

# Central Asia Education Platform NEWSLETTER

Newsletter #10 April 2018

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## Editorial

Dear colleagues,

This month saw the successful realisation of the latest Regional Conference organised within the CAEP roadmap of activities, with a theme of “Enhancing cooperation between employers and education institutions in HE and VET in the EU and Central Asia countries”, a priority underlined in the Astana Declaration last year.

We would like to thank our colleagues at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland for the excellent cooperation which made this conference in Warsaw possible. We were delighted to welcome high-level representatives and distinguished education experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well representatives from EU Member states Poland, Latvia, Germany and new participants in the platform, Bulgaria.

However, the event would not have been possible without the presence of representatives from the business sector, and we were fortunate enough to witness delegates from employers' associations, chambers and international companies share their views on how to strengthen the ties between education and business.

Following the 3-day event, the venue hosted the 3rd CAEP Steering Committee Meeting, with participants from all five CA countries and lead partners Poland and Latvia, ETF and the CAEP Team. CA representatives commented on the relevance of the platform to education reforms in their countries, highlighting that:

- Policy dialogue and exchange of experience and expertise between the CA countries has been facilitated by the



platform;

- CAEP activities have figured prominently in shaping current reforms in the sector;
- The European experience and expertise shared within the framework has been of vital importance;
- CAEP is contributing to an evidence-based policy approach in education in the region (together and supported by ETF);
- CAEP actively promotes the Erasmus+ programme and there has been a subsequent increase in the number of project applications involving CA countries.

As previously announced, CAEP 2 has been formally extended until March 2019 and the CAEP Team are now busy planning a range of activities for the coming year, including:

- Two Regional Workshops and Conferences on: “Role of education in supporting social inclusion and resilience among youth in Central Asia”; and “Strengthening education reforms and employability in Central Asia and the EU – The EEI and CAEP 2012-2019”;
- 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”;

- An extension of the Working Group on “Evidence-based policy making” to address the challenge of “Employability – the transition from education to work”.

We look forward to continuing our cooperation with you for another year.

Christian Wagner  
CAEP Team Leader

## Also in this issue:

**CAEP Regional Conference on Cooperation between Employers and HE and VET Institutions**



**Work-based Learning in Central Asia: a report from the European Training Foundation (ETF)**



**Stock-taking Report: Good Practices in Central Asia and the EU on Collaboration between Business and HE and VET institutions**



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## CAEP Regional Conference on Cooperation between Employers and HE and VET Institutions



The Regional Conference “**Enhancing cooperation between employers and education institutions in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training in the European Union and Central Asia countries**”, took place in Warsaw on 14-16 March

Organised by CAEP in collaboration with the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the 3-day event was attended by 80 participants from all five of the Central Asia countries, from Bulgaria, Germany, Latvia, Romania and Poland, as well as from the European Commission, the EEAS, EACEA and the ETF. Participants included high-level government representatives, including ministers and deputy ministers for education and labour from Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, education specialists and practitioners, and representatives from business, business associations and chambers.



In his opening speech, **H.E. Emil Savov Yalnazov, Ambassador of Bulgaria to Poland**, discussed how the priorities of the current Bulgarian EU Presidency, “The Future of Europe and Young People” and “Digital Economy and Skills for the Future” relate to the theme of the Conference and emphasised the importance of life-long education and building relevant skills for the future.

**Mr Jürgen Heimann, Development coordinator for Central Asia at the Directorate-General for Interna-**

**tional Cooperation and Development (DEVCO)**, outlined how DEVCO is supporting skills development and employment in Central Asia through both bilateral programmes and regional programmes such as Erasmus+ and CAEP. He highlighted the importance of private sector participation and the need to foster links with labour markets to ensure that education systems respond to the needs of learners and job seekers as well as employer demand.

The first day of the conference focused on the benefits of business-education cooperation. CAEP experts presented the findings of a stock-taking report on best practice in the field in the EU and CA countries (see page 4), and HE and VET representatives from CA countries shared their experiences of cooperation between businesses and educational institutions at both system and operational level. This included existing cooperation models in developing National Qualifications Frameworks and qualifications, how to ensure the active participation of businesses in developing learning content and finally, approaches to creating a culture of “entrepreneurship”.



**Mr Marcus Braunert from ABB in Germany** presented an insightful case study on ABB’s approach to cooperation with education institutions as part of the “classical” German dual system, including their innovative involvement in the Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative (Dual) State University (DHBW), offering a unique synthesis between theory and practice at university level.

**Round table discussions** concluded that there were still great improvements that could be made in cooperation between the sectors and the following areas were highlighted:

- Addressing the cultural differences between industry and education and establishing mutual trust;
- Improving communication and coop-

eration with SMEs;

- Developing the HE sector in favor of business start-ups, innovative business models and job creation through work-based training and internships, and providing entrepreneurship skills;
- Establishing and promoting Quality Assurance systems for industry-education collaboration;
- Involving learners in collaboration agreements;
- Jointly assessing and reviewing collaboration models.

The second day of the conference opened with two **keynote speeches from Poland**, on major reforms of the country’s HE system and the Polish Graduate Tracking System, and participants then took part in one of two parallel workshops.

The first looked at cooperation at system level, such as the use of Sector Qualification Councils in the development of National Qualification Systems; the differences among the CA Countries in the development of NQFs were evident, but the opportunities to learn and cooperate were well-identified.

The second workshop engaged participants in a diagnostic exercise to identify and evaluate the various forms of cooperation between business and education institutions. A presentation of national “roadmaps” concluded the workshop; areas to be addressed included more freedom for universities to define learning content in cooperation with companies; how to ensure relevant learning at theory and practical level and to strengthen employability; and the challenges in the recognition of informal learning.

The day concluded with examples from Torino Process countries of how HE and VET can interrelate with regards to enhancing the employability of graduates, from **ETF Expert Christine Hemschemeier**, and a discussion on the permeability between VET and HE.

The third and final day gave participants the opportunity to visit two Polish HEIs and discuss opportunities for potential cooperation.



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## Work-based Learning in Central Asia: a report from the European Training Foundation (ETF)



Christine Hemschemeier, Senior Specialist in VET Policies and System

Work-based learning has a long tradition in Central Asian countries. At independence, all countries had VET systems in which VET providers were linked to a “base/key” enterprise. Base enterprises were responsible for the practical, enterprise-based training of students and then offered employment to graduates.

Despite the dramatic changes Central Asian economies underwent, all the countries maintained a strong practice component (ranging typically from 30% of study time up to 50%) as part of their curriculum. Practice was typically made-up of introductory workshop practice inside the VET school or college and mandatory enterprise-based practice.

Yet, both the education and business side became increasingly unsatisfied with the prevailing model. VET providers had to cover more and more practice within their workshops. These were however often lacking up-to-date equipment due to lack of resources. At the same time it became increasingly difficult for VET providers to attract Masters (teaching staff delivering practical training) with sufficient enterprise experience. As a consequence, many employers claimed that VET graduates lacked the necessary practical skills.

To address this challenge, Central Asian countries started to explore ways of improving the cooperation between VET providers and business on work-based learning. Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic developed an apprenticeship approach, which in both countries is called the “dual approach”.



**Kazakhstan** can certainly be considered the forerunner in this respect. The country has been piloting different apprenticeship approaches in cooperation with foreign partners since 2008. Based on the outcomes of these pilots a number of key criteria for apprenticeship work have been developed. These include an agreement that at least 60% of study time is devoted to enterprise-based practice, that the curriculum is developed jointly between the business and the VET provider, that the enterprise provides an in-company trainer (“nastavnik”) for apprentices, and that student assessment takes place jointly between the two partners.

In 2014 the Ministry of Education and Science, together with the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs “Atameken”, adopted a “roadmap for the introduction of dual training in Kazakhstan”. The roadmap covers the large scale implementation of the approach, with a focus on technically oriented professions. It is expected that by 2019 at least 80% of VET colleges will have gained experience of apprenticeships. When roadmap implementation started, 10,000 students were taking part in apprenticeships; there years later in 2017 the number had more than doubled to nearly 24,000 students. At the same time the number of businesses involved went from 600 to over 1800, of which many were also small and medium enterprises.

Implementation was also supported through a number of institutional changes. The concept of “dual training” has been enshrined in the law on education, and adaptations have been made to the labour code. A new VET standard has been adopted for “dual VET”. Since 2017 per capita financing has been under development. Within the new financing models special conditions are being explored for “dual VET”, in order to provide incentives for employers. The National Chamber of Entrepreneurs has developed a training approach for in-company

trainers and prepared the first group of trainers (Atameken, 2017).

The feedback of many enterprises working with apprentices has been positive. This is also reflected in the employment rates of “dual VET” graduates, which are typically higher than the employment rates of graduates that have taken part in traditional VET.



In the **Kyrgyz Republic**, apprenticeships have been piloted since 2017 as a cooperation effort between the Agency for Initial VET and light industry (garment) associations, covering in particular professions that are in high demand in the sector and where VET lasts up to one year.

In the pilot courses up to 70% of the curriculum is dedicated to practice, which takes place throughout the training; the schedule is flexible and agreed with the employer. The introductory practical training can take place either at the VET school or within the enterprise, while the main practical training takes place within the enterprise, under real working conditions. Students are paid for their work and the assessment and certification of graduates takes place with the support of enterprise representatives.

After a successful completion of the first pilot, it is now planned to expand the approach to professions in the IT and hospitality sectors.



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## Stock-taking Report: Good Practices in Central Asia and the EU on Collaboration between Business and HE and VET institutions

The Regional Conference in Warsaw saw the presentation of the latest CAEP stock-taking report on cooperation schemes between business and education institutions in the EU and Central Asia. The report gives an overview of current legislative frameworks and existing programmes that provide funding for collaboration activities, as well as highlighting examples of good practice.

**Research cooperation** is considered the most common and important form of cooperation between HEIs and businesses. An excellent European example is the cooperation between the **Solid State Physics Institute (SSPI) of the University of Latvia** and **GroGlass**, a leading Latvian manufacturer of anti-reflective and high-performance glass coatings. SSPI provides highly specific, professional analysis and product tests for GroGlass, which in return provides the university's staff and students opportunities to improve their professional skills and competencies via in-company practice and training.

The value of cooperation is usually seen in the commercialisation of research results. However, value also comes in the form of **academic and student entrepreneurship**. An interesting example of this from Central Asia is the **Mirzo Ulugbek Innovation Center in Uzbekistan**; its goals are to create favourable conditions for the creation and development of high-tech industries based on the use of ICT, and integrate science, education and production in the sector. Both HE and VET institutions cooperate with business partners in the **development of curricula and study**

**programmes and work-based learning opportunities**. An example from Europe is the **Center for North American Studies (CNAS) of the University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovakia**. CNAS offers its students more than 10 accredited elective courses, developed and taught in English by representatives from global private companies, such as Lenovo, DELL, AT&T, and Amazon.

**Cooperation at management level** can either take the form of joint governance or shared resources. A good example from Central Asia is the case of the **Professional Services Lyceum (PSL)** in Khujand, Tajikistan, which provides practical training of young people in collaboration with local employers. One of their partners, **CJSC "Avtoservis"**, has fully equipped one of PSL's classrooms and classes for both teachers and students are run by specialists from the company here.

**Career counselling and alumni work** includes a range of services and tools to promote student employability. One of the programmes offered by Bosch Germany is for students studying mathematics, technology and/or computer science who have completed an internship at Bosch. Each student within the **"Students@bosch" programme** has the opportunity to attend extra training courses and seminars and also has their own mentor who can offer valuable career advice.

The **most common challenges** identified in the study related to geographical limitations, insufficient support from public institutions and problems mobilising and motivating key stakeholders. Despite these, the study shows that cooperation between educational institutions and the business sector is highly beneficial for all participants and is becoming more and more popular in both Europe and Central Asia.

## "Save the date": Next CAEP events

### April 2018 (date tbc)

Webinar on NQF and Stakeholder Involvement: the case of sectoral councils and institutional settings

### 30 May - 1 June 2018

Working Group on Evidence based policy making to strengthen employability: Kick-off and 1st meeting  
Almaty, Kazakhstan

### June 2018 (date tbc)

Webinar on Gender Equality in Education

### June 2018 (date tbc)

Regional Seminar on the "Role of education in supporting social inclusion and resilience among youth in Central Asia"  
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

## In the next CAEP Newsletter issue #11 (May 2018):

1. Report on Webinar on NQF and stakeholder involvement
2. Erasmus+ activities in Central Asia
3. Regional capacity building projects in Central Asia

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