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***Analysis of conditions for internationalisation at Kurdish HEIs
compared to those in the European institutions***

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Introduction

This report reviews the condition for internationalisation in Kurdish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) compared to those in the European institutions.

The report is divided into two parts. The first part reviews the conditions for internationalisation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq set by the KRG Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) and therefore focusses on the condition present on the systemic level.

This part is based on two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was developed and sent to the MEHSR by Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL) in spring 2018. The second questionnaire was developed and sent by Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (UGOE) and Global Impact Institute (GII) as part of an online survey in November 2018.

The second part of the report reviews the conditions for internationalisation in Kurdish HEIs in comparison with European HEI partners and focusses on the institutional level. It is based on a questionnaire developed and sent by UGOE and GII in November 2018.

In addition, the report draws from additional translated resources provided by various Kurdish partners and research by UGOE.

In its structure, each part follows the second questionnaire designed by GII and UGOE, which inquired about

- the conditions for incoming and outgoing staff mobility,
- the conditions for incoming and outgoing student mobility,
- the conditions for international strategy and budgets for internationalisation,
- the conditions for international promotion of institutions,
- the conditions for internationalisation of research,
- the conditions for internationalisation of education.

In addition, the second questionnaire to the MHESR inquired about the conditions to become a member to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) including the ratification of the European Cultural Convention (Treaty 018) and the adherence to the principles of the Bologna Process.

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Part I – Existing conditions for internationalisation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq set by the KRG Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Existing conditions and procedures to promote incoming and outgoing staff mobility

Based on the data submitted, the overall conditions and procedures to promote incoming and outgoing staff mobility in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq set by the MHESR have to be characterised as limited or non-existent.

When asked about the conditions and procedures in place to support the existence and increase of different nationalities represented in the staff body at Kurdish Higher Education Institutions, the MHESR referred to Kurdish universities and their “*mutual agreements, protocols and MoUs*” in place with universities abroad.

From this, we assume that MHESR currently sees the recruitment of foreign staff mainly as a task of Kurdish universities and that no dedicated support structures, policies or regulations are in place that promote multi-national staff bodies at Kurdish HEIs.

When asked about the conditions and procedures in place to promote outgoing staff mobility, either by taking part in exchange programmes or international conferences, the MHESR again referred to the Kurdish universities and their cooperation agreements in place, reinforcing the previous impression that promoting staff mobility is seen by the MHESR mainly as a task for Kurdish HEIs.

Interestingly, if true this contradicts the Law No. 10 on the KRG Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which clearly defines the “*exchange of scholars and experts between the scientific Iraqi institutions and others*”¹ as a core task of the MHESR.

¹ Law No. 10, Section 2, Article 3, Paragraph 13.

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In addition to the answer above, the MHESR stated that generally the “*ministry plays a supportive role in all activities which are in favour of scholar exchange*” and would provide “*full financial and administrative support*”.

Unfortunately, no further details were conveyed regarding the support provided by the MHESR rendering it impossible to assess the existing conditions and procedures to promote outgoing staff mobility conclusively. However, the lack of detailed information hints towards the non-existence of a comprehensive support scheme/framework for outgoing staff mobility.

The MHESR was also asked about conditions and procedures in place to increase the proportion of staff at Kurdish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that are members of an international academic or professional association. Though membership in such associations is looked upon favourably by the MHESR, the vague answer that the MHESR “*always supports and fully enhance [sic!] the process of being a member of any academic accredited international bodies*” conveys very little information again, rendering it impossible to assess the conditions in place conclusively.

Though it is known from the first questionnaire sent to the MHESR by KUL that Kurdish universities are generally free to recruit and employ foreign staff² and that increased international mobility by Kurdish HEI staff is seen as desirable by the MHESR, it is to conclude that while very little is hindering staff mobility to and from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq from a regulatory standpoint, there is also very little in place to support it.

Existing conditions and procedures to promote incoming and outgoing student mobility

Unfortunately, the data submitted by the MHESR is again extremely limited and therefore bears little information for a conclusive assessment to be based on. However, the absence of detailed information can be telling in its own right.

² Here the only requirement stated was the equalization of the staff’s degree / qualification with the MHESR: “*Upon arrival, professors need to submit their academic certificates to the department of certificates equalisation in the ministry of higher education to equalise the degree they hold with its equivalent here.*”

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When asked about the conditions and procedures in place for outgoing students in order to increase the proportion of students at Kurdish HEIs that participated in outgoing exchange or mobility programmes, the MHESR simply referred to a general responsibility of Kurdish universities stating that this issue *“is more related to the academic institutes rather than MHESR”*. No additional information was provided.

Similarly, when asked about the conditions and procedures in place for incoming students, the MHESR again referred to Kurdish universities, which *“take care of receiving international students and allocate additional support to them as needed”*. Regarding its own role, the MHESR stated that it *“provides general outlines for increasing students enrol [sic!]”*. However, no further details regarding these *“general outlines”* were submitted.

Looking at both answers, despite their limited nature several issues can be highlighted.

First, it is interesting to see that the MHESR – as was the case with staff mobility – constantly refers to Kurdish universities and their responsibility for international student mobility, both incoming and outgoing. Though it is true that HEIs play a crucial role in organising and implementing student mobility, the emphasis placed on universities combined with the complete lack of any reference to the MHESR itself raises the question if the MHESR currently perceives student mobility as one of its responsibilities in the first place.

In addition, the lack of detailed information also renders it questionable if the MHESR currently possess any coherent strategic approach to international student mobility.

In this regard, it is interesting to note that the MHESR chose to omit completely any mention of the previously existing *“Human Capacity Development Program in Higher Education (HCDP)”*, which was funded by the Kurdistan Regional Government with an annual volume of 100 million US\$ and provided graduate students from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with the opportunity to study in universities in North America, Europe, Australia, Asia and neighbouring countries,³ which clearly

³ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290996846_Scholarships_Programs_in_Iraq_an_investment_in_Human_Resources_and_a_way_to_reform_Higher_Education_Sector.

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indicates that previously such a strategic approach and support scheme for outgoing student mobility existed.

Interestingly, in regards to incoming mobility the MHESR also did not mention the recently launched “*Kurd scholarships Programme*” that offers scholarships to foreign students with a special interest in Kurdish language, literature and culture to study at Kurdish universities.⁴ Though only offering a limited number of 20 scholarships and targeting a narrowly defined target group of students, it is unclear why the MHESR chose not to disclose this scholarship programme, since it hints to at least some form of strategic approach.

In general, it is known from the first questionnaire that no major regulatory obstacles exist for incoming students to enrol in Kurdish universities. On the contrary, according to the MHESR, foreign students are eligible for special admission conditions that provide easier access to higher education.⁵

Based on this and the limited data provided by the MHESR in the second questionnaire, it is again to conclude that while very little is hindering student mobility to and from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq from a regulatory standpoint, currently there is also very little in place to support it.

Existing conditions for international strategies and budgets for internationalisation

Based on the data provided by the MHESR, no requirements or regulations from the ministry’s side are in place that require Kurdish HEIs to devise an institutional international strategy or allocate a dedicated budget for internationalisation.⁶

⁴ <https://www.mhe-krq.org/node/3728>.

⁵ Regarding legal rules concerning incoming students, the MHESR stated: “*For BA, BSc [sic!] incoming students, they need first to equalise their high school certificate with ministry of education. After that the student may get up to 15% marks help to get admission to the wanted programme in comparison with local student. For PhD students, also after equalisation of Master’s degree, they can apply to the related field of study and will be also assisted in the admission.*”

⁶ Devising such a strategy seems to be voluntary and at the university’s own discretion. Hence, not all Kurdish universities have internationalisation strategies established.

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Consequentially, according to the MHESR no conditions or procedures are in place to make sure that international strategies of Kurdish HEIs are implemented or that sufficient budgets for internationalisation are available at Kurdish HEIs.

Existing conditions for international promotion of institutions

Asked about the conditions and procedures in place for promotion in order to improve the international marketing and visibility of Kurdish HEIs, as with previous questions the MHESR referred to Kurdish universities as responsible and simply stated that the MHESR would support this process. Unfortunately, no further details regarding the support provided by the MHESR were conveyed.

From this, however, it can be concluded that though Kurdish universities are generally free to engage in international promotion activities they are neither required to engage nor supported in engaging in international promotion.⁷

Based on the limited answer provided by the MHESR, it can further be concluded that no dedicated strategy, support structures or supporting actions by the MHESR are in place to increase the international visibility of Kurdish HEIs. This refers also to the lack of rather simple promotion instruments such as a “*Study in ...*” website providing basic information about study opportunities in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.⁸

Existing conditions for internationalisation of research

When asked about the conditions and procedures in place to increase the production of international publications at Kurdish HEIs, the MHESR generally stated that it “*supports the professors and academicians [sic!] to publish and participate in any renowned and famous international events which eventually leads to have more publications*”. Unfortunately, no further

⁷ The fact that Kurdish HEIs are free to engage in international promotion was confirmed in the first questionnaire sent by KU Leuven.

⁸ A “Study in ...” website exists for all European partner countries of the TIGRIS Project, e.g. <https://www.study-in.de/de/>, <https://www.studyinholland.nl/>, <https://www.studyin.cz/>, <http://www.studyinbelgium.be/en/content/home>.

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details about the support provided were conveyed rendering it impossible to assess the existing conditions and procedures for increasing international publications conclusively.

However, the lack of detailed information hints towards the lack of a comprehensive support scheme/framework for increasing international publications.

When asked about the conditions and procedures in place to increase the production of international collaborative research projects at Kurdish HEIs, the MHESR referred to the “Split-Site PhD Programme” for joint international PhD education, established in 2010, and more generally to the presence of *“many foreign professors are here working on different scientific and academic projects”*. Again, no further details were provided.

Though joint international PhD education is a well-established and appropriate instrument to facilitate international research collaboration, it is difficult to assess the programme’s performance, since no statistical data was submitted. In addition, no information was provided on how the MHESR supports (e.g. volume of funding, number of positions offered) the establishing of “Split-Site PhDs”.

Also, since no information was provided on how the *“many foreign professors working on different scientific and academic projects”* were attracted (programmes, funding scheme, etc.) it is unknown if any dedicated support action by the MHESR exist to attract foreign researchers.

Hence, we must assume that the conditions and procedures to increase the production of international collaborative research projects are limited a best.

Existing conditions for internationalisation of higher education

When asked about the conditions and procedures in place for internationalisation of higher education in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the MHESR stated that Kurdish state universities were encouraged *“to change their curricula to English language”* and that *“many topics are now taught exclusively in English language for the past 4 years”*. Unfortunately, no details about the number or percentage of English-taught programmes were submitted. However, the transition to English as

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the main language of instruction generally is to be considered conducive to the internationalisation of Kurdish higher education.

Furthermore, the MHESR mentioned that it had “*started a serious [sic!] of steps towards changing the whole educational system to Bologna process*” and the implementation of ECTS, but no further details (regulations, status of development/implementation, Kurdish framework and standards for implementation, etc.) were provided. It is unclear, why the MHESR did not choose to elaborate further, especially since it is known from the “*Workshop on the Bologna Process and the Introduction of ECTS at Kurdish HEIs*” that the MHESR has already approved the implementation of ECTS at various Kurdish HEIs.

In regards to internationalisation of higher education, the questionnaire also inquired about the conditions for international summer schools as well as joint/double/ multiple degree programmes. According to the data provided, the MHESR itself does not facilitate international summer schools or summer programmes. Also, except for the “*Split-Site PhD Programme*” no other conditions or measures exist that increase the number and proportion of joint/double/multiple degree programmes at Kurdish HEIs.⁹

Tough the transition to ECTS and English as language of instruction are important steps for internationalising Kurdish higher education in the future, the data shows a complete lack of dedicated actions to support this transition. Therefore, the current conditions for promoting the internationalisation of Kurdish higher education seem limited at best.

Existing condition for joining the EHEA

As stated in the second questionnaire, the MHESR plans to apply for the EHEA in the near future. When asked to assess Kurdistan’s readiness for application and possible challenges lying ahead, the MHESR mentioned that it considers Kurdistan well prepared in terms of infrastructure, but notes that “*main challenges [exist that] are political, geographical and cultural variations that might*

⁹ For more information on the condition for joint/double/multiple degree programmes at Kurdish HEIs see the “*Framework for comparison between existing regulation and procedures in their institutions for development of double diplomas and joint degrees and those in place within EU partners*” established in the TIGRIS project.

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critically affect the decision of joining EHEA". Unfortunately, the MHESR did not choose to elaborate further on these challenges.

However, from the data provided it is clear that currently the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is ill prepared to become a full member to the Bologna Process and the EHEA due to several reasons.

To become a full member, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq would have to first ratify the European Cultural Convention (Treaty 018), which so far is not the case. Ratifying the European Cultural Convention, however, could present itself to be a challenging task, since Kurdistan – though an autonomous federal region of Iraq – lacks the legal quality of a state, which is a prerequisite for becoming a member to the European Cultural Convention. Though the example of Belgium and its federally organized statehood show that individual federal subjects can be members of the EHEA (in the case of Belgium the Flemish and French Community), nevertheless membership of the nation-state as such is still required.¹⁰

Additionally, in order to become a full member, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq would have to proof its adherence to the Bologna Principles.¹¹ When asked to describe in which way the Kurdistan Region of Iraq adheres to these principles, for four out of five criteria the MHESR failed to provide any answer leading to the conclusion that neither does Kurdish higher education currently adhere to the Bologna Principles nor does the MHESR have a comprehensive plan developed for achieving adherence.¹²

¹⁰ For the Flemish Community see <http://www.ehea.info/pid34250-cid101107/belgium-flemish-community.html>. For the French Community see <http://www.ehea.info/pid34250-cid101108/belgium-french-community.html>.

¹¹ The five principles are "international mobility of students and staff", "autonomy of higher education institutions", "student participation in the governance of higher education", "public responsibility for higher education", "the social dimension of the Bologna Process".

¹² Interestingly, in this segment the MHESR only provided an answer for the criteria "student participation on the governance of higher education", in which it referred to an annually elected "*students [sic!] union [whose] representatives defend students [sic!] rights and participate in annual university meetings*". The MHESR did not refer to the criteria "autonomy of higher education institutions", which is surprising, since Section 5, Article 8, Paragraph 1 and 2 (in particular) of the Kurdish Higher Education Law (Law No. 10, 2008) enshrine academic freedom and the autonomy of HEIs as fundamental principles of Kurdish higher education.

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Conclusion

Unfortunately, the answers provided by the MHESR for each of the questionnaires were very limited in regards to both scope and quality of information rendering it possible that the data provided is incomplete.

However, based on the information provided it must be concluded that currently the systemic conditions for internationalisation of Kurdish higher education are limited at best.

In regards to student and staff mobility, both incoming and outgoing, the lack of comprehensive support schemes are most apparent. Moreover, the limited nature of the answers provided made it questionable if the MHESR currently possess a strategic approach to mobility at all.

With the exception of the “Split-site PhD Programme”, the verdict regarding mobility seems also true for the internationalisation of research, for which very limited support seems to be in place.

The existing conditions for internationalisation of education seem more favourable considering the already started transition to an ECTS-based system and the shift to English as a main language of instruction. Here, however, the data shows a lack of comprehensive support schemes for the transition being it a common framework for the implementation of ECTS or a capacity building programme for teaching staff to be teaching in English.

As for the stated goal to apply for membership to the Bologna Process and the EHEA, the data not only showed that currently the necessary requirements are not met but that apparently no coherent plan exists to develop Kurdish higher education to meet the requirements in the long run.

Considering all this, it is clear that the MHESR will have to develop its future vision of higher education in Kurdistan Region of Iraq by developing a comprehensive internationalisation strategy that clearly defines developmental goals and objective complemented by an action plan that clearly states what is to be done by whom when and to what purpose and backed up by regulations and bylaws, which set common standards and practices for Kurdistan Region as a whole. Subsequently,

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policies and support schemes are to be developed providing the means necessary to Kurdish HEIs, their students and staff, both administrative and academic, to reach the common goals set.

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Part II – Existing conditions for internationalisation in Kurdish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) compared to those in the European institutions

Existing conditions and procedures to promote incoming and outgoing staff mobility

Based on the data submitted, the overall conditions and procedures to promote incoming and outgoing staff mobility in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq existing at Kurdish HEIs have to be characterised as limited.

Incoming staff mobility (Kurdish HEIs)

All Kurdish HEIs have currently either no (3 partners) or a very low number (5 partners) of international staff. An exception is the University of Raparin (UoR) citing 10% of its staff being international.¹³

Several Kurdish HEIs cite security reasons as well as financial issues as factors that prohibit the recruitment of international staff, while one partner HEI also cites its status as a newly founded university as reason for low numbers of international staff.

Erbil Polytechnic University (EPU) points out that due to the financial crisis in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, regulations by the MHESR would be in place currently that prevent the recruitment of local and foreign staff. However, this statement is contradicted by Sulaimani Polytechnic University (SPU), which cites the recent recruitment of 10 new international staff. From the data available, it cannot be established why different conditions exist at both HEIs.

¹³ In absolute figures the number of foreign staff amounts to 25. Interestingly, besides teaching personnel this includes also administrative staff. Here, it is interesting to see that the trend of low/decreasing numbers regarding incoming staff as established in the survey in WP1.4 continued and that only UoR increased the number of international staff recruited.

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According to the data submitted, only Salahaddin University (SU) and University of Halabja (UoH) actively use Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with foreign universities as a vehicle to increase the number of incoming staff, while only UoR regularly announces job vacancies internationally.

In terms of support for incoming staff, only two Kurdish HEIs seem to offer support, mostly in terms of accommodation, while only one HEI mentioned having a support structures in place in form of their international office. In general, institutional support structures such as Welcome Centres do not exist at any Kurdish partner HEI.

Outgoing staff mobility (Kurdish HEIs)

As it is the case with incoming international staff, the conditions for promoting outgoing staff mobility are equally limited at Kurdish HEIs.

Though the Kurdish partners in this questionnaire did not submit specific numbers of outgoing staff, it is known from the survey conducted in WP1.4 that the overall numbers are low.¹⁴

In terms of funding, most Kurdish partners referred to “EU-funded programmes and projects” (e.g. KA107, TIGRIS) as well as other international third party funding (DAAD, UNESCO, IREX) as means to promote outgoing staff mobility.

According to the data provided, no dedicated institutional or governmental funding scheme is available in Kurdistan Region of Iraq to send staff abroad.

Participation in international conference (Kurdish HEIs)

The limited support for outgoing mobility also becomes evident when looking at the existing conditions to promote participation in international conferences by Kurdish HEI staff.

In general, all Kurdish partner HEIs report that they encourage the participation in international conferences by their staff members, both academic and administrative. In addition, UoS points out

¹⁴ For specific numbers see the report in WP1.4.

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that attending international conferences is also factored into staff evaluation by the MHESR and is rewarded with a higher evaluation score. Hence, participation in international conference is generally desirable for staff members from a scientific as well as professional standpoint.

Four Kurdish partners provided figures for conference participation, which range from 20 to 50 participants annually. It is unclear if the numbers concern both administrative and academic staff. If academic staff is included, the numbers have to be considered low.

Lack of funding and visa issues are cited as the main factors impeding participation in international conference. Interestingly, only SPU and UoR report to be supporting academics financially in participating in international conferences, especially those conferences that as a result publish research in ranked/impact factor scientific journals.

According to the data provided by Kurdish HEIs, the MHESR mainly supports conference participation by providing proof of employment and support in the visa application process. However, no financial support scheme seems to exist to facilitate international conference participation.

Interestingly, UoH reports that staff wanting to participate in international conferences needs permission to leave from the MHESR. If true, this seems to be a peculiar bureaucratic procedure. In terms of governance, the decision to grant leave is more suited to be made at an institutional (faculty or department) than ministerial level. Currently, the rationale behind this procedure is unclear.

Membership in international academic or professional association (Kurdish HEIs)

The membership in international academic or professional associations can be conducive to international staff mobility, therefore the questionnaire inquired about the conditions and procedures in place to increase the proportion of staff that are members of such associations.

All Kurdish partners report that no dedicated strategies, procedures or support schemes are in place to facilitate membership of their staff in international academic or professional associations though

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all look favourably on such memberships. UoR points out that memberships in international academic or professional associations are usually organized at an individual level, especially when discipline-related.

Three partners point to the membership of their institution in international networks and associations (Association of Arab Universities, International Association of Universities, International Universities Council) as generally conducive.

Incoming staff mobility (EU HEIs)

Expectedly, the survey of the European partner HEIs regarding the existing conditions and procedures to promote incoming and outgoing staff mobility shows quite a different picture.

In contrast to the situation at Kurdish HEIs, all European partners point out a significant number of international staff, which in case of UGOE or Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (RUG) can make up one-fifth to one-third of all staff. In addition, all European partners report a high number of short-term stays for training, teaching or research-related purposes.¹⁵ Ample funding for incoming international staff is available with partners pointing to European (Erasmus+), national as well as institutional grants and funding schemes.

In addition, vacancies are announced internationally and all European partner HEIs have a Welcome Centre or similar institutionalized support structures in place that offer comprehensive support to international incoming staff.

Outgoing staff mobility (EU HEIs)

For outgoing staff mobility, all European partners point to the extensive use of EU funding, mainly KA103 and KA107, but also state the availability of institutional funds / scholarship programmes (e.g. RUG “Marco Polo Scholarship Programme”). In addition, bilateral agreements, memberships in

¹⁵ E.g. in regards to training all European partners organize international staff trainings/staff weeks.

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consortia (UGOE “U4 Network”, KUL “Venice International University”) and other joint international projects facilitate outgoing staff mobility.

Participation in international conference (EU HEIs)

In regards to facilitating the participation of staff members in international conferences, the picture for the European partners differs. While professors and researchers at KUL receive a personal budget to cover costs for conference participation, RUG does not offer dedicated support to academic staff. However, for supporting (administrative) staff, funding is available. Both UGOE and Masaryk University (MU) point to funding via EU programmes as well as institutional funding as being available for conference participation.

Membership in international academic or professional association (EU HEIs)

Similar to the situation in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, at the European partner HEIs no dedicated procedures are in place that facilitate the membership of staff members in academic or professional associations.

However, three out of four partners point out existing funding opportunities for mobility (European, national, institutional) as potential facilitators of such memberships, while two partners cite their institution’s membership in networks and associations (Coimbra, the GUILD, U4, HeKKSaGoN, EUA) as generally conducive to this.

Existing conditions and procedures to promote incoming and outgoing student mobility

This section inquired about the condition and procedures in place to increase the proportion of students that participated in outgoing exchange or mobility programmes and to increase the proportion of international students among all students.

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Outgoing student mobility (Kurdish HEIs)

For outgoing student mobility, the Kurdish partners generally report low numbers ranging from 15-20 outgoing mobilities annually, while one Kurdish HEI reports having no outgoing students at all.

According to the data provided, outgoing mobility mostly concerns postgraduates and PhD students. Only UoS cites participation of undergraduates in outgoing student exchange.

In terms of funding, several Kurdish partners refer to Erasmus+ mobility programmes as well as the Kurdish “*Split-Site PhD Programme*”. Only EPU and SPU report on using institutional funds and scholarships to fund outgoing student mobility. According to the Kurdistan Institution for Strategic Studies and Scientific Research (KISSR), after the end of the “*Human Capacity Building Programme*” no comprehensive governmental funding scheme for student mobility exists in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Tough all Kurdish HEIs offer some kind of advice for students on studying abroad, only 3 HEIs have a dedicated advice structure in place that promotes outgoing student mobility. Therefore, the institutional as well as financial conditions to promote and facilitate outgoing student exchange at Kurdish HEIs are limited at best.

Incoming student mobility (Kurdish HEIs)

For incoming students, the Kurdish partners also report limited numbers, e.g. both SPU and EPU report between 10 and 20 incoming mobilities annually.¹⁶ Generally, the political situation, the security environment as well as the lacking implementation of Bologna and ECTS are cited as factors that impede incoming student mobility.

Support provided for incoming students usually concerns accommodation, while UoR, SPU and DPU also assist in the admission procedure. According to the data, only SPU offers scholarship for

¹⁶ SU reports to receive approximately 300 Syrian students per year, but due to their status as refugees these students do not qualify as students participating in academic mobility.

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incoming international students, while UoR offers negative financial support by waiving tuition fees for international students.

According to the data provided, dedicated institutional support structures or advisory personnel for incoming international students are generally absent at all Kurdish HEIs. Only three partners report that such functions are carried out by either the International Office and its staff or other offices (e.g. DPU “International Student Admission Office”, EPU “Academic Relations Office”).

Incoming and outgoing student mobility (EU HEIs)

As to be expected, the survey of the European HEIs again shows a different picture in terms of funding and institutional support.

In terms of funding, all European partners point to European (Erasmus+), national (UGOE “DAAD Promos Programme”) as well as institutional funds and scholarships (MU & RUG, only for outgoing students) available for international student mobility.

At all European partners, outgoing student mobility is promoted, organized and administered both at central and faculty level by dedicated staff: At UGOE, besides 3 central outgoing advisory staff, each faculty has staff assigned to promote, support and administer outgoing student mobility. In case of RUG, the faculties’ International Offices manage their own exchange agreements while Erasmus+ and scholarships are administered centrally.

For incoming students, all European partners have dedicated support structures and personnel in place. At UGOE, incoming students receive support through a central incoming student advisor, flanked by student assistance and staff of the International Student Office. In addition, two persons are supporting with accommodation. 250 rooms in the student dorms are set aside for incoming exchange students, well supported with a position that helps to get along in the dorms.

MU also offers dormitories for all international students and a welcome service is organised by the Centre for International Cooperation.

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At RUG, faculties' international offices manage the exchange agreements and promote these. On the basis of partners' requests or on the request of RUG academic staff new agreements may be signed and new mobilities implemented. RUG has both bilateral and university-wide agreements. In addition, RUG has a buddy system (within ESN and at faculty level) and organizes pick-up services from Amsterdam airport and welcome events at the start of each semester. Accommodation has been outsourced to a housing office.

Existing conditions for international strategy and budget for internationalisation

International Strategy and Budget for Internationalisation (Kurdish HEIs)

Not all Kurdish partner institutions have an international strategy in place, which is not surprising considering the fact that establishing such strategies is one of the objectives of the TIGRIS project.¹⁷

However, all partners report that governance structures are in place that manage and develop international relations, which in most cases include the University President, the newly established or expanded International Offices as well as other high-ranking HEI managers such as Vice Presidents et.al. Interestingly, no partner reported the inclusion of faculty representatives though that does not definitely rule out their participation in the process.

In terms of budget, according to the data provided none of the Kurdish HEIs have a dedicated budget allocated for internationalisation, though most report to be using some of the institution's general budget for internationalisation activities.¹⁸

For future internationalisation of Kurdish HEIs, it is clear that the development of international strategies is mandatory in order to be able to engage in internationalisation successfully and to implement it as a streamlined, goal-driven, institution-wide process that is sufficiently supported both by human as well as financial resources. For future development, Kurdish HEIs might have to revise their governance structure and set up dedicated organisational structures, processes and

¹⁷ See the report on WP1.4 for detailed information.

¹⁸ See the report on WP1.4 for detailed information.

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procedures to develop, implement and monitor the institution's international strategy. In addition, the allocation of a dedicated budget is a necessary requirement, which should also be factored in by the MHESR when allocating budget to public universities in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

International Strategy and Budget for Internationalisation (EU HEIs)

In contrast to the situation at Kurdish HEIs, all European partners have dedicated institutional structures, processes as well as budgets in place for developing and implementing their institution's international strategy.

At UGOE, the International Office is working hand in hand with the International Officers at the faculties and the Vice President of the University responsible for International Affairs to develop and implement the universities internationalisation strategy.

At RUG, the Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020 highlights internationalisation as a key pillar of the University's approach to education. This is monitored and evaluated by a university governance structure that operates at programme, faculty and university level to ensure quality and consistency of internationalisation policy and outcomes. This is supported by the permanent allocation of significant financial and staff resources, along with temporary funding for the delivery of strategic internationalisation projects.

At MU, the faculties at different levels are included in the strategy preparation. The goals are discussed in advance, they are SMART (data-driven) and financially supported by the university. The budget for internationalisation is planned annually at the management level.

At KUL, the vice-rector for internationalization is responsible for the development and the execution of the international policy supported by the university's International Office. Also, the faculties are cited to have some responsibility. KUL allocates institutional funds but also relies on external financing for projects.

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Existing conditions for international promotion of institutions

Promotion of institution (Kurdish HEIs)

According to the data provided, Kurdish partners have no dedicated budget, structures or staff in place that engage in international marketing specifically. However, five out of nine partners report to be using their institution's media department to engage in promotion activities involving their university's website, social media channels as well as TV stations. CHU reports on having established a Career Centre, which engages in student recruitment and therefore promotion activities on the national level. In the near future, CHU plans to expand these activities to the international level.

From the survey conducted in WP1.4 it is known that five out of nine partners have defined a strategy for international communication, promotion, and marketing, while six out of nine provide their website on a foreign language, usually English. Interestingly, none of the partners chose to mention this as an existing condition conducive for international promotion in the questionnaire for WP1.1.

In addition, it seems not logical for those HEIs that have a strategy for international communication, promotion, and marketing defined to not have a dedicated budget, organisational structure or staff in place to implement this strategy. It could be possible though that the strategies reported to be in place were mislabelled as "international", while in reality they concern general strategies for communication, promotion, and marketing. This explanation would be very much in line with national promotion and marketing activities reported by the Kurdish HEI partners in the questionnaire for WP1.1.

Considering that most Kurdish partner HEIs already engage in some form of institutional promotion, the conditions for engaging in international promotion in the future generally seem more favourable, since knowhow and institutional capacities to a certain extent already exist which can be built upon. That being said, however, in the future Kurdish HEIs will be required to develop their individual international promotion/marketing strategies and subsequently make decisions on strategic goals, target markets and audiences, promotion channels and formats as well as resources

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to be allocated, both human and financial. Quite likely, activities should also include a training programme for marketing staff aiming at capacity development and professionalisation.

Promotion of institution (EU HEIs)

In contrast, all European partners actively engage in international marketing and have professional marketing services and budgets in place to support the promotion efforts.

At UGOE, a full International Marketing position with substantial additional funding has been installed at Göttingen International in 2010, being assisted by the central press & media unit of the university, while MU has a special budget as well as professional team for international marketing purposes. Similarly, RUG has an international marketing team for incoming degree students. At KUL, a 'marketing service' recruits local as well as international students. Here, however, the faculties also play a role by visiting international educational conferences and by having alumni chapters in other parts of the world.

Existing conditions for internationalisation of research

This section inquired about the condition and procedures in place to increase the production of international publications and number of international collaborative research projects.

International publications and international collaborative research projects (Kurdish HEIs)

Here, seven out of nine Kurdish partners report having a research centre established which advises on and supports research at each institution. In case of UoS, the centre is supported by research committees at the college level. However, no detailed information was provided regarding the nature and extend of support and advise offered by the research centres rendering it difficult to assess the conditions conclusively.

Generally, all Kurdish partners strive for increased production and publication of research, especially in international ranked/impact factor journals. To encourage researchers to publish research, several partners provide individual incentives e.g. in form of financial rewards. In addition, research publications are factored into staff evaluations and in some cases constitute a precondition for

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promotions as well as degrees (e.g. PhD). To support research, the possibility for a sabbatical year exists. However, only three partners (SPU, DPU, EPU) report to have allocated a dedicated budget for publication of research.

In contrast, the condition for increasing the number of international collaborative research projects are much more limited. Only two partners (DPU, EPU) report on having seed funding for international collaborative research projects available, while one partner notes that participation in international projects would mainly take place on an individual basis and depending on the researcher.

No partner institution reported on the availability of governmental funding programmes that aim at increasing joint international research project; a fact that supports the conclusion drawn in Part I of this report that currently no governmental support scheme that promotes international research is in place. Hence, the major obstacle seems to be a general lack of funding opportunities for conducting joint international research. To which extent the research centres existing at each HEI advise on fundraising and project writing could not be established from the data submitted. Considering the low numbers that were reported in the survey for WP1.4, it is reasonable to assume that advice and support offered by the centres are limited and can be improved. For the future, Kurdish HEIs should develop professional advice structures and engage in capacity building for supporting staff thereby guaranteeing adequate support for researchers.

International publications and international collaborative research projects (EU HEIs)

In contrast, all European partner HEIs have dedicated institutional support for production of international publications and international collaborative research projects in place.

UGEO has a strong research department incl. EU office supporting the research activities of the researchers. Competitive own funding (seed funding) and central advice is available for proposals. International research cooperation to support joint publication is strongly supported; currently, there is an annual increase in joint publication of 8.6 %. More than 50 % of all publication is with international co-authorship.

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Likewise, RUG has a department, which gives information about research funding, and an EU office. International research cooperation is also supported by the international strategy & relations department.

At KUL, international publications count for the evaluation of researchers (hiring, evaluation, promotion etc.). This is a strong incentive for them to write articles. Besides, there is the research support office (central) and the research support team (Group Humanities and Social Sciences). Both assist in the writing of proposals for externally funded projects.

MU has support assured at faculty level with different rules according to the individual faculty.

Existing conditions for internationalisation of higher education

The survey also inquired about the conditions for internationalisation of higher education focussing on study programmes taught in a foreign or second language, the existence of international summer schools, the establishing of joint/double/multiple degree programmes as well as the implementation of Bologna system for ECTS.

Study programmes taught in a foreign or second language (Kurdish HEIs)

Regarding study programmes taught in a foreign or second language, the data submitted by the Kurdish partners provides a heterogeneous picture. While some Kurdish partners report on having only one MA programme in Arabic, other HEIs like SU and UoS have a more comprehensive portfolio of MA and PhD Programmes taught in English.¹⁹ KISSR seems to be having progressed the most in this area reporting that all Master and PhD programmes are taught in English.

According to the data, teaching in a foreign language currently only concerns Master and PhD programmes with English and Arabic used as language of instruction.

Though all Kurdish partners strive to increase the number of programmes in English especially, no information was provided on how Kurdish HEIs support the development of such programmes

¹⁹ E.g. University of Sulaimani reports that Master and PhD programmes at the medical, scientific and engineering colleges of are taught in English language as well as some programmes in humanities, law and Arabic department in Arabic language.

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rendering it difficult to assess the existing conditions conclusively. However, since a number of programmes at most partner HEIs are taught in a foreign language already, some procedure and institutional support must be in place at those institutions.

For internationalisation purposes though, Kurdish HEIs will be required to increase the number of study programmes and courses taught in a foreign language (usually English) significantly and therefore will not only have to establish institutional support but must develop and ensure adequate capacities of teaching staff (e.g. language skills). Here, special attention should be paid to quality assurance.

Study programmes taught in a foreign or second language (EU HEIs)

In comparison, all European partners in some way support the study programmes taught in a foreign language.

At UGOE, starting in 2008 additional funding was made available to increase the amount of international Master and PhD programmes, which continuously grew over time. An international study programme development position was implemented at the same. Likewise, MU has different institutional programmes and funding scheme are available for this purpose. RUG offers an extensive portfolio of English language programmes. Currently, RUG has more than 100 master's programmes, of which more than 90 are taught in English. Of 48 bachelor's programmes offer by RUG, 33 are taught in English. However, KUL points out that in Flanders legal limits exist regarding the number of such Master's programmes.

International summer schools (Kurdish HEIs)

According to the data, Kurdish partner HEIs do not offer international summer school programmes despite expressing the intention to do so in the future. Only UoS reports to have international summer schools and programmes with few German and Iranian universities. However, it is not clear from the data if those summer schools are developed and offered jointly or if students from UoS simply participate on a regular basis.

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However, as was shown in the survey for WP1.4 this does not mean that Kurdish HEIs do not offer summer schools or programmes at all. Here, quite the contrary seems to be the case, since all but one Kurdish partner HEI reported on organising summer schools or programmes for Kurdish students. Unfortunately, no data on the existing institutional capacities and budget available for the development and implementation were submitted impeding a conclusive assessment of the existing conditions.

Tough international summer schools are not prevalent at Kurdish HEIs at the moment, the fact that summer schools and similar activities are routinely organised at nearly all Kurdish partner HEIs renders the condition for future development of international schools and programmes favourable.

However, it is expected that Kurdish HEIs will have to increase their institutional and organisational capacities and budgets available for international summer schools in order to progress in this area. Of course, external factors that currently effect incoming mobility negatively such as the overall political situation present a general obstacle that might hinder significant development in the near future.

International summer schools (EU HEIs)

In contrast, all European partners offer summer schools and have central support in place.

At UGOE, 1.5 positions at central level support summer school organization and up to 4 summer schools are being financed annually each year from own funding. Further summer schools are being organized decentral, and mainly carried out through DAAD-funding. Similarly, at RUG a summer school coordinator at the central level supports the summer school organizers at the faculties. Also, a starting budget from the central office is available for new summer schools. MU also offers central support in terms advice and help with the preparation. In addition, MU has a central marketing policy for summer schools. At KUL, the current policy team focusses on the organization of summer

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schools via different ways. Among others, Venice International University, of which KU Leuven is part, organizes summer schools in Venice.²⁰

Implementation of ECTS (Kurdish HEIs)

Though every Kurdish partner HEI seems committed to transition to ECTS-based study programmes in the immediate to near future, the conditions to implement ECTS vary. While some partners have already begun implementing ECTS actively, others are still in the preparation phase. Hence, no system-wide transition to implementing ECTS has taken place yet.

In addition, those partners having started to implement ECTS have done so to a varying degree. While at SU only the Civil Engineering Department has transitioned to the use of ECTS, at CHU the transition is institution-wide.

It is known from the “*Workshop on the Bologna Process and the Introduction of ECTS at Kurdish HEIs*” that so far no common framework (incl. common standards) for the implementation of ECTS exists for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and that those Kurdish HEIs having implemented ECTS did so according to individually developed institutional frameworks.

Here, the establishment of a common framework for all Kurdish HEIs approved by the MHESR seems mandatory in order to guarantee a sound and coherent implementation. A common framework would also support those Kurdish HEIs that have not begun the implementation process by providing guidelines and orientation.

Despite the absence of a common framework, the readiness for transition to ECTS-based study programmes as well as the knowhow that already exists within several Kurdish HEIs render the conditions for the implementation of ECTS more favourable.

²⁰ www.univiu.org and <https://www.kuleuven.be/english/education/summer-schools>.

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Implementation of ECTS (EU HEIs)

In comparison, all European partners are Bologna-conform and have implemented ECTS. Their study programmes are accredited.

Joint/double/multiple degree programmes (Kurdish HEIs)

According to the data provided, joint/double/multiple degree programmes are not prevalent at Kurdish Partner HEIs. Only four out of nine HEIs report to have such a degree programme established, while CHU states to be actively developing such programmes with several partners. In general, all Kurdish partners are in favour of developing such programmes.

Unfortunately, no information was provided on how the development of such programmes is supported institutionally as well as financially. Only EPU reported its academic relations staff (international staff) together with Curriculum development to be supporting the development of joint and double Master degrees. In terms of funding, SU cited the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) as funding institution for its joint/double degree programmes.

The lacking implementation of ECTS as well as insufficient English language proficiency of students were cited as two main factors that would limit the development of such degrees. This assessment is certainly true and since establishing joint/double/multiple degree programmes is a complex and challenging task, Kurdish HEIs should for the time being not prioritize the development of such programmes. An exception here is certainly joint international PhD education, for which the existing conditions (Split-Site Programme) seem more favourable. Here, however, clear regulations by the MHESR seems mandatory, while Kurdish HEIs will have to develop and ensure adequate support structures for such PhD projects.

Joint/double/multiple degree programmes (EU HEIs)

In contrast, all European partners have dedicated support for the establishing of such degrees in place.

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At UGOE, one position for international curriculum development supports the development of Joint or Double Degrees in the Students Affairs Department, advice for funding opportunities is available in the International Office. Plenty Double Degree programmes receive funding from DAAD and the EU. Likewise, MU offers funds as well as central support for establishing such degrees. At RUG, the EU-office and international offices support the development of such degree programmes, which often receive EU-funding. At KUL, joint and dual degrees are usually supported by staff members at faculty level. For PhD degrees, special regulations exist.²¹

Conclusion

As expected, the analysis shows quite different conditions for internationalisation in place at Kurdish and European universities. This is not surprising considering the fact that most Kurdish HEIs are just beginning to engage in internationalisation while European partners have done so for more than two decades now. Certainly, the general conditions currently existing in Europe are also more favourable and conducive to internationalisation efforts than those in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

From the start, however, the goal of this analysis was not to highlight the discrepancy but first to establish the status quo at Kurdish HEIs and second to show what European universities have in place to meet the challenges and requirement that come with internationalisation.

Considering what could be established from the data submitted, all Kurdish HEIs have various challenges ahead e.g. being it the implementation of ECTS or the development of support structures and capacities for incoming international students and staff.

Equally, all Kurdish HEIs will be required to make fundamental decisions on their institutional setup and approach to meeting the challenges of internationalisation, in this defining and developing their own future vision of their institution. Here, every HEI is challenged individually as is evident from the survey of the EU partners showing that while all their setups and approaches are similar, none are the same.

²¹ <https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/phd/jointdegree>.

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That being said, however, other important tasks such as the development of common frameworks and standards or support schemes for international mobility and research collaboration can only be addressed collectively and in cooperation with the MHESR.



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