
Press Release

Hadat-Baabda, April 19, 2018

Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between TICKET Research Laboratory and the Faculty of Engineering at the Antonine University and BMW Group

Under the auspices and in the presence of Cesar Abi Khalil Minister of Energy and Water, TICKET Research Laboratory and the Faculty of Engineering at the Antonine University and BMW Group signed at Lady of Seeds Monastery at Antonine University main campus in Hadat-Baabda, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); thereby, officially concretizing a relationship for collaboration between the two institutions that started 3 years ago.

In attendance at the signing were Cesar Abi Khalil Minister of Energy and Water, Antonine University President Fr. Michel Jalakh, Dr Dirk Dreher Vice-President and Head of the Logistics Planning at BMW Group accompanied by a delegation, Secretary General at Antonine University Fr. Toufic Maatouk, Former Ministre of Economy and Trade Dimianos Kattar, Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Research at UA Prof. Nidaa Abou Mrad, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering Dr. Chady Abou Jaoude, Director of TICKET Research Laboratory Dr. Bechara Al Bouna, Executive Director of the Legal Department at Banque du Liban Me. Pierre Kanaan.

The signature of the MoU took place in the frame of a panel discussion entitled "Innovation-Driven Economy" moderated by Dr. Georges Chalhoub and including Dr. Dirk Dreher Vice-President and Head of the Logistics Planning at BMW Group, Former Ministre of Economy and Trade Dimianos Kattar and Executive Director of the Legal Department at Banque du Liban Me. Pierre Kanaan.

On this occasion, a documentary on the collaboration between TICKET Research Laboratory and BMW Group was screened at the beginning of the inaugural session and during which Dr. Chady Abou Jaoude and Dr. Bechara Al Bouna both evoked the relationship between the two institutions. The latter said "Three years ago we planted a seed by signing our first Memorandum of Understanding with the It Innovation Lab and logistics. After three successful years consisting of

several visits in both directions, and more than 16 internships including two PhDs and 1 full timer, this seed turned into a tree, which flourished with the trip of the Vice President of BMW Group, Dr. Dirk Dreher, for the first time to Lebanon.

“Through this collaboration, we were able to shed light on our academic program as well as on the solid higher education system established in Lebanon”, he added.

For his part, Fr. Jalakh welcomed all present and said, “one of our missions at the Antonine University is to promote contextualized research. This means research priorities and topics relating to the Middle Eastern societies. However, when it comes to problems relating to Technology and Engineering, all geographical boundaries collapse, and the entire globe becomes our context, otherwise we would not have international research partnerships such as the one we have with BMW for example.”

He added, “We are here today to discuss a new economical paradigm where innovation is the major propeller of growth. This is a very precious opportunity for countries like ours where mind capital is the main wealth. I believe that investing in innovation, and relying on the talents of our young, yet outstanding researchers, are our royal path towards economic prosperity and social development.

While doing so, we are invited to keep an eye on the local communities around us. We are called to work seriously on digital literacy, not only to allow all of our citizens to take advantage of the numeric revolution, but more specifically to initiate what we might call, after Bernard Stiegler, contributive research projects, where the university is invited to help its environment in finding creative and know-how friendly ways of using technology.”

Dreher said, “We’re living in a world of fast development. Topics like Big Data / Privacy / Autonomous Driving / xxx getting more and more important. If a company like BMW Group would like to keep up with these technologies it is important for us to create such kind of cooperations. Our Vision for these cooperation between BMW Group and Universities are to give technology a hand, convert thoughts into actions, set the tone, illuminate visions, operate seamless processes, keep an eye on speed, turn ideas into nuts and bolts and aid progress.”

Dreher also explained that BMW is now aiming to align its university cooperation activities with BMW Vision NEXT 100, to achieve greater transparency with regard to existing university contacts and

cooperations, to interlink more strongly the activities of different partner universities and to make university cooperations more international overall.”

“BMW Group is building up a portfolio of university contacts that will work from different strategic directions.

The first benefits of this new upcoming cooperation led to a common application between BMW Group and the consortium of the lebanese universities for the european research Project Horizon 2020. We hope that this will be the first step in a fruitful cooperation regarding our common vision” he said.

Energy and Water Minister Cesar Abi Khalil said, “The Knowledge economy is a system of consumption and production that is based on intellectual capital. It is one where organizations and people acquire, create, disseminate, and use knowledge more effectively for greater and social development.”

In 2013, Lebanon launched, through its Central Bank, the first set of funds that aim at financing innovative startups, building by that the foundations of a new economic sector, a knowledge-based-one. The value of knowledge economy majorly consists of intangible assets not the least of which is the value of it’s workers’ knowledge. And this is why this sector has evolved considerably in Lebanon, attracting a large number of university graduate and young entrepreneurs. The major resource of Lebanon is tis human asset, and this, paralleled with the financial support of the banking sector, is a main factor in the rapid development of knowledge economy. This sector aims at limiting the brain-drain to outside Lebanon, especially in new generations, and hopefully resulting in an in-migration of the diaspora.”

He added, “Since 2010, MoEW has put action plans to reduce reliance on fossil energy and decrease the country’s carbon-print. We encourage innovations in the Energy and Water sectors, especially in renewable energies, energy efficiency and water conservation with the aim of reaching a target of 15% power generation from renewable sources by 2030. In the oil and gas sector, MoEW aims at shifting to the use of natural gas in energy production.”

“The use of advanced technologies in the knowledge economy sector can help offer sustainable development an efficiency. The low capital investment combined with information accessibility increases competitiveness, resulting in lower prices of the services and higher productive capacity in

the sectors of energy and water. With climate change and the decrease of natural resources, the themes of renewable energy and green economy will have an increasing importance” Abi Khalil said stressing that economic growth and job creation in Lebanon should be based on innovation, technology and knowledge.

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