



The second millennium has brought a new definition of employability. The requests for competences are increasingly demanding and transversal. Our lives are being shaped by « Innovation for entrepreneurship or « entrepreneurship for innovation ». Social development depends on it, and new jobs tend to focus on « graduates offering competences and not graduates simply looking for work». Therefore, Higher Education Institutions cannot distance themselves from the new demands of the job market and must ensure the connection between course offers and the new conditions for employability. In order to guarantee proper communication among stakeholders on the value of knowledge in innovation and on socio-economic advancement, it is important to gather university members, socio-economic decision-makers and ministerial bodies at the same table.

These topics were discussed on the 5th and 6th of July during **the 4th thematic conference on Innovation & Entrepreneurship**. This event was organised as part of the RESUME project (RESUME is a European Union Project financed by the Erasmus+ Capacity Building programme).

Works started at 2 PM on **the 5th of July 2017** at the Hadath Campus of the Lebanese University in Beirut.

The conference's aim was to provide higher education institutions' personnel with the necessary skills and initiate dialogue and cooperation among the different stakeholders (universities, companies and political authorities) on the common challenge of increasing young graduates' employability. During the conference, the project's stakeholders presented their best practices related to innovation and local and regional experts in the socio-economic field were invited to share their experience on the matter. The event was open to the public and about thirty masters and PhD students participated in the two-day conference and in the debates.

The conference was opened and inaugurated by **Ms. Véronique Kazpard, lecturer at the Faculty of Sciences of the Lebanese University** and **Mr. Sélim Mekdessi, professor at the Faculty of Management Sciences**, as well as **Ms. Silvia Marchionne, in charge of the RESUME project for UNIMED – the Mediterranean Universities Union – the project's lead partner**.

Ms. Eva Jimeno Sicilia, from the European Training Foundation, introduced the conference subject, highlighting that unemployment has increased since 2010, ranging between 10 and 25%, and that it is particularly high among women and young people. Among Eva Jimeno Sicilia's key messages, it is worth mentioning the need to improve education and training systems, thus improving the youth basic skills and working on new mechanisms able to create jobs (in particular, for the young people who have a high level of education and who are more likely to become NEET - "not (engaged) in education, employment or training". Finally, the entrepreneurial spirit as a key competence could generate the resilience needed. Entrepreneurship should be on the growth and employment agenda as any other political domain.

The conference was divided into three different round tables, the first one of which focused on the topic of **“Technical platforms: a tool for strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship in the university space”**, with a presentation by the external expert, **Mr. Amgad Abdel-Rahim, Solution Delivery Manager of Schlumberger in Egypt**. Other external speakers and participants in the project took part in the **2nd round table on “Innovative university courses: a curriculum closer to entrepreneurship and socio-economic needs”**.

This round table was moderated by **Mr. Hervé Sabourin, Middle East Director of the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie in Lebanon**, who presented the schemes favouring employability, such as the project TEMPUS OIPULES aimed at strengthening Orientation and Professional Integration in the Universities of Lebanon, Egypt and Syria through an information website on university programmes and related work opportunities (Boukrajobs). Moreover, Sabourin presented AUF strategy on the development of student entrepreneurship in Lebanon through the creation of a cooperative workspace based on the French model of PEPITE: **“Student Centre for Innovation, Transfer and Entrepreneurship “**, which includes 12 universities, MEES, CNRS, LAAS, DRC, Berytech, SmartEsa, the Central Bank of Lebanon and the Municipality of Beirut.

Mr. Aref Elsoufi, Coordinator of the Erasmus+ programme at a national level and Mr. Georges Aoun, Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration and Management of Saint Joseph University in Beirut participated in this round table. In a regional and national context characterized by wars and conflicts, a lack of socio-economic development policies and amidst the chaotic expansion of the education sector and a lack of university-enterprise collaboration, Elsoufi presented the European Commission’s strategy for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the academic environment, and outlined some of its numerous programmes, such as Erasmus +, Horizon 2020, COSME and the European Investment Bank’s Funds. The key elements of this process are therefore Universities, Teachers, Learners and Trainings, which should interact with the socio-economic milieu. Mr. Aoun, instead, stressed that higher education institutions do not have rapid continuous returns from the market, that bureaucracy slows down responsiveness to changes occurring in the surrounding environment, that it is difficult to anticipate changes in the environment and in static forces within higher education institutions, and that rarely professors are inclined to develop innovative training programmes which correspond to the new realities of the market. In order to tackle those issues, it is in the best interest of higher education systems to teach graduates to reason analytically and solve problems in a very dynamic environment, where uncertainty is growing and labour and consumer markets are more and more globalised. However, most importantly, HEI should enable learners to become entrepreneurs, so they can be drivers of change in the society, by teaching graduates how to gain knowledge on line in order to upgrade their skills after graduating, while improving their ability to innovate in a network.

On the 6th of July, the **3rd round table on “Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Creativity: Fundamental Drivers of the Economy”** took place. It was moderated by **Fouad Zmokhol, the President of the Association of Lebanese Business People in the World (RDCL World)**, with **Rabih Sabra, Director General of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon** and **Bassel Aoun, Project Manager of Kafalat iSME Programme in Lebanon**. They stressed the need to be aware of risks, especially for young entrepreneurs and the fact that entrepreneurs’ individualism, which characterises the Lebanese context but also the regional one, is not necessarily a negative aspect or a weakness. It is necessary to appreciate such individualism as an opportunity in the labour market, which entrepreneurs should cultivate and nurture throughout their career. Another key message conveyed by the experts during the debate was the

importance of understanding how to absorb graduates and the unemployed who come from the informal labour market, which recently developed in Lebanon and in other countries of the MENA region. In short, entrepreneurship should be characterised by three elements: perception, passion and perseverance – as Mr. Zmokhol stated at the end of his address to the conference audience.

For more information and more details, please find all the good practices presented by the RESUME project partners at this link:

For more information on the project, please visit the RESUME project website:

www.resumeproject.eu

About RESUME

The RESUME project aims at enhancing and reinforcing the role and potential of HEIs in the development of employability in the Mediterranean countries by adopting a transversal entrepreneurial mind-set within the HEIs and by opening and structuring the dialogue among universities, enterprises and policy makers. The RESUME project will address four priority actions established by the EC, the OECD and ETF:

1. Establishing inter-ministerial commissions for entrepreneurial learning
2. Establishing a platform for the identification and exchange of good practices
3. Strengthening co-operation among HEIs and promoting links with business to foster entrepreneurship.
4. Establishing an accredited Southern Mediterranean entrepreneurship network paying particular attention to gender issues.

Partners

- UNIMED – Mediterranean Universities Union, Italy (coordinator)
- UniME, Università degli Studi di Messina, Italy
- AMU, Université d’Aix-Marseille, France
- UB, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain
- AlmaLaurea, Consorzio Interuniversitario Almalaura, Italy
- VdM, Ville de Marseille, France
- IAV, Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, Morocco
- UM5R, Université Mohammed V de Rabat, Morocco
- Us, Université de Sousse, Tunisia
- USf, Université de Sfax, Tunisia
- UL, Université Libanaise, Lebanon
- USEK, Université de Saint Esprit- Kaslik, Lebanon
- AFEM, Association de Femmes Chefs d’entreprise, Morocco
- MESFCRS, Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique et de la Formation des Cadres, Morocco
- MESRS, Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique Tunisien, Tunisia
- DGHE, Directorate General Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Lebanon

- ASCAME, Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce, Spain (associated partner)

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