



# Mission Report

Type of mission	Regional TAM
Subject	Higher Education Policies in the South-Mediterranean Region
Location	Sharm El-Sheikh - Egypt
Date	10-11 April 2019
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## General Context

- C. Mokbel and M. Oueidat, two Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) from Lebanon participated in the Regional TAM organised by SPHERE in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on April 10-11, 2019 about higher education policies in the South-Mediterranean Region countries (SMR) contributing to an improvement of the quality and relevance of their higher education systems.
- Most countries in the SMR are either developing or modifying their HE national policies, some do not have policies and some are working on them. This Regional TAM discussed the aim to map the status of HE policies, to learn from the EU experience in this respect and to adopt strategies and solutions to address Higher Education trends.
- Regional experts present models & experience of HE policies in their countries:
  - Status of HE policies in Palestine presented by Waleed Sweileh,
  - Status of HE policies in Jordan presented by Hassan Al-Shalabi,
  - Status of HE policies in Lebanon presented by Chafic Mokbel.
- Two European experts in HE policies (Kevin Guillaume, Ligia Deca) presented several approaches for developing HE policies, illustrating the related challenges. Examples and practices of HE policies from EU countries have also been shown.

## Discussions

- The organisation of the Regional TAM was well thought of. **Ligia Deca** presented theoretical elements, with practical applications (public policy cycle, with details on each stage of PP development) and the history of policy change in Romania and current strategy. **Kevin Guillaume** presented the history of the Bologna Process, analysed the impacts of a voluntary intergovernmental process on the development of HE national policies and showed how stakeholders organisations (at both European and national levels) have taken a key role in the

development of HE policies. He also stressed on the diversity of the Belgium HE system. Two case studies from Belgium were explained:

- Development of qualifications frameworks in Europe and in Wallonia-Brussels;
  - Reform of the higher education landscape.
- The Regional TAM was interactive and good time was reserved to questions and answers. There have been good interactions that permitted to clarify several points.

## My contribution

- The HEREs have actively participated in the discussions that took place in nearly all the sessions.
- The HEREs have profited to reinforce their networking.
- The HEREs have actively participated in practice time represented by three working groups followed by a presentation and debate each day.
- A presentation on the policies development in Lebanon has been provided as a case.

## Lessons learned

The major take home ideas relevant, according to the authors, to the Lebanese HE:

- The creation of a **unique structure** ARES “Academy for Research and Higher Education” in order to give a greater coherence to Walloon-Belgium higher education, to leave the logics of competitions to privilege the collaborations and the synergies between institutions of higher education, beyond the historical and philosophical cleavages. The HE and research landscape has experienced lately a major reform that has led to the establishment of the “Academy for Research and Higher Education”, ARES in French. The ARES is the **umbrella organization** representing all HEIs in a **unique structure as new "center of gravity"** for the HE policy development, based on a strong involvement of the stakeholders that have become both policy-makers/contributors and beneficiaries. It is the result of the merging of various councils. ARES is trying **to foster closer cooperation and facilitate the dialogue between HEIs**. It was also a political willingness to better coordinate the offer of programmes in order to avoid duplication of programmes and reduce ineffective competition between HEIs. In 2014, **ARES** was established as a **public body but independent from the Government**. ARES has many different missions, some being more of regulatory nature, other being more policy-oriented. For example:
  - in the **academic** field, ARES provides systematic advices on the creation new programmes before the final approval by the Government, it organises the entrance exam to medical studies, it accredits part of the continuous training programmes, etc.
  - in the **information** field, ARES collects and processes data on the HE system, it provides general information to prospective (national) students and other stakeholders, etc.
  - in the **institutional** field, ARES provides advice and formulates proposals to the Government and other public actors, etc.
  - in the **development cooperation** field, ARES manages the federal budget allocated to academic cooperation towards developing and emerging countries and ensures the general coordination of HEIs’ participation in the various projects, initiatives

- in the **international** field, ARES supports the internationalisation of HEIs by coordinating the promotion of HEIs abroad, offering capacity-building opportunities, lobbying public authorities in charge of international relations.
- in the **Research** field: doctoral schools
- Points of attention:
  - **Capacities** of stakeholders to engage: autonomy;
  - **Legitimacy** of stakeholders' organizations: representativeness;
  - **Objectives, expected** outputs and **timing**: feasibility;
  - Mutual **trust among stakeholders** and **with decision-makers**: partnership;
  - **Acceptance** of failure: realism.
- **Key strength** of the EHEA but also **main obstacle** of the implementation of the EHEA:
  - **Diversity vs. harmonization**
  - **Transparency vs. complexification**
  - **Top-down vs. bottom-up**
- **PILLARS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM in Romania:**
  - PERSONALIZATION AND QA
  - EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FLEXIBILITY
  - ADAPTABILITY OF THE SYSTEM to external change
- Cross-cycle reform coherence: changes on single issues in HE need to be backed up by complementary reforms in previous cycles.
- Need to develop vocational, technical and technological education in the region.

### Ideas for exploitation

- Invite the academic community to hold an in-depth discussion about the possible strategic choices in *higher education policies in Lebanon*
- *Explore the possible form of a committee to coordinate the policies of the higher education in the region*

More details about the conference (presentations, ...) can be found at: <http://supportthere.org>

It is possible to discuss specific points with any of the two HEREs by sending an email to:

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