

AlmaLaurea: the Internationalisation

IN BRIEF

AlmaLaurea was born from the idea and passion of a group of researchers at the University of Bologna, coordinated by Andrea Cammelli, Professor of Statistics and Director of the Consortium. In 1988, on the occasion of the University of Bologna IX Centenary Celebration and Signature of the University Magna Charta, promoted by the then Rector Roversi Monaco, today President of AlmaLaurea, the idea to set up the Consortium was launched. After a pilot project run in 1994 by the Statistical Observatory of the University of Bologna, AlmaLaurea was officially set up, with the launch of the database. As a demand/supply matching system, connecting graduates, universities and the business world, AlmaLaurea represents today 64 universities, almost 80% of the Italian graduates and a databank of about 2 million Curricula, gaining great expertise in cooperation projects. Since the launch of the international system AlmaLaurea.net in 2008 under **EAL-NET project**, several programs have been developed and run in different areas:

□ in the **Euro-Mediterranean area** AL model has been replicated in selected universities of **Morocco** (**GRINSA** project) and will be further extended to a larger number of Moroccan universities and to **Tunisia** (**ISLAH** project). The **World Bank**, the **World Bank-CMI** and the **Union for the Mediterranean** are strongly supporting project' development in Maghreb and its extending to Middle East and North Africa countries. AL also acts as knowledge partner in the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education & Research Area (**JISER-MED** project).

□ in **European and Neighbouring countries** cooperation is in place for the support of high quality in education (**QACEP** project); the implementation of the graduates' database (in **Armenia** under **HEN-GEAR** project); the development of its database in countries facing the Adriatic sea (**ADRIA-HUB**); the transferring of know how to initiative based on the AlmaLaurea model (in **Spain-Porta Laurea**); as knowledge partner in institutional initiatives and EU programs (in **Poland**-under 7th Framework Program).

□ in **Latin America** several initiatives are in place as in **Chile** (**EUROPAID-Alfa Programme**), **Argentina** and **Colombia** (**Observatorio Laboral para la Education**). AL is promoting the definition of common EU-Caribbean HE Area (**CaribErasmus** project).

□ in **African, Caribbean and Pacific Area** (**EDULINK** project) for the transferring of tools at support of local development projects.

Aims

The process of internationalisation is based on the commitment of *enforcing* provision of data and information to local governments for the governance of HE system and labour market; *enhancing* the linkages between HE, economy and society; *innovating* the HE system; *cooperating* in developing better conditions in labour markets and society. Among the **main goals** of the internationalisation process:

- diffusion of AlmaLaurea experiences and best practices in European and international context;
- cooperation for graduates database's planning in foreign countries according to local socio-economic environment and needs;
- promotion of international networks of bodies and institutions with similar competences on issues related to graduates' employability and education system performances monitoring.

Methodology

The applied methodology is based on the following principles:

- implementation of efficient activities for information and dissemination of AL model and of its international platform (www.almalaurea.it/en/);
- identification of areas and countries of interest and collaborations with European and international agencies and organizations.
- agreements with partners in selected countries on targeted actions based on national needs
- bidding of multilateral projects with European and extra-European funding

2. PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES *in details*

The ongoing internationalisation program has been developed and run in different countries and areas mainly through the participation in European grants. International cooperation has been established with **European and Neighbouring countries, Southern Mediterranean, Latin America and Asian countries.**

Following a brief description of the main activities carried out in the last years and of those still in progress:

2.1. Launch of the international system AlmaLaurea.net

The development of a pilot database under EAL-NET project has allowed the set up in 2008 of the **International edition of the AlmaLaurea database** (www.almalaurea.it/en/). Thanks to the complete delivering of all the services in English, a larger number of users is reachable: not only a simple translation of the contents but an international database query system that carefully takes into account the comprehensibility of the information (in English) independently from the origin of the user, generalizing and “delocalising” the system as much as possible. It gives to graduates in the database the opportunity of a larger and international diffusion of their CVs. The international website also contributes to surveys and research production and diffusion, fostering international cooperation and twinning with other research centres working in the same field.

EAL-NET Project - eTEN Programme- Development of an European graduate database prototype (activity closed)

Thanks to an European fund (eTEN program) a trans-national AlmaLaurea prototype (called EAL-NET) was set up. The prototype was implemented and tested with the contribution of the final users (companies, graduates and universities). This project was coordinated by AlmaLaurea consortium with the participation of the universities of Warsaw (Poland), Maastricht (Netherlands), Paris-East (France) and Budapest - ELTE (Hungary).

Some of the target achieved: the setting up of a standard curriculum format with “European” contents, orientation and organization; supply of multilingual services; construction of a database query system taking into account systems of education and classification of study titles; system test led by the final users (companies and European employers).

The EAL-NET dissemination activity has allowed the beginning of a great number of collaborations with UE countries, starting from the ones where the EAL-NET prototype was implemented (Netherlands, France, Poland and Hungary). In some of these countries, a support action was realised, accelerating the launch of an autonomous database systems with a potential national dimension.

2.2. Cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area

In the commitment to the objectives of creating a Euro-Mediterranean area of higher education and research, AlmaLaurea is cooperating with countries of the Mediterranean Basin for the diffusion of the integrated demand/supply matching model for the monitoring and assessment of HE practices and processes, taking into account the specificities of the local institutional and socio-economic environment.

Cooperation aims at:

- enhance the linkages between HE, economy and society;
- supply countries with the required tools for ensuring a better match between training and employment;
- improve internal and external efficiency of the HE system;
- develop a management tool of the HE system capable of providing reliable indicators for the assessment of the educational system also at supporting reform implementation in the area;
- promote employability and job mobility of graduates within the region, across the two shores of the Mediterranean and beyond.

In the Southern Shore of the Mediterranean, cooperation is in place under two main projects funded by the European commission: the project **GRINSA**, with the AlmaLaurea model been already replicated in selected universities of **Morocco** and the Project **ISLAH** envisaging further system enlargement to Moroccan higher education institutions and to **Tunisia**. World Bank experts working in the field of education in **West Bank and Gaza** have expressed strong interest in implementing AlmaLaurea model in the **MENA** region and contacts have been already established in different countries as Jordan.

GrInSA project-Graduate's Insertion and Assessment as tools for Moroccan Higher Education Governance and Management (TEMPUS Programme)

Since 2007 AlmaLaurea has set up a profitable collaboration with the Moroccan academic world, interested in build its own graduates system database with a twofold aim: to produce statistical evidence for the governmental bodies and to build an innovative instrument for the promotion of graduates' employment.

At the scope, AlmaLaurea was selected as an operational model. A consortium leaded by AlmaLaurea and composed by 4 Moroccan universities (Marrakech, Meknes, Oujda and El Jadida) and 3 European universities (Turin, Toulon, Tarragona) has submitted in the frame of Tempus IV Program the project called GRINSA. The project, of 3 years duration, started on 15 January 2010.

The Moroccan universities are appointed to develop a pilot database to be extended to the entire academic bodies in the country, also thanks to the support of the Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education and the local National Agency for Evaluation that have joined the action, because in quest of comprehensive, efficient, update, well timed documentary bases for policy analyses.

ISLAH project-Instrument at Support of Labour market and Higher Education (TEMPUS Programme)

The 3 years Project ISLAH, starting at the end of 2012 under Tempus IV 5th call (structural measures), will enlarge and further develop the Graduates Monitoring System called Maroc-Laurea (previously developed under project Tempus GRINSA) at benefit of a larger number of Moroccan Universities (from 4 to 7 with Fes, Tetouan-Tangier and Agadir as new entrants) and of 4 Tunisian universities (Monastir, Jendouba, Gafsa and Gabes). The Consortium leaded by AlmaLaurea also see the participation of the Moroccan and Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education, the Tunisian Ministry of Labour and the Moroccan National Evaluation Agency together with European partners (CEREQ, AQU, University Rovira i Virgili of Tarragona, University Aix-Marseille).

The AlmaLaurea Project ISLAH will also set up a network of observatories following an "hub and spoke" model: 2 National Observatories (hubs) developing, harmonizing and providing common monitoring tools for fostering graduates' employability by tracing their characteristics and "career path" according to labour market needs; Local Observatories (spokes) acting in full autonomy for the provision of guidance and placement services, for the promotion of graduates' employability by enforcing university-enterprises partnerships.

AlmaLaurea also acts as *knowledge partner* in the **development of the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education & Research Area** through its involvement in several projects and funding programs making available its specific competences. Among the most relevant projects:

JISER-MED project - Joint Innovation & Synergies in Education and Research in Mediterranean Region

JISER-MED is a project co-financed by the European Commission within the framework of the ERASMUS MUNDUS Programme. Its main objective is the consolidation of the relations between the EU and the Mediterranean Area in the field of Higher Education.

As the project title indicates, JISER-MED wishes to act as a bridge of bridges between Europe and its Mediterranean neighbors by contributing to the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education & Research Area in line with existing policy lines and declarations (Cairo 2007-Slovenia 2010) and by taking advantage of the existing forums and networks created through EC Projects and Programmes promoted by the EUROMED Ministerial Summits, Forums and Policy dialogues.

The main objective of JISER-MED is to build on existing networks, projects and programmes created by the European Commission and to contribute to the consolidation of the initiatives generated within the EUROMED Common Area of Higher Education & Research.

2.3. Cooperation with European and Neighbouring countries

AlmaLaurea also acts as *knowledge partner* in the provision of tools for *evaluation* and *quality assurance* in education. Among the most relevant project:

QACEP project - Quality Assurance for Universities' Continuing Education Programmes (Lifelong Learning Programme)

To respond suitably to the request of high quality in higher education system, instruments able to evaluate the continuing education cannot be avoided. There is a need to share, identify and produce in a creative way and with a trans-national perspective specific instruments to secure a high quality for this typology of education.

The QACEP project is funded by the Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) from education and culture DG of the European Commission and coordinated by the University of Bologna, started in November 2009 and ended in September 2011.

Aim of the project is to begin a discussion on the definition and use of flexible methodologies to assure a high quality in the continuing education course offered by the universities, sharing good practice already used by the partners and maintaining as a reference the ENQA standards.

The promoters of the project, Bologna University and AlmaLaurea, have clearly understood the importance of developing of a survey methodology and the evaluation of the postgraduate (continuing education) training that enrich significantly the Universities' educational offers.

Cooperation with European and Neighbouring countries sees AlmaLaurea involved in several initiatives and funding programs, for making available its core competences such as labour markets and HE systems analysis and monitoring, quantitative research on social studies and education studies, actions at support of employment, technical solutions for DBs implementation and management, involvement in scientific research. In **Armenia** AlmaLaurea is supporting local Universities in identifying instruments and methodologies to improve the effectiveness of education system through the implementation, at local level, of a graduates database system that follows the model developed in Italy.

HEN-GEAR project-Higher Education Network for Human Capital Assessment and Graduate Employability in Armenia (TEMPUS Programme)

The 3 years Project HEN-GEAR, starting at the end of 2012 under Tempus IV 5th call (structural measures), led by AlmaLaurea, will support Armenian Universities in identifying instruments and methodologies to improve the effectiveness of education system through the implementation, at local level, of a graduates database system that follows the model developed by AlmaLaurea in Italy. The complete, periodic, well-timed and updated documentation provided will be made available to Universities and Government as a tool for quality assurance and policy making, at support of employability and collaboration between education and the business sector. The Project sees the participation and support of the Armenian Ministry of Labour and of the Armenian Ministry of Higher Education, the involvement of eight Armenian Universities (Yerevan State University, State Engineering University of Armenia, Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction, Armenian State Agrarian University, Armenian State University of Economics, Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts, Gavar State University, Gyumri State Pedagogic University), of the Armenian Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen, of the National Student's Association, of the Armenian Quality Agency together with EU partners (Universidade do Minho, Universidad de Huelva and Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria- the Spanish ones also developing the Consortium **Porta Láurea**, following AlmaLaurea model).

AlmaLaurea initiatives in European and Neighbouring countries

In the countries facing the **Adriatic sea** (Slovenia, Croazia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro), AlmaLaurea is developing its database system to help matching between demand for and supply of labour and supporting local SMEs in finding human capital according to their needs (**ADRIA-HUB-Adriatic IPA programme**).

In **Spain** the Universities of Huelva and Gran Canaria are developing a cooperation network with other 4 Spanish universities and the Spanish Ministry of Labour: a feasibility study on the development of an Interuniversity Consortium, named **Porta Láurea** (clearly inspired to the Italian good practice), managing information system for fostering graduates job insertion monitoring tools and graduates job demand/supply web services.

Since 2003 AlmaLaurea has developed good relationship in **Poland**, starting with the involvement of the University of Warsaw in the EAL-NET project, and later invited to take part to institutional initiatives held in the country: in 2010 as guests of the *Warsaw School of Economics for the Confrontations Europe "think tank" meeting "Dialogue et partenariats pour le développement des industries et des services sur le grand marché européen"*. In 2011 in occasion of the Polish UE Presidency semester as knowledge partner in two governmental relevant conferences: the *Krakow Meeting of Directors General for Higher Education; Warsaw conference "Effective policies for the development of competences of youth in Europe"*. Currently is under evaluation in 7th Framework Program the research project **PISEMAG**: "Policies to improve the sustainability of employment of marginalized groups", coordinated by the former Polish Minister, Professor Jerzy Hausner of the University of Krakow who sees AlmaLaurea as Italian research partner.

2.4. Cooperation projects in the African, Caribbean and Pacific area

A significant number of initiatives have been launched in the recent past in partnership with the universities of **Kenya, Ghana, Cameroon, Dominican Rep, Haiti, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique and RDC**. AlmaLaurea was involved in a EDULINK project coordinated by the CINECA consortium for the strengthen of the research in Epidemiologic sector (Medishare project) in association with the Nairobi University (Kenya), Muhimbili University in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) and Makerere University in Kampala (Uganda).

2.5. Cooperation with Latin American Countries

In 2012 The Central University of **Chile** invited the AlmaLaurea Director to present the Italian system and its benefits. On that occasion a cooperation agreement has been signed. AlmaLaurea has been involved in the activities of **EmploiALCUE** network, managed by Central University of Chile (a sub-unit of the wider VertebrALCUE Project, coordinated by the University of Bologna and financed under EUROPAID's ALFA programme)

In the past years AlmaLaurea has participated in the **GRADUA2** project (ALFA Program framework) and coordinated by the Monterrey Technological Institute (Mexico) together with the Columbus - Unesco Institute in Paris. The aim is to spread the use of instruments able to set up a better link between the University and the Labour market with the application of quality evaluation for education.

AlmaLaurea has also collaborated with the **Argentinean** (a feasibility study on graduate DB system development was realized) and the **Colombian Higher Education Ministries**. In Colombia AlmaLaurea contributed to the development of the local Ministry's employability observatory (**Observatorio Laboral para la Educación**) also participating to the conference "Seminario Internacional sobre Pertinencia de la Educación: La Educación para la Competitividad", at the Externado University in Bogota.

AlmaLaurea is involved in the front line academic cooperation with some **ACP Area's Universities**. An important **UE funded project** is ongoing with the contribution of Almalaurea:

CaribErasmus Project - Caribbean opening to Erasmus Mundus (Erasmus-Mundus programme)

The CaribErasmus project aims to foster the attractiveness of European higher education institutions towards Caribbean partner universities, students and researchers in a collaborative perspective, that is not through one-way promotion activities but rather through partnership building (the slogan of CariMundus is "promote and improve by sharing").

The project is built on the successful experiences of the VALUE (2007-2008) and ACCESS (2009-2010) projects, two Erasmus Mundus Promotional Actions focused respectively on Latin America and on South East Asia. The project has carried out an extensive survey among Caribbean students and researchers on the perception they have about EU higher education together with a policy survey involving key higher education decision makers to advance towards the definition of a common EU-Caribbean higher education area. The Survey component has been entirely designed and managed by AlmaLaurea.

The project involves also key European HE networks (MENON and EURASHE), a professional web promotion institution (Mastersportal) and three key players with EC projects experience from the Caribbean (the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network, the Universidad Iberoamericana from Dominican Republic, the Centro Coordinador para la Formación y Desarrollo del Capital Humano from Cuba).

3. Participation in networks and research groups

AlmaLaurea has strengthened collaborations with European networks in sectors close to its field of expertise.

AlmaLaurea Networks and Research Groups

The INGRADNET network is coordinated by the University of Kassel and working in the field of tracking studies harmonization initiative at European level; the EUNIS network (European University Information System), that in 2011 awarded AlmaLaurea with the prestigious EUNIS (European University Information System) Elite Award for excellence in implementing Information Systems for Higher Education.

AlmaLaurea has also established tight cooperation with National and regional institutions developing similar graduates tracking surveys like CEREQ, the most important French observatory on employment and qualifications, producing statistics, research activity and providing support for policy implementation and with AQU (Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency) involved in the assessment, accreditation and certification of quality in the sphere of the universities and HE centers of Catalunya and INCHER (University of Kassel), carrying out the most extensive German Graduates tracking survey.

AlmaLaurea also took part to the research group REFLEX (Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society New Demands on Higher Education in Europe) in the frame of the 6th Framework Programme, Graduates Job Conditions survey (5 years on from graduation) was realized in 10 countries.