

News from ECOEI



30th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)

ECO Educational Institute delegation headed by President Prof. M. Akif KİREÇÇİ has attended to the 30th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) which has been held on 14-16 January 2020 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

ECOEI President KİREÇÇİ delivered a statement about ECOEI activities and functions since the last RPC Meeting in January 2019. Prof. KİREÇÇİ also briefed the council on the activities organized by ECOEI, and highlighted the Institute's commitment to make each and every activity of the ECOEI to be truly multilateral. ECOEI delegation also participated in the sectoral committee meeting on International Affairs and Specialized Agencies, during which ECOEI's past activities and future projects are discussed.

Delegations of all the 10 Member States, ECO Observers and Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies took part in various sectoral committees to discuss and formulate ECO's policies and programs on trade, investment, transport, communications, energy, environment, agriculture, industry and tourism. The meeting concluded with the adoption of the ECO Work Programme and ECO Calendar of Events for 2020.

The Workshop on "Exchanging Experiences in Achieving Educational Goals of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)"

The ECOEI participated in the workshop on "Exchanging Experiences in Achieving Educational Goals of SDG" in Ankara on 5 March, 2020. The workshop organized by the Turkey's Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in cooperation with European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and UNESCO.

The main objective of the workshop was to create a platform to discuss Turkey's progress, achievements and plans in regards to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in particular the SDG-4: Quality Education which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all'.

The participants from UNESCO, OECD and Turkish Statistical Institute talked about the progress in regards to achieving Sustainable Development Goals both in Turkey and in the world, and also emphasized the significance of filling the data gap. Turkey's PISA 2018 results were also discussed. The participants also drew attention to the importance of sharing the best practices, relevant and complete data and cooperation among international and national organizations.

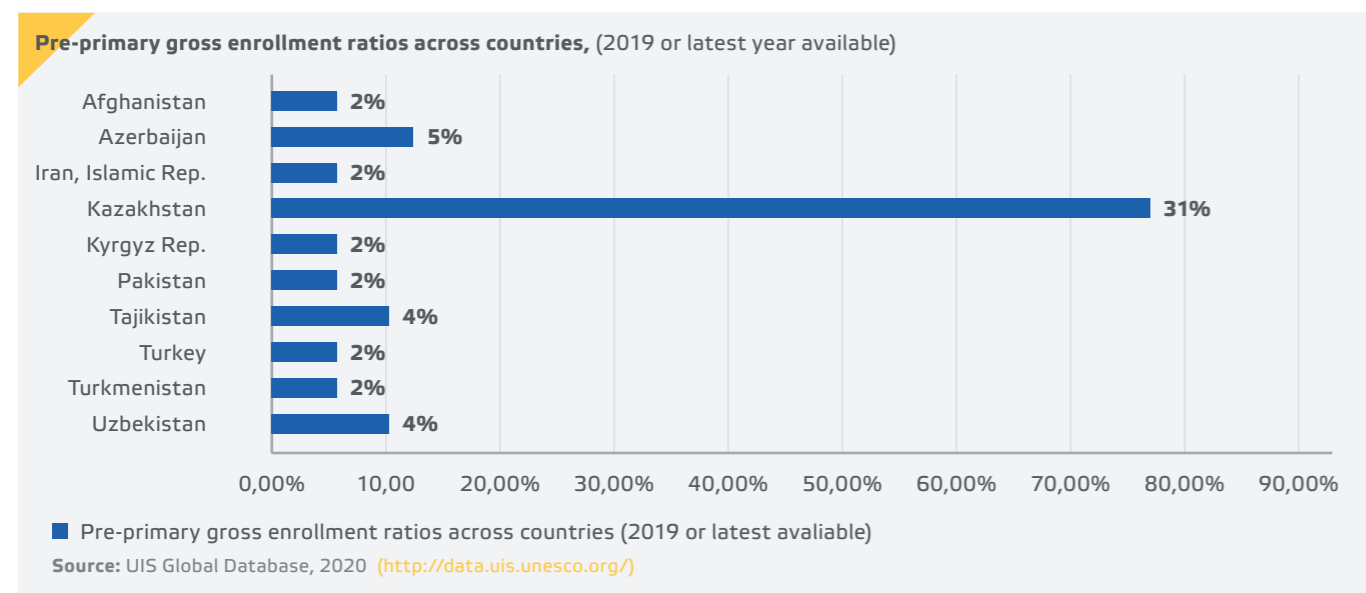
Education in Numbers

The time for Prioritizing Quality Early Childhood Education

As indicated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 Education Target 4.2., it is significant to “ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”. According to the UNICEF there are “evidence shows that the foundations for learning are largely built in

the early years of life, before a child ever crosses the threshold of a primary school”. Thus, children who are lack of quality early childhood education will encounter several problems in the later years of their education even being at the risk of falling behind their peers. Nonetheless, despite the importance of early childhood education, half of the pre-primary school-age children in the world are not enrolled in pre-primary education systems.

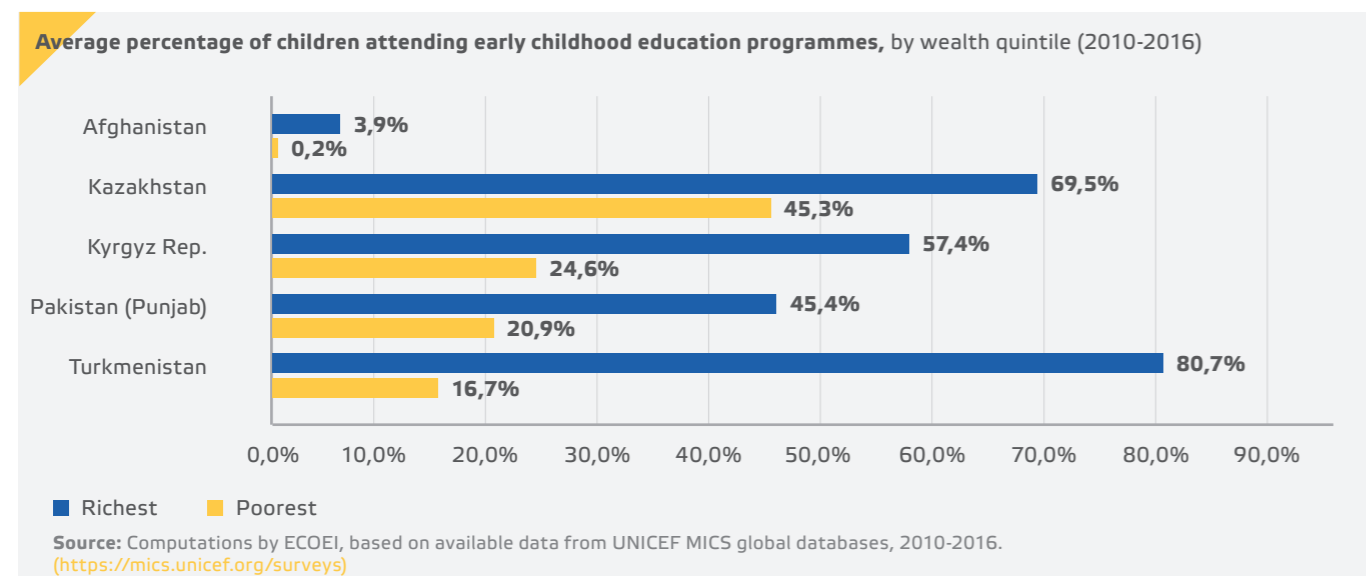
The SDG-4’s Target 4.2. uses 5 indicators to assess countries’ progress towards achieving inclusive and quality early childhood education. One of them is ‘Gross early childhood education enrolment ratio in pre-primary education which you will find the graphed data below on ECOEI member states.



Another important matter on early childhood education is the equality principle as access to pre-primary education has been uneven not only between countries but also within

the countries. In order to break the generational cycles and achieve inclusive and quality education, providing equal access to early childhood education for the population in underdevel-

oped regions and countries is the key. Here are the UNICEF data on access to early childhood education based on wealth quantile in the ECOEI member countries.



Providing quality early childhood education is an investment for future education outcomes of the children. Early childhood education will not only support successful transition to pre-primary education but will

also allow children’s literacy and numeracy skills to be on track. Yet, according to UNICEF report, while in high-income countries 83 percent of children are enrolled in pre-primary education, in low-income countries

the rate is only 22 percent. Increasing the pre-primary enrollment rate could only be achieved by mitigating the barriers especially for those students from marginalized populations and eliminating gender disparities.

Innovative Ideas for Education: Best Free Video Conferencing Systems for Educators during the Covid-19 Lockdown

The recent school closures due to the coronavirus pandemic lead educators to switch to online education for the time being. As face-to-face communication is essential for education, video conferencing tools are also become more and more valuable. Many universities start using their online platform or benefit from the already available systems to continue their education. Here are some of the most used video conferencing systems that are also free to users.

Google Hangouts

Google Hangouts includes Chat that is available for all and Meet feature that is available only to G Suite Customer. However with the coronavirus outbreak, Google extend Hangouts Meet capability to G Suite and G Suite for Education users for free. Moreover, enterprise-level features like meetings of up to 250 people and recording to Google Drive are also available for free until July 1, 2020. Hangouts can be used in the browser or through the mobile apps.

Skype

Microsoft’s video chat tool Skype allows its users to easily sign up via e-mail and join meetings without installing the app. Other features of the Skype includes screen sharing, focus on one speaker, blur backgrounds, live subtitle and recording chats.

Zoom Meetings

Zoom Meeting becomes more and more popular as it enables to hold meetings up to 100 people and joining the invited meetings simply clicking on the link without signing up. The only side issue in the free version is the meetings are up to 40 minutes if there are 3 or more participants. Other features are screen sharing, whiteboarding and annotations and recording meetings as mp4 and m4a formats. Zoom Meetings are also available in browsers and as a mobile app.

FreeConference

FreeConference offer simple and easy access without installing any software and there is a mobile app available as well. While FreeConference also has features like screen sharing, recording calls, dialing international numbers and setting up recurring meeting in its free version, it also has limitations on participants up to 5 people.

CiscoWebEx Meetings

Free version of the WebEx Meetings offers to hold HD quality video meetings with up to 100 participants, screen sharing and private chat rooms. Other options in the free package includes 1GB of cloud storage, unlimited meetings of unlimited length and the ability to make MP4 recordings. It is also available through web browser and mobile app.



Sources:

Best video conferencing software 2020: paid and free solutions for business, March 2020. (<https://www.techradar.com/best/best-video-conferencing-software>)

Future Events and Opportunities

April through July 2020: Due to the coronavirus pandemic many libraries, eLearning courses and trainings, and other online resources open their services free to access for a certain time to support education. Check the METU's announcement for the list of free online resources <http://lib.metu.edu.tr/announcements/free-access-during-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>.

Similarly, art, music and educational online resources in Europe have been made available for free during the pandemic. Here is the list of these resources <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/europeathome-10216>

Education News around the World

January 15, 2020: Hoca Ahmed Yesevi International Kazakh-Turkish University has been given a special status by a decree signed by President Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This new status will expand the university's academic and administrative independence and allow the university to have control over the content of its educational programs and award Ph.D. degrees.

March 2020: The new coronavirus pandemic has forced more than 110 countries to shut down their education systems partially or fully for a period of time. According to the United Nations, 102 of countries have nationwide closures that includes more than 849 million children and youth from pre-primary to higher education. Remaining 11 countries have localized shutdowns. In ECOEI members, millions of students from pre-primary to upper secondary level were affected from the closures. 44.9 million students in Pakistan, 17.7 million students in Turkey, 14.6 million students in Iran and 9.6 students in Afghanistan had to abandon traditional classroom teaching due to the pandemic.

April 30, 2020: Community Volunteers Foundation (TOG) in Turkey and ING Bank has created a COVID-19 Support Fund. Through this fund, TOG will provide scholarship for children and youth whose families going through economic difficulties due to Covid-19. After completing the online application form by April 24, 500 students from primary and secondary education and 500 undergraduate students will benefit from the scholarship. TOG has also initiated a 'Have a Computer' campaign for college students who needs computer for distance education.

April 2020: A university in Japan conducted a graduation ceremony by using robot avatars. When coronavirus epidemic shut down the schools, the university administrators did not want to cancel their graduation ceremony and come up with a unique idea to hold it safe. The remotely operated robots with gowns, caps and face screens accepted the diplomas on behalf of the students and rest of the graduates were able to watch the ceremony via Zoom Meetings.



JUNE 2020
Newsletter