



## PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF TURKIC STATES

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### COMMISSION ON SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

#### TENTH MEETING

March 2, 2023, Bishkek

#### REPORT

### **Cooperation among the TURKPA member countries in developing cross-border education in a post-pandemic situation to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education**

In accordance with the Plan of Activities for 2023 of the Secretariat adopted during the 11<sup>th</sup> TURKPA Plenary Session held in Cholpon-Ata, the Kyrgyz Republic, it was decided to take up subject ***“Cooperation among the TURKPA member countries in developing cross-border education in a post-pandemic situation to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education”*** for the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting as a main item of agenda.

All TURKPA member states are the full-fledged members of the United Nations and its Programmes. Each TURKPA member state included in its long term development plans certain objectives concerning of education’s development, accessibility and enhancement, especially in the context of the higher education.

There are now about 235 million students of higher education around the globe. About 6 mln students are studying abroad, and it is estimated that their number will reach 8 mln by 2025. According to researches of UNESCO the accessibility of higher education in different parts of the world are not equal: the least number of students are presented by African countries, Southern parts of the Sahara desert – 9% of total students; Central and Southern Asia – 25%; East, South-East Asia, countries of Latin America and Caribbean –

40%-50%. Data of UN Population Fund informs that the total amount of people in the world by the end of 2022 was 8 bln people, and the share of the population aged between 15-64 years takes 65% from total. Among this 65% of world's population the students share is only 4,5%.

Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 influenced 91% of total students, about 1,6 bln people, at all levels of education by temporary closure of educational organizations. And this case enforced to re-think new approaches not only for daily life but to the education too.

Sustainable Development Goal-4 of the Agenda 2030 pursues worldwide implementation of inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Realization of this project envisages the development both of national education system and enlargement the capacity of the cross-border education to meet the requirements of the SDG-4.

## **AZERBAIJAN**

Average numbers of students of higher education in Azerbaijan is increasing by each year. In 2022/2023 academic year the number of students was about 216 thousand people, which is almost 2.1% of total population of the country. There are totally 51 universities in Azerbaijan and some of their filial in cities and region of the country.

According to UNDP data on the Human Development Index (HDI), Azerbaijan is ranked on 91<sup>st</sup> place among 191 countries, which is considered high, with index of 0,745. And the indicators are levelling up from year to year. High rank of HDI implies also the enhancement of level of education in the country that influences on comparatively high level of living standards in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan actively cooperates with TURKPA member states in sphere of higher education. Most of the cooperation is based on student's exchange based on bilateral agreements between state bodies and universities.

Based on the Agreement signed between Ministries of Education of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan an annual exchange of bachelor and doctorate students, five each, is considered. During 2022/2023 year totally 87 Kazakhstan's citizens studied in Universities of Azerbaijan; one Azerbaijani student got permission to obtain an education in Kazakhstan's National University named after Al-Farabi.

In May 2021 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Azerbaijan's Education Quality Assurance Agency and Kazakhstan's Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education. Such cooperation builds a platform for joint assessment programmes on educational standards of the states.

The effort of Azerbaijan towards cooperation in cross-border education also was reinforced by the visit of Minister of Education and Science of Azerbaijan Mr. Emin Amrullaev to Kazakhstan and the meeting with his colleague Minister of Science and Higher education Mr. Nurbek Sayasat in June 2022.

Student's exchange programme of Azerbaijan is practicing also with Kyrgyzstan. For the educational year 2022/2023 15 citizens of Kyrgyzstan were obtaining education in Azerbaijan on the bachelor and doctorate programmes, 2 of them gained an educational grant.

A wide exchange programme in education of Azerbaijan is conducted with Republic of Türkiye. Only during 2022/2023 years 3036 citizens of Türkiye studied in Azerbaijan. Within the State Program for Improving the International Competitiveness of the Higher Education System in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2023 a 43 Azerbaijan's citizen studies PhD in Türkiye. The State Program for 2022-2026 for enabling youth to study in prestigious foreign universities gave opportunity for its 24 students to study at 13 Organizations of higher education of Türkiye.

Educational cooperation between Azerbaijan and Türkiye consists in bilateral visits and participation within various events on governmental level like meeting of 60 rectors of Azerbaijani and Turkish universities during the visit of delegation the Council of Higher Education of the Republic of Türkiye to Republic of Azerbaijan in June 2022.

Along with the abovementioned measures Azerbaijan and Türkiye are cooperating in reconstruction works of two professional educational institutions in Azerbaijan and establishing a new Azerbaijani-Turkish University.

In conformity with the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030 President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2021 had signed the Decree on "Azerbaijan 2030: National priorities for socio-economic development". This current strategic document included the chapter dedicated to the matters of education that was discussed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Forum "New

challenges in education” held in Baku on November 5<sup>th</sup> of 2022 with participation of wide range of scientists and experts from 46 states.

## **KAZAKHSTAN**

Number of the students of higher education in Kazakhstan is 575,5 thousand people which is 3% of total population of the country. According to official data there are 116 organizations of higher education in Kazakhstan and 1/4 of them are state owned organization and 72% are private, the rest are foreign organizations of higher education.

According to UNDP data on the Human Development Index (HDI), Kazakhstan is ranked on 56<sup>th</sup> place among 191 countries, which is considered very high level, with index of 0,811. The indicators of HDI had decreased a bit, but the general position in global rate had increased up to 3 positions in compare with previous year. Progressive socio-economic development and increase of HDI in Kazakhstan, presupposes the increase of number of high education students up to 1 mln people within 5-6 years.

Among all of abovementioned students in Kazakhstan 3,9% of them are foreign students: 1,9% from CIS states, mostly from Uzbekistan (1,4%); 2% from far abroad countries, mostly from India (1,3%). The interest of gaining education in Kazakhstan of foreign students gave impetus to modernize and internationalize higher education in the country. One of it is a State Programme “On development of education for period of 2011-2020”, aimed to strengthen the quality of education and to contribute to Kazakhstan’s economic development. The internationalization of higher education was also reflected in Nation’s Plan “100 concrete steps”, that was adopted in 2015 and it is expected the transition to English language of study in high schools and universities step-by-step. The aim of it is to increase of competitiveness of educated people and growth of export potential of educational sector. The continuation of the above-mentioned programme became another State Programme 2020-2025 that puts two goals to achieve: increase of global competitiveness of Kazakhstan’s education and increase of science’s contribution into socio-economic development of the country. The tasks that have to be implemented respond to many SDGs, including the quality education, decrease of gap between rural and urban levels of education, sequence of educational process.

Progressive reforms in education lead Kazakhstan to switch to 12 year school education, to develop skills needed in 21<sup>st</sup> century, to make equal access to quality and not expensive education at all stages for everyone.

In 2010 Kazakhstan had joined to Bologna Declaration and became a 47<sup>th</sup> country of the Bologna Process. This fact facilitates for the work of international and joint universities in Kazakhstan, such as Kazakh-Turkish University named after Yasawi, Kazakh-German University, Kazakh-British Technical University, Kazakh-American Free University and others. Kazakhstan's educational organizations cooperate with foreign partners through academic programmes such as TASIS and Tempus.

On legislative level an international cooperation in sphere of education seconded by Law of Republic of Kazakhstan On Education (2007) and other normative legal acts. Internationalization of Kazakhstan's education targeted not only on compliance with advanced educational systems but also on attraction of foreign students to study in Kazakhstan and to increase their number for 10% in nearest future.

## **KYRGYZSTAN**

Average number of the students of higher professional education in Kyrgyzstan is about 231 thousand people which is 3,3% of total population of the country. According to statistical data there are 60 organizations of higher education in Kyrgyzstan and 1/3 of them are private.

According to UNDP data on the Human Development Index (HDI) Kyrgyzstan is ranked on 118<sup>th</sup> place among 191 countries, which is considered medium level, with index of 0,692. The indicators are levelled by in compare with previous years. The growing indicators reflect the positive dynamic in general socio-economic and educational development of the country.

Kyrgyzstan's education system also is involved within internationalization process. Among of the abovementioned students 35% of them are foreign students. Most of them are from Central Asian countries. Kyrgyzstan's educational organizations tightly work within Mevlana, DAAD, Erasmus+, Fulbright programmes. Kyrgyzstan's participation in internationalization of education covers both student and academic mobility, as well as programme mobility within the Bologna Process.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of Interstate Council of Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan in October 2022 Presidents of two states noticed the significance of capacity

building of cooperation in sphere of education with elaboration of concrete programme.

Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as a nearest neighbours in the CA region had signed many bilateral agreements and memorandums concerning cooperation in sphere of education. The recent one was a signing the Protocol on Amendment to the Agreement of 2006 between the Governments of two states on cooperation in sphere of education. This document was signed during official visit of the President of Kazakhstan K.-J. Tokayev to Kyrgyzstan in may 2022. Progress of the cooperation implies the possibility of opening of branches of Kazakhstan's Universities in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye in sphere of education marked at all levels, starting from bilateral relations between universities up to the intergovernmental relations. In 2021/2022 study year there are 1048 citizens of Türkiye study in Kyrgyzstan's universities, and 857 of them are at the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, that became an education bridge between two countries. And there are 1649 kyrgyz citizens study in Türkiye on scholarship and self-paid manner.

Along with the SDGs priorities Kyrgyzstan had included into its National Development Strategy-2040 the prioritized attention to improve the education at all levels, and by Ministry of education of the Kyrgyz Republic was elaborated a document "Education Development Strategy for 2021-2040". Main goals reflected in the document comply with the Goals of Agenda 2030 concerning quality education, its accessibility and modernity, but with preservation of national cultural values.

## **TÜRKİYE**

By year 2021 the number of students of higher education in Türkiye reached the level of 8,4 mln people. This number increased from 1,6 mln during past 18 years. Today's number of students of higher education constitutes almost 10% out of whole population of the country. There are 209 universities in Türkiye and 129 of them are state universities.

According to UNDP data on the Human Development Index (HDI) Türkiye is ranked on 48<sup>th</sup> place among 191 countries with index of 0,838, which is considered very high level. Both the HDI indicator and the rate position had levelled up in compare with previous year of research. High indicators

perform the state's input into the education system, i.e. budget allocation for higher education increased from 2,5 bln TL to 36 bln TL.

About 200 thousand students from around the globe are pursuing a higher education in Türkiye. Among all of a students of higher education in Türkiye the ratio of female students reached the share of 49%. Along with the implementation of the SDG 4 itself the SDG 5 concerning gender equality with empowering females and their capacity including in education is also on track in Türkiye.

Cooperation in education between Türkiye and Azerbaijan is based on numerous bilateral agreements and memorandums: Memorandum on mutual Understanding between Ministries of Education (28.02.1992); Interstate Agreement on education, study, expert assistance, technical and scientific cooperation (03.05.1992); Interstate Agreement on comprehensive cooperation in scientific, technical, social, cultural and economic spheres (09.02.1994), Intergovernmental Agreement on cooperation in sphere of education (31.10.2017), Protocol on cooperation in sphere of professional education (19.02.2021). Letter of Intent between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and General Department of Expatriates and Kinship Communities of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye (23.02.2021), Protocol between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Turkish Maarif Foundation (20.05.2021), Memorandum of Understanding between the Education Quality Assurance Agency (TKTA) and Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) (26.07.2021).

Those documents put the beginning for the further quality development between states in sphere of education. The bilateral meetings of the Heads of the Ministries of Education of both countries, their mutual visits and the experience exchange visits are reflecting the practical work of cooperation. Among the results of the educational cooperation teaching of the subject "Common Turkic history", working on the textbooks "Geography of Turkic World", "Common Turkic Literature" in Azerbaijan's educational organisations can be mentioned.

Educational project on professionally-technical education is conducted between states also with the support of TİKA. There are already some joint Turkish-Azerbaijani lyceums and schools are functioning in Azerbaijan mainly oriented for citizens of Türkiye and local students. Recently two parties are working on establishment of joint Turkish-Azerbaijani University with

residence in Azerbaijan. The university will teach specialties, which are in the leading universities of Turkey and are in demand in Azerbaijan.

Türkiye's cooperation with Kazakhstan in education based on several bilateral agreements on different levels. One of the first of them is Memorandum of Understanding signed by Presidents of two States (25.09.1991). This document put the base for further enlargement of cooperation: Intergovernmental Agreement on cooperation in sphere of education, science, culture and sport (01.05.1992); Agreement on establishment of Turkish-Kazakh University named after Yasawi (31.10.1992); Protocol on cooperation in sphere of education and science between Ministries of Education (04.03.1997); Agreement between Ministries of Educations on professionally-technical education (05.02.2007); Intergovernmental Agreement on cooperation in sphere of education (10.05.2022) and others. These documents created a platform for opening and operation of Turkish middle and high schools in Kazakhstan, including functioning of the University of Yasawi. Beside of it a numerous cultural courses and language classes in Turkish are open in schools and Universities of Kazakhstan. Cross-border education cooperation is also implemented through the project of professional-technical education and exchange programmes within it. In period between years 2012-2017 a 363 trainers from Kazakhstan were in Istanbul and 52 teachers from Türkiye made a field trip to Kazakhstan.

Cooperation between Türkiye and Kyrgyzstan based on bilateral agreements, memorandums and protocols. Intergovernmental Agreement on cooperation in sphere of education, culture and science (03.03.1992) gave the impetus to enlarge and deepen of the educational cooperation between states. The cooperation is implemented by establishing Turkish-Kyrgyz Anadolu middle school and Turkish-Kyrgyz Anadolu professional middle school for girls; establishing of Kyrgyz-Turkish University Manas; providing working units for citizens of Türkiye at the Turkish educational centre of Kyrgyzstan's university. Work on educational cooperation is done also within the multidimensional relations and Joint Economic Commission.

The internationalization of education for Türkiye is not only being a host country for foreign students and opening Turkish schools and universities abroad, but also in gaining higher education of Turkish students abroad. According to information of Ministry of National Education of Türkiye there are about 145 thousand Turkish students study in 14 countries. The popular countries traditionally are Europeans countries and USA.



## **CONCLUSION**

TURKPA member states are full-fledged actors in process of internationalization of education. The state and university programmes targeted both on the levelling up of the education quality in the country, and on the promoting it on international level.

Internationalization of education conducted by different means that include opening of university branches, establishing joint universities with mixed programme of double diploma, exchange of students and academicians that fit to the programme of educational mobility.

Cross-border education between TURKPA member states is not limited only by academic and student mobility of the higher education. It is also applied for the education given in middle and high schools. Mostly it is done by Türkiye by means of opening middle and high schools and educational centres in TURKPA member states, where not only Turkish citizens and ethnical groups may obtain education but also local citizens too. Educational cooperation on the level of primary, middle and high schools play significant role for further integration and communication of students with each other, and developing common perception and understanding in education.

Universities of TURKPA member states beside of the bilateral international relations also cooperate within the Turkic Universities Union (TURKUNIB) with participation of 41 universities (cooperation programme under aegis of OTS).

Promotion of education beyond the borders is conducted with the use of European platforms based on Bologna Process. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Türkiye joined to the Bologna Process in 2005, 1999 and 2001 correspondingly. Kyrgyzstan fully didn't join the Bologna Process, but its 15 Organizations of higher education signed the Magna Charta Universitatum between years 2002 and 2015, and by this they joined to the Bologna Convention.

TURKPA member states have at least two international platforms for cooperation: Bologna Process and 41 universities of TURKUNIB Orhun Process, both of which use European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The best practice in internationalization of education between TURKPA member states is the use of already existing system of cooperation with its integration into turkic education process.