

The OSCE Academy in Bishkek: A Potential Yet to Be Unleashed

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Abstract

This paper traces the development of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek since its inception in 2002 and highlights its recent achievements against the background of a strained institutional and geopolitical context. After outlining the Academy's mission, structure, and activities, the paper analyses its programmatic successes in higher education, research, and internationalization. These are weighed against structural challenges, especially financial and institutional uncertainty, and current geopolitical crises in Eurasia. These challenges undermine any fragile achievements the Academy's faculty, students, and management have seen. The paper closes by providing a list of recommendations that address these issues.

Keywords

OSCE, Academy, Bishkek, education

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Introduction

This paper discusses major developments in one of Kyrgyzstan's leading institutions of higher education: the OSCE Academy. It argues that, thanks to the efforts of its previous leadership and international support, the OSCE Academy has grown into a chief regional platform for education and research on Central Asia. With that said, the institution remains vulnerable to internal and external challenges that have inhibited its strategic development. The paper seeks to alert gov-

ernments, international donors, and policymakers to this problematic constellation, as securing stable space for academic freedom in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia is essential to sustaining critical civil society and training future professionals in the region.

After providing a brief overview of the Academy's history, the paper outlines its mission, structure, and activities. It then charts its programmatic successes in higher education, research, and internationalization. These achievements are analyzed against the backdrop of structural challenges (in particular financial and institutional uncertainty), as well as the current geopolitical crises in Eurasia and

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the Academy's position within the OSCE. The paper shows that these challenges have begun to undermine the fragile achievements of the Academy's faculty, students, and management. The final section offers a list of recommendations for how to maintain the Academy's unique role and standing in the region.

Historical overview

The OSCE Academy in Bishkek was founded in 2002 upon the request of the Kyrgyz government, under Askar Akaev. The institute's primary aim was to educate and train future state professionals in Central Asia. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed, following which the OSCE tasked the Centre for OSCE Research (CORE), Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), to support the establishment of the Academy, which formally came into being in 2003. Following the resolution of initial challenges—such as securing the necessary facilities, staffing, and directorship, as well as the question of the Academy's legal status—the first participants of professional training programs were given the opportunity to study subjects such as human rights, conflict prevention, and media and democracy.¹ These training initiatives were supported by international partners such as the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), and later the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law.²

In 2004, a pilot course for a master's program in political science with a focus on Central Asia was implemented, soon becoming a core activity of the Academy.³ In thirteen months, up to thirty students from all five Central Asian countries and beyond were selected to attend lectures and seminars. The vision behind the program was to form a pool of professionals to take on regional transformation and development challenges and to promote the improvement of their societies.⁴ As a rule, a quota was set to allow five students from each Central Asian country to join the Academy. Due to variations in the number of applicants from each country, these quotas were regularly adjusted to allow for higher enrolment rates. Lectures were conducted by faculty from regional universities and partnering academic institutions in other OSCE participating States.⁵

The everyday programmatic activities of the OSCE Academy were managed by the director, and its institutional affairs were governed by the Board of Trustees, on which OSCE structures, members of the donor community, and representatives of the Central Asian participating States had a seat.⁶ A consultative body was created—referred to as the Academic Advisory Board—and charged with overseeing the quality of education and research.⁷ With regard to the institute's governance, a special role was given to the Head of the OSCE Program Office in Bishkek, who has served as the chair of the Board of Trustees since the Academy's inception.⁸ The OSCE Ambassador in Bishkek was also tasked with raising funds among OSCE participating States

and with lobbying for the Academy's interests in Vienna. Governance of the Academy's affairs was further institutionalized through the selection of staff at the OSCE Program Office in Bishkek to support the Academy in its financial and organizational dealings.

In the first years of its existence, the OSCE Academy managed to establish itself as a reference point for exchange between young Central Asian professionals. In 2006, it opened its doors to its first master's students from Afghanistan.⁹ Afghanistan had become an OSCE Partner for Co-operation in 2003, and the Academy assisted development processes in Afghanistan in the absence of an OSCE presence on the ground. This new link also corresponded with other efforts, namely at the American University in Central Asia, to support exchange between the Central Asian region and Afghanistan. Afghan students also joined the ranks of applicants to the new Master's program in Economic Governance and Development, launched in 2012.¹⁰ This newly created program was developed with the help of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), which has become one of the OSCE Academy's strongest supporters in terms of both academic input and financial assistance.¹¹

With the re-registration of the Academy's license and the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Kyrgyz authorities in 2016, the institute's standing continued to grow. Facilities for the Academy were provided by the Kyrgyz government free of charge and on an unlimited basis, and the educa-

tional and academic mission was likewise free of limitations.¹² The OSCE Academy was set to expand its activities and to embark on new collaborations.

The OSCE Academy in Bishkek as of 2024

The OSCE Academy in Bishkek, registered as a public foundation with a license to operate programs in higher education, runs its programmatic activities in line with Kyrgyz legislation. Its bachelor's and master's programs are aligned with educational standards approved by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education, and its master's diplomas are state degrees.¹³ At the same time, the Academy is governed by an extended Board of Trustees with up to eighteen members, following another change to its charter in 2020 and its re-registration in 2022. The scope of its co-operation with OSCE structures and institutions has also increased. The board includes not only the Head of the OSCE Program Office in Bishkek, who serves as chair, but also representatives of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center and the OSCE Chairpersonship-in-Office. Five seats are reserved for representatives of the Central Asian participating States, and eight are granted to those participating States who support the Academy financially. Two seats are filled by representatives of the Academy's academic partner institutions.¹⁴ Due to their long-standing support, these two seats are filled by representatives of NUPI and the GCSP.

The Kyrgyz Republic is represented on the Board of Trustees via the state's Mission to the OSCE in Vienna. More concretely, the Kyrgyz Mission represents the interests of the Ministry of Education, which formally occupies the seat on the Board of Trustees. This structure requires the close co-operation of the Academy, the OSCE Program Office in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Education in co-ordinating the implementation of the institute's activities and the development of new programs. Over the years, one of the challenges has been maintaining reliable communication channels, especially in times of geopolitical crisis or the deterioration of relations between Kyrgyzstan and the OSCE, as occurred in 2016 and 2017.¹⁵

In the last five years, the OSCE Academy has secured a wide range of supporters among OSCE participating States. This is largely reflected in financial support provided by the latter to the Academy. Alongside funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is implemented via multi-year collaborations between the Academy and NUPI, extrabudgetary pledges are regularly made by Finland, Switzerland, Austria, the United States, and Germany.¹⁶ While the OSCE's Chair traditionally makes a contribution, funding has also been secured from third parties, especially for the Academy's growing field of research. A large portion of the funding, allocated to cover running costs, still stems from the OSCE's Unified Budget (UB).¹⁷ Despite the OSCE's political stalemate on questions concerning the UB (in particu-

lar its "zero nominal growth policy"), the Academy's management has successfully lobbied for an increase in its share of the UB over the past six years and was able to increase its UB support from €180,000 in 2016 to €480,000 by 2020.¹⁸ Financially, the Academy has thus been on a good path, following years of uncertainty and a lack of financial sustainability despite early calls to work towards achieving it.¹⁹

Programmatic achievements of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek

By 2023, the OSCE Academy had succeeded in developing its core activity and had launched two new programs, a Master of Arts in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS) and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics.²⁰ The establishment of the MAHRS program followed extensive discussions at the Academy and in the OSCE over the launch of a third MA program in the field of law. What was broadly imagined as a correspondence with the three dimensions of OSCE engagement (the politico-military dimension, the economic and environmental dimension, and the human dimension) was also the result of repeated calls by students and the wider academic community to engage in the field of legal inquiry and to offer young professionals in Central Asia the chance to train in international law and human rights. As for the bachelor's program, it represents the Academy's first attempt to fill the gaps in regional undergraduate education in economics. In light of the decreasing quality and number of students enrolling in its Master of

Arts in Economic Governance and Development, the bachelor program was conceived by the Academy as a means of giving undergraduates the training they need to satisfy the rigorous selection criteria for entrance into the MA program.²¹

The new programs strengthen the OSCE Academy's educational engagement and outreach. By the end of 2023, 619 students had graduated from its master's programs. Most of these were from Kyrgyzstan, although Tajiks and Afghans formed a further significant share. Kazakh and Uzbek graduates formed a third major contingent, followed by thirty-one graduates from Turkmenistan.²² These alumni have been loyal supporters of their alma mater. The OSCE Academy runs a dedicated alumni program to promote community development, and every three years it invites its former graduates to visit Bishkek within the framework of an alumni reunion. The Academy's ties with its former students have significantly affected the former's standing in the wider region; many alumni have entered high-ranking positions in various professions and continue to promote the Academy and its benefits to Central Asia. Thanks not least to regular alumni conferences, chapter meetings, and special alumni teaching and travel grants, the Academy has kept in close contact with its former students and invites them to make their own contributions to the institute's development. In particular, the Junior Public Officers program has proven a valuable means by which alumni can engage within their home countries. Through Memoranda of Collaboration, the selected graduates are

invited to intern at Central Asian ministries of foreign affairs for up to six months and are given the opportunity to forge diplomatic careers.²³

Attractive internships at home and abroad, included in the mandatory curriculum of the master's programs, have been a strong motivation for students to apply. Students can intern in various OSCE structures, and academic partners such as NUPI, the GCSP, and the European Centre for Minority Issues offer sought-after places to conduct research and gain international professional experience. The Erasmus+ collaborations established in 2019 have provided students with an additional opportunity to spend a semester abroad and for the Academy's staff to engage in professional exchange.²⁴

Without a doubt, the Academy's greatest achievement has been the development of a long-awaited research capacity at the institute. From 2017 to 2022, additional third-party funding was secured, and the inclusion of the Academy's faculty in international research clusters was also pursued. The funding was designed to support scholars, mostly from the region, in conducting their field research and increasing their publications. New collaborations and active outreach to other academic institutions in the wider Central Asian region during this period laid the foundation for the Academy's emergence as a regional research platform and a safe space for free academic exchange in the social sciences.²⁵

Within this new regional platform, several research directions were established to examine important regional developments, such as the Belt and

Road Initiative's impact on Central Asia, Afghan-Central Asian relations, and the Central Asia Forecast. A large number of academic conferences and presentations were carried out during this period,²⁶ supported by the creation of various short- and long-term research positions at the OSCE Academy. These research activities have helped to boost the Academy's publications. Its flagship series, the Policy Papers (fully re-branded and transformed into short, analytical information pieces), has seen a steady rise in numbers, and new formats such as the Academy Papers (conference summaries), the Analytical Yearbook, and the Research Paper series have also been developed, allowing for a wider variety of analytical insights to be distributed to a growing audience interested in developments in Central Asia.²⁷ A big step has been the launch of the Springer publication series—a joint effort by the Academy and steered by former German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Prof. Dr. Anja Mihr—which has resulted in numerous collective volumes and a few monographs, all of which have helped to raise the Academy's visibility.²⁸

Structural challenges

If the OSCE Academy is to achieve financial and institutional sustainability—a prerequisite for growth in its programmatic and research activities—several structural challenges must be addressed. These challenges are largely financial, administrative, and political in nature. Financial sustainability has regularly been spoken of by executives and governing

bodies alike but has never actually been achieved.²⁹ Extrabudgetary pledges by participating State donors are often one-time actions and rarely allow for planning beyond one to two years. The Unified Budget contribution has been increased, yet it remains to be seen whether a further increase is possible given the deadlock in which the OSCE presently finds itself. Third-party funding has been the most stable of all sources, with NUPI's contributions covering the three- to four-year program periods.³⁰ The EU funding for the new MAHRS program, directly allocated to the Academy via its partner, the Venice-based Global Campus of Human Rights, follows similar implementation cycles and allows for mid-term planning.³¹ Thus, the Academy's financial sustainability will likely remain a matter of wishful thinking given that the bulk of its funding is from OSCE participating States, whose funding decisions for OSCE projects (of which the OSCE Academy is but one among many) are politically motivated.

Perhaps more complicated against this background is the difficulty of administering funding and flexibly allocating it according to actual needs. The Academy, situated in a highly volatile region, must often shift its focus on an ad hoc basis, re-directing funds from one activity to another and ensuring that they remain free of overly strict conditions. This has proved problematic. Donors often require that their funds be directed toward activities rather than overhead costs, and the cross-financing of different sources of funding requires additional approval.³² This has remained a challenge for the

Academy and other public foundations working in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia in general. State and public regulations often lack clarity, and procedures such as obtaining visas for faculty and students require the increased mobilization of in-house capacities, stretching actual resources thin in the process.

The Academy has been affected by these structural challenges in many ways. Staff numbers have been extremely low, for example, and do not match the burgeoning scope of the activities pursued. The creation of the Research and Training Unit in 2019 and the subsequent merger of the MA programs' management were key restructuring developments, without which the successes achieved in both fields of activity would likely have been impossible. All this required additional staffing, which was hard to come by given the constant pressure to cut overhead costs and reduce spending on staff.

This challenge has grown in recent years with the Academy's attempt to create full-time positions for lecturers in order to anchor research, teaching, and student supervision at the institute. Previously, faculty were employed on a short-term basis and through visiting fellowships, which impeded lasting engagement with the Academy's students and activities. Following complaints from students and professors alike, and with the aim of fostering research capacity, the first full-time teaching and research positions were created in 2018 and 2019.³³ This unprecedented effort at further institutionalization contributed to making

the Academy a place of academic excellence.

With more personnel, scholars, and young researchers joining the Academy, however, physical space has become a problem. International students have been asking for further support to find housing, and the addition of new programs means that more classrooms are required.³⁴ The Academy has been unable to garner the necessary support from the Kyrgyz government to find a lasting solution. Equally tricky has been the government's response to the Academy's plea for help with student visas and registration. Obtaining visas for Afghan students at the time of the Taliban's takeover of power was particularly challenging.³⁵ Registration was also problematic for students who rented accommodations that did not come with the mandatory residency documentation. Navigating these everyday legal requirements, the associated burden of which is not properly reflected in the Academy's budget, has been a constant source of stress. Most foreign donors have failed to grasp the intricacies of these recurring challenges.³⁶

Another critical challenge has been the historical problem of extended interregnums linked to uncertainty regarding the directorship of the Academy and its consequences for institutional operation and development. Without clarity on how the OSCE arranges such appointments, the result will remain a protracted process that leaves the institution headless for lengthy periods of time. The previous interregnum in 2023 suspended the Academy's many projects and plans for fourteen months, to the detriment of the

Academy's fragile achievements, which will be discussed below. Once finally appointed, the new director held the position for only six months, from February to July 2024. As of August 2024, the position is filled on a temporary basis, reflecting the Academy's institutional unsustainability.

The political environment in Kyrgyzstan and the wider Central Asia region

Most of these structural challenges would not put such stress on the Academy and its community if it were not for the OSCE's vulnerability to (geo)political turbulences that have affected its operations. While the COVID-19 pandemic imposed constraints that all institutions had to manage, the Academy, despite its impressive efforts to switch to online forms of teaching and learning, had to work harder to integrate all enrolled students in the face of unreliable internet access in many parts of the region and the sporadic availability of electricity in Afghanistan.³⁷

The political fallout from the pandemic and the general increase in geopolitical tensions have prompted an even greater call for adaptive maneuvers. While the third Kyrgyz revolution in October 2020 did not have an immediate impact on the Academy's activities, the violent conflict on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in April 2021 and September 2022 and the subsequent travel restrictions have caused disruptions. Tajik students who sought to leave Kyrgyz territory could do so only via one open land corridor in the south of the country, and

the enrolment of new Tajik students was largely impossible. Further, the Taliban takeover in the summer of 2021 jeopardized the Academy's outreach to Afghan students and brought all existing collaborations with Afghan partners—including co-operation with the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs—to an abrupt end.³⁸

Domestic political developments in five Central Asian states have not helped the Academy's cause. Application numbers for Uzbek students have persistently remained below their actual potential, and applications from Turkmenistan have never exceeded single digits. Creeping authoritarianism throughout the region has had direct implications for the Academy's activities. The closure of political systems has made it difficult for the Academy to spread its message, substantiate collaborations, and develop its full outreach to the wider Central Asia region, which it is meant to be serving. Challenges to academic freedom—including self-censorship by students and faculty as a result of the political environment—remain a real concern.

Last but not least, Russia's war against Ukraine has put the OSCE in deadlock. The 2023 Ministerial Council saw the extension of the chief positions (including that of the General Secretary) for only nine months rather than the usual three years, and progress on the budget, which must be renewed annually, has been null.³⁹ These organizational constraints have added to the political situation, in which every action is measured against its repercussions for the ongoing war in Ukraine. The Central Asian states' attempt at geopolitical balancing

and a multi-vector foreign policy has certainly paid off for the countries (and the regimes), yet it led to the strict surveillance of public debates in the region. Rapidly changing geopolitical constellations have led to an increase in security apparatuses across the region who survey public spaces for “sensitive” topics such as Chinese and Russian influence and decolonization—an environment that is not overly conducive to academic freedom and the free exchange of opinions. Pressure on academic freedom across educational institutions has been particularly felt during interregnum periods, when these institutions are especially vulnerable.

A unique but unrealized opportunity

Against the background of these structural challenges and a difficult political environment, the Academy continues to present an opportunity for the wider academic community in Central Asia. As a platform where Central Asians can connect to each other and to a wider group of partners and as a space to engage in a growing range of research projects, the Academy has begun to fill a gap in the academic landscape of the region. For too long, Central Asian scholars have been stripped of the opportunity to come together on their own terms and to decide on agendas for research and debate without external pressure. The OSCE Academy, although funded and supported by Western donors and in some regards shaped by external educational and academic agendas, nevertheless offers young

scholars from the region (or with an interest in the region) the opportunity to engage in serious discussion of what constitutes an original research program in and for Central Asia.

Increased collaboration with academic institutions in the region has allowed for the formation of a budding network that, if maintained, will promote lasting exchange among the Central Asian academic community. Thus far, such exchange has only taken place in the form of strategic think tank roundtables or within the framework of regional conferences held by the Central Eurasian Studies Society and the European Society for Central Asian Studies. Although such meetings have undoubtedly been stimulating, the formation of a genuine Central Asian association of social scientists, in whatever format, would be a welcome development. The growing network created by the OSCE Academy could serve as the backbone of such an initiative. The consortium of regional partners of the recently launched MAHRS is a further step in this direction.

The question remains whether the OSCE Academy can deliver on these promises. Its failure to realize earlier plans to establish two crucial research clusters/centers (focused on the Belt and Road Initiative and Chinese affairs in Central Asia in general, on the one hand, and Afghan security and development, on the other) did not bode well for the Academy and its researchers.⁴⁰ Such centers/clusters would have drawn many more resources and researchers to study two significant developments in the region. The Afghan Research Centre in

particular would have been a flagship initiative for the OSCE Academy, reflecting the region's need for knowledge regarding the situation in southern Central Asia and communication with Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.⁴¹ Such a step would also have provided valuable support to the Afghan alumni of the Academy, who, with their extended contacts in the country and ideas for feasible research projects, would have been best positioned to staff such a center. Given the urgent need to identify avenues by which Western donors can assist young Afghan women and men, such a center would have easily secured the means necessary for its operation, especially since it had the support of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴²

The discontinuation of research fellowship programs has further undermined earlier efforts to make the Academy a sustainable research platform.⁴³ The recurrent calls for applications for full-time positions suggests that the Academy can no longer fill the positions required to maintain its in-house teaching capacities.⁴⁴ Most of the previous full-time lecturers have already left the OSCE Academy, the only remaining full-time presence being the DAAD-funded visiting professorship.

A further cause for concern is decreasing support for publications. While in 2023 the Academy was still engaged in projects initiated in previous years, by the end of that year publications had almost ground to a standstill, and only one contribution to the Springer series was published in the first four months of 2024 (in January 2024).⁴⁵ This repre-

sented a serious drop in the Academy's rankings, with implications for its visibility and international collaborations. Unless the new management and governing bodies of the OSCE Academy can remedy the problems outlined here, the Academy risks becoming just another teaching facility among many others, losing its initial appeal to students and scholars alike and failing in its charter-enshrined mission to provide a Central Asian platform for dialogue.⁴⁶ Against the background of the hard work that has already been accomplished, this would be a regrettable outcome.

Recommendations

Greater effort should be made to engage in regular political dialogue with the Kyrgyz government and the governments of other Central Asian states in order to strengthen the institution's regional roots. The OSCE missions present in Central Asia can contribute to this process, as their heads could be more involved in oversight over the Academy's affairs. Both elements would seem to be essential to the Academy's endeavor to attract the best applicants from all of the countries in the region in sufficient numbers. With respect to the issue of financial sustainability, new modes of funding allocation must be developed to grant the Academy the autonomy to decide how best to adapt to a changing environment.

With regard to the Academy's human resources, it is important to reestablish the former full-time lecturer and researcher positions. A permanent faculty

is not only indispensable to the Academy's normal functioning but also key to its interest in further rooting itself in the region and to internationalization. In the past, full-time scholars afforded the Academy unprecedented outreach in Central Asia and beyond by increasing in-house publications and visibility at conferences and policy circles. They contributed to successful fundraising activities and research development, including the establishment of new PhD and postdoctoral positions, and played an important role in securing EU grants. The Academy has yet to reach its full potential when it comes to boosting its budget and increasing its attractiveness to new and former students. It is only by restoring this institutional capacity that the Academy will be able to achieve and extend its developmental goals.

Success in this regard will require mobilizing additional financial resources. The OSCE Academy operates in a fast-growing higher education institution environment, where quality candidates, especially from the wider Central Asia region, too often choose to work for better-paying international organizations, if not for academic institutions that offer competitive salaries and attractive packages. The Academy and its supervisory bodies should consider developing a research strategy, a financial plan to support it, and an academic council to steer it. The revival of plans for focus projects on Afghanistan and the Belt and Road Initiative could serve such a purpose, as both projects continue to be highly relevant to the region. Other important areas include climate and water security and

intra-regional co-operation, especially in trade and transport connectivity.

Finally, with a view to maintaining the Academy's unique position in the region, it is crucial to further develop and widen its academic networks. Here, the alumni community is a chief resource that has yet to be fully exploited. The annual alumni conference should be transformed into an actual platform for progressive regional dialogue, where scholars and policymakers from Central Asia can discuss the regional agenda. As mentioned above, such a platform is needed in the region, and its absence has prevented the development of a Central Asian scholarly community and a sense of ownership of the regional agenda. The OSCE Academy still has the potential to bring such a platform into being, provided its scattered intellectual capital, networks, and resources can be brought together and mobilized.

Notes

- 1 On the early period of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, see Frank Evers, "A New Think-Tank for the OSCE and Central Asia: Establishing the OSCE Academy in Bishkek," in *OSCE Yearbook 2003*, ed. IFSH (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2004), <https://ifsh.de/file-CORE/documents/yearbook/english/03/Evers.pdf>; Annette Krämer, "The OSCE Academy in Bishkek," in *OSCE Yearbook 2004*, ed. IFSH (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005), <https://ifsh.de/file-CORE/documents/yearbook/english/04/Kraemer.pdf>
- 2 See, for example, OSCE Academy in Bishkek, "Newsletter No 4," September 2005, <https://osce-academy.net/upload/>

- journal/files/1369806999_99442600.pdf; OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Newsletter,” https://osce-academy.net/upload/journal/files/1369801722_38455700.pdf
- 3 For more details on the early developments, see the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Donor Report: Annual Program (Bishkek: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, 2006), https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/Donor_Report_AP_2006.pdf
- 4 On strategy and goals, see Evers, cited above (Note 1), 341–42.
- 5 This rule still applies; see OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Annual Report 2023 (Bishkek: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, 2024), 11–15, <https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/AR2023.pdf>
- 6 See OSCE, “Meeting of the OSCE Academy Board of Trustees,” <https://www.osce.org/bishkek/62106>
- 7 See Evers, cited above (Note 1), 343.
- 8 See the introductions by OSCE heads of missions in the annual reports by the OSCE Academy, for example OSCE Academy in Bishkek, cited above (Note 3), and OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Annual Report 2014 (Bishkek: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, 2015), <https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/AnnualReport14.pdf>
- 9 See OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Annual Program 2008 (Bishkek: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, 2009), 6, https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/Annual_Program_2008_brochure.pdf
- 10 For an overview of the recent history, see OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “History of the Academy,” <https://www.osce-academy.net/en/about/history/>
- 11 See Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, “Cooperation between the OSCE Academy and NUPI,” <https://www.nupi.no/en/projects-centers/cooperation-between-the-osce-academy-and-nupi>
- 12 See Bermet Sarlykova and Pal Dunay, “The OSCE Academy in Bishkek,” *Security Community*, no. 2 (2016): 31.
- 13 See, for example, the state license for the MA in politics and security program: Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic. License to conduct specialized education No LD180000049 [Кыргыз Республикасынын Билим Бериу жана Илим Министерлиги. Кесиптик билим беруу тармагында билим беруу ишмердуулугун жүргүзүүгө беруучу лицензия No LD180000049], https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/License_PS.pdf
- 14 See Charter of the Public Foundation: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, registered June 8, 2022, https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/OSCE_AiB_Charter_Eng.pdf
- 15 See Vesti.kg, “Will the OSCE Center Remain in Kyrgyzstan?” [Останется ли Центр ОБСЕ в Кыргызстане?], January 10, 2017, <https://vesti.kg/politika/item/44135-ostanetsya-li-tsentr-obse-v-kyrgyzstane?.html>
- 16 See references to donors in the annual reports, for example OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Annual Report 2021 (Bishkek: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, 2022), 74, [https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/AR2021\(31.05.22\).pdf](https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/AR2021(31.05.22).pdf)
- 17 OSCE Academy in Bishkek, cited above (Note 16).
- 18 See presentations to the Board of Trustees with budget projections: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Presented to the Board of Trustees, Vienna, 26 May 2017,” <https://www.osce-academy.net/upload/file/BoT20170526.pptx>; OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Meeting of the Board of Trustees, Bishkek/Vienna (Zoom), 22.07.2020,” https://www.osce-academy.net/upload/file/20200722_PPT_OSCE_Academy_Final.pptx
- 19 See Krämer, cited above (Note 1), 474.
- 20 See OSCE Academy in Bishkek, cited above (Note 5); the BA program was launched in 2022.
- 21 See the enrollment numbers presented to the Board of Trustees on June 23, 2021: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Board

- of Trustees Meeting, Bishkek/Vienna (Zoom), 23.06.2021,” https://www.osce-academy.net/upload/file/20210623_PPT_BoT_OSCE-Academy.pdf
- 22 See OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Board of Trustees Meeting, Vienna, 14.11.2023,” https://www.osce-academy.net/upload/file/20231114_PPT_BoT_OSCE-Academy_web_final.pdf
- 23 For more information on the OSCE Academy’s alumni events and activities, see the annually published *SalamAlum* magazine, available at: <https://osce-academy.net/en/alumni/alum/>
- 24 See OSCE Academy in Bishkek, cited above (Note 16), 8–10.
- 25 See OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Meeting of the Board of Trustees, Bishkek/Vienna (Zoom), 09.12.2020,” https://www.osce-academy.net/upload/file/20201209_PPT_BoT_OSCE-Academy.pptx; OSCE Academy in Bishkek, cited above (Note 21).
- 26 For the period of 2022, for example, see the presentation to the Board of Trustees on November 28, 2022: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Board of Trustees Meeting, Bishkek/Vienna (Zoom), 28.11.2022,” https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/20221128_PPT_BoT_OSCE-Academy.pdf
- 27 See the overview provided on the OSCE Academy’s website: OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Publications,” <https://osce-academy.net/en/research/publication/>
- 28 OSCE Academy in Bishkek, cited above (Note 27).
- 29 See Krämer, cited above (Note 1), 474.
- 30 Compare the budget figures presented in the annual reports, which can be found on the OSCE Academy’s website: <https://osce-academy.net/en/about/annualreports/>
- 31 See OSCE Academy in Bishkek, cited above (Note 5).
- 32 Discussion with an OSCE employee, November 2023.
- 33 The author was included as a member of the selection commission responsible for filling the first full-time positions at the OSCE Academy in 2018.
- 34 Discussions with students in the period from 2023 to 2024.
- 35 Discussions with Afghan alumni and an OSCE Academy employee, 2024.
- 36 Informal talks with donors present in Bishkek in the period from 2023 to 2024.
- 37 The author was employed as a teaching fellow at the OSCE Academy at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and experienced these challenges first-hand.
- 38 Discussions with OSCE Academy students and faculty, Bishkek, May 2023.
- 39 See OSCE, Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/23, Extension of the Appointment of the OSCE Secretary General, MC.DEC/3/23 (Skopje: December 1, 2023), <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/5/560001.pdf>
- 40 Interviews with researchers formerly affiliated with the OSCE Academy, online and in person, May and September 2023.
- 41 Discussion with OSCE Academy employee, online, March 2024.
- 42 Informal talks with employees of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023.
- 43 For information on fellowships, see OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Fellowship Programmes,” <https://www.osce-academy.net/en/research/fellowships/>
- 44 See the repeated calls for applications in the monthly newsletter of the OSCE Academy, which can be accessed at: <https://mailchi.mp/osce-academy/osce-academy-newsletter-february2024-17382821?e=e1c38ec45>
- 45 See OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “Academy Policy Briefs,” <https://osce-academy.net/en/research/publication/policy-briefs/>
- 46 See Charter of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, cited above (Note 14), Article 3.2.

