

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR HORIZON EUROPE NCPS

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Sharing Experience from Uzbekistan's National Contact Points Network

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- Scientific and innovative activities in Uzbekistan
- Importance of National Contact Points (NCPs) in Horizon Europe and international research cooperation
- Uzbekistan's integration into the Horizon Europe framework

The idea to create a National Contact Points (NCP) network in Uzbekistan emerged as part of our broader ambition to integrate into the European Research Area and increase participation in Horizon Europe.

The official launch of the NCP network took place in **2022**, shortly after Uzbekistan's association with **Horizon Europe**. It was initiated and is coordinated by the **Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovations**, with strong support from our leading universities and research institutes.

We began with **six key thematic NCPs** — carefully selected based on Uzbekistan's research priorities and alignment with Horizon Europe's structure:

- Health
- Energy
- Environment
- Digital
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)
- Widening Participation & Spreading Excellence

“Each NCP is hosted by a national expert institution and led by professionals familiar with both local and international research needs.”

Since the launch of our NCP network in 2022, we've made significant progress in a short period of time — both in terms of outreach and results.

We have organized over **25 awareness events**, including info days, webinars, and training workshops. These activities reached more than **1,000 researchers, innovators, and university staff** across the country — not only in Tashkent but also in regional centers.

Uzbek teams have already been involved in more than **20 Horizon Europe project applications** — a major step forward, considering that just a few years ago there was little awareness of such opportunities.

Beyond activities and numbers, the most important question is: **what real impact has the NCP network had on Uzbekistan's science system?**

And the answer is — a lot.

First, our researchers and institutions are now **more visible on the European stage**. We're no longer observers — we are **active contributors** in international research projects, consortia, and innovation discussions.

“We also developed a **national applicant database**, which helps connect researchers with relevant partners and calls. The value of the NCP network is not just in facilitating calls — it's in shaping a culture of **openness, competitiveness, and global collaboration** within our scientific community.

Like any new system, building Uzbekistan's NCP network came with its share of **challenges**. But we see these not as setbacks, but as important **lessons** that help us grow stronger and smarter.

Our first major challenge was **limited awareness**, particularly outside the capital.

Many researchers — especially young scientists and regional universities — were unfamiliar with Horizon Europe, its structure, and its potential.

We realized that information alone is not enough — we need **active engagement**, roadshows, and personal outreach to build trust and interest.

Another barrier was the **language of science and proposals**.

That's why we began offering **targeted training**, mentoring, and peer-review sessions to help researchers improve their applications.

One of the biggest indicators of a successful NCP network is not just how many events it hosts — but whether the system is **sustainable, institutionalized**, and supported at the highest levels.

In Uzbekistan, we are fortunate to have strong **government backing**.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovations has integrated NCP activities into national policy planning, including funding, coordination, and strategic targets.

Uzbekistan's NCP system is not temporary or donor-dependent, but **self-sustaining, locally driven, and globally connected**.

Looking ahead, Uzbekistan is committed to making its NCP network **stronger, broader, and more internationally integrated**.

We plan to **expand the NCP system into new thematic areas** aligned with Horizon Europe and national priorities.

Uzbekistan aims to become not only a participant, but a **platform**.

We plan to **host international info days, brokerage events, and training seminars** together with EU partners — to bring Europe and Central Asia closer together.

we're building a system that's not only active, but **adaptive, future-oriented, and aligned with European values** of excellence, openness, and impact.

To conclude, Uzbekistan's journey in building its National Contact Points network is about much more than project numbers.

It's about **creating an ecosystem of opportunity** — where researchers are empowered, institutions are connected, and science becomes a driver of global cooperation.

As Mirzo Ulugbek once said, *'Science is the lamp that lights the path of progress'*.
Let's walk that path together — for knowledge, for people, and for the future.

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