

# Central Asia Education Platform NEWSLETTER

Newsletter #11 June 2018

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## Editorial

Dear colleagues,

The last couple of months have been a very productive time for the CAEP team. We are very happy to have continued our cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the Working Group on Evidence Based Policy Making, with the 4th meeting taking place this month in Almaty. This session focused on career guidance, a highly relevant topic both in the European Union and Central Asia where efforts are being made to better match the skills of current and future graduates with the needs of employers. You can read more about how the meeting went on page 2 of this newsletter.

Last month, also in Kazakhstan, CAEP signed an important Memorandum of Understanding with the "Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Center", under the Ministry of Education and Science. The MoU aims to develop a closer relationship between the two parties in order to expand cooperation between the EU and Central Asia within HE and promote the full implementation of the agreed principles of the Bologna Process in Kazakhstan.

As well as visits to Kazakhstan, the CAEP team has also recently conducted two very rewarding missions to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Firstly, in Ashgabat, we met with major project stakeholders; the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and a number of university rectors, in order to strengthen their participation in CAEP activities.

The meeting with the team working on the EU-funded project 'Support to



the Education Sector in Turkmenistan' highlighted the synergies between the two projects and we are planning to conduct some joint activities in order to support the modernisation process of HE and VET in the country.

In Tashkent the CAEP team participated in the OSCE Conference on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (VERLT). This was an opportunity for the project to establish a link with the OSCE in order to develop CAEP's new priority area, as set out in the Astana Declaration, which looks at using education to strengthen social inclusion in the region. This will be the focus of the CAEP Regional Seminar in Tashkent this autumn and ties in closely with both the recent OSCE event and an upcoming UNESCO sub-regional meeting on Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) through education in November.

As part of a new initiative to reach a wider audience in all five of the Central Asia countries engaged in the CAEP project, a further two 'webinars' are planned for the coming months. The

first of these, on the role of sectoral councils in NQF, will take place in July and the second, on gender equality in education, is planned for September.

Don't forget that you can find details of all our recent and upcoming events on the CAEP website, along with our recently expanded database of relevant donor projects in the region.

Christian Wagner  
CAEP Team Leader

## Also in this issue:

4th Working Group Meeting on Evidence Based Policy Making



UNESCO meeting highlights areas for mutual collaboration



CAEP missions to Ashgabat and Tashkent



This project is funded by the European Union

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#### 4th Working Group meeting on Evidence Based Policy Making focuses on Career Guidance



This month saw the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Evidence Based Policy making in Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) take place in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The meeting was attended by delegates from Ministries of Education and Labour and educational institutions in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, along with education experts from the EU and representatives from CAEP and the European Training Foundation (ETF).

The aim of this working group is to enhance Central Asian countries' capability and use of evidence for policy analysis and policy making in the fields of VET and HE, by addressing the following needs:

- Reinforcing monitoring functions in CA countries through better knowledge and skills
- Sharing experiences and lessons across countries and with the EU on the evidence based policy making approach
- Creating a network in the region which will continue to exchange practices and evidence in the area of VET/HE and skills development.

The initiative is based on the policy learning methodology and is being developed and implemented by CAEP and ETF, building on ETF's experience with the Torino Process.

This fourth meeting was dedicated to evidence on the transition process, covering specifically the topic of career guidance. Transition is considered a particularly pertinent topic as it is closely connected to the issue of employability; requires the co-operation of both Ministries of Education

and Labour, and employer organisations; has been identified as important by Torino Process members in Central Asia; and has an EU level dimension.

After introductions from Christine Hemschemeier, ETF, and Christian Wagner, CAEP, and a recapitulation of the key aspects of the evidence cycle, representatives from each of the five CA countries presented an existing overview of career counselling in their country and relevant issues and challenges. This was followed by a case study from Latvia, presented by Aleksandra Joma, which focused on the concept of lifelong career development within the EU and the role of employment services.



The second day saw delegates work together in country teams to map career guidance in their respective countries, looking especially at the infrastructure, roles and current challenges. Some of the issues raised by the groups were a lack of consistency or systematic approach, insufficient funding and the low involvement of employers. After feedback and discussions with the whole group, the teams then looked at what data and evidence is generated and used for monitoring the sector in their countries.

Participants later worked in mixed groups to discuss how to reach out to three specific groups which have until now not been very well represented within the VET system; women and girls, people with special needs and NEET (young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training). They considered what evidence would be needed to learn more about the target group, what tools could be used to reach them and how to monitor the implementation of the new measures and their effectiveness.

Finally, on the last day, the delegates reconvened in their country teams to identify evidence gaps in career guidance in their countries and report

back on what they had learned from the meeting and what activities they were planning as follow-up.

The 5th, final meeting of the working group in October will look at graduate tracer studies; the importance of systematic data collection in the tracking of graduates has also been highlighted as crucial to enhancing employability in the region.

#### Interview with Cesare Onestini, Director of the European Training foundation (ETF)



At the recent CAEP Regional Conference on cooperation between employers and Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions, we talked to Mr. Onestini about the Torino Process in Central Asia and the importance of evidence based policy making in the sector.

Over the last five years ETF has seen great developments in VET reform in Central Asia; Mr. Onestini highlighted how the Torino Process has brought together a growing number of stakeholders to discuss how to use VET to fulfill skills needs and that businesses are being involved in a much greater depth in the planning and implementation of educational reform programmes such as qualification systems.

He explained that ETF's emphasis on the importance of evidence based policy making comes from their experience of policy implementation. **"We see that in order to have reforms that are sustainable, that are credible and that bring in all the partners you need to have a solid analysis."** The collection of evidence helps stakeholders to focus on priorities, and solid evidence is particularly important in developing countries where there are many competing demands on government resources.

Mr. Onestini believes that "the evidence gathering process, through



the Torino Process as well, is one of the strengths of the support that ETF can give to the (Central Asia) countries”, which is reflected in the work that ETF has been doing together with CAEP in this series of Working Group meetings. ETF is currently actively engaged in national Torino Process work in selected regions and oblasti in Kazakhstan, showing the high level of commitment and ownership they have achieved in ETF partner countries. We will follow this closely and report on the outcomes of these national activities in one of our next newsletters.

**CAEP and UNESCO meeting highlights areas for mutual collaboration**



While in Almaty for the working group meeting, CAEP Team members visited the UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office to explore cooperation opportunities between the CAEP project and UNESCO initiatives in the field of Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training.

The meeting highlighted many synergies between the two parties, especially in the areas of gender equality, social inclusion, preventing violent extremism (PVE), and VET reforms. Firstly, Meirgul Alpysbayeva and Gaukhar Yessentayeva outlined UNESCO's current STEM and Gender Advancement (SAGA) project, which aims to contribute to improving the situation of women and reducing the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. The theme of gender equality has also been selected as a priority area for CAEP for the second half of 2018 and a webinar on the topic will be held in the autumn following the publication of a stock taking report.

UNESCO is planning a sub-regional meeting on Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) through education in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in November.



This project is funded by the European Union

Social inclusion is the second new thematic priority area for this phase of the CAEP project and a regional seminar on the topic is being held in Tashkent in September, to which UNESCO have now been invited to join.

Furthermore, UNESCO is helping to renew the TVET curriculum with a focus on life-long learning and it is hoped that mutual collaboration in the area of VET reforms will also be a possibility.

**CAEP signs agreement with the 'Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Center' in Kazakhstan**



An important Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Central Asia Education Platform (CAEP) and the “Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Center”, under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The aim of this agreement is to develop a closer relationship between the Center and CAEP in order to expand cooperation between the European Union and Central Asia within the sector of higher education and to promote the full implementation of the agreed principles of the Bologna Process in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Declaration in 2010, becoming the 47th member country of the Bologna Process and the first Central Asian state to be recognised as a full member of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The “Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Center” ensures the active participation of the Republic of Kazakhstan in EHEA and other higher education spaces; its mission is to promote proper and full implementation of agreed principles of the Bologna Process at national and institutional levels.

As part of the MOU the Center and CAEP will share experience and

knowledge of education reform and the Bologna Process, exchange information resources and actively participate in seminars, conferences, scientific studies and projects, as well as provide mutually beneficial assistance for the implementation of Bologna process principles, with the final aim of promoting education reform and modernising the higher education system in Kazakhstan.

**Mission to Ashgabat sees strengthened involvement of Turkmenistan in CAEP project**



The CAEP TA Team visited the city of Ashgabat in Turkmenistan recently in order to meet with representatives of the Ministries of Education and Labour, university rectors and senior staff of VET schools.

The Ministry of Education confirmed the relevance of CAEP events to education reforms in the country and confirmed their continued, strengthened involvement in the project as well as supporting the future participation of the Ministry of Labour in relevant activities. This includes the upcoming CAEP webinar on sectoral councils, for which the Ministries have agreed to provide logistical assistance.

The CAEP Team also had the opportunity to meet the team leader of the EU-funded bilateral project ‘Support to the Education Sector in Turkmenistan’ to discuss opportunities for mutual cooperation. The productive meeting highlighted synergies between the two projects and the teams will continue to share information and develop opportunities for joint activities, linked to CAEP priority themes as agreed in the Astana Declaration.

Details of this project can be found here: <http://dbase.caep-project.org/project/support-to-the-education-sector-in-turkmenistan-2/>



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## OSCE Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism



On 11-12 June, Uzbekistan hosted an international conference on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (VERLT).

The event was supported by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and attended by over 200 participants, including government officials and civil society groups from all Central Asian countries.

Delegates discussed and shared best practices on how to engage youth in preventing and countering VERLT, specifically through education, media, arts and sports. Following the debate and the results of working groups, recommendations were developed that underscored the importance of an inclusive, whole-of-society approach.

EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Ambassador Peter Burian, stressed the commitment of the EU, through its bilateral and regional initiatives, to continued support to reforming the education sector in the region and highlighted the challenging task of job creation for the growing population in Uzbekistan.

The CAEP Team attended the conference to discuss OSCE participation in the foreseen Regional

Seminar on "The role of education in supporting social inclusion and resilience among youth in the European Union and Central Asia". Part of the project's ongoing support to policy dialogue and HE and VET reform across Central Asia, this seminar will focus on the link between quality education and training and the issues of social inclusion, economic integration and the resilience of young people against radicalisation.

## CAEP Projects Database Update

The EU-funded project 'Support to the Education Sector in Turkmenistan' is just one of the 150+ donor projects that can be found in the searchable online CAEP database.

A recent update has seen a total of 39 new projects added to the database, which are implemented across Central Asia in both the higher education and vocational education and training sector (initial and continuing) in a range of occupational fields.

These projects are being supported by a number of donors, including the European Union (mostly within the Erasmus+ project), World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. As well as donor identification, each entry also contains information about the implementation period, the budget, objectives and target groups, as well as materials and links to project relevant data. The newly added information is available in both English and Russian.

The database can be found at: <http://dbase.caep-project.org>

## "Save the date": Next CAEP events

**4 July, 2018**

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

**September 2018 (date tbc)**

*Webinar on Gender Equality in Education*

**September 2018 (date tbc)**

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

**10-12 October, 2018**

*5th Working Group meeting on Evidence Based Policy Making in VET and HE*  
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

## In the next CAEP Newsletter issue #12 (August 2018):

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

## Contact:

**Christian Wagner**  
CAEP Team Leader  
E-mail: christian.wagner@proqualityconsult.de

**Dilyara Woodward**  
CAEP Communication Expert  
E-mail: dilya\_woodward@mail.ru

**Nanna Pedley**  
CAEP Communication Expert  
Email: nannapedley@gmail.com

**Address:**  
GOPA Consultants  
Hindenburgering 18  
61348 Bad Homburg, Germany  
Tel: +49 (0) 6172 9300

**Website:** [www.caep-project.org](http://www.caep-project.org)



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