Building bridges between Germany and the Middle East and North Africa
2017
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Dear readers,

This year the DAAD Office Cairo successfully launched COSIMENA (Clusters of Scientific Innovation in the Middle East and North Africa). The aim of the project is to intensify scientific collaboration and increase the visibility of networks between researchers and universities in Germany and the countries of the MENA region. In order to build on existing partnerships, COSIMENA is harnessing synergies between DAAD funded projects, alumni and partner institutions that can be expanded to the whole MENA region. Based on the positive feedback on the Water Cluster, COSIMENA facilitated the set-up of additional clusters in the fields of health, energy, economy and urbanism.

Common global challenges in particular, such as climate change, population growth or water scarcity, call for innovative scientific ideas and interdisciplinary and intersectoral solutions. Therefore, numerous COSIMENA activities and events brought together stakeholders and from science, business, government and civil society. Alongside the “German Science Day” with over 300 PhD and postdoc candidates, the “German Science Night” took place for the first time during Ramadan and attracted over 1,000 participants to watch scientific documentaries and attend various activities at the Science Lounge. Moreover, the first COSIMENA Summer School focused on innovations in the fields of water, energy and health and brought together 30 junior researchers from Germany and the whole MENA region. In addition, our activities included the Health Cluster Conference, participation in the International Water Technology Conference, the Energy Cluster Conference, the Economy Cluster roundtable, the Solar Energy Poster Exhibition and the participation of the Urbanism Cluster in the Quality of Life Conference, among others.

The large number of participants, with their diverse scientific backgrounds and hailing from different countries of the MENA region and Germany, underlines the huge potential for further scientific exchange in the future. While we plan to intensify our activities within the existing clusters in the upcoming year, we will expand our thematic diversity by introducing clusters in the fields of agriculture and cultural heritage. I now wish you a pleasant read of the annual report, which reflects on numerous activities, showcases, inspiring speakers and participants as well as emphasising the increasing interest in joint and interdisciplinary research collaborations.

Dr Roman Luckscheiter
Director DAAD Office Cairo
COSIMENA - Fostering Collaboration between Science and Industry at the International Water Technology Conference (IWTC) in Hurghada

As a partner of the 20th International Water Technology Conference in Hurghada, COSIMENA supported the important exchange of science and industry in the field of water. The three-day event brought together more than 200 researchers, representatives of industry and policy makers from the Middle East and Africa as well as from various European countries including Germany, Italy and the Czech Republic. Thus it was a unique opportunity to present the Water Cluster as part of the DAAD’s new regional initiative, Clusters of Scientific Innovation in the Middle East and North Africa (COSIMENA).

In his presentation, the director of the DAAD Cairo, Dr Roman Luckscheiter, underscored that the goal of fostering cooperation on water-related issues depends on scientific exchange among researchers and research institutions from Germany and countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, COSIMENA encouraged various members of the Water Cluster to participate in this conference, including Prof. Hany El-Kateb and Dr Noama Shareef, who contributed as speakers focusing on afforestation and innovative wastewater treatment technologies.
COSIMENA Launched the Economy Cluster in Collaboration with the German-Arab Chamber of Industry and Commerce

On Tuesday, 23 May 2017, the DAAD and the German-Arab Chamber (AHK) joined forces to kick off COSIMENA's Economy Cluster with a roundtable on science and business. More than 50 representatives from the DAAD, the AHK, and Egypt’s research and industry sectors came together at the DAAD premises in Cairo to discuss developments and challenges regarding cooperation between academia and the private sector in Egypt. As the representative of the German Embassy in Egypt, Rauia Toama welcomed the guests and expressed her gratitude to the Egyptian business sector for having taken the initiative to propose this meeting. The roundtable, as she emphasised, should be embraced as an opportunity to foster cooperation among critical stakeholders. COSIMENA and the DAAD could offer a platform for such cooperation, but input from the assembled experts would be crucial, agreed Dr Roman Luckscheiter, head of the DAAD Office Cairo. Andreas Hergenröther, CEO of the German-Arab Chamber of Industry and Commerce, joined in remarking that Germany could serve as an example of such successful cooperation, and the AHK could offer its services and expertise on the topic.

The first of the two roundtables of the afternoon tackled cooperation between industry and academia in higher education. Dr Wolf, Assistant Professor at the Technical University of Berlin, introduced the topic by providing insight into Germany’s experience in TVET. His keynote address emphasised that the introduction of a dual training system is not an endeavour that can be realised through government effort alone, but additionally requires dedication from businesses as well as significant support from society. The young business entrepreneurs who were present agreed that a wider institutional effort must be undertaken to stimulate cooperation as well as to raise students’ awareness for the concept of innovation early on. While the participants agreed that the business sector should become significantly more active in, and take more responsibility for, the education
of prospective employees, representatives of the education sector described some fundamental ways in which education programmes have already begun responding to the demands of industry and the economy. Businesses are increasingly involved in setting qualification frameworks and interdisciplinarity has recently emerged as a quality of educational programmes. Still, it seems that major challenges remain for the realisation of dual training programmes, including a societal resistance to vocational training programmes as well as businesses’ fear of the risks involved in investing in students. At the end of the first roundtable, all participants recognised that developing success stories of cooperation between academia and business in the higher education sector is of utmost importance for a holistic remodelling of the system supported by political and societal forces.

Cooperation in research and development constituted the topic of the second roundtable of the afternoon. A short presentation of the Fraunhofer Institute by Dr Mona El-Tobgui, a successful model for cooperation between industry and academia, illustrated the fact that a successful cooperation can only emerge from a working model in which academia supports businesses in their research rather than taking over their tasks. Academia’s role must continue to be scientific innovation, while industry should work on its application. With this distinction of roles, successful partnerships can be built in which businesses provide for commercial success based on the scientific findings generated by academia.

Under Horizon 2020, the EU ran a prototype model to incentivise such collaboration by inviting academia and businesses to propose joint projects for which funding would then be provided. In the specific context of Egypt however, participants of the roundtable remarked that establishment of a framework for cooperation and clarification of the laws surrounding it would be prerequisite to organising joint initiatives. According to experts at the table, the pharmaceutical sector in particular - the best performing sector in Egypt - requires changes in regulation to facilitate advances in research and development. The roundtable ended with various offers of cooperation from universities such as TU Berlin El Gouna or the AUC, as well as a clear motivational message to young entrepreneurs in particular to keep trying to enter into cooperation with academic research institutions.

The roundtable has once more highlighted the benefits that can be reaped from an exchange between stakeholders. In order to enhance the much-needed collaboration between industry and academia, it has proven crucial to enter into a constructive conversation about best practices and the specific needs of the sectors. In particular, the roundtable brought to light young entrepreneurs’ power and drive for innovation, which can be utilised in transforming the Egyptian research and business landscape that lies ahead.
On Thursday, 15th June 2017, the DAAD Cairo hosted its first German Science Night at the DAAD Campus and Zamalek Cinema, which turned out to be a huge success. The evening involved the screening of three scientific documentaries at Zamalek Cinema, as well as a Science Lounge at the DAAD Campus comprised of various scientific presentations, information booths about German universities, the DAI and the DAAD, and some short films. The Science Night provided an innovative format that stimulated scientific exchange and invited visitors to discuss a variety of scientific topics in a dynamic setting. Visitors were encouraged to move between the two locations to make the most of the evening.
The German Ambassador to Egypt, H.E. Julius Georg Luy, and the head of the DAAD Cairo, Dr Roman Luckscheiter, opened the event at 9pm, welcoming all guests to an evening of fruitful exchange and stimulating discussions. The screening began with ‘Nature Tech – Life of Power’, a movie exploring biomimetics, followed by ‘Science and Islam – The Empire of Reason’, presenting the history of science in Islam. The programme at the cinema closed with ‘Plug & Pray’, a film that discusses the possibilities and pitfalls of artificial intelligence. Parallel to the movie screenings, guests were invited to visit the Science Lounge at the DAAD Campus. In addition to lively discussions in the DAAD garden, visitors fully enjoyed the interesting presentations given by various distinguished scientists and seized the opportunity to ask them questions about their projects and fields of study. The evening was rounded off at the DAAD Campus when Sohur was served to the guests at 1am. During the night, the DAAD Cairo welcomed more than 1000 visitors at both event locations. The dynamic format proved to be a great success in encouraging fruitful exchange and inciting new ideas and thoughts. The DAAD Cairo is looking forward to more such rewarding events and hopes to continue with German Science Night 2.0 during Ramadan 2018.
9TH-10TH JULY 2017

COSIMENA Health Cluster Conference in Cairo - Two Days Dedicated to Health in the MENA Region

On the evening of Sunday, 9 July 2017, and on Monday, 10 July 2017, the DAAD Office Cairo hosted its first Health Cluster Conference within the framework of its project Clusters of Scientific Innovation in the Middle East and North Africa (COSIMENA). Scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs, practitioners and policy makers from Tunisia, Sudan, Egypt and Germany came together for these two days to discuss existing and possible future cooperation within the region and with Germany. Dr Roman Luckscheiter, Director of the DAAD Office Cairo, and H. E. Sönke Siemon, Chargé d’affairs ad. Int. of the German Embassy in Egypt, opened Monday night’s event, which was attended by 60 guests representing both university
and non-university partners. In their welcome addresses, they highlighted the importance of scientific collaboration with regards to the health sector, both within the MENA region and between that region and Germany, and called for more multidisciplinary approaches to health. Journalist Ashraf Amin of Al Ahram Newspaper moderated the panel debate that followed, during which Dr John Jabbour, World Health Organisation Country Representative to Egypt, Dr Olaf Horstick from the Institute of Public Health at the University of Heidelberg, Prof. Haydar El Hadi Babikir, representing the University of Gezira, Dr Chajia Schloemann-Abid of Sfax University in Tunisia and Dr Karim Fawya from Cairo University, engaged in a constructive discussion on health challenges as well as successes and problems with the implementation of health-related policies.

After the previous evening’s dinner had provided an initial opportunity for extensive discussions between guests, 30 participants used the second conference day for an exchange of detailed stories relating the successes and challenges of cooperation. Various presentations and a hands-on workshop provided for fruitful and constructive discussions on the achievements of and need for building partnerships. Participants especially appreciated the workshop led by Dr Olaf Horstick, as it gave them the opportunity to share examples of successful and problematic partnerships and to analyse success factors.

The Health Cluster Conference succeeded in creating a space for its participants to engage in constructive and enhancing discussions on cooperation in the health sector. Following a bottom-up approach, the university and non-
4- Conjoint Update

Targeting the Neurosurgeons-
Provide the cutting edge of in-
Interactive Course, improving-
Live surgery

2015: Cairo
2016: Greifswald
2017: Cairo
2018: Greifswald
university representatives – the most integral parts of existing and potential partnerships – came together to share their ideas and to engage in networking activities. Those partners benefiting from the efforts of the DAAD described the institution’s role as that of a facilitator of exchange and communication within the MENA region and with Germany. Notably, participants remarked on the crucial role that COSIMENA plays in serving as a platform for bringing together key actors and partners in the field of health and providing a space to seek out potential opportunities for scientific collaboration.
13th-17th July 2017

Decision Making in Public Health – A Course Delivered in Khartoum by the Institute of Public Health, Heidelberg

The COSIMENA Health Cluster, in collaboration with the Institute of Public Health, University of Heidelberg and the Public Health Institute of Sudan, organised a course focusing on “Decision Making in Public Health” from 13 to 17 July in Khartoum.

Dr Olaf Horstick and Dr Pauline Grys from Heidelberg’s Institute of Public Health held this weeklong course at the premises of the Public Health Institute of Sudan, bringing together 25 accomplished experts in public health with multiple scientific and professional backgrounds, including many leading experts from the Federal Ministry of Health. During the course, the participants were provided with the necessary tools to develop and successfully implement evidence-based concepts and decisions in public health.

The concept of decision-making in public health practice was introduced, leading to an exploration of the process of selection and implementation of appropriate public health interventions.

Divided into small groups focusing on malaria, patient satisfaction and baby-friendly hospitals, the participants developed their own practical approaches throughout the week and presented their interesting and innovative results on the last day of the course. The high number of applicants and the consistently positive feedback from participants show the huge demand for such training courses in the field of public health in Sudan.
17th July 2017

More than 300 PhD Candidates and Postdocs Participated in the German Science Day 2017

For the sixth time, the DAAD Cairo invited numerous experts and scientists to the German Science Day – this year within the framework of Clusters of Scientific Innovation in the Middle East and North Africa (COSIMENA). The German Science Day acts as a platform for promising doctoral and postdoctoral candidates to engage with the German research landscape and for attendees to get meaningful insight and initial feedback for their planned research in Germany.

The aim is to foster further interdisciplinary and binational research relationships and to intensify the already substantial exchange in scientific research between Egypt and Germany.

This year’s German Science Day opened with a panel discussion on “Doing Research at German Universities”. Throughout the day, more than 300 participants were invited to attend numerous lectures given by our German guests on the latest research and development “made in Germany”. Amongst others, Dr. Angela Krewani of Philipps-Universität Marburg provided insight into the impact of TV sitcoms on their audiences. Dr. Walid Azab of the Freie Universität Berlin presented advanced scientific findings showing viruses to be masters of co-evolution and a constant life threat. In her short lecture, Prof. Dr. Maike Petersen of Philipps-Universität Marburg focused on the
genes and enzymes involved in plant specialised metabolism, specifically in plant in-vitro cultures. Prof. Dr Rudolf Schäfer and Christoph Banhardt of the Technische Universität Berlin presented the university’s research in urban development and the efficiency of renewable energies in Egypt. Dr Ezzelin Metwali and Dr Murad Omar of the Technical University of Munich shared their latest research in the field of nanostructured materials for solid-state batteries and advances in optical biomedical imaging, respectively. Moreover, Dr Marc Milling offered workshops on “Project Management and third Party Funds”.

In addition, the participants had the opportunity for individual counselling with the Technische Universität Berlin, the Technical University of Munich, the Freie Universität Berlin, Philipps-Universität Marburg and the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. The counselling sessions were a unique opportunity for the PhD and postdoc candidates to establish initial contact with German professors, to present their proposals and to get valuable insights and feedback. Following the German Science Day, the attendees will be able to use these established connections to further develop their research proposals and possibly find a doctoral supervisor. Other representatives of the universities and funding organisations, such as the DAAD and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, used information booths and sessions to provide insights into scholarships, programmes, application procedures and financing models. In addition, a panel consisting of representatives of the Research, Development and Innovation Programme (RDI), the Science and Technology Development Fund in Egypt (STDF) and Erasmus+ elaborated on “Best Practices on Utilizing Project Funding”.

The big rush and high number of applicants demonstrated once again Egyptians’ interest in the German higher education sector and the importance of the DAAD’s work in providing outstanding Egyptian scholars with direct contacts to German research institutions.
Launching the First COSIMENA Summer School on Training for Innovation

In line with COSIMENA’s goal to tackle today’s global challenges by fostering scientific collaboration, the DAAD Office Cairo, in cooperation with the Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport, organised the first “COSIMENA Summer School” under the title “Training for Innovation – How science and technology can contribute to a better life for all”. The Summer School aims at training young researchers to become adept innovators in their respective fields.

The 30 young researchers and experts who participated in the two-week Summer School came from nine different countries among the MENA Region – Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, Jordan, Libya, Syria and Lebanon – as well as Germany.

The Summer School was divided into the three main clusters of Innovation, Water and Health, in addition to a “Self-Marketing” DKA Module led by Dr Heba Salama, Alexandria University. Participants were divided into five working groups to share their experiences and familiarise themselves with the different methodologies, policies and strategies adopted in each country. Each cluster ended with a joint presentation summarising what each group had learned and what knowledge they could take back to benefit their home countries. It is worth mentioning that different trainers introduced each cluster: Dr Annika Arnold was responsible for Innovation and Energy, Dr Eng. Stefan Panglisch, Dr Ashraf Hilal and Dr Meike Lenzen presented Water, and Dr Mohamed Nour tackled the Health cluster.

By the end of the Summer School, participants had gathered insights into membrane technology, wastewater treatment and Nexus, as well as being introduced to new information and international points of view, allowing them to understand the concept of innovation in a Multi-Level-Perspective context.

The working groups presented different innovative projects with respect to water solutions that could be implemented in the MENA Region: a New Ceramic Filter, an Integrated Micro-System for grey water processing, Green Villages, an Integrated wastewater treatment system and the development of smart cities to create sustainable communities.

Ms Louise Sarant, an environment and science journalist and moderator of the closing session, gave the participants the advice, “think big but start small”. The participants’ main vision should be developing innovative projects, but upon implementation they should start with the small ideas that are actually practicable.

The participants came to the conclusion that each country has its own challenges and opportunities in terms of its innovation and progress. However, most agreed that there are common challenges in the MENA countries, such as high unemployment rates, low investment in R&D, high population growth rates and lack of good infrastructure, etc. Challenges are not only faced in developing countries but also in developed countries like Germany. Germany is facing other kinds of challenges since it has a lower level of digitalization than other leading countries and a slow adaptation process in the educational sector.

One of the best outcomes of the COSIMENA Summer School is the social network built among the participants. Having 30 participants from 10 different countries enriched the interdisciplinary aspect of the Summer School. This network established among the participants will be sustained through the social media channels with which they will continue to share their experiences and maintain cooperative relationships.
COSIMENA Solar Energy Poster Exhibition in Collaboration with the German-Arab Chamber

Following up on the 9th Egyptian-German Renewables Day, which took place on the 8th of October in Cairo, the DAAD Office Cairo hosted 50 scientists and economists during the opening of the Solar Energy Poster Exhibition and Networking Dinner on the evening of Monday, 10 October 2017. Dr Roman Luckscheiter, Director of the DAAD Office Cairo, welcomed the participants and opened the event, which was organised in collaboration with the German-Arab Chamber of Industry and Commerce (GACIC).

The Solar Energy Networking Dinner joined a series of previous events hosted under the auspices of the DAAD Cairo and addressing the potential of renewable energy, including the “Rethinking Energy” conference in 2015 as well as the workshop on the study “80 Gigawatts of Change: Egypt’s Future Electricity Pathways” and a one-day workshop presenting the study conducted by the Fraunhofer ISE on Electricity Costs from Renewable Energy Technologies in 2016.

As a result of economic and population growth, the energy demand in the MENA countries will continue to rise in the coming decades. Sunlight as a renewable energy source is available in abundance, but its implementation is only progressing slowly. In order to address this issue, researchers and economists were invited to present their solar energy research and projects in the MENA region. The event turned out to be
a remarkable success, emphasising the interface between science and business. Seven scientific posters were presented by the Academy of Scientific Research & Technology, ERANETMED, the German Aerospace Center (DLR), Germany Zeweil City of Science & Technology, Cleantech Arabia, students of the TU Berlin El Gouna and two other researchers from Egyptian universities. In addition, eight companies were keen to market their energy activities and projects that evening. During the networking dinner, many participants exchanged new ideas for upcoming projects and gave positive feedback about the COSIMENA Solar Energy Poster Exhibition.
Health Cluster Expert Session in Mansoura - Germany in the Nile Delta

In the scope of Germany in the Nile Delta under the auspices of the German Embassy in Cairo, the DAAD successfully organised the COSIMENA Health Cluster Expert Session on German-Egyptian Research Cooperation on Sunday, 29 October 2017. The intention of the COSIMENA Health Cluster is to build upon existing collaborations and to develop strategies and formats for a concentrated collaboration and joint projects within the MENA region.

In welcoming the guests, his Excellency the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Egypt, Georg Luy, expressed his appreciation to the German Egyptian research cooperation in the field of health. In the following address, Dr Roman Luckscheiter emphasised how the COSIMENA Health Cluster provides an interdisciplinary setting to illuminate existing cooperation between research institutions in Germany and countries of the MENA region in the health sector.

The first presentation, given by Prof. Domres of the German Institute for Disaster Medicine, Dr Gamal Abbas, President of the Egyptian Resuscitation Council, and Dr Amr Yassen, Secretary of the Egyptian Resuscitation Council, introduced the MoU between Mansoura University and the German Institute of Disaster Medicine and Emergency Medicine on the topic of emergency medicine.

The second presentation, given by Dr Mohamed Salama, Mansoura University, described the successful model for cooperation between Mansoura University and the Technical University of Munich within the GeneFINDER project. GeneFINDER aims to study the genetics of familial neurodegenerative diseases in Egyptian patients.

The Expert Session ended with a fruitful panel discussion moderated by Dr Yasmeen Taalab of Mansoura University about the importance of continuing research cooperation between Germany and Egypt within the new initiative COSIMENA.
The DAAD Office Cairo, in collaboration with the AHK and the KfW Development Bank, organised the Egyptian-German Energy conference “Energy-Efficient Buildings for the Future” on 12 November at its Zamalek campus. The conference brought together speakers from the financial sector, research and academia, and civil society to examine new possibilities for forging a more energy efficient Egypt.

The Clusters of Scientific Innovation in the Middle East and North Africa (COSIMENA) Energy Cluster conference highlighted the importance of energy efficiency, particularly in the building sector. The welcoming addresses by Rauia Toama of the Science Office at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Cairo, Dr Roman Luckscheiter, Director of the DAAD Office Cairo, Andreas Hergenröther, CEO of the German-Arab Chamber of Industry & Commerce, and Burkhard Hinz, Director of the KfW office Cairo, reflected the multi-sector focus of the conference and emphasised the pressing environmental and economic need to promote the rational use of energy.

The discussions were organised according to three themes. For the first theme, energy efficiency and building modernisation, Burkhard Hinz explored funding lines for energy efficiency initiatives and Andreas Wanke presented a case study of effective implementation of energy efficiency practices at the Freie Universität Berlin. Next, Dr Wafaa Nadim of the German University in Cairo and Clemens Hott, Sales Director Mashreq at BASF, discussed sustainable buildings in terms of challenges and opportunities for energy efficiency. Then, the founder of the Egyptian Green Building Council, Dr Ayman Mosallam of the University of California, Irvine, discussed governmental policies and the role of civil society organisations in promoting sustainable buildings.

While the thematic presentations focused on broader strategic issues, the afternoon working groups brought together researchers and architects to discuss the latest innovations in sustainable buildings. Wael Moussa of the Technical University of Munich as well as Christoph Banhardt and Prof. Thomas Löffler of the Technische Universität Berlin, El Gouna presented their research on energy efficient architecture and on technology that takes into account the Egyptian environment and climate. Dr Adel Beshara, Chairman and Managing Director of Global Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Solutions, and architect Mohammed el Sokkary presented case studies of recently constructed sustainable buildings in Cairo that successfully reduce energy consumption.

The conference closed with a panel discussion with Burkhard Hinz, Prof. Michael Eichner of the German University in Cairo, Andreas Hergenröther, and Prof. Mohammed Salheen, Director IUSD/ IDG, which was moderated by Dr Roman Luckscheiter. The panel reiterated the importance of promoting the efficient use of energy through regulation, financial incentives, and increased end-user awareness. Through a networking lunch and dinner, attendees had the chance to exchange ideas and form connections, laying the foundation for a bright future for sustainable buildings.
Two Days Dedicated to Noncommunicable Diseases in the MENA Region

In collaboration with NCDFREE, the DAAD Office Cairo hosted two events raising awareness of noncommunicable diseases in the MENA region among junior and senior scientists and researchers. NCDFREE is a global social start up that makes the health burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) relevant, accessible and prominent in the minds of millennials worldwide.

On 18 November the Innovation Incubator showcased the wide variety of activities and concepts which NCDFREE has developed and championed since 2013, specifically focusing on the diverse communication and advocacy tools used to engage young professionals and students in the topics of NCDs and Global Health. The over 70 attendees gained innovative thinking, advocacy and leadership skills through interactive presentations, skill sharing and design-oriented exercises. In her keynote Ghada Mostafa Khalafallah from the Breast Cancer Foundation of Egypt introduced effective methods to use communication as a tool for organising awareness campaigns. The event ultimately connected a diverse group of next generation thinkers and leaders with NCDs, NCDFREE and Global Health through stimulating and exciting activities.

On 19 November the Long Lunch attracted 35 young and established leaders of different field on health focusing on cancer. The programme framed the issue of cancer in the MENA region, where the largest increase in cancer incidence in the next 15 years is likely to be in, taking into account the trends for all related risk factors. The event explored successful and innovative ways of decreasing the risk factors by tapping into health and non-health related topics such as smoking, nutrition, physical activity, environmental health and the built environment. Over a healthy three-course meal outstanding keynotes were delivered by Dr Asmus Hammerich, Director for NCDs and mental health at the World Health Organization Regional office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO), Prof. Dr Dina Husseiny Salama, Chief Scientific investigator of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Prof. Dr Malak Shaheen, Paediatrician and active advocate for NCDs in children (NCD Child) and Ms Enas Mohamed, corporate communications manager. During the event the participants gained a different perspective on the issue of cancer, as well as innovative thinking, advocacy and leadership skills.
COSIMENA Urbanism Cluster Kick-Off Event in El Gouna – First International Conference “Towards a Better Quality of Life”

As a partner of the first international conference “Towards a Better Quality of Life”, COSIMENA supported the important scientific exchange in the field of urbanism. The three-day event provided a platform for over 275 academics, experts, practitioners, researchers, professionals, policy makers, companies, start-ups, students and delegates to exchange new ideas and bring them in fruitful discussion. The event aimed to move the world closer to more sustainable living environments but also continued to build relations between researchers and decision makers from the Middle East and North Africa as well as from Germany. The DAAD Office Cairo used this unique occasion to launch the COSIMENA Urbanism Cluster.

The conference was inaugurated by chairmen Prof. Dr-Ing. Matthias Barjenbruch (Director, Technical University of Berlin Campus El Gouna) and Prof. Khalid Mohamed El Zahaby (Chairman, HBRC). In their welcome address, they upheld the potentiality of this German-Egyptian scientific conference to enhance the sustainability of cities. An idea that was reinforced by Dr Roman Luckscheiter (Director, DAAD Office Cairo) and Associate Professor Dr Mohab Elrefaie (Senior Advisor, GIZ) in their speeches. Honorable Red Sea Governor General Ahmed Abdallah was being present for the second day of the conference and encouraged a continued scientific cooperation leading to practical outputs for the betterment of the Red Sea Region and overall Egypt. He also emphasised the need for academic research especially in the field of regional and rural development, clean energy technology expansion and industrial and economic growth.

On the second day of the conference the DAAD Office Cairo hosted an expert round table discussion moderated by Prof. Rudolf Schäfer in order to launch the COSIMENA Urbanism Cluster. Prof. Dr Lang (Technical University of Munich), Prof. Dr Mariam Chabou (Ecole Polytechnique d’Architecture et d’Urbanisme Alger, Algeria), Prof. Dr Layla Raswol (Dohuk University, Iraq), Prof. Dr Sahar Sodoudi (Freie Universität Berlin), Prof. Dr Bernd Hillemeyer (Technical University of Berlin) and Dr-Ing. Wulf-Holger Arndt (Technical University of Berlin) discussed the broad aspects of sustainable urban development by setting up a first thematic framework for the cluster, focusing on energy efficiency, urban renewal, green urban design, sustainable mobility and transport, climate change and building materials.

The conference provided insights into exemplary national and international case-studies and best practices for building sustainable and resilient livelihoods in harmony with the ecosystem and local resources, as well as exhibiting special German project experiences in the construction sector, climate change, green urban infrastructure, mobility, water, housing, energy etc. this conference has opened a path towards a better quality of life in Egypt, the MENA region and beyond.
In collaboration with the Institute of Public Health of the Universität Heidelberg, the COSIMENA Health Cluster hosted the four-day training course “Decision-Making in Public Health: Evidence, Politics” at the premises of the DAAD Office Cairo from 10 to 13 December 2017. On the first day, Dr Roman Luckscheiter, Director of the DAAD Office Cairo, and Mr Simon Brombeiss, cultural attaché of the German Embassy in Egypt, welcomed Dr Olaf Horstick and Dr Pauline Gryss from the Institute of Public Health as well as the 20 participants in the course. Dr Luckscheiter and Mr Brombeiss highlighted the enduring cooperation between the University of Heidelberg and the DAAD Office Cairo, which had organised this second public health course after the first had been held in Khartoum in July 2017.

The 20 participants were chosen out of 250 applicants and came from five different countries in the MENA Region: Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Paralleling the positive results in Khartoum, the high number of applicants once again showed the great interest and demand for such training courses in the field of public health in the MENA region.

The concept was based on team applications consisting of a junior and a mid-senior so that the group was very heterogeneous, with varying levels of experience. While some are enrolled in Masters programmes, others work for well-known international organisations such as Action Against Hunger and the International Committee of the
Red Cross or for organisations, universities and companies located in Egypt and in the region. After the participants expressed their high expectations for the course, Dr Olaf Horstick introduced them to the group work based structure of the course instead of formal lectures, using participatory teaching techniques. Dr Horstick and Dr Grys talked about the three steps of making a rational decision – Assessing-Choosing-Changing – and highlighted the direct link between data and decision-making. In the following days, the trainers were able to foster a creative learning atmosphere by encouraging the participants to take an active role in the lectures and to present their group results. The participants learned a lot and came up with their own ideas of how to bridge the research gaps.

In the end, Dr Horstick and Dr Grys picked up the basic questions from the beginning: What is decision-making and what makes a decision accountable. Everyone was able to answer these questions now since the training course had made the participants more confident in the subject. Furthermore, they had learned how to make a better decision by finding their own decision-making strategy.

After the four-day course, Dr Olaf Horstick and Dr Pauline Grys drew a positive conclusion and were delighted by the motivation and self-confidence of the participants that had made the interactive training course such a huge success.