

CURRENT STATUS AND PROSPECTS OF UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS: THE EXAMPLE OF THE PEOPLES' FRIENDSHIP UNIVERSITY OF RUSSIA

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This article discusses the current status and prospects of university partnerships, using as an example the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. The theme of university partnership in our context has actively developed during the last few years. At the moment, Russian universities use consortium agreements in order to actualise and create partnerships. There are two ways of doing this: the decision can be made on a governmental level or/and on a university level.

The 'Education Act' is one of the forces that make university partnerships easier. This Legislation identifies the potential participants of the network to be involved in the partnership: scientific, cultural, sportive, religious and other organisations that have the resources that are needed in order to accomplish the goals of the partnership. The draft of this Act includes the following collaborative programmatic matters:

- Joint activities of organisations engaged in educational activities aimed at enabling students to develop an educational programme using the resources of several organisations engaged in educational activities;
- The acceptance of the results of the developed curriculum programme. This includes courses, subjects, and modules and so on.

Article 109, Chapter 14 of the Education Act, "Participation in international cooperation," requires that Russian organisations and citizens of Russia take part in cooperative international undertakings in education enter into agreements with foreign organisations and citizens in accordance with the laws of the Russian Federation, other forms provided by Federal law, and other normative legal acts of the Russian Federation, including those that address networking with foreign organisations engaged in educational activities.

The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia is a member of three international education consortia and two Russian ones. Three international educational consortia in which the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia is a participant are especially important:

- The University Network of the CIS, with the support of the Interstate Fund for Humanitarian Cooperation of CIS Member States, which was created on the 11th of June in 2009.
- The Network University of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation that was established with the support of the SCO in 2009.
- The Venice Consortium for Human Rights at the UN. Entry into this Consortium took place on the 15th of July, 2009.

The above-mentioned international education consortia, all supported by international organisations, have different areas of training and different numbers of participants. The table below illustrates these differences:

	CIS	SCO	EIUC
Number of Participants	22 universities from 9 countries	59 universities from 5 countries	44 universities of Europe
Education	MA: joint courses	MA: inclusive	MA: inclusive
Number of students	More than 300	More than 15	59
Financing	IFESCO.the budget of the Russian Federation, the national budgets of the CIS	Budget of the Russian Federation, the Federal Program	Budget of the Russian Federation, the UN
Faculties of...	Economy, Philology, Jurisprudence, Humanitarian sciences	Ecology	Jurisprudence

The University Network of the CIS

The CIS development of academic mobility for students doing a joint master's degree includes the following academic programmes: "Jurisprudence" in international law, "Management" in the management of international projects "International Management," "International Economics,'Philology" in Russian Language and Literature, and "International Relations."

The main objectives of the Consortium are to accomplish the following :

- Creation of a single (general) education area of high schools of the Commonwealth of Independent States through the implementation of joint educational programs and the organisation of "inclusive education."
- Establishment of mechanisms for the development of academic mobility of students and teachers in the Commonwealth of Independent States;
- Promotion of intercultural dialogue among students; promotion and enrichment of culture, language, historical and national traditions of the peoples of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The People's Friendship University is the initiator and the parent organisation of the CIS Network University. Our university has the central part of the organisational and methodological work, as well as interaction with national ministries, including financial support related to the IFESCO CIS Network University.

The Network University of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was established with the support of the SCO in 2009, and now has some 59 member universities from Russia, Kazakhstan, China, Tajikistan, and Kirgizstan.. The main objectives of the Consortium are to accomplish the following:

- The SCO development of academic mobility for students doing the following academic programs: "Ecology," "IT and Nanotechnologies", "Regional Studies" and "Energy Studies."

In this consortium, the People's Friendship University plays a key role in the Ecology course. Our mission is to unite all of the schools in this programme, to develop joint curricula, and to enroll students from the partner universities.

On the 1st of June, 2010, the Peoples' Friendship University joined an agreement on Venice Consortium for Human Rights to develop joint educational programmes in the field of human rights with the Office of the High Commissioner and 44 European universities.

The teaching of MA students, specialising in human rights, is provided at a high level of academic training. The programme is innovative in both its content and form.

So, what does the participation in the consortium provide to the Peoples' Friendship University and other Russian institutions of higher education? What benefits do we receive?

Why should other universities implement this model of partnership? And how can partnerships and networks benefit universities more generally? The answers to these questions are not insignificant; such partnerships and cooperative networks:

- facilitate the use of new educational technologies in the learning process.
- encourage cooperation with international organisations.
- result in an increase in academic exchanges.
- allow the benefits of multilateral agreements to also become bilateral agreements.
- expand the range of educational programmes offered by the university to integrate with other universities, including Russia.
- improve the quality of education, including taking into account the quality of training by the partner universities.
- expand international cooperation.
- provide additional opportunities for advertising to recruit students.
- maintain and improve the competitiveness of the university in the external and internal markets of educational services.
- help to upgrade of the university within the country and abroad.
- facilitate the integration of logistics and human resources of educational institutions participating networking (teachers, educational support and administrative staff).

Thus, the prospects of the international partnership of Russian universities in the implementation of educational programmes in various regions of the world (Europe, CIS, SCO, APEC, etc.) are broad and we believe have great prospects.