

Speech by Ms. Elsa Fenet
Chargée d'Affaires a. i., Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon

« TEMPUS NATIONAL INFORMATION DAY 2013 »

Ministry of Education and Higher Education
17 January 2013

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Your Excellency Dr Hassan Diab, Minister of Education and Higher Education,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to the Tempus Information Day. The European Union has been supporting the development of higher education in Lebanon for many years, as we recognise the importance of higher education for economic but also for social development. Higher education plays a crucial role in producing a highly qualified labour force and also in disseminating scientific discovery and advanced knowledge. Through teaching and educating future generations of citizens, society profits at large, and well educated young people are able to contribute to better governance. The increasing speed at which existing knowledge becomes outdated in some scientific disciplines requires high adaptability of the education system.

For years, higher education has been a core area within the EU-Lebanon cooperation, with several programmes taking place on bilateral or regional level. Tempus is indeed our principal tool, as we celebrate today yet another year of the implementation of this programme in Lebanon.

Since 2002, the Tempus Programme has supported many projects in Lebanon and contributed to the on-going reform and modernisation of the higher education sector which is brought forward by our Lebanese partners.

In particular, Tempus has helped Lebanese universities modernise curricula and teaching methods and created new Master and Doctoral programmes, focusing on enhancing quality assurance and on keeping up with new challenges and demands. Tempus has also helped promote cooperation between higher education institutions on both sides of the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the Programme has contributed to capacity building of academics and administrative staff in universities in the area of project management.

Many are the achievements of the EU-Lebanon partnership in these areas. However, many are also the challenges which remain to be tackled.

Tempus continues to be a suitable tool to help the Lebanese education sector develop an adequate response to the labour market needs.

Tying the skills taught in the classrooms to the needs of the businesses in the growth sectors of the economy must be one of our primary goals. Moreover, it is crucial that we support graduates in their capacity to adapt to the ever-changing world of today.

One of the means we have to do so may be to complement academic skills with a period of studying abroad, which allows students to develop comparative skills while also fostering dialogue, and boosting personal development and adaptability. In this respect, Erasmus Mundus, the second core programme of the European Union for Higher Education and the flagship for scholarships and academic cooperation between Europe and the rest of the world, is another dimension of our cooperation in higher education.

Tempus, Erasmus and other relevant EU programmes in the field of higher education, as well as the different opportunities that come along with them for Lebanon, will be presented in more detail during today's event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Even in times of financial crises as the European Union is currently experiencing, we continue to hold the firm belief that investing in higher education and academic cooperation is essential for the mutual understanding and prosperity of the European Union and its neighbourhood partners. We will continue to support the Lebanese students, universities and government to this end.

Thank you. I wish you all a fruitful Day.