

Your Excellencies Minister Diab, Ambassadors Eichhorst, Pietton,

Your Excellency Dr. Elie Salem, President of the University of Balamand,

Socio-Economic stakeholders, Representative of the Association of Banks of Lebanon, Mr. Joseph Tarabay, Representative of LibanPack....

Colleagues representing all project partners from Europe and from Lebanon,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we are launching TLQAA one of only 2 projects selected last year following the 4th call for proposals under Tempus. The competition was very hard due to a low budget allocated to the programme at that time. It is not a coincidence that the 2 projects selected address respectively employability and quality assurance; 2 issues of great and strategic importance for university planners these days. Employability is one of the noble objectives of higher education; it is an obligation towards our graduates. However, to ensure a job for a graduate we need to make sure that he/she has already acquired the suitable skills, competencies and the proper knowledge. We need to make sure that the university is doing its job properly, efficiently and effectively. That is why we need Quality Assurance.

This morning, Minister Diab has reminded us of the golden days of the Lebanese higher education sector. It is true that the wars and events in Lebanon have left a considerable damage on the Lebanese infrastructures; and the higher education was not an exception. But I would like to stress here the fact that the challenges are different now. Higher education is changing so rapidly that the issues that we were discussing before are not relevant anymore. Accessibility and expansion of the sector are replaced by quality of deliverables and learning outcomes. Teaching methods have been liberalized and a student is replaced by a learner and even more by a lifelong learner.

Now why TLQAA?

We have been talking and lecturing about quality assurance in Lebanon since 2002. Many projects have been funded in that direction to enhance awareness and to disseminate the culture of quality. When time to move to action has come,

a law for the creation of a QA national Agency has been drafted and submitted to the government. In order to meet that objective, an effort has to be exerted to provide this agency, once it is established, with all the necessary tools and standards and expertise. Technical and human resources have to be there to serve this agency. And that's what TLQAA is standing for.

What is special about TLQAA?

1. Its responsiveness to a real need at national level
2. The idea came from within the country and this is important for a Tempus project, something which will strengthen the institution's ownership of the project's activities
3. This is Structural Measure type of a project with an impact reaching the whole higher education system in Lebanon, rather than being confined or restricted to 1 or 2 institutions.
4. National project managed by a Lebanese university, for the second time since 2008, reinforcing the institutional capacities of management and leadership of the Balamand.
5. The project includes a large consortium with a certain flexibility to include many other Lebanese higher education institutions wishing to get on board.

Dear friends,

More than one year ago I was standing here at the launching of another successful Tempus project about aircraft maintenance, giving some technical advice. I believe it is useful to repeat some of them :

- Collaborate with the EU Delegation in Beirut, keep them informed of what you are doing and invite them to your activities; at the end they represent the external and political dimensions of this EU grant.

- Keep in touch with the National Tempus Office ie us; we can help you a lot by providing you with all sort of assistance always within the framework of our terms of reference.
- Prepare yourself for our monitoring visits that we should undertake during the 2 year lifetime of the project.
- Learn as much as possible from your previous Tempus projects, in particular the one on Food Science and on aircraft maintenance so that you can improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of your activities.
- Disseminate the results of the project to a large spectrum of stakeholders within the University and at national and regional levels. In this way, we can enhance the visibility not only of your project but also of the University of Balamand and of the Tempus programme.
- Finally, do your best to make sure that the results be sustained beyond the Tempus funding, because it is all about building something solid, viable, evolutionary and durable.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I congratulate you again and I wish you and the university all the progress and I am looking forward to a success story that we can tell to everybody.

Thank you.