

EUNIT: A Capacity Building Project With International Outlook

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Over the past years, Dr. Antoine Abche, Professor of Biomedical Engineering in the department of Electrical Engineering has been actively engaged in several European (EU) projects between the University of Balamand and European partners. One of the most recent projects in this respect is the EuNiT project. To get to know more about this project and its implications for the university, I sat with Prof. Abche and had the following interview.

What is EUNIT?

The European project design and management in the south Mediterranean region (EuNiT) is a Capacity Building project that is co-financed by Erasmus+ Programme for the amount of one million euros for three years. It started in October 2016 and will end in October 2019. A main objective of the Erasmus+ EuNiT project, as a capacity Building project, is to set-up and install in each of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) involved in the project from the partner countries an "EU project design and management unit" that deals with the planning and management of European projects and equip its staff with the needed skills and expertise that enable them to successfully set up and run such a unit. The EU project will mainly contribute to the internationalization of the Higher Education universities of the South Mediterranean region.

EPU is expected to render services to interested members of the UOB community participating, or wishing to participate, in different Erasmus+ projects. These services are expected to become fully operational at the end of the EuNiT project. Another important task that EPU needs to perform is to introduce the UOB community to different European programs, their richness, their complexity and their importance since they widen UOB's international exposure.

Who are the partners in the EuNiT project?

The consortium consists of sixteen partners from Europe and the South Mediterranean region. They are: Euro-Mediterranean Universities Network TETHYS, Aix-Marseille University (coordinator), the University of Split, Croatia, the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, France, the Mediterranean Universities Union (Unimed), Italy, the University of Messina, Italy, the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, the University of Barcelona, Spain, the University of Santiago de Compostella, Spain, Princess Sumaya University for Technology, Jordan, Yarmouk University, Jordan, Antonine University, Lebanon, the University of Balamand, Lebanon, Saint Joseph University, Lebanon, Misurata University, Libya, the University of Tripoli, Libya and Zawia University, Libya. Besides, the associated partners are: the Ministry of Higher



Education and Scientific Research, Jordan, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Lebanon, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Libya, the Association of Arab Universities (AARU), Jordan, the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA), Brussels and the County of Splitskodalmatinska županija, Croatia.

How do such projects impact the institution and students?

The involvement of the University of Balamand in EU projects such as EuNiT will contribute to its internationalization in order to develop sustainable cooperation and partnership at the regional and international levels. Subsequently, it will foster the networking and links between the Higher Education Institutions involved in the indicated project as well as with other HEIs in the partner countries, especially with the reputable and well-known HEIs. Besides, the South-North cooperation, South-South cooperation is encouraged to forge collaborations. Once implemented the EuNiT project will provide activities and services in the framework of the project that will be highly directed towards the students, the academic staff and the administrative staff. Moreover, the students will benefit from the increase in mobility under the International Credit Mobility program as well as their involvement in other developed EU Projects.

How does the EuNiT project differ from other projects in this scope?

The activities of the EuNiT project are mainly related to the transfer of expertise, information and knowledge in European project design and management in order to enable the HEIs involved in the project and in the south Mediterranean region to be involved in EU projects and respond effectively and efficiently to EU proposals and initiatives and consequently, to strengthen and



expand the links between the EU and South Mediterranean countries. In this context, an innovative training program (cooperation sessions, research sessions and Practical placements) will be developed in which the selected participants will highly benefit from being in a space where they have the opportunities to network and build their soft skills. Besides the contents, the training program entails three levels of cross cultural-exchange and diversities in performing the activities. It is also adapted to train staff with a project manager and/or financial profiles to build a complementary team in each of the involved partner institutions. Furthermore, the project's strategy for the dissemination and exploitation of the project will conduct two external training sessions (one in Jordan and one in Lebanon) besides the internal training sessions. This allows the colleagues from other HEIs in the institution to become aware of the project and transfer the needed knowledge to set-up such an EU unit to the interested universities in the region. In addition, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS), based on the training sessions, are developed and made available to reach the widest possible audience using online resources and remote learning.

What is future outcome we can look on to in this respect?

Internationalization is one of the important criteria in university ranking. UOB is targeting to evolve in this ranking as part of its academic vision and its opening perspective. Internationalization is a chance given to the HE community to share experience, to gain from other programs and to show the importance and value of our work. Participating in European programs is one of the important axes that help UOB reach its goal of excellence. In this context and based on the gained experience, the administration is currently discussing the development of the unit to better serve the UOB community.



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