



# Kyoto University European Center



## Season's Greetings 2019

### Greeting from the Director

For several reasons, 2019 was a particularly meaningful year for the Kyoto University European Center. Perhaps most notably, we were very happy to commemorate the center's 5th anniversary. The center first opened its doors on May 3, 2014, and since then, we have worked continuously to build bridges of academic collaboration between Kyoto and Europe. We held a ceremony to mark the anniversary in September, and we were delighted to be joined by many friends and associates who gathered to celebrate the occasion with us, and we also received many warm messages of congratulations and encouragement from our partners around the world. On behalf of the center and all of its staff, I would like to express my renewed gratitude to all of our colleagues and partners for your support and collaboration throughout the past five years.

Another significant event that took place in September was the 7th Presidents' Conference of HeKKSaGOn, the German-Japanese university alliance, which was held in Heidelberg. HeKKSaGOn was founded in 2010, and has now entered the second phase of its activities, in which it will focus on promoting research in four priority areas that contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Last but not least, I would like to mention that, in 2019, Kyoto University established its first two strategic partnerships, both of which are with universities in Europe. This highlights the fact that Europe is of prime importance to the university in the continuing intensification of its international collaborative activities, and this new development will doubtless add an additional dimension to the work of the European Center. The new strategic partnerships are also anticipated to have a positive effect on our relationships with other institutions in Europe. Our work at the center over the past five years has reinforced our appreciation of the importance of maintaining a robust and diverse multilateral network in the region. It is Europe's diversity that makes it unique, and the embracing of that diversity resonates with Kyoto University's core values, as expressed in our institutional strategy, the WINDOW Concept.

This year we had an opportunity to celebrate the partnerships that we have cultivated and our shared achievements so far, and now we look forward to the future and to exploring new ways to enhance our relationships with partners old and new. With this spirit in mind, we thank you for your continued support and cooperation in the years to come.

*Prof. Yasuyuki Kono*

Director, Kyoto University European Center

### Strategic Partnerships with Université de Bordeaux and Universität Wien

Kyoto University acknowledged Université de Bordeaux and Universität Wien as their first strategic partners. Serving as a bridge the Kyoto University European Center supported activities with both European universities and Kyoto University.



*Handshake between the presidents Prof. Tunon de Lara (Université de Bordeaux) and Dr. Yamagiwa (Kyoto University) on October 7, 2019*

In the future, both universities will closely cooperate in the fields of *African Studies, Health and Aging* and *Sustainable Cities*.

Université de Bordeaux (France) organized an international symposium in 2014. In the same year, a research exchange agreement between both universities was concluded. In 2015 and 2017, further symposia were held and the multifarious exchange continued.



*Signing Ceremony between Kyoto University and Universität Wien in presence of the Austrian Ambassador to Japan (left) on October 7, 2019*

Universität Wien (Austria) exchanged students and researchers with Kyoto University for over a quarter of a century since the conclusion of an academic exchange agreement in 1993. In 2018, a research partnership agreement was newly signed and our first joint workshop was held in September in Vienna. And this year, marking the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relationship between Austria and Japan, we have concluded the strategic partnership agreement to expand the fields of cooperation and to foster academic exchange.



## Promoting African Studies in Europe

Kyoto University's research activities in Africa have their origin in a series of field surveys launched in 1958 by Kinji Imanishi, the father of Japanese primatology. It has continued to develop its dimensions by expanding activities for more than sixty years far beyond primatology.



The 15th Nichi-Doku Joint Lecture held by Professor Masayoshi Shigeta on June 26, 2019

In Humanities, it is Professor Masayoshi Shigeta, the Director of the *Center of African Area Studies* (CAAS), who is a driving force to promote African studies on culture, ecology and society on an international scale. During his research stay at *African Studies Center Leiden* from May to July, he met colleagues and built networks with fellow European researchers. On his mission to initiate widespread international collaborations, he organized a conference with University of Bordeaux/Sciences Po Bordeaux at Addis Ababa University in August and he attended at the *Africa Multiple: Conversations and Building Networks Conference* at University of Bayreuth in October – an interdisciplinary meeting of experts from all over the world.

## Fostering cultural & academic interaction towards Sustainable Development Goals

Starting in 2017, *Kyoto University Research Administration Office* (KURA) continuously works towards supporting international mobility of researchers. The first program called *AI DA* (Ambitious Intelligence, Dynamic Acceleration) enabled early career researchers from Kyoto University to visit high-class German research facilities like *German Cancer Research Center* and *European Biology Molecular Laboratory*.

In 2018, in cooperation with the *German Academic Exchange Service* (DAAD), KURA concluded a one-of-its-kind match-funding program called *DAAD-Kyoto University Partnership Programme towards SDGs*. In this framework, early career researchers from Kyoto University or any German research institution (including universities) can visit partners in the respective host

In June Professor Shigeta also visited the Kyoto University European Center in Heidelberg holding the 15th Nichi-Doku Joint Lecture titled *Ecological Anthropology of the Foundation of the Ethiopian Highlands Civilization*. In this lecture, Prof. Shigeta showed various unique historical connections between Japan and Ethiopia. He then explained the cultural development of Ethiopian civilization from the standpoint of hardware (farming tools) and software (farming skills and environmental awareness).

We are pleased to witness this growing collaboration in recent years and we are proud to be able to provide logistical support and ensure the communication for our faculties and young researchers in this field. Overall, with the celebration of the 5th anniversary of the center just a few months ago, this year marked an important milestone for us with much-anticipated projects including research on Africa and collaboration with African researchers. We are looking forward to seeing the developments in the years to come and will keep you updated!



*Africa Multiple: Conversations and Building Networks Conference* at University of Bayreuth on October 31, 2019

More on Prof. Shigeta's and other Nichi-Doku Joint Lectures can be found on our website.



institutions. Through one-way or two-way exchange, early career researchers and their working groups can build new networks and cooperate in existing or new projects. These efforts led to the building of over 14 research groups in diverse fields during the first phase of the partnership program.

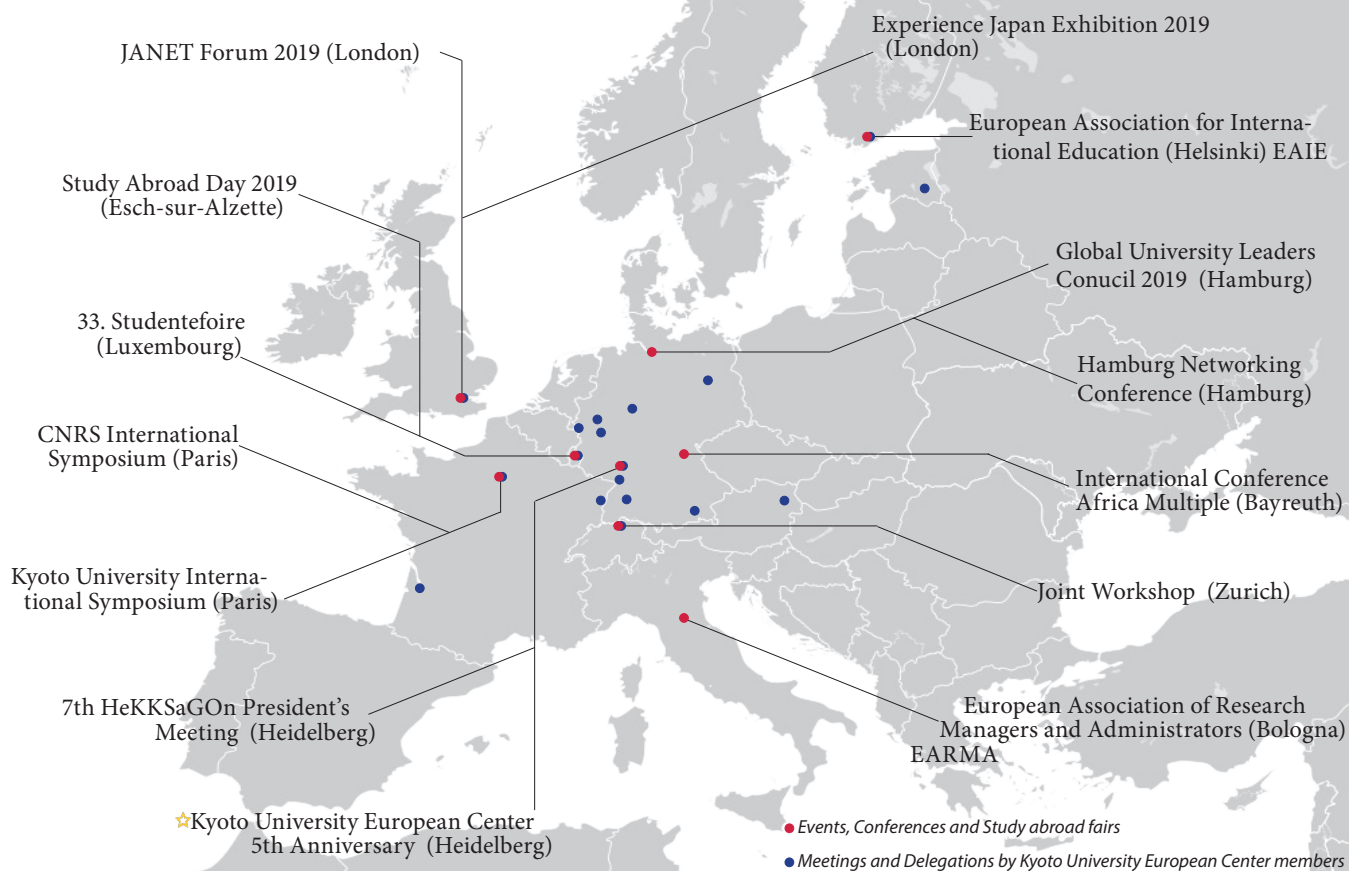
And yet, KURA does not stop here. To further stimulate academic exchange and support for early career researchers, it also participated and presented its efforts at several opportunities such as the *3rd Symposium of the Research University Consortium* in cooperation with DAAD and a conference hosted by the *German Centre for Research and Innovation*.

*Kamogawa Talk*, the event series to be organized by KURA jointly with Goethe-Institut Osaka Kyoto, will bring up *Fostering cultural & academic interaction towards SDGs* as its primary topic in line with KURA's mission.

Details and reports about *DAAD-Kyoto University Partnership Programme* available under the following QR code



## Major Networking Events and Meetings in 2019



## 7th Presidents' Conference of German-Japanese university alliance HeKKSaGOn

The 7th Presidents' Conference of German-Japanese university alliance HeKKSaGOn was held in Heidelberg University on 12 and 13 September. The first phase of HeKKSaGOn ended with the last presidents' conference at Osaka University and the second phase started this year.

Presidents and vice-presidents, researchers, students and staff members from six universities, including our center, got together and discussed the achievements and future of the alliance.



HeKKSaGOn universities' delegations on the Philosophenweg

Apart from the closed presidents' meeting, researchers and some students from various fields gathered in working group meetings presenting and discussing their projects. Meanwhile, students participating in a workshop discussed how HeKKSaGOn can contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and support young researchers.

At the end of the conference, the joint statement composed by the presidents of the six universities was promulgated. Its key points are the inclusion of SDGs into future HeKKSaGOn projects conducted by each working group and the focus on four well-defined priority areas. It also addresses the responsibility of science towards society and the next generation of researchers. Signing ceremony of this joint statement concluded the 7th HeKKSaGOn Presidents' Conference. The next HeKKSaGOn Presidents' Conference will be held at Tohoku University in 2021.

We, as a liaison office of the alliance, will continue to make efforts to connect Germany and Japan in the second phase of HeKKSaGOn for the better and sustainable future.

For more information on HeKKSaGOn and the 7th President's Conference please scan the QR code or visit our webpage.





# Thoughts about Student Mobility during my Stay in Europe

Written by Yamamoto Sho (John Mung Program trainee)

I am working as a trainee at Kyoto University European Center for one year. During my stay and due to my academic background in Educational Studies, I wanted to find out more about student's motivation to study abroad from an educational perspective. In order to find ways to encourage students, the following questions are essential to me: What is the benefit for students studying abroad? What motivates them? How can we support them?



Kyoto University exchange students at KUEC

I believe that studying abroad can reveal students' hidden potential and has a strong influence on their studies, careers and lives. There are some obvious benefits such as acquiring new language and professional skills. Nevertheless, it also has not so obvious effects. In an interview series with exchange students from Kyoto University, I found out that they experienced a variety of cultural shocks – but mostly in a positive way. For instance, “discussions” are an essential part of classes in European universities. Many Japanese students seem to struggle with this at first and usually say it is tough in the beginning to join in. However, they gradually adapt and even find it stimulating after some time. Outside the classroom, they also get new perspectives through different challenges on campus and in their daily lives, thereby giving them an opportunity to reflect upon themselves and their backgrounds.

Despite this, what motivates students to study abroad? In the same set of interviews, I found several examples that sparked their motivations. Some students say that they wanted to conduct specific research or understand global issues from a European point of view. Others say that they were curious about the multilingual and multicultural environment in Europe. Thanks to close partnerships among European universities, students can take classes with students from all over Europe and exchange their thoughts with people who have diverse background. They also enjoy the proximity of different countries and the chance to encounter different cultures and lifestyles.



Prof. Kono speaking with students from Kyoto and Germany

When thinking about student mobility, I always keep asking myself: “How can we support them?” Crucial parts of the answer are funding opportunities, improvement of language skills. It is also necessary to provide practical information of partners and make curriculum or credit transfer systems more flexible. Equally important is the individual support for students in accordance with their abilities, needs and motivations. Therefore, I firmly believe that we should listen to students more actively and more carefully in order to assist them on their endeavours and help them to flourish. This ought to be a key value to our mission of supporting educational activities

Check out some first hand reports by Kyoto University and European students and researchers about their experiences abroad



## Greetings from Kyoto University European Center's Staff

The Kyoto University European Center staff members wish you a prosperous *Year of the Rat*, which marks the beginning of a new cycle in the Japanese zodiac calendar.

*It's always a pleasure to work with you. Wishing you good health, happiness, and good cheer in the coming year. よいお年を!*  
Ayukawa Kei

*Nous vous souhaitons un joyeux Noël et une bonne et heureuse année 2020. Recevez tous nos vœux pour cette nouvelle année!*  
Sakamoto Tsubasa

*We treasure every encounter as things can only start from there. Thanks to all of you we met for the past 5 years and we will meet for the years to come!* Kanno Chiyoko

本年も我々の活動をご支援くださり誠に有難うございました。来年も皆様のご協力を楽しみにしています。 Bernd Kirchner

*May the New Year bring us more wonderful opportunities to work together. Warm wishes for 2020! 良いお年をお迎えください* Mori Tomoko

*Ti ringrazio per la tua amicizia Siamo felici se potessi incontrarti a Kyoto. Auguriamo buon Natale e felice anno nuovo !* Suzuki Tamaki

*Vielen Dank für Ihre fortwährende Unterstützung. Wir freuen uns darauf, auch im nächsten Jahr mit Ihnen zusammenarbeiten zu dürfen.* Yamamoto Sho

*Wishing you a prosperous link created with Kyoto University's ASEAN and European Networks, “Sawadee-Christmas Krab” (Thai)*  
Sonobe Tarō

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