

WINTER 2022 ISSUE

KUNNECTION

KOÇ UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

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4 New ERC Starting Grants

The European Research Council (ERC), which provides Europe's most prestigious scientific research support, found only four researchers from Türkiye worthy of Starting Grant this year. We congratulate our Faculty Members, who are the owners of these projects, all of which were prepared under the aegis of Koç University, for their significant achievements. Link in bio. #EUFunded #FrontierResearch #ERCStG (left to right) Asst Prof. Barış Yıldız, Assoc. Prof. Elif Nur Fırat Karalar, Assoc. Prof. Selim Erdem Aytaç, Dr. Erkan Aydın

The European Commission has announced the 2nd stage results of the 2022 ERC Starting Grant Program. All four Koç University projects that passed the first round in the initial evaluation received funding, bringing in ~7.1M € in one single call. Overall, 4 out of 8 Koç University Projects have been selected for funding in the 2022 call with an impressive success rate of 50%. With these new additions, 27 out of 47 ERC Grants in Türkiye are awarded to Koç University.



Graduate School of Business' Outstanding Achievement in FT Ranking

Koç University EMBA program has climbed up 14 ranks and is now ranked 1st in Türkiye, 31st worldwide in Financial Times Global Executive MBA ([EMBA Rankings](#)) and strengthening its position yet again as one of the leading programs in the world for senior working managers. The Financial Times rankings consider a total of 16 criteria, including alumni accomplishments (salary today, salary increase, career progress, work experience and aims achieved), faculty and student gender diversity, international diversity, corporate social responsibility, and research (based on the number of papers published in the leading academic journals).

What is more remarkable with this year's ranking is, our Graduate School of Business, with its ratio of 50% in women faculty members, shared first place with regard to this criterion with three other universities.

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Koç University Welcomes New Cohort of International Students

This year, we received applications from over 90 countries and we are glad to welcome our new undergraduate students from across the globe. The incoming class includes a record 14 Molecular Biology and Genetics students for the first time.

Our new international students hail from top schools in the US, Canada, UK, Russia, Azerbaijan, Qatar, South Africa, Kenya, South Korea, Japan and China. This is also the first year that we welcomed undergraduate students from the Maldives, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Kenya. We are excited about the increased diversity and all the positives it brings to a university campus. We are also proud to share that our international student enrollment has increased by 173% between 2018-2022 with talented students from all around the world thanks to the efforts of the International Student Recruitment Team, partnerships with top high schools and selected educational agencies.

Also, for the first time we welcomed a cohort of 12 undergraduate students from Azerbaijan who are funded by the Azerbaijan Ministry of Education Scholarship program.



Our First International Student Valedictorian at the 2022 Commencement Ceremony

We are very proud of our **Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education (AGFE)** scholar “Shadi Hamdan” and his outstanding achievement for being ranked 1st and being chosen as the first international valedictorian ever at our University.

Shadi is a very valuable member of our bright and growing international student community at KU. Awarded the AGFE scholarship to pursue his higher education in a STEM related discipline, Shadi came to KU to begin his undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering in 2017.

Currently, Shadi is a new PhD student and an AI Fellow in the **Koç University İş Bank Artificial Intelligence Research Center (KUIS AI)**.

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Graduation of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education STEM Scholars Cohort

During the 2022 Commencement Ceremony, we celebrated the graduation of our last high-achieving scholars cohort co-funded by the **Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education (AGFE)** and Koç University. AGFE is one of the biggest philanthropic organizations in the Arabic world based in Dubai, UAE.

The cohort that graduated in 2022 included 7 students from Computer Engineering, 2 from Mechanical Engineering, 2 from Industrial Engineering and 1 from Physics majors who are now in full-time jobs in Türkiye and abroad or pursuing graduate studies in top ranked universities.



Gender Equality Office Staff Week: Gender Mainstreaming in Higher Education

Koç University Gender Equality Office (GEO) is organizing International Staff Week in Istanbul, between 8-12 May 2023.

The program will be a good opportunity for fellow Higher Education professionals from around Europe to exchange best practices and engage in fruitful discussions on gender equality & inclusion practices and gender mainstreaming in higher education ecosystems. The participants will share their experiences and ideas for future collaboration on common gender equality issues in research and innovation institutions through various group discussions and workshops. Methods and practices of developing effective Gender Equality Plans and common gender equality themes (such as data collection for gender analytics, gender auditing, gender-sensitive recruitment, anti-harassment, and work-life balance policies) will be presented and discussed during the program. Experts and professionals specialized in developing and implementing gender equality plans will especially benefit from the program.

Should you require any additional information, do not hesitate to contact the Gender Equality Office at geo@ku.edu.tr



International Staff Week & Study Abroad Fair 2023

As the Koç University Office of International Programs (OIP), we are very thrilled to be holding our annual International Staff Week & Study Abroad Fair from 8-12 May 2023!

During this week, the participants from different institutions will get a general overview of Koç University, participating universities, and how institutions create a welcoming climate for both students and staff from all backgrounds with thoughtful cross-cultural experiences. Our program will mostly revolve around the international offices of our partner universities and the areas that we will be exploring will largely be exchange programs, international student experiences and partnerships. While participants enjoy week-long thought-provoking discussions and sessions with colleagues from all around the world, they will also enjoy the cultural beauties of Istanbul and Türkiye.

More information can be found [here](#).



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KU Library's 4th International Staff Week 2023

For the third time, Koç University Libraries are organizing the 4th International Library Staff Week in Istanbul, between 8-12 May, 2023. The event brings together professional Library staff with varied backgrounds working in universities or other research orientated libraries with an interest in sharing ideas and networking with colleagues. The main theme of the 4th International Library Staff Week is Open Knowledge to Share: Access, Culture, Scholarship. Library and Information Science is a key sector that contributes to the development of open knowledge.

During this week, library staff and visitors will have the chance to engage into fruitful discussions and exchange of professional and personal experiences, which will broaden their perspective on issues related to Information Science, strengthen their skills and hopefully plant the roots for future collaboration on joint projects.

Please click [here](#) for more information.



Orientation Week of Fall 2022 for Incoming Exchange Students

The world almost went back to normal this year after COVID-19, and the classes are back to being in person again. So, this year's orientation days were also both online and in person so OIP reunited with students again. Incoming Exchange students got to attend the orientation days whether they were on campus or not yet. Fall 2022 started with fun orientation days and international exchange students got to explore the campus.

Even though the majority of the exchange students were on campus during the orientation days, for those who were not present physically, presentations were recorded and distance learning tools such as Zoom were used and they were able to participate in the session and activities virtually.

The first week started with registration and welcome speech and a quick introduction to Koç University. After a break, the exchange students had a Survival Turkish course where they learned basic words and sentences they would need on a daily basis such as ordering food, introducing themselves, and more. There was also a Sariyer presentation by the International Community Services Office (ICO) and a course planning explanation. The second day started with a few presentations by ICO, the Career Development Center, and KURES. After lunch, there was a mingling activity which was a campus tour given by mentors followed by a Human Bingo game. The third day had a Turkish Culture session, KOLT presentation, dormitory management presentation, and a library orientation & tour. Suna Kiraç library captured the attention of the exchange students when they learned that it is open 24/7 and has lots of physical and virtual sources available. For the next two days, ICO Help Desk was available for exchange students in order to help them with their residence permit papers submission. These two days were followed by a nice mingling dinner which was planned by the Exchange Student Mentors.

Incoming exchange students enrolled in their classes the next week, with the help of mentors on campus. Then they spent their days at the student club fair, until the next week which was the first week of classes. They also had time to relax and explore around by themselves.



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Our Incomings Experience the Turkish Hospitality!

The Turkish Hospitality Experience Program, coordinated by OIP's Inbound Mobility Team, brings Incoming Exchange Students together with Koç University students and staff families to provide exchange students with a unique experience of Turkish culture and hospitality while assisting them in integrating into life in Türkiye. There are several options available, ranging from visiting a host family for a family meal to spending weekends or holidays together. Participating students and host families applaud the program.

Stephanie Elizabeth Sanchez Huerta

"As an exchange student from Mexico studying International Relations, these kinds of programs are very valuable to me, it not only helps me meet native people and understand their culture but also it helps me be a better person in terms of multiculturalism and self-development. Back in Mexico, I am an only child but now in Türkiye, I was able to get the experience of having two amazing little brothers and two great host parents. We had a nice Turkish dinner where I tried traditional food and spoke about the cultural differences between Mexico and Türkiye, I also got to speak French with one of my host brothers and learned a few Turkish words from them. I now hold a very pleasant memory from this country thanks to the Turkish Hospitality Experience Program."

Johanna Christine Reichel

"My experience with the Turkish Hospitality Experience Program was great so far! I meet my partner Elif on campus first to get to know each other and think about things we want to do together. I was very happy and grateful when she invited me to her home to have lunch with her family - her grandmother is a great cook and her mother is a very kind host. We talked for about three hours about many interesting things, I had the best çay and company :) A really Turkish experience. Elif also showed me around Nisantepi afterward and explained more about the neighborhood and the culture. I love the charm of that area and the park close to Taksim. I am very grateful to Elif and her family for welcoming me with open and warm arms and look forward to our next adventures."



OIP Organized a Mingling Activity for Outgoing and Incoming Students

On 26th of October, Erasmus+ incoming and outgoing student mingling gathering was held in winter garden. Outgoing students wore name tags along with their destination city. Incoming students also wore name tags along with their home country. Then, outgoing students tagged with the same cities formed groups both to share their plans with each other and to get some everyday life tips from the incoming students prior to their departure. Incoming students also had a chance to meet-up with other incoming students they have not met.

A 15-foot canvas was laid on the stage of winter garden and students were provided with brushes and colourful acrylic paints. They were then asked to channel their inner creativity as freely as they can. Resulting canvas had many detailed works of art including flags, hearts, portraits, flowers, and all sorts of colourful animals. It was surely colourful sight to see!



Exchange Activities over the Summer

Being on exchange whether as a student or a professional, gives lots of advantages to the participants in their life, education and career. Knowing people's perspectives around the world helps us realize that everyone on earth is different even though we might look similar. We heard and witnessed many great stories and we would like to share some of the experiences of our outgoing student and staff members' exchange stories during the Summer 2022 term.

"I had the privilege of participating in a great summer exchange program at Kedge Business School in Marseille where I gained many experiences. During the courses that I took, learning about global finance and business in a market-oriented country like France has expanded my vision of the business world. The professors were proficient in their respective courses which made me easily follow their lessons and benefit from them although my major is chemical and biological engineering.

Everyone from the program was very welcoming and open to showing us their culture while also wanting to learn about my Turkish heritage. There were many activities organized by them such as going to lavender fields, trekking by the Calanques, and I got to scuba dive for the first time as well. We also got to learn and play a french game: Pétanque, it was very enjoyable. We had the opportunity to do some business trips such as visiting the factory of L'occitane in Aix-en-Provence too. Since France can be considered the capital of the cosmetics and perfumery sector, I was very excited and amazed by this trip. Overall it was an unforgettable experience in which I learned a lot of things that I could not learn anywhere else about my career and also in my personal life."

SELIN OKCU
STUDENT, CHEMICAL AND
BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING



Exchange Activities over the Summer

"I participated in the staff week at Stellenbosch University and had a fantastic week there! It was a unique experience for me to meet with colleagues from other sides of the world and explore their way of work. We held many meetings with colleagues working in different administrative departments and agreed to expand our cooperation with my colleagues who works in Stellenbosch. Koç University has an excellent reputation worldwide, and this Erasmus staff exchange helped me recognize this and made me proud to be a part of the Koç University family.

On behalf of Stellenbosch University, it is not only the oldest university in the region but one of the biggest ones. Their hospitality was excellent, and the people were so friendly. I enjoyed being in this country and learned a lot from it."

SAHRA AKALIN

TRAINING ASSISTANT SPECIALIST
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



"Under the Erasmus+ Staff Exchange program, I had a chance to visit City, University of London.

During the week, I met with the Digital Team inside the Marketing and External Relations Department, Global Engagement Team and Bayes Business School Marketing Team. Everyone was so welcoming, warm, and helpful. It was a great experience for me as I learned a lot about their web content, CRM, social media, communications and digital marketing activities. We shared our best practices and evaluated current projects and plans together. As City's admission requirements, online application process and cycles in the UK are different from ours, it was very interesting to see how it affects the digital marketing and communication activities."

LEVIN TANLAR

INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL
MARKETING SPECIALIST



"I participated in the Erasmus+ Worldwide Staff Exchange Program at ADA University of Azerbaijan. It was a great professional experience to see Azerbaijan's culture, system and local regulations. My hosting colleagues were extremely helpful and I had a very efficient week in Azerbaijan. We organized meetings with the administrative units like as Finance, Procurement, Human Resources and Information Technologies Department. We shared information about the similar processes of Ada University and Koç University. At the meeting, the financial affairs program used by the host university staff was explained (Banner). Information was shared on issues such as the payment cycle, the budgeting process, the controls applied, and the approval authority levels etc. I am thankful for every counterpart who let me experience this amazing opportunity well."

ÖZGÜN YILMAZ

RISK MANAGEMENT,
COMPLIANCE AND IC DIRECTORATE



International Student Service Hub: An Interactive Platform to Share Professional Experiences

Since April 2022, ICO has been welcoming colleagues from around the world to be a member of the International Student Hub (Int'l Hub) and to take part in the space where they can come together monthly over Zoom, to share their experiences regarding providing assistance to degree-seeking international students after enrolment and throughout their education period. With **30 active members from 20 institutions and 15 countries**, every month there has been the opportunity to learn from each other's best practices and become inspired to evolve the current services provided to the international student body. The exchange of ideas continues throughout the month on the **Slack Workspace**.

The themes covered so far have been:

Orientation Week Practices, Buddy/Mentorship Programs, Mental Health Needs and Support, Social Integration Projects and Events, Methods of Communication, Social Media Tools, Career Services, Alumni Relations

ICO invites all university professionals working in the field of internationalization to become a part of the Int'l Hub. Your valuable perspective and expertise on the services provided would be highly insightful and the discussion of services would be greatly beneficial in broadening the internationalization efforts of all parties involved.

To find out more, sign up and watch the previous sessions, you may visit the [ICO Website](#).



International Student Buddy Program by ICO

With the initiative of the ICO, the International Student Buddy Program was created to allow current international students to be friendly guides to new international students who needed peer support during their adaptation process to becoming degree-seeking students at KU.

After a rigorous recruitment process, 31 International Student Buddies were selected to assist new international undergraduate students during the Fall semester. On 28 July 2022, ICO came together with the Buddies and provided online training to prepare them for the semester to come. During the summer period, the Buddies assisted new international students on the Goin' platform by sharing their experiences and answering questions regarding life as a KU international student. In the orientation period, they worked alongside the ICO to welcome the new students and to introduce them to KU by giving them campus tours and accompanying them to student club activities. With their support in the voluntary Buddy Program, students have the chance to learn about other cultures, make new friends, improve their interpersonal skills, and receive a certificate at the end of the program.



Brand New KU Guides Finally Arrived!

The International Community Services Office launched its awaited [Koç University \(KU\) Guides Program](#) for the Fall 2022 semester.

The program should have started in 2020 but was delayed because of the global pandemic.

This intercultural engagement program was designed by the ICO to help the KU international community find at least one activity each week to socialize, learn, and make friends. The activities are led by Turkish volunteer students, aka KU Guides. KU Guides are meant to guide the KU international community members on their transition process to their new lives in Türkiye by organizing events, workshops, activities, and local tours. It aims to offer the KU community a new experience on a regular basis by bringing together groups of faculty, staff, students, researchers, and families to do activities on and off campus.

The Fall '22 schedule was set in advance with KU Guides in Spring '22, and can be found on the ICO's website!

Facts

- The program started on October 7th with its first event.
- There have been 6 activities so far within 4 weeks.
- On average, 18 people attended each activity.

For more information and the semester plan, visit the [ICO's website](#).



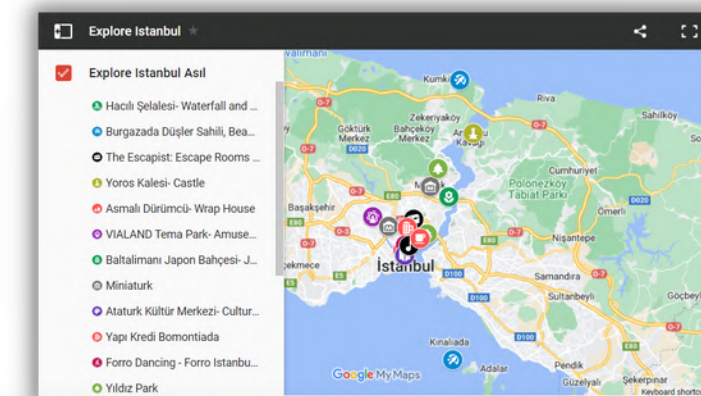
A New Vivid Project for the Community: Explore Istanbul Map

The Explore Istanbul Project provides exciting recommendations that are worth visiting in Istanbul. The office has already gathered the suggested spots from the whole KU community through an online form in advance, and designed their special Istanbul Map!

The project allows KU international community members to look at a map of Istanbul on ICO's website to find interesting and attractive spots that are worth visiting. The suggested spots are so-called “**hidden gems**” discovered, observed, and experienced by KU members.

The Explore Istanbul Project has a live map that is subject to update at any time. To do so, the office still accepts new suggestions and adds them to its map upon receiving them.

You can check out the map by clicking [here](#).



A Fruitful Summer and Fall For The International Projects And Education Programs (IPEP) Team

In collaboration with several other departments and units of the university, the IPEP team worked for a long time to bring the Bing Overseas Studies Program “Stanford in Istanbul” back to life after a long break, and KU is now hosting Stanford students on its campus for Fall 2022! IPEP also hosted the Northeastern University for a 10-day program this past summer.

On the projects front, KU celebrates that Archeology and History of Art Assist. Prof. Matthew Harpster’s project “The Marine Spaces – Planning / Culture / Climate (MS-PCC)” is granted funding in the category of ERASMUS-EDU-2022-EMJM-DESIGN.



KU welcomes “Stanford in Istanbul”

A group of Stanford students arrived at KU in September to spend the Fall 2022 semester here within the framework of the Bing Overseas Studies Program “Stanford in Istanbul”. The program is designed to give students an integrated study abroad experience in Istanbul and to provide them with an opportunity to experience rigorous academics while at the same time developing a broad awareness, knowledge, and appreciation for Türkiye, its culture, and its role within the global ecosystem. The program will be repeated on an annual basis.

While taking courses from multiple departments at Koç University with top notch academic quality, the Stanford students are also exposed to several extracurricular activities, both in Istanbul and other parts of Türkiye, organized by the IPEP team that enrich this learning experience to a great extent.



KU Receives Funding for New EMDM Project



Koç University Archeology and History of Art Asst. Prof. Matthew Harpster's project "Marine Spaces – Planning / Culture / Climate (MS-PCC)" has been granted funding in the category of ERASMUS-EDU-2022-EMJM-DESIGN.

Based on a collaboration between Koç University (Türkiye), the Universities of Oldenburg (Germany) and Copenhagen (Denmark), and the State Archaeology Department of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) and the Ocean Decade Heritage Network (Denmark), this program will establish a Joint Master's program combining principles of Maritime Cultural Heritage management, Marine Spatial Planning, and Climate Change. International policies such as the EU Blue Growth Strategy and the UN 2030 Agenda, as well as directives from the European Parliament, require expert with cross-disciplinary training in all three disciplines, yet there is no such opportunity within the European Higher Education Area.

This program aims to fill that educational gap while building a cohort of experts who can integrate these three domains in the local, national, and international policy sectors.

"Dialogue of Civilizations" with the Northeastern University

In June this year, OIP hosted students from the Northeastern University for the 10-day "Discovering Turkish Cultural Values and Engineering Advancements" program within the "Dialogue of Civilizations" for a series of seminars with KU professors. A variety of comprehensive seminars stretching from sports to politics and arts to medicine allowed the students to gain an intensive learning adventure with the KU academics. Simultaneously, by arranging extracurricular activities including

visits to museums and historical sites in and around Istanbul, special dinners, and cultural gatherings with KU student clubs, OIP supported the students' immersion in Turkish culture.

In addition to seminars constituting the scientific and technological part of the program, the Northeastern students made a corporate visit to the Arçelik Plant in Gebze to get to know Turkish industry and investments closely. We hope for this program to be the first of many to build new bridges between civilizations!





BURCU SARSILMAZ COŞAN
DIRECTOR

**WISHING YOU A GREAT
HOLIDAY SEASON!**



RENA POLAT KORKMAZ
TEAM LEADER, INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

**INCOMING EXCHANGE PROGRAMS
& PARTNERSHIPS**



TUĞBA GÜVEN
UNIC MOBILITY HUB
SPECIALIST



MERVE ÖZİŞÇİ
ASST. SPECIALIST

**OUTGOING EXCHANGE PROGRAMS
& PARTNERSHIPS**



ÖMER ESKİCİ
SPECIALIST



EGE ESKİN
ASST. SPECIALIST



GİZEM GÜLER
ASST. SPECIALIST

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AYHAN ŞEKER
SPECIALIST



ZİKRİ MERT DEMİRCAN
SPECIALIST



BEGÜM ÇİÇEK
ASST. SPECIALIST

**INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS**



NİLÜFER AKPINAR ŞAHİN
TEAM LEADER



OYA ÖZER KURT
SPECIALIST



METEHAN ALDOĞAN
ASST. SPECIALIST



ARZU DALYAN
SPECIALIST

Season's Greetings!

from the Office of International Programs!

