

Central Asia Education Platform NEWSLETTER

Newsletter #3 October 2016

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

Editorial

Dear Colleagues,

Our warm congratulations on the start of the academic year, we hope that it will be a productive and successful year for you!

In our second newsletter we shared with you the results of the Regional Conference in Riga that took place from 20 to 22 April on "Qualification Frameworks in Central Asian Countries: Current Developments and Cooperation Perspectives".

As part of the follow up from the conference, **CAEP organized two National NQF meetings in Dushanbe and Bishkek in September.** We are glad to say that both meetings gave new insights into the on-going process to introduce qualifications frameworks in the two countries, and that CAEP facilitated the exchange of practical experience with experts from both Latvia and Poland. You can find more on these meetings in this newsletter.

Also in this issue we continue our specific focus on relevant developments in the education sector in a specific Central Asian country: this time it is **Country in Focus: Kyrgyzstan**, where we would like to draw your attention to some latest developments regarding NQF, accreditation and certification issues.

In the next Country Focus we will look at Tajikistan and we would like to invite you to share with us any relevant information on events, activities and developments regarding the education sector in the country, including both Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training.

Finally, it is my pleasure to announce the next **CAEP Regional Conference on "Enhancing cooperation in Higher Education between Central Asia countries and the European Union" in Cracow, Poland, from November 16-18.**

We're looking forward to welcoming high-level representatives from Ministries of Education as well as higher education institutions based in Central Asia, Poland and Latvia. We are also very much looking forward to welcoming the EU Special Representative to Central Asia, Mr Peter Burian, and the Director of the EACEA,



in charge of implementing the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Details of the objectives of the conference and the agenda are below.

We look forward to your feedback and hope that you will also visit us on at the CAEP project website at www.caep-project.org

Let's work together to prepare our students for success by making our education systems fit the needs of our future generations!

Best regards,

Christian Wagner
CAEP Team Leader

CAEP Regional Conference to be held in Cracow 16-18 November

The CAEP Regional Conference on "Enhancing cooperation in Higher Education between Central Asia countries and the European Union" will be hosted by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MSHE) at Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

The aim of the conference is to facilitate exchange on the positive effects of internationalisation on modern education

systems between representatives of Central Asian public authorities, education practitioners and the business community and representatives from EU Institutions and Member States and international donors.

Furthermore, conference participants will gather ideas and develop recommendations for strengthening cooperation in Higher Education between the EU and CA countries.

The conference will be underpinned by the recent stock-taking report produced by the CAEP on "Existing Capacity Development and Mobility Programmes between the EU and Central Asia Countries", the results of which will be presented at the conference.

Also in this issue:

CAEP market intelligence
report on NQF



National NQF meetings in
Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan



Country Focus: Kyrgyzstan



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The first two days of the conference will focus on the current state of the Erasmus+ programme, recent developments and good practice in HE in CA countries and the importance of links between the HE sector and labour market needs. The third day will see visits to relevant institutions in Cracow to link discussions to Polish case studies and facilitate networking between Central Asian and EU universities.

Outcomes of the event will be reported in our December issue.

CAEP project publishes stock-taking report on National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF).



The CAEP stock-taking report on NQF in Central Asia was completed in September 2016. The objectives of this report were to provide an overview of the evolution and implementation of Qualification Frameworks in Central Asia and to highlight challenges and best practice. Detailed Country Reports were collected for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The main results can be summarized as follows:

In all four countries the renewal of qualifications - according to the Learning Outcomes approach and in cooperation with employers' representatives - is recognised to be a key element in the national strategy to modernise education and to assure the quality of education provision, but formal and substantial implementation is still in early phases.

Kazakhstan might be considered the most advanced country of the region, already participating in the Bologna Process and currently reviewing and completing its NQF; Kyrgyzstan has also recently approved a new NQF, but the other countries have also accumulated significant experience and elements of a technical infrastructure that could speed up development in the immediate future.

Challenges were reported in even the more advanced countries, including limited employer involvement and the difficulties of transitioning from a classification system based on the duration of studies to one based on learning outcomes.

The importance of bilateral cooperation in developing NQFs, both with the EU and globally,

was highlighted and high interest for international recognition of qualifications and credit transfer was noted in all countries.

Themes for future collaboration were suggested, including the development of local expertise to fully develop, implement and maintain a NQF based on learning outcomes, and the involvement of stakeholders from the labour market in developing International and Regional Sectoral Qualifications.

The full report in English can be downloaded from the CAEP website at www.caep-project.org/useful-content/studies-and-reports/

CAEP organizes NQF meetings in CA countries

A series of in-country NQF meetings is being conducted by the CAEP team and partners, with the first two taking place in **Dushanbe** and **Bishkek** in September. Further NQF meetings will take place in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan over the next few months.

These meetings form part of the follow-up from the Riga Regional Conference on National Qualifications Frameworks in April, where high-ranking representatives from all five Central Asia countries, Latvia, Poland, the EU and the World Bank came together to share best practice in developing all levels of National and Sectoral Qualification Frameworks.

Please see below for details of the Dushanbe and Bishkek meetings.

NQF meeting in Tajikistan



This high-level national meeting on National Qualifications Frameworks brought together deputy ministers, senior officials and education experts from Tajikistan and the European Union, including Erasmus+ representatives, in Dushanbe on 13 September 2016.

More than forty delegates discussed and reflected on the issues facing Tajikistan in developing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Mr Christian Wagner, CAEP Team Leader, opened the meeting and highlighted the role of NQF in strengthening links between the Higher Education (HE) and Vocation Education & Training (VET) sectors. Mr Bozorali Odinzoda, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, expressed his appreciation of CAEP activities that support the development of the education sector in Tajikistan. The Tajik government is currently intensifying efforts to streamline and develop professional qualifications and

standards into a coherent system. One major challenge remains the link between VET and HE qualification levels. Mr Nozimzhon Sidikov, Deputy Director of the Department of Professional Education and Adult Education in the Ministry of Labour, informed the audience about a joint inter-ministerial working group that is being set up to develop occupational and professional standards. In this context, the Tajik government is also being supported by bilateral donors, such as the German company GIZ.

In his opening speech, Mr Maciej Adam Madalinski, Head of Operations Sections of the EU Delegation to Tajikistan, stressed the importance of education at both regional level (as addressed by CAEP) and national, through bilateral EU-Tajik cooperation. The Erasmus+ programme already plays a major role in this cooperation and further bilateral projects will be implemented in the future, addressing the needs that have been expressed by the Tajik government.

The presentation given by Ms Tatjana Danilova from Latvia about the Latvian experience in developing and introducing a NQF prompted a lively and constructive discussion. Points raised in this discussion will be used to help set the topics for the forthcoming CAEP peer learning group on NQF.

Materials from the meeting can be downloaded from the CAEP website at: www.caep-project.org/dushanbe-september-17-2016/

In Focus: Kyrgyzstan



NQF Developments in Kyrgyzstan

In March 2016 the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development adopted a regulation to introduce a NQF in Kyrgyzstan, as part of a National Qualifications System Concept. Since then, various steps have been taken to modernize and adapt existing qualifications with the aim of better aligning them with the needs of employers and the labour market and ensuring a better quality education. Industry and employer involvement has been central in the process of achieving this objective.

The European Union has supported this challenging process for many years - one example is the successful completion of the Tempus QUADRIGA project (Qualification Frameworks in Central Asia: Bologna-based Principles and Regional Coordination) in 2015, which provided valuable input to the elaboration of the NQF in Kyrgyzstan by mobilizing national expertise and facilitating exchange at regional level with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.



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The Kyrgyz Republic – Country Brief

Population: 6.034.000 (2015 estimate by UN)

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country bordering China to the east, Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west and Tajikistan to the south. It has an area of 200,000 square kilometres and its capital city is Bishkek. Kyrgyzstan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and became a UN member in 1992.

Kyrgyzstan has an estimated GDP per capita of \$2,200. Major industries include mineral resources, hydroelectric energy and textiles and over 50% of Kyrgyzstan's population works in agriculture and animal husbandry. In 2014 Kyrgyzstan spent 5.53% of total government expenditure on education (UNESCO).

Education

The higher education system of Kyrgyzstan consists of 52 higher education institutions, both public and private. Although it is not a Bologna signatory country, Kyrgyzstan has been working towards implementing key aspects of the Bologna reforms. In 2014 the traditional system of higher education qualifications (Specialist Diploma, Doctorate) was replaced with a new two-tier system in line with the EU (Bachelor's degree, Master's degree), and third-tier PhD programmes are currently being piloted. In 2015, there was a 45% gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education.

VET starts at secondary level, with one, two and three-year courses which can then lead to higher level professional education, including Bachelor degrees and Master studies. Responsibility for VET falls under the Ministry of Education and Science and VET is part of the Education Development Strategy 2012–2020.

Useful links

Ministry of Education and Science: <http://edu.gov.kg/>

National Erasmus+ office: <http://erasmusplus.kg>

Overview of HE system: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/overview/Kyrgyzstan.pdf

CAEP organises NQF meeting in Bishkek



Thirty-five education experts, deputy ministers and senior officials from Kyrgyzstan and the EU met in Bishkek on September 16, 2016 to discuss and reflect on the current status of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in Kyrgyzstan and to put forward recommendations for their effective development.

After some opening remarks by the CAEP Team Leader, Mr Christian Wagner, Mr Nurmamat Esenkulov, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, stressed the efforts being currently undertaken to develop a coherent National Qualification System in the country. Ms Zuurakan Kadenova, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development then focused on the importance of the system for employers in contributing to job growth in the most needed areas and strengthening the export potential of Kyrgyzstan.

In his opening speech, Mr Jaap Ora, Head of the Political, Press and Information Section of the Delegation of European Union to the Kyrgyz Republic, highlighted Education as being one of the three important sectors being supported by the EU in Kyrgyzstan, with the other two being Social Protection and Good Governance. Projects are currently

being implemented in education, health, environmental sustainability, peace-building, food security and the promotion of democracy.

Claudio Dondi and Onolkan Umnakulova, experts working on the CAEP project, presented the main findings of the stock-taking report on NQF, highlighting the results of the Kyrgyzstan Country Report.

Ms. Larisa Marchenko, from the Ministry of Education and Science went on to explain in detail the developments towards a National Qualification System in Kyrgyzstan that have taken place so far.

A report was also given by Professor Ewa Chmielecka from the Warsaw School of Economics on the Polish experience of developing an NQF, including an overview of some of the challenges that have been overcome along the way. She highlighted that the key to their success has been the active involvement of all stakeholders in the process and the ongoing support from the Ministry of Education. The case study presented by Prof. Chmielecka was of great interest to the Kyrgyz participants, particularly the experience Poland has had in training and involving expert groups and state bodies who systematically meet to discuss NQF issues.

In conclusion, it was announced that 3 peer learning events on NQF would be organised over the next 6 months within the CAEP-Phase II project, and the main topics for discussion were identified.

Details of these Peer Learning Events will be published in forthcoming CAEP newsletters.

Kyrgyz Republic introduces system of independent certification of professional competence for VET graduates

A sector-based system of certification of professional competence (NBTS) has been developed in the Kyrgyz Republic with the

support of the German development consulting firm GOPA within the GIZ "Vocational Training and Employment Promotion" project 204-16.

An NBTS Coordinating Council was established to develop the system, led by the Chamber of Commerce and including representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Economic Development of the Kyrgyz Republic; the Ministry of Education and Science; the Ministry of Health and the Vocational Education Agency as well as industry representatives.

Independent certification of high-school and college graduates is a process whereby the level of 'professional competence' in terms of practical knowledge and skills is confirmed by an independent commission, led by industry representatives and employers. These discipline-specific certificates are now being increasingly recognized by employers in Kyrgyzstan.

The project has also led to the development of an electronic database of certified professionals to assist employers in the Kyrgyz Republic and abroad when searching for skilled workers. Details of this database can be found on the Chamber of Commerce website at: www.cci.kg/



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NBTS Coordinating Council meeting and award ceremony for graduates of vocational schools



In July 2016, The Chamber of Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic held a meeting of the NBTS Coordinating Council.

Opening the meeting Amangeldy Davletaliev, Senior Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic said, "It is gratifying that an independent professional certification of graduates of high schools and vocational schools is becoming sustainable. The younger generation is starting to understand the importance of this certification in leading to employment in the best companies in Kyrgyzstan."

This year, the NBTS Coordinating Council has significantly expanded to include the mining companies Centerra GOLD and Kumtor Gold Company (KGC), JSC "Sevelelectro" medical school, and the Veterinary Chamber of the Kyrgyz Republic. "This shows the interest of companies to employ professionals who want to develop" - said Mikhail Terekhov, a GOPA expert on accreditation and certification.



The meeting presented the results of the work completed by the Council in 2016. This year 153 graduates took part in the voluntary certification procedure; 84 of whom received the required number of points for industry certification in 17 areas including construction, ICT, veterinary science, medicine, healthcare, agriculture and mining.

An award ceremony for these 84 graduates took place on July 8, 2016 in Bishkek in the great hall of the Kyrgyz National Drama Theatre T. Abdumomunov. The graduates included nine Kumtor Gold Company (KGC) regional scholarship holders.

Holger Noyveger, head of the GIZ regional office in Kyrgyzstan said, "This day will forever remain in your memory, symbolizing the beginning of a successful career. Industry certificate issued and recognized by the business community are a great premise for finding a good job with decent earnings."

On presenting the certificates KGC's Vice-President of Human Resources, Deon Badenhorst said, "It will give students the opportunity to attain qualifications that they can use not only in Kyrgyzstan but also all over CIS countries and elsewhere in the world...giving them the chance to broaden their horizons."

More information on the Coordinating Council meeting can be found at:

www.cci.kg/news/1/1590.html

Photos from the award ceremony can be seen at:

<http://www.cci.kg/news/1/1592.html>

"Save the date": Next CAEP events

16 - 18 November 2016

Cracow, Poland

Regional Conference:

"Enhancing cooperation in Higher Education between Central Asia countries and the European Union"

18 November, 2016

Cracow, Poland

2nd Steering Committee Meeting

15 December, 2016

Astana, Kazakhstan

National Seminar on NQF

30 January, 2017

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

National Seminar on NQF

2 February, 2017 (tbc)

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

National Seminar on Bologna Principles

3 February, 2017 (tbc)

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

National Seminar on NQF

In the next CAEP

Newsletter issue #4 (December 2016):

1. Report from the Regional Conference in Cracow
2. CAEP report on Student Mobility
3. EPartner events in the EU and Kazakhstan

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