

Kyoto University European Center

Season's Greetings 2022

The Kyoto University European Center has returned to Heidelberg.

After the staff members dispatched from Kyoto in March 2020, we had been operating the center remotely with local staff in the pandemic for about two years, and finally landed in Europe on 7 March 2022. We will never forget the moment when we went to the office immediately after arriving at the airport and opened its doors for the first time in a long time.

From there, we gradually resumed full-fledged activities at the center, but it is when we welcome researchers, students and visitors from other universities and institutions to the office and talk to them face to face that we are most aware that operations here have resumed.

First of all, we were able to visit our close partners with whom we have maintained online relationships, such as the Strategic Partnership universities and HeKKSaGOn members, which is one of the priority activities of the European Center, and to confirm our collaboration once again.

Another focus of our work is the support for ECRs (Early Career Researchers), which has been an exceedingly difficult over the past two years. With travel restrictions being eased and lifted, we have started to provide new support through the JSPS Overseas Research Fellowship, in addition to matching funds with DAAD and support for young researchers in the Strategic Partnership. We were also pleased to hold the first face-to-face DNA for ECRs workshop for young researchers, which was launched online in the wake of the pandemic.

While the world was gradually returning to normal after the pandemic, the situation in Ukraine shook the world and our European sites were also affected to no small extent. In accepting students from two Ukrainian universities with which Kyoto University has concluded academic exchange agreements, the European Center played an important role as an intermediary. During the tense online connection with Kiev, we were touched by the enthusiasm of the Ukrainian university people to keep the fire of academia burning, and it was a great pleasure to host their students.

Our European Center will continue to strengthen and expand our network in Europe with values such as diversity and inclusiveness in mind. We would like to thank you all for your support.

Development in Kyoto University's Strategic Partnerships in 2022

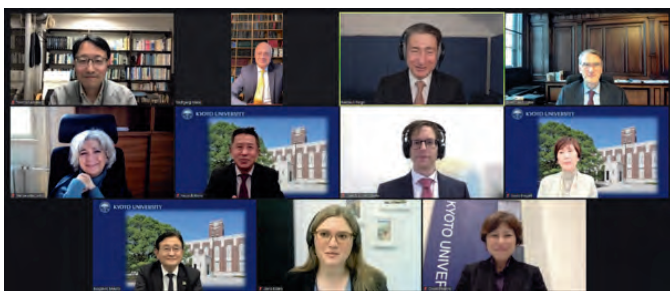
Kyoto University has four strategic partnerships within the European region since 2019, and the European Center actively supports their activities.

The agreement with the University of Vienna and the University of Bordeaux, which were signed in 2019, will enter the second phase of their partnership with the renewal of their first Memorandum of Understanding.

Commemorating the third anniversary of their relationship, University of Vienna and Kyoto University held an online event in November 2022. In the presence of the Executive Board, the partners reaffirmed their commitment and researchers introduced their collaborative research projects. While this year's event took place online, two symposia with University of Zurich in March and with Universität Hamburg in June 2023 are already being planned to be held in person.

One of the main incentives of Kyoto University's strategic partnerships are joint calls for research funding, encouraging research cooperations between the partner universities. In 2022, we have made further advances by adding several new initiatives to the existing calls. The scope and research areas have been extended beyond existing support and fields with University of Vienna. In addition, we established a new framework to dispatch young researchers with Universität Hamburg.

After a couple of years, in which it was difficult to carry out activities involving travel due to the world-wide pandemic, we have finally been able to gradually resume the mobility of researchers and the activities between the strategic partnerships are showing signs of revival. Utilizing this momentum, we would like to develop the relationships from bilateral ones to wider, multi-lateral research-education collaborations in the near future, to unlock internal and external resources to strengthen and diversify the schemes for next generation researchers.



Online event commemorating the third anniversary of Kyoto University's and University of Vienna's strategic partnership



Kyoto University has successfully reached out to top-tier international partners committed to international and interdisciplinary research. Information on existing partnerships, joint calls, and events is available [here](#).

DNA for ECRs' support for young researchers

DNA for ECRs (Doitsu-Nihon Academy for Early Career Researchers) – started in 2021 – is a training workshop jointly organised with the DAAD Tokyo Office and has been held three times in 2022. A novum was the participation of B.A. and M.A. students, who are now also eligible to sign up for this program.



Another positive development is that more than half of the applications were female, which we supported by reserving slots for women.

Participants of "DNA for ECRs" event at Kyoto University in July 2022

Thankfully, we were able to organize face-to-face meetings in July and November, with the participation of students and young researchers from Kyoto and German students, who are recipients of DAAD scholarships and were able to come to Japan. In both events, the workshop theme was "Networking and Collaborating in Global Science". Participants learned effective networking techniques from classroom lectures and practiced them on the spot.

Because of the program's success in Japan, we consider future cooperations in such initiatives with European universities, which offer workshop programs as well as opportunities for international and interdisciplinary ECR exchange.



Kyoto University and the Kyoto University European Center offer a variety of events. Stay up to date with information from our news page.

AI DA

[AI DA (Ambitious Intelligence Dynamic Acceleration)] is the general term name for programs in which we aim to accelerate international career development of ambitious young researchers (early career researchers, ECRs).

Under the current framework the DAAD-Kyoto University Partnership Programme towards SDGs provides funding to assist the mobility and networks of ECRs to foster academic exchange and cooperation between higher education and research institutions in Germany and Kyoto University for the purpose of contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Until last year, mobility was hindered by the pandemic.

This year – luckily – we welcomed Dr. Yao Ziang at our office – the first AI DA recipient visiting Europe after the break. He studies at the Department of Urban Management at Kyoto University and met leading European researchers in the field of traffic simulation. Dr. Ziang was thankful for the opportunity to build networks and lay the foundation for his future career.

"Light and Mind" being discussed by Dr. Yamamoto and artist Tobias Daemgen

We also managed to restart our "Kamogawa Talk" – a lecture series jointly organized with Goethe-Institut Osaka Kyoto/



Villa Kamogawa. The series promotes the exchange between young representatives from academia, art, and culture in a relaxed atmosphere. This year, for example, multimedia artist Tobias Daemgen and Dr. Hiroki Yamamoto (Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies, Kyoto University) discussed the topic "Light and Mind": its fundamental physical properties, the neurological processes of its perception in art to light in religious spaces.

Detailed information about AI DA, its activities and programs is available here.



HeKKSaGOn × L-INSIGHT spin-off Programme

HeKKSaGOn is an alliance of German and Japanese universities – in which we function as a liaison office together with Heidelberg University Office, Kyoto. An attempt to promote dialogue among young researchers (Fellows) using this platform was carried out online last November ("Five Dialogues for Future Research and Science with Early Career Researchers"). As a follow-up programme, we were very pleased that a face-to-face workshop was held at Heidelberg University in November 2022.



Announcement for "Seven Dialogues for Future Research and Science with Early Career Researchers" 2022

One of the aims of this spin-off programme is to ensure that ECRs not only refine their own field of research, but also have a cross-disciplinary perspective in an increasingly complex society. At the Heidelberg workshop, researchers with different approaches to the common topic 'environmental protection' met and engaged in lively discussions.

The second workshop, "Seven Dialogues", with two more Fellows than last year, was held online in December. Again, the three German universities of the HeKKSaGOn were at the core of the programme, and by making full use of the networks established by the European Center, we were able to gather a wide range of dialogue participants from the Universität Hamburg, Technical University of Munich, Charité Medical University, German Cancer Research Centre and Max Planck Institute, among others. We were also grateful for the involvement of coordinators from Heidelberg University, Göttingen University and Karlsruhe Institute of Technology from the planning stage, who showed sympathy and understanding for this ECRs training programme.

We have become aware that it is an important function of the European Center to provide that first step for ECRs together with our staff in Kyoto as a single mechanism. Our office hopes, that they will utilize such opportunities and make the next steps to further build their careers based on the foundation of the international networks made here.

To get the broader picture, please have a look at this year's program, which includes information on the panels and the speakers.



Kyoto University European Center's Activity Journal 2022

february

△ DNA for ECRs (online)



march

Return to Kyoto University European Center

- ◇ DAAD
- ◇ DFG
- ◇ JSPS
- ◇ JETRO in Munich

JETRO Office in Munich



april

△ Lecture by the prime minister of Switzerland in Kyoto



may

△ Annual Celebration at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
◇ Universität Hamburg



Meeting with the head of Strategic university partnerships in Asia team at Universität Hamburg

june

- ◇ Technical University of Munich
- ◇ RWTH Aachen University
- ◇ KU Leuven & UC Louvain (Belgium)
- ◇ University of Vienna and its University Library
- ◇ Embassy of Japan to Austria



Meeting staff of Université catholique de Louvain



Visit to Technical University of Munich

july

- △ DNA for ECRs
- △ Meeting with University of Vienna representatives
 - ◇ University of Göttingen
 - ◇ University of Zurich
 - ◇ Embassy of Japan in Switzerland



Visit by University of Vienna staff at our office

august

- △ Imperial College London-JSPS Orientation Event
- △ Director Prof. Mika Yokoyama's first official travel to Europe



september

△ Prof. Hikiyama Takashi meets Heidelberg University Library representatives and visits CATS Library

Prof. Hikiyama at the Center for Asian and transcultural Studies Library



october

- △ «Study in Japan!» (online)
- △ Joint Symposium of Kyoto University and Strasbourg University
 - ◇ KU Leuven
 - ◇ RWTH Aachen

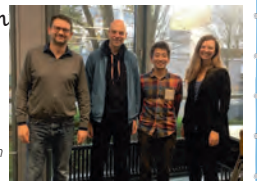
Prof. Mika Yokoyama in Strasbourg



november

- △ 3rd Anniversary of the Strategic Partnership with University of Vienna Commemoration (online)
- △ HeKKSaGOn Alliance Vice-President (online)
- △ HeKKSaGOn x L-INSIGHT Seminar

HeKKSaGOn x L-INSIGHT Spin-off Seminar "Approaches in Environmental and Wildlife Conservation"



december

- △ HeKKSaGOn x L-INSIGHT "Seven Dialogues" (online)
- △ Nichi-Doku Joint Lecture in Kyoto (hybrid)
- △ Members of University of Zurich visit our office

Nichi-Doku Joint Lecture



- △ Event
- ◇ Visit



Kyoto University European Center Director Prof. Yokoyama's Visits to Europe

Professor Mika Yokoyama was appointed director of the Kyoto University European Center two years ago in November 2020. Since then she and her team had to face many unforeseeable challenges due to the pandemic: managing relations, programs, and events from afar as well as keeping contacts and the academic exchange alive via ones and zeros traveling around the globe through thin wires. Despite all the problems and some downturns, there was growth in relationships and contacts, which are the basis to continue what had to be put on hold or build back what has been lost.

This year – finally – Professor Yokoyama was able to visit Europe for the first time in her position as our director. On her inaugural tour, she visited Kyoto University's strategic partners and close allies in Bordeaux, Hamburg, Zurich, Vienna, and Heidelberg collecting many impressions of the universities and deepening the ties between the institutions.

On a second trip, she attended the joint symposium of Kyoto University and the University of Strasbourg, which commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Memorandum of Understanding between Kyoto University and Strasbourg University. The two universities organize such symposiums to discuss topics in various, but common fields, bringing researchers of both universities together to build networks and exchange ideas. Professor Yokoyama was chosen to hold the closing remarks for this year's symposium celebrating the anniversary.

Next year, Professor Yokoyama will further travel to Europe to strengthen the networks between Kyoto University and its partners all over Europe while also creating opportunities for international exchange of people and knowledge.



Kyoto University European Center's Student and Educational Activities

In 2022, our mission to support students and researchers in their endeavor go abroad continued — be it at Kyoto University, be it in Europe.

Like in the years past, we participated and organized events to present Kyoto University to European students and to offer information about opportunities to take the steps towards an international experience. For example, we co-organized an event for students enrolled at German universities in October with other European overseas supported by the Japanese Consulate (Munich). We focused on the presentation of Kyoto University's commitment to interdisciplinary research and its chances for exchange students, while giving the audience the chance to hear first-hand reports.



Ph.D. student Shimoyama Chiharu studying manuscripts at Heidelberg University Library's Manuscript Reading Room

We were also happy to support Ph.D. students like Ms. Shimoyama Chiharu, who supervised by Prof. Abe Takeshi of Kyoto University's Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies. The Kyoto University European Center helped her to get access and contacts to archives holding the source material for her doctorate thesis on Hans-Georg Gadamer and Thomas Kuhn.

Another student from Kyoto University's Department of Architecture visited our office. Mr. Narihara Takanori studies the IBA project in the Ruhrgebiet as an example for the conversion of industrial areas to recreational areas. He characterized his stay as highly inspirational both scientifically and personally.

Ms. Shimoyama and Mr. Narihara are an example for the few researchers who were able to continue their research abroad. However, because of the high interest of students and eagerness of researchers to go abroad, are looking forward to welcoming and supporting students and researchers to accomplish their educational and research goals home and abroad in the future.



An overview over programs and schemes can be found here.

Editorial

We hope you enjoyed this year's greetings. One thing that was particularly striking while editing this letter: Most of the texts and pictures in this issue are about people meeting and connecting in person. After a long time, we are finally able to meet partners and friends – old and new. Researchers, students, and staff are luckily able to move and many are eager to leave their home offices, online meetings, and "native" labs behind to explore new shores. The years past taught us lessons good as well as bad. Let us keep the good, and leave the bad behind. The world is still facing many challenges.

However, the major lesson of the past crisis is that we can overcome overwhelming obstacles if we come together and work towards solutions as one.

Our whole team wishes you a successful and prolific Japanese zodiac's year of the rabbit 2023.

Kei Ayukawa, Chiyoko Kanno, Bernd Kirchner, Kazuhiro Kosaka, Tarō Sonobe, Mika Yokoyama



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