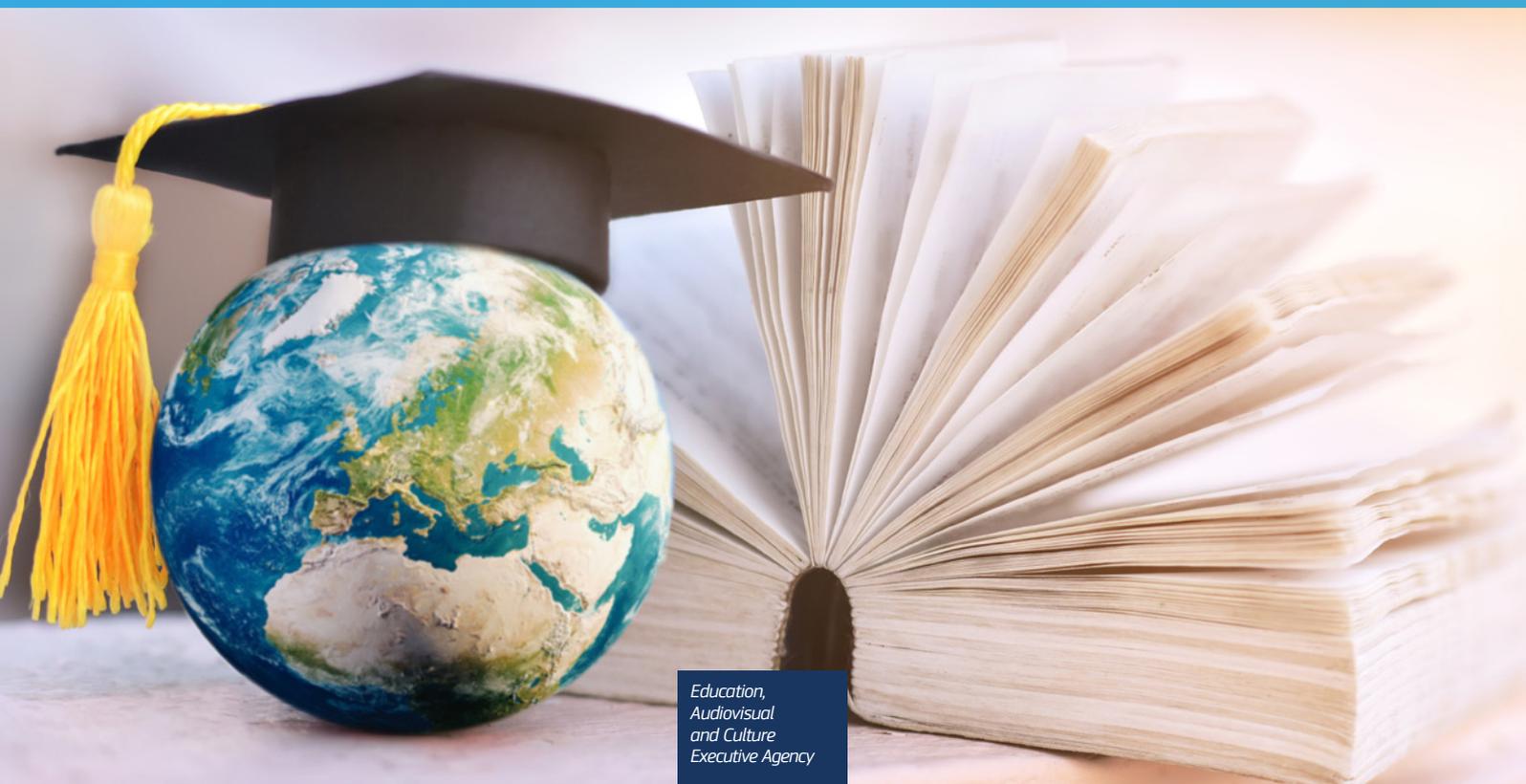




Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report South Mediterranean Region



More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://europa.eu>).

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Erasmus+
**Capacity Building in
Higher Education (CBHE) action**

**Regional Report
South Mediterranean Region¹**

¹ Defined as 'Region 3' in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and covering Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine (this designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue), Syria and Tunisia. All ten South Mediterranean countries have been involved in the CBHE action since the very beginning of the Erasmus+ Programme in 2014.

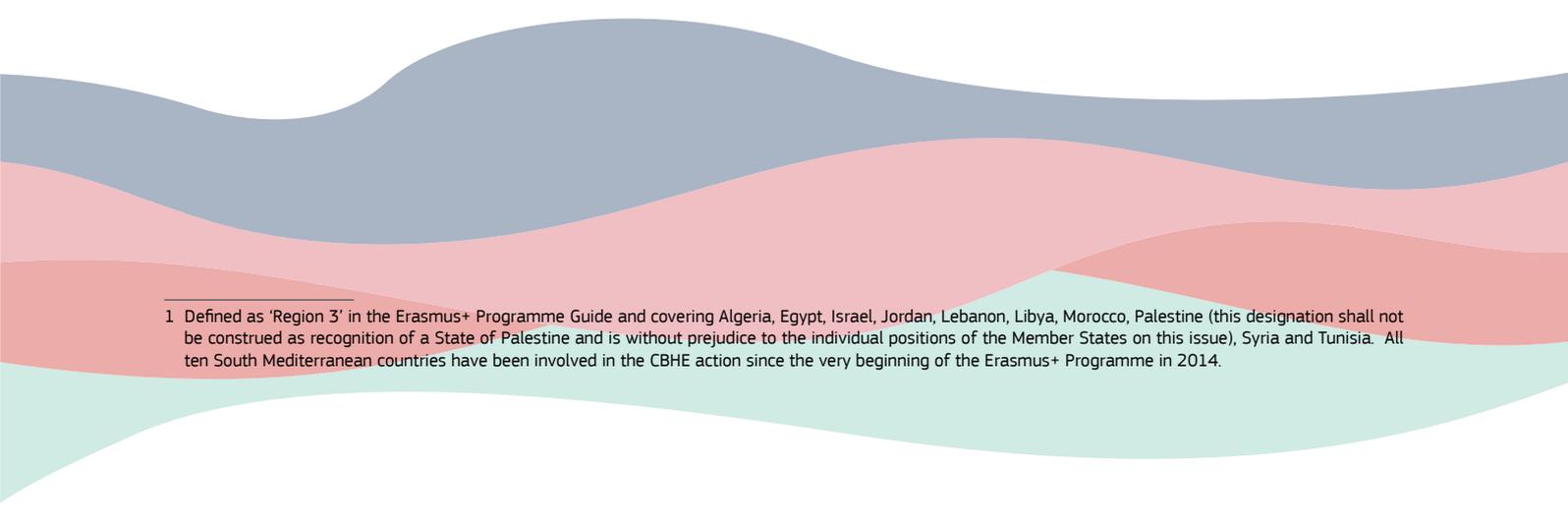




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1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

This report is based on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's evaluation of the first final project reports of the first generation of CBHE projects selected for funding in 2015. Altogether 138 projects were funded in 2015² among which 39 were implemented in the South Mediterranean Region.

The report's results are therefore based on a relatively small sample of finalised CBHE projects² and are to be considered as preliminary and to be reviewed at a later stage. The analyses takes also into account the institutional monitoring visits and cluster meetings that were organised by the Agency as part of its monitoring strategy.

The report is analysing the role of the CBHE action as regards **the impact and sustainability of the funded projects** together with their **inclusiveness** (participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers). More specifically, the report will look into the institutional development of HEIs (HEI), their modernisation of study programmes and their teaching and learning methodologies, structural reforms and the strengthening of HEI's technical capacities. It will zoom into the **opportunities created for individuals** (students, academic and administrative staff) and third parties like enterprises, associations and NGOs.

The report will also examine how the EU projects have influenced **national policy developments in the education sector**, mainly but not exclusively through 'Structural Projects'. Special attention is given to the strengthening of **regional cooperation** through CBHE projects that include two or more countries from the same Region.

Finally, the analyses will be used to identify **challenges** and provide a **set of recommendations** for future reference.

² CBHE projects have a funding between EUR 500,000 and 1 million and normally last 3 years; with a very few shorter projects of 2 years' duration. A high percentage of projects asked for a contract extension to catch up with implementation delays and will last between 3-4 years.

³ There are about 700 running projects after 5 annual calls, starting in 2014

2. INTRODUCTION

The CBHE action of the Erasmus+ Programme supports the modernisation and development of HEIs and the educational systems in the Partner Countries. Capacity Building projects are expected to have a long-term structural impact and their direct influence is on institutions and educational systems rather than on individuals.

European HEIs have a key role to play in supporting the modernisation efforts of emerging and developing parts of the world. Via the development of the educational systems of Partner Countries, they contribute to a sustainable development of the economies and societies as a whole and they allow addressing challenges at national, regional or even global level (e.g. climate change). In this context, the involvement of national authorities (Ministries of Education) plays a critical role.

International consortia of HEIs (including private businesses) strengthen the quality of Higher Education in the Partner Countries by providing to students new and upgraded skills needed in the labour market, introduce innovative approaches in teaching and learning and provide entrepreneurial skills.

The CBHE action is implemented through two types of projects, which aim to have an impact on HEIs or on the educational system as a whole. '**Joint projects**' are aimed at the development of HEIs (e.g. curriculum development, governance of institutions, etc.), while '**Structural projects**' address important challenges for the educational systems of the Partner Countries (accreditation, quality assurance in education, PhD education, etc.).

Both project types address one of the following **three pillars**

1. Curricula Reform
2. Modernising university governance and management
3. Strengthening of relations between HEIs and the wider economic and social environment

These three types of activities have to match pre-established national⁴ and/or regional priorities.



⁴ For the ex-Tempus countries defined by the Ministries of Educations of the Partner Countries.

3. CBHE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Higher education systems in the South Mediterranean Region are facing a number of challenges. Growing levels of student enrolment throughout the Region are straining the limited resources of public universities. At the same time, the number of private institutions has increased. The economic situation in these countries has been quite challenging, due to severe political instability/ conflicts resulting in streams of refugees, and to the poor performance of the labour markets, reflected in very low employment rates and high levels of unemployment. This has led to a high rate of brain drain among graduates and a lack of regional university cooperation.

The CBHE action targets these challenges through the implementation of international cooperation projects. The results accomplished in these projects have encouraged the **modernisation and reform** of higher education in the South Mediterranean Region. HEIs and individuals (staff and students) have benefited from institutional and study programme reforms by applying and mainstreaming the results of CBHE projects, primarily related to creating new curricula, modernisation of university structures, and updating educational processes. In some cases, the CBHE project outputs also led to changes at a national level by directly or indirectly influencing the structure and legislative framework of higher education.

The CBHE action applies both a bottom-up and a top-down strategy to align national decision making with the priorities associated with **university development and internationalisation**. However, effective structural impact on the higher education sector in the Partner Countries proved to be quite complicated and not so evident. National authorities did not have the required effective capacity, nor the concrete intention to follow-up and build on the results of the implemented Structural projects. The endemic instability and complexity of the political apparatus/structures in most of the South Mediterranean countries has limited potential reforms brought about by the CBHE projects. Nevertheless, through the CBHE projects local authorities become more familiar with the set of guidelines and principles governing the higher education sectors in the Programme Countries, whether in terms of National Quality measures or the National Qualification Framework, or common educational standards and principles as encompassed in the Bologna process.

Concrete achievements directly ascribable to CBHE projects are mostly visible in **curriculum development** through the creation of new student-centred study programmes at Bachelor and Master level, as well as in the establishment of laboratories and centres of excellence, in the enhancement of the universities' governance and the establishment of new university services.

The achievements obtained through CBHE projects have provided national authorities, university management and students in the region with opportunities that they would not have had without the input of the European partner institutions. Indisputably, the support of



the management of HEIs and of national authorities is pivotal in this context and vital for the sustainability of the achieved project results.

- ▶ The CBHE action has enhanced the capacities of universities in each country in the Region to manage international cooperation projects. Although the percentage of the selected projects coordinated by South Mediterranean HEIs has remained constant (38%) over the period covered by the CBHE action, currently there are projects coordinated by HEIs from 8 out of 10 South Mediterranean countries⁵.

Thanks to CBHE projects with European partners, **bridges** have been built for **intra-national, regional or cross-regional** cooperation. Such bridges are otherwise unlikely to have existed in the South Mediterranean Region.

3.1. Institutional Development

3.1.1. Curricula Reform

One of the main objectives of the CBHE action is curricula reform. Partner Country HEIs work together in highly qualified international consortia to revise study programmes or to develop new ones, to engage in new learning and teaching methods and to prepare students with new and better skills for a changing job market and a developing economy.

- ▶ Almost 50% of all CBHE projects in the Region selected for funding deal with curriculum reform. Thanks to the 2015 projects, based on the information available in the final reports, 417 courses were newly developed/updated. Out of 17 curriculum development projects from the 2015 generation, 14 have developed courses taught in a foreign language (English).

The modernisation and launching of new study programmes, as well as the introduction of innovative learning and teaching methods (not previously available in the South Mediterranean region), have significantly changed the academic offer of the universities involved and indirectly the landscape of the university sector as well. Most of the newly created study programmes at graduate and postgraduate level have become an integral part of regular degree programmes taught at the HEIs, establishing the basis for their sustainability.

Co-construction d'une Offre de Formation à Finalité d'Employabilité Elevée (COFFEE) (561812-EPP-1-2015-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

The COFFEE project succeeded in accrediting 17 new professional Bachelors, co-designed with relevant companies and enterprises in Algeria, by addressing specific profiles and skills requested by the local labour market, such as industrial maintenance, building rehabilitation and e-commerce. The consortium includes the Ministry for Higher Education and Research (MESRS), nine Algerian universities as well as two organisations representing industry and six European partners.

For many Partner Country HEIs, working together with European universities on curricula development meant exposure to the **Bologna Process methodology**. Hence, when developing new curricula and considering student mobility opportunities, ECTS was introduced and student-centred learning approaches (learning outcomes) were used:

⁵ HEIs from Syria and Libya are not allowed to coordinate projects under the CBHE action.

Development of Health Informatics integrated curricula in Computing and Health-oriented undergraduate degrees (HiCure) (561776-EPP-1-2015-1-PS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The four HiCure Jordanian and Palestinian partner universities successfully established 12 competence-based undergraduate courses integrating 60 detailed case studies. During the life of the project, the developed HiCure courses were taught 67 times in all the partner universities and the total number of students who benefited from them is quite remarkable (1603 students). Alignment with the Bologna principles is visible in the use of ECTS for each of the established courses.

Additionally, CBHE projects have supported the institutions in adopting a more multidisciplinary approach to curricula development in line with the Bologna principles.

- For the 2015 generation of projects implemented in the South Mediterranean Region, out of 17 Curriculum Development CBHE projects, 9 covered interdisciplinary study programmes.

The MEDiterranean Public HEALTH Alliance (MED-HEALTH) (561748-EPP-1-2015-1-PS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

MED-HEALTH has introduced a Master degree programme in Public Health Management in the partner HEIs (Palestine, Jordan and Tunisia) in line with Bologna requirements and with a holistic and multidisciplinary approach. Complementary to the programme, a Public Health ePortal and a Regional Health Management Network were set up as points of reference in the field and as mechanisms to ensure sustainability of the project outcomes for the ultimate benefit of the Region.

Via the CBHE projects, South Mediterranean HEIs established fruitful cooperation with the non-academic sector, bringing the impact of the projects to a larger audience and reinforcing the strategic link between universities and enterprises, which is crucial in paving the way for future absorption of graduates into the labour market. This can be seen as a possible response to stagnating economies and high unemployment rates, which are common in most of the South Mediterranean countries affected by the Arab Spring.

Promotion of Innovation Culture in the Higher Education in Jordan (INVENT) (561996-EPP-1-2015-1-JO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The INVENT project built on the dialogue with local businesses and companies since the early stage. The partnership successfully set up four Centres for Transfer of Innovation (CTIs) in each of the four HEIs in Jordan, as well as three-phase training of partners' staff in the Programme Partners' countries. In addition, it carried out an important set of trainings in each individual CTI, targeting university staff, researchers and students as well as representatives of the non-academic partners and local industry. An Industrial Innovation Programme Unit was created and equipped at the Jordan University of Science and Technology with the aim of establishing close cooperations between HEIs and businesses at national level.

Specific remarks

None of the countries in the South Mediterranean Region has signed the Bologna declaration nor abides by its principles. Most commonly, the academic offer is based on a system of credit hours that varies from country to country. There is a clear awareness that the introduction of ECTS, as a new method of calculating credits, would facilitate cooperation and mobility exchanges with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), whether in the framework of European programmes or in bilateral cooperation. As such, challenges exist in particular concerning the transparency of the selection mechanisms, and the transferability and recognition of learning outcomes.

Not all of the Curriculum Development projects managed to effectively implement the newly developed programmes within the eligibility period. This is due to the long and cumbersome accreditation process in each of the South Mediterranean countries. As well as the institutional accreditation, the new programme must obtain final accreditation from the national authorities before it is launched (e.g. the Ministry of Higher Education in Morocco, the Higher Education Accreditation Commission in Jordan, or the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation for Education and the Supreme Council of Higher Education in Egypt). As a result, some study programmes could only be launched after the end (eligibility period) of the project.

In general, the involvement of students in the preparatory phase or in the design of the curricula is not sufficiently considered. In most of the cases student involvement in curriculum development takes place only at the end for testing purposes and on an individual bases.

3.1.2. Technological Upgrade

The provision of funds to improve the technical structure and capacities of Partner Country HEIs is an important element of CBHE, and the provision of equipment plays an important role in this (often almost one third of the total grant). It is an attractive offer to universities that often lack modern and labour market orientated training facilities.

- ▶ Approximately EUR 7.4 million were invested in equipment for the 39 projects implemented in the South Mediterranean Region.

Adequate provision of equipment in laboratories and centres is vital for supporting practical coursework, especially in the natural and hard sciences. Provision of equipment allows facilities like career advice centres, innovation and start-up centres to be set up. Besides being an important means of support for teaching purposes, the new facilities are also used to train private or public employees, who otherwise would not have access to such important support structures.

Vocational training center for undergraduate university students and teachers in Jordan (VTC) (561708-EPP-1-2015-1-DE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Through the VTC project, six Vocational Training Centres (VTC) were created and equipped at each of the six Jordanian partners' universities. Specialised training courses (Aspen Training, AutoCAD, Network Marketing, Communication skills, among others) were provided for graduates as career support and also to improve their communication with employers. The project is an example of good practice in terms of involvement of stakeholders: more than 65 Jordanian companies participated in the activities of the project including workshops and job fairs.

The strengthening of HEI technical capacities by opening new laboratories for teaching is an obvious measure for CBHE projects. Additionally these labs are often used to conduct research and thus create a vital bridge between teaching and research. Although the CBHE action is not aimed specifically at financing research activities, a series of initiatives to enhance **research and innovative** capacity have been undertaken.

Joint Programs and Framework for Doctoral Education in Software Engineering (PWs@PhD) (561577-EPP-1-2015-1-FI-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project was set up to modernise education by research at the PhD level both in the Russian Federation and in Jordan in the field of computing, and more specifically in the theories and practices of Software Engineering. The project has set up seven schools for PhD students to strengthen the key competences identified, and to share learning experiences in developing the content of software engineering doctoral programmes. More than 110 students were involved and 82 academic staff were trained.

CBHE projects also strengthened the digitalisation of education by using various IT tools in the teaching process and in enhancing the governance of the universities involved:

Modernization of tEaching meThodologies in higher educatiOn: EU experience for jorDan and paleStinian territory (METHODS) (561940-EPP-1-2015-1-JO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project improved the quality of teaching and learning at the Jordanian and Palestinian partner universities by incorporating technological tools and by building the capacity to design e-curricula. A total of 36 courses were updated. National Training Centres on blended learning were created together with an educational portal 'MethodsX' with all the courses to ensure sustainability.

Specific remarks

CBHE projects have allowed Partner Country universities to purchase specific equipment that was necessary for gearing up newly-established laboratories in order to integrating the newly-established/modernized curricula/programmes.

However, in a considerable number of projects general equipment was purchased in order to satisfy rather general purposes like laptops for students and teachers, or scanners or videoconferencing for the wider public.

The assessment of the final reports has cast significant doubt on the effective need to purchase general equipment to attain the projects' specific objectives. This is aggravated also by the fact that by participating in several projects, partner universities might ultimately be attracted by the possibility of modernising their facilities with new equipment rather than focusing on specific innovative themes or on a sustainable academic offer.

Moreover, most of the partner HEIs reported administrative constraints with the tendering procedures due to multiple layers of bureaucracy. The purchase of equipment is most commonly finalised in the third year of the projects' implementation. This jeopardises the accomplishment of the anticipated results in due time and it raises doubts, as mentioned above, about how the equipment can really be instrumental in the achievement of the results when it is purchased in the very last month(s) of the project.

3.1.3. Governance and Management Reform

The governance of South Mediterranean universities still requires institutional strengthening to ensure a more effective management and to reinforce the universities' role in an increasingly challenging national, regional and international environment. HEIs in the Partner Countries need to improve the efficiency of their governance processes and structures to make them grow internationally and to offer study programmes of high quality, which attract academics, students and the society at large. This requires, among other things, sustainable strategies and regulations, efficient international relations offices, quality assurance units endorsing international and European standards, financial autonomy, structures for cooperating with the labour market and strong alumni associations.

CBHE projects have clearly contributed to the creation or reinforcement of university bodies and changes at institutional level. Examples include the modernisation of the tools used and the increase in human resource management capacities:

Information Technology Governance for Tunisian Universities (ITG4TU) (561614-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project successfully introduced IT Governance (ITG) as an innovative approach to Tunisian universities, matching the strategic priorities of the Tunisian higher education sector, both on governance and digitalisation. Four customised ITG Frameworks were developed and applied, and permanent structures/positions in charge of strategic choices and monitoring were created.

Modernising human Resource management In South Mediterranean higher Education (RISE) (561810-EPP-1-2015-1-JO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project addressed the modernisation of Human Resources Management in 10 HEIs in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Jordan. It addressed specific needs for improving people management in the South Mediterranean Partner Country HEIs through structured training programmes and conferences.

However, much remains to be done in the area of governance and management reform for the South Mediterranean HEIs. Possibly new CBHE projects could support the efficiency of the structures in place (e.g. approaches for involving stakeholders in governance, especially employers and alumni), digitised procedures, optimised processes, and mechanisms to trace the employability of the graduates, etc.

3.1.4. HEI's International strategies

The internationalisation of the higher education sector is one of the priorities of the governments and HEIs in the South Mediterranean countries. However, while in Europe internationalisation is considered as a vehicle for enhancing the competitiveness of HEIs and economies, in the South Mediterranean region it is seen primarily as a means of supporting national reforms and institutional capacity building. The higher education systems in the Region cannot compete with the more established and highly internationalised education systems in Europe. However, internationalisation offers a chance to get gradually involved, to improve and to develop through cooperation with highly qualified European partner institutions.

Individual academics remain the most important driver of international cooperation in the region. It is through bottom-up initiatives organised by academics that short-term mobility, research cooperation, development of joint study programmes, and other activities are being developed. While there is a high level of commitment to internationalisation almost everywhere, these academics often do not receive sufficient support to sustain their cooperative ventures. University practices and support services are not sufficiently adapted to serve this goal. Internationalisation efforts are hampered by certain shortcomings throughout the Region, such as weak International Relations Offices (IROs), an insufficient number of courses offered in foreign languages, relatively poor foreign language skills among students and academics, and weak support for finding and managing research funding. However, the intensity of these shortcomings varies significantly across the different countries.

Numerous strategic and procedural documents were created and adopted to support internationalisation and modernisation at the institutional level. These included guidelines for learning outcomes at HEIs, strategies for university internationalisation, systems for monitoring the quality of the education process, and the adoption of protocols and procedures, which help improve the service provided by the international relations offices.

Moreover, the CBHE projects have **increased the visibility** of the HEIs involved, through their strong outward orientation and focus on international cooperation. One of the most visible aspects of the projects' impact is the establishment of an informal Erasmus+ academic and administrative coordinators' network, which often closely cooperates with the central university management and across the whole South Mediterranean Region. This change significantly improves the support provided to students and staff interested in mobility at the university/faculty level:

Internationalization by Innovative Technologies (IN2IT) (561642-EPP-1-2015-1-IL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

IN2IT is an Israeli national project that developed and implemented an innovative technological infrastructure in order to advance internationalization and expand the practical applications of internationalization in Israeli academic colleges. Several teaching and training activities were carried out including the piloting of three courses ('English Skills' (36 students), 'Embracing Diversity' (51 students), 'English for Internationalisation Purposes' (25 students) and 'Global Entrepreneurship' (16 students). New collaboration agreements derived from the project, including partnerships between Israeli HEIs and between Israeli and European HEIs.

The performance of HEIs is often measured on the basis of their research income, research output and quality. Opening HEIs up to global standards and benchmarks has motivated them to work on the continuous improvement of their systems and processes:

Modernisation of Institutional Management of Innovation and Research in South Neighbouring Countries (MIMIR) (561548-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

The MIMIR project has contributed to the mapping of the existing situation in the Jordanian and Moroccan partner universities with regard to innovation and research structures and strategies. The partnership produced a Handbook on European Innovation and Research Management and a New Innovation and Research Model based on the experience and practice of the programme country partners that were piloted in Jordan and Morocco. In addition, the project set up a common web-based Innovation and Research Information Platform and a database to facilitate information entry, including comprehensive lists of researchers, centres and industry partners, as well as to facilitate the exchange of information among the partners, to be used by a larger number of stakeholders.

3.2. Broadening Horizons for Individuals

3.2.1. Academic staff

The CBHE action has given professors from Partner Countries the opportunities to meet their peers in different countries. By working together in international consortia, professors have become aware of different perspectives, gained new insights into their academic field and been exposed to international quality standards in education. The CBHE projects have allowed them to work with other experts in their area, leading to direct peer-to-peer knowledge transfer from Europe to the Partner Countries.

Interuniversity learning in Higher Education on Advanced land management- Egyptian Country' (ILHAMEC) (561827-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project focused on the reduction of land desertification and preservation of land productivity. Thanks to the project, 29 Egyptian academics had the opportunity to carry out a training experience in EU countries, enhancing their skills with a view to teaching a new curriculum in Sustainable Land Management accredited in their HEIs.

Gender Studies Curriculum: A Step for Democracy and Peace in EU-neighbouring countries with different traditions (GeST) (561785-EPP-1-2015-1-LT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project improved the pedagogical and academic skills of 50 teachers from Morocco, Tunisia (and Ukraine). Mentored by European colleagues, the Partner Countries' academics were introduced to new methodologies centred on a competence-based approach and learning outcomes. Their attendance at Summer Schools and International Conferences organised by the consortium were useful in providing the academic staff with further research cooperation opportunities and increasing the number of their publications.

Two different categories of academics can be distinguished, namely experienced academics and young academics at the start of their carrier:

- (a) Those academics who are advanced in their career, but who are limited as regards further vertical growth at their home universities are offered a new lease of life, opening new doors and allowing them to broaden their perspectives, by bringing an international dimension to their work. However, for the same reason this also means that it is not always the leading academics in a field who participate in CBHE projects, and a monopolisation of involvement in EU-funded projects inside the HEIs can be observed. Access to EU projects is regarded as ‘territorial gain’ and not necessarily as something to be shared. To a lesser extent, this holds true also for Programme Country staff members and is leading to networks of these ‘peer groups’ which risk producing ‘mediocre’ project outcomes. It also needs to be underlined that the motivation to be part of a CBHE project is not always connected only to the project’s content or cooperation aspects but also to the **generous funding** that the CBHE project offers for the staff costs of professors. The additional remuneration covers tasks that should be part of the normal duties of the academics, namely the updating of their degree programmes in the case of curriculum development projects, or the improvement of university governance and services.

Some academics and ‘professional project writers’ sell/recycle project ideas that do not always correspond to the real needs of the HEI in the South Mediterranean Region, and the CBHE action suffers from a high number of ‘recurrent beneficiaries’.

- (b) A limited number of dynamic young academics are given the opportunity to take over the leadership of project work packages and thus gain experience of an international working environment. They get access to EU funding which helps prevent a further brain drain from the South Mediterranean region.

In general, training and workshops organised within the CBHE projects allowed academics to acquire new skills and knowledge in various disciplines and to get new contacts:

Création d’un Master en Biotechnologies Végétales Appliquées (MaBioVA) (561964-EPP-1-2015-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

In this Moroccan national project, the staff members involved gained valuable new skills both in the specific field of plant biotechnologies and in pedagogical engineering. Training courses and project activities allowed Moroccan academics to learn how to create e-learning units built on a competence-based approach (CBA) and centred on problem-based learning (PBL). The acquisition of these new competences are regarded as a major step in the teachers’ professional development.

Serious Games pour la Maintenance des infrastructures ferroviaires (ΣRail) (561986-EPP-1-2015-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

The academic staff involved in this project produced innovative e-learning materials on a topic, railway maintenance, where no similar resources existed. Moroccan and Tunisian teachers were also exposed to the concept of serious games for didactical use and they learned how to exploit serious games for promoting a more active learning experience.

- ▶ In the 39 South Mediterranean projects **2881 instances of training of academic staff** were reported, which mostly took place at Programme Country institutions. The new skills and knowledge also strengthen the home HEIs and improve education standards.

The CBHE action allowed academics to overcome national boundaries and also to link with other disciplines within their HEI. EU countries have been experimenting with **multidisciplinary courses** for some time and most academics recognise the benefits. Therefore, this concept was also introduced to Partner Countries and helped to promote innovation and synergies between departments, and broaden the academics'/institutions' ways of thinking:

Developing skills in the field of integrated energy planning in Med Landscapes (ENEPLAN) (561877-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project focused on the acquisition of the concept mapping methodology, recognised as a suitable tool to share and co-create knowledge on multidisciplinary issues such as energy planning. In a series of thematic workshops 83 teachers from Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt were trained in constructing Concept Maps. The application of concept mapping techniques improved the quality of education and teaching and increased cooperation among HEIs and research centres.

Working with the **private sector** as part of a CBHE project was a new experience for many professors. They gained greater insights into business realities and were able to make the study programmes more relevant to business needs:

Creative Leadership & Entrepreneurship - Visionary Education Roadmap (CLEVER)(561636-EPP-1-2015-1-IL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

A strong partnership was created in this project between HEIs and private entities in the sector of Creative Industry in Israel. About 100 Israeli HEI staff were trained with a view to reinforcing their capacity to deliver teaching modules on Creative Economy and Creative Leadership. A new Entrepreneurship & Innovation Centre was established in Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art offering vocational lifelong learning training courses and workshops to practitioners in the Creative Industry.

The CBHE action gave staff from the South Mediterranean Region the opportunity to **develop their intercultural skills**, by working together with colleagues in a multinational consortium. Academic and administrative staff gained intercultural experience of working with EU countries and with their neighbouring countries, which does not occur so frequently in a region that still suffers from open or frozen conflicts and divisions. In this context, EU-funded international projects are a powerful means of promoting cooperation with HEIs from neighbouring countries.

Furthermore, in some cases CBHE projects opened the door for academics to **university management**. For instance, in Tunisia where university management is appointed through a bottom-up elective process, an influential element in the choice of the candidates for management positions is their demonstrated capacity to firmly engage the institution in international collaborations such as CBHE projects.

Many stakeholders complain about the lack of job-readiness of HE graduates in the South Mediterranean countries, while others report graduates' lack of interactive skills, IT skills, organisational skills, and ability to work in teams. HEIs are seen as focusing on theoretical knowledge to the detriment of providing graduates with practical knowledge and experience, which is a key concern for employers. As a result, the curricula of many study programmes fail to reflect the combination of skills that employers seek.

3.2.2. Students

One of the main drivers of internationalisation has been the need for universities to attract better students and professors to raise the level of education offered and to become more competitive in the global education market. The CBHE action has helped HEIs to set up high-level study programmes, which increased the visibility and attractiveness of the HEI nationally and contributed to stopping brain drain. Cooperation with EU partners also provides students with guarantees as regards the **fair treatment of their merits** in societies that are often marked by nepotism and corruption.

- ▶ Within the 39 South Mediterranean CBHE projects, 3593 students were enrolled in new or upgraded courses and 5355 students received training or took part in a mobility.

The impact of the CBHE projects on students has been manifold. They benefited from modernised or new study programmes and were exposed to innovative teaching and

learning methods and more motivating approaches. The use of new or improved equipment/infrastructure, exchanging with foreign academics, using new methodologies as well as short and long-term mobility (available in all three cycles) enhanced both the academic and practical competences of students:

South Mediterranean Welding Center for Education, Training and Quality Control (SM Weld) (561786-EPP-1-2015-1-SE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project aimed to implement education training and certification system in welding in Algeria and Tunisia, based on harmonised European standards. Thanks to the Special Mobility Strand, 31 students from the two partner countries had the opportunity to spend a term at another university in the consortium and some of them also had the opportunity of a placement in an industrial firm. Six students carried out their master thesis in a Swedish company and the company employed one of them after the conclusion of his studies.

The mobility of staff and students has enabled **doctoral candidates to be supervised by staff from international partners**, improving the quality of research and enhancing the reputation of the associated HEIs. There are examples **of joint research projects and joint publications** initiated as spin-offs from successful cooperation within a CBHE project.

Graduates' **entry into the labour market** in the South Mediterranean Region is often **precarious** and they experience shorter or longer periods of unemployment before they find stable employment. This transition from the academic world to the labour market is hampered by a relatively low level of cooperation between HEIs and employers in relation to curriculum design and graduate recruitment. Still too few employers are involved in the outline of new curricula.

The CBHE action strongly **encourages cooperation between HEIs and the labour market**. In a number of projects, private sector representatives are involved in designing new curricula that are more appealing and relevant for the business world. Professors who adopt this entrepreneurial and long-term perspective have been trendsetters of such cooperation, which led to internships for students and, in some cases, job offers after graduation. Evidence shows that curriculum development projects working closely with private sector partners and including internships within university education have a higher graduate employability rate and are therefore much more attractiveness to national and international students.

However, despite notable exceptions, the overall involvement of private business partners in HEI curricula development is limited and lags behind expectations.

- ▶ Overall, only 14% of the 2015 generation of CBHE projects include placements and internships for students. Thanks to CBHE projects, many students established their first contacts with the private sector and this interaction increased their recruitment opportunities.

Vocational training centre for undergraduate university students and teachers in Jordan (VTC) (561708-EPP-1-2015-1-JO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project contributed to reinforcing the University-Enterprise cooperation by establishing six Vocational Training Centres (VTC) at the six participating Jordanian universities. The Centres offer graduates a number of workshops and specialised training courses for career support. More than 65 Jordanian companies took part in the project's activities including job fairs and student competitions.

Some CBHE projects include concrete support structures, such as career centres, incubators or student support services, which have developed strategic and sustainable links with the labour market and **provide training in soft and transversal skills**:

Promotion of Innovation Culture in the Higher Education in Jordan' (INVENT) (561996-EPP-1-2015-1-JO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project aimed to increase Jordanian HEIs' capacities for innovation, technology transfer and commercialisation of applied scientific research. It established four Centres for Transfer of Innovation (CTI) providing incubation services and training on entrepreneurship and employability skills; internships and job placement were also offered and start-up competitions were organised.

Although the students are the main end beneficiaries of the CBHE projects, they have only been sporadically involved in project activities. The development and modernisation of curricula and therefore the identification of student needs for their future, is considered as a prerogative of the HEI and their academic staff. In South Mediterranean countries, CBHE projects have not yet reached the point where students participate in building their future. Lack of active involvement of students in the implementation of project activities is a recurrent outcome of the various cluster meetings organised in the South Mediterranean Region.

3.2.3. Administrative staff

CBHE projects also have an impact on administrative staff. This applies particularly to staff from the **offices for international affairs and staff responsible for project financial management**, who have to be well-acquainted with the regulations and procedures relating to project implementation.

Although administrative and financial staff provide significant contributions in international cooperation, their role is not always very visible in the project activities. Moreover, given the nature of their work, they participate more rarely in mobility opportunities. However, regular interaction via email and Skype with their counterparts in other countries has brought learning opportunities and given them insights into best practices in financial and grant management. Sometimes they have also been able to **introduce new practices into their own HEI systems**. Dealing with international projects, they have to work in English, and in this way they considerably improve their language skills.

- ▶ In total, 1400 administrative staff members at South Mediterranean universities were trained within the 39 CBHE projects from 2015.

The equipment budget has allowed administrative staff to purchase new technology and to use their newly acquired skills for the benefit of their home HEI. Some CBHE projects specifically target administrative staff:

Modernising human Resource management In South Mediterranean higher Education (RISE) (561810-EPP-1-2015-1-JO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This multi-country project targeting Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria aimed at improving the human resources management in Higher Education Institutions. Among other activities, it delivered training to a high number of administrative staff. Training materials were conceived in e-learning format in order to maximise the opportunities for larger groups to improve their skills in this area. A guideline on best practices in HR management was also produced.

Modernisation of Institutional Management of Innovation and Research (MIMIr) (561548-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

This project aimed to improve innovation and research capacities in Moroccan and Jordan Higher Education sector. During the project, 15 administrative staff from the two beneficiary countries attended study visits and training at European universities, while 30 administrative staff in total were trained.

3.2.4. Entrepreneurs/Employers

In the South Mediterranean countries, the direct participation of employers in CBHE partnerships is not common, at least in the first generations of projects. The involvement of businesses in a number of CBHE projects was achieved through surveys sent to businesses by HEIs staff. Opportunities for entrepreneurs were not visibly broadened by the CBHE project activities. It is important to note, though, that the labour market includes not only the private sector, but also NGOs and the public sector. Government agencies or professional associations were also occasionally involved in CBHE projects.

- ▶ Overall 966 individuals from the private sector, NGOs and civil servants were trained as part of the 2015 CBHE projects. However, 78% of these people were trained in two projects.



4. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Regional Cooperation

Prior to the cooperative work of the Tempus and CBHE projects, in most of the South Mediterranean countries the relations between HEIs was quite competitive. However, through participating in CBHE projects, HEIs often discovered the **hidden benefits** of working together with national and regional counterparts. Some HEIs realised, for example, that **sharing resources** such as research databases, open learning platforms and scientific laboratories is a win-win situation as well as being evidently resource saving.

Since the first generation of CBHE projects, the CBHE action has contributed to reinforcing the regional cooperation between the South Mediterranean countries. This continued in the following years, under the subsequent calls for proposals. Academics in the South Mediterranean Region are eager to seek cooperation with institutions from the same region. Indeed, when there is a preference for international cooperation, the geographic or cultural proximity (expressed in factors such as language and religion and a tradition of cooperation) tends to prevail.

The financing of CBHE projects through regional budget envelopes is a further factor in facilitating regional cooperation and exchange. In terms of geographical scope, **40% of all projects selected in the entire action period are regional projects**, the majority of which involve 11-15 institutions from different countries.

This regional cooperation provides a means by which HEIs can work together on themes of mutual interest across national and ethnic boundaries, and promotes people-to-people contacts, which help to change mentalities and diminish prejudices.

A number of academic subject areas lend themselves to a regional dimension such as health, engineering and environmental studies and proved to be suitable fora for cooperation. In working together, exchanging best practices and benchmarking against each other, each country has learned from its neighbours:

A bottom-up approach for opening up education in South-Mediterranean countries (OpenMed) (561651-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

OpenMed addressed Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) at the partner HEIs in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Palestine. The project established eight "Innovation Centres for Open Education" (ICOEs) at the premises of the partner universities together with a series of specific training courses for trainers from the partner countries. Through OpenMed a series of dialogues between the partners were established, enabling the regional agenda to promote OER and to build capacities in Open Education (OE). In addition, OpenMed created a network of experts, advocates and researchers with the primary objective of supporting the co-creation of knowledge from a regional perspective with a unique and collective approach to opening up education.

4.2. National Education Reforms

Structural projects are of particular importance for triggering and supporting developments and reforms in the national education systems of the Partner Countries. The majority of Structural Projects are **national projects** (57%).

Analysis has shown that successful CBHE projects sparked national debates and highlighted policy gaps. Since the participation of Ministries of Higher Education in Structural Projects is obligatory, the CBHE action laid the ground for cooperation between HEIs and national authorities:

Professional Standards Framework for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Lebanese Universities (E-Taleb) (561981-EPP-1-2015-1-LBLB-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

The project successfully developed a Lebanese Professional Standards Framework for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. In addition, a Post-Graduate Certificate Programme in Teaching and Learning (NCTL), eight Centres for Teaching and Learning Excellence, and a platform for exchanging good practices were also established with success. E-Taleb standards became an integral part of the Higher Education system in Lebanon. The support of the Ministry of Higher Education is a key element to ensure broader impact at national level and to ensure the sustainability of the project results for the benefit of the Higher Education system in Lebanon.

Despite success stories **in reforming national legislation**, the process is not always smooth. Many Ministry officials were not used to this bottom-up approach and limited language skills acted as a barrier, increasing their resistance. In addition, there was often a **lack of awareness and proper follow-up by the Ministries**, mainly due to evident **lack of human resources** able to follow up effectively on the projects' implementation. As a result, despite the reforming potential that most of the structural projects have, the effective translation into policy and legislative reforms is regrettably less widespread than expected.

Nevertheless, despite the obvious constraints, Structural Projects remains an essential means of ensuring the involvement of the Ministries of Higher Education in the CBHE action. According to their perception, these projects remains **highly relevant** in terms of attainment of policy objectives in the Partner Countries.



5. INCLUSIVENESS

5.1. People with Fewer Opportunities

- ▶ Around 33% of the CBHE projects in the South Mediterranean Region include as a priority the involvement of people with fewer opportunities. Projects target students with disabilities (visual and hearing-impaired students), refugees, women and, less frequently, ethnic minority groups for which, in the South Mediterranean Region, interest and sensitivity are not very advanced.

Given the socio-economic difficulties in the South Mediterranean Region, activities aimed at people with disabilities are especially dependent on international funding mechanisms like the CBHE action:

Improving Higher Education Quality in Jordan using Mobile Technologies for Better Integration of Disadvantaged Groups to Socio-economic Diversity (mEQUITY) (561527-EPP-1-2015-1-BG-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project focused on developing digital learning resources for mobile devices targeting students with special needs, ethnic minorities and students dropping out of the educational system for various reasons. Through project activities a number of Jordanian academic staff acquired the capacity to create digital learning resources for mobile devices and 18 specific courses were developed on a dedicated platform.

Developing programs for Access of disadvantaged groups of people and Regions to higher Education (DARE) (561547-EPP-1-2015-1-IL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This cross-regional project aimed at improving the access of students with learning disabilities, ethnic minority students and refugees to Higher Education. Through the development of accessible online/blended courses and the creation of new services and facilities at the universities such as Simulation Lab, Academic Writing Centre, Technology Lab, the project shifted cultural assumptions and succeeded in modifying the regulations of the HEIs for the target groups. It also submitted advocacy papers and guidelines to national authorities pursuing a change in policy towards target groups.

5.2. Institutions Located in less developed regions

In the South Mediterranean Region, the CBHE action reached HEIs outside the capitals. Institutions located throughout the national territory participated in the projects, even though it were HEIs located in the main cities that more often took part in consortia. In some consortia, a good practice was observed consisting in more experienced universities twinning with universities located in more peripheral areas and mentoring them in their first international projects.

Co-construction d'une Offre de Formation à Finalité d'Employabilité Elevée (COFFEE) (561812-EPP-1-2015-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

This project consortium was set up with the view to grouping together, in each of the three Algerian main areas (East, Centre, West), a more experienced university and two “junior” institutions which were first-time participants in the action, and which could benefit from specific support and guidance. The model proved effective in nurturing the active participation of less-experienced HEIs and in increasing their willingness to take on board larger responsibilities.



6. CONCLUSIONS

The South Mediterranean countries are privileged partners of the European Union, however their economies are still insufficiently competitive, the private sector is underdeveloped and there is often too much political interference. Aside from Israel, none of the countries of this area is considered to be a well-functioning market economy and the Region is undermined by political instability affecting several countries to different degrees (Lebanon, Palestine, Algeria, besides the conflicts in Syria and Libya). Despite some progress and reforms undertaken, many structural problems affect the national labour markets and employment opportunities for young people (graduates).

A first analysis of the 2015 project final reports has shown that CBHE projects play a role in supporting the development of the education systems in the Partner Countries. The higher education sector is a driving force for the economy and society as a whole, and the role of the CBHE action is important as it contributes to long-term structural changes in these countries. A number of best-practice examples show the benefits that CBHE projects can have on education systems, HEIs and individuals (academics, administrative staff, and students).

However, the impact of the CBHE action can be further improved by looking at the challenges that were identified in the assessment of the 2015 projects' final reports and in the monitoring activities (desk monitoring, monitoring missions, institutional monitoring and cluster meetings) conducted by the Agency. Some of the challenges refer to the CBHE action as a whole, others specifically to the South Mediterranean region.

6.1. Challenges

- The CBHE action has a large number of **recurrent beneficiaries**, both institutions and individuals. In the long term, this leads to a **lack of innovative and creative project ideas** (and few new collaborations) and diminishes the impact of the CBHE action in the region. In addition, this reduces the opportunities for newcomers, who are more in need of building capacities, as they have to compete with very experienced HEIs who have already gained expertise in writing competitive proposals.
- Despite a clear willingness to open up universities to international cooperation, **internationalisation strategies** at HEIs are often insufficiently developed. The creation of project consortia often lacks a long-term strategic vision for the development of the HEIs; proposals are developed because of individual contacts between staff and academics in other countries or because of recurrent collaborations existing since the Tempus programme, rather than focusing on the academic needs of the target beneficiaries and the effective expertise of Programme Country HEIs.
- The overall monitoring activities have shown that the **same staff members are involved in several projects** in parallel. This has produced a kind of 'monopolisation' within the projects to the detriment of diversification of individuals and faculties. Diversification would reinforce the institutional ownership of results rather than individual ownership.
- The large maximum grant amount (EUR 1 million) too often leads to 'inflated' project budgets and lowers the **cost efficiency of project activities**. This can be observed in staff costs, where excessive calculations of unit costs per activity are applied, as well as in equipment where general

devices prevail over equipment targeting the specific needs of each institution, and where the link with the specific objectives of the project is not always evident. In addition, subcontracting often includes a range of miscellaneous activities (printing, website management, translations) that should normally be carried out by the partners, but are outsourced to reduce the financial contribution of the universities.

- Purchasing equipment, on average 20% of the CBHE grant, is very often delayed due to complications in tendering procedures with the consequence that sometimes **equipment** is only available at the very end of the project and is not really used during the project activities.
- CBHE consortia organise a lot of travel, with an average duration of 4-5 days per mobility. Most of this mobility concerns the delivery of training to the Partner Countries' staff in Europe. While this duration is appropriate for project meetings and study visits, **for staff training** such short mobilities do not constitute an optimal format to achieve the expected results. Not only is the number of staff involved limited due to the high travel costs and costs of stay, but also, and more importantly, such trips often fail to transfer the necessary skills and abilities to the Partner Countries' staff in order for them to master the newly-acquired knowledge. Consequently, the frequently applied T-O-T scheme (Training of the Trainers) was only occasionally satisfying, and many difficulties were encountered in providing sessions at the Partner Country universities to increase the number of trained staff.
- **Accreditation** is sometimes problematic because it takes a long time and does not enable new degree programmes to be launched within the eligibility period of the CBHE project. In other cases, accreditation does not concern all partner HEIs in the consortium as some universities take part in the project with the aim of updating a few courses, rather than creating a new curriculum or a new study track that would require the involvement of the entire department.
- With the exception of Jordan, the participation of **non-academic partners** in CBHE projects is very limited and the involvement of private business remains a challenge. Finding mechanisms for the integration of more non-academic partners is vital given their importance for ensuring the relevance of new and updated study programmes for the labour market.
- The current **categories of projects** (Curriculum development, Modernisation and Governance of HEIs, Strengthening academia/business relations) present some inconvenience and confusion, as many proposals submitted under the third category are not substantially different from those of the other two categories. Indeed, proposals submitted under category III either plan an updating/creating of new modules to improve the employability of the graduates, or intend to create new services or centres at the universities to facilitate structured collaboration with external stakeholders.
- **Regional and cross-regional projects** face various administrative and management challenges due to different rules and regulations applicable in different countries. As a result, regional cooperation is less evident and national cooperation remains more common.
- The creation of **key project management documents** for quality assurance, management processes, promotion and dissemination often does not meet the expected quality standards: one of the most striking elements is the lack of quantitative targets for indicators and, more generally, a persistent confusion of essential concepts as indicators, sources of verification, and risk mitigation.

- There is little regular **outreach beyond the initial partnership**. This should become a key priority for the CBHE projects. Intensive dissemination of project outcomes and results during and after the funding period is essential for the sustainability of the project. Excellent results should be better valorised and shared with other HEIs working in the same field and facing the same challenges. The effective impact of the project would thus be strengthened and broadened.
- For a number of CBHE projects, appropriate an **institutional endorsement** by the HEI administration is not or only partially in place. HEIs must invest more in using CBHE projects for strategic development and provide adequate support via their international offices and financial departments. Often, a lack of synergies between different CBHE projects (and with other funded Erasmus+ initiatives) within the same institution can be observed.
- In a considerable number of Structural Projects, the **involvement of decision makers and national authorities (Ministries of Education/Higher Education)** is not as determinant as expected. In practice, the difference between Joint Projects and Structural Projects tends to be blurred; in particular, dissemination activities and exploitation of results are basically conducted in the same way in Structural Projects and in Joint Projects. In most of the cases the Ministries lack the necessary human resources to follow up all CBHE projects in which they are involved. Nevertheless, this reflects a certain lack of commitment from the national authorities to follow up and incorporate the CBHE projects' results into their national education strategies.
- Lack of **financial autonomy at the HEIs is a serious problem particularly in Maghreb countries**. Without their own funds and separate bank accounts at HEI level, institutions face severe challenges in the financial management and implementation of international projects. This causes a huge administrative burden and delays project activities since the request for funds may within the institution requires lengthy procedures engaging many hierarchy levels for approval. This also jeopardises the sustainability of the project results because the regulations hinder attempts to generate additional income, for example via consultancy and research services.
- **Students** are not involved in the project conception, design and implementation in the majority of cases. They are mainly involved at the end of the CBHE project in its testing phase, if at all. In addition, in the South Mediterranean Region the culture of involving the final beneficiaries, i.e. the students, in the evaluation of courses, teaching methodology and learning outputs is not widespread, as its value for improving teaching standards is usually underestimated. Also, student associations, which could be part of project consortia, have not participated in CBHE projects in the South Mediterranean Region; as a consequence, students' expectations and needs are not sufficiently taken into account, lowering the relevance of their studies for the labour market.
- The **sustainability of project results** is often not sufficiently addressed by the consortia, particularly in public universities, and sustainability often relies on the submission of a successive application to 'prolong' the funding period. In most of the cases, partnerships regard the purchased equipment as the main sustainability measures, but this is an evident misconception.

6.2. Recommendations

The analysis of the 2015 CBHE projects, together with the challenges identified, gives rise to the following recommendations for changes and improvements:

- The action should focus more on **targeted structural change** in the Partner Countries. The **Structural Projects** should be better employed as instruments to address the national needs and bring about the necessary reform in line with the national priorities of the Partner Countries' education systems. The Ministries of Education play a critical role for the exploitation, upscaling and mainstreaming of CBHE project results but this does not translate into reform or modernisation of the sector. Adequate measures should be set up to ensure that the national authorities play a steering role in Structural Projects. The organisation of project 'cluster meetings' in the presence of the Ministries of Education brought some good results particularly in terms of awareness, but this is still not sufficient to guarantee appropriate impact at sectorial level.
- The participation of Partner Country HEIs in the CBHE action or in future cooperation programmes should **be based on institutional medium and long-term strategies and must reflect institutional priorities**. This 'strategic interest' orientation leads to better support of the CBHE projects, the exploitation and synergies of the project results and, above all, to the effective ownership of the overall project as well as of specific project objectives. With this premise, the sustainability of the project results after the end of the projects' funding periods would be concretely ensured and would not remain only on paper.
- The **institutional capacity of Partner Country HEIs** to manage international projects needs to be further developed. Although South Mediterranean HEIs have acquired concrete capacities and experience in this domain throughout the entire duration of the CBHE action, it is still evident that they could benefit from more training and support to develop innovative project ideas and competitive proposals, and to ensure high quality in the implementation and management of international projects. This is particularly true bearing in mind the often challenging institutional and national constraints that are not conducive to further increase their capacities.
- The **diversity of HEIs** and individuals in the CBHE action needs to increase. The CBHE action focuses on high value projects and this favours experienced (often recurrent) and larger HEIs. The 'entry barriers' for smaller institutions and newcomers are currently high. One way to counterbalance this challenge would be to dedicate a share of the budget to smaller projects covering certain types of activities only (i.e. staff training activities, exchange of university professors, update of few modules, summer schools, etc.). However, such an approach is more labour-intensive to manage from EACEA and would require the introduction of simplified funding modalities (e.g. lump sums) and simplified monitoring of project activities.
- The **involvement of non-academic partners, including private businesses and relevant stakeholders** (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, professional associations, etc.) in CBHE projects needs to be reinforced to strengthen the link with the labour market and to facilitate the employability of the students. New approaches to ensure a significant quantitative and qualitative participation of companies active in the Region should be developed. To this end, the current **three categories of projects** (Curriculum development, Modernisation and Governance of HEIs, Strengthening academia/business relations) **should be rationalised**. With regard to the first category, the participation of non-academic partners could be made compulsory for every

curriculum development project. The second category of projects can be kept to address the modernisation of the HEIs' governance/management and the higher education system.

- The **involvement of certain professors in several parallel projects** (as coordinators and/or partners) – and benefiting from “top up” staff costs – needs to be reviewed as it undermines the quality of project outputs and the real outreach of capacity building activities within the partner universities, faculties and departments. The **inclusion of younger and diversified academic staff** in CBHE projects would not only provide them with opportunities for continuous professional development and career options (contributing to the fight against brain drain), but also increase the visibility and ownership of projects results within the HE Institution.
- South Mediterranean HEIs would benefit from **increased and recurrent contacts with professors from Programme Countries HEIs** to ensure, on one hand, **more training for the Partner Countries' staff** and, on the other, to teach as **guest lecturers** in graduate and post-graduate courses. Training provided by Programme Country professors would improve the effectiveness of the training delivered within the projects, as local staff would benefit from regular coaching sessions as part of a longer and comprehensive training cycle. This includes applying the acquired knowledge to teaching practices as well as receiving on-spot guidance from the Programme Countries' trainers on practical cases and to discuss local specificities. As for guest lecturers, in the case of Curriculum projects, the presence of lecturers from Programme Countries would improve the knowledge transfer and provide more visibility and attractiveness for students. In both cases, the overall results would be an increased number of staff being involved, reinforcing the desired multiplier effect within each partner institution.
- To demonstrate adequate responsiveness to the current challenges of climate change, CBHE projects should **limit the amount of air travel**, for instance giving preference to the mobility of lecturers/trainers instead of the mobility of larger groups of academics to be trained. Appropriate use of online activities could be used whenever these can produce equivalent outputs.
- **Students and student associations** should take part in CBHE projects (were relevant) from the beginning. This would enrich project development and implementation and allow a better

match between project outcomes and the expectations and interests of the students. This would also contribute to guaranteeing the sustainability of the projects, particularly for curriculum development projects.





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Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report South Mediterranean Region

Resume

This report is based on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's evaluation of the first final project reports of the first generation of CBHE projects selected for funding in 2015. Altogether 138 projects were funded in 2015 among which 39 were implemented in the South Mediterranean Region.

