



Beirut Office

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UNESCO - Beirut

# NEWSLETTER

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## Summer 2015: More Outreach, More Impact

UNESCO Office in Beirut built on what was achieved during the first half of the year to raise the scale of its interventions in Lebanon, Syria, and the Arab world in general, reaching more, accomplishing more. The hard work during the first half of 2015

started paying off with substantial results attained in all sectors, even with the relatively worsening situation in the region.

For the first time since the start of the Syrian Crisis, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education and UNESCO are expanding their intervention beyond basic education. UNESCO and the ministry started implementing a new initiative entitled "Enhancing Access to Secondary Education and Quality Results for Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis (EASE)". In a first phase, the project will benefit around 1500 students through direct support, the provision of needed equipments to 35 schools, and reinforcing the capacities of the schools' principals and teachers.

Under the NETMED project, 33 young women and men representing youth organizations from Arab countries met in Beirut for the Regional and Strategic Planning Workshop. Under the same project, UNESCO launched a Media training programme consisting in a number of workshops to help NGOs in developing their communication skills.

On the other hand, the world and UNESCO achieved a milestone in countering the destruction and illicit trafficking of cultural property with a global initiative launched in New York, to ensure follow up on related resolutions and decisions adopted by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and other international bodies. Furthermore, UNESCO Office in Beirut organized two meetings in Berlin, Germany, to discuss artefacts' inventories in Syria.

Equally, the Communication and Information field witnessed major developments: following several months of research and studies, UNESCO and Maharat foundation launched the "Internet Freedom Report in Lebanon", a key step to internet development in Lebanon.

Finally, as we invite you to look back with us at the main activities and results achieved during the last three months, we also look forward to a very busy period ahead. One that will eventually represent the ideal conclusion for a perfect year.

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## UNESCO Beirut Office contributes in shaping global & regional Education

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Representing UNESCO office in Beirut, Programme specialist for Curriculum, Teachers and Higher Education Dakmara Georgescu contributed as a main resource person to two workshops held over the previous period on quality textbook development and effective usage of self-learning materials.

From 1 to 3 July 2015, UNESCO and King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) organized a workshop in Vienna, Austria, with the aim to reviewing draft guidelines for quality textbook development with a focus on cultural aspects, gender equality and intercultural/interfaith understanding.

During the workshop, education experts tested a tool to assist educators in writing textbooks which are free of stereotypes and prejudices about culture, religion and gender. The tool will be used to assist in curriculum development worldwide as well as to assess current textbooks in circulation or develop new ones. Additionally, It will eventually serve to communicate curriculum recommendations to textbook authors, in both public and private sectors.

Furthermore, at the invitation of UNRWA, Ms. Georgescu contributed to a workshop on the Quality and Effective Usage of Self-Learning Materials (SLM) UNRWA units have developed to support students affected by the Syria crisis. The workshop was held in Amman from 28 to 30 July 2015, with the aim to produce an evaluation framework for SLM, as well as implementation guidelines for different categories of stakeholders involved.



## Joining Hands to Provide Education for Refugees & Vulnerable Youth in Lebanon

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In a substantial step to address the challenges imposed by the Syrian crisis and support the continuation of learning for Syrian refugee youth and Lebanese youth in Lebanon, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education and UNESCO are implementing a new initiative entitled 'Enhancing Access to Secondary Education and Quality Results for Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis (EASE)'.

The EASE Project will facilitate the enrolment of around 1500 students in secondary schools located in all Lebanese governorates. Students will benefit from direct support in the form of school registration fees and stationery, while around 35 schools will be provided with needed school equipment. UNESCO will also work with the Centre of Educational Research and Development (CERD) to reinforce the capacities of a number of secondary schools. Activities include training principals and teachers.



## UNESCO' Sirs El-Layyan Centre Hosts a Workshop in Literacy and Adult Learning

Under the auspices of his Excellency the Minister of Education in Egypt Dr. Mohebb El-Rafi'i, and in cooperation with UNESCO Cluster Office in Cairo, and the Regional Centre for Adult Education (ASFEC) in Sirs El-Layyan, UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States - Beirut, organized a workshop on the Training of Certified Trainers on Adult Education.

Held from 9 to 12 August 2015, the workshop aimed to support the UNESCO category 2 Centre of Sirs El-Layyan, and enable it to better assume its regional role serving the Arab countries in the field literacy and Adult learning. Trainers from Arab countries participated in this workshop, in addition to experts from the South East Asia Centre of Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development (Philippines), in order to exchange regional experiences and strengthen cooperation between the UNESCO category 2 Regional centres, and further promote the South-South cooperation.

The workshop focused on improving the participants' basic training and communication skills, as well as discussing new trends in adult education in the post-2015 global education agenda.

# Cultural Heritage in Syria Suffers Tragic Losses

Since controlling the archeological city of Palmyra last May, terrorist groups intentionally destroyed iconic buildings within the UNESCO World Heritage site. In line with similar war crimes that they committed elsewhere, extremists destroyed the two temples of Baalshamin and Bel using explosives, and damaged renowned cultural property at the site, particularly the funerary busts and the famous Lion Statue of Athena. Armed groups also destroyed the Mar Elian monastery located in the Syrian town of al-Qaryatayn, a major pilgrimage site for Syria's Christian community.

"The intentional targeting and systematic destruction of the cultural heritage of Syria is reaching unprecedented levels", warned the Director-General. "The cultural cleansing underway at the hands of ISIL/Daesh must stop. The persecution of communities reflecting the great diversity of Syria, combined with the systematic destruction of some of the most iconic representations of Syria's rich heritage, testifies to an ideology of hatred and exclusion", she added.

In another immense blow, the Syrian cultural heritage community lost in August 2015 archaeologist Khaled Assad in Palmyra, and the Assistant Director of laboratories at the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums Qasem Abdullah Yehiya.

"The untimely deaths of Mr. Assad and Mr. Yehiya are a terrible loss to the cultural heritage community in Syria and globally," the Director-General added.

According to news reports, Assad, had been killed at the site of Palmyra, where he had worked for more than 50 years, after being held for more than one month, and questioned about the location of valuable artefacts. Within one week of this tragic incident, Qasem Abdullah Yehiya died in a rocket attack on the Damascus Citadel and the National Museum.



Temple of Baalshamin © Bernard Gagnon



The Church of Mar Elian © UNESCO



Temple of Bel, Palmyra © Anton Ivanov



## Culture

### Celebrating UNESCO's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary through Zahlé Gastronomic Creativity

Under the Patronage of the Minister of Tourism and UNESCO-Beirut Office, the Municipality of Zahlé organized an International Gastronomy Festival on 30 August 2015 to celebrate UNESCO's 70th anniversary as well as the nomination of the city Zahlé into UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, in the category "Gastronomy".

Around 300 persons participated in that event, including the Minister of Tourism HE Michel Pharaon, a number of former Ministers of Culture, in addition to the Secretary General of the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO, Dr. Zahida Darwish Jabbour representing the Lebanese Minister of Culture, as well as representatives from the Brazilian, French, Italian, Ukraine, US embassies and professionals in the domain of Gastronomy.

"Zahlé's culture has long revolved around its signature crop, the grape and its products, wine and arak, leading to its reputation as "the City of Wine and Poetry", stated head of Zahlé's municipality Mr. Joseph Maalouf, emphasizing the city's major contributions to the Lebanese culture, and its key role throughout the different historic phases in Lebanon.

### Global initiative Launched to Counter the Destruction and Trafficking of Cultural Property by Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups

A new international initiative to enhance the protection of cultural heritage targeted by terrorists and illicit traffickers has been launched on the sidelines of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly.

The "Protecting Cultural Heritage—An Imperative for Humanity" initiative was presented by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Italy and Jordan with the participation of principals from UNESCO, INTERPOL and the UNODC as well as ministers from a number of UN Member States.

The main goal of the programme is to follow up on resolutions and decisions adopted by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and other international bodies.

Advocating for increased political commitment, Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO said, "Culture is on the frontline of conflict – we must place it at the heart of peace-building".

President of INTERPOL, the world's largest police organization, Mireille Ballestrazzi stressed the need "to combine our efforts and resources to efficiently curb this criminal phenomenon and protect the world's cultural heritage for future generations".

This new initiative seeks to strengthen the Global Coalition for the protection of heritage launched earlier this year during the World Heritage Committee in Bonn (Germany). In order to raise awareness and multiply actions to counter this threat, the social media campaign #unite4heritage will also be enhanced. The public is also invited to join the discussion on heritage and organized crime at #ProtectHeritage.





“The UNESCO Creative Cities Network was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development”, stated UNESCO Beirut Office Director, Dr. Hamed Al-Hammami. “Zahlé is an ideal example”, he added.

The 69 cities which currently make up this network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

Zahlé is famed for hosting the early days of modern ‘mezze table’. Since the 20s, the region’s locals would gather along the Berdawni river bringing in typical dishes and sharing their food and heritage in a picnic style setting. It was only in the late 50s, that restaurants started lining along the river while serving ‘mezze meals’.



## Meetings in Germany to Discuss Syrian Museums’ Inventories

As part of its efforts to improve the inventories of Syrian sites and museums, UNESCO and its partners organized two meetings in Berlin, Germany, under the title “Improving inventories of built and movable heritage”.

On 30 July 2015, UNESCO organized a meeting hosted by the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) to discuss the inventory systems for Syrian built heritage and looted objects database with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museum (DGAM). During the meeting, which was also attended by representatives of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), the University of Durham, the Université de Nice Sophia Antipolis and the Carabinieri/Whitehall Reply, participants worked closely to develop a tool and method that allows institutes and organisations to transfer and exchange data.



Under the same framework, UNESCO, the Free University of Berlin and the DGAM held another meeting on 20 and 21 August 2015, which was attended by the DAI, the International Council on Museum - International Committee for Documentation (ICOM/CIDOC) and the Museum für Islamische Kunst, with a focus on the museum inventory of the National Museum of Deir ez-Zor.

Both meetings came under the “Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage” project, a pioneering initiative funded by the European Union with the support of the Flemish Government and in partnership with the ICCROM and ICOMOS.



### UNESCO and Maharat Foundation Launch the “Internet Freedom Report in Lebanon”

Technical and legal experts, NGOs’ representatives, media and academic professionals met on 3 September at UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut to attend the launch of the “Internet Freedom Report in Lebanon”, a new study prepared by UNESCO and Maharat foundation.

The meeting served as a platform between different stakeholders to discuss the main challenges facing internet development in Lebanon.

“Technical progress and internet development, along with the right policies, effectively enhances access to knowledge and information, supports freedom of expression as a right and a tool for democratic processes, and would even help in terms of information privacy”, stated, Programme Officer at UNESCO, George Awad. Mr. Awad ensured that this report represents a first step that will be followed by other future activities, in partnership with Maharat, with the aim to improve the general internet environment in Lebanon.

“This report highlights the lack of a clear policy to manage the internet sector in Lebanon”, stated Maharat Foundation Representative, Roula Mikhael. “There’s a need to elaborate a better approach concerning the freedom of information in today’s knowledge societies, according to new principles that would guarantee Lebanon’s leading role in freedom advocacy”, she added.

A discussion panel followed UNESCO and Maharat speeches, as key points of the report were debated and further explained by legal and technical experts who are deeply involved in Internet development in Lebanon.

According to the report, the internet speed average in Beirut is around 3.86 MB/s, compared to a world average of 23.38, putting Lebanon in the 174th place of 200 countries. At the same time, in terms of content, the country is slowly transforming to an unfriendly environment for internet freedom, as several violations to freedom of expression were noted against activists, bloggers and internet users. Additionally, although internet users in Lebanon exceed 85% according to the ministry of information, privacy is totally neglected by legislations. Finally, in terms of governance, the report suggests that although Lebanon has all what it takes for an ideal internet governance, policies in place lack transparency, as the civil society and other stakeholders are excluded.





### Media Training Programme to Empower Youth NGOs

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As part of Net-Med Youth Project, an UNESCO initiative and funded by EU, UNESCO Beirut office launched a Media training programme for youth NGOs to enhance their communication skills, through enabling them to build media relations, increase their capacity to produce media material, push their news through national and international channels, and efficiently monitor this process.

On 18 September 2015, 30 youth NGOs representatives took part in the inaugural session where Mr. George Awad, UNESCO Communication & Information programme officer, talked about the programme, its stages, benefits and the commitments needed from each NGO. This was followed by a brief on each NGO current communication status, which was lead by Ms. Nada Hamzeh, UNESCO consultant.

The second session was a panel discussion with Mr. Sam Menassa, General Manager of Radio Voice of Lebanon and Mr. Ghassan Hajjar, managing editor at Annahar Newspaper. The two guests shared their perspective on “Understanding the Media” and how it is dealt with at different media outlets through their own experiences. Mr. Menassa talked about the structure of the media outlets and the changes that have happened over the years. While Mr. Hajjar emphasis was on the quality of information to be shared as not any information is Media Information and not any information is important enough to be published.

The Round-table also addressed the fact that Youth are not interested in Radio, nor Newspaper and even less in TV (as per UNESCO latest study). Social Media is the Youth Hub nowadays.

### Youth Information Centre Opened in Khiyam



UNESCO Office in Beirut, World Vision, and Resala Islamiya Scout inaugurated “the Youth Information Centre” in the town of Khiyam, South Lebanon.

The opening ceremony, held in the centre on 29 August 2015, was attended by representatives from Khiyam municipality, mayors, schools principles, teachers, community members, NGOs active in the area as well as representatives from UNESCO, World Vision and Resala Islamiya Scout.

Speaking at the event, Mr. George Awad, programme manager at UNESCO, stated that this activity comes in a time where Lebanese and Syrian youth are in desperate need for safe places where they can fulfill their aspirations through contributing to their empowerment. World Vision Representative, Mr. Hanna Sweidan, added that this centre targets all of Khiyam residents, including youth and children, in addition to Syrian refugees living in the town.

On behalf of Resala Islamiya scout, Mr. Ahamd Ramadan praised the partnership with UNESCO and World Vision, calling to open similar centres in all the regions around Lebanon. Mr. Ramadan welcomed the opening of this Centre that will eventually serve young citizens of Khiyam and surrounding towns, and contribute to the development of the whole region.



# Youth Share Experiences & Build Stronger Networks at NET-MED Youth Beirut Workshop

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More than a year after the launch of the NET-MED Youth project, a unique three-year project implemented by UNESCO and funded by the European Union, youth working groups have demonstrated an exceptional ability to learn new skills, develop creative action plans, and engage and affect change in their communities.

From 22 to 23 July 2015, Beirut was home to a Regional and Strategic Planning Workshop that gathered 33 young women and men representing youth organizations from Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, in addition to partner institution representatives and UNESCO programme specialists.

The Regional Coordination and Strategic Planning Workshop allowed participants to share and evaluate the action plans developed and implemented since the launch of NETMED Youth (in June 2014).

"NETMED Youth offers us the space and skills to develop our own programmes," said Dareen Abulail, National Project Officer for NETMED Youth in Jordan. "It is a very demanding and challenging project but it is the only one I know that really empowers and trains youth to do things the way they want to do them".

Over the two days, youth took over the floor to brainstorm in multi-country teams, to present their own initiatives, to collect feedback and to plan together for years two and three of the project.

"We wanted to start small by working with a small municipality," says Khawla El Behi, member of Taabir Association for artistic and digital expression in Tunisia, as she explained how their working group launched [a pilot project in Kalaat El-Andalous](#) that aimed at drafting an action plan to encourage the development of a youth strategy in the town and the participation of



youth in public life. "We made it happen. Now the town's youth, local NGOs and the municipality are working together and leading joint activities that satisfy the priority needs of Kalaat El-Andalous".

"It is essential to make civil society a partner of public decision-makers," says Youcef Boukoucha, who is a member of Agora Association in Algeria.

Youth stressed the need to be involved and emphasized the importance of expanding their networks and include a higher number of young people, even outside of the project's youth groups, and allow them to be full players in the development of youth policies, and in their respective communities and regions.

"It's very important to create this common space for dialogue and communication between youth, decision-makers, and all stakeholders," says Tatiana Skaf, National Project Officer for NETMED Youth in Lebanon. "This is exactly what NETMED Youth is about."

Participants in the workshop benefited from the interactive and participatory nature of the event to share their diverse methodologies, results and data, to unify their efforts, and to explore opportunities for collaboration, joint activities and partnerships among each other and within their communities.





### More than 100 Professionals in the Arab Countries Trained on Bioethics in 2015

The UNESCO programme furthered its Bioethics capacity building with a specific boost at the Arab region. In 2015, 107 professionals were trained in the series of 4 Ethics Teaching Training Course (ETTC) organized in Amman (Sept 2014), Muscat (Dec 2014), Beirut (June 2015) and Tunis (Sept 2015). Furthermore, a sub-regional workshop in Kuwait (May 2015) was organized in coordination with Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) to promote the establishment and enhancing the role of National Bioethics Committees in the Gulf sub-region.

The Course, developed by UNESCO in 2006, offered a unique opportunity for professors and researchers in medicine, nursing and public health from Arab countries to enhance their teaching capacities in ethics. The Course's module contains theoretical and practical components, and is divided among seven sessions as follows:

1. General Introduction: UNESCO, Bioethics and Ethics Education Programme;
2. Global and National Perspective on Ethics Teaching: trends, challenges and opportunities;
3. The UNESCO Core Curriculum in Bioethics;
4. Ethics Teaching in Action – Pedagogical approaches, skills and methods;
5. Classroom communication: pedagogy and psychology of ethics teaching;
6. Sharing experiences in ethics teaching from the local perspective;
7. Simulated teaching presentations.

### Upcoming Events (October - December 2015)



- Education 2030 in the Arab region: Information and Coordination Meeting; *Beirut, 9 October 2015*
- A cluster training workshop on "Youth-led intercultural dialogue through Sports in Lebanon and Syria"; *Beirut, 14-16 October 2015*
- Validating the Regional Teacher Policy Framework and Resource Pack (Expert Meeting); *Beirut, 19 - October 2015*
- Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development in Lebanon; *Beirut, 20 October 2015*
- Follow-up meeting on CONFINTEA VI - Adult learning; *Alexandria, 26-28 October 2015*
- Educational workshops for students under the title "Lebanon # students are united with Heritage"; *Baalbek, Tyre, and Byblos, and in the National Museum, October and November 2015*
- Sub-regional WS on Global Citizenship Education; *United Arab Emirates, 15-16 November 2015*
- A workshop for UNFIL officers on "Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict"; *Naqoura, 22 - 25 November 2015*
- Sub-regional Seminar on Accreditation for Non-formal Education; *Beirut, 30 November - 1 December 2015*
- National Workshop on Illicit Traffic; *Beirut, 2-4 December 2015*
- Regional Information and Advocacy Meeting on Education 2030 Agenda; *Cairo, 15-16 December 2015*
- National conference on water scarcity; *Beirut, 15-16 December 2015*