

# Central Asia Education Platform NEWSLETTER

Newsletter #6 May/June 2017

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## Editorial

Dear colleagues,

The EU and Central Asian countries support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education, aiming at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, putting education as one priority for their mutual cooperation.

This March representatives of the Ministries for Education from CA, Latvia and Poland, the European Commission, ETF and the EEAS met for the **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Senior Officials (SOM)** in Brussels. The aim of the meeting was to review the progress of cooperation and the current state of education in Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the Central Asia (CA) countries since the First Ministerial Meeting in Riga in 2015, and during the meeting delegates drew up the first draft of the Declaration to be concluded at the **Second Ministerial Meeting**, which will be fine-tuned during the 4th SOM Meeting in Astana on June 22.

The project would like to express its gratitude to the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr Erlan Sagadiev, who will be hosting and chairing the Ministerial Meeting on June 23 in Astana, which will further explore steps to strengthen cooperation between Central Asia and the EU in HE and VET.

We expect to have an interesting and productive Ministerial Meeting, enhancing policy dialogue in such an important sector as education, which plays a vital role in contributing to the prevention of the radicalization leading to violent extremism in our countries. On a lighter note, we are



also looking forward to combining the Ministerial Meeting with an opportunity to visit the EXPO 2017 "Future of Energy" in the capital of Kazakhstan.

Last but not least, other CAEP events taking place over the coming weeks include a National Meeting on Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Dushanbe at the end of June and the 3rd and conclusive meeting of the working group on data collection in Torino in July jointly with the European Training Foundation (ETF).

Christian Wagner  
CAEP Team Leader

### CAEP Regional Conference held jointly with EHEF event in Dushanbe

The Regional Conference, "**Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training**" was held in Dushanbe on 18th and 19th May, organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan.

The 2-day event brought together senior officials from the Ministry, the EU Delegation and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with representatives of leading universities and colleges in Tajikistan, representatives of the Ministries of Education and Science of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and education experts from the EU, Armenia, Poland and Latvia.

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EU-funded projects in Turkmenistan



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The conference was conducted in close partnership with another EU initiative – **European Higher Education Fairs (EHEF)**. The synergy between the two projects provided participants with a unique opportunity to not only to establish contacts with EU counterparts, but also discuss current topics and exchange experience with colleagues in the region. The first part of the Conference was jointly moderated by the two project Team Leaders – Mr. Christian Wagner, CAEP and Dr. Stephen Webber, EHEF.

In his opening speech, Mr. Bozorali Odinazoda, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, highlighted the need for colleges and universities to prepare highly qualified specialists, and told delegates about existing collaboration with international donors and organizations, the EU being one of the most important and trusted partners. The Deputy Minister thanked the organizing committee and reassured conference participants that the Ministry of Education of Tajikistan is open for collaboration and will do its best to continue cooperation at all levels of the education system.

Mr. Maciej Adam Madalinski, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Tajikistan, addressed the participants and highlighted the importance of the CAEP project as one of three current EU initiatives at the regional level, along with the rule of law and environmental platforms. H.E. Mr. Piotr Iwaszkiewicz, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Uzbekistan and Republic of Tajikistan, then spoke of the challenges that the region faces and the key role of education in tackling those challenges.

Dr. Samvel Karabekyan from Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, Armenia, also an HE Reform Expert, analysed how the process of transition to the Bologna process has been implemented in Armenia since 2005 and highlighted the relevance of QA and Accreditation in HE in the country. He also cited the active involvement of HEIs in Tempus

and Erasmus Plus and shared best practice such as self-certification and the recent achievement of the accreditation of the National Centre of QA by the European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Dr. Zarrina Kadirova, Vice-Rector for International Relations, Tajik State University of Commerce, presented the results of the mobility report that was prepared within the CAEP project by EU experts, shared the position of Tajikistan in EU-funded projects including Erasmus Plus, and drew attention to recommendations from experts. She also highlighted the importance of regional collaboration by all five Central Asian countries.

In the last part of the joint CAEP-EHEF session Unzeilya Khassymova from Kazakhstan and Susarkul Alunbekova from Kyrgyzstan shared their experiences and best practice in national quality assurance setting and accreditation.

The afternoon saw Ms. Andra Šenberga, from the State Education Quality Service of Latvia and Mr. Maciej Markowski, International Policy Advisor of Polish Accreditation Committee share the Latvian and Polish experiences of implementing QA and Accreditation, followed by round table discussions in which the delegates discussed the challenges faced and how to tackle them.

On the second day, participants engaged in lively dialogue through round table discussions and working groups, looking at areas such as integrating different types of learning into QA settings, how to make QA relevant to the labour market and optimising stakeholder involvement.

Downloadable materials are available for the CAEP conference: [www.caep-project.org/caep-regional-conference-on-quality-assurance-and-accreditation-held-in-dushanbe/](http://www.caep-project.org/caep-regional-conference-on-quality-assurance-and-accreditation-held-in-dushanbe/)

For the EHEF conference: [www.ehef.asia/events/tajikistan](http://www.ehef.asia/events/tajikistan)

## Peer Learning Meetings on NQF



The general aim of Peer Learning (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 as well as sharing best practice and developing a regional mutually-trusting team.

The first PLA event on National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) saw delegations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the EU join the CAEP team in Istanbul this February. Current developments in NQF in the respective countries were presented and discussed and themes for peer learning activities and collaboration were set.

This was followed by a second meeting on 24-25 April in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, bringing together representatives from the Kyrgyz Republic, including the Delegation of the European Union, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and national employers, along with participants from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, education experts from Latvia and Poland, and CAEP experts.

Mr. Johannes Stenbæk Madsen, Head of Cooperation at the Delegation highlighted the importance of CAEP events: ***"This second meeting deepens some of the focal areas already been tackled during these events... We hope that meetings at expert level like the one started today will contribute and strengthen mutual ties and make a valuable contribution to improving our educational systems by learning from each other's best practices"***.



## Turkmenistan – Country Brief

**Population: 5.439.000 (2016 UN estimate)**

Turkmenistan is bordered by Kazakhstan to the northwest, Uzbekistan to the north/east, Afghanistan to the southeast, Iran to the south and the Caspian Sea to the west. It covers an area of almost 500,000 square kilometres, the capital is Ashgabat and the Karakum (Black Sand) Desert stretches across most of the country.

With an estimated GDP per capita of \$9,031, approximately 49% of GDP comes from industry, 37% from services and 14% from agriculture (UN, 2014). Hydrocarbon exports (mainly natural gas) make up 31% of the GDP in total, with 60% of gas exports going to China and the remainder to Russia and Iran. In 2012 Turkmenistan spent 20.8% of total government expenditure on education, which was 3.05% of GDP (UNESCO).

### Education

There are 24 state-owned higher education institutions in Turkmenistan including 5 universities, 17 institutes, an academy and a conservatoire. University studies consist of 5 or 6-year programmes leading to a Specialist Diploma. After 3 years of additional studies, graduates can obtain the degree of 'Candidate of Science', followed by a 'Doctor of Sciences' through supervised research. Turkmenistan is not a Bologna signatory country, however some of the newly established universities are starting to offer 4-year Bachelor and 2-year Master degree programmes. In 2014, there was a 7.98% gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education (UNESCO).

Vocational education and training is offered mainly at initial and secondary level. There are 131 accredited vocational schools and training centres offering IVET and 40 secondary vocational schools. Since 2009 VET has been the responsibility of a dedicated VET department in the Ministry of Education.

### Useful links

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

Overview of HE system: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating\\_countries/reviews/Turkmenistan.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/reviews/Turkmenistan.pdf)

Overview of VET sector: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Turkmenistan\\_VET\\_and\\_labour\\_market\\_update\\_2015\\_EN](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Turkmenistan_VET_and_labour_market_update_2015_EN)

Participants shared recent developments and progress made in the implementation of NQFs and discussed challenges faced, how to successfully involve stakeholders and the methods and tools that can be used to validate learning outcomes achieved through non-formal and informal learning.

At the end of the two-day meeting a plan was made for peer learning activities in the participating countries and the dissemination of results to stakeholders. Finally, the delegates agreed on the activities needed to be covered before the 3rd and final Peer Learning event of the series to be held in Riga in September.

### Working Group Meetings on Data Collection

The aim of this working group is to enhance Central Asian countries' use of evidence for policy analysis and policy making in the field of VET and HE through developing participants' knowledge and skills, and sharing experiences and lessons within a regional network.

In total, three meetings have been planned to cover all the phases of the evidence cycle and to discuss and exchange good practice with respect to evidence collection and in total, three meetings have been planned to cover all the phases of the evidence cycle and to discuss and exchange good practice with respect to evidence collection and use.

Since the kick-off meeting in Istanbul in February, each participating country has been actively working on a strategy to improve the evidence available for a selected topic, considering also the challenges related to the evidence use and communication.

The second working group meeting took place in April in Bishkek. Delegates from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan actively discussed monitoring and data collection strategies and the meetings was also an opportunity for policy learning on continuing professional development and inclusive approaches, existing evidence collection approaches and the means to improve these.

The last meeting of the working group will take place in Turin from 4-6 July 2017.

### Country Focus: Turkmenistan



Turkmenistan declared independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and has since then been moving towards a market economy. Although the official unemployment rate has been stable for the last few years at around 8%, there is a higher rate of unemployment amongst young people (12%) and the majority of those without work have completed secondary or higher education, indicating a mismatch of skills between the existing education system and the labour market.



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To meet the challenges of this skills gap along with the need to maintain increasing economic growth, the **National Programme of Social and Economic Development of Turkmenistan 2011-2030** has in its objectives the establishment of an education system comparable to developed countries, providing modernized education and training to better prepare its workforce.

In addition, the **State Programme on the Development of Education for the Period 2012-2016** lays out guidelines for quality provision of secondary, professional, and higher education in accordance with international standards.

### EU-funded Education Projects in Turkmenistan

During recent years the EU has supported the modernisation process of education in Turkmenistan within two projects; "Support to the modernisation of the Education System" (2009-2011), in which secondary school curricula were revised and teachers and school principals trained, and "Further improvement of quality and relevance of Professional Education" (2011-2013), which focused on VET.

To further support the Government of Turkmenistan in the creation of an education system in line with international educational standards, a new "Support to the Education Sector in Turkmenistan" project has recently been launched by the European Commission.

The aim of the project is to contribute to the on-going education reform process by facilitating the introduction of educational standards and adapting professional education programmes to labour market needs.

The main intended results of the project are:

#### 1. Strategic planning/institutional capacity building

a. Strengthening of the planning, implementation and monitoring capacity of the overall reform of education/professional education.

b. Review of the existing education strategy and adoption of international standards.

#### 2. Program development/delivery of general and vocational education

a. Revision of general secondary education taking into consideration the European Reference Framework for key competencies.

b. Review of VET qualifications on the basis of modern criteria and development of new curricula.

c. Establishment of a national school community platform and introduction of enhanced best international school management practices.

d. Analysis of cooperation between VET schools, local administration and enterprises and implementation of innovative cooperation approaches.

The project is being implemented by a consortium led by European Profiles from Greece and partnered with Internationaler Bund from Germany, Pearson Education Ltd. from the UK and European Projects Management (EPM) from Latvia, and will run until 2020.



The first Strategic Seminar within the project was held in January in Turkmenbashi, in which the project team introduced the task, approach and expected results to the community, collected feedback, prioritized efforts and discussed first activities. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education a detailed year-long work plan has been prepared and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for approval.

For more information about this project please see:

<http://dbase.caep-project.org/project/support-to-the-education-sector-in-turkmenistan-2/>

### "Save the date": Next CAEP events

**22 June, 2017**

*4<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM)  
Astana, Kazakhstan*

**23 June, 2017**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Meeting (MIN)  
Astana, Kazakhstan*

**30 June, 2017**

*National Meeting on QA and Accreditation  
Dushanbe, Tajikistan*

**4-6 July, 2017**

*3<sup>rd</sup> and final Working Group on Data Collection  
Torino, Italy*

### In the next CAEP Newsletter issue #7 (July 2017):

Special edition focusing on the 2nd Ministerial Meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan

Plus coverage of National Meetings on Quality Assurance and Accreditation

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