

**Final Conference Tempus-TLQAA  
University of Balamand**

Concluding Notes

**Welcome note**

Your Excellency Dr. Jammal Director General of Higher Education representing Minister Diab

Your Excellency Ms. Eichhorst Ambassador Head of the European Delegation

Presidents and rectors of the universities

Head of orders and professional associations

Representatives of industrialists

Members of the European and Lebanese academic institutions

Dear Students and colleagues,

Welcome to the University of Balamand. Less than 2 years ago, on January 26<sup>th</sup> of 2012, we were also here gathered under the auspices of Minister Diab and Ambassador Eichhorst launching the Tempus-TLQAA project. The speeches given that day by Ms. Ambassador, by Mr. Minister and by Mr. President Dr. Elie A. Salem shaped this project and its pathway.

**Project achievements**

That day, my colleagues and I promised to meet the project goals. Please allow me to enumerate briefly what has been achieved during the past couple of years. We started by the most complex task of finding a consensus of a possible model for the Lebanese Quality Assurance System that takes into consideration the expectations of the different stakeholders knowing that the establishment of a QA agency is a major change in the governing structure of a Higher Education System. A model was proposed and met the stakeholders' approval. Afterwards, the major components of a QA agency were developed: standards and procedures, training evaluation experts, guide for self-

assessment, etc. These components were tested in a pilot evaluation. Yes, Ten Lebanese Universities have performed their self-assessment and provided their self-study reports and five among them have undergone external evaluation by committees formed of Lebanese and European experts. Beyond this technical side, we have been able to show that, with all diversity here in Lebanon and in higher education, and when the context permits, we would work together and trust opening our doors to peers in a pure academic setting and for the noble objective of assuring quality education to the young generations. This process and the lessons learned are described in the book: “On the Design of an Evaluation Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education”.

### **The Tools**

This was the seed of a Quality Culture. But what were the tools?

The need was here, and the motivation and engagement of the Lebanese partners prove that. From mutual respect to transparency a climate of trust was developed. In this climate, the diverse expertise and visions have beautifully mixed up and engaged more and more efforts to reach continuously further objectives. But another tool is missing. Your Excellency ambassador Eichhorst, in the latest Europe Day at your premises, and after enumerating the assets of Europe in your speech, you have put forward and explained to all, the European secret weapon: dialogue. Going from mutual respect to trust engaging efforts to reach the project goals have not been possible without dialogue and mediation. We believe in your message, Ms. Ambassador, till the point of integrating in the suggested quality standard 9, academic integrity, the need of our institutions to promote in our youth democratic values, respect of diversity and problem solving through dialogue. This responds to a local societal need. Here allow me to take the occasion to thank Europe, for its generous support, not only financial but by providing the expertise, time and care to building the capacity of our Lebanese HES. A special thought of our colleagues from Belgium, France, Spain and UK who have not been able to join us because of non-travel advises. I can but thank my colleagues from Europe for their commitment and devotion all along the project.

Looking at the cover of the book “On the Design of an Evaluation Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education” one can see Zeus taking Europa. Zeus has taken Europa

and few thousands years ago noone on this land would dare questioning Zeus logic. I will not. But far from the myth, the logic says that we are lucky to have Europa as our neighbor.

### **Recommendations**

The Tempus TLQAA project finishes today and it has to. Now what?

As my President, Dr. Elie A. Salem writes in the introduction of the book, “Our commitment to this noble objective is as serious as is our need to give priority to the values of tolerance, honesty, transparence, and accountability, in all our endeavors. Any activity outside this commitment will only perpetuate the inefficiencies that permeate the patterns that are familiar to all of us.”

The TLQAA project had two main objectives: inducing in-depth and conductive reflection through the academic community about the components of a QA agency and bringing QA to a reality close to the Lebanese HE institutions in order to support the legislative process. After this journey, we can but seize this momentum and clearly call to vote up this law and to start the expected LQAA agency.

We also recommend maintaining the spirit and approach of the TLQAA process in the future not only for the efficiency and legitimacy of any quality assurance process but for a more harmonized academic spirit in the Lebanese Higher Education system and perhaps beyond.

Our final recommendation, hope and probably promise, is to shift TLQAA from a project to a community in order to continue serving quality in higher education, by organizing seminars or training sessions for new experts. The presence of the socio-economic partners and of representatives of non-partner institutions shows that we can but widen our group. I hope also that the cooperation with our European partners will be continued in the context of future projects allowing us to maintain and develop our participation as a Mediterranean partner to international debates on HE.

At the end it is my privilege to thank H.E. Minister Diab represented by Dr. Jammal, H.E. ambassador Eichhorst, the Tempus Programme, and you all stakeholders of the LHE for your interest and for honoring us being here today and to Balamand for hosting this event. My special and sincere thanks go certainly to each partner or person who has worked in this project. You have taught me a lot and I have learned. Thank you.

Chafic Mokbel

Coordinator of Tempus-TLQAA

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