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## Academic mobility and educational migration under international crisis: adaptation of Central Asian countries through geographic diversification

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For all countries of Central Asia, Russia has traditionally been the main direction of international educational cooperation and educational migration. The authorities of three out of five Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan - under the current international crisis, decided, without abandoning the Russian vector, to speed up the development of other geographical directions through “educational diplomacy”. Citizens of all Central Asian countries, in their turn, decide on the place of receiving higher education under the influence of a negative information campaign against Russia. Two years of crisis is a period that allows us to determine at least short-term trends in educational migration among Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and the outside world.

Statistics available for analyzing international educational cooperation between Central Asian countries have varying degrees of detail and efficiency. The most complete statistics on international connections of universities (including data on academic mobility, joint programs, foreign students) are published by Kazakhstani authorities represented by Higher Education Development National Center under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (<https://enic-kazakhstan.edu.kz/ru/analitika/otchety-1>). The authorities of Uzbekistan have recently launched a statistical service containing various current data and allowing the one to analyze, among other things, work of foreign branches and joint educational programs of the country’s universities (<https://stat.edu.uz/>). Higher education statistics published by the

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Kyrgyz authorities only include data on the number of foreign students studying at universities of the country (<https://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/obrazovanie/>).

National statistics of Central Asian countries can be supplemented with data from other countries, primarily summary statistical reports from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia in the VPO-1 form on the number of foreign students in Russian universities (<https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/action/stat/highed/>). International statistics are presented by data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics on the number of national citizens studying in foreign universities by host countries (“Inbound internationally mobile students by country of origin», <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>). However, this statistic, firstly, is provided with a significant delay (there is still no data for 2022 for many countries). Secondly, it is not given to UNESCO by all countries, for example, there is no data for China or for Tajikistan since 2018.

### **Kazakhstan: academic mobility**

Statistics on academic mobility of university students are provided only by Kazakhstan. Data on incoming academic mobility (internationally mobile students in universities of Kazakhstan, see the table below) proves the following dynamics:

- number of students from Russia fell annually in 2022-2023, especially sharply in 2023, the overall reduction compared to 2021 was 2.6 times;
- in 2022-2023 other main directions of mobility from the CIS countries also decreased: from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan the drop in mobility was even stronger than from Russia;
- mobility from Europe in 2022-2023 doubled, the aggregate figure is at the level of leaders from the CIS countries; the main result in 2023 was provided by 5 countries led by Germany and France;
- mobility from Asian countries increased significantly, especially from China and Japan.

Table - Incoming academic mobility to Kazakhstan - number of students  
(the original names of the regions and the division of countries by region are preserved)

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1582</b>	<b>1226</b>
<b>CIS countries</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1718</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>704</b>
Russia	140	31	696	590	264
Kyrgyzstan	81	4	326	315	215
Uzbekistan	28	-	498	112	167
Tajikistan	42	3	134	41	50
<b>Europe</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>188</b>
Germany	46	-	3	5	37
France	21	3	24	18	34
United Kingdom	-	1	-	-	26

Turkey	29	11	52	28	21
Poland	1	-	2	8	18
<b>Southeast Asia</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>194</b>
China	122	31	61	157	111
Japan	41	6	9	6	57
South Korea	22	5	14	17	19
India	2	-	-	3	-

Data on outgoing academic mobility (number of Kazakhstani students studying at foreign universities, see the table below) show the following dynamics:

- number of students who chose Russia, after the peak in 2021, decreased significantly throughout 2022-2023;
- number of students in other major CIS host countries (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan) sharply grew in 2022-2023 and for the first time in total in 2023 exceeded the Russian indicator;
- European direction reached the pre-Covid level in 2022, and significantly exceeded it in 2023; cumulatively this direction in 2022-2023 already exceeded the CIS countries;
- the undisputed leaders from “European” countries according to 2023 data are Poland and Turkey, two more European countries – Germany and France – had indicators above 100 people;
- in Asia, South Korean direction has grown significantly; Chinese direction remains weak, significantly below pre-Covid levels.

Table - Outgoing academic mobility from Kazakhstan - number of students  
(the original names of the regions and the division of countries into regions are preserved)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Total</b>	<b>2694</b>	<b>1373</b>	<b>3246</b>	<b>3613</b>	<b>4426</b>
<b>CIS countries</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>1812</b>	<b>1602</b>	<b>1902</b>
Russia	453	326	1459	1146	857
Kyrgyzstan	73	30	84	127	243
Uzbekistan	42	20	202	255	598
Tajikistan	9	12	33	9	156
<b>Europe</b>	<b>1637</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>1282</b>	<b>1695</b>	<b>2143</b>
Poland	457	244	371	439	668
Turkey	333	221	91	482	619
Germany	102	61	143	135	177
France	80	76	55	101	117
Lithuania	120	53	72	85	93
<b>Southeast Asia</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>326</b>
South Korea	142	30	51	118	151
China	145	5	50	79	65
Malaysia	51	15	31	29	44

Japan	22	2	3	22	35
India	-	-	-	-	-

### Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan: joint educational programs

**Kazakhstan** maintains separate statistics on “joint educational programs” (JEP) and on “double-degree programs” (DDP), which is available in various sections, starting only from 2022. The data shows, among other things, the following dynamics:

- the number of JEPs with Russian universities and their student participants increased in 2023; in terms of JEPs number, Russia remained first, but in terms of students’ numbers it dropped to third place; the number of double-degree programs with Russian universities decreased by only 3, while the number of students participating in such programs noticeably increased and, in general, Russian universities remained number one in this form of educational cooperation;
- in 2023 other geographic areas of educational cooperation between universities in Kazakhstan have grown significantly: the USA, Turkey, China - in JEP format; the UK, the USA, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and China - in the format of double-degree programs; France fell in both formats and Poland stagnated.

Table – Joint educational programs of universities in Kazakhstan with foreign ones (top 10 partner countries, number of programs / number of students)

Joint educational programs		
	2022	2023
<b>Total</b>	<b>65 / 1195</b>	<b>84 / 1976</b>
USA	20 / 612	25 / 879
Turkey	2 / 70	3 / 397
Russia	20 / 177	27 / 263
Germany	4 / 134	4 / 148
France	7 / 150	5 / 110
China	1 / 4	3 / 67
South Korea	0 / 0	2 / 18
Lithuania	1 / 2	3 / 17
Poland	3 / 15	3 / 14
Uzbekistan	3 / 4	3 / 12

Table - Double-degree programs of universities in Kazakhstan with foreign ones (top 10 partner countries, number of programs / number of students)

Double degrees		
	2022	2023
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>212 / 1974</b>
Russia	115 / 564	112 / 640

United Kingdom	5 / 167	8 / 446
USA	7 / 79	7 / 202
Uzbekistan	3 / 19	6 / 128
Kyrgyzstan	6 / 43	11 / 102
France	6 / 144	8 / 93
China	2 / 38	4 / 83
Poland	12 / 60	13 / 68
South Korea	5 / 34	6 / 36
Germany	10 / 41	8 / 26

**Uzbekistani** authorities publish data on the geography of JEPs with foreign universities only in terms of the number of JEPs, but not their students. A comparison of data for the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 academic years for this indicator proves the following:

- Russian direction continues to retain the status of the main one, however, both the number of JEPs and the share of JEPs with Russian universities have decreased noticeably;
- Belarusian direction - traditionally number two for universities in Uzbekistan - retained its share;
- many other destinations have increased twice or more - among them are Turkey, Poland, Tajikistan, South Korea, France, India, etc.

Table - Geographical distribution of JEP run by Uzbekistani universities with foreign partners (number of JEPs)

№	Countries	Number and share of JEPs			
		2021/2022 academic year	%	2023/2024 academic year	%
1	Russia	169	55	126	43,6
2	Belarus	91	29,6	87	30,1
3	Turkey	-	-	11	3,8
4	Poland	4	1,3	8	2,8
5	Malaysia	9	3	6	2,1
6	Indonesia	4	1,3	6	2,1
7	Latvia	4	1,3	6	2,1
8	Tajikistan	-	-	6	2,1
9	South Korea	2	0,6	5	1,7
10	France	-	-	5	1,7
11	India	-	-	5	1,7
12	China	2	0,6	3	1,1
13	Czech Republic	-	-	3	1,1
14	United Kingdom	-	-	3	1,1
15	Austria	2	0,6	2	0,7
16	Italy	-	-	2	0,7

17	Israel	5	1,6	1	0,3
18	USA	4	1,3	1	0,3
19	Lithuania	4	1,3	1	0,3
20	Germany	1	0,3	1	0,3
21	Hungary	-	-	1	0,3
22	Kazakhstan	3	1	-	-
23	Kyrgyzstan	2	0,6	-	-
24	Finland	2	0,6	-	-
	Total	308	100	289	100

### Educational migration from Central Asian countries

Data on educational migration from **Kazakhstan** (see the table below) show the following:

- Russian direction by number of students from Kazakhstan reduced in both 2022 and 2023;
- data for China are not publicly available; it can be assumed based on indirect estimates that indicators are close to or have already reached pre-pandemic levels, giving China second place;
- educational migration from Kazakhstan to Turkey grew at a very high pace for 2022-2023, securing it a strong third place;
- such directions of educational migration from Kazakhstan as the USA, Poland, South Korea, Uzbekistan, Hong Kong, Slovakia grew after 2022;
- according to 2021 data, the Czech Republic and Germany were also significant destinations, but data for 2022-2023 are not available yet.

Table – Outgoing educational migration from Kazakhstan by host country  
(number of students)

Country/Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Russia	71 368	60 931	61 040	56 733	53 957
China	14 224	15 000	...	...	~15 000
Turkey	2 191	2 349	2 911	8 864	11 958
USA	2 091	1 830	2 121	2 440	...
Kyrgyzstan	2 479	2 083	2 178	1 985	...
Poland	759	1 172	1 468	1 735	...
United Kingdom	1 272	1 288	1 201	1 117	...
South Korea	749	755	797	823	...
Uzbekistan	136	...	277	526	...
France	432	459	412	430	...
Hong Kong	179	243	265	285	...
Slovakia	47	80	202	251	...
Belarus	302	301	232	242	...
Malaysia	572	260	236	201	...
Latvia	214	186	169	151	...

Czech Republic	1 751	2 027	2 395	...	...
Germany	963	1 143	1 218	...	...
Canada	576	651	696	...	...
Hungary	463	626	618	...	...
Italy	167	304	565	...	...
Austria	340	350	392	...	...
Lithuania	117	156	174	...	...
Japan	120	119	127	...	...

Data on educational migration from **Uzbekistan** (see the table below) show the following:

- Russia and Kyrgyzstan remain the main destinations for educational migration from Uzbekistan; the number of students in Russia decreased in 2023, in Kyrgyzstan - in 2022;
- Kazakhstan continues to lose its attractiveness at a high rate among Uzbekistani students;
- South Korea, China, Turkey have grown significantly and already occupy a noticeable share;
- according to 2022 data educational migration to Belarus, Poland, the USA, and the UK has increased significantly;
- Japan and Germany showed high growing rates in 2020-2021, but data for 2022-2023 are not available yet.

Table – Outgoing educational migration from Uzbekistan by host country  
(number of students)

Country/Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Russia	27 397	38 111	48 671	57 992	53 399
Kyrgyzstan	14 538	37 571	51 605	40 282	...
Kazakhstan	15 600	14 235	13 550	9 571	6 721
South Korea	5 215	7 426	7 641	8 222	> 12 500
China	...	...	...	> 8 000	...
Turkey	1 075	1 598	2 423	4 794	6 247
Belarus	115	432	1 070	2 352	...
Poland	251	629	1 368	2 116	...
Latvia	1 243	1 717	1 710	1 397	...
USA	...	545	543	1 089	...
United Kingdom	297	510	629	996	...
Malaysia	299	265	209	200	...
Saudi Arabia	45	94	102	117	...
France	123	105	103	110	...
Japan	693	1 048	1 00	...	...
Germany	653	777	879	...	...
Italy	352	248	332	...	...
Czech Republic	252	256	262	...	...

Data on educational migration from **Kyrgyzstan** (see the table below) show the following dynamics:

- Russian direction remains the key one, but the number of Kyrgyzstani students decreased there in 2023;
- it can be assumed, based on indirect estimates, that China's indicators are close to or have already reached pre-pandemic levels;
- Turkey shows growth in the number of Kyrgyzstani students and maintains the third place in the ranking;
- the USA, Poland, South Korea, Uzbekistan, and Georgia grew at very high rates in 2022.

Table – Outgoing educational migration from Kyrgyzstan by host country  
(number of students)

Country/Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Russia	7 046	7 493	8 648	9 621	8 811
China	> 4 000	...	...	...	4 000
Turkey	1 937	1 792	1 649	2 026	2 282
USA	357	328	478	705	...
Kazakhstan	1 117	1 161	716	597	672
Poland	88	204	260	470 / 553	...
South Korea	239	246	285	345	...
Uzbekistan	53	...	154	333	...
Saudi Arabia	223	210	271	291	...
Jordan	81	98	111	105	...
Georgia	82	9	7	103	...
Great Britain	85	94	92	101	...
France	57	65	67	78	...
Malaysia	80	79	52	63	...
Germany	483	515	538	...	...
Czech Republic	139	194	290	...	...
Hungary	71	133	193	...	...
Italy	29	86	154	...	...
Japan	107	106	115	...	...

## Conclusion

1. The importance of Russian direction for academic mobility and educational migration from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is decreasing in 2022-2023 in all aspects mentioned above, except for joint educational programs and double-degree programs of Kazakhstani universities.

2. For 2022-2023 educational migration flows among three Central Asian countries and a number of foreign countries increased significantly, but in varying degrees and different formats:



- Turkey strengthened significantly its position as a partner in joint programs for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as one of the main directions of educational migration for citizens of all three countries;
- Poland became a significant destination for joint programs of universities in Uzbekistan and for educational migration from all three Central Asian countries;
- due to the traditionally strong positions of Germany and the growth of other country directions, the importance of the entire EU direction of academic mobility and educational migration from all three countries has increased;
- the USA maintained its strong position as a partner in joint and double-degree programs for universities in Kazakhstan and as a direction of educational migration from Kazakhstan, while significantly strengthening its position as a direction of educational migration from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan;
- The UK increased its presence at the Kazakhstani market through the development of double-degree programs, and also became a significant direction of educational migration from Uzbekistan;
- South Korea has significantly strengthened its position as a country hosting educational migration from Uzbekistan;
- China regained, after the lifting of pandemic-related restrictions, its position as one of the main destinations for educational migration from Central Asian countries after Russia;
- educational migration flows increased noticeably (in terms of academic mobility, joint educational programs and double-degree programs, educational migration) along various bilateral tracks between the Central Asian countries themselves.