



**BANUU**

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



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

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

### Final External Evaluation Report



**Disclaimer**

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**Author's short bio**

Kristen Barrett-Casey is a first year PhD researcher in Archaeology at the University of Oxford. Her research specialism focuses on the politics of international aid in post-conflict cultural heritage reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan and its implications for post-conflict statebuilding. Her latest publication is on the unintended consequences of Iraq's legal system for cultural heritage protection.

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## Executive Summary

### *Evaluation Purpose and Scope*

*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 Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Union in the frame of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2 in the Field of Higher Education (Project Number: 610191-EPP-1-2019-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP).<sup>1</sup>

BANNU is the ancient Akkadian word meaning “to build”. It has originated from the experiences of WALADU, a CBHE project financed in 2016 which aimed to improve the teaching quality and structure of BA Archaeology courses in Iraq. The shortcomings and gaps observed concerning student employability due to the lack of structured HEI-private sector relationships inspired the creation of BANUU.

By building on the three years of experience of WALADU, and strengthening the relationships that were continued in EDUU, BANUU aims to develop a Structural Project that, by involving the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research as a full partner, and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH), a Department of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as an Associated partner, can better tackle those underlying issues identified as having a national impact.

The *WaLink Network*<sup>2</sup> was created at the end of the WALADU project from an initial consortium of Iraqi, European and North American universities, research centres and public institutions. The members of these networks are part of the BANUU consortium. The project partners are:

- P1 - University of Bologna, Italy – Coordinator
- P2 - Koç University of Istanbul, Turkey
- P3 - Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi Torino, Italy
- P4 - University of Baghdad, Iraq
- P5 - University of Kufa, Iraq
- P6 - University of Qadisiyah, Iraq
- P7 - University of Mosul, Iraq
- P8 - Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Iraq

The project is also supported by 8 associated partners (including 2 national organisations, 2 international organisations and 3 private companies):

- State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH), a division of the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities;
- UNESCO Youth Committee;

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<sup>1</sup> BANUU website: <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en>.

<sup>2</sup> WaLink page on the WALADU website: <https://site.unibo.it/waladu/en/walink-1>.

- AlmaCube – Start-up Incubator founded by the University of Bologna;
- AARU - Association of Arab Universities Association of Universities.
- Sana Al-Amar Company – Oil & Gas Company;
- TreviGroup – Construction Company;
- Tareek Al-Ofuk Co. – Travel and Tourism Company;

The project has been drafted according to issues and needs identified in several government plans, including the Iraqi National Development Plan 2018-2022 (NDP 18-22), the Iraq Reconstruction and Investment Plan (February 2018) and the preliminary draft of the Iraqi Vision Project 2030 issued by the Iraqi Government.<sup>3</sup> Additional reports from UNESCO, the World Bank and IREX have also fed into the design of the project.

The project, initially planned to last 36 months, but extended by an additional 9 months owing to the Covid 19, has 6 specific intended outcomes:

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 Archaeology, 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 favourable legal, administrative, and financial environment in which HEIs can draft comprehensive agreements and contracts with external partners.

To achieve these objectives and outcomes, BANUU planned to implement a range of activities encompassed in ten interrelated work packages (WPs):

- WP1 - Analysis of issues and needs;
- WP2 - Internships framing: training and establishment of dedicated database and offices;
- WP3 - Pilot internships and their structuring in degree courses;
- WP4 - Design and planning of activities that can foster students' entrepreneurship;

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<sup>3</sup> Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, *Iraqi National Development Plan 2018-2022*, [https://www.iraq-jcme.jp/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018\\_2022.pdf](https://www.iraq-jcme.jp/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018_2022.pdf).

World Bank, Iraq Reconstruction and Investment Plan (2018), <https://www.iraq-businessnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Iraq-Recons-Inves-World-Bank-Jan-2018.pdf>

Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, *Iraq Vision Project 2030*, <http://iraqieconomists.net/en/2020/10/26/iraqs-ministry-of-planning-iraq-visio-2030/>.

- WP5 - Pilot entrepreneurship activities;
- WP6 - Frameworks of internships and entrepreneurial paths at national level;
- WP7 - Operational and financial management;
- WP8 - Quality control in action;
- WP9 - Dissemination of project results;
- WP10 - Ensuring project exploitation and sustainability;

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the project's experience and achievement of its expected outcomes in relation to its main objectives. It seeks to:

Review the project's performance throughout its years of implementation;

Assess its impact by identifying achievements and changes within its field of operation compared to previous evaluations, its needs analysis, and its objectives and intended outcomes;

Identify key lessons learned and recommendations for future work;

### *Findings*

Analysis of the project's technical documentation, supplementary and previous reports, surrounding contextual research, and feedback from key informants shows that the BANUU project has managed to consistently operate and engage target groups within a fast changing and complex context, which is a testimony to the **relevance** of the project to their needs and priorities. The project is based on a thorough knowledge of the complexities linked to the context in which it operates, as demonstrated by the report of Work Package 1, and the gaps related to the lack of established relationship between the stakeholders engaged in the development of the private sector and student transversal skills for employability in the cultural heritage sector in Iraq. For this reason, the project has proven to be **highly flexible** and adaptive to the challenging, ever-changing Iraqi context.

The project is **well structured** with Work Packages corresponding to each objective, which properly link concepts and ideas that are relevant to the attainment of the overall project goal. Importantly, the formulation at each stage of the project design and implementation was collaborative between the project's partners and external stakeholders, such as the companies who were engaged in internship provision. The most successful and impactful elements of the project were based around both training in start-ups as well as gaining internship experience, whilst providing better-resourced institutional support through internship offices and subject-specialist libraries at the partner universities. This three-pronged approach to the project has ensured that students have received a **comprehensive** spectrum of interdisciplinary skills that could be employed either in an entrepreneurial start-up context or in dependent employment.

Owing to the long-standing and deepening relationship that has evolved between the European and Iraqi partners over several years, through Waladu, Eduu and Kalam, the managerial and

coordination aspects and mechanisms were found to be **efficient** and integratable into one another. BANUU is a clear progression of these established relationships which are now being broached with the private sector. A review of documentation surrounding management, financial management, quality control and dissemination shows a thorough planning and integration of control and evaluation mechanisms, which allowed for corrective measures to be observed and actioned in advance of the project's completion.

The initial impact has been small, however, with only six students and two companies engaging in internships, and with this summative evaluation being conducted before these students have graduated. Two explanatory problems explored in interviews firstly the lack of students coming to study archaeology and related subjects from school, and the difficulty to persuade companies to offer internships without funding. In order to ensure a continued, expanded, and sustainable success of this project both of these fundamental issues will need to be addressed in future work.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the findings of the evaluation, and on the conclusions of previous sections, the following recommendation have been formulated:

**R1:** To conduct a further complimentary study in Arabic to address the key target groups in Iraq who were less familiar with English and so less able to in-depth, nuanced discussions on the topic.

**R2:** To conduct a follow-up study on the longer-term impact of this project. One of the biggest limitations of this evaluation is that it has been conducted immediately at the end of the project with no real sense of what its long-term impact will be.

**R3:** To expand upon the relationships already built within this project in the private sector to include NGOs and tourism companies to broaden the societal network across Iraq and to broaden the market within which students could aim for employment

**R4:** To integrate the internship model into university degree courses as an essential course component. This would include within it regular content quality reviews to ensure that students were gaining strong skills and experience from these internships.

**R5:** Relationships should continue to be strengthened between SBAH, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the private sector, to enable employees of SBAH, as well as students, to be able to move into the private sector.

**R6:** This project should be expanded to include collaboration between archaeology students with those from other departments to encourage interdisciplinarity and to raise awareness of cultural heritage as an employment market beyond those who have studied it.

## Introduction

Several decades of war, conflict, sanctions and terror have degraded Iraq's social, economic, cultural and historical foundations and infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

Historic sanctions imposed by the United Nations after the First Gulf War in 1991 and the US-led 2003 invasion and subsequent Occupation has led to a complete reconfiguration of the state and its political and economic institutions based on ethnic and religious quotas, known as the *muhasasa* system.<sup>5</sup> This environment has led to an entrenchment and cementing of sectarian division, a separation of the rule of law from the reality on the ground, and a haphazard, incomplete and unsystematic reconstruction effort.<sup>6</sup> Alternative, sub-state power structures through the religious endowments have developed and been empowered through a combination of competing laws, a lack of legal enforcement, and a transformation of cultural heritage into a political asset which has brought the endowments profits through an emphasis on religious tourism that would otherwise have gone to the central state.<sup>7</sup> Such an abuse of heritage has degraded a common national Iraqi identity with a shared heritage and past and now serves to stoke division, with long-term effects on Iraq's economy, education, and cultural heritage protection.

This political system and environment has had several consequences. The distribution of hundreds of billions of Iraqi State funds since 2003 through the Muhasasa system has had major repercussions on Iraq's development, governance, reconstruction and progress. Similarly, the rise of the Islamic State in 2014 was the result of a lack of essential reforms needed to create a state capable of delivering good employment and basic services and infrastructure.<sup>8</sup> Subsequent to the liberation from ISIS, frustration with the government's inability to enact change expressed itself through the Tishreed protests in October 2019, where a largely young population protested against government corruption, mismanagement, high unemployment and lack of essential services. As one of the biggest protests in Iraq's history, total systematic overhaul was called for, including new electoral laws and constitutional reform.<sup>9</sup> Whilst protests halted during the years of Covid 19, these historic protests demonstrated a clear structural issue within Iraq surrounding the state of the political system, chronic unemployment, and a lack of infrastructure and services which has the potential to only worsen without intervention.

In this context of growing inequalities, increasing poverty rates and a lack of basic services, the resources allocated to prioritising cultural heritage were minimal, and mostly came from the

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<sup>4</sup> Kathem, M., Robson, E., & Tahan, L. G. (2022). Cultural heritage predation in Iraq. *London: Chatham House*.

<sup>5</sup> Dodge, T. (2020). Beyond structure and agency: Rethinking political identities in Iraq after 2003. *Nations and Nationalism*, 26(1), 108-122.

<sup>6</sup> Kathem, M. (2020). Cultural (dis) continuity, political trajectories and the state in post-2003 Iraq. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 26(2), 163-177.

<sup>7</sup> Kathem, M., Robson, E., & Tahan, L. G. (2022). Cultural heritage predation in Iraq. *London: Chatham House*.

<sup>8</sup> Tichý, L. (2019). Energy infrastructure as a target of terrorist attacks from the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria. *International Journal of Critical Infrastructure Protection*, 25, 1-13.

<sup>9</sup> Eriksson, J., & Grief, I. (2023). The Iraqi state's legitimacy deficit: Input, output and identity-based legitimacy challenges. *Global Policy*, 14(2), 363-372.

international community. Due to the fall in oil prices in 2020 (which accounts for more than 90% of government revenue) the Government of Iraq stated the need for international loans to pay for government salaries.<sup>10</sup> This decision failed to address the underlying causes of Iraq's systemic issues, creating further political instability by cementing further dependency on the international community.

Iraq's cultural heritage, Higher Education and private sectors have all been deeply impacted by the years of a failed economy and the implementation of the quota-based political system. Whilst Iraq's national legal system states that there is a collective responsibility across state and sub-state institutions for conservation and care for Iraq's cultural heritage, in reality the various religious endowment laws have divided the real ownership and responsibility of each site to respective religious endowments. Dependency on the international community for funding and expertise has had a selective impact on the management, conservation and periodic reconstruction of Iraq's heritage, with little to support the flourishing of Iraq's own cultural heritage sector.<sup>11</sup> A situation has been created in which, owing to an internationally-dependent conservation system, crippled Higher Education sector and chronic levels of unemployment, Iraq is struggling to create internally-trained, highly skilled professionals who will be able to lead the conservation management of Iraq's cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage, education and employment, as well as an independent national private sector manned with internally-educated, highly skilled professionals, are all important and critical factors for Iraq's post-conflict redevelopment and re-establishment as a country that is not dependent on, or open to exploitation by, the international community. The exploitation of heritage by the religious endowments coupled with internationally-led heritage projects has led to a separation of Iraq's heritage from its society. Addressing this disconnect with the lack of internal training resources has the potential to bring into a realm of enabling both employment and social cohesion to be probed.

The BANUU project has both operated within this context and sought to address some of the issues outlined by building relationships between Iraq's Higher Education system, cultural heritage-related private sector, and the Ministry of Higher Education. It seeks to contribute to the improvement of the private job sector for the next generation of Iraq's students in archaeology and cultural heritage through the development of internship activities and private entrepreneurship. This is in line with the European Union Erasmus+ Capacity Building scopes and also the Iraqi educational and economic agenda for long-term job market improvement. It aims to do this by creating new pathways of cooperation between universities and the public and private sectors.

The project team includes three European universities and research centres – the University of Bologna (UNIBO) which coordinates the entire project, the Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino (CRAST) and the Koç University of Istanbul (KU); four Iraqi universities – the University of Baghdad (UOB), the University of Kufa (UOK), the University of Al-Qadisiyah

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<sup>10</sup> Khaleel, Z. K. (2021). IMPACT OF OIL PRICE FLUCTUATIONS ON IRAQ'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, 20, 1-8.

<sup>11</sup> Barrett-Casey, K., Hisari, L., & Fouseki, K. (2022). 13 Is world heritage politically sustainable?. *Routledge Handbook of Sustainable Heritage*, 181.

(UOQ) and the University of Mosul (UOM); two Iraqi ministries – The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR) and the Ministry of Culture represented by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH); five national and international associations – the UNESCO Youth, the Association of Arab Universities (AARU), AlmaCube, Tarek al-Ofuk Company (TOC) and the Sana Al-Amar Company (SAAC). This variety of project partners ensures the development of scientific knowledge, the official support at state level, and the presence of several international private stakeholders.

The project has six specific objectives and intended outcomes:

- 1) Creation of national framework for designing and implementing internships;
- 2) Creation of new pathways to enhance transversal entrepreneurial skills;
- 3) Piloting of new frameworks and pathways;
- 4) Redrafting learning outcomes of degrees - involving external partners;
- 5) Strengthening relationships between Higher Education Institutions and the national economic and social environment;
- 6) Creating favourable legal, administrative and financial environment for Higher Education Institutions to draft agreements and contracts with external partners;

To achieve these objectives and outcomes, the BANUU project involves a broad spectrum of activities that are encompassed in seven work packages (WPs) interrelated with each other:

- WP1 - Analysis of issues and needs;
- WP2 - Internships framing: training and establishment of dedicated database and offices;
- WP3 - Pilot internships and their structuring in degree courses;
- WP4 - Design and planning of activities that can foster students' entrepreneurship;
- WP5 - Pilot entrepreneurship activities;
- WP6 - Frameworks of internships and entrepreneurial paths at national level;
- WP7 - Operational and financial management;
- WP8 - Quality control in action;
- WP9 - Dissemination of project results;
- WP10 - Ensuring project exploitation and sustainability;

## Scope and Methodology of the Evaluation

As stated in the Quality Plan (2022), 'an External Summative Evaluation (ESE) will take place at the end of the project and will be carried out by the second appointed EEE. Similarly to the EFE, the ESE will be discussed with the QMC and the Operational Committee before being distributed to Consortium Assembly meetings for a final review. The ESE report will evaluate the overall project, and will be published and disseminated to policy makers and external stakeholders. Its aim is to attest the project achievements, to detect the problems arisen during its implementation and the solutions found by the Consortium, and to provide suggestions for its exploitation and its future replications'.<sup>12</sup>

This evaluation will build on the first External Formative Evaluation as well as the Internal Formative and Summative Evaluations, encompassing both the deliverable work packages 1-5 and the quality control, operational, dissemination and sustainability work packages 7-10. The evaluation was conducted in four phases between September - October 2023:

- 1) **Desk review** A review of the project's technical documents which formed part of subsequent informant interviews. Other EU, international, and Iraqi policy documents were also reviewed, mostly in relation to needs analysis.
- 2) **Data gathering** A range of primary and secondary data was collected from the project's technical documents, the interrelated WALADU and EDUU projects, surrounding evaluative reports, and online, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the project's key informants based in Iraq and Istanbul. These interviews took place variously over WhatsApp voice call, Microsoft Teams, and in some instances over email, owing to language barriers and discomfort of informants conversing in English.
- 3) **Data analysis** The collected data has been analysed for recurring trends and themes, as well as gaps and inconsistencies, through which follow up interviews were held and reanalysed.
- 4) **Synthesis** This data analysis has been summarised in this report, from which key recommendations for exploitation, repetition and sustainability will be made.

The analysis and structure of this evaluation consists of the project's:

- 1) Relevance;
- 2) Efficiency in its implementation;
- 3) Effectiveness and impact;
- 4) Dissemination, exploitability and sustainability.

### *Limitations of the evaluation*

Some of the recommendations made in this evaluation are owing to the challenges and limitations that were encountered in the data gathering phase. These challenges were found

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<sup>12</sup> BANUU project Quality Plan, April 2022, 7.  
<https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results/wp8-quality-control-in-action>

primarily through conducting the evaluation remotely, which made both interviewing challenging and limited the number of informants who were able to give interviews as well as to ground truth observations made during the interviews. Secondly, language barriers with some Iraqi colleagues made having in-depth and nuanced conversations around the issues of the project difficult. This resulted in some interviews being conducted over email instead of in discussion, and in some instances affected the overall quality of the data gathered from some of the informants. However, due to the consistency of the informants' responses, challenges around language could be somewhat mitigated.

Whilst the interview respondents were all unanimously enthusiastic about the impact of the project on Iraq, the discussions and analysis suffered from a lack of concrete data or examples to corroborate these statements, even when pressed with follow-up answers or explicitly asked to give examples. Similarly, communication between the project participants seemed ineffective as many were unable to provide recommendations for follow-up interviews, made recommendations for new elements which had already been implemented, and could not provide essential data such as the specific activities undertaken during the internships. This difficulty could be owing to conducting this research remotely and also language barriers, which recommendations in this report have tried to compensate for.

A third challenge, partly owing to conducting the evaluation remotely, was access to some of the Target Groups. In particular Iraqi ministerial officers, Iraqi entrepreneurs, and Iraqi civil society stakeholders were difficult to contact, which perhaps would have been easier if the evaluation had been conducted on the ground in Iraq.

Due to time constraints and the difficulty of accessing students owing to language barriers, the nature of the primary data gathered is qualitative in nature. Quantitative data has been gathered from secondary sources and discussed during interviews.

These limitations have affected creating a fully well-rounded picture of BANUU from the point of view of every Target Group, however owing to the consistent responses of the participants who were interviewed and their consistency with the secondary data gathered this limitation is minimal. These limitations have helped to inform some of the recommendations at the end of this evaluation.

## **Findings**

The BANUU project is part of the Higher Education and Cultural Heritage programme established by the University of Bologna in cooperation with its Iraqi partners. It is the last of three interrelated projects, starting with WALADU in 2017 - 2020 and continuing with EDUU, within the framework of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2. WALADU's key objective was to modernise and restructure BA courses in archaeology in line with EU standards and to increase employment opportunities for graduates. EDUU, funded from 2020 - 2023, aimed to contribute to the reconciliation of Iraq's civil society through raising awareness of Iraq's ancient and modern shared cultural heritage through secondary school courses and capacity building within local museums.

One of BANUU's key strengths and successes as a project was the benefits derived from these previous interrelated projects. Not only did it continue to build on key relationships that were forged between the EU and Iraq, and within Iraq, but the previous experiences of WALADU and EDUU directly informed the aims and intended outcomes of BANUU. During the previous two projects several gaps and shortcomings emerged that BANUU sort to address:

- 1) The lack of internships and practical placement opportunities for students in archaeology, cultural heritage and the humanities, owing to institutional siloeing and lack of connectivity between various institutions and sectors in Iraq;
- 2) University courses in Iraq are overly theoretical with no practical archaeological experience gained owing to the inability for students to participate in excavations;
- 3) A lack of best practices in the entrepreneurial sector for students to follow to pursue their own initiatives.
- 4) The findings analysed the outputs of the Work Packages in accordance with the project's relevance and coherence, structure and design, effectiveness and impact, as well as long-term effects and sustainability, and limitations of the project that can be addressed as recommendations later in the evaluation.

## Relevance and coherence

The experience of WALADU and EDUU which BANUU capitalised and built upon meant the needs, objectives and intended outcomes which structured the project were timely and filled a critical role in Iraq's recovery and reconstruction process. Specifically within the project, Work Package 1's analysis of needs and issues demonstrates a full and comprehensive understanding of the work needed to be done, contextualising not only Iraq's broader needs coming out of decades of sanctions and conflict, but also being directly informed by feedback from each Target Group on existing legislative constraints which had been preventing the core relationships and networks in this project from being agreed and formalised.<sup>13</sup> This report was able to feed directly into the structure and design of BANUU through its creation of each of the three pilot pathways through which each Work Package could logically build on the next.

The composition and ordering of the Work Packages provided a logic and coherence which allowed activities to build on each other and mutually reinforce the work towards the common objectives. Whilst work package 1 effectively contextualised Iraq's historical structural issues and the overall objective of the project, the online training provided in Work Packages 2 and 4 provided a comprehensive and wide-reaching package of online training in both internships entrepreneurial knowledge respectively, reaching 44 Iraqi academic members of staff and 52 students.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the Massively Open Online Course (MOOC) produced as one of the outputs of Work Package 2 continued to address the same needs identified in Work Package 1, and engaged through in a medium that was both accessible and adaptable to the challenges of Covid 19, allowing students to work remotely and self-paced.

Interview data from key informants within Iraq's university network and survey data collected from previous evaluations attests to this project being much needed. This was felt particularly in Mosul, where informants discussed the holistic nature of cultural heritage there and how central it was to the recovery of the city, owing to its large-scale destruction by Daesh in 2017. This is consistent with several policy documents published on the subject of Iraq's reconstruction and its challenges, such as the Iraqi government's National Development Plan 2018-2022; its Reconstruction and Investment Plan 2018; as well as the IREX Labor Market Report 2017, and UNESCO's Revitalising Science, Technology and Innovation in Iraq 2011-2020.<sup>15</sup>

The challenges identified by the Iraqi government in the previous decade made having the Ministry of Higher Education and SBAH essential partners in the success of this project, owing to the ability they brought in being able to align the government's identified challenges and needs with the aims and objectives of the project to be formalised, enabled, and legitimised the efforts pursued in BANUU. Whilst they were not one of the most actively engaged target groups in the project, the establishment of this essential relationship has the potential to ensure greater

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<sup>13</sup> Banuu project Work Package 1 Analysis of Issues and Needs, <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results/wp-1-analysis-of-issues-and-needs>.

<sup>14</sup> Banuu project Work Package 4 Design and planning of projects to foster student entrepreneurship, <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results/wp-4-design-and-planning-of-activities-that-can-foster-students-enter-preneurships>.

<sup>15</sup> IREX Labour Report (2017), <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/labor-market-report-university-linkages-program.pdf>

national and international engagement after the project's completion, and is essential to ensuring credibility and continued relevancy of the project's objectives.

### *Limitations*

Whilst the overall objective of increasing employability in the cultural heritage sector was relevant to Iraq's structural and underlying issues, not all of the objectives were clear and scorable in their definitions. For example, Objectives 5 and 6 of 'Strengthening relationships between Higher Education Institutions and the national economic and social environment, and 'Creating a favourable legal, administrative and financial environment for Higher Education Institutions to draft agreements and contracts with external partners'. How these relationships would be strengthened and what a strengthened relationship would look like, as well as what a favourable environment would look like was not made clear in the project documentation, nor were interview respondents able to answer how they would define it or what such an objective meant to them. As such, these objectives seemed rather broad and unquantifiable, and as such it is difficult to evaluate whether they have been achieved, since there is no metric to measure against if an environment is favourable or if a relationship between an institution and its environment has been strengthened.

Further, despite an identification of several target groups, only the first three were most comprehensively engaged, with ministerial officers, entrepreneurs and civil society stakeholders having overall less engagement with each of the Work Packages. This could be for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the disruptive nature of Covid 19, however there is scope for these relationships to be developed further, which will be explored in the recommendations.

## **Design and intervention logic, and implementation**

The design of the overall project as well as the individual work packages was at each stage collaborative between the Iraqi and EU partners, testament to the strong relationship built up over several projects. The intervention logic through each Work Package is coherent and comprehensive, as witnessed through both documentation analysis and interview data. The design of the Work Package structure builds upon each element in order to simultaneously strengthen both the Higher Education and the private sectors, capacity-build amongst students through knowledge, skills and experience development, as well as the start of institutionalisation of these relationships through the engagement of the Ministry of Higher Education, which itself lends national credibility to the project.

The presence of the Quality Plan has been important to committing the project to 'establish criteria, tools and procedures for monitoring and evaluating project in terms of processes and outputs, aimed at implementation of stated quality control in line with fixed strategies, scheduled deliverables and budget'.<sup>16</sup> The Quality Plan has comprehensively addressed the tools and methods for measuring and controlling the design and implementation of the project, importantly building into the project's structure continuous evaluation to spot problems in the implementation as they arise in order to address at the earliest opportunity. Additionally, feedback opportunities from the different target groups have also been built into the design of the project, resting on a Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. The governance structure of the Consortium Assembly, Operational Committee, Quality and Monitoring Committee and the Coordination Team, as well as the local teams and associated partners, has allowed for collaboration as well as distribution of responsibilities and management which is democratic rather than imposed by external project partners.

One of the biggest influences on the implementation of BANUU has been the disruption caused by Covid 19. Feedback gathered from staff and students engaged in internship and entrepreneurial training in work packages 4 and 5 mentioned the impact online training had on their ability to communicate effectively with the trainers as well as to gain practical skills. However, the fact that these training schemes were so rapid in their adaptability to the unforeseen impact of Covid 19 as well as a couple of small political disturbances is testament to the effect design and planning of the project, as well as the roadmap of deliverables produced between the partners. It is not clear yet what the long-term impact of Covid 19 has been on the overall impact of the achievement of the project's objectives, however in terms of the theoretical knowledge gained through course tuition the impact has been limited.

### *Limitations*

The biggest limitations were the lack of autonomy of universities in the management of their bank accounts; the project delivery in English; and the limited engagement from the Ministry of Higher Education. These three elements have meant that Iraq has not been able to have financial resources transferred to itself in order to control financial management of the project (which will have implications for the sustainability of the project); has been presented with some

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<sup>16</sup> Banuu project, Quality Control in Action, <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results/wp8-quality-control-in-action>.

language barriers in the training elements of the project; and has had limited implementation nationally. This is not to detract from the achievement of having four geographically dispersed universities from joining a consortium, but rather the spread and impact of the project could have been greater had the Ministry had greater involvement in the publicity of the project.

## **Effectiveness and impact**

The effectiveness and impact of BANUU can be differentiated in terms of reach and individual impact. Different strands of the project had different levels of reach and impact. The training, subject libraries and hubs established in each of the participating universities can be seen to have had a wide reach to both staff and students, and will be able to continue to, whereas the internships were undertaken by only six students but for each student had a big impact in terms of practical experience gained. The start-up competition provided a useful exercise for students in terms of thinking through a start-up project from start to finish, however only one was successful in gaining funding and at the time of this evaluation had not been officially set up. The start-up competition, therefore, similarly to the internships, provided invaluable practical experience for those who engaged and were successful, however its overall reach has been limited. However, with the right exploitative features implemented, all strands of the project have the potential to have a broader national impact.

Previous evaluation data and interview data from this evaluation has consistently shown that participants of the project felt Work Packages 1, 2, 4 and 5 were the most effective, creating a wide variety of practical and taught elements that were directly informed by an in-depth comprehensive study of Iraq's historical context, contemporary political situation, and needs identified by the Iraqi government and international organisations. The feedback consistently referenced the comprehensive nature of the teaching in both work packages, despite its online delivery, and how effectively the trainers communicated the contents of each session.

Central findings in Work Package 1, such as the need for the involvement of the Ministry of Higher Education owing to the lack of autonomy of universities, as well as the disconnect between the higher education and private sectors, and hence the lack of practical experience of students, has directly contributed to the shaping and objectives of BANUU. This analysis corresponds to that done by the Iraqi government itself and the international community, such as the IREX report in 2017 and the Iraq Reconstruction and Investment Plan of 2018 which stressed the importance of enhancing the Iraqi cultural heritage and the establishment of a proper sustainable tourism sector through reconstruction, rehabilitation and promotion activities of archaeological sites and monuments across all governorates. The IREX report in 2017 explicitly stated the poor connection between universities and the private sector, and the necessity of 'internships, apprenticeships and other practical hands on initiatives which can provide a basis for students to develop skills and gain crucial, real world experience'. To do so they suggest 'the necessity for universities to increase their role as gateways between students, industry and various programs and offices. They particularly suggest the creation of offices, such as internship offices, to foster public-private connection'. As such, this coherent and consistent analysis has effectively informed the logical structure and activities of the project which directly shaped, for example, Work Packages 2 and 4.

Work Package 4 was executed between January – March 2021, where students participated in several online courses with the aim to foster students' entrepreneurial skills through developing start-up projects. The training consisted of different theoretical sessions to introduce key concepts on entrepreneurship in the field of archaeology and cultural heritage. These activities were chaired by experts from the University of Turin and several Italian private companies in archaeology, heritage and cultural tourism, such as ArtStories, Ad Hoc 3D Solutions and

A.R.Va. These training activities were followed by practical sessions in which students were divided into different groups aiming at designing start-up projects in the fields of archaeology and heritage. The development of the new entrepreneurial ideas received constant feedback from private companies in order to guarantee their feasibility.

The projects developed during the work package were presented in poster form to the academic and wider community during the 12th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE) held by the University of Bologna between the 6th - 9th April 2021. For the students who were able to participate, this experience has reportedly had enormous impact on developing an understanding of the private sector and also helped staff to develop methods for enabling students to enter these markets.

### *Limitations*

Whilst aspects of BANUU have reached over 100 members of staff and 200 students, such as the training, libraries and hubs in universities, the internships had a limited impact in terms of numbers and reach. Once those students who undertook internships enter the job market, the effectiveness on an individual level will be able to be assessed, however at the moment in terms of societal reach only six students undertook an internship with two companies. Such numbers would suggest a small impact on Iraq nationally, and it must be examined why more students did not apply (only 10 students applied) and why more companies were not willing to offer internships. Interview data suggests companies were reluctant to offer training and internships because of the lack of funding available from the project, despite the received benefits of unpaid labour in their company. Similarly, it was difficult for students to undertake unpaid work as well as to travel for this experience.

Whilst the training for staff and students had one of the broadest reaches of impact, feedback also indicated that some language barriers with English made the true impact of the training slightly more limited. The entrepreneur training in Istanbul was aided by the hiring of two students who were Arabic speakers, however they were not professional translators. Whilst this mitigated some of the language barriers, putting a future emphasis in universities on English language training will enable future international projects to engage with Iraq easier. This recommendation

is beyond the scope of BANUU's reach, but it is rather a general need that should be prioritised by the Iraqi government and its Ministry of Higher Education.

Since this was the first iteration of this project, the results on an individual level seem to have had impact and effect, which can be corroborated and confirmed once these students seek employment. The model of internship has the potential to be expanded across Iraq, to involve more companies, more types of company, and more students. Whilst the first round of internships involved only a limited number of people, if more companies can be persuaded to offer internships this model has the potential to provide more students with the practical experience necessary to gain employment.

In every interview, Covid 19 was mentioned as impacting on the effectiveness, but not the impact of the project. It impacted on the effectiveness as what was meant to be practical training

ended up having to be moved. Covid 19 did not affect the overall impact of the project, only the way in which it was delivered and in some of the practical skills acquisition.

Interview participants gave suggestions for increasing the effectiveness and impact on a wider societal level, as well as the number of students involved at an individual level. Among suggestions were offering further workshops and training programmes on entrepreneurship and business development and creating mentorship programmes connecting students with successful entrepreneurs. Policy-specific suggestions included the need for recognition and accreditation of internship programmes within the national education framework, incentives for businesses to offer internships, such as tax benefits or grants, and support for research and development initiatives in related fields. To achieve this, suggestions were to push for further ministerial engagement on policy, and to conduct further research and evaluations on the impact of these internships and the private sector on both the national economy and education system. Areas that were suggested to enhance in BANUU to this end were expanding the outreach and marketing efforts to attract more companies and students, as well as enhancing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to continuously improve the quality and impact of internships.

## Dissemination, long term effects and sustainability

BANUU is the product of several years of relationship and observations between the EU and Iraqi long-term sustainable international partnership<sup>17</sup>, from which the WaLink Network was created from initial consortium of Iraqi, European and North American universities, research centres and public institutions to foster and support collaboration between Iraqi and Middle Eastern universities in field of Humanities and Cultural Heritage to benefit Iraqi students, scholars and public officers.<sup>18</sup> As such, it is itself the product of a sustainable partnership from which many previous project results have been exploited and continued to continue to address problems in Iraq.

Interview participants unanimously acknowledged the importance of a strong methodology underpinning the dissemination plan in order to ensure continued success and sustainability after the project's completion. Several participants acknowledged this was especially necessary given the added difficulty in the loss of funding after the project's completion. The Consortium developed as part of the delivery roadmap a Dissemination Plan and an Exploitation and Sustainability Plan, which have been revised and re-evaluated during the project.<sup>19</sup> However, whilst both plans pinpoint future elements to implement, they lack specificity in how they will be achieved, as well as how specific target groups will continue to be engaged with.

Academic and administrative staff trained to support students with entrepreneurial skill acquisition, as well as providing entrepreneur hubs and subject-specialist libraries that combined cultural heritage management and other pilot pathway academic volumes with economic and entrepreneurial academic volumes, along with a computer and printer/scanner for student use. Therefore, by investing in equipment, resources, and staff training, the project has the potential to continue to help new students that come through the system, and to gain experience through each generation of students they help. This prioritisation of resources has been one of the most important steps in ensuring continued benefits and dissemination of the project after its completion.

Another of the most effective and most sustainable elements of the project's dissemination has been the creation of the Preventive Archaeology MOOC (Massively Open Online Course)

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<sup>17</sup> Other projects:

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/wpcontent/uploads/2014/11/HC-GRANTSLIST\\_12.2021-1.pdf](https://www.jmkfund.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/11/HC-GRANTSLIST_12.2021-1.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Waladu project, Walink, <https://site.unibo.it/waladu/en/walink-1>

<sup>19</sup> Banuu project, Dissemination Plan,  
<https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results/wp-9-dissemination-of-project-results>

Banuu project, Exploitation and Sustainability Plan,  
<https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results/wp10-ensuring-project-exploitation-and-sustainability>

provided by the University of Bologna.<sup>20</sup> As a MOOC, it is open to anyone globally with internet access and provides a systematic introductory education to preventive archaeology through the themes of framing, monitoring and investigating archaeological risk with case studies specific to Iraq. A comprehensive overview of skills in remote sensing and geophysics, for example, is provided through video format with quizzes to test comprehension. This course is an essential complementary feature for those who have studied heritage without archaeological knowledge or those without practical experience to be able to study in their own time and at their own pace a type of archaeological and heritage management that is important in a context like Iraq where so much archaeology is endangered. As this is something which can continue to be used beyond the project's completion without need of additional funding, it is a crucial element future students can continue to benefit from and disseminate among other students without the input of additional resources.

The start-up projects coming out of the training themselves have the potential to contribute to strengthening sustainable relationships, recovery and social cohesion. For example, informants from the University of Mosul elaborated on how crucial cultural heritage management was to the overall recovery of Mosul from its destruction by Daesh in 2017. University staff interviewed during the evaluation stage spoke of informal dissemination plans which were not part of the formal Dissemination Plan to capitalise on the unsuccessful start-up project ideas and to pursue through other university projects. Such acquisition could enable a broad dissemination of the knowledge and experience gained in BANUU to reach a wider audience within the Target Groups. Their main concern, however, was how this could be done without sustained project funding, and indeed this remains one of the core limitations to ensuring sustained and strengthened continuation and exploitation of BANUU's results.

The Dissemination Plan is wide-ranging and contains a number of elements to its strategy to reach its intended Target Groups. These include the use of digital and printed promotional material, on BANUU's project website, social media channels and at international conferences, as well as the organisation of Internship Open Days, and the publication of a project handbook and guidebook.

However, owing to Covid 19 the Internship Open Days had to be postponed, and they have not since had the opportunity to be established. Similarly, this evaluation has not been able to review any project handbooks or guidebooks which might have been produced. The promotional material which exists has not been produced in Arabic or Kurdish, limiting its impact on its audience. Whilst the project website contains a clear layout with clear reporting on each of the Work Packages, except WPs 3, 5 and 6, these materials are also all in English. The thoroughness of the website publications is not reflected in its social media engagement, which was not routinely populated with posts as the dissemination strategy suggested it would be. The Instagram page has only one post and the Facebook page has very infrequent posts over the last three years. This element of the Dissemination Plan has not developed as expected, and this could be to do with stretched resources and capacity owing the Covid 19, as well as how Covid 19 affected the intended in-person nature of the project, forcing many of the Work Packages online, consequently affecting the content of potential posts. Developing a revised

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<sup>20</sup> Banuu MOOC Course, [https://book.unibo.it/courses/course-v1:Unibo+BANUU101+2023\\_E1/course/](https://book.unibo.it/courses/course-v1:Unibo+BANUU101+2023_E1/course/)

Dissemination Plan considering the experience to date with the use of social media could include a dedicated intern or student team from each of the partner universities who could regularly update from their internship placements. By engaging students in the creation of the project's posts, this could enable greater engagement from the wider student population rather than the posts coming from the BANUU project team itself.

The Exploitation and Sustainability Plan presents a 5-step roadmap to ensuring the continuation and growth of the project's results. These are the creation of a national incubator for start-ups; an enhancement of public-private cooperation; a national network of enterprises; the creation of a Permanent Interministerial Commission; and replication of the project through the Association of Arab Universities. Each step has been designed with exploitation in mind to expand both the number of participants in the project, for example through bringing in more private partners, and the societal reach in strata and geography, through a prioritisation of ministerial relationships and the national network for enterprises.

However, there are no concrete steps for how this exploitation will be achieved, which elements of the project will be exploited, nor what it would bring about. For example, when aiming for an 'enhanced' cooperation, it is not clear what this would look like, how such an enhancement would be achieved, nor what it would subsequently achieve. Similarly, whilst a Permanent Interministerial Commission is one of the main elements of the sustainability plan, to date the involvement of the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Culture has been limited, and it is not clear how to encourage greater ministerial involvement, nor what such involvement could achieve on the ground, especially with the difficult political context of Iraq itself.

Two large obstacles which are not tackled in either plan is how to persuade more enterprises to become involved in the project when funding is not available, nor how to encourage students to study archaeology and cultural heritage at university initially. Both of these obstacles are essential in order to ensure continued training of skilled professionals coming internally from Iraq, as well as how private companies can create further opportunities for employment beyond the immediate scope of the project.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The review of the project's technical and policy documentation, previous evaluation reports, and feedback from key participants has shown the BANUU project has **addressed a clear need** within Iraqi society, identified previously by the government and by target groups prior to formulation. The needs and issues analysis of Work Package 1 demonstrated a clear and comprehensive analysis of Iraq's long context and impact of conflict and sanctions and how this relates directly to the formulation of the project's objectives. Most importantly, BANUU is the product of several years of relationship-building and cooperation between the project partners, and an increasingly nuanced understanding of the siloeing and isolation between stakeholders in Iraq. As such, despite the unique challenges of Iraq's society as well as the Covid 19 pandemic, this understanding has enabled it to operate **consistently, flexibly, and efficiently**.

Whilst it is too early to know the full impact of the project on student employability in the three pathways identified, it has already been seen to have an impact on several of the target groups, upon which it can continue to build and expand in the coming years, through effective long-term and sustainable engagement. This impact has been mostly felt at an **individual and organisational level**, affecting students, staff, universities and participating companies the most, with the potential to have a broader societal influence through successful start-up initiatives. The greatest achievement of the project is the relationships that have been established between universities, the Ministry, and the public and private sectors and the agreements they have signed, and it is the strengthening and broadening of these relationships which should be the main aim of future projects. Similarly, the training provided on entrepreneurial skill acquisition and start-up workshops has been one of the most widespread, repeatable, sustainable and impactful elements of the project.

Whilst the very successful training reached a wide number of staff and students, the impact of the internships has only been felt on a very small scale, with only six students and two companies engaging in practical internships. Whilst every interview participant made extremely strong claims about the impact of BANUU on Iraq as a country, no concrete examples or statistics were ever given, nor was communication between project partners effective as recommendations for follow up interviews were not provided and many essential areas of knowledge were missing from participants which made quantitative data collection extremely difficult.

There is, therefore, much more work that remains to be done in order to effectively quantitatively and qualitatively assess the impact of the project, some of which is listed in the recommendations below. Further work also remains to be done in order to increase the impact started by this project, and its sustainability. Whilst six internships happened over the course of the project, data was not provided on the characteristics of these students (e.g. gender, class, religion, geography) nor were details provided on the specific nature of their internships, only what they might have done.

As these students have not yet graduated the real impact of the project cannot be assessed until we see them enter the labor market.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, and on the conclusions of previous sections, the following **recommendations** have been formulated:

**R1:** To conduct a further **complimentary study in Arabic** to address the key target groups in Iraq who were less familiar with English and so less able to in-depth, nuanced discussions on the topic.

Several limitations were encountered during the data gathering phase of this evaluation surrounding language barriers which hindered how open, nuanced, and in-depth the discussion could be. A follow-up study should be conducted by a native Arabic speaker in Iraq who will be able to speak openly with informants of Target Groups it was either not possible to speak with or whose lack of confidence with English made the discussion too simplistic for the purposes of analysis. By using a native Arabic speaker, some groups, in particular the students, might feel more confident in describing their experiences of the project. Secondary data used in this evaluation, for example survey data from the formative evaluation or feedback surveys from the training in Istanbul, does not accurately or holistically capture a full extent of opinion or experience.

Such a study could also address why more people aren't coming to study archaeology and cultural heritage at university to begin with, and could be implemented in relation to follow-on school engagement projects from EDUU. This should examine barriers to entry or reasons for secondary school-age children to not want to study archaeology and cultural heritage. This study should be integrated into the findings and recommendation from the EDUU project which sought to engage with secondary school-age children.

**R2:** To conduct a **follow-up study on the longer-term impact** of this project. One of the biggest limitations of this evaluation is that it has been conducted immediately at the end of the project with no real sense of what its long-term impact will be.

A follow up study of the project would be beneficial in the next year or two. This evaluation was conducted over the final months of the end of the project, before the students involved have even graduated. The true success of the project, therefore, cannot be understood before the students have entered the job market and it can be assessed whether the project played a role in helping the students gain employment. It is, at the time of this evaluation, too soon to know what the true effect of the project's impact on Iraq's economy, social cohesion, public and private sectors is. Further, a follow-up study could also focus on collecting insightful quantitative data which could enlighten where further work would be necessary. Such quantitative data could include, for example, the religion, gender, and geographic location of those people who were successful in gaining employment, as well as the broad pathway in which the employment falls (e.g Preventive Archaeology). From a broad collation of this data further efforts could be better targeted.

**R3:** To **expand upon the relationships** already built within this project in the private sector to include NGOs and tourism companies to broaden the societal network across Iraq and to broaden the market within which students could aim for employment.

Whilst expanding on these relationships a focus should be on the creation of a support network for these businesses to compensate for the lack of funding to take on students. Such a support

network could encourage more businesses to become engaged in the project with less personal risk and greater reputation gain. This is needed in terms of geographical spread owing to the fact that students cannot really travel across Iraq to conduct internships, not only because of travel expenses but because so much of their lives are conducted around their families, as recurred in interviews, so there should be options for internships spread across Iraq.

**R4:** To **integrate the internship model** into university degree courses as an essential course component. This would include within it regular content quality reviews to ensure that students were gaining strong skills and experience from these internships.

Internships should be integrated into Higher Education curriculums, as well as practical skills and training in archaeological methods and excavations, and heritage management. This should include a continued strengthening of the relationship with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to address barriers to students participating currently in excavations.

**R5:** Relationships should continue to be strengthened between SBAH, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the private sector, to enable employees of SBAH, as well as students, to be able to move into the private sector.

This could include through the pursuit of common policy objectives, volunteering and training schemes through SBAH and secondment schemes from SBAH to the private sector.

**R6:** Collaborations should be pursued **beyond archaeology university faculties** to engage a variety of Higher Education departments.

To begin collaborations within universities outside of archaeology and cultural heritage departments to include, for example, engineering, architecture, business or politics departments. This will have several benefits. The first is it will broaden student awareness of Iraq's cultural heritage beyond archaeology students, who were already interested in this topic. Secondly, it will broaden the networks of students interested in creating a start-up and connect people with different backgrounds, specialisms and skills, which could increase the chances of founding a successful start-up. Thirdly, this expansion will lead to a greater dissemination of the goals of BANUU beyond the initial target groups, therefore increasing the chances of integrating cultural heritage into Iraq's social, economic and societal reconstruction.

**R7:** Internationalise through an Arab Higher Education network.

This could be replicated internationally in the Middle East through the Arab university network. Similarly, through projects such as Kalam, Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan have the potential to strengthen the relationships already being established. This could raise awareness of Iraq's cultural heritage and recovery efforts, potentially attracting new private sector investment, and allows students from Iraq to gain international experience as well as exposure

to other types of cultural heritage they would not otherwise receive, as well as allowing other students both to learn about Iraq and the methods employed in the BANUU project.

**R8: A prioritisation of start-up projects which specifically focus on civil society stakeholders.**

Whilst Iraqi civil society stakeholders were one of the target groups to engage with during BANUU, they have not been effectively engaged with through the project. This is mostly because the work packages, such as the internships and training, were not targeted at them, however there is potential for successful start-ups to impact on their awareness and understanding of Iraq's cultural heritage, as well as potentially creating broader employment opportunities outside of university graduates. Any future work packages or follow-up projects should be tailored to the engagement of civil society stakeholders from a variety of socio-economic and religious backgrounds. This would provide the next logical establishment of relationships since BANUU's focus on Higher Education institutions with the ministry and with the public and private sectors. This additional relationship would continue to integrate the work of universities into the social and economic fabric of Iraq and reduce the isolated siloeing of institutions.

**R9: A prioritisation in universities of English language training.**

As a priority, English language training should be pursued in universities. Language barriers were consistently reported to be a problem for students in the project. During the training in Istanbul two native Arabic-speaking students were hired as interpreters, however this does not fully compensate for the holistic use of English employed throughout the project, and indeed in which the project's dissemination materials are written. By focusing on English as a priority tuition need, more students would have been eligible to take part in BANUU and could have benefited from its opportunities, and more generally with the acquisition of English language skills there will be more international experiences to be gained and networks to create, for example in the private sector, which could help to strengthen Iraq's position as an independent country within the international community.