

# Central Asia Education Platform NEWSLETTER

Newsletter #8 October 2017

A newsletter published by CAEP — a project funded by the European Union's Programme for Central Asia

## Editorial

Dear colleagues,

This newsletter focuses on one of the priority topics in CAEP: National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF).

The final Peer Learning (PL) meeting on NQF was held last month in Riga; we would like to express our gratitude to the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science for hosting the event, the Academic Information Centre for their excellent contribution and the State Education Development Agency for all their assistance during the PL cycle.

These events have been an excellent example of in-depth exchange of expertise on one of the most complex issues in education: how to tackle setting up a coherent qualifications system, with an NQF at its centre.

Participants included experts from EU member states, notably Latvia, Poland, Estonia and Lithuania; from the European Training Foundation (ETF); and from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The final meeting also saw the participation of a delegation from the World Bank "Skills and Jobs" project team in Kazakhstan; showcasing the synergies that can be created among donor-funded projects focusing on the same areas of reform. Please see the following article for more details on the outcomes of these meetings.

September and October have been busy months for CAEP; in September, we organized a two-day National Meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on NQF and QAA, and this month, in close cooperation with ETF, we concluded the working group on



"Data collection methodologies and evidence based policy making in education" in Torino, Italy. Both events will be covered in the December newsletter.

CAEP experts are currently starting work on a review of best practice in Central Asia and the EU on collaboration between the VET and HE sectors and employers to enhance graduate employability. The results of this stock-taking report will feed into the CAEP Regional Conference on "*Cooperation between Employers and VET and HE institutions*". This event, which was due to be held in November in Warsaw, Poland, has now been postponed at the request of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education and will take place in the first quarter of 2018.

Last but not least, we are delighted to inform our readers that the foreseen extension of CAEP until March 2019 is well on track. Anticipated activities are based on the Astana Declaration adopted in June and will address the following additional topics through

regional workshops, face-to-face meetings and webinars; gender equality in education, innovative teaching methodologies, the continuation of the Working Group on "Evidence based policy making to strengthen employability", models of financing education, and the role of education in preventing violent extremism.

We will keep you informed as plans are finalised and look forward to continuing our mutual cooperation.

Christian Wagner  
CAEP Team Leader

### Also in this issue:

Third and final Peer Learning on NQF meeting held in Riga



Revision of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)



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**Peer Learning events on National Qualifications Frameworks reach their conclusion.**

The general aim of Peer Learning (PLA) within CAEP 2 is to contribute to shaping and supporting regional collaboration between the Central Asia countries, in order to accelerate national policy development and implementation as well as sharing best practice and developing a regional mutually-trusting team.

Peer Learning is based on the principle that each participant has something to learn and something to give. Learning methods are intrinsically participative and expert input facilitates rather than defines the content of learning that is agreed in the process according to emerging needs.

Following the Riga Ministerial Conference in June 2015, two macro-themes were identified for a series of Peer learning activities within the CAEP framework: National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) and Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA).

The activities are designed to take the form of three 2-day seminars with participants from each of the Central Asia countries as well as HE and VET experts, delegates from EU member states and the CAEP team.



The first series, on NQF, has now reached a successful conclusion with the third and final seminar taking place in Riga.

The central focus of the seminars has been the analysis of current and innovative practices in each participant country (and in the EU) according to the four themes identified as priorities for NQF in the previous phases of CAEP activities, including National Meetings on NQF:

1. Integration of NQFs into the existing systems of qualifications;
2. Recognition and certification of Learning Outcomes from any form of learning;
3. Involving the world of work in defining, maintaining and assessing qualifications;
4. Alignment and self-certification of national qualifications to international Qualification Frameworks.

The kick-off meeting took place in Istanbul in February 2017. Current developments in NQF in both the EU and the CA countries were presented and discussed and the working approach for the peer learning activities was set.

This was followed by a second meeting in April in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in which the themes discussed were how to successfully involve stakeholders in the implementation of NQF and the methods and tools that can be used to validate learning outcomes achieved through non-formal and informal learning.

Each country team has been encouraged to work in-country between the PL meetings to accompany the PL regional exercise. Coordination Meetings using Skype were held on a monthly basis to keep track of project developments as well as to design and develop common activities of a trans-national nature; for example, a pilot webinar was organised on "Formulating Study Programmes in Terms of Learning Outcomes", attended by over 40 Kazakh participants and three EU experts in a total of five different locations. The creation of a Facebook Group to accompany the PL activities and extend the outreach of potential users has been proposed and implemented by the Kazakhstan Team; most of the discussion and exchange of materials is now taking place in Russian.

The third and final meeting of the Peer Learning Group took place in Riga, Latvia on 18 and 19 September, hosted by the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science, and opened by the State Secretary, Ms Liga Lejina.

This final event in the series resulted in an excellent opportunity to consider options for further collaboration. This positive outcome was due to, amongst



other factors, the active engagement of the participants; four delegations from Central Asia countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan); a Polish delegation; the hosts, the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science and the Academic Information Centre of Latvia; experts from Estonia and Lithuania; the European Training Foundation (ETF) and a delegation from the World Bank project team in Kazakhstan.

Participants compared how national coordination structures for NQFs have developed in different countries, and a self-assessment exercise, based on the ETF Toolkit, was conducted by each national delegation to identify common challenges. The use of level descriptors was explored, the EQF Advisory Horizontal Comparison project was presented, and representatives compared different ways of validating and recognising learning outcomes achieved through informal and non-formal learning.

As this was the final event in the series, substantial time was devoted to formulating a set of policy recommendations to be shared with national Ministries and institutions linked to NQF, especially concerning potential follow up activities:

- An overarching proposal was to set up a Working Group (WG) to compare in detail the existing systems and qualifications in place in the four Central Asia countries, as a direct follow-up of the CAEP Peer Learning exercise;
- This WG should integrate the efforts, results and future developments of CAEP and the ETF NQFs platform and support the creation of a CA network of experts on qualifications to:



1. Map existing types of qualifications and awarding procedures in CA Countries;
2. Develop new pilot professional and educational standards;
3. Facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications among the CA Countries;
4. Support the self-assessment of qualification systems using the ETF Toolkit;
5. Organise national workshops with employers on validation of learning outcomes of informal learning;
6. Harmonise key terms of the CA qualification systems on the basis of European experience.

- With continued light support (e.g. webinars and possibly a peer review meeting) from the CAEP team and EU experts, ownership of the process would pass to the Central Asia countries themselves. The WG would work with an agenda consensually defined by the national teams; and would stimulate progress at national level by feeding in relevant results.

Please see the CAEP website for a full report on this third meeting:  
<http://www.caep-project.org/third-peer-learning-group-event-on-national-qualification-frameworks-held-in-riga/>

Now that the first series of Peer Learning activities has come to an end, a final report will be drafted by the CAEP Team, presenting both the results of the exercise (learning outcomes, policy advice produced, new evidence collected, team work practice, etc.) and the lessons learnt during the process.

However, it can already be firmly stated that the positive working environment created in the Peer Learning exercise has increased not only the level of confidence among the teams, but also the awareness of the long-term benefit of continued cooperation.

It is hoped that the advantages of this working method will be equally felt in the next series of Peer Learning activities, on Quality Assurance and Accreditation, due to commence in December.

**Interview with Marat Issabekov, National Chamber of Entrepreneurs (NCE) "Atameken", Kazakhstan**



Following the Second PL meeting on NQF in April in Kyrgyzstan, we asked Marat Issabekov to tell us how the CAEP workshops are helping influence NQF developments in Kazakhstan.

#### **How relevant is the topic of the seminar?**

CAEP workshops have a high degree of relevance to the current situation in Kazakhstan as far as the formation of a qualifications system is concerned; through the qualified assistance of European experts, the existing small amount of in-country experience can be analysed and ways of overcoming difficulties can be found.

#### **How do the activities of CAEP meet the goals and objectives of National Chamber of Entrepreneurs (NCE) "Atameken"?**

NCE is included in the system of qualifications of Kazakhstan; it contributes to the adoption of professional standards and promotes the development of these standards by employers and organises the creation of qualifications and qualification assessment systems in the sectors. NCE participates in the working group and the loan project committee of a large World Bank project, which requires additional knowledge and competencies in the field of qualifications frameworks on from NCE staff. All normative documents on NQF are to be agreed with the Chamber. Therefore, all CAEP activities – at national, regional and international level - support NCE experts to develop relevant competencies to formulate recommendations in the current reform settings. We consider it very useful for Kazakhstan and CAEP to work more closely together, not only through the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan.

For example, after a CAEP seminar in Riga, NCE included a map of professional qualifications into the development of methodology of the sectoral qualifications framework, based on Latvia's experience.

#### **How do workshops organized by CAEP influence the reforms of education in Kazakhstan?**

CAEP seminars help employers, through the NCE, to formulate requirements for education through setting of professional standards, developing the framework of qualifications and creating a sector-based assessment of qualifications (certification). NCE seminars then promote and activate the learning process in workplaces and in the labour sphere (work-based learning), thereby nurturing qualifications among employers.

#### **How can the experience of the EU member states be used in the process of developing and implementing the NQF in Kazakhstan?**

The situation in Kazakhstan is characterized by a still insufficient number of NQF experts as well as a low level of preparedness for these demanding tasks. The main direction for using the experience of EU countries is in selecting and training future experts and stakeholders in Kazakhstan on NQF issues. It is desirable that these efforts are directed "bottom-up", and not "top-down", since the working infrastructure of the NQF in Kazakhstan is only in its initial stages. We need to interact directly with experts from companies and industries as well as individual teams elaborating professional standards.

**Council adopts revision of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**



This summer, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of the European Union adopted the revision of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning.



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The purpose of the EQF is to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of people's qualifications in Europe. The EQF was originally created in 2008 as a common reference framework of eight European generic levels of learning, which serves as "translation grid" between national qualifications systems.

The adoption of the revision ensures the continuity as well as a further deepening of the EQF so it can keep up with future developments.

The wider objectives of the recommendation are to contribute to modernizing education and training systems and to increase the employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners. It also aims to better link formal, non-formal and informal learning and support the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings.

All types and levels of qualifications are covered, including qualifications from higher education, vocational education and training and general education, but also qualifications awarded by the private sector and international sector organisations.

Level descriptors are used to define the 8 levels within the EQF, based on learning outcomes, with a third element now being added; **Responsibility and Autonomy** defines the ability of the learner to apply the **Knowledge** and **Skills** they have gained autonomously and with responsibility.

The new revision recommends that Members States:

- Use the EQF to reference their National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) or System to, using **criteria** and procedures developed by the EQF Advisory Group;

- Ensure all qualifications with an EQF level are in accordance with common principles for **quality assurance**;

- Promote links between **credit systems** and NQF using common principles on credit systems;

- Ensure all **documentation** relating to qualifications refers to the appropriate EQF level;

- Make the results of the referencing process **publicly available** using specified data fields.

The Council's also recommends that the Commission:

- Support consistency in the further implementation of the EQF by Member States by **comparing and discussing methodologies**;

- Support the setting up of voluntary procedures on the **levelling of international qualifications**;

- Develop **guidance for communicating the EQF**;

- Set up **peer learning** and best practice exchange between the Member States;

- Explore possibilities for the development and application of criteria and procedures to enable the **comparison of third countries' national and regional qualifications** frameworks to the EQF.

The full Council revision can be found in the official journal of the European Union at:

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01))

## "Save the date": Next CAEP events

**4-6 December, 2017**

*Peer Learning QA and Accreditation Kick-off Meeting  
Istanbul, Turkey*

**1st Quarter, 2018**

*Regional Conference on "Cooperation between  
Employers and VET and HE institutions"  
Warsaw, Poland.*

## In the next CAEP Newsletter issue #9 (December 2017):

1. National Meetings on NQF and QA in  
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

2. Meeting of Working Group on Data Collection  
Methodologies in Torino, Italy

3. Kick-off Meeting for Peer Learning on QA and  
Accreditation

4. Country focus Uzbekistan

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