



## IBTIKAR

# promoting research and innovation environment in the Libyan higher Education System

### Background

According to the Libya Restart research project performed by UNIMED during a two-years research (2018-2019), Universities in Libya have a greater degree of autonomy in research fields, compared to teaching issues, even though we saw that the university profile is much more teaching-oriented than research-oriented. Universities are currently engaged in establishing (if not already done) research units and centres within each faculty of university. **Research is indeed an integral part of academic staff responsibilities at universities and is performed through research activities carried out by individuals or research groups of academics, in order to meet promotion requirements, for professional development or as a part of their post-graduate duties.**

The National Authority for Scientific Research (NASR) through various research centres, is supervising scientific research in Libya. Despite that, **some activities suffer from a lack of management and some research centers are not properly activated.** This would lead us to say that **the biggest priority for Libyan universities in the area of research is establishing research priorities, promoting specialization strategies within universities and supporting existing research centres and research units.** Moreover, lack of funding has been a big issue mentioned by most of the respondents, and the specialization strategy is considered by most of them as the best solution to face the issue.

Research and innovation actions can be defined as embryonic and several international organizations (World Bank, UNESCO, UNDP) recognized **the need to move forward towards a more mature phase for the research and innovation environment in the country.** The improvement of the research capacities of Libyan research centres has been clearly expressed as a priority during several meetings with Libyan Universities which are the most relevant bodies interested and engaged in scientific research in various branches of knowledge. In this sense, Higher Education Institutions serve to support and find solutions to society challenges, providing experts, scientists and researchers in various fields of knowledge in addition to modern equipment and laboratories.

Another key element is international mobility of academics and students, which brings important benefits in terms of research and development, as it enhances knowledge flows, stimulates new ideas, develops cooperation for joint research and fosters innovation, reducing the risk of brain drain by creating links for sustainable cooperation. Linkages between higher education institutions and other actors, such as private firms and research centers, also may help to develop innovation sustainable systems in Libya; as well, attracting foreign researchers/companies may improve local capacity and enhance research cooperation between institutions. For these reasons, in the last years the World Bank Group has developed a strategy for the MENA region that intends to promote social inclusion, create opportunities for young people, further develop regional cooperation in sectors such as education and economy, the protection of refugees, expanding and deepening partnerships internationally.



According to the results of the UNIGOV (Modernizing UNiversity GOVernance and Management in Libya) project, which aimed (among other things) to identify the challenges of Higher Education Institutions in Libya, strengthening scientific research is one of the key priorities. International ranks of universities prove right the results of the UNIGOV project, as these ranks give high portion of percentage to researchers' citation. There are no Libyan universities among QS world university ranking in 2018, nor among the first 4000 universities within other international superior rankings. **Research quality and quantity of the Libyan universities are weak compared to international universities in Europe, but also compared to other North African countries.** This is due to many factors, including lack of research management, weakness of staff research skills, lack of IT skills and lack of access to national and international funds. Obviously, the lack of security in the country and the war-like-state dramatically affected Universities performances.

In this sense, there is a **huge need to train university staff members to expand their capacity to be more involved in scientific research projects**, so that new partnerships will be built across the region and on an international scale. This will complement the World Bank Development strategy in the region and support the achievement of the Libya vision 2030 and sustainable development goals for the 2030. These programs are supporting not only training, but also inclusion and economic sustainability in the country.

Responses collected by Libyan HEIs staff often point out the difficulties faced in writing up projects and accessing information on funding opportunities, due to the **lack of expertise and qualified human resources (academic and administrative staff)** dedicated to these tasks. HEIs struggle to put forward their ideas concerning researches independently. Furthermore, even **research management** is a task which requires a set of specific skills (e.g. financial management, organization of activities, etc) for which university members are not trained. This lack of expertise is curtailing the potential of HEIs to develop further on research and be involved in initiatives which could be highly beneficial to their staff and students in terms of research and innovation.

According to the above state of the art we can sum up the needs of the Libyan Higher Education system as following:

- Evident lack of suitable equipments and resources for scientific research and training. Generally speaking, infrastructures and equipments, especially communication and ICT infrastructure, are very poor and inadequate.
- Scarce research capacities of Libyan HE system in terms of methodologies, research management, skills, etc;

## Project's Objectives

Universities explicitly ask for the design of a research agenda and research management training path at national level. By following these suggestions, IBTIKAR propose the following activities to be carried out:

**1. Definition of an institutional Action Plan for research technology and innovation (RTI) processes in the Libyan Universities**, which establishes a common methodology for all Libyan partner Universities. The model is based on a bottom-up approach, in which research centres are key players to promote, steer and manage research at the University, in cooperation with national counterparts. In order to take advantage of similar experiences already carried out, an analysis of Best Practices and Lessons Learnt will be carried out as an additional input to the design of the model.



2. To allow research centres to work properly and implement the Action Plan, together with researchers and academics, **a number of capacity building actions** are foreseen:

- A **vertical CB action** (training of trainers) where European Partners train Libyan Partners on the basic skills required to run research on the basis of the designed model:
  - 1) Horizontal skills (soft skills, ICT skills, Research Management, English Language) for all the Administrative and Academic staff of the involved Libyan Universities
  - 2) A Thematic training for Research and Administrative Staff including a field visit to the EU HEIs
- A **horizontal CB action**, where Libyan Academic and Administrative staff train the internal staff. The idea is to generate a cascade-effects, where Libyan administrative and academic staff share with their counterparts not only the knowledge acquired but also their experience in managing and implementing research activities in the Libyan context. They are well aware of the limitations and opportunities of their own system and will transfer to less experienced staff members their perspectives on how to better apply the shared model.

3. **Definition of a White Paper** aiming at bringing the attention of decision-makers on the definition of a National Research Agenda, which will support specialization strategies within universities, enabling existing research centres and research units to rely on a national framework, supporting universities in research management and training in specific field of knowledge, as well as setting up proper infrastructures.

4. For the implementation of the Action Plan, existing research centres will be provided with proper **equipment and new research centres will be opened, and equipped, where missing.**

## Project partnership

Number	Partner	WP Leadership	Focal Point
P1	UNIMED	WP8 Management	Marcello Scalisi Anne-Laurence Pastorini Martina Zipoli Orlando Luca
P2	Bogazici University	WP3 Development	Naz Zeynep Atay
P3	University of Salento	WP2 Development	Antonio Ficarella
P4	Universidade de Tras-Os-Montes e Alto Douro	WP5 Development	Carlos Afonso Teixeira
P5	University of Tripoli	WP1 Preparation	Adel Dhiyaf
P6	University of Benghazi	WP6 Quality	Ruwida Snini
P7	Misurata University	WP4 Development	Mohammed Abugharsa
P8	Sebha University	WP5 Development	Jamal Abubaker
P9	Sirte University		Eltayeb Elgobbi

P10	University of Zawia	WP7 Dissemination	Emad Khalfalla
P11	Elmergib University		Mohamed Elrawemi
P12	Alasmarya Islamic University		Ali Ben Omran Saleh Ben Khayyal
P13	Bani Waleed University		Jellah Alfitouri
P14	University of Ajdabiya		Noha Muftah
P15 (Associated partner)	Libyan International Medical University		Salma Bukhtawa

## WPs description

More specifically, the IBTIKAR project is structured around the following eight Work Packages:

**WP1:** Synergies creation: best practices and lessons learnt lead by UoT, University of Tripoli, will ensure a proper update of the state of the art due the time-lapse between the project proposal writing and actual implementation.

Expected Results:

- Updated Need Analysis: A document exposing weaknesses and strength of Libyan research activities (both at Faculties and Research centers level) and organization with a series of recommendations on how to improve it.
- Online catalogue of Inspiring Practices and lessons learnt: An online platform where to collect a set of inspiring practices from both EU and MENA region.
- Report of on-site visits: A report including the results of field visits performed by UoT and UNIMED to Libyan Universities (both at Faculties and Research centers level).

**WP2:** Definition of an Action Plan confirming the training scheme and institutional research agenda for research technology and innovation (RTI) lead by UNISAL, University of Salento, will define a proper action plan for training as well as will define an Institutional research agenda designed by Libyan Universities and White Paper for the reform of Libyan research national strategy

Expected Results:

- Action Plan validated: The deliverable contains the definition of the action plan, defining training contents and objectives for both the vertical and horizontal capacity building action
- Institutional research agenda set per each Libyan partner: An institutional agenda for implementing acquired capacities. Will represent the basis for WP5!
- White Paper: A strategic paper resulting from stakeholder consultation through a bottom up process, in which Libyan Universities (supported by Eu partners) will define a reform process for the research strategies of national authorities

**WP3:** Vertical capacity building action: from Europe to Libya lead by BU, it will represent the core of the CB action with both horizontal skills training for Academic and Administrative staff and advanced Thematic skills training for Academic staff and administrative staff to be performed through study visits and training weeks.  
Expected Results:

- Horizontal skills (soft skills, ICT skills, Research Management, English Language) for all the Administrative and Academic staff of the involved Libyan Universities. Will be held in Libya.
- A Thematic training for Research and Administrative Staff held in Lecce and Istanbul.

**WP4:** Horizontal capacity building action: from Libya-to-Libya lead by MU, it will allow Libyan Universities to perform internal transfer of competences.

Expected Results:

- Transferring acquired academic/administrative competencies. Training will be performed by Libyan universities in order to raise their ownership of the acquired results and will also ease internal travels from one city to another. Additionally, the training could be performed directly in Arabic (if required by the trainees) and this will facilitate the transfer of acquired knowledge.
- Harmonization phase: harmonization meeting will take place at MU premises with the scope of reconcile different training approaches adopted by Libyan universities during the Local training. The harmonization meeting will be also the occasion for involving different stakeholders and disseminate IBTIKAR activities towards students, policy makers and the society at large.

**WP5:** Research activities piloting phase lead by UTAD, it will represent a monitoring phase of the implemented CB activities and will allow EU partner to assist Libyan universities in performing research activities at their premises.

Expected Results:

- Research activities benefiting from acquired competencies: Using the field of Environmental studies as testing and validating discipline, the Libyan Universities will test the acquired capacities (both in terms of management and research production).
- Supporting Research activities (monitoring by EU members): This includes a phase of pilot operation testing the quality of the research activities. This monitoring phase will be performed both in presence and via the WEB. Universities performances will be evaluated according to the criteria set in the institutional research agenda together with UTAD.

**WP6:** Deals with the quality assurance procedures which have been experimented in several previous projects and it is led by UoB;

**WP7:** This WP concerns the dissemination of the project's results through a well-designed set of communication actions and six dissemination conferences in Libya, with the ultimate goal to achieve a replication of the results and the highest possible level of awareness and it is led by ZU;

**WP8:** This WP will ensure the management of the project from the strategic, operational and administrative points of view, with the cooperation of the partners under the experienced leadership of UNIMED