



Meeting of Erasmus+ CBHE projects managed by Lebanese institutions: Challenges and Lessons learnt

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Webpage: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/event/11299>

Conclusions/Recommendations/Best practices

MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

- Despite the very exceptional situation in Lebanon that has been affecting the performance of the Lebanese higher education sector for years, the management of CBHE projects by national institutions remains a positive practice that should be further adopted and encouraged.
- There is no specific model of management adopted by the Lebanese coordinators of CBHE projects, however the results of the pre-event survey and the discussions made during the meeting showed that the different Lebanese coordinators developed a management system based on specific committees/teams, regular follow-up, collaborative set-ups, transparent administration and continuous communication schemes. For this purpose, projects establish professional platforms and other handy online tools.
- The Lebanese coordinators have appreciated the latest 'suggestions' for the financial management of the CBHE projects involving Lebanese institutions designed by EACEA in collaboration with NEO Lebanon to mitigate the consequences of the Lebanese banking system crisis. While few coordinators believe that these suggestions have partially lifted the obstacles of their financial implementation, many others find that the flexibility provided by these 'suggestions' can adequately meet the challenges faced by their CBHE projects.
- In light of the difficult financial situation in Lebanon, a contingent financial management model is adopted; centralisation with Lebanese partners and decentralisation with EU partners are adopted.
- The Lebanese University, the only and the largest public HE institution in Lebanon, is still not able to fully benefit from the flexibility offered by the latest 'suggestions' of EACEA due to bureaucratic rules in the university's administration.
- The Lebanese coordinators emphasised the importance of their institutions' support for the successful management of their projects. Many relied on a diversity of services offered by their universities departments and offices to cope with the management of international consortium.
- With respect to relationship with partners, the coordinators argued that these relations depend on the rules of each partner institution; they all considered Partnership Agreements as an essential tool for effective management of the consortium; they believe that trust is an important prerequisite for cooperation especially in big consortia, and that mixed task forces developed for different activities are essential to involve as many partners as possible.
- Besides, Lebanese grantholders discussed the following impact of coordinating a CBHE project on the concerned institution: wider exposure and visibility, impact on institution in managing international projects, enhanced financial management, more emphasis on extracurricular activities,

reflection, improvement of institutional policies, building capacities for dealing with uncertainties and risks given the volatile context of Lebanon and using a responsive flexible management system.

- One important issue that has been challenging the implementation of the CBHE projects managed by Lebanese institutions since the switch to online mode of activities. This has impacted the efficiency of these activities due to the deteriorating Lebanese infrastructure resulting in some cases in inactive participation from the part of the stakeholders.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the pre-event survey and the discussions during the cluster meeting, the following recommendations and messages can be made. These lessons learned stem from the coordinators experience in leading CBHE projects.

- The special context in which the Lebanese higher education sector is going through should not discourage Lebanese stakeholders from submitting CBHE proposals as project leaders.
- CBHE project (potential) coordinators should have a good understanding of their universities' rules, plans and resources in order to get the best support for the management and implementation of their projects.
- During implementation, coordinators should stay connected with the different units of their institutions.
- Partners should be chosen carefully among those having strong knowledge and expertise in the field/area addressed by the project.
- Project outcomes should be set to be realistic, tangible and attainable.
- It is important to cooperate with projects in the same area to have synergies and to complement and build on previous successes/practices.
- Contingency and flexible plans have to be developed especially for uncertain contexts like that of Lebanon.
- Online mode of delivery has become a reality and raised again the issues of quality and relevance which had been under discussion since long time before the pandemic. Projects are invited to deal with this reality in an innovative way in the aim of getting more efficiency, profitability and return.
- The distribution of responsibilities and tasks among all the partners is a crucial factor for successful implementation especially in large consortia where better organisation is needed.

BEST PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

The Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Coordinator of 3 CBHE projects participating in the cluster meeting, is developing a manual for internal management of projects at the coordinating institution. This manual, when achieved, can be used by any potential candidate for coordination of a CBHE project.

The issue of co-leadership involving pairs from partner and programme country institutions was also raised and advised as a good practice in the management of CBHE projects.