



Regional Platforms for International Cooperation in Higher Education

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Abstract: The present overview raises questions regarding the degree of regulation of educational network cooperation between domestic and foreign universities. The current networking models within the educational space, the so-called constructors, are analysed. Special attention is given to the Network University of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Network University, the “Russian-African Network University” Consortium, the University Alliance of the Silk Road, the Australia Africa Universities Network, the Matariki Network of Universities, the Network of Universities of South and South-East Asia, the International Strategic Technology Alliance, the Black Sea Universities Network, and the Association of Pacific Rim Universities. The author highlights the unique advantages of network cooperation, the possibility of combining different processes (theoretical training, research activities, practical internships with employers), the possibility of cooperation in all forms of training with the utilization of remote resources. In the conclusion, it is stated that the network form of cooperation is a trend of innovative and qualitative movement of the educational system and, equally, a special tool for rationalizing partner universities, as well as a mechanism for monitoring and regulating the quality of educational programs. Moreover, a common set of barriers in the development of network educational programs and online universities are identified, in particular, insufficient activity in the field of goal-setting and strategic management and inadequate effectiveness of institutional structures coordinating online educational activities.

Keywords: network forms; cooperation; education; scientific diplomacy; network universities

Cite as: Gulyaeva, T.K., (2026). Regional Platforms for International Cooperation in Higher Education. *Kutafin Law Review*, 13(3), pp. 667–690, doi: 10.17803/2713-0533.2026.3.37.667-690

Contents

I. Introduction	668
II. Models of Network Cooperation	669
III. Foreign Experience in Implementing Network Programs and Network Universities	672
III.1. Network University of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS Network University)	672
III.2. Eurasian Network University	674
III.3. “Russian-African Network University” Consortium	676
III.4. University Alliance of the Silk Road	677
III.5. Australia Africa Universities Network	678
III.6. Matariki Network of Universities	680
III.7. South and Southeast Asian University Network	681
III.8. International Strategic Technology Alliance	683
III.9. Black Sea Universities Network	685
III.10. Association of Pacific Rim Universities	686
IV. Conclusion	687

I. Introduction

International educational cooperation is implemented at a growing pace through the creation of network programs and universities. This development reflects a broader strategic shift toward institutional flexibility, wherein collaborative academic frameworks are increasingly viewed as instrumental in aligning domestic educational outcomes with evolving global research priorities. The expansion of the boundaries for the introduction of network higher education programs was announced by the Russian head of state as an assignment for the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, in particular, it was emphasized that this mechanism would open access to those educational competencies that fully meet Russia’s stated goals in the field of science and technology.

The dynamic initiation of educational programs (EPs) in the network model is laid down in the provisions of the Federal Law No. 273-FZ dated 29 December 2012,¹ according to which the specified matrix is understood as one of the many ways to implement an EP along with the independent activities of an educational organization.

II. Models of Network Cooperation

Strictly speaking, the Federal Law No. 273-FZ dated 29 December 2012 allows two ways of implementing the EPs under the network model — appealing to the resources and possibilities of domestic and foreign educational facilities, as well as other interested institutions.

A potential model of a network constructor may include the interaction of the base university (based on a contract or agreement on a network form of educational program implementation) and the participant university that provides an additional educational program.

The training procedure assumes mutual two-way connection between the base university and the participant universities. At the same time, when implementing these programs, the base university must have an educational license containing information on the type, level, specialty, and field of study. It should be noted that this condition does not apply to educational institutions in foreign countries.

Possible models of network cooperation include the following.

1. The flagship collaboration model — the formation of relationships within which a main educational organization and participant educational organizations are defined.

2. The hybrid collaboration model assumes the presence of participants in areas including education, sports, medicine, culture, as well as other institutions with sufficient educational assets. The value of this collaboration form is derived from training and practical internships being completed at a potential employer's company. Within this framework of this collaboration, the resources of other participants are used in order to implement educational programs. The participants possess the required material and technical bases and resources to perform edu-

¹ Federal Law No. 273-FZ dated 29 December 2012 “On Education in the Russian Federation”. ConsultantPlus Legal Reference System.

cational and practical training. In this case, only the main educational organization issues a diploma, and other participants issue a certificate of education or provide a period of study.

3. The social collaboration model — the formation of vertical relations among the participants of cooperation (the so-called lifelong learning with three stages: a general education organization, an educational organization of secondary vocational education, and an educational organization of higher education).

4. The linear collaboration (interaction) model presupposes the formation of horizontal relations at the level of equal educational structures with similar or analogous programs, which result in the development of a new joint educational project.

In addition to the above-mentioned options, three more subtypes of network cooperation models are possible. The first subtype: a student enrolls in the base educational organization, independently selects modules (disciplines) online in another organization. The modules are subsequently included in the individual training plan. Upon graduation, the student receives an electronic certificate and a diploma from the base educational organization. Such modular flexibility expands a choice of curricula while also requiring robust mechanisms for a credit transfer and improving outcome validation across institutional partners.

The second subtype: the parties are educational, sports, medical and cultural institutions in the field of education providing their technical and material tools to students in order to complete educational and practical training. The student is enrolled in the base organization issuing him the respective diploma.

The third subtype: the base educational organization integrates modules (a set of academic disciplines) into its program on the basis of a network agreement. Students are sent to another educational organization to complete the module (the disciplines). Student enrolment takes place in the base organization, upon completion of which the diploma is issued, and the completed disciplines are covered in the second university that issues a certificate of education for the selected modules and disciplines.

One can point out to key advantages of network cooperation:

1. the competitiveness of the domestic educational path grows,
2. network programs may be more appealing to students, thus making the education process more fruitful,
3. there arises a possibility to combine different processes (specifically, in the areas of theoretical training, research, and practical internships with employers),
4. collaboration is allowed in all forms of learning with the utilization of remote resources,
5. interaction is possible not only with domestic, but also with foreign facilities,
6. the agreement is the legal framework of network cooperation,
7. networking programs are a productive model for international educational cooperation.

The order of registration of the network cooperation model is as follows:

1. the agreement contains requirements for the educational process, the material and technical bases, and the form of cooperation;
2. there is a mandatory procedure for concluding an agreement between educational organizations and, if necessary, also with other specialized institutions;
3. the required terms of the agreement include specifying the attributes of educational programs, a detailed description of academic disciplines, the procedure for issuing diplomas, and a clear specification of obligations and responsibilities of educational organizations (Federal Law No. 273-FZ, 2012);²
4. an approximate form of an agreement on the network form of educational programs may be found in the acts of the relevant ministries of Russia for educational activities (Order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation No. 882/391, 2020);³
5. a license for educational activities should be held.

² Federal Law No. 273-FZ dated 29 December 2012 “On Education in the Russian Federation”. ConsultantPlus Legal Reference System.

³ Order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation No. 882/391 dated

III. Foreign Experience in Implementing Network Programs and Network Universities

III.1. Network University of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS Network University)

The CIS Network University has been operating as an innovative project with the multilateral participation of universities from various foreign countries since 2009.⁴ The development of academic mobility programs for students from the participating states and the development of joint educational programs are the main areas of activity of the CIS Network University. The Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) has been appointed as the parent organization and coordinator, and a separate specialized department for coordinating work with the network universities has been established on its site, performing three functions: unification, coordination and consolidation of the ties between them. Through this institutional architecture, the CIS Network University serves as a practical mechanism for deepening regional integration in higher education, enabling participating universities to pool their academic resources while preserving their individual institutional identities.

The area of responsibility of the CIS Network University parent organization implies interaction with all the participants of the BRICS Network, the University of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, informational and organizational participation in procedures helping to coordinate the activities of network universities; participation in the preparation and implementation of proposals aimed at creating and maintaining a unified document management system between the participants in the network cooperation aimed at implementing joint educational programs; organization of meetings and other events in the territory of Russia and abroad, contributing to the implementation of the plans of the rectors of the University of the Shanghai Cooperation

5 August 2020 "On the organization and implementation of educational activities in the network form of educational programs". ConsultantPlus Legal Reference System.

⁴ Agreement on the Establishment and Operation Network University of the CIS dated 2020. Available at: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/561369521> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

Organization, the Coordinating Council of the CIS Network University and the BRICS Network Universities.

RUDN strives to enhance cooperation and exchange of experience between the faculties of partner universities (holding annual round tables with the participation of partner universities to discuss and update joint curricula; participation of professors in conferences of home universities and partner universities, as well as scientific internships and summer schools as co-organizers and speakers); conducting methodological meetings among professors with the purpose of exchanging experience and educational literature; attracting the attention of potential applicants, increasing motivation to study among students.

The annual work plans of the CIS Network University include a set of measures related to organizational and legal support, educational, methodological and scientific efforts, and informational and organizational assistance.

Thus, organizational and legal support involves participation in the implementation of the intergovernmental Agreement on the Establishment and Operation of the CIS Network University signed in 2020; development and approval of a long-term work plan for the medium and long term; preparation of the annual report of the Parent Organization; organization and promotion of the CIS Network University through the Internet; the formation of a database of graduates. Educational, methodological and scientific efforts refer to the coordination and approval of the schedule of the joint state attestation commission; the formation of applications for admission of students; the holding of joint meetings of the state attestation commission; the issuance of documents on higher education. Informational and organizational assistance shall be understood as holding a meeting of the Coordinating Council of the CIS Network University; organizing groups within the framework of major international conferences; holding thematic seminars on priority areas of training.

The second equally crucial form of cooperation in the field of education is the network of higher education institutions of the BRICS Member States.⁵ The founding document of the BRICS Network Uni-

⁵ BRICS Network University. Available at: <http://nu-brics.ru/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

versities provides for the universities' activities within the framework of the six primary areas of study: scientific research, environmental agenda, energy resources, safety in the digital sphere, problems regarding waste disposal (Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of the BRICS Network University, 2015).⁶ For the period of 2023–2025, an appropriate concept has been developed, envisioning an increase in the number of new work guidelines, in particular, the approval and testing of collective educational programs, specialized seasonal schools; joint scientific publications; the launch of additional electives in the above-mentioned areas of training; the accumulation of a foreign contingent through academic exchanges.⁷ This conceptual expansion signals a shift toward deeper operational integration, with the designated thematic clusters serving as platforms for sustained joint research and educational exchange.

Despite the fact that the key areas of activity of this model presuppose the introduction of joint Master's and postgraduate training programs, the development of academic mobility of students, professors, and graduate students, it seems reasonable from a practical point of view to implement joint management of dissertation projects, collective cooperation through joint writing of textbooks, teaching aids, and the introduction of extracurricular teamwork of students through moot courts, which will enhance their professional skills. It is rational to consider making changes in the format of a separate protocol to the constituent act of the BRICS Network Universities by expanding priority areas of knowledge to higher legal education. Such expansion could foster curricular harmonization, encourage comparative legal scholarship, and strengthen the Network's capacity to address transnational legal challenges.

III.2. Eurasian Network University

The Eurasian Network University (ENU) is one of the rising institutional forms of international cooperation in Russia in the field of

⁶ Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of the BRICS Network University dated 18 November 2015. Accessible at: https://www.hse.ru/data/2015/11/25/1080435539/MoU_SU_BRICS_RUS.pdf [Accessed 29.04.2026].

⁷ The concept of functioning and development of the BRICS Network University from 2020 in the medium-term prospects for 2023–2025. Available at: <https://we.hse.ru/mirror/pubs/share/565469615.pdf> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

education and scientific diplomacy.⁸ The training of the qualified personnel in a network manner, including the use of long-distance learning technologies, the development of tools capable of ensuring the free movement of educational services within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), are the main tasks of the ENU.

The activity directly affects the phased formation and creation of a unified educational space of the EAEU. Cooperation in the field of vocational education is provided for in Para. 10.1 and 10.2 of the EAEU Strategic Directions until 2025 (Strategic directions for the development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025, 2020).⁹

The organizational structure is represented by the following bodies:

1. the Secretariat that organizes activities on operational issues and is a working body at the expert level for preliminary elaboration of decisions of the Coordinating Council;
2. the Coordinating Council, the highest collegial body that determines the strategic directions and tactical objectives of development;
3. the Centre for Scientific Cooperation, the Centre for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the Competence Centre, the Centre for Educational Programs and Methodological Support, the Centre for Strategic Development and International Cooperation.

During the period 2023–2025, the scientific activities of the ENU covered a number of events, including holding round tables, approving educational programs for foreign audiences and departmental structures of the EAEU, and holding educational forums 2022 (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 661, 2022).¹⁰

Obvious barriers to the implementation of network educational programs of the ENU are the updating processes of the legislation of the participating countries, the financial resources allocated for train-

⁸ Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of the Eurasian Network University dated 25 May 2022. Accessible at: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/medialibrary/79d/25.05.2022-g-Memorandum-o-vzaimoponimani-po-sozdaniyu-Earziyskogo-setevogo-universiteta.pdf> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

⁹ Strategic directions for the development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025 approved by the Decision of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council No. 12 dated 11 December 2020. ConsultantPlus Legal Reference System.

¹⁰ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 611 dated 5 September 2022 “On approval of the Concept of humanitarian policy of the Russian Federation abroad”. ConsultantPlus Legal Reference System.

ing, the organization of business trips, the unsatisfactory motivational level of applicants, the departments themselves, the specialized sub-departments of universities, the varied conditions and requirements for the level of knowledge and skills in the participating countries, organization of student exchanges, quality control of education, inadequate proficiency in a foreign language, maladaptation during integration into a new language environment.

At the moment, it is necessary to identify and create groups of priority areas of training for the development of multilateral network educational programs within the framework of the ENU. It is advisable to initiate activities for the development of network programs with the testing of bilateral cooperation programs. In addition, it is proposed to form an International Student Council, the ENU co-management body, with the aim of involving students from ENU member universities in a joint international educational and scientific system, whose main functions may include active participation in ENU events, expert assessment of initiatives, projects and ongoing network educational programs.

III.3. “Russian-African Network University” Consortium

The Consortium of the Russian-African Network University (RAFU),¹¹ operating on the basis of The Provisions on the Organization of the Activities of the RAFU Consortium and the Agreement on the Establishment of the RAFU Consortium dated 20 August 2021,¹² aims to bring together universities in Russia and Africa and their research institutions in the field of education and scientific diplomacy.

Achieving a unitary platform with equal educational access for students of all universities is the current goal of the consortium. Among the medium-term areas of work are the introduction of common educational programs, innovative interaction tools, increasing exchanges among students and departments, cultural and social integration of foreign students, and adaptation to traditions of the member states.

¹¹ Available at: <https://rafu.ru/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

¹² Available at: https://rafu.ru/uploads/files/main/agreement_rafu_ru.pdf, https://rafu.ru/uploads/files/main/thesis_rafu_ru.pdf [Accessed 29.04.2026].

Seven principles, aimed at achieving competence-based and competitive educational programs, make it possible to ensure the functioning of the consortium as an association of universities and scientific institutions in Russia, open to any educational and scientific facility in Russia. Those principles are voluntary participation, openness, self-governance, equality and mutuality, focus on educational programs, assurance of high-quality educational programs, and respect (Agreement of Establishing the “Russian-African Network University” Consortium, 2021¹³).

The activities of this structure are monitored by the relevant department of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. The planned course of the Consortium’s activities is aimed at the introduction of digital education services, the implementation of practice-oriented projects and concepts at the request of departmental structures in Russia and interested institutions in Africa.

On the basis of the Consortium, practical internships are successfully and continuously conducted on topics such as document management in the field of medicine, biological diversity of water resources, aviation, artificial intelligence, space industry, innovative entrepreneurship, crop and livestock production, and sustainable development.

III.4. University Alliance of the Silk Road

University Alliance of the Silk Road (UASR)¹⁴ is an alliance of universities organized by Xi’an Jiaotong University (People’s Republic of China, or PRC) in order to implement the national strategy of the PRC, known as the “Belt and Road” Initiative. As a non-governmental, non-profit organization, this alliance strives to apply the principles of openness and transparency in the implementation of international educational cooperation.

The primary advantages of participating in the Alliance are the possibility of multilateral building of scientific communication among its members, as well as building academic potential through bilateral

¹³ Available at: https://rafu.ru/uploads/files/main/agreement_rafu_ru.pdf [Accessed 29.04.2026].

¹⁴ Available at: <http://uasr.xjtu.edu.cn/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

student exchanges with taking into account the geographical location of the universities of the Alliance.

Current realities show the membership of more than one hundred and sixty universities, a certain proportion of which are members of the EAEU. It is noteworthy for the establishment of legal measures at the university level and the introduction of joint analytical centres.

III.5. Australia Africa Universities Network

The next interesting network form of university cooperation is the Australia Africa Universities Network, based on a Cooperation Agreement between the universities of Australia and Africa¹⁵.

The Founding Act of this network defined the University of Sydney as the central university, acting simultaneously as the leading partner and responsible for the overall coordination of the university network. The network in question is led by a steering group consisting of more than seven Australian member universities operating in Africa and more than ten African member universities. Australia and Africa appointed two co-chairs to lead the steering group.

A consultation group has been established on the network's site, with its main function being the development of the network's subject areas. At the same time, the group's meetings are mainly held in the format of annual meetings and on-demand sittings.¹⁶ Each key area of the network's research, including education and food safety, has an appointed head who contributes to the goal of maximizing the involvement of Australian universities in Africa to develop specialized expert centres for the continents of Australia and Africa.

Among the primary goals of the network are the creation of a transparent information and advisory portal for government agencies, corporate sector enterprises and the media in order to provide direct access to a range of scientific research in Africa through a shared Centre; the expansion of partnerships in the field of institutional research in Africa; the formation of professional development and training programs in

¹⁵ Available at: <https://aaun.edu.au/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

¹⁶ Governance. Australia Africa Universities Network. Available at: <https://www.aaun.network/about/#aaun-governance> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

the field of agriculture, higher education, healthcare, etc.; development of innovative approaches prepared with the participation of non-governmental organizations and leading researchers; provision of research support to scientists from Africa.¹⁷

The network's strategic plan for the period 2026–2030 assumes utilizing academic diplomacy and science communication through engagement with key stakeholders in academia, government, industry, and communities to support the deepening of Australia-Africa literacy and cooperative relations¹⁸.

The Australia Africa Universities Network is a unique network of universities in Australia and Africa, created to promote innovation in research, education and mobility and to address mutual challenges based on equal partnership and governance, and to create an efficient system of diplomacy and friendship in higher education and scientific research.¹⁹

The main areas of the network's work include environmental protection, agriculture, food and nutrition, health, higher education, sustainable development, and employment issues. The network's further actions are aimed at preserving and developing sustainable development goals, Australia's international Indo-Pacific strategies, continuing cooperation with partners and sponsors (the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, the National Research Foundation of South Africa, the World Health Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; forming alliances and building relationships with the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the Regional University Forum for Agricultural Capacity Building, the African *Alumni* and Diaspora Network, as well as the search for new strategic partners, the expansion of targeted partnerships between Australia and Africa).

¹⁷ Objectives. Australia Africa Universities Network. Available at: <https://aun.edu.au/objectives/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

¹⁸ Strategic Plan. Australia Africa Universities Network. Available at: <https://www.aun.network/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/AAUN-Strategic-Plan-2026-30.pdf> [Accessed 28.09.2026].

¹⁹ Strategic Plan. Australia Africa Universities Network. Available at: <https://aun.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/AAUN-Strategic-Plan-2020-22-pdf.pdf> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

The latest report of the network reviewed a number of studies on the following topics: sanitation using phosphorus in the framework of sustainable development, improving food security and biodiversity, educational and training programs in the field of climate change and agriculture, ensuring sustainable aquaculture production in Africa, and extending women's workplace rights and opportunities in Africa, food safety risk monitoring in retail trade in Africa and Australia, health and nutrition for sustainable development.²⁰

III.6. Matariki Network of Universities

The Matariki Network of Universities²¹ was established to develop international excellence in research and education at the local and global levels. The University of Western Australia is one of the founders of the Network, the international group of leading like-minded universities that opens up new opportunities for multilateral international cooperation in research and education. The University serves as a forum where universities may discuss issues of common interest.

Each university is responsible for conducting research on the topics of integrative neurobiology, quantum science, sustainability, cybersecurity, and blue economy. The commitment to academic freedom and respect for diversity may be highlighted among the main principles of the network.

The medium-term objectives of the network include the development of new joint educational activities for students; the development of financial infrastructures, strategic research with local and regional communities.

This network provides for the use of common (joint) sites at each of the partner universities, for example, an innovative park or a scientific (educational) Centre. The network also encourages the development of student mobility, international scholarship programs, and summer and winter schools.

²⁰ The Annual Report for 2019. Australia Africa Universities Network. Available at: <https://aaun.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/AAUN-Annual-Report-2019-Digital.pdf> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

²¹ Available at: <https://www.matarikinetwork.org/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

III.7. South and Southeast Asian University Network

The South and Southeast Asian University Network is an important regional platform for international cooperation in higher education, approved by the Department of Education of Yunnan Province (PRC) and initiated by Yunnan University in Kunming (Yunnan Province, PRC) at the end of 2018.

This aforementioned platform is a non-profit international university network formed on a voluntary basis by universities in China, South and South-East Asia and has the seditious goal of strengthening and encouraging mutual exchange and cooperation, jointly improving the quality and level of local higher education in the southern region of China and South-East Asia, creating an international community of higher education facilities; development of more open, inclusive, balanced and mutually beneficial research areas; promotion of regional economic and social development of the regions of China and Asia (The Constitution of the South and Southeast Asian University Network, 2021).²²

To date, the members of the organization encompass more than a hundred universities from various countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, etc., whose tasks are to strengthen cultural exchange and cooperation between Network members; expand channels of research cooperation between Network members; organize a forum of rectors of Universities of South and South-East Asia; creating a platform for sharing resources among Network members.

At this stage of the network's activities, four major brand events have already been held, including the Yunnan Provincial Department of Education Forum (PRC); the Yunnan Conference on International Specialist Exchange organized by the Yunnan Provincial Committee; the Asia-South Asia President's Forum and the Sports Culture Exchange Week.

Starting in 2021, there are four subcommittees: the Subcommittee on Emerging Engineering Education, the Subcommittee on Innovation

²² The Constitution of the South and Southeast Asian University Network. Available at: https://subsites.chinadaily.com.cn/saseaafen/2021-11/19/c_683099.htm [Accessed 29.04.2026].

and Entrepreneurship Education, the Subcommittee on Journalism and Communication, and the subcommittee on Chinese Language Teaching. The current plans include the coordination and approval of a four-year plan for the development of a Network of Universities in South and South-East Asia for the period from 2024 to 2027.

The organizational structure is represented by the founding universities and joining universities. Any university may join on a voluntary basis. In this case, the University submits a written application to the Secretariat, which in turn prepares recommendations for the Network Council. A new member of the Network is approved if supported by the vote of more than 2/3 of the members of the Network Council.

After joining, new members acquire the following bundle of rights: to participate in various Network events; to put forward proposals for the development of the Network; to propose amendments to Articles of the Charter; to receive grants for various exchange and cooperation programs; to monitor the Network; to withdraw membership. It is noteworthy that membership fees are not provided.

The Network holds regular meetings of university presidents to discuss general topics relating to the innovative development of regional higher education, strengthening mutual understanding between universities and sharing university management experience; studies international teaching methods, training undergraduates and postgraduates; promotes mutual recognition of academic diplomas, creating an international certification system within the Network to improve the level of training of innovative and professional talents; promoting international cooperation in the field of scientific research; strengthening the link between analytical Centres and various international laboratories and other research platforms to jointly promote regional economic and social development.

The organizational management mechanism of the Network includes:²³

- the Council of Representatives of the Network members as the highest advisory and decision-making body of the Network. The Council members, who are the legal representatives of the Network members.

²³ Governance. The South and Southeast Asian University Network. Available at: http://www.en.sseaun.ynu.edu.cn/2021-11/19/c_683110.htm [Accessed 29.04.2026].

— the Secretariat of the Network, which is permanently located in Yunnan University (PRC). The secretariat, headed by the Secretary General, who is the Vice President for International Affairs at Yunnan University (PRC).

— the Professional Committee of the Network.

Based on the principles of equality, the Network carries out international exchanges and cooperation with other existing university networks.

III.8. International Strategic Technology Alliance

The International Strategic Technology Alliance,²⁴ founded in 1995, is an international platform for cooperation and partnership with more than thirty higher education facilities in China, the USA and the United Kingdom to promote applied research and development, technology transfer and commercialization of technologies and products on an international scale.²⁵

The Alliance was founded with the support of the Department of Education to use the collective technological potential of Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Chinese higher education facilities in order to develop applied technologies and commercialize them. Through continuous cooperation and network development, the Alliance has expanded its membership to include members from mainland China, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America (USA).

The main goals of the Alliance are to combine the research capabilities of leading universities in PRC and abroad to provide diversified and competitive technologies and products for various industries; promote the exchange of best practices among its members, strengthen international relations and cooperation, and close partnership between members in order to improve academic efficiency and the quality of applied research.

²⁴ Networks co-founded by PolyU. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Available at: <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/geo/partnerships/consortiums-and-networks/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

²⁵ History. International Strategic Technology Alliance. Available at: <http://www.ista-net.net/en-us/pages/history> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

The key initiatives of the Alliance²⁶ involve targeted work to promote the development and transfer of scientific technologies through various strategies, drawing on the collective experience of individual members in the field of politics and international exchanges.

Under the leadership of the Executive Committee, the Alliance has achieved sustainable development in the following aspects.

1. Encouraging the implementation of research and development activities. With outstanding research abilities and talents among its members, the Alliance promotes the development of applied research projects and their subsequent commercialization at both local and regional levels. This enhances the capacity of the Alliance to translate scientific advances into tangible regional and local benefits. A significant number of projects implemented by the Alliance members have received support within the framework of China's strategic national programs.

2. Improving knowledge management to enhance innovation value. In order to maximize the potential of the Alliance's applied research results, an active platform has been developed to share information about ongoing practice and challenges in knowledge management and intellectual property.

3. Strengthening international networks and communications. The Alliance is consistently gaining the opportunity for its members to take advantage of the prosperous world of opportunities in international financial markets and interactions with the Alliance's international partners. In addition, international organizations such as the Australian Technological Network and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development have rated the Alliance as the best partner network.

4. Stimulating regional progress.

The members of the Alliance actively contribute to the creation of scientific, industrial and social clusters in the interests of regional growth. In order to find opportunities for cooperation between institutions and representatives of various industries, training missions have been organized, and forums regarding technology commercialization and scientific and industrial cooperation have been held.

²⁶ Key Initiatives. International Strategic Technology Alliance. Available at: <http://www.ista-net.net/en-us/pages/key> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

5. Creating joint research projects.²⁷

The member universities of the Alliance unify their knowledge and resources for cooperation in the field of scientific research, technology transfer, commercialization and subsequent internationalization between members and partners, joint research centres are being created among the member universities of the Alliance to strengthen research capacity in specific technological fields.

III.9. Black Sea Universities Network

The Black Sea Universities Network is an initiative aimed at creating a platform for cooperation between universities of the Black Sea region.²⁸ The Network has the legal status of an international organization, established on the occasion of the second Rectors Conference of the Black Sea region universities, held in Constanta in July 1998.

More than 120 universities from 12 Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization Member States, such as Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and Serbia, participate in the network's activities.

Within the framework of close cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, this network has the status of a partner in the sectoral dialogue, and cooperation has also been established through agreements with the Eurasian Universities Association coordinated by the Lomonosov Moscow State University, and the Association of Universities in the Caspian Region.

The Network's decision-making body is the General Assembly — the Conference of Rectors of the Black Sea Region — which includes the rectors of the member universities of the Network. In the period between sessions of the Rectors' Conference, the activities of the Network are coordinated by the three Presidents alongside the Executive Committee, which includes rectors from each of the Network's member countries. This two-tier governance structure ensures both broad

²⁷ Collaboration. International Strategic Technology Alliance. Available at: <http://www.ista-net.net/en-us/pages/collaboration> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

²⁸ Black Sea Universities Network. Available at: <https://bsun.org/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

representation at the strategic level and operational continuity during inter-session periods, thereby facilitating responsive decision-making while preserving the collective authority of the member institutions.

The Charter of the Network defines a range of responsibilities:

1) to promote a systematic exchange of information and experience between universities and to coordinate the concordance of university management systems;

2) to encourage joined projects in areas of shared interest of universities;

3) to expand access to educational technologies with a focus on a multimedia approach;

4) to update technological capabilities for conducting effective research;

5) to organize courses, exhibitions, seminars, workshops, as well as other events for students, undergraduates, and postgraduates;

6) to support and encourage scientific and educational cooperation between universities and research facilities;

7) to pay special attention to assisting the development of multi-lateral cooperation projects;

8) to encourage cooperation and function as the link between ministries of education, science and facilities of universities and the member countries;

9) to foster the development of bilateral relations between member universities;

10) to develop cultural cooperation by organizing meetings, art festivals, and sports competitions;

11) to strive for the sustainable development of the Black Sea region and protect the environment with joint effort.

The composition consists of a group of core members, associate and affiliate members accredited and verified by local ministries of education.

III.10. Association of Pacific Rim Universities

One of the alluring examples of remote networking is the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, founded in 1997.²⁹ The network con-

²⁹ Association of Pacific Rim Universities. Available at: <https://vse.apru.org/about-apru/> [Accessed 29.04.2026].

sists of 60 leading universities in North and South America, Asia and Australia. It provides its students with an exclusive opportunity to communicate with peers from all over the world to learn new knowledge and skills, exchange ideas and discover each other's cultures.

The Virtual Exchange program allows students to attend academic courses and participate in educational programs remotely.

IV. Conclusion

To summarise, considering that network cooperation is significant for the development of universities, we may state the following.

1. The network cooperation is considered to be a trend of innovative and qualitative movement of the educational system and, equally, a special tool for rationalizing partner universities, as well as a mechanism for monitoring and regulating the quality of training programs.

2. The launch and adaptation of such programs should be accompanied by a full synchronization of the processes of enrolment, expelling, curriculum development, and defining financial responsibility of the parties.

3. The main features of network cooperation include the presence of a voluntary intent to cooperate, a long-term potential of collaboration, participant autonomy, their multilevel synergy of participants and competitiveness.

4. It is reasonable to introduce new methods of program organization at the sites of network universities using a suitable approach, when the facility is simultaneously a platform for joint work of groups of representatives of industry partnerships, also through the principle of interdisciplinary of educational programs, namely, the creation of interdepartmental laboratories and research centres with a unified management centre.

5. It is fundamentally necessary to implement new principles, such as the accessibility of education for all categories of natural persons; variability of higher education programs; transparency (openness) of universities; advancement of the competence of teaching staff and the access to technological resources; further promotion of the Russian language, forums and *alumni* communities, and the creation of their databases.

6. It is important to note and solve the problem of the complementary workload of university teaching staff, the development of algorithms for partner interaction and the optimization of the current quality control systems for the education provided.

7. An advantage of networking is the potential exchange of benchmark university practices and access to library resources and opportunities.

8. An efficient outline the parties' tasks is a prerequisite for networking, thus allowing each university to choose the objectives they may most successfully accomplish — for example, teaching general and specialized courses, language training, organizing internships, workplace training, fostering competencies of students, creating chances for online or hybrid learning.

9. It is rational to accurately determine the audience for which the online form of cooperation will be implemented.

10. A balanced network program structure accessible to the understanding of the university faculty is needed.

11. It is necessary to monitor, within the framework of the quality assurance policy of education, the responses of students and teaching staff, and to receive feedback from them.

12. Network forms of cooperation are a manner of utilizing the educational resources of partner universities on a large scale and strengthening the competencies of students. A network form of university cooperation should become a stimulating element for subsequent changes and achieving a high level of educational program realisation, including improving the quality of scientific research, developing interdisciplinary practices, and forging new approaches to the development of educational modules.

The mission of any internationally-oriented university is to generate and allocate advanced knowledge and technologies in demand abroad, to export personnel for the international labour market, and position itself as a public diplomacy structure.

Essential aspects to take into account with regards to participation in and the development of networks include a clear understanding of the tasks, responsibilities of universities and procedures for implementing educational programs at their sites; the right of each university to

amend the educational process in order to consider the interests of the facility proper and the students; the responsibility of universities for potential violations of the established order of networking.

13. The advantages of a network model of cooperation include the improvement of the quality of education in the absence of the necessary resources from one university; the effective accomplishment of universities within the framework of network partnerships; the strengthening the professional reputation and authority of a given university on an international platform; the reallocation of resources and costs for the implementation of university projects; the accumulation of optimal university resources at the request of the employer (for example, new libraries, updating university staff); the exchange of innovative experienced between universities; the utilization of modern material and technical base and methodological foundations; the creation of interdisciplinary university programs and additional jobs.

Positive examples of the use of networking are the practice of the BRICS Network Universities, the CIS Network University, the University of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Eurasian Network University. The Humanitarian Policy Concept of 2022 (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 661, 2022) confirms the increased importance of such structures among domestic organizations in the sphere of higher education.³⁰

14. Barriers to the development of network educational programs and network universities include insufficient activity in the field of goal-setting and strategic management (insufficiently or excessively restrictive character of interstate agreements, strategic documents, road maps that would contain data on network areas of interaction, deadlines, resources and Centres of responsibility); absence or inefficiency of institutional structures coordinating network activities; the persistence of difficulties in linking educational programs, requirements for education levels, and study periods; unresolved international issues regarding mutual recognition of educational documents, etc., which necessitates increased activity in the development of international legal

³⁰ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 611 dated 5 September 2022 "On approval of the Concept of humanitarian policy of the Russian Federation abroad." ConsultantPlus Legal Reference System.

frameworks in relevant areas, adjustment and unification of national legislation of member states of organizations with network universities. Another challenge may be the language barrier and the absence of a universally acceptable language within integrational formations (for instance, the BRICS, the SCO), which requires accentuating programs popularizing the Russian language and learning Russian, including on-line or in a hybrid fashion.

The incentives to development of network educational programs and network universities include the consolidation of the best intellectual resources, the selection of advanced educational programs, ensuring relevant interdisciplinarity, which in turn significantly improves the quality of education while maintaining a contingent in their own jurisdictions; the creation of international interdisciplinary research Centres with the involvement of leading experts on the most complex and in-demand issues on the global agenda, aimed at bringing together the norms of legislation, the positions of the organizational mechanisms of the Member States of regional associations.

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Received 07.02.2026

Revised 13.02.2026

Accepted 09.03.2026