

Convention on  
Biological Diversity

## Newsletter n°1: Resume of DEBPAL2 project activities in occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity 22 May 2013

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Project Acronym: **DEBPAL2** - Project Coordinator: **AL-QUDS UNIVERSITY** - Project full title: **Reinforcing Capacity Building for Defending Biodiversity in the Palestinian Territories**  
Summary: **This additional deliverable provides an overview of the project activities at month 15 and the next planned steps for the next 21 months.** Document ID: **DB-Veltha-WP6-D6.6-Special-Biodiv-day.**



## Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Networking in Biodiversity Research.....	5
2.1 Establishment of a Palestinian branch of the Mediterranean Forest DNA Bank.....	5
2.2 Al- Quds University graduates following a PhD course in Italy .....	6
2.3 Social Network and photo competition .....	7
2.4 Selection of 8 Pilot sites .....	8
2.5 Field trip to 3 Pilot Sites and other biodiversity conservation facilities .....	9
2.6 Data sheets of the visited pilot sites.....	11
2.7 Training in “Ex situ” conservation of plant species .....	18
3. Training in technological transfer and new business system.....	20
4. Training in EU research projects appraisal.....	21
5. Development of a Research and Policy Strategy .....	23
5.1 Guidelines for national strategies .....	23
5.2 Workshop in Palestine: presentation of guidelines and first steps towards a policy strategy.....	23
5.3 Next steps .....	26
Annex 1 Programme of the Workshop .....	27

*In the cover page: pictures taken during the field trip in the Pilot Site n°2 on 18 May 2012*

## 1. Introduction

**DEBPAL2** is a FP7 Coordination Action financed by the European Commission with the objective of reinforcing the cooperation capacities of Al Quds University, to improve its actions, researches and environmental activities in defence of Biodiversity (including Agro-Biodiversity), in the interlinked fields of conservation, restoration and legal protection, as requested by the international Convention on Biological Diversity, a major commitment in the European Union main politics.

The United Nations has proclaimed May 22 the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.

In December 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted 22 May as IDB, to commemorate the adoption of the text of the Convention on 22 May 1992 by the Nairobi Final Act of the Conference for the Adoption of the Agreed Text of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

This special newsletter has been issued in occasion of the 2013 International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) and presents the activities of the DEBPAL2 project, the first results achieved and a preliminary plan for the next 21 months.

In the following there is a summary of the project activities related to the work packages:

- WP 2 Networking in Biodiversity Research
- WP 3 Training in technological transfer and new business system
- WP 4 Training in EU research projects appraisal
- WP 5 Development of a Research and Policy Strategy

This deliverable will be also used as a basis of discussion with the project partners and other Palestinian stakeholders, mainly the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Research and other Palestinian University, about common activities in the second part of the project.

Furthermore, this document will be also presented at the Workshop “*EU – Palestinian cooperation in research and innovation*” to be held on 29 May 2013 in Palestine, Caesar Hotel, Al-Masyoun – Ramallah.

## 2. Networking in Biodiversity Research

This specific networking is being developed through a strict cooperation with the DAFNE Department of Tuscia University in Viterbo (Italy), having a renown high experience in biodiversity analysis and related recovery plans in several Mediterranean area, as well as recent experience in FP projects.

The main networking activities are: a) sharing of scientific information about biodiversity recovery plans, setting up joint experiments and identifying future applications in FP7 projects; b) improvement of the laboratories by identifying the needed equipment for the Al Quds University scientific activity and by purchasing the most relevant ones (complying with the budget availability).



A **spectrofluorometer** has been already purchased with the project funds, together with some minor equipment and is running at the biology lab in al Quds University, as for the side picture

*Fig.1 The spectrofluorometer placed in the Al Quds Biology lab*

### 2.1 Establishment of a Palestinian branch of the Mediterranean Forest DNA Bank

The already existing cooperation between the DAFNE Department and Al-Quds University in the “Mediterranean Forest DNA Bank” ([www.medna-bank.eu](http://www.medna-bank.eu)) has been reinforced and at the present 2 Al-Quds graduates are following their PhD courses in Italy, working on DNA extraction and conservation; the aim is to organize a **Palestinian Branch of the Bank** to store and conserve the most important endangered and valuable Palestinian plants. To this purpose, a specific training has been started (as reported in the following section 2.2) and a set of 8 relevant Pilot Sites has been defined.

3 Pilot sites has been visited during a joint field trip with Al-Quds professors and students , Tuscia University professor and PhD researchers, Veltha partners and officers of the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture (see next section 3.2), in order to start a parallel research between the two involved

Universities: while the PhD students in Italy are been trained in the advanced techniques used in Tuscia University, their colleagues in Palestine will organise similar connected activities and will start to analyse some pilot sites, then the preliminary phase of the DNA bank branch will be initiated. The branch will be fully operative before the end of the project.

### 2.2 Al- Quds University graduates following a PhD course in Italy

At the beginning of the project Al Quds University launched a selection for having two graduates following a 3 year PhD course in Tuscia University (Italy).

*Two female students have been selected; their families have been assured that the students would not have had any kind of problems in wearing the veil, as other Islamic female students normally attend the courses in Viterbo since several years.*

After the selection, prof. Schirone from Tuscia University started the procedure for the PhD course “*Sciences and technologies for the forest and environmental management*” and the students applied for it. Their application has been formally accepted on 19 March 2013 (as for the communication hereinafter), then all the bureaucratic procedures have been accomplished.

**From:**Daniela Loreti\_Ufficio\_Offerta\_Formativa <danielal@unitus.it>  
**To:**iman Alhirsh <imanalhirsh@yahoo.com>  
**Cc:**Bellarosa Rosanna <bellaros@unitus.it>  
**Sent:**Tuesday, March 19, 2013 3:11 PM  
**Subject:**

In attachment you can find the letter of your admission to the first year of the Ph.D. Programme in "Sciences and technologies for the forest and environmental management".

Best regards.

Daniela Loreti  
Ufficio Offerta Formativa e Orientamento in Entrata  
Università degli Studi della Tuscia  
Tel. 0761357961  
Fax 0761357963

**The 2 students are in Tuscia University since 10th of May 2013** and at the present they are being trained in the preliminary phases linked to the biodiversity conservation.

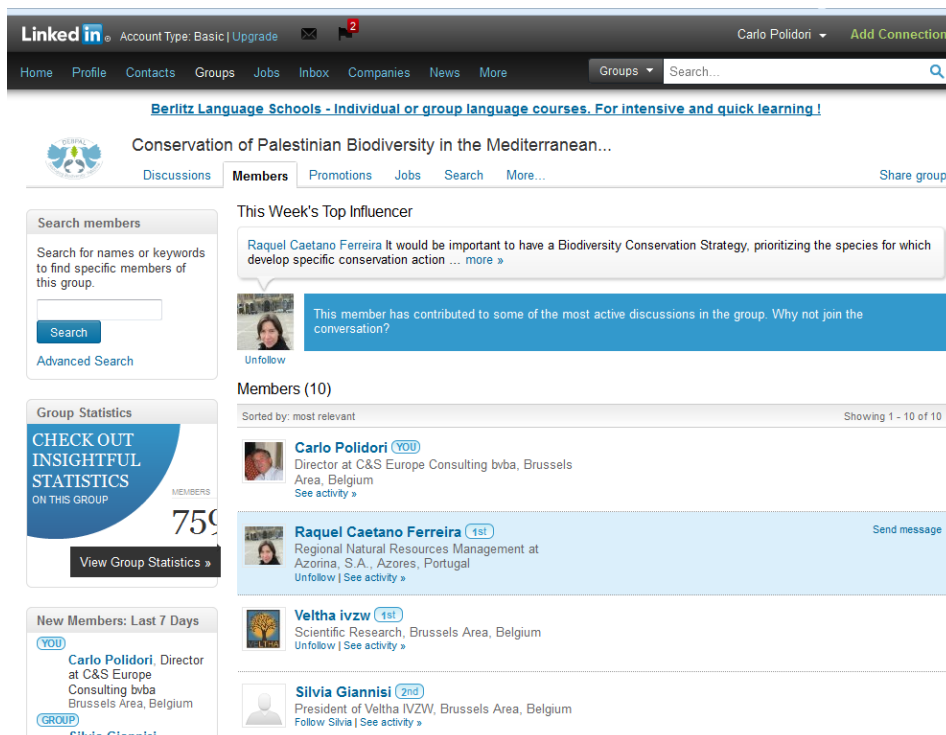
The second step of the training foresees an introduction to the Mediterranean Forest DNA Bank and the related techniques of “ex situ” and “In situ” conservation, as well as the management of protected areas; then a parallel work with other researchers in Al Quds University will start, in order to establish the local Branch of the Bank.

An updating of such a programme will be presented in an event in Italy (Rome) hosted by the partner Vivai Torsanlorenzo after summer 2013.

### 2.3 Social Network and photo competition

A social network “Conservation of Palestinian Biodiversity in the Mediterranean hot spot” has been set up in the form of an open discussion group on LinkedIn. Mirror sites are under preparation on Facebook and Twitter. The first participants are the project partners, students of Al Quds and Tuscia University and other Palestinian stakeholders.

The network has been established with a certain delay respect to the original plan, but it is now going to be enlarged towards the scientific circle of the participants from the involved universities; in fact further Italian and Palestinian academic centres have been already involved, as well as other stakeholders from Palestine, Portugal and Belgium.



The aim is to use this specific social network to discuss both scientific and policy aspects of the biodiversity conservation in Palestine and in the whole Mediterranean hot spot.

The partner Vivai Torsanlorenzo launched the **Palestinian Biodiversity photo contest**, a competition for Palestinian students, that has been announced during the workshop of 19 May, held in Jerusalem.



The first 5 photos of each category selected by the Committee will be exposed at the Torsanlorenzo International Award on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2013, the authors will receive a certification of participation

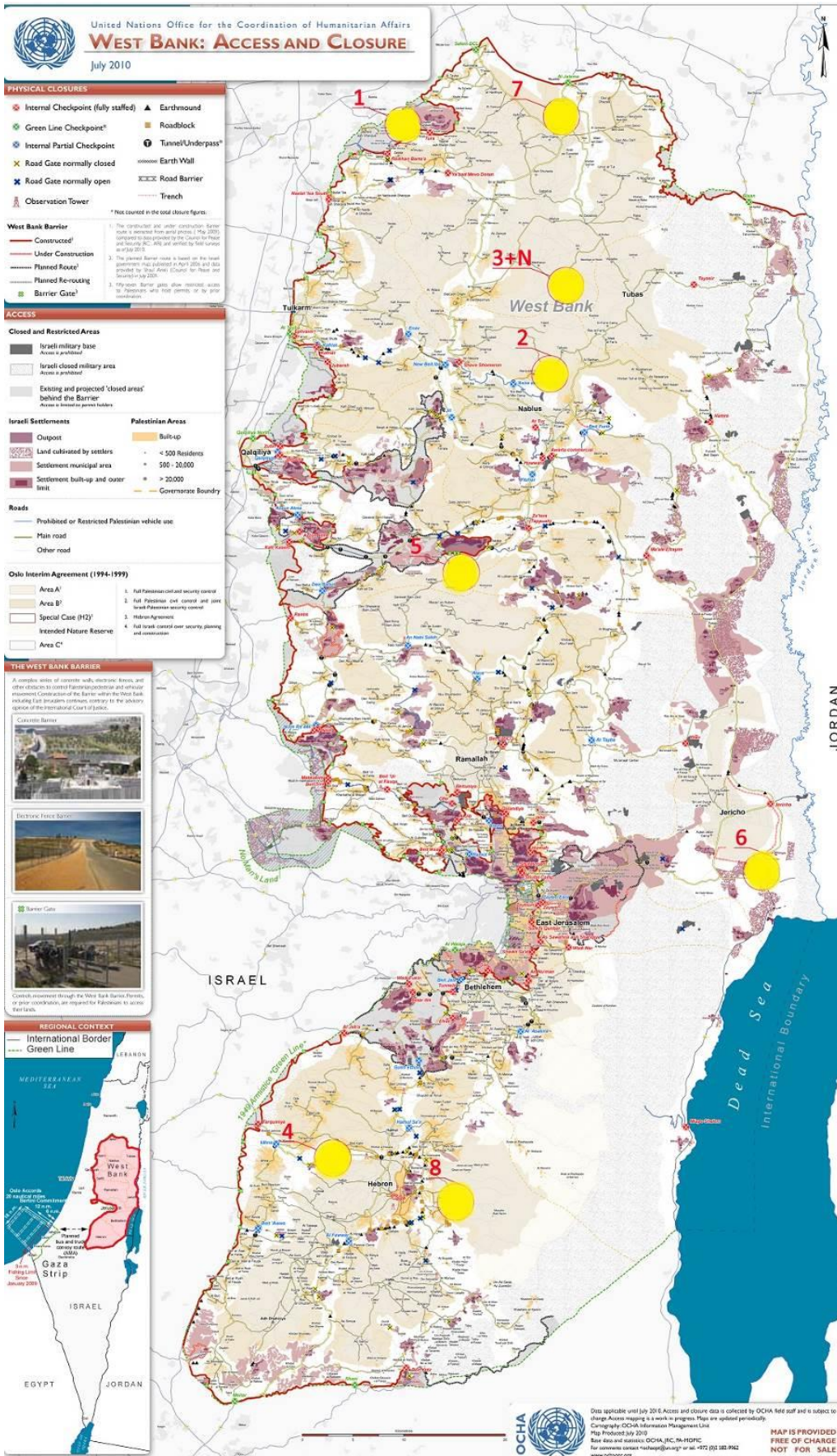
The winner of each category will be invited by Vivai Torsanlorenzo at the seminar “From Research to Business”. The seminar will be held at the Torsanlorenzo Group Headquarter in Italy on October 2013.



Participants may enter their photograph in any of the two categories: **Environmental biodiversity** and **Urban biodiversity**: the first ten photos selected by an international committee will be exposed at an event in Italy and the winner of each category will win a travel in Italy to participate at the seminar: “from research to business”.

Fig.2 the presentation of the photo competition rules

2.4 Selection of 8 Pilot sites



8 Pilot sites have been selected, in order to deepen (working also on the spots) the themes of Plant Biodiversity, of the Conservation theories and methods, of the Vegetation management from a consistent forest ecology point of view.

The sites, proposed by Prof. Vallino, Prof. Schirone and Prof. Sawalha have been highlighted on the UN Map “West Bank: Access and Closure”: an A0 format of such map, with the instructions on how reach the sites and pictures taken during the field trip is under preparation and will be a further deliverable of the project. A short description of the 8 sites is in the following page

Fig.3 The A0 Map with the 8 Sites

- 1) Um-Rehan Nature Reserve (Um Rehan Forest). Example of Mediterranean-Maquis/Forest, protected since the BRITISH MANDATE. Legal Status: protected. - Localization: North of the city of Tulkarem; from the administrative point of view is in the extreme Western part of the Governorate of Jenin
- 2) See the specific data sheet
- 3) See the specific data sheet
- 4) El Qof Forest and Nursery of El Qof. Example of “plantation” during the BRITISH MANDATE, with subsequent intervention of “plantation” during the JORDANIAN PERIOD, inserted on a pre-existing kernel of Natural Plants. Legal Status: protected. Localization: Governorate of Hebron.
- 5) Khirbit Quais .Example of Natural Flora and Vegetation in a private land. Legal Status: unprotected, but considered an IPA Site (Important Plant Area). Localization: sector south of the Salfit (Salfeit) administrative zone.
- 6) Ein Al- Fashkha - Example of Natural Vegetation in the Dead Sea Ecological Region. Legal Status: protected. Localization: Governorate of Jericho.
- 7) Example of “Plantation” of the JORDANIAN MANDATE, well conserved and having a close canopy. It is a site on the top of the tall hill dominating the city of Jenin. Localization: higher part of the Governorate of Jenin.
- 8) See the specific data sheet

### 2.5 Field trip to 3 Pilot Sites and other biodiversity conservation facilities

A field trip to 3 Pilot Sites has been organised by Al-Quds University, with the participation of Palestinian students and professors, officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and partners from Italy and Belgium.



A coach with the participants travelled on 18 and 20 May 2013 to the pilot Sites n° 2, 3 and 8 indicated in the map above.

2 officers of the Ministry of Agriculture were in the places 2 and 3 and explained the characteristics of the sites; then they accompanied the visitors to a nursery used for the cultivation and propagation of the natural Palestinian species.

*Fig.4 Inside the coach with the professors and the students*



For each site visited, a preliminary data sheet has been prepared and some specimens have been collected, to be used according in the preliminary approach of “ex-situ conservation”. The specific data sheets are reported in the following paragraphs, together with more detailed maps, comments and pictures

*Fig.5 Prof. Mutaz Qutob, Coordinator of DEBPAL2, explains the concept and objectives of the project to the students during the travel toward the first Pilot Site.*



*Fig.6: the participants at the field trips*

2.6 Data sheets of the visited pilot sites


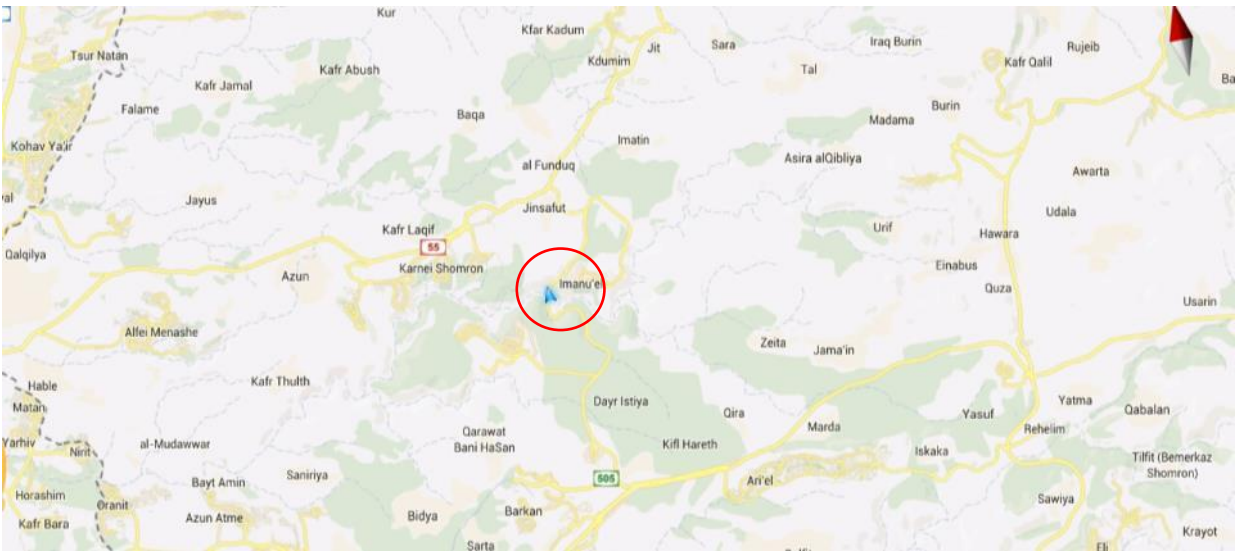
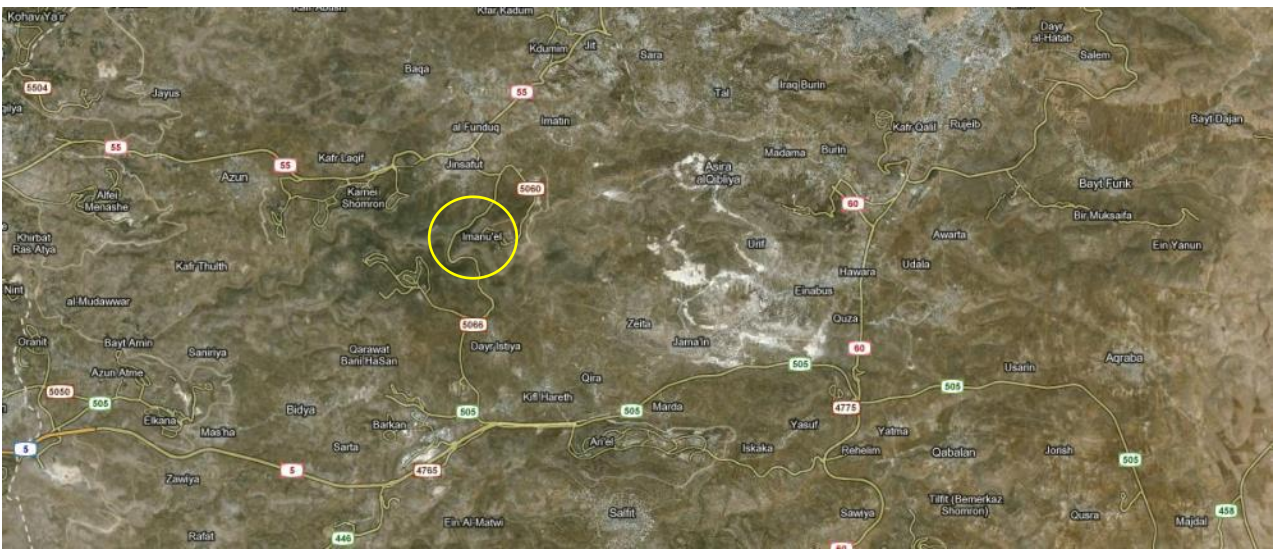
Site n°2		Wadi Al Zarka - Wadi Kana - Wadi Al Shair (Eshai'r)	
	Localization	Central coordinates	32°09'36.78" Nord, 35°08'01.60" EST
		Governorate	Sulfeit (Sulfit)
	Legal status	Protected	
	Description	Example of Natural Gariga evolving in Macchia, protected since the JORDANIAN PERIOD.	
			
			



Fig.7 - Site n°2 - Orange and lemon cultivation merged with a natural environment



Fig.8- Site n°2 –Collection of water specimens; on the left hill there is an urbanized area (Israeli settlement)

Note: the pictures in the cover page have also been taken during the field visit in the Pilot Site n° 2



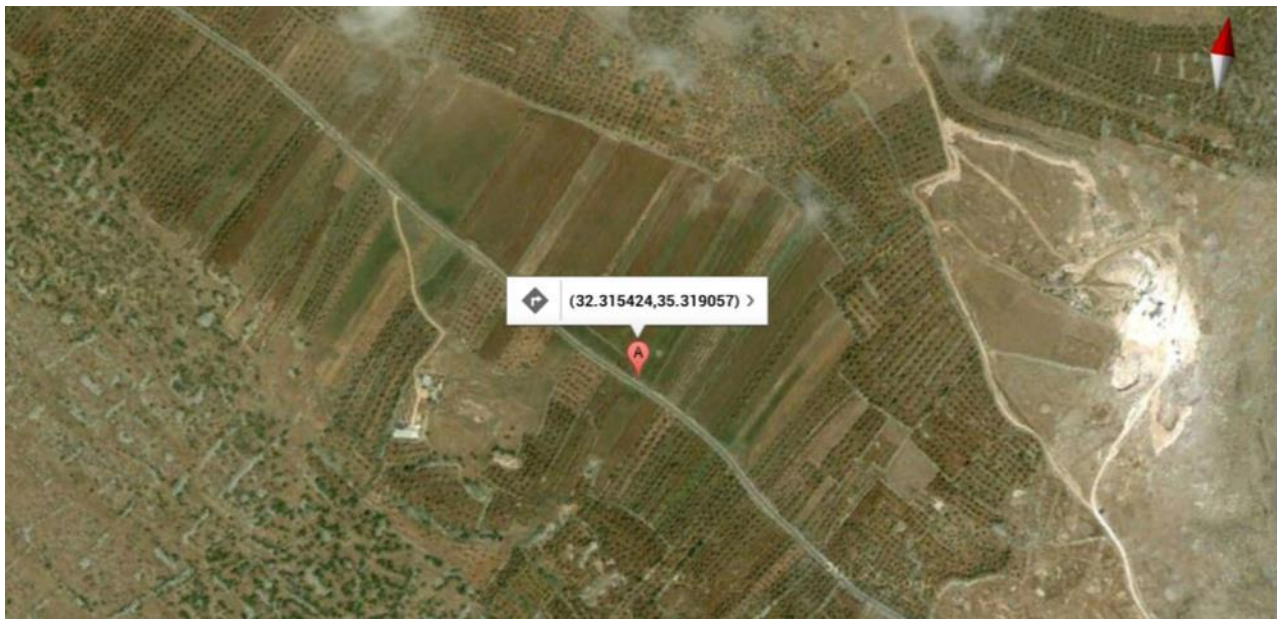
Site n°3		Siris	
	Localization	Central coordinates	32°18'55.47" Nord, 35°19'04.32" EST
		Governorate	Jenin
	Legal status	Protected	
	Description	Example of Plantation of the JORDANIAN PERIOD, around a pre-existing kernel of Natural Plants.	
			
			



Fig. 8 - Site n°3: Cultivated and irrigated lands. Natural plants on the hills



Fig. 9 - Site n°3: rare tree inside an olive tree plantation. The seeds of this tree are used for propagation by the nursery



Fig. 10 -: Cultivation of natural endangered and/or valuable species in a nursery managed by the Ministry of Agriculture close to the Site n°3. The small plants are distributed for propagation in the Palestinian territories



Fig. 11 -: Explanation of the propagation techniques




Site n°8		Bani Naim area	
	Localization	Central coordinates	31°30'08.16" Nord, 35°11'24." EST
		Governorate	Hebron (5 Km East of Hebron-City)
	Legal status		
	Description	Example of spots of Natural Vegetation on mountainous – tall hills slopes. Also: going East toward Eastern Slopes of the West Bank, old Natural trees and shrubs with less density (dry natural habitats).	
			
			



Fig. 12 -: Site n° 8: natural environment and local species conservation facilities



Fig. 12 -: Site n° 8: Prof. Khalid Sawalha shows the plantlets ready for the propagation





*Fig. 13: Palestinian sunbird in Bani Naim*

*Fig 14 Rock botanic garden in Al-Quds campus, where waste of rocks from Palestinian stone industry close to Bani Naim area were used for construction of the garden. 20 wild Palestinian plants were introduced in the garden*



2.7 Training in “Ex situ” conservation of plant species

The training in scientific research for biodiversity conservation is performed by Tuscia University in three different ways:

- 1) By specific training of two AI Quds graduates following a 3 years PhD course in Italy
- 2) By a specific social network (LinkedIn open group) in which experiences are exchanged
- 3) By a direct training in the most advanced techniques and a participation in the Mediterranean Forest DNA Bank

The points 1) and 2) above have been already described in the previous sections. The direct training has been initiated in summer 2012 with a preliminary discussion about the needed equipment, who led to the purchasing of the HPLC system. Then a common research programme has been drafted, foreseeing a parallel training of students in Palestine and the two PhDs in Italy.

Ms. Irene Tunno from Tuscia University, went in Palestine and gave a first lecture about biodiversity conservation



Fig.15 Ms. Irene Tunno presenting her lectures in AI Quds University

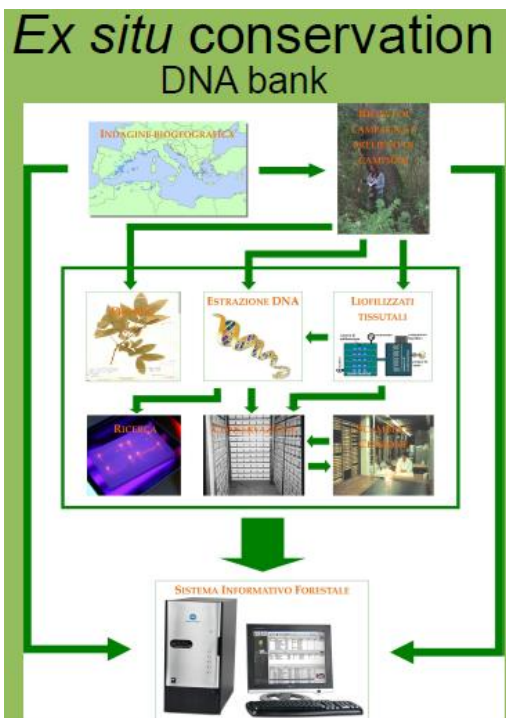


Fig.16 some slides from Irene Tunno’s lecture

### 3. Training in technological transfer and new business system

According to the objectives of the DEBPAL2 Work package 3, and particularly task 3.1, Ms. Liana Margheriti, co-owner of the SME Vivai Torsanlorenzo and partner in the project, made a lecture in Al Quds University, explaining how they have exploited some research results (done jointly with Tuscia university) in their business operations.



The aim of the lecture is to establish a fruitful cooperation between Vivai Torsanlorenzo, Palestinian SMEs and the involved Universities, in order to increase the Palestinian economy based on agrobiodiversity.

The lecture will be followed by a specific workshop in Italy “From Research to Business” in October 2013 in Italy. The lecture was also followed by a Palestinian SME and representatives of other Universities.

*Fig.17 Liana Margheriti (on the left) gives her lecture in Al Quds University; Silvia Giannisi (Veltha) is on her side together with Prof. Mutaz Qutob (Project Coordinator)*




*Fig.18-Restricted meeting with Palestinian researchers interested in the exploitation of their research towards aromatic oil business together with Vivai Torsanlorenzo;*

## 4. Training in EU research projects appraisal

The training in EU project research appraisal was initiated on November 2012 with 3 days seminar in Palestine (Al-Quds University, campus of Abu Dis) held by the partner Veltha and focused on administrative and management aspects. The last day of the seminar was also dedicated to the analysis of some project ideas presented by several researchers; such analysis continued after the seminar, as well as the contacts with Palestinian researchers.

D2B



SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

Proposal full title:

# From Desert to Business

Acronym: **D2B**

Type of funding scheme: **Coordination and support actions (Supporting)**

Work programme topic addressed: **Reinforcing cooperation with European Neighbourhood Policy countries on bridging the gap between research and innovation (R2I-ENP) FP7-INCO-2013-9**

Societal challenge addressed among those identified in the Commission proposal for Horizon 2020: **Food security, sustainable agriculture, marine and maritime research and the bio-economy**

Work programme area addressed: **Mediterranean Partner Countries**

Name of the coordinating person: **Ms. Silvia Gianni**

List of participants:

Participant no. *	Participant short name	Participant organisation name	Country
1 (Coordin.)	VELTHA	VELTHA -International no profit research Association	Belgium
2	AQU	Al Quds University	Palestinian administered area
3	PA-MoA	Palestinian National Authority – Ministry of Agriculture	Palestinian administered area
4	APROFE	Association pour la promotion de la Femme Entrepreneur	Tunisia
5	CamComVT	Camera di Commercio della Provincia di Viterbo	Italy
6	VTS	Vivai Torsanlorenzo	Italy

\* Please use the same participant numbering as that used in section A2 of the administrative forms

Page 1 of 47

Such contacts led to the preparation and presentation of another FP7 project (D2B), participated by Al Quds University and the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture.

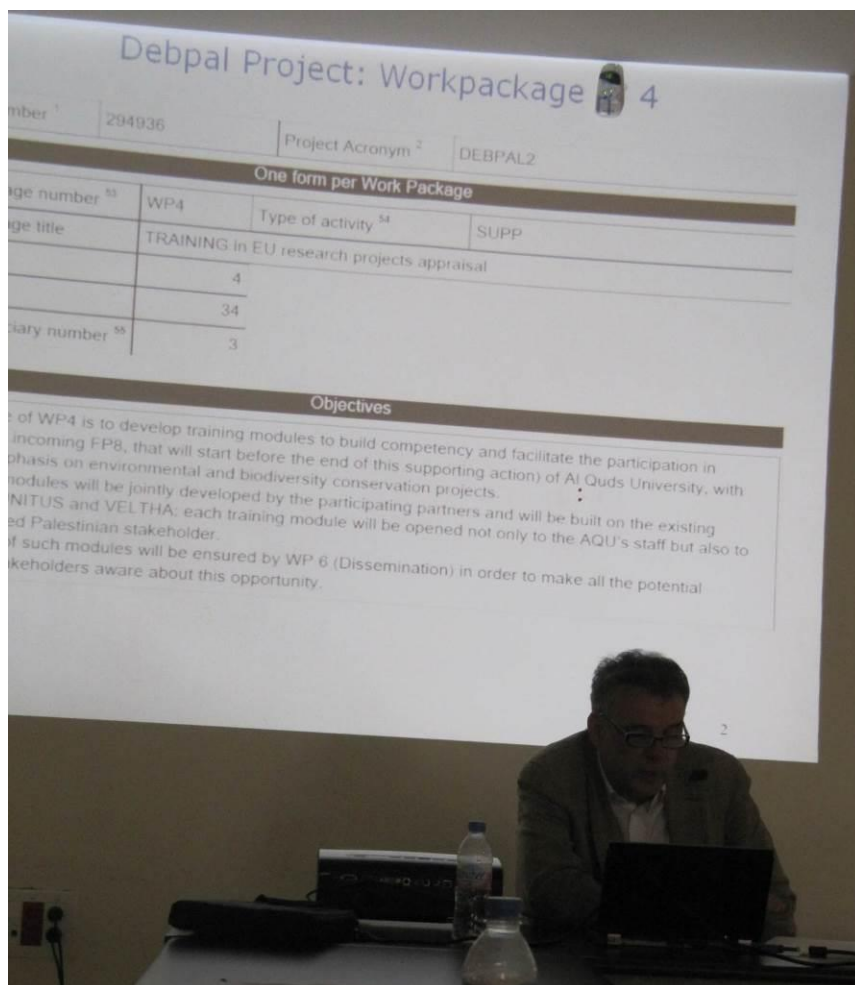
Even if the project was not approved, this can be considered a very good result achieved in the first phase of DEBPAL2.

Since the evaluation report has shown a good appreciation for some ideas contained in the proposal, the partner have already agreed to work together in improving the proposal (according to the recommendations of the evaluation report) and in re-submitting it at the first occasion.

A second training course was held in Palestine on May 2013, more focused on project management issue and cost statements, in view of the Debpal2 project review scheduled in Brussels towards the end of November 2013.

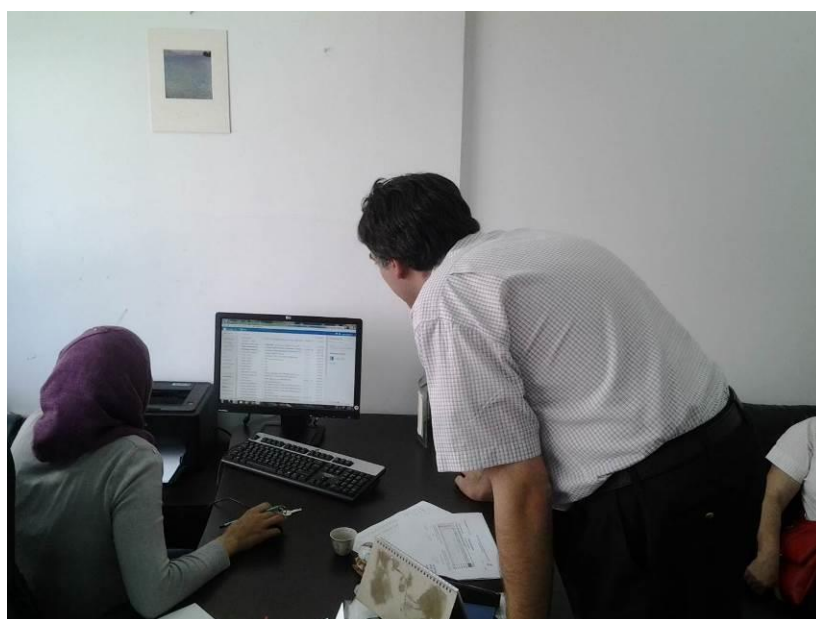
A specific session of the training course, opened also to participants

from other Palestinian Universities, was focused on the presentation of the incoming research programme “Horizon 2020: Carlo Polidori (Veltha) underlined the opportunities for the foreign countries given by the new programme and further contact for possible projects have been established with a representative of Nablus University.



*Fig.19-Carlo Polidori (Veltha) explains the management and administrative issues related to the EU funded research projects to the Al-Quds staff in Abu Dis campus (Palestine); a special session related to the new programme Horizon 2020 has been held at the end of the seminar.*

*Fig.20-Prof. Mutaz Qutob, coordinator of the DEBPAL 2 project, have just added an administrative employee of Al Quds University as coordinator contact in the Participant Portal; now she is registering herself into the ECAS, in order to get access to the online project financial reports This operation has been conducted with the assistance of Veltha partners in the University campus..*



## 5. Development of a Research and Policy Strategy

### 5.1 Guidelines for national strategies

A preliminary version of the guidelines has been issued as deliverable D2.1 of the project: this version contains only the general principles to be discussed with the Palestinian stakeholders, including the ministry of Agriculture, during the workshop planned in Jerusalem. The scientific part of the guidelines is still in progress and will be issued as an updated deliverable D2.1 within summer 2013.

### 5.2 Workshop in Palestine: presentation of guidelines and first steps towards a policy strategy

The Guidelines have been presented in a dedicated workshop on 19 May 2013 in Al Quds University. The workshop was attended by:

Dr. Mutaz Qutob	AlQuds University
Dr. Khalid Sawalha	AlQuds University
Dr. Jihad Abadi	AlQuds University
Dr. Yousef Najajreh	AlQuds University
Mr. Husam Taleeb	Ministry of Agriculture
Ayman Jarar	Ministry of Agriculture
Thaer Rabi	Ministry of Agriculture
Banan Al-sheikh	Ministry of Agriculture
Dr. Ghadeer Omar	AlNajah National University
Dr. Raed Alkowni	AlNajah National University
Dr. Hani Alahmad	AlNajah National University
Ayman Salah	Palestine Polytechnic University
Prof. Charlotte Vallino	Tuscia University
Ms. Irene Tunno	Tuscia University
Ms. Liana Margheriti	Vivai Torsanlorenzo
Ms. Silvia Giannisi	Veltha
Mr. Carlo Polidori	Veltha

There were also many students in addition to two representatives from the Alnakel Company for Palm production (Palestinian SME).

The programme is reported in the annex 1

During the workshop, after having discussed the main aspect related to the Palestinian Biodiversity conservation, the participants agreed to jointly analyse the drafted guidelines and to prepare a memorandum of understanding between the 3 Palestinian Universities, the Ministry of Agriculture and eventual other interested stakeholders for the establishment of a permanent committee on Biodiversity conservation and related research activities.

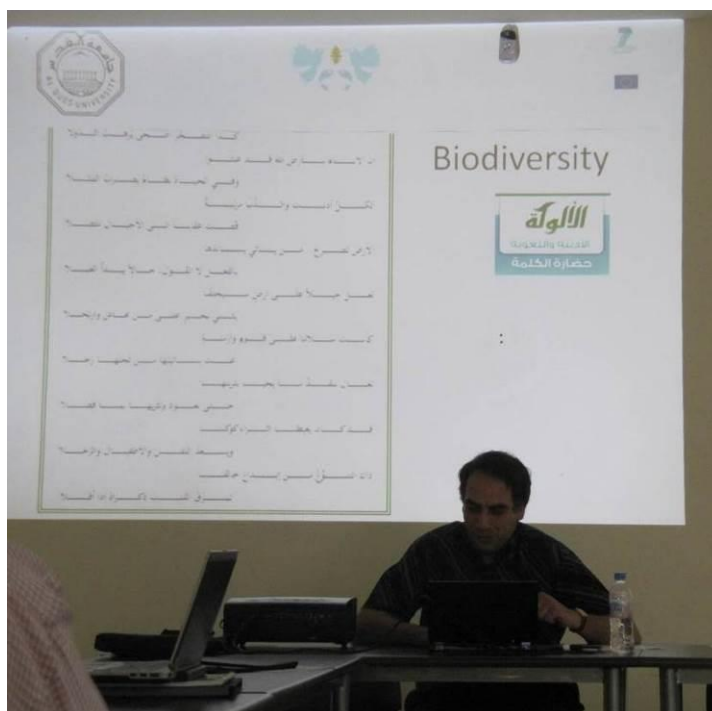
The aim of the envisaged committee is to advise the Palestinian National Authority in the development of national guidelines as foreseen in the DEBPAL2 project.

Since this agreement (that will be formalized in the above mentioned memorandum of understanding) is a noticeable DEBPAL2 result, further project seminars and workshop will be dedicated to such a committee and his work.



Fig.21: Andalusia botanic garden in Al Quds University campus, venue of the workshop. The separation wall divides the University and the Abu Dis area from the rest of Jerusalem: the access is possible only through an Israeli military check-point.

Fig.22-Prof. Mutaz Qutob, Coordinator of the DEBPAL2 project, opens the workshop →



← Fig.23-Prof. Charlotte Vallino (Tuscia University) introduces the first version of the Guidelines



Fig.24-Participant at the workshop: Ministry of Agriculture, other Palestinian universities, SME and students

Fig.25 Prof. Khalid Sawalha (Head of Al Quds Biology Dept.) explains the main issues of Biodiversity in Palestine: Occupation, Israeli settlements, separation wall, human activities, land over use, climate change and water scarcity.



Fig.26 Prof. Yousef Najajreh (Deanship of Research in Al Quds) explains the need of a strict cooperation between Palestinian Universities in this field and in the research in general, in order to be ready for Horizon 2020.



### 5.3 Next steps

The next steps of the activities raised by the field trips, workshop and seminars are:

1. Collection of the original propagation protocols of the local species (at the present conserved only as an oral tradition)
2. Introduction of new techniques and technologies on seed conservation, treatments and pre-cultivation
3. Implementing the joint research programme aiming at the establishment of the Mediterranean Forest DNA Bank - Palestinian branch
4. Training the Al- Quds University graduates following a PhD course in Italy on "Sciences and technologies for the forest and environmental management"
5. Improving the contact between the Palestinian researchers and Vivai Torsanlorenzo, in order to exploit their research on aromatic plants , as for the previous section 3.5
6. Preparing the A0 format of the general West Bank Map, with the accession points and the information on the Pilot Sites
7. Seminar "From research to Business" in Italy after summer 2013
8. Implementing the photo competition and making the Prize in Italy
9. Training in EU research projects appraisal in Brussels
10. Memorandum of understanding between Palestinian Universities and other institutional stakeholders about the Development of a Research and Policy Strategy<sup>1</sup>
11. Enlarging and animating the Social Network

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<sup>1</sup> Special coordination is under way between Biology Department of Al-Quds University and the National Agricultural research of Ministry of Agriculture (Palestine), where an agreement is expected to be signed to cooperate on conservation of biodiversity and agricultural research. DEBPAL2 project will try to add other efforts at national and regional levels to support and strengthen the efforts to conserve nature of Palestine.

Annex 1 Programme of the Workshop**DEBPAL2 –Project**

***Presentation of the “Guidelines for national strategies and programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in Palestine – Sunday 19 May 2013***

DEBPAL 2 is a FP7 Project funded by the European Commission and developed by Al-Quds University (as Coordinator) Tuscia University (Italy), VivaiTorsanlorenzo (Italy) and Veltha (Belgium)

The development of the deliverable “Guidelines for Biodiversity defence” represents an important step towards the general objective of “Reinforcing Capacity Building for Defending Biodiversity in the Palestinian Territories”

***Programme***

19 May 2013 start at 9:00 am in Aljamal hall

9:00-9:30 coffee reception

9:30 – 09:50 Welcome by AQU Vice President Prof. Hasan Dweik

09:50 – 10:10 The position of AQU in the European funded projects. Dr. Yousef Najajara/ Deanship of research AQU

10:10 – 10:30 Introduction of the DEBPAL project. Dr. Mutaz Qutob– Project Coordinator

10:30 – 10:50 The problem of biodiversity conservation in Palestine. Dr. Khaled Sawalah/ Head of the Biology Department AQU.

10:50 – 11:20 Coffee break

11:20 - 11:40 Introduction to the Guidelines for biodiversity conservation. Prof. F. Charlotte /Tuscia University (Italy).

11:40-12:00 Research issues of biodiversity conservation and practical applications –Dr. Irene Tunno/Tuscia University (Italy)

12:00-12:30 Presentation of the Photo Competition “Biodiversity in Palestine” The Prize will be held in Italy on next October. – Elisabetta Margheriti /VivaiTorsanlorenzo (Italy)

12:30-12:50 The second goal of the DEBPAL project: EU research project appraisal; general overview and opportunities – Eng. Carlo Polidori / Veltha (Belgium)

13:00 – 14:30: Lunch

14:30 – 04:00 FP7 projects - Silvia Giannisi / Veltha (Belgium)

*Note: Due to a last minute occurrence, Ms. Elisabetta Margheriti has been substituted by her sister Liana Margheriti*