



Innovative Governance Practices in the Higher Education Institutions in Iraq

INSPIRE

Innovative Governance Practices in the Higher Education Institutions in Iraq

Programme

European Commission, Erasmus+, KA2 – Capacity building in the Field of Higher Education

Partners

- Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq
- Wasit University
- Southern Technical University
- Al Karkh University for Science
- University of Basrah Oil and Gas
- Al-Qasim Green University
- Sumer University
- Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University
- University of Basrah
- University of Baghdad
- University of Mosul
- UNIMED- Mediterranean Universities Union
- Istanbul Aydin University, Turkey
- University of Evora, Portugal
- University of Bologna, Italy
- University of Siena, Italy (Coordinator)

Budget

993.365,00 EUR

Project Duration

From 15 January 2019 to 14 January 2023

Project N.

598790-EPP-1-2018-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP



Project objectives

The project aims at reinforcing institutional capacity of HEIs in strategical planning, as a prerequisite for them to compete in a global setting. Moreover, the project aims to **enhance the relevance and quality of the higher education system through the revitalization of academic life and scientific research**. In this respect, European partners could provide methodological techniques and best practices to support the development on HEIs strategical plan. Acknowledging the specifics of the local context, the European partners' support will help the Iraqi institutions to define their own priorities.

The project is consistent with EU strategy in **supporting Iraq rebuilding of public institutions** through capacity building. Indeed, efforts to strengthen and support the Iraqi academic institutions, particularly the universities and research centres – once among the best in the region – are also essential for the improvement of the governance of the country.

Unfortunately, Higher Education is one of the sectors that experienced serious destruction of infrastructure since 2003. The rehabilitation of the Iraqi higher education system, already damaged by almost two decades of under-investment and isolation, is hampered by insufficient infrastructure and limited capacity in terms of planning, policy and management of higher education programmes. The gap between the educational opportunities offered by Iraqi universities and the requirements for sustainable economic development is widening.

The overarching goal of INSPIRE is to support, through the cooperation of European institutions, the rebuilding, modernisation, and internationalisation of the governance system of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Iraq with a specific focus on planning and programming systems. Due to the recent crisis and political economic situation, the current higher education system requires a strong intervention to face the weakness of the existing governance system. To institutionalize good governance practices in Iraqi HEIs, which also means enforcing institutional values such as autonomy, accountability, participation, and internationalization, as well as implementing well-structured management systems, will contribute to the development of Iraqi HIEs helping them to meet the international standards.

The aim of the project is to **support HEIs in Iraq in order to make them capable of establishing a modern governance framework** through the adoption of innovative practices.

More specifically, it seeks to:

- Enhance good governance, management and accountability practices in the HEIs
- Establish a clear governance framework, including well-defined and clear mission and goals through the definition and implementation of action plans
- Strengthen the capacity of HEIs to develop their own specific strategies and to implement them effectively and efficiently by means of programming systems
- Strengthen the international relations management within the HEIs
- Improve the participation in strategic planning and development activities of non-university actors and non-state actors

Project Methodology

The working methodology used to design the project is based on a **participatory approach** where all decisions, especially those regarding the design of activities, are the result of a process of close collaboration among all partners. The WPs and the activities to be carried out are established on the basis of a systematic review of institutions' needs in partner countries, as well as of an intensive consultation with partners in programme countries. The overall approach is based on the idea that “one size does not fit all”. Rather, it is built on the following assumptions:

- **Realise a careful diagnosis:** the whole exercise of cooperation between European and partners countries should begin with a need analysis to identify gaps in the local situation;
- **Set priorities:** governance frameworks have many dimensions, with different degrees of priority, thus there is a need to finalise specific strategies;
- **Focus on implementation of change,** maintaining flexibility in pursuing it: European partners should support the implementation of the strategic planning, monitoring and assessing progresses, and adjusting paths to evolving conditions.

The project consists of 8 WPs, each of which is made up of a specific set of activities.

The first step (**WP1- Update of needs analysis**) requires, besides the realisation of a comprehensive literature review aimed at identifying the existing governance frameworks, the development of an updated needs analysis carried out by a European partner with the support and collaboration of one Iraqi university: UNIMED + University of Baghdad. This kind of study aims at identifying the current situation of the universities involved in the project and enable the identification of specific topics to address in the capacity building action. The WP provides also the identification of hypothetical stakeholders to be involved in innovative governance practices, being the basis for the activities included in WP5. The second step (**WP2- Training and capacity building activities for internal staff in quality assurance and strategic planning**) aims at realising capacity building through different kinds of training: an online training with Moodle, four virtual training seminars organized by the European Universities members of the consortium (Siena, Evora, Bologna and Aydin) plus a set of workshops. Moreover, 3-days study visits in person in Siena, Evora and Aydin per each Iraqi HEI is also in the plan, to be performed from January to May 2022 and 10 training of trainers will be held at local level in Iraq from June to November 2022 (each Iraqi university will perform its own). These activities will be addressed to the university's leaders, academic and administrative staff involved in strategic planning, management, QA.

The second part of the Capacity Building action will provide a specific focus on the **management and governance of international relations (WP4) e the stakeholders' participation (WP5)**. The WP4 would support the HEIs to strengthen, through the development of useful tools and techniques, the internationalization process of their institutions by fostering academic and research collaboration, reinforcing strategic cooperation, partnerships and networking. The WP5 aims to set-up of a formal consultative body within Partner HEIs, in order to assure a better coordination between the systems of education, higher education, and private/public sector, also ensuring the involvement of other non-state actors.

Along with the training, the participants and project team will be ready to start the third WP (**WP3- Implementation of changes and best practices through action plans**). Under the supervision and the guidance of European partners, the trainees and their institutions will be involved in the development of action plans that should be implemented by each HEI, exploiting also the dialogue space granted by the WP5 Consultative Centers. According to the relevant literature on higher education governance, strategic planning, quality assurance, strong leadership, internationalisation and wide participation of stakeholders are all elements essential to guarantee good governance for HEIs. Thus, all WPs are strongly interrelated.