Currently, the world is facing many environmental problems, economic crises and severe political issues. Despite the “Arab Springs”, the Arab region is increasingly in peril. Clearly, there is no challenge facing our region that is more essential than achieving a sustainable future. Sustainability is about living in ways that leave the same or better options for future generations as we enjoy today. The great challenge of the 21st century for institutions of higher learning is to train professionals in favor of sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a vision of education that seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future. According to UNESCO, higher education systems in the Arab Region are facing many challenges that are negatively influencing their capacity to achieve the desired ESD goals. This situation requires that educational programs of universities should be reoriented in order to infuse ESD and sensitize students and other stakeholders towards sustainable development.

A number of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe joined efforts with a number of HEIs and NGOs from the Arab region to tackle the issue of ESD within the scope of an EU-funded TEMPUS project. The “Reorient University Curricula to Address Sustainability” (RUCAS) project was launched in October 2010. Its main goal is to help six partner HEIs in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt to embed ESD into their curricula and teaching methodology through capacity building of university staff.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>E.U. partners</th>
<th>Arab Region partners</th>
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<td>University of Crete, Greece</td>
<td>Notre Dame University- Louaize, Lebanon</td>
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<td>University of Athens, Greece</td>
<td>Université de La Sagesse, Lebanon</td>
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<td>Dublin City University, Ireland</td>
<td>Hashemite University, Jordan</td>
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<td>Stockholm University, Sweden</td>
<td>University of Jordan, Jordan</td>
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<td>University of Padova, Italy</td>
<td>Suez Canal University, Egypt</td>
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<td>University of Bordeaux3, France</td>
<td>Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development, Egypt</td>
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<td>MIO/ECSDE/MEdIES (Mediterranean Information Office for Education Culture &amp; Sustainable Development/ Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability)</td>
<td>UNESCO Regional Office Beirut for the Arab States, Lebanon</td>
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<td>SEKEM Development Foundation, Egypt</td>
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<td>League of Independent Activists (IndyACT), Lebanon</td>
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Road map project’s activities: An update

I. Kick-Off meeting
The project Kick-off meeting was held in Crete in December 2010. Dr. Nancy Kanbar and Dr. Jacques Harb attended the meeting. The project main goals, objectives, administrative and managerial structures were presented.
II. Pilot assessment on ESD competencies
RUCAS defined and validated core ESD student competence framework. A sample of 3,757 students was surveyed from the 12 participating universities. *The pilot study for the development and validation of the framework was carried out at NDU.*

III. Revisiting Universities Curricula
A curriculum analysis was carried out to examine how and to what extent sustainability problems and principles of ESD are represented in the study programs of the participating institutions. The curricula were evaluated based on (1) sustainability themes; (2) goals of education for sustainable development; (3) competencies to be developed, (4) teaching methods, and (5) forms of evaluation.

IV. Capacity development and strengthening
Three regional workshops were held in the three partner countries:

*First Regional Workshop: NDU, 23 – 25 October 2011*
The workshop introduced the faculty members from Arab partner universities in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon to the teaching methods, concepts, principles, processes and practices in ESD curriculum design. Themes, teaching methods, goals and competencies that need to be addressed for curriculum revision were discussed. A communication platform, the RUCAS Community of Practice, was initiated to support the process of curriculum revision and design.
Left to right: Drs. Talal Salem, Layla Khalaf-Kairouz, Jacques Harb

Participants in the workshop
Dr. Assaad Eid launching the workshop

Dr. Aref Al-Soufi, national Tempus coordinator
Dr. Vassilis Makrakis, project coordinator
Dr. Michele Biasutti (University of Padova, Italy), Dr. Nancy Kanbar (FBAE, NDU-RUCAS institutional coordinator)

Working group sessions on different themes
Second Regional Workshop: SEKEM Farm, Cairo, 7-9 January 2012
Faculty members, Drs. Kanbar, Hage, Doumit, Labaki, Samra and Salem attended the workshop and discussed the revised syllabi they have developed to infuse sustainability. They also reviewed the actions needed to integrate sustainability into the university mission, faculties and other university structures.
Showing: Dr. Jacqueline Doumit and Dr. Tanos El-Hage

Dr. Sami Samra

Dr. Nancy Kanbar

Working sessions
Third Regional Workshop: University of Jordan, Amman, 17-20 April, 2012
NDU faculty members, Drs. Kanbar, Zgheib, Hage, Khalaf-Kairouz, Doumit, Harb, Salem, Samra, and Labaki, joined the third regional workshop that examined the implementation process of the revised courses. They discussed with the other partners the process and outcomes of disseminating project results and examined the strategies for the institutionalization of ESD.
V. Communication platform at NDU: Virtual Center

An ESD Curriculum Design Toolkit and a virtual center for curriculum reform and professional development were established in every partner university in the Arab region. The facility is hosted at the computer center at NDU.

Dr. Fawzi Baroud guiding the monitoring team in the virtual center in the presence of VP Assaad Eid.
VI. Evaluating progress

NDU hosted the first **monitoring visit** for RUCAS in January 2012. The visit was attended by Ms. Roisin Mc-Cabe from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels, Drs. Aref Al soufi and Amer Helewan (National Tempus Office, Lebanon). The monitoring team met representatives from NDU, as well as representatives from La Sagesse University. The feedback that the NDU team received after the visit was very positive.

Dr. Kanbar presenting the progress of the project to the monitoring team

NDU group with LaSagesse participants and the monitoring team