

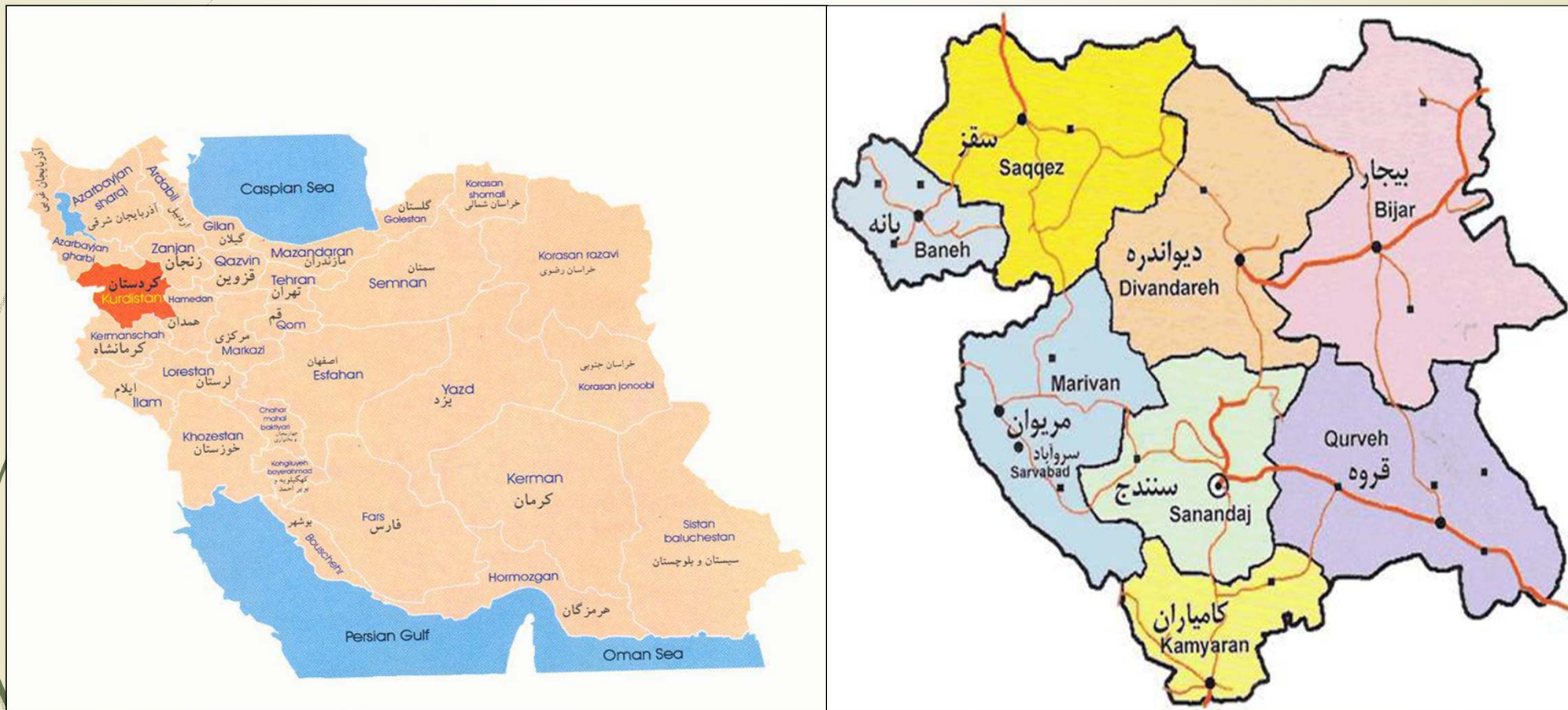
# Strengthening the Regional Engagement Role of Universities in Africa & Asia

*The Iranian Kurdistan Province Case*

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# Geography: Iranian Kurdistan Province





# Geography

- ▶ Size: 29,137 square kilometers
- ▶ Lies in northwestern Iran and one of 31 provinces, sharing over 200 kms of borderlands with Iraqi Kurdistan
- ▶ Neighbouring provinces are West Azarbaijan (north) and Zanjan (north and east), Hamedan (east), Kermanshah (south)
- ▶ 10 counties, 31 districts, 29 towns and 86 rural districts
- ▶ Population: 1,493,645
- ▶ Governed by a Governor General appointed by the Minister of Interior subject to cabinet approval.



# Natural Environment

- ▶ Western Half of Province: mountainous (average altitude of 2000 meters above sea level), higher rainfall ( 500mm of average rainfall)& greater share of natural green environment (forests: 374,084 hectares and rangelands: 1,414,000 hectares)
- ▶ Eastern Half of Province : is covered by plains which contain rich agricultural lands (total province agricultural 806065 hectares) producing wheat, barley, potato, alfalfa, fruits (biggest national producer of strawberry) and vegetables
- ▶ Forests are home to many species of animals and plants (over 2200 plant species most of which are used for medicinal purposes)
- ▶ The province's many rivers, lakes, mineral water springs and natural ice-stores with 5 major watersheds joining the Caspian Sea basin and Lake Uremia Basin and Iraq (water in the province is redirected to other areas in the country)



# Economy

- Major industries: agricultural industry, animal husbandry, and horticulture
- On a smaller scale, the province's economy is dependent on:
  - ❖ *agricultural machinery (125 workshops)*
  - ❖ *metal and non-metal mining (out of 372 mines, 96 are active mines)*
  - ❖ *food and drinks industry*
  - ❖ *car tyre production*
  - ❖ *petrochemical plant*
  - ❖ *cement factory*
  - ❖ *tile factory*
  - ❖ *cigarette and tobacco production*
  - ❖ *traditional handicrafts such as backgammon boards, carpets, and rugs that are world-renowned*



# Cultural Issues

- ▶ Kurds are a minority group with unique cultural identity.
- ▶ Religion: Mostly Sunni Islam (after 7th Century Arab conquest) but some Shi'a Muslims primarily living in the Ilam and Kermanshah provinces of Iran
- ▶ Traditional and indigenous religions worshipped before the proliferation of Islam. These religions are Yazdanism/Yazidism and Ahl-e Haqq, and both have been practiced by the Kurd's for nearly 2000 years
- ▶ Earliest known evidence of a unified and distinct culture (and, possibly, ethnicity) - the inhabitants of the Kurdish mountains dates back to the Halaf culture of 5400 - 6000 B.C.
- ▶ Music and dance play a vital role in Kurdish culture
- ▶ Handicrafts – carpet weaving, woodworks etc...



# Education in Iran

- ▶ Education in Iran is centralized and divided into K-12 education (supervised by the Ministry of Education) and higher education (under supervision of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology and for medical sciences under the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran)
- ▶ Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) governs almost 2800 Universities, 49 Research Institutes, 205 Science Technology Parks and 167 Incubator Centres
- ▶ Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran governs 47 Medical Universities throughout the country





# Education in the Province

- ▶ Total HEI student population in province: 70,000 students
- ▶ 41 Higher Education Institutes (both private and state)
- ▶ A student population of 70000
- ▶ **University of Kurdistan** (in the city of Sanandaj) is the main state university in the province and is responsible for evaluating and monitoring all the other higher education institutes in the province.
- ▶ Overall literacy rate in the province is 82.3 % (88% male literacy rates and 76.6 % female literacy rates)
- ▶ Although primary school is compulsory, only 78% of 6 year olds and over are literate.
- ▶ Higher female participation in HEIs (64% of total undergraduate student population)

# دانشگاه کردستان

University of Kurdistan



- ▶ The University of Kurdistan (UOK) commenced its activities as the Higher College of Sanandaj, an affiliate of Tarbiat Moallem (Teacher Training Institute), Tehran in the academic year 1974-1975.
- ▶ The college then became an off campus faculty of Kermanshah's Razi University and was thereafter named the Sanandaj Faculty of Teacher Training.
- ▶ Granted university status by the Ministry of Higher Education and Culture in 1991
- ▶ 9000 students, of which over 25 per cent are postgraduate students.
- ▶ University of Kurdistan has 8 faculties (and 45 departments offering 170 undergraduate and postgraduate courses and also an autonomous college (Pardis)
- ▶ Academic Staff: 339 full-time academic. Over 95% having Assistant Professorship or above grading.





# Research Institutes

دانشگاه کردستان  
University of Kurdistan



**Kurdish Studies Research Institute**

**Medicinal Plants Breeding and  
Development Research Institute**



**Strawberry Breeding and  
Agronomic Research Institute**



**The Centre for Research and Development  
of Northern Zagros Forestry**



# Research Institutes



Center of computer  
emergency response  
team (CERT)



Water Sciences &  
Engineering Center



Nanotechnology  
Research Institute

Smart/Micro Grids  
Research Center



Life Long Learning Unit





# UOK Management

- ▶ UOK has a semi-autonomous, semi-decentralized administrative structure managed by:
  - ❖ Board of Trustees (which has the highest position in the University and overlooks future educational expansion, financial projections and other major plans of the University),
  - ❖ Chancellor,
  - ❖ 5 Vice Chancellors (Vice Chancellors for Educational and Academic Affairs, Research Affairs, Student Affairs, Financial Affairs and Cultural and Social Affairs),
  - ❖ Board of Directors
  - ❖ University Council
  - ❖ The Board of Trustees members are the Chancellor of the University, Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Education, Provincial Governor, an academic staff member, two well-known public figures (i.e in industry or parliament). All new university policies must be put to the Board of Trustees and then when approved are executed by the University Chancellor and Vice Chancellors for Educational Affairs, Research Affairs, Student Affairs, Financial Affairs, and Cultural & Social Affairs

# International Agreements

- ❑ University of Sulaimani – Kurdistan Region, Iraq
- ❑ Salahaddin University - Kurdistan Region, Iraq
- ❑ Sulaimani Polytechnic University - Kurdistan Region, Iraq
- ❑ Garmian University - Kurdistan Region, Iraq
- ❑ Halabja University - Kurdistan Region, Iraq
- ❑ Charmo University – Kurdistan Region, Iraq
- ❑ University of Raparin – Kurdistan Region, Iraq
- ❑ Koya University - Kurdistan Region, Iraq
- ❑ Graduate School of Environmental Studies, Nagoya University, Japan
- ❑ School of Science and Technology, Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan
- ❑ University of Extremadura – Spain
- ❑ Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

# Erasmus+ “Internationalization of Higher Education in Iran”



Europe  
Partner Universities



Asia / I.R.Iran  
Partner Universities



دانشگاه کردستان  
University of Kurdistan



دانشگاه شهید چمران اهواز  
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz







# Economic Challenges

- ▶ Relies on agriculture as a source of revenue
- ▶ High unemployment rate with increasing number of unemployed young graduated people
- ▶ Current status of road infrastructure could be improved for better linkages to the rest of the country
- ▶ Transportation systems are weak. There is 1 airport in the province with daily flights to only the capital. No rail networks exist which are all important for national and ultimately international relations.
- ▶ Lack of investment from national and international investors
- ▶ Lack of entrepreneurship – unable to change innovative ideas into sellable and marketable products or services.
- ▶ Education systems have no links to industry

# Social Challenges

- ▶ Many health centers and facilities which exist in the province, there is a lack of specialist health workers that carry out specialist treatments. One of the lowest life expectancy rates in the country (75.6%)
- ▶ Minimal welfare system offering very limited services
- ▶ UN's Human Development Report: Index of Social Welfare (six dimensions of social welfare, including health, housing, social security, economy, education, and employment) in Iranian provinces the worst values (except one) of SWI has been devoted to Kurdistan
- ▶ High unemployment: secondary and tertiary educational systems are not skills and practice-based and this is a weakness since employable skills are not learned and does not prepare the young for the work environment and global-knowledge economy



# Environmental Challenges

- ▶ Increasing environmental pollution
- ▶ Over-use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture due to lack of awareness threaten food security. The global climatic changes have had an impact on local weather conditions causing greater instances of freak weather.
- ▶ Deforestation and greater instances of droughts and dust storms also threaten food security
- ▶ Drinking water sanitation is at a high level and well monitored but there is lack of water to meet agricultural needs. There is 60% water wastage in agricultural usage

# Other Issues

- ▶ Kurdistan Province and Iran enjoys relatively high political security in the Middle East considering that it is surrounded by highly unstable political regions such as Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan
- ▶ Wider political and economic sanctions
- ▶ Migration to cities in the province has increased dramatically impacting the agricultural industries causing the abandonment of villages and the rural life. Most migrate in search of better employment opportunities and educational facilities
- ▶ In major cities in the province such as Sanandaj and Saqez, there is the problem of illegal habitation which impacts local council planning – “Suburbanization”
- ▶ The recent national and local elections in Iran demonstrated high levels of participation. But in general civic participation is weak

# Main priorities for HEIs in the region

- ▶ Competitive advantage
- ▶ Internationalization of Higher Education in order to compete on a global level
- ▶ Establishing strong links with industry
- ▶ Improving ranking through scientific and practical research development
- ▶ Establishing greater links and academic cooperations with HEIs abroad
- ▶ Providing qualified workforce in relevant area with close link to local and regional development requirements
- ▶ Facilitate equal access to higher education with particular reference to disadvantage groups (i.e. gender) and marginalized areas (rural inhabitants)
- ▶ Providing work-based and work-related education (University of Technical and Vocational Education)
- ▶ Providing in-service training to all state and private organizations staff and workforce (Islamic Azad University and private HEIs)



# Achieving the Third Mission in HEIs

- ▶ Creation of Entrepreneurship centres, Incubator centres, Science and Technology Parks, Knowledge-based companies, Student Financial Assistance (mostly supported by staff )
- ▶ Developing cultural and intellectual foundation of the community;
- ▶ Expanding social capital development (networking, trust and security)
- ▶ Addressing social and environmental issues in the community;
- ▶ Carrying out productive research project that are, among other things, socially robust;
- ▶ Improving human capital development;
- ▶ Accelerating regional economic growth
- ▶ Linking the community and the world (boosting local/global connectivity);
- ▶ Re-conceptualizing regional sustainable development
- ▶ Developing corporate and private citizenship attributes; and
- ▶ Facilitating social change including helping to solve critical social problems with particular reference to marginalized and deprived areas

# Achieving the Third Mission in HEIs

- ▶ Redefining national and regional policies to remove barriers and obstacles on the country' sustainable development.
- ▶ How?
  - ❖ Universities are encouraged to participate and play a greater role in dealing with societal, environmental, economic and other challenges through carrying out relevant research projects, conferences on the local, regional and national levels, introducing fresh relevant programmes, short courses and workshops and acting as advisors to key policy makers, middle managers, practitioners and civil society



# Regional Aspirations and Agenda

- HEIs to prepare strategic plans that take into account engagement of in regional socio-economic development
- National educational policies geared towards:
  - ❖ More quality monitoring and importance of qualitative indicators being observed) The current administration tends to revised higher education system critically in a way that some courses and programs or and even some department and universities may be closed down if they do not fit themselves with quality indicators and guidelines.
  - ❖ Freeing up academics' time to concentrate on third mission objectives by reducing number of teaching hours, lowering the number students and focusing on graduate and post graduate education.
  - ❖ Increasing HEI budgets (especially those in disadvantaged areas)





# Regional Aspirations and Agenda

- ❖ Promotion of faculty members being dependent on the extent they are continuously engaged in civil society's capacity building or strengthening
- ❖ To focus on collaborating with other counterpart regions in SRERUAA in ecotourism, SME development and social capital development plans





*Thank you for  
your attention!*