The Office of International Programs (OIP) has continued participating in virtual gatherings and events on international higher education closely, and actively taking part in events such as the NAFSA Conference, PIM Conference, and University Global Coalition (UGC)’s 2nd Annual Gathering on Building Connections & Action for the SDGs Conference as an organizing committee member. Koç University has been collaborating with the leading global institutions to explore new partnerships for the mobility of students and academic staff members.

UNIC

The last quarter of the year was full of exciting events and news for the UNIC Alliance. While September brings the Pop-up CityLab at KU, in October First International UNIC CityLabs Festival took place in Liège, Belgium between the 14th and the 16th of October 2021. UNIC has launched its new research program on Engaged Research: UNIC4ER.
In October 2021, the OIP team attended the PIM Conference that was hosted virtually by Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University for PIM Network members.

The conference aimed to provide a venue for participants to network, share best practices on exchange innovations, creative partnerships, post-COVID travel risks, and restarting, and expand global mindset without traveling. Participators also had the chance to learn PIM’s strategies for growth, development and address issues that impact international education.

In June 2021, the OIP team attended the Virtual NAFSA 2021 Conference themed “Designing our Shared Future” that focused on how international educators to design new ways to engage our global community in building bridges and responding to the needs of the next generation.

Participators were able to join together with the global international education community from more than 100 countries to discover the latest innovations, new strategies, and best practices. OIP members also had virtual individual meetings with its partners and prospective partners to establish and build upon own institutional partnerships.

Launched in 2019 with the purpose of encouraging collaboration and collective action in higher education to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the University Global Coalition (UGC) organized its second virtual gathering in September 2021. As part of the organization committee colleagues from the Office of International Programs, College of Administrative Sciences and Economics, and Vice President for Academic Affair at KU took an active part in conference organization, proposal evaluations, and communication activities.

This year, the focus was on empowering individuals and universities to act upon the SDGs. During this two-day-long virtual gathering, attendees were able to connect to others in the field, with a focus on increasing accessibility, rebuilding a more just and equitable world, and growing future generations of leaders.
### New Institutional Partnerships

- Koç University and the Catholic University of Portugal extended their agreement to Law Faculties to support the mobility of the students in this area.
- Successful collaboration under the Erasmus+ ICM (Worldwide) Project and Global Exchange Program has led ADA University and Koç University to expand their partnership agreement for student & faculty mobilities in the areas of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Art.
- After a successful virtual meeting held during the NAFSA 2021 Conference, Université Libre de Bruxelles and Koç University agreed to sign the Erasmus+ agreement to enable student mobility in the field of Business and Social Sciences.
- In an effort to form strategic partnerships for the School of Law of Koç University, collaboration agreements with the University of Pretoria, University of Fribourg, and Seoul National University were made.
- Koç University signed various Erasmus+ agreements for student & faculty mobilities in different areas with the aim of enhancing inclusion, impact, and mobility within and in between the UNIC Alliance.
  - University of Oulu: Chemistry
  - University of Zagreb: Business Administration, Law
  - University of Deusto: Law
  - The Ruhr-University Bochum: Media and Visual Arts, Economics, Business Administration
  - University of Liege: Law

### Virtual Collaboration

With the latest developments in the higher education system due to the COVID-19 breakout, virtual exchange has appeared as an innovative way to engage groups of students with their peers online for educational programs/projects and intercultural integration under experienced facilitators/professors.

In line with this idea, the Office of International programs at KU has been exploring the options of co-designing, co-teaching, or co-facilitating a virtual/online course or extra co-curricular activities with interested partner institutions in the upcoming semesters/academic years.

OIP kindly asks interested partners to fill the [survey](#) if your institution is open to collaborating with KU.

If agreed, there can be different virtual collaboration options such as:
- The co-designed or co-taught courses can be open to the students of both institutions
- Co-designed or co-facilitate extra co-curricular activities that are open to the students of both institutions
- A professor from your institution can collaborate with a KU professor only to co-design the course
- A professor from KU can be the co-lecturer of a course in your institution and vice versa, etc.

To kick off the conversation, interested partners can contact us at partner@ku.edu.tr for further information.
Pop-Up CityLab Event by KU

CITY RESILIENCE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CASE OF ISTANBUL

Pop-up CityLabs are local events for identifying the challenges of Post-Industrial cities or implementing the solutions found in Virtual Meeting Platforms.

The UNIC team at Koç University focused on the theme “City Resilience Against Climate Change: The Case of Istanbul” where vulnerability and resilience of Istanbul regarding climate change were discussed. Following the discussion, participants ideated to develop possibilities to enhance the resilience of the city towards climatic events.

The 2-hour workshop started with brief presentations led by academics and stakeholders on the current challenges of climate change and to what extent Istanbul was resilient towards climatic events. This was followed by a process of inductive interactive exchange based on a ‘station model’ across selected sub-topics to identify main challenges.

UNIC Meets in LIEGE

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CITYLABS FESTIVAL TOOK PLACE IN LIÈGE, BELGIUM BETWEEN THE 14TH AND THE 16TH OF OCTOBER 2021

International CityLabs Festival brought together citizens and actors from civil society, academia, politics, and business to identify the challenges their territories are facing and to try to find sustainable solutions in order to:

- Help to better valorize public spaces for social and urban regeneration through culture.
- Share best practices concerning social inclusion and the relations of cultural and creative spaces with their neighborhoods.
- Promote different cultures and multilingualism.
- Reflect on the results of the CityLabs activities organized between May and October 2021.

UNIC takes the next step towards boosting impact, inclusion, and mobility in a truly European collaboration and launches a joint research dimension: “UNIC 4 Engaged Research (UNIC4ER)”

With the Horizon2020-sponsored program UNIC 4 Engaged Research (UNIC4ER), the alliance will develop a joint strategy, structure, platform, and excellence on engaged research as a strategy for enhancing inclusion, impact, and mobility within and in between the 8 partner universities. This will strengthen the alliance and add an important research dimension to the existing collaboration.

In UNIC4ER, the alliance will work together to develop and promote various interdisciplinary approaches and methods for engaged research, or systematic knowledge production not only for society but also with and within society.

For more information:

UNIC4ER
Orientation Days Fall 2021

After a difficult one and a half year in which everyone could only see each other through computer or smartphone screens, OIP finally reunited with colleagues and students. Holding the Orientation Days for Incoming Exchange Students physical at the beginning of Fall 2021 made the Incoming Exchange Team realize once again how much they missed that sweet rush and the lovely campus.

Even though students and staff have returned to campus this semester, distance learning tools such as Zoom were utilized to broadcast the orientation session live for the virtual exchange students and exchange students who were not able to attend in person. The presentation recordings and other resources made for the students were delivered to those who missed the orientation.

The Orientation Week started with a welcome speech by the Dean of Students and a quick introduction to Koç University and its student services. After a short break, the first day continued with course planning with the help of the Mentor students in the computer labs. With some mingling activities and the Student Club Fair all over the campus, the first day was wrapped up.

The second day started with a highly useful session by the International Community Services Office (ICO) and students were informed on COVID-19 regulations in Turkey and the residence permit application process along with many other important topics. The rest of the second day was occupied with online applications for residence permits, a campus tour, and Student Club Fair’s second day.

A trivia game on Turkey and Turkish culture was the first session of the third day. The game was presented by the Mentor students and even though it was about Turkey and Turkish culture, the incoming exchange students also talked about the similarities or differences between their culture and Turkish culture. So, it was an interactive session and a fun way to exchange culture. After the lunch break, the whole afternoon was spent in the computer lab for the online course enrollment session. Mentors and assistants from the Registrar’s Office were also there with incoming students to help them.

The library will be the second home to the exchange students throughout their semester, especially right before and during the exam weeks. Luckily Koç University has Suna Kıraç Library that is open 24/7 with lots of physical and digital resources and very helpful staff that explained to the students how to access and use the library resources. The rest of the fourth day went by with the orientation sessions by other KU departments that will support the students during their exchange semester at KU, such as the Office of Learning and Teaching (KOLT), Career Development Center, Diversity, Inclusion, and Disabled Student Coordination Unit and Guidance and Psychological Services Center (KURES).

The last day of the week was a free day for the students to discover the neighborhood where the campus is located and to relax before the courses begin in a couple of days. During the day, mentor students accompanied their peers coming from different countries again.

Having missed the face-to-face human interaction and feeling isolated for a while, it was refreshing to see a diverse group of bright young people mingling and new, life-long friendships blooming.

Trip to Cappadocia, Fall 2021

The Incoming Exchange Mentors, who are always hard-working and ready to help, took the responsibility of organizing a trip to Cappadocia for the incoming exchange students. The Incoming Exchange Team would like to share four testimonials from the mentor students and incoming students:
In the middle of October, our traditional and most anticipated trip of the semester took place: Cappadocia, the land of the beautiful horses. Despite many difficulties, we undertook this heavy but enjoyable responsibility of organizing this trip for 72 people, as there was so much demand and enthusiasm for Cappadocia from almost all the mentees who heard the rumors about such a trip. We had to carry out the entire organization on rather short notice and under difficult circumstances so as to arrange the trip in the best possible season of the region. It took a great deal of effort both before and during the trip and I would like to thank all the mentors who took part in the organization without whom it would be impossible to do such an organization.

I was especially enthusiastic during the planning period as it was also going to be my first time in Cappadocia and I had such high expectations, and to tell the truth, Cappadocia exceeded my entire expectations. Everybody was amazed by the natural and almost unearthly natural landscapes of the different parts of the region. Not only the natural landscapes but we were also shocked to be in an area that had a tremendous historical background ranging from Roman times to the Ottoman period. Even though we were exhausted from all the walking through the day, we as a group, refused to retire back to our rooms and arranged multiple night events ranging from a traditional Turkish night to clubbing. In addition, taking part in all these once-in-a-lifetime experiences with the friendliest group of 72 people took the entire experience to a new level. Overall, it was an unforgettable experience both for the exchange students and the mentors.

As Koç University Exchange Student Mentors, we made our first trip of the semester to Cappadocia. We managed our trip as mentors from the beginning to the end. First, we had to determine our travel destination. Since Turkey is a country full of beautiful places to see, we had a hard time choosing. However, since Cappadocia is one of the must-visit destinations in Turkey and considering the season in which we organized our trip, we decided that Cappadocia was the most suitable option. As it is a world-famous holiday destination, our choice was welcomed by exchange students, and we were faced with high demand for the trip. We arrived in Cappadocia after a 13-hour bus journey. During our 3-day trip, we organized all the activities that make dreams come true about Cappadocia. These include unique activities such as taking a hot air balloon ride, visiting the Göreme Open Air Museum, exploring the unique landforms of Cappadocia, taking an ATV tour in the valleys, participating in the Turkish Night event, visiting pottery and gemstone workshops, hiking in Ihlara Valley which is one of the largest valleys in the world, and walking on the Salt Lake. Thanks to this beautiful trip, we gained valuable memories as mentors and mentees, and we also provided an unforgettable adventure to the exchange students who came to Turkey for the first time. We have seen this with the feedback we received from the exchange students because at the end of the trip, all the exchange students expressed their satisfaction about the trip and their thanks for the organization to us. Thus, we saw what a successful event we had. As a mentor, I had a trip to Cappadocia where I had great fun and collected unforgettable memories with my lovely friends. It is very pleasing for me to know that the other mentors and mentees who participated in the trip also felt the same feelings, and it is a source of motivation for our next events.
OMER FAROOQ MALIK
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, INCOMING EXCHANGE STUDENT FROM LAHORE UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, PAKISTAN

I can say with all my heart that the trip to Cappadocia was the highlight of my exchange semester at Koç. Not only did it take me close to the fantasy world of hot air balloons but gave me an opportunity to make some amazing friends, live the best moments of my life, and make lots of memories to cherish for a long time.

During these 4 days, everything we did was a unique experience. From the mesmerizing views of the Göreme Open Air Museum, Fairy Chimneys, Ihlara Valley and Salt Lake to the adventure packed quad biking and horse riding, to witnessing the fantastic display of craftsmanship at the Pottery Workshop and Stone Atelier, to clubbing inside caves, every single experience was worth dying for. I am extremely thankful to the OIP and all our amazing exchange mentors who made us live the time of our lives!

YASHASVI VISHAL KONDHIA
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, INCOMING EXCHANGE STUDENT FROM IE UNIVERSITY, SPAIN

The Cappadocia trip that was planned by the exchange mentors was an experience that captured all the essentials in Cappadocia in the most fun way possible. Managing over 70 people is a task especially when everyone wants to spend their time doing different things. The mentors took this into consideration to plan a trip that was a lot of fun and at the same time, efficient. From the underground city to the cave museums to the hot air balloons, it was a well-planned and well-executed trip, with enough time to rest and flexibility in case things were not going according to plan. The hot air balloon ride, the highlight of the trip for me, was insanely beautiful and a truly magical experience, but the underground city was something, unlike anything I had ever seen. To get the opportunity to see that and learn about it from the guides that were with us throughout the trip was irreplaceable.

Further, having the friends I made during the exchange in Turkey, which included the mentors, added to the experience in ways that could not be explained. Going to Cappadocia by myself or with a smaller group of people would not do justice now that I had that experience. On the way back to Istanbul we also stopped at Salt Lake during sunset, which was extremely picturesque, as well. In all honesty, I would not trade anything for this experience and I am glad to have chosen to come to Koç for exchange, where the mentors are this involved in planning and ensuring we have a great semester here.
Faculty-Specific Info Sessions for OIP’s Outgoing Exchange Programs

EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR FACULTY!

OIP’s outgoing advisors organized faculty-specific information sessions for KU students and met with the students of the faculties to discuss the specific exchange opportunities.

These information sessions were designed to promote the exchange programs and painted a very comprehensive picture of OIP’s outgoing exchange programs from where to begin, all the way to how to complete course transfer procedures.

OIP advisors were also there to answer students’ questions with a Q&A session at the end of each presentation, and they made sure that students had all the information to apply for an exchange program of their choice.

The topics discussed in the faculty-specific information sessions:
- Which program suits the student best?
- When should students apply and when they should go?
- How to apply for these programs?
- What are the scholarship and grant opportunities?
- How can students select and transfer their courses?
- Who are the departmental exchange coordinators? How can students contact them?
- What other things should students consider while applying?

OIP representatives were ready to answer all of the students’ questions above and they also informed the students that they all can book a 1:1 meeting to discuss and design their exchange program journey.

Students who missed one of these sessions can also join the program-specific info sessions for each and every exchange program. They can also stay updated on the OIP announcements page and utilize the FAQ documents on the website as well.

The Outgoing Exchange Team is hoping that KU students have better knowledge and understanding of the exchange programs and would be delighted to see more students applying!
Participating in the Erasmus+ Internship program has been one of the best decisions I have made. I did a very fulfilling internship that has taught me a lot. I always wanted to pursue my work life outside of the country and this opportunity has provided me with many necessary things for taking the first step towards reaching my goals. The whole process of taking a job in a foreign country provides many skills, including interviewing for a job, working with different nationalities and cultures; understanding, learning, and adapting to the regulations of a new country, all of which also boosts your confidence to be successful at your career prospects.

I have participated Erasmus+ Internship program at Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam as an Electrical and Electronics Engineering and Physics bachelor intern student. This program has enabled me to engage the scientific environment of The Netherlands from different aspects. I have also experienced the unique Dutch innovation culture of bringing products into the market from an engineering view. During my traineeship, I met with people who have given me some insights in science and industry about what to expect from working in those areas. Overall, I have gained invaluable social, academic, and professional skills through this program and I strongly suggest everyone apply for it.

I had the chance to do my internship via the Erasmus+ program and I consider myself very lucky not only because of the financial support but also because of the honor of being a member of the Erasmus family. Being an Erasmus+ internee has helped me a lot through this journey, in terms of both finding an internship and also the recognition of the internship by my own faculty. This was a very important milestone for my education and my future career, as I intend to continue my career in Germany. Therefore, I am very grateful to the OIP Staff for making this internship possible for me.

I feel so lucky to have the chance to get work experience abroad at the beginning of my career through the Erasmus+ Internship Program. During the Summer, I worked as Marketing Intern in one of the prominent tech companies in Lund, Sweden, which is the birthplace of many pioneer international brands inventions. Working at a Swedish company in such an innovative city provided me with great networking opportunities, hands-on experience with a foreign market in a multicultural environment, improved soft skills such as cultural adaptability, confidence, resilience, and definitely made my CV stand out! In a globalized business world, I recommend everyone to seize such opportunities to enhance career prospects.
As the outbreak of COVID-19 created a need to do things remotely, the operations of the majority of the workplaces went online. It was the case for the universities as well. In this regard, the International Community Services Office (ICO) had some of its essential presentations vocalized for the convenience of the KU international community. The main motivations for this move were eliminating the health risk of gatherings and the obstacle of finding a common time slot that suits the majority of the audience.

So far, ICO vocalized its Visual Introduction to KU, Sarıyer District Presentation, New Faculty Orientation, and Full-Degree International Students Orientation.

Those resources are now available online and in service 24/7.

On September 16th, ICO attended the Newcomers’ Orientation Program for Undergraduates and presented the office, services they provide, residence permit application process, campus entry regulations, HES code, using Istanbulkart with HES code, and such essential information. Approximately 90 new international undergraduate students attended the session.

The office also had an on-campus presentation for exchange students. On September 21st, ICO met with the Fall ’21 incoming exchange students during their orientation week in the Sevgi Gönül Cultural Center’s auditorium. There, the office had a chance to provide information specifically for exchange students about their residence permits, HES codes, phone registrations, and more. The presentation was live through Zoom as well, and approximately 95 exchange students attended the session.
For the Fall ’21 semester, TPH received a record number of volunteer applications. 75 Turkish-speaking KU members—students, faculty, administrative staff—applied to become volunteer conversation leaders. For the first time in TPH history, the semester plan has 2 volunteer leaders for each session.

TPH had a kick-off meeting on October 27th to meet each other, provide more details, explain the initial design as a Turkish Coffee Hour, and welcome the new semester. Approximately 25 people participated.

Compared to the beginning of the year, the number of TPH WhatsApp group members increased by 56.2 percent. There are 37 active volunteer leaders for the semester.

Like the previous semester, ICO continued with the previously established session structure: one hour reserved for beginners and one for intermediate and above. The Turkish learners meet volunteers every Wednesday to practice their Turkish conversational skills. Meeting dates and hours were selected per both volunteers’ and participants’ preferences.

For more information about TPH, click here.

ICO’s Fundamental Help Desk to Facilitate Residence Permit Applications

Following the announcement of returning to campus and the beginning of the Fall ’21 semester, new international students along with current ones arrived in Istanbul, and their new journey had started.

One of the initial tasks for international students is to make sure they have a valid residence permit during their study periods at KU. ICO steps in the circle at this stage by organizing its indispensable Help Desk to facilitate residence permit application processes.

The ICO Help Desk was on duty only in September for consultation and document submission. It lasted for 5 full days at the Student Center. The students received initial information and hints before the Help Desk through online and on-campus presentations and mailings.

On the Help Desk days, ICO collected a total of 214 residence permit applications which means that around 2140 official documents were received, checked, and filed within a week, and submitted to the immigration authorities. All applications were successful thanks to ICO’s expertise and experience.

ICO’s Brand New Website

ICO’s website, ico.ku.edu.tr, has been home to its resources, instructions, and important announcements for numerous years. However, it had several design limitations with the previous format. The office took the initiative to transfer the format to the latest corporate format of KU to be more reader-friendly and beneficial.

WHAT’S NEW?
- Modules have been updated professionally
- Contents have been updated in accordance with the new design
- New resources have been created and published for you
- Voiceover resources/presentations are added.

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IPEP organized four online summer programs with the following titles; “International Migration and The Crisis: The Basic Instinct: Survival”, “Next Generation Leadership”, “Turkish Television Drama: A Mosaic of Genres and Stories”, and “Global Learning Certificate: Leadership, Sustainability and Social Innovation in 21st Century”. Apart from the certificate program, the others were top-notch academic courses and came with ECTS as well as certificates of participation. The Global Learning Certificate program was composed of a series of workshops and seminars. Students participating in the certificate program embarked on a learning journey where domains of personal well-being, decision making, social innovation, sustainability, future of work, and conscious leadership intersect with each other. All four of these programs hosted participants from several different countries.

**Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) was Launched!**

Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) was launched in June 2021 to increase awareness of Erasmus+ KA152 Youth Exchange Projects, empowering students to create their own projects and mentoring them throughout the project design and funding application processes.

YEP, Youth Empowerment Program is an empowerment program initiated by the Office of International Programs for Koç University students to take an active role in Erasmus+ KA152 Youth Exchange Projects. The YEP initiative is created and coordinated by the OIP’s International Projects and Education Programs team.

YEP was launched in June 2021 and had the very first info session on July 5, 2021. 45 Koç University undergraduate and graduate students attended the info session, among which three project teams contacted the YEP coordination team afterward. For the second call of 2021, the YEP coordinator team mentored two project teams during project creation and application processes. A total of 13 Koç University students and alumni benefited from the YEP program in its first term.

More information can be found on the website, including online info session recording and e-mail addresses: [https://oip.ku.edu.tr/yep/](https://oip.ku.edu.tr/yep/).
**The Art of De-biasing**

**TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT MEETING**

KU is a partner of Erasmus+ Key Action 2 in the field of Adult Education project: "The Art of De-biasing". The project’s 3rd Transnational Project Meeting was hosted by Artevelde University of Applied Sciences, where the partners had a chance to meet in person, discussing the following steps of the dBias project and enjoying the rainy weather in Gent, Belgium.

**TRAINING ACTIVITY**

Within the project, a Video Training took place online between April 20 - 29. The training was designed for academicians, administrative staff, and students of the partner organizations. Participants learned the techniques for film-making, using visual language, sound, and editing to tell a story under different themes such as: “Learn film-making techniques”, “Make Short Films Develop Scenarios”, “Produce Shot Lists and Storyboards”.

Bash Art Creative, the coordinator of the project, led the training which will be made use of in developing one of the project results; “Video clips on the bias-governed situation”.

For more information about the project please visit [https://dbias.eu/](https://dbias.eu/).

**Interview with Nilüfer Akpınar Şahin**

Nilüfer Akpınar Şahin, International Projects and Education Programs Team Leader at OIP, gave an interview for OIP’s Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Projects Newsletter. Ms. Akpınar Şahin was the coordinator of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 PEACEMAKERS Project: “Peace Dialogue Campus Network: Fostering Positive Attitudes between Migrants and Youth in Hosting Societies” led by Koç University, between 2018 - 2020.

To watch the interview please click [here](https://example.com) and for more information about the PEACEMAKERS project please visit the [website](https://example.com).
OIP TEAM

BUĞÜM ÇİÇEK
ASSISTANT SPECIALIST

ÖMER ESKİÇİ
ASSISTANT SPECIALIST

OYA ÖZER KURT
SPECIALIST

BURCU SARSİLMAZ ÇOŞAN
DIRECTOR

RENAPOLAT KORKMAZ
TEAM LEADER, INT. MOBILITY PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS

ARZU DALYAN
SPECIALIST

OMER ESKICI
ASSISTANT SPECIALIST

TUĞBA GÜVEN
UNIC MOBILITY HUB SPECIALIST

ÖZGÜR BAYRAK
SPECIALIST

GİZEM GÜLER
ASSISTANT SPECIALIST

AYHAN ŞEKER
SPECIALIST

ÖZGE GÖKTEŞ
ASSISTANT SPECIALIST

ZİKRİ MERT DEMİRCAN
ASSISTANT SPECIALIST

PELİN SÜRMELİ
ASSISTANT SPECIALIST

OYA ÖZER KURT
SPECIALIST

RENA POLAT KORKMAZ
TEAM LEADER, INT. MOBILITY PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS

AYHAN ŞEKER
SPECIALIST

ZİKRİ MERT DEMİRCAN
ASSISTANT SPECIALIST

THE EDITORIAL STAFF WELCOMES STORY IDEAS, COMMENTS, AND NEWS. DROP A LINE AT oip@ku.edu.tr