

Your Excellency Mr. Patrick Renauld  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure indeed to be among you today jointly patronizing this important gathering, in which our experts are both assessing and celebrating our involvement with Tempus, and launching Tempus IV.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, under his Majesty King Abdullah II's direct guidance and support, is paying a great deal of attention to education at the school level, and to higher education and research. A healthy, robust education system is our ticket to development, progress, and prosperity. We need an outstanding education system – not just a good or a very good one – and we are intent upon achieving such distinction and excellence.

As far as higher education is concerned, our focus is essentially dual: capitalizing on the achievements and the successes on the one hand, and strengthening and enhancing those aspects which need further rectification and development.

It is a happy coincidence indeed that the launching of both Tempus III and Tempus IV has come at the moment when we have been zeroing in on our higher education system as in no time before. As is obvious to all concerned, our higher education institutions have been growing steadily and expanding at a fast pace. The demand on higher education in our part of the world – unlike what it is in some other parts of the world perhaps – is on the increase.

The quantity challenge is real for us. From one small public university in 1962, we have around 26 substantial public and private universities now; and from one community college a few decades ago, we have more than 25 at this point. While we are happy that we are fulfilling quantity demands nationally and regionally, we will – as you imagine – be a lot happier when we meet the quality demands. Overall, our higher education sector is a quality sector. But as quality is an ever shifting, ever changing and ever elusive notion, we are determined to continue to implement strategies, action plans, ideas, and projects in support of quality. This is indeed our priority at this point in time.

We in the higher education community view Tempus as an important international opportunity and venue for injecting more quality into our system. As a matter of fact, the various Tempus projects I have had the pleasure either to be involved in or amply aware of contribute directly to our quality drive.

It goes without saying, that there is much we can do, and are doing in Jordan alone. But it goes without saying also, that there is much we can do, and are doing in close coordination and cooperation with our partners. Our European neighbors have done a lot, and are doing a lot from which we can benefit. Likewise, we have a lot that we can also share with our European partners.

One cannot but notice a shift in our relation to Tempus. While five years or so ago, whenever we took part in a Tempus function, we took part as observers or listeners. Today we take part as active participants and experts. It is indeed heartening to see both European and Jordanian experts working side by side for the welfare and development of education in both Europe and our part of the world.

I thank the European Commission and the Jordan Tempus Office for both organizing this timely event and lending support to our efforts. I also thank all of our Jordanian institutions which are actively taking part in Tempus projects, urging them to benefit further from the opportunities available through Tempus IV and Erasmus Mundus.

May God bless our joint efforts and cooperation.

Omar Shdiefat  
Minister of Higher Education & Scientific Research  
Tempus Day  
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