growth in the post-crisis environment will require diversification of the national economy and increasing its competitiveness.

"Therefore, the most important task for the government will be to ensure the comprehensive growth of labor productivity. Evaluating and financially stimulating this at all levels of management should be the key mechanisms of achieving the goals we set for ourselves. Only proper introduction of innovative methods of work can provide a sharp increase in labor productivity," he said. The Ministry of Industry and New Technologies is the major agency assigned with pursuing this goal.

President Nazarbayev also announced forming the Ministry of Oil and Gas, which is being created on the basis of the former Ministry for Energy and Mineral resources. Sauat Mynbayev, 47, was appointed to lead the new agency.

"The Ministry will release the KazMunaiGas from a number of inappropriate functions that used to create a conflict of interests between pursuing commercial profits and implementing state policy in the field," the President underlined.

He said the nature of the KazMunaiGas national oil and gas company activities should now be exclusively commercial.

The newly established Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, has the powers in the field of strategic planning and regional development, with the task of budget planning transferred to the Ministry of Finances. The 44-year-old Harvard graduate Zhanar Aitzhanova, who was appointed to head the Ministry, becomes the second female member of the current government in Kazakhstan.

The Ministry of Culture and Information was reorganized into the Ministry of Culture with the adoption of powers to ensure the rights of citizens to practice their freedom of religion, from the Ministry of Justice. Mukhtar Kul-Muhammed, 49, will continue as the Minister of Culture.

The new Ministry of Communications and Information, created on the basis of the Agency for Informatization and Communications and several departments of the now dissolved Ministry of Culture and Information, will coordinate activities to introduce digital technologies in Kazakhstan's media. Its new head is the 37-year-old former president of the Kazakhtelecom company, Askar Zhumagaliev.

OSCE Chairperson's Special Envoy Calls for Stronger Dialog in Tirana

The Special Envoy of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantin Zhigalov, on a visit to Tirana on March 15, said overcoming the political impasse is crucial for Albania to continue making progress in implementing its ambitious reform agenda.

"We recognize the progress made by Albania in carrying out democratic reforms. The co-operative climate established in the past between the government and the opposition has contributed to the significant successes achieved in this area," he said.



OSCE stands ready to support the Efforts of Albania's political parties to engage in political dialogue, OSCE Chairperson's Special Envoy Konstantin Zhigalov stressed.

Photo by the Foreign Ministry

In welcoming the entry of the main opposition Socialist Party into the Assembly, Zhigalov expressed the hope that this would pave the way for future political debate to be conducted within a parliamentary setting. He stressed the OSCE stands ready to support the efforts of Albania's political parties to engage in political dialogue. "However, the responsibility to resolve the current situation ultimately lies with the national players," he explained.

During the visit, all local interlocutors stressed their appreciation for OSCE's contribution to the ongoing reform progress of the country. Zhigalov expressed his strong satisfaction regarding the strong cooperation between the OSCE presence and the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all other national authorities.

Zhigalov also briefed local interlocutors on the future plans of the Kazakh Chairmanship, paying reference to the envisaged informal ministerial meeting due to take place in Almaty in the summer this year.

"These meetings will provide an excellent opportunity to discuss, inter alia, a follow up to the Corfu process, the Vienna Document 1999, OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan and the substance of the OSCE summit," Zhigalov said.

His agenda in Tirana included meetings with President Bamir Topi, Prime Minister Sali Berisha, Foreign Minister Ilir Meta and Socialist Party Chair Edi Rama. Later during the week, Zhigalov is expected to visit Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Land Transport Security, Environmentally Sustainable Transport in Focus



L-r: Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Voronetsky, Kazakhstan's Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, and the OSCE's Goran Svilanovic at the opening session of the 2nd preparatory conference for the 18th Economic and Environmental Forum, Minsk, 15 March 2010.

Photo by OSCE/Vitaly Golovenko

A two-day OSCE meeting began in Minsk on March 15 focusing on how the Organization can help increase the security of land transportation, facilitate railway transport and promote environmentally sustainable transportation choices.

"With its membership of 56 participating States and its broad security mandate, the OSCE is well placed to identify and address political problems and contribute to the ongoing harmonization and standardization efforts in the field of transport and security," Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov said, speaking on behalf of the 2010 Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship.

The OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, said many challenges facing the transportation sector are security challenges.

"International terrorism and transnational organized crime pose serious threats to the transport sector - indeed, to our common stability and security," he told the 180 participants of the meeting, which is part of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum process.

Goran Svilanovic, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, added: "Land-based transport is by many considered to be the weakest link in securing the international supply chain; at the same time it is considered a potential vehicle as well as a target for terrorist attacks. This is due to the lack of an intergovernmental body and regulatory framework dealing with land transport security in a comprehensive manner. This is where the OSCE could help out."

Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Voronetsky and Deputy Transport and Communications Minister Vladimir Dervenkov highlighted in their remarks that the topic was particularly important to Belarus, a country located at the crossroads of major transport routes.

The conference is organized by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities with the support of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and the OSCE Office in Minsk.

The final part of the 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 2010 will be held from 24 to 26 May in Prague.

Kazakhstan Parliament Considers Bill to Institutionalize Lobbying

Kazakhstan's government is trying anew to legitimize the practice of lobbying. A draft bill *On lobbying* was handed over to the Mazhilis (lower house of parliament) in late February 2010. Yet another attempt to institutionalize lobbying is fighting its way forward.

The first ever attempt to regulate lobbying in Kazakhstan took place ten years ago, when the government introduced a similar bill in the Parliament in 1999. From then on, the proposed law set off strong debates. After months of discussions, deputies and the government were

unable to reach a consensus on key statutory provisions, following which the document was voted down by the parliamentary majority.

The authors of the new bill argue the present version is much different from its decade ago

prototype. In particular, the government suggests that the lobbyists' activities are performed exclusively in the Parliament of Kazakhstan. The term "lobbying" is defined by the law as "a form of advocacy of one's interests with the intention of influencing decisions made by legislators in the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan".

The government also proposes to define a "lobbyist" as a "non-governmental association or union of Kazakhstan, comprising no less than ten legal entities officially registered by the competent authority".

Presenting the bill to the deputies, Deputy Minister of Justice Dulat Kustavletov stressed that today's approach results from the absence of due regulation of lobbying practice in Kazakhstan.

In the meantime, the MPs again gave quite contradictory assessments of the proposed law. They noted that by providing only business associations an opportunity to be engaged in lobbying, the government automatically excluded trade unions and non-governmental organizations from the list. In fact, the latter are the very same actors who promote the interests of various strata of society, including factory workers, disabled persons, children and others. Moreover, the MPs asked why the government was eager to permit lobbying exclusively in the Parliament, though the lobbyists, in their opinion, work practically in all state bodies of the country, including the Government itself.

The experts of Institute for Law Monitoring, Expertise and Analysis raised a number of questions as well. They provided a legal assessment of the bill at the request of the Ministry of Justice. According to them, if today lobbying in Kazakhstan has no legal guarantees of its inviolability and operates with a certain degree of risk, after the adoption of such a law the lobbyists will be given absolute freedom.

"The lobbyists will hold open meetings and talks with the legislators. As for the counter obligations, which include payment for services after the promoted law is adopted, they will nevertheless be kept secret, as it often happens today," the research review says.

Despite numerous questions, the MPs agreed to consider the bill. They admit, however, the document may either be changed significantly in the review process or repeat the fate of its analogue from one decade ago.

Today, lobbying has become an intrinsic part of the political system in most countries around the world. As a consequence, numerous organizations representing commercial interests, medical interests,



If approved by the Mazhilis and passed by the Senate a draft bill *On lobbying* will become a law which creates a legislative framework for regulation of lobbying practice in Kazakhstan

Photo by vesti.kz

educational groups, financial institutions, trade unions, and other professional associations, all maintain a strong presence in the lobbying industry.

Lobbyists play an important role in politics as they provide information about a variety of complex issues that lawmakers simply do not have the time to research on their own. They use time spent with legislators to explain the goals of the organizations which they represent and the obstacles elected officials face when dealing with issues, to clients.

Lobbying is regulated by law in the USA, United Kingdom, France, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania and Poland.

Also in the news:

- A major flood which broke a dam in the Almaty region Thursday night last week caused a major disaster as the whole village was wiped out and around 40 people died. The government sent in equipment to restore life and help the 3,000 evacuees. Law enforcement authorities also launched an investigation into the cause of the disaster, taking into custody local officials in charge.
- From March 15 through 17, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu is on a visit to Kazakhstan. He was received by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, parliamentary leaders and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev to discuss the potential for expanding contacts, which have been based on the cooperation agreement signed in April 2004. The Central Asian country is not a member of the Council of Europe and the honorable guest invited Kazakhstan to participate in the Assembly's activities as "partner for democracy".
- Bosnia and Herzegovina's Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj paid an official visit to Astana on



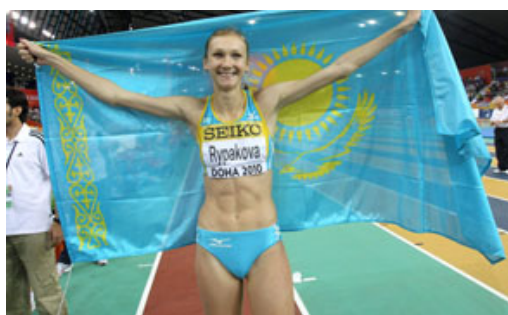
March 15 and 16 to discuss bilateral cooperation and interaction within international organizations, including the OSCE. Following his talks with his Kazakh counterpart Kanat Saudabayev, the Bosnian diplomat said his country supported the proposal to convene an OSCE Summit in Astana and confirmed his personal participation in the OSCE Informal ministerial meeting in Almaty this summer. Talking about the various aspects of bilateral economic cooperation, he invited Kazakh businesspeople to participate in a large

investment forum in Sarajevo coming next month.

- Diplomats from Astana and Washington discussed President Nursultan Nazarbayev's upcoming visit to the U.S. in April at the annual bilateral consultations between Kazakhstan and the United States of America. The Kazakh delegation comprising of representatives from government agencies was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Kairat Umarov and the U.S., by Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Robert Blake. The Parties reviewed the development of strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the United States and identified prospects of its further expansion.
- President Nazarbayev signed the law "On Ratification of the Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Foreign Adoptions". The purpose of the convention is to guarantee that foreign adoptions are in the best interests of the child and fully respect of his or her fundamental rights.
- The National Welfare Fund Samruk-Kazyna will hold additional bailout of the Alliance Bank. It will be realized in the amount of 129 billion tenge (KZT 150 = 1 USD) by purchasing newly issued common shares of the bank on total amount of 24 billion tenge and conversion claims to its bonds in preference shares amounting to 105 billion tenge. Bank lenders, who will convert their claims to the bank into shares, can participate in the bailout as well. As a result, shares of

Alliance Bank will be split with 67 percent going to the Samruk-Kazyna fund and 33 percent to lenders.

- The regional seminar of experts, hosted by Astana on Monday, discussed the preservation of populations of the seals on the Caspian Sea. Deputy Minister of Environment Eldana Sadvakasova of Kazakhstan proposed the littoral states to create a single protected area for the seals. Kazakhstan has already taken steps in this direction with part of its sector on the Caspian Sea designated as an area of protecting these unique marine creatures. According to the experts at the seminar, there is now less than 1,000 Caspian seals left, while a century ago their population exceeded one million.
- The Government of Japan decided to provide grants to four social projects to ensure human security in the framework of “Grass Roots” project, the Japanese Embassy in Astana informed. The program has supported non-governmental organizations, local authorities and medical organizations in Kazakhstan since 1997. In twelve years, the Government of Japan provided financial support through 46 projects totaling more than \$ 3 million.
- On March 14, Almaty hosted the Day of Japanese Culture. The guests of the festival were able to enjoy a concert of masters of traditional and contemporary arts of Japan, watch the demonstration of Japanese sword-fencing art and a karate master-class, as well as master the ikebana art, tea ceremony and visit the exhibition of national cuisine and Japanese dolls.



- Olga Rypakova of Kazakhstan won the gold medal in triple jump at the world indoors championships in Doha, Qatar, as she showed the world season’s best result and set her personal, national and Asian records. Olga managed to beat two-time world champion Yargelis Savinja from Cuba, who had to make do with a silver medal.

Things to Watch:

- On March 16 -17, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan visits Uzbekistan at the invitation of his counterpart Islam Karimov. President Nazarbayev will visit Tashkent for a constructive and substantive discussion of some key issues of cooperation, with the intention of developing joint solutions that are beneficial for the whole of Central Asia and the peoples living in the region.
- The Forum of German Investors is to be held in Kazakhstan on March 19. Its main objective is to arrange an open dialogue between representatives of state institutions of Kazakhstan and the businessmen from both countries.
- Kazakhstan will host Days of Culture of Saudi Arabia on June 1-5. Minister of Culture and Information of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz Khoja said that the Kingdom intends to organize an exhibition of the Koran translations as well as a photo exhibition dedicated to the Kaaba, the mosque of Prophet Mohammed and other Islamic monuments. In addition, Saudi Arabia will organize the concert of the country’s best artists.

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