

VLIR-UOS Community Talk Morocco

Entrepreneurship as a driver for change within Higher Education in Morocco

Date : February 23rd, 2022 @ 11 am

In a challenging economic context, promoting private investment and stimulating entrepreneurship are becoming essential to address the major unemployment issues, especially among youth. It is therefore crucial to foster synergies between the various supporting entities, to create, improve, nurture and evolve a geographically clustered ecosystem that is conducive to successful entrepreneurship. This will contribute to the development and emergence of more businesses, and to the dynamization of the regional economy and entrepreneurship.

A circular note from the Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education was sent in 2019 to the University Presidents to initiate the establishment of the National Status of the Student-Entrepreneur (SNEE). The SNEE will be a facilitating tool for students to build relationships with the various stakeholders in the business world (bankers, suppliers, customers, etc.) while embedding an entrepreneurial project in the training curriculum.

Accordingly, and to support this endeavor, we were able to initiate, through the institutional university cooperation program at Moulay Ismail University of Meknes, with the support of VLIR-UOS and the Flemish universities of Belgium, an entrepreneurial dynamic among students, young researchers and professor-researchers through a number of coordinated initiatives :

- The implementation of a structuring tool for supporting students-entrepreneurs via workshops and co-working spaces, including the CAPE (Center of Assistance to the Promotion of the Student Employment), in partnership with the national and regional socio-economic actors, the APEFE (Min Ajliki Program), the ANAPEC and INJAZ Al Maghreb.
- Creation of an Entrepreneurial and Employment platform, gathering offices and contact points of several programs and actors, including INJAZ AL MAGHREB, Min Ajliki, Youth Employment Program (Enabel-APEFE), CREPP Project of ARES, Sustainable Territorial Development Project supported by the IUC program of VLIR-UOS, and the University Agency of ANAPEC.

This Community talk will shed the light on these initiatives and will present the strategy framework we developed and which provides structure and guidance for students, start-ups and cooperatives, that sell innovation and growth opportunities through ecosystem collaborations. We will also give a brief about the initiative we are starting toward developing a collaborative online platform for Entrepreneurship in Africa (ENTRAFRICA). To make the content more engaging and add practical insights, the CT-Talk Morocco will include testimonials from people with different backgrounds, but all have one thing in common – insightful thoughts on entrepreneurship.

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Agenda

11:00 – 11:10: Entrepreneurial framework within the IUC Program : Opportunities and way forward

Jean Michel RIGO, Hasselt University – Belgium

The presentation aims to answer the questions on how student entrepreneurship can enhance academic performance and reduce the gaps between training programs and the market needs. It will also present key actions planned for the second phase of the IUC program at UMI for a better impact and outreach to the community.

11:10 – 11:20 : Entrepreneurial platform : from individual to Ecosystem journey and network effects

Samir EL JAAFARI, Moulay Ismail University, Morocco

The presentation will highlight the different local initiatives by different actors and how a strategy around them allows for a better coordination and impact of the actions and the move from an (ego)system to the creation of a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem at territorial level. Lessons learned are being shared with some African partners (in Angola, Benin, Madagascar and Rwanda) with the objective of initiating a digital entrepreneurial platform in Africa to unlock networking effects.

11:20-11:45 Entrepreneurial support and education for students and local cooperatives as a driver of sustainability : How to leverage communities

Testimonials :

- Els HUYSMAN, Finance Professional, VITO – Belgium
- Virginie BITO, Flemish coordinator of the project on Herbal medicines, Hasselt University
- Imane ARBANE, ITP VLIR-UOS Fellow, Master BASE, Moulay Ismail University of Meknes

The ITP “A Circular Coaching Program Bridging the Sustainability Needs of Entrepreneurs” at UHasselt, funded by VLIR-UOS, offers a training and coaching program to starting entrepreneurs from the South in an international environment where interaction with Belgian entrepreneurs and coaches with diverse backgrounds will ensure the exchange of knowledge and experience in different directions. 1 coach and 6 students from Moulay Ismail University followed the training.

The IUC program has helped students and many cooperatives by improving their technical knowledge and enhancing their financial and marketing skills. Thanks to these local initiatives, some cooperatives were able to reach the international market and be awarded international prizes.

Who are our speakers?



Jean Michel RIGO, teaches, among other, general physiology and neurosciences to (bio)medical students at Hasselt University. He has developed expertise in self-learning methods, e-learning and virtual labs, as well as in evaluation of learning and of teaching. From 2012 to 2016, he was vice-rector of Education and of Internationalization and from 2016 to 2020 vice-rector of Research and of Internationalization at Hasselt University. Since 2007, he has also been actively involved in university development cooperation projects (RD Congo, Vietnam and Morocco).

Samir EL JAAFARI is Full professor at Moulay Ismail University of Meknes. He is an agronomist and professor of genetics and environmental health. With an extensive experience of 20 years in international cooperation, he lately served as the Vice president of Cooperation and International Relations at Moulay Ismail University of Meknes. He is the coordinator of the Institutional University Cooperation program of VLIR-UOS and responsible of many European and Intra-Africa projects. He initiated the Entrepreneurship platform at Moulay Ismail University of Meknes.



Els HUYPMAN After 9 years as a counselor for start-ups and SME's at an employers' organization, she transferred in 2015 to UHasselt University to take the lead in the project Student StartUP. The main mission of Student StartUP is to enforce and facilitate the student entrepreneurship ecosystem. Through one-on-one coaching sessions and networking activities, in close collaboration with entrepreneurs, academic and government organisations, Student StartUP aims to stimulate the entrepreneurial mindset of our students and turn them into solid entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs.

Virginie BITO, PhD in biomedical sciences at the KUL (Belgium), Associate Professor at UHasselt, She currently teaches general physiology and cardiology to (bio)medical students. She performs fundamental research in cardiology, using specific animal models of heart failure. She is, since 2013, chair of the Ethical Committee for Animal Experimentation at UHasselt. Since 2019, she is chairing the Animal Facility of UHasselt. Finally, from 2020, she is the vice-director of BIOMED. She is actively involved in several VLIR-UOS projects with Morocco and DR Congo.



Imane ARBANE has graduated from the Master on Bio-actives, Health and Environment at Moulay Ismail University of Meknes (Morocco), specialized in Environmental Health and Carbon footprint strategies. She is a fellow of the ITP program on "A Circular Coaching Program Bridging the Sustainability Needs of Entrepreneurs" at UHasselt. She was awarded many prizes in regional and national competitions related to entrepreneurial promotion. Currently, she is Environmental and Social Analyst at MASEN, the Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy.