Global Gateway

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REGIONAL SKILLS ROADMAP

for Continued Regional Cooperation on Skills Development in Central Asia

HLG CONSULTATION DRAFT

October 2026

Document focus	To provide a framework for policy review of future regional cooperation on skills development beyond DARYA by the High-Level Group in Ashgabat, including transport and logistics as a possible initial sectoral application.

Status: Draft for HLG policy review.

The draft Roadmap reflects technical consultation with members of the 2026 Regional Steering Group and subsequent consultations. The proposals and examples in this draft describe possible cooperation formats and evidence of feasibility. They do not constitute country commitments or decisions to continue, scale or finance DARYA-supported activities.

The High-Level Group is invited to provide strategic guidance and further finetuning for the proposed cooperation approach, thematic priorities and the limited set of actions that may warrant further development. Any subsequent activity would require action-specific consultation, feasible arrangements and agreement by the interested countries and institutions.

1. Purpose of the Roadmap

The Roadmap provides a voluntary, country-led framework for future regional cooperation on skills development, building on DARYA experience. It identifies feasible joint actions aligned with priorities agreed by Central Asian countries and the European Union and, where relevant, other development partners.

Technical consultations during the 2026 Regional Steering Group validated the thematic scope of the Roadmap and supported a sector-based approach. Transport and logistics emerged as the strongest area of convergence for initial application, including in relation to the Trans-Caspian corridor. Other sectors may be considered where there is shared demand, regional added value and a feasible first output.

The Roadmap does not represent a continuation of DARYA or its thematic module structure. It converts country experience and regional dialogue into a limited set of cooperation actions. Participation is voluntary and may vary by action, with later entry possible where technically feasible.

Core safeguard	No action proceeds automatically. HLG guidance does not constitute formal adoption, signature or an implementation commitment. Participation remains voluntary, action-specific and subject to national mandates, practical feasibility and resources.

2. Foundations in Regional Dialogue and Country Experience

The proposed priorities draw on regional policy dialogue, country experience and practical DARYA-supported cooperation rather than on DARYA's internal programme structure.

Evidence stream	Contribution to the Roadmap
DARYA High-Level Group, Tashkent, December 2024	Prioritised expert networks, joint references for high-demand skills, competence recognition and regular exchange on education, qualifications and labour-market practice.
Fourth DARYA High-Level Group, Turin, October 2025	Highlighted qualifications and validation, skills evidence, teacher and trainer development, sector-focused provision and structured employer dialogue.
National Steering Groups and DARYA implementation evidence, 2026	Demonstrated national uptake of methods and identified experience that countries can share or further develop through regional cooperation.
Regional Steering Group and follow-up consultation, September 2026	Confirmed voluntary, country-led cooperation; identified transport and logistics as the first candidate sectoral application; and proposed concrete actions, safeguards and implementation considerations.

The previous regional consultations identified several relevant but resource-intensive options (a regional portal, steps towards a regional qualifications framework, a shared resource repository and regular mobility for educators) that were not considered feasible to establish and sustain in the foreseeable future.

The Roadmap gives priority to feasible forms of cooperation, existing structures and gradual development based on demonstrated value.

3. Cooperation Approach

Regional cooperation is not a single model and may begin at different levels. Each action should begin at the lowest appropriate level and move further only when interested countries see value and the necessary conditions are in place.

Level	Form of cooperation	Typical output	Additional requirement
1	Information exchange	Inventory, presentation or documented practice	Defined topic and interested institutions
2	Peer learning and methodological exchange	Practice note, adapted tool or technical learning session	Shared learning question and relevant expertise
3	Coordinated comparison and/or validation of findings	Comparative note, mapping or voluntary reference	Comparable inputs and agreed methods
4	Joint piloting or national adaptation	Pilot output or nationally adapted method, profile or provision model	Agreed scope, inputs, timeline and follow-up
5	Structured country-led cooperation	Recurring country-led mechanism with periodic review	Sustainable governance arrangements and explicit country mandates

4. Common Principles and Preconditions

- **Country interest:** at least two countries identify a shared issue; participation is voluntary, can vary by action, and later entry remains possible where technically feasible.
- **National ownership**: regional outputs serve as voluntary references; national mandates, legislation, approval procedures and data ownership remain fully respected.
- **Regional added value**: the expected benefit should exceed what separate national or bilateral activity could reasonably achieve.

- **Alignment with EU-Central Asia agreed policy priorities**: cooperation should support jointly identified sectoral priorities and, where appropriate, complement other development-partner initiatives.
- **Clear policy use and output:** the participating institutions agree what will be produced and for what operational or policy use.
- **Proportionate coordination:** existing focal points and time-bound technical groups should be used where possible; no permanent secretariat is assumed.
- **Feasibility and review**: scope, expertise, staff time, information and resources should be proportionate, with a decision to continue, adapt, pause or conclude after each stage.

5. Thematic Areas and Priority Actions

The three thematic areas below provide a policy focus for future regional cooperation. They are options for policy guidance and further action design, not an implementation package or a list of country commitments.

5.1 Qualifications and Recognition

Possible action	Cooperation and first output	Policy added value	Main beneficiaries and contributors
Qualification and occupational-profile comparison	Compare selected requirements, levels or profiles; produce a comparative note or voluntary reference for national use.	Improves transparency and supports qualification development, mobility and sector investment.	Qualifications authorities, sector bodies, VET providers, employers and learners.
Multicountry occupational profiles	Develop or update profiles in an agreed sector, with flexible participation and voluntary national adaptation.	Translates common competence needs into practical references for standards and programmes.	Qualifications bodies, sector experts, employers, providers and curriculum developers.
Validation, recognition and assessor capacity	Exchange validation, recognition and quality-assurance approaches, including assessor competences; prepare a peer-learning note, mapping or limited pilot.	Supports credible validation and wider access to recognised competences.	Validation bodies, assessors, qualifications authorities, workers and jobseekers.
Micro-qualifications	Begin with a bounded exchange on terminology, legal approaches, quality assurance and policy use rather than a regional standard.	Supports flexible and short-form skills development while preserving national regulation.	Policy authorities, providers, employers and adult learners.

5.2 Skills Evidence and Labour-Market Intelligence

Possible action	Cooperation and first output	Policy added value	Main beneficiaries and contributors
Methodological exchange	Compare employer surveys, tracer studies, forecasting and sector-analysis methods; prepare an adapted tool or agreed comparison plan.	Improves the quality and institutional use of skills evidence.	Labour and education authorities, analytical institutions, employers and sector bodies.
Priority-sector skills analysis	Apply a common core question to national analysis, employer input and provider mapping; retain national data and produce a joint synthesis.	Creates comparable evidence for qualifications, provision and investment-related skills responses.	Policy authorities, employers, providers, investors, learners and workers.
Evidence-to-policy learning	Exchange how evidence is used to update standards, programmes, career guidance and labour-market measures; produce a practical policy note.	Closes the gap between analysis and decisions affecting skills supply and demand.	Policy makers, qualifications bodies, providers, career services and employers.
Terminology and interoperable references	Explore common terminology, mappings or reference logic, including lessons from ESCO, without assuming a single regional database.	Supports comparability while preserving national systems, infrastructure and data ownership.	Skills-data institutions, employment services, qualifications bodies and system users.

5.3 Skills Development and Provision

Possible action	Cooperation and first output	Policy added value	Main beneficiaries and contributors
Teacher, trainer and assessor development	Focused peer learning on a defined pedagogical or assessment challenge, drawing where useful on SCAFFOLD, CPD and validation experience.	Supports sustainable improvement in competence-based teaching, training and assessment.	Teachers, trainers, assessors, CPD bodies, providers and learners.
Sector-based programmes and practical training	Compare curricula, workplace learning, modular provision, upskilling or reskilling solutions for selected occupations; prepare options for national adaptation.	Improves responsiveness of provision to shared sector and employer needs.	Providers, employers, sector bodies, workers, jobseekers and learners.
Career guidance linked to sector evidence	Use sector skills information and occupational profiles to improve guidance tools and informed occupational choices.	Connects labour-market demand with learner choices and employer-responsive provision.	Young people, adults, career services, providers, employment services and employers.

5.4 Cross-Cutting Delivery Mechanisms

The following mechanisms support cooperation across the thematic areas and do not constitute separate policy priorities:

- **Focal points and expert groups:** use existing focal points and institutional networks, with time-bound expert groups established where needed for a defined task or output. This does not presume a permanent regional structure or secretariat.
- **Employer and sector dialogue:** involve employers and sector bodies where their evidence is needed to identify priority occupations and skills gaps, review occupational profiles or assess the relevance of proposed training responses.
- **Coordination across ministries:** involve education, labour and other relevant authorities where an action requires decisions or responsibilities across policy areas. Existing coordination arrangements, including experience from the DARYA Regional Steering Group, may be used where appropriate.
- **Cross-cutting issues:** consider digital transformation, artificial intelligence, automation and green skills within relevant thematic actions and specific use cases, rather than treating them as separate policy areas at this stage.
- **Peer learning and exchange:** choose a form of cooperation suited to the issue, ranging from information exchange and methodological learning to coordinated comparison or limited joint piloting.

6. Sectoral Application of the Roadmap: Transport and Logistics

A sectoral application would show how the Roadmap can translate strategic priorities into focused regional cooperation across skills evidence, qualifications and provision.

The 2026 RSG consultation identified transport and logistics as the strongest candidate for an initial application because of shared regional interest and its relevance to EU–Central Asia priorities, including the Trans-Caspian corridor.
This first application would demonstrate the Roadmap's approach without limiting its future use in other sectors. Tourism, hydropower and other green-economy fields could be considered where countries identify shared demand and regional added value.
The proposed sequence links evidence on skills demand to occupational and qualification references and, where justified, targeted improvements in training and provision.

The geographical scope, priority occupations, participating countries and outputs would be agreed during action-specific design.

The table below illustrates how cooperation in transport and logistics could develop in phases.

Phase	Candidate activity and first output	Policy use and added value	Indicative stakeholders
1. Scope and employer dialogue	Define corridor functions, priority questions and occupational focus through targeted consultation; produce a short scoping note.	Ensures that further work addresses an agreed economic and workforce problem.	Interested authorities, transport and logistics employers, sector bodies, providers and analytical institutions.

Phase	Candidate activity and first output	Policy use and added value	Indicative stakeholders
2. Skills-demand and provision evidence	Use a common core for employer input and country-level analysis; map relevant VET provision; produce national findings with a regional synthesis.	Identifies shortages, emerging skills and gaps between demand and available provision without creating a single regional dataset.	Labour and education authorities, employers, providers, statistical and analytical bodies.
3. Occupational and qualification references	Compare selected occupations, standards and qualifications and, where useful, develop or update multicountry occupational profiles.	Provides voluntary references for national standards, qualifications and programme development.	Qualifications bodies, occupational-standard developers, employers and sector experts.
4. Targeted skills response	Compare modular programmes, curricula, workplace learning, validation and assessor/trainer needs; prepare options for national adaptation or a limited pilot.	Turns evidence into practical training, recognition and capacity-development responses.	Providers, employers, trainers, assessors, career and employment services.
5. Review and extension	Assess usefulness, document lessons and decide whether to continue, adapt or extend the model to other countries, occupations or sectors.	Keeps cooperation proportionate and creates an evidence-based route for scaling.	Participating institutions, policy authorities, users and possible development partners.

7. DARYA Experience Demonstrating Feasibility

The DARYA examples below illustrate how bounded, output-oriented regional cooperation can produce usable results while preserving national ownership. They are included as evidence of feasibility and possible working methods; they do not imply that activities will continue, expand or be replicated automatically.

Experience	What it demonstrates for future cooperation
Country-to-country and methodological exchange	Peer learning on the Kyrgyz Social Contract, platform work and tracer studies showed that focused exchange can improve national tools without requiring a common regional instrument.
Multicountry occupational profiles	Six prototype profiles demonstrated that structured technical work can identify common competence requirements while outputs remain voluntary references rather than regional qualifications.
Kazakhstan-Tajikistan energy-efficiency skills study	A shared methodology can produce country-level evidence and a joint synthesis connecting sector demand, qualifications and targeted skills responses.
Employer-survey and forecasting tools	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz experience showed how piloted methods can be adapted and institutionalised nationally while supporting regional methodological learning.

7.1 Multicountry Occupational Profiles

In 2024–2025, sectoral working groups from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan used a DARYA-supported methodology to develop six prototype multicountry occupational profiles: dry-finishing master, truck driver, logistics warehouse specialist, energy auditor, e-commerce specialist and tourist guide. The profiles identify common competence requirements and learning outcomes and serve as bridging references; they are not regional qualifications. The piloting of three additional profiles in Global Gateway-related fields is planned for the final year of DARYA, subject to the voluntary participation of relevant institutions from at least two countries.

Practical value	**Structured cross-country technical work can produce usable common references and support national qualification development**

Source: *DARYA multicountry qualifications pilot 2026: objectives, final products, working modality; Annex 1 DARYA Event Plan Q1–Q4 2026; 2026 NSG country presentations.*

7.2 Multicountry Study on Skills for Energy Efficiency

A DARYA-supported multicountry sectoral study has been initiated on current and emerging skills needs for energy efficiency in the residential housing sector in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Building on the multicountry profile for energy auditors, the study uses a shared methodological framework while retaining country-level analysis of skills demand and supply, technologies and occupations, provision, qualifications and stakeholder roles. The findings are expected to inform policy recommendations and will be validated nationally.

Practical value	**A shared analytical framework can support cross-country learning while preserving national evidence, validation and policy use. It also links labour-market evidence to qualifications and targeted skills responses in a priority economic sector.**

Source: *DARYA 2026 Multicountry Sectoral Study on Skills for Energy Efficiency in the Housing Sector (Kazakhstan and Tajikistan); DARYA–EU Delegation meeting presentation, 12 May 2026; 2026 Kazakhstan and Tajikistan NSG presentations.*

7.3 From Survey Pilots to Nationally Owned Evidence Tools

With DARYA expert support, Kazakhstan's Workforce Development Centre, working with the Shanyrak sector association, initiated and is scaling an Establishment Skills Survey in housing-related subsectors. The survey assesses workforce capacity, shortages, qualification levels and readiness for digital and energy-efficient technologies and is intended for integration into the Centre's regular processes. In Kyrgyzstan, a DARYA-supported labour-market research methodology was institutionalised through a 2026 government decision requiring the study to be conducted every three years; employer-survey and forecasting tools continue to be developed for policy use.

Practical value	**Regional exchange is most useful when it helps countries improve and institutionalise national tools. Comparable methods can support peer learning without requiring a single regional database or resource-intensive joint analysis.**

Source: *Establishment Skills Survey – Scale-Up of the Pilot Exercise; DARYA NSG 2026 Workforce Development Centre Kazakhstan presentation; Kyrgyz Republic NSG presentation, 23 June 2026.*

8. Policy Revisions and Follow-Up Pathway

The RSG provided technical guidance and a consolidated set of proposals. The HLG is invited to consider the strategic relevance and direction of the Roadmap. Its guidance would inform subsequent action-specific consultation; it would not trigger automatic implementation.

Stage	Purpose	Expected output or decision gate
1. RSG technical consultation - completed	Review the approach, identify areas of convergence and collect concrete country and stakeholder proposals.	Consolidated feedback and proposed Roadmap revisions.
2. Roadmap refinement - completed	Integrate RSG evidence, clarify gaps and frame a limited set of policy-level propositions.	Updated Roadmap for HLG consultation.
3. HLG consultation and revision	Provide strategic guidance on the cooperation approach, thematic priorities and initial sectoral application.	Political and strategic guidance; no automatic commitment, signature or implementation decision.
4. Action-specific consultation and design	Interested countries and institutions define scope, users, output, participation, inputs, timeline and review point.	Cooperation action note developed only where interest and common preconditions are sufficient.
5. Limited activity and review	Undertake the smallest useful activity and assess its relevance before continuation or expansion.	Decision to continue, adapt, pause or conclude.

9. Issues for High-Level Group Guidance

- Does the voluntary, country-led and action-specific approach provide an appropriate basis for regional cooperation beyond DARYA?

- Should transport and logistics be the first sectoral application of the Roadmap, while allowing other sectors to be considered later?
- Which two or three Roadmap actions should be prioritised for further consultation and possible activation from 2028, and what should be the first practical step for each?
- Are there additional strategic considerations that should shape scope, sequencing, partnerships or policy use?

10. Source Base

- DARYA High-Level Group meeting reports and minutes: Tashkent, December 2024, and Turin, October 2025.
- National Steering Group presentations, June 2026; Regional Steering Group presentations, discussion record and consolidated feedback matrix, 11 September 2026; and follow-up synthesis, 14 September 2026.
- DARYA 2026 implementation materials on multicountry occupational profiles, the Kazakhstan-Tajikistan energy-efficiency skills study and establishment skills surveys; and the Analytical Assessment of Regional Skills Cooperation in Central Asia, Version 3, August 2026.