



The EU-GCC Partnership: Cooperation in Higher Education

Kuwait University

March 10-11, 2009

Taking Stock of the EU-GCC Cooperation in Education, Science, and Technology: Conference Overview Paper

Compiled by the Center for Applied Policy Research (C·A·P), Munich and the Gulf Research Center (GRC), Dubai

A. EU-GCC Cooperation

1. Bilateral Agreements

The cooperation in educational, scientific, and technological fields between Europe and the GCC states has been institutionalized in two ways: Firstly, through the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and secondly through the cooperation channel between the EU-Arab League (all GCC member states are members of the Arab League).

- **Cooperation Agreement between the European Economic Community, of the one part, and the countries parties to the Charter of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (the State of the United Arab Emirates, the State of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar and the State of Kuwait) of the other part [sic]**

Article 1/1 B: "In the 1989 EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement, both parties have agreed to (...) broaden and consolidate their economic and technical cooperation relations and also cooperation in energy, industry, trade and services, agriculture, fisheries, investment, science, technology and environment, on mutually advantageous terms, taking into account the differences in levels of development of the Parties; (...)

Article 8: *In the fields of science and technology, the Community and the GCC countries shall strive to encourage and facilitate, inter alia:*

- *cooperation in scientific and technological research and development in the two regions,*
- *the transfer and adaptation of technology, notably through research activities and appropriate arrangements between economic operators of the two regions,*
- *the links between the scientific communities in the GCC countries and the Community,*
- *access to data banks concerning patents.*

Source: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21989A0225\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21989A0225(01):EN:HTML)

- **Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on strengthening cooperation with third countries in the field of higher education /* COM/2001/0385 final */**

Source: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!DocNumber&lg=en&type_doc=COMfinal&an_doc=2001&nu_doc=385

- **Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service**

Source: <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l33163a.htm>

- **Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Yemen**

(...) “In the field of development cooperation, the Community recognizes that it could make a greater contribution in terms of size and impact and therefore undertakes to help Yemen reduce poverty by developing primary education and training, better working conditions, water supply, rural development and better health care” (...) Human resources development will also be covered as an integral part of economic and social development. Efforts will be made to promote access for women to

education, development of skills through closer cooperation on education and training and cooperation between universities and businesses. (...)

Source: <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/r16003.htm>

It is important to note that EU's financial assistance to Yemen in education-related fields mainly serves the reduction of poverty.

2. Communiqués of the EU-GCC Joint Councils and Ministerial Meetings

- **14th Joint Communiqué:** The Joint Council welcomed progress in education issues in the GCC countries but did not give any particular guidance to further cooperation in this field.
- **15th Joint Communiqué:** The Joint Council welcomed the progress in the “comprehensive development of education” and stressed that the “development and modernisation process on political, economic, and social domains should come from within the states and regions concerned and be owned by them.”
- **16th Joint Communiqué:** The Joint Council agreed to explore ways to strengthen cooperation in the field of education and to help strengthen the participation of GCC countries in the EU's Erasmus Mundus program through a “GCC Window.” In addition, the GCC expressed interest in increasing their participation in the 7th EU Research Framework Program. It was agreed to further pursue the contacts and identify potential for enhanced cooperation.
- **17th Joint Communiqué:** The Joint Council “insisted on the urgency of finding practical ways to strengthen cooperation in the field of education between universities in both regions, and on strengthening the participation of GCC countries in the Erasmus Mundus programme.” Moreover, the 7th EU Framework Program and the opportunities opened by the instrument were welcomed and it was agreed to establish contacts at expert level for concrete action.
- **18th Joint Communiqué:** The Joint Council agreed to hold an education information day in Brussels at the beginning of October 2008 to start discussions for a possible cooperation initiative in 2009.

Since 1 January 2007, funds from the Instrument for cooperation with industrialized and other high-income countries and territories (ICI) are available for financing measures to implement the EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement. This includes:

- The promotion of cooperation, partnerships, and joint undertakings between economic, academic, and scientific actors;

- The promotion of cooperative projects in areas such as research, science and technology, energy, transport, and environmental matters — including climate change, customs, and financial issues.

Source:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/expert/displayFtu.do?language=en&id=74&ftuld=FTU_6.4.6.html

3. **Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window (EM ECW) (2002-2008) and (2009-)**

- **EU Erasmus Mundus** is a cooperation and mobility program in the field of higher education between the EU member states and third countries. The program provides EU-funded scholarships for third country nationals participating in master's courses, as well as for EU nationals studying at partner universities around the world. Although this program has been extended through the External Cooperation Window, the countries of the GCC had not been included in this program. It was not until the 17th Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting in 2007 that representatives of the GCC and the EU decided to establish a so-called "Gulf Window" to enable participation of the GCC countries in the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window (EM ECW). In the academic year 2008-2009, two students from the GCC countries (one from Oman and one from Saudi Arabia) participated in the Erasmus Mundus program. Iran, Iraq and Yemen are covered by the EM ECW LOT 7.

Source: <http://www.erasmusmundus7.net/Partners/>.

- **Since 2009 - New Erasmus Mundus:** During 2009, the European Commission will be launching a new project for cooperation between universities in the EU and the Gulf countries. The program will take the shape of a large network and/or an Erasmus Mundus external cooperation window within the new Erasmus Mundus. The new program will cover Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. Besides preparation of project proposals, the European Commission Delegation in Riyadh is preparing a Higher Education event to which all the universities in the Gulf region as well as representatives from Higher Education Ministries will be invited. The launching conference will take place on April 21-22, 2009.

Source: <http://bgeduglobal.blogspot.com/>

4. Jean Monnet Program

The Jean Monnet program, which is co-sponsored by the European Commission, is designed to increase knowledge and awareness about European integration by promoting teaching, research, and debate on European Union matters at higher education institutions in EU member states and third countries. The Jean Monnet Action is currently present in 61 countries, but not in the GCC countries.

5. Tempus

The Trans-European mobility program for university studies supports the modernization of higher education and fosters cooperation between the EU and third countries. Until now there has been no participant from the GCC countries.

6. EC Framework Programs for Research and Technological Development

The 7th Framework Program for Research and Technological Development (FP7) started in 2007 and will terminate in 2013. The budget of FP7 is over € 50 billion. FP7 sponsors research institutions in the EU and in third countries. It finances research, technological development, and demonstration projects. Topics include nano-sciences, information technology, health, agriculture, energy, security, social science, and humanities as well as the environment. In addition to that, the Framework Programs also aim at the creation of research infrastructures and networks. Eligible countries are the EU member states, countries associated with FP7 by a Science and Technology Agreement and the International Cooperation Partner Countries (ICPC). Until now, Oman is the only GCC country in the ICPC group.

However, as part of the FP7 work program 2009 the European Commission issued a call for the establishment of a network for international cooperation (INCO-NET) that will also include the GCC-states. This network would establish a dialogue on priorities of science and technology and related issues, promote the participation of institutions from the GCC countries in the Framework Program, and strengthen and develop further existing cooperation projects. At the time of writing, the evaluation of the submitted proposals had not been finished. However, it can be expected that an INCO-NET incorporating the Gulf countries into the European Research Area will be established in 2009.

7. Specific EU Programs/Calls

In addition to the Framework Programs, the European Commission and the European Council issue specific calls and provide funding for programs that address topics which reflect the priorities of the European Union. The financing mode of these programs varies. Most recently, the EC co-financed three projects on EU-GCC public diplomacy and outreach activities:

- One of these projects is the 'EU-GCC Al-Jisr Project'. Al-Jisr is coordinated by the Gulf Research Center (GRC), further participants of the consortium are the Arab Reform Initiative, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Centre for European Policy Studies, the European Institute for Asian Studies, the Fundacion Para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior (FRIDE), the Instituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), the Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Kuwait University, National Technical University of Athens, Sciences-Po, and Lund University. The objective of al-Jisr is to enhance the public as well as professional knowledge and understanding of the EU among the GCC-citizens and strengthen reflection and debate about EU-GCC relations.
- Another project that is co-financed by the EC is 'Eurogolfe - Public Diplomacy and Outreach Project' (EPDOP) under the guidance of Sciences Po. As partners in the Gulf region EPDOP includes the King Faisal Foundation, the GRC, the American University of Sharjah, the Qatar Foundation, and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). Eurogolfe intends to boost the EU-GCC relations. It deals with economic issues, question of regional stability and security, as well as culture and education.
- Eurochambres and the Federation of GCC Chambers of Commerce lead the third more economically focused project that organizes a forum to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, policy views and best practices between EU and GCC chambers. A particular focus is on the role of SMEs, supply chain development, innovation transfer and the impact of the EU-Gulf Trade negotiations.

In the energy sector, the EUROGULF project, which was launched in 2002 by a consortium led by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute in Florence and comprising the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies, the Energy Policy Unit of the National Technical University of Athens, and ECONERGY SAL of Beirut, has gained prominence. Funding was provided by the European Commission through a grant from the SYNERGY programme. The objective of the project is to analyze EU-GCC relations with respect to oil and gas issues and propose new policy initiatives and approaches to enhance

cooperation between the two regional groups also in the fields of technology transfer and R&D.

B. University Cooperation

In the recent past, Gulf countries have started to liberalize their once state-controlled educational sectors. Private groups, among them many European ones, have been setting up an increasing number of universities, schools, and training institutes in the region. Some European universities established their own campuses in the Gulf, others keep a presence within a Gulf university or concluded specific cooperation agreements with Gulf universities, e.g. with regards to joint academic programs or research activities. It is important to note that Europe has been lagging behind Asian and, particularly, US institutions. The following list provides a few examples:

- Universität Bonn and Technische Universität München – Abu Dhabi University
- Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen – Sultan Qaboos University
- Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen – German University of Technology in Oman
- Paris-Sorbonne Université – Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi
- Génopole D'Evry – King Saud University and King Abdulaziz University
- Haute école des études commerciales – King Abdulaziz University
- Université Versailles-St. Quentin – Universities of Al Hail and Tabouk
- Institut Nationale de Recherche Agronomique – King Saud University
- Freie Universität Berlin – Gulf Research Center
- University of Erlangen-Nurmburg – Gulf Research Center (MoU)
- Sciences Po – Gulf Research Center
- Sciences Po – Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences
- Sciences Po – University of Kuwait (cooperation within the framework of the Gurogolfe project of Sciences Po)
- Sciences-Po – American University of Sharjah (cooperation within the framework of the 'Gurogolfe' project of Sciences-Po)
- Wismar University – Maritime University Dubai
- Berlin Institute of Technology – Abu Dhabi University
- L'École des Ponts Paris Tech – Abu Dhabi University
- Exeter University – Zayed University, Abu Dhabi (cooperation agreements under discussion)
- Exeter University – American University of Sharjah (cooperation agreement under discussion, building on 2007 MoU)

- London School of Economics – Kuwait University/KISR (collaboration in framework of Kuwait Gulf Program at LSE)
- British University in Dubai
- London Business School - Dubai
- Middlesex University - Dubai
- Partner universities of the Mohammed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum Foundation of Dubai: London Business School (LSE), Cranfield University, I'ENA, INSEAD, University of Navarra (IESE Business School), Oxford University (Said Business School), Cambridge (Judge Business School), Sciences-Po. Source: <http://www.mbrfoundation.ae/English/Knowledge/Pages/PartnerUniversitiesFellows.aspx>

C. Cooperation in R&D, Science and Technology Transfer

In comparison to the GDP per capita of the GCC members the investment in R&D remains very low. The economic development strategy in the GCC particularly in the UAE/Dubai has been to establish “themed” industrial clusters with free-zone benefits to attract related industries (e.g. Dubai Biotechnology and Research Park, Dubai TechnoPark, and Dubai Silicon Oasis). They promote linkages with local and international academic institutions

Cooperation in R&D and technology transfer has – among several others – mainly taken place in the following key areas: 1) hydrocarbon technology, 2) renewable energy 3) healthcare sector, and 4) water treatment.

Many joint projects and initiatives have successfully been established in these fields. For example, the German Fraunhofer Gesellschaft has been active in this regard and concluded an agreement with Sharjah University City on the exchange of scientists and engineers. Moreover, there is a liaison between Fraunhofer and SS Lotah Group and a Memorandum of Understanding between Fraunhofer and Dubai Techno Park (DTP). Another example is the cooperation between the Technical University of Munich and the National Petroleum Company in Abu Dhabi in the field of machinery catalysis and the extraction and refining of crude oil and natural gas.

But also institutions from the GCC states have been very active in forging international links: King Abdullah University of Science and Technology's (KAUST), for instance, established with its Global Research Partnership (GRP) a global research funding program that is dedicated to enabling scientists and researchers from leading institutions to collaborate in solving challenging scientific and technological problems facing Saudi Arabia, the region, and the world. In 2008, GRP announced a grant to the Centre of Collaborative Applied Mathematics (OCCAM) at Oxford University, the Centre for Soil, Water, and Coastal

Resources (SOWACOR) at Utrecht University and to 19 research fellows, coming from institutions and universities in Europe, Asia and North America. Moreover, 12 scientists from six countries received grants from KAUST's Global Research Partnership. In addition to that, through a special Academic Partnership, KAUST intends to explore research areas of common interest and institutions interested in research collaboration. Until now, KAUST has entered into partnerships with institutions in Asia, North America, Europe, and the Middle East.

Gulf-European relations rank particularly high on the agenda of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), Dubai. The EU-GCC program aims at strengthening cooperation, communication and exchange between all relevant actors and sectors involved. To this end the GRC established an extensive network of research institutions and hosts researchers from European partner institutions.

D. Vocational Training

Complementary to the aspects of higher education and research, the GCC member states have a particular interest in vocational training, which strengthens their efforts to build up a knowledge-based economy and a society which is well versed in sector skills that match GCC's labour market requirements. On EU-level, so far there is no institution or program that caters for EU vocational training for third countries: the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), the European Training Foundation (ETF), and the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training exclusively cover European member states. Source: <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/s19002.htm>

However, on EU member states level, various governmental institutions, committees, and NGOs maintain cooperation programs or provide vocational training in different sectors for the Gulf. The GCC states, on their part, have offered Europe assistance in areas of their particular expertise, such as energy-related fields (including renewable), shipping industry, and the burgeoning Islamic banking, finance, and insurance industry.

The British Council, for instance, is intensively engaged in cooperation with the GCC countries on schooling. As part of its 'UK-Middle East School Partnership' frame, the British Council established the so-called '1001 schools' program, which covers GCC-countries plus Iraq and Yemen. The project supports the establishment of school partnerships between the Gulf region and the UK, it runs leadership-programs for head teachers and deputies and facilitates the use of information and communication technology in schooling through training seminars for teachers.

Germany plays a special role as a provider of vocational training. The first German Arab Vocation Training Forum is to be held in spring 2009. A leading operational role in this regard is held by the German Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). The GTZ is responsible for the implementation of development cooperation projects of the German government. The GCC countries rank fourth in the list of applicants for GTZ International Service. Apart from energy and geology issues, cooperation exists in the fields of vocational and teacher training and development of curricula and teaching materials or training and advice for the public authorities. With each GCC country, the GTZ has agreed on specific priority areas to focus the cooperation.

Other EU member states maintain, through their respective ministries and international cooperation agencies, similar cooperation programs with the GCC.

In addition to the cooperation efforts under governmental leadership, the role of the private sector in this context is increasing. For instance, within the iMOVE program the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and Ghorfa Arab-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a strategic partnership to foster cooperation between German suppliers of vocational training and partners in the Gulf region.