

HE Adam Kulach, Ambassador-Head of Delegation of the European Union to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar

First of all, I would like to thank all of those who have helped in the development and organization of this conference; because without their efforts this would not be possible. As you know the European Commission and the European Union have been from the beginning supporting not only emergence of inter-Arab connectivity between universities and educational establishment, but also supporting financially for twelve years now organizations and networks, like ASREN, and other regional organizations of the same type in other regions, because we truly believe that through development of the interconnectivity between us, we really lay foundations for the future cooperation.

Nowadays you cannot really imagine high quality higher education and research without this electronic infrastructure that enables universities not only to contact, but also to exchange the knowledge, and to be part of the International community of science.

The European Commission first priorities are the creation of jobs and growth, and this would not be possible without education and investing in the human potential. One of our biggest initiatives aimed at achieving that goal is the Horizon 2020 which is the program for innovational research open to all our partners globally. It will provide over seven years funding in the range of 80 billion euros, which is really a big potential to use.

The European Union has been from the beginning very active in supporting every single initiative which brings us closer and also in the higher education, for example, the EUMEDCONNECT project connection with the European network of universities and research establishment (GEANT), all this is really important because if we developed separately without this inter connection not only in higher education, we will not achieve the goal of the better future to our children.

Another initiative which is very important and the EU has been developing and continue to develop is Maria Sklodowska, a Poland scientist. Under this name the EU has been developing programs and activities to encourage exchanges between researchers, to encourage the development of the careers for professors, PhD holders and those who are working on their PhDs, mobility between research staff and professors, and we believe that this is really something that should be used more by our partners.

In the previous financial perspective, we count our budget in financial perspective of seven-year period, practically, no body from the GCC was participating in those activities, and we regret it, because it was open at that time, we hope that in the new financial perspective there will be more interest because it will be jointly beneficial to us. Now we have the first institution that showed interest in this program, King Abdulla University of Science and Technology, which has become part of the consortium working in geophysics, and this is a good example to all higher education institutions in the Middle East and the Sultanate of Oman that the cooperation with the European Union is possible but requires an initiative to look for potential partners to identify priorities and to identify those institutions on the European side who are leading and willing to cooperate with their Arab partners. Willingness and readiness on the European side of course exists but it also requires initiatives from the other side.

We hope also that apart from the cooperation between the European Union and the Arab world as a whole and the networks, we will also attract more interests in other part of the Arab world especially in the GCC region in jointly developing this initiative for the sake of a better future for us all.