The networked university: Opportunities and challenges for higher education between the Arab world and Europe

Over the past two decades internationalisation has become critical for universities in all continents. While it takes many different forms, it is almost always based on student and staff mobility, builds structured collaboration in research and teaching, and, in some places is supplemented by off-shore centres and campuses. Furthermore, internationalisation strategies, which are very common, have become indicators of the ability of today’s universities to respond to a fast changing globalised world, in which reputations are built beyond national boundaries. Increasingly, outreach to and presence in other parts of the world is seen as a competitive advantage, and as one of the quality drivers in teaching and research. This can take many forms and includes identifying synergies between diverse institutional and social cultures, as well as pooling resources. In many aspects, and in parallel to developments in other social and economic sectors, the university is becoming increasingly networked in its functioning, be it at local or national level or as part of its transnational initiatives.

The importance of networking and greater interconnectivity is growing for both Arab and European universities. While situated in very diverse national environments, they are facing the same challenges in developing meaningful partnerships for teaching and research that benefit their students and society at large. Arab and European universities are also increasingly seeking to develop further cooperation between each other; this occurs against a specific regional, political and social background: the Arab world with its linguistic unity and a shared cultural and historic heritage, Europe in the context of 50 years of integration and with considerable challenges now facing the European Union.

As part of the Arab-Euro Higher Education Conference (AECHE) platform, the El Gouna conference will focus on concrete case studies for exchange and collaboration between the Europe and the Arab world, and explore the development potential for the coming years. Different types of collaboration models, including new forms of off-shore and shared campuses, will be featured.

Among others, the conference will discuss the following questions:

- How do staff and student exchanges contribute to a better quality of learning and teaching, and prepare students for a career in a globalised world?
- How can international joint programmes and off-shore campuses contribute to this?
- How can they contribute to research capacity building?
- What are some of the current models for collaboration and how has the notion of ‘off-shore’ evolved?
- What is the actual and potential impact of the recent “digital revolution” on collaboration, be it in research or in teaching?
• How do universities in their international exchange and collaboration respond to different social and cultural values and beliefs?
• What are the implications of the networked university for governance, management, and resources?
• Given low public support, ongoing austerity measures and budget cuts, how can universities demonstrate the added value of their internationalisation and ensure more sustainable and enduring relationships?

The Conference is hosted and organised by TU Berlin at its El Gouna Campus in Egypt. University internationalisation leaders are invited to attend, as well as those engaged in managing international collaboration.

This event is a thematic conference of the AECHE platform. The results will feed into the next AECHE leadership conference that will take place in Barcelona in 2016.

More information on registration will follow shortly.