



Kyoto University European Center

Season's Greetings 2020



Greeting from the Director

We are approaching the end of 2020—a year that will undoubtedly go down in history books.

My name is Mika Yokoyama. I am the new director of the Kyoto University European Center.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere sympathy to all those affected by the new coronavirus in one way or another.

From my viewpoint as a law scholar, I have always been interested in the creation of a sustainable society. I am currently conducting comparative legal research on the concept of ownership (*la propriété*) and its function from the perspective of fair use and the preservation of goods (*les biens*) in Japanese and European laws with a focus on French law.

While ownership is an almost universal concept ever present in our everyday lives, the way it is legally codified varies from country to country. Comparative legal research allows us to discover differences between our societies and cultures. At the same time, we are equally able to clearly reveal the commonalities in the challenges we face as human beings.

It is Kyoto University's guiding principal „to pursue harmonious coexistence within the human and ecological community on this planet.“ In these dire times caused by Covid-19, the harmonious coexistence of the global society is utterly needed. It is my belief that one key to work towards a sustainable future even in this difficult times is the creation of new values using the diverse values we have cultivated in the long histories of Japan and Europe. Together with you, the Kyoto University European Center would like to contribute to the harmonious coexistence of the global society from an academic perspective.

It is my sincere hope that we can meet somewhere in Europe and share a glass of wine together as soon as possible.

May 2021 be a good year for all of you.

Prof. Mika Yokoyama

Director, Kyoto University European Center

Covid-19 at Kyoto University and the Kyoto University European Center

The spread of Covid-19 posed a great challenge to all members of Kyoto University. Like many of you, they faced previously unknown problems and obstacles since March. Research at laboratories had to be canceled. Lectures had to be quickly moved online where possible. Hundreds of students and researchers scattered all over the world had to be cared for and returned to Japan. Institutions vital to university life like libraries and other facilities had to close. Academic and social events had to be halted immediately due to the uncertainty of what would lay ahead.

Kyoto University acted quickly to counter the impact of this crisis. It offered its researchers and students information, support, and internet infrastructure. To reduce the financial burden of students, it expanded its framework for tuition exemption and additionally established the *Fund for the Emergency Student Support Plan* so that they can continue their studies.

Closely monitoring the situation, Kyoto University continuously updates measures and procedures to prevent the spread of

Covid-19 and ensure the safety of students, faculties, and staff. Whenever the security level allows, Kyoto University permits classes to continue in-person with the observance of appropriate restrictions to give students access to their professors and instructors as well as to reduce social stress. Thanks to mid-year's easing of the situation, and policies enacted by the Japanese government, the international academic exchange could continue to a small degree with MEXT exchange students being able to come to Kyoto University.

Kyoto University European Center also responded quickly by providing information on its webpage and support to students on their way back to Japan. We also started #*KyotoWithCovid* on our Facebook page to show how Kyoto is handling the situation and that we are looking forward to welcoming the world at Kyoto, once Covid-19 has ceased. Kyoto University European Center's Japanese members had to leave Europe. While we are away, our local staff is taking care of matters on-site, and supporting activities in-person and online. We are eagerly holding contact with our partners and pursue as many activities as possible online until travel restrictions are lifted.

Latest information and Kyoto University's response regarding Covid-19



Major Activities and Events in 2020

Usually, you would find a map with many names of events and dots signifying academic institutions instead of a text right here in our *Season's Greetings*. But nothing is usual this year. One reason for the existence of the Kyoto University European Center is to be in close contact with our partners, students and researchers, academic and government organizations, which includes on-site face-to-face meetings. Except for some visits at the beginning of this year, all meetings with representatives of European academic institutions and events, which we commonly participate in to inform, network, and support like student fairs or conferences such as EARMA or EAIE, were canceled or postponed.

Instead of our annual student orientation, we invited students and staff from partner universities to a virtual *Kyoto University European Center Meet & Greet* in September. Around 60 participants from 13 European countries joined us as we presented multiple faces of Kyoto University. The event included interviews with former exchange students, which were welcomed as an opportunity to get first-hand impressions and valuable insight into student life in Kyoto.

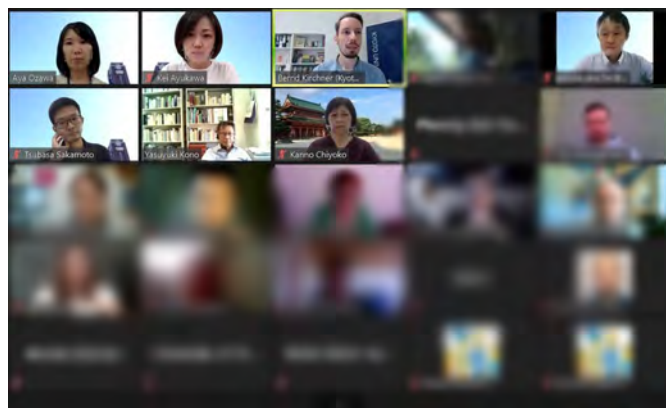
Despite the hardships, we also managed to find new collaborations. For example, the Hokkaido University Europe Office in Helsinki asked us to participate in their *Study in Japan* event together with the Japanese Embassy in Finland, Nagoya and Kobe University. Over 60 students from University of Helsinki, Aalto University, and Turku University listened to information on exchange opportunities at Kyoto University and in Japan.

HeKKSaGOn Second Phase Take Off

This summer, the partners of the six universities German-Japanese alliance HeKKSaGOn sent a call for new projects for its second phase. On 28 September, HeKKSaGOn representatives came together online at the Vice-Presidents' Meeting and chose projects to be funded. The eight selected projects contribute to four priority areas, which were agreed upon at last year's Presi-



HeKKSaGOn Vice Presidents' Meeting held online on 28 September 2020



Kyoto University European Center's Meet & Greet 2020 online event

Like so many others, we continued to keep connected with our partners and friends online. This also extended to our official visits. Because we were unable to travel, we had to hold all of our meetings—including those leading to strategic partnerships—via internet. However, we are becoming more accustomed to the technologies and the virtual environment. In addition, since everybody is in the uncomfortable situation to be forced to stay in one place, the number of meetings increased memorably. As bad as it may be, we are also growing together.

These virtual meetings are vital to our work right now and they may open new ways of reaching people in the future. However, we miss the many opportunities to meet people in person and network with them face-to-face to build stronger interpersonal relations as a foundation for professional cooperation. We hope that we will meet our European partners, friends, and people interested in academic exchange again in person as soon as possible.

Get the latest updates on our activities and news from Kyoto University European Center by visiting our webpage.



dents' Meeting and which in themselves are in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

1. Transcultural studies and the transformation of cultural heritage,
2. Data science, digitization, and artificial intelligence,
3. Health, well-being, safe and resilient societies,
4. Engineering molecular systems and bio-imaging.

This year, HeKKSaGOn did not only enter its second phase but also celebrated its eleventh year of existence since its launch in 2010. It has been a difficult departure amidst limited researcher exchanges due to Covid-19, and with Kyoto University European Center at its helm as a liaison office we keep searching for our role to play in this situation. However, based on the mutual trust forged so far, HeKKSaGOn is heading towards its 8th Presidents' Meeting scheduled in September 2021 in Tohoku and determined to venture to new shores.

For more information on HeKKSaGOn please scan the QR code or visit our webpage.



University of Zurich and Universität Hamburg —Kyoto University's new Strategic Partners

The endeavor to conclude strategic partnerships started in 2019 with University of Bordeaux and University of Vienna. In 2020, University of Zurich and Universität Hamburg joined our existing partners. Now, Kyoto University has four strategic partnerships with European universities and one with National Taiwan University.



Virtual signature ceremony at the Kyoto University President's Office

The aim of strategic partnerships is to strengthen existing relationships with world leading universities that go beyond MOUs and inter-university academic exchanges. To achieve the most benefit for both universities and to create a sustainable cooperation,

Early Career Researcher Support by Kyoto University European Center

One of Kyoto University European Center's activities in 2020 was the support of early-career researcher mobility. A core element of this is the *DAAD-Kyoto University Partnership Programme towards SDGs*, which was introduced in 2018. So far, this program supported the exchange of 15 researchers from 16 projects in natural and social sciences as well as humanities between German universities or research facilities and Kyoto University. In 2020, the planned travels were unfortunately made impossible by Covid-19. However, thanks to the mutual agreement of both Kyoto University and DAAD, most projects were able to continue their research online. We are looking forward to the day that the situation is under control and researchers can freely move again.



“strategic” has multiple meanings. The goals are set specifically for each partner ranging from collaboration in specific fields, the creation of matching funds or management staff exchanges as well as educational projects.

For our new partners, an active researcher exchange was expected to start from this year, but due to the spread of Covid-19 this plans had to be cancelled or postponed. Kyoto University European Center is working closely with representatives of partner universities—including regular online meetings—to find ways to interact in this era.

One example is a workshop we jointly held online with University of Zurich titled *Advanced Technology and Law* on 4 December. Early next year, we will send our students to University of Vienna's winter school and in return invite their students to our spring program (online). We are also preparing an online international symposium with University of Bordeaux. All these events will be held in February 2021.

Currently, we are coordinating matching calls with University of Zurich and will explore possibilities for such calls with other partners including Universität Hamburg in the future.



On Kyoto University's newspaper you will find more about its strategic partnerships in 2020

In addition, we collaborated with a new program by Kyoto University called *Program for the Development of Next-generation Leading Scientists with Global Insight (L-Insight)*. This program aims to “develop the next generation of top researchers with global insights, who aspire to be world-class researchers in the 2030s.” This year—the first of this program's existence—we went to universities around the world to survey their efforts to foster young researchers. Kyoto University staff visited 23 European institutions—including universities and laboratories—in the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Denmark, and Estonia. Kyoto University European Center members alone met with representatives of 18 institutions outside of Germany in February and March, just before the outbreak of Covid-19. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to each of the organizations that helped us.



L-INSIGHT
Program for the Development of
Next-generation Leading Scientists with
Global Insight

Further information and programs provided by Kyoto University are available here.



Changes in Kyoto University's Management

After six years of serving Kyoto University as president, Dr. Juichi Yamagiwa ended his term on 30 September 2020. On the same day, Executive Vice-President for International Affairs and former director of our office Dr. Kayo Inaba also retired.



Dr. Inaba visiting Kyoto University European Center on its 3rd anniversary in 2017

From October 2014—shortly after the establishment of the Kyoto University European Center until the spread of Covid-19—they visited Europe on the multiple occasions like international conferences such as HeKKSaGOn Presidents' Meetings or our own 5th anniversary celebration in 2019. We thank them very much for their six years of service and support.



Dr. Yamagiwa at the 6th HeKKSaGOn Presidents' Meeting 2016 at KIT (Karlsruhe)

The honor of the Kyoto University's presidency was passed to Dr. Nagahiro Minato. Dr. Kyoko Inagaki was appointed Executive Vice-President for International Affairs. Both started their term on 1 October 2020. We sincerely hope that after the Covid-19 situation is resolved, they soon will be able to visit Europe.



Dr. Inaba, Prof. Eitel (President of Heidelberg University)



Dr. Yamagiwa at Hamburg University 2017
Dr. Yamagiwa at Kyoto University European Center's 5th anniversary celebrations 2019

Farewell Notice by former KUEC Director Prof. Yasuyuki Kono

I served as director of the Kyoto University European Center for two and half years starting from May 2018. At the end of October 2020, I resigned from this post and handed the torch to Prof. Yokoyama. While



Prof. Kono with KUEC staff in Cologne in 2019

being director, I traveled to Europe three times and paid visits to numerous universities and academic government agencies. This gave me the opportunity to exchange information and ideas with

many people. Through this experience, I learned that European and Japanese societies share many challenges and many visions for the future. I also learned that European universities have many aspects in common with Kyoto University in terms of philosophy, structure and basic management policies. Europe is a strong partner in promoting education and research. Under Prof. Yokoyama's leadership, we hope that the academic exchange between our university and European universities will deepen further. I will continue to be in charge of Kyoto University's international strategy as Vice President and additionally serve as director of the North American Center from November. I look forward to seeing you again.

— Yasuyuki Kono (Vice-President for International Strategy)

Kyoto University European Center Editorial

Every year the *Character of the Year* 今年の漢字 is chosen by the public in Japan. In a ceremony, a chief priest of Kiyomizu Temple in Kyoto writes this character on a big sheet of paper with a brush in mid-December. What is your "word of the year"?

Kyoto University has just begun planning various events for its 125th anniversary in 2022. Its Japanese slogan is 京大力、新輝点。 which translates to "Kyoto University power and new radiance points—illuminating the future." The staff of Kyoto University European Center hopes that we can create a *brilliant* and *illuminating* 輝 future together. We are looking forward to working with you all again in 2021.



Kyoto University European Center

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