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Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Lebanon National Impact Study Report on 2015-2017 projects

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Preface

The Erasmus+ 2015-2020 generation has come to its end and will be followed by a new phase of the programme for the period 2021-2027. With its international actions, this EU flagship programme the main funding scheme that provided the Lebanese higher education system with opportunities to modernise, reform, open up, inter-cooperate and keep connected to international higher education community.

The international dimension of Erasmus+ includes four main actions:

- Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) projects
- International Credit Mobility (ICM) projects
- Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)
- Jean Monnet Actions (JM)

While ICM projects focus on exchange of students and university staff, EMJMD projects on scholarships to students to follow high quality master's degrees, and the JM actions address studies and research on the European Union issues, the CBHE projects target reform and modernization of higher education at institutional and systemic level.

At this bridging phase of the history of the programme, it is a good moment to look back at what has been achieved by its capacity building in higher education CBHE projects. It is important to give evidence on the impact made by the different types of the CBHE projects, to draw lessons from their implementation journey and to examine the challenges faced during their lifetime.

The best way to look forward to a better future is to look at the past in neutral eyes.

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Executive Summary

Eleven CBHE¹ projects selected between 2015 and 2017, complemented by other still on-going projects selected between 2018 and 2020 and building on previous capacity building Tempus projects, have impacted the Lebanese higher education sector in many strategic areas.

They impacted curriculum development by developing or upgrading Master programmes in the fields of Gas & Oil, Road & Traffic Safety and Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy. They introduced new teaching methodologies, improved Teaching and Learning by adopting competence-based and Learning Outcomes approaches, developed teaching modern materials based on Bologna principles, equipped laboratories with state-of-the-art materials and offered hundreds of students better learning environment and resources.

They impacted Quality Assurance, by confirming a culture of Quality already started since 2003, creating a pool of experts in institutional and programme evaluation, elaborating sets of standards with all related components, tools and procedures, spreading further the culture of Quality, putting internal Quality systems in place, organising many workshops and seminars of international dimension, and opening up to prestigious international QA agencies. The QA lobby created through these projects together with the different actions taken by the Erasmus+ experts has been struggling for the creation of the Lebanese QA Agency by the national authorities and to guarantee the credibility of this Agency with regards to the respect of the international standard of independence and integrity.

They impacted students by offering them state-of-the-art curricula, providing them better teaching and learning facilities, improving the student support services, empowering their participative and engagement role in the universities' democratic processes and by training university staff on how to accept students among them as players in the governance architecture of each institution.

They impacted employability by offering relevant programmes, creating a new wind in the field of entrepreneurship and university-enterprise cooperation based on a spirit of networking, creating more and better structured internships and by building reliable career services.

They impacted internationalisation by opening up the Lebanese HE sector to the cooperation with new EU countries and to a regional cooperation, developing programmes of international dimension, launching research activities, signing MoU and cooperation agreements, seeking international accreditation and QA enhancement, getting in contact with experts from all EU countries, organisations and association, and being updated on the latest development worldwide. The CBHE curriculum development projects contributed to the internationalisation strategy of at least five institutions by building sustainable cooperation with EU partners, by implementing student and staff exchange. Internationalisation was enhanced through building capacities on the recognition issues based on NARIC-like structures and by establishing special EU units for the design and the management of international and EU projects.

They impacted inclusion by setting up programmes and structures for female empowerment, improving the capacities of the universities in supporting refugee students and their Lebanese host communities in terms of recognition, counselling and advising, and by ensuring a geographic coverage across the country through reaching out to young institutions outside the capital.

They impacted Teaching and Learning by training Lebanese academic staff from eight universities at best EU centres for T&L, proposing a Lebanese Professional Standards Framework for T&L to be

¹ CBHE stands for Capacity Building in Higher Education

adopted by the Lebanese authorities, developing a Post-Graduate Certificate in T&L for professional development, establishing modern centres for excellence in T&L and by raising awareness at national level and among different stakeholders about the importance of this subject in the search for QA and accreditation processes. Under the teaching and learning reform agenda a student-centered pedagogy has become a pillar of quality culture.

Needless to say that all above mentioned achievements were made with the support of leading EU partner institutions having a longstanding experience in all the fields addressed by these projects. This would not have been possible without the EU-funded Erasmus+ programme.

The eleven CBHE projects selected between 2015 and 2017 and which included 16 Lebanese HEIs, have also involved 43 partners from 17 EU and Programme countries. In the framework of these eleven projects:

- 282 staff were trained and more benefited directly from the training and retraining,
- 423 students benefited directly from a diversity of activities,
- At least 45 internships implemented, and more than 45 MoU were signed,
- 8 laboratories were equipped or upgraded,
- At least 11 NGOs benefited from cooperation with projects' partners,
- 16 centres or units were established in 11 Lebanese institutions.
- At least 46 courses of undergraduate and Master level were developed including MOOCs and professional development modules,
- E-learning and open course tools were developed and used.

In general, CBHE projects enhanced the openness of the Lebanese higher education sector to regional cooperation and to partnerships between competing Lebanese HE institutions. They also aligned the sector with the international and European reform agenda and helped spreading the culture of speaking a common language of reform and addressing issues of universal dimension.

These achievements have reached out to, and benefited, a diversity of stakeholders from the academic circles and the national socio-economic sector. However, it is important to underline the fact that many strategic objectives remained unachieved, mainly those that rely on the dynamic of the national authorities. The political instability in the country and the resulting disruptions in the work of all state institutions including the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, had a negative impact on getting many strategically important and structural CBHE projects fully reaching their ultimate long-term goals.

The implementation of these projects faced many challenges related to the institutional ownership of their results, the wider multiplication effect and the failure of the Ministry to fulfil all of its commitments made in the structural projects. Other challenges were related to the troubled political context which witnessed a lot of strikes and interruption of the study periods, and which impacted the motivation of the Lebanese elite to commit themselves to reform and modernisation agenda.

Recommendations are made in Chapter 9.

Introduction

This national impact study aims to investigate the impact made by the Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects (CBHE) implemented in Lebanon following the rounds of selection 2015, 2016 and 2017. When synergy or complementarity is found with capacity building projects implemented under the Tempus programme or with ongoing Erasmus+ CBHE projects selected in 2018 and 2019, this will also be referred to.

The study intends to explore this impact made at different levels: individual, institutional, and systemic. It also aims at drawing lessons about the relevance of this Erasmus+ action and the challenges faced at a bridging phase between the 2015-2020 and 2021-2027 generations of Erasmus+.

The study has tried to be as neutral as possible aiming to give an objective overview of what has been achieved, identifying all the challenges met during the implementation of the CBHE projects and providing recommendations to policy makers for improving the future intervention of the European Union in the field of higher education.

This study can be useful to:

- Programme designers
- EACEA as programme implementer
- Project designers from Programme and Partner countries
- Networks of the National Erasmus+ Offices and the National Agencies

We look forward to drawing lessons on the following:

- Relevance of the CBHE projects to real needs
- Institutional commitment and ownership
- Involvement of the national authorities
- Multiplication effect of capacity building
- Sustainability of results
- Maintaining strategic objectives of projects

Methodology

CBHE projects covered

This impact study involves 11 CBHE projects which are:

- 3 on Curriculum Development: GOPELC, MENASAFE, HEBA,
- 1 on Quality Assurance: TLQAA+,
- 1 on Student Empowerment and Engagement: StEER-LEB,
- 1 on Employability: RESUME,
- 1 on Internationalisation: EuNIT,
- 1 on Recognition: MERIC-Net,
- 1 on Refugees and host communities: RESCUE,
- 2 on Teaching and Learning: E-TALEB, ENEPLAN.

Source of information

Survey: A questionnaire and explanatory note by NEO were sent to 33 stakeholders including project managers, the team of Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE²), and other people active in HE. Responses from 18 stakeholders were analysed and reported. The Note and the questionnaire are annexed to this study.

Interviews: carried out with 3 people very active in Tempus and Erasmus+ including the former Director of the AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie) and the former Director General of HE.

Monitoring reports: the impact sections of 20 monitoring report, the impact monitoring reports of 4 CBHE projects, the EACEA feedbacks to projects' progress reports and the NEO continuous follow-up of projects' implementation.

Cluster meetings: 3 cluster meetings, 1 for CBHE projects and 2 for International Relations Offices.

Methodology

Seven areas which were covered and significantly impacted by the eleven projects have been identified. Each area has been analysed separately through the projects that are more relevant to it, without overlooking the fact that each of these areas has been impacted more or less by many other CBHE projects, by projects funded under the Tempus programme, by activities carried out by the NEO and by the team of Higher Education Reform Experts, and by the overall environment created by the EU-funded programmes.

The seven areas analysed are: Curriculum Development, Quality Assurance, Students, Internationalisation, Employability, Inclusion, Teaching and Learning.

In each area, the study has reported on:

- Alignment with priorities,

² These teams were established in each of the 27 ex-Tempus countries in collaboration with the respective national authorities.

- Needs of stakeholders,
- Target groups,
- Trends,
- Achievements,
- Impact at different levels,
- Sustainability,
- Challenges and lessons learned.

Chapter 1: Impact on Curriculum Development

Three CBHE projects addressed the following areas of Curriculum Development:

- Gas and Oil industry,
- Road and Traffic Safety,
- Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy EE-RE.

Each of these areas is a high priority area of which the country has been in need in the last decade. The country is expecting a high potential of gas and oil reserves off its shores, it also suffers from a severe problem in its deteriorating road and traffic safety system. Energy saving and the rationalisation of the use of clean energy in buildings intersect with better management of transportation nationwide and are crucial for sustainable economic and social development.

Alignment with national and regional priorities

The 3 projects are well aligned with the national priorities as defined for Lebanon in the field of Engineering, Chemical engineering and processing, and Environmental protection technology. Two of them which are multi-country projects are aligned with the regional priorities in terms of introducing new degree programmes compatible with Bologna principles, new teaching and learning tools based on learning outcomes, practical placements, and a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary approach.

The project on EE-RE which addressed the national priority of environmental protection technology has complemented two previous projects funded under Tempus and by which an online joint professional diploma in Green Engineering was successfully launched and sustained.

Needs of stakeholders

- The consortia involved in these CBHE projects include the public Lebanese University in addition to 5 private institutions. These host around 55% of the Lebanese student population and have strong responsive Faculties of Engineering that need to respond to a growing demand by the society and the labour market in the field of gas and oil, road and traffic Safety, and energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- All these universities are highly competitive and each one seeks state-of-the-art programmes to attract students and to get international accreditation.
- Each project aimed to respond to a high demand for skilled graduates in three relevant fields by the national and regional labour market and industries.
- One project foresees a gas and oil extraction off the Lebanese shores and prepares for the industry that is going to flourish besides, another project addressed an alarming issue in terms of better road safety measures and continues to provide access to learners through academic programmes and to non-traditional learners through lifelong learning courses. A third project invested in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency which is a real need at all levels. This has an economic, environmental, and social dimension.

Target Groups and beneficiaries

- Institutions: private and public which acquired state-of-the-art programmes with new degrees and equipped laboratories.

- Teaching staff: trained and exposed to EU expertise.
- Students: who will have access to high quality programmes.
- Chemical industry, Municipalities (at least 2), NGOs active in road safety (at least 4), Governmental bodies (at least 3), NGOs active in Green technology and environmental protection (at least 5), civil Engineers practitioners.

Trends

- The 3 projects address highly up-to-date issues like energy efficiency and environmental protection. They all contain elements of e-learning and open course materials.
- As far as inclusion is concerned, two of the three projects include the public Lebanese University. Universities from Beirut, Mount Lebanon and Northern Lebanon are covered by the three projects.

Achievements

- 35 courses of Bachelor and Master level have been developed or upgraded.
- 85 academic and 7 administrative staff have been trained.
- More than 230 students have directly benefited from the new programmes developed.
- Around 30 internships have been conducted during the implementation of the projects.
- Lab equipment have been purchased and installed in addition to two labs established.
- Many EU-LB cooperation actions have been established to foment research and many MoU have been signed with NGOs.
- Two research centres in the field of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy have been established.
- E-learning modules have been developed and open course mode has been introduced in one project.
- The projects contributed to the achievement of the EU 2050 Goals, to offer high quality education compatible with EU standards that meets the market needs of the emerging knowledge-based society and by strengthening Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy teaching.

Impact at individual level

- Staff have been trained and acquired knowledge through study visits to the best EU universities and centres. On-site training and exposure to EU expertise have helped Lebanese academics from many public and private universities to upgrade their skills and learn new teaching methodologies.
- Students benefited from state-of-the-art programmes and study visits that gave them the chance to learn European know-how in a new learning environment with a direct contact with a European culture and its way of work. This has certainly contributed to widen their education and changed their attitude in a unique opportunity.
- Students benefited from internships with the relevant industry and in many civic engagement activities.

Impact at institutional level

- Lebanese universities have developed, with the help of European leading institutions, modules and courses based on the Bologna requirements in terms of credit and learning outcomes. Some of these modules have led to the creation of new Master degrees, some to professional diplomas and others have reinforced existing programmes at Bachelor level.
- State-of-the-art teaching materials and methodologies have been developed through study visits to Programme countries and training seminars conducted by European partners in the framework of the projects.
- The innovative aspect of each of the projects implemented intended to enhance the attractiveness of the concerned institutions. The novelty with respect to the country and to the institutions is reflected by the content of the courses developed which is inspired by European trends of eco-friendly approach and civic engagement, and by the new teaching methodologies introduced (multimedia, videos, case studies from European countries) with a focus on the practical and experimental part of the learning process.
- The Lebanese universities have benefited from a multiplier effect created through the training of trainers.
- Universities have been able to open-up to industries and provide them with skilled graduates. Opportunities of internships for their students have become more available.
- The projects have strengthened the relationship of the institutions with many stakeholders active in the respective fields outside the academic circles.
- Lebanese universities have further reinforced their internationalisation strategies by being in direct contact with eleven European institutions and by sustaining many relationships with some of them through research and exchange activities.
- Laboratories have been either created or modernised in collaboration with European partner institutions. These labs have started to be used by students at Master level.

Impact at national level

- The 3 implemented projects have a strong socio-economic dimension given the subject addressed by each of them. They paved the way for a good connection and networking with the relevant industries, NGOs and Associations active in their fields.
- Each project throws skilled graduates educated with European standards into a market which needs competences in an area of a top priority for any economic and social development.
- Awareness at national level about the importance of the subjects has been raised through many activities like summer schools, national roundtables, and symposia to which stakeholders from Ministries, Municipalities, and other governmental and non-governmental organisations were invited along with representatives from European partners.

Sustainability and long-term impact

- Impact monitoring has shown that the Master level courses and modules are still being offered in Master degrees created by two of the three projects and in courses of existing Master degrees for one project.
- The Lebanese institutions involved in the projects are able to provide an institutional commitment to the newly established modules and study programmes. This commitment is

- supported by a good number of trained staff, well designed teaching materials and accompanying laboratories.
- Partner universities have co-financed the equipment of laboratories to meet the needs of industry and research.
 - Collaboration between Lebanese and EU partners have continued after the end of the projects. Some of these collaborations have been institutionalised and led to research activities and joint publications. A project has generated new cooperation projects between Lebanese and EU partners in the framework of E+ CBHE and H2020 programmes. The public Lebanese University has been involved in a H2020 project with the Swedish institution KTH and in a joint supervision of PhD students. Another Lebanese university signed a cooperation agreement in March 2017 with a Romanian institution leading to an ICM project.
 - Many spin-off effects have been noted like exchange of students and the submission of new CBHE proposals.
 - One of the projects has paved the way for an extended network for internship opportunities.

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

- One of the 3 projects has been challenged by the issue of opening the promised Master degree at one institution and the Postgraduate Diploma at another. Although all academic, legal and administrative preparatory measures were taken to launch the Master degree and the Postgraduate Diploma in the field of Road and Traffic Safety, these have not been opened yet for lack of students registered in either of these programmes. Both are still included in the catalogues of the two concerned institutions. The courses developed in Road and Traffic Safety are being delivered as part of other Engineering programmes and as university requirement courses taken by students from many disciplines. This failure of opening the Degree and the Diploma reflects a weakness in the original conception and the design of the project. A more concrete and thorough feasibility study has to be probably required when a CBHE proposal addresses a curriculum development.
- In Curriculum Development projects involving many partner countries, the regional networks promised in the proposals seemed to be unrealistic as almost all intended networks have not been established. In the cases where a network was created, it is still not operational as it should be. This can be generalised to all outputs of regional dimension as will be described in the chapter about general recommendations at the end of this document.
- As these CBHE projects deal with highly special disciplines, the multiplication effect when achieved remain limited to the staff who have knowledge in the subject. A better outreach was observed when a multidisciplinary and/or an interdisciplinarity exist.
- A general recommendation should be made about the visibility of the project results within each institution even when the project concerns mainly a particular Faculty or Department.

Chapter 2: Impact on Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance is the important subject that has been most impacted by the EU programme. Even though only one CBHE project has directly addressed this subject, this project has built on more than six Tempus projects implemented in the field of QA since 2006. The CBHE project TLQAA+ implemented between 2016 and 2019 aimed at setting standards for and training experts on programme evaluation. TLQAA+ which included a large number of Lebanese beneficiary institutions has complemented the Tempus project TLQAA (towards a Lebanese QA Agency) selected in 2011.

The main areas covered by the CBHE project TLQAA+ are:

- Setting core standards for and piloting programme evaluation in the field of Engineering, Health and Life sciences, Human and Social sciences,
- Conducting training of national experts on programme evaluation,
- Revising an existing draft of a Lebanese Qualifications Framework.

This project, together with all Tempus projects that had been implemented, has reinforced the QA systems built in many Lebanese HEIs, confirmed the awareness made on this strategic issue and continued to put pressure in favour of the lagging issue of the establishment of a Lebanese QA Agency that has been dragging on since 2010.

Alignment with national priorities

Lebanon has not defined QA as a national priority for the CBHE projects 2015-2020. This is because many projects had been funded under Tempus in this field which was sufficiently developed at national level and there was no need for further funding in this domain. The majority of the Lebanese HEIs have established their internal QA systems and many others have sought evaluation and accreditation by competent international agencies. The country has had enough expertise to proceed further on its own while the external intervention should be more specific and specialised. The project TLQAA+ addressed a different national priority defined by Lebanon about relating the HE sector with its society at large. The project addressed the issue of recognition of qualifications and the definition and the implementation of reform policies.

Needs of stakeholders

- This national structural project involved 12 universities that host more than 95% of the Lebanese student population in HE, the Ministry and the Association of Lebanese Industrials.
- Some of these partner universities have already sound internal QA systems and need to go further towards programme evaluation as a consolidation of their international accreditation processes. Others are still young in developing their internal QA system and benefit from the high-level resources provided by the project to establish or develop such systems.
- The presence of the Ministry was essential to push further for the ratification of the law to create a Lebanese Agency of QA. Recognition of Qualifications is another issue of interest for the Ministry.
- The Association of Lebanese Industrials needed to learn further about the procedures that are going to be in place for the evaluation of the programmes and their relevance to the labour market.
- The project involved international partners highly active and competent in the field of QA like the Spanish agency ANECA, the French international Centre CIEP, the French Agency HCERES,

and the European Association ENQA for QA in HE. It also involved universities from Spain, France, Belgium, and Germany with a good experience in QA, Recognition and Qualifications Framework.

- The kind of training and knowledge requested by the project needed the expertise of these prestigious international bodies. Such knowledge cannot be provided by local expertise.

Target Groups and beneficiaries

- Institutions: private and public at different level of advancement in the field of QA.
- Teaching staff trained and exposed to EU expertise including Deans, VPs and those in charge of institutional research.
- The Ministry which has been following the law for the establishment of the Lebanese QA Agency.
- The socio-economic sector represented by the Association of the Lebanese Industrials.

Trends

- The novelty aspect of the project is the articulation between the issues of QA, Recognition and Qualifications Framework.
- QA of non-traditional teaching and learning including the online learning delivery has been addressed.
- As far as inclusion is concerned, the high number of Lebanese institutions involved in the project makes a good representation of the different regions in the country. It also involves prestigious universities as well as young institutions which are trying hard to get involved in the reform processes.

Achievements

- 35 academic staff and 3 non-HE individuals were trained.
- More than 45 academics benefited directly from the training.
- Experts have been added to an already built national pool of experts in QA.
- Standards and procedures for programme evaluation in three different areas were defined.
- Self-study reports were produced by universities selected for pilot evaluation.

Impact at individual level

- Through this project and together with its Tempus predecessors, a pool of at least 80 national experts in the field of QA has been formed. These have been trained by prestigious European agencies on institutional and programme evaluation.
- All university staff whether professors, administrators or decision makers have become more aware of the QA as a strategic issue for improvement and advancement. They also have access to a rich documentation and resources on the subject.
- By implementing internal QA mechanisms at many Lebanese universities which are also seeking accreditation from international agencies, both staff and students have benefited from the reform that has been introduced and the improvement that has been made in their status and the on-campus services provided.

Impact at institutional level

- Internal QA systems have been in place in several Lebanese higher education institutions. These systems are fully operational with respect to pre-defined standards and criteria.
- Lebanese universities have been going further in this direction by seeking accreditation at institutional and programme levels from international agencies mainly European.
- Some universities have appointed a VP or highly positioned people in charge of QA implementation and included the concept in their institutional visions, missions and strategies.
- Universities have improved their structures, programmes and services to meet the QA standards and requirements.

Impact at system level

- A culture of QA has become well rooted in the Lebanese HE sector.
- The country has now more than one draft of QA standards which need to be adopted or adapted by the universities.
- The Tempus project TLQAA and its CBHE successor project TLQAA+ have generated a movement and a group of HE experts active in the field of QA. This network is ready to intervene as a pool of experts or as a lobbying group in any attempt to address the QA system at national level.
- The EU-funded projects under Tempus and Erasmus+, together with the campaigns of the Higher Education Reform Experts have contributed to the efforts of establishing a Lebanese QA Agency by preparing the necessary standards and the human resources needed once the Agency is created.

Policy Development and national reform

- The main policy development registered in the field of QA is the attempt by the Ministry to create an agency for QA in higher education. Supported by a series of EU-funded projects and events organised by the Erasmus+ team of experts, the Ministry has formed a special committee in 2010 to propose a draft law for the creation of a Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency (LQAA).
- The draft law for the creation of the LQAA has been revised and submitted many times to the Lebanese Parliament for ratification.
- The law for the creation of a LQAA is still unratified.

Sustainability and long-term impact

- All QA systems established at Lebanese institutions are operational and well-supported institutionally. The long-term impact can only be guaranteed when an independent national body of QA is created.

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

- QA is a process which needs to be developed and monitored continuously.
- Training should always be conducted to remain up-to-date and linked to the latest development in the field.
- Independence and autonomy are crucial and primordial to the integrity and the success of any national body in charge of QA.

- Universities should play a stronger role in launching processes, defining the governance of the national QA systems.
- The LQAA has been and will remain for quite a long time challenged by the political and unstable context of Lebanon.

Chapter 3: Impact on Students

Students have been at the centre of each reform and on the agenda of the Lebanese projects funded by Tempus, Erasmus+ and the actions of the team of Higher Education Reform Experts. Students are targeted by almost all CBHE projects and are at the centre of every curriculum development project. Two types of interventions have been addressed by the EU-funded projects and activities: 1) the improvement of on-campus student services and wellbeing and 2) the empowerment and the participative role of the students in their institutions. While two Tempus projects addressed the first issue between 2013 and 2015, only one CBHE project has addressed the second issue. This project, called StEER-LEB selected in 2017 is still ongoing and expected to close soon.

While student services have been developed and improved because of the EU-funded projects, accreditation and QA requirements have played an important role in this regard. The issue of student participation and engagement in the governing structure of the Lebanese institutions is a highly sensitive issue given the political, social and divisive context of the country. It is worth mentioning that there is no National Student Union for higher education in Lebanon and while many universities maintain their democratic process of electing student representation bodies, many others including the public Lebanese University have suspended this process in the aim of avoiding violent conflicts between the different parties. The CBHE project StEER-LEB that addressed this sensitive and difficult issue aimed at establishing institutional and national structures for student Empowerment, Engagement and Representation in Lebanon.

Alignment with national priorities

Although the national priorities included students as part of the development of university services, the CBHE project has gone further in empowering the role of the students as important players in the governing structure of each university. They are the most relevant stakeholders within each institution that can look after their interests and wellbeing.

Needs of stakeholders

- All projects that addressed student issues are highly relevant to the sector's needs, particularly that most of the Lebanese higher education institutions are seeking accreditation by international agencies where student empowerment and representation is one of the key standards for accreditation and Quality Assurance.
- This national project StEER-LEB includes three private universities that represent 11.5% of the student population in higher education. The three are maintaining their annual election of their student representation bodies. The presence of these bodies in the governing structure of each university needs to be developed according to international standards and norms.
- The project intends to create national structures for student bodies, something missing in the country. For this reason, the project has included the Ministry in its partnership even though it is not a structural project.
- Students need to be trained on many democratic processes for their presence in the governing bodies of the universities.
- University staff need to be trained on how to see the students in a different eye and to understand their role as partners in the university's governing structure.
- The whole country needs a model for student representation and participation.

- The need to train both students and university management (staff and professors) on all the principles, techniques and structures related to these issues is urgent and cannot be done without the expertise of the European universities. The CBHE projects, particularly StEER-LEB, included institutions from EU with long experience in student participative role like the University of Bologna in Italy.

Target Groups and beneficiaries

- Institutions: 3 private institutions were involved in the project StEER-LEB, many others were targeted by the training, the project activities and by the other projects' activities implemented since 2013.
- Decision makers.
- Academic and administrative staff.
- Students.

Trends

- Networking activities between Lebanese and European students are being conducted using many IT tools and toolkits.
- Student civic engagement is among many new skills reinforced by the complementarity of many projects.
- A MOOC has been developed as a prerequisite for anyone who would like to develop a StEER-LEB-like student structure.

Achievements, impact at different levels and sustainability

- A diversity of student services have been either established, upgraded or modernised in at least 3 HEIs including the public Lebanese University.
- Students have benefited from new high quality Master programmes implemented at 6 institutions including the public Lebanese University.
- At least 50 students, 29 academic staff and 5 administrative staff have directly been trained in the framework of a still ongoing CBHE project about student representation and empowerment.
- Students from 3 Lebanese HEIs were given a unique opportunity to participate in 3 international shadowing visits and capacity building activities in which good practices were collected. These students have been trained to be future actors in the representation and engagement processes of their universities.
- Institutional and national student structures are being established in three Lebanese HEIs to ensure the democratic representation of the students in the decision making of these universities.
- A student empowerment culture is more and more spreading in university campuses.
- Exposure to EU experiences in the fields of student services and empowerment allowed Lebanese stakeholders to see closely how structures dealing with student representation mechanisms operate.
- Lebanese institutions were provided with a comparative exercise by which every partner institution can monitor its position (weaknesses and strengths) vis-à-vis student engagement.

- The national student structure promised by the project would give the student movement in the country a new dynamic missed for a long time.
- At society level, civic engagement and all types of student engagement will provide the society with new expertise offered by highly motivated youth.

Policy Development and national reform

- In the new law for the organisation of private higher education in Lebanon issued in 2014, there is a special emphasis on guaranteeing the interests of students at each institution. All QA systems in place at each HEI includes student interests as one of their standards.
- The absence of a national organisation of the student movement in higher education has been challenging the higher education community since a long time.

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

- The CBHE StEER-LEB is a challenging project addressing a sensitive issue given the different complexities of the Lebanese context.
- If structures at institutional levels are possible to be created and established, the creation of a national body widely recognised remains a real challenge.

Chapter 4: Impact on Employability

Employability is one of the ultimate objectives of every HEI; it is part of the third social dimension that the modern university has added to its 2 traditional goals of creating and transmitting knowledge. It is probably the subject that has been addressed by the maximum number of capacity building projects that have been implemented in Lebanon since Tempus. At least 7 Tempus projects directly addressed University-Enterprise (U-E) cooperation issues and employability. The issue was also addressed at many occasions through activities organised by the NEO and its team of Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) in collaboration with other bodies active in higher education.

All CBHE curriculum development projects have supported employability of the universities' graduates by equipping them with highly relevant skills needed by the labour market and by providing all students with internships as first contact with the world of work. Other CBHE projects addressed employability by creating career services and by building structured communication with the respective industries and enterprises. At least 9 CBHE projects selected between 2018 and 2020 and still under implementation have addressed the issue of employability in many different ways. However, there is only one project that dealt with this issue among those selected between 2015 and 2017, that is the project RESUME about 'Mediterranean Network for Employability'. This chapter will describe the impact made by the CBHE EU-funded projects on employability with a particular focus on the project RESUME.

Alignment with national and regional priorities

The project RESUME together with all Tempus and other CBHE projects responded directly to a national priority about U-E cooperation towards employability and entrepreneurship which are also defined as regional priority.

Needs of stakeholders

- As unemployment is the most painful nightmare of every economy, employability of graduates has become the main concern of every higher education institution. It is a noble goal of any university to help its graduates find a first job.
- Universities need to develop efficient career services and build structured cooperation with the socio-economic sector.
- The Lebanese HE sector is mainly private and competition between the Lebanese institutions to attract students makes employability one of the leading vectors of their strategies.
- The Lebanese higher education sector strongly needs EU experience and practices in the field of employability.
- The project RESUME strengthened the already existing career services of the Lebanese partner institutions by integrating them into a regional network of HEIs operating through conferences and pilot projects.

Target Groups and beneficiaries

- Institutions: which reinforced their structures for career services.
- Staff: who were trained on at least 7 themes related to employability and E-U cooperation.
- Students: who wish to increase their employment opportunities in the labour market.

Trends

The implemented projects included many relevant curricula, IT tools and MOOCs.

Achievements

Only within the project RESUME:

- At least 25 academic and administrative staff were trained.
- 300 best practices were identified by the different universities involved in the project and published through the project.
- Two professional MOOCs were developed.
- Two career centres were established or upgraded.
- At least 33 MoU for internships were signed with industries and enterprises.
- A Mediterranean Network for Employability was created.

All this could not have been achieved without the help of EU universities and institutions having good experience in the field of University-Enterprise cooperation, employability and networking like AlmaLaurea, the Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and UNIMED.

Impact at all levels

At individual level, at least 25 persons from 2 universities and the Ministry have their capacities reinforced through the research of good practices and the seven thematic conferences that they attended. More people were trained either when some of these thematic conferences were organised in Beirut or when retrained by their colleagues in other workshops.

At institutional level, universities have explored tens of good practices in many fields related to entrepreneurship and employability and each was asked to implement at least one of these pilot good practices of its choice. This required a mobilisation of actors from both the academic and economic sectors. Capacities of the partner institutions were built through seven thematic conferences on issues relevant to University-Enterprise cooperation and employability. Each university had a well-established and operational career centre. The centre MINE established at the public Lebanese University has been well-sustained, continues to be active and plays an important role in training, promoting and providing assistance. A 2-module programme on entrepreneurship was developed and is delivered at 2 Lebanese universities.

The two universities of project RESUME have established more than 33 cooperation agreements with local companies including dozens of internship agreements for their students.

At systemic level, tens of good practices were accessible to the Lebanese higher education sector. The Ministry also benefited from this research for good practices by sensitising its collaborators about entrepreneurship and employability.

The two universities involved in the project RESUME launched a joint national annual forum on employability and entrepreneurship.

At society level, the economic situation in which the country has been plunged since years was so severe that any impact made by the university's effort to face unemployment becomes minimal. Apart from some statistics published by each higher education institution that tracks its graduates after their graduation, there is no reliable indicators that can show how much the Lebanese universities are progressing in facing the challenging employability issue.

High unemployment is one of the most painful problems in Lebanese society forcing an entire generation to emigrate in search of work. The project has helped advance the issue of employability in the Lebanese higher education sector in synergy with other initiatives.

The economic sector can now benefit from the services of the centre established in each partner university.

Policy Development and national reform

The Ministry also started to put in place long-term plans for the multiplication and the development of the project results towards the establishment of a national bureau for entrepreneurship, the creation of a special taskforce, the definition of the legal status of the entrepreneur, the launch of a national platform and a MOOC on the management of enterprises.

Sustainability and long-term impact

The Ministry played an important role in disseminating the results of the project RESUME to other stakeholders.

The centre established at the public Lebanese University has been developed to an active centre called MINE carrying out a diversity of activities and providing training and advice. This centre is strongly supported by the University and institutionally well established.

Again, as every output of regional dimension, its sustainability is weak and challenged by the context of the region. The RESUME network is now hosted by UNIMED and should be institutionalised by the partner countries involved in the project. The network includes now more than 20 institutions from 11 countries.

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

As all CBHE projects, those which address the employability issue are challenged by many difficult obstacles. The main difficulties come from the following:

Projects can make changes at university levels by modernising programmes and aligning them in a better way with the society's needs. They can also strengthen the universities' capacities in establishing sustainable relationships with the industry. They can also improve the skills of the universities' graduates in response to the labour market needs. However, projects can only provide limited contribution and support to an economic recovery plan supposed to be set out by the national authorities. Facing unemployment needs a federation of efforts and long-term strategies.

Lebanon has a special context and is confronted by longstanding political deadlocks and crises which paralysed all plans of reform and recovery.

Regarding the HE sector, employability, entrepreneurship and U-E cooperation should all be part of a national strategy defined for HE and to which all institutions ought to be committed.

Chapter 5: Impact on Internationalisation

Every Erasmus+ CBHE project has an international dimension, whether it is about curriculum development, modernisation of governance or linking university with the socio-economic sector. Thus, internationalisation was served to certain degrees by all the CBHE projects implemented in Lebanon. It was also developed through many Tempus capacity building projects by which Lebanese institutions defined their internationalisation strategies and built their International Relations Offices. However, three Erasmus+ CBHE projects addressed this issue directly, one project selected in 2019 and still on-going dealing with a new concept of Internationalisation at Home and two others MERIC-Net and EuNIT selected in 2016 and closed last year which addressed the recognition of international qualifications and the issue of building capacities and structures for the design and management of EU and international projects. The impact on internationalisation of the CBHE projects selected between 2015 and 2017 will focus on that made by these two projects and particularly by EuNIT without overlooking the impact made indirectly by all other CBHE projects.

Alignment with national and regional priorities

Internationalisation is a regional priority well addressed by the two regional CBHE projects MERIC-Net and EuNIT. MERIC-Net addressed the recognition of qualifications as the national priority for Lebanon, while EuNIT addressed the university services such as support for student mobility and the development of research and innovation capacities. EuNIT provided good training on how to design proposals for Horizon 2020.

Needs of stakeholders

- MERIC-Net responds to the need of the Lebanese higher education sector to address the issue of recognition in line with the international standards as many Lebanese students travel to study abroad and come back with qualifications from all over the world. Lebanon was also a destination of many international students. The hosting of a high number of refugee students from Syria and Iraq put a pressure on the system in terms of recognition and equivalence of qualifications.
- EuNIT responded to the need of many Lebanese universities to improve their participation in highly competitive international and EU-funded programmes in terms of quality and design of proposals and management of selected projects.

Target Groups and beneficiaries

- Institutions: that strengthened their internationalisation strategies by building capacities in the field of recognising international qualifications and diplomas and in the field of designing and managing international projects and by acquiring units for training and retraining other stakeholders on project design and management.
- Academic and administrative staff: who were trained on how to improve the quality of their proposals in response to EU and international calls. Their responsiveness to CBHE projects, ICM proposals, Horizon 2020 and other EU actions considerably improved.
- Lebanese students: who conduct international mobilities.
- International students including the refugee students.

Trends

The implemented projects developed MOOCs for training and retraining. They also established EU units for project design and management which are unique of their kind in the Lebanese universities.

Achievements

- Online courses and MOOCs developed on many issues related to international and EU project design and management.
- Units for EU project design and management in three Lebanese universities, integrated in adapted ways into the internationalisation structures of these universities.
- A basis for a regional network linking all these EU project structures built in Lebanon, Jordan and Libya.
- Nine academic and three administrative staff were trained on international project design and management, then around 100 academics, 15 administrative staff and 100 students benefited directly from knowledge transferred in the frame of the project EuNIT.
- A bilingual Guidebook has been developed and put in the service of any HE institution that wishes to create an EuNIT-like unit.
- Improvement in the participation and the management of ICM projects and Horizon2020 has been noted as a spin-off of the project EuNIT.
- All these achievements would not have been made without the support of EU partners like UNIMED from Italy and Téthys from France which have the knowledge and the experience in all internationalisation activities.

Impact at all levels

- At individual level, staff from at least three Lebanese universities have gained knowledge from their EU partners on managing international projects. Through retraining activities within each institution, this knowledge was in turn transferred to other beneficiaries who are interested in submitting proposals as a response to EU or international calls. The impact at individual level has reached top management and decision makers at Lebanese institutions.
- At institutional level, three Lebanese universities have established EU units for the design and management of international projects. For at least one institution this was a turning point in its efforts to improve its participation in Erasmus+ and other EU international actions. Based on the experience gained through the project EuNIT, universities have become more able to handle other Erasmus+ CBHE and ICM projects. At least in two institutions, the IRO was restructured based on the experience gained through the EuNIT project. The Lebanese universities have promoted their visibility internationally and forged more international cooperation. Communities in partner universities will learn more about the opportunities offered by the EU programmes with better capabilities of designing good projects.
- At systemic level, the project closed its activities just before the surge of Covid-19 pandemic, which slowed down the exploitation of the project results beyond its partnership. The project has developed many materials like the Guidebook for building specialised units for designing and managing international projects, the MOOCs for training and retraining other stakeholders and the EuNIT regional network.

Policy Development and national reform

The projects implemented in the field of internationalisation have generated more results at institutional and at sector level but not at the level of policy development and national reform. The respect by the Ministry of international standards in the recognition of qualifications facilitates international mobility and exchange. The Ministry is also open to any joint or dual degree that universities can establish with international partners.

Sustainability and long-term impact

The Lebanese HE sector is international by nature. The CBHE projects have further enhanced the internationalisation strategies of many Lebanese universities. The projects have designed many sustainability elements like the structures created and the knowledge acquired. The structures created by the project EuNIT are well integrated into the universities' architectures and institutionally supported, while other sustainability elements need further follow-up particularly those related to national and regional initiatives.

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

The extension of the projects' results and outputs to other stakeholders from outside the partnerships is challenged by circumstances specific to Lebanon. Relying only on the Ministry of Higher Education for mainstreaming the projects' results and further extend them to other institutions is risky.

Despite the enthusiasm that might be shown at some stage by the Directorate General of HE, the exploitation of the projects' results at national level needs more support at higher level, particularly when reform requires legislative measures.

Chapter 6: Impact on Inclusion and Refugees

CBHE projects implemented in Lebanon have been inclusive. Women empowerment is being covered by a running CBHE project FREE about 'Female Academic Role Model Empowerment, Equality and Sustainability at Universities in Mediterranean Region: towards 2030 Agenda'. Management of NGOs is being covered by a running CBHE project MORALE about 'sustainable NGOs management and operation with special focus on refugees'. A better geographical coverage was also ensured.

Inclusion was more addressed through the CBHE projects MERIC-Net and RESCUE which were both implemented between 2016 and 2019. The first project strengthened competencies and skills on recognition of foreign qualifications, the second helped Lebanese universities to respond to the refugee students' needs in terms of academic career and training. RESCUE built in 3 universities ad-hoc services allowing refugee and vulnerable students to access educational resources.

Alignment with national priorities

The two projects RESCUE and MERIC-Net aimed at modernising the governance and management of higher education institutions. They enhance the students' services, the recognition of qualifications based on Bologna principles and the internationalisation of the HEIs. Although the issue of the refugees was not clearly mentioned in the list of the national priorities, however the Syrian crisis and its repercussions on the neighbouring countries including Lebanon has made this issue of a high priority for Lebanon and many other countries like Jordan and Iraq which had universities involved in the RESCUE project. The influx of the Syrian refugees into Lebanon had put a considerable pressure on the country and on its higher education sector and resulted in an urgent need to face the consequences of this crisis on the refugees themselves and on the host communities in Lebanon. A project like RESCUE was highly relevant and timely.

Needs of stakeholders

- Lebanese universities needed capacity building and appropriate structures to cope with refugee students studying in a different context and under very difficult circumstances.
- Recognition of qualifications of students who fled their countries without documents was a particularly challenging problem and could not be faced without the support of experienced EU institutions in terms of structures, tools and procedures.
- Universities needed to be trained on counselling and assisting students facing difficulties and living in crisis.
- The Ministry, which is the main recognising body in the country, needs to have its capacities and competences in the field of recognition reinforced and upgraded.

Target Groups and beneficiaries

- Institutions: which acquired RESCUE R-SOS units to provide help and assistance to refugee students and students in difficulties.
- Academic and administrative staff who were trained on recognition issues and on how to support the integration of refugee students.
- Students: refugees and from host communities as main beneficiaries from the projects' results.

Trends

- A Web-Based Info system which contains online materials to be delivered in distance learning mode was developed.
- MOOCs were developed.

Achievements

- 18 academic and 13 administrative staff trained on recognition of foreign higher education credentials for refugees, internally displaced persons and persons in refugee-like situations.
- 3-part MOOC developed on recognition of qualifications of refugee students.
- 5 academic and 10 administrative staff trained on how to deliver effective ad-hoc services to refugee students and students in difficulties.
- R-SOS (Refugee Student Operational Support) units have been established at three Lebanese higher education institutions including the public Lebanese University.

All these could not be done without the know-how provided by experienced EU institutions like NUFFIC from the Netherlands and UNIMED from Italy.

Impact at individual level

- Capacities of a good number of academic and administrative staff including Ministry personnel have been built in the fields of recognition of refugees' qualifications and internationalisation. Others were also trained on how to provide effective assistance to refugee students, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and students in difficult situations.
- Full-time staff of future R-SOS units have been trained and up-skilled in the fields of IT, e-learning, social and psychological assistance, conflict management, trauma, and resilience intervention.

Impact at institutional level

- Lebanese universities have become more aware of the importance of assisting and supporting refugee students.
- Three institutions have already established special structures properly staffed and well equipped to respond to their needs in the field of refugee students and students in difficulties. Through these specialised units the partner universities would enhance their participative engagement, their responsibility, and their self-esteem in addressing humanitarian and academic issues.
- Lebanese institutions have increased their experience on how to deal with all problems faced by and related to international students and not only refugees or IDPs.

Impact at system level

- Given the highly sensitive and complicated context of Lebanon, the issue of the Syrian refugees is considered by many as a real threat to the social, political and demographic fabric of the country. The RESCUE project contributes, together with other EU-funded projects, very modestly in facing this problem through a specific sector, that is, the higher education.
- The Ministry services dealing with recognition issues have gained experience on how to deal with recognition of local and foreign diplomas based on international best practices.

Policy Development and national reform

Given the special Lebanese context and its political complications, the projects MERIC-Net and RESCUE remain short of producing policy development and national reform.

Sustainability and long-term impact

Like many regional networks, the network of RESCUE experts and R-SOS units has not been active or made operational yet.

The R-SOS units are supposed to be self-viable and relevant to the needs of the institution in order to survive all kinds of changes. Extending the mission of these R-SOS units to include students in difficulties or in disadvantaged situations and not necessarily restricted to refugees is better for the future of their continuity and sustainability.

The full-time staff recruited for each unit established at the three Lebanese universities, the special training on psychological intervention conducted for their staff are all good elements of sustainability for these R-SOS units.

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

At regional level, a network of NARIC-like centres harmonising the different approaches of recognition and facilitating mobility is a challenge to all stakeholders. A MERIC network at regional level is still far from being confirmed.

At national level, the extent by which the Ministry can integrate what has been gained from the project MERIC-Net into its recognition procedures depends on how much this Ministry is committed to reform and modernisation. Based on previous experience and on the slow legislation process in the country and until proved otherwise, there is a doubt that this can be materialised.

Each R-SOS unit should be responding to a real need felt and identified by the institution itself and to be an integral part of the university's institutional structure and organigramme.

The extension of the RESCUE project objectives to address higher education students coming from refugee communities, from IDP groups or from any category of disadvantaged students was a good step towards more sustainable capacity building in each of the partner institutions. This presented a flexibility to adapt to a local context in which the project is operating.

This EU response to the issue of the refugee students is a model of intervention that can be adopted by other Lebanese HEIs and that should inspire the Lebanese decision makers in their attempt to cope with the spill-over of the Syrian crisis.

Chapter 7: Impact on Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning (T&L) is one of the main issues that has been mostly impacted by the EU-funded projects in general and particularly by the projects selected between 2015 and 2017. All the CBHE curriculum development projects trained Lebanese beneficiaries on new methodologies in T&L with a special focus on Bologna principles. However, in this chapter, the impact of a national structural CBHE project called E-TALEB will be investigated.

Through the CBHE project E-TALEB, eight Lebanese universities supported by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon and with the help of five EU institutions from Germany, UK and France including the British SEDA Association and the German EVALAG Agency managed to 'develop Faculty members professional teaching skills and students' learning experience'.

The project came to complement many other actions initiated by other stakeholders active in higher education towards the development of T&L. The team HERE has led many of these actions that promoted the competence-based T&L and learning outcomes approach.

The American University of Beirut, a prestigious Lebanese institution, hosts an annual International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education to which experts from all over the world and from the MENA countries are invited.

Alignment with national priorities

The EU-funded projects were fully aligned with the national priorities as defined for Erasmus+ and responded to the need of many Lebanese HEIs seeking international recognition and accreditation. The country has defined T&L as a priority area in the field of governance, strategic planning and management. It is also part of its strategy for developing research and innovation capacities.

The projects respond to the national strategy for HE which calls for the enhancement of the quality of the Lebanese higher education, increase its attractiveness to students from Lebanon and from the surrounding countries. The projects help to maintain a longstanding reputation of the sector and push it further.

The quality of the Lebanese higher education sector would be reconfirmed through a continuous improvement and development. A nationally recognised Professional Standards Framework was intended to form the basis for continuous improvement in teaching and learning for all Lebanese universities.

Needs of stakeholders

- Teaching and Learning is one of the standards of any Quality Assurance or Accreditation system implemented and sought by almost all Lebanese HE institutions.
- The professional development of the Faculty members in the field of teaching skills and the improvement of students' learning experience are both highly relevant to the modernisation agenda of the Lebanese HE sector. This sector is increasingly engaged in Accreditation and Quality Assurance processes.
- The project E-TALEB included many young universities besides old ones making its results more inclusive in terms of institutions' age and geographical coverage.
- The project has also included experienced EU institutions like the British association SEDA which built the framework of standards for professional development in UK.

Target Groups and beneficiaries

- Education strategists,
- Ministry: which needs a national standard framework for professional development,
- Higher education programme designers,
- Academic and administrative staff,
- Students: need to be taught according to the best standards.

Trends

- Many Lebanese institutions have linked the Teaching and Learning process to their Quality Assurance systems. This goes well with the international trend as requested by almost all international QA agencies.
- The centres for T&L built at the Lebanese HEIs contain very modern tools and use high tech materials.

Achievements

- 62 LB-EU mobilities have been carried out for training at UK, France and Germany on the Professional Standards Framework, on the establishment of the centres for excellence in T&L and for the programme of the Postgraduate Certificate in T&L.
- A Lebanese Professional Standards Framework LBPSF was developed and approved by the National Authorities.
- 30 staff members were trained at best EU centres for T&L.
- Awareness about T&L and the LBPSF among university leaders, academic personnel officers, faculty members, students, and other stakeholders.
- A Post-Graduate Certificate in T&L with 5 modules for professional development was developed and accredited by the Ministry.
- 8 centres for excellence in T&L were created in 8 Lebanese higher education institutions including young institutions and others in geographically remote regions.
- A Registry for Lebanese Centres for T&L was launched at <http://www.etaleb.org/registry-of-etaleb-centers-for-t-l-excellence>.

Impact at all levels

At individual level, academic staff from at least eight Lebanese HEIs have gained knowledge and skills in the field of T&L and the management of related structures. They also participated in the design of the modules for a Postgraduate Certificate in T&L and became able to deliver these modules. The knowledge acquired by these people has allowed them to be promoters of T&L in their institutions and to be multipliers among their colleagues.

At institutional level, at least eight universities have become aware of the importance of T&L in their educational system. The concept has been understood by the top hierarchies as driver for excellence in their institutions. Developing the teaching capacities of their staff is crucial for the reputation of these universities and definitely has a positive effect on the learning processes of their students. In addition, each university has acquired a state-of-the-art centre of excellence in

T&L properly linked to its QA system already in place. This linkage goes well with the international trend as stipulated by almost all international QA and accreditation agencies.

At systemic level, almost all Lebanese HEIs were gathered through the CBHE project E-TALEB to discuss the Lebanese Professional Standards Framework LBPSF for T&L. This was feasible due to the presence of the Ministry in this structural project. The approval of the LBPSF and its Guidance by the Council of HE, which is the country's highest authority in HE has increased the chance to extend the project results to a national dimension. The linkage with the QA system already confirmed in the Lebanese HE sector and the collaboration with other bodies operating at national level is giving the concept of T&L a wider spread.

Policy Development and national reform

The project E-TALEB, together with other CBHE projects, has provided the country with an excellent opportunity to organise the issue of the professional development of university teaching personnel based on a recognised national framework of standards and a postgraduate certificate in T&L.

The adoption of the LBPSF by the Council of Higher Education was a step forward towards the fulfilment of the national reform strategy which calls for a high quality of teaching and learning and for an alignment with the latest development in the reform and modernisation of HE worldwide. This step, as many other reform initiatives, remains incomplete due to the unstable context of the country.

Sustainability and long-term impact

The impact made by 3 curriculum development projects and the structural project E-TALEB on the T&L subject has good elements of sustainability. The teaching methodologies with their tools of new technologies have been well integrated into the teaching process of each concerned institution. The approval of the LBPSF by the Council of Higher Education with the publication of the Guidance document, the establishment of the centres at 8 partner institutions and the development of the Postgraduate Certificate programme are all results confirmed by the respective concerned institutions.

Many other sustainability issues like the Registry for the centres of excellence, the Annual Forum and the on-line Journal for T&L, are still pending further commitment, planning, institutionalisation and implementation.

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

All results related to T&L achieved within the universities involved are sustained thanks to the institutional support and commitment of each institution. However, the challenging part is that which depends on the competent national authorities where it is required to extend the results obtained to the whole system and to legalise the LBPSF and the PGCTLHE. This relies on the Ministry's ability to validate and legalise the related programme and convince the sector to adopt it as a requirement for faculty recruitment and promotion.

This dependence on the Ministry, logically justified, has proved to be not sufficiently reliable given the Lebanese special context.

Many objectives are being challenged by the difficult legislation process in the country.

Chapter 8: General challenges/Lessons learned

Challenges at national level

State failure

If CBHE projects aim at making any change at a national level, this cannot be done without the support of the national authorities and their readiness to accompany this change with the necessary measures, legislations and plans. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education played a positive role through its Directorate General of High Education in supporting the implementation of the CBHE projects, disseminating their results, and engaging the whole sector in their events and activities. However, the national authorities failed to materialise many results that needed conclusive steps. This is due to the general political context of the country and its complications. Long-term results like the creation of a Lebanese QA Agency, the reconstruction of the recognition department at Ministry, the implementation of the adopted Lebanese Professional Standard Framework for Teaching and Learning, the creation of many national platforms including the one for entrepreneurship, and the launching of national student bodies are all still missing and waiting to be either ratified or adopted.

The failure of the national authority to lead the HE sector in defining a national vision and strategy has weakened the capitalisation of the CBHE projects results at national level and the extension of the impact of single projects to sector level.

The national authorities suffer from a substantial lack of adequate resources to monitor the implementation of, and the achievements made by, the CBHE projects in order to accompany them with necessary measures and proper follow-up.

The situation has even worsened since 2019 when the uprising erupted, followed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the explosion of 4 August which added to the already ailing country more political, social and economic complications.

Inter-university cooperation

CBHE projects have generated many bilateral cooperation activities between Lebanese institutions. However, this cooperation never reached a sustainable strategic level particularly at the national higher education landscape. Many results that needed a national network have not been completed and remained on paper. The cooperation remained limited to a small number of institutions like what happened with 3 institutions from the North of Lebanon which established a cooperation scheme initiated by a structural CBHE project on Teaching and Learning.

Another challenge at the level of the institutions is that participation in CBHE projects did not extend to new institutions, probably this is due to the fact that only those which have strong international connections are more successful in submitting and designing proposals, in addition to the fact that partnering in an EU CBHE project requires good institutional resources and efforts. It is worth mentioning that the participating institutions in the CBHE projects covered more than 90% of the Lebanese student population in higher education.

Involvement of socio-economic sector

CBHE projects have included the socio-economic sector in their partnerships. Some projects have included non-academic stakeholders in their activities. However, and apart from the 3 curriculum development projects, the presence of the socio-economic sector in the projects' partnerships is moderate. This is a continuation of a tradition of a weak cooperation between academia and enterprises. In a couple of cases for recently selected projects, NGOs withdrew from the

partnerships for technical reasons without affecting the eligibility of the projects or the awarding criteria on which the projects had been selected for funding.

Challenges at regional and international level

CBHE projects have opened the door for regional and international cooperation activities. They generated many joint activities particularly between Lebanese and EU institutions. They also opened up the Lebanese HE sector to new EU countries. However, all results that consisted of building regional networks or centres did not materialise. It seems that establishing solid cooperation schemes at regional level is confronted by different types of barriers related to the political context in each country and the relationships between the countries of the region.

Challenges at institutional level

Two issues are still challenging the CBHE projects at the level of the targeted institutions: 1) The institutional ownership of the projects' results and outputs, 2) The wider impact within each institution.

Projects results are institutionally owned when they are well integrated into each institution's strategy for development and reform. They should respond to a well-defined and grounded need. This will ensure the sustainability of these results and their proper exploitation. They are also institutionally owned when the top university leaderships are well-aware of the projects general and specific objectives and when the institutions are able to put in place genuine plans to maximise the benefits from the projects and widen their impact to reach a maximum of beneficiaries at the levels of the university, the faculties and the departments. Institutional ownership is more than a simple engagement taken by the legal representative of each institution. It is a serious commitment.

In few cases, the institutional commitment was negatively impacted by changes occurred at the institutions' leadership. Continuity was not guaranteed and led to changes of the people originally involved in the projects' conception.

Reinforcing the impact of the projects on the capacity building of the partner institutions needed a better retraining policy confirmed by the original proposal. In some cases, the projects could not extend beyond a limited number of beneficiaries or expand to other faculties and departments. Bringing the impact from individual level to institutional level through a sound plan of multiplication effect was also challenging some of the CBHE projects.

Chapter 9: General recommendations

The following recommendations are made not only based on observing and analysing the 11 CBHE projects selected between 2015 and 2017 but also inspired by the remaining 16 CBHE projects selected between 2018 and 2020 and which are under implementation.

- A revision of the programme procedures from selection to the implementation of the projects should be conducted. This should include the documentation used in the application process, the evaluation and assessment of the proposals, the awarding criteria, the monitoring strategies, and the reporting mechanisms.
- The institutional ownership of any CBHE project results should be given an utmost attention as this is a key factor for confirming the impact of the projects, achieving their strategic objectives, and increasing their sustainability chances. In this regard, we recommend to work out a set of Guidelines for this important issue. A policy of regular communication with the universities' top managers should be envisaged.
- Although the regional projects have opened new opportunities between universities to cooperate in particular areas, improve the knowledge about the diversity of the HE systems in place, and exchange practices and expertise, they have fallen short of producing sustainable outcomes of cross-border dimension. Most of the networks promised by the projects remain inactive and need to be better institutionalised and reactivated. It is recommended that the multi-country projects go beyond 'budget sharing' towards real cooperation and networking. The proposals should give strong evidence before being selected of their plans to concretise any output of regional dimension by providing measurable indicators.
- The multiplication effect is a key factor for avoiding CBHE projects having impact on a limited number of beneficiaries at each institution. In some cases, this has resulted in the formation of a same group of people benefiting from the projects which limit the impact of the projects to few people or to a particular faculty or department. A multiplication effect which relies on allowing a large number of beneficiaries and a wider visibility of the projects within the concerned institutions can also be addressed by ensuring a better institutional ownership, clear indicators set in the proposals about the number of beneficiaries that are going to be involved in the projects' activities. The creation of multipliers and the issue of retraining should be addressed by the submitted proposals and followed up later during the implementation. Minimum number of beneficiaries with a diversity of profiles should be envisaged as contractual obligations that if breached should incur penalties. The projects are expected to elevate the impact from individual level to institutional level.
- A general recommendation should be made about the visibility of the project results within each institution even when the project concerns mainly a particular Faculty or Department.
- Almost all CBHE projects start with a preparatory workpackage about conducting a kind of a 'Needs Analysis'. This is supposed to lay the foundation for the subsequent steps of the project and to confirm its relevance for the different stakeholders. However, this is not what was always happening. In some cases, the surveys conducted for the report on the Needs are challenged by a low rate of response from the relevant stakeholders and in other cases, the subsequent steps are not fully based on the findings of this analysis. It is recommended that an analysis should be conducted before the submission of the proposal to give evidence on its relevance and feasibility. It is recommended that the Needs Analysis carried out within the project should be clearly more related to the content and the design of the subsequent activities. Otherwise, we should expect and accept the possibility of being confronted with a 'Needs Analysis' showing no need for the project. A more concrete and thorough feasibility study might be required when a CBHE proposal addresses a curriculum development

- Workpackages in CBHE proposals that address horizontal issues like Quality Assurance, Sustainability and Dissemination have been transformed into formal obligations required by the programme without real content. A good effort should be exerted in order to transform these workpackages from a formality or an accessory requirement to a serious issue that has to be supported by a good design at the proposal level and a concrete commitment at the implementation level. The selection should be strict on the criteria related to these horizontal issues.
- The monitoring should be developed into a closer follow-up policy based on continuous intervention by NEOs to assist, advise, urge, remind and overcome difficulties. The latest conversion to online mode of activities has proved the possibility that the NEO can attend most of the projects' meetings and activities without travelling. The presence of the NEO in the projects' meetings have increased the efficiency of these meetings and improved their quality.

Annexes

Annex 1: Note and questionnaire used for the survey

This survey is part of a study that aims to investigate the impact made by the Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects (CBHE) implemented in Lebanon following the rounds of selection 2015, 2016 and 2017.

The study intends to explore this impact made at different levels: individual, institutional, and systemic. It also aims at drawing lessons about the relevance of this Erasmus+ action and the challenges faced at a bridging phase between the 2015-2020 and 2021-2027 generations of Erasmus+.

As an active partner in the CBHE projects, we look forward to your invaluable contribution in this study by answering the following questions. Your feedback should be based on your experience in the CBHE projects, your analysis as an observer of the Lebanese HE development and on evidence that could demonstrate any information provided.

The questions are formulated in English, but you are free to provide your answers in the language you like. Please provide your answers in bullets when possible.

- 1) Based on your experience, what are the main areas where Erasmus+ CBHE projects made a change/difference in your institution?
- 2) What exactly has been achieved and why?
- 3) Why this would not have been possible without EU Partners?
- 4) Who benefited directly from the activities and how?
- 5) Can you identify any innovative character of your project(s)?
- 6) What are the academic, economic, social, and environmental long-term impacts and who has been affected?
- 7) Can you list the outcomes made by the CBHE projects that are still alive and operational in your institution?
- 8) How does your institution sustain the achieved results after the end of the project(s)?
- 9) Have your projects built on results of previous EU-funded projects like Erasmus Mundus, Tempus etc.?
- 10) If applicable, how do the different projects you have been involved in compare in terms of efficiency and relevance, and how are they complementary in order to reinforce impact and sustainability?
- 11) How did you disseminate your projects results, and among which target groups?
- 12) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of your project(s)?
- 13) What, in your opinion, are the main challenges that might face the implementation of CBHE projects in the future?

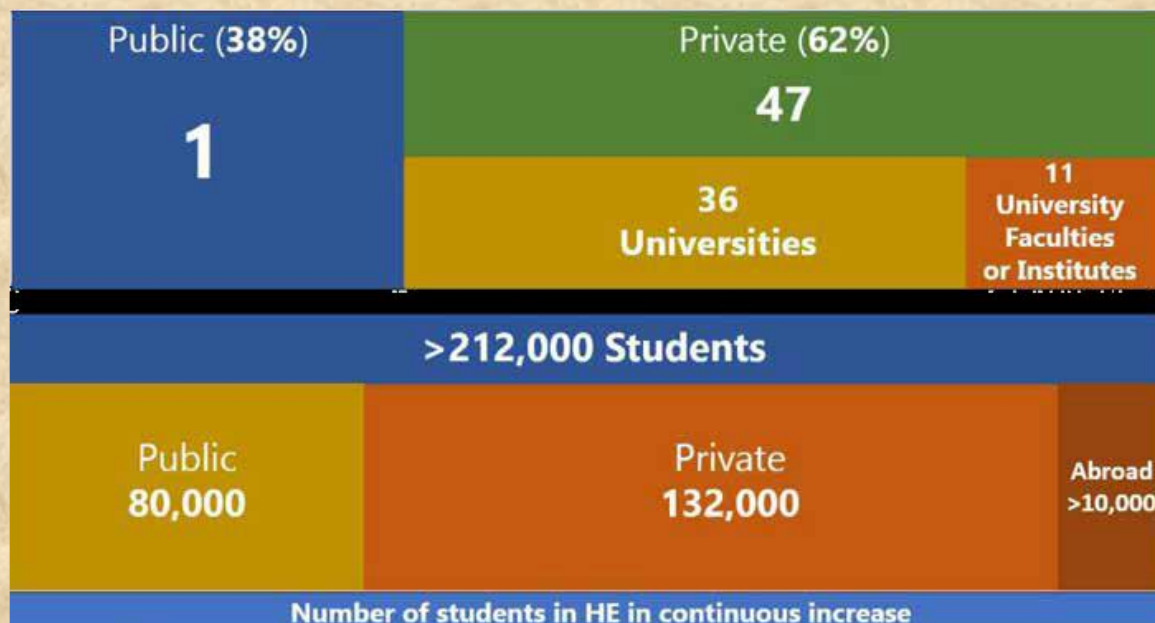
Additional questions (optional)

- 14) From your perspective, what are the main areas where Erasmus+ made a change/difference in the Lebanese higher education sector?
- 15) What, in your opinion, are the main challenges that the Lebanese higher education sector has been and will be facing in the future?
- 16) Based on your longstanding observation of the Lebanese higher education sector, do you think it is evolving in the right direction? Why?

Annex 2: Mapping Lebanese HEIs with the areas covered by the 11 CBHE projects

	Curriculum Development	Quality Assurance	Students	Employability	Internationalisation	Inclusion and Refugees	Teaching and Learning
Lebanese University	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Beirut Arab University	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Holy Spirit University of Kaslik		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
University of Balamand	✓	✓			✓		✓
American University of Beirut	✓	✓					
University Saint Joseph		✓	✓		✓		✓
Lebanese American University		✓	✓				✓
Notre Dame University	✓	✓					
Antonine University		✓			✓		✓
City University		✓					✓
Holy Family University		✓					✓
Modern University for Business and Science	✓						
Lebanese International University						✓	
Jinan University							✓
Islamic University of Lebanon		✓					
Lebanese Canadian University		✓					

Annex 3: Specific Context of Lebanese Higher Education



Annex 4: Facts and Figures on Erasmus+ CBHE projects (2015-2020)

