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Answer given by Mr Piebalgs
on behalf of the Commission
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Health and education have been identified as priority areas for EU co-operation with Uzbekistan.

The Uzbekistan Annual Action Programme 2010, part 1, Commission Decision C(2010)4850–PE/2010/4327 dated 14 July 2010 for a total amount of EUR 4,200,000 comprises two actions, namely the “Further Strengthening of the Bi-Cameral Parliamentary System and Networking with Regional Assemblies” and the “Institutional Building and Partnership Programme”.

The Institution Building Partnership Programme (IBPP) is focused on the support for the provision of social services to vulnerable groups of the population, notably in the area of health, education, women entrepreneurship, sustainable use of natural resources. The programme is based on the partnership between Uzbek organizations and local authorities and EU/international NGOs and it is implemented through Calls for proposals.

In the Annual Action Programme 2010 for Uzbekistan, part 2, Commission (EC) Decision C(2010)9125-PE/21010/8715 of 17 December 2010 covers a total amount of EUR 13,400,000. Under this Decision, one project (EUR 3.7 millions) is dedicated to support the integration of Disabled Children into the Uzbek primary education system.

The project does not involve providing EU financial support to the Uzbek authorities or government structures. The project will provide targeted technical assistance and European know-how in the area of inclusive education. The technical assistance will take the form of training, didactic material, study programmes, exposure to EU experience, special equipment for schools, etc. In order to ensure an effective implementation, the independent expert will work with the relevant national entities in the inclusive education area indicated by the Uzbek government, including the Ministry of Public Education, the Ministry of Health and the National Centre for Social Adaptation of Children with Special Needs (NCSAC). The NCSAC works directly under the Cabinet and is thus the key partner to translate policy recommendations on inclusive education into appropriate legislation and action plans.

The project will be implemented under centralised management, meaning that all expenditure will require prior approval by the Commission.

However, this project has not yet started. According to standard EU rules, the first step regarding a contract to implement this project will be the selection of an independent EU expert through a call for tender at the end of 2011.

The detailed activities scheduled in the co-operation programme will be stipulated in the specific terms of reference and, in the event that the agreed work-plan is not followed or expected results not delivered, the project can be stopped and unused funds returned to the budgetary authority.

The Establishment Agreement for opening an EU Delegation in Uzbekistan was signed in January 2011. The EEAS is proceeding with the usual steps for opening a full-fledged Delegation in Tashkent possibly by the end of 2011. A Chargé d’Affaires nominated by the EU has already taken up his post as of May 2011.