

# PELIARQ

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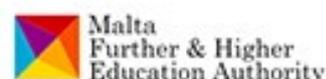
## Guidance toolkit for internationalisation opportunities in the Levant

Version 1, May 2022

Version 2, August 2022



Promoting European-Levantine Internationalisation and Automatic Recognition of Qualifications





## About PELIARQ

PELIARQ “Promoting European-Levantine Internationalisation and Automatic Recognition of Qualifications” promotes opportunities for internationalisation by European universities in the Levant; and promotes improved recognition of qualifications and transparency around the education systems in Europe.

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PELIARQ is implemented by:

- UK NARIC, ECCTIS Limited
- UNIMED – Mediterranean Universities Union (Italy)
- Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)

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## List of Acronym

COIL: Collaborative Online International Learning  
DGHE: Directorate General of Higher Education  
EHEA: European Higher Education Area  
EU: European  
HE: Higher Education  
HEI(s): Higher Education Institution(s)  
ICM: International Credit Mobility  
ICT : Information and Communication Technologies )  
IRO: International Relations Office  
MEHE: Ministry of Education and Higher Education  
QA: Quality Assurance  
TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training  
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization





## Introduction

The PELIARQ project, Promoting European-Levantine Internationalisation and Automatic Recognition of Qualifications, seeks to support EU higher education (HE) institutions to establish improved links with and understanding of the education systems in the Levant (specifically Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria). The project aims for the guidance to be valuable to HEIs across all of Europe. The expected impact is to contribute to new links and partnerships between European HEIs and the region. This guidance toolkit is expected to make internationalisation activities in the Levant clear and easier for European HEIs. In turn, this has the potential to generate a direct impact on students and staff in European HEIs who will benefit from the enhanced collaboration with colleagues in the Levant. It will also have an impact in the Levant, improving links for HEIs in the region with European counterparts.

Strategic internationalisation activities are the cornerstone of a world class higher education system. European universities must be at the forefront of internationalisation to deliver exceptional higher education opportunities for their students and the opportunities for staff to develop ground-breaking research. At the same time, the ability to understand international education systems and qualifications frameworks is a crucial enabler for universities looking to recruit the best students and staff from around the world.

According to UNESCO statistics, the top destination for outbound student mobility from Lebanon is in the EU (France), with the UK being fifth and EHEA countries making up 10 of the top 20 destinations. Moreover, 9 of the top 20 destinations for Jordanian students are also in the EHEA, while for Syria the top destination is Turkey, with 10 of the top 20 destinations being within the EHEA. It is therefore necessary for EU and EHEA institutions to better understand the education systems these students are coming from.

Furthermore, while internationalisation at home and within the EU are well established, other regions continue to require additional information and support. In order to ensure these strategies have the maximum success and impact, HEIs require clear guidance on the available opportunities in specific regions and the ways in which these opportunities can be maximised. It is necessary to identify barriers to internationalisation (such as regulatory issues) and how these can be overcome, and concurrently any particularly pertinent enablers for the opportunities available, such as the use of technology to support internationalisation, support for public-private initiatives, the degree to which educational levels are aligned between systems, and the recognition of prior learning to facilitate transition of learning between different HEIs. The nature and structure of quality assurance arrangements is also a key element in supporting both internationalisation and a clear understanding of the education systems of the region.

PELIARQ is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union during the period September 2020 to August 2022.





## Rationale for this guidance and methodology

The rationale behind the **Guidance Toolkit for internationalisation opportunities in the Levant** is to support internationalisation opportunities between Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Europe and their counterparts in the Levant, namely in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The guidance toolkit includes guidance on developing partnerships, student and staff mobility, cross-border educational arrangements, between the EU and Levantine institutions, and guidance on delivery of online / blended learning, compatible with regional recognition and accreditation requirements. The guidance toolkit is divided into subtopics related to different types of internationalisation opportunities, including country overviews. The guidance toolkit is developed also in the form of an **interactive tool**, to be disseminated across Europe to promote increased cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe and the Levant, for the mutual benefit of the internationalisation strategies. It aims to demonstrate the range of available internationalisation options for European universities seeking links with institutions in the Levant.

There is a vast literature on the internationalisation of higher education, as the topic is of primary interest for policy-makers, educators and leaders. Economic performance is indeed affected by the growing cross-border flows of knowledge, workers and students; while at the same time reflecting nations' willingness to internationalise. Although universities have been international since ancient times, globalisation has brought in new environments for the universities to operate in, and increasingly, the universities worldwide are trying to internationalise their operations and connect to each other.<sup>1</sup> While many activities have been implemented in the direction of cooperation with the region, thus far there has not been a project with the specific focus on the needs of EU higher education institutions, building their knowledge and understanding of the three systems, and supporting them to take up available opportunities for internationalisation. The focus on EU institutions and their need for information and guidance makes this an innovative Toolkit.

### Why this guidance toolkit?

The guidance toolkit is designed to respond to the most common questions of European HEIs while willing to cooperate with their counterparts in the Levant. The guidance toolkit aims to facilitate cooperation and encourage relations between HEIs in the two regions. While higher education institutions in the Levant should come closer to the European model, it is equally important that European Higher Education systems deepen the knowledge of others. It aims to gather all in one place the most relevant information, which are usually scattered.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Vardhan, Internationalisation and the Changing Paradigm of higher education in the GCC Countries, SAGE Open. April 2015. DOI:10.1177/2158244015580377





The toolkit intends to answer the following questions:

- Want to know more about the Higher Education systems in the Levant? Consult the countries overviews to get familiar with the Lebanese, Jordanian and Syrian Higher Education sectors and these countries in general.
- Want to engage in cooperation with the Levant? Consult our sections reporting the main types of internationalisation activities, the main stakeholders in the region, and the major areas of interest for cooperation.
- Want to know more about opportunities of internationalisation with Syria, Lebanon or Jordan? Consult the past projects section to get inspiration, take note of the funding opportunities and be aware of potential challenges to face.
- Want to know more about the recognition systems in the Levant? Check our Guidance on Levantine qualifications, qualification frameworks and credit systems.
- Still need further guidance? Check the suggested potential lines of cooperation and our recommendations for the way forward.

## **Why the Levant?**

The Levant is an approximate historical geographical term referring to a large area in the Eastern Mediterranean region of Western Asia. In its narrowest sense, it is equivalent to a stretch of land bordering the Mediterranean in southwestern Asia, which includes present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine and part of Turkey. The selection of the 3 target countries, among those labelled as Levantine, is based on the experience and outreach capacity of the PELIARQ partners.

## **Who is this guidance toolkit for?**

The target group for the guidance toolkit are admissions and international office staff in European HEIs. The guidance is for European HEIs seeking opportunities in the Levant, and/or needing information in order to improve the integration of students from the region into the European Higher Education Area.

## **Methodology of the guidance toolkit design**

In order to develop the guidance toolkit, Partners have engaged in a number of activities:





- a) First, a thorough needs analysis has been conducted, with the aim of reviewing current activities in the region and complimentary projects or activities already taking place. It allowed us to identify current and past projects relevant to the development of the guidance toolkit, identify stakeholders and potential respondents, and set a number of research questions.
- b) Second, a desk research was performed to collect secondary data. A full list of sources were identified to gather information about the Levantine HE systems.
- c) Third, Partners proceeded with stakeholder engagement and primary source data gathering, surveying European HEIs regarding their knowledge of the region, current engagement activities, and interests for future collaboration; Levantine HEIs on their current activities involving European HEIs; relevant actors for the internationalisation of EU HEIs in the Levant. In total, 57 surveys were collected during the period May to September 2021.
- d) Finally, semi-structured interviews were performed to clarify the information collected and refine the guidance toolkit. A total of 8 interviews were conducted with universities from Jordan (3 HEIs), Lebanon (3 HEIs) and Syria (2 HEIs) between October and December 2021.

After the data collection process, Partners developed and designed the guidance toolkit, reviewing the information collected and defining the best way to present data in a clear, interactive and readable format. Content was structured to present information and resources to be useful, appealing and functional. Particular attention is paid to the sustainability of the output. A round of validation was conducted with reviewers from European universities to receive feedbacks by members of the guidance target groups. Reviewers were asked to fill a template to assess the document relevance, accuracy, completeness, clarity, as well as to share additional references and inputs to enhance the outcome.

## How to use this guidance toolkit?

The Guidance Toolkit is available in two different formats:

- A document version (PDF) for consultation, where a set of information are presented in a readable format to provide the reader with an overall view over the Higher Education systems of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, with a focus on internationalisation priorities, opportunities, actors and trends
- An interactive version, soon available on the project website [www.peliarq.net](http://www.peliarq.net), to allow users to move freely among sections, look for a selected piece of information, access the Forum and exchange with peers from European and Levantine HEIs.





## Challenges to Higher Education internationalisation in the Levant region

Below you can find a list of challenges to internationalisation activities with the Levant region. This toolkit aims to provide the response to some of these challenges, and it is important for HEIs to take into account these factors while designing their collaboration initiatives. Based on this study, the challenges perceived by both European and Levantine HEIs are:

✓ Universities in the EU are often unfamiliar with the overall HE systems in the Levant. Moreover, despite some similarities and the geographical proximity, the situation varies heavily from country to country which requires an examination for each of them.

★ The guidance toolkit provides an overview of the 3 countries Higher Education sectors.

✓ The qualification equivalency system is unknown/unclear.

★ The Guidance on Levantine qualifications, qualification frameworks and credit systems provides information and guidance on the different systems applied.

✓ Lack of information about the number and type of higher education institutions in the area, and on the main elements of the HE sector.

★ The Toolkit provides an overview of the 3 countries HE sectors and a list of the main actors in the countries, including references to the HEIs. The Toolkit aims to be an instrument for European HEIs to potentially collaborate with all HEIs in the country.

✓ European HEIs perceive these countries as not safe for student mobility and not attractive in terms of research and teaching activities for staff.

★ The Toolkit has sections dedicated to mobility flows, inbound and outbound, and to past projects. These may serve as inspiration for future activities. Moreover, it provides a number of practical information as a reference for the planning of mobility arrangements in the most effective, safest and proper way.





- ✓ Lack of communication channels to facilitate mobility and knowledge exchange.
- ★ The Toolkit includes a list of stakeholders in the region with their main contacts and an online Forum for HEIs in Europe and the Levant to connect.
  
- ✓ Universities may be willing to keep their old partners and may have limited interest in new partners and collaboration.
- ★ The Toolkit and the PELIARQ project in general have the main objective of facilitating and widening the cooperation between European and Levantine HEIs.
  
- ✓ Project and initiatives mostly depend on external fundings.
- ★ Although the Toolkit cannot solve the issue of funding initiatives, it provides an overview of the main funding schemes which aim to finance international cooperation.





## Structure of the guidance toolkit for internationalisation opportunities in the Levant

The guidance toolkit is structured as a user-friendly and easily accessible database of information which has the potential to facilitate cooperation between European HEIs and HEIs in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. To welcome users, it is structured as follows:

*8 things you need to know to engage in cooperation with Higher Education Institutions in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.*

1. What is the **higher education system** like in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria?
2. What are current **internationalisation activities** in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria?
3. Past **projects, inspiring examples** and **additional references**
4. **Mobility** with the Levant
5. How can internationalisation activities get **funded**?
6. Which are the main **actors** for the cooperation between Europe and the Levant?
7. **Areas of interest** of Levantine HEIs
8. The **way(s) forward**

The next paragraphs in the documents report the information for each of the above questions / topics as to provide guidance for internationalisation activities.





## What is the **higher education system like** in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria?

### Higher Education in Jordan<sup>2</sup>

31 HEIs in the country	10 public	19 private	2 regional institutions
280.000 students data from 2018-2019	54% female	10% foreign students	
Degrees delivered: Bachelor, Master, Post-Graduate			
Teaching languages	Arabic	English	
Reliable legislative framework for HE			

HE in Jordan plays a key remarkable role in the process of comprehensive development at various levels and areas. In spite of the limited financial and human resources, HE lies within the national priorities in promoting the economic, social and knowledge level of the Jordanian citizens. As for university education, it commenced by the establishment of the University of Jordan in 1962, followed by the establishment of Al-Ahliyya Amman University in 1989 as the first private university in Jordan. As per 2022, there are four types of HEIs in Jordan, for a total of 31 universities in the country, of which 10 are public, 19 are private, and 2 are regional institutions (The World Islamic Science & Education University and the Arab Open University), and 44 are Community colleges. Public HEIs depend on tuition fees and receive partial government funding, while private universities are run and financed by several parties (individuals and companies). All universities are subject to the international standards of accreditation and are administered by the Higher Education Council, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions.

HEIs private universities accommodate about one-fourth of the student population in Jordan. The total number of students in HEIs over 280.000 (data from 2018-2019), of which 54% are female. The number of female students between 20 and 39 years of age graduating from university almost tripled from 2000 to 2017, surpassing the number of male graduates in the same period. In addition, there are several foreign universities operating in Jordan, programs between Jordan and foreign universities and programs of Jordanian universities in and with neighbouring Arab countries.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Jordan (<http://www.mohe.gov.jo/Default/En>)





During the last two decades, the HE in Jordan witnessed a prominent development as well as progress evidenced by: a) the increasing number of institutions of higher education; b) the number of enrolled students, faculty members, administrative and academic members; c) the size of expenditures and the financial government support to the HE sector. The progress in numbers of universities was accompanied by a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in these universities, where 28.000 out of the total are from Arab or foreign nationalities. Universities in Jordan offer a wide range of study programmes. Classes in Arabic language as well as English language are offered in many universities in Jordan.

As a result of the development that occurred in the sector and in order to maintain the quality of HE, the next phase required a reconsideration of the law governing public and private universities as well as the higher education sector in general. Thanks to the "Law of Higher Education No. (23), for the year 2009" and "The Jordanian Universities Law No. (20), for the year 2009", the Jordanian universities became more independent in managing administrative as well as financial matters [...]. Moreover, the Ministry of Higher Education worked on bridging the gap between higher education outputs and the labour market in order to respond to the present and future needs of qualified and specialized personnel in various areas of knowledge, and to compensate for the lack of natural resources in the region by creating a qualified human resources empowered by knowledge and efficiency. In the region as a whole, Jordan's education role has become so effective for the high quality of its educational system, the thing which makes it the focus of attention and admiration in the region, and this is clearly reflected in the number of foreign students' at Jordanian universities from around the world.

### Higher Education in Lebanon<sup>3</sup>

49 HEIs in the country	1 public	48 private	
60% of the Lebanese students are enrolled in private universities			
Degrees delivered: Bachelor, Master, Post-Graduate			
Teaching languages	Arabic	English	French
Very diversified HE sector		Solid structures for internationalisation	

<sup>3</sup> Higher education in Lebanon, SPHERE (<https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-lebanon>) Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) country fiche Lebanon (2017)





Lebanon's HE dates back to the 19th Century when the American University of Beirut (AUB) was founded in 1866 and the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) in 1875. The Lebanese University (LU) is the only public university in the country and it was founded in 1951. Most of the 49 HEIs currently operating in Lebanon were legally established in the late nineties when the private sector flourished in a sudden and rapid expansion following the 15 year civil war in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990, which had a very damaging impact on the country's higher education sector. The freedom and independence of Lebanese higher education is protected by the Constitution.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) is in charge of managing all tertiary education in the country. In 2002, a Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) was established to regulate the private higher education sector and supervise and coordinate all actions related to it. The DGHE is in charge of the 48 private higher education institutions currently in operation in the country, while the only state Lebanese University (LU) has autonomy and its own system of governance. The freedom of Lebanese HE is guaranteed by the Constitution. According to Article 10, chapter 2 of the Lebanese Constitution, "Education shall be free" and every religious community has the right to have its own schools or universities. As far as private HE is concerned, up to 2014 the sector had been governed by a law which dated back to 1960. A new law regulating the Lebanese private Higher Education sector was adopted by the Parliament on 30 April 2014 and it is now in the implementation phase.

The public Higher Education sector, represented by the Lebanese University (LU), is governed by its own law, decrees and bylaws under the tutorship of the MEHE and has a high degree of independence and autonomy. On the other side, Lebanon has a very developed and significant private Higher Education sector. It represents more than 60% of the total student enrolment in Higher Education. The sector is under the tutorship of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education through the Directorate General of Higher Education. In 2007, the government adopted a new national education strategy in which a vision for Higher Education was included. It aims at an education of good quality and available on the basis of equal opportunity; education contributes to social integration, economic development and to the creation of a knowledge society. This strategy remained without feasible action plans until 2010 when the MEHE announced its quinquennial action plan for general education. In 2011, the newly appointed Minister of Education and Higher Education confirmed this action plan. Achievements have been made in some of these areas: a new law for the reorganisation of private Higher Education was adopted in 2014, two laws, one for the creation of a National Agency for Quality Assurance in HE and another for the restructuring of the DGHE, have been drafted and are in their final stage of ratification at the Lebanese Parliament since then.





## Higher Education in Syria<sup>4</sup>

31 HEIs in the country	8 public	23 private
In 2012-2013 about 660.000 Higher Education students	In 2015 about 450,000 university-age Syrians had become refugees	
Degrees delivered: Bachelor, Master, Post-Graduate		
Teaching language	Arabic	Few courses delivered in English / French
HEIs and international cooperation severely impacted by the civil war		

Higher education in Syria is governed by the Ministry of Higher Education, which is also responsible for developing, deciding, implementing, and evaluating higher education policies, laws, and regulations. Higher education is regulated by University Law No. 6 of 2006, and each institution is established through a separate presidential decree. Because institutions of higher education cannot operate without government approval, all operating institutions are assumed to have formal recognition or accreditation. The Syrian HE system includes in 2020 8 public and 23 private universities in Syria. Public universities have long dominated the scene in HE in Syria. Education at most public universities is free. Students can obtain a bachelor, master or PhD. They only pay a small annual registration fee. Most Syrian students study at public universities. Syria's four main public universities are Damascus (established 1923), Aleppo (1958), Tishreen (1971), and Al Baath (1979). Along with public universities, there have been private universities in Syria since 2001. Private universities were first permitted to open in Syria following Presidential Decree No. 36 in 2001; prior to this, no private universities were permitted in the country. The first private provider was the University of Kalamoon in 2003. Until now (2022), private universities have only been allowed to offer bachelor's programmes. There are also Higher institutes, which often fall under the supervision of a public university or the Ministry of HE, offering various types of programmes as bachelor's, master's or PhD degree. Last, the Syrian Virtual University was established in 2002 and offers distance learning courses entirely delivered online. Indeed, it is the only institution allowed to deliver online education in Syria.

By law, holders of a general secondary school certificate qualify for access to higher education. Although all students with a general secondary school certificate are guaranteed admission to higher education, it is highly competitive. The institution to which they are admitted depends on the scores they receive on the secondary-school examination. Syrian

<sup>4</sup> Education in Syria, NUFFIC <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/education-systems/syria/higher-education>  
The state of play in Syrian Higher Education post-2011, UNESCO Beirut office and UK NARIC (2020)





higher education institutions can offer professional and research-oriented higher education. Students can pursue higher education at: public universities; private universities; and higher institutes. Courses are mostly taught in Arabic although English proficiency is often required, particularly at postgraduate level as most courses have some teaching in English.

Various reform initiatives were launched during the 2000s seeking to 'modernise' Syrian higher education and make the sector an integral part of the national economic liberalisation strategy. In the 2006-2010 five-year plan, higher education was held to be crucial to supplying highly-skilled graduates that could enhance national competitiveness and create a domestic knowledge-economy. However, since the eruption of protests in Syria during March 2011 and the subsequent civil war, HEIs have been subject to multiple stresses in a complex and fast-changing conflict-affected environment. Among the challenges to the survival of the HE sector: high levels of insecurity, mass displacement, war economy and siege warfare, just to cite some. Much more than the quantity of higher education, conflict has impacted upon quality. First and foremost, Syria's brain drain of faculty members: many of the best qualified professors left, being replaced by much less qualified staff. HEIs suffer also from lack of equipment and destroyed infrastructures, which collapsed significantly, limiting both teaching and research capacity (laboratories are barely equipped for research). Corruption and lack of funding worsen the scenario for Syrian HEIs. Prior to the outbreak of war in 2011, the British Council and UNDP were working on plans to establish a quality assurance system and national qualifications framework, but these were postponed due to the conflict.





## What are current **internationalisation activities** in the Levant countries?

### Internationalisation of Higher Education in Jordan<sup>5</sup>

#### Highlights

- Most HEIs teach in English teaching and have the syllabus coherent with international standards. English versions of institutional websites are generally available.
- Good cooperation in Hard Sciences and research on the top agenda of internationalization for universities.
- A QA policy and agency exists for HEIs, which contributed to quality of education and improved universities' international ranking, perceived as a means of promoting international research.
- The country's stability compared to other countries in the region.
- Jordanian HEIs are willing to develop joint degrees and more joint doctoral programmes, as well as making agreements for co-supervision of PhD students.
- Great experience of many Jordanian HEIs with the Erasmus+ program.
- HEIs need to work on strengthening the entrepreneurial mindset and the capacity to dialogue with the private sector.

Universities in Jordan aim to raise among the world-class universities, providing students with quality education and learning experience, adopting research programs, producing and disseminating knowledge and integrating a lifelong learning approach to contribute to the quality of local, regional and international communities. Being international and being recognized at international level has indeed been a priority for most of the HEIs in the country, with the overall purpose of becoming competitive and delivering high quality education in line with international standards. Jordanian universities have increased their attractiveness in the region, thanks to the process of modernization undergone in recent years, as well as their reputation in Europe, Africa, and Asia. After more than a decade of cooperation projects, and capacity building actions, Jordanian HEIs are now considered as well-experienced and reliable actors. The University of Jordan and the Jordan Institute of Science and Technology are considered among the best institutions in the Arab world. Concerning academic mobility,

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<sup>5</sup> *The Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Mediterranean, Current and prospective trends, Union for the Mediterranean.*





Jordan raised in the South-Mediterranean region as a preferred destination, thanks to the quality and attractiveness of HE, and the stability of the country over the years with respect to other MENA countries.

A special focus is posed now on internationalization of research, which might be the new open window for Jordanian universities, through the development of joint research programs and joint degrees with international counterparts, and developing more doctoral programmes. Also, the European Commission recognises Jordan as one of the most promising actors in the Arab countries for research.

From 2015 to 2020 Jordanian universities took part in 53 projects funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, (against 210 projects funded for the whole South-Mediterranean region). Jordanian universities participated as Coordinators of 16 projects, which is an outstanding result compared with the neighbouring countries.

In a context where funds are limited but the national policy has always been supportive, the commitment of universities has been the real driving factor. Universities have shown a great commitment to establishing international relations, to collaborating more with institutes all over the world, to sending and receiving students and staff, to engaging in cooperation projects and so on. While historically Jordan had connections mainly with the United States and with the United Kingdom, in recent years the European Member States have opened the doors to a wider range of possibilities through its programmes, increasing cooperation agreements with almost all European Member States, especially with Germany, Spain and Italy. Although the Constitution of Jordan states that the Arabic language is the official language of teaching and learning, in practice in most universities teaching is in English language, especially in hard sciences.





## Internationalisation of Higher Education in Lebanon<sup>6</sup>

### Highlights

- Full autonomy of Higher Education Institutions.
- International Relations Offices and QA offices exist in most universities, staff is well trained and experienced in international cooperation.
- The HE system works in 3 languages (EN, FR, AR), facilitating 2-way mobility.
- English and/or French versions of institutional websites are available.
- Strong interaction with large international organisations.
- Some Lebanese universities are at the top of HEIs international rankings.
- Lebanon may act as a cultural bridge between Europe and the Middle East.
- Many joint degrees and double diplomas are already in place.
- Coexistence of both the European and the American credit systems.
- No legislation to recognize online education is in place.
- Very bureaucratic system which may hinder collaborations.

Internationalisation of HE in Lebanon is an historical process and a natural evolution, and has been mostly the result of initiatives of individual higher education institutions, together with the support of foreign governments, supranational organizations and international policies, rather than the consequence of national legislation. Furthermore, the Lebanese diaspora has resulted in a multinational composition of the Lebanese people at home and abroad, and international cooperation has been regarded as a means to gather Lebanese emigrants back to their roots. The diverse and open cultural background and the high degree of autonomy that universities in Lebanon enjoy have attracted over the decades many foreign students and many foreign universities. On the downside, such a highly diversified development process, together with the Lebanese state playing a minor passive role, have generated a HE sector that appears fragmented, somehow muddled, influenced by foreign countries and strongly depending on the individual strategy of each HEIs.

HEIs are composed of only one public university, the Lebanese University, and 49 private higher education institutions currently in operation in the country. Most of the universities have foreign affiliations, or religious affiliation, born upon historical ties. In general, universities have full autonomy to design their programs, choose the language of instruction and engage in international partnerships. In this context, HEIs do a great deal in reinforcing and strengthening their international dimension to become regional players. The majority of Universities in

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<sup>6</sup> *The Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Mediterranean, Current and prospective trends, Union for the Mediterranean.*





Lebanon have a strategic plan which includes internationalisation as a core element. The strategic commitment is translated in most cases into the appointment of a Vice-Rector for international affairs, the creation of an International Relation Office (IRO) to coordinate institutional activities and eventually the involvement of different academic and administrative staff in each faculty in one or another initiative as an additional reference for internationalisation. The staff working at the IROs is usually very well-trained.

The language of instruction is for the 90% of cases English or French, other than Arabic, and sometimes (such as for the Lebanese University) both languages are used to deliver courses, so that the HE system basically works in 3 languages. Moreover, most universities receive professors and teaching material from their sister institutions in foreign countries, and many faculty members have double nationalities since they completed either graduate or post graduate studies abroad, and this in turn supports the implementation of joint programmes (this is particularly the case with France) enforcing the international dimension of the sector. In general universities are very active in signing agreements with foreign partners, which offer assistance in the development of curricula and in the establishment of joint programs and/or double degrees, which are quite common with European Institutions (especially with France and the United Kingdom), both for the Lebanese University and for private universities, especially at the Master level. The Erasmus+ program has played an important role in diversifying the destination of the mobilities and partnerships, including cooperation with Sweden, Austria, Romania, Greece, Poland, Spain and Portugal.





## Internationalisation of Higher Education in Syria<sup>7</sup>

### Highlights

- Both private and public universities join international cooperation initiatives, and both academic and administrative staff participate in mobility programs.
- Most public universities have International Relation Offices.
- HEIs teaching is mostly in Arabic, with few courses in English or French.
- There is no credit system in Syrian HEIs.
- The only university allowed to deliver online education is the Syrian virtual university. Moreover, infrastructure or tools for online learning are not readily available.
- The war and the instability of the country had a huge impact on academic cooperation, reducing both opportunities and interest.
- Studying abroad is not recognized, and joint degrees are not possible at the undergraduate level. At Master's and PhD levels it is possible for students to do research abroad as part of their program of study.

After many years of conflict, Syrian higher education institutions continue to function. The most significant impact over the HE sector has been on the quality of the education provided, and on the capacity of Syrian HEIs to maintain stable relations with foreign universities around the world. Academic cooperation has suffered deeply due to the political instability, the collapse of infrastructures, and the isolation of the country.

Syrian HEIs used to be partners in European funded projects with Germany, Spain, France, Italy, and to have several collaborations with foreign universities. Recently, projects have been for the most part closed, and also the National Erasmus Office in Syria closed in 2017. Cooperation starts and moves up-to-date along bilateral agreements between universities, for staff exchanges, academic staff mobility, training and skills development. Moreover, due to the difficult relation with Europe, and the difficulties for students and staff to be granted a visa to enter European Member States, Syrian HEIs are recently looking elsewhere, pursuing collaborations with Russia, Iran, China, Indonesia.

Syrian universities have clearly expressed their will to restore academic cooperation and international relations with foreign universities, especially with European ones. Most universities (especially public universities) are equipping themselves with staff and offices dedicated to international relations. However, we must acknowledge that Syrian HEIs still do not have statements or written strategies for international relations, nor has an official roadmap

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<sup>7</sup> Syrian higher education during conflict: Survival, protection, and regime security, Milton (2019)





for internationalisation on behalf of the Ministry of Higher Education been designed. Moreover, International Relations Offices seem to be competing with each other for internationalisation opportunities.

Syria has always been a preferred destination for foreign undergraduate and postgraduate students particularly for those who specialize in Arabic and Islamic studies. Today, mobility is a very small part of university life for Syrians. The international community takes responsibility for reintegrating Syrian refugees into higher education through scholarships from international donors such as UNESCO and programs (e.g, DAFI), and through a number of projects funded by the European Union such as HOPES. However, Syrian students, from inside Syria, have no access to such scholarships, and limited access to other opportunities. Mobility for Syrian students is financed with ICM funds of the European Commission and through scholarships financed by the university itself or the Ministry of HE and distributed along public universities.

Due to the fact that studying abroad is not formally recognized, mobility is managed differently at private and public universities, and depends on the level of education. At the undergraduate level, mostly students of private universities, with a wealthy background, are likely to go on mobility and to come back to Syria. On the contrary, at public universities, almost only master and PhD students go on mobility: they do research abroad as part of their study programs or do a training period at a foreign university as part of their thesis design. These are usually students with English proficiency which are most likely seeking working opportunities abroad. Mobility for academic and administrative staff is instead pursued as a means for acquiring skills, language competences and exchange knowledge, within the framework of cooperation agreements. As a general reflection, very strong travel restrictions are imposed on Syrians, along with a very high risk of brain drain and migrations with no return; and many are unable to fund their learning journeys abroad.



## Past projects, inspiring examples and additional references

### Past projects

	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria	Multi-country
Past projects on internationalisation	<p>EQUAM (on quality assurance and Bologna process) (<a href="http://equam.psut.edu.jo/Home.aspx">http://equam.psut.edu.jo/Home.aspx</a>)</p> <p>JOVITAL (<a href="https://jovital.eu/">https://jovital.eu/</a>)</p>		<p>ASSUR (Erasmus Mundus) (<a href="https://erasmusmundus.univaq.it/assur/">https://erasmusmundus.univaq.it/assur/</a>)</p>	<p>MIMI (<a href="http://www.mimiproject.org/">http://www.mimiproject.org/</a>)</p> <p>EUNIT (<a href="https://www.eunitproject.eu">https://www.eunitproject.eu</a>)</p>
Past projects on recognition	<p>NQF-J (<a href="https://www.nqfjordan.org/what-is-the-nqf-j-project">https://www.nqfjordan.org/what-is-the-nqf-j-project</a> )</p>	<p>TLQAA (<a href="https://www.bau.edu.lb/International-Relations-Office/TLQAA-Project">https://www.bau.edu.lb/International-Relations-Office/TLQAA-Project</a>)</p> <p>TLQAA+ (<a href="http://plus.tlqaa.org/">http://plus.tlqaa.org/</a>)</p> <p>QAHEL (<a href="https://www.bau.edu.lb/International-Relations-Office/QAHEL-Project">https://www.bau.edu.lb/International-Relations-Office/QAHEL-Project</a>)</p>		<p>RECONOW (<a href="http://www.cimea.it/it/progetti-in-evidenza/reconow/reconow-project.aspx">http://www.cimea.it/it/progetti-in-evidenza/reconow/reconow-project.aspx</a>)</p> <p>MERIC-NET (<a href="http://www.meric-net.eu/en/index.aspx">http://www.meric-net.eu/en/index.aspx</a>)</p>
Current internationalisation activities	<p>Funded projects: <a href="http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/38">http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/38</a></p>	<p>Funded projects: <a href="http://erasmus-plus.org/jo/en/Projects">http://erasmus-plus.org/jo/en/Projects</a></p>		<p>MED2IaH (<a href="https://med2iah.eu/">https://med2iah.eu/</a>)</p>
Current recognition work	<p>Jordan National Qualifications Framework, JNQF (<a href="http://en.heac.org.jo/?page_id=7578">http://en.heac.org.jo/?page_id=7578</a>)</p>	<p>LEBPASS (<a href="https://lebpas.org/">https://lebpas.org/</a>)</p>		



## Inspiring examples

### **German-Jordanian university**

A very successful experience in Jordan is the German Jordanian University (<http://www.gju.edu.jo/>). The German-Jordanian University (GJU) is a public university, founded in 2005 by a Royal Decree, in accordance with a memorandum of understanding reached between the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research of the Federal Republic of Germany. The University was modelled on the German applied-sciences model, promoting links between Jordan and Europe, particularly Germany. The University provides undergraduate and graduate programs. Students spend part of their education in Jordan and part in Germany. For example, undergraduate students spend 2 years in Jordan and the last year of their degree abroad. GJU is a state university, therefore it follows the national regulations for HE and issues a Jordanian diploma.

### **International agreements of Lebanese universities**

As a good practice for the internationalisation of the curriculum, we can mention the agreement between University of Saint-Joseph (USJ, a francophone institution) and an American University for an assessment of the English proficiency of BA undergraduate students, which cannot obtain their diploma without the English certificate. Another good practice has been implemented by the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, “being the first private higher education institution in Lebanon to commit itself to staff professional development initiatives and faculty development programs, mostly in cooperation with UK and US universities, thus playing a key role in training highly-qualified academic staff in a trans-national environment”. French-speaking universities in Lebanon use to have double diplomas with their sister universities in France, and most of the Lebanese universities use to “borrow” foreign teachers to deliver courses in Lebanon.

### **European funded projects as an opportunity for Syrians in Syria**

During the interviews, the staff at Syrian universities stressed the fact that they were used to having cooperation with European universities, in the form of joint masters in many fields, from architecture to international law, from urbanization to restoration. Due to the war, these cooperation agreements have been suspended or cancelled. However, scientific cooperation is still possible and European funded projects may represent an opportunity to fund academic cooperation between Syrian universities and European universities. Many are the programs for Syrian refugees around the world, which are without doubts essential. However, European institutions should still look at Syrian HEIs as valuable international partners, capable to bring an added value to academic cooperation.





### **“Enhancing Quality Assurance Management in Jordanian Universities”, EQUAM**

EQuAM is a TEMPUS project (run between 2012 and 2015) which was coordinated by University of Barcelona, Spain, with six universities participating from the Jordanian side: Princess Sumaya University for Technology, Yarmouk University, Hashemite University, Mutah University, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University and Tafila Technical University, in addition to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Higher Education Accreditation Commission and the Association of Arab Universities. From the European side, EQuAM members were the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA), the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System (AQU) University of Tallinn, Estonia, University of Rome La Sapienza, Italy and University Montpellier 1, France. The wider objective of EQuAM was to improve management of quality assurance and enhance the capacity of quality assurance bureaus in universities in Jordan, with the scope of assisting the creation of a model to assess the quality of the Jordanian higher education system, and to support Jordanian higher education institutions and their Quality Assurance Bureaus, hence improving internal QA in line with newly established (at that time) national higher education accreditation commission (HEAC) requirements and international expectations. The model was based on analyses of needs and capacities in higher education institutions and the experiences and best practices from the successful QA action line of the Bologna Process. Workshops, consultations and ‘matching’ exercises were performed, and contributed to the development and improvement of Jordanian higher education institutions. European experiences in building productive relationships between higher education institutions and their QA agencies informed the effective implementation of the model. EQuAM reflected the importance of autonomous universities meeting national and international expectations whilst still working in different contexts.

### **RecoNow**

The RecoNow project aimed at improving and increasing the quality of student mobility within Middle Eastern and European higher education systems. The project tackled poor recognition of foreign qualifications as one of the main challenges that hinder international student mobility. Specific expertise in the credential evaluation field, access to official, comprehensive and focused information on different HE systems, study programmes, institutions and their recognition procedures are among the key issues to be improved in order to guarantee smooth recognition procedures and to foster cross-border student mobility. These are the targets of the RecoNow project, that ran from December 2013 until May 2016 in the framework of the Tempus Programme. Main project activities:

- organisation of a blended course for government officials from Jordan and Palestine to provide them with the knowledge of EU higher education systems, to understand recognition practices and to increase their skills to develop and run National Recognition Centres.
- elaboration of National Reports focusing on education systems in Jordan and Palestine, on Higher Education Institutions, their programmes and qualifications in





these countries with the aim of facilitating the circulation of clear and complete information, useful both to recognition officers and students.

- organization of a training for university staff from Jordanian and Palestinian universities to foster their capacity to carry out academic recognition procedures in order to put in place effective University Recognition Centres and to increase the cooperation among universities on higher education issues.
- elaboration of guidelines for evaluating non-traditional, trans-national education and distance learning institutions and their qualifications in order to foster up-to-date recognition practices that can be applied even to latest and cutting-edge education methods.
- promotion and sharing of the project final results through a publication that were presented during two international conferences that took place in the first half of the year 2016, in Jordan and in Italy.

Partners in the project were: Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Italy - Project coordinator, CIMEA, Italy, Université de Bordeaux, France, Centre International d'Études Pédagogiques - CIEP, France, University College Cork, Ireland, Higher Education Accreditation Commission, Jordan, Association of Arab Universities, Jordan, University of Jordan, Jordan, Princess Sumaya University for Technology, Jordan, University of Petra, Jordan, Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Jordan, Palestinian Ministry Of Education & Higher Education, Palestine, Birzeit University, Palestine, An-Najah National University, Palestine, JCP Srl, Italy.

### **LEBPASS, The Lebanese Diploma Supplement**

The implementation of the LEBPASS project started in 2019 and is running to end in 2022. It aims to promote the Higher Education System in Lebanon, engaging universities, graduates, employers, and other stakeholders for the sake of delivering a Diploma Supplement that could translate the qualifications and skills of students and refugees who graduate from Lebanese Higher Education institutions. The main outputs are summarized as follows:

- Clear educational objectives and student outcomes for degree programs
- Principles for generating a Diploma Supplement similar to the ones adopted in Europe
- A national information centre which oversees the Lebanese Diploma Supplements issuance and raises awareness on its benefits to students and refugees
- A platform
- "LEBPASS" that includes the Diploma Supplement module and other related modules

The project is designed drawing on the Europass Experience. In 2003, the Berlin Communiqué of the Bologna Process sought to bring more coherence to higher education systems across Europe and set the requirement for all Higher Education Institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to all students graduating from 2005 onwards. Diploma Supplement has become more and more a mandatory component of every degree certificate in Bachelor's and Master's programmes in Europe.

Objectives of the project:

- Provide accurate, fair and up-to-date information on an individual's qualifications
- Aid mobility and access to further study and employment abroad





- Provide fair and informed information relating to Lebanese Higher Education System
- Facilitate academic and professional recognition thus increasing the transparency of qualifications

Among the set outcomes of LEBPASS:

- Ensuring sustainable academic programs with clear educational objectives and student outcomes which able to adhere with Diploma supplement requirements
- Developing principles for generating a diploma supplement
- Creating a rational Platform through which the Diploma Supplement module is integrated
- Adopting the Diploma Supplement module by the DGHE, university partners and progressively other universities in Lebanon
- Establishing a national centre who shall oversee the Diploma supplement procedures, implementation and sustainability
- Promoting awareness of the significance and benefits of Diploma supplement among students, refugees, employers and education providers

Expected Impact on the institutional level:

- More awareness on the importance of providing the student a LEBPASS
- Alignment of the framework with institutional policies related to graduation, academic rules, etc.
- Influence Institutional strategies and student support services
- Common language within and cross institutions
- Accurate and up-to-date information on students' qualifications
- Academic recognition and transparency
- Increase of the student mobility

Expected impact on the national level:

- A common language for the different Credits systems existing in Lebanon
- Creation of a National Information Centre for recognition
- Having experts and evaluators to review diploma supplements
- Mobility and access to further study and employment abroad
- Providing fair and informed information relating to qualifications
- Academic and professional recognition increasing the transparency of qualifications
- Creation of common national platform for graduates to make their qualifications visible to the world.





## Additional references

### Regional Resources

- UNESCO Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students, UNESCO Institute of Statistics: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>
- Internationalisation of Tertiary Education in the Middle East and North Africa, CMI: [https://www.cmimarseille.org/sites/default/files/newsite/online\\_english\\_tertiary\\_education\\_report\\_2.pdf](https://www.cmimarseille.org/sites/default/files/newsite/online_english_tertiary_education_report_2.pdf)
- The Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Mediterranean, Current and perspective trends <https://ufmsecretariat.org/publication-speech/internationalisation-of-higher-education-mediterranean/>
- Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education <https://en.unesco.org/themes/higher-education/recognition-qualifications/global-convention>
- Arab States adopt the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education <https://en.unesco.org/news/arab-states-adopt-revised-convention-recognition-studies-diplomas-and-degrees-higher-education>
- UNESCO qualifications passport for refugees and vulnerable migrants <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/qualifications-passport>

### Jordan

- Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research Jordan: <http://www.mohe.gov.jo/en/Pages/default.aspx>
- Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions: <http://www.heac.org.jo/>
- The Scientific Research Support Fund: <http://www.srf.gov.jo/>
- Delegation of the European Union to Jordan: [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/jordan/index\\_ar.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/jordan/index_ar.htm)
- Overview of higher education system - Jordan [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiches\\_jordan\\_2017.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiches_jordan_2017.pdf)
- Erasmus+ for higher education - Jordan Factsheet: [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/neighbourhood/jordan\\_erasmusplus\\_2019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/neighbourhood/jordan_erasmusplus_2019.pdf)
- Study in Jordan: <http://rce.mohe.gov.jo/studyinjordan/en/>
- SPHERE Jordan: <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-jordan>
- Universities recognized by the MHESR for international collaborations: <http://rce.mohe.gov.jo/en/RecognizedUniversities>
- JUST International Students Network: <https://www.facebook.com/ISNJUST/>





- Jordanian National Qualification Framework  
<http://jnqf.heac.org.jo/?v=5.20.10.28.2&url=en/Home>
- List of HEIs in Jordan offering courses in English: <http://erasmus-plus.org.jo/en/For-Students/HEIs-in-Jordan-that-Offer-Study-Programmes-in-English>

## Lebanon

- Ministry of Education and Higher Education: <https://www.mehe.gov.lb/en/>
- National Council for Scientific Research: <http://www.cnrs.edu.lb/english/about/the-cnrs-overview>
- Overview of higher education system - Lebanon: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/library/overview-higher-education-system-in-partner-countries-regions-1234-and-7\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/library/overview-higher-education-system-in-partner-countries-regions-1234-and-7_en)
- Erasmus+ for higher education - Lebanon Factsheet: [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/neighbourhood/lebanon\\_erasmusplus\\_2019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/neighbourhood/lebanon_erasmusplus_2019.pdf)
- SPHERE Lebanon: <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-lebanon>
- Equivalence Committee: <https://www.mehe.gov.lb/en/Pages/Transactions/Committee.aspx>

## Syria

- Ministry of Higher Education [AR]: <http://www.mohe.gov.sy/mohe/index.php>
- Erasmus+ for higher education - Syria Factsheet: [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/neighbourhood/syria\\_erasmusplus\\_2019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/neighbourhood/syria_erasmusplus_2019.pdf)
- Overview of higher education system - Syria: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiches\\_syria\\_2017.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiches_syria_2017.pdf)





## Mobility with the Levant

### Going into Levant

Going to Jordan and/or Lebanon from Europe does not require a long-process of visa application. Instead, for both countries, it is possible to apply and obtain a visa simply at arrival in the country, at the airport of arrival. Travellers can apply for a one-entry visa, for a short stay (maximum 1 month), paying a fee. The officials issuing the visa may be willing to see the accommodation booking, a round-trip flight reservation, and a bank statement (as proof of the capacity of the traveller to pay for their stay in the country). Recently, health documentation is also required to cope with the regulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The cost for the visa is approximately 50 to 100 euro.

### Going into Europe

Travelling into Europe for students and staff of Levantine Higher Education Institutions, and more in general for third-country nationals, is regulated by the Directive 2016/801. Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 rules on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au-pairing. Link to the directive text here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/801/oj>.

As a general rule, a visa is needed to enter Europe for a set period of time and for a justified reason. The visa is issued by the Embassy and/or Consulate in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria. In order to get the visa, travellers must comply with set conditions, such as demonstrating the actual reason of the trip, the financial capacity to fund the mobility as well as the stay abroad, an insurance issued for the travel, in some cases an invitation letter on behalf of the European institutions hosting the student / teacher / administrative member. Moreover, the visa procedure is often quite expensive. Issuing a visa requires time in most of the cases, and the visa may be denied if the travel is not considered duly justified.





## Mobility flows in and out of Jordan

- Mobility flows (both incoming and outgoing) increased notably between 2014/15 and 2018/19 for both students and staff (both academic and administrative staff).
- Main funder of mobility: the European Commission.
- Geographical scope of mobility: Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK.
- Students' mobility mainly at Bachelor's level.
- Staff mobility mostly for academic staff, teaching hard sciences.
- The percentage of women on mobility has increased over the years.

## Mobility flows in and out of Lebanon

- Mobility flows (both incoming and outgoing) have been deeply affected by recent events, including the blast in the Lebanese harbour which reduced the functioning of several HEIs.
- Funders of mobility: European Commission, private companies, international organisations.
- Geographical scope of mobility: France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Spain, UK.
- Student exchanges are mostly for credits, but mobility for degrees is increasing, which is coherent with the delivery of double diplomas with European institutions.
- Gender distribution of students on the move is balanced.
- Students are involved in mobility mostly at Bachelor's and Master's levels.
- Academic mobility happens across many fields, and mainly with sister universities in Europe.

## Mobility flows in and out of Syria

- Mobility flows are very limited, due to the war and war-like situation of the country for many years. While incoming mobility is almost none, outbound flows are ongoing.
- Funders of mobility: international funds, HEIs and the national Ministry of HE.
- Geographical scope of mobility: due to the recent difficulties in the exchanges with Europe (in terms of visa and opportunities), Syrian HEIs are looking primarily at exchanges with Russia, Iran, and China.
- During undergraduate studies, it is mostly students from private universities who go on mobility, while students at public universities go on mobility during their Master's or Phd, as a training period.
- Academic and administrative staff mobility is ongoing, and is very well recognized at the HEI in terms of prestige and reputation, being socially and culturally valued.





## How can internationalisation activities get funded?

International organisations and funding opportunities are wide and worldwide. Here below some of the main programmes and funding scheme are mentioned:

- Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission:  
<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>
- Horizon Europe programme of the European Commission:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en)
- Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund programme of the European Commission:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/funding/asylum-migration-and-integration-funds/asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-2021-2027\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/funding/asylum-migration-and-integration-funds/asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-2021-2027_en)
- Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA):  
<https://prima-med.org/what-we-do/>
- Agence universitaire de la Francophonie Moyen-Orient:  
<https://www.auf.org/moyen-orient/nouvelles/appels-a-candidatures/>
- Funds from national Ministries of Higher Education
- Funds from international companies and private foundations
- DAAD funding programs: <https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/>
- Scholarships offered by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs:  
<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/studying-in-france/finance-your-studies-scholarships/>
- HOPES-LEB Call for Proposals to support Training and Capacity building projects:  
<https://www.hopes-madad.org/announcementsecond-round/?fbclid=IwAR0OxrBLEW0s8-YHrA0ks80QF4TK6GwbtG57-cnFlcjejAaJqYTGIT-kTcw>





## Which are the **main actors** for cooperation between Europe and the Levant?

The most recent updated list of Higher Education Institutions in the 3 target countries, from official sources, are reported here below:

- List of Higher Education Institutions in Jordan: <http://rce.mohe.gov.jo/studyinginJordan/en/>
- List of Higher Education Institutions in Lebanon: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/24>
- List of recognized Higher Education Institutions in Syria: <http://mohe.gov.sy/mohe/> (available only in Arabic)

The focal point for internationalisation are International Relation offices, the President offices, and in some cases offices specifically dedicated to research, mobility and/or cultural relations. Contacts are available on most of the official university's websites.

Additional relevant stakeholders for the cooperation between Europe and the Levant:

- Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE): <http://www.anqahe.org/index.html>
- Association of Arab Universities (AArU): <http://www.aaru.edu.jo/en/english/NewHome.aspx>
- Erasmus Students Network (ESN): <https://www.esn.org/>
- UNESCO Office in Beirut: <https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/beirut/about>
- UNESCO Office in Amman: <https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/amman/about>
- Union for the Mediterranean: <https://ufmsecretariat.org/>
- International Association of Universities (IAU): <https://www.iau-aiu.net/>
- European University Association (EUA): <https://eua.eu/>
- National Erasmus+ Plus Office in Jordan: <http://erasmus-plus.org.jo/en/>
- National Erasmus+ Plus Office in Lebanon: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/>
- German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD): <https://www.daad.de/en/>
- Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF): <https://www.auf.org/>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): <https://www.unhcr.org/>
- European Association for International Education (EAIE): <https://www.eaie.org/>
- Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED): <https://www.uni-med.net/>
- ENIC-NARIC Networks: <https://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx>
- Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA): [https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/index_en)
- Delegation of the European Union to Jordan:





- [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/jordan/1356/about-eu-delegation-jordan\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/jordan/1356/about-eu-delegation-jordan_en)
- Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon: [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon_en)
- Delegation of the European Union to Syria: [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/syria\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/syria_en)
- World Bank: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/home>
- NUFFIC, the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in higher education: <https://www.nuffic.nl/en>
- British Council: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>





## Main areas of interest for Levantine HEIs

According to the responses to the PELIARQ project's surveys and interviews, Levantine universities have an interest in developing cooperation primarily in relation to:

- Digitalization and online learning
- Qualification frameworks and accreditation procedures
- Health education, pharmacy
- Information and communication technologies
- Business and finance
- Art and humanities
- Natural sciences
- Employability and TVET programs
- Engineering
- Environmental studies, renewable energies, green transition

Priorities of Levantine HEIs for their internationalisation activities are:

- the sharing of knowledge and advancement in research
- mobility of students and staff
- co-supervision of PhD students and joint post-doc programs
- implementation of joint-degree and/or double diplomas with European HEIs
- digitalization of education
- interdisciplinary cooperation
- cooperation with QA agencies in Europe





## The way(s) forward

Even though the three countries have unique characteristics and differences, there are a few common elements when it comes to internationalisation. While European HEIs plan cooperation activities with the Levant, they should keep in mind these common features:

- The programmes of the European Commission are the main funding schemes for the Euro-Med region, providing opportunities for exchange, mobility, capacity building, research and for the development of joint programmes.
- The administrative staff at the Levantine universities, and in general the staff dedicated to international activities, may be very well prepared to manage funds and opportunities, but may also be very inexperienced and may require additional support to fully take part in cooperation projects and international initiatives.
- There is a highly fragmented reality when it comes to credit recognition and qualification frameworks. While over the long-term the three countries would be advised to promote and implement structural reforms, in the short-term European institutions should consider defining tailored learning agreements, bilateral inter-university agreements and standards for mutual assessment and recognition of credits.
- Language is often perceived as an issue, while it can be considered as a resource. Both Jordanian and Syrian academics have reliable English knowledge, and Lebanese HEIs are used to work both in English and French. Moreover, Levantine institutions may be a resource when it comes to Islamic studies and Arabic language.

### **The opportunities opened by the digital dimension of education**

The silver lining of the recent COVID-19 pandemic was that many HEIs were forced to move faster towards digitalisation and the use of ICT tools in education, to compensate for the restrictions of movement and in-presence life. The digital dimension of education had an impact also on internationalisation activities, which had a great stop (it was impossible to perform mobilities and organise international symposiums and events, as well as training and project activities). Virtual mobility, virtual exchanges, practices of internationalisation at home were developed further as a response to the limitations caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

The integration of the digital dimension has opened new opportunities for universities, widening the educational offer and pushing the national decision-makers, in some cases reluctant to fully recognize online learning, to adapt to the changes.





Innovative learning methods, and the use of ICT tools, have complemented other internationalisation dimensions and have the potential to grant to higher education Institutions additional tools to relate with each other. European HEIs willing to cooperate with HEIs in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria , should not exclude the possibilities of going digital, with professors giving lectures miles away through a screen, promoting remote co-supervision of master and PhD students, integrating virtual mobility and virtual exchanges in their programs.

It is worth mentioning a few cases pointing in that direction: Jordan has been the first South-Mediterranean country in terms of participation in the European Virtual Exchange programme; Lebanon and Syria are opening to the development of COIL model-Collaborative Online International Learning, that can lead professors to design their online courses, after delivering them in different parts of the world.





## Conclusion

The Guidance Toolkit on internationalisation opportunities in the Levant is far from being concluded. To continue supporting European universities staff in their activities in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, we have collected the major feedback from the reviewers, to define what shall be the next steps:

- The next version of the Toolkit should include additional information about the other internationalisation activities in which Levantine universities are (or are willing to be) engaged, such as participation in networks, organisation of international summer schools, etc.
- It might be interesting to further develop the Toolkit with, on the one side, basic steps on how to start a cooperation with Levantine universities from scratch, and on the other side, how to improve cooperation with these universities.
- It would be beneficial and relevant to explore the interconnection between internationalisation, third mission and inclusion, to widen the discourse on the global responsibility of universities. In particular in contexts of social and political fractures.
- More information on the services that universities in the region may provide to foster both incoming and outgoing mobility can be additional included.
- While the current Guidance Toolkit is an excellent starting point for beginners, more experienced universities in Europe may need more detailed information, with case studies (for example on accredited cooperation examples between Europe and the Levant; current practices of internationalisation; comparative sheets, etc).

