



Designing new pathways for employability and entrepreneurship of Iraqi students in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Project Number: 610191-EPP-1-2019-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

EXPLOITATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Last updated: April 2022

Disclaimer:

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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Project Summary

BANUU - Designing new pathways for employability and entrepreneurship of Iraqi students in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage is a three-year (2020-2023) international project funded by the European Union in the frame of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2 in the Field of Higher Education¹.

BANUU aims at contributing to the improvement of the students' employability in the field of Humanities in Iraq by creating new pathways of cooperation between Universities and the public and enterprise sectors. This will be the result of six specific practical objectives connected with the different Working Packages of the project:

1. Creation of a national framework for designing and implementing internships in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage in Iraq;
2. Creation of new pathways to enhance Iraqi students' transversal skills (focus on entrepreneurial skills);
3. Piloting of the new frameworks and pathways in 3 specific sectors: Preventive Archeology, Cultural Tourism, Cultural Heritage Management;
4. Re-drafting of the learning outcomes of Iraqi BA and MA degree programs involving external partners as co-producers of knowledge;
5. Strengthening of the relations between HEIs (Universities, Ministry) and the wider national economic and social environment;
6. Creating a favorable legal, administrative, and financial environment in which HEIs can draft comprehensive agreements and contracts with external partners.

The success of the project will be ensured by a series of integrated and multidimensional activities contained in three dedicated WPs:

WP8 - Quality control in action: This work package is aimed at establishing criteria, tools and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the project in terms of both processes and outputs. It is also aimed at the actual implementation of the stated quality control in line with the fixed strategies, the scheduled deliverables, and the budget. Please see the *Quality Plan* for further information.

WP9 - Dissemination of project results: The overarching goal of WP9 is to maximize the spread and dissemination of the project's results, with particular focus on WP2 (Internships framing), WP3 (Pilot internships), WP4 (Entrepreneurship activities framing), WP5 (Pilot entrepreneurship activities) and WP6 (Accreditations) outcomes. Please see the *Dissemination Plan* for further information.

WP10 - Ensuring project exploitation and sustainability: The overarching goal of this WP is to make project's

¹ For further information, please visit https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/grants/2014-2020/erasmus_en.

results sustainable after the project lifetime.

1. Introduction

BANUU was developed in line with both EU and Iraqi national policies on education and development. The project aims to become a best practice example for the promotion of education, cooperation and development policies. In fact, the creation of an excellent and innovative academic offer in Archaeology and the connection with the private stakeholders are realizing a spill-over effect on society at large, thanks to the creation of new internships and entrepreneurial opportunities for the youth and the enhancement of the use of cultural heritage as a powerful tool for mitigating social tensions, building mutual understanding and leading the Iraqi society to a stronger social cohesion.

Therefore, it is essential for the Consortium to make the project sustainable even after the activities have ended. Only a strong commitment of all partners to keep the results alive can generate a real impact in the long term. To this end, the Consortium decided to adopt a Exploitation and Sustainability Plan, illustrating the pursued strategy, as well as the specific actions already carried out, and those which will be developed until the end of the project, but also afterwards.

1.1 Involved partners

As WP10 is transversal to all project activities, the tasks foreseen will concern the whole consortium, with the following allocation of roles:

	Name	Acronym	Country	Role
P1	University of Bologna	UNIBO	Italy	Project Coordinator and WP10 co-leader
P2	Koç University of Istanbul	KU	Turkey	Partner
P3	Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi Torino	CRAS	Italy	Partner
P4	University of Baghdad	UOB	Iraq	Partner
P5	University of Kufa	UOK	Iraq	Partner
P6	University of Qadisiyah	QU	Iraq	Partner
P7	University of Mosul	UOM	Iraq	Partner
P8	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	MHESR	Iraq	WP10 co-leader

1.2 The WaLink Network

BANUU has been built up on an EU-Iraqi long-term sustainable international partnership. The so-called *WaLink Network* was created from the initiative of an initial consortium of Iraqi, European and North American universities, research centers and public institutions, in the frame of the EU-funded Erasmus+ Capacity Building KA2 project WALADU. The official launch of the Network took place during the final meeting of the Waladu project at the University of Kufa (Iraq) on 12th January 2020.

The WaLink network consists of 22 partners from different research projects, national and international institutions and universities and research centers, coordinated by the University of Bologna (Prof. Nicolò Marchetti) for the first three years. Each partner appoints one official representative.

The “raison d’être” of the WaLink network is to foster and support collaboration between Iraqi and Middle Eastern universities, research centers and public institutions with European and North American research projects, universities and research centers in the field of Humanities and Cultural Heritage.

Differently from other networks, concentrated on the needs of their members, WaLink aims to benefit a specific group of people: Iraqi scholars, students and public officers that, due to the current shortcoming in the education system in Iraq, have not an updated knowledge of their own field. More information about WaLink can be found at: <https://site.unibo.it/waladu/en/walink-1>.

1.3 Other projects

In addition to the common membership to the WaLink Network, the Consortium partners have developed several projects together in the past years:

Name	Years	Website
WALADU - Developing and Structuring of BA Courses in Archaeology in Iraq	2017-19	https://site.unibo.it/waladu/
EDUU - Education and Cultural Heritage Enhancement for Social Cohesion in Iraq	2017-19	https://site.unibo.it/eduu/
INsPIRE - Innovative Governance Practices in the Higher Education Institutions in Iraq	2019-22	https://projectinspire.eu/
KALAM - Analysis, Protection and Development of Archaeological Landscapes in Iraq and Uzbekistan through ICTS and Community-based Approaches	2021-24	https://site.unibo.it/kalam/

Nineveh and East Mosul: Planning for Conservation and Enhancement	2021-22	https://www.jmkfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/HC-GRANTS-LIST_12.2021-1.pdf
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The interconnection between these projects, and the common objectives of modernisation and internationalization of Iraqi HEIs and the archaeological and cultural sector, will therefore contribute to increasing BANUU's achievements, both in the short and mid-term.

The EU-Iraq cooperation in the field of education and archaeology/cultural sector is indeed proving to be essential to provide Iraqi young people with a complete educational preparation and a greater number of employment opportunities, which will foster a sustainable development of the country's economy.

2. Roadmap and actions for exploitation and sustainability

During the proposal drafting phase, and thanks to the previous experiences of WALADU and EDUU, the Consortium stressed the need to ensure full exploitation of the project results. These considerations were updated during the first half of the project, in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and of the early activities undertaken.

As a consequence, this Exploitation and Sustainability Plan intends to draw a roadmap of the future actions to be carried out by all involved partners, in order to ensure long-term sustainability, to strengthen the relations between HEIs and enterprises, and to reinforce EU-Iraq cooperation. Although prepared from the beginning through targeted actions, the results and deliverables will be achieved mostly during the last months of the project.

2.1 National incubator for start-ups

WP4 ("Design and planning of activities that can foster students entrepreneurship") and WP5 ("Pilot entrepreneurship activities") are dedicated to the framing and the development of start-up projects. After the training activities carried out during WP4, the resulting Start-up projects have been presented - in poster form - during the 12th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE) held by the University of Bologna (6-9 April 2021).

Iraqi students have received the feedback of the ICAANE international community about their proposals uniting conservation and development of the cultural heritage of their country. This experience has consolidated in them an understanding of the basic dynamics of the private sector and at the same time has fostered in the involved faculty staff a method for bringing students in closer touch with such realities.

The start-up project posters are available here: <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/start-up-projects>.



In order to systematize and consolidate this development model, the BANUU project envisages the creation of a national official incubator for start-ups in the field of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage. The incubator will have its own website, and will be realized with the support of Almacube, a BANUU associated partner.

Almacube, founded in 1999 and certified by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, is the incubator and innovation hub of the University of Bologna and Confindustria Emilia. It aims at fostering the economic development of the territory, through innovation and the development of young enterprises, collaboration with established companies, and the education of the new generations in an entrepreneurial approach. Its activities are divided into: support to research spin-offs, support to startups and support to mature companies through open innovation and venture clienting services.

The Consortium intends to make the new incubator available from the month of January 2023.

2.2 Public-private cooperation and internships

Based on the experience and know-how collected during the WALADU and EDUU projects, BANUU focused on the necessity of improving the organization of the Iraqi educational system, as indicated by the official reports issued by the Iraqi Ministry of Education, as well as external international bodies including EU and UN. The 2017 Labor Market Report issued by IREX strongly supports the connection between improved university programs and the demands of the public and private companies.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some of the activities foreseen for WP2 (“Internships framing”) and WP3 (“Pilot internships and their structuring in degree courses”) could not be realized in the first project year. The actual implementation of the internships was consequently postponed, although other preparatory activities were undertaken.

During the first reporting period, an Internship Office and a library were set up in each of the four Iraqi HEIs. In particular, the internship offices were created to provide support to the academic departments, in order to frame the internship programs. The offices will be available also to the students, to actively have access to entrepreneurship activities in the field of cultural heritage. All the necessary equipment has been purchased, as agreed individually with each Iraqi HEIs on the basis of their needs and approved in the WP2 meeting held virtually on December 20th 2020, and installed thanks to the BANUU fundings.

In the frame of WP2, the Consortium identified a series of organizations to be involved for the realization of the internships. The list is available here:

<https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results/wp2-internships-framing-training-and-establishment-of-dedicated-database-and-offices>.

Moreover, UOB and CRAFT drafted a selected list of museums, private and public cultural institutions, associations and foundations as well as several artistic, archaeological and architectural sites and monuments in Iraq. The relevance of these cultural institutions and associations lies in the fact that they may support the development of private entrepreneurship in the field of humanities in Iraq, and therefore being actively



involved in the development of the internship programs. The list is available here: <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results/wp-9-dissemination-of-project-results>.

During the last months of the project, the Consortium's efforts will be oriented towards the finalization and the strengthening of the university-enterprise cooperation. In fact, the Iraqi partner HEIs and private companies will sign official contracts for development of possible cooperation activities, including internship opportunities for the students. Among others, the companies signing the contract will include some associated partners such as Tareek al-Kouf, TreviGroup and Sana Alamar.

Should the request for the extension of the project implementation period presented by the Consortium in April 2022 be approved, the activities regarding the activation of internships and signature of the contracts will be carried out within the month of July 2023.

2.3 National network of public and private enterprises

The synergy between the HEIs, the MHESR and the private sector, developed through BANUU, will also bring to the creation of a national network of public and private enterprises. The aim of this network is to let all these companies and institutions to focus on common interests and objectives, and to work towards a more favorable legal, administrative, financial, and social environment in the fields of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.

The list drafted by UOM and CRAFT will serve as a basis for the creation of the national network. It is necessary to highlight that the emergency conditions resulting from the diffusion of the Covid-19 virus partially prevented research in the field by both the Italian members of the project team and by the Iraqi ones. This contingency partially conditioned the final results of the data collection, although the research will continue in the second half of the project.

The national network will be established during the last project meeting. The result of this meeting, consisting in attendance lists and reports of the first constitutive meeting, will be disseminated by the Consortium partners at national and international level.

2.4 Permanent Interministerial Commission

In addition to the abovementioned public-private relations, one of the project objectives is to strengthen the synergy between the Iraqi University, the MHESR, and the wider national economic and social environment.

In particular, this result will be pursued by the creation of a permanent Interministerial Commission, involving both the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, which is responsible for the State Board of Antiquities (SBAH).

The Interministerial Commission will be in charge of drafting new policies on public-private cooperation in the field of Humanities. Through the creation of these new institutionalized and structured spaces,



Universities and enterprises will share experiences and ideas, thus reaching a common vision for the drafting of comprehensive agreements and contracts. It represents therefore a key opportunity in terms of ensuring the project's long-term impact and sustainability.

2.5 Replicability of BANUU in the Arab world

Although BANUU is focused on the Iraqi HEIs, a wider objective of the project - and, more generally, of the WaLink network - is to find, test and create patterns for economic development, which can be replicated in other countries of the Arab world, or even scaled up to the region as a whole. To reach this aim, the Consortium agreed on the necessity of a proper dissemination and promotion of the project methodology and results to other Arab HEIs.

It is fundamental, indeed, to increase the interest of such subjects (both Universities and other institutional actors of the Arab world) in developing internships and updating degree courses and learning outcomes in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage. To this end, the Consortium will involve the Association of Arab Universities (AARU), an associated partner of BANUU, for the implementation of this action.

These activities will be carried out during the last months of the project.

3. Expected results

As mentioned, the BANUU project aims at establishing and consolidating best practices for the involvement of BA and MA students in the management of Cultural Heritage in Iraq. This objective is addressed through multiple actions: their implementation and the exploitability of the results depends on the collaboration of EU and Iraqi partners, a meaningful factor for the transmission of knowledge and practices.

The political and social impact addressed by the project include the HEIs departments, the students and the private companies.

3.1 HEIs departments

A stronger relation between the HEIs departments, the MHESR and the private sectors of the national Iraqi economy will be beneficial, as it allows them to shape and improve their educational offer, in accord with the demand of specific expertise in fields of Preventive Archaeology, Cultural Tourism, and Cultural Heritage Management.

Moreover, the creation of internship offices will increase their management skills, bringing to the signing of public-private contracts and the development of long-term programs and strategies.



Until now, almost 180 academic staff members and 100 administrative staff members have been actively involved in training sessions.

3.2 Students

During the first reporting period, a sector-specific library was opened in each one of the four Iraqi HEIs. The purpose is to support the students in their educational path by creating new collections and expanding the existing ones with updated international scientific volumes.

The libraries include around 160 newly-purchased scientific volumes for each Iraqi HEIs. The volumes cover a large number of topics related to archaeology, ancient history, economy and cultural heritage. In particular, the volumes are connected to four specific topics, which broadly fit in the three-phase action strategy: cultural heritage management (51 books), cultural tourism (28 books), entrepreneurship (44 books), preventive archaeology (37 books). Each library has also been equipped with laptops and printer/scanner in order to allow students and researchers to search for the volumes and to make photocopies or to scan them.

The designing and implementation of internship programs in public and private companies will provide Iraqi students with career opportunities aside from academic research. This will allow them to develop transversal entrepreneurial skills in the management and enhancement of cultural heritage, both in Iraq and abroad.

Until now, more than 200 students have been directly involved in BANUU's activities.

3.3 Private companies

The collaboration between Universities and private companies will allow the latter to have preferential, direct access to the job market. The participation in the development of internship programs will also allow them to highlight their necessities, and thus to define the sets of required skills for the new specialists entering the job market.

Moreover, the active involvement in the national network will allow them to exchange best practices with similar actors, to redefine their policies in a more sustainable approach for Preventive Archaeology and the protection of Iraqi heritage, and to work together towards a more favorable legal, administrative, financial, and social environment in the fields of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.