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**INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS A FACTOR IN  
IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY<sup>1</sup>**

In 2015, the United Nations member states adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Higher education is one of the priorities of Task 4.3 of the SDGs - "By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and high-quality vocational and higher education, including university education". To achieve this goal, one of the illustrative strategies is to promote the internationalization of higher education.

In the Astana Declaration (2017), the Central Asian countries' Ministers of Education reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in the field of internationalization of higher education, including for sustainable and inclusive development<sup>2</sup>. Despite the fact that there are many definitions, the internationalization of higher education is understood as: Intentionally expanding the spatiality of higher education through cross-border mobility and interconnection between educational institutions, students, scientists, knowledge, programs and suppliers (systems and providers)<sup>3</sup>.

This definition includes holistic policies and practices in higher education in response to globalization. Given the rapidly evolving trends in economics, technology and science, internationalization poses growing

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<sup>1</sup> The thesis is based on the materials of the regional leadership forum for improving the quality of higher education: The policy and practice of internationalization in the Asia-Pacific region. UNESCO. May 22-24, 2019. Almaty, Kazakhstan.

<sup>2</sup> Central Asia Education Platform (CAEP)

<sup>3</sup> Developing Holistic Indicators to Promote the Internationalization of Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific (UNESCO Policy Brief on Education in the Asia-Pacific Region, November 2018)



challenges for higher education systems in Central Asia in the areas of quality assurance, graduate employment, employer satisfaction with the quality of graduate training, and the preparation of comparable mobility statistics<sup>1</sup>. World experience shows that Kazakhstan, in its State Program for the Development of Education, aims to increase the overall percentage of foreign students in the country<sup>2</sup>. About 14,000 foreign students are currently studying in Kazakhstan, including from Uzbekistan and India<sup>3</sup>. Kazakhstan also aligns its higher education system with the European Higher Education Area (EEPO), adopting the relevant principles of the Bologna process, including the introduction of a three-tier degree structure, an independent quality assurance system and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in accordance with European higher education systems. In Kyrgyzstan, there were more than 14,000 mobile students from other countries, including India. The country is taking steps to promote the recognition of qualifications in order to increase the transparency of qualifications, promote mobility, expand employment opportunities and increase the level of lifelong learning. From the middle of 2019, new and more accelerated procedures for the recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications will appear in Uzbekistan<sup>4</sup>. Tajikistan also gives priority to international cooperation in higher education, including exchange programs and recognition of qualifications in its State Program for the Development of Education until 2020<sup>5</sup>. These issues are particularly important for strategic cooperation with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, which is the fastest growing region in the world, in terms of the number of foreign students arriving and departing.

In October 2018, the member states of the Asia-Pacific region announced a “new era of mobility and internationalization of higher education in the Asia-Pacific region through the recognition of qualifications”<sup>6</sup>. Within the framework of the Seoul Declaration, the countries of the Asia-Pacific region reaffirmed their commitment to ratify and implement the Tokyo Recognition Convention, which entered into force

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<sup>1</sup> Astana Declaration (June 2017). Second Meeting of Ministers for Education of the Member States of the European Union and of the Central Asian Countries (Astana, Kazakhstan)

<sup>2</sup> State Program of Education Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016-2019

<sup>3</sup> Center for International Programs of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan

<sup>4</sup> Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Additional Measures to Improve the System of Control over the Quality of Education”. <https://regulation.gov.uz/uz/document/669>

<sup>5</sup> State Program of Education Development in Tajikistan until 2020

<sup>6</sup> Seoul Statement (October 2018). First Session of the Committee of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (Tokyo Convention Committee). UNESCO Bangkok



on February 1, 2018 after ratification by five Member States - Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea.

As an analogue of the Lisbon Convention in Europe, the Tokyo Convention in the Asia-Pacific region provides new opportunities for harmonizing recognition policies and practices in order to increase student mobility in the region and beyond. Although student mobility remains one of the main trends in the region, the concept of internationalization of higher education is expanding rapidly and includes more diverse aspects, including at the institutional and system level.

Key aspects include:

<b>A. At the level of national education systems:</b>	<b>B. At the institutional level:</b>
Mobility of teaching and learning (for example, mobility of people, programs and institutions)	Mobility of teaching and learning (for example, mobility of people and programs)
Scientific collaboration	Scientific collaboration
Network policy (for example, credit transfer systems)	Institutional network
Coordination with international regulatory documents (for example, the Tokyo Convention)	Social inclusion
Quality assurance tools (for example, internationally recognized quality assurance agencies)	Management and Leadership (e.g. Institutional Management)

At each level, new opportunities and questions emerge to explore how internationalization can improve the quality of higher education at home and abroad. The goal is to promote a holistic approach to internationalization and promote the creation of sustainable societies in Central Asia and throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

At present, the internationalization of higher education is focused primarily on internationally mobile learners. However, the majority of students in higher education institutions probably do not have opportunities or financial resources for short-term or long-term study abroad. In this regard, so that the majority of local students can take advantage of internationalization, without necessarily going abroad, the internationalization of programs and curriculum, such as home-based internationalization, is also important and requires a holistic and inclusive approach for all students.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that in order to deepen the process of internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan, it is necessary, first of all, to ratify and accede to international regulatory documents (Tokyo Convention, Astana Declaration). In the future it is



necessary (vital) to solve the problems associated with the language barrier, the lack of material resources to ensure the mobility of students and teachers. And, probably, in order to achieve the set goals, first of all, it is necessary to establish international scientific cooperation (writing and publishing joint articles, monographs) that will enable the establishment and development of partnerships between universities, professors and researchers.