



PRESS RELEASE

Cooperation and Migration Studies: in Tunis the final conference of the Migrants Project

Tunis, 04.05.2023 - On May 2, the Cité des Sciences in Tunis hosted the final conference of “MIGRANTS” to present the results of the project, underline its importance and share expectations for the future. More than 100 people, Tunisians and Europeans, academics, researchers, experts and representatives of labor market and civil society working in the field of migration, attended the event and shared the opportunity to celebrate this pivotal event.

In addition to all the Rectors of Tunisian and European partner universities and representatives of all project partners, the conference counted on a number of valuable contributions. It was attended by Matthew Forman, representative of the British Embassy in Tunisia, Fabrizio Saggio, Ambassador of Italy in Tunis, the Coordinator of the Erasmus+Office in Tunisia, Nesrine Baklouti, and representatives from the IOM Tunisia, the International Organization for Migration.

MIGRANTS is a three year Erasmus+ capacity building project, funded by the European Commission, which aims to reinforce the capacity of the Tunisian higher education system concerning the management of a regular and safe migration.

The project's main objective was an interdisciplinary Joint Master's Degree “Migration Studies: Governance, Policies and Cultures” between the three Tunisian partner universities, which is currently involving 50 international students.

The Master is animated by 25 professors, scholars and experts from the three Tunisian universities who worked, from September 2020 until May 2023, in training courses, co-teaching and job shadowing with professors from the University of Palermo, University of Westminster and University of Granada and experts and professionals in the field of migration selected by COSPE, CLEDU, UNIMED and other Tunisian and international NGOs.

Prof. Serena Marcenò, Scientific Director and Coordinator of the project from the University of Palermo, said that: “Migrants has been working to train, study, research and work so that the youngest generations have the tools to develop a different and contrasting vision compared to the current security drift in the governance of migratory flows. And this is our sustainability, the knowledge, the skills, our students' critical gaze on the present”.

During these years of activity, 23 co-teaching mobilities were implemented in order to share teaching approaches between Tunisian and European professors. Moreover, 17 weeks of training were organized from September 2020 to May 2021 with the participation of 25 Tunisian Professors and 17 European trainers for a total of 128 hours of training.

The project has supported 6 young Tunisian scholars for the acquisition of the PhD degree at European partner universities, 2 Summer Schools were organized, in Granada in July 2022 and in London in September 2022, and a third one is approaching in Palermo in July 2023.

In order to give the opportunity to teachers, researchers and students to work alongside migration experts, observing and participating in their field work, the NGOs involved in the project implemented 58 days of job shadowing in Tunisia, in Granada, in London and Palermo with the involvement of 25 Tunisian professors, 6 PhD candidates, and 50 students.

The activities of job shadowing were carried out with the valuable work of a wide range of associations: Tunisian Asile Lands, Arab Institute of Human Rights, Avocats Sans Frontières,

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African Leadership and Development Association, PRODIVERSA, Spanish Red Cross, Agrupación para el Desarrollo en Norte, Migrant Voice, Counterpoints Arts and Bail for Immigrants Detainee. In addition to that, 3 seminars were organized with civil society organizations.

In the greetings, the Italian Ambassador in Tunis, Fabrizio Saggio, said: "All projects focused on training are supported by the Embassy of Italy and the Italian government, because this is how we can give future to young people. I hope that the results will be lasting and will allow students, Tunisian ones and others, to access the labor market with appropriate tools".

The role of academic training and civil society in generating change towards a different narrative of migration has been repeatedly stressed by several actors participating to the conference. These are the words of the Coordinator of Erasmus+ in Tunisia, Nesrine Baklouti: "Higher education is crucial in the transition to inclusive societies. For this reason, universities must continue to work to capitalize on best practice in the future. The most important thing now is the sustainability and continuity of the project".

There was also a strong commitment to the research of academic partners whose results are coming soon (September 2023) in two volumes entitled: "Migrations: Socio-Cultural Contexts and Constitution" and "Migrations: Governance, Policies and Rights".

The project has also consolidated the ten-year collaboration between the three Tunisian universities and the University of Palermo so much so as to start a new program of Double degree between the Master in Migration Studies in Tunis and the Master in Cooperation, development and migration in Palermo.

From the intense work and the close collaboration among partners, another cooperation initiative was born: the British Academy Writing Workshop "Migrants in transit: a transdisciplinary writing programme for emerging scholars of migration in Tunisia" conducted by the University of Westminster (UK) in collaboration with the University of Middlesex (UK) and the University of Tunis El Manar (Tunisia).

"MIGRANTS is one of the most successful projects winning the Erasmus+ grant in Tunisia due to the dynamics within the consortium and the cooperative spirit between partners. The achievements of the project: a Master's degree with more than 200 applications and 25 students per year from several disciplines; a double degree just started and a network in the field consolidated. Also, this project helps in fostering "cultural awareness" about the political, media and public opinion discourse about migration, given the local, regional and global challenges", stated the Scientific Coordinator for University of Tunis El Manar, Prof. Samira Mechri.

The Migrants project, which will officially end on 14 September 2023, was coordinated by the University of Palermo and gathered University of Tunis El Manar, University of Tunis, University of La Manouba, University of Granada, University of Westminster and non-academic partners, namely UNIMED, COSPE and CLEDU.

Further information on the "Migrants" project and the Final Conference is available on the official website www.migrantsproject.eu. [Here](#) the event's photo gallery and press review are available.