

Editorial

by Aref Alsoufi

Lebanon and its educational community are wrapping up the year 2021 with all its sadness and disappointments and looking at the year 2022 with fear, uncertainty without any glimpse of hope. The higher education sector is still struggling to survive all types of difficulties with a complete failure of the policy makers to put forward proper solutions.

- The higher education sector has taken a very hard blow with the discovery of thousands of diplomas allegedly sold to Iraqi students with improper enrolment at some Lebanese universities. The issue raised a big question on the way the sector is managed and quality controlled. It also underlined the chaotic situation in which the sector has been going through since at least two decades with the unprecedented expansion of the sector at the turn of the new century.
- The year 2021 was marked by the publication of the Erasmus+ 2022 call for proposals

offering a diversity of opportunities to the Lebanese higher education sector to compete at international level and to keep connected to the international trends. The new Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 provides support to organisations and individuals from the sectors of higher education, vocational education and youth.

- The Lebanese higher education community was saddened by the loss of Dean Professor Therese El-Hachem Tarabay, member of the Lebanese Council of Higher Education. The National Erasmus+ Office in Lebanon has lost with the passing away of Professor El-Hachem an active collaborator and a friend full of energy and enthusiasm. Our deepest sympathy goes to her husband, her family and all her friends and colleagues.



Erasmus+ 2022 Call for Proposals

The first complete call under the new Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 was launched on 24 November 2021. This call provides opportunities for institutions, organisations and individuals. The programme includes many novelties in the fields of higher education, vocational education, and youth.



Erasmus+

All international opportunities under the Erasmus+ programme can be found at: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/accessing-erasmus-opportunities-from-outside-the-eu>.

The Call for proposals and the Programme Guide can be consulted at: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/erasmusplus-programme-guide>.

Deadlines for submitting applications in each action:

- International Credit Mobility (ICM): 23 February 2022 (18:00 Beirut time)
- Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters (EMJM): 16 February 2022 (18:00 Beirut time)
- Erasmus Mundus Design Measures (EMDM): 16 February 2022 (18:00 Beirut time)
- Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE): 17 February 2022 (18:00 Beirut time)
- Jean Monnet Actions (JMA): 1 March 2022 (18:00 Beirut time)
- Mobility for young people, youth workers: 23 February 2022; 4 October 2022 (18:00 Beirut time)
- Capacity Building in the field of Youth (CBY): 7 April 2022 (18:00 Beirut time)
- Capacity Building in VET (CBVET) : 31 March 2022 (18:00 Beirut time)



It is important to learn that in order to benefit from any EU-funded programme, the candidate should obtain and validate a Participant Identification Code (PIC).

Information on how to register your organisation and obtain a PIC number is available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register>

The Call-related Information Campaigns

Erasmus+ worldwide online seminar 23, 24, 25 November 2021

This seminar, organised by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the EU Commission, included information sessions on some major actions under Erasmus+ programme: International Credit Mobility, Erasmus Mundus, Marie Curie actions for researchers and Capacity Building in Higher Education. Information about this seminar and its resources can be found at <https://erasmusplus.mci-events.eu/>.

Erasmus+ Information and training sessions 2, 14 December 2021

These two sessions, organised by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency, covered general information on Capacity Building CBHE projects, on how to design a competitive proposal and a special training for newcomers with less experience in the programme. Information, presentations and recordings are accessible/downloadable at:

https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/online-info-session-2-december-capacity-building-higher-education-erasmus_en.

<https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-capacity-building-in-higher-education-infoday-2021-12-02>.

https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/online-info-session-2-december-erasmus-capacity-building-higher-education-cbhe_en.

https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/online-info-session-erasmus-capacity-building-higher-education-cbhe-fostering-access-cooperation_en.

Lebanon Information Campaign 3, 13, 17 December 2021

The National Erasmus+ Office in Lebanon organised its information campaign on 3, 13 and 17 December 2021 to explain the international actions covered by this call and to detail all opportunities available including the novelties introduced. Training on how to submit a proposal was also conducted.

For more info and useful resources: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/event/12012>.

International Events

CBHE Virtual Fair 2021

The European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the Erasmus+ National Offices (NEOs) organised on 26-27 October 2021 a Virtual Fair to showcase best results and inspiring practices emerging from Capacity Building projects in Higher Education (CBHE).

The banner features a red background with a blue wave at the bottom. On the left, the Erasmus+ logo is displayed with the tagline 'Enriching lives, opening minds.' Below it, the text 'Erasmus+ CBHE Virtual Fair' is written in white and blue. In the center, there is a circular image of a globe with a graduation cap on top. To the right, there is a QR code with the text 'SCAN ME' below it. At the bottom, the dates '26-27 OCTOBER 2021' are written in white, followed by 'More information: https://bit.ly/3BpgXKA'.

The Virtual Fair was an online event offering the opportunity to about 100 CBHE projects, representing all regions, to showcase their most relevant results in front of an international and varied audience composed of academics from Programme and Partner countries, university managers and students, national policy makers, EU staff and other stakeholders.

The Virtual Fair included plenary sessions, parallel workshops and a limited number of interactive training sessions targeting small groups and carried out by project partners. The Virtual Fair also allowed for efficient networking opportunities such as sharing project ideas and partner-finding in view of the upcoming CBHE calls under the new Erasmus+ Programme. More information about this international gathering can be found at: <http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/wp-content/uploads/Virtual-fair-2021.pdf>.

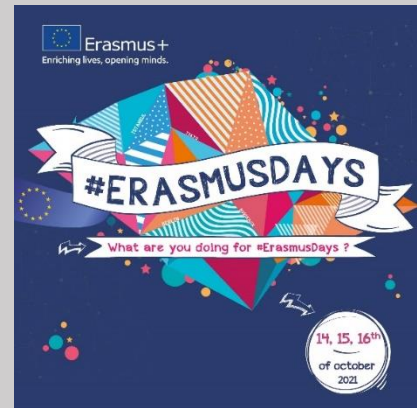
Erasmus Days 2021

#ErasmusDays2021 took place on 14, 15 and 16 October 2021.

More than 5600 events were organised in 67 countries on the occasion of the #ErasmusDays2021. The following two events were organised in Lebanon on this occasion.

- Erasmus roundtable: how the experience shaped students from Lebanon organised by the EU Delegation to Lebanon on 14 October.

The aim of this roundtable which was organised by the EU Delegation to Lebanon in collaboration with the National Erasmus+ Office on the occasion of the #ErasmusDays2021, was to gather Erasmus+ student beneficiaries in the two actions of the programme: ICM (International Credit Mobility) and EMJMD (Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree) to talk about their experience and how it has impacted them personally and professionally. Six students shared their experiences in presence of Alessia Squarcella, Head of Sector "Economy, Green Deal and Local Development" at the EU Delegation to Lebanon.



- SWaTH project event on October 14.

On Thursday, October 14, 2021, within the scope of the Sustainable Wastewater Treatment for Hospitals / SWaTH project, the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Balamand hosted a celebration of Erasmus Days 2021. The project SWaTH is led by the University of Balamand and focus on sustainable wastewater treatment.

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). The project aims to evaluate the social and environmental impacts of wastewater treatment through life cycle analysis studies, transfer of knowledge from European to Lebanese partners, and form skilled environmental and chemical engineers.



The event was launched by Professor Rami Abboud the VP of Internationalisation and Engagement and Dean of Faculty of Engineering at the University of Balamand, the Coordinator of the SWaTH project Dr. Makram Bachawati and attended by the Coordinator of the National Erasmus+ Office of Lebanon Dr. Aref Alsoofi. Representatives from the Lebanese partners as well as students attended the event. Other European partners joined online. The event included a Concept Idea session where different faculty members in partner universities presented different concepts related to waste management. For more info about SWaTH project: www.swath.eu.

Projects-related activities

NEO Monitoring activities

A series of monitoring visits was conducted by NEO Lebanon to four projects in the last quarter of the year 2021. The aim of these visits is to check on the implementation of the projects and to provide the necessary support and recommendations.

A monitoring visit to UPGRADE project “Urban and Transportation regeneration for reducing automobile dependency in Mena area” has been carried out on September 30, 2021. UPGRADE involves from Lebanon the Notre Dame University and the University of Balamand. <http://www.aast.edu/en/scientific-research/upgrade/>.

Another monitoring visit to DeCAIR project “Developing Curricula for Artificial Intelligence” has been conducted on October 12, 2021. The project involves from Lebanon Beirut Arab University and the Lebanese University. <http://decair.ju.edu.jo/Home.aspx>.

A third monitoring visit to GLOB-SM project “Development of new master program in Global Supply Chain Management for Southern Mediterranean” has been conducted on November 29, 2021. GLOB-SM is coordinated by the American University of Beirut and involves also from Lebanon Saint Joseph University.

Finally, a monitoring visit to SWaTH project has been conducted on December 21, 2021. www.swath.edu.

StEER-LEB activity at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education

The Capacity Building Project StEER-LEB “Student Empowerment, Engagement and Representation in Lebanese Universities” organised its National Advocacy campaign and closing event on October 13, 2021 at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in presence of his Excellency Dr. Abbas Al Halabi, Minister of Education and Higher Education, Father Talal El Hachem, President of Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Father Salim Dakkash, Rector of the Saint Joseph University, and other representatives from the Lebanese and European partners. The project is led by the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) and is implemented in Lebanon with the Ministry as a partner. The project closed with two strategic outputs namely the Advocacy campaign and the National Student Structure. The presidents of the three partner universities, USEK, USJ and LAU signed the bylaws for the national student structure affirming their commitment for students’ engagement and representation hoping that more Lebanese universities will join this structure in the future.



Cluster meeting on visibility of Erasmus+ programme

The National Erasmus+ Office in Lebanon organised on October 28, 2021 a cluster meeting under the title: Visibility of Erasmus+ in the media tools of the Lebanese Higher Education institutions.

The visibility of the EU-funded programmes, Erasmus+ in particular, is an issue of vital importance not only for the implemented projects themselves but also for the institutions in which these projects are being implemented. Although this is a contractual obligation clearly set in the grant agreements signed between the EU Commission and the beneficiary projects, its importance comes from the linkage to the overall communication plan, the

institutional ownership of the projects results and the internationalisation strategy of each beneficiary institution. It also shows the way each institution is reaching out to its different stakeholders, students in particular.

A preliminary scan that has been conducted over the websites and other social media of 37 Lebanese universities out of which 65% are involved in one or more of the Erasmus+ international actions, showed that there is a diversity of practices in disseminating the EU-funded projects in terms of the access to the information, the visual identity of the action used and the level of the presence of these Erasmus+ actions.

The meeting aimed at discussing this visibility issue by exchanging practices, benchmarking with different models adopted suggesting possible measures for improvement and underlining its importance at the eve of the launching of the new phase 2021-2027 of the Erasmus+ programme. It also aimed to reflect on the reinforcement of the HEIs communication plans towards a transparent international identity.

The 27 CBHE projects implemented in Lebanon between 2015 and 2020, VPs for Internationalisation, international relations officers and people in charge of implementing institutional communication plans were invited to this meeting.

To know more about this important meeting visit its webpage at <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/event/11785>.

Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) Activities

Greening in Higher Education Online seminar

In the spirit of the SPHERE Technical Assistance Missions, the SPHERE Team organised a webinar as a universal TAM for all HERE teams, NEOs and interested parties in Partner Countries, to explore the topic of greening in higher education. The event was open to the general public on 18 October 2021.

The event discussed and embraced the different elements of this topic, including teaching and learning, research, societal engagement, university operations and international cooperation.

‘Greening’ in higher education has become more relevant in recent years and is underpinned by a number of important recent policy frameworks, such as the Green Deal in the European Union and the recent commitment of the European Higher Education Area. In other parts of the world, greening in HE has already gained speed in relation to the UN SDGs and universities’ contribution. But in many countries, more structured approaches to this topic are just emerging now or yet to be discussed.

For more information <https://supporthere.org/event/greening-higher-education-sphere-webinar>.



Annual HERE conference

The 2021 Virtual HERE Annual conference is the last of a six-year contractual period for Support for Higher Education Reform Experts (SPHERE) (www.supporthere.org), an initiative of the European Commission to support capacity development and policy reform in higher education in EU Neighbourhood countries. The conference was held on 18-19 November 2021, and it was not only a means to celebrate what has been learned and achieved, but also to reflect in more depth on the impact of the HERE in higher education systems in EU Neighbourhood countries. This is particularly timely in the midst of a pandemic, where higher education reform

topics that were already pressing prior to the crisis have become more accentuated, such as access, teaching and learning innovation, digitalisation, and quality assurance.

The conference offered an opportunity to look forward: What is in store for the new EU cooperation programmes for higher education and where is emphasis placed? How do HERE envisage the university of the immediate future and how can this be achieved? How have the dynamics of global cooperation changed and where are there new challenges and opportunities? For more information <https://supporthere.org/finalconference>.

Upcoming Events

Higher Education in times of collapse - The perspective of higher and further education institutions (January 20, 2022)

HOPES-LEB (Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians and vulnerable youth in Lebanon) project funded by the European Union, through the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the ‘EU Madad Fund’, and implemented by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Campus France and Nuffic, in partnership with the **National Erasmus+ Office of Lebanon** are launching a series of stakeholder meetings addressing “**Higher Education in times of collapse**”.

These gatherings which will bring together professionals and academics, representatives of institutions and organisations as well as students, aim at analysing the current situation in the higher education sector and its impact on students and education providers. By identifying challenges and mitigation measures, the meetings shall contribute to the development of recommendations which will help relevant stakeholders to address the situation accordingly.

The series of dialogues will focus on three main aspects:

- 1- **The perspective of higher and further education institutions**
- 2- **The perspective of project implementers and organisations**
- 3- **The perspective of students**

The first event of this series will take place virtually on Thursday January 20, 2022, from 10:00 am until utmost 12:30 pm Lebanon time.

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