

# Central Asia Education Platform NEWSLETTER

Newsletter #1 March 2016

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## Editorial

Dear Colleagues,

**The Central Asia Education Platform (CAEP) welcomes you as practitioners and people interested in the world of Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Central Asia!**

When the platform started four years ago in 2012, education was one of the main fields of cooperation between the European Union and the countries of Central Asia. "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership", adopted in June 2007 and reinforced in 2015, is the foundation upon which this education platform rests.

**Since then, education has even become a "flagship" of the EU – Central Asia cooperation,** and we are proud to make our contribution as technical assistance team to fill the platform with life.

What do we want to achieve with CAEP? What shall be our main results?

**The CAEP is designed to strengthen education reforms in the region, and to enhance cooperation between the European Union and Central Asia, and between the countries of Central Asia.**

We will do this by setting up dialogue fora and conferences at national and regional level, and by facilitating knowledge and personal exchange on ongoing education initiatives and reforms in the region. Furthermore, we offer a unique project database on past and current education projects in Central Asia, and also conduct studies and stock-taking reports, for example, on quality in education or national qualification frameworks (NQF), to strengthen evidence-based policy dialogue.

**The first CAEP Steering Committee met recently in Brussels and endorsed the CAEP Work Plan up to 2018.**

Representatives from Kazakhstan,



Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the European Commission, the European Training Foundation, and Latvia and Poland as EU Member States, agreed on the future steps in implementing platform activities.

The next event will be the **Regional Conference in Riga from 20 to 22 April on "Qualification Frameworks in Central Asian Countries: Current Developments and Cooperation Perspectives"**. Furthermore, CAEP plans some peer learning events for ministerial staff and relevant stakeholders to exchange good practice between the EU and our Central Asian partners. The topics include, among others, the internationalisation of education, or strengthening quality and quality assurance both in HE and VET.

Starting from now, we will publish a CAEP newsletter on a regular basis, to share current news on the platform and on interesting developments in the Central Asia countries in the modernisation of education.

We are looking forward to your feedback and hope that you will also visit us on our CAEP project website at <http://www.caep-project.org>

Let's work together to prepare our students for success in making our education

systems fit the needs of our future generations!

Best regards,

Christian Wagner  
CAEP Team Leader

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## CAEP: Glance back to past events

In its four years of existence, the CAEP has paved the way towards intensified dialogue at policy and expert level, on education issues between the EU and Central Asia countries. It has assisted in preparing the **First Meeting of Ministers for Education of the Member States of the European Union and of the Central Asian countries in June 2015 in Riga, Latvia.**

In conjunction with other EU activities (Tempus/Erasmus+, ETF, etc.), CAEP's activities have contributed to the:

- **Adoption of recommendations** for developing a "National Strategy on Human Resource Development Support in HE" in Kyrgyzstan;
- **Adoption of a resolution** on "HR Management and development in the HE system of Uzbekistan" as a result of the "Republic Seminar" supported by CAEP in Tashkent in January 2014;
- **Appraisal of the Education Sector Plan in Uzbekistan**, which was well received by the state authorities and the donor community;
- **Launch of a joint cross-sub-sector discussion between VET and HE on an integrative qualification system** in CA countries. This discussion substantially contributed to ensuring that qualification systems fit the requirements of lifelong learning and lifelong employability needs at national level.

### Dialogue events supporting exchange of good practice

More than 450 senior staff from ministries, education institutions, business associations and chambers, as well as education experts from CA and the EU, participated in various CAEP events:

- **Four thematic Regional Conferences** on the Torino Process, Quality Assurance, Teacher Policies in Education, Labour Market Needs and Employability, in Astana, Bishkek and twice in Istanbul;
- **Various national dialogue forums and seminars** addressing quality-related topics as well as teacher policies in education to validate CAEP study results;
- **Three national workshops, and support to selected Kazakh universities**, organised in Bishkek, Dushanbe, Almaty and Tashkent as follow-up to the Tashkent Tempus Human Resource Management Conference.

CAEP cooperated closely with the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the National Erasmus+ Offices to carry out these conferences and seminars.



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## Studies enhancing an evidence-based policy approach

Following a detailed **needs analysis of the education sectors** in the CA countries, CAEP conducted a set of studies to complement the dialogue fora:

- **Multi-country studies on "Teacher Policies" and "Quality in VET and HE"** were published for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan;
- Two additional short **reports on the "Implementation status of legislation and best practice in the field of quality and teacher policies"** were released for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Ministerial staff and education experts showed appreciation for CAEP as an excellent mechanism for:

- **Sharing experience, lessons learned, best/good practices;** and
- **Favouring people-to-people exchange and thus enhancing mutual understanding** in the ongoing modernisation processes in the education sector, both in Central Asia and the European Union.

All studies and additional material can be downloaded at:

<http://www.caep-project.org/useful-content/studies-and-reports/>

### EU and Central Asian Ministers for Education agree on Roadmap for joint activities to foster cooperation in education up to 2018

The **development of qualification frameworks and standards, quality assurance and accreditation, and employment and labour market needs, will be the main areas of cooperation between the EU and Central Asian countries in the field of Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training during the next two years.** The Ministers for Education and high-level officials from the European Commission, EU Member States and the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan agreed on these priorities at the **First meeting of the EU and Central Asian Ministers for Education on 26 June 2015 in Riga.**

Hosted by Ms Mārīte Seile, Minister for Education and Science of Latvia, and Mr Andrejs Pildegovičs, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Latvia, this was the first ministerial-level dialogue between Central Asian countries and the EU in the field of education.

This Ministerial Meeting aimed to ensure the exchange of good practice and the encouragement of tangible and more

results-oriented activities that would serve the interests of both, Central Asia and Europe.

Prior to the Ministerial Meeting, in order to identify areas of mutual interest, a first Senior Officials' Meeting took place in Brussels on 27 May 2015. A second Senior Officials' Meeting on 25 June 2015 finalised the preparations for the Ministerial Meeting, mainly by fine-tuning a draft Communiqué. As part of the meeting in Riga, the Senior Officials also had the opportunity to visit some of Latvia's higher education and VET institutions, in addition to participating in the plenary sessions of the meeting.



By adopting a **Joint Communiqué**, the participants agreed on further mutually beneficial cooperation in Higher and Vocational Education, covering practical activities in the period up until 2018 in an Indicative Roadmap.

In the Joint Communiqué, **"Ministers welcomed the value of the dialogue and work jointly undertaken by Central Asian countries, the EU and the donor community in this area."** They acknowledged "the progress achieved since 2012, notably the reforms undertaken by Central Asian countries to modernise education systems whilst also involving relevant stakeholders to build links between HE and the different levels of VET."

The Communiqué and the Roadmap imply both the independence and the interdependence of the participating countries – though based on a voluntary participation, such close interregional cooperation is often seen as an increasing necessity in the contemporary, globalised world.

### Both Latvia (for VET) and Poland (for HE) will assume a leading role in the Education Platform

In her concluding remarks, Ms Seile noted that more countries are welcome to join the round table in 2017, when the education policymakers from Central Asia and the EU plan to meet again in order to report on the progress of their cooperation efforts in a second Ministerial Meeting.

The Joint Communiqué can be downloaded at

<http://www.caep-project.org/useful-content/studies-and-reports/>



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**CAEP Steering Committee meets for the first time and adopts Work Plan for the Platform up to 2018**

On 21 January 2016, representatives from all Central Asia States, the European Commission, the European Training Foundation, and the European External Action Service, as well as senior officials from Latvia and Poland and the CAEP Technical Assistance team led by GOPA Consultants, met in Brussels for the 1st CAEP Steering Committee meeting.

The Steering Committee (SC) has been set up to provide guidance in the overall project implementation and to facilitate an exchange on the next steps to be taken under the CAEP.

During the meeting, the European External Action Service (EEAS) stressed the relevance of education as a “flagship” of the cooperation between Central Asia countries and the EU in the framework of the EU – Central Asia Strategy. This had also been underlined during the Meeting of Foreign Ministers from Central Asia and the EU in Astana on 21 December 2015.

The EU Commission stressed furthermore the importance of diversity in education and the need for strengthened cooperation in, and exchange on, education reforms in VET and HE between the EU and Central Asia, and among the Central Asia countries. The involvement of Latvia and Poland to strengthen the education platform is a major step forward to ensure the project’s success, and is also a clear sign of the commitment to CAEP on behalf of EU Member States.

**EU Special Representative for Central Asia stresses the role of education as catalyst for modernisation**

Ambassador Peter Burian, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, highlighted the importance of education in an interview given to the EU Rule of Law Platform on 16 February 2016:

“I believe that **education is key to economic development**. EU education programs, in particular the ERASMUS+, should play a key role in helping Central Asian institutions to build capacity, modernize and broaden their cooperation networks and individuals to gain international experience. The **Education Platform within EU – Central Asia education initiative under leadership of Latvia and Poland addresses issues of employability, quality and mobility in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training.**”



Ambassador Peter Burian  
EU Special Representative for Central Asia

He further concluded, with a view to all **EU platforms in Central Asia** (Education, Rule of Law, Water), that they should **“serve as a catalyst not only for interested EU Member States to channel their specific activities and to address the needs of the Central Asian countries for policy dialogue, but to enable joint actions which would have been impossible**

**otherwise**. In some cases, this requires a **shift in perspectives**. I would like to initiate this shift in the mind-sets of relevant Central Asian officials **to spot and embrace the benefits of regional visions and joint actions** instead of pointing to the existing differences and obstacles.”

The full interview can be found under: <http://ruleoflaw.eu/interviews/h-e-ambassador-peter-burian-eu-special-representative-for-central-asia-emphasises-eus-engagement-on-rule-of-law-and-human-rights-in-central-asia/>

**ETF awards outstanding achievements in VET school development in Central Asia**

On 15-16 October 2015, policy makers, vocational school directors, teachers and trainers, experts, employers, ETF and EU colleagues and other partners, met at the ETF VET Academy event in Bishkek to discuss how vocational education and training are looking in the 21st century, what the challenges and the opportunities are, and what should they aspire to be. Special focus was placed on the gaps between demand and supply in the continuous professional development of VET teachers and managers.

Delegations took part from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, using the opportunity for the ETF’s Central Asia partner countries to share updates, priorities and progress reports on VET. The ETF presented a “Compendium of good practice” on successful school development initiatives for lifelong learning in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan showcased their Communities of Practice, networks of VET schools, employers and other social partners. The communities have been developing social partnerships, strategic planning, on-the-job training, vocational pedagogy and continuous professional development of VET teachers and trainers.

The top success stories were honoured at a special Academy Awards Gala Dinner. The winners will feature in a forthcoming series of films and stories by the ETF.

The Central Asia Education Platform (CAEP) presented the range of activities foreseen to strengthen EU - Central Asia cooperation in VET as part of the platform, on the basis of the long and intense cooperation with ETF in this sphere since 2012.

ETF is going to support CAEP in designing the stock-taking report on National Qualification Frameworks in the region, while CAEP plans to intensify its cooperation with ETF towards strengthening VET reforms in Central Asia countries.



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All materials from the VET academy (presentations and the compendium of good practice with success stories in VET) can be downloaded using the following link:

[http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/EV\\_2015\\_Regional\\_VET\\_Academy?opendocument](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/EV_2015_Regional_VET_Academy?opendocument)

For more information on this ETF event, please contact Ms Dagmar Ouzoun.  
Email: [Dagmar.Ouzoun@etf.europa.eu](mailto:Dagmar.Ouzoun@etf.europa.eu)

For more information on ETF activities in the region, please contact Ms Nadezhda Solodjankina.  
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## Future CAEP events and activities

The CAEP will be organising a series of events and activities in 2016, including the following:

- **Regional Conference** on “National Qualification Frameworks” in Riga, 21-22 April 2016;
- **Regional Conference** on “Prospects for Creating a Bridge between Central Asia Countries and the European Higher Education Area” in Poland in October, 2016;
- Publishing of a **Stock-taking report on “National Qualification Frameworks in Central Asia”**, covering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in March, 2016;

- **Peer Learning activities** on National Qualification Frameworks and Quality in Education, to be started in May/June 2016;
- Developing **working papers** on labour market data collection methodologies and mobility in education;
- Continuous **update of the education project mapping database.**

CAEP will continue to cooperate closely with Erasmus+ and ETF-related activities. Multiple opportunities are available for Central Asia countries under existing mobility and capacity-building schemes, particularly in the Erasmus+ programme. These can be used to even better advantage in the future to reinforce the educational exchange between Central Asia and the EU.

The **CAEP newsletters** will focus on thematic issues, ranging from the Torino Process and academic mobility, to - for example - work-based learning, and **specific country coverage**. The next issues will thus focus on all Central Asia countries in loose alphabetical order, starting with Kazakhstan, to highlight major developments in the education modernisation process of the respective country and the mutual benefits for regional exchange.

## CAEP Dates:

**20-22 April 2016**

Riga, Latvia

Regional Conference:

“Qualification Frameworks in Central Asia Countries: Current Developments and Cooperation Perspectives”

## In the next CAEP Newsletter Issue in May 2016:

1. National Qualification Frameworks in Central Asia
2. Country Focus Kazakhstan

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