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| **Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG)**  **30th Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 19-23 June 2023** | A close up of a sign  Description automatically generated |
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| **Australia** | |
| Barriers and potential solutions for academia to participate  in the work of the Union based on Australian experience | |
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| **Summary:**  This Contribution outlines the existing barriers faced by academia wishing to participate in the work of the Union, and potential measures to improve engagement based on Australia’s experience. This aims to assist the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) with its continuous study aimed to identify whether any additional measures and/or arrangements to facilitate academia participation are required.  **Action required:**  TDAG is invited to consider this document and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.  **References:**  Resolution 169 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022); Resolution 71 (Rev. Kigali 2022) | |

1. **Introduction**

Resolution 169 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) on Admission of academia to participate in the work of the Union instructs the RA, WTSA and WTDC to mandate their respective advisory groups, including TDAG, “to continue to study whether there is a need for any additional measures and/or arrangements to facilitate such participation that are not covered by relevant resolutions or recommendations of the above-mentioned assemblies and conference, and adopt such modalities, if they deem it necessary or required, and report the results through the Directors of the Bureaux to the Council”.

Australia is home to 43 universities and research institutes with many consistently ranked among the world’s top 100 universities. Among these, more than 15 have research interests in telecommunications/ICTs. Despite this, only two Australian universities (Monash University and RMIT University) are currently members of the Union.

1. **Barriers faced by Australian academia**

As part of the Australian Administration’s efforts to boost academia participation in ITU, we have interviewed a number of Australian researchers, including from universities that are currently not ITU members. So far, the following barriers to engagement have been identified:

* Australian researchers prioritise publications in A-ranked academic journals over outreach and engagement activities, as the former score higher/have more weight when applying for research grants and academic promotions.
* Teaching loads in Australian universities are very high which leaves little time for outreach and engagement activities.
* ITU value proposition for academia is not well articulated in public facing documents (the documents articulating the value of membership are generic, and not tailored for a specific audience). For example, currently the [ITU-D Membership Kit](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/MembersPartners/Pages/Members/benefits.aspx) available on the ITU-D website does not articulate how engagement with ITU would benefit researchers.
* Information on concrete activities that researchers could get actively involved in is not easily accessible on the ITU website (the website is difficult to navigate, especially for those unfamiliar with the platform). Moreover, information shared by ITU requires a lot of time to digest. This includes ITU circulars, which are often many pages long.
* ITU meetings, in particular Study Group meetings (of most interest to academia), are conducted only in Geneva, Switzerland, which makes participation challenging due to travel time, costs and time difference (if joining the meetings virtually).

1. **Potential solutions/measures to be taken by ITU**

While we understand that some of the barriers outlined above cannot be addressed by ITU, we believe that there are certain measures that ITU can take to increase academia participation. These include:

* Develop a standalone document clearly articulating the precise benefits of engagement for academia. It would be beneficial to include sections that highlight research opportunities, curriculum development, teaching benefits, and address youth engagement (e.g. outlining activities where involvement of BA, MA and PhD students would be particularly welcome by ITU and its membership).
* Hold research specific initiatives and competitive funding opportunities on telecom/ICT‑related issues, such as the [Connect2Recover Research Competition](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/sites/connect2recover/about/connect2recover-research-competition/). The Connect2Recover Research Competition was an attractive initiative for research institutes and illustrated ITU’s strength of providing a global platform for key stakeholders to achieve tangible outcomes.
* Consider organising PhD placements, with PhD students assisting ITU with relevant projects. This would allow students to develop their professional skills (including engagement and outreach skills), and in return ITU would benefit from the students’ research expertise.
* Work with academia, especially in developing countries, to help bring telecom/ICT-related curricula up to date, potentially incorporating relevant modules from ITU Academia into the existing curricula. This can potentially be done as part of services the universities would have access to when joining ITU as members.

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