

# Central Asia Education Platform NEWSLETTER

Newsletter #9 January 2018

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

## Editorial

Dear colleagues,

We are delighted to confirm that the CAEP project extension until March 2019 has been officially agreed and a range of activities are now being planned in line with the Astana Declaration agreed at the Second Ministerial Meeting in June last year.

2017 was a busy year for the project with a total of 15 dialogue forums implemented, attended by over 500 representatives from ministries of education and labour, affiliated agencies, HE and VET institutions, chambers and other business associations, education practitioners and experts from Central Asia countries and EU Member States. These included:

- The Second Meeting of Ministers for Education of the CA countries and the EU in Astana in June
- A Regional Conference on "Quality Assurance and Accreditation in HE and VET"
- Three Peer Learning Meetings on National Qualification Frameworks (NQF)
- A Peer Learning Meeting on Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA)
- Three Working Group meetings on data collection methodologies
- Four National Meetings on Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA)

In order to continue the extensive dialogue and cooperation that has taken place so far and address the issues highlighted in the Astana Declaration, the following activities are currently being planned for 2018/19:

- An extension of the Working Group on "Evidence-based policy making" with two meetings planned to address



the challenge of "Employability – the transition from education to work"

- Three Regional Workshops and Conferences on "Cooperation between Employers and HE and VET institutions"; "Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) in Central Asia - The role of education"; and "Strengthening education reforms and employability in Central Asia and the EU - The EEI and CAEP 2012-2019"
- Completion of the Peer Learning Meetings on QAA
- A series of virtual meetings and webinars on "Gender equality in education", "Innovative teaching methodologies in education in HE and VET" and "Financing of HE and VET".

Preparations are well under way for the next Regional Conference on "Cooperation between Employers and HE and VET institutions" that will be hosted this March in Warsaw by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland. This event will see up to 60 participants from all the Central Asia countries and the EU meet to discuss current cooperation models between business and HE and VET institutions to enhance the employability of graduates

and address the widespread mismatch of skills and jobs (e.g. development of learning programmes, curricula, work-based learning schemes and entrepreneurship).

We look forward to a productive and exciting 2018!

Christian Wagner  
CAEP Team Leader

Also in this issue:

Country Focus: Uzbekistan



National Meetings on NQF and QA and Accreditation in Tashkent



Report on the latest Working Group and Peer Learning meetings



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## Country Focus: Uzbekistan



Since independence in 1991, the government of Uzbekistan has made education a priority in its plans for economic and social development. As it seeks to shift from a commodity dependent economy to a more competitive, industrialised one, with ambitious growth plans and a young and growing population, the country needs to produce a highly skilled workforce.

This focus was reflected in the government's Education Sector Plan for 2013-2017, which tackled the need to improve the overall quality of education at all levels, and included a programme to improve the technical facilities of higher education institutions and increased teacher training. The new Education Sector Plan for 2017-2021 has ambitious plans to increase the number of undergraduate places available by 18% and to offer new fields of study, relevant to the needs of the growing economy. It also aims to improve teaching quality by recruiting more foreign faculty and raising the salaries of the most professional domestic faculty.

Two donor projects are currently underway in Uzbekistan to assist in meeting these objectives:

### 1. Modernizing Higher Education Project – World Bank 2016-2023

This World Bank project has three key objectives:

#### a. To strengthen Higher Education management

Project activities are aiming to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education (MHSSE) to manage the sector, support the State Testing Center (STC) to develop and implement the system of external quality assurance, and support the higher

education institutions (HEIs) to strengthen their own internal systems quality assurance.

#### b. To improve the learning environment in HEIs

The project is supporting the government in improving laboratories and research systems as well as establish a national e-library.

#### c. To improve the relevance of Higher Education

The project is also supporting the establishment of a competitive Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) in the MHSSE, which will aim to improve the relevance of HE to the labour market by financing innovative projects to improve university-industry links, teaching and learning practices and the environment within HEIs.

More details can be found in the CAEP online database:

<http://dbase.caep-project.org/project/modernizing-higher-education-project/>

### 2. Skills Strategies for Industrial Modernization and Inclusive Growth – Asian Bank 2017-2018

This Asian Bank project's objective is to address skills needs in micro and small enterprises in Uzbekistan by:

#### a. Developing a pilot survey of employer demand for skills

b. Establishing a pilot monitoring system to identify changes in industry skills needs, and provide information for VET providers to adjust programme offerings

c. Assessing the VET sector by identifying key challenges, strengths, weaknesses and possible reforms to help improve its efficiency, quality, and relevance

d. Identifying and assessing options to improve the VET system, including curricula and programme revision, qualification frameworks and skills certification, labour market information systems, capacity-building measures, mechanisms to increase VET system and business links, and innovative financing models.

More information can be found in the CAEP online database:

<http://dbase.caep-project.org/project/skills-strategies-for-industrial-modernization-and-inclusive-growth/>

## CAEP National Meetings on NQF and QAA held in Tashkent



The most recent CAEP event in Uzbekistan was attended by over 30 senior officers and experts from the HE and VET sectors as well as representatives from the National Erasmus+ Office and Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE). This 2-day event in late September was the last of a series of National Meetings on National Qualification Frameworks (NQF) and Quality Assurance & Accreditation (QAA) and followed similar meetings in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Mr. Uzokboy Begimkulov, Deputy Minister of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, opened the event and Mr Radoslaw Darski, Chargé d'Affaires and Head of Political, Press and Information Section, gave opening remarks on behalf of the European Union Delegation to Uzbekistan.

The aim of these meetings is to support the process of professionalisation and modernisation of education in the region by sharing EU expertise, facilitating national policy dialogue and exploring opportunities for development in the field.

The meeting was facilitated by Uzbek moderators and experts from the CAEP Team and involved presentations from Latvian, Polish and Romanian participants, highlighting the successes and the difficulties of the reforms in their respective countries. This "sharing experience" approach encouraged participation and led to productive debate and outcomes in terms of priorities for future collaboration.

The first day was dedicated to reviewing the Uzbek Qualifications System, including the significant changes introduced in the last decade which have brought it closer to the establishment



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## Uzbekistan – Country Brief

### Population: 30.300.000 (2016 UN estimate)

The Republic of Uzbekistan is one of only two doubly landlocked countries in the world, bordered by five landlocked countries: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. It is Central Asia's most populated country with more than 30 million people, most of whom (80%) are ethnic Uzbeks.

With an estimated GDP per capita by purchasing power parity (PPP) of \$5,500 (World Bank and IMF), approximately 48% of GDP comes from services, 33% from industry and 19% from agriculture (UN, 2014). GDP increased by 8% in 2015. The literacy rate in the country is one of the highest in the world and annual public expenditure on education accounts for 10-12% of GDP.

### Education

Following 9 years of general education students can choose to study for 3 years either at an academic lyceum or follow a vocational path at a vocational/professional college. The majority of students going on to this stage of education study at the latter, with VET colleges accounting for around 90% of upper secondary institutions. The number of vocational colleges has grown rapidly, from under 50 in 1998 to over 1,500 in 2014.

There are currently 82 higher education institutions including universities (universitet), academies (akademiya) and institutes (institut). Recent reforms have resulted in a switch to a two-level structure consisting of a 4-year Bachelor (Bakalavr) programme and a 2-year Master (Magistr) programme. The old two-stage postgraduate system (Candidate of Sciences and Doctor of Sciences) has also been replaced by a single level Doctor of Sciences. In 2016, there was a 9.09% gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education (UNESCO).

### Useful links

National Erasmus+ office: <http://www.erasmusplus.uz/>

Overview of HE system: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiche\\_uzbekistan\\_2017.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiche_uzbekistan_2017.pdf)

2016-17 Torino Process report for Uzbekistan:

[http://www.etf.europa.eu/WEB.NSF/pages/TRP\\_2016-17\\_Uzbekistan\\_EN](http://www.etf.europa.eu/WEB.NSF/pages/TRP_2016-17_Uzbekistan_EN)

of an overarching National Qualifications Framework (NQF), a project in the pipeline according to Ministry representatives. A survey of qualification requirements has already been launched by the National Coordinating Council for the NQF and a major international comparison exercise has been conducted. The experiences of participating EU Member States were



critically reviewed and considered a good basis of know-how to be used in the further development of the Uzbek Framework.

The second day focused on Quality Assurance and Accreditation: a presentation by two experts from the Uzbek Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education on the effect of the President's 2017 five-year plan to improve qualifications, was followed by inputs from EU experts

and an open discussion. The link between QA, Accreditation and the availability of a well-designed and updated NQF was underlined several times along with the necessity of developing the culture and skills for internal Quality Assurance.

Most importantly, it was recognized that having a range of views on the definition of quality within education is not only legitimate, but also necessary for stakeholder involvement in the effort to improve learning processes and outcomes.

At the end of the discussion, issues were identified to feed into regional Peer Learning activities on QA and Accreditation, more details of which can be found on the following page.

Over the course of the two days the Uzbek participants showed a high level of motivation to involve further collaboration in the modernisation of the Uzbek education system, and concluded by requesting the support of CAEP to continue moving forward. Further details of the meeting can be found on the CAEP website: <http://www.caep-project.org/national-meetings-on-nqf-and-qaa-held-in-tashkent/>

### Working Group on Data Collection hold its final meeting in Torino



Representatives from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan gathered in Torino at the European Training Foundation (ETF) in October, to discuss how to use evidence to impact policy-making in the fields of HE and VET.

This was the third and final meeting of the CAEP Working Group on "Data collection methodologies and Evidence based policy making". The first meeting covered ways to identify and frame policy issues to be explored with the use of evidence, and the second explored monitoring approaches for education systems and tools that can be used to generate evidence and data.

Throughout the third meeting participants debated the feasibility of differ-



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ent strategies for evidence use and communication – with a particular focus on data analysis and visualisation, and concrete country projects. “In Kazakhstan we understood that in order to convince our audiences we need to use straightforward, compressed presentations. We need to stick to one phrase, use as little text as possible, and increase the visual production.” said Alima Ibrasheva, from the Information-Analytical Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

One thing emerged as key: using facts to pressure for change is easier through effective data visualization – which can be used not only to inform citizens, but also to help decision-makers grasp difficult concepts and make informed choices. For the full report please see the CAEP website:

<http://www.caep-project.org/final-working-group-meeting-on-data-collection-takes-place-in-torino>

## First Peer Learning on QAA held in Istanbul

The first in a series of Peer Learning (PLA) group meetings on Quality Assurance (QA) and Accreditation in HE and VET kicked off in Istanbul in December. Delegations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan joined national experts from the EU member states Latvia, Poland and Romania and members of the CAEP Team for the three-day event.

The general aim of PLA within CAEP 2 is to contribute to shaping and supporting regional collaboration between the CA countries, in order to accelerate national policy development and implementation; to share best practice and develop a regional mutually-trusting team. A

series of three PLA meetings on NQF successfully concluded last autumn and has led to the establishment of a regional Working Group on NQF.

This first meeting on QAA looked at both internal Quality Assurance and external Quality Assurance and Accreditation with contributions from CA country delegations and EU experts. After an introduction to the PLA method and an exchange of views on the concept of ‘Quality’ in education, the participants discussed the costs and benefits of committing an education institution to internal QAA and how to involve stakeholders and create a “Quality Culture”.

At the end of the meeting the national groups discussed what they had learnt that could be useful in their countries and suggested activities that could be held at national level to share these results with the relevant stakeholders. The CAEP team also proposed a number of tasks to be carried out by each country team to follow up from the meeting and items for the agenda of the next meeting in February were proposed, as well as the possibility of organising a webinar on ‘Institutional accreditation: challenges, methods, benefits and impact of different options available’.

For the full report please see: <http://www.caep-project.org/peer-learning-meetings-on-quality-assurance-and-accreditation-kick-off-in-istanbul/>

## “Save the date”: Next CAEP events

**26-28 February, 2018**

Peer Learning QA and Accreditation 2nd meeting  
Almaty, Kazakhstan (tbc)

**14-16 March, 2018**

Regional Conference on “Cooperation between Employers and VET and HE institutions”  
Warsaw, Poland

## In the next CAEP Newsletter issue #10 (March 2018):

1. Special Focus: Work-based Learning
2. Report on Regional Conference in Warsaw
3. Review of Report on “Good practices in CA and the EU on Collaboration between Business and HE and VET institutions”

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