



Final EUCON Project Event: www.eucon-project.eu

“Geopolitical Shifts in the Post-Soviet Region: Impacts on European Business and the Quest for Alternative Markets”

Public Forum, 10 October 2023, 18.00-21:00

Location: UAS BFI Vienna, Wohlmutterstrasse 22, 1010 Vienna, Room 304

The post-Soviet countries, which have not joined the European Union (EU), have become significant trade and business partners of the Common Market over the past three decades. They are receiving European exports and investments from the EU and supply the block with raw materials, most notably gas and oil. Cooperation with Russia has always played a special role in this context and created strong dependency of the European economy.

Economic and business relations have always been exposed to high political risks, these include state capture, clientelism, deficits in the rule of law, and unresolved territorial conflicts. Since 2014, increasing geopolitical tensions resulting inter alia in sanctions have added to the political risks. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine then became the final game-changer. New rounds of sanctions on an unprecedented scale and high reputational risks prompt some companies to withdraw from Russia, while recent surveys show that these are only a fraction of the companies with investments in Russia. For the other companies still operating in Russia, legal uncertainty increases in the Russian war economy (expropriations, pressure to sell, etc.).

While the geopolitical conflict with Russia, partly overlapping with rising Sino-American tension, takes forms of an economic war seriously affecting business operations of European enterprises, prospects for economic opportunities remain opaque. As long as Russia attacks Ukraine, the reconstruction of Ukraine cannot start, although business are already preparing for the end of the war. Other post-Soviet states in the southern Caucasus and Central Asia are trying to balance Russia's economic influence with stronger ties to Europe. This offers new market and investment opportunities as well as additional sources for energy and raw material supply. These countries include above all Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

Project title: “The EU and the EEU: Between Conflict and Competition, Convergence and Cooperation” (EUCON)

Project number: 620085-EPP-1-2020-1-AT-EPPJMO-NETWORK



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Against this background, there is great uncertainty among companies and policy-makers, prompting urgent questions: How will the geopolitical conflict develop? What role will Ukraine and other countries in Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia play for the European businesses in the future? How to deal with Russia and investments in the country? How promising are alternative markets in the South Caucasus and Central Asia? These are key questions that will be addressed during the panel discussion.

18:00	Opening Speeches: Prof. (FH) Dr. Andreas Breinbauer (Host), Dr. Hannes Meissner (Project Leader)
18:30	Keynote Speech: Prof. Dr. Holger Hestermeyer, International and European Union Law, Diplomatic Academy of Vienna
18:45-20:00	Panel discussion Prof. Dr. Daniel Göler (University of Passau) Anna Lazareva (University of Applied Sciences BFI Vienna) Dr. Tamás Matura (Corvinus University, Budapest) Dr. Albert Hayrapetyan (Armenian State University of Economics, Yerevan)
20:00	Reception with drinks and fingerfood

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