

Editorial

by Aref Alsoufi

While it does not seem that the crisis of the country is near to an end nor even to a slightly reversible course, the Lebanese higher education sector is about to follow the rule of the market in its ugliest form: **dollarization of the cost of learning**. In the editorial of our newsletter of last September (Cultures of adaptation and black markets), we warned about the culture of adaptation as one of the worst scenarios that the Lebanese society is heading for. This culture, which has been always considered as a Lebanese phenomenon of survival and resilience, turned out to be one of the main obstacles against change. Following the model of “dabber rasak”, the universities, in the private sector, are turning, like many other businesses, to fresh dollars throwing their students into an unknown destiny. The resort to such simplistic solutions will, at the upcoming new academic year, generate chocks, disappointment and anger. This system D -like or culture of ‘mind your head’ has really a special meaning in Lebanon particularly when it is applied in a chaotic and ruthless way, and without any mercy. No ‘invisible hand’ can intervene in this jungle of selfish and uncontrolled policies. At the public higher education front, the Lebanese University, which is the most dramatically impacted by the crisis, is also trying, although reluctantly, to get into this market game with an increasing opposition from its community.

The only constant in this crisis is the lack of a unified and consolidated response to the crisis. It is probably too unfair to blame the universities for this lack of vision and responsive strategy, but we always believed that in the circles of thinking that the universities are supposed to create and run that adequate and innovative responses to crises are designed. However, one can never create an oasis in the middle of a ‘hell’.

(Read below in page 6 about a joint initiative on ‘Higher education in times of collapse’ launched by EU-funded project HOPES-LEB and Erasmus+ Lebanon)

Dr. Mazen El Khatib in charge of Directorate General of HE

On 28 March 2022, Dr. Mazen El Khatib has been assigned the task of managing the affairs of the Directorate General of Higher Education at the Ministry of Education and Higher education. Dr. El Khatib is a full professor of Chemistry at the Lebanese University. In practice, he assumes the responsibility of the Directorate General in a very difficult time while the sector of higher education has been suffering from a state of collapse since 2020.

Dr. El Khatib was the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the Lebanese University for the period 2005-2010 and advised many Ministers of Education and Higher Education on administrative and educational issues. He was a member of the team of Higher Education Reform Experts formed by the EU-funded programmes Tempus and Erasmus+ between 2008 and 2015.

Erasmus+ Programme updates



Go smarter



greener



connected



social



Closer to citizens

The new generation of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 is more inclusive, more digital, and more green. It has opportunities for all ages, and more choices for organisations.

New opportunities: VET and Youth

Erasmus+ 2021-2027 provides wider opportunities for vocational education and training as well as for youth.

VET institutions can benefit from capacity building projects aiming at bridging gaps with the market needs, providing training and development opportunities, and building curricula and reform.

For more information on the Capacity Building in the field of Vocational Education and Training CBVET: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/organisations/cooperation-among-organisations-and-institutions/capacity-building-vet>.

Erasmus+ also offers opportunities for organisations active in the field of youth to benefit from capacity building projects. These projects aim at increasing the capacity of organisations dealing with youth outside the formal learning settings, reaching out to and improving the competencies of youth, mainly those with fewer opportunities, improving the quality and recognition of youth work in non-EU countries, and bridging gaps with formal learning and labour market.

For more information on the Capacity Building in the field of Youth CBY: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-organisations/cooperation-among-organisations-and-institutions/capacity-building-youth>.

Infosession on Youth SALTO (28/4/2022)

The SALTO* EuroMed team and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency met on 28 April 2022 with the EU Delegations and NEOs of the South Med region to foster more knowledge and awareness of the SALTO EuroMed and encourage further cooperation in future activities with EU Delegations and NEOs. During this event, SALTO Euromed: mandate, main activities, development strategy 2022-2024 was presented. Other issues were discussed including cooperation with partner countries Long Term Activity, the Delegations' and NEOs' new mandate on youth policy in the South Med region, and challenges and common actions to be developed in the future.



**SALTO-YOUTH is a network of seven Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field that helps promote and support youth work by offering trainings, tools and state of art strategies.*

For more info: <https://www.salto-youth.net/>

This focus on Youth in the Erasmus+ programmes comes in the framework of the EU Youth strategy and the European Year of Youth 2022.

For more information: https://europa.eu/youth/year-of-youth_en#content



In addition to SALTO, other EU initiatives might be at the interest of Youth. These are:

- The European Solidarity Corps: an international volunteer programme funded by the European Commission that enables young people legally resident in Europe aged between 18-30 years old to carry out an international volunteer service in an organization or in a public body in Europe, Africa, Asia or south America for a period ranging between 2 to 12 months. https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en



**EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS**

- Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange is a ground-breaking project enabling youth in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean to engage in meaningful intercultural experiences online, as part of their formal or non-formal education. https://europa.eu/youth/erasmusvirtual_en.



European Youth Portal: https://europa.eu/youth/about-us_en

Erasmus+ Goes Green (7 June 2022)

In alignment with the overarching priorities of the Erasmus+ programme and the EU priorities in going Green, the Erasmus Goes Green project* organised on 7 June 2022 a webinar to present institutional and student-driven approaches to changing the travel behavior of Erasmus+ students and staff and encourage efforts to travel sustainably. The project presents its carbon footprint calculator that can be easily used by students going on mobility. This calculator allows the user to make comparisons between the different means of travel and choose the most environmentally friendly by estimating the carbon footprint of the mobility based on the place of origin and the destination <https://www.egg-project-eu.uvsq.fr/a-carbon-footprint-calculator-designed-for-erasmus>



**The Erasmus Goes Green project is a consortium of five universities, the European University Foundation and the Erasmus Student Network, aims at reducing the carbon footprint of Erasmus+ travels, by empowering students and staff to make more conscious and environmentally friendly decisions when going on exchange.* <https://www.egg-project-eu.uvsq.fr/>

Erasmus+ CBHE Projects : News and Synergies

Infoday at Notre Dame University

An Erasmus info day was organised at Notre Dame University on 28 April 2022 where updates on three ongoing Erasmus+ capacity building projects were presented. These are SWaTH, ICARE, and UPGRADE.

SWaTH project was presented by its coordinator Dr. Makram Bachawati from University of Balamand. The project is about Sustainable Wastewater Treatment for Hospitals. The project brings together 11 organisations from four European countries (France, Sweden, Finland, Spain) and Lebanon (Lebanese University, Lebanese American University, the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Notre Dame University). www.swath.eu.



UPGRADE project, presented by Dr. Ioanna Spyropoulou from the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) and Dr. Talal Salem, FE Associate Professor at NDU, aims at improving the urban planning and public transportation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). <http://www.aast.edu/en/scientific-research/upgrade/>

ICARE project, presented by Dr. Jessy El Hayek, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences (FNHS) at NDU Clinic at the University, is a student-led venture to provide communities with high quality health care, education, and social services at little or no cost

Another EU funded project MAIA-TAQA, presented by Dr. Elias Kinab, Associate Professor at the Lebanese University (LU) described the installation of a pilot, wastewater treatment plant at the LU Industrial Research Institute in Hadath, Lebanon <https://www.enicbcmed.eu/projects/maia-taqa>.

The event was attended by the President of NDU, Fr. Bechara Khoury, Ms. Orla Colclough from the European Union Delegation to Lebanon, and the Coordinator of the National Erasmus+ Office in Lebanon, Dr. Aref Alsoufi as well as other professors from NDU and other partner universities in Lebanon and Europe.

For more details: <https://www.ndu.edu.lb/news-and-events/news/ndu-hosts-erasmus-plus-info-day>



Synergy day at Balamand: projects SWaTH, AQUACYCLE, CLAIM

The Faculty of Engineering at the University of Balamand in collaboration with the National Erasmus+ Office in Lebanon organised an awareness workshop on Domestic wastewater, microplastics in seawater, and hospital wastewater on May 12, 2022 at University of Balamand. The workshop was attended by academics, stakeholders, and representatives of various municipalities and municipality unions. In addition to the Erasmus+ CBHE project SWaTH www.swath.eu, two other projects were presented AQUACYCLE <https://www.enicbcmed.eu/projects/aquacycle> and CLAIM <https://www.claim-h2020project.eu/>.



This workshop was an opportunity to find synergies between the projects presented and strengthen liaison between the different stakeholders. More information on the event: [Awareness Workshop - SWaTH](#)

The Ministry is regaining contact with CBHE projects LEBPASS and CONECTE

With a new person in charge of the Directorate General of Higher Education at the Ministry, Erasmus+ CBHE projects, particularly the structural ones, are gaining further support and commitment from the Ministry which is becoming more active as a partner in Erasmus+. Two structural projects coordinated by Lebanese Institutions: CONECTE (<https://www.usj.edu.lb/conecte/>) on career building and training coordinated by Saint Joseph University and LEBPASS (<https://lebpas.org/>) on Lebanese Diploma Supplement coordinated by the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, have met the DG and the Ministry's technical Committee more than once and discussed many issues with regards to the projects implementation and took immediate actions to move forward with the projects' results.

CONNECTE



MoU between Antonine University and MEHE in the framework of project MERIC-Net

In the framework of the Erasmus+ CBHE project MERIC-Net, a MoU between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Antonine University was signed on Monday 20 June 2022 by Minister Abbas el Halabi and Father Dr. Michel Jalakh. The meeting which took place at the Office of Minister El Halabi was attended by Dr. Mazen El Khatib from the DGHE at the Ministry, Ms. Orla Colclough from the EU Delegation to Lebanon and Dr. Aref Alsoufi from the National Erasmus+ Office. The MoU is about an equipment that detects fraudulent documents and which was purchased in the course of the EU-funded project MERIC-Net.

MERIC-Net is about Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres on the Recognition of Qualifications and it involves from Lebanon Ministry of Education and Higher

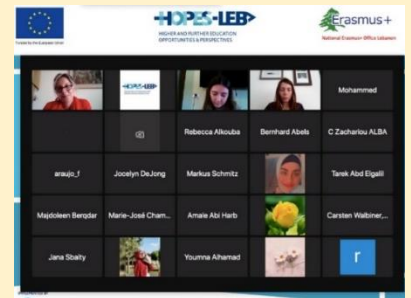


Education, Antonine University and Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, as well as many partners from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Norway, France and Italy (<http://www.meric-net.eu/en/index.aspx>).

Joint action with HOPES-LEB: continuation

HOPES-LEB-NEO 3rd dialogue

HOPES-LEB in partnership with the National Erasmus+ Office of Lebanon organised the dialogue “Higher Education in times of collapse – The perspective of students” on Friday May 13, 2022. This was the third of a series of stakeholder dialogues and meetings, launched in January 2022 and organised on a national level, bringing together professionals and academics, representatives of institutions and organisations as well as students, to further discuss the current situation in the higher education sector in Lebanon and its impact on students and education providers as well as to explore further approaches and recommendations to better address the situation. This 3rd dialogue aimed at analysing the current situation in the higher education sector from the students’ perspective while focusing on their views, ambitions, plans and how they see their future prospects in light of the current circumstances. This dialogue brought together 90 representatives from institutions and students as well as the acting DG for higher education Dr. Mazen El Khatib. This dialogue was preceded by a survey conducted with 774 students in April 2022 to explore students’ perceptions, in these times of crisis, of the quality of teaching, provision of resources, relation with faculty members and staff, their individual performance, graduation, drop out of studies, value of their degree, financial challenges, plans to change university or travel and their concern about the future.



For more info: <https://www.hopes-madad.org/higher-education-in-times-of-collapse-the-perspective-of-students/>

HOPES-LEB-NEO follow-up meeting

The HOPES-LEB project and the NEO Lebanon have organised a follow-up meeting of the series of stakeholder dialogues “Higher Education in times of collapse” on 21 June 2022 at the Gefinor Rotana Hotel, Beirut. The aim of this meeting is to explore priorities and recommendations for the future through establishing a drafting committee and initial roadmap for joint policy recommendations. As a quick recap, the main findings of the 3 stakeholder dialogues were also presented highlighting the perspectives of each of higher and further education institutions, project implementers and students. The meeting gathered 40 participants from senior positions in LHEIs as well as NGOs.



For more info: <https://www.hopes-madad.org/higher-education-in-times-of-collapse-follow-up-meeting/>

Other local events

Europe Day at USJ

On the occasion of the Europe Day 2022, the EU Delegation to Lebanon organised an inter-school student competition on **May 9** in presence of Ambassador Ralph Tarraf. Students from four private and four public schools competed in a general knowledge competition about the European Union.

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/europe-day-2022_en?s=203

@EUinLebanon



National Erasmus+ Office Lebanon,
5th. Floor,
Ministry of Education and Higher Education,
Habib Abi Chahla Sq. (Unesco Palace Area)
Beirut – Lebanon

Tel. +961-3-654 180

Fax: +961-1-804 310

www.erasmusplus-lebanon.org

www.facebook.com/ErasmusPlusLebanon/

https://twitter.com/Neo_Lebanon

The National Erasmus+ Office (NEO) Lebanon
is represented by Dr. Aref Alsoufi.

Funding Source: This Newsletter has been funded within the framework of the European Union Erasmus+ programme.

Disclaimer: This Newsletter reflects the views only of the authors, and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.