



# EU-GCC Cooperation in the Fields of Higher Education and Scientific Research: The Way Forward

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This policy paper seeks to understand the factors that have inhibited significant progress in relations between the European Union (EU) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with particular focus on higher education and scientific research (HESR). A literature review covering the period 2002-2012 suggests that little progress has been made in successfully concluding the EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Interest in this FTA has kept oscillating over the last decade. Moreover, progress in the HESR field has also been slow. Very little data is available on the Internet or from government agencies. In fact many of the recommendations put forth over the period 2002-2009 are yet to be implemented.<sup>2</sup>

Part of the disappointment or lack of satisfactory progress is attributable to the GCC countries' having different expectations from the EU countries in terms of priorities, fields, level and outcomes of cooperation. For example, the GCC, as a bloc, views the EU as a source of technology, advanced know-how and high standards of education. They hope to see EU technologies and education systems replicated in the Gulf.<sup>3</sup> The EU on the other hand is driven by its pursuit of economic sustainability, seeking more favourable access to GCC fossil fuel and markets. As one further example, the philosophy of *modus operandi* within the GCC countries does not see the link between EU-GCC co-operation and the politics of human rights. Meanwhile the EU as a bloc is obliged to mainstream human rights in all its

1 This paper relies heavily on private discussions held with officials and scholars from Europe and Oman. Names have been withheld as per the request of respondents.

2 See Giacomo Luciani and Felix Neugart (eds.), *The EU and the GCC. A New Partnership*, Updated version, Gütersloh, Bertelsmann Stiftung, February 2005, <http://www.cap-lmu.de/publikationen/2005/eu-gcc.php>; Michael Bauer and Christian Koch, "Promoting EU-GCC Cooperation in Higher Education", in *Al-Jisr Policy Briefs*, May 2009, [http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2009/2009\\_EU-GCC\\_Higher\\_Education.pdf](http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2009/2009_EU-GCC_Higher_Education.pdf); Ahmed Ali M. al-Mukhaini, *EU-GCC Cooperation*, MA Dissertation, University of Durham, 2002; Christian Koch, "Make Education the Focus of the GCC-EU Relations", in *Arab News*, 6 September 2005, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/272563>; Anais Faure Atger and Elspeth Guild, "Reinforcing Interregional Cooperation between the EU and the GCC. Scenarios for a Modification of Visa Policies", in *CEPS Liberty and Security in Europe Papers*, January 2011, <http://www.ceps.be/node/4112>.

3 Ahmed Ali M. al-Mukhaini, *EU-GCC Cooperation*, cit.



processes and procedures, and its foreign relations. Policies pertaining to higher education institutions, in particular, in both blocs have not yet delivered a systematic approach to enhancing forms of co-operation such as grants and administrative procedures, particularly from the GCC side.

It is imperative to note here that, in our assessment, the EU-GCC FTA has been fraught with challenges ever since its inception. This has largely been due to the two blocs having two different political and economic evolutionary processes, in addition to having two different sets of expectations as explained earlier. For example, differences over unfair competition (resulting from subsidies and tariffs) and political interference (related to civil society development and human rights) have led to fluctuating interest in the EU-GCC FTA and rendered it incapable of providing the framework for the desired co-operation.<sup>4</sup>

The above has been compounded by the lack of specific indicators that measure the degree and nature of success achieved in each of the desired co-operation fields. In this policy paper, we will briefly address the factors we opine to be the underpinnings of this lack of progress in co-operation. These factors can be classified into the following categories:

- a) structural/ institutional challenges;
- b) political challenges;
- c) philosophical challenges; and
- d) logistical challenges.

While significant progress has been made in the energy dialogue,<sup>5</sup> investment, trade and archaeological expeditions, cultural exchange and exhibitions, little is perceived as having been achieved in the HESR fields.

However, in 2010 an interesting breakthrough came about in the form of the Joint Action Programme (JAP). This matrix of areas of cooperation and proposed mechanisms was drafted by senior officials from both sides in Riyadh in 2010 and was endorsed at the 20th Joint EU-GCC Council Meeting in Luxemburg in June 2010. The JAP was meant to provide a road map to EU-GCC cooperation.

In order to facilitate streamlining the outcomes of this policy paper into policy making and implementation, we will be examining the HESR component of the JAP as well as other relevant documents, wherever that is practicable. Due to lack of access to comparable data from the EU or the GCC, most of the statistics used in this paper come from the Global Education Digest (GED) published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics to ensure

<sup>4</sup> See Ahmed Ali M. al-Mukhaini, *EU-GCC Cooperation*, cit.; Christian Koch, "Make Education the Focus of the GCC-EU Relations", cit.

<sup>5</sup> Please refer to Abdulaziz Al-Shalabi, Nicolas Cottret and Emanuela Menichetti, "EU-GCC Cooperation on Energy", in *Sharaka Research Papers*, No. 3 (June 2013), <http://www.sharaka.eu/?p=1255>.



comparability of data and objectivity of analysis. However, the 2012 GED contains data up to 2010 only.<sup>6</sup>

Conclusions drawn from informal discussions held with opinion leaders and government officials in Oman as well as insights from meetings and discussions held in Brussels in 2011 with representatives of the EU Commission, European Parliament and NGOs are incorporated into this policy paper.

Based on the premise that progress in economic development and scientific research is highly dependent on progress in higher education, as higher education builds up human capital, it is logical to position co-operation in higher education as the locomotive leading the way for EU-GCC co-operation.

Moreover, higher education could provide an experiential route for understanding the EU modus operandi and assist the GCC countries in addressing challenges with youth and extremism (or monolithism). Over two thirds of the GCC population is under the age of 25. Finally, as the EU's own experience suggests, cooperation in higher education is highly conducive to integration, stability and economic growth,<sup>7</sup> all of which are valid concerns for the EU and GCC alike, and constitutes an area in which the two blocs can develop a greater sense of complementarity.

In this paper, we will be paying closer attention to higher education than scientific research. This paper will first briefly examine the status quo in the GCC human development situation to deduce the impact of higher education capacities, or lack thereof, on human development index ratings. Then it will identify challenges and suggest steps to enhance co-operation.

## 1. Status Quo

Over the last few decades, the GCC countries have experienced great developments as captured by the Human Development Index (HDI) and its sub indices.<sup>8</sup> The GCC composite Human Development Indicators have benefited greatly from expanded health care services, high admission rates at the primary education level, and the high prices of fossil fuel, which makes up at least two thirds of their gross national income. However, the overall ranking of the GCC countries is kept down by their low figures for higher education facilities and educated population compared to others.

**Table 1** below shows the values of HDI for the GCC countries between 2006 and 2011.

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Digest 2012*, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/global-education-digest.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmed Ali M. al-Mukhaini, *EU-GCC Cooperation*, cit. Also, discussion with some EU sceptics in the UK and Oman.

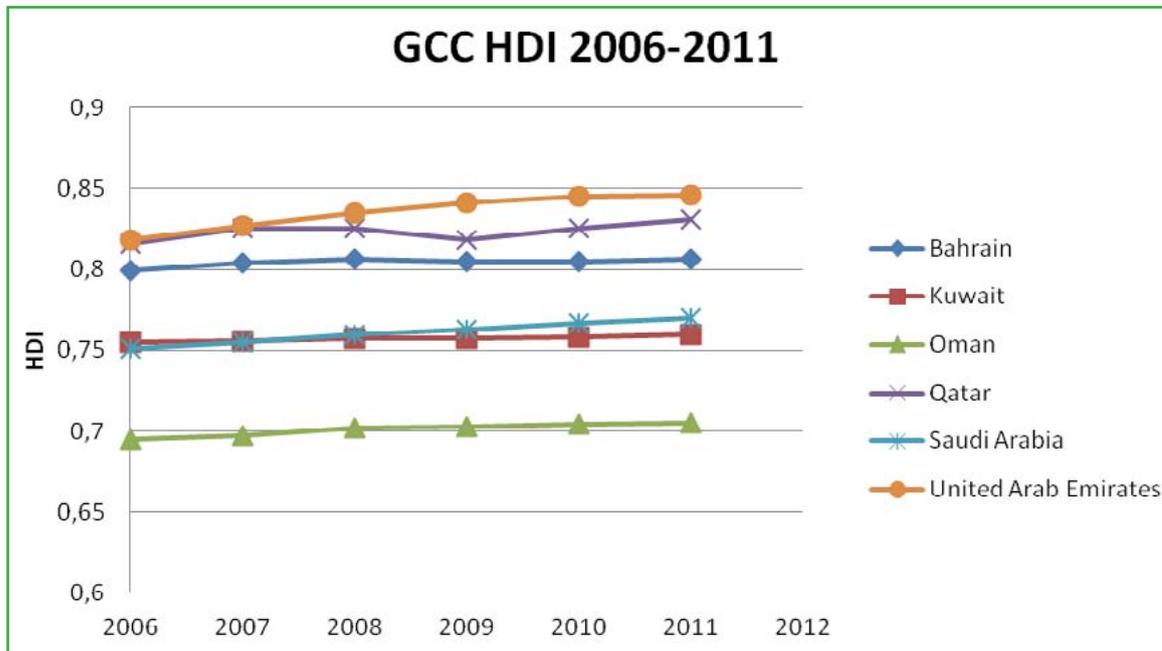
<sup>8</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Index (HDI) database*: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/profiles>.

Table 1. Human Development Index for GCC countries (2006-2011)

| Year | Bahrain | Kuwait | Oman  | Qatar | Saudi Arabia | UAE   |
|------|---------|--------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| 2011 | 0.806   | 0.760  | 0.705 | 0.831 | 0.77         | 0.846 |
| 2010 | 0.805   | 0.758  | 0.704 | 0.825 | 0.77         | 0.845 |
| 2009 | 0.805   | 0.757  | 0.703 | 0.818 | 0.76         | 0.841 |
| 2008 | 0.806   | 0.757  | 0.702 | 0.825 | 0.76         | 0.835 |
| 2007 | 0.804   | 0.756  | 0.697 | 0.825 | 0.76         | 0.827 |
| 2006 | 0.799   | 0.755  | 0.695 | 0.816 | 0.75         | 0.818 |

Note: The value “1” means fully or mostly developed while the value “0” means least or not developed.  
 Source: UNDP, Human Development Index (HDI) database, 2013.

Fig. 1. Human Development Index for GCC countries: trends (2006-2011)



Source: UNDP, Human Development Index (HDI) database, 2013.

Majlis ash-Shura of Oman issued policy papers a few years ago arguing for a strong causal relation between education index values and HDI.<sup>9</sup> Examining the arguments put forward, and the Education Index value compared to HDI values, we could only deduce a high level of correlation, but not a categorical causation.

**Table 2** below shows potential correlations between low education index and low HDI. Values have been colour coded to facilitate comparison of education index values, and to

<sup>9</sup> Oman’s Majlis ash Shura, Preparatory policy papers on education in Oman for the sixth and seventh development plans.



highlight correlation between education and the composite HDI. The green colour signifies the higher end of the index value spectrum. Darker green indicates a higher value. The red colour represents the lower end of the value spectrum. Similarly, darker red indicates a lower value. For example, Oman has scored the lowest in both the Education index and the HDI. Bahrain, on the other hand, despite limited oil wealth compared to Qatar and the UAE, is competing with these two countries' HDI due to its high education index.

Table 2. Correlating education index to HDI through colour coding

|                        |      | Bahrain | Kuwait | Oman  | Qatar | Saudi Arabia | UAE   |
|------------------------|------|---------|--------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| <b>Education index</b> | 2011 | 0.747   | 0.577  | 0.539 | 0.623 | 0.689        | 0.741 |
|                        | 2010 | 0.747   | 0.577  | 0.539 | 0.623 | 0.689        | 0.741 |
|                        | 2009 | 0.744   | 0.576  | 0.539 | 0.621 | 0.684        | 0.733 |
|                        | 2008 | 0.741   | 0.575  | 0.537 | 0.638 | 0.676        | 0.718 |
|                        | 2007 | 0.737   | 0.574  | 0.535 | 0.649 | 0.669        | 0.702 |
|                        | 2006 | 0.734   | 0.572  | 0.533 | 0.655 | 0.66         | 0.686 |
| <b>HDI</b>             | 2011 | 0.806   | 0.76   | 0.705 | 0.831 | 0.77         | 0.846 |
|                        | 2010 | 0.805   | 0.758  | 0.704 | 0.825 | 0.767        | 0.845 |
|                        | 2009 | 0.805   | 0.757  | 0.703 | 0.818 | 0.763        | 0.841 |
|                        | 2008 | 0.806   | 0.757  | 0.702 | 0.825 | 0.76         | 0.835 |
|                        | 2007 | 0.804   | 0.756  | 0.697 | 0.825 | 0.755        | 0.827 |
|                        | 2006 | 0.799   | 0.755  | 0.695 | 0.816 | 0.751        | 0.818 |

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Index (HDI) database, 2013*.

Furthermore, an examination of the education sub-indices of the GCC countries suggests that the low education index is due to low enrolment rate at the tertiary education level, with less than 50% of the population aged 18-24 in a higher education institution. Admission rates in primary and secondary education, however, are quite high (approximately 97%).<sup>10</sup> It is expected then for the GCC countries to divert their attention to tertiary education issues, having focused sufficiently on the countries' infrastructure. Improving access to higher education has become essential due to its linkage to attracting foreign investment, providing human resources for the economy and minimising the expatriate presence in the GCC.

## 2. Top HE Destinations for GCC

After having highlighted the status quo of higher education and development in the GCC countries, We will highlight in this section the top higher education destinations for GCC students. The objective is to ascertain whether EU countries are on the list, and if not what the reasons could be.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

**Table 3** below shows the top ten destinations for GCC students undertaking higher education.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that of the EU countries only the UK features strongly among the top ten destinations, followed by a modest presence by France, Ireland, Germany and Slovakia.

Table 3. Top destinations of GCC students

| Rank | Bahrain      | Kuwait       | Oman         | Qatar        | Saudi Arabia | UAE       |
|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1    | UK           | Bahrain      | UK           | UK           | USA          | UK        |
| 2    | Jordan       | USA          | Jordan       | USA          | UK           | USA       |
| 3    | India        | Jordan       | Australia    | Jordan       | Australia    | Australia |
| 4    | USA          | UK           | India        | India        | Jordan       | India     |
| 5    | Saudi Arabia | Australia    | USA          | Bahrain      | Bahrain      | France    |
| 6    | Australia    | India        | Malaysia     | Saudi Arabia | Canada       | Canada    |
| 7    | Qatar        | Saudi Arabia | Qatar        | Australia    | Malaysia     | Oman      |
| 8    | Malaysia     | Slovakia     | Morocco      | Canada       | Kuwait       | Ireland   |
| 9    | Canada       | Canada       | Saudi Arabia | France       | New Zealand  | Morocco   |
| 10   | Kuwait       | Malaysia     | Canada       | Oman         | India        | Jordan    |
| 11   | New Zealand  | Oman         | New Zealand  | Ireland      | France       | Germany   |

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.

Several factors lie behind the choice of destinations, namely (not in any particular order of precedence): language of instruction; funding opportunities; quality of life in the area of prospective study; and historical links and familiarity with the culture.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of language of instruction, most GCC students are conversant with English as a medium of instruction and communication. This has definitely had a bearing on the choice of destination. This is probably why GCC students opt for the UK and, later, other countries where English is used as a medium of instruction and communication.

In terms of funding opportunities and support through grants and scholarships, GCC students are often not considered for such grants and scholarships. This position has been mainly based on the premise that GCC countries are not entitled to assistance or aid due to their high GDP. GCC students are expected to be taken care of by their own governments or families.<sup>13</sup> The above point has to be considered in tandem with the higher tuition fees for non-EU students when compared with the fees paid by EU students. It is worth noting that students' living expenses and associated costs in the UK can be much higher than in some other EU countries, including France and Germany. Moreover, tuition fees in the UK

11 See UNESCO Institute for Statistics website: *Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students, 2012*, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>

12 Meeting with students pursuing higher education abroad.

13 Discussion with faculty members responsible for admission in some UK universities.



for international students are very high compared with France and Germany.<sup>14</sup> However, the language factor seems to mitigate the cost issue. Moreover, UK scholarships and grants seem more visible and pursuable by the public radar than those of other countries in the EU. It is logical perhaps to deduce that EU countries can attract more GCC students if funding opportunities are provided, even partially. EU countries would need to maximise their presence in the public sphere through proper awareness campaigns and study travel shows.

In terms of quality of life, quite a few international students in the EU (including GCC students) care more about the quality of city life and their ability to integrate with the culture than about the academic standing of the university.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, historical links between the GCC and some EU countries seem to play a role in the choice of education and research partners, as evidenced by the above and by trade relations.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Tertiary Education in the GCC and EU

The education sector in the GCC is growing. It is expected that the total number of students at all education levels will grow from 9.5 million students in 2010 to 11.3 million students in 2020 at CAGR<sup>17</sup> of 1.8% under normal scenario conditions.<sup>18</sup> The number of students in tertiary education is expected to witness the highest growth. This is attributed to an increased awareness of the importance of tertiary education, job market challenges and the need to participate fully in the private sector where a tertiary education diploma is needed. The growth rate in tertiary education is estimated to be CAGR of 5.5%.<sup>19</sup>

Addressing this potential growth can lead to one of three possible scenarios:

1. Optimistic: where the growth of tertiary education surpasses its historical trend;
2. Neutral: where the growth of tertiary education meets its historical trend; and

14 Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR), *Mobile Talent? The Staying Intentions of International Students in Five EU Countries*, Berlin, SVR, April 2012, p. 11, [http://www.svr-migration.de/content/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Study\\_Mobile\\_Talent\\_Engl.pdf](http://www.svr-migration.de/content/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Study_Mobile_Talent_Engl.pdf)

15 Hannah Ellis, Joran van Aart, *Key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe 2013*, Eindhoven, StudyPortals, August 2013, p. v, <http://www.studyportals.eu/research/student-satisfaction>.

16 Lena Odgaard, "EU-Arab trade relations after the Arab Spring: The EU wants stability", in *Arab-EU Quarterly*, Autumn 2012, p. 1-2, <http://di.dk/SiteCollectionDocuments/DIBD/AE-Network/Newsletters/Arab-EU%20Quarterly%20Autumn%202012.pdf>

17 CAGR: compounded annual growth rate, which is the rate of increase in the value of a quantity (such as an investment), compounded over several years. A firm's CAGR, for example, is one of the main numbers tracked by security analysts. See <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/compound-annual-growth-rate-CAGR.html>

18 Alpen Capital, *GCC Education Industry*, Dubai, Alpen Capital, September 2010, p. 7, <http://www.alpencapital.com/Me-educationgcc.htm>

19 Ibid.



3. Pessimistic: where the growth of tertiary education falls short of matching its historical trend.

In an optimistic scenario, the number of students enrolled in private education is expected to increase from 1.3 million students in 2010 to 1.9 million students in 2020 at a CAGR of 3.3% during the period 2010-2020). It is estimated that the share of tertiary education will rise from 11% in 2010 to 15% in 2020, while the share of primary education will decline from 46% to 43% during the same period.<sup>20</sup>

Tertiary education is often viewed from a mobility perspective, i.e. examining origin and destination of students in tertiary education, which is the second largest global industry after health care. The share of students studying in North America and Western Europe has fallen from almost 50% in 1970 to about 20% in 2007, indicating a growing popularity of tertiary education in other regions of the world such as Asia and Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>21</sup> The figures have picked up again moderately due to high intake of “local” students, resulting from recent waves of immigrants to this cluster of countries.<sup>22</sup>

In 2010, as shown in **Table 4** below, origins of students in tertiary education in North America and Western Europe were broken down as follows:<sup>23</sup>

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| a) East Asia & Pacific            | 25% |
| b) North America & Western Europe | 23% |
| c) South and West Asia            | 12% |
| d) Central & Eastern Europe       | 11% |
| e) Arab states                    | 8%  |
| f) Latin America & the Caribbean  | 7%  |
| g) Sub-Saharan Africa             | 7%  |
| h) Unspecified                    | 6%  |
| i) Central Asia                   | 1%  |

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p 7

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.11

<sup>22</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Digest 2012*, cit., p. 130.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

Table 4. Tertiary education: internationally mobile students by host country and regions of origin

| REGION                           | Students from abroad studying in given country (inbound mobile students) |           |                               | Mobile students by region of origin |                                |                  |                               |                                     |                                      |                          |                         |                |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
|                                  | MF (1)   | % F (2)   | Inbound mobility rate (%) (3) | Arab States (4)                     | Central and Eastern Europe (5) | Central Asia (6) | East Asia and the Pacific (7) | Latin America and the caribbean (8) | North America and Western Europe (9) | South and West Asia (10) | Sub-Saharan Africa (11) | Unspecified    |
| <b>REGIONAL AVERAGES</b>         |  |           |                               |                                     |                                |                  |                               |                                     |                                      |                          |                         |                |
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | <b>3,572,840</b>   | <b>47</b> | <b>2.0**</b>                  | <b>249,277</b>                      | <b>387,245</b>                 | <b>120,795</b>   | <b>1,008,732</b>              | <b>196,888</b>                      | <b>542,654</b>                       | <b>343,377</b>           | <b>257,099</b>          | <b>466,772</b> |
| Arab States                      | 219,389  | 40        | 2.7**                         | 44,925                              | 951                            | 1,815            | 3,124                         | 123                                 | 4,711                                | 4,436                    | 8,173                   | 151,131        |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 321,270  | 45        | 1.5**                         | 15,672                              | 133,542                        | 72,041           | 28,925                        | 1,470                               | 26,123                               | 15,059                   | 7,445                   | 20,993         |
| Central Asia                     | 43,782   | 42        | 2.1**                         | 409                                 | 12,141                         | 21,203           | 3,774                         | 24                                  | 137                                  | 4,972                    | 33                      | 1,089          |
| East Asia and the Pacific        | 752,253  | 47        | 1.4**                         | 21,678                              | 4,962                          | 5,706            | 446,049                       | 6,422                               | 33,318                               | 67,407                   | 20,693                  | 146,018        |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 68,306   | 49        | 0.3**                         | 391                                 | 226                            | 31               | 4,093                         | 40,931                              | 8,457                                | 1,315                    | 6,553                   | 6,309          |
| North America and Western Europe | 2,060,749  | 49        | 5.6**                         | 161,796                             | 235,260                        | 19,776           | 520,795                       | 147,867                             | 468,614                              | 243,985                  | 149,585                 | 113,073        |
| South and West Asia              | 17,629   | 40        | 0.1**                         | 4,171                               | 102                            | 222              | 1,829                         | 47                                  | 788                                  | 6,181                    | 1,998                   | 2,291          |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 89,462   | 45        | 1.7**                         | 235                                 | 62                             | 1                | 143                           | 4                                   | 507                                  | 22                       | 62,619                  | 25,869         |

Source: UNESCO, *Global Education Digest 2012*, cit., p. 133.

Unfortunately, official statistical sources have not yet managed to amalgamate Eastern European countries into the North American and Western Europe cluster as evidenced above.

GED 2012 suggests that Asia and Eastern Europe are attracting more Arab and GCC students and filling the gap in tertiary education outside the GCC. This trend has been facilitated by the GCC political and economic shift towards these countries, and building economic and commercial partnerships in the fast growing economies of these two regions. Moreover, available success models in human resource development in Asia, perceived to be more comparable and realisable vis-à-vis the GCC context, have aided this move. Finally, use of English as a teaching medium coupled with affordable tuition and living expenses made tertiary education in Asia an irresistible temptation for GCC students.

#### 4. Areas of Joint Scientific Research

Despite repeated calls and apparent needs, the presence of long term and well established EU studies programmes or centres in the GCC remain very limited. Only two programmes are available in Kuwait and the UAE. There are legislative, economic and structural challenges. For example, there is not an appropriate legal framework to establish study centres or think tanks outside universities or government agencies. This is further compounded by some structural challenges, whereby universities in the GCC would establish EU studies centres and programmes if they could attract sufficient numbers of students at the undergraduate level. In all cases they require funding. Energy study centres are facilitated by funds provided from oil companies.

The EU on the other hand has expressed sustainable interest in Middle Eastern studies, though very few centres or programmes specialise in the GCC region. This is often subject to funding constraints and political motivations. Nevertheless, EU knowledge of the GCC seems consistent and at a higher level than GCC knowledge of the EU, as evidenced by the number of study centres and area study programmes examining the Middle East, including the GCC.<sup>24</sup>

#### 5. Higher Education and Scientific Research in the EU-GCC Jap and Related Activities

This section of the paper examines activities pertaining to co-operation in higher education and scientific research (HESR) as outlined in the Joint Action Programme (JAP). In Annex 1 we discuss the proposed mechanisms of cooperation in the areas of higher education and

<sup>24</sup> See Giacomo Luciani and Felix Neugart (eds.), *The EU and the GCC. A New Partnership*, cit., p. 14; Ahmed Ali M. al-Mukhaini, *EU-GCC Cooperation*, cit.

scientific research provided for in the JAP.<sup>25</sup> Overall the language used is non-committal and does not show clear responsibilities, accountability or measurable indicators. One can only conclude that the JAP was designed using an effort-driven (activities) model rather than an object-oriented (outcomes) model. This in a way reflects the structural and philosophical challenges outlined in a later section of this paper. Despite the above-mentioned observations, the EU and the GCC have managed to conduct several successful activities and attain some results. What remains to be done is mapping these outcomes and results and putting them in the context of the objectives set for the EU-GCC cooperation.

Furthermore, the JAP's proposed mechanisms have often intersected, leading to vagueness over funding and operational responsibilities. Perhaps one source of confusion, or rather intersection between Energy and Scientific Research as outlined in the JAP, is the reliance of both areas on the 7th Community Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) to share knowledge and perhaps conduct joint research. This has naturally led to a gravitation of efforts exerted towards powerful or resource-rich players. For example, the literature addressing progress in cooperation over energy has often referred to scientific research interchangeably.

The following paragraphs will outline two prominent initiatives in the energy and scientific research areas to highlight two things. Firstly: to show the extent of interest and dedication accorded to energy and related issues. Second: to showcase them as examples of successful co-operation when political will and interest join hands. Energy remains a major concern for EU policies.

### *5.1. EU-GCC Clean Energy Network*

The first of these two initiatives is the EU-GCC Clean Energy Network.<sup>26</sup> The Network was created following the adoption of the JAP to facilitate the establishment of a long-term strategic relationship between the EU and the GCC regions. This relationship aims to focus on sustainable, clean and renewable energy, and to create a means (and a practically useful tool) for developing tangible cooperation activities among various actors in the sector, across the EU and the GCC. The Network, therefore, has been designed to respond to the common interests of various actors in the field of clean energy in the EU and GCC. Energy is pivotal to the GCC economies as a source of revenue and to the EU economies as a means to sustain growth. Both blocs are concerned with environmental hazards associated with fossil fuels.

<sup>25</sup> Annex 1 is an excerpt from the EU-GCC-approved JAP showing the areas of desired co-operation and proposed mechanisms. We have added a third column to share our assessment of each of the items mentioned in the table.

<sup>26</sup> See the website: <http://www.eugcc-cleanenergy.net>

The Network has been focusing on the following areas:

- renewable energy sources;
- energy demand side management & energy efficiency;
- clean natural gas & related clean technologies;
- electricity interconnections & market integration; and
- carbon capture and storage.

Some of the activities and services offered by the network included:

- experts meetings;
- thematic discussions;
- seminars;
- training sessions;
- high-level conferences;
- preliminary studies in the area of clean energy;
- research exchanges between the GCC and the EU;
- clean energy discussion groups to facilitate collaboration among EU and GCC experts;
- joint demonstrations and pilot projects being implemented with the participation of EU and GCC entities in the area of clean energy;
- support for the publication of articles in scientific journals on clean energy in EU and GCC regions; and
- a web-area to facilitate discussion, dialogue and collaboration among EU and GCC stakeholders on technology, research and policy aspects of clean energy.

These goals have not been fully satisfied, however, some progress has been achieved.

### *5.2. EU-GCC INCONET*

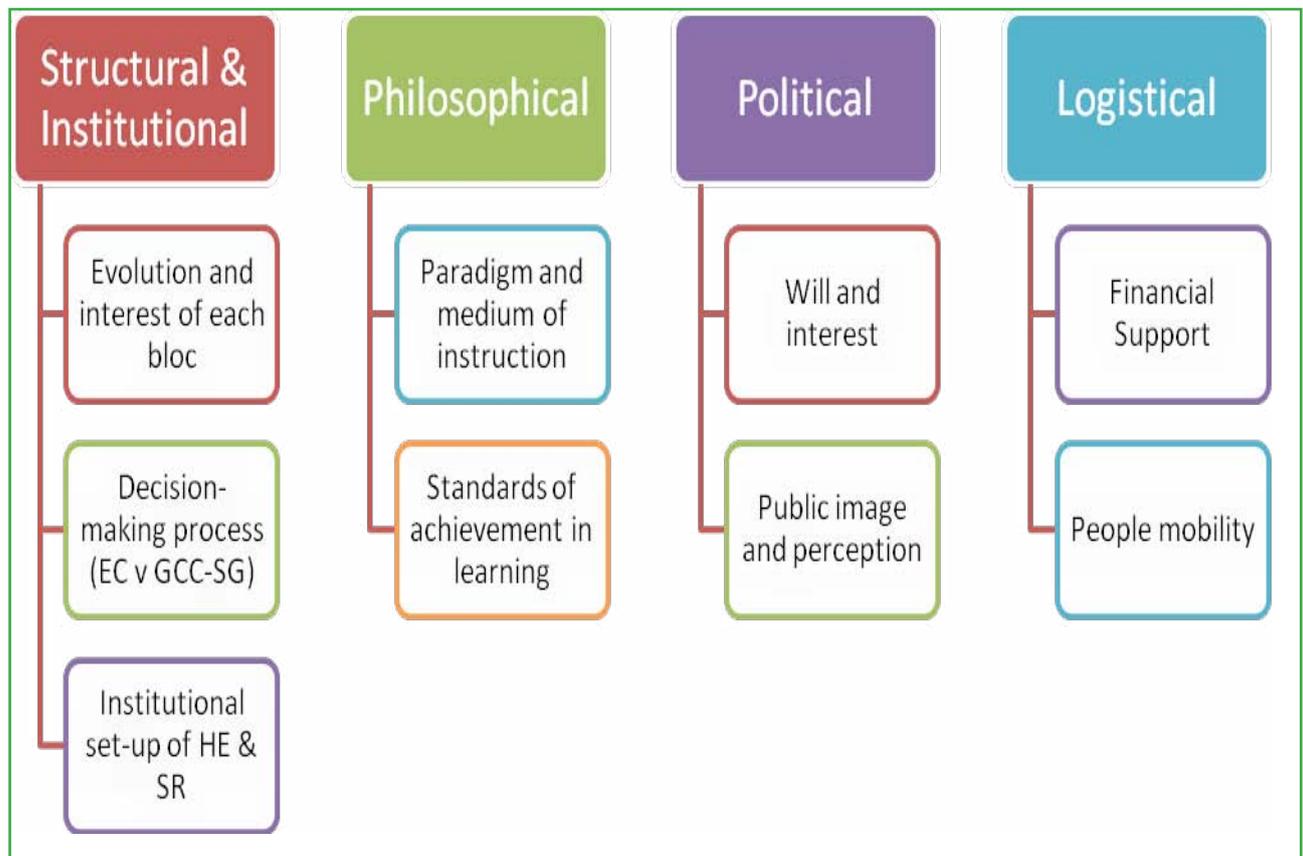
The second prominent initiative of EU-GCC cooperation deals with scientific research. INCONET-GCC is an "initiative" that aims to develop and support dialogue between the GCC and the EU by bringing together policymakers and stakeholders from the GCC and EU member states. INCONET managed to establish a dialogue and action platform to identify common interests in research areas, set up science and technology (S&T) priorities, support capacity building activities, and enhance the interaction between different cooperation instruments of the European Commission and EU member states. It has focused on the explorative aspect of cooperation with some successful isolated joint research projects, which seem to have relied on individuals and personal networking more than the GCC-EU institutional umbrella.

## 6. Challenges to EU-GCC Cooperation in HESR

This section outlines the challenges to EU-GCC cooperation in HESR ahead of suggesting mitigation steps. These challenges have largely been categorised as follows:

- a) structural/institutional;
- b) philosophical/cultural;
- c) political; and
- d) logistical.

Fig. 2. Summary of identified challenges



### 6.1. Structural and institutional challenges

The evolution of the EU and of the GCC was determined differently. It is important to recollect the circumstances and driving ethos behind the evolution of each organisation to realise where the priorities and the political will lie, and how this has resulted in differing structures and institutions in the EU and the GCC.

It would be deceitful to claim that the two blocs are very similar and deal with them accordingly without being cognizant of these structural and institutional differences,

though the GCC's officials have repeatedly claimed that the GCC was modelled on the EU. This modelling remains superficial and incomplete at best.

One stark difference is that the EU is committed to market expansion and further integration. Security is taken as a logical consequence of economic stability and a market-led economy. Foreign policy remains a minor factor in the decision-making process within the EU which, in contrast to the GCC, is a collective, complex and institutionalised organisation of cooperation.

The GCC, on the other hand, is driven by security concerns and foreign policy factors. Though economic integration and interest in new markets have become policy issues in the last decade or so, the focus remains on strategic issues, such as domestic and regional security. Moreover, the GCC Secretariat does not possess "real" decision-making or negotiation powers, which renders the GCC less than a supra-national organisation. Decisions within the GCC remain at the individual state level. This is further compounded by the economic structures of the GCC. Different GCC countries have different national agendas and competing economic priorities, which often inhibit reaching a consensus vis-à-vis the EU. This is similar to the case of the EU, albeit to a much smaller extent and mainly within the foreign policy context.

The issue of perception is an important one in the EU-GCC relationship. Each of the two sides views the other as a funding opportunity, especially the EU.<sup>27</sup> The GCC looks at the EU mainly as an up-skilling and enabling opportunity, while the EU regards the GCC as an economic opportunity.

Moreover, the higher education and scientific research sectors have been set up differently in the EU and the GCC. HESR institutions in the EU tend to be independent in their governance and self-reliant in terms of funding. The situation in the GCC is different. Government and private higher education institutions are highly attuned to government decision-making processes and authorities. Furthermore, the HESR sectors are being led by governmental initiatives and modus operandi, while these sectors in the EU tend to be governed along philanthropic or non-governmental modus operandi. In the EU public accountability also impacts governance of HESR institutions. This is not the case within the GCC.

Over the last five years the HESR industry in the GCC has undergone some significant changes, most notably the expansion of private higher education to absorb the high growth of the population of youth seeking career betterment and more promising job opportunities (see Table 5 and Figure 3 below). The growth in tertiary education is set to continue.<sup>28</sup> EU academic and research institutions have only partially taken part in this expansion as discussed in section 3.<sup>29</sup>

27 "Europeans Seek Gulf Funding, but Free Trade Remains Far Off", in *Knowledge@Wharton*, 2 November 2011, [http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/arabic/article.cfm?articleid=2731&language\\_id=1](http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/arabic/article.cfm?articleid=2731&language_id=1)

28 Alpen Capital, *GCC Education Industry*, cit.

29 Center for Applied Policy Research and Gulf Research Center, "Taking Stock of the EU-GCC

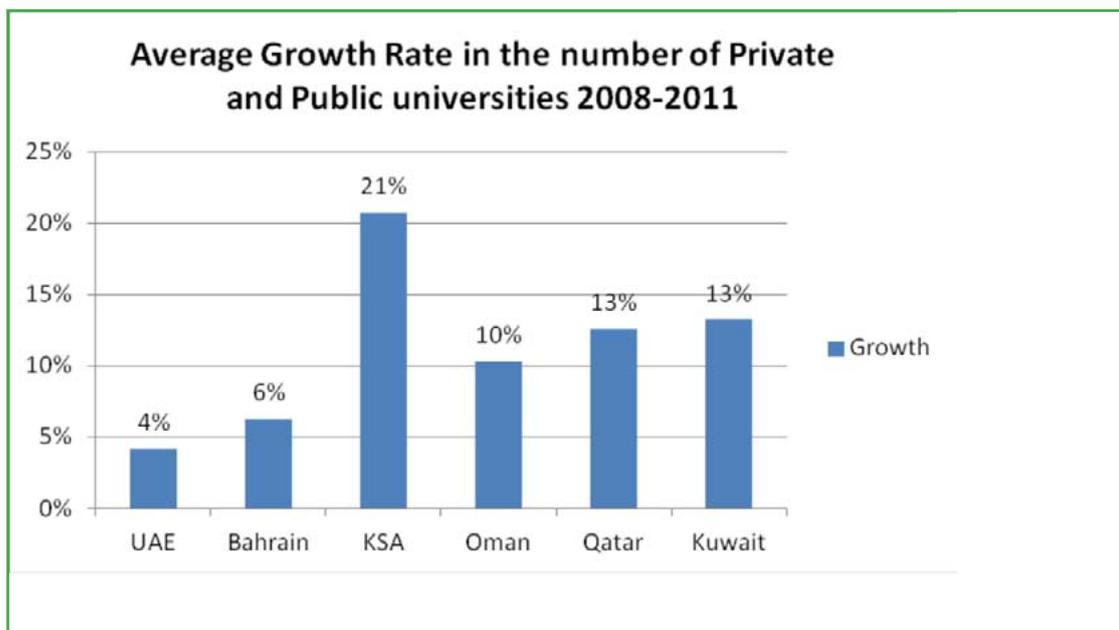
The growth of GCC-based tertiary education is likely to create a structural competition-based conflict between tertiary education institutions in the EU, wanting to attract more students and generate further revenue, and the GCC tertiary education institutions that have similar revenue aspirations and in many cases suffer economic survival challenges. It is important to consider the above factors when analysing the pace of progress in EU-GCC cooperation, especially in the HESR field, and in seeking to set more realistic goals and objectives.

Table 5. Number of private and public universities in the GCC (2008-2011)

| Country      | 2008       | 2009       | 2010       | 2011       |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Bahrain      | 16         | 16         | 16         | 19         |
| Kuwait       | 7          | 9          | 9          | 10         |
| Oman         | 6          | 7          | 7          | 8          |
| Qatar        | 10         | 13         | 13         | 14         |
| Saudi Arabia | 19         | 26         | 30         | 33         |
| UAE          | 64         | 64         | 72         | 72         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>122</b> | <b>135</b> | <b>147</b> | <b>156</b> |

Source: GCC Secretariat General, GCC: *A Statistical Glance*, 2012, p. 42, <http://sites.gcc-sg.org/DLibrary/index-eng.php?action=ShowOne&BID=569>

Fig. 3. Average growth rate of private and public universities (2008-2011)



Source: GCC Secretariat General, GCC: *A Statistical Glance*, 2012, cit., p. 42.

Cooperation in Education, Science and Technology: Conference Overview Paper", in *Al-Jisr Background Papers*, March 2009. [http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2009/2009\\_EU-GCC-Cooperation.pdf](http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2009/2009_EU-GCC-Cooperation.pdf)

## 6.2. Philosophical and cultural challenges

The philosophical challenge is a serious barrier and would require consistent efforts leading to the formulation of long-term objectives. There are three components to this challenge, as presented below.

The first of these components is the language of instruction used in the EU and the GCC. The GCC countries have adopted a policy making English the second language. Moreover, science and maths are often taught in English in private schools and colleges as well as in some government schools. Other languages, whether indigenous or foreign, though widely spoken, are not being taught systematically or formally in the region.

Focusing on the English language only limits tertiary education options for the GCC students. If some of them are to pursue their education abroad, they are limited to English speaking countries. Some of these countries have expensive tuition fees, high living expenses or complex visa procedures. As highlighted in section 2, language of instruction is a concern and a great factor in the choice of external higher education institutions for GCC students. Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden and some other EU countries have managed to attract students by offering courses and degree programmes that are taught in English, with optional, sometimes free, courses to learn the respective national languages of these countries.

While policy lines and official attitudes towards other EU languages are becoming more positive, as indicated by official statements and encouragements to introduce language training centres in the GCC, more effort and attention are required to allow these centres to play their rightful role in expanding tertiary education options for GCC students.

Another challenge with regard to the language issue relates to the fact that participation in exchange programmes, e.g. Erasmus, will be limited if GCC students are not equipped with foreign languages other than English. This leads us to suggest that perhaps what is required first is an introduction to the languages and cultures of EU nations for GCC students, academics and researchers. Solid future cooperation will certainly be dependent on good linguistic and cultural foundations.

The second component of the philosophical challenge is the paradigm of learning adopted in the GCC versus the one adopted in the EU. Despite all the educational reforms embarked upon by the GCC countries over the last decade or so, teaching methods operate to a large extent within a traditional mind-set of rote learning. EU educational systems on the other hand mostly rely on a critical thinking approach. The quality of teachers (whether national or expatriate) within the GCC has been identified as a serious challenge to the educational reforms undertaken by the GCC countries.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See Alpen Capital, *GCC Education Industry*, cit., p. 15; Michael Barber, Mona Mourshed and Fenton Whelon, "Improving Education in the Gulf", in *The McKinsey Quarterly*, March 2007, p. 39-47, <http://abujoori.files.wordpress.com/2007/04/improve-gulf-education.pdf>

This paradigm of learning often renders it necessary for GCC students to go through a new cycle of learning when they set foot in EU higher education institutions or join research projects. Students wanting to participate in exchange programmes will have limitations and several hurdles to overcome. This picture is not intended to be pessimistic. However, if the EU and GCC are interested in achieving good progress in higher education and scientific research cooperation, then serious attention has to be paid to harmonising the two paradigms of learning through technical support and specialised up-skilling programmes for GCC students and faculty members. This would require a specific action plan whereby students and faculty members separately undertake intensive summer training. A more thorough approach would be to amend the curriculum of teachers' training and the national curriculum for students. However, effective outcomes are not certain and the whole process is time-consuming.

The third component of the philosophical challenge is the underperformance of GCC students in maths and science. Not all GCC countries take part in the TIMSS survey. Maths and science constitute the backbone of modern education systems. One possible reason is that national standards of achievement in learning these subjects are lacking, and where they are available they are often not adhered to or complied with.<sup>31</sup> Levels of learning outcomes vary greatly within each of the GCC countries and in comparisons between different GCC countries.

### *6.3. Political challenges*

The EU is driven by economic integration and seeks wider market access within the GCC, which will provide job opportunities and economic growth. Moreover, the EU is interested in leveraging the GCC against Iran, with the objective of attaining some geopolitical stability and sustained flow of fossil fuel. The GCC, however, is driven by a strategic and political outlook. Though the GCC is quite keen on having better access to EU markets, the GCC countries' ability to capitalise on this market and compete is quite limited. The GCC would like perhaps to further bolster EU economic interests in the GCC region in order to secure some leverage over Israel and achieve geopolitical stability or perhaps a good and fair solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Interests and the current geopolitical situation at the regional level after 9/11 and the Arab uprisings tend to determine the lack of political will to invest in education as opposed to in energy and trade. This is suggested by the growth in trade volume between the EU and the GCC and the success reported in the energy and clean environment sectors. Moreover, following the 22nd GCC-EU joint Council and Ministerial meeting in Luxembourg on 25 June 2012, the two sides "recognised there is a clear need for us to consult and to co-operate whenever possible on global challenges such as non-proliferation and disarmament,

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

counter-terrorism and climate change.<sup>32</sup> The two sides instructed their senior officials to prepare the new JAP for the period 2013-2016. No reference was made to education in the 2012 meeting.<sup>33</sup>

#### 6.4. Logistical challenges

Three logistical barriers are worth mentioning. They are financial resources, visa requirements and travel routes.

One of the logistical barriers inhibiting further cooperation in higher education and scientific research is financial resources. Europeans often assume that all GCC citizens are well off and that there is an abundance of public wealth available for educational and research projects. This myth has created high expectations within the EU, where large sums of GCC money were expected to pour into the EU-based higher education co-operation projects. This has led to a cutting down of the budget allocated by the EU to fund co-operation in the higher education field and inhibited solid cooperation. Moreover, such gaps are often filled by non-religious endowments or philanthropic organisations, as is the case in the United States of America. However, such endowments and philanthropic organisations are not legal within the GCC region. Instead, endowments with religious or strict charity objectives are permitted with heavy governmental oversight.

The second of these barriers is visa requirements. The existence of complex visa policies and practices between the EU and the GCC constitutes a fundamental barrier preventing the promotion of exchanges between these regions when it comes to people-to-people contacts, developing commercial relations or exchanging knowledge. Closer ties between the two regions, enhanced understanding of their respective cultures and increased educational exchange require increased mobility.<sup>34</sup>

Concerns over GCC students settling in the EU are not warranted. Only 12.5% of the international students, including GCC students, studying in Europe stated that they wished to stay on for more than five years. The majority of the international students seek either to return home or to go to another country. The main tendency, however, is to stay for a few years just to gain international experience.<sup>35</sup>

32 Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton following the 22nd EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg, 25 June, 2012, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/131194.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/131194.pdf)

33 Lénaïc Vaudin d'Imécourt, "EU, GCC pledge to deepen cooperation", in *EuroPolitics*, 26 June 2012, <http://www.europolitics.info/external-policies/eu-gcc-pledge-to-deepen-cooperation-art338164-44.html>

34 Anais Faure Atger and Elspeth Guild, "Reinforcing Interregional Cooperation between the EU and the GCC", cit.

35 Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR), *Mobile Talent?*, cit., p. 38 and 47.

Last but not least, travel routes are considered to be among the inhibiting factors for a stronger GCC-EU cooperation. Except for very few EU destinations such as London and Paris, most other major European destinations are not regularly serviced or direct routes are not available. This does indeed discourage some students and researchers from pursuing this travel.

## 7. Why Focus on Higher Education and Scientific Research Now? Some Turning Points

The renewed interest in EU-GCC cooperation must be provided with a new context. The 23rd GCC-EU joint Council and Ministerial meeting commended the progress achieved in relation to the Joint Action Programme.<sup>36</sup> This seems to have enhanced the GCC-EU appetite for greater cooperation. From an observer's perspective, there are other factors that can be pooled and plaited to justify a renewed interest in the EU-GCC cooperation, most notably: the Arab Spring; anticipated growth in the higher education industry; trends in energy and environmental policies; and Islamic banking and finance.

**First: the Arab Spring.** The impact of the Arab Spring cannot go unnoticed in the context of EU-GCC relations. The Gulf governments have shown their resilience to change and as a result the GCC has emerged once again as a regional power in the MENA area. This has become of significant importance in the southern Mediterranean countries bordering the EU and, in the case of Syria and Lebanon, bordering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The EU's pursuit of stability in its neighbouring region warrants a renewed examination of and momentum for a cooperative EU-GCC relationship.

Moreover, the Arab Spring has blatantly brought to surface the challenges posed by the young population of the GCC. The youth challenge, if left without due consideration, could render the young GCC population prone to anarchy, extremism or exploitation. Concerted efforts would be required to ensure that the GCC youth population is provided with education, training and jobs. This is a mutual interest for the GCC and EU countries.

**Second: Anticipated growth in HE industry.** As mentioned earlier, the number of students in tertiary education in the GCC is expected to increase at the highest rate in the education industry. The growth rate of tertiary education is estimated to be CAGR of 5.5% until 2020.<sup>37</sup>

The GCC countries will definitely be in need of technical and policy support from EU higher education institutions. This will provide an opportunity for cementing cooperation between the EU and the GCC as well as bridging the technical gap and generating revenues for EU higher education institutions.

<sup>36</sup> Co-Chairs' Statement, 23rd GCC-EU Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting, Manama, 30 June 2013, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137671.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137671.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Alpen Capital, *GCC Education Industry*, cit., p. 7.

**Third: energy & environment: the tables turned.** Economic forecasts indicate that local demand for energy within the GCC is on the increase. It is expected that by 2020 the GCC countries will be consuming most of their energy produce for manufacturing purposes.<sup>38</sup> In fact some recent pessimistic scenarios suggest that some GCC countries will be importing fuel in 2050.

It is noticeable that the GCC countries have now shifted their focus to solar and nuclear energy in pursuit of clean and renewable energy sources for domestic use, deliberately allowing its hydrocarbon reserves to be used mainly for export.

The GCC's environmental concerns over clean and renewable energy sources are essentially shared by the EU, not only in terms of overall sense, but most notably from commercial, scientific and civil society perspectives. This should provide a renewed drive towards closer cooperation.

**Fourth: Islamic finance.** Islamic finance has grown consistently since the 1960s. The Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) estimated that Islamic finance assets have reached \$1.6 trillion as at end of 2012.<sup>39</sup> The GCC countries contribute around 41% of global Islamic finance turnover. Islamic finance has become a major industry comprising around 400 institutions worldwide controlling around \$500 billion.<sup>40</sup> Islamic finance instruments may provide good funding opportunities for the European economies in the form of foreign direct investments (FDIs) and sukuk purchase.

## 8. Policy Recommendations

### 8.1. Short to mid term: small steps, large impacts

Keys to the success of EU-GCC cooperation are education and people-to-people contacts. However, two main barriers exist: insufficient financial resources; and unwelcoming visa procedures. While complex visa processes will remain an issue for both sides for some time (despite some policy guidelines to unblock this issue)<sup>41</sup>, one can address for the time being the financial resource constraints. The following two recommendations aim to facilitate streamlining and quantifying of EU-GCC cooperation.

**Step one: remove the logistic barriers.** To address the financial resources issue, the EU and the GCC should establish a joint HESR Fund (the "Fund"). The seed money should come from

38 Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), *The GCC in 2020. Outlook for the Gulf and the Global Economy*, March 2009, <http://graphics.eiu.com/marketing/pdf/Gulf2020.pdf>

39 See IFSB, *Islamic Financial Services Industry Stability Report 2013*, May 2013, [http://www.ifsb.org/docs/IFSB%20-%20IFSI%20Stability%20Report%202013%20\(Final\).pdf](http://www.ifsb.org/docs/IFSB%20-%20IFSI%20Stability%20Report%202013%20(Final).pdf)

40 Anis Ahmad, *Lecture on Contemporary Islamic Finance. Presentation*, October 2011.

41 Anaïs Faure Atger and Elspeth Guild, "Reinforcing Interregional Cooperation between the EU and the GCC", cit.

both blocs. The table below shows two options for seed money contribution calculated as a percentage of the GDP for the EU and GCC.

|              |   | <b>Option One</b>                        | <b>Option Two</b>                         |
|--------------|---|--|---|
|              | Approximate GDP for 2011 (million Euro) | Contribution at 0.001% of the GDP (Euro) | Contribution at 0.0001% of the GDP (Euro) |
| <b>EU</b>    | 13,007,720                              | 130,077,200                              | 13,007,720                                |
| <b>GCC</b>   | 827,468                                 | 8,274,680                                | 827,468                                   |
| <b>Total</b> | 13,835,188                              | 138,351,880                              | 13,835,188                                |

The Fund will be an independent legal entity and will be run as a civil company espousing a philanthropic spirit. Contributions to the Fund are welcome from individuals, existing endowments or commercial entities in the EU and the GCC. Universities, civil society organisations, individual students, researchers and others can apply directly to the Fund and compete openly and equitably.

The Fund will provide for the following:

- Exchange visits for students, professors, researchers, writers, poets, artists, young leaders, women, social entrepreneurs, etc.;
- Research grants and scholarships including small hardship bursaries; and
- Publications, whether electronic or in printed form.

Government officials and programmes will not benefit from the Fund.

**Step two: own the momentum & personify the process.** One factor contributing to the successful cooperation in the energy and other sectors is political ownership.

The EU and the GCC should create a political position and appoint a commissioner-level representative for cooperation in higher education and scientific research. The appointee will be responsible for providing inputs to the revision of the Joint Action Programme and supervising its implementation. The GCC and EU appointee(s) will meet regularly and be provided with access to policy makers and decision makers.

The appointee(s) will push for the identification of Key Performance Indicators that are pertinent to higher education and scientific research. This will be made possible by the results of the explorative discussions and workshops held over the period 2010-2012.

## 8.2. Long term: joint EU-GCC Helsinki process for GCC higher education

Longterm steps must be also contemplated. The steps outlined below are categorised as long-term due to their invasiveness into existing structures and institutions in the EU and GCC. Hence the term “Helsinki process” for the GCC. Several iterations were made in the past.

However, it is critical that the new Helsinki process possesses the following characteristics:

- focused on institutional, policy building and technical support for higher education and scientific research, acting almost as a think tank driven by the GCC agenda;
- jointly managed and guided; and
- politics-free mandate.

**Step one: build EU research and studies centres in the GCC.** The GCC universities should establish research and education centres dedicated to understanding the EU and monitoring the EU-GCC cooperation. These centres can also tap into knowledge resources within the EU and bring them closer to the GCC. The above-recommended Fund will help sustain some of the programmes and projects run by these centres.

**Step two: make EU universities more accessible to GCC students linguistically.** Successful examples in some EU countries need to be emulated. Part of the above-recommended appointee(s)’ mission is to facilitate the design and delivery of degree programmes in English. This will naturally require further analysis in terms of topics, numbers and types of degrees. The above-recommended Fund can be used to provide initial financial backing for such degree programmes with the objective that they become self sustained in five years’ time.

The above step will be needed also from the GCC side to diversify language curricula in their education system. Spanish, French and German must become part of the national curricula. Specialised language training centres will also need to be created by the private sector or through foreign funding to complement formal language education.

**Step three: quantifying better image representation.** The GCC and the EU have acknowledged the need to brush up their respective images in the media and cultural outlets of the other. However, unless both blocs specify what is meant by “image” and “cultural understanding”, this goal will remain in the distant future. Part of the scientific research agenda and funding must be directed towards media and cultural research to provide continuous monitoring and evaluation of the GCC image and presence in the EU media and public arena, and vice versa.

**ANNEX 1. COMMENTARY ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH COMPONENT OF THE JOINT ACTION PROGRAMME**

| <b>Areas of Cooperation in Higher Education</b>   | <b>Proposed Mechanisms</b>   | <b>Comments</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>1.</b> Continue cooperation between EU and GCC at senior expert level.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of a joint GCC-EU expert group to follow up and coordinate on a regular basis.</li> <li>Explore the possibility of cooperation between the European University Association and the GCC Committee of Heads of Universities.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The official literature and media outlets consulted suggest that this expert group has not been established yet.</li> <li>Several high-level meetings have taken place over the last 5 years. However, these two incomparable bodies were not reported to have synthesised concrete collective cooperation measures. Perhaps they should start with designing the vision and desired outcomes for the EU-GCC cooperation in this field.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>2.</b> Enhance GCC participation in ERASMUS MUNDUS and Marie Curie Scientific Mobility Programmes. Universities shall select the fields deemed most appropriate and compatible with their bylaws and rules of procedure of the relevant Ministry of Higher Education.</p>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion and awareness campaigns in the region.</li> <li>Explore possibilities for partnership between GCC and EU universities.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some progress has been made along this line.</li> <li>This aspect of the EU-GCC cooperation remains explorative with some isolated successes at the bilateral level.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>3.</b> Establish a sustained partnership between EU and GCC universities for cooperation in teaching Arabic language and Middle Eastern studies as well as European languages and studies under which universities will be open to receive specific modules and training.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study the possibility of increasing exchanges of students and faculty staff in Arabic language and Middle Eastern studies, as well as in European languages and studies.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This aspect of the EU-GCC cooperation remains explorative and non-committal.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>4.</b> Establish and develop joint supervision programmes between GCC and EU universities through which scholarships would be granted to students of GCC universities to study in the EU in major fields that are important to the GCC States.</p>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance and facilitate existing cooperation between GCC universities and distinguished EU universities with regard to joint supervision in higher education programmes.</li> <li>GCC Secretariat will provide the list of recognized public and private universities in the GCC countries. The EU will provide a similar list.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very limited or no specific information is available on the progress made along this line.</li> <li>A mere procedural step.</li> </ul>   |

ANNEX 1. (FOLLOWS)

| Areas of Cooperation in Higher Education  | Proposed Mechanisms  | Comments   |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>5.</b> Cooperation with EU universities in developing academic programmes at GCC universities, focusing on new scientific specializations such as the peaceful use of nuclear energy, genetics, etc.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise a workshop at one of the GCC universities (coordination could be made with Bahrain University to organise this type of workshop as the electronic learning centre is based there) wherein concerned universities from both sides can participate.</li> <li>• Organise workshops on best practices on these subjects.</li> <li>• Explore the EU's opinion on the assistance that EU universities can provide to GCC universities in the cooperative education provided by the EU universities.</li> <li>• Organise a workshop at one of the GCC universities (coordination can be made with King Abdulaziz University, King Saud University or the Arab Gulf University) in which representatives from universities on both sides can participate to identify cooperation opportunities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A passing reference to this step was found announcing the award of the grant to implement this step. No further details were found.</li> <li>• An explorative and non-committal step.</li> <li>• An explorative step. Several similar meetings were held, interesting findings were shared and a group of policy recommendations were deduced.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>5.1.</b> Call on the EU countries to develop a mechanism for exchanging e-learning expertise with the GCC universities.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise workshops on best practices on this subject.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy recommendations were developed.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>5.2.</b> Call on the EU universities to establish partnerships with the GCC States in the field of cooperative education to enable exchange of expertise and give opportunities to the students from both sides to be exposed in the industrial and commercial training programmes.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the EU's opinion on the assistance that EU universities can provide to the GCC universities in the cooperative education provided by the EU universities.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An explorative step. No further details were available.</li> </ul>  |

ANNEX 1. (FOLLOWS)

| Areas of Cooperation in Higher Education  | Proposed Mechanisms  | Comments  |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>5.3.</b> Call for cooperation with the EU universities to upgrade academic performance (university leadership level, teaching staff level or administrative level) through participation of the GCC universities in sharing best practices.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise a workshop at one of the GCC universities in which representatives from universities on both sides can participate to identify cooperation opportunities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intersects with earlier mechanisms identified above. Several such meetings were held.</li> </ul> |

| Areas of Cooperation in Scientific Research   | Proposed Mechanisms  | Comments   |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>1.</b> Achieve highest degree of cooperation between the GCC and EU universities and research centres in the joint research projects of applied nature through which knowledge and modern technology can be transferred from the EU countries to the GCC States in areas of importance to GCC countries such as: water related technologies (i.e., solar techniques applied to desalination), renewable energies (solar and wind), environment, bio-technology, nano-technologies and petrochemicals.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a GCC-EU science and technology policy dialogue to deal with the main issues of research, development and innovation.</li> <li>Develop ways and means to ensure the participation of GCC researchers in the 7th EU Research Framework Programme through scholarships.</li> <li>Provide opportunities to GCC researchers (via research cluster meetings) to participate in joint research projects undertaken by European research institutes with a view to upgrading their capacities and expertise.</li> <li>Invite EU researchers to participate in certain research projects existing in the GCC States.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intersects with earlier mechanisms identified above.</li> <li>Non committal. Cases of successful incorporation reported.</li> <li>Non committal. Cases of successful incorporation reported.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>2.</b> Open up the field for GCC universities and Research Centres to make use of the INCONET initiative for scientific research.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the participation of GCC universities and research centres to make use of this initiative.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non committal.</li> </ul>   |

ANNEX 1. (FOLLOWS)

| Areas of Cooperation in Scientific Research   | Proposed Mechanisms   | Comments |
|---|---|----------|
| <p><b>3.</b> Transfer of EU expertise in the field of establishing financing and managing research programmes to the GCC universities and national research centres, and establish a long-term relationship to foster those practices in research area.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU will provide background documents about its experience in this area at the earliest joint meeting between the two sides and will also organise a thematic seminar on this subject.</li> </ul> |          |

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### ABOUT SHARAKA

**Sharaka** is a two-year project implemented by a consortium led by Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).

The project, partially funded by the European Commission, explores ways to promote relations between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), through the implementation of policy-oriented research, outreach, training and dissemination activities.

The overall project aim is to strengthen understanding and cooperation between the EU and the GCC, with particular attention to the strategic areas identified in the Joint Action Programme of 2010, such as trade and finance, energy, maritime security, media and higher education.

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