

**Second external evaluation report of the Erasmus plus  
Capacity building project  
“Interuniversity learning in Higher Education on Advanced  
land Management (ILHAM- EC)”**

External evaluator: Dr. Filippo Sartor

*The ILHAM-EC project has been funded with support from the European Union. This report reflects the view only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

The scope of this report is to assess the main activities that have been carried out during the second part of the ILHAM project and to evaluate the main outcomes achieved according to the forecast schedule.

The report covers all the actions put forward between June 2017 and the end of the project that occurred on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2019. The period can be easily divided in two main phases. The first one has been characterized by the preparation of the bylaw that was a mandatory step in order to activate the Master in the four Egyptian Universities. In addition, further training activities were carried out in order to enhance competences among Egyptian faculties. The second phase included mainly the promotion and the delivery of the first year of the Master programme that represents the main tangible outcome of the project.

The report has been developed by an external evaluator that has been employed by the consortium in May 2019 in order to carry out the second and final external quality report. The first one was already produced in July 2017 while an additional quality report has been drafted in 2018 to analyze the quality of online modules produced by the project partners.

The Project coordinator UNISS and the partner institution responsible for WP6 “quality assurance”, UNIMED have provided to the external evaluator all the main documents of the project, including the project proposal, minutes of the meetings, individual feedback assessments of the meetings and of the Master (questionnaires), plans, reports, course outlines, reviews, and the access to learning management system adopted by the consortium (Moodle). In addition, the external evaluator participated to the final project conference held in Cairo in October 2019 where he managed to interview students, professors and to discuss with the members of the steering committee. This last opportunity was extremely useful to complete the analysis carried out through questionnaires and internal documents and to address more directly the main participants, beneficiaries and stakeholders of the projects.

The structure of the report is the following:

- 1) An evaluation of the effectiveness of the main meetings and workshops held in 2017 and in 2018 in order to fine tune the organization of the Master. In particular there were 4 workshops in European universities with the involvement of Egyptian professors whose mobility was covered under the Erasmus plus mobility strand for academic staff. Each event will be analyzed starting from the agenda, the minutes with the results achieved and, when available, feedback questionnaires filled by the participants.
- 2) An overall evaluation of the first year of the Master. This is the core of the second quality report and it will be divided in two main sections:
  - a. Analysis of the feedbacks received by the students both for the first year of the Master held in Egypt and for the internship held in Sassari
  - b. Analysis of the feedbacks received by professors

Finally, the last section will be dedicated to remarks and suggestions that may be relevant for the prosecution of the Master experience in Egypt. It will recall the main comments that emerged during the report but also it will try to propose suggestions to be taken into consideration during the second year of the Master, and, above all, next possible editions of the Master programme. The project, in fact, allowed the implantation of the first year of the pilot edition of the Master which purpose, also thanks to the bylaw, is to become a permanent postgraduate programme in Egypt. Therefore, it is relevant to identify the main strengths and possible corrections in order to guarantee a better sustainability of the programme in the future.

Finally, in addressing the above mentioned issues and dimensions, the external evaluator has always taken into consideration the feedbacks received by EACEA as part of the evaluation of the first interim report submitted in April 2017 and the final considerations of the first evaluation report of the project submitted by the external evaluations in August 2017.

## 1. Evaluation of meetings, train the trainers workshops and the main project events

During the 2017 and the 2018, the following ILHAM meetings and events took place:

Type of activity	Place and date	Participants	Types of feedbacks
Mobility strand workshop	Sassari, May 2017	Only Egyptians	7 questionnaires filled
Mobility strand workshop	Thessaloniki, May 2017	Only Egyptians	4 questionnaires filled
Mobility strand workshop	Leeds, 2018	Only Egyptians	2 questionnaires filled
2nd steering committee meeting	Rome, June 2017	All partners	Only minutes
Egyptian Partners Scientific Group	Alexandria, July 2017	Only Egyptians	Only minutes
Mobility strand workshop And second participatory workshop	Sassari, January 2018	Egyptians and European HEIS	13 questionnaires filled
3rd steering committee meeting	Cairo, February 2018	All partners	5 questionnaires filled
Coordination meeting	Skype, December 2018	UNISS + Egyptian partners	Only minutes
Final steering committee	Cairo, October 2019	All HEIs (except Leeds University) and UNIMED	<u>Only minutes</u>

These activities may be grouped in three blocks:

- Mobility strand workshops were periods of stay in European universities for Egyptian professors in order to get acquainted with the organization of the partner institutions, to deepen aspects related to land management and ways to transfer these aspects into new teaching modules, to meet relevant stakeholders and analyze curricula of European universities. They have been organized thanks to the additional financial support given by the mobility strand tool promoted within Erasmus plus Capacity Building action.

- Steering Committee meetings were events when Contact Persons of each institution of the consortium gather together. They were the place to take the main organizational decisions of the project and to verify the correct implementation of the activities.
- Scientific Committee meetings were events when partners discuss and take decisions specifically on the definition of new modules and the structure of the Master.

As it is reported in the last column, not always the activities have been monitored through a feedback system. Not all meetings envisaged the adoption of a questionnaire and not always all participants paid attention to fill properly the questionnaires. Nevertheless, the external evaluator has tried to assess and provide comments on the events also taking into consideration the agenda and the minute. We will first start with the Mobility strand activities and we will move afterwards on project meetings.

### 1.1 Mobility Strand training, Sassari 2017

The training took place for 5 days and was a mix of workshops, study visits of the local context (farms), training on the use of the online platform Moodle, meetings with staff of specific university services like KTO, case studies and simulations. The agenda was definitely ambitious and aspiring with the involvement of different actors and stakeholders that could be relevant for the Master programme.

Feedbacks from the questionnaires are only qualitative so it is not possible to make statistics. Not all the participants filled the entire questionnaire and formats were not homogeneous with different information provided. At the end, the external evaluator could count on 7 questionnaires and identify the following main features:

Main Lessons learn and differences in respect to own institution	Number of participants who underlined the point
Acquisition of new practical skills in the own subject useful for teaching and not adopted in my own institution	II
Acquisition of new skills in ICT and education with particular reference to Moodle	IV
Fulfilled expectations	Number of participants who underlined the point
Acquiring new knowledge in my specific field	II
Acquiring skills to use Moodle	II
Increasing capacity to do networking for teaching and research purposes	V
Acquiring new learning practices and teaching methods	I
Reinforcing relation with colleagues of UNISS	II
Having the opportunity to visit interesting experience (Arborea)	I
Favoring spin off effects for curriculum development within ILHAM	II
Unfulfilled expectations	Number of participants who underlined the point
Limited opportunities to reinforce new learning practices and teaching methods	I
limited strengthening of networking at disciplinary level	I
concepts only relatively deepened due to lack of time	II

limited contacts with labour market organization	II
Limited opportunities to cultural exchanges	I
<b>Follow up</b>	<b>Number of participants who underlined the point</b>
The initiative was useful to clarify my role within ILHAM project	VI
Willingness to transfer new knowledge acquired to colleagues and students	III

Despite answers were not always coherent and reflect two different types of questionnaires, it emerges clearly that participants were highly satisfied of the experience. The most relevant aspects were the increasing awareness on the use of online platforms in education and the opportunity not only to do networking but also to reinforce the capacity to do it. Participants recognized the coherence between the strand mobility training and the overall structure of the ILHAM project. The new knowledge and practices acquired have to be transferred into the new ILHAM master and shared with colleagues in Egypt. A good number underlined how the experience was useful to clarify their role and possible future contribution in the project. Generally speaking, the training was an additional but also concrete opportunity to increase skills and competences useful to teach in the new Master. Some skills were more technical (use of Moodle) other more scientific and acquired thanks to the interaction and networking among project partners.

In terms on weaknesses, some participants insisted on the lack of time to deepen some concepts and arguments, to do networking at disciplinary level or to visit further realities of Sardinia not necessary part of the University of Sassari. Cultural aspects and integration were taken into consideration but played a marginal role during the training period.

## 1.2 Mobility Strand training, Thessaloniki 2017

At the mobility strand in Thessaloniki participated 6 professors coming from the 4 Egyptian universities of ILHAM project.

Most of the training was based on a workshop to discuss case studies, share best practices from projects and deepen topics related to water resource management and exploitation, quality of the soil and waste management. One day was dedicated to fieldwork, visiting Lake Kerkini dam and the irrigation network of Strymonas river catchment area. Then, the mobility strand was an opportunity to visit all the facilities of Thessaloniki universities with particular attention to laboratories of the School of Agriculture.

Logistic was definitely a plus of the experience with clear and detailed information provided before the departure. At the end of the experience, 4 questionnaires were collected with mainly qualitative information. The format of the questionnaire was different from the one applied for the mobility strand in Sassari, even if the main issues were comparable. From the answers, it is possible to identify the following main features and recurrent aspects:

<b>Main positive aspects of the mobility strand</b>	<b>Number of participants who underlined the point</b>
Variety of presentations	I
More value for your institution	I

Current topics	I
Presenters	I
Organisation	III
<b>Less relevant aspects of the mobility strand</b>	<b>Number of participants who underlined the point</b>
The content was helpful	II
The duration of the mobility strand was sufficient	III
The applied methodology was satisfactory	I
The mobility strand goals were achievable	I
I listened with interest the trainers	I
I contributed with my experience and reflection	I
I understood the content of the mobility strand	I
<b>Most interested subject covered</b>	<b>Number of participants who underlined the point</b>
Remote sensing for water resources management	IV
Water resource management	IV
Application of precision agriculture and remote sensing	IV
<b>Main difficulties encountered and improvements</b>	<b>Number of participants who underlined the point</b>
More fieldwork activities	I
More focus on teaching skills improvement	II

Generally speaking, feedbacks from questionnaires were very positive. Participants were particularly satisfied by the organization and the hospitality of the staff of University of Thessaloniki who took very seriously the management of the event, providing always exhaustive information and taking care of all aspects of the logistics. All participants indicated the same relevant scientific topics and this was due to the fact they belonged to similar field of studies. Two participants underlined that contents were relevant but could have been more useful to discuss in terms of future application. Others pointed out that the time was not always sufficient to cover topics and to allow a proper discussion. But, again, the overall evaluation was broadly satisfactory.

Finally, participants suggested improving fieldwork activities that were always appreciated in the context of mobility strand training. Two participants underlined that there could have been more focus on new teaching skills and methods. This aspect is an important component of ILHAM project and was widely covered in other events but still it is interesting to note the recurrent focus posed by Egyptian participants considering that the aspect is often neglected in many new teaching initiatives.

### 1.3 Mobility Strand training, Leeds 2017

Only 4 Egyptian professors participated to the mobility strand in Leeds due to limitations posed by UK VISA policies. Nevertheless, the experience has been evaluated positively by the participants that found in Leeds a very stimulating environment. The mobility strand training in Leeds was, in fact, quite different from those organized

in the same period by the staff of Universities of Sassari and Thessaloniki. The programme was based on a variety of learning experiences including workshops, laboratory practices, simulation games, practical applications, discussions on research and learning methods. The overall structure seemed more interactive, methodological and less content based than the other mobility strand training experiences. Field visits were not included but the training was more based on participatory methods and active learning. Reflections on learner engagement and blended learning approaches were also part of the agenda as well as participatory methods both for research and teaching.

Only two questionnaires were collected at the end of the experience so it not possible to develop any significant comparative analysis or reflect on the most recurrent feedbacks. The external evaluator tried to verify if the answers of the participants were coherent and reflected the aims of the organizing institution.

According to the feedbacks expressed in the questionnaires, both participants confirmed that logistics were very reasonable and effective which made the overall experience very fruitful. In terms of lessons learnt, they insisted that it was important to be exposed to different teaching methods and technologies. They underlined also the knowledge acquired in sustainable management strategies in agricultural systems and they appreciated to tackle methodological issues such as the future prospects of e-learning and its impacts on learning capacity and efficiency. All these issues are only marginally considered in their universities and represent new challenges to incorporate in their teaching and academic practices.

Analyzing fulfilled expectations, participants indicates the following items: efficiency of the schedule; new teaching methods learn; opportunities to meet professors of the same field; opportunities to exchange experience and strengthen networking; chances to deepen the use of Moodle platform and occasions to identify new research prospects and visit the facilities of the hosting institute. While, in terms of unfulfilled expectations, participants just underlined that they would have liked to do even more practice on designing a new online module in Moodle and exchange more experiences on teaching specific courses and on student evaluation methods.

Finally, in terms of follow up, they believed to be now more ready to contribute to the development of ILHAM Master programme and to transfer the knowledge acquired to the colleagues.

Therefore, answers from the questionnaires confirmed the considerations made analyzing the agenda and objectives of the mobility strands. Participants appreciated the effort made by the organizing institution to insist on methods and practice and to organize sessions based on discussion, simulations and active learning. They said that had to directly contribute to the discussion more than expected but it was certainly a positive aspect of the entire training. The workshop held in Leeds, despite it was offered only to 4 participants, was definitely organized in an effective and coherent way, respecting goals and purposes of ILHAM project.

#### **1.4 Second Participatory workshop and Special Mobility Strand training, Sassari (second edition) 2018**

The training held in January 2018 was the most participated with 26 Egyptian professors that took part in the activities. The reason was due to the fact that the training saw, for the first three days, the participation of all teachers coming from Egyptian Universities and, for the last two days, only those Egyptian teachers who were not able to participate in the special mobility strand before. Organized by all European HEIs, professors from Leeds

and Thessaloniki moved to Sassari in order to have all the group gathered in a single place and being able to share experiences and discuss SLM topics, in order to increase skills in teaching by confronting each other..

The structure of the event was mainly based on workshops with EU professors that took classes on specific topics followed by discussion. According to the agenda, the discussion should have focused on teaching methods, so how a specific topic could be turned in an effective lesson targeted to Master students. In addition, during the week, the participants under the Special Mobility Strand, had the chance to visit ARPAS, the Environmental Protection Agency of Sardinia region. It was an opportunity to get closer with the local context and share practices on the role of public authorities in the management of the territory. Finally, the last day was dedicated to contributions from Egyptian professors, with some of the participants that gave lectures on topics related to land issues relevant for Egypt.

At the end of the training, it was possible to collect 12 questionnaires, so quite a relevant number of feedbacks of the experience. According to them, in the following tables it is possible to identify the main patterns and recurrent issues for the participants:

Main Lessons learn and differences in respect to own institution practices	Number of participants who underlined the point
New teaching methods: let students Work in groups	IIII
New teaching methods: using online exercises and computer labs including gaming	IIIIIIII
New teaching methods: new approaches to assessment and feedback	IIII
New teaching methods: case studies to support critical thinking and to strengthening the ideas	IIIIIIII
New teaching methods: using system dynamics approaches to investigate agriculture and natural resource management	IIII
Topics related to Mitigating environmental impact improving farm efficiency	I
Topics related to cost benefit analysis	I
New teaching methods: using video	II
Holistic and multidisciplinary approach of teaching sustainable land management	I
Elements that were less or not innovative in respect to own experience	Number of participants who underlined the point
Teaching methods based on FtF presentations adopted by Eu professors	III
Group discussions	I
Modules, grading, and student monitoring approaches	I
Fulfilled expectations	Number of participants who underlined the point
Know and discuss new topics in sustainable agriculture relevant for Mediterranean region	IIII
Acquiring skills to use online education tool	III



Having the opportunity to networking with colleagues from other universities and share experience	
Acquiring new learning practices and teaching methods	
Cultural exchange	I
Having the opportunity to visit interesting local experiences	II
Practical approaches and opportunities	I
<b>Unfulfilled expectations</b>	<b>Number of participants who underlined the point</b>
Limited opportunities to do more practical activities	II
No opportunity to deepen knowledge in my discipline	I
concepts only relatively deepened due to lack of time	II
No opportunity to participate to activities with local students	I
No visit to labs of the local university	II
More on learning monitoring approaches	I
No examples of teaching experiences from Sassari University	I

The results of the questionnaires confirmed the emphasis posed on learning and teaching methodologies. For most of the participants the main lessons learned referred to an improvement of teaching practices, from the use of online platforms with games, video, quizzes to the adoption of case studies as a way to favor critical thinking. Then, they were stimulated on the adoption of system dynamics approaches, work group activities and on thinking on different way to assess learning. One participant, in particular, insisted on an aspect that may be extremely important for the new ILHAM Master, i.e. the need to propose a multidisciplinary approach to sustainable land management. The mobility strand was a good opportunity to discuss how to calibrate the Master and to combine the request of specialization with the need to maintain an holistic approach to land management. According to ILHAM WP1 preliminary survey, the Master aims at creating new profiles in Egypt able to overcome views that may be too narrow or partial and based only on a discipline, while sustainability requires the capacity to tackle complexity and conduct multi sectorial analysis.

In terms of fulfilled expectations, in addition to the opportunity to strengthening teaching methodological skills, participants underlined the positive atmosphere among the group that favored networking and exchanges of ideas, for some of them also at disciplinary level. On the contrary, the main concerns on the experience referred to the fact that still most of the activities and topics were proposed using traditional approaches with limited practical exercises. There was lots of discussion but this is something Egyptian academic staff were already used to. In addition, some of the participants pointed out they would have appreciated more visits to labs and facilities of University of Sassari and, generally, speaking, to deepen more some topics especially when they were relevant for the own discipline.

The overall evaluation of the second mobility training held in Sassari is in line with ILHAM previous activities and the considerations of the participants reflect the effort to highlight methodological teaching aspects. Most of the judgements are quite similar to the ones that emerged after the methodological workshop already analyzed during the first evaluation report. ILHAM project has definitely created a good platform to exchange and discuss

ideas among participants that need to be embedded in the design of the Master. These ideas are on methods to be adopted but also on issues to be covered during the Master that would have started in the next months, as the event in Sassari in January 2018 was the last mobility opportunity for academic staff.

### **1.5 2nd steering committee meeting, Rome June 2017**

After the evaluation of 4 mobility strand training activities, we move to the assessment of project meetings that occurred from June 2017 to the beginning of the Master programme that started in Autumn 2018. The first one was held in Rome in June 2017, just after the submission of the first interim report to Bruxelles and at the end of the first block of mobility strand activities in Europe. As there is no questionnaire available, the external evaluator based his assessment on the content of the agenda and of the minutes. In particular, it will be considered the clarity of the agenda and the relevance of the objectives, the quality of the minutes and the effectiveness of the meeting in terms of decision taken, awareness of the participants and compliance to the agenda.

The Steering committee in Rome was a key moment for the project. The agenda was clear and very challenging, including all the main issues that were debated in the previous project period. The main topic was the preparation of the bylaw and the fulfillment of the Master accreditation process in Egypt. But the focus was also on the preparation of the structure of the Master, the rescheduling of the next project activities, the evaluation of Mobility strands etc. Rome was definitely a cornerstone of the project as all key persons from partner universities finally met after longtime and extensive email exchanges and had to take relevant decisions for the continuation of the project.

The minutes reflected this situation. They were prepared in a very accurate way, describing all the contributions, the exploitations provided and the decision taken. Minutes confirmed that the core issue was the need to find an agreement between Egyptian universities to proceed through the bylaw and allow the Master to start in Autumn 2017. Most of the time of the meeting was dedicated to this topic, much more than those forecasted in the agenda. Decisions taken were clear and shared but were also subject to external constraints that were not under the control of the project consortium, in particular the time scheduling to obtain the bylaw. Some issues regarding the joint Master were postponed at a further online conference to be held in July 2017.

Unfortunately, the complexity of the accreditation process did not allow dedicating proper time to other relevant issues such as Master didactic aspects including the game, the evaluation of mobility strands, the deepening of transversal workpackages and acquisition of equipment. Nevertheless, the minute reported very clearly the explanations made by the coordinator on all the topics, leaving the participants the possibility to be fully aware of the status of implementation of different activities. A table with all the main milestones and deadlines agreed during the meeting was attached to the minute, specifying clearly which partner institution was involved and responsible for.

### **1.6 Egyptian Partners Scientific Group, Alexandria July 2017**

The Egyptian partner scientific group meeting held in Alexandria on July 2017 was mainly a continuation and update of the previous Steering Committee meeting that had taken place in Rome in June. It was participated only by Egyptian partners and the agenda was fully dedicated to the various aspects of implementation of the new ILHAM master programme: from the progress of Bylaws approval process to the management of the Master including student selection criteria, promotion of the programme but also distribution and pairing of the teachers, equipment and webinars

The meeting lasted 1 day. Minutes again were very accurate and reflected all the contents of the agenda. As far as bylaws concerns, some steps were done after the meeting in Rome and all universities were in condition to terminate the internal Master approval by the end of August. But then it was required to pass through the Supreme Council of Universities that was already alerted about the new initiative.

Then, common decisions were taken in relation to student selection criteria not only for the enrollment to the Master but also for participating to the Student Mobility strand in Italy as part of the Master. The same was adopted for promotion of the Master and each university was in charge of organizing a promotion day in their respective institution. A significant part of the meeting was dedicated to identify criteria to select teachers for the forthcoming Master and to pair them between Egyptian institutions. This was one of the most innovative aspect of ILHAM project as Egyptian universities were not used to work together especially for common education initiatives. Attention was given to proficiency in English but also to previous participation to ILHAM preparatory activities. Finally, there was a debate of Webinars topics and on the acquisition of equipment, where each university should be responsible for its own items.

Minutes reported that the decision making approach among participants were quite coordinated and smooth despite long discussions and misunderstandings due the complexity of the implementation of a Joint Master. ILHAM Master in fact was quite a unique initiative in Egypt as local universities were not used to share their educational materials, approaches and tools. The same for the Bylaws and the approval of the Supreme Court of Universities as it was the first case of Joint Master among Egyptian universities. This element and the possible spillover effects must be taken into consideration in the overall evaluation of the initiative.

### **1.7 3rd steering committee meeting, Cairo February 2018.**

This steering committee meeting was organized 8 months after the meeting in Rome with a scenario that was completely changed. The Master that should have started in Autumn 2017 was necessary postponed due to delay in issuing the bylaws. The Supreme Court of Universities approved the Master degree in November 2017 but Egyptian universities had to wait for the last administrative step from the Court in order to activate the new Master programme. Therefore, the meeting was an occasion to review the current status of the SLM Master and to take important decisions such as the formal request of project extension amendment. Partner universities needed one further project year to launch the Master and carry out the first year of the pilot edition. All partners participated with one member, including University of Leeds and ACS whose representatives attended on videoconference.

The agenda was straightforward and clear: the first part of the meeting was supposed to be dedicated to the review and the amendment decision, while the second part aimed at focusing on some open issues such as

equipment purchase and conference organization but also the analysis of train the teacher activities and project difficulties.

At the end of the meeting 6 questionnaires were collected, including those of the Egyptian partner universities. Feedbacks provided were quite repetitive and did not provide exhaustive and comparative data but it is possible to affirm that the overall evaluation of the meeting was positive. The questionnaire was based on 3 main dimensions, all divided in sub points: logistics and organization, effectiveness of the meeting and contents of the meeting. All participants evaluated from 4 to 5 (5 was the maximum) all the dimensions not really differentiating their estimation. Within this positive scenario, it was decided to monitor which points receive more 4 instead of 5 and therefore a relatively less appreciation. The results are the followings:

- The materials produced before and during the meeting are clear and useful to develop the expected project activities,
- The Meeting was useful for establishing good working relationships among the partners,
- The Agenda (and related materials) were circulated to the partnership prior to the Meeting in adequate advance,
- After the Meeting, to which extent are work plan and deadlines clear to you?

Those points were the ones that received the highest number of 4, so potentially were less valued. The second point may offer some reflections. The meeting came after a period that produced much pressure among Egyptian universities. The choice to move towards a National Joint degree was extremely innovative in Egypt but created a lot of stress and conflicts among partner institutions that were asked to agree and share practices that were traditionally regulated at university level, if not in each single disciplinary field. SLM Master required to find common solutions among disciplines (multidisciplinarity) and among universities that were extremely challenging for the participants. So it is not surprising that participants evaluated less the point related to “the good working relationships “even if an extensive effort has been made by all partner universities and relationships improved a lot during project life.

Questionnaires offered information also regarding expectations for the future activities and the risks but all participants pointed out the same issues including the willingness to start soon the Master and the risks provided by the delay to obtain the Bylaws and the purchasing of equipment in the international market.

Finally, it is important to remark the overall quality and clearness of the minutes that were shared among participants just a couple of weeks after the meeting. All points were adequately described and minutes terminated with a table with clear assignments, deadlines, roles and responsibilities.

### **1.8 Coordination meeting, held by skype in December 2018**

This was a short coordination meeting made on skype with the participation of representatives of Sassari, Cairo, Alexandria, Zagazig and Damanhour. The scope of the meeting was to share first impressions on the implementation of the Master that finally started in October 2018. There was not a real agenda but all topics moved around the Master, including the results of the first exams of the students, the organization of the student mobility strand, the mobility of teachers within Egyptian universities.

As far the first period of the Master concerns, there were opposite considerations. On one hand, representatives of Egyptian partner universities insisted that the Master run very well. Students were attending classes and teachers were very satisfied on the way the Master was organized, including academic staff mobility within the group of Egyptian universities that issued the programme. But the results of the first mid term examinations were not satisfactory with several students that performed badly and teachers were afraid that some students could fail the final exam. On this regard, recommendations were shared during the meeting and, in particular, it was suggested to strength communication with students, identify problems and try to offer adequate support.

Then, time was given to address two important features of the Master: the student mobility strand to be held during Summer 2019 and the mobility of academic staff within Egypt. The positions assumed, especially by the coordinating institution, were precise and resolute: a) students must satisfy language requirements before moving to Italy and must pass the final exams of the first year; b) academic staff that composes the faculty of the Master must have been preliminary engaged on train the trainers modules offered on Moodle and must report regularly of the activities made in class.

All the decisions taken were reported in the minute that were shared with the participants just few weeks after the online meeting.

Regarding the last Steering Committee Meeting, held in Cairo on October 6<sup>th</sup>, no questionnaire was collected. The event was mostly dedicated to the validation of project results and solve equipment issues. The external evaluator participated to the event and had the opportunity to interview participants. Results and considerations will be available in the next part of the report.

To conclude this section, it is important to underline as a plus the effort of the coordinating institution to manage and coordinate all the meetings and the workshops. Preliminary information before the events were regularly provided and the reporting system was effective with accurate minutes shared with all the participants, including decision taken and responsibilities assigned. On the contrary, information and comments provided in the questionnaires were not always satisfactory, resulting often quite repetitive and predictable. Communication within the consortium was constant and, despite the difficulty of the decisions to be taken, sufficiently clear. Not always all the partners reacted suddenly to the decision taken or the request of the coordinating institution and this caused some organizational problems and misunderstandings.

## **2. Evaluation of the first part of Master programme**

The evaluation of the Master is based on a set of documents and tools in order to catch different views and perspectives. The evaluation is divided in two parts. The first is an analysis of the comments and considerations made by the students while the second is based on the assessments made by professors who took classes during the first year of the Master.

The main sources were the following: a) two documents called ILHAM - Master in SLM Evaluation Questionnaire for Students Report and for Teacher Report that were produced by the internal quality group of the Master, 2) student questionnaires on the mobility strand experience made in Sassari during the first part of Summer 2019; 3) interviews to the students and teachers collected during the final conferences.

## 2.1 The point of view of the students on the first year of the Master

### 2.1.1 The first year held in Cairo and Alexandria

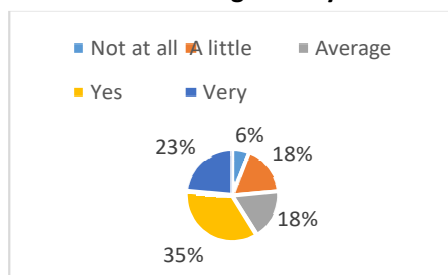
Students were the main protagonists of the Master. They started in 20, 5 per each Egyptian partner university. 10 of them attended classes in Cairo, 10 in Alexandria on a common curriculum. At the end of the first semester, 1 student from Cairo University decided not to continue. Students had the opportunity to meet occasionally and to spend the entire mobility period in Sassari together. As it was possible to realize from the interviews, all of them were already working when they started the Master. Some of them were junior assistants at the university, some were working in the private market or in the own family firm or farm.

The main source to collect their opinions was certainly the survey produced by the internal quality group. It was based on questionnaires that were filled online by the students at the end of the first year of the Master. The questionnaire contained 22 items, including closed and open questions for detailing the rating, aimed at verifying the satisfaction of participants concerning mainly organization, development of the course and achievements. The sections were three: a) logistical organization of the training; b) students' degree of satisfaction, comments and suggestions; c) overall evaluation of the Masters.

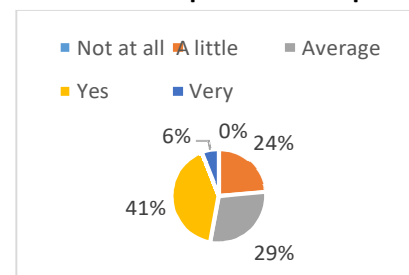
The analysis of the questionnaires was already made by the internal quality group there is no sense to repeat the exercise. The experience was generally evaluated average, with some elements that were more positive and other negative. According to this framework, we add a further contribution to the analysis, identifying which aspects that emerged for the survey were more coherent or critical in relation to 1) the preparatory phase of the Master, 2) the recommendations made by the external evaluator in the first interim report. In doing that, we also take into consideration the interviews made to the students during the final conference.

Two elements should be highlighted: one positive and one more critical. On the positive side, it was always underlined the SLM Master could have been very challenging for Egyptian institutions as it represented a very innovative way to organize teaching activities and combine expertise from different institutions and disciplines. In the first interim report, the external evaluator recommended to monitor the role of each university in the organisation/structure/jointness of the Master, the contribution and the preparation of local Professors and the aspects that must be shared among the four Egyptian institutions. On this regard, students expressed positive evaluations both in the survey and during the interviews. In particular, the following two graphics shows that Professors were generally available despite they belonged to different institutions and the topics had been explained clearly, to confirm that the preparation made in the first two years of the project was effective.

**Were the teachers generally available?**



**Did the teacher explained the topics clearly?**



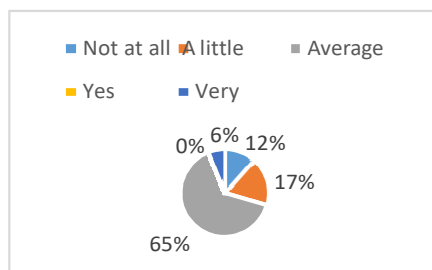
In addition, in the open questions students argued that the exchange of teachers between universities has been beneficial and, during the interviews, they appreciated the variety of contributors and to work together with students that were coming from different Egyptian realities. Some of the students underlined that the schedule of the classes was not always efficient due to the need to concentrate many hours of the same professor in few days, but it was not considered a huge concern.



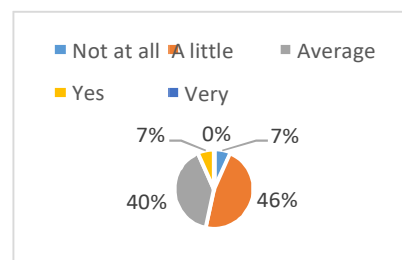
Therefore the first year of the Master showed that the quality of the contents was good and that it was affordable to manage a joint Master based on two didactic hubs, one in Cairo and one in Alexandria. Of course, this aspect should be further discussed and tuned in the next editions but the pilot initiative confirmed that it was worth to insist on developing a joint didactic initiative.

Moving to more negative aspects, there is an issue that must be addressed with more attention in the next editions of the programme. In the interim report, the external evaluator stressed the importance of the investment made in training on teaching methods. It was written “Professors appointed to teach in the Master should combine theoretical and practical learning approaches and should try to address Innovative learning methods (not necessarily only online learning)”. The results from the survey of the students were not satisfactory on this term:

#### Are you satisfied with the quality of teaching?



#### Are you satisfied with the teaching methods?



After 4 teacher mobility strands and 1 methodological workshop carried out during the first part of the Master, we would expect more satisfaction from the students regarding teaching methodological issues. Failing on this aspect is relevant if we consider that all students were somehow adults with already work experience. Under these circumstances, a Master programme should dedicate more time for discussion, reciprocal understanding, active learning and involvement of the students. This point has been already raised by the internal quality group in the conclusion of their report and it should be definitely emphasized for the next editions.

Considering other pro and cons that emerged from the interviews and the survey, we want to mention also the following:

#### Pros:

- Classes held in English
- Opportunity to carry out an internship experience abroad
- Sustainability as key concept that characterizes all the subjects

#### Cons:

- Overlapping among disciplines and professors
- heterogeneity of student's background did not allow to deepen topics
- scarce level of equipment

During the interviews, students remarked very clearly the importance to attend classes taught in English in order to be ready for an international exposure as well as the importance of the mobility abroad. Despite SLM Master was a study programme focused on Egypt with local professors, students insisted to highlight the international component and the need to increase external contributions. This is definitely a positive aspect and a genuine concern but it must be handled properly in order to avoid that the Master can be seen only as a bridge to move away from Egypt.

Regarding cons, students pointed out that their different background (for example those that were already working and those with a more academic approach, those with a degree in sciences and those in social sciences) created some problems in the alignment of the level of the class. Some lectures were too simple for a group and

vice versa. This risk was already anticipated and acknowledged by the teachers during the second mobility strand in Sassari and it is quite common at Master degree level, especially when programmes are based on interdisciplinarity. Solutions must be discussed within the Master scientific Committee, but the right mix between adopting an holistic approach and offering specialized knowledge must be found.

### **2.1.2 The internship experience in Sassari**

The internship experience in Sassari was one of the key activity organized during the first year of the Master. It was announced to the students since the enrollment rising many expectations. During the first term in Egypt, students were given the opportunity to get in contact with staff of University of Sassari in order to identify internship opportunities. A very exhaustive form was fulfilled, describing for each student the type of internship, the supervisor of the host institution, the detailed programme, skills and competences to be acquired, the monitoring and evaluation plan. The only possible limitation was that all internships would have been conducted at the university with a predominance of academic components and the acquisition and application of new techniques, procedures and analytical tools. This approach was definitely coherent with the overall structure of the Master but in some cases students perceived the experience more as a final dissertation period than an internship.

At the end of the internships, 16 students fulfilled the questionnaire that was ad hoc prepared to monitor the experience. The questionnaire was divided in the following main sections: 1) motivation and overall satisfaction, 2) quality of studies, 3) academic recognition, 4) language skills, 5) personal development, 6) future prospects, 6) accommodation and logistics.

The majority of the items were closed questions where participants were required to rank their judgments according to predefined scales or to pick up some aspects within a list. Results that come up from the analysis are significant even if the answers of the students were quite repetitive especially in some sections. For example, there were some lists where students pick up all items without really differentiating or where their overall comparative judgment was the same.

Anyway, as far as the section “motivation and overall satisfaction” concerns, a first interesting evidence appears. Half of the students did not really choose any significant motivation, picking up all items of the list. Who differentiated has pointed out that the most relevant motivations were associated to “enhance his/her future employability” both in the home country or in Europe, while on the contrary “live abroad and meet new people” was not considered so relevant. These opinions were partially contradicted during the interviews where students admitted they liked to be assimilated in local culture, but still at least some participants appeared less interested to be integrated and know new people, rather be very focus on obtaining opportunities for future work prospects. Anyway, all students, with the exception of four, declared to be very satisfied by the experience, all would recommend it to a friend and all would do it again with the exception of four that were undecided.

As far as “quality of studies” concerns, students were generally rather or very satisfied of the quality of learning and teaching at the receiving institution. The item that received a lower score was the degree of learning support received. We know from the organizer institution that it depended on the type of internship as it was not always possible to satisfy all the needs of the participants. They all pointed out, with the exception of one, that they gained knowledge and skills that were not available in the sending institution and this is should be considered a relevant result. The complementarity and the differentiation of experiences and opportunities should be a key element of each Erasmus plus mobility and ILHAM succeeded on that.

As far as the “academic recognition” concerns, all students filled the same points and they all received full recognition of credits. The internship experience aboard was fully integrated in the structure of the SLM Master programme and 12 ECTS credits were assigned. So there was not really a recognition issue as far as the agreement was predefined: all students took part to the mobility in Sassari, performed their duties and acquired the credits



according to the student plan of the Master.

In the section “language skills” all students filled the same again. The language of the internship was English. They all said that they improved their skills during their stay abroad and that they took advantage of linguistic support in learning English from the hosting university. University of Sassari, in fact, organized additional English courses during the internship period and this was particularly appreciated by the students.

The section “personal development” is the one where finally students differentiated more their answers. Students were asked to identify what they learned more thanks to the stay abroad with Erasmus+. A list of items was provided and they had to rank each item from 5 to 1, where 5 was given when they strongly agreed and 1 when they fully disagreed. Generally, the answers were positive with some distinctions as it is shown in the following table.

Item	Average score
think logically and draw conclusions (analytical thinking)	4,25
find solutions in difficult or challenging contexts (problem-solving skills)	4,31
plan and carry out my learning independently	4,69
use the internet, social media and PCs, e.g. for my studies, work and personal activities	3,81
develop an idea and put it into practice	4,50
see the value of different cultures	4,88
cooperate in teams	4,44
plan and organise tasks and activities	4,56
express myself creatively	4,63

“See the value of different culture” was the issue students learned more. This is coherent with the results of the interviews made by the external evaluator during the final meeting and reflects the fact that for many participants this was the first opportunity to travel abroad. Very positive was also “plan and carry out my learning independently” and “express myself creatively”, while “cooperate in teams” was considered strongly for some but much less for others. Definitely, the experience was not relevant for “improving internet and social media skills” but this was not the focus of the internship, while students did not insist too much in “think logically and draw conclusions”, again depending on the type of internships they performed.

Then, students were asked to identify how they position themselves after the mobility in respect to a set of dimensions, like being more confident with themselves but also more interested on some topics. Actually, answers were repetitive with most of the participants that put the highest points to all issues with the exception of aspects like political life, democratization processes and engagement in the society. Once more, students appeared very much focus on their personal development and acquisition of skills relevant for the labor market or for going abroad, more than to an overall personal growth.

Moving to “future prospect”, all students said that they would have been back home after the internship but this was obvious as it was part of the Master programme. Most of them pointed out that they would appreciate a further opportunity to move again to University of Sassari and they argued to feel being more ready to start again an experience abroad. This was confirmed also by the interviews made during the final meeting. The impression was to face a group of students with very limited experience abroad as the internship was the first time, but anxious to replicate it soon.

Finally, the questionnaire addressed “logistics and accommodation” issues. Answers were not particularly significant. The vast majority of the students was very satisfied of the support received by the staff of the University of Sassari, even in solving personal problems. They said not to have had too much chance to integrate with local students but it should mention that the internship was made during the Summer period and was not based on following classes. Some students spent most of their time in labs of University of Sassari and they had definitely the opportunity to work together local students and junior researchers. But it was not the same for all and depended a lot on the type of internship. In terms of accommodation and services, students were usually very satisfied with the only remarks on the cafeteria and the use of internet. But the accommodation was good and they definitely approached their stay in Sassari.

To conclude, the overall evaluation of the mobility strand was very encouraging and, generally speaking, was perceived more positively by the students than the period of lectures made in Cairo and Alexandria. Of course expectations were very high even because it was the first experience abroad for the vast majority of the participants. Not all the participants met all their expectations but it was mainly due on the type of internships and the difficulty to match the interest and the competences of the students with the availability of the Professors and the needs of the Departments of University of Sassari. Then, some students approached the internship more as a period to develop their final dissertation that was not the case and this generated some misunderstanding. Students said that they learn a lot on the values of different cultures but, at the same time, they were more concentrated on their personal development than social aspects and engagement. But this again was quite obvious in the overall framework of the Master and considering that all students were already working before starting the Master and the employability was and is their first concern.

## **2.2 The point of view of the academic staff on the first year of the Master**

Academic staff was the other key actor of the Master. Their role in the new SLM programme was particularly relevant for at least four reasons: a) teachers were belonging to 4 different Egyptian universities and this was quite unusual; b) teachers co-designed the syllabus of each single module of the Master, bringing different contributions and experiences; c) teachers moved from one institution to the other to teach; d) all teachers had the opportunity to know each other before the beginning of the Master thanks to an intense programme of “train the trainers” activities, including mobility strand in Europe and methodological workshops. All these experiences were expected to facilitate the interaction and to strengthen teacher capacities both from a disciplinary and teaching method perspective.

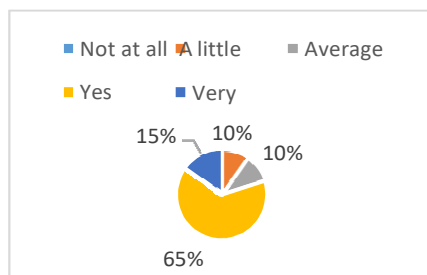
In order to evaluate the Master from the point of views of the professors, we count on two main sources. The first one is a survey produced by the internal quality group while the second are the interviews that the external evaluator conducted during the final conference held in Cairo on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2019. The approach will be similar to the one adopted with the students. We will start analyzing the results of the survey, trying to underline the most relevant issues also in relation to the overall framework of the Master. Then, we will add further considerations taking inspirations also from the interviews and the direct opinions of the participants.

The survey was carried out in May 2019 at the end of the first year of the Master. 35 teachers were approached but only 20 filled the online questionnaire. The last one was divided in three main sections: 1) logistical organization of the courses; 2) professors degree of satisfaction, comments and suggestions; 3) overall evaluation of the Masters.

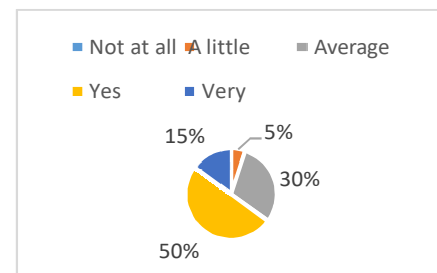
Similarly to the survey on student opinions, the analysis was already carried out by the internal quality group so it does not make sense to repeat the exercise. The experience was generally considered satisfactory, with overall evaluations that were higher than those made by the students. Starting from this framework, we try to offer a further contribution analyzing the comments of the professors from a specific angle. In particular, we are interested to assess the consistency of the Master within the overall structure and objectives of the ILHAM project. So, was the implementation of the first year of the Master coherent with the preparatory phase? Did professors exploit the competences acquired during the training? Was the cooperation among Egyptian universities effective or was just a division of roles within the same Master programme?

On this regard, we highlight one positive aspect and one more negative. The survey shows that teachers reacted very positively to the request to cooperate with colleagues of other universities. These opinions changed during the project and it was confirmed also by the interviews. At the beginning, teachers were more skeptical to cooperate but their impressions and motivations changed thanks to the joint participation to various project activities and events.

**Are you satisfied with the organization of the Teaching course among the 4 Universities?**



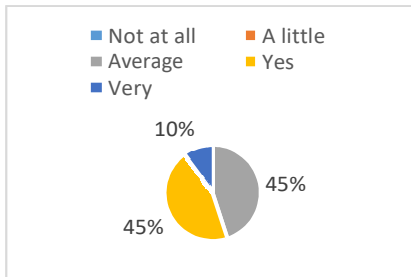
**The collaboration of teachers coming from different Univ has been a value added for the quality of the course?**



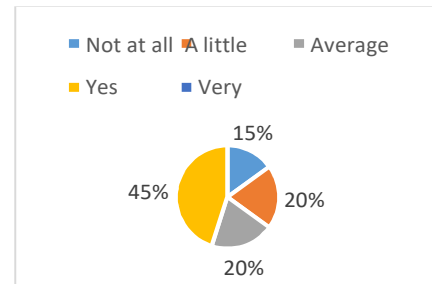
Teachers recognized the value added of the collaboration. It was possible to share the own knowledge and to offer different points of view and approach of the same topic to the students. Then it was possible to teach in a different Egyptian institution, approaching another environment and context. At the beginning the co-design was very top down with the coordinator of the module who took the main decisions and assemble the different contributions. But then the process became more participatory. Harmonizing different methods and specialization was challenging but motivating. Some aspects worked better, other were more complicated. For example, a professor pointed out that it was difficult to organize exams jointly. But, generally speaking, feedbacks were positive and the Master Scientific Committee should seriously reflect to which extent continue and valorize this experience.

The survey showed also some critical aspects that were highlighted by the professors. They mainly referred to logistics and organization.

### Satisfaction for the logistics of the course?



### Satisfaction for the equipment?



Professors pointed out that the lecture timetable was not always balanced. Some classes were extremely concentrated and this was due inevitably to teacher mobility and the need to stay in the partner institution a limited number of days. Then, professors insisted that the equipment was not always adequate to the level of the Master and that some exercises and practices were not carried out due to lack of specific equipment in the laboratories. Then, the distribution of material was sometimes problematic with students that received the relevant documents at the end of the course and not at the beginning.

In addition to logistics, there are two other issues that the Scientific committee of the Master should take into consideration that are somehow interrelated.

1) Preparation of the students. Only 50% of the professors declared that entry student preparation was adequate. The rest said that it was average or low. In the interviews some professors underlined that the level of the class was not uniform as backgrounds were different and this has not allowed to deepen contents as they would have liked. As it was already pointed out in other sections of the report, the Master governance should put more attention to identify clearly the expected target students and to balance the needs of specialization with the request of multidiplinarity. One suggestion could be to carry out the selection process together, settling a joint committee among the four universities while in the first edition each university select each own students.

2) Balancing learning activities. Professors confirmed that the majority of the classes were frontal lectures, with limited use of other teaching methods and approaches. The online platform and the online contents developed during ILHAM project were scarcely valorized by Egyptian teachers, despite various workshop and training session during the first part of the project. Other professors said they would have liked to organize more field trips and activities based on case studies. All agreed that the internship in Sassari was useful and appropriate. The Scientific Committee should monitor these aspects and provide guidelines. Varying teaching methods may be useful not only to stimulate Master students but also to simplify the management of the class. Differences in student background can become a value added if they are used by professors to propose work group and ask to solve problems from different perspectives. This is also related to the first point and it is an issue that the Scientific Committee of the Master cannot elude.

Generally speaking, the opinions of the professors partially confirmed the views of the students but the overall consideration of the Master was more positive. They appreciated the opportunity of mobility within the 4 Egyptian universities and the chance to cooperate with other local but also European professors. The Master achieved its goals but the overall structure and organization requires adjustments already starting from the second year.

### 3. Final remarks and recommendation

The second period of ILHAM project may be clearly divided in two phases. The first part was more a continuation of the first period with additional activities to design the SLM Master and all formal procedures to approve the programme at national level (bylaw). The second part was the real value added of the project: Egyptian universities carried out a pilot edition of the Master, trying to put in practice all the knowledge and skills acquired and to respect the decision taken in the first part.

The main elements that emerged during the second part of the project and that must be emphasized are the following:

- Egyptian partners finally succeeded to design, activate and implement a joint Master involving 4 local universities. It was a challenge from many aspects: the approval of the Bylaw, the co-design of the Master structure and the modules, the involvement of professors from different fields. The project was very ambitious but the final result is satisfactory. In particular, it is the first joint degree approved between Egyptian universities and it can become a model for similar initiatives in the future
- All partners contributed to the project outcomes. Alexandria and Cairo were the two host universities of the Master but all Egyptian institutions were involved with students and professors. European partners continued to participate especially in the first part, bringing their experience and contributing to feed the online platform.
- The Coordination of University of Sassari was sound and effective. Meetings took place regularly and were well documented despite difficulties in organizing activities in Egypt and uncertainty due to bylaw. We have also to mention the active role played by Unimed who made all the possible effort to facilitate the purchase and delivery of the equipment in Egypt. The last one was extremely complicated due to bureaucratic restriction and delays and the result is only partially achieved.
- All participants emphasized the important role played by mobility in the Master. Students remarked the opportunity to carry out the internship in Sassari, while professors assessed positively the possibility to teach in another Egyptian institution.
- Moodle platform, didactic games and online contents were only marginally exploited during the Master, despite the effort to design and prepare them made during the first phase of ILHAM project.

As far as final recommendations concern, the external evaluator has underlined the following issues to be taken into consideration for the sustainability of ILHAM Master programme:

- The first edition of the Master was satisfactory but a further effort is required to improve the programme. In particular, participant universities have to tune the selection process, to insist on innovative teaching methods and balance specialization and multidisciplinary needs. Both student and professor surveys and interviews underlined these aspects but there are possible solutions. In particular, the different background of the participants that was perceived as a constrain should become an opportunity to tackle the complexity of sustainable land management.
- Also alignment modules could be proposed at the beginning of the Master in order to harmonize, at least partially, the class and make didactic more effective for all participants
- The Master should maintain stable contacts with Egyptian and international stakeholders from the labour market. This aspect was very much emphasized in the need analysis at the beginning of the project. More field trips, seminars and workshops with professionals should be included in the Master structure. Also final thesis in companies should be encouraged.

- The Scientific committee of the Master should encourage professors to use more case studies and group work in their classes. In a Master tailored for students that are already working, a combination of theory and practice is essential.
- The Scientific committee of the Master should evaluate the possibility to integrate more European visiting professors in the programme, also for short blocks of lectures. It is a way to favor internationalisation at home without moving students. Also online webinars may be used for the same purpose.
- Solutions to sustain internship experiences in Europe should be found for the next editions of the Master as all participants considered it a plus. The Erasmus plus KA107 provides some opportunities and the now 2021-2027 framework programme should maintain these actions. Consortium members, including European partners, should encourage the adoption of proper measures, involving also other European stakeholders that are not necessarily universities.
- Both students and professors appreciated to use English as vehicular language but not always the proficiency was adequate. We recommend to organize transversal English modules during the Master in order to make participants more ready to international mobility and any international exposure.
- Egyptian universities should consider the opportunity to complete the SLM Master with PhD and bachelor programs that adopt the same approach. The SLM Master opens a new way to combine agricultural and soil sciences with economics and statistics. This approach can become even stronger if it is carried out at first, second and third cycle university level.
- Egyptian universities should not underestimate administration and services. The Master needs to improve class organization and to provide more services to the students in order to maximize the learning experience.
- Egyptian universities should consider the possibility to promote the Master at international level, starting from students of the neighboring countries or Sub Sahara Africa. The SLM approach fits perfectly with learning and competence needs of the entire region and the Master could become a reference point for a wider academic community.

To conclude, the external evaluator wants to thank all the participants of ILHAM project for the great effort and for the availability to share their opinions and suggestions. SLM Master has a great potential that must be further exploited in the next years.