



Strengthening UK-Turkey Partnerships in Higher Education: Baseline Research

British Council Turkey

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Abbreviations and Glossary

ADEK Akademik Değerlendirme Komisyonu

(Academic Evaluation and Quality Development Boards): A Commission established in 2005 to plan and coordinate the quality assurance and evaluation system in higher education institutions

ANIE African Network for Internationalisation of Education

An NGO committed to the advancement of high-quality research, capacity building and advocacy on the international dimension of higher education with a prime focus on Africa

APAIE Asia-Pacific Association for International Education

An association committed to promoting the value of international education within the Asia-Pacific region, enabling greater cooperation between institutions, and enriching and supporting international programmes, activities and exchanges

ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations

An association to accelerate economic growth, social and cultural development, regional peace and stability among Southeast Asian Nations

BUILA British Universities International Liaison Association

A UK-wide, membership-led organisation supporting the work and professional interests of staff working in international recruitment and liaison at UK higher educational institutions

CIMO Centre for International Mobility (Finland)

An organisation for international mobility and cooperation and mainly focuses on education, working life, culture and young individuals. CIMO offers many scholarship programmes for doctoral studies and research at Finnish Universities

CoHE The Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu-YÖK)

The public body established by the Constitution and responsible for strategic planning, coordination and supervision and monitoring of higher education as well as establishing and maintaining quality assurance mechanisms in Turkey

DAAD German Academic Exchange Service

The independent organisation of German higher education institutions and their student bodies, devoted to internationalising the academic system

DfE Department for Education (UK)

Government department responsible for children's services and education in England, including higher education

DIT Department for International Trade (UK)

Government department responsible for promoting and financing international trade. Holds joint responsibility, with the Department for Education for the International Education Strategy

EAIE European Association for International Education

The European centre for expertise, networking and resources in the internationalisation of higher education as a non-profit, member-led organisation serving individuals actively involved in the internationalisation of their institutions

ECTS The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

A tool, created in European Higher Education Area, to make programmes and courses more transparent and to help students academic qualifications recognised

EHEA European Higher Education Area

A unique international collaboration on higher education, started with Bologna Process in 1999 to have transparent, comparative and recognised degrees in 49 countries through implementing a common set of commitments: structural reforms and shared tools

EU European Union

The economic and political structure of European countries under common rules and regulations. The UK withdrew from the European Union on 31 January 2020, Turkey is a long-standing candidate country

EUA European University Association

A non-profit organisation representing 800 universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries to promote the development of a coherent system of education and research at the European level through studies, projects and services to members

HE Higher Education

The sector of education, including universities, which delivers degree-level programmes and conducts research

HEI Higher education institution

A university or an institution that delivers degree-level programmes and conducts research

HESA Higher Education Statistics Agency (UK)

National agency that collects, assures and publishes information about UK higher education

IaH Internationalisation at Home

A term indicating a university's internationalisation activities in its own campus and with its own facilities and resources

IAU International Association of Universities

A leading global association of higher education institutions and organisations from around the world working under the auspices of UNESCO

IHE Internationalisation in Higher Education

Adding international dimension to education, research and society service functions of higher education

ICT Information and Computer Technologies

The computers and other electronic equipment to store and send information

MoNE Ministry of National Education Turkey

The Ministry responsible for all levels of education from pre-school to post-secondary in Turkey

MENA Middle East and North Africa

An English-language acronym referring to region covering the Middle East and North Africa

MoU Memorandum of Understanding

A type of partnership agreement between higher education institutions in different countries to establish a cooperation

N National Organisation

Code given for national organisations participated in this research

NAFSA Association for International Educators

The world's largest and most diverse non-profit association dedicated to international education and exchange, working to advance policies and practices that ensure a more interconnected, peaceful world today and for generations to come.

NGO Non-governmental Organisation

Any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organised on a local, national or international level

NQF National Qualifications Framework

A system which describes what learners should know, understand and be able to do on the basis of qualification and how they can move from one qualification to another in a national system

NUFFIC Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education

An organisation helping schools and education institutions shape internationalisation and international cooperation.

OAS Organisation of American States

on among its member states within the Western Hemisphere

OSYM Ölçme Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi

(Centre for Assessment, Selection and Placement): The body responsible for organizing the national level university entrance examination, and several other large-scale examinations in Turkey

PhD Doctor of Philosophy

The third or top tier of higher education under the Bologna system

QAA Quality Assurance Agency (UK)

National body responsible for safeguarding standards and improving the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world

SBB Strategy and Budget Department (Turkey)

The department under Turkish Presidency responsible for development plans and central management budget

SUNY State University of New York

A system of public colleges and universities in New York State

SWOT Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

An analysis which identify core strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an organisation

THEQC Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (Yükseköğretim Kalite Kurulu-YÖKAK)

A public legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy and special budget founded with the aim of evaluating the quality levels of higher education institutions' education and research activities and administrative services in accordance with the national and international quality standards, and coordinating the processes of accreditation, internal and external quality assurance, and authorization of independent external evaluation organisations.

TNE Transnational Education

Education delivered in a country other than the country in which the awarding institution is based

TURQUAS Turkish Quality Assurance Project

An Erasmus+ project run by the Turkish Council of Higher Education aiming to promote, facilitate and internalize the implementation of the European Higher Education Area reforms in Turkish higher education system

TÜBİTAK Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknik Araştırma Kurulu (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey)

The national body for management, funding and conduct of research in Turkey, established in 1963 with a mission to advance science and technology, conduct research and support Turkish researchers

UCAS Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UK)

National organisation that runs the application process for UK universities

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

It is a world-wide organisation which seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture

UUK Universities UK

The advocacy organisation for universities in the UK

UUKi Universities UK International Section

The international section of Universities UK (see above)

YABSİS Yabancı Akademisyen Bilgi Sistemi (Information System on Foreign Academics)

A web-based portal developed by CoHE for the records of international academics applying to Turkish universities

YÖDEK Yükseköğretim Kurumları Akademik Değerlendirme ve Kalite Geliştirme Komisyonu

(The Academic Evaluation and Quality Improvement Commission in Higher Education)

A National commission established in 2005 as a responsible national commission for the organisation and coordination of academic evaluation and quality improvement studies in higher education in line with the European Standards and Guidelines

YÖKAK

see THEQC

YÖK

see CoHE

YÖS Yabancı Öğrenci Sınavı (Foreign Student Exam)

The central exam which was in effect for selecting international degree students to study in Turkey

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The research outlined in this report was commissioned by the British Council in Turkey to explore the opportunities and barriers to further developing higher education partnerships between Turkey and the UK, and to provide the basis for a set of recommendations for key stakeholders – at both national and institutional levels.

The background to the research is a series of past initiatives and events for the UK and Turkey organised by the British Council between 2012 and 2019, and the British Council's work on English language qualifications in higher education and on national-level quality assurance partnerships. Although there have been positive relations between the UK and Turkey in variety of fields including higher education, there has been insufficient information about the quality and quantity of extant collaborations. This research was thus commissioned in order to understand the current situation, potential opportunities and capacity, and obstacles encountered before, during and after establishing partnerships between the UK and Turkey.

During the period from November 2020 to February 2021, qualitative data were collected in both Turkey and the UK. The research approach included: individual interviews with representatives of key national-level organisations and higher education institutions (HEIs) (the latter chosen to represent the diversity of the higher education sector in both countries); focus groups with academic staff and students (who had moved between the two countries); and an analysis of strategy documents, where available, from both national organisations and individual HEIs. Initial findings were then discussed at a webinar hosted by the British Council in Turkey.

Opportunities for strengthening partnerships

Research participants, in general, identified a wide range of potential opportunities to develop or strengthen partnerships between Turkey and the UK. The most commonly discussed were geopolitical factors – relating, for example, to the geographical location of Turkey (on the border of Asia and Europe) and the UK's strategic importance within global higher education – and the way in which the UK's withdrawal from the European Union may lead to a reconfiguration of higher education partnerships (with the UK more likely to look outside of Europe). It was also asserted by a substantial number of UK interviewees that their institutions were keen to diversify the countries they worked with, and this presented an opportunity to develop closer links with Turkey. Both Turkish students and international students from neighbouring countries who wish to study in Turkey might constitute an opportunity for UK diversification.

The commitment to internationalisation on the part of both countries was viewed as an important basis upon which partnerships could be built, as was the belief, on the part of Turkish interviewees, that there were significant opportunities for institutional learning by collaborating with UK HEIs that often had a longer history of working internationally. Both national and institutional actors in Turkish higher education emphasized strongly how cooperation with the UK might positively affect their quality assurance and internationalisation efforts. Covid-19 was also discussed as having brought about new opportunities – for demonstrating how effectively online spaces could be used for cross-national collaborations for education and research, as well as for liaising more generally with HEIs abroad. It is believed that online cooperation opportunities would open up new opportunities for cooperation between the two countries.

Finally, some interviewees identified specific disciplinary areas where they thought Turkey-UK collaborations would be most fruitful. These included archaeology, history, heritage studies, migrant and refugee studies, aerospace, soil science and farm management.

Main identified barriers

Despite identifying many opportunities for future partnership working between Turkey and the UK, research participants also identified a number of specific barriers. Some of these were structural, relating in particular to regulatory and financial matters, and immigration procedures. For example, Turkish interviewees discussed how their national regulations often impeded international activity, directing HEIs towards focussing on student mobility rather than other forms of partnership, and made developing joint programmes with the UK difficult. Similar views were reflected in the UK data, with some participants commenting on the lack of available public data with respect to the regulatory environment in Turkey. Financial barriers included the high tuition fees charged by UK HEIs, and the relatively limited funds specifically for bi-lateral research co-operation between Turkey and the UK. The stringent visa requirements imposed by the UK were seen as a barrier to mobility to the UK from Turkey, and were thought to have had an adverse effect on partnerships for both education and research.

In addition, various interviewees discussed issues to do with national impetus or commitment. Participants believed that a lack of explicit commitment to developing partnerships, articulated at governmental level, could be a barrier to bi-lateral co-operation.

A range of more attitudinal and cultural factors were also outlined. These included a lack of knowledge of higher education in the other country (more commonly mentioned by UK interviewees), and a sense that there was a significant imbalance between the two countries in experience of and priorities for internationalisation, which could lead to problems in both initiating contact in the first place, and then sustaining equal, mutually-respectful relationships.

Other issues, mentioned by a relatively small number of participants include: an emphasis on consolidating existing partnerships rather than developing new ones, on the part of some UK HEIs; dependence on a single member of staff; the impact of Covid-19; and, for Turkish HEIs keen to attract UK (and other international) staff, the prevailing academic culture.

Recommendations

On the basis of the data collected in the project, we suggest that action is taken by national-level organisations and individual HEIs in both countries to address the various barriers identified by the research participants, and make the most of the opportunities for collaborative working identified by many of our research participants. These are summarised in the figures below.

Research-related recommendations

For national-level organisations

- Continue and, where possible, extend dedicated funds for Turkey-UK partnerships, covering a broad range of subject areas (particularly those of mutual benefit and/or where there is specific expertise in one or both nations).
- Involve doctoral students in funding schemes, to develop capacity in international collaborations
- Develop initiatives to increase awareness of research in the other country (e.g. similar to Turkey's 'Year of Science with Germany' in 2014).
- Develop a database of academics interested in collaborations with colleagues in the other country to facilitate contact.
- Organise meetings to bring together academics from both countries working in the same field.

For higher education institutions

- For Turkish HEIs, ensure financial procedures (such as the costing of research grant applications) are transparent and communicated effectively to academics.

Education-related recommendations

For national-level organisations

- Provide seed funding to stimulate new educational partnerships.
- Offer more scholarships/tuition fee waivers for study abroad.
- Consider whether the Turing and Mevlana schemes can be used in tandem to promote reciprocal short-term mobility.
- Ensure national regulations in Turkey facilitate the establishment of partnerships, particularly for joint degree programmes.
- Ensure national qualification frameworks in both countries articulate well with each other.
- Disseminate widely examples of where educational partnerships between the two countries have been successfully established.
- Provide easily-accessible information in English about education and regulations in the other country for those interested in exploring possible future partnerships.
- Run 'match-making' activities – for groups of institutions – which bring together staff working at similar levels within HEIs.
- Consider developing new forms of collaboration such as lifelong learning partnerships, open university collaborations, more diverse forms of short-term student and staff mobility, tailor-made summer/winter schools and joint postgraduate programme.
- Integrate online learning into education programmes, to more easily facilitate contributions from both countries.
- Involve UK HEIs more fully in English language teaching in Turkey.
- Establish monitoring and tracking tools to make improvement.

For higher education institutions

- Be proactive in approaching HEIs in the other country, including to help 'benchmark' Turkish HEIs.
- For Turkish HEIs, ensure internal quality assurance systems are in place.

- Consider expanding internship-type opportunities, for short-term student mobility.

Other recommendations

For national-level organisations

- Provide stronger commitment to HE partnerships with the other country – perhaps through a new education agreement.
- Make greater use of alumni networks to develop and promote new initiatives.
- Consider making the immigration process to the UK smoother, and offering visas to Turkish nationals (especially Turkish academics/students/alumni) for longer periods of time.
- Develop a comprehensive and sustainable recruitment policy for UK academics in Turkish HE.
- Establish a taskforce from the UK and Turkey to explore new possible collaborations and monitor ongoing partnerships.

For higher education institutions

- Ensure that dialogue between staff in the UK and Turkey is open and constructive, to enable any concerns to be addressed at an early stage.

With respect to research, we recommend that national-level organisations: continue and, where possible extend, dedicated funds for Turkey-UK partnerships, covering a broad range of subject areas; involve doctoral students in funding schemes, to develop capacity in international collaborations; develop initiatives to increase awareness of research in the other country (e.g. similar to Turkey's 'Year of Science with Germany' in 2014); and develop a database of academics interested in collaborations with colleagues in the other country to facilitate contact. We recommend that HEIs in Turkey, in particular, ensure financial procedures (such as the costing of research grant applications) are transparent and communicated effectively to academics. The British Council may play an important facilitating role in improving communication between the two sides.

In relation to education, we recommend that national-level organisations: provide seed funding to stimulate new educational partnerships; offer more scholarships/tuition fee waivers for study abroad; consider whether the Turing and Mevlana schemes can be used in tandem to promote reciprocal short-term mobility; and ensure national qualification frameworks in both countries articulate well with each other. In addition, we recommend such organisations: disseminate widely examples of where educational partnerships between the two countries have been successfully established; provide easily-accessible information about education in the other country for those interested in exploring possible future partnerships; run 'match-making' activities – for groups of institutions – which bring together staff working at similar levels within HEIs; consider developing new forms of collaboration such as lifelong learning partnerships, open university collaborations, more diverse forms of short-term student and staff mobility, and joint postgraduate programme; integrate online learning into education programmes, to more easily facilitate contributions from both countries; and involve UK HEIs more fully in English language teaching in Turkey. At the institutional level, we recommend that staff are proactive in approaching HEIs in the other country, including to help 'benchmark' Turkish HEIs; and, for Turkish HEIs, ensure both external and internal quality assurance systems are in place.

With respect to more general issues, that cross-cut both research and education, we recommend that

national-level organisations: provide stronger commitment to HE partnerships with the other country – perhaps through a new education agreement; make greater use of alumni networks to develop and promote new initiatives; and consider making the immigration process to the UK smoother, and offer visas to Turkish nationals, particularly for academics, students and alumni for longer periods of time. It may also be useful for Turkey to develop a comprehensive and sustainable recruitment policy for UK academics, and, together with the UK, as taskforce to explore possible new partnerships for both education and research. In addition, we recommend that, at the institutional level, steps are taken to ensure that dialogue between staff in the UK and Turkey is open and constructive, to enable any concerns to be addressed at an early stage.

We note that some of these actions can be implemented relatively quickly, and can be considered 'quick wins', while others will require longer-term action. We suggest that action with respect to both is equally important: while some of the longer-term goals will help to address some of the most significant obstacles identified in our research, the 'quick wins' will help to build momentum in this area, and demonstrate that this an area that key stakeholders take seriously. We note also that at least one of the recommendations – that relating to immigration – is not within the provenance of higher education stakeholders and, as such, may make it significantly harder to address than many of the other suggestions. Nevertheless, we have included it because of its importance to many of our Turkish interviewees and focus group participants.

Introduction

Introduction

Background and aim of the report

International collaboration has become increasingly important to universities in the 21st century as they seek to enhance their social and economic contribution, train national workforces, and drive scientific and technological advances. Moreover, such collaborations are seen by national governments as a key means of exerting soft power on the world stage. Various mechanisms for collaboration have been established over the last few decades, typically based on a set of commonly-held values. These have included regional collaborations, such as those generated through the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as well as associations of universities, including the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the European Universities Association (EUA). Numerous bi-lateral schemes, between individual universities, have also been initiated. This research, initiated and funded by the British Council in Turkey, focuses on collaborations between the UK and Turkey specifically. It seeks to identify the opportunities for and barriers to future collaborations, and outline some specific actions that can be taken to further partnership working between the two higher education (HE) sectors.

UK universities have a long history of attracting staff and students from across the globe due to their standing within world rankings and the quality of the education they offer. In addition, they play a key role in many international research collaborations. However, they may well be adversely affected by the impact of Brexit and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, it is useful for the UK to explore new partnerships and forms of collaboration. In Turkey, the higher education sector has experienced a number of recent and substantial changes, including the expansion of the sector with an increasing number of universities; a stronger interest in implementing national and international quality assurance systems; and the embrace of internationalisation as a key goal for education and research. This rapid change to the

higher education sector over the past two decades has presented both challenges and opportunities.

Collaboration between Turkey and the UK is longstanding, and is based on a variety of historical, cultural and economic links. Partnerships between the two countries were formalised through an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation for education and culture signed on 12 March 1956. This agreement is still valid and covers a wide range of topics and activities. More recently, over the past decade, there have been various attempts to strengthen higher education partnerships between Turkey and the UK. In 2011, an intergovernmental protocol entitled UK-Turkey Knowledge Partnership was signed. This was followed by a cooperation protocol, the UK-Turkey Higher Education and Industry Partnership Programme, signed by the President of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and the President of the Universities UK (UUK) in 2012.

In addition, the British Council has coordinated various collaborative activities between Turkey and the UK, with the aim of promoting capacity-building and knowledge exchange in both the HE and industrial sectors: 22 such projects have been developed in the fields of agriculture, energy, food security, health, ICT, financial services and sustainable development and environment. The British Council also organised the Turkey-UK Higher Education Strategic Partnerships Forum, held on February 2019 in cooperation with CoHE. This forum brought together 13 rectors from prominent Turkish universities and 31 UK university leaders and academics with the aim of improving engagement between the Turkish and UK higher education sector. Discussions focused on identifying UK-Turkey research collaborations and exploring future opportunities for student and staff mobility, academic exchange, transnational education, and university-industry partnerships. Moreover, the British Council signed a memorandum of

understanding (MOU) with the Council of Higher Education in 2019 with the aim of developing stronger relationships and a higher degree of bi-lateral cooperation in higher education. The British Council has also worked with the CoHE to define quality and qualifications standards for English in Turkish higher education, and prepared a report on the state of English in higher education in Turkey (British Council, 2015). A Cultural Centres Agreement has also been signed by the two countries and recently was incorporated into law in Turkey.

At the institutional level, five universities from Turkey (Hacettepe University, İstanbul University, İstanbul University Cerrahpaşa, Middle East Technical University, İzmir Institute of Technology, Ankara University) have initiated partnership agreements with UK higher education institutions to deepen and expand collaboration, following the MOU mentioned above (British Council, 2019). In relation to research, bilateral collaboration has been facilitated through the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund, supported by the UK and Turkish governments, and in operation since 2014. The main objective of this fund is to promote sustainable research and innovation collaboration between the UK and Turkey in the areas of lifelong health and welfare, agriculture and food security, disaster and risk management, and energy and climate change (British Council, 2021). The British Council acts as one of the delivery partners for the UK and, in Turkey. In addition, the 'New Connections in English Medium Instruction – Turkey Research Partnership Fund' has facilitated institutional partnerships. Through this research fund, The British Council in Turkey aims to improve the learning and teaching of English in higher education institutions in Turkey through the production and dissemination of innovative research in key areas identified.

Relationships between the two countries have been strengthened through wider European initiatives, such as the European Higher Education Area, through which the comparability and equivalency of higher education degrees/qualifications across member countries has been enhanced, the Erasmus+ mobility programme and European Research Area and Framework Programmes such as Horizon 2020. Moreover, the British Council has been collaborating with the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) since its

establishment in 2015 to support the setting up of a national system of quality assurance, with a structure and function comparable to its international counterparts. There are also some bilateral agreements or collaborations for education, training and research established between individual HEIs.

Developing new partnerships is of considerable importance to both countries at the present time – as the UK seeks to put in place new relationships with a range of countries following its withdrawal from the European Union and the Erasmus+ scheme, and Turkey aims to consolidate its research base, increase institutional co-operations and internationalisation, benefit from peer learning, and provide support for the large number of students who hope to study in the UK each year. The research outlined in this report aims to provide a clear basis for such high quality, sustainable and mutually-beneficial developments by supplying insight about what has been achieved to date and what is possible in the future. Analysing national and institutional priorities, successful partnerships, barriers and potential development areas will help to develop effective, long-term partnerships in relation to teaching and research activities – to the benefit of both Turkey and the UK.

Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows: after outlining the research methodology and ethical issues in the remainder of this Introduction, Chapter 1 provides the context for the research, by discussing the internationalisation of higher education and its development over time. Chapter 2 then moves on to focus on the UK and Turkey more specifically, providing detail about their respective HE systems, current priorities with respect to internationalisation and, drawing on data from our research, evidence about the current level of collaboration between the two countries. Chapter 3 outlines what those involved in the research considered to be the opportunities for and benefits of collaboration between the UK and Turkey, with respect to higher education, while Chapter 4 describes some of the perceived barriers to such partnerships. Chapter 5 then explores some of the ways in which these barriers can be overcome and how links between the two countries may be strengthened in the future. These various areas are then brought together in Chapter 6, the Conclusion.

Methodology

Research questions

On the basis of the aims outlined above, six research questions were formulated, which underpinned the research:

- what do key stakeholders (national-level organisations, higher education institutions (HEIs) and individual academics and students) consider to be priority areas for UK-Turkey HE institutional partnerships, and what form should these partnerships take?
- what are the opportunities for increasing the scale and scope of institutional partnerships between the UK and Turkey?
- what are some of the current barriers to establishing UK-Turkey partnerships?
- How can the conditions necessary for establishing institutional partnerships be improved, and how can the identified barriers be overcome?
- what are the attitudes of UK stakeholders towards transnational education (TNE) in Turkey?
- what can we learn from examples of best practice in UK-Turkey partnerships and/or successful case studies in this area?

To answer these research questions, data were collected from three different levels of stakeholders in both the UK and Turkey: national-level organisations with an interest in this area; higher education institutions; and individual academics and students (who have already been involved in some form of UK-Turkey mobility and/or partnership). Because of the necessity of generating detail and fine-grained data, qualitative methods were employed, namely document analysis, individual in-depth interviews and focus groups. Initial findings were also discussed with stakeholders at a webinar, organised by the British Council in Turkey.

Research methods

The research was structured into three strands of work, each focusing on a different group of stakeholders: national organisations (Strand 1), higher education institutions (Strand 2), and individual academics and students (Strand 3).

Strand 1: National organisations

Interviews were conducted with representatives of relevant national organisations in Turkey and the UK. In the UK, these comprised representatives of: the Department for Education; the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; the Department for International Trade; Universities UK international section (UUKi); the British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA); the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA); and two university 'mission groups' (the Russell Group and University Alliance). In Turkey, these comprised: the Ministry of National Education; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate of EU Affairs; the Turkish Scientific Research Institution (TUBİTAK); the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC); the Turkish National Agency; the Turkish Education Attaché in London; the British Embassy Chevening Programme; and the British Council in Turkey.

In all cases, the interviews lasted about an hour, were conducted online and in the national language, and were audio-recorded (with the interviewee's permission). The interview schedule was informed by the research questions outlined above, and so covered participants' perceptions about:

- their organisation's internationalisation strategy
- priority areas, and types of institutional partnership and transnational education
- opportunities with respect to strengthening collaboration between Turkey and the UK
- current barriers to collaboration
- possible effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) and
- suggestions for improving practice in this area.

After each interview, descriptive and analytic notes were taken by the researcher who conducted the interview. Where available, relevant strategy documents from each of the organisations were also analysed.

Strand 2: Higher education institutions

In this strand, we interviewed representatives of a sample of HEIs, chosen to represent the diversity of the HE sector in each country and, where possible, HEIs with some previous experience of collaborating with the UK/Turkey and others with no such experience. In the UK, interviews were conducted with representatives of 14 HEIs: five large, research intensive universities (all members of the Russell Group); five 'pre-92' institutions; and four younger HEIs, that had gained university status from 1992 onwards. The sample was also stratified geographically to include institutions from Northern Ireland (1), Wales (2) and Scotland (2), as well as England (9).

In Turkey, the sample was stratified according to type of institution (public or foundation university) and year of foundation. Moreover, we aimed to achieve diversity with respect to geographical location and medium of instruction (English or Turkish). Currently, 62 per cent of Turkish universities are public universities and 38 per cent of them are foundation universities. Therefore, of the 15 selected institutions, five of them were foundation and ten of them were public universities. In relation to year of foundation: five were established before 1981; five were established between 1982-2002; and five were established after 2002. We sampled universities according to their age to ensure that we collected data from the more established universities, whose research and international partnership capacity is higher, and from the younger universities established in the last decade whose priorities, needs and experiences are different.

In each institution, we interviewed a member of staff with responsibility for internationalisation. In the UK, this was typically the head of the university's international office or global engagement unit. In Turkey, interviews were conducted mostly with the rector of the university and his/her team responsible for internationalisation (seven rectors and six vice-rectors participated in the study). The interviews lasted, on average, about an hour and were conducted online in the national language. As with Strand 1, the interview schedule was underpinned by the six research questions and included questions on the following topics:

perceptions about priority areas and types of institutional partnerships and transnational education; current barriers to collaboration; and suggestions for improving practice in this area. After each interview, descriptive and analytic notes were taken by the researcher who conducted the interview. Where available, relevant strategy documents from each HEI were also analysed.

Strand 3: Individual academics and students

In this strand, we conducted online focus groups with academics and students. Given the short duration of the research project, the use of focus groups was a time-efficient means of exploring the views of a relatively large number of individuals. Moreover, as the topics for discussion were not particularly sensitive in nature, we assumed that individuals would be happy to talk about their own experiences in the company of others. All groups were conducted online, included between four and six participants, lasted approximately 90 minutes and were recorded (with the permission of those taking part). In the UK, we conducted:

- two focus groups with Turkish students who had moved to the UK for the whole or part of their higher education (including both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and those who were in receipt of a government scholarship as well as those who had funded themselves)
- one focus group with Turkish academics who had moved to the UK for work and
- two focus groups with UK-based academics who had been involved in research or education partnerships with Turkey. Reflecting the profile of such staff, one of these focus groups was comprised solely of Turkish nationals (working in the UK) and the second was of staff who were not Turkish nationals.

The four focus groups with Turkish nationals were conducted in Turkish, and the fifth group (with non-Turkish nationals) in English. Participants were recruited through adverts placed by the British Council and the research team via social media and email lists. In categories where there were more volunteers than places in the focus groups, participants were chosen to maximise the diversity

of the sample (in terms of, for example, gender, age, university type and geographical location). Overall, a total of 10 students (six scholarship recipients and four self-funded) and 15 academics (six Turkish academics who had come to the UK to work, four UK-based Turkish national academics with collaborations with Turkey, and five UK-based non-Turkish academics with collaborations with Turkey) took part in the focus groups.

Participants were asked questions about their own experience of being involved in a higher education partnership between Turkey and the UK, and/or moving between the two countries for the purposes of teaching and/or research. After each focus group, descriptive and analytic notes were taken by the researcher who conducted the group.

In Turkey, it was not possible to replicate the composition of the focus groups, given the small numbers of UK staff and students in Turkey (highlighting one of the significant imbalances between the two sides). Indeed, despite many advertisements and calls for participation by the British Council, research team and the HEIs that participated in the study, no UK students volunteered to participate in the focus groups. We therefore conducted:

- two focus groups with Turkish academics who had collaborations with the UK. The first focus group was conducted with middle-level academics who had conducted research projects with UK institutions. The second group consisted of senior academics (rectors, vice-rectors or high-level administrators) who had valuable experience of Turkey-UK relations in higher education
- two focus groups with UK academics working in Turkish universities.

The first two focus groups with Turkish academics were conducted in Turkish and the two focus groups with UK academics were conducted in English. Participants were recruited through adverts placed by the British Council and the research team via social media; some were also nominated by the HEIs participating in the study.

The sample of Turkish academics was chosen so as to capture diversity in terms of seniority, department, university type and gender. However, for the UK academics, as very few people volunteered to take part, we included in the focus group all those who showed interest. In total, eight Turkish and eight UK academics participated in the focus groups. Six of the eight UK academics came from English language teaching departments.

Participants were asked questions about their own experience of being involved in a higher education partnership between Turkey and the UK, and/or moving between the two countries for the purposes of teaching and/or research. After each focus group, descriptive and analytic notes were taken by the researcher who conducted the group.

Research ethics

The research followed the ethical guidelines of the Educational Research Association alongside those of the University of Surrey in the UK and Beykoz University in Turkey. Prior to the commencement of the research, ethical review was undertaken at the University of Surrey and Beykoz University.

To ensure that the respondents understood the likely nature of their involvement, the purpose of the research, the methods to be used and the possible uses of the findings were made clear during initial contact with the prospective interviewees and focus group participants. They were all sent a detailed information sheet to ensure that the aims and objectives of the project were communicated clearly. This emphasised that no-one should feel under any obligation to become involved in the research. In addition, all interviewees were required to sign (by email) a consent form, and the researchers made it clear that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage.

Participants' details were held in confidence throughout the research. Personal data (name, contact details, audio recordings) were handled in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation. All information supplied by the respondents was stored securely in password-protected computer files and locked filing cabinets and remained confidential. Identifying information was shared only amongst the project team, and we

do not refer to any individual or organisation by name when reporting data. In the text, the quotations and views of participants were coded as 'N' for national organisations, 'HEI' for higher education institutions and 'Focus Group' for focus group participants and each organisation/institution has been given a separate number. In addition, all participants in the focus groups were asked to confirm that they would treat the responses of other group members as confidential.

Limitations

The research outlined in this report was conducted in a relatively short period of time, from November 2020 to mid-March 2021, which imposed some limitations of the extent and nature of our data collection. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews and focus groups, as well as team meetings, had to be conducted online. While in many ways this worked well, we encountered some technical difficulties, and focus group discussions were perhaps not as free-flowing as they may have been if conducted face-to-face.

Moreover, as noted above, it was not possible to reach UK students studying in Turkey as we initially planned. According to CoHE statistics there were only 250 UK students (144 male, 106 female) in Turkish universities in 2019-2020 and, as a result of Covid-19, they most probably continued their programmes online in 2020-2021. Although this means that the perspectives of this group of students are not included in the report, it does underline imbalances in interest in student mobility between the two countries – a theme we return to later in the report. Lastly, as we used qualitative methods of data collection, we do not claim that our findings are necessarily representative of all higher education stakeholders in the two nations - but that they communicate important perspectives held by at least some relevant stakeholders.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1

Setting the context: Internationalisation in Higher Education (IHE)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the context for the chapters that follow by first explaining what the term internationalisation means in the context of higher education, and outlining how initiatives in this area have changed over time. Second, it examines some of the tools that have been used within higher education sectors in different nation-states to further internationalisation.

1.2 Definition and historical context of IHE

Internationalisation has become one of the most important strategic priorities for national authorities, higher education institutions and individual stakeholders. It is a broad term, covering different approaches, tools and rationales. The most commonly used definition of IHE is ‘the process of integrating an international and intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of higher education’ (Knight, 2003, p.2). Over the past 30 years, IHE has evolved from being an ad-hoc and marginal activity to a central component of higher education policy and an integral part of university strategies (De Wit and Hunter, 2014).

In the last decade it was acknowledged that comparing with the total number of students and academics, very small numbers benefit from internationalisation abroad programmes. The concept of ‘comprehensive internationalisation’, developed by Hudzic (2011), refers to the embrace of internationalisation by the whole of an institution, and its use as an institutional imperative rather than only a desired possibility. Extending the analysis of

the term, Rumbley (2020) has defined ‘intelligent internationalisation’, as a process that requires a thoughtful alliance between research, practitioner and policy communities and which emphasizes the centrality of mutual learning across relevant stakeholder groups.

Although in the 1980s and 1990s, the main focus of IHE was on mobility and education abroad (De Wit, 2020), because of the limited number of students and staff who can move in this way, it became necessary to enlarge the definition beyond physical mobility. Although physical movement still tends to receive the most attention within internationalisation policy and practice, it is not inclusive and excludes the vast majority of students worldwide (De Wit and Jones, 2018). As a result, alternative and more inclusive concepts have been developed, including ‘internationalisation at home’ (Beelen and Jones, 2015), ‘internationalisation of the curriculum’ (Leask, 2015), and ‘virtual internationalisation’ (Lawton, 2015).

Within these conceptual frameworks, the beneficiaries of internationalisation include disadvantaged and non-traditional students. In recognition of these developments, in the past decade, the definition of IHE has been updated to: ‘the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society’ (de Wit et al., 2015). As a result, IHE is viewed as an intentional process that should inform HEIs’ policy and practice by not focusing exclusively on mobility, but by ensuring that all students,

whatever their background, benefit from internationalisation strategies.

The rationales driving HE internationalisation can be categorized as academic, economic, political and socio-cultural (Knight, 2004), although economic rationales have received considerably more attention than the others (Van der Wende, 2001; Jiang, 2008; Brandenburg and De Wit, 2011). When the focus is only on economic benefits, only a small and elite subset of students and institutions tend to benefit from internationalisation (De Wit and Altbach, 2020). The mobile student population across the world is typically not diverse in terms of social characteristics such as income, ethnicity and disability, and thus the employment advantages that often accrue to those who are physically mobile tend to reinforce social inequalities (Brooks and Waters, 2011). As a consequence, and in line with the points made above about the importance of defining internationalisation in more inclusive terms, various scholars have argued that more emphasis needs to be placed on the socio-cultural rationale, and less on economic imperatives (Branderburg et al., 2019).

Internationalisation policies for higher education have become a priority for most nations in the world, with many national governments, individuals HEIs and other stakeholders developing and implementing policy in this area. Helms, Brajickovic and Rumbley (2016) classify these groups as: regional government entities (e.g. EU, EHEA, ASEAN, OAS); national government entities (e.g. CIMO in Finland); quasi-governmental and independent organisations (e.g. British Council, DAAD, Nuffic, Campus France); and other influencers such as multinational organisations (e.g. EAIE, APAIE, ANIE) or regional university associations (e.g. EUA, ASEAN). As a result, IHE policies formulated at the local level are often significantly affected by the changes and development at various others level of society, too.

In the past, internationalisation of higher education was seen as something related solely to developed countries, which controlled the international market for scientific journals, graduate students etc. However, in the last two decades, developing countries have also started to play a role in this market as international and global concerns have become central strategic priorities for many universities (Edelstein and Douglass, 2012).

Developing countries have increasingly aligned their HE systems with international standards and regulations for economic, academic, political and socio-cultural reasons. They have, for example, made significant efforts to attract international students for various reasons such as improving the quality and cultural composition of the student body, gaining prestige or earning income (Altbach and Knight, 2007). For some HEIs and other stakeholders, increasing the number of international students and teaching staff is seen as a means of achieving 'internationalisation at home' when there is little possibility of 'internationalisation abroad'.

1.3 Scope and tools

There are various ways for higher education institutions to pursue internationalisation, such as through student/staff mobility, incoming degree-seeking students, research and publication, internationalisation of the curriculum, joint degree programmes, and opening campuses abroad. Although student mobility is the best-known form of internationalisation (Van Damme, 2001), physical international exchange has been transformed into broader forms of academic co-operation, joint research and transnational higher education (Huang, 2007).

Various scholars have developed typologies to describe the most common forms of internationalisation. For example, Teichler (2017) has argued that the most widespread forms of internationalisation aim to further: worldwide knowledge transfer; physical mobility across countries; international co-operation and communication; international education and research; international similarity; and international reputation. Similarly, Edelstein and Douglass (2012) identified seven different clusters of internationalisation activities: individual faculty initiatives (research collaboration, curriculum development etc.); managing institutional demography (international student and academic staff recruitment, conferences etc.); mobility initiatives (exchange programmes, internship etc.); curricular and pedagogical change (foreign language, intern cultural competence etc.); transnational engagements (double-degree programmes, branch campuses etc.); network building (alumni networks; consortia etc.); and campus culture and ethos. With respect to IHE

policies, specifically, Helms, Brajkovic and Rumbley (2016) distinguish between the following five types:

- *type 1: Student mobility:* Recently, educational systems have become more and more internationalized through various mechanisms; however, the mobility of students is still the most well-known form of internationalisation. Incoming and outgoing student mobility can be realized either through structured programmes (e.g. the EU's Erasmus+ programme, Turkey's Turkish scholarship programme, the Fulbright Programme) or the individual decisions of degree-seeking students.
- *type 2: Scholar mobility and research collaboration:* Scholar mobility for educational purposes and research collaboration is another form of internationalisation which aims to increase the global research capacity of individuals and HEIs. Structured programmes have been developed for this purpose (e.g. EU Horizon 2020, DAAD scholarship, British Council's Researchers Link). Individual networks or international faculty might also be a starting point.
- *type 3: Cross-border education:* Cross-border education can be in the forms of branch campuses, virtual courses, joint or dual degrees, and transnational education (TNE). It is typically based on institutional initiatives and partnership agreements between HEIs. As Knight (2016) explains, collaborative or independent transnational provision might include joint/double/multiple degree programmes, twinning programmes, co-funded universities, branch campuses or franchise universities.
- *type 4: Internationalisation at home (IaH):* IaH consists of strategies and approaches to inject an international dimension to a 'home' institution such as comparative perspectives in the curriculum or recruiting international students and staff (Altbach et.al., 2009). Beelen and Jones (2015) define IaH as the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students in their domestic environment.
- *type 5: Comprehensive internationalisation:* As noted above, this approach denotes a holistic approach towards internationalisation, with the aim of internationalizing education and research, and serving society through the co-operation of

all stakeholders including leaders, academic and administrative staff, and students.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of internationalisation within higher education. It has shown how the definition of the term has expanded over time to include a wide range of activities, not only the physical mobility of staff and students. It has also demonstrated how, although internationalisation was initially a strategic aim for higher education institutions primarily in developed countries, it has now been embraced by institutions across the world. Indeed, a wide variety of international and regional organisations are now involved in policy-making in this area, not only national governments and individual HE institutions. The chapter has also delineated various types of IHE, many of which will be returned to in subsequent chapters of this report.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

The UK and Turkey: higher education systems and existing partnerships

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the higher education systems in Turkey and the UK, to help contextualise the findings discussed in later chapters. It also outlines some of the current priorities in both nations, with respect to internationalisation, with reference to recent policy documents and pronouncements. The final section of the chapter then focuses on partnerships and other forms of collaboration between Turkey and the UK specifically, drawing on the data collected during the research study.

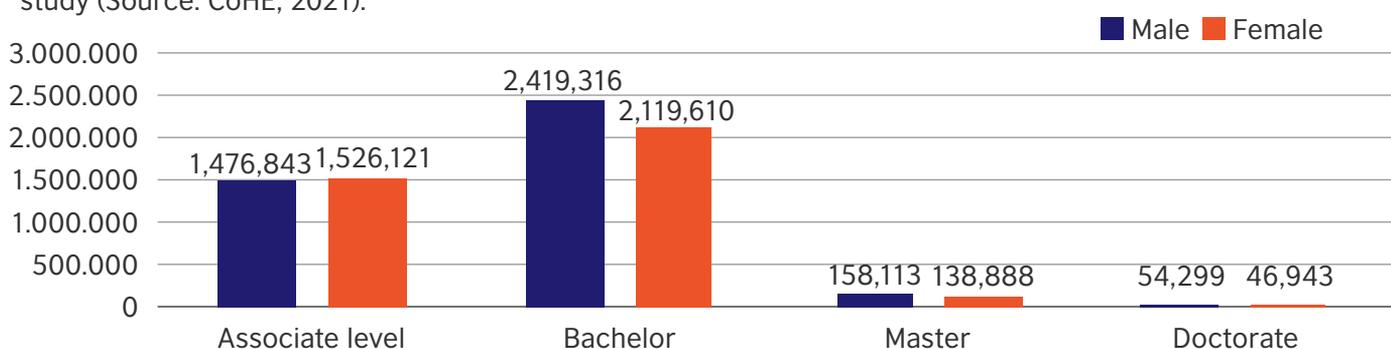
2.2 Overview of the HE systems in both countries

2.2.1 Turkey

Turkey has a large higher education sector, which is centrally planned and coordinated in line with the Constitution and the associated Law (Erdogan and Toprak, 2012). The Council of Higher Education is the responsible body for the strategic planning, coordination, supervision and monitoring of higher education, as well as for establishing and maintaining quality assurance mechanisms in Turkey (CoHE, 2019b).

Over the past two decades, the higher education sector has massified rapidly and grown significantly in size – to promote access and enhance the capacity of the system – as stipulated in the Constitution as well as in the national Development Plans (Erdogan and Toprak, 2012). According to statistics produced by the CoHE (2021), there are eight million students in the Turkish higher education sector – the largest number of any country within the European Higher Education Area. Nearly half of the student population (over 4 million) is enrolled in distance learning provision. Nevertheless, demand for higher education has always outstripped supply in Turkey. Access to higher education is managed through a very competitive annual nationwide selection and placement exam run by the Measurement, Selection and Placement Centre (OSYM).

Figure 2.1: Number of students studying in the Turkish higher education system by gender and level of study (Source: CoHE, 2021).



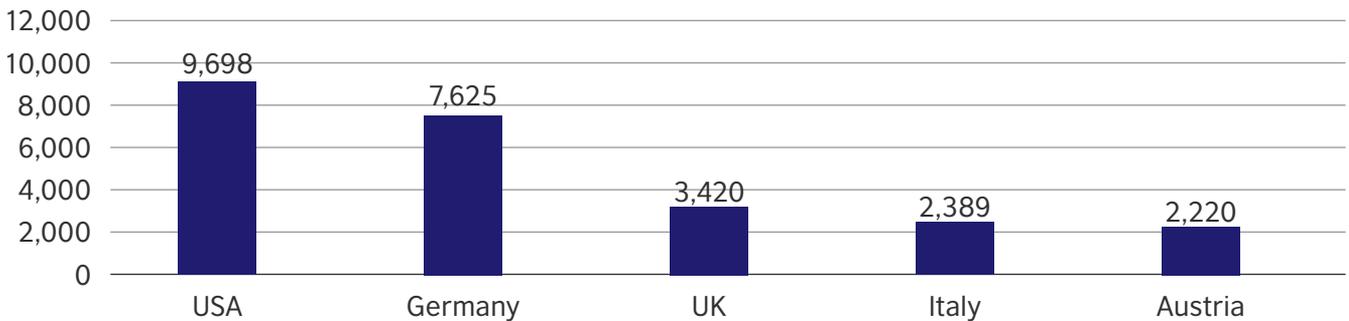
The distribution of students by gender and level of study is given in Figure 2.1

Currently 207 higher education institutions operate in Turkey (CoHE, 2021). 129 of these are state universities, 74 are foundation universities, and four are vocational foundation schools. Although the universities are spread throughout the country, approximately 40 per cent are located in the cities of Istanbul and Ankara. Most Turkish universities are newly established: 43 of them were founded between 1991-2000; 77 of them were founded between 2001-2010; and 58 of them were founded between 2011-2020. Current numbers of students and faculty according to university types are given in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Number of universities, students and faculty in Turkish higher education system (Source: CoHE, 2021)

University type	# of universities	# of students	# of faculty
State	129	7,320,449	151,429
Foundation	74	608,123	26,983
Foundation Vocational School	4	11,561	239

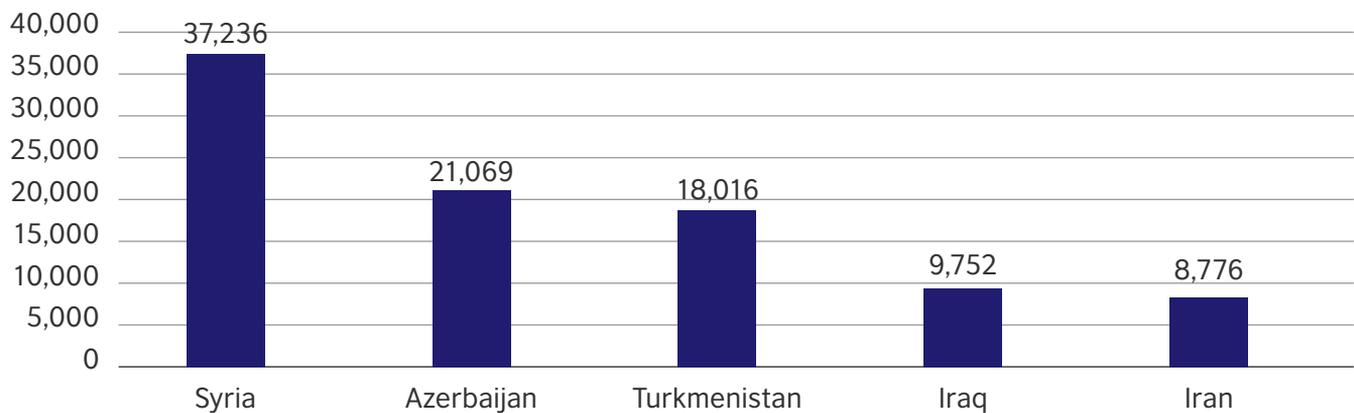
Figure 2.2: Number of outgoing whole-degree students from Turkey (Source: UNESCO, 2021)



The Turkish government places particular importance on increasing the number of international students in HEIs. The number of outgoing Turkish students is 47,546 (UNESCO, 2021) and the most popular destinations are shown in Figure 2.2.

The corresponding number of incoming whole-degree students was 185,047 in 2019-2020 (CoHE, 2021). There has been a significant increase in the number of international students in Turkey due to national policies such as abandoning the centrally regulated Foreign Student Exam (YÖS) in 2010, to give universities more flexibility in accepting international students and introducing scholarships for international students.

In addition, in 2011, Mevlana exchange programme was established for the students outside the EU, and in 2012 the Study in Turkey programme was established to attract international students. The Turkish Scholarship Programme (Türkiye Bursları) began in 2012 (replacing the previous Big Student Project which had run from 1992 with the aim of systemising and sustaining international student recruitment). Through this programme, the Turkish government offers grants for international students from countries with which Turkey has historical, political, religious ties (Türkiye Bursları, 2020). As a result of these various policies, Turkey has become one of the most popular countries for attracting international students, ranking in the top 10 countries of such countries in the world by UNESCO.

Figure 2.3: International students in Turkish HE (2019-2020) (Source: CoHE, 2019)

As the statistics shown in Figure 2.3 indicate, most of the international students in Turkey are from the countries with which the country has regional, historical or cultural ties. Indeed, Turkey functions as a regional hub, empowered by historical and cultural ties with other countries and communities in the region. Its internationalisation strategy tends to be driven by a desire to reinforce these ties rather than by economic motives (Kondakci, 2011; Kondakci et al., 2016). The number of Syrian students increased dramatically from 2011 after the civil war began in Syria and more than four million Syrian sought shelter in Turkey (Erdogan and Erdogan 2020). The tuition fees of Syrian students are paid by the Turkish government while other international students are eligible for a ‘Turkey Scholarship’.

In addition to the national policies discussed above, international initiatives such as the Bologna Process and the European Union’s Erasmus+ programme have been key facilitators of the internationalisation of Turkish universities, and have led to various organisational changes within HEIs since 2001. Turkey’s participation in the Bologna Process has accelerated internationalisation (along with other changes related to Bologna action lines). The tools introduced by the Bologna Process have enhanced the comparability, recognition and equivalency of degree programmes, which has, in turn, facilitated internationalisation. For example, a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was developed in 2011 to make degrees more comparable, and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has been included within the HE Law (Erdogan, 2015).

Moreover, the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) was established in 2015 to implement quality assurance at the national level, building on the earlier establishment (in 2005) of quality commissions in individual HEIs (ADEK) and a commission at the national level (YÖDEK). In addition, since about 2004 when Turkey began participating in EU education programmes such as Erasmus, within HEIs, international offices have been operating, and a member of the rectorate has held specific responsibility for internationalisation. At the present moment, internationalisation is identified as a key goal in official national documents, and is also included in the strategic plans and vision/mission statements of the universities as they take a more pro-active stance towards internationalisation.

Nevertheless, despite the initiatives described above, the number of international teaching staff in Turkish universities is low (see Table 2.2) and limited mainly to some foundation universities and old state universities in big cities (Erdogan, 2014). Most of the Turkish higher education institutions teach in Turkish, and this can act as a deterrent for international staff alongside some regulatory obstacles (see Chapter 4). The number of international faculty members is not systematically shared with the public; evidence is available from different sources.

Table 2.2: Number of international students and faculty members in Turkey (Source: CoHE, 2021)

Academic year	# of international students	# of international faculty members	Source
2020-2021	207,000	-	CoHE (2021)
2019-2020	185,001	3,325	CoHE (2021)
2018-2019	153,662	2,085	CoHE (2020)
2017-2018	126,681	1,219	CoHE (2019a)
2016-2017	108,076	2,886	CoHE (2017)

Although international faculty members work in a relatively large number of universities (165) universities, only 29 institutions have more than 20 such members of staff (CoHE, 2020). The most common countries of origin for such staff in Turkey are the USA, Syria, Azerbaijan, the UK, Iran, Northern Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Egypt and Canada (CoHE, 2017). In 2017-18, there were 200 UK academics working in Turkish universities (see Table 2.3), most of whom were lecturers on English language teaching programmes.

Table 2.3: UK nationals working in Turkish HEIs (Source: British Council, personal communication)

Academic Year	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Lecturer	Research Associate/Assistant	TOTAL
2017-2018	10	7	26	157	-	200
2016-2017	6	9	27	167	-	209
2015-2016	10	9	32	95	1	247

In terms of international research partnerships, 131 universities had 1,449 internationally funded projects in 2019. However, 58 universities had no such projects and only 20 universities had 20 or more internationally funded projects (CoHE, 2020). This demonstrates that international research activity is not spread equally across Turkish universities, with some large disparities in activity.

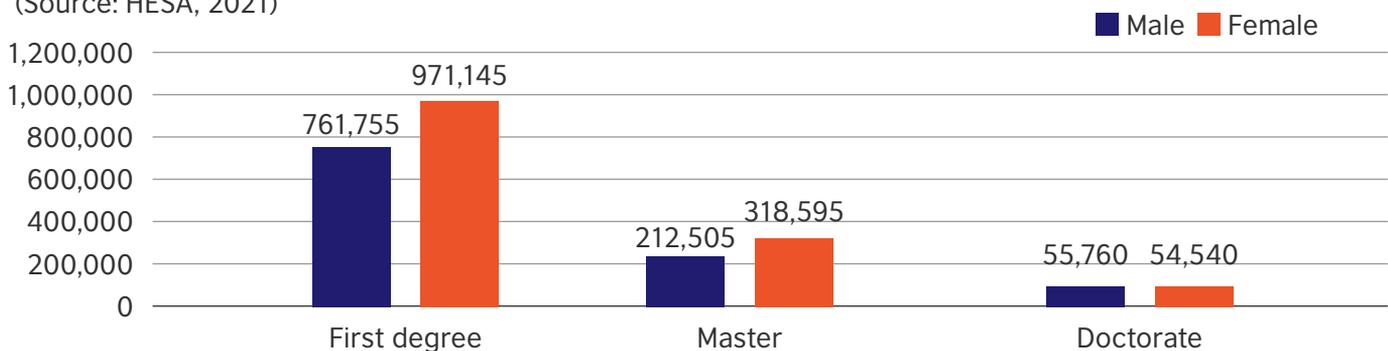
With respect to joint degree programmes, Turkish universities have 74 joint degree programmes with the USA; 52 with the UK; 30 with France; 29 with Germany; 7 with the Netherlands; and five with Malaysia (Study in Turkey, 2021). One of our national-level interviewees in Turkey indicated that, between 2014 and 2020, Turkish HEIs were involved in 87 strategic Erasmus+ partnerships, 15 of which were with UK HEIs.

2.2.2 The UK

The UK higher education sector is currently comprised of 165 institutions, just under 440,000 staff and 2.52 million students (HESA, 2021; UUK, 2021a). The breakdown of students, by gender and level of study is provided in Figure 2.4. The sector is more vertically-differentiated than in many countries (Hazelkorn, 2015), with divisions typically drawn between (i) larger, older, 'research intensive' universities (typically members of the 'Russell Group' mission group); (ii) smaller, research-focussed universities, that held university status prior to 1992; and (iii) more modern, often teaching-focussed institutions, that gained university status in 1992 or later. Across the UK, all students pay tuition fees for their higher education, although the amount charged differs by the particular nation, whether students are categorised as 'home' or 'international', and the level of their study (undergraduate or postgraduate).

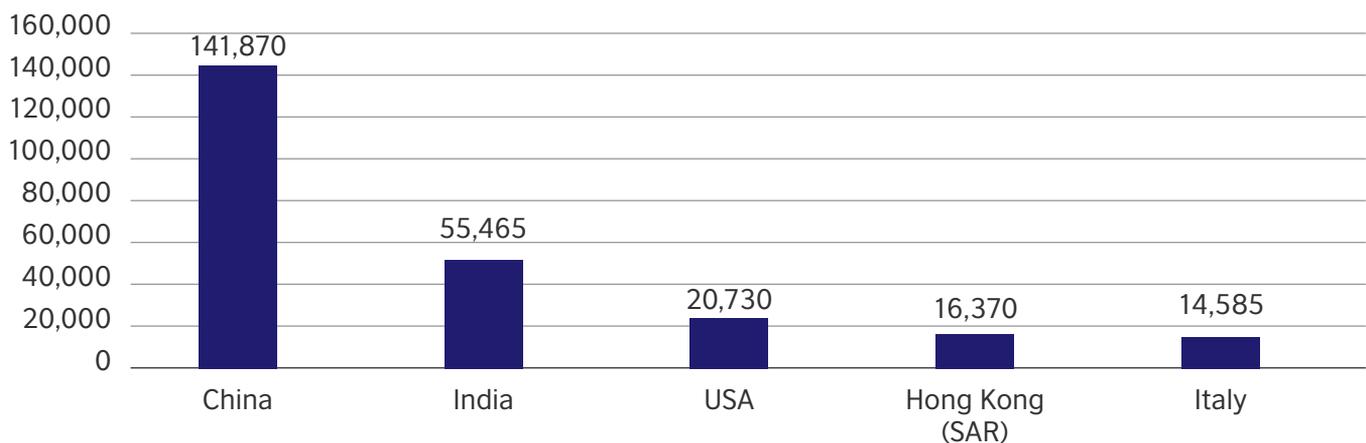
In England, at undergraduate level, ‘home’ students pay tuition fees of a maximum of £9,250 per year, while the fees of international students are uncapped and can sometimes be as much as three times the amount charged to ‘home’ students. Postgraduate fees are uncapped for both home and international students, but there are typically large differences between the amounts paid by the two groups. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the fees payable by international students and postgraduates are similar to England. However, at undergraduate level, no fees are payable by Scottish students who study in Scotland, and the fees of Northern Irish students who study in Northern Ireland are capped at £4,395 (UCAS, 2021). UK students are entitled to apply for a loan to cover both their tuition fees and living costs, repayable once their future earnings have reached a particular point (currently an annual salary of £26,575). The loan for living costs is means tested while the tuition fee loan is available to all UK students studying in the UK who have to pay fees.

Figure 2.4: Number of students studying in the UK higher education system by gender and level of study (Source: HESA, 2021)



International activity has long been of importance to the UK HE sector, particularly since the reduction in public funding for higher education from the 1980s onwards (Brooks and Waters, 2011; Tannock, 2018). The latest data available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2021) indicate that in 2019-20 there were 556,625 international students studying at UK HEIs (see Table 2.4), accounting for 22 per cent of the total student population (just under 15.9 per cent of all undergraduates and 39.9 per cent of all postgraduates). Of these international students, 147,800 were from EU countries and 408,825 from outside the EU. In 2019-20. The top five sending countries are shown in Figure 2.5

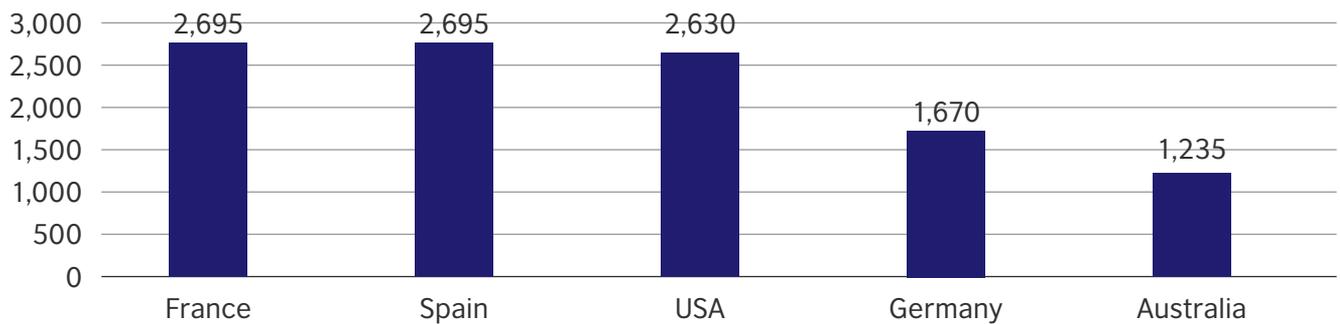
Figure 2.5: Incoming whole-degree students to the UK, top five countries (Source: HESA, 2021)



The number of Turkey-domiciled international students in the UK increased by 20 per cent over the past five years – from 3,695 in 2015-16 to 4,440 in 2019-20. Of these 4,440 Turkish international students in 2019-20, 42 per cent were on undergraduate programmes, 31 per cent on taught postgraduate programmes, and 27 per cent were studying at doctoral level. With respect to short-term Erasmus+ mobility, in 2019, 416 Turkish students came to the UK (out of a total of 29,797 incoming Erasmus students) (European Commission, 2020).

Around 7.8 per cent of UK undergraduates work, study or volunteer overseas as part of their degree. One third of mobile students follow language degree programmes and over 30 per cent study medicine and dentistry. There are also some differences by social background: 9.5 per cent of students from more advantaged were mobile, compared to only 5.6 per cent from less advantaged backgrounds (UUK, 2019). Only a small number have moved to Turkey under the Erasmus+ programme. In 2019, the number was 69 – out of a total of 18,099 Erasmus+ participants from the UK (European Commission, 2020). The five most popular countries for outward short-term mobility from the UK are shown in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6: Outgoing UK students (for credit mobility), top five countries (Source: UUK, 2019)



More than a quarter of all UK HE staff are from outside the UK: 21 per cent of teaching staff and 45 per cent of researchers (UUK, 2021b). With respect to staff, in 2018-19, approximately 32 per cent of academic staff were not UK nationals: 18 per cent had an EU nationality, and 14 per cent were nationals of a country outside the EU (see Table 2.4 for specific numbers). For non-academic staff, 7 per cent had an EU (non-UK) nationality, and 4 per cent had a non-EU nationality (ibid.). Data from the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency indicate that, in 2019-20, there were 539 Turkish academics working in UK HEIs: 289 females and 253 males. The vast majority of these (85 per cent) were working in England, rather than the other three nations of the UK (HESA, 2021).

Table 2.4: Number of international students and staff in the UK (Source: HESA, 2021)

Academic year	# of international students (EU and non-EU)	# of international staff (EU)	# of international staff (non-EU)
2019-2020	556,625	34,410	31,785
2018-2019	496,315	38,830	29,400
2017-2018	469,205	37,035	27,625

While university vice-chancellors have overall responsibility for an institution's international strategy and activity, responsibility for operational matters and day-to-day international activities tends to be delegated to the head of an institution's international office, global engagement unit or similar. Such structures are well-established and have been in place for many years.

2.3 Priority areas, strategies, policies

2.3.1 Turkey

Turkey's national priorities for the internationalisation of higher education are outlined in two main documents: the 11th Development Plan of the country and CoHE's strategic plan for internationalisation (2018-2022).

The 11th Development Plan

The 11th Development Plan of Turkey (2019-2023) includes various strategic aims to increase the attraction of Turkish universities for international students (SBB, 2021). The strategic aims to develop the internationalisation of higher education are defined in the following ways (p.150):

- to improve the promotion of Turkish universities to international audiences
- to increase the number of qualified international students
- to increase the proportion of qualified international faculty amongst the total number of academics
- to increase the number of programmes offered in a foreign language
- to increase the accommodation available for international students
- to develop the institutional capacities of HEIs (with respect to internationalisation).

CoHE's strategic plan for internationalisation

According to the Internationalisation Strategy Document of Higher Education (2018-2022) (CoHE, 2017), the main aim of internationalisation is to attract more international students and staff. The key tools to achieve this aim are identified as: the Bologna reforms, the TURQUAS project, the Erasmus+ Programme, the Turkish Scholarship Programme, the Mevlana Exchange Programme, joint degree programmes, the International Project-based Mobility Programme, the YABSIS (Database for International Faculty) Project, Regulation for

School Recognition, policies for international PhD students to stay in Turkey after graduation, scholarships for international students including job guarantees, and the integration of immigrant students into higher education.

A SWOT analysis was conducted as part of the plan by CoHE. This identified the following factors with respect to the internationalisation of Turkish universities:

Strengths: variety of universities and programmes; integration in the European Higher Education Area; multi-culturalism in cities; transportation; language proximity for Turkic countries; cultural proximity for Turkish and Islam countries; high capacity for teaching Turkish;

Weaknesses: access to education; relatively few programmes offered in English; accommodation; integration of international students; inadequate institutional structures; inadequate language skills of students and staff; insufficient information in foreign languages; inadequate promotion and branding;

Opportunities: demand for higher education; affordability of life and higher education; historical/ social/ cultural ties; Turkish scholarships; developments in ICT; geopolitical position; Turkish universities' willingness to internationalize; policies towards focused specific geographies; air transportation to most of the countries of the world;

Threats: regional instability; negative perception about security; recognition or equivalency of diploma problems with some countries.

The main strategic aims for 2018-2022 are defined as, firstly, making Turkish HE an attractive international location through:

- increasing the number of international students
- increasing the number of international faculty members

- attracting international faculty members through ‘reverse brain drain’
- increasing the number of co-operation agreements and participants in student and staff mobility programmes
- increasing accommodation opportunities for international students; increasing the international co-operation potential of HEIs
- increasing the international recognition of Turkish HEIs
- increasing the number of educational programmes in foreign languages; increasing the teaching capacity of academicians in foreign languages; and
- increasing the number of co-operation agreements with foreign governments and multinational institutions.

The second aim is to develop institutional capacity for international higher education through:

- establishing international offices in universities
- ensuring a supply of qualified and sufficient human resource for internationalisation
- establishing communication mechanisms for inter-agency work on legislation, current developments and trends in the field of internationalisation and
- employing ‘academic advisors’ responsible for HE in target countries.

These strategic aims show that increasing the number of international students and staff is an important priority for Turkish government. The UK was identified as one of 20 strategically important countries for the period between 2018-2023. (The countries are listed alphabetically (in Turkish) in the document: Afghanistan, Germany, Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, People’s Republic of China, Indonesia, India, UK, Iran, Kosovo, Macedonia, Malaysia, Egypt, Pakistan, Russia, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, Greece).

2.3.2 The UK

The UK’s current priorities with respect to internationalisation of the higher education sector are summarised effectively in its International Education Strategy, published in 2019, and the recent update to this, published in February 2021 by the Department for Education and the Department for International Trade. The update to the strategy reaffirms the government’s commitment to achieving the two main targets outlined in the 2019 strategy, namely increasing the value of education exports (which include international students studying in the UK) to £35 billion per year (from £23.3 billion in 2018 – the latest available data) and increasing the number of international students studying in the UK to 600,000 per year (in 2019-20, the comparable number was just under 560,000). In addition, the updated strategy identifies some specific actions to help increase the value of education exports and the number of international students. These include:

- widening the range of countries and regions from which international students are recruited. To this end, a number of ‘priority’ countries and regions, thought to have high growth potential, are identified for targeted action (India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Nigeria) alongside ‘other important regional markets’ (Brazil, Mexico, Pakistan, Europe, China and Hong Kong)
- building lasting global partnerships in and beyond the priority areas identified above
- improving the experiences of international students – from the point of application to a UK degree through to entry into employment and
- introducing a new international teaching qualification to attract students from around the world who wish to train as teachers.

Having provided an overview of key national priorities, the following section outlines the current situation with respect to UK-Turkey collaborations by drawing on our data.

2.4 UK-Turkey collaborations: current situation

2.4.1 Turkish perspectives

Reflecting the national priorities discussed above, most of the HEIs that participated in the research aimed to increase their number of international students. Although most of the universities did not have a separate internationalisation strategy document, their strategic plans include parts or aims that relate to internationalisation. Our analysis of these various strategic documents indicated that internationalisation was often seen primarily in terms of student mobility. Other dimensions of internationalisation remain less visible and less systematically approached. Similar trends were evident at the national level, too, with the strategies of national organisations tending to prioritise increasing the number of incoming international students to Turkey (e.g. CoHE, 2017).

Research participants outlined various structural changes that they believed were necessary to support the aims of greater internationalisation - such as increasing the number of courses taught in English or seeking accreditation by national or international institutions. All the participants emphasized the importance of competency in a foreign language and quality assurance for internationalisation. The former was thought to be necessary to promote effective communication with research partners (who may not be able to speak Turkish), while the latter was deemed to be important for establishing joint degree programmes and other forms of student mobility – where partners needed to be reassured about the standard of Turkish qualifications.

As stated in the previous sections, national-level policymaking institutions have developed clear strategies for increasing internationalisation, and the UK is benchmarked in relation to this goal. The collaboration of a relatively new national institution, the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council, with experienced UK national institutions such as the QAA and the British Council, was seen to offer considerable potential for facilitating co-operation in a number of areas. Moreover, CoHE's memorandum of understanding with the UUK, signed in 2012, and with the British Council, in 2019,

were also seen as helping to strengthen the internationalisation agenda.

At the institutional level, in general, the interviewees thought that co-operating with UK universities would bring many benefits and opportunities for both countries, but that the current number and size of UK-Turkey partnerships were not sufficient and should be diversified and increased. They believed that in addition to the efforts by Turkish national bodies and the British Council, the considerable number of UK graduates as academics or high level administrators in Turkish universities who are familiar with the UK system would help develop such links – as would the Turkish academics currently working in the UK.

In terms of student/staff exchange, most of the agreements were concluded under the Erasmus+ programme based on specific disciplines. These provided an important opportunity, especially for newly founded universities, to begin internationalisation processes. Some individual academics stated that their first partnerships with the UK have also begun through the Erasmus+ programme. Nevertheless, some of the participants also noted how agreements with UK universities had been terminated due to an imbalance in demand, with more interest in movement from Turkey to the UK than vice versa.

According to Erasmus+ statistics of outgoing students, the UK is the 12th most popular country for Turkish students (European Commission, 2020). Interviewees explained that although many Turkish students want to choose the UK, mobility is limited because of the low number of agreements compared to the other countries in Europe. Most of the HEIs that participated in the study did not have any UK students or very few, and those that they did have were often of Turkish origin. In terms of Erasmus+, between 2014 and 2020, from Turkey 2670 students and 509 staff visited the UK, but only 403 students and 250 staff from the UK visited Turkey. In terms of study areas, outgoing students were mostly from political science, psychology, engineering, medicine and law, and incoming students were mostly from political science, business administration, motor and aircraft engineering, history and archaeology and law. Some interviewees believed that there was more

opportunity to participate in the Erasmus+ internship programme since it does not require an institutional agreement and acceptance is based on the qualifications of an individual student.

For degree-seeking mobility, interviewees mentioned the high demand from Turkish students to study in the UK. They noted that institutions were keen to recruit Turkish students and they participated in fairs and high school visits in Turkey for that purpose. Moreover, they also stated that Turkish students have a particular interest in studying in the UK for their graduate education. Participants outlined the following scholarship sources that enabled Turkish students to study in the UK:

- Turkish Ministry of Education (MoNE) scholarships for graduate education abroad. The UK was the most popular destination under this scheme. The MoNE concluded 49 agreements for tuition fee discounts with UK universities for Turkish degree-seeking students as part of this initiative.
- Chevening Scholarship Programme. The scholarship awarded under this programme covers all expenses for a 12-month master programme. Applicants should have minimum of two years' work experience after their bachelor's degree and they have to return to work in Turkey for at least for two years after their studies.
- Jean Monnet Scholarship Programme. This is run by the Directorate of European Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The UK is the top choice of the Turkish students who apply to this programme – and, as a result, a country quota has been introduced for the UK.
- TÜBİTAK 2213 and 2214 and Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund PhD Scholarship Programme. The Science and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) offers scholarships for PhD studies and post-doctoral studies abroad, including the UK. Moreover, the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund also supports the mobility of PhD students and post-doctoral researchers as a part of funded research projects.

Interviewees also noted, however, that in the UK tuition fees are high and opportunities for full or partial compensation (through scholarships) are few.

This is an important barrier to further expansion, which we discuss in Chapter 4.

In terms of research links, most of the participants had positive views about research collaborations. Research projects discussed in the interviews were funded by EU Horizon 2020, Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund, Royal Academy of Engineering and the Erasmus+ Programme. In addition, the British Council also offers some research funds through its initiatives on English as a medium of instruction and its English Language Teaching and Research Awards (ELTRA). Turkish national authorities explained that they were currently working on new schemes with UK institutions to promote relationships between industry and higher education. Similarly, one industry-based university also mentioned that they were co-operating with another industry-based UK university on applied research projects.

These research partnerships were mostly established by individual academics, through their own professional networks, or a network of a faculty member or UK graduate. HEI interviewees described how they aimed to transform these individual links into institutional ones. They also noted, however, that in most universities, the international cooperation office responsible for exchange programmes and international research offices do not work in co-operation.

With respect to education, joint degree programmes were widely mentioned as one of the priority areas for collaboration, particularly at the postgraduate level. Nevertheless, interviewees identified various barriers relating to regulation, legislation and attitudes that hindered collaboration in this area. Such barriers will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. However, as an example, one university mentioned that they worked for six years with a UK university and developed a model, but the model was then not approved by CoHE and so could not be implemented. Another university mentioned that they had to terminate their joint degree programme with a UK university due to communication problems.

Finally, those UK academics who were working in Turkey had tended to relocate for similar reasons to one another – often to be close to family and for

other personal, rather than work-related, reasons. Although some universities had strategies to increase the number of UK academic staff, most had experienced difficulties in realising such aims.

2.4.2 UK perspectives

In general, UK interviewees considered that partnerships between UK and Turkish HEIs were not well-developed, particularly when compared to various other countries with which UK HEIs were working.

With respect to TNE, many of the national-level interviewees commented on the very small numbers of Turkish students involved in UK TNE programmes (i.e. where students remained in Turkey but studied for a UK qualification) (typically around 500 per year) and noted that most of these were registered on online and/or distance learning courses. Moreover, despite some of the important national-level initiatives referred to above and in the Introduction, none of these interviewees were able to identify a successful TNE partnership between the two countries. Within our sample of HEIs, two were interested in setting up an articulation agreement with a Turkish HEI (one of which had already begun discussions with a possible partner), and a third had previously begun work on an articulation agreement but had had to pull out because of problems in matching quality assurance systems. (Other barriers are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.)

Short-term mobility agreements were not, on the whole, considered any more successful. Five HEIs in the sample had had a student and/or staff mobility agreement with a Turkish university through the Erasmus+ programme. Two of these had lapsed: in one case because the staff member who had set up the agreement had left, and in the other, because of a lack of student interest on the UK side. In the three other HEIs, interviewees reported the schemes often suffered from an imbalance of interest – with more Turkish students interested in coming to the UK than vice versa.

Interviewees tended to be more positive about links between the two countries with respect to whole degree mobility – although only from the perspective of Turkish students coming to the UK.

For some HEIs in the sample, Turkey represented an important market, while for others it was one they hoped to grow. One interviewee noted: 'It is one of our priority countries in the Middle East for direct student recruitment as we have relatively large numbers each year [just under 150 at the time of the interview]' (UK-HEI 4). He went on to say that his university had worked quite closely with private secondary schools in Turkey and educational agents in the country, to help sustain this flow.

Interviewees were most positive about the links established through research – with several citing the collaborations that had been formed through research projects funded by the European Union and the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund. However, nearly all noted that these tended to be driven by individual academic staff, and the particular funding sources available, rather than by any institutional action or initiative. Indeed, in most cases, the international offices had only rather scant knowledge of the specifics of the collaboration. This view was replicated in the focus groups – with most staff reporting that their partnerships with Turkey had been established through personal connections. These personal connections include having met at a conference, having been approached by an individual academic from Turkey, or simply having a common friend in the UK (for the UK-based non-Turkish academics). For the Turkish academics, acquaintances established while studying either in the UK or in Turkey had also had a positive impact on building partnerships.

Five of the HEIs reported no links with Turkish HEIs of any kind.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some contextual information about the higher education systems in Turkey and the UK, and outlined key aims with respect to internationalisation. Both countries have given high priority to internationalizing further their HE sectors, although they are currently in rather different positions. In particular, the UK has a high number of international students and staff, and well-established institutional international offices, while the number of international students and staff in Turkey is much lower, and not all institutions yet have internationalisation strategies. There are many more Turkish students studying in the UK than vice versa, with some dedicated scholarship schemes to facilitate their mobility. Some UK HEIs have been actively pursuing this market by, for example, working closely with Turkish high schools. Differences were also apparent with respect to short-term mobility, with much more interest in such schemes from Turkish students and staff than their UK counterparts.

Despite these differences, there are also some important commonalities across the two countries. First, most interviewees were positive about the research collaborations established between Turkey and the UK, noting that these tended to be driven by individual academics, rather than institutional initiatives. International funding schemes were key to facilitating such partnerships. Second, it was not possible to identify any examples of best practice with respect to education partnerships. In both Turkey and the UK, interviewees explained that, although there had been interest in establishing joint degrees and/or articulation agreements, these had fallen through because of various specific barriers. In the next two chapters, we explore these issues in more depth – first, in Chapter 3, by discussing some of the particular opportunities for collaboration identified by our participants and then, in Chapter 4, by examining the perceived obstacles.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Opportunities for and benefits of higher education partnerships

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the key opportunities and benefits of HE partnerships between the UK and Turkey are outlined. These include geo-political factors, post-Brexit reconfigurations, geographical diversification, commitment to internationalisation, institutional learning, the impact of Covid-19, and specific areas of common interest. Describing perceived benefits and opportunities in this way may help prepare the ground for future partnership working between the two countries, and identify areas that could be targeted by particular interventions.

3.2 Geo-political factors

Many of those representing national-level organisations in the UK emphasised the importance of various geo-political factors in helping to drive future partnerships between the UK and Turkey. Although Turkey has not been chosen as one of the five priority areas in the recently-published update to the UK's international education strategy (DfE and DIT, 2021) – because other areas were thought to have more growth potential – this did not mean that it was unimportant. Indeed, three of the eight interviewees mentioned the strategic importance of Turkey because of its location on the boundary of Europe and Asia. Implicit in such views was a sense that Turkey could act as a gateway to Asia and, because of Turkey's geographical position, its academics had the potential to develop strong networks with colleagues in both continents – which would be attractive to the UK. A fourth talked about its location in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and how this area was of strategic importance to the UK; links with Turkey could help build stronger relationships with neighbouring MENA countries, too. A small number of institutional

interviewees also mentioned Turkey's strategic importance in this way. One spoke, for example, of its position as 'a bridge to the Middle East from Europe' (UK-HEI-11) and the potential for international engagement associated with that, while another speculated that it could constitute 'a good hub for the region, to help support wider networks' (for TNE and other education links) (UK-HEI-4). A third talked about how Turkey's location between Europe and the Middle East was particularly relevant for an area in which her university had specific research strength (logistics), and so she was keen to develop links to support this area of work (UK-HEI-7).

From the perspective of the Turkish interviewees, the UK was seen as a strategically important country for HE partnerships by nearly all participants. Most believed that the UK – along with the US – was one of the best countries for the Turkish HE sector to collaborate with, with some emphasising its geographical proximity. One HEI interviewee stated that the UK is the key for the future of Turkish higher education system (TR-HEI-13). A national organisation representative mentioned that the strategic aims of the two countries overlap as the UK wants to recruit more students from different countries and Turkey wants to send more students to the UK for a quality education (TR-N-8). Another university interviewee stated that 'academics in Turkey are familiar with the Anglo-Saxon system, therefore, the UK is a preferable professional partner for us' (TR-HEI-7).

Higher education links with Turkey (as with other countries) were seen by UK interviewees as important in terms of improving bi-lateral relationships more generally. One national-level interviewee talked about the importance to the UK

of having strong, stable countries – and thus the need to support Turkey’s development through research schemes such as the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund. Indeed, three of the eight UK national-level representatives emphasised the need to develop partnerships that are of genuine mutual benefit, not just for UK gain. To do this, it was felt important to look at the development needs of partners, and work on capacity-building in these particular areas. More specifically, it was hoped that by working closely with Turkey now, it would encourage the UK to become Turkey’s ‘partner of choice’ for research collaborations in the future (UK-N-6).

Geo-political factors were also mentioned by Turkish participants. Indeed, one national organisation interviewee stated that developing scientific relations between the two countries will strengthen political and commercial relationships more generally, since the best Turkish students who have been part of international collaborations often go on to become leaders in Turkey (TR-N-1). Similarly, another participant mentioned that it is believed that Turkish scholarship-holders who graduate from UK HEIs will become the leaders and decision makers of the future, and are likely to want to build positive relationships with the UK (TR-N-7).

One interviewee from a UK national organisation also mentioned the relatively large Turkish diaspora in the UK, and how this could constitute an important resource for partnership building, given how crucial individuals with links to a particular country often are in the initial stages of such initiatives. Indeed, several institutional interviewees mentioned how the links they had had with Turkey in the past had been forged by Turkish member of staff that they had employed and/or former Turkish PhD students. Similarly, a Turkish university interviewee explained how alumni in the UK had facilitated collaborations:

20 per cent of the alumni of our university live abroad. We had organised an alumni meeting in London, we have 320 alumni there. We have used this network to send 150 students for internship. We can benefit from Turkish alumni settled in the UK. (TR-HEI-13)

Moreover, an individual academic mentioned that she had Turkish friends working in UK universities and they had become partners in many projects. This had then led to her becoming involved in other networks in the UK (TR-Focus Group-1).

Geographical factors were also mentioned by a small number of the UK focus group participants. Some of the students noted that they had chosen the UK rather than other English-speaking nations because of its proximity to Turkey.

3.3 Post-Brexit reconfigurations

Linked to the geo-political factors discussed above, was a sense – among many of those representing UK national organisations – that the withdrawal of the UK from the EU represented an opportunity to reconfigure some of its partnerships. Several talked about the new need to look more widely for partners, and a belief that there would be stronger government support for doing so (some made reference to recent government initiatives with respect to India). In relation to Turkey in particular, one interviewee thought the UK could learn from Turkey in terms of establishing a relationship with the EU as a third country (for example, in terms of accessing future research funds through Horizon Europe). The UK’s withdrawal from the Erasmus+ scheme, and the introduction of the Turing Scheme in its place, was also seen by one national organisation as an opportunity to offer new models of student exchange – such as for shorter periods, and with a strong employment focus – which may be of interest to Turkish universities (although this was seen by others as a barrier, as we discuss in Chapter 4).

Various institutional interviewees also discussed the impact of Brexit on their own strategies, and the various associated opportunities. Several talked about how they had started exploring new markets, outside Europe, to compensate for the predicted loss of EU students coming to the UK for the whole of their degree, and the UK’s withdrawal from the Erasmus+ scheme. Some universities were putting more effort into possible TNE partnerships as a result, while others were looking at new markets for direct recruitment onto UK-based programmes, and short-term student exchanges. Turkey was mentioned explicitly by two of the universities as part of this exploratory work, while others talked

about their focus on ‘wider Europe’ (of which Turkey was considered to be part). In a small number of HEIs, however, the UK’s withdrawal from the EU had promoted a more concentrated focus on EU countries – with the aim of establishing TNE programmes with them, to compensate for the reduction in the number of students coming to the UK, and reassuring European partners that they were still very committed to teaching and research collaborations with them. A small number of focus group participants also saw Brexit as an opportunity to strengthen links between the two countries.

For Turkish interviewees, Brexit was perceived mostly in positive terms, and as offering a range of new opportunities by most of the participants (although primarily in terms of student and staff mobility, and joint programmes, rather than TNE). The following quotation is illustrative:

Considering the benefits, the UK will be on a quest after Brexit. Before Brexit, there was already a rapprochement between the two countries. Relationships were at their best, there will be a derivative of this in higher education. Students from the European Union were coming from home student status and the UK attracted students from Europe. However, as of September 2021, they will pay the same level as international students, that is, twice as much. We need to gain mutual benefit from the UK. There will be a decrease in the number of European Union students, maybe we can fill this gap. (TR-N-8)

HEI interviewees stated a belief that Brexit would not alter the leading role of the UK in their partnerships and, although the structure of such collaborations might change, co-operation would continue (e.g. TR-HEI-1; TR-HEI-12). One university representative mentioned that ‘Brexit has a positive effect for Turkey since after Brexit, universities in the UK searched for new regions other than Europe and Turkey become a strong candidate for this aim. After Brexit, three different UK universities contacted us to co-operate’ (TR-HEI-11). Another university interviewee was confident that they would be able to adapt to whatever changes Brexit brought, as academics were competent at putting together collaborations and able to adapt to changing circumstances (TR-HEI-2).

In terms of research collaborations, one national organisation (TR-N-3) mentioned that they had already started discussions with UK authorities, and they both saw collaborations between industry and the HE sector as a particular opportunity since demand from both sides is strong in this area. An HEI representative mentioned that they had already contacted and agreed to co-operate with a UK university to offer joint training programmes for Turkish industry (TR-HEI-7).

Internships (for example, for short-term work placements for students, linked to particular degree programmes) were also mentioned as a good example of new opportunities after Brexit. Although funding is provided by the Erasmus+ programme for internships, Turkish university interviewees mentioned that their students were often accepted by UK universities, and paid for their internship work, despite the absence of any institutional agreement. According to one of the national-level interviewees in Turkey, between 2014 and 2019, 1566 Turkish students went to the UK to pursue internships, compared to 1068 for (short-term) academic study. This example demonstrates that UK universities were willing to accept Turkish students for their summer internship programmes based on their individual merits - and this might continue after Brexit.

3.4 Geographical diversification

Half of the UK national organisation interviewees emphasised the importance of UK HEIs developing partnerships with a wider range of countries than had been the case in the past – reflecting one of the priorities in the international education strategy update (DfE and DIT, 2021). This was not necessarily related to Brexit, but more a perception that it was quite risky to remain reliant on a small number of partner countries, and that some historically-popular markets for the UK had become saturated. Some of the national organisations were actively working to encourage HEIs to diversify in this way. This emphasis on geographical diversification was also evident at the institutional level, with several interviewees discussing the importance of increasing the number of countries with which they had partnerships and/or from which they recruited whole degree students, to reduce risk. They also mentioned how having a larger number of nationalities on campus would make an important contribution to their aim of having a more diverse student body and ‘internationalisation at home’.

Although few of the interviewees mentioned Turkey specifically in this context, it was seen by some as an area with untapped potential – because of its large population (with a relatively young average age) (see Chapter 2 for details about the size of the student population), the fact that there was little UK TNE there at present, and a sense that HEIs in Turkey were interested in internationalising. One HEI interviewee also mentioned that staff tended to have a very positive view of Turkish students because of the high calibre of those who had come to their university to study in the past. Although some concerns were raised about the regulatory environment in Turkey (see Chapter 4), one national-level interviewee, with oversight of issues related to market access, noted that the World Bank’s ‘ease of doing business’ metrics (see <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings>) indicated that Turkey would be quite easy to work with in many respects (UK-N-5).

Related to issues associated with diversification, one participant from the student focus groups was quite positive about establishing a UK branch campus in Turkey which, they thought, could attract many international students from the neighbouring countries who wish to earn a UK degree at a low-cost. They stated that, as Turkey already receives more than 100,000 international students mostly from neighbouring countries, such a branch campus may attract many more. (It should be noted, however, that under the current Turkish legislation, branch campuses are not permitted in Turkey).

Additionally, one Turkish HEI explained that they had established a joint-degree programme with a UK university, and the applications to this from countries neighbouring Turkey were more than from Turkey itself (TR-HEI-4). Similar sentiments were echoed by interviewees from six other Turkish universities, who emphasised the strong educational links between Turkey and neighbouring countries. This example shows that Turkey’s geographical position can be a useful means for UK universities to reach to other countries within the broader region.

3.5 Commitment to internationalisation

An opportunity that was mentioned by Turkish participants, specifically, was Turkey’s commitment to internationalisation. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, interest in internationalising the HE sector is high in Turkey, and evident at both the national and institutional levels. The strategy documents of the HEIs that participated in the study clearly indicate that internationalisation is a crucial strategic aim for Turkish universities. These strategies focus largely on increasing the number of international students and staff, offering more courses in English, securing international research funds and offering more international opportunities for students at home. All universities in the study that teach in Turkish also focused, within their strategies, on increasing the foreign language competency of students and staff and increasing the number of courses taught in English.

Similarly, many participants in the research mentioned that Turkish universities are now taking internationalisation very seriously - increasing English-language taught courses, hiring more staff who have studied abroad (TR-HEI-1; TR-HEI-9), making particular efforts to internationalise the campus (TR-HEI-3, TR-HEI-5, TR-HEI-13) and seeking international accreditations (TR-Focus Group-2). Moreover, a Turkish national-level interviewee indicated that the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council is working with the UK’s QAA to help establish a national quality system in Turkey. The interviewee believed that the QAA’s experience of working internationally, and its use of transparent standards, helped to provide a good model for the Turkish Quality Council. The same interviewee also noted that the Turkish Quality Council is working with the British Council to promote staff development within individual institutions. Participants believed that these various quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms will facilitate internationalisation of Turkish higher education.

Some university representatives mentioned that one of their strategic aims was to increase the number of international faculty members, and that they held all administrative meetings in English (TR-HEI-3, TR-HEI-5, TR-HEI-13). Similarly, one UK academic who participated in a focus group in Turkey stated that all

managerial meetings are held in English in his department (TR-Focus Group-2). Directing these internationalisation efforts towards the UK was believed by a variety of Turkish participants to be very beneficial for the reasons outlined in other sections of this chapter.

As noted in previous chapters, internationalisation has long been important to the UK, and remains a key national priority – evidenced by the publication of the International Education Strategy update in February 2021 (see Chapter 2). Turkish participants considered this commitment to internationalisation on the part of UK HEIs a particular opportunity and many staff were keen to collaborate with the UK. Indeed, one HEI representative stated that although the USA is the most common partner for joint international publications in Turkey, the UK is second. There is also always demand from academic staff to visit the UK; there is a large group of UK alumni who want to keep their academic ties with the UK (TR-HEI-1, TR-HEI-2, TR-HEI-13, TR-HEI-15). Moreover, two university interviewees explained that there is a bottom-up approach in their institutions to increase co-operation with the UK and academics are very eager to build such partnerships (TR-HEI-3 and TR-HEI-4). One focus group participant believed that there were many advantages to partnering with the UK when compared to other European countries, since there are often more options for different forms of collaboration, and greater access to funding (TR-Focus Group-1).

Participants also pointed to commitment to internationalisation at the national level. One interviewee, from a national-level organisation in Turkey, cited the example of the Turkey-UK Knowledge Partnership Agreement, signed in 2011 between the Turkish Ministry of Economy and the UK's Department for Business, Innovation and Science, and the memorandum of understanding signed between the Turkish CoHE and Universities of UK (with the co-signature of the UK Minister of State for Universities and Science) in 2012. Moreover, 20 innovative cooperation projects were established between 23 Turkish and 20 UK universities and 21 industry partners in 2014 (British Council, 2014). The projects focussed not only on research areas such as energy, food or sustainability but also various new areas including curriculum development and English language teaching.

3.6 Institutional learning

A benefit and opportunity that was articulated quite commonly by Turkish participants was the institutional learning that could occur through HE partnerships with the UK. For example, some noted the well-developed quality assurance mechanisms in the UK, and how these could provide a model for Turkish HEIs (e.g. TR-N-2), while others thought lessons could be learnt from the UK HE sector as a whole – given that many UK HEIs are a lot more experienced than their Turkish counterparts (TR-N-1) – particularly with respect to research infrastructure (TR-HEI-7; TR-HEI-11). In addition, an individual senior academic stated that Turkish universities need to have benchmarks from universities abroad, and UK universities are perfectly positioned to provide these (TR-Focus Group-2). The opportunity for institutional learning was raised by only one interviewee from a UK HEI. As mentioned in section 3.3. above, this person thought that UK universities could learn from their Turkish counterparts about accessing EU funds as a third country.

3.7 Impact of Covid-19

Nearly all the UK national organisation interviewees believed that, while a significant short-term challenge (see Chapter 4), Covid-19 had opened up various new opportunities for international collaboration. At a very general level, some noted the increased ease of liaising with international partners now, through the normalisation of video calls. They speculated that this cheaper and less time-consuming method of international engagement may make HEIs more willing to engage with potential partners. More specifically, interviewees thought that the prevalence of online learning during the pandemic, and a recognition that high quality education can be delivered in this way, would lead to more flexible educational partnerships, such as models of TNE that incorporate a larger component of online and distance learning, and a greater willingness of UK HEIs to offer TNE to students no longer able or willing to come to the UK.

The UK HEI representatives had a similar view about the potentially profound impact of Covid-19. A common view was that the necessity of moving to online teaching had increased staff confidence that education could be delivered effectively and to a

high standard through this medium and, as a result, more consideration was now being given to expanding online delivery, particularly through TNE routes. Wholly online programmes were mentioned, as were blended routes comprising a UK online degree but some face-to-face delivery at an international partner.

Some universities believed that international students would be less keen to come to the UK because of Covid-19, and so it would be necessary to place more emphasis on partnership agreements than had been the case in the past – and facilitating virtual rather than physical mobility for both students and staff. A number of individuals also believed that Covid-19 would have a lasting impact on how partnerships and other forms of collaboration were established – with greater confidence in the efficacy of virtual meetings. Reflecting the comments of national interviewees mentioned above, many thought that this would save both time and money, and potentially speed up the establishment of new collaborations. Some thought that not having to fly around the world to liaise with partners would also support their institutional aim of reducing their carbon footprint.

Similarly, most of the Turkish participants agreed that having become more aware of opportunities for ‘digital internationalisation’ as a result of Covid-19 may open up new options for partnerships between the two countries. A university with 40 years’ experience as an open university discussed possible co-operation with the Open University in the UK with respect to producing online course materials. In general, both the national institutions and the HEIs in Turkey believed strongly Covid-19 would reinforce the importance of digital and hybrid education models (e.g. TR-N-2, TR-HEI-13).

Focus group participants (in the UK) also spoke of the positive impact of Covid-19, mentioning that it had enabled Turkish staff and students to join a wide range of reading groups and seminars organised by UK colleagues. They also speculated that it may lead to greater use of online learning, and thus a greater ease of cross-national collaboration between the two nations. Moreover, it was felt that online interaction helped to overcome some of the problems with visas, which was one of the main challenges reported in the focus groups for Turkish

staff and students coming to the UK. However, with respect to research collaborations in particular, face-to-face contact was still considered essential for establishing close partnerships.

3.8 Specific areas of common academic interest

Interviewees from two UK institutions discussed the ways in which there was potentially a good match between areas of expertise in their own institution and that in Turkey. This was articulated in relation to archaeology, heritage and refugee studies at one HEI:

Around heritage and archaeology ... that’s where we have more potential to grow partnerships. Historically, we have had links through archaeologists who have done lots of work in Turkey, and we had a visit last year from a Turkish university that wanted to do some work with us in archaeology. We are looking at how we can grow the relationship with Turkey here. Also around social sciences and refugees – there is growing interest in this, we have several researchers interested in this area. We would like to build the research connectivity and then layer other forms of collaboration on this. We would like to offer research mentorship for our partners, to help build connections. With heritage, there are opportunities for site visits, digs, fieldwork, data collection. We are just about to launch a new master’s in heritage and it might be interesting to do some co-development work. (UK-HEI-2)

The second HEI saw the link more in terms of the alignment between Turkey’s national priorities and the expertise of her HEI. She spoke specifically about aerospace, soil science and farm management in this regard (UK-HEI-7).

Although the subject areas mentioned above could be seen as relatively niche, and thus perhaps unlikely to have a large-scale impact on collaborations for research and/or education, a larger range of topic areas were mentioned in the focus groups. Indeed, the opportunities presented by areas of common interest was a strong theme of the UK focus groups with academic staff, as many

participants spoke of how their research collaborations with Turkish colleagues had been driven primarily by strong sets of shared interests.

Some Turkish interviewees made very similar comments about areas of common interest. For example, one commented:

The academic community in the UK should be informed about Turkey. A faculty member or student studying archaeology in Oxford, should come to Turkey for research. (TR-HEI-8)

In addition, one national organisation mentioned collaboration with UK authorities in defining thematic priorities like food agriculture or climate change for each year's Newton-Kâtip Çelebi (TR-N-3). Another emphasised that Turkey provides a natural data set for UK academics in certain fields such as health, migration etc, and is therefore very attractive to UK researchers (TR-N-1). Similarly, a HEI interviewee reflected on their sustainable partnership with a UK university in the field of art and ceramics, noting that the uniqueness of Turkish ceramics makes this partnership attractive for the UK partner (TR-HEI-12). Another university interviewee stated that marine sciences is an additional area of interest for both countries, and their university had worked productively with UK universities as part of a European Union project for preventing pollution in the Black Sea (TR-HEI-14).

Another area of shared academic interest was identified as the English language teaching field. One university stated that although their curriculum was in Turkish, they were hoping to develop new partnerships with the UK to provide English language courses for their students and academics (TR-HEI-15). This university mentioned that they needed to develop the English language competency of their students and staff, and they hoped to buy input from UK HEIs for this purpose. Indeed, most of the universities that participated in the study also mentioned that Turkish universities were heavily engaged in initiatives to increase the foreign language competency of their students, and that this is one of the strongest fields for the UK.

3.9 Other opportunities/benefits identified by focus groups

The participants in the focus groups articulated a number of other particular benefits and opportunities that are not captured by the discussion so far. Those who had moved to the UK from Turkey for work or study talked about the personal advantages to them. For staff, this typically included access to excellent facilities and research funding, and freedom to work on a range of different research topics. Some had also been motivated by a range of personal factors, such as family already in the UK, and a desire for their children to spend some time in the UK. Turkish students in the UK mentioned the importance of a highly regarded and high-quality student experience, which responded well to student feedback; the relatively short duration of UK degrees; the diversity of UK society and perceived relatively low levels of discrimination against Turks; and good provision for disabled students. Both groups also believed that UK experience would help their future careers in various ways.

Participants in the Turkish focus groups also identified particular benefits. For example, UK academics working in state universities mostly stated that, despite having only a one-year contract, they believed they had good and secure job conditions – because they were treated as civil servants with associated benefits such as generous health insurance (TR-Focus Group 3 and 4). They were content with the transparent promotion mechanisms, a friendly and inclusive work atmosphere, and autonomy in opening new courses. In addition, they thought they had a more comfortable life in Turkey, as the cost of living is lower than in the UK, and they believed that social mobility was easier, with plenty of job opportunities for English speaking academics.

Moreover, the focus groups conducted with Turkish academics (in Turkey) evidenced how they benefited from their co-operation with UK universities individually. All were all alumni of UK universities, and had kept in touch with colleagues in the UK afterwards. They believed that there were more opportunities to collaborate with academics in the UK than in other countries (with the exception of the USA), relationships between Turkish and UK colleagues tended to be good, and the research

produced in the two countries was of a comparable standard. Focus group participants also mentioned that research partnerships with the UK had helped them to learn more about opportunities for collaboration. For example, one academic stated that he had been an associate partner on a Marie-Curie project and, as a result, he learned about the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund and applied for that (TR-Focus Group-1). In general, participants in the Turkish focus groups believed there was significant potential for future partnerships between the two countries, which were likely to open up a range of diverse opportunities.

3.10 Conclusion

Although some differences in perspective between Turkish and UK stakeholders have been outlined in the discussion above (for example, in relation to the potential for institutional learning), on the whole, there was a high level of agreement between participants about the benefits and opportunities provided by HE partnerships. UK universities considered Turkey's strategic location as an important advantage, while Turkish universities valued the well-established status of UK universities and their developed infrastructure. Moreover, as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, it was believed, by some, that Turkey has the opportunity to become a stronger partner - because of a belief that the UK would be keen to establish more collaborations in non-EU countries. In addition, the impact of Covid-19 was perceived as an opportunity to increase digital and virtual internationalisation, and it was thought that this might open up new options for Turkey-UK partnerships. Finally, there was agreement across the two countries that opportunities for collaboration were presented by areas of common academic interest, and that these could provide the basis for successful and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Perceived barriers in establishing and/or sustaining partnerships

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the significant opportunities for collaboration between the UK and Turkey. This chapter presents the main barriers or obstacles, described by the research participants, with respect to establishing and/or sustaining HE partnerships between the two countries. The findings indicate that there are various country-specific obstacles in addition to some common barriers identified by the interviewees on both sides. These barriers can be identified as structural (regulatory, academic, financial), attitudinal (relating, for example, to cultural differences and views of the other country) and some more general issues (priorities, incentives). We hope that by presenting such barriers in an open and objective manner in this report, useful and realistic solutions can be suggested to overcome them (which we outline in Chapter 5).

A summary of some of the key barriers is provided in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Key barriers as identified by research participants

Regulatory factors e.g. national-level regulations in Turkey prioritising international student mobility rather than joint programme development

Financial factors e.g. high UK tuition fees; limited funds specifically for bi-lateral research co-operation

Immigration requirements for Turkish nationals moving to the UK

Perceived lack of national-level commitment to developing partnerships between Turkey and the UK

Lack of knowledge of higher education in the other country

Imbalance between the two countries in priorities for internationalisation

Emphasis on consolidating partnerships rather than developing new ones

Dependence of some partnerships on a single member of staff

Impact of Covid-19

4.2 Regulatory and quality assurance environment

4.2.1 Overview

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the HE system in Turkey is centralised, and the responsible public body for is the Council of Higher Education. In international partnerships CoHE plays an important role as, through the higher education law, it is responsible for planning, coordinating and monitoring higher education at the national level. In the UK, responsibility for internationalisation lies at the level of individual HEIs. While targets have been set for the whole of the UK, with respect to the number of international students, for example (see Chapter 2), individual HEIs have the freedom to decide the extent to which they want to engage with internationalisation, and the ways in which they do it. The QAA, however, plays an important role in the UK of ensuring the quality of education programmes, including those that are offered transnationally.

While some Turkish interviewees noted that having a central system and national responsible body like the CoHE can play a facilitating and coordinating role for the universities, others stated that it can become an obstacle if internationalisation policies are too general, and regulations do not allow for diverse and flexible implementation (TR-Focus-2).

As Chapter 2 analysed in detail, Turkey's HE sector has grown over the past two decades and some of the barriers mentioned with respect to international partnerships are related to this process of enlargement. For instance, in Turkey the number of higher education institutions has increased dramatically over the last two decades. Therefore, in terms of experience, capacity, resources, priorities and quality assurance issues there is variation among the universities. For this reason, and as explained in the Introduction, universities were selected under three categories according to their date of establishment and in each category, we have taken into consideration the type of the university (public/foundation), medium of instruction (Turkish/English), size and geographical difference. In our research we have found out that such differences are also reflected in the barriers identified by the interviewees.

General barriers identified by interviewees from the more established universities in Turkey relate to the overall environment and ecosystem of higher education in facilitating international partnerships. They believed that national regulations do not allow innovative forms of internationalisation (such as branch campuses and some other forms of TNE) (TR-HEI-5,9, TR Focus-2); for this reason, similar and traditional models of internationalisation have been implemented by most universities. Participants talked, for example, about the imposition of targets for recruitment of international students without having established the necessary elements to ensure sustainability and a quality education. This is illustrated in the following quotations:

Let the number be more is not a sustainable and realistic strategy. There should be in line with the immigration policy for the selection of international students. Why do we want them, to stay in our country as a human resource, to go to another country, or to go back home? We need to specify our needs and goals consistently. (TR-HEI-9)

It is not important to be praised only for the number of students, without knowing the quality. Therefore, firstly, culture is very important and secondly, it is necessary to adopt the tools very well. There is a problem with the internalization dimension. We need these tools, especially for a transparent and reliable education system. (TR-Focus-2)

Another general barrier mentioned frequently in Turkey – but not the UK - was defining internationalisation as a separate aspect of the university that was not aligned to other functions such as research and service to society.

Regulations were also mentioned with respect to the barriers faced by UK (and other international) staff in Turkey. Focus group participants and HEI representatives raised, for example, the fact that contracts are offered to such staff for only one year at a time – which can make it hard for them to plan for the future, and can deter them from making plans to stay in Turkey. Some also believed that quotas applied to international staff, to ensure they comprise no more than two per cent of all staff, was a regulatory barrier, alongside the requirement for

all staff to have PhDs. One interviewee commented:

The important thing is to build an ecosystem. Trying to compete with the world with rules and regulations created according to the conditions of that day, is not possible...Another decision was taken that those who do not have a PhD degree cannot be appointed in a university. It is not possible to keep the international staff in our universities. (TR-HEI-5).

Participants also mentioned that it was very rare for international staff to be appointed to administrative roles in Turkish HEIs, because of employment and recruitment restrictions. Although they noted that this was slowly changing, these regulations were still thought to deter some foreign nationals, potentially including some from the UK.

4.2.2. Joint degree programmes and TNE

In Turkey, joint degree programmes were discussed as one of the key tools to establishing a long-term partnership with the UK. All Turkish HEIs interviewed expressed their willingness to establish a joint degree programme with a UK HEI, but noted that this was one of the areas where the most obstacles were persistently experienced due to regulatory, legislative and bureaucratic factors. The majority of the HE leaders interviewed referred to the USA being more flexible and practical in establishing such partnerships (nevertheless, it is important to note that these were not necessarily identified as good practice due to academic and regulatory differences between the two countries).

As mentioned above, curricula of joint/double degree programmes need to be approved by the CoHE in Turkey. Although Turkey has been following the Anglo-Saxon higher education system and did not face any difficulty in setting up a three-cycle system (bachelor, master, doctorate) as part of the Bologna Process, the duration, type, structure and management of programmes are different from the UK. A senior academic summarised the regulatory difficulties in setting up a joint programme in this way:

We started a collaboration with a university that is suitable for our size, so that it can work comfortably. We have developed many different models of cooperation: Exchange programmes, joint project applications, joint

programmes, top up programmes. It is not easy to harmonise different education models for 3 years and 4 years. In addition, the UK has a large number of seminars where students are more active than lectures. When you look at the evaluation of the exams, there is an external examiner, there is no such application in Turkey. They have very established, written and habitual models. As such, you will either follow it, which creates problems locally as a hegemonic structure emerges. It is also a long-term problem. It is difficult to overcome the rules brought by CoHE. It has no legal framework. The only framework of CoHE was State University of New York SUNY [State University of New York], a model they started with the USA universities. (TR-Focus Group-2).

These difficulties were raised by other interviewees as well, who noted that if you do not want to follow similar, traditional programmes, it is not easy to develop innovative or interdisciplinary joint programmes instead.

It was also felt that the structure of ostensibly 'joint' degrees were often not very joint in practice, because of imbalances in the relationship between UK and Turkish HEIs, which impacted on the structure of programmes. A participant in the focus group for Turkish academics described her experience of a joint degree programmes in the following way:

My university started the joint diploma programme with a university in the UK, but the deal seemed too one-sided. The result was a 'colonial' agreement. An agreement was signed on unequal terms. This programme is defined as a separate section in the catalogue in the university entrance exam. Students entered with higher scores and when they finished, they were graduating from both universities. They were made as if they could want anything but we could not. The lecturers at our university had to prepare all course information and even exam questions at the beginning of the term and send them to the other party. We did it like this for 5 years, but there was no positive benefit provided to our tutors. (TR-Focus Group-1)

Problems were also described from the UK

perspective. Indeed, a key barrier that was mentioned by three of the eight UK national organisation interviewees was the perceived difficulty of the regulatory environment in Turkey, with respect to TNE partnerships specifically (UK-N-3,4,5). They described how it had been difficult to do business with Turkey in the past because of the centralised system in place and, related to this, the length of time that it took to get approval for programmes from central bodies. One interviewee recalled the experience of a UK HEI that had abandoned its plans to set up a TNE programme with a Turkish university because it had taken two years to secure central approval. In addition, she noted that Turkey's insistence on students' physical presence in the UK in order to gain a UK award was not helpful. Interviewees also believed that the lack of clear information about quality assurance and regulation in Turkey was a disincentive for UK HEIs to pursue TNE partnerships. Indeed, it was felt by many of those we spoke to that partnerships were most successful where the government or other national bodies had taken an active role in clarifying the regulatory and quality assurance environment, and taking steps to modify it where necessary – and that this had not been evident in Turkey to date.

At the institutional level, the majority of UK interviewees were unaware of the regulatory and quality assurance environment in Turkey – for example, the procedure for getting joint degrees approved, how degrees are quality assured, whether UK degrees are recognised in certain professional areas in Turkey (see also below). A third described how her university had tried to set up a TNE articulation relationship with a Turkish university, but this had had to be abandoned because they were unable to align the two quality assurance systems. It seems that there is lack of knowledge about basic regulations, data or reports relating to Turkish higher education, and this creates complications for establishing partnerships

Most of the Turkish HEI interviewees and some from national institutions said that the quality assurance environment was an important criterion (alongside position in international rankings) during the establishment of joint degrees (and other forms of higher education collaboration) with the UK. In addition, many believed that the accreditation of programmes helped to facilitate international partnerships. Here, however, there are differences between older and newer universities in Turkey.

Despite quality assurance becoming more important across the sector as a whole – as a result of the Bologna Process and the establishment of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council– it has taken longer to institutionalise in the newer universities, which (alongside their typically lower position in international rankings) has had a negative impact upon their ability to collaborate internationally.

In short, representatives of HEIs in both countries accept that lack of flexibility, lack of public information, alongside some restrictions imposed by the legal context, function as barrier to educational partnerships.

4.2.3 Research collaborations

Research collaborations were commonly seen, in both countries, as activities of individual academics and so not necessarily the responsibility of institutions. In the UK, research typically was included in internationalisation strategies, but in Turkey this was not clearly stated in all cases, as the medium size or newly established universities tend to prioritise international student recruitment and exchange programmes. As noted previously, strong research partnerships between the two countries have been established through the EU's Horizon 2020 programmes and bilateral programmes with the UK such as the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund, which is co-funded by both countries. Even though this programme was repeatedly given as a good example by the interviewees, some obstacles relating to the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi scheme were expressed by different beneficiaries in Turkey, relating to the regulation of the fund (specific financial factors are discussed below). First, some interviewees noted that even if the scientific excellence of the projects was very high, applications may not be supported if they do not map on to the specified development needs of Turkey (TR-N-1).

Moreover, some Turkish interviewees described their confusion about how research was managed in the UK. While TUBITAK is the intermediary institution for these projects on Turkish side, on the UK side, there are several different national bodies that fund research (for example, the Economic and Social Research Council, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, the Biotechnology and

Biosciences Research Council) - although they do now all come under the umbrella of UK Research and Innovation. Turkish research offices and researchers were confused about the different regulations for each of these UK funding organisations: 'Each project is like a different programme that we have to learn from the beginning for each application' (TR-Focus Group-1). In addition, one interviewee also noted that some UK universities do not have information about the programme when they are approached to be partners. (TR-HEI-8).

4.3 Financial factors

Finance was a barrier that was mentioned by many interviewees on both sides. With respect to TNE, UK national organisation interviewees reflected on the fee imbalance between the UK and countries like Turkey with no or low fees (in public HEIs). This could be a barrier to establishing a partnership in the first place and, if partnerships were established, a disincentive for students to enrol. At both the national and institutional level, UK interviewees emphasised the importance of long-term financial sustainability for education programmes (typically derived from the fees paid by students and/or scholarships awarded by national governments) and for research programmes, noting that the latter were often highly dependent on specific national funding streams.

Indeed, those working in UK HEIs in particular emphasised the importance of financial incentives to engage with Turkey – in a context in which they had many other countries that were keen to collaborate with them, and where national funding schemes often incentivised collaborations with other nations instead. Speaking with reference to research, in particular, one interviewee commented that 'without funding it is difficult to engage academics as they have so many other priorities' (UK-HEI-4). Others noted that few universities had significant funds of their own to support research collaborations, and so staff were very dependent on government initiatives. Similar points were made with respect to education partnerships. Several interviewees explained that they had few resources to devote to exploratory work with countries, or to respond to what some called 'cold calls' by particular institutions abroad, and so were dependent on the information and funding offered by the British Council and respective governments. A small number were concerned that reciprocal

student exchanges would become more difficult because of the UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus+ scheme, and the availability of funds – under the replacement Turing scheme – for outward mobility only.

On the Turkish side, financial issues were also viewed as barriers to collaboration. Although the UK is among the top three destinations for degree-seeking mobile Turkish students (either self-funded or on scholarships), high tuition fees were seen as one of the main barriers to collaboration. This was also noted by Turkish participants in the UK focus groups. The Turkish government provides merit-based scholarships for postgraduate studies abroad and, because of the high tuition fees and the change in the exchange rate over recent years, other countries and regions had become more popular than the UK. A national institution representative highlighted that 'tuition fees are differentiated according to the regions and our students are paying the highest. We try to make special agreements for our students but it is not always accepted' (TR-N-8). The lack of any reductions in tuition fees for Turkish students was mentioned repeatedly by the interviewees, noting that the Netherlands, Canada, Australia and other countries providing programmes in English have started to be preferred.

Financial issues were discussed as a barrier for joint degree programmes as well by Turkish interviewees. The following quotation is illustrative: 'For joint degree programmes, we waive our tuition, but UK universities continue to charge tuition fees' (TR-HEI-4). For joint programmes at graduate level, there was an expectation, on the Turkish side, that scholarships will be provided, because life is so expensive in the UK. Participants noted that other countries such as USA offer more scholarships for graduate students or reduce the tuition fees payable.

For research collaborations, insufficient or limited funds were identified by Turkish participants as a major obstacle at all three levels (national, institutional and individual). When reflecting on the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund, despite many very positive comments, participants thought that the funding provided was insufficient, as the demand (and capacity to conduct important bi-lateral research) outstripped the money available. Those in

one focus group remarked that as applications were increasing each year and only five projects are funded, this could deter strong researchers from applying (TR-Focus Group-1). Moreover, one participant in a focus group with the UK academics in Turkey stated that ‘when you establish a partnership with the UK institutions, Turkey needs to take the smaller part’ (TR-Focus Group-3), with financial implications. Another identified problem in research projects was the lack of clear national legislation to cover the share of co-funding. A university representative stated that:

The university could not contribute to co-funding, due to lack of the legislation. We had budget, but we could not pay. This is exactly why such an EU project cancelled at the signature stage. (TR-HEI-14).

Since completing the data collection for this project, the UK has announced very substantial cuts to research programmes funded through its aid budget, which include those awarded through the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund. It is likely that this will have a significant adverse impact on research partnerships in the future.

4.4 Immigration procedures

Visa issues have been one of the main obstacles highlighted by HE leaders, academics and students in Turkey. Visa requirements are common between countries, but the specific application process, procedures, paperwork, duration and visa fees in the UK were critiqued by all the Turkish citizens in the interviews. They stated that the specific procedures and requirements, as well as the unwelcoming attitude that such policies communicated, were major obstacles that hindered collaborations as well as even participating in a conference in the UK. One university leader who received PhD degree from a university in the UK expressed his opinion strongly: ‘There is an arrogant, humiliating point of view. I myself do not prefer to go to the UK any longer. They ask every detail of my financial condition, or whether I participated any terrorist activity. Why should a full-professor bother with these details every time? This policy is not true’ (TR-HEI-15). Some other senior academics said ‘My colleagues do not choose to go to the UK just because of the visa problems, some training programmes of our students were cancelled because the visas were issued too late’

(TR-HEI-3, 9,12). Frequently participants compared the visa procedures of the UK with that of the USA, noting that in America the application steps are easier, cheaper and a visa is given for a longer period of time. For EU countries, academics working in Turkish public universities do not need to get a visa because of the type of the passport they have in Turkey. This encourages many to work with these nations, rather than the UK, because of the ease of travel.

4.5 Perceptions about national impetus

Linked to the points in the earlier section about the regulatory environment, despite the national-level links between Turkey and the UK outlined in Chapter 2, there was a perception among UK interviewees that there was limited national commitment in Turkey to drive partnership-building between the UK and Turkey. Contrasts were drawn, for example, with other countries where they believed national governments had taken a more pro-active stance demonstrated through, for example, providing substantial funding for bilateral initiatives and taking steps to ensure that regulatory systems were well-aligned. Indeed, various interviewees at both national and institutional level spoke of how institutions were often encouraged to investigate a particular country when they were reassured that the country’s government was highly supportive of links with the UK, and was taking proactive steps to ensure that its regulatory system, quality assurance mechanisms and accreditation procedures aligned well with the UK’s. (Pakistan was given an example of a country that had recently done this.) It was felt that this reassurance had not yet been forthcoming from Turkey. Indeed, one national-level interviewee said:

A lot of the countries that we do work with we choose because of the initiatives from that country’s government – pushing it and being proactive. If there was impetus from the government or the Council of Higher Education to make it work strategically with the UK, then there would be that interest. But as far as I can see, there hasn’t been that interest in recent years. (UK-N-5)

Similar sentiments were echoed at the institutional level by a number of institutions. One interviewee (UK-HEI-9), for example, noted that he would be

interested to know whether the Turkish government is keen to support TNE partnerships with UK HEIs. If it is, this would give him greater confidence that there would also be interest from Turkish universities, and make him more likely to think it was worth investing time investigating potential partnerships. In general, interviewees were not aware of any particular national impetus from Turkey and this could be seen as a barrier when there were so many other countries to consider that were keen to establish partnerships.

A smaller number of interviewees felt that a lack of impetus from the UK side was also sometimes a barrier. One non-governmental national interviewee thought that the UK government could do more to promote the UK abroad, and signal more clearly that many UK HEIs – not only the large, research-intensive universities – were keen to establish international partnerships (UK-N-8). At the HEI level, some interviewees stated that, as far as they were aware, Turkey was not a priority country for the UK government, and such priorities did affect how they prioritised particular parts of the world.

The priorities and experience of the UK and Turkey, with respect to the internationalisation of higher education, are in many ways different, as highlighted in previous chapters. The UK is regarded as a significant international player in higher education, which attracts attention from all over the world, and so is able to be very selective in its approach to internationalisation. In contrast, Turkey has a lower international profile, having massified more recently and is currently undergoing a process of rapid development. Barriers are often related to this difference in the two national contexts – and, in particular, assumptions that the national impetus for involvement is different for the UK and Turkey. This quotation by a senior university representative in Turkey summarises this point well:

We establish relationships based on the assumption that science is not sufficiently developed in Turkey. When a university from the UK starts communication with us, they look like the benefactor and we are the main beneficiaries of this partnership. However, the other party becomes the beneficiary of this superior effort on our side. For this reason, we need to switch to a definition of common interest among peers at the perception level.

Since we have a distinct superiority in certain areas, it is necessary to define our own superiority correctly... Better collaborations will be born. The UK side should work with us as much as we want them. We should have done our own competency analysis in areas where our existence is indispensable. (TR-HEI-2)

While many UK interviewees stated that there is lack of national impetus in Turkey towards the UK, almost all the interviewees in Turkey stressed the difficulty of approaching UK institutions, and the unwillingness of the UK to develop collaborations with Turkey as they have other priority regions and countries.

4.6 Cultural and attitudinal factors; lack of knowledge

Apart from various concrete barriers such as regulations, legislation, funding and immigration procedures, sometimes views, experiences or attitudes about the other country can affect international partnerships. Both HEIs and individuals outlined various cultural or attitudinal factors that could sometimes hinder collaborations (although many also noted numerous positive aspects of relationships between the two countries).

A fairly common theme across the UK interviewees was a relative lack of knowledge about the Turkish higher education system, and how this could act as a barrier to collaboration. Some of the national organisation interviewees, for example, described the ‘isomorphism’ of the UK HE sector – i.e. that institutions are quite risk averse and so tend to follow where others have already gone, using the knowledge and experience that has already been gained by other UK HEIs. Some also spoke of their own, personal lack of knowledge of Turkey when compared to many other countries. This was, in large part, because so few UK HEIs had worked with Turkey in the past.

These views were articulated at the institutional level, too. As noted above, many interviewees described how they had little resource (in terms of time or money) to investigate potential new partners, and so were dependent on the information provided by central agencies (for example, when governments were particularly proactive and made their regulatory information easily available). The following quotations are typical:

We are responsive to moves made by others; we don't have resources to do data gathering ourselves. We don't know how to get a programme approved in Turkey. (UK-HEI-13)

I don't know about the regulatory regime and fee levels in Turkey – whether it would make financial sense for us. (UK-HEI-1)

We lack knowledge about what Turkish universities actually want, and there are a lot of potential partner countries – we can only do a limited amount with resources we have. (UK-HEI-11)

I know very little about Turkey as a market as we do so little there. (UK-HEI-14)

Some UK interviewees felt that they had a reasonable knowledge of Turkey, but that this was not shared by many students and staff. Indeed, those who had had Erasmus+ agreements with Turkish universities typically spoke of the difficulty of generating sufficient interest in these among UK staff and particularly students. Some attributed this to a lack of knowledge about the Turkish higher education system and the quality of education in the country and/or an incorrect assumption that the Erasmus+ scheme covered only countries within the EU.

Lack of knowledge was also an important theme in the UK focus groups when discussing mobility to the UK for the whole of a degree or for work. Turkish students studying in the UK talked about the difficulty of finding information about doctoral opportunities and choosing a supervisor, particularly as education consultants often knew little about this level of study. At the staff level, participants mentioned the difficulty of finding out about UK job opportunities whilst in Turkey, and then the lack of knowledge about Turkey within UK HEIs, which affected the quality of information they were given about immigration processes. They also mentioned, with respect to their colleagues in Turkey, that it was often difficult for them to access information about funding opportunities for collaboration (especially in newer Turkish universities) and to find a UK colleague interested in the same research topic. Some academics also

stated that there is a lack of knowledge about available funding (e.g. the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund) that targets specifically partnerships between Turkey and the UK.

These points were widely reflected in the interviews conducted in Turkey. Indeed, some Turkish participants thought that UK staff did not have sufficient knowledge of Turkish universities, or were influenced by misinformation about Turkey from inaccurate or biased news in the UK media. Some of the interviewees were optimistic that this lack of knowledge could be overcome:

When we start collaboration, they don't know about the education and research quality of Turkish universities, when our partnership develops, they appreciate it. (TR-HEI-11).

Their attitude is distant to us, because they don't know how hospitable we are. We need to give them the opportunity to get acquainted, we also have prejudices. Some had prejudices about Turkey, however, they were very satisfied after they came here and we received re-applications from the same university (TR-HEI-14).

Some others however were not hopeful that any change would happen, and therefore preferred to approach other regions and countries who accept Turkey positively:

We had experienced attitudinal problems with the UK universities. British universities have prejudices towards Turkish universities. Therefore, we started to approach to other countries. (TR-HEI-8,10).

It is really difficult to contact a university in the UK. They do not reply, they forward from one office to the other. Demand is always from our side and most of the cases one-sided, at least they make you feel it that way. We can contact American universities easily. (TR-HEI-12)

We approach the best universities in the UK on our scale. When we first approach them, none of them are welcome in the first insight. The network between faculty members is so

important. (TR-HEI-4)

Collaborations that are not based on an equal basis do not go anywhere. They also come with a certain stance; you feel it during the negotiation phase (TR-HEI-8).

The same view was expressed in the focus groups in Turkey by both Turkish and UK academics working in Turkish universities. In the focus group comprised of UK-origin academics, reputation was thought to be a barrier influencing partnerships with UK institutions. One of the participants who had been working in Turkey for more than 10 years stated:

If you want to set up a research with the British University, they think it will be a second-rate research, not acknowledging the other nations. We have multi-partnered project, but Rome University made the application, if I had made it, British researchers would not accept it. British side does not acknowledge Turkey, based on horror stories outside of academia. Genuine willingness is needed to have co-operation with Turkey. But Turkey will be one of the last countries they can think the junior partner all the time. Personal, sensitive, cultural barriers. (TR-Focus Group-3).

Turkish interviewees thought problems associated with lack of knowledge were particularly acute for HEIs that had been established more recently. Their lack of graduates and experience of international co-operation, as well as not being evaluated in international rankings, were thought to be important barriers to forming partnerships with UK HEIs:

We participated in many fairs like NAFSA, EAIE where we approached to UK universities, we did not get any positive sign. We are a new university, we didn't have ranking scores etc., and they had already finished their quota to sign new agreements with Turkish universities. The battle was over. (TR-HEI-5)

4.7 Exogenous factors, geopolitical conditions, political environment

In addition to cultural and attitudinal factors, exogenous factors such as geopolitical conditions

and the political environment also influenced the establishment and sustainability of the partnerships between Turkey and the UK and were commented on by participants from both countries.

For UK interviewees, one of the key barriers to partnerships was thought to be the political environment in Turkey. This was mentioned by five of the eight national-level organisation interviewees. Some noted that they were aware that, as a result of the attempted coup d'état in 2016, and general security concerns around the same time, many UK funders and academics had been unwilling to work in Turkey, and students had been unwilling to take part in mobility programmes to Turkey out of fear for their safety. They also noted that there were more recent concerns about a perceived lack of academic freedom in Turkey that was sometimes a barrier to engagement. These views were echoed at the institutional level. Half of our interviewees said that staff and students concerns about perceived political instability, student safety and academic freedom would likely be a barrier to working with Turkey. The following quotations are illustrative:

A lot of UK academics would be quite wary of the political situation – the kind of headlines about academics in exile, lack of freedom of expression. (UK-HEI-1)

Issues around academic freedom would be a concern. (UK-HEI-4)

There are concerns at a high level at the university about equality and diversity. (UK-HEI-8)

There might be concerns about teaching in areas of political science and sociology. (UK-HEI-10)

In general, most interviewees believed that these concerns would not necessarily preclude partnership working, but may make it harder to generate enthusiasm amongst academic staff and students, and were a factor when they had a large number of other countries that were interested in working with them. Nevertheless, several noted that they had similar concerns about some other countries with which the UK had a lot of partnerships, with China the most frequently cited

example. Thus, political concerns were typically not seen as an insurmountable barrier.

The political environment was also mentioned quite frequently in the UK focus groups. Staff noted that, in some cases, collaborative research with Turkey had been blocked because of institutional concerns about staff safety. This was particularly the case for social scientists who had planned to research politically-sensitive issues. In some cases, this was believed to be an over-reaction on the part of UK colleagues, and rooted in a poor understanding of the Turkish context. In other cases, staff talked about their own preferences for working with ‘top universities’ in Turkey, as they were seen as being more able to ensure the academic freedom of their staff than less prestigious institutions. One focus group participant discussed a rather different political issue, reflecting that some collaborations between the UK and Turkey were not an equal exchange of ideas, as UK colleagues sometimes assumed the flow of ideas should be one-way (i.e. from the UK to Turkey).

Geopolitical factors, in terms of security concerns, were also raised by Turkish interviewees, noting that some recent developments in and around Turkey are sometimes seen a barrier by international partners. This concern is also stated in the strategy documents of the HEIs and that of the CoHE, under the topic of weakness or threats - regional instability, and negative perceptions about security are both mentioned explicitly. The representatives of the national institutions also talked about the obstacles they had encountered in the last few years, as a result of the terrorist attacks, which targeted civilians in Turkey, and the attempted coup d’état in 2016. They believed that while research collaborations had not been adversely affected, exchange programmes and site visits were affected considerably.

Research participants thought that security concerns were also having an impact of the flow of international staff – from the UK and elsewhere - into Turkey to take up academic jobs. One HEI interviewee remarked that after the coup attempt ‘unfortunately, we could not even replace those who left’ (TR-HEI-5). Nevertheless, despite these comments, the majority of the Turkish interviewees believed that security concerns tended to be exaggerated and were based on inaccurate perceptions and/or biased news about Turkey. Some UK interviewees also acknowledged that their views

of Turkey were not necessarily up to date. Further research is needed to explain the multidimensional aspects of these perceptions.

4.8 Perceptions about lack of market

The research indicates that the size, capacity and quality of Turkish HE is not yet very well known in the UK, despite having the largest student population in the European Higher Education Area. Indeed, despite the various opportunities outlined in Chapter 3, some of the UK interviewees perceived that there was much less demand for UK collaborations from Turkey than from many other countries, which then affected the practices of UK institutions and organisations. For example, several national-level interviewees believed that because of Turkey’s good relationship with the EU with respect to education and training programmes, it did not have a particular need to form close ties with the UK (for either education or research). With respect to TNE in particular, some asserted that demand for UK provision was likely to be low given the good quality of Turkey’s own higher education system and its relatively high capacity, and the number of TNE schemes already existing in the region (particularly in south east Europe and north Africa).

Similar views about lack of demand were expressed by some of the HEI interviewees, too, although this was mainly with respect to demand for outward student mobility from the UK. As noted previously, several universities that had had Erasmus+ agreements with Turkish universities in the past had had difficulty in recruiting UK students to take part, and reported imbalances in the exchange. One interviewee was also concerned about the lack of demand from Turkey for partnerships with the UK in the future, noting the way in which Turkey was establishing itself as a knowledge hub. She reflected that in a few years’ time, Turkey may have no need to partner with the UK, and may become a competitor – in terms of attracting students from the Middle East who may otherwise have come to the UK. Indeed, this latter point about Turkey’s role as a new hub was mentioned by some of the rectors interviewed in Turkey: ‘We are the new hub for the international students. So, we are competing with the UK to recruit successful international students from Africa, Asia and Middle East’ (TR-HEI-8).

Comments in the UK about lack of demand among domestic students for exchanges with Turkey were also reflected in the Turkish data. The main barrier is

reciprocity for all Turkish universities, whether old or new. 'The UK has connections with many parts of the world and Turkey is not among the priorities of the British students' said some representatives of older universities in big cities. 'Our students want to go there, but their students do not want to come to Turkey. If they do, they are Turkish origin. There is no demand from there, they don't have an interest in Turkey' (TR-HEI-4,5,8). Similarly, another rector stated: 'we came to the last stage of the agreement; however, we did not sign it. They offered to receive our students, but they would not send any student to us. We did not accept it'. (TR-HEI-7).

Despite great interest among high school students and university graduates about studying in the UK, many Turkish students ultimately choose to go elsewhere for short-term exchanges. Visa requirements and the cost of living seem to be the main obstacles, but many universities also noted the unwillingness of UK universities to set up any Erasmus+ partnerships with Turkish universities.

4.9 Other issues

While the barriers discussed above were those that were most commonly raised across the dataset, and which participants believed had the most impact on collaborative working, a number of other issues were raised, which we cover briefly in this section.

4.9.1 Consolidation – rather than diversification – in some cases

Despite the points made above about the importance of geographical diversification to many UK stakeholders, a minority of UK interviewees spoke about pressures to move in the opposite direction, and to consolidate their existing partnerships rather than develop new ones. One representative of an HEI spoke about how they had spread themselves too thinly in the past, and were now being much more selective about their internationalisation activities, focussing on a smaller range of countries and partnerships. This was also mentioned by one of the national-level interviewees, with respect to his analysis of what was currently happening across the country with respect to TNE in particular. Similar points were also made during the interviews in Turkey. A majority of the HEI interviewees described how, because they believed the UK already had many existing collaborations and was keen to strengthen these rather than develop

new links with Turkey, they tended to seek partnerships in Asia and with neighbouring or historically connected countries: 'For a rector, in his limited time it is more pragmatic to choose the already positive partners, rather than waiting for persuading the others' (TR-HEI-5, 8, 10).

4.9.2 Dependence on a single staff member

Another barrier that was mentioned by a small number of UK interviewees, when reflecting on previous links with Turkey, was the dependence on a single member of staff. Several universities that had had links with Turkish institutions explained that they had come about because of the personal links of a single member of staff or, in one case, a former PhD student who had returned home to Turkey. While these connections were generally welcomed by the interviewees, they also pointed out that, if they were not expanded to include other colleagues, they could remain fragile. Indeed, one explained that his university had had several Erasmus+ partnerships with Turkish universities, established by a particular colleague, but that none of these had been used after the staff member left the institution.

This point was reflected in the interviews in Turkey. Interviewees stated that partnerships were most commonly established on the basis of individual links – forged through study abroad, visiting or exchange schemes, conferences and other academic activities, or when a Turkish student or colleague working in the UK facilitated connections. While such personal connections were often seen as highly productive, they were limited in scope. As in the UK, wider institutional support was viewed as necessary to ensure the sustainability of education-related partnerships. For example, one HEI representative reported that finding time to develop international partnerships was difficult for academics, because they were given no designated time by their institutions for this type of activity.

4.9.3 Covid-19

While Chapter 3 discussed some of the opportunities brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, interviewees also emphasised some associated barriers. This was particularly the case among the Turkish interviewees, who remarked on its negative impact on short-term student mobility programmes and research visits:

It stopped the physical mobility which is the core of Erasmus programme. The students participate in e-mobility programmes, but they don't experience the other culture. Therefore, this is a really big obstacle for the programme. (TR-N-5).

Covid was an exogenic shock (TR-HEI-7).

However, this was typically seen as only a short-term barrier or obstacle.

4.9.4 Academic culture

A final barrier, that was raised only with respect to the mobility of UK staff to Turkey to take up jobs in Turkish HEIs, was how academic culture could act as a barrier. Focus group participants asserted that factors such as limited facilities, a lack of time to do research, and long hours in the classroom deterred UK nationals (and other international staff) from relocating to Turkey.

On the basis of our data, there appears to be a disconnect between the aim to attract more international staff, outlined in both national and institutional strategy documents, and practice on the ground, which caps the number of international academics at two per cent of the total number of staff, and allows their appointment on a yearly basis only.

4.9.5 No barriers; just absence of incentives

Five of the HEI representatives believed that the lack of partnerships with Turkey was not a result of any specific barriers, but rather the absence of any particular incentives, at a time when they had many other countries to choose from and a lack of time and often money to explore new geographical areas. One noted, in discussing education-related collaborations: 'There are no barriers as to why we wouldn't work with Turkey; our focus has just been on other countries for the time being. But if the relationship with one of our current Turkish [research] partners was strengthened and there was interest on both sides in developing joint educational programmes or something like that, then I am sure the university would support that' (UK-HEI-5).

This point was also discussed in Turkey. Although

the majority of Turkish interviewees made very positive remarks about partnerships with the UK, many also believed that UK HEIs were not willing to establish partnerships with Turkey they had offers from other nations or had a sufficient number of partnerships already (see also discussion above).

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some of the factors that Turkish and UK participants identified as negatively affecting the establishment or sustenance of collaboration between the two countries. These relate to structures (such as regulations, legislation and quality assurance mechanisms), financial issues (including fee levels and research funding), and cultural and attitudinal perspectives that can impede communication. Barriers also can be related to particular national policies or positions, affecting, for example, visa and immigration regulations and the prioritisation of other geographical areas. In addition, lack of knowledge about the country or the HE system and concerns about the wider political environment were identified. While, in some cases, we report participants' perceptions – which may not always be factually correct – awareness of them is nevertheless important as they can still constitute crucial barriers. These perceived barriers inform the discussion in Chapter 5, about steps that can be taken in the future to develop collaboration between Turkey and the UK.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Overcoming barriers and strengthening links in the future

5.1 Introduction

This chapter details the suggestions that were made by research participants in both Turkey and the UK about how some of the identified barriers to collaboration and partnership could be overcome, and how links between the two countries could be strengthened in the future. National-level interventions are first discussed, before those that could be initiated by individual higher education institutions. We suggest that taking action at both levels is necessary. While some of the recommendations can be considered ‘quick wins’ that should be relatively easy to implement, others require longer-term action. Some relate to broader societal factors, which may be much harder to address.

It should be noted that, with respect to education, we focus primarily on joint degrees rather than other forms of transnational education. This is because, while other models were mentioned by a number of our UK interviewees, they were not on the agenda of the majority of our Turkish participants.

5.2 National-level action

In this section, we outline the actions that our participants from national-level organisations and HEIs, as well as some of those who took part in the focus groups, suggested to address some of the barriers outlined in Chapter 4. Here we discuss the importance of funding (with respect to research and education, as well as tuition fees); national-level commitments; information and examples of good practice; and help with institutional match-making. We also identify some areas where new forms of collaboration could take place and, finally, discuss

the impact of immigration procedures (noting, however, that these may be much harder to change than some of the other areas we discuss).

5.2.1 Funding

Research funding

As noted in the previous chapter, funding was considered by participants in both Turkey and the UK to be a key means of incentivising collaboration and of further internationalisation. With respect to research, from the UK side, many spoke of how the Global Challenges Research Fund had been highly successful in incentivising partnership-building with the countries on the UK’s Official Development Assistance list. Interviewees from both countries believed that the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund (although less well-known in the UK) had been important in establishing sustainable research partnerships between the UK and Turkey. Moreover, European funding had enabled collaboration (although usually as part of a multi-nation consortium). The continuation and/or extension of such schemes was seen as critical to developing further research partnerships between the two countries (and also for providing a firm basis for education-related partnerships). Without funding, it was argued that there was little incentive for researchers to collaborate nor the means for them to do so. In addition, to ensure that the highest quality research partnerships are funded, and that all interested academics have a chance to participate, information about such schemes could be disseminated more widely.

Although the UK funding for the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund (and other research funded through the UK's international aid budget) has recently been cut back substantially (see Chapter 4), our data indicate that this is a key means for furthering research partnerships between the two countries. It thus seems important that dedicated schemes such as this are continued and/or expanded, when national funding allows. In this context of likely reductions to the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund, it becomes even more important that smaller-scale research projects continue – such as through the various research commissioned by the British Council in Turkey, and seed funding from national organisations (such as from the UK's Royal Academy of Engineers, which had been used by some of the Turkish academics in the study).

Participants in both countries thought that available research funding could be used more strategically, to encourage the involvement of particular groups of individuals, and to address a wider range of social issues. Some suggested that research grants for UK-Turkey collaborations should include funding for doctoral students, to give them experience of partnership working, in the hope that they would lead such collaborations in the future. Others thought that female academics and doctoral students in Turkey could be targeted specifically by such schemes, to increase their power within the Turkish HE system. One example of good practice with respect to this issue, which participants believed could be replicated by other schemes, is the Turkish government's funding for PhD students and post-doctoral researchers' studies in the UK, implemented by the MoNE and TÜBİTAK. Finally, some focus group participants suggested that the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund be extended to cover a wider range of subject areas, including social sciences.

Funding to stimulate education partnerships

Funding was deemed less important with respect to education partnerships, although it was thought essential that any such collaborations were financially sustainable. Seed funding, to bring partners together to develop small-scale initiatives was however thought to be useful. Some UK HEIs and a national-level interviewee thought a good model was the funding that had been made available

by the British Council and Philippines government to set up a joint master's programme and some PhD scholarships to meet local needs in the Philippines. One interviewee suggested that, given the UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus+ scheme, Turkish funding of short-term student exchange to the UK would be welcomed: 'if the Turkish government match-funded student exchanges, UK HEIs will send students to them because we are funding them to going back the other way' (UK-HEI-10). It was also thought that, in the past, the funding of scholarships for study in the UK had been an effective means of fostering wider links.

As the Turing Scheme (the new UK scheme for short-term student mobility following its withdrawal from Erasmus+) will fund only outward student mobility, use could be made of Turkey's Mevlana exchange programme, which was initiated in 2011 to fund exchanges between Turkey and non-EU countries. This may help to consolidate and extend bi-lateral student mobility.

Tuition fees

For Turkish interviewees – a large majority of the interviews and focus groups in Turkey and in both the focus groups conducted in the UK – lowering the fees charged by UK HEIs to the level payable by domestic students was suggested as a means of furthering collaboration. This would, participants believed, increase whole-degree mobility from Turkey to the UK, and make TNE activities between the two countries more financially viable. Indeed, some Turkish interviewees noted that collaborations had been forged with other European countries to avoid the high fees charged in the UK, and that some students were following English language classes in Turkey or other countries such as Malta because they were unable to afford the high UK fees. In other cases, while individuals were able to afford the higher fees, it was nevertheless considered inequitable to charge such different amounts to 'home' and 'international' students. Turkish interviewees also called for more scholarships covering tuition fees (or a reduction in fees) to be available, particularly at graduate level, to facilitate mobility to the UK.

5.2.2 National-level commitment

Interviewees from both Turkey and the UK believed that stronger commitment to partnerships between the two countries from national-level organisations would stimulate activity in this area.

Many UK interviewees thought links between the two countries could be strengthened in the future if there was a clearer national commitment to this from, for example, the Turkish government or a national body such as Turkey's Council of Higher Education. As noted in the previous chapter, UK national organisations and HEIs spoke of the importance of such reassurance before they embarked on developing partnerships. While some interviewees thought statements of serious intent would be sufficient in themselves, others believed that more detailed commitment was needed at the national level, for example, to work to remove any regulatory barriers that impeded TNE relationships, and facilitate speedy decision-making. The following quotations, from UK HEI interviews, are illustrative:

If there is appetite from the Turkish side, it needs to come through in awareness-raising and an outline of very specific interests and drivers, so that universities can assess their position against these. These would need to come from both national and institutional actors. (UK-HEI 1)

A welcoming and encouraging regulatory framework [is needed]. (UK-HEI 6)

Normally we only get involved with a country where there is a big push from the overseas government, for example as happened with the Philippines and Greece. There needs to be greater transparency about regulation in Turkey. (UK-HEI 11)

One suggestion, made by Turkish participants, was for a new education agreement to be signed between the two countries, to underline an intent to co-operate, and outline a series of concrete actions to be taken to consolidate higher education links. Indeed, it was suggested that the intergovernmental agreement on education and culture, signed by the UK and Turkey in 1956, could be revised. The 1956

document provides a broad framework for various activities related to education and culture, but offers no concrete proposals. A revised agreement could build on the trade agreement that was recently signed between the two countries, offer more concrete suggestions for collaboration and help provide new momentum for future relationships between the two countries. In addition, the recent establishment of the Turkish HE Quality Council (THEQC) can provide the impetus for collaboration, at the national-level, with the UK's Quality Assurance Agency, to demonstrate commitment on both sides to removing regulatory barriers and promoting collaboration. It is also suggested to establish monitoring mechanisms and making improvements or revisions.

A small number of UK interviewees thought more action was needed on the part of the UK government, too – to indicate that Turkey was a country they it was keen to partner with, and to provide clear and easily-accessible information about factors related to regulation, quality assurance and accreditation. Those representing smaller and/or less prestigious UK HEIs, felt the government and the British Council could sometimes do more to signal to potential overseas partners their interest in international activity, with respect to both education and research, and to link them with comparable HEIs abroad. In addition, one interviewee thought more could be done by UK bodies to promote Turkey as a destination for UK students considering an exchange – by, for example, emphasising the high quality of its research. (We address this issue further below, with respect to the provision of information and institutional-level actions.)

5.2.3 More information; publicising examples of good practice

Research participants in both Turkey and the UK asserted that more could be done by various national actors to provide information to staff in higher education institutions, to help facilitate partnerships.

Turkish interviewees suggested that the research strength of Turkish universities could be better emphasised to potential UK partners, through the identification of particular priority areas, and universities where important research is being

conducted. Some suggested that the model developed with Germany could be replicated: 2014 was declared ‘The Year of Science with Germany’, which helped to facilitate numerous joint research programmes. Some interviewees also thought that younger institutions in Turkey, in particular, would benefit from knowing more about the regulatory and quality assurance framework in the UK – and that such information could be provided at the national level as well as through links between individual HEIs.

On the UK side, several interviewees stated that the dissemination of case studies by a government department, the British Council or Universities UK – where a UK HEI had worked successfully with a Turkish partner (ideally for education-related activity) would be very helpful, and give other UK HEIs the confidence to approach Turkish partners. For example, one interviewee commented:

It would be helpful to hear about other UK HEIs and their experiences of working with Turkey – if some have been developing really good links, especially for educational purposes, whether it is student mobility or deeper collaborations. It would be really good to see these and to talk to people who have been engaging in these. (UK-HEI 5)

There was also a strong call for more information about Turkey, which reflected the belief among Turkish interviewees that their activities were not well known in the UK. While many UK HEIs noted that they probably could find relevant information for themselves if they put in sufficient time and effort, many stated that they did not have the necessary resources to devote to this, particularly if they were not aware of any specific incentives (financial, regulatory or otherwise) to develop collaborations. Suggestions included information about:

- the Turkish HE sector in general
- relevant demographic factors (to help UK HEIs assess if there is enough local capacity to meet demand)
- Turkish government policy with respect to TNE and other forms of partnership
- accreditation of particular degrees in Turkey

(e.g. UK law and pharmacy degrees)

- any particular areas of research that the Turkish government plans to invest in
- particular market opportunities, including which Turkish universities are keen to work with the UK, and what in particular they are looking for in a partner
- regulatory and quality assurance frameworks, including any particular government restrictions
- potential factors that could hold up a partnership agreement and advice about how to avoid them.

Most UK interviewees agreed that it would be most useful if all of this type of information could be held in one place that was easy-to-access for HEI staff. It may also help if it is available in English. In addition, several interviewees thought it would be helpful to have events (held virtually) from time to time, to disseminate and discuss such information and ‘help keep Turkey in people’s minds’. It may also be useful for Turkish organisations to play a prominent part in international conferences such as ‘Going Global’ to heighten awareness of Turkish HE.

For students and staff considering moving to the UK, themselves, for study or work, focus group participants thought it would be helpful if more HE fairs were held in Turkey; more UK HEIs visited the country (to attend fairs and for other information-giving events); and that a centralised postgraduate application system was set up (like UCAS) to make applying for master’s courses and doctoral study easier.

5.2.4 Matchmaking; identification of areas of common interest

In both Turkey and the UK, some interviewees suggested that it would be helpful if more ‘matchmaking’ activities were initiated by national-level organisations. As noted above, Turkish interviewees believed they would benefit if more was done to emphasise the particular research strengths and priorities of Turkey to UK audiences, and to highlight specific universities where innovative work was being carried out. They also thought that both countries could benefit from the identification of certain areas of common interest – which could provide the basis for partnership-

building. Suggested areas were history, archaeology, migration, environment and climate change, disaster studies, and plate tectonics.

In the UK, some interviewees (albeit a relatively small number), particularly those that did not have any Turkish contacts of their own, thought links could be facilitated through matchmaking activities run by the British Council. It was believed that this worked best when groups of HEIs (from both countries) were brought together to explore particular areas for potential collaboration rather than one-to-one conversations. Speaking with respect to her experience of establishing partnerships elsewhere, one interviewee commented:

I have found it useful where there is a delegation from a particular country (organised by British Council or UUKi, for example), where you have an opportunity to talk about different possible partnerships and their interests. That facilitation of creating links in one place, rather than HEIs working separately, would be useful. More of this at national level would be useful. (UK-HEI 5)

Some matchmaking activities of this nature were facilitated by the British Council between 2012 and 2018. However, these discussions were typically conducted with high-level representatives from participating HEIs. More direct and tangible links may be forged if staff from a lower level in HEIs (such as from within faculties or professional services departments) are brought together.

In addition, UK focus group participants thought it would be useful to have a database to help match staff research interests in the two countries, to facilitate research partnerships between individuals. A searchable platform along these lines could be run by one or more national organisations, such as the CoHE, encouraging academics interested in international collaborations to register and identify their areas of expertise.

5.2.5 Developing new forms of collaboration

Research participants, particularly those in Turkey, believed that various new forms of collaboration

could be pursued in the future, which would help to strengthen links between the two countries. These included the following:

- *Lifelong learning partnerships:* Turkish interviewees reflected on the high proportion of Turkish young people not in education, employment or training relative to other countries, and the consequent need for specific education and training initiatives for this group to provide them with a second chance at education and/or gain new qualifications. To increase capacity in Turkey, it was suggested that joint programmes with the UK could usefully be developed, perhaps including NGOs. Such initiatives could give young people, who would typically not be able to take advantage of HE mobility programmes, exposure to international perspectives.
- *Open University partnerships:* the strength of Open University provision in both Turkey and the UK was noted by some Turkish interviewees (for example, in Turkey, Anadolu University has run distance learning programmes for almost four million students - nearly half the whole student population), who thought this would provide a useful basis for collaboration and partnership. The Turkish Higher Education Council and the British Council have already begun a pilot project for the quality assurance of online programmes, and Open University has been participating in networks for distance education for a long time. The post-Covid-19 environment is likely to make this a fertile area for collaboration and further development. As one of our interviewees noted, 'Covid [hastened] the digitalisation of HE that is likely to happen in the 2030s, and we need to internationalise our experiences (TR-N-2).
- *Short-term mobility programmes and exchanges:* to encourage greater mobility between the two countries, and to increase understanding of the two national contexts, Turkish interviewees suggested that a greater range of opportunities should be offered, beyond the conventional semester- or year-long academic exchange. These could include: internships; short-duration visits to use particular facilities in the other country, such as laboratories or libraries;

summer schools for students, focussing on particular themes (Turkish interviewees noted that these had worked well in the past when run with other countries); social responsibility projects; and short cultural and historical trips for students and staff.

- *Alumni and migrant networks:* many Turkish interviewees thought more could be done to use alumni networks – comprised of those who had taken part in exchanges between the two countries, and who had studied for the whole of a degree in the UK. Members could be encouraged to organise (online or in-person) collaborative activities. In addition, some interviewees believed that the large number of Turkish academics working in the UK, and the smaller number of UK academics in Turkey, both constituted important assets that could be used by the British Council and other actors, to help promote links between the two countries. Some participants had already engaged in some work in this area themselves. One noted: ‘We formed a group of Oxford-Cambridge alumni so that we can do something with our contacts there ... It may help if groups of graduates who have studied in the UK are active. (TR-Focus Group-1)
- *Joint master’s and doctoral programmes:* many Turkish interviewees (at all levels) believed that joint programmes would enhance the quality of postgraduate education for Turkish students (when compared to studying wholly in Turkey), and regulations should be developed to facilitate their establishment. They would also offer certain advantages to Turkey when compared to sending students to the UK for the whole of a doctoral degree. Components of such joint degrees could be offered online. (It should be noted, however, that Turkish students studying in the UK, who took part in the focus groups, valued highly the opportunity to come to the UK for the whole of their degree. We thus do not present the suggestion above as an alternative but rather an additional means of collaboration.) Joint postgraduate programmes can be initiated more easily in Turkey than those at undergraduate level. Moreover, in the internationalisation strategy of the CoHE, facilitating new regulations for joint programmes at the national level has been identified as a priority (CoHE, 2017). An important part of

developing such programmes will be ensuring that the national qualification frameworks in Turkey and the UK speak to one another effectively.

In addition, interviewees from both countries thought that online learning opportunities, brought into sharp relief by the Covid-19 pandemic, offered ways of strengthening collaboration between Turkey and the UK. Online learning could, interviewees suggested, now more easily form part of joint and/or TNE programmes. It could also be used as smaller parts of Turkish or UK degree programmes (with, for example, UK academics offering specific lectures for students in Turkish institutions). A senior Turkish academic stated:

the pandemic broke the paradigm of physical platforms. Online methods can ease many things between the two countries, at least part of the training can be done remotely. It may be possible for UK teachers to teach online. (TR-Focus Group-2)

Finally, some Turkish interviewees discussed how changes could be made to English language teaching in Turkey, to help strengthen English-language capacity and thus, ultimately, help facilitate higher education partnerships with the UK. This articulates with the national strategic priority of increasing the Turkish HE sector’s foreign language capacity, and the number of programmes taught in a foreign language (noted in the CoHE’s internationalisation strategy for 2018-22). Interviewees suggested various innovative ways in which English language teaching could be improved, from post-secondary level onwards, some of which involved collaboration with UK colleagues. Specific ideas included developing joint seminars, visits, course materials and specific pedagogical approaches, and the involvement of UK HEIs in the training of Turkish English language teachers. One interviewee summed up this perspective well in the following comment:

We have a specific role in our region and our partnership with the UK on this matter can help this. I want our graduates to compete with the world, and without knowing the language of the world it is impossible. (TR-HEI-15).

5.2.6 Immigration

Focus group participants in the UK, and Turkish interviewees at all levels, believed that mobility between staff and students in the two countries would be made easier if immigration procedures could be made more straightforward – ideally, by not requiring Turkish citizens travelling to the UK to have a visa, demonstrate a certain amount of money in their bank account, or prove that they have not participated in any terrorist activity. It was also suggested that visas could be issued for longer periods of time – such as for ten years (rather than for only six months), as is the case for the USA. While, realistically, such change is unlikely to occur in the UK in the short-term, it is important to recognise that, as noted in Chapter 4, the visa application process was identified and stated repeatedly as one of the key barriers to partnership and mobility by many Turkish research participants.

5.3 Institutional-level action

In addition to the recommendations about national-level activity, discussed above, participants from all strands of the research suggested various actions that could also be taken by individual higher education institutions. Typically, it was asserted that these needed to be taken alongside those at the national-level, even in Turkey, which has a more centralised system than the UK. Recommendations focus on programme development and peer learning; quality assurance and costing processes, and mechanisms for establishing open dialogue. We discuss each of these in turn.

5.3.1 Programme development and peer learning

It was felt by some interviewees, particularly those in Turkey, that programme development between the two countries could be undertaken by HEIs themselves, without waiting for national-level support. Suggestions included signing bi-lateral agreements for student and staff mobility; establishing joint postgraduate programmes; and developing curricula with another institution. The following quotation, from one of the Turkish focus groups, is illustrative:

Joint doctoral programmes can be made with England ... joint doctoral programmes are important because there may be an

opportunity to join an overseas research group after classes. It is especially important for Anatolian universities. Many universities in Anatolia give a doctorate, but it is necessary ... to convince them to have a foot from the outside. There are strong research partners and if we can persuade them [to set up a] joint PhD, it would be a huge change. With the cooperation of the two countries, good examples can be [learnt from and] repeated and bad examples are eliminated. (TR-Focus Group-2).

Relatedly, Turkish interviewees believed that HEIs could take action themselves to identify similar institutions in the other country with which they could begin to establish links. They thought that Turkish HEIs could ‘benchmark’ themselves against suitable UK universities, and that this may then facilitate a process of peer learning. This was suggested by various senior leaders and academics who had had close partnerships with foreign higher education institutions in the past, and who worked in the older and bigger universities in Turkey. They thought that, as well as benchmarking against whole HEIs, such comparisons could also be made at a more local level, with respect to research centres working on similar topics, for example.

5.3.2 Quality assurance processes

Although most UK interviewees believed that national action was needed to address potential problems with the regulatory environment and quality assurance mechanisms, Turkish interviewees thought that steps could be taken at the institutional level to make collaboration easier, and provide role models for other Turkish HEIs. They believed that quality assurance could be furthered by undertaking institutional evaluations in this area and/or programme accreditations. Some talked, for example, about the importance of setting up internal quality assurance systems, such as the widespread and systematic use of external examiners for individual programmes, as is common in the UK. One focus group participant stated:

setting up a quality assurance system within the university is a bit of [establishing] a culture, like benchmarking, setting an example. It is important to see the functioning system, to meet with teachers, to experience

internal quality assurance, to provide opportunities for those who want to specialise in this field. (TR-Focus Group-2)

Internal quality assurance processes and reports could, it was suggested, be then shared between HEIs to provide examples of good practice and thus strengthen further action in this area. It was thought that taking action in this way, to enhance quality assurance procedures, would make it easier to collaborate with external partners in the future.

5.3.3 Costing processes

Another suggestion that was mentioned only in Turkey was to improve the costing processes, at an institutional level, when partnerships are being put together – to ensure that Turkish HEIs are not disadvantaged by their involvement in such collaborations. One focus group participant, for example, described how the full costs to be incurred during a collaborative project had not been calculated in the past, and this had led to the project being cut short:

Universities' cost accounting should be calculated in full detail. For example, when calculating the library cost, salaries, book expenses, water, security, electricity, cleaning, etc. Everything should be included. Our budgeting structure is not suitable for this. While calculating the cost of the project, water, electricity, wear is not calculated. The devices are wearing out, the project is cut short. Foundation universities should be more enthusiastic, benchmarking with UK universities. (TR-Focus Group-2)

Indeed, a prominent theme in the Turkish focus groups was the way in which research projects were costed and then accounted for. Action could be taken at the institutional level in Turkey to make financial procedures easier for academic staff to navigate, to ensure that this does not act as a barrier to international partnerships. It is possible that UK HEIs could offer some examples of good practice in this respect.

5.3.4 Establishing open dialogue; improving knowledge

As outlined in Chapter 4, participants from both countries held some negative views about the other country. Some UK participants mentioned that they had concerns about academic freedom constraints in Turkey, while some Turkish participants mentioned that they had experienced a colonial and/or arrogant approach from their counterparts in the UK. To some extent, these barriers can be addressed by furthering knowledge of the two countries – by national-level action – as discussed above. However, action is also needed at the institutional level to ensure that when dialogue occurs between staff in the UK and Turkey it is open in nature, and individuals feel supported to raise any concerns they might have which may impact on partnership working. Principles for such open communication can be articulated at the institutional level (as well as, perhaps, by national-level organisations such as the British Council). HEIs can also play an important role in countering negative stereotypes of the other, by ensuring the information they provide to academic staff is up-to-date and accurate.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted some of the specific suggestions made by the interviewees and focus group participants about action that could be taken, at both the national- and institutional-levels, to overcome the barriers identified in Chapter 4, and strengthen links between Turkey and the UK in the future. While there were some differences between the perspectives of our participants from the two countries, as evident in the data presented above, there was general agreement that there was scope for plenty to be done by both national actors, as well as those working within universities, to improve bilateral collaboration. Moreover, while some require significant change, which may be outside the scope of many policy actors (for example, with respect to immigration), there are many actions that can be taken relatively easily - in both the short- and medium-term – to help strengthen partnerships between the two countries.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This report has drawn on detailed qualitative research in both Turkey and the UK to explore the current state of play with respect to higher education partnerships between the two countries, and prospects for developing such links in the future. It has documented (in the Introduction and Chapter 2) the various ways in which Turkey and the UK have collaborated, with respect to higher education since the intergovernmental agreement on cooperation for education and culture signed in 1956.

In this chapter, we summarise the key opportunities for further collaboration that were identified by representatives of national bodies in the two countries, as well as by a broad spectrum of higher education staff - some representing their university, and others who spoke to us in an individual capacity (discussed in Chapter 3). We then outline some of the main barriers to realising these opportunities (covered in Chapter 4), before presenting the key recommendations (which were explored in detail in Chapter 5). We end by outlining some areas for further research.

6.2 Opportunities for strengthening partnerships

Research participants, in general, identified a wide range of potential opportunities to develop or strengthen partnerships between Turkey and the UK, and were able to cite some examples of collaborations that were believed to have benefitted both countries. The most commonly discussed potential opportunities were related to geo-political factors –for example, the geographical location of Turkey (on the border of Asia and Europe) and the

UK's strategic importance within global higher education – and the way in which the UK's withdrawal from the European Union may lead to a reconfiguration of higher education partnerships (with the UK more likely to look outside of Europe). It was also asserted by a substantial number of UK interviewees that their institutions were keen to diversify the countries they worked with, and this presented an opportunity to develop closer links with Turkey. Turkey was also seen to present opportunities through its location as a regional hub, attractive to students from neighbouring countries. Joint UK-Turkish programmes could potentially tap into this wider market.

The commitment to internationalisation on the part of both countries was viewed as an important basis upon which partnerships could be built, as was the belief, on the part of Turkish interviewees, that there were significant opportunities for institutional learning by collaborating with UK HEIs that often had a longer history of working internationally (for example, through 'benchmarking' against examples of good practice).

Covid-19 was also discussed as having brought about new opportunities – for demonstrating how effectively online spaces could be used for cross-national collaborations for education and research, as well as for liaising more generally with HEIs abroad. One of the most important priorities for the Turkish higher education system is to be more open to the developments in the world in order to become a more competitive, transparent and inclusive system; the UK would be a good partner to help achieve this aim.

Finally, some interviewees identified specific disciplinary areas where they thought Turkey-UK collaborations would be most fruitful. These included archaeology, heritage studies, migrant and refugee studies, aerospace, soil science, marine studies, and farm management. With respect to archaeology and heritage studies, particularly, Turkey was discussed as a ‘natural laboratory’ where researchers from both countries could work together. English language teaching was also identified as a potentially important area for collaboration, particularly in HEIs where the medium of communication is Turkish.

6.3 Main identified barriers

Despite identifying many opportunities for future partnership working between Turkey and the UK, research participants also identified a number of specific barriers. Some of these were structural, relating in particular to regulatory and financial matters, and immigration procedures. For example, Turkish interviewees discussed how their national regulations often impeded international activity, directing HEIs towards focussing on student mobility rather than other forms of partnership, and made developing joint programmes with the UK difficult. Similar views were reflected in the UK data, with some participants commenting on what they believed to be a lack of available public data and regulations in English, accessibility of information with respect to the regulatory environment in Turkey. Financial barriers included the high tuition fees charged by UK HEIs, and the relatively limited funds specifically for bi-lateral research co-operation between Turkey and the UK. The stringent visa requirements imposed by the UK were seen as a barrier to mobility to the UK from Turkey, and were thought to have had an adverse effect on partnerships for both education and research.

In addition, various interviewees discussed issues to do with national impetus or commitment. Participants believed that a lack of explicit commitment to developing partnerships, articulated at governmental level, could be a barrier to bi-lateral co-operation.

A range of more attitudinal and cultural factors were also outlined. These included a lack of knowledge of higher education in the other country (more commonly mentioned by UK interviewees), and a sense that there was a significant imbalance

between the two countries in experience of and priorities for internationalisation, which could lead to problems in both initiating contact in the first place, and then sustaining equal, mutually-respectful relationships.

Other issues, mentioned by a relatively small number of participants include: an emphasis on consolidating existing partnerships rather than developing new ones, on the part of some UK HEIs; dependence on a single member of staff; the impact of Covid-19; and, for Turkish HEIs keen to attract UK (and other international) staff, the prevailing academic culture.

6.4 Key recommendations

On the basis of the data collected in the project, we suggest that action is taken by national-level organisations and individual HEIs in both countries to address the various barriers outlined above, and make the most of the opportunities for collaborative working identified by many of our research participants. We include recommendations for both education and research. We would suggest that these are approached in a participatory manner, involving all key stakeholders, and evaluated systematically, with input from both countries, where relevant.

Specific actions are listed in Figures 6.1 – 6.3 below.

Figure 6.1: Research-related recommendations

For national-level organisations

- Continue and, where possible, extend dedicated funds for Turkey-UK partnerships, covering a broad range of subject areas (particularly those of mutual benefit and/or where there is specific expertise in one or both nations).
- Involve doctoral students in funding schemes, to develop capacity in international collaborations.
- Develop initiatives to increase awareness of research in the other country (e.g. similar to Turkey’s ‘Year of Science with Germany’ in 2014).

- Develop a database of academics interested in collaborations with colleagues in the other country to facilitate contact.
- Organise meetings to bring together academics from both countries working in the same field.

For higher education institutions

- For Turkish HEIs, ensure financial procedures (such as the costing of research grant applications) are transparent and communicated effectively to academics.

Figure 6.2: Education-related recommendations

For national-level organisations

- Provide seed funding to stimulate new educational partnerships.
- Offer more scholarships/tuition fee waivers for study abroad.
- Consider whether the Turing and Mevlana schemes can be used in tandem to promote reciprocal short-term mobility.
- Ensure national regulations in Turkey facilitate the establishment of partnerships, particularly for joint degree programmes.
- Ensure national qualification frameworks in both countries articulate well with each other.
- Disseminate widely examples of where educational partnerships between the two countries have been successfully established.
- Provide easily-accessible information in English about education and regulations in the other country for those interested in exploring possible future partnerships.
- Run ‘match-making’ activities – for groups of institutions – which bring together staff working at similar levels within HEIs.
- Consider developing new forms of collaboration such as lifelong learning partnerships, open university collaborations, more diverse forms of short-term student and staff mobility, tailor-made summer/winter schools and

joint postgraduate programme.

- Integrate online learning into education programmes, to more easily facilitate contributions from both countries.
- Involve UK HEIs more fully in English language teaching in Turkey.
- Establish monitoring and tracking tools to make improvement.

For higher education institutions

- Be proactive in approaching HEIs in the other country, including to help ‘benchmark’ Turkish HEIs.
- For Turkish HEIs, ensure internal quality assurance systems are in place.
- Consider expanding internship-type opportunities, for short-term student mobility.

Figure 6.3: Other recommendations

For national-level organisations

- Provide stronger commitment to HE partnerships with the other country – perhaps through a new education agreement.
- Make greater use of alumni networks to develop and promote new initiatives.
- Consider making the immigration process to the UK smoother, and offering visas to Turkish nationals (especially Turkish academics/students/alumni) for longer periods of time.
- Develop a comprehensive and sustainable recruitment policy for UK academics in Turkish HE.
- Establish a taskforce from the UK and Turkey to explore new possible collaborations and monitor ongoing partnerships.

For higher education institutions

- Ensure that dialogue between staff in the UK and Turkey is open and constructive, to enable any concerns to be addressed at an early stage.

We note that some of these actions can be implemented relatively quickly, and can be considered ‘quick wins’, while others will require longer-term action. We suggest that action with respect to both is equally important: while some of the longer-term goals will help to address some of the most significant obstacles identified in our research, the ‘quick wins’ will help to build momentum in this area, and demonstrate that this an area that key stakeholders take seriously. We note also that at least one of the recommendations – that relating to immigration – is not within the provenance of higher education stakeholders and, as such, may make it significantly harder to address than many of the other suggestions. Nevertheless, we have included it in the list because of its importance to many of our Turkish interviewees and focus group participants.

6.5 Areas for future research

As we noted in the Introduction, there are a number of limitations to the research that underpins this report. For example, because of our reliance of qualitative interviews and focus groups, while we have generated in-depth data from many key stakeholders, their views are not necessarily representative of all their colleagues. In particular, while we took steps to ensure that the institutional diversity of both countries was reflected in the sample, we had time to interview representatives of only a relatively small proportion of HEIs in each country. Further research could usefully employ survey methods to reach a larger and more representative sample of HEI staff.

The voices of UK students studying in Turkey are also not represented in our research. As we explain in the report, we tried hard to include some such students in the sample but suspect that, at the time we collected data, there were very few in Turkey anyway – largely because of the impact of Covid-19. Future research could usefully engage with this population and, given that that the numbers of such students moving from the UK to Turkey are small, provide important information about the motivations of this group. The views of UK students about studying in Turkey, who have not yet made any decision about studying abroad, should also be researched.

6.6. Concluding comments

We hope that this report, based on our research findings, contributes to: identifying potential areas for future partnerships; establishing a closer dialogue between colleges in Turkey and the UK; and bringing together HE systems, institutions and individuals in the two countries for stronger, mutually beneficial, efficient and sustainable collaborations.

Appendix

Appendix

List of organisations that took part in the research

Turkish national organisations

Ministry of National Education
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate of EU Affairs
 The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK)
 Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC)
 Turkish National Agency
 Turkish Education Attaché in London
 British Embassy Chevening Programme
 British Council Turkey

UK national organisations

British Universities' International Liaison Association
 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
 Department for Education
 Department for International Trade
 Quality Assurance Agency
 Russell Group
 University Alliance
 Universities UK International

Turkish HEIs

Abdullah Gül University
 Altınbaş University
 Anadolu University
 Atatürk University
 İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

Gebze Technical University
 Hacettepe University
 İzmir Institute of Technology
 Karabük University
 Karadeniz Technical University
 Koç University
 Middle East Technical University
 OSTİM Technical University
 Sabancı University
 TOBB ETÜ University of Economics & Technology

UK HEIs

Abertay University
 Cardiff University
 Cranfield University
 Keele University
 Lancaster University
 Leeds Beckett University
 Queen's University, Belfast
 Stirling University
 University of Edinburgh
 University of Liverpool
 University of Reading
 University of Sheffield
 University of South Wales
 University of Surrey

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