

**OECD IMHE General Conference  
Attaining and Sustaining Mass Higher Education**

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*Session 5: What does the future hold for mass higher education?*

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- 1. *What will shifting regional economic and geo-political balances and internationalization mean for mass higher education?***
  
- 2. *What role is technology (including different on-line learning options) likely to play in extending the reach of higher education and increasing access to learning?***
  
- 3. *Are public budget pressures and resource constraints likely to make mass higher education unsustainable?***

Dear Colleagues,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address you in this distinguished platform. I would like to thank OECD for their kind invitation and also for the organization of this general conference. We, as policy-makers, institutional leaders and academic experts, are here today to discuss the challenges we are facing, as mass higher education have become more of a reality for each of our countries. We have heard almost all aspects of mass higher education from many prominent speakers in these three days, as it is the main title of this year's general conference.

Let me start by putting the very basic elements of the mass higher education together. We all know that globalization has affected higher education perhaps more than it has done in any other subject. Massification of higher education is a result of social, economic, political and technologic conditions of our century. Higher education sector grows and evolves rapidly, and new challenges as well as opportunities appear at global, regional, national and institutional scales. Broadening access has brought dramatic changes to the traditional roles of

higher education, such as the governance, funding and finance, curriculum and attitudes towards students. Community of university has become diverse and mobile. What is more, higher education and economic developments have mutual effects in the knowledge societies, where job market is consisted mainly of university graduates.

If I focus now on the different sub-topics of our panel, starting with how regional economic balances affect mass higher education, I can say that higher education with outcomes such as its graduates, its innovation and research products is also a component of economic competition in our age. Interaction among university, industry and government is key to innovation and growth in a knowledge-based economy. Therefore universities are seen as the major partners of the sustainable economic growth locally and nationally. As we all know **Europe 2020 Vision** mainly pinpoints the effects of the economic crises and clearly defines roles for universities for the sustainable development of European economy. It is no surprise that to increase the levels of access to higher education and employability of the graduates are the main targets of this **Vision**. Similarly, EHEA (European Higher Education Area) has been a voluntary collaboration to reach competitive, comparable and transparent higher education systems. There are many other regional co-operations to support partnership between economic and education fields throughout the world (from the Asia-Pacific Cooperations to Gulf States or the Black Sea Cooperation and so on).

In my country we invest on higher education and try our best to increase access to higher education. In the last ten years the numbers of the universities were increased dramatically from 73 in 2000 to 172 in 2012 in order to utilize the access to higher education. It is of course both a challenge, but at the same time an opportunity for local and regional developments. The positive economic, social and cultural effects of the new universities are visible and we will monitor these effects regularly.

Turkey is the second biggest country in terms of student population after Russia, among European Higher Education Area. Having young population is also another unique characteristic of Turkey for producing new policies and strategies. In order to increase cooperation, institutional development and capacity of the new universities we started a program called Farabi, allowing short term student and staff mobility within the country.

When I come to the effects of the geo-politic balances on mass education, the first issue to be mentioned is the cross-border nature of mass education. Today higher education systems benefit from going beyond the national boundaries and setting up cooperation between different institutions and countries. We know that there are almost 4 million mobile higher education students and this number is expected to be around 7 million by 2020.

These challenging missions I have mentioned so far, require our cooperation in many aspects. Attractiveness of higher education systems in accordance with their geo-political dimension lead us to find new solutions for our students who wish to study in better academic environments.

In Turkey, we focus on increasing the quality of our universities, reducing the regional disadvantages. But meanwhile if our students want to study abroad we increased our budget to diversify our scholarships. We have been lucky as we did not have any cut in higher education budget due to economic recession. Instead, as I have already mentioned we increased the budget of our international programs, as well as increasing the access facilities. For this end, we are preparing Mevlana Exchange programme, for both incoming and outgoing students and academic staff. Mevlana Programme is open for whole countries in the world.

The last dimension I would like to touch on is the effects of inter nationalization on mass education. Internationalisation cannot succeed if it is not accompanied by the related reforms on curricula, degree structures, as well as recognition of foreign credits/ degrees, and quality assurance. Internationalization is top of our agenda in Turkey.

We are currently revising our strategy paper on internationalisation together with the restructuring of our higher education system. We are aiming at encouraging the diversity of our universities, their institutional autonomy and accountability, improving their opportunities for competition and the financial flexibility in their actions. Making our higher education more attractive for the foreign students and academics, as well as motivating our students and universities for international experience is also among our our targets. Of course these can be realized only if you spare extra financial resources.

The last point I would like to underline in my speech is the importance of leadership and vision. I believe that importance of regional and international collaboration will be the key issue in the coming decades. We have to

implement flexible learning procedures including online/distant/open education benefiting from the technological developments. We have to remove the barriers in front of the internationalization. One main barrier is the visa requirement for academic staff and students. It is an outside barrier to be solved by the governments. Another barrier is the recognition of foreign credits and degrees. We face negative effects of these procedures. We all know that traditional and strictly defined structures cannot cope with the needs of the coming decades.

Therefore by sharing our experiences in various international platforms like this one, I believe that we can achieve more for our future.

I wish a very fruitful rest of the meeting.

Thank you...