

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ECO REGION

Report on the First High
Level University
Representatives Forum



ECO
Educational Institute



INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ECO REGION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>PREFACE</i>	7
<i>INTRODUCTION: HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ECO REGION</i>	9
Current Trends and Growth Potential on Internationalization of Higher Education in the ECO Region.....	9
<i>M. Akif Kireççi</i>	
The Need for Regional Exchange Programs: Perspectives from Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University.....	17
<i>Muhsin Kar</i>	
Cyprus International University: Nurturing Global Connections and Advancing Education in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.....	19
<i>Halil Nadiri</i>	
Gazi University: Leading Research and Academic Excellence.....	21
<i>Musa Yıldız</i>	
Enhancing Cooperation for Scientific Development and Economic Growth in the ECO Region.....	22
<i>Mitra Teymouri</i>	
Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University: Advancing International Cooperation and Mobility in Higher Education.....	24
<i>Mustafa Hilmi Çolakoğlu</i>	
Promoting Linguistic Diversity and International Cooperation: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML).....	26
<i>Muhammad Zubair Iqbal</i>	
Enhancing Internationalization in Kazakh Higher Education: The Bolashak Scholarship and Collaboration Efforts.....	28
<i>Gulzhanat Tayauova</i>	
Academic Excellence and International Collaboration: The European University of Lefke (EUL) Experience.....	29
<i>Sadık Ülker</i>	



Azerbaijan Technical University: Advancing Engineering Education and International Collaboration	31
<i>Orkhan Vatankhab</i>	
SECTION I: STUDENT MOBILITY WITHIN THE ECO REGION: FACTS AND PROSPECTS	32
Promoting Student Mobility and Institutional Alliances: Unlocking Opportunities at COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI)	33
<i>Arif Awan</i>	
Nurturing Global Connections through Student Mobility and Collaborative Projects	35
<i>Ashhan Sencel Bingöl</i>	
Research Collaboration and Academic Opportunities for Foreign Students	37
<i>Hülya Üründü</i>	
Al-Farabi Kazakh National University: Promoting Academic Mobility and Global Collaborations	38
<i>Saltanat Jakubayeva</i>	
Academic Mobility at Sarsen Amanzholov East Kazakhstan University	40
<i>Dana Nigmanova</i>	
Facilitating Student Mobility: Bahria University's Internationalization Initiatives	41
<i>Awais Mehmood</i>	
Embracing Online Opportunities: American University of Cyprus' Approach to International Student Engagement	43
<i>Zalihe Şanlı</i>	
NEVU: A Global Hub for International Exchange and Education Diversity	45
<i>Makbule Talip Fişekçioğlu</i>	
Ankara University: A Legacy of Excellence and International Engagement	46
<i>Özge Ülker</i>	
SECTION II: STRENGTHENING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH COLLABORATION IN THE ECO REGION AND RESOURCE SHARING	47

Gazi University’s Expanding Horizons and International Collaborations	48
<i>Burcu Aydıner</i>	
International Collaborations: Advancing Research and Knowledge Exchange in Key Fields	49
<i>Cahit Tağı Çelik</i>	
Global Engagement and Student Mobility: Empowering Students through International Programs and Partnerships	50
<i>Makbule Talip Fişekçioğlu</i>	
University of Kyrenia: Pioneering Maritime Studies and Fostering Research Excellence in Northern Cyprus	51
<i>Eser Gemikonaklı</i>	
Bahria University: Fostering Global Connections and Collaborations in Business, Maritime Studies, and Beyond	52
<i>Ali Imtiaz</i>	
Research Institutes and Knowledge Output: Nurturing Education, Research, and Societal Impact in Islamic Countries	54
<i>Muhammad Zubair Iqbal</i>	
Fostering Scientific Collaboration: Exploring Opportunities and Sharing Achievements among Universities in Kazakhstan and Beyond	56
<i>Saltanat Jakubayeva</i>	
Institute of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan: Advancing Education Policy, Research, and Quality Enhancement	58
<i>Musharraf Mammadova</i>	
Fostering Collaboration in Psychological Education and Research: Strengthening Connections in the ECO Region	60
<i>Khudeja Mehmood</i>	
Promoting Scientific Collaboration in the ECO Region: Practical Strategies	61
<i>Khosrow Nazari</i>	
Promoting Accessible Education: ECO Certification and the Role of Open Educational Resources (OER)	66
<i>Mitra Teymouri</i>	



Empowering Distance Education: Gazi University's Commitment to Inclusive Learning and International Collaborations	68
<i>Mutlu Tahsin Üstündağ</i>	
TechnoKOP: Fostering Regional Collaboration and Innovation through Technoparks in the KOP Region	70
<i>Bilgin Yazlık</i>	
SECTION III: INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION	72
Addressing Challenges in Credit Transfer and Accreditation: Insights from the International Relations Office	73
<i>Hülya Üründü</i>	
Towards Institutionalization and International Collaboration: A Case Study of Arkin Creative Arts and Design University (ARUCAD)	75
<i>İbrahim Dalkılıç</i>	
Global Engagement and Academic Excellence: Sumgait State University's Journey in International Collaboration	78
<i>Saadat Humbataliyeva</i>	
Facilitating Mobility and Accreditation: Gazi University's Credit Transfer and Recognition Framework	79
<i>Aslıhan Sencel Bingöl</i>	
Advancing Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education: A Comprehensive Framework for Evaluation and Improvement	80
<i>Khosrow Nazari</i>	
Accreditation and Strengthening Partnerships for Quality Education	82
<i>Mehmet Toycan</i>	
Empowering Recognition and Accreditation: Facilitating Student Mobility and Qualification Validation	83
<i>Özlem Kalkan</i>	
KEY TAKEAWAYS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS	85

PREFACE

The internationalization of higher education, which refers to the deliberate integration of international perspectives, collaborations, and experiences in higher education, has become a prominent and transformative force in today's globalized world. Through internationalization, institutions aim to prepare students to thrive in a multicultural and interconnected world, foster research collaborations that address global challenges, and enhance the quality and relevance of higher education. This report aims to highlight the significance of internationalization in higher education and sets the stage for a deeper exploration of its benefits, challenges, and trends in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) region.

The report encapsulates the essence of the “High Level University Representatives Forum,” organized by Economic Cooperation Organization Educational Institute (ECOEI) on 27 September 2021. The primary objective of the forum was to promote and foster the internationalization of higher education within the ECO region. By facilitating higher coordination and collaboration between universities both within and outside the ECO region, the forum aimed to create a dynamic platform for the exchange of ideas, expertise, and technologies among ECO universities. The event brought together 60 experts representing 30 universities from Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Türkiye and Turkmenistan, providing them with the opportunity to share insights on ongoing projects, address challenges, and forge valuable partnerships. The present report provides an overview of the forum, delving into the key insights, outcomes, and potential future directions towards fostering internationalization in higher education.

The report starts with opening speeches from rectors and presidents of participating universities, setting the stage for further discussions. The next three sections of the report are dedicated to roundtable sessions, which brought together experts from international offices of universities.



These parts are organized around specific themes to facilitate targeted discussions on select issues. In the first section, the participants discuss student mobility within the ECO region, sharing numbers from their institutions and explaining their efforts about future projects. At the second section, the experts share their experiences and perspectives on strengthening scientific research collaboration in the ECO region and resource sharing such as joint use of libraries, educational technologies and systems and laboratories. In the last section, they discuss issues pertaining to institutionalization of higher education cooperation, with a special focus on accreditation, credit transfer and accumulation systems, consortia, recognition of qualifications and joint degree programs. The report concludes by highlighting conceivable policy directions that can be inferred from discussions made throughout the Forum. We believe that the report provides some insights and recommendations that can inform policy makers and readers on potential measures to enhance internationalization of higher education, foster student mobility, address funding challenges, strengthen accreditation systems, promote multilingualism and intercultural competence, and support overall educational advancement within the Economic Cooperation Organization region.

INTRODUCTION: HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ECO REGION

Current Trends and Growth Potential on Internationalization of Higher Education in the ECO Region

M. Akif Kireççi
President, ECOEI

The forum is organized as part of a larger project with the theme of internationalization of higher education. ECOEI has chosen this theme because internationalization of higher education could provide the best opportunities for the Member States to overcome both educational and economic challenges. By encouraging international student mobility, they could benefit from each other's intellectual, technical and logistical strengths, replenish their education sectors, create job markets, increase inflow of foreign currency and know-how, and raise their intercultural understanding.

Internationalization of higher education could provide the best opportunities for the Member States to overcome both educational and economic challenges.

The number of people studying outside of their own country is increasing rapidly and that, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the number of globally mobile students has grown from 2.1 million in 2000 to 5.1 million in 2017, an increase of one hundred forty-three percent. The pandemic might have recently had an adverse effect on student mobility, but it is estimated that this number will reach to 20 million by 2030.

The bulk of globally mobile students come from high- and upper-middle-income countries, who accounted for 27% and 40%, respectively, of total outwardly mobile students. According to research by University Information Services, lower middle-income and low-income countries



made up 33% of outward mobility in 2017. High-income countries enrolled 76% of all globally mobile degree-seeking students as compared to 19% of upper-middle-income countries in 2017. The top destinations were the United States with almost 1 million students, followed by the United Kingdom with half a million students, and China was becoming a top destination with around four hundred thousand students. The dominance of high-income countries as an internationalization destination remained strong over the years.

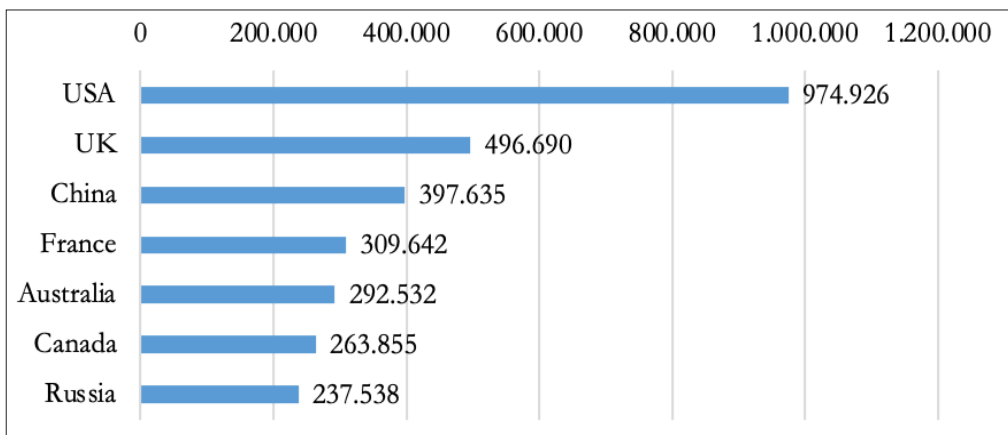


Figure 1. Top destinations of international students.

China had more than half a million outgoing students, which accounted for more than one third of all international students. Türkiye, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Pakistan also made the list of top sending countries according to 2009 data.

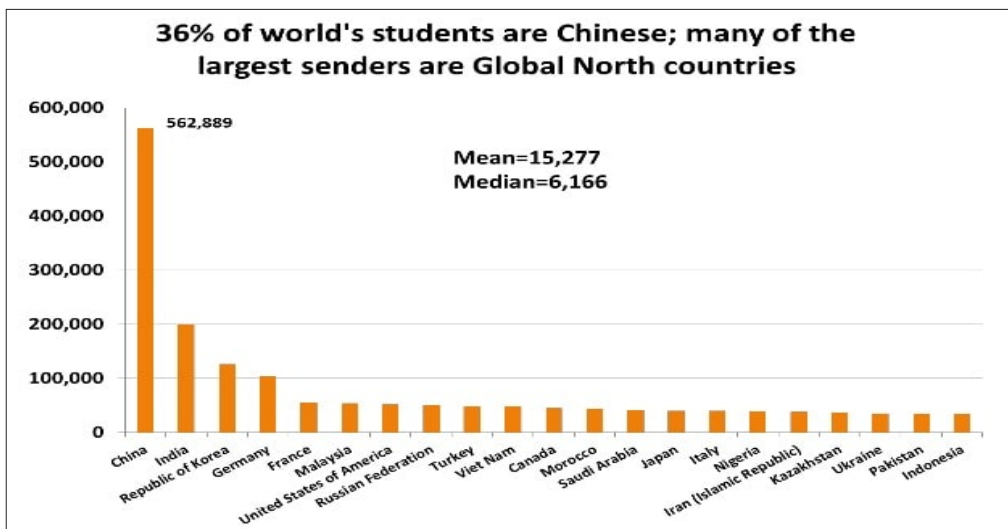


Figure 2. Top sending countries.

Moving on to recent data, Figure 3 shows the number of international students in each ECO country, with Türkiye being the top destination country for international students (125,138 students), followed by Kazakhstan (40,742). The incoming students data for Pakistan was not available in the UN Institute of Statistics dataset, hence the graph is incomplete. There had been a recent surge in outgoing students from Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Iran, with the number of international students from these countries who study abroad surpassing those from Türkiye by 2019.

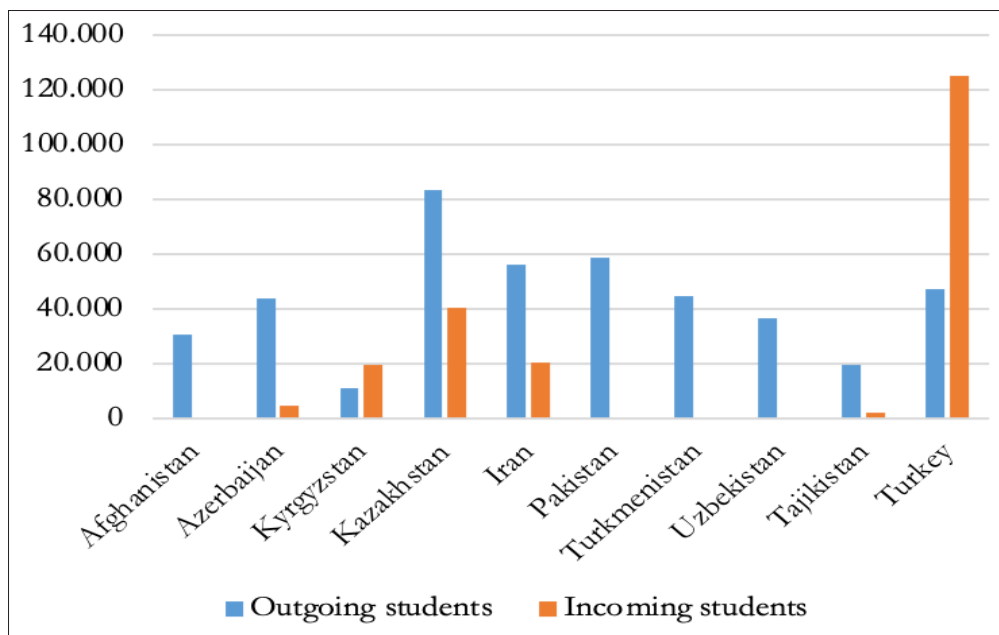


Figure 3. Flow of international students in the ECO region.

Prof. Kireççi also made an interesting comparison by looking at the ratio of incoming students to outgoing students. In the region, only Kyrgyz Republic and Türkiye were attracting more international students than they were sending abroad.

Figure 4 shows the number of international students in the region who are from other ECO countries. Most of the international students in the region were from other sister countries of the ECO region. However, Pakistan's data was missing, and hence, one must exercise caution while interpreting these numbers.

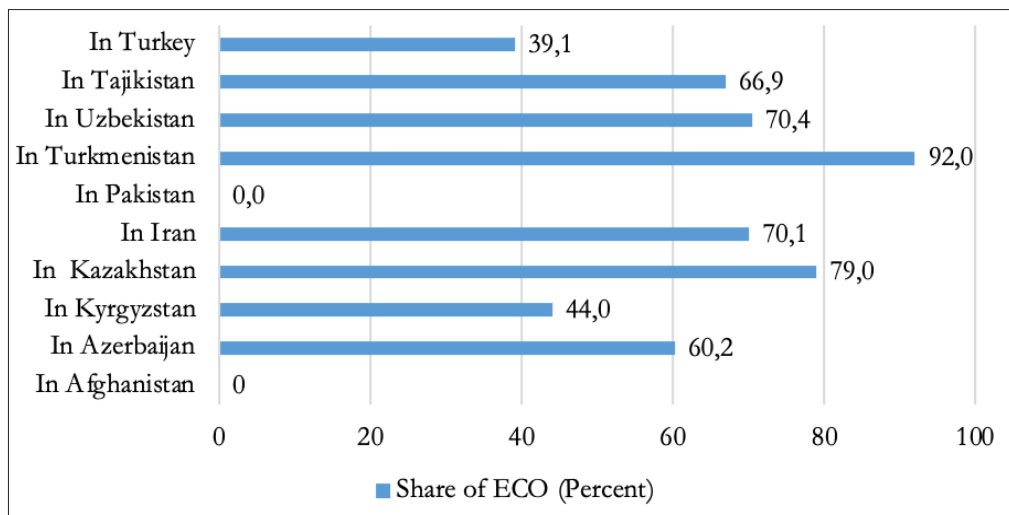


Figure 4. How many international students are from other ECO Member States? (%)

Of all the international students an ECO Member State sends abroad, how many end up in another ECO Member state? Except for students from Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, students from ECO countries do not predominantly prefer to study in other ECO countries. Figure 5 shows the number of outgoing students to ECO countries as a percentage of all students going abroad from that country. While only 5.1 % of all outgoing students from Pakistan prefer another ECO country as study destination, 78.9 % of all outgoing students from Uzbekistan study in another ECO Member state.

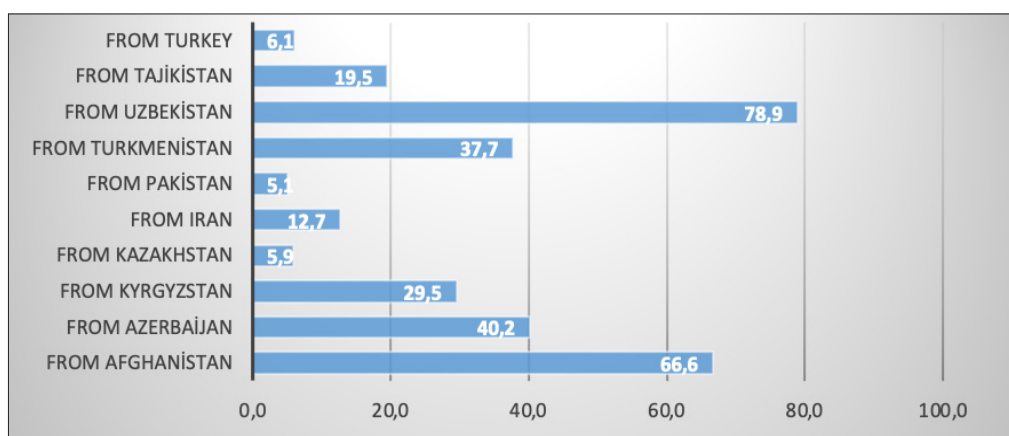


Figure 5. ECO Region as Destination (%)

Student mobility in higher education in the region, depends on several factors. Especially “expenditure per student” appears to be a crucial

determinant in attracting students. Students are more likely to choose countries where the students are granted with adequately funded services and perhaps monetary incentives. The other significant determinants are:

- b) the level of safety;
- c) the degree of openness of host country;
- d) the GDP per capita of host country.

The capacity and desires of international students is important in devising strategies to augment student mobility. Previous research from World Education Services identified four segments of international students based on their academic preparedness and financial resources. This study is based on students studying the United States but we can infer some key points for our region.

Students with money are either highflyers, who want the best education and best services, or the explorers, who are more interested in the personal experience of studying abroad rather than academic achievement and prestige.

While highflyers seek prestige and status, explorers seek personal experience. These two groups make up the emerging segment driven by the expanding wealthy classes in countries like China and India. Strivers are those who seek a top-tier school but require financial aid. They usually make up the largest segment, and these students are highly motivated. Finally, there are strugglers, who have limited financial resources and need additional preparation to do well academically.

How do we access these students? Where do they get their information from? The two most popular information channels used by international students during their information search are institutional websites and personal networks (family & friends). On average, 90% of the survey respondents used institutional websites to obtain information, and 67% consulted their family and friends for the same purpose. However, social media is an important

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Since institutional websites are the number one channel of information for international students, ECO Educational Institute embarked on a project to develop a website for students, StudyinECO.org.

emerging source of information for international students, with around one-third of respondents indicating that they had used this channel during their information search. The use of agents is not as widespread, with only one out of six respondents reported to have used this channel.

Since institutional websites are the number one channel of information for international students, ECO Educational Institute embarked on a project to develop a website for students, **StudyinECO.org**. ECOEI is designing a full-fledged web portal for prospective students who would like to study in ECO universities. StudyinECO.org will provide information on the country and provide an overview of its education system. The prospective student will be able to

list available certificate, associate, undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and filter them according to accreditation of programs and recognition of qualifications, university fees, scholarships, living costs, health insurance and services, accommodation and transportation options, student transfers, preparatory language courses, application and visa requirements and processes, and other forms. The website will also include interactive features which allow alumni, prospective students, administrators or professors to talk to each other.

By providing all necessary information in one database, StudyinECO aims to make university choice and application easier for international students and increase digital visibility of universities in the ECO region.

By providing all necessary information in one database, StudyinECO aims to make university choice and application easier for international students and increase digital visibility of universities in the ECO region. By providing a wider selection of countries, programs and universities to choose from, the web platform is expected to draw more students. With the willing universities, we may even collect international applications each semester for different programs and hand over the information to evaluation committees and announce the application results. So it will not only increase visibility of universities but also provide a service.

So what can be done?

Given the changing landscape of international student mobility, sustainable growth will require proactive action by universities and policy-makers to deliver value for money. This is critical not only to maintain a diverse student body but also to hedge against risking dependency on one or two source countries.

Likewise, immigration policies must align with economic need and demographic reality, which suggests that we must rise above short-term viewpoints. It is important to create pathways for international students to gain work experience and recover a part of their investment. A subset of these students may become long-term migrants and contribute to economic development and innovation.

At the same time, countries and higher education institutions need to avoid overdependence on a few sending countries and cultivate emerging markets since political, economic and demographic factors are playing a more important role in student mobility than ever before.

We must build a portfolio of practices that can help ECO institutions reduce the risks involved and maximize their opportunities. For example, to tap into sources of funding, institutions should leverage their institutional competitive advantage and develop relationships with organizations that fund and/or administer overseas scholarships.

Finally, we must assess country specific push and pull factors for each country. To this end, Educational Institute introduced another project. It is a research project that aims to measure the level of internationalization in participating higher education institutions. Using an index to assess and understand the level of internationalization, the research team finds out the weaknesses and strengths of universities in attracting international students. The research offers

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policy recommendations to universities based on their assessment of institutional needs with respect to internationalization and evaluation of current structures and conditions of the universities.

ECO region is a fast developing region, and with development comes a greater need for competent professionals and leaders with the abilities to understand greater context, to motivate others and to drive results. The economic development rests on a capable, skillful and a highly educated society. ECO Educational Institute is firmly committed to support advancement of education in Member States, through supporting experts, educators, institutions, and students.



The Need for Regional Exchange Programs: Perspectives from Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University

Muhsin Kar

Rector, Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University, Türkiye

Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University is a public university located in the city of Niğde, Türkiye. It was established in 2015 and named after Ömer Halisdemir, a non-commissioned officer who was killed during the failed coup attempt in Türkiye in July 2016. The university offers undergraduate and graduate programs in various fields, including engineering, economics, education, law, and social sciences. Its mission is to provide high-quality education and research opportunities to students and contribute to the social and economic development of the region and the country.

Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University is a university in Central Anatolia with 780 international students coming from 54 different countries. The university puts much emphasis on internationalization, the present forum is a great occasion for us to share our experiences and create new opportunities for cooperation.

International cooperation attempts such as this Forum certainly deserve to be supported and universities have to provide the backing that is needed. The emerging international order presents many crises and challenges for us all. Educational institutions also have certain responsibilities to protect the stability, peace and order of our countries and the region. We have to join forces and cooperate closely to share our experiences and develop joint research projects.

One of the biggest problems in our region is the lack of an exchange program in the ECO region similar to the Erasmus program in the European Union. A model similar to the Turkic Universities Union of the Organization

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of Turkic States can be implemented to support cooperation between universities. This requires a system, in which mutual obligations between the universities are established through cooperation agreements and protocols. For example, under Turkic Universities Union's Orkhun Exchange Program, the sending university covers the travel costs including airfare tickets, whereas the host university covers the accommodation of the exchange student or scholar. A similar program can also work for the wider ECO region and may provide a platform for interuniversity cooperation, which remains limited if left to universities own means. Other models may also be considered.

Student mobility is definitely a significant part of internationalization of education, and we expect it to grow in the upcoming years. I would like to reiterate that I will support any project that ECO will develop.



Cyprus International University: Nurturing Global Connections and Advancing Education in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Halil Nadiri

Rector, Cyprus International University, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Cyprus International University (CIU) is a private university located in North Nicosia, the capital city of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). It was established in 1997 and offers undergraduate and graduate programs in various fields, including business, engineering, social sciences, education, law, health sciences, and fine arts. The language of instruction is English. CIU aims to provide a multicultural learning environment and has a diverse student body from over 100 countries. It also has partnerships with numerous universities around the world for student exchange programs and research collaborations.

A quarter of the population in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are university students, which is very unique and important for the country. At Cyprus International University, out of more than 17.000 students, around 10.000 (65%) come from foreign countries. This is why internationalization is a crucial subject for us, as it acts as a shared mechanism for universities' advancement and plays a vital role in the economic growth of the region.

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Universities are becoming a powerful magnet for the internationalization of the region. Through their academic and research activities, universities also provide the much needed human resources for several public and private organizations and contribute significantly to the social development of society. Education has become more important than ever. It contributes significantly to the academic as well as economic



progress in a country which is very valuable. In today's world, education has gained paramount importance as it plays a vital role in both academic and economic advancements of a country, making it an invaluable asset.

Cyprus International University strives to build strong relationships with stakeholders in the region and the international arena. Sustainable development through high quality education is fundamental. We are living in a global world right now and borders are disappearing in the field of education. Students create an international movement in the institutions they go to and if they are high-caliber students, they can also increase inter-institutional relations.



Gazi University: Leading Research and Academic Excellence

Musa Yıldız

Rector, Gazi University, Türkiye

Gazi University is a public research university located in Ankara, the capital city of Türkiye. It was founded in 1926 as the first teacher training institution for higher education in Türkiye. Today, Gazi University is one of the largest universities in Türkiye with over 80,000 students and 21 faculties. The university offers undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs in various fields including education, engineering, arts, social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences, and applied sciences. It is known for its research activities and collaborations with industry and government institutions.

As one of the first universities established in the Republic of Türkiye and one of the eleven research universities in Türkiye that provides high quality education, we are in cooperation with several regional and international universities. We are at the forefront of scientific research. We are honored to take part in this session and hope that we can establish successful partnerships in the future.

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Enhancing Cooperation for Scientific Development and Economic Growth in the ECO Region

Mitra Teymouri

Acting Director, Center for International Affairs and Schools Abroad, Ministry of Education, the Islamic Republic of Iran

Senior Supervisor at Supervision Department, Farhangian University, Islamic Republic of Iran

There are some problems that Iranian universities face with respect to cooperation, especially at the regional level. One of the most important issues is that scientific development can only be possible through the development of educational centers in universities. With a global network, there is no limit to knowledge and research and scientific research can continue uninterrupted. International organizations play an important role in this regard and especially the ECO Educational Institute is broadening horizons in this region. Cooperation in both scientific and educational activities and research between Member Countries also contributes to economic development. When we fully realize the human and scientific potential of the ECO region and increase cooperation among ourselves, we can set an important example for the rest of the world.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to join forces with other countries. There are several universities in the ECO region with which we have increased and established scientific relations. There are other areas in which

From a historical and regional point of view, we need to walk and innovate together, and the present forum will certainly help us to do that.

we are active, for example, we are taking steps together with UNESCO, ICESCO as other universities in the ECO region do as well. From a historical and regional point of view, we need to walk and innovate together, and the present forum will certainly help us to do that. Embarking on this path presents us with both opportunities and challenges. However, through mutual agreements and collective efforts, we have the ability to overcome these challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead. Effective management

will be key in maximizing the benefits and outcomes of our collaborative endeavors.

To ensure the success of our initiatives, it is crucial to establish specialized working groups comprising our top professors and academics. These groups will leverage their expertise and knowledge to drive progress and innovation in their respective fields. By fostering a culture of collaboration and interdisciplinary cooperation, we can tap into the collective wisdom and experience of our academic community, leading to impactful outcomes.

While pursuing our goals, it is essential to assess the associated costs with the guidance of experts in the field. Their expertise will enable us to make informed decisions and allocate resources efficiently, ensuring that our efforts yield the desired outcomes while maintaining financial sustainability.





Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University: Advancing International Cooperation and Mobility in Higher Education

Mustafa Hilmi Çolakoğlu

Vice-rector, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Türkiye

Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University is a state university located in Nevşehir, a city in central Türkiye. The university was established in 2007 and named after the famous Sufi philosopher and poet, Hacı Bektaş Veli, who lived in the region in the 13th century. The university offers undergraduate and graduate programs in various fields, including engineering, science, social sciences, education, economics, and tourism. Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University offers 11 faculties, 1 conservatory, 4 institutes, 8 vocational schools, and 43 undergraduate programs. It also has research centers and institutes focusing on various topics such as history, tourism, and technology. There are 680 academic staff members at

Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University and the total number of students enrolled in the university is approximately 27000.

Most of the time, when we think about student mobility at higher education, the immediate target group appears to be bachelors level students. Yet, universities may also target master's or doctoral level students as well. Graduate students are very much more likely to contribute to the improvement of the relations between countries and create added value.

Another crucial point could be that the decision makers of the countries should be able to have sufficient knowledge about other ECO Member countries and their education systems. Wide-scope research on education systems of ECO Member countries which will point out their strengths and weak points, would

Wide-scope research on education systems of ECO Member countries which will point out their strengths and weak points, would be of tremendous help for universities as well as decisionmakers, and students.

be of tremendous help for universities as well as decisionmakers, and students. Decisions should be based on a comprehensive analysis of factors such as demand for higher education, cultural ties, and potential for academic collaboration. The agencies and student counselors should also get to know the countries as well as the higher education institutions reasonably well.

Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University staff and faculty would be happy to host the international delegations and be happy to inform them. This is an open invitation to all the participants, so that they learn about our university in detail.





Promoting Linguistic Diversity and International Cooperation: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML)

Muhammad Zubair Iqbal

Pro-Rector, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Pakistan

National University of Modern Languages (NUML) is a public research university located in Islamabad, Pakistan. It was established in 1970 and is known for its specialization in linguistics and foreign languages.

NUML offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in various disciplines including languages, social sciences, management sciences, engineering, and computer sciences. It also offers language courses in more than 25 languages including Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish.

The university has a diverse student population and also offers opportunities for international students. There are 136 international students, which include those from Afghanistan, Iran and Kazakhstan. NUML has collaborations with several international universities and organizations for research and academic exchange programs. The university also hosts international conferences and seminars on various topics.

NUML has a strong faculty with many professors holding PhD degrees from prestigious universities around the world. In NUML, there are 39 international faculty members which include those from ECO Member countries; one from Kazakhstan, two from Türkiye, one from Uzbekistan, and there are plans to hire one or two faculty from Azerbaijan.

The political conditions and regional developments, particularly US withdrawal from Afghanistan, had a huge impact and on all our social and cultural activities. There is an emergent order by Shanghai Cooperation

Organization (SCO) countries as well. The first point I want to make is that we must find a way to leverage cooperation between ECO and SCO. The second point relates to the perception. Universities and organizations in the region should reach out to each other. NUML has seven MOUs signed with Turkish universities, we are currently processing one with İstanbul University and another of Azerbaijan University of Languages. These connections need to be extended to ECO countries. Pakistan is a part of the Belt and Road Initiative, and a major player through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC can be extended to Afghanistan, to many of the Central Asian countries, as well as to Iran. Some research needs to be done to understand how this economic cooperation model can be beneficial to ECO countries.

Government of Pakistan has a very open policy regarding international collaboration at the higher education. Through Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, universities are encouraged to cooperate in many areas ranging from culture, language, science, scholarships as well as faculty and student exchanges. There are excellent engineering and medical schools in Pakistan, which can welcome and contribute immensely to both international faculty and students in the ECO region. Some Pakistani universities are now in the top-400 in Times Higher Education or QS rankings. There is a great hope in Pakistani universities.

There are excellent engineering and medical schools in Pakistan, which can welcome and contribute immensely to both international faculty and students in the ECO region.



Enhancing Internationalization in Kazakh Higher Education: The Bolashak Scholarship and Collaboration Efforts

Gulzhanat Tayauova

Vice-rector for External Relations and Doctorate, Turan University, Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, internationalization of higher education has become a key priority in recent years, with the government implementing various policies and initiatives to attract more international students and promote collaboration with foreign universities. Bolashak International Scholarship is the flagship scholarship program of the Kazakh government that supports talented students who wish to pursue graduate studies abroad. The scholarship covers tuition fees, living expenses, and travel costs. To apply, students must pass a competitive selection process. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as of September 2021, more than 13,000 Kazakh undergraduate and graduate students have received the Bolashak scholarship since the program's inception in 1993. Since 2011, bachelors programs have been omitted, and the program has focused on masters and PhD programs and widened the categories of research internships. The scholarship has supported Kazakh students in pursuing undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees at top universities around the world. Outgoing doctoral students are required to have a second advisor in the host country, as well as undergo a period of internship.

For the number of outgoing and incoming students to increase, governments need to support collaboration efforts. Turan University is one of the largest private universities in Kazakhstan, in terms of number of students. Turan University currently has 135 international students and working towards acquiring international accreditation. Turan University has several doctoral students currently studying abroad. Over 47 of PhD students are spread over to more than 10 different universities in Türkiye, most being at Istanbul University. With globalization, students seek diversified experiences and prefer dual diploma programs.

Academic Excellence and International Collaboration: The European University of Lefke (EUL) Experience

Sadık Ülker

Vice rector, European University of Lefke, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

European University of Lefke (EUL) is an institution of higher learning located in the Northern Cyprus Nicosia District town of Lefka. Founded in 1989 by Cyprus Science Foundation, the university opened in 1990 as a member of the Balkan Universities Network, and offers 77 undergraduate and school programs and 38 postgraduate and doctoral degree programs which are approved by Türkiye's Council of Higher Education (YÖK).

Universities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus make significant economic contributions to the country. 60% of students come from Türkiye, while students from other countries make up a quarter of the total student population. Foreign students constitute 80% of total student population, which is truly remarkable and provides substantial economic benefits. Northern Cyprus is among the leading countries in terms of the surplus of international students.

EUL has successfully resolved the challenges about international accreditation with the assistance of Türkiye. Cooperation from esteemed institutions in this matter is greatly appreciated. The university places great importance on ensuring high-quality education, which is why it gives significant attention to accreditation processes. With students hailing from 85 different countries, the majority of the universities' graduates naturally return to their respective countries and begin their professional careers there. To ensure a smooth transition of its foreign students into their home countries' workforce, European University

To ensure a smooth transition of its foreign students into their home countries' workforce, European University of Lefke has diligently addressed recognition and equivalency matters through accreditation initiatives.



of Lefke has diligently addressed recognition and equivalency matters through accreditation initiatives.

Furthermore, there is a pressing need to foster increased research collaborations in addition to student mobility within the region. Research endeavors serve as a significant factor in propelling universities to the forefront of academic excellence. By encouraging collaboration among universities at the master's and Ph.D. levels, we can forge stronger bonds within the ECO region and contribute to its advancement.



Azerbaijan Technical University: Advancing Engineering Education and International Collaboration

Orkhan Vatankhah

Head of External Relations Office, Azerbaijan Technical University, Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan Technical University (AzTU; Azerbaijani: Azərbaycan Texniki Universiteti) is a public university specialized in engineering and is located in Baku, Azerbaijan. The University has 9 schools and 54 departments, 884 faculty members and approximately 6500 students.

Based on the presidential decree on “Improvement of the Educational System” dated 13 August 2000, the Azerbaijan Technological University was founded on October 11, 2000. The university was established by the expansion of the branches of the Azerbaijan Technological Institute by the order of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan Technical University is one of the most prominent universities in technical research in terms of the bachelor’s degree and master’s degree. The university also provides opportunities for the science centers. Azerbaijan Technical University is in close corporation with the other international universities and science research centers. Last year the Dual Diploma programs with universities in Germany, Ukraine and Türkiye are introduced and received wide attention. Thanks to the dual diploma program, student mobility is increasing which helps to gain more knowledge, and better international relations.

Azerbaijan Technical University is ready to closely cooperate with all the representatives of the international universities in the Forum.

Last year the Dual Diploma programs with universities in Germany, Ukraine and Türkiye are introduced and received wide attention.



SECTION I: STUDENT MOBILITY WITHIN THE ECO REGION: FACTS AND PROSPECTS

Promoting Student Mobility and Institutional Alliances: Unlocking Opportunities at COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI)

Arif Awan

*Senior Program Officer at International Office,
COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan*

The COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), formerly known as COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), is a public university in Pakistan. COMSATS stands for Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South and CUI is under COMSATS administration. It is a multi-campus university with its principal seat located in Islamabad. CIIT was envisioned as Pakistan's first exclusive Institute of Information Technology. In the latest QS University Rankings, CUI ranked 7th in Pakistan and 801-1000 in the world. Nationally it is ranked top-most in Computer Sciences and IT category.

The COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) is among the top five universities in Pakistan. Student mobility is a strong element of internationalization. Nowadays, many refer to virtual mobility, which does not really give out what true mobility gives. True internationalization whether it is abroad or at home, it has to be student mobility. In Pakistan, there is a very unique situation. There are many foreign students who are going abroad. Students going to Türkiye, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. However, student inflow has been very less. The university benefited from the Erasmus Plus and Mevlana Program with Türkiye. As Pakistan is a lower middle income country, funding for student mobility is always a challenge. This challenge could have been sought down by these fundings. These funded avenues had been going to Türkiye, and they had been going to European countries. Getting European students and getting other students from ECO countries has been a challenge.



We have given a lot of scholarships to COMSAT member countries and OIC. COMSAT member countries stand for “commission on sustainable development in the South”. These are 26 countries which are harnessing science and technology for sustainable development.

The COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), currently has around 400 international students, and a majority of them come from Afghanistan and other countries from sub-Saharan and Northern Africa. The students are given scholarships which is an important motivation to come to our university. There are many opportunities for students who are from the ECO region. One of the most important aspects is economic. Studying in Pakistan is very economical, making it an affordable option for students

In addition to its affordability, the other aspect that makes studying in Pakistan a rewarding experience is its rich and diverse cultural heritage.

seeking quality education without burdening themselves with excessive financial costs. In addition to its affordability, the other aspect that makes studying in Pakistan a rewarding experience is its rich and diverse cultural heritage. Another benefit is that academicians offer a good level of English proficiency. These are some of the reasons why students should study in Pakistan.

As CUI, we believe that need more alliances and institutional support. There are many representatives from several universities in this forum so it is a great opportunity to build linkages and associations as well as to share opportunities at the institutional level. For example, any university can say that CUI is their partner and their students could be encouraged to go to CUI. This do not have to be for a full semester -even short term visits for a specific project are valuable. The publicity has to be done at an institutional level. Even though Pakistan is not represented very favorably in social media, there are many good things to experience there. Unfortunately, the direction of student mobility in the region is usually very uneven, majority going to Türkiye or Northern Cyprus. All the participants to this forum are invited to Pakistan and CUI. I thank you for listening and I wish you nice deliberations ahead and coming with solutions for increasing student mobility.

Nurturing Global Connections through Student Mobility and Collaborative Projects

Aslıhan Sencel Bingöl

Coordinator of Exchange Programs and Deputy Coordinator of Education and External Relations Coordination Office, Gazi University, Türkiye

Gazi University is a public research university located in Ankara, the capital city of Türkiye. It was founded in 1926 as the first teacher training institution for higher education in Türkiye. Today, Gazi University is one of the largest universities in Türkiye with over 80,000 students and 21 faculties. The university offers undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs in various fields including education, engineering, arts, social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences, and applied sciences. It is known for its research activities and collaborations with industry and government institutions.

Gazi University has opened its doors to many foreign students. The university has a total of 1,509 foreign students, of which 600 are female. The students are from various countries, such as Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Egypt and Palestine. Foreign students generally prefer to study medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy, psychological counseling, engineering, and architecture. These foreign students also take Türkiye scholarships besides the scholarships they take from their own countries. As a university, we have been coordinating the Erasmus + International Credit Mobility project since 2017. Thus, in the ECO region we have a contract with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, with whom there are continuing projects. We are planning to improve our existing relations with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan through student mobility. Mevlana Exchange Programme is a programme which aims at the exchange of students and academic staff between the

“Pakistan-Türkiye Researcher Mobility Scholarship Program-2019” has been established with the aim of supporting academic and research activities, promoting mobility of graduate students and faculty members, and fostering new scientific and technological collaborations between Turkish and Pakistani higher education institutions.



Turkish higher education institutions and higher education institutions of other countries. There is also the “Pak-Türk” Project belonging to Gazi University. “Pak-Türk” Project is still going on with the University of Engineering and Technology in Pakistan. According to the protocol signed between the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, the “Pakistan-Türkiye Researcher Mobility Scholarship Program-2019” has been established with the aim of supporting academic and research activities, promoting mobility of graduate students and faculty members, and fostering new scientific and technological collaborations between Turkish and Pakistani higher education institutions. We are pleased to cooperate with ECO countries.



Research Collaboration and Academic Opportunities for Foreign Students

Hülya Üründü

*Lecturer/ International Relations Coordinator at International Relations Office,
Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University, Türkiye*

Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University has some agreements and memorandum understandings with different countries under Erasmus Exchange Program, Mevlana Program and Orkhun Program. These agreements cover exchange programs as well as research programs. Every academic year we invite some academics under these programs. We also provide support to the foreign researchers.

When foreign students apply to our international office, we help them to find the supervisor for their projects and researchers. Some documents are requested from the visitors. We host up to 60 students each year for the mobility program. If former exchange students apply for the university's master's degree or PhD programs, they are given priority.

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There are many research projects about food, agriculture sciences, energy, nanotechnology, and social sciences. These projects are carried out with the ECO countries and European Union countries. Countries like Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Kuwait are our best partners. The cost-sharing and resource sharing mechanism depends on the project and can be changed. The coordinator of the project can divide up the partners responsibilities, based on their strengths.



Al-Farabi Kazakh National University: Promoting Academic Mobility and Global Collaborations

Saltanat Jakubayeva

*Deputy Dean on Scientific Innovations and International Relations, Faculty of
Oriental Studies, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University*

Deputy Dean on Scientific Innovations and International Relations,
Faculty of Oriental Studies, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, also called KazGU or KazNU, is
a university in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Named after the Eastern philosopher
and scholar al-Farabi, it is one of the country's largest
universities.

*According to the QS
World University
Rankings 2021
KazNU
takes 165th place in
the rating of the best
universities of the
world.*

KazNU is the oldest classical university of the Republic
established by a Decree of the Kazakh Regional Committee
(KRC) office dated November 13, 1933. One year after
Kazakhstan's 1990 declaration of independence, the
name was changed to Al-Farabi Kazakh State University.
According to the QS World University Rankings 2021
KazNU takes 165th place in the rating of the best universities
of the world.

In 2001, the government classified it as a “national” university. More than
20,000 students, post-graduates and PhD students study at KazNU, and
there are more than 2500 faculty members working at KazNU, including
400 doctors of science, professors and more than 800 candidates of
science and associate professors. Like other universities founded under
the Soviet system, it is highly centralized. In 2021, Al-Farabi Kazakh
National University was named as one of the Top 500 Universities in the
World.

KazNU is currently working with the Erasmus+ Program, great Mobility
Projects and the Mevlana. I am very delighted to see our partner from

Pakistan, COMSATS University. The academic mobility situation in Kazakhstan is very similar in Pakistan. KazNU has a number of students participating in academic mobility who are going to Türkiye and other countries. The inflow of students is much less than outgoing students. Before the pandemic, only 8 students participated in these programs and they were in Türkiye, and a big number of students are going to South Korea and Japan. However, the academic mobility between ECO countries is very low. In Iran only 2 students participated in academic mobility 2020, and 8 students participated in the Erasmus and Mevlana programs to study in Türkiye. After 20 years, our first student trip to Pakistan was not for academic mobility but for an internship.

KazNU is open to accept students from ECO countries from all the universities so that student mobility between KazNU and other universities will be higher in future.





Academic Mobility at Sarsen Amanzholov East Kazakhstan University

Dana Nigmanova

*Specialist of the International Department,
Sarsen Amanzholov East Kazakhstan University*

Internationalization is a key factor for the competitiveness of universities in the modern world. Internationalization is a strategy to respond to the needs of globalization by the universities. The process of internationalization encompasses the consideration of student needs, requirements for foreign students, the organization of exchange programs, and the promotion of individual student mobility. Student mobility plays a crucial role in fostering internationalization initiatives.

The Sarsen Amanzholov East Kazakhstan University is a leading multidisciplinary higher educational institution in Oskemen. Academic

Academic mobility is a great opportunity for exchanging experience and knowledge.

At the moment foreign students from China, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Russia, Uzbekistan study at our university.

mobility of faculty and students of the Sarsen Amanzholov East Kazakhstan University is coordinated through cooperation with partner universities. The implementation of academic mobility programs is carried out through active cross-border cooperation. In 2020, more than 30 students from our university participated in the annual international economic school. Several students participated in academic mobility programs in South Korea, Malaysia, Poland, Lithuania, USA and so on. Academic mobility is a great opportunity for exchanging experience and knowledge. At the moment foreign students from China, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Russia, Uzbekistan study at our university.

Facilitating Student Mobility: Bahria University's Internationalization Initiatives

Awais Mehmood

Director of International Office, Bahria University, Pakistan

Bahria University is a university established in 2000 by the Pakistan Navy in Islamabad, Pakistan. The university maintains campuses in Karachi and Lahore.

Established by the Pakistan Navy in 2000, the university's status is semi-government. It offers programs in undergraduate, post-graduate, and doctoral studies. Its research is directed towards the development of engineering, philosophy, natural, social, and medical sciences. Bahria is a comprehensive university having multidisciplinary programs that include Health Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Computer Sciences, Management Sciences, Social Sciences, Law, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Psychology and Maritime Studies. The university is one of the more renowned institutions of higher learning in the country and ranks 23rd in among the country's top thirty and most notable universities in the "general category" by the HEC, as of 2016. The university is a member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities of the United Kingdom.

Bahria University puts strong emphasis on student mobility programs. There are two types of student mobility: the first one is a short-term student mobility program, and the second one is to pursue full-time degree programs. Bahria University is amongst a few universities in Pakistan that attracts a good number of international students. One of the hardest challenges that students face is bureaucracy

One of the hardest challenges that students face is bureaucracy when they apply. Obviously, we need to come up with certain incentives that make it more convenient for the international students.



when they apply. Obviously, we need to come up with certain incentives that make it more convenient for the international students.

Majority of the foreign students are from Afghanistan. There is only one student from Kyrgyzstan at the moment. The university is eager to have more students from different countries. Students must have their educational equivalences when they come to another country with student mobility programs. For the short term mobility programs there is a concept of “sponsor family”. Each student who comes from abroad would be linked to a local family who voluntarily wants to support an international student. Bahria University is particularly interested in students from ECOEI member states to have more international students to come and study at Bahria University for a full semester.



Embracing Online Opportunities: American University of Cyprus' Approach to International Student Engagement

Zalihe Şanlı

Head of Student Affairs and International Office, American University of Cyprus, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

American University of Cyprus is a private, American liberal arts university in Nicosia, Northern Cyprus. The language of instruction is English. The university is made up of three faculties and one vocational school. Also, American University of Cyprus has a Lifelong Learning Center and a Foundation School. The Lifelong Learning Center offers courses that conform to an arts and sciences curriculum and the Foundation School operates the university's English and foundation programmes. American University of Cyprus is a member of the European Council for Business Education, the International Universities Search & Rescue Council and the Cyprus Universities Association.

The number of international students was less than expected because of COVID-19. For the present semester, the university made adjustments to get accustomed to using online systems and adapt students. According to the plan that the university has made, 250 international students are expected to come for the next semester. Our profile of international students generally come from African countries like Nigeria, Liberia and Congo. At our university, we prioritize the educational needs and experiences of our international students as one of our primary objectives. We recognize the importance of providing a supportive and inclusive environment that caters to the unique requirements of students from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Moreover, our international office team is working on new projects.

Because of COVID-19, the university is planning to concentrate on online activities. Most of the students cannot travel to Cyprus and other

At our university, we prioritize the educational needs and experiences of our international students as one of our primary objectives.



countries. We have more webinars, and online workshops to be active. Generally, most preferred programs are business management, tourism and hotel management as well as other departments like architecture and plastic arts. The university is in the process of establishing agreements with various social clubs in foreign countries with the aim of raising awareness among young people about the diverse range of programs available to them.



NEVU: A Global Hub for International Exchange and Education Diversity

Makbule Talip Fişekçioğlu
*Lecturer, International Relations Office,
 Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Türkiye*

Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University (NEVU) is a public university located in Cappadocia. Established in 2007, NEVU carries out its scientific activities in 7 different campuses with 10 faculties, 9 vocational colleges, 1 college, 4 institutes, and 16 research and application centers. NEVU has been an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) holder higher education institution since 2010. Recently, NEVU was awarded the “ECHE 2021-2027 Quality Certificate” by the European Commission.

NEVU has Erasmus agreements under the KA103 Programme with 75 universities. Moreover, the university has Mevlana Exchange Program Agreements with universities from various countries such as Korea, China, Brazil, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Algeria, Iran, Pakistan, Ukraine and Tajikistan. The total number of international students is 657. 258 of them are female and 399 of them are male students from abroad. The most chosen department by international students is economics and administrative sciences, which as 150 foreign students currently enrolled.

the university has Mevlana Exchange Program Agreements with universities from various countries such as Korea, China, Brazil, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Algeria, Iran, Pakistan, Ukraine and Tajikistan.



Ankara University: A Legacy of Excellence and International Engagement

Özge Ülker

Internationalization Coordinator, Ankara University, Türkiye

Ankara University is a public university in Ankara, the capital city of Türkiye. It is the first higher education institution founded in Türkiye after the formation of the republic in 1923. The university has 40 vocational programs, 120 undergraduate programs and 110 graduate programs.

We also have many students from ECO countries; from Afghanistan 111, from Azerbaijan 381, Kazakhstan 86, Kyrgyzstan 41, Pakistan 20, Tajikistan 17, Turkmenistan 284, Uzbekistan 26 and Northern Cyprus 71.

Student mobility can be divided into three programs in Ankara University. We have bilateral, multilateral and individual student mobility. We have Memoranda of Understanding/Agreements with several countries including Japan, Korea, Russia and as an ECO country with Kazakhstan. We also have many students from ECO countries; from Afghanistan 111, from Azerbaijan 381, Kazakhstan 86, Kyrgyzstan 41, Pakistan 20, Tajikistan 17, Turkmenistan 284, Uzbekistan 26 and Northern Cyprus 71. These numbers include both undergraduate and graduate students.



SECTION II: STRENGTHENING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH COLLABORATION IN THE ECO REGION AND RESOURCE SHARING



Gazi University's Expanding Horizons and International Collaborations

Burcu Aydiner

Department of Chemistry, Gazi University, Türkiye

Gazi University is a public research university located in Ankara. It was founded in 1926 as the first teacher training institution for higher education in Türkiye. Today, Gazi University is one of the largest universities in Türkiye with over 80,000 students and 21 faculties. The university offers undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs in various fields including education, engineering, arts, social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences, and applied sciences. It is known for its research activities and collaborations with industry and government institutions.

In 2021, Gazi University was selected for Advanced Research for the field of organic chemistry, biomaterials and machine electric equipment.

In 2021, Gazi University was selected for Advanced Research for the field of organic chemistry, biomaterials and machine electric equipment. 38 research centers are established in different fields of science. Both faculties and research centers offer research opportunities for international students and scientists. Dual projects are ongoing with different countries, for example in Azerbaijan. Some of the scientists are welcomed and accommodated as guests, and scholarships are provided in Türkiye for various levels of study, especially for full-time programs. There are available resources particularly related to educational research opportunities at Gazi University.

International Collaborations: Advancing Research and Knowledge Exchange in Key Fields

Cahit Tađı Çelik

Vice-rector of Niđe Ömer Halisdemir University, Türkiye

Nigde Ömer Halisdemir University is a public university located in the city of Nigde, Türkiye. It was named after Ömer Halisdemir, a non-commissioned officer who was killed during the failed coup attempt in Türkiye in July 2016. The university offers undergraduate and graduate programs in various fields, including engineering, economics, education, law and social sciences. Its mission is to provide high-quality education and research opportunities to students and contribute to the social and economic development of the region and the country.

Possible areas of international cooperation with other research institutions include energy, agricultural sciences, and food sciences.

Every year the university announces visiting academic positions. Currently there are 15 postings. Nigde Ömer Halisdemir University also provides support to post-doctoral or doctoral researchers who seek supervisors or advisors for their own research or programs. Previously, this was referred to as the Bolashak program, and university provide support up to 60 under the purview of mobility program.

The university carries out projects with other countries and partners, especially in the fields of food, energy, agricultural sciences, nanotechnology, and social sciences. It conducts projects with European Union countries. The primary and main sources of international funds are the European Union and TÜBİTAK.

Possible areas of international cooperation with other research institutions include energy, agricultural sciences, and food sciences. The sharing of resources here can vary depending on the project, and the coordination and responsibilities among the partners can be redefined according to the nature of the responsibility, including the responsibility of providing resources.



Global Engagement and Student Mobility: Empowering Students Through International Programs and Partnerships

Makbule Talip Fişekçioğlu

International Relations Office, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Türkiye

Since 2010, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University has actively participated in the renowned Erasmus program, which has served as a valuable platform for international mobility and collaboration. Our university's commitment to fostering global connections and providing enriching experiences for students has been recognized with an esteemed award, acknowledging our welcoming approach towards international students.

Through our strong commitment to establishing international partnerships, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University has forged agreements with numerous institutions and organizations in different countries.

In addition to our involvement in the Erasmus program, we are proud to run the Mevlana Exchange Program. This program further enhances our university's commitment to internationalization by offering additional opportunities for students to broaden their horizons and immerse themselves in different cultural and educational settings.

Through our strong commitment to establishing international partnerships, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University has forged agreements with numerous institutions and organizations in different countries. These partnerships provide a solid foundation for meaningful academic collaborations, student exchanges, and joint research endeavors. By actively engaging with our partner institutions, we aim to facilitate mutual learning, cultural understanding, and the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

University of Kyrenia: Pioneering Maritime Studies and Fostering Research Excellence in Northern Cyprus

Eser Gemikonaklı

*Acting Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Kyrenia University,
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*

University of Kyrenia is the first university of Northern Cyprus specializing on maritime studies and was established in 2013 in Kyrenia. There are now 12 faculties, 3 vocational schools, 3 graduate schools and an academy.

University of Kyrenia focuses on technology and boasts well-equipped and advanced laboratories, particularly in the fields of Medicine and Sea Energy. It actively encourages research and collaboration, offering 17 programs and providing support for English language education. The university has research centers and highly motivated researchers who are encouraged to take part in research activities. As a research university, University of Kyrenia aims to attract university students from different regions to come and collaborate with its research center, working on their projects. It provides infrastructure support and offers the opportunity for short-term or long-term stays.

It should be emphasized that the university strives for efficiency in the higher education system, efficient organization of knowledge, and successful implementation of research projects. It is keen to establish sustainable collaborations and work together with all universities in the ECO region, focusing on research excellence to achieve mutual benefits. It is particularly enthusiastic about hosting and welcoming visiting faculty and international collaborators at University of Kyrenia.

University of Kyrenia focuses on technology and boasts well-equipped and advanced laboratories, particularly in the fields of Medicine and Sea Energy.



Bahria University: Fostering Global Connections and Collaborations in Business, Maritime Studies, and Beyond

Ali Imtiaz

Dean of Management Studies, Bahria University, Pakistan

Bahria University offers programs in undergraduate, post-graduate, and doctoral studies. Its research is directed towards the development of engineering, philosophy, natural, social, and medical sciences. Bahria is a comprehensive university having multidisciplinary programs that include Health Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Computer Sciences, Management Sciences, Social Sciences, Law, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Psychology and Maritime Studies.

We are constructing a state-of-the-art facility in close proximity to the sea in Islamabad. Our aim is to collaborate on joint projects with different universities and create a platform for interaction.

Bahria university currently has a faculty of business administration, attracting visitors from various global locations, including Türkiye. University hosts them and work towards expanding international understanding and bridging knowledge gaps. We are also involved in important initiatives related to maritime studies. We are constructing a state-of-the-art facility in close proximity to the sea in Islamabad. Our aim is to collaborate on joint projects with different universities and create a platform for interaction. Through the sharing of knowledge, including books, journals, and articles, we foster meaningful connections and establish strong relationships. Pakistani government is highly supportive of international collaboration, and the university shares the same outlook. Thus, the university offers a serious approach, especially in the fields of business administration, medicine, psychology, and other disciplines represented by our faculties. It regularly organizes seminars, courses, and sessions that encourage interactive participation from individuals hailing from diverse geographical backgrounds. Pakistan provides an open environment for such endeavors, and we express our gratitude for

the potential and opportunities that arise, allowing sharing resources and enhance collaboration in the best possible way.

The best sharing necessitates sharing our resources. It is necessary for us to come together, unite our strengths, and work towards a common goal. Whether it is through established channels or physical means, we must share and exchange knowledge. We can share digital libraries and create an environment where we are always accessible. Our faculty would be delighted to be available and contribute to these collaborative efforts.





Research Institutes and Knowledge Output: Nurturing Education, Research, and Societal Impact in Islamic Countries

Muhammad Zubair Iqbal

Pro-Rector of National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Pakistan

The National University of Modern Languages (NUMLs) is a multi-campus public university with its main campus located in Islamabad, Pakistan and other campuses in different cities of Pakistan.

The National University of Modern Languages was established as an institute of modern languages in 1969. Initially, the institute provided language training facilities to the Armed Forces personnel and other government servants. In May 2000, its status was upgraded from an institution to a federal charter university.

Research output is usually measured based on several criteria including the emphasis on publishing various articles, but the most important aspect is the publication of articles that contribute to society and facilitate its development.

There is a great economic output in the most populous countries in the region, such as Iran, Pakistan and Türkiye, yet the quality and quantity of scientific output is not comparable. I'm glad to have the opportunity to learn about the distinction between research universities and others that focus solely on education. In Pakistan, like most of the rest of the world, universities are seen as both educational and research institutions. They conduct research and offer both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Research output is usually measured based on several criteria including the emphasis on publishing various articles, but the most important aspect is the publication of articles that contribute to society and facilitate its development. Thus, the production of articles and knowledge output is essential in various quality publications, although the quality of some journals may be debated. From our perspective, the Higher Education Commission in Pakistan asks, "What have you produced in terms of new intellectual and cognitive

knowledge and intellectual property?” This prompts us to understand that the output should benefit society and contribute to policy-making. For example, how well can we provide solutions to challenges, how sustainable can our contributions be in areas such as communication, gender, or achieving sustainable development goals? It is crucial to determine the percentage of resources obtained from various sources for these projects. By asking these questions, we can strive to answer how our research aligns with important criteria and how it can be beneficial.





Fostering Scientific Collaboration: Exploring Opportunities and Sharing Achievements among Universities in Kazakhstan and Beyond

Saltanat Jakubayeva

*Deputy Dean on Scientific Innovations and International Relations,
Faculty of Oriental Studies, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University*

The capacity for scientific collaboration at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, one of the oldest universities, is evident in its scientific achievements, its distinguished faculty and scientific activities. In 2020, we conducted a significant research project funded by the Ministry of Education, as well as international sources and grants. Since 2016, we have received 188 different scholarships, including international grants

I propose the establishment of a comprehensive website or a shared academic platform that serves as a hub for universities to share their programs, contact information, and responsible individuals. Such a platform would open up extensive and diverse opportunities for collaboration, taking into account the unique capabilities of each university.

and internships. Our research output includes 1064 published articles and three faculty members who are highly knowledgeable and specialized in their respective fields. Our Oriental Studies Faculty is one of the many faculties within our large universities. Personally, I am interested in looking at the scope of this faculty's work. We have a research faculty at its core, along with four research institutes.

Our university has five centers related to heritage and historical legacies, such as Japanese and Turkish research areas. These centers provide important income and support for research activities. Professor Kireççi stated that we can promote and strengthen collaboration by getting to know each other better. I propose the establishment of a comprehensive website or a shared academic platform that serves as a hub for universities to share their programs, contact information, and responsible individuals. Such a platform would open up extensive and diverse opportunities

for collaboration, taking into account the unique capabilities of each university. For instance, universities in Kazakhstan that offer education in the Uyghur language could showcase their specialized programs and expertise, fostering cultural diversity and linguistic inclusivity within the academic community. This platform would serve as a centralized resource for universities to connect, exchange knowledge, and explore potential collaborations, ultimately strengthening academic partnerships and facilitating educational growth on a global scale.





Institute of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan: Advancing Education Policy, Research, and Quality Enhancement

Musharraf Mammadova

*Specialist, National Qualifications Department on Lifelong Learning,
the Institute of Education, Azerbaijan*

Institute of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijani: Azərbaycan Respublikasının Təhsil İnstitutu (ARTİ)) is an organization subordinate to the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan. The main goal of the Institute of Education is to implement the state policy in the field of education: to conduct pedagogical, psychological, social, economic, fundamental and applied research; to develop content for all levels of education; to establish and implement innovations.

The Institute is engaged in a range of activities aimed at enhancing the quality of educational institutions. These activities include conducting

In 2018, we established a research department with the aim of enhancing research capacities, funding research topics, and creating funding opportunities for doctoral programs. This department serves as a platform for collaboration with researchers and fosters a new chapter in research endeavors.

research to improve quality indicators, such as expanding learning opportunities and promoting equal opportunities for students. Additionally, the Institute focuses on training competent staff and developing educational assessment standards. They also play a vital role in organizing psychological services in various educational institutions to support the well-being of students. Another area of their work involves the preparation of electronic content, among other initiatives, to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Through these diverse efforts, the Institute contributes to the advancement and development of education.

As an institute, we are involved in designing curricula for universities and vocational schools. Our work includes developing content and materials for various schools, such as universities and high schools. Equally important is providing training to teachers in essential technologies and

different subjects across Azerbaijan. Research is a crucial aspect for us, as we have students pursuing doctoral degrees and conducting research in various fields. In 2018, we established a research department with the aim of enhancing research capacities, funding research topics, and creating funding opportunities for doctoral programs. This department serves as a platform for collaboration with researchers and fosters a new chapter in research endeavors. Although the department is relatively new, we aspire to take significant international strides in this domain. We value the opportunity to participate in this platform and are delighted to be here with all of you.





Fostering Collaboration in Psychological Education and Research: Strengthening Connections in the ECO Region

Khudeja Mehmood

Lecturer, Professional Psychology Department, Bahria University, Pakistan

It is a great honor for me to be here, alongside esteemed representatives from numerous universities and high-ranking government officials. In our ECO region, particularly regarding our psychological department, we adopt a two-pronged approach. Firstly, we provide education to our students to equip them with the skills necessary to offer psychological services. Secondly, we strongly encourage and empower our students and faculties to engage in research, fostering their research capabilities.

Collaboration with your esteemed institution, for instance, will provide a broader perspective and exposure to more knowledge. We have cooperation agreements with 43 institutions, including universities, and we request their international scholars to participate in our events, workshops, and educational processes. Over the past four years, we have hosted 400 international speakers, although 20 of them could not be physically present on our campus, we have conducted some sessions online.

We collaborate with various universities, such as 9 Eylül University in Türkiye, and other institutions in Izmir and Istanbul, considering it a tremendous opportunity, particularly for children, as the work we enhance and the communication we establish with universities form the foundation of future interactions.

We firmly believe in the value of funding renowned individuals in this field for the benefit of our students and their academic progress. Sharing resources and personnel exchange holds significant importance for us. We collaborate with various universities, such as 9 Eylül University in Türkiye, and other institutions in Izmir and Istanbul, considering it a tremendous opportunity, particularly for children, as the work we enhance and the communication we establish with universities form the foundation of future interactions. I am greatly honored to be part of today's session, as it provides an opportunity to see how I can contribute and build a dialogue, opening avenues for future opportunities.

Promoting Scientific Collaboration in the ECO Region: Practical Strategies

Khosrow Nazari

*Director, International Scientific Collaborations and Communications,
International Office, Farhangyan University, Iran*

The countries of the ECOEI region have more interaction with each other due to having common cultural elements. Familiarity of different nations with each other's knowledge, thoughts and ideas contributes to their cultural development and brings nations closer together.

Farhangian Teacher Education University (FTEU) is the culmination of a century-long tradition of teacher education in Iran which was established in 2012 as a result of the aggregation of all teacher education institutions with the main objective of combining strategies and adjusting endeavors to align with Islamic and national merits. It is an umbrella organization with 98 branches, 4,000 faculty members (Full & Part time) and approximately 80,000 enrolled student teachers in various disciplines throughout the country. FTEU is affiliated with the Ministry of Education and is run by its own board of trustees. The boards and councils constitute the principal policy-making bodies of the university are: Board of Trustees, Board of Governors of the University, Council of the University and Chancellor of the University. The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Minister of Science, Research and Technology and Minister of Education are some of the Members of Board of Trustees. FTEU also has MOU with two Türkiye universities (Erzurum Ataturk and Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University), two Malaysian universities (Malaya and Sultan Idris University), Japan (Aichi University of Education), Finland

Farhangian Teacher Education University (FTEU) is the culmination of a century-long tradition of teacher education in Iran which was established in 2012 as a result of the aggregation of all teacher education institutions



(Jamk university) and New Zealand (Unitec institute of Technology). Also, FTEU has been hosting a UNESCO chair entitled, “Teachers as Lifelong Learners.” FTEU has hold many workshops with Jamk and Aichi University and is ready to share its experiences with ECOEI region countries.

There are ten simple and practical suggestions that can be applied in countries in the ECO region to expand scientific collaboration.

1. Holding joint BA/MA/Ph.D. Courses

In Iran, Allameh Tabatabai University, as the largest university of humanities in the Middle East, has joint courses, joint degrees, dual degrees, multiple degrees and integrated/ combined degres. So far, 21.893 joint degrees have been issued by Iranian universities and other foreign partner universities.

2. Publishing a Virtual Scientific-Educational Journal with the Participation of ECOEI countries

Publishing scientific journals is a simple way for expanding the relations between the member countries. This journal can introduce the scientific and research capacities of member countries as well as the culture, customs and conditions of universities and higher education. In addition, researchers can publish their joint research there. The publication of a scientific journal in cooperation with member countries is an opportunity to start, continue and stabilize relations between member countries.

3. Holding Annual Workshops, Seminars, Webinars and Conferences with the Participation of ECOEI Countries

Workshops, Seminars, Webinars and conferences, with the Participation of ECOEI countries, will provide opportunities for participants to share the latest research, educational and scientific findings, training of the latest research software and so on.

4. Organizing Periodical Scientific Exhibition with the Participation of ECOEI Member Countries

Periodical Scientific exhibition in different ECO member countries will provide an opportunity for participating countries to get acquainted with the different social, cultural and scientific sectors of these countries. There will also be an opportunity to exchange cultural goods such as books, magazines, quarterly books, etc.

5. Providing Study Opportunities for Faculty Members of Universities and Educational and Research Institutes of ECOEI Member Countries

Study opportunities create and develop academic horizons among countries. One of the ways of professional development and empowerment of the faculty of universities is gaining experience, knowledge, updating information, familiarity with scientific and technological developments in other countries and rebuilding professional ability and thinking power. Study opportunities provide professors and students with the chance to learn about different countries, to produce and transfer knowledge, and to collaborate on an international research project.

6. Joint Research Projects with the Participation of ECOEI Member Countries

In this program, university professors and researchers define a joint research project. Usually, financial support for such projects can be provided through the European Union (such as Vision 2020).

7. Providing Short Visit Trip for Students and Faculties in ECOEI Member Countries

Some ECO member universities can offer University Short Visits program, through which students and professors can visit the host university (usually a week) and in some cases the related industries.



8. Exchange of Students in Master's and Doctoral Degrees among ECOEI Member Universities and Higher Education Institutions

The student exchange is with the aim of course taking or research activities at the master's and doctoral levels in order to carry out a student project at the host university for one to three semesters. At the end of this course, the students will not be given a degree from the host university and will only be given transcripts or a research certificate. Usually, in these courses the host university exempts students from paying tuition.

9. Joint Guidance of Students in Master's and Doctoral Degrees by Professors of ECOEI Member Universities

In this method, two professors from two ECOEI member countries jointly guide the student in the relevant research project. In this method, the student spends the entire course at his university and no transfer takes place. In the thesis defense session, the professors from both institutions can participate in person or virtually. This type of cooperation usually takes place without financial expenses. The tutor's achievement will be solely in the production of publications or a joint patent and product.

10. Scholarships between ECO Member Universities for Postgraduate and Doctoral Students

This scholarship can be just allocated to ECO member countries and can be awarded annually with special criteria to doctoral and postgraduate students.

Regional Information Center for Science and Technology (RICeST) is one of the largest organizations providing scientific information in Iran and the countries of the region. RICEST is an information center affiliated with the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), established through an agreement between TWAS and Iran's Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology. The center aims to facilitate scientific achievements in Iran and regional countries by supporting educational, research, and technical aspects of information management activities. It

also strives to enhance access to scientific information in various fields for researchers, faculty members, students, and others in Iran and the region. RICeST has scientific content in Persian, English, and Arabic, including 38.051 research projects, 8.052.428 articles, 89.029 books, and 117.435 publications.

The center engages in activities such as establishing electronic communication channels for information exchange between Iranian and regional researchers, preparing and organizing domestic and regional written knowledge, developing several databases, publishing research reports and books, supporting domestic and regional research, organizing scientific lectures, and establishing communication with international organizations particularly UNESCO, TWAS, ECO and the OIC. RICeST envisions itself as a leading center in acquiring, processing, and disseminating scientific and technical information. It is committed to applying innovative principles of information and knowledge management for intelligent organization of multilingual resources, advancing ICT for better management of data, information and knowledge, promoting accessibility to information resources for Iran and regional countries, thereby supporting education and research throughout Iran and regional countries, aiming at the development of informed societies. It contributes to scientific communication among academicians and freelance researchers through knowledge synergy.

Its mission is to organize multilingual resources in the field of science and technology, provide efficient information through modern technologies, develop information and communication technologies, enhance access to resources produced in Iran and the region through re-designing more user-friendly information storage and retrieval systems, support education and research through creating knowledge communities, and foster regional interactions among scientists and researchers.

Regional Information Center for Science and Technology (RICeST) is one of the largest organizations providing scientific information in Iran and the countries of the region.



Promoting Accessible Education: ECO Certification and the Role of Open Educational Resources (OER)

Mitra Teymouri

*Acting Director of the Center for International Affairs and Schools Abroad,
Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran Senior Supervisor at
Supervision Department, Farhangian University*

As the Deputy Director responsible for schools outside of the central region, I am here to emphasize the importance of collaboration. We have set goals in relation to education, teaching, and learning in order to adapt and utilize the available resources effectively. When we look at the educational resources, it is crucial to enhance accessibility and revise them. Sharing and exchanging educational resources are vital, as they provide an opportunity for everyone to access and use valuable information. We believe open access educational resources are a significant idea in the 21st century, where resources are defined in an infinite manner and open to the public. In the ECO region, educational resources must be open to the public to facilitate the exchange of wisdom and learning from each other's experiences.

Iranian government supports establishment of an ECO Certification of Universities, which ensures that resources in different ECO institutions

Accessing international resources and the implementation of Open Educational Resources (OER) framework in the ECO region are essential.

are accessible to all. Open Educational Resources (OER) plays a key role in this context, providing advantages regarding the use and adaptation of educational materials, both at the national and international levels. UNESCO emphasizes the importance of accessibility, utilization, and adaptation of resources, and OER serves as the manager in this regard, promoting sustainable models and international cooperation. Accessing international resources and the

implementation of Open Educational Resources (OER) framework in the ECO region are essential. Education is a fundamental element, and OER facilitates the sharing of tools and resources among ECO members, supporting the exchange of knowledge. Each university should allocate a specific budget for the development of communication and information technologies. As the Ministry of Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran, we underscore the importance of such initiatives.





Empowering Distance Education: Gazi University's Commitment to Inclusive Learning and International Collaborations

Mutlu Tahsin Üstündağ

Director of Gazi University Distance Education Application and Research Center (GUZEM), Türkiye

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the critical importance of distance education. It has revealed that many countries were unprepared for the sudden shift to remote learning. In response to these challenges, our institution has proactively embraced the use of open online sources to support both faculty members and students.

Recognizing the significance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) proficiency in ensuring effective distance learning, we have prioritized strengthening the digital skills of our students during the pandemic. By providing access to online resources, training programs, and support services, we have aimed to empower our students with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate the virtual learning environment successfully.

Through the utilization of open online sources, we have created opportunities for self-paced learning, collaboration, and engagement, enabling our students to continue their education without disruption. These resources have not only facilitated the delivery of academic content but have also promoted interactive and dynamic learning experiences, fostering student engagement and participation.

Furthermore, our institution has invested in enhancing the ICT proficiency of our faculty members. By equipping them with the necessary training and resources, we have empowered them to effectively deliver online instruction and engage with students in virtual classrooms. This investment has been crucial in ensuring the continuity of education and maintaining high-quality teaching standards during these challenging times.

In our commitment to inclusive education, we place significant importance on ensuring full accessibility to educational resources for individuals with disabilities. We firmly believe that every individual, regardless of their abilities, should have equal opportunities to access and benefit from the content provided through open sources. To achieve this, we have implemented various measures to enhance accessibility.

In line with our vision of inclusivity and global collaboration, we have actively engaged in international partnerships and collaborations. These collaborations have provided valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange, sharing of best practices, and expanding access to high-quality educational content. Platforms such as Coursera and edX have played a significant role in facilitating these online collaborations, enabling us to connect with learners and institutions from around the world.

Additionally, we have actively participated in programs like the Erasmus Program, which fosters international cooperation and mobility among students and academic staff. Through Erasmus and similar initiatives, we have established fruitful partnerships with institutions in different regions, enabling us to broaden our educational offerings and create diverse learning experiences for our students.

Building on the success of our existing collaborations, we are determined to expand our projects to other geographical locations, particularly to the ECO region. By extending our programs and initiatives to new regions, we aim to foster cross-cultural understanding, promote knowledge sharing, and create opportunities for global educational engagement. We believe that such endeavors will not only enrich the educational experiences of our students but also contribute to the development of a more interconnected and inclusive global education community.

Building on the success of our existing collaborations, we are determined to expand our projects to other geographical locations, particularly to the ECO region.



TechnoKOP: Fostering Regional Collaboration and Innovation through Technoparks in the KOP Region

Bilgin Yazlık
General Manager, Cappadocia Technopark, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Türkiye

I am the manager of the science park of the Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University's Cappadocia Technopark. We have 30 tenants in our zone. Cappadocia Technopark was established in 2018 and is still a young. While the number of technoparks in Türkiye has reached 97 today, Cappadocia Technopark has started to attract attention with its significant performance improvement in recent years among these technoparks. It is a business incubation center that is focused on academic and student entrepreneurship.

Cappadocia Technopark led a cooperation initiative about the establishment of union of regional technoparks. Cappadocia Technopark is located in the Konya Plain Project (KOP) Region. KOP Region is a special region in Türkiye. The KOP Region, which includes the provinces of Aksaray, Karaman, Konya, Niğde, Nevşehir, Yozgat, Kırıkkale, and Kırşehir, has been an important center of cultural history in every period from prehistoric times to the present day and has hosted numerous civilizations. In the process of humanity's cultural development, the reconfiguration activities of production, nutrition, technology, belief, and social life elements found their expression in the cultural areas of the region, especially at Çatalhöyük. These significant developments extended to the region becoming the center of empires. These important cultural and social accumulations that have emerged throughout history have now entered a renewed integrated development process with the Presidency of KOP Regional Development Administration.

This year, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University became the leader of the university union of the KOP Region which is called UNIKOP.

Also, we have decided to establish a new sub-segment inside of the region which is called TechnoKOP. TechnoKOP is a special union of technoparks that are established inside the KOP Region. In our pursuit of fostering technological innovation and entrepreneurship, we have successfully established seven technoparks in various cities, namely Cappadocia Technopark, Konya Teknokent, Karaman Technopark, Kırıkkale Technopark, Niğde Technopark, Kırıkkale Technopark, and Bolu Technopark. Through the collaborative efforts of these technoparks, we have further solidified our commitment to promoting research, development, and technological advancements.

To streamline our operations and facilitate effective communication and cooperation among these technoparks, we have taken the initiative to sign a protocol as TechnoKOP, creating a dedicated website that serves as a central platform for information sharing and collaboration. This website enables us to connect and engage with stakeholders from different technoparks within the ECO region, fostering a broader network of innovation and knowledge exchange.

Recognizing the importance of expertise and knowledge transfer, we have also prioritized the training and development of educators within our technoparks. By equipping our educators with the necessary skills and competencies, we ensure that they are well-prepared to support and guide aspiring entrepreneurs and researchers, creating an environment conducive to growth and success.

Drawing inspiration from our experiences, we believe that similar initiatives can be replicated throughout the entire ECO region. By establishing technoparks and fostering collaboration on a broader scale, we can unlock the immense potential for innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development within our region. Through shared protocols, dedicated platforms, and continuous learning opportunities, we can create a thriving ecosystem that encourages technological advancements and propels our collective progress forward.

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SECTION III: INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION

Addressing Challenges in Credit Transfer and Accreditation: Insights from the International Relations Office

Hülya Üründü

Lecturer/ International Relations Coordinator at International Relations Office, Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University, Türkiye

At our university, the International Relations Office plays a crucial role in managing matters related to credit transfer and accreditation. When a student returns from a student mobility program, they are directed to the relevant faculty for further evaluation. The faculty then communicates its decision to the Student Affairs Office, where all pertinent information is recorded and documented.

Additionally, the International Relations Office takes charge of ensuring that the courses taken during the mobility program receive proper accreditation. They are responsible for providing the necessary guidance and support to facilitate a smooth credit transfer process. With extensive experience in sending students around the world through programs like Erasmus, our university has developed a deep understanding of the procedures and requirements involved.

Through the collaborative efforts of the International Relations Office, faculties, and the Student Affairs Office, we ensure that students who participate in mobility programs have their academic achievements recognized and appropriately credited. By streamlining the documentation and evaluation processes, we strive to make the credit transfer and accreditation procedures efficient and transparent.

Our university's involvement in the Erasmus program has allowed us to gain valuable insights and expertise in handling the intricacies of student mobility. We are committed to leveraging this experience to provide comprehensive support to our students, enabling them to make the most

Our university's involvement in the Erasmus program has allowed us to gain valuable insights and expertise in handling the intricacies of student mobility.



of their international experiences and academic achievements. The most important problem we face is that the contact person is not available at the partner institution or changed. Due to the procedures, we have to go back all the time. There should be the same person who is responsible for international issues during the process all the time. Furthermore, the insurance has to be done before a foreign student comes to Türkiye. The insurance is done especially by the private institutions, since they lack cost. The problem is that this kind of insurance cannot be approved in Türkiye's hospitals. Examination can be expensive. To be more affordable, we offer students to do their insurance in Türkiye Social Security Institution.

We are planning to start a joint degree program, and we hope to see our first students in the next term. We are planning to have such a program with Kazakhstan University. We wish to carry out such programs in the future as well.



Towards Institutionalization and International Collaboration: A Case Study of Arkın Creative Arts and Design University (ARUCAD)

Ibrahim Dalkılıç

*Vice-rector of Arkın University of Creative Arts and Design,
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*

Arkın University of Creative Arts and Design (ARUCAD) is the first and only art and design-focused university in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It comprises the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Design, and Faculty of Communication. The campus is located in Girne (Kyrenia). Founded in Northern Cyprus, in 2017 ARUCAD is a thematic art university that is wholly dedicated to the fields of art, design and communication. In ARUCAD's educational approach, students continuously improve their creative productivity through interdisciplinary and cross-cultural programs based on traditional, modern and contemporary art teaching and learning, whilst adhering to the inseparable link of theory and practice.

We believe that we share similar issues, and I am thankful for the chance to participate in this valuable event and to potentially expand our collaboration in the future. One topic I would like to focus on is institutionalization, particularly in the context of higher education. Our university, in terms of the student population, is predominantly composed of individuals from outside the region. In fact, in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, more than half of our students come from abroad. I believe there is a 50/50 balance, with an equal number of registered university students being citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and foreigners. We face political and economic challenges and occasional difficulties due to economic shortcomings, but I am familiar with all of our universities in the Turkish

In order to become ready for international cooperation, we detected and identified our requirements in two main scales, external and internal.



Republic of Northern Cyprus, and I have seen significant progress in the last 10 years.

In order to become ready for international cooperation, we detected and identified our requirements in two main scales, external and internal. For internal scale, there are many requirements for the individual institutions to fulfill before international cooperation:

- Detection of Needs and Requirements
- Positioning of the Institute
- Corporate Establishment
- Educational Policies and Institutional Compatibility
- Documentation
- Sustainability of the Process Management
- Objectives and Projections

The external factors which are related to our cooperation under the ECO umbrella, are:

- Common Framework
- Documentation
- Processes and Procedures
- Concepts
- Conducive Environment and Common Ground on Higher Education
- Legal Framework

We come up with a pathway, follow it, and try to find potential possibilities in that scale.

international potential collaboration pathway

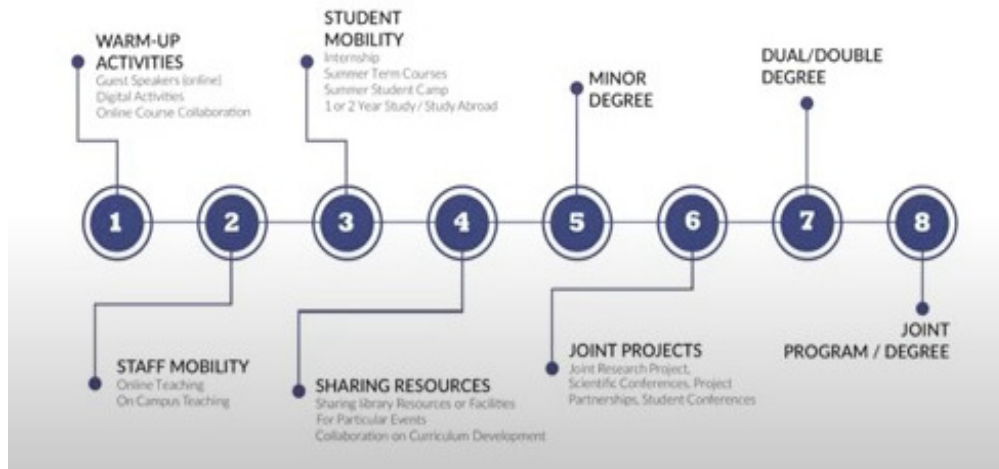


Figure 1. International Potential Collaboration Pathway

Right now, Arkin University of Creative Arts and Design (ARUCAD) has signed a collaboration agreement with the Manchester School of Art, part of Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. This agreement provides dual degree to students of the ARUCAD Faculty of Arts. We are open for new collaborations with universities under the ECO Region.



Global Engagement and Academic Excellence: Sumgait State University's Journey in International Collaboration

Saadat Humbataliyeva

Lecturer at Economy Department, Sumgait State University, Azerbaijan

Sumgait State University is a public university in Sumqayit, Azerbaijan. Founded in 1962, it operated as a remote branch of the Azerbaijan State Oil Academy until 1992 when it became independent as the Azerbaijani Industrial Institute. On June 13, 2000, it was renamed into Sumqayit State University. More than 3500 students are trained for bachelor's degrees in 17 directions and 200 students for master's degrees in 28 specialties in seven departments: Mechanics-mathematics, Physics and Electrical Power Engineering, Chemistry, Computer Techniques and Technologies, Economy, History, and Philology.

In the past three years, we have had more than 100 foreign students graduate from our university.

We have multiple faculties, including history, geography, economics, engineering, mathematics, chemistry, and biology. As a state university, we have participated in numerous international programs. We offer exchange programs to our students in many foreign universities, both in Türkiye and abroad, and we have foreign students from various universities. Currently, the majority of our foreign students are from Türkiye, and in the past three years, we have had more than 100 foreign students graduate from our university. We also have students from Hungary, Russia and other countries. We would have loved to host this forum and hope to meet in other forums, perhaps in Azerbaijan.

Facilitating Mobility and Accreditation: Gazi University's Credit Transfer and Recognition Framework

Aslıhan Sencil Bingöl

*Coordinator of Exchange Programs/Vice Coordinator of Education and
External Relations Coordination Office, Gazi University, Türkiye*

At Gazi University, we have a credit transfer system in place for undergraduate programs, which is overseen and revised by the Credit Transfer and Regulation Directorate. We also work on accreditation and transfer for master's programs, particularly in collaboration with higher education institutions to ensure recognition. If students can provide relevant certificates and documents, their qualifications are recognized. Gazi University's recognition and accreditation are carried out by the respective directorates, especially for engineering and health sciences programs. Accreditation boards actively accredited programs such as Pharmacy, Mechanical Engineering, and Chemical Engineering.

One of the issues faced is the continuation of extracurricular programs, especially regarding foreign language proficiency and student placement. This can sometimes result in high or low credit transfers for host institutions. We are in the process of drafting agreements and sending them to the legal counsel department for review. Subsequently, they are forwarded to national and international units and the university senate for approval before being sent to other universities. Finally, a joint undergraduate program agreement is reached and reviewed by the Higher Education Council.

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Advancing Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education: A Comprehensive Framework for Evaluation and Improvement

Khosrow Nazari

Faculty member / Director of International Scientific Collaborations and Communications, International Office, Farhangian University, Iran

Regarding accreditation, there are structural considerations and forward-looking perspectives on policies related to accreditation. When it comes to academic policies for accreditation at the university, we have a center within the Ministry of Science that provides quality assurance support to all government and non-government universities. This center, which oversees evaluation, assessment, and quality assurance, has responsibilities for teacher training centers as well. They have a bilateral agreement with all relevant offices within the universities and assume a responsibility in this regard. The center monitors operations, assessment systems, research, and technology quality to enhance the overall quality of higher education.

The design of necessary criteria for accreditation and quality assurance is carried out in parallel with some scientific and association frameworks.

It aims to improve the country's overall quality and follows a comprehensive evaluation module that is observed meticulously.

Both governmental and non-governmental universities, including state and private institutions, have their processes tracked in terms of observation and evaluation related to the accreditation system and quality assurance. The design of necessary criteria for accreditation and quality assurance is carried out in parallel with some scientific and association frameworks. It also establishes qualifications for university rectors and managers of certain centers and subunits, validating their competence. This process consists of several steps, ensuring the alignment of behaviors with set objectives, the effective distribution of factors of interest within the system, and the representation and recognition of

system objectives and standards. The system evaluates whether the defined competencies are met, focusing on technology and research universities. The entire process aims to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, reflecting the desired qualities of the system and meeting established standards. It emphasizes attention to quality assurance and accreditation, especially in higher education, and the focus on strategic evaluation and relevant capabilities. Continuous improvement and evaluation of these capabilities are necessary, as well as the creation of feedback loops. These considerations are not limited to processes and certain entities but extend to selected universities with established centers.





Accreditation and Strengthening Partnerships for Quality Education

Mehmet Toycan
Vice Rector, Cyprus International University

At our university, we have more than 17,000 students, and within the country, there are already over a hundred universities. We attach great importance to bilateral agreements. However, our current status as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is somewhat isolated politically, limits us and restricts our participation in student exchange programs. Nevertheless, we establish contact with universities through Erasmus programs, especially utilizing the European Union credit system. We then proceed with an adjustment agreement, where we align and harmonize our programs, for example, with universities in the

we do not want to rely solely on paper-based qualifications; instead, we strive for a robust infrastructure.

United Kingdom. This enables us to obtain accreditation from different institutions, such as Türkiye or even Germany, which enhances the acceptance and quality of our programs, ensuring continuous improvement. We also engage in memorandum of understanding and joint degree programs with various partner universities, progressing in a coordinated manner in different areas. As my colleagues have mentioned earlier, we do not want to rely solely on paper-based qualifications; instead, we strive for a robust infrastructure. For instance, we have bilateral engineering programs that allow for collaborative work and the production of high-quality outcomes.

Empowering Recognition and Accreditation: Facilitating Student Mobility and Qualification Validation

Özlem Kalkan

*Lecturer, International Relations Office, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli
University, Türkiye*

At Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, we place great emphasis on ensuring the accreditation and recognition of credits, courses, and qualifications for our students studying abroad in various countries. Each department within the university provides students with the opportunity to choose relevant courses that align with their academic goals. We offer clear guidelines and criteria for the recognition and validity of these courses, as well as the recognition of qualifications obtained during their studies abroad.

This guidance serves as a valuable resource for our students, acting almost like an award that validates the recognition of their credits and qualifications. It plays a crucial role in facilitating the work of employers and educational institutions by providing them with transparent and easily accessible information about the qualifications and competencies that our graduates possess.

To ensure transparency and clarity, our diploma supplement plays a significant role.

To ensure transparency and clarity, our diploma supplement plays a significant role. It contains comprehensive information that confirms the type and level of qualification obtained, the issuing institution, the content of the courses completed, the results achieved, and the details of our education system. This document serves as an official record of our students' academic achievements and provides a clear overview of their educational background, enabling employers and educational institutions to assess their qualifications effectively.

By prioritizing accreditation, recognition, and the provision of comprehensive information, we strive to empower our students with



credentials that are widely recognized and valued. We are committed to ensuring that their educational achievements are acknowledged both domestically and internationally, fostering their career prospects and opening doors to diverse opportunities in the global job market.



KEY TAKEAWAYS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Forum proved to be an invaluable platform for universities to engage in insightful discussions and exchange ideas which help identify key areas for improvement and strategic decision-making. The insights gained from the Forum's discussions can serve as a guiding compass for policymakers and universities alike, as they navigate the evolving landscape of higher education.

With respect to student mobility within the ECO region, the participants discussed the flow of foreign students to their institutions, sharing insights into the number and trends of international student enrollments. Furthermore, they provided information about the profile of foreign students, including their gender, countries of origin, and income levels. They also highlighted the program preferences of these students, shedding light on the fields of study they are more inclined towards. In addition, the speakers elaborated on the programs, projects, and facilities that have been specifically designed to attract and accommodate international students. They highlighted initiatives aimed at creating a welcoming and supportive environment to enhance the overall student experience.

The first takeaway from this first section is that while there is a growing potential for increased student mobility across the ECO region, there are several areas to improve the student experience. Increasing funding opportunities for international students by offering scholarships, grants, and financial aid programs will attract more students from other ECO countries and promote educational mobility. Moreover, streamlining and simplifying admission processes for international students to reduce bureaucratic barriers and ensure transparent and efficient processes would greatly enhance student

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experiences. In some cases, offering language support programs, such as English language courses, may be needed to help international students overcome language barriers and adapt to the educational environment. Finally, encouraging cultural exchange programs and activities can foster intercultural understanding among students from different ECO countries.

The speakers also addressed several key topics on strengthening scientific research collaboration in the ECO region and sharing resources such as libraries, educational technologies and systems, laboratories. They discussed the number of international faculty members hosted by their institutions on an annual basis, emphasizing the importance of exchange programs and visits for junior and senior researchers. They also highlighted the availability of post-doctoral programs aimed at attracting and supporting talented researchers. The speakers shared information about major international research projects undertaken by their institutions and the partner institutions, countries, and agencies involved in these collaborations. They emphasized the significance of cross-border cooperation in fostering scientific advancements and knowledge exchange.

Moreover, they provided insights into the major sources of international funding for multinational research projects. They discussed the various funding agencies, foundations, and organizations that support research initiatives within the ECO Region, emphasizing the importance of securing financial resources to sustain collaborative research efforts.

A second takeaway is to start with fostering research collaborations among universities by establishing joint research centers, funding collaborative projects, and facilitating the exchange of researchers and scholars.

The fields of cooperation were also a focal point of discussion. The speakers highlighted the specific research areas in which their institutions actively collaborate with international partners. They emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and the exploration of shared research interests.

Furthermore, the speakers outlined the major resource sharing mechanisms in which their institutions participate. They discussed initiatives aimed at facilitating the

exchange of resources, such as library materials, educational technologies and systems, and laboratory facilities. They emphasized the importance of collective efforts in optimizing resource utilization and enhancing research capabilities.

A second takeaway is to start with fostering research collaborations among universities by establishing joint research centers, funding collaborative projects, and facilitating the exchange of researchers and scholars. While student mobility requires in-place credit transfer systems and compatible curriculums, which require long and comprehensive work by both sending and incoming institutions, research collaborations are easier to create with less extensive formalities.

The third takeaway is a prerequisite of the former. Establishing reliable, adequate and transparent systems for funding international research is an overriding necessity to facilitate exchange of scientists and enabling research opportunities. Therefore, a policy recommendation could be to allocate adequate funding resources and establish grant programs to support research activities within the ECO region.

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The speakers also addressed specific topics related to accreditation, credit transfer, and frameworks of cooperation among institutions. They provided information about their respective departments at the university and country level that are responsible for overseeing accreditation and credit transfer processes.

Additionally, they discussed the challenges and issues faced in establishing and maintaining exchange programs, highlighting the complexities involved in ensuring the smooth transition of students and credits between institutions.



Strengthening the legal and formal infrastructure for accreditation is a must for fostering international collaboration.

The speakers also presented initiatives aimed at fostering bilateral and multilateral frameworks for higher education cooperation. They explored possible venues for collaborative efforts with overseas institutions, the development of joint degree programs, and the establishment of consortia to facilitate educational opportunities and partnerships.

The final takeaway was the need to develop comprehensive internationalization strategies not only at the institutional and national levels but also at the regional level to guide universities in attracting international students, promoting mobility, and forming global partnerships. This in turn, requires wide-scope research on education systems of ECO Member countries. Such a comprehensive analysis of factors such as demand for higher education, cultural ties, and potential for academic collaboration would offer a foundation for

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universities as well as decisionmakers to design long-term strategic pathways for internationalization of higher education in the ECO region.

Strengthening the legal and formal infrastructure for accreditation is a must for fostering international collaboration. This suggests a policy recommendation to invest in improving the accreditation systems and processes within the ECO region, ensuring they are robust, transparent, and aligned with international standards. Implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and accreditation systems to maintain high educational standards across universities in the ECO region should be an integral part of all internationalization strategies.