

## Turkish agents cautious about online programmes

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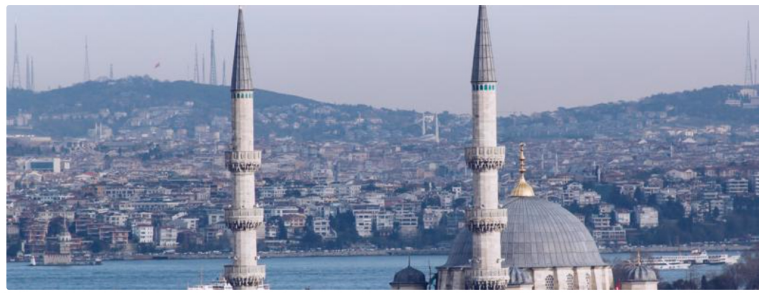
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## Turkish agents cautious about online programmes

Published on 08/04/20

**Agency associations in Turkey have expressed caution about the wave of online language programmes being offered by partner schools and the way some courses are being marketed.**

In a letter to partner schools by Turkish agency association UED - sent to *StudyTravel Magazine* and published as this week's guest 'View from the desk of...' article – President, Aslıhan Ozenc , said that they understood why most schools are currently offering language programmes as a substitute and that they need to work together with partners.

But she also shared the concerns that member and non-member agencies in Turkey have expressed.



**Aslıhan Ozenc, President of UED, has written to partner schools regarding online programmes.**

"As we all agree, international students' motivation to learn a language overseas comes from the ability to practice and experience the language and the culture in real life. They pay for in-class and in-the-country learning. Therefore, we understand that some schools have to compensate the courses via online due to school closures. However, for those who want to sell future courses online we strongly advise that this should only be a short part of the onsite courses," she said.

Aslıhan said that programmes were being sold at a more expensive rate than an average online course with the hope that they will be able to convert to regular face-to-face programme when the coronavirus pandemic has passed.

She claimed that students that might not be able to afford to go overseas or get a visa, that some programmes do not have a clear cancellation policy, and that "these courses will affect the credibility of the agencies and schools".

In terms of quality, Aslıhan continued, "It seems that some of our partners have opened online classes without completing necessary technical infrastructure and organisation. The feedback we received from our member agencies showed that in some online programmes, the student satisfaction rate was just about 10 per cent."

She also said agencies were unhappy that schools were contacting former agency clients directly with offers of online programmes and "bypassing the agencies who were the ones bookings these students to schools in the first place".

"Please bear in mind that we are all in the same boat and we need to support each other in difficult times. Therefore, we strongly believe that our partners will take our concerns mentioned above into consideration."

The letter from UED comes a week after YEDAB , the Tukey-headquartered Association of Study Abroad Counsellors, announced that it would not support online language provision.

In a statement posted on the StudyTravel Network, Osman Yılmaz , President of the association, "YEDAB agencies held an extraordinary meeting today and took the decision that our agencies will not purchase and sell the online language courses from now on, no matter what name and brand. We kindly inform our partner language schools."

In the aftermath of the coronavirus outbreak affecting most of the major language study destinations, *StudyTravel Magazine* reported on the industry's [shift towards online courses](#). Subsequently, a consortium of major language schools [issued a statement](#) urging agencies to accept either online alternatives or vouchers for future usage, rather than asking for compensation.

In an update last week, member national agency associations of the umbrella [Federation of Education and Language Consultant Associations \(FELCA\)](#) spoke about coronavirus-related issues in their respective markets, including differing attitudes towards online courses.

Click [here](#) to read the full letter from Aslıhan.

By Matthew Knott

News Editor



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