

INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MEDITERRANIAN REGION

COUNTRY PROFILE

»Lebanon«



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	American Council on Education
CMI	Centre for Mediterranean Integration
EAIE	European Association for International Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IaH	Internationalization at Higher Education
IoHE	Internationalization of Higher Education
IRO	International Relations Office
LU	Lebanese University
OIR	Office of International Relation
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MENA	The Middle East and North Africa
OIR	Office of International Relations
QA	Quality Assurance
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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- a) Internationalisation policy/strategy
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to globalization, internationalization of higher education has become a key priority among universities around the world. Increasingly, universities recognize their role in developing global, international, and intercultural competencies to prepare graduates for participation in a highly interconnected global community. As a result, internationalization has become a major strategic priority for Lebanese universities as an approach to achieving such student learning outcomes. Among other things, this calls for adjustments to the teaching, learning and service aspects of institutions of higher learning. All the more so, given the rampant growth in internationalization of higher education which has been overtaken by concerns regarding non-mobile students and the ability of institutions of higher learning to provide them with the same global skills and experience.

Internationalisation at Home (IaH) exposes students to intercultural and global learning and provides equitable access since it focuses on learning provided at the home university and does not require mobility to gain the benefits of internationalized learning opportunities and outcomes. As such, IaH aims to promote an international perspective throughout the University community and to prepare graduates to become leaders in a multicultural and global society. Hence, IaH mandates universities to design and intentionally integrate an international, intercultural or global dimension into the Curriculum, and promote cross-cultural learning that can expose students to others from diverse backgrounds, open new pathways for students to acquire knowledge about international cultures, and place them within a global setting. Given the open nature of IaH, it requires deliberate planning and practice on the part of universities in order for it to be integrated into the ethos and strategies of such institutions.

Lebanon is currently suffering from political crises, economic and financial instability, social unrest, and the COVID 19 pandemic, often making travel abroad for higher education almost impossible for most students. Universities in the Lebanon have an even stronger need to internationalize as young people want fresh opportunities to travel, learn, study, and create knowledge. Most universities in Lebanon list internationalization as an important priority and core strategy in reaching institutional goals; both students and institutions recognize the benefits of internationalization at Home in improving the academic environment. As IaH emerges as a key priority in universities, there is a critical need for ongoing assessment of internationalization outcomes and strategies to provide clarity on the contribution internationalization makes to the objectives and quality of an institution.

Lebanon Coordinating Team



INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MEDITERRANIAN REGION

COUNTRY PROFILE

« LEBANON »

I. INTRODUCTION

Context analysis of the internationalisation of higher education

Internationalisation of higher education is of primary interest for policy-makers, educators and leaders. This is because economic performance is affected by the growing cross-border flows of knowledge, workers and students; at the same time, it reflects 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 in Lebanon are trying to internationalise their operations and connect with others abroad.

One of the main references when it comes to the internationalisation of higher education in the Mediterranean countries, considering the specific dimension of mobility, is the UNESCO online database Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics collects data on the mobility of students in order to shed light on the shifting demand for higher education, particularly in the developing world. International student mobility indicators are used to track the flows of tertiary students seeking higher education abroad. Data include figures and rates related to inbound and outbound students by regions and countries of origin, as well as host countries.

A report on "Internationalization in Tertiary Education in the MENA Region" was published by the CMI (Centre for Mediterranean Integration) in 2020.⁶⁰ The Report focuses on the Middle- East and North Africa and attempts to demonstrate that, being an important part of the reforms needed in education and training, the internationalisation of tertiary education has a major role to play.

When it comes to addressing of the current status of the internationalization landscape in Lebanon, data collection for mobility flows in Lebanon is particularly challenging, despite the commitment shown and the strategies put in place by participating universities. The country has been severely affected by a number of factors: the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut port blast that deeply affected the functioning of some institutions, and the scarce information available for the entire period investigation. Moreover, additional factors influenced the analysis: the high diversification in the higher education sector made it more difficult to generalise trends at the national level; the analysis does not involve countries outside of Europe, thus underrepresenting other cooperation arrangements, such as those with the USA. That said, data collected still show very interesting trends for the country, especially in relation to academic years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

II. UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MEDITERRANIAN CONTEXT (SPECIFICALLY FOR LEBANON):

II.I INTRODUCTION

General Lebanese Context: Population

4 500 000 + 400 000 Palestinians + 1 500 000 Syrians >10 000 000 Diaspora

1 Public	47 Privates	
	36 Universities	11 Universities Faculty of Institutes
>210,000 students		
Public 80,000	Private 132,000	Abroad >10,000

Education in Lebanon is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). In Lebanon, Arabic, English or French are taught from early years in schools. Freedom of Lebanese higher education is guaranteed by the Constitution. According to 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 higher education is concerned, up to 2014 the sector had been governed by a law dating 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 sector is supervised by the Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). The public higher education sector, represented by only one higher education institution namely the Lebanese University (LU), is governed by its own law, decrees and bylaws under the aegis of the MEHE, and has a high degree of autonomy. In addition, the Lebanese education is highly influenced by the French educational model due to the French rule of Lebanon (1920-1943), and by the English educational system due to the presence of American universities. Hence, the Lebanese higher education system is a mixture of many characteristics and is in line with the Bologna Process since 2014 after adoption of the new Higher Education Law 285 which makes allowance for an LMD system. Although Lebanon is not a signatory to the Bologna Declaration, gradual adjustment stemming from the Bologna process has been made to the bachelor's and master's structure and associated tools within the Lebanese education system. Lebanon has its own credit system, although some institutions use the ECTS system to indicate the study load of programs. This is generally 180 ECTS for a bachelor's program and 120 ECTS for a master's program. Upon request, some institutions also issue a Diploma Supplement.

Though many agreements have and continue to be made at institutional level with foreign higher education institutions, there is no national policy per se to promote student mobility. International cooperation is another dimension of Lebanese higher education. The Lebanese higher education has been and is still attractive for a significant set of students from the region. As a matter of fact, several Lebanese universities have opened branches in the Gulf region. At international level, the Lebanese universities have well established cooperation with foreign universities, they also participated actively in Tempus and Erasmus Mundus projects and currently in ERASMUS+ projects. At research level, the Lebanese universities participated in EU (FP6, FP7) projects and continue to participate in Horizon 2020 projects as well as several USAID projects. CEDRE program has also been supporting research cooperation between Lebanon and France. Several other cooperation programs exist. However, there are no clear policies regarding the organization and development of the international dimension in the Lebanese Higher Education.

II.II INTERNATIONALISATION DIMENSIONS: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Internationalisation is on top of the agenda of higher education institutions in Africa and especially in the Middle East, as underlined by the responses to the 5th IAU Global survey conducted in 2018 (83% of respondents stated that internationalisation is of ‘high’ importance). Despite the lower response rate for the Middle East once compared to other regions, it is nonetheless indicative of the difficulties for international stakeholders to access reliable and consistent data on a somewhat regional dynamism, which is often underestimated.

The real question is: what do we mean when we speak about internationalisation in the Mediterranean region? What is the perception about the meaning of this process? In most cases, there is a remarkable misunderstanding of the concept of internationalisation, which many local higher education institutions equate with mobility. That is why, even when investigated practices and digitalisation activities related to the internationalisation at home, responses are invariably linked to the physical dimension of mobility.

To be sure, further investigation and research needs to be conducted in order to understand and assess the knowledge of internationalisation and its dimensions by the Mediterranean higher education institutions. And a reflection should be made on the long-term effects of the rapid shift towards internationalisation in the South-Mediterranean countries, and whether this is truly contributing to increased inclusion, equity and fairness in higher education.

I.III VALUES AND PRINCIPLES REFERENCED IN INTERNATIONALISATION POLICY/ STRATEGY

In order to move forward on internationalisation, the principles and core values of mutuality and academic hospitality can help for establishing more ethical and balanced cooperation mechanisms. A relationship where mutuality is present shows connection, understanding, involvement, communication, respect and, while the exchange might not be equivalent, the willingness and commitment of both parties to pursue a common goal with mutual respect for each partner’s values, knowledge, norms, ways of knowing and beliefs.

International partnerships, the attitudes of our students going abroad and our own attitudes to and rationales regarding how to attract and serve international students, are examples of internationalisation activities that could benefit from a mutuality lens. The common practice of internationalisation involves the interaction between people (students, faculty and staff) of distinct national origins. Within a higher education context, academic hospitality embedded in teaching, research and service forces ‘Us’ to understand the ‘Other’ on their own terms as opposed to our terms. By using such approach, higher education institutions can start fostering an environment that enhances intercultural engagement both within their Institution (for example, between ‘local’ and ‘international’ students) and beyond (in the relationship between the larger community and the institution’s international partners).

Engaging in mutuality and academic hospitality helps position all participants in the process of internationalisation at an equal level, willing to learn from each other. It avoids an emphasis on power disparities fuelled by (current or past) geopolitical forces that perpetuate inequalities between nations. Given the global orientation, the Office of International Relations OIR is an instrumental and indispensable asset towards making significant progress for such purpose and direction. In pursuing Internationalization at Home, the OIR is responsible for developing and coordinating international relations and activities, among others, it includes initiatives concerning students and staff mobility, international educational agreements, funding opportunities and alike.

In this regard, actions are afoot in crafting an internationalization plan that will set out goals, objective, and actions at various levels.

a) Institutional Level:

- i. Internationalization: The Office will work on the development and implementation of the strategic plan for internationalization, which will also include adapting university's curricula to align with international competences and standards as well as enhancing university's profile and reputation.
- ii. Coordination with other academic units will strive to forge partnerships with foreign universities on providing joint or dual degree programs. Additionally, the office will play an important role in enhancing the universities international network and participating in calls for international project proposals.
- iii. International reference point: The OIR as a central hub within the university will manage and supervise all international activities as well as act as a reference to any international student/ faculty / staff mobility exchange and mobility.
- iv. International Image and Outreach: Step by step, the OIR will be building on the international profile of the university, scaling up to reach new audiences abroad.

b) Stakeholder Level:

- i. The Office will work on developing and managing international exchange and mobility opportunities for students / faculty and staff.
- ii. The Office will assist students and staff in activities concerning mobility, scholarship opportunities, exchange programs, and available grants.
- iii. The Office shall foster and so maintain contact with alumni.
- iv. Students will gain international experience, developing global skills they need to succeed in the 21st century job market.

It is important to note that OIR will be working in coordination with all schools in the university to facilitate whichever international agendas as they relate to and actively participating with all local and international stakeholders, such as partnership agreements and exchange opportunities. The OIR will thus work towards the strengthening of the international efforts through various activities, while encouraging the active participation of all stakeholders.

II.IV. RISKS AND CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONALISATION

Significant challenges are how universities in the global South are able to receive and host students, researchers and administrative staff from the North. It is a mix of security issues, lack of preparedness and research quality. Attractiveness (or, to be more precise, the lack of attractiveness) has been the core topic of several international organizations' comments in higher education systems. It is indeed very important to reflect on how universities in the South could be attractive enough to receive students from other universities in terms of quality, good curriculum, reliable infrastructures and so like.

Nowadays, it is common to consider mostly one-way mobility from the South to the North. The absence of reciprocity is a crucial and negative aspect in the perception of Southern Mediterranean university practitioners. More bureaucracy and less transparency than in the European universities are two of the main barriers affecting the international attractiveness of local HEIs in a non-EU country.

Neither does political, economic nor social instability help certain countries in confronting real problems and major challenges for internationalization, and for mobility from Southern Mediterranean countries towards Europe and vice versa, are visas and the perception of instability in the region. This is causing low interest from students and staff in Europe for some mobility opportunities in Southern Mediterranean countries. This lack of reciprocity is probably the main problem for internationalization in the Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean, through research by European Association for International Education (EAIE)’s view, as stated by Laura Howard, “is not a priority, and especially for European countries, despite we are very close, at least geographically. And we have a common history. And very often we face similar challenges, despite we might not recognize that, but we still are in the process of understanding why the Mediterranean is not felt as a priority”.

When we talk about the challenges for Southern higher education sectors, along with the lack of knowledge of foreign languages, another element comes to mind: the limited international exposure of the administrative staff who are invariably less involved in the mobility schemes.

One of the barriers to internationalization in the South-Med region is the lack of mutual knowledge. universities in Europe are still too often asking themselves questions such as: what is the interest for our students to go there?

<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong international links with EU and non-EU HEIs • Full autonomy of HEIs under all aspects, the Ministry does not interfere neither in public nor private institutions • IROs and QA offices exist in most universities • HE system works in 3 languages, facilitating two-way mobility • Erasmus+ has generated a diversification in the partnerships and South-South cooperation • High levels of incoming and outgoing mobility, gender independent, also supported by the private sector and foreign governments • Strong interaction with large international organizations 	<p>Weakness</p> <p>Lack of a national strategy for HEI (legislation on several matters exists on paper, but very outdated and rarely translated into action),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HE system is highly fragmented, • HEIs communicate with foreign counterparts on an individual basis • Lack of a vision for the sector by the ministry • Credit recognition is a big problem, systems are not homogeneous and there are no guidelines at national level • Cultural resistance and dislike towards virtual activities • Lack of legislation on online teaching and learning • Formal recognition of refugees is missing • Not all level of HEIs staff are equally involved in international activities • Lack of a national agency for QA and accreditation
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Significant funding opportunities for bilateral cooperation,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaspora as a networking opportunity, 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial crisis and the 2020 crisis of the banking system, • Governmental and institutional crisis,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural bridge between Europe and the Middle East • Opening to the Gulf area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turmoil and unrests affecting security since October 2019, • External policies affect internal processes, • Bureaucratic barriers negatively affect internationalization, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet and ICT infrastructure of bad quality
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II.V. PRIORITY AREAS FOCUSED UPON IN INTERNATIONALISATION ACTIVITIES AND FUNDING

Creating an international campus environment sends a strong message to all stakeholders that Internationalization at Home is one of the central components of the University’s character and identity; and that all HE institutes in Lebanon expect the students to develop global awareness and/or competency.

Proposed activities to complement and extend IaH efforts also requires creating an inventory of courses with significant global content, expanding education abroad opportunities where possible, effective utilization of partners abroad, and encouragement of international student research.

This inventory will serve as a benchmark against which progress on internationalization of the curriculum will be measured.

I. International Mobility Opportunities

Goal 1: Increase access to and participation in international mobility experiences for Students, Faculty Researchers, and administrative Staff

This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- 1) Promote international mobility – both semester-long exchanges and shorter-term stay.
- 2) Streamline the process of credit recognition to studying abroad.
- 3) Encourage and support faculty in developing collaborative relationships with faculty from partner institutions as a means of strengthening partnerships and increasing student mobility.

Goal #2- Strengthen Exchange Agreements and Academic Study Abroad.

- 1) This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:
- 2) Increase the number of outgoing students and targeting specific majors.
- 3) Develop a model that better reports on the outgoing mobility of students and improve data management and procedures.
- 4) Support Exchange opportunities through European Credit Mobility projects.

Goal 3- Intensify International Mobility for Students, Faculty Researchers, and administrative Staff

This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- 1) Participate in Erasmus+ credit mobility programs, future programs of the European Commission in the area of higher education and other mobility programs.
- 2) Raise the level of cooperation with foreign higher education institutions with which HE institutions already have signed cooperation agreements.
- 3) Develop support services for incoming international students and scholars.
- 4) Support existing student clubs to better integrate international Exchange students in relevant



club activities and programs.

II. Internationalization of Students

Goal 1: Provide innovation and leadership to increase multicultural, multinational and multilingual engagement through increased opportunities for global community engagement.

This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- 1) Provide an opportunity for students to include an internationally focused course within their degree program.
- 2) Foster international skills/ competencies by students who do not seek a stay or study abroad.
- 3) Foster e-learning or other forms of teaching that provide an international dimension.
- 4) Strengthen and guarantee the quality of teaching foreign languages and cultures.
- 5) Build a portfolio of international community organizations (industry, NGO, governmental agencies, networks) and support community engagement as an alternative path to education abroad for HE students.

Goal 2: Enrich the cultural diversity and Involvement of the HE community in International Activities.

This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- 1) Encourage Faculty and staff members to attend exchange programs supported with grants by the EU Erasmus+ program.
- 2) Create an online resource for faculty to find information about available funding, deadlines and requirements for international collaboration in international academic exchange, research collaboration, organization of events, and external funding sources.
- 3) Encourage and create opportunities for involvement of students, faculty, and staff in inter-cultural activities.
- 4) Support to promotion of language skills (English and other foreign languages) of students, teaching and non-teaching staff, which will ensure their active participation in the process of University internationalization.

III. Internationalization of the Curriculum

GOAL 1: Provide faculty with the resources needed to internationalize their courses and instructional strategies with diversified perspectives

This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- 1) Promote innovative teaching in subjects related to internationalization.
- 2) Strengthen the international/ intercultural component of teaching by increasing number of guests lecturers.
- 3) Promote a culture of sharing international experiences.

GOAL 2: Provide innovation and leadership in the promotion of international, intercultural and interdisciplinary competency within academic curricula.

This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- 1) Support for faculty to create new courses or enhance existing ones to feature international content.
- 2) Develop internationally focused instructional materials, coursework and/or degree programs to support international, intercultural and interdisciplinary competency within all schools.
- 3) Integrate international concepts and methodologies within the curriculum.
- 4) Adopt an international course requirement within the undergraduate core curriculum to ensure students have a base level of knowledge and understanding about the global dimensions of human society.

IV. Partnership & Networking

Goal 1 – Promote Cooperation with Foreign Universities and Research Institutions, Industry and other Partner Institutions through Continuous professional development.

This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- 1) provide the conditions for higher participation rate in international funding programs within Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and other programs.
- 2) Increase participation in international projects and promotion of cooperation with foreign universities, research institutions, industry and other partner institutions in various fields of education, research and innovation.
- 3) Raise the visibility of research capacities and results achieved at national and international level.

Goal 2: Support the development of strategic Partnerships through networking to maintain a database for scientific research, maintaining continuous training on scientific research, and virtual data exchange.

This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- 1) Create an Office of International Relations (OIR) website.
- 2) Develop and increase its participation in international networks and partnerships that add value and can generate external funding for student exchanges.
- 3) Develop outreach that is specifically linked to alumni engagement with and an interest in international affairs.
- 4) Establish new and expand existing international degree programs (e.g. joint degrees, double degrees) in the schools.
- 5) Establish short-term programs such as international summer schools.

Implementation and Monitoring

The long-term goals of internationalization will be achieved by following an approach of limited but high impact initiatives that can be set, implemented and evaluated in fixed periods. These initiatives can be reviewed and maintained or changed according to the international, national and institutional context of the university.

The following mechanisms shall monitor progress towards the achievement of the strategic goals and initiatives to improve internal and external awareness of internationalization at home activities in Lebanon:

- a. Use in all Schools, OIR and other relevant administrative units (VPAA, Provost, Registrar's Office, Career's Office, Alumni Office, others).
- b. University wide common indicators and Academic or Administrative Unit specific indicators
- c. Exchange Student Surveys, Course evaluations,
- d. Performance indicators may be included in:
- e. Overseers Report
- f. Individual Annual Reports / Annual Strategies of Units
- g. External communications (websites, catalogues, brochures, presentations, orientation)

A detailed internal communications plan on internationalization will be developed for staff and student engagement around key internationalization initiatives as relevant.

II.VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

To be sure, engaging faculty in internationalization at Home is critical to having a broader reach. Resources and time will need to be allotted for professional development and curriculum development which includes intercultural competency assessment strategies. If the institution is to move beyond the strategic priority level, institutional changes required to develop intercultural competencies in all students must be championed by leadership to support allocation of resources and drive change.

In the earlier time internationalization primarily focused on increasing student mobility and the number of institutional exchange agreements. However, in recent decades as internationalization and globalization have become more interwoven and consequentially there has been growing pressure to cultivate a broader framework for developing intercultural competencies in all students, leading to the promotion of Internationalization at Home (IaH) consisting of activities such as internationalizing the curriculum, developing a diverse faculty and student body, and the hosting of intercultural learning opportunities and experiences. Thus, internationalization especially at home has moved from being the goal, to a means of achieving and advancing other institutional goals such as producing globally aware and inter-culturally competent graduates.

Considering student mobility was a major priority in the early times of internationalization it was not surprising to find that the bulk of research then focused on outcomes related to student mobility. Commonly, assessment at the institutional level presented data related to numbers of outgoing and incoming students and/or professors teaching abroad or participating in international research, rather than the more difficult assessment of the development of intercultural competency as a desired outcome of IaH. Assessing the impacts of IaH on the university community and students' outcomes provides important information to decision makers on the contribution to strategic goals of the institution.

Several assessment tools are available, but it is not a one size fits all choice.

As universities seek to internationalize through IaH it is very important to assess whether IaH activities are promoting students' development of competencies necessary to thrive in an increasingly global world. First steps in planning assessment should be a clear definition and prioritization of what is being measured, and for what purpose. Other important considerations include the validity and reliability of the instrument and practicality of implementation in terms of time and cost to the institution. If the instrument is too difficult or too expensive to implement, it is unlikely to ever move to implementation.

IaH activities can positively influence students' development of global, international and intercultural competencies equal to or greater than those demonstrated from traditional study/travel abroad. As the majority of students will not participate in study abroad, the measurement of the impacts and outcomes of IaH is critical to understanding how institutions are doing in terms of developing intercultural competence in students.

Over the course of data mining of Lebanese HEIs, these organisations differ in nature, scope and goals, but in some ways they all contribute to the internationalisation of HE. Most organizations in Lebanon point out that they significantly support the international dimension of universities.

1. Quality, quality, quality. A mantra for Lebanese universities,
2. Digitalisation processes: going virtual in order to boost physical activities,
3. Recognising shared cultural roots, deconstructing stereotypes, increasing mutual knowledge,
4. Abandoning silo mentality in favour of clustering: the role of regional organisations
5. Inspiring practices:



- Impactful: able to generate a change in the context, with an emphasis on quality not quantity.
- Transferable/replicable: able to be transferred or replicated to other contexts/countries/institutions and still generate a positive similar impact.
- Sustainable: able to rely on existing resources and survive over time.
- Adaptable: able to be adapted to other contexts and still generate a positive impact.
- Innovative: exhibiting innovative elements with respect to the status quo.
- Added value: able to build on and improve processes and results, overall being capable of becoming a learning experience for others.
- Diverse cooperation arrangements (North-South, South-North, South-South)
- Practices framed in the institutional strategy
- Stand-alone cases due to their innovative characteristics
- Top-down approaches (framed within existing policies)

III. SECONDARY DATA ON INTERNATIONALISATION IN LEBANON

Strategic Goals

Internationalization at Home aims to help guide all efforts and activities at the different academic, research and administrative units towards fostering an international academic environment and increasing mobility of students and academic staff as well as promoting cooperation and exchange with other universities to share education, research and development capacities. What's more, students should be exposed to alternative cultures and experiences that provide a vibrant, challenging and stimulating learning environment that prepares them to live, work and succeed in an interconnected world.

To this end, the HE in Lebanon takes account of its general objective to be an inclusive place that shapes integration and educates students for an increasingly international labor market to become responsible citizens and leaders. To accomplish these, the University attributes great value on "Internationalization", and its long-term Internationalization strategic goals emphasizes this. Moreover, the themes and activities are designed to be synergistic and mutually supportive to provide strategic leadership for achieving desired outcomes that will have a transformative impact for improving the quality of all university activities and inform decisions. The themes are as follows:

Internationalization Plan Themes

The strategic goals of the Internationalization plan are presented in four thematic pillars:

- I. International Mobility Opportunities
- II. Internationalization of Students
- III. Internationalization of the Curriculum
- IV. Strategic Partnerships and External Networking

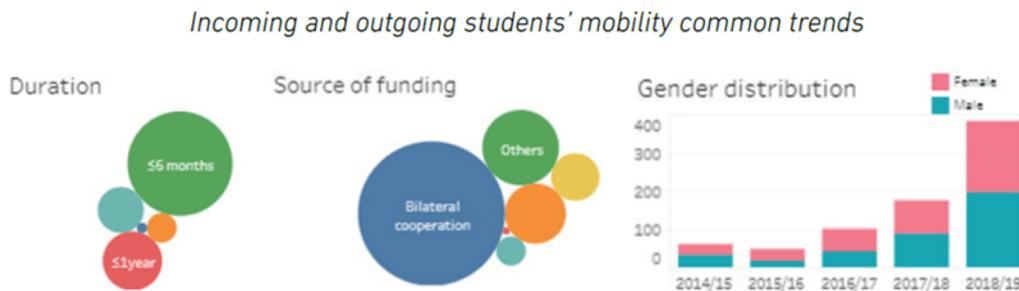
IV. CASE STUDIES BASED ON SELF-EVALUATION TOOL ON INTERNATIONALISATION IN Lebanon – PARTNERS IN MED2IaH PROJECT

Data collection for mobility flows in Lebanon is particularly challenging. The country has been severely affected by a number of factors: the COVID-19 pandemic, the blast in the Lebanese harbour which has deeply affected the functioning of some institutions, and the scarce information available for the whole period of the investigation. Having said that, data collected still show very interesting trends for the country, especially in relation to the last academic years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

Students' mobility flows

Students' mobility trends show similar elements in relation to both incoming and outgoing mobility: exchanges occur mostly for credits (with a duration of about six months) but there is also a significant mobility for a degree (with an average duration of one year) which is consistent with the delivery of double diplomas with European institutions. Mobility is financed mostly within the framework of bilateral cooperation agreements, secondly by international organisations, private foundations and the European Commission. It is noteworthy that the gender distribution of students on the move is balanced, with both male and female students engaged in mobility over the years.

Incoming and outgoing students' mobility common trends



Students involved in incoming mobility are mostly at the bachelor and master's level. Students involved in outgoing mobility are mostly at the master's level, with a significant number of PhD students engaged in exchanges. Due to historical ties, France has the highest mobility rate for both incoming and outgoing cohorts. Other countries with which exchanges are frequent are Belgium, Italy and Germany, in line with the consolidated relations of Lebanon with some European countries.

Teachers' mobility flows

Teachers' mobility flows show some similarities between incoming and outgoing trends: the duration of exchanges is in the majority of cases of about a month, and main financing sources of exchanges are private foundations and other bodies such as international organizations or regional actors. In terms of academic mobility, European funded projects seem to have a limited impact. In terms of gender distribution, an imbalance towards male academics is shown for both incoming and outgoing mobility, despite the number of females involved slowly increasing over the years.

Incoming and outgoing teachers' mobility common trends



Teachers' involved in incoming mobility come mostly from France, Italy, Belgium, Germany and Spain. Among the neighboring countries, mobility has been tracked from Jordan and Tunisia. As far as outgoing mobility is concerned, France emerges again as the preferred destination, followed again by Italy, Belgium, Germany and Spain. Interestingly enough, a number of exchanges have been tracked with Austria, the

Netherlands and Sweden, confirming the geographical diversification related to the participation into cooperation projects in the framework of European funded projects. In terms of South- South cooperation, outgoing mobilities exists with Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and with Turkey. Another element worth mentioning is that outgoing academic mobility occurred in the past 5 years in quite a wide range of fields, which seems to be in line with the different priorities of each higher education institution.

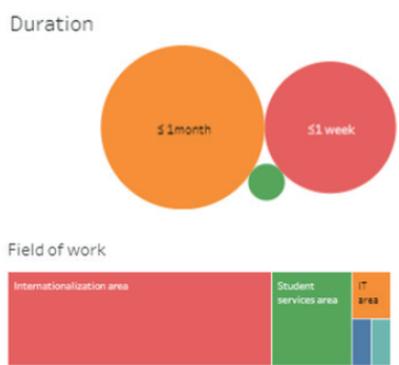
Outgoing teachers' mobility



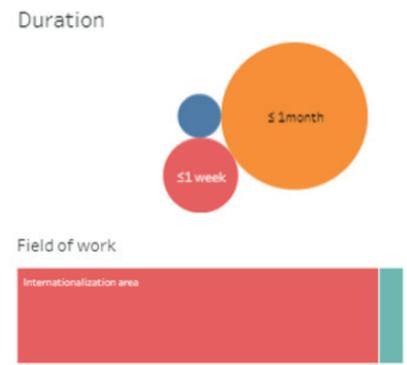
Administrative mobility flows

Regarding administrative mobility from and to Lebanon, we must start by saying that administrative mobility data showed that numbers are significantly low in comparison with students and teachers mobility. This is in line with the qualitative analysis which highlighted how administrative mobility is less facilitated by institutions. The majority of exchanges, both incoming and outgoing, lasted on average either a month or a week, were funded by private foundations, the European Commission and other organizations and were related mostly to internationalization.

Incoming administrative mobility



Outgoing administrative mobility



In terms of geographical distribution, it is worth noting that outgoing mobility of administrative staff is directed, to Europe (e.g., France, Italy, Spain, UK, Germany) but also to neighbouring countries, such as Turkey, Tunisia and Jor



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