



EuNIT Project

D4.4

Report of the EU project design and management units' Assessments

WP LEADER: UNIMED

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Introduction

EuNIT Project aims to contribute to the internationalization of HEIs in Jordan, Lebanon and Libya, enabling them to develop sustainable international and regional partnerships. The main objective of the EuNIT Project is to foster the creation of links between institutions for increased dialogue and exchange of good practices in project design and management. By doing so, the Project will contribute to the modernization and development of systems in HEIs in the South Mediterranean region.

In order to achieve this goal, the EuNIT Project has put in place a series of activities. In particular, the EuNIT Project has:

- Developed and reinforced the relevant theoretical and practical skills and expertise in Partner Country HEIs with the aim to install their own “EU project design and management units”.
- Equipped Partner Country HEIs with a team of personnel necessary to successfully run an “EU project design and management unit”.
- Widened the international standing of HEIs in the project’s Partner Countries by strengthening their participation in international cooperation projects.

By installing EU project design and management units in partner HEIs in Jordan, Lebanon and Libya and equipping members of staff with the necessary skills to design and manage EU projects, these HEIs will be able to develop stronger links with European institutions. Members of staff in HEIs will be given the opportunity to learn about the possibilities for them to be involved in EU projects and the benefits it could offer them. Furthermore, HEIs will also possess an operational team that has the ability to manage projects efficiently.

Once the EU project design and management units were set up by the Partner Countries’ HEI’s, the EuNIT Project workplan required that these would be assessed by the Programme countries’ partners, in order to identify possible areas of improvement and to share with the other partners the successful achievements (or good practices) in view of their possible replication.

In order to ensure the achievement of this objective, UNIMED and Aix-Marseille University (Project coordinator) developed a roadmap representing a set of guidelines with the aim of helping the assessors to conduct their task in a structured and homogeneous way across all the operating units.

Hence the Roadmap was structured in the form of a questionnaire, with quantitative and qualitative questions, as well as a list of issues and of information items to be collected and analysed in order to formulate suggestions for improvement and to identify good practices to be transferred.

The roadmap for EU project design and management units’ assessment has been used to assess the progress in the following 8 Universities:

- PSUT, Princess Sumaya University for Technology, Jordan
- YU, Yarmouk University, Jordan
- UA, Université Antonine, Lebanon
- USJ, Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, Lebanon
- UOB, University of Balamand, Lebanon
- MU, Misurata University, Libya



- UoT, University of Tripoli, Libya
- ZU, Zawia University, Libya

This report contains the results of the evaluations that have been carried out following the roadmap drawn up by UNIMED and the coordinator.

In addition, it should be pointed out that, in consideration of the current political and institutional situation in Libya, the three Libyan Universities made a self-assessment of their own EU project design and management Units.

2) Key issues analysed.

The analysis followed the process adopted for setting up the units, and described in a detailed way in the “Guidebook for the installation of European Project Design and Management Units”, a document developed within the framework of the EuNIT Project.

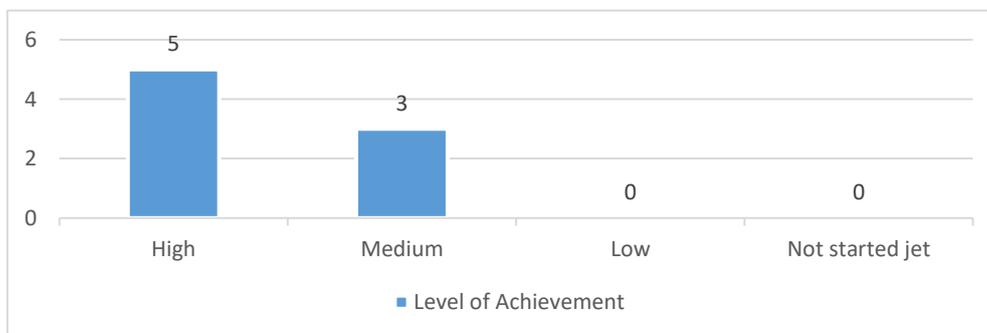
The main areas of assessment were:

- The structure of the units,
- The training of the staff
- The procurement of the equipment
- The setting-up of the units
- The start-up of the units
- The functioning of the units
- The future sustainability plans for the units

The following charts and answers show the detailed results per question of the assessments held at the aforementioned 8 Universities.

2.1 The structure and objectives of the units.

Provide awareness to the university community about the importance of participating in EU projects:





□ As an average, how many people from your university community have been impacted by your raising of awareness about the importance of participating in EU projects:

Some Universities pointed out the fact that exact data on how many people from their university communities have been impacted by a raising of awareness about the EU projects cannot yet be calculated precisely.

Nevertheless all the assessed Universities underlined that a large number of actions were taken in order to improve the level of awareness of the importance of EU projects.

Some of them presumes that about 150-200 persons (40-50% of full-time academic staff members: 389 on 30.05.2019) are aware of the EU projects. In particular, they consider that most of their students are aware about mobility opportunities, as well as the university staff. In order to inform the people of the university communities about the opportunities provided by the participation in a European project, several internal dissemination activities have been done, especially through the use of e-mails (newsletter), websites, posters and social media, like Instagram and Facebook.

It is possible to state that many people from the university communities were interested in knowing more about the European projects.

□ Encourage the university community to respond to EU calls, initiatives and programs:

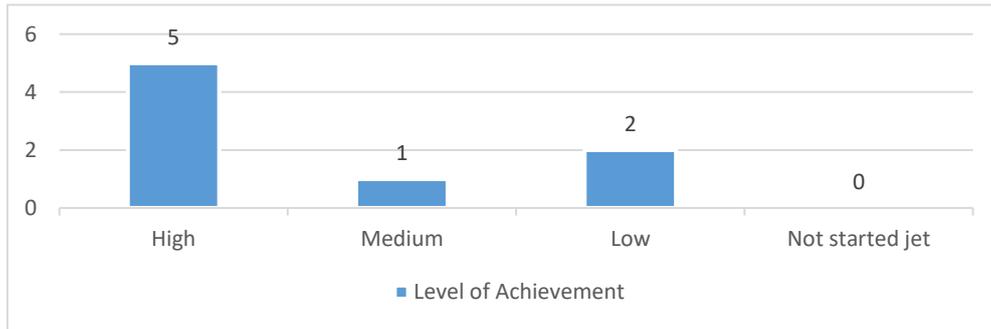


□ Have you noticed a higher participation in responding to EU calls, initiatives and programs? How many projects is your university part of/submitted since the beginning of EuNIT? Are the numbers higher than before EuNIT started?

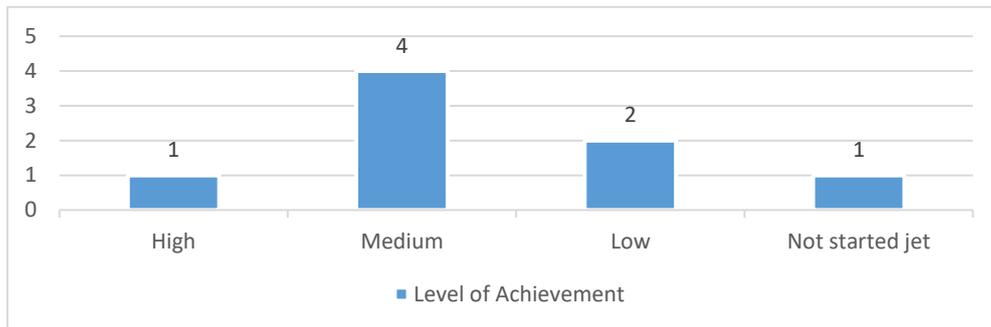
Some universities have been able to increase their participation in EU calls and initiatives. In particular, they confirmed that, since the participation in EUNIT project, they submitted several projects and some of them became partners in both Capacity Building projects and ICM Projects. All the Universities confirmed that the participation rate to EU calls, initiatives and programs, as well as the success rate, has increased significantly. The participation to an EU initiative makes the universities more attractive and therefore more capable of finding partners for the participation to other EU call and programs.



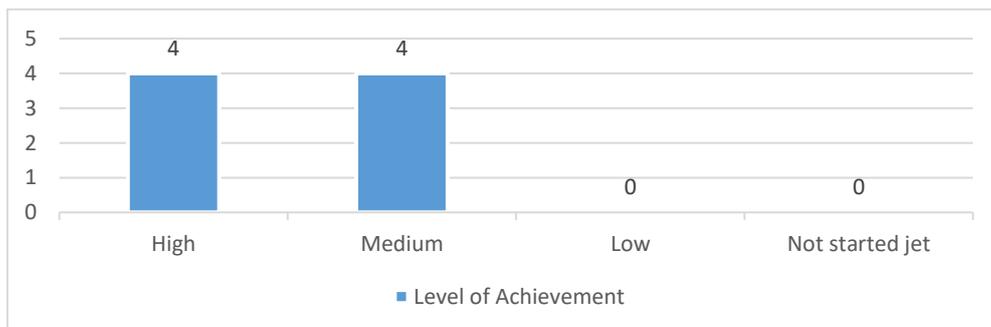
Disseminate calls for proposals and associated information to all faculty and staff members within the University:



Increase the visibility of the University's research structures:



Establish a permanent communication channel with all university members (teachers-researchers):





Please indicate which means are used/have been used to communicate information about EU programs and projects:

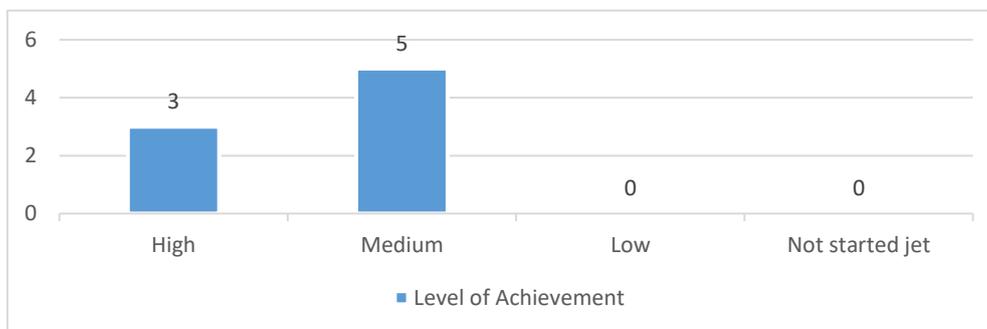
Most of the assessed Universities confirmed that they have used all available means to communicate information.

They underlined that the EuNIT activities have encouraged them to perform significant reforms in several issues related to internationalization. One of them is the internal communication strategy that has been implemented especially by the creation of a dedicated Website (with an Online Application System) and the production of an email distribution list.

In addition, all types of means like memos, posts on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), newsletters and university radios have been used in order to inform the university communities about EU programs and projects.

One University (USJ), in particular, has established a process through which the unit members send emails about the upcoming open calls of EU programmes to their colleagues with the objective to inform them and invite them to participate with the support of the unit.

Provide services to support the faculties' members who are, or who will be involved in EU projects by putting in place tools and procedures to support the design and management of projects and thus ensuring the smooth running and implementation of projects:



One University (USJ) pointed out that the services provided by the unit were not completely mature and the level of service was still between low and medium.

Which services, tools and procedures do you provide to support the faculties' members who are, or who will be involved in EU projects, to support the design and management of projects?

According to almost all the Universities assessed, different structures, services, tools and procedures have been implemented as part of the EuNIT activities results. In particular, the EU Projects Unit installed at universities provided and will provide the following services:

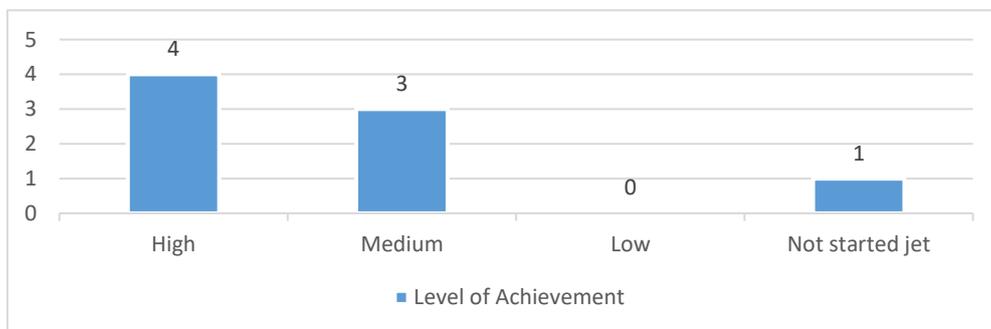
- Presentations and Workshops about Governance, Regulations & Related Procedures and Management Staff & Physical Logistics;



- General presentations and info about the institution;
- Official information about PIC number, VAT number, contact details, etc;
- Clarification about the signing mandates, declarations of honour and other required docs;
- Support for proposal writing and preparation of cooperation projects;
- Administrative support.

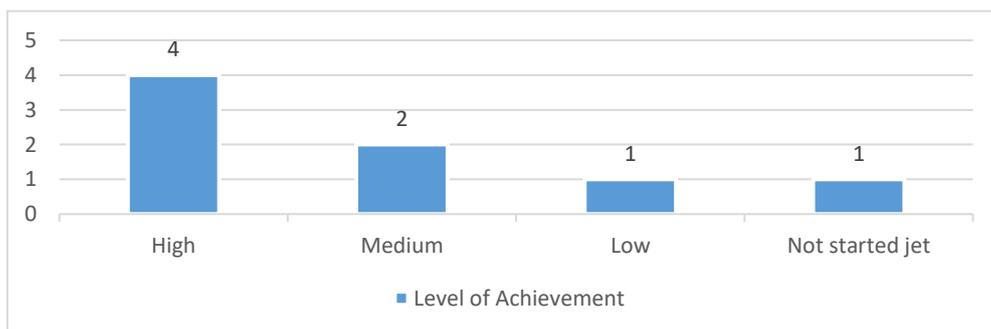
The units also provide support for financial aspects and technical support related to the EU project structures and approach for the elaboration of successful proposals.

Provide administrative support for researchers and project coordinators:



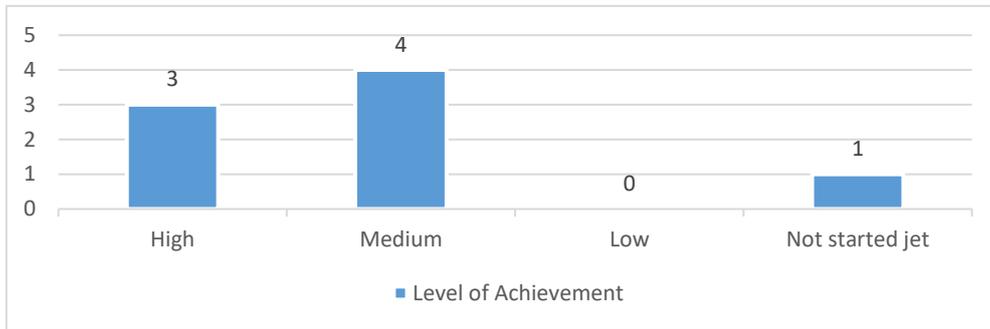
UoT answered “not started yet”

Provide recommendations to the University about a particular international network i.e., “to join or not to join”:



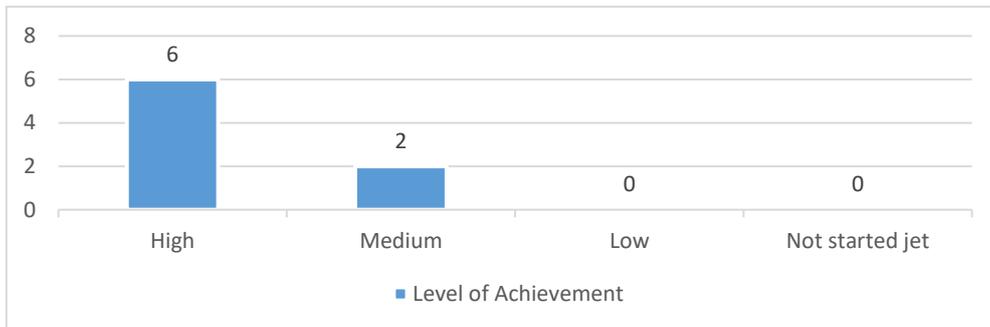
UoT answered “not started yet”

Introduce new areas of cooperation:

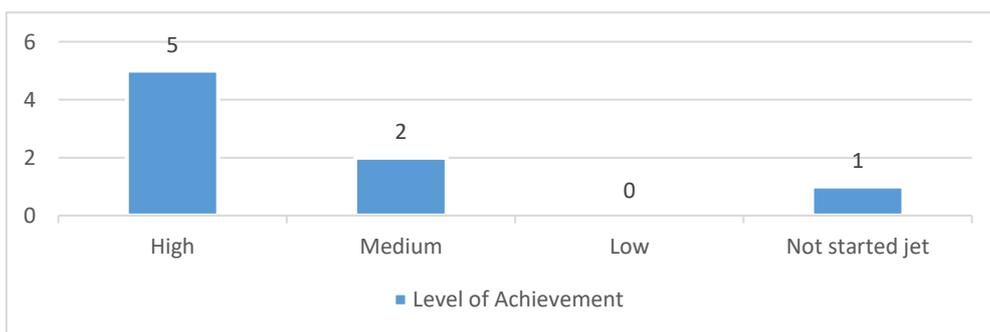


USJ answered “not started yet”

Prepare Erasmus+ EU and international projects:

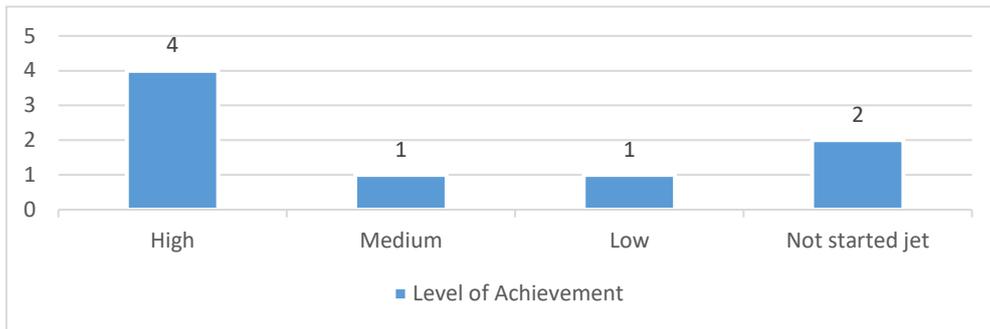


Manage EU mobility projects (administratively and financially):



UoT answered “not started yet”

Organize and perform training sessions on European project design and management to University staff:



UoT answered “not started yet”

□ How many people have benefitted from the training sessions that you have carried out (if applicable)?

At the time of the assessment, most Universities underlined that they had not yet organized the training sessions. For this reason, it was impossible for them to provide a detailed figure on the numbers of participants.

Only one University (PSUT) explained that the actions already done before the assessment have been opened to the participation of all academic and administrative staff involved in international relations tasks.

The Zawia University did not answer this question and the Yarmouk University simply underlined that has a detailed data on the numbers of participants, but they did not specify a number.

Misurata University pointed out that some activities of the unit have been active before the EuNIT project. After having joined the EuNIT project, the activities have developed thanks to the more systematic support given to the university community in developing projects as well as managing the projects already being implemented.

□ Since when is the unit operational? Based on your practical experience, do you think that the objectives are still valid? Do you think that all of them should be addressed by the unit? Would you like to add other objectives?

The assessed Universities confirmed that the units are operational and the objectives are still valid for the majority of the universities assessed. The first Unit was established in 2016 at YU, even if it started working in late 2016. Two more units were established at PSUT (April 2017) and UA (November 2018). The UoT established the unit in September 2018. USJ and UOB established their own units respectively in October 2018 and in the first semester of the academic year 2018/2019. The Zawia University did not specified when the unit started to be operational.

According to the Universities, the objectives are still valid and almost all of them should be addressed by the unit. Among the objectives to be added the are the following:

- Governance: Attending European Projects and Exchange;
- Regulations and Procedures: Communication for students and staff mobility;
- Management of staff and phycical logistics.



Based on your practical experience, do you think that these missions are still valid? Do you think that all of them should be addressed by the unit? Would you like to add other missions?

All the assessed Universities agreed on the fact that the missions of the Units are still valid and effective. Some Universities suggested adding the following missions:

- Encourage and support professors to select and join international networks and scientific societies.
- Stakeholder committee in this regard should be formulated having periodic meetings to define the needs of Libyan education system.
- Create local networks among Libyan universities according to the specialization, which can help in terms of defining their needs.

What is the current structure of the unit? How is it embedded in the organisational chart of your University? To what extent does it implement the structure proposed in the Guidebook? Did you have to modify the proposed structure?

The current structure of the unit created at PSUT is based on three subunits: European Projects, Student and Staff exchange, and International Cooperation (Bilateral agreements and Joint degrees). The structure developed is not equivalent to that proposed in the Guidebook; In particular, the Research programs subunit is not well visualized in the structure developed.

Also the structure of UOB's unit is slightly different from the structure proposed in the guidebook as it has been necessary to adapt it to the structure of University. In particular, the Unit is under the supervision of the Provost and it is part of his office. In total five members of staff compose the unit.

At YU, the structure of the unit is divided into Directorate for International Relations and Directorate for Projects. These constitutional units are part of the Rectorate and responsible to the vice-president to whom the directorates report their work. This structure greatly conforms to the Guidebook.

The structure of UA unit is partially implemented in line with the structure proposed in the Guidebook, as well as the UOT and ZU units and MU. In particular MU states its intention to try to incorporate the suggested structure in the guidebook with their existing structure (unit system already available in the International Cooperation Office). By the application of few changes, both of the structures will be implemented in order to create a newer version.

The unit established at USJ is part of its Research Council. The unit has a director who is the vice rector of research, and it is composed of four other members; each member has a specific role based on their competencies. However, according to the guidebook's reference the unit's structure has a director, even if the unit does not have a hierarchical structure.

During the evaluation held at USJ, the University of La Sapienza team made the proposal to put these roles in a structural diagram that elaborates the relationship between the



different figures. Ideally, the current members would like to extend the structure to include more than one administrative staff member and to include an academic staff member responsible for each scientific sector. This way, they would be able to support the academic staff members based on their specific fields of interest.

□ How many people are allocated to the Unit? Did all of them attend all the training sessions delivered? Are they permanent or temporary staff? How were they selected? Have their jobs and competences been defined?

The number of people allocated to the units spans from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 6. In all the Universities, the selection of the people allocated at unit was based on their competences, even if the jobs description had not yet been defined.

Some of the employees were trained at the training sessions at European partner universities within the EuNIT project and some of them are attending training sessions at their own University, as defined by the Project.

2.2 The training of the staff

□ Do you think that the staff that is running the unit is equipped with the sufficient knowledge to carry out the objectives and missions stated above? If not, what can you suggest to enhance their knowledge and abilities?

The assessed Universities confirmed that the staff that is running the unit is, on average, well equipped with the sufficient knowledge to carry out the objectives and missions of the units. As stated earlier, the selection of the people to allocate to the unit was based on the evaluation of the employees' competences.

However, in some cases, the staff asked for additional training, especially on specific aspects of H2020 and CBHE projects, in particular project management, dissemination and proposal writing. One university (USJ) specified that the practical training held in Messina was the most interesting for the team as they had the chance to have a hands-on experience.

□ Has the trained staff carried out internal trainings, in a transfer of knowledge approach? If so, please briefly explain what topics were covered (also send used materials, any available photos etc.). Did you provide evaluation questionnaires of the trainings to the staff who attended the internal trainings?

If you have not yet carried out the internal trainings, when are you planning to organise such internal trainings?

At PSUT, the unit conducted internal training sessions on Projects' Design and Proposal Writing. Additionally, the trained staff conducted three Orientation Days that involved



academic staff, administrative staff and students. Internal trainings were carried out also at YU, ZU and MU that realized a series of workshops and pilot trainings.

Four others Universities did not carry out the internal trainings.

The trainings were mainly focused on the following topics:

- The importance of International office for the universities;
- The evolving of EU projects;
- KA1;
- KA2;
- H2020;
- CBHE.

2.3 The procurement of the equipment

How effective was the equipment procurement procedure (if applicable)? Is all the necessary/planned equipment available? Did your University contribute with its own resources (equipment, furniture...) to the setting up of the units?

At the question on “*How effective was the equipment procurement procedure?*” the universities underlined the fact that, on average, the procurement procedure for buying the equipment was efficient. In many cases, the supplier chosen was in the same country of the university and the planned equipment was quickly installed.

The Universities confirmed that the equipment served the trainees during their training courses and that the equipment is fully available to the people assigned to the unit.

Some universities specified that, before the purchase of the equipment, they contributed with their own resources at the setting up of the unit.

2.4 The setting up of the units

Which problems, if any, did you encounter in the whole process of setting up of the units? E.g. did you have problems in obtaining office space, in the assignment of the staff, in the establishment of the Unit within the structure of the University, with the university governance? What advice would you have for other universities wanting to set up such a unit?

Most of the assessed Universities did not encounter any serious problems during installing and setting up the unit. Some universities underlined that the development of this type of units was slowed down by the change in the high-level administration. However, all of them pointed out the importance of this strategic challenge for the internationalization of their own University.

At the question “*What advice would you have for other universities wanting to set up such a unit?*” the universities have provided the following suggestions:



- move gradually and select the objectives the university wants to implement compatibly with the existing university structure;
- evaluate the number of unit members (academic and administrative) that should be involved in relation to the unit's activities and tasks;
- maintain a consistent dialogue with university management in order to have the full support of the management structures.

2.5 The start-up of the units

□ Which problems, if any, did you encounter in the process of starting up the operations of the units? How quickly did the unit start providing services to the beneficiaries? Is it recognised and accepted by the beneficiaries? Are the real beneficiaries those you expected? Are there other ones?

Until the time of the assessment, no significant problems were encountered. There was some confusion with responsibilities of people assigned to manage mobility of students. The units were in general well accepted by beneficiaries, especially the ICM (International Credit Mobility). The beneficiaries are those expected, in particular: teachers, staff and students

Only one university encountered some obstacles in the process of selection of staff with qualities, skills and qualifications relevant for project management and administration of the unit.

However it was pointed out that the establishment of the units was a time consuming process that lasted approximately six months. It can be concluded that after that period, the units started to provide a full support in their services.

2.6 The functioning of the units

□ Do you have statistics of the usage of the unit by the beneficiaries? Have all the foreseen activities become operational? If not please explain why and what could help to make them operational. To what extent are the dissemination and communication tools of the unit operational? Are they effective and useful? Is there something missing in terms of dissemination and communication?

All the Universities confirmed that they have started to collect statistics about the people involved in the activities of EU projects and the number and type of operations run by the unit. In particular, there are statistic data on:

- the number of applications, number of submitted projects;
- the number of granted projects;
- the number of clicks, hits, likes comments, shares and other information that social networks and other communication channels provided.

All the foreseen activities were operational at the time of the assessment. With regards to the internal plans of the unit, all activities have been started or planned. The majority of



assessed Universities confirmed that the dissemination and communication tools were useful and fully operational. Only one University (UOT) pointed out that the communication tools were still at a low level and needed to be developed.

Some Universities underlined that, after the creation of the unit, there was a significant rise in the number of submitted projects and awarded grants, in terms of witness of effectiveness.

2.7 The Future sustainability plans for the units.

□ In regards to how it is running today, how sustainable do you think the unit will be? What actions could you put in place to ensure its sustainability? What are the elements you can provide (also to the EACEA) to ensure that the unit will be sustainable after the project ends?

According to one University, the sustainability of the unit is guaranteed by the previous experience in the field of European projects, in particular with the Capacity Building in Higher Education Projects. For this reason, it is possible to assume the real commitment for internationalization.

Other Universities underlined that the units are already part of the universities' structure; people have already been assigned and are operating since more than one year.

Thanks to the creation of the units, the Universities have submitted new projects and they aspire to participate in more projects. The internationalisation strategy for the university has already been planned and will contribute to the sustainability of the units. In particular MU explained that, with the aim to encourage beneficiaries to participate in the programs offered by the CBU - Capacity Building Projects Unit, MU has gained an official permission to conduct training activities from the Libyan Ministry of Labour.

To secure the sustainability of the unit, one University confirmed the intention to assign a head of international cooperation office at each faculty of the University in order to ensure that all the university's staff are aware of the EU projects and can submit the projects according to the faculties' specialization.

3. Conclusions.

The Roadmap has been used as a flexible guidance to assess the units once they have started their activities. The goal of the assessment exercise was to formulate suggestions for improvement, to enhance the sustainability of the units and to identify good practices, which could be replicated inside and outside the EuNIT consortium.

The main missions of the project design and management units were to provide information and raise the awareness of the University communities on the available funding opportunities and encourage their participation in cooperation programs; to provide support for proposal writing and preparation of cooperation projects; to provide support to project



monitoring and management and to ensure continuous update of staff knowledge and awareness of the European project guidelines and procedures.

The results of the assessment show that these objectives have been mostly achieved.

In particular, concerning the structure of the units established at the Universities, it can be observed that a large number of actions were taken in order to raise the level of awareness on the importance of EU projects. Thanks to these activities, held with different means of communication (creation of a dedicated website, use of newsletters, social media, and other tools of dissemination) the assessed Universities have been able to improve their participation in EU initiatives and to increase their success rate to EU calls.

The assessment confirmed that the participation of the Universities to EU initiatives made them more attractive and therefore more capable of finding partners for the participation to other EU calls and programs.

In addition to their increased attractiveness, the creation of a project design and management unit encouraged the Universities to perform significant reforms in several issues related to internationalization. At the time of the assessment, all the Universities confirmed that the units were already operational and that the missions of the units were valid and effective. This shows that the objective to establish an internal university unit with an efficient structure capable to increase the awareness of the university community on the potential of EU projects has been accomplished.

This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that most of the assessed universities did not encounter any serious problems during the installation and setting up of the units. Even if some universities have pointed out that the development of the units was slowed down by the change in the structure of the high-level administration, the inclusion of the units within the university administrative structure ensures their future sustainability.