

Newsletter

Dear colleagues,

With the aim of supporting higher education in Africa, the European Union has launched the Erasmus+ program for which a presentation will take place in Abidjan on June 26-28, 2024

Then two important problems in the academic world will be addressed, namely on the one hand the third mission of universities which covers relations with civil society, and on the other hand the growth in the energy consumption of information technology and the resulting pollution which will soon be of the order of magnitude of aeronautics. Finally, USF provides access to its columns for academics to freely express their views on the academic situation in Gaza.

Wishing you a good read.

Prof. Robert Laurini, Editor of the USF-AWB Newsletter. ■

Abidjan from 26 to 28 June 2024: Regional days of the Erasmus+ program for sub-Saharan Africa

The general objective of the European Commission's Erasmus+ program in the university sector is to contribute to sustainable growth, quality jobs, social cohesion and the promotion of innovation through training. As such, the program supports the implementation of strategic university cooperation between European and African higher education institutions (public and private universities as well as vocational training institutions).

The next Erasmus+ event for sub-Saharan Africa is scheduled to take place in Abidjan from 26 to 28 June 2024, with the aim of:

- highlight opportunities for cooperation between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa,
- foster contacts between African and European institutions,
- and thus encourage the development of Erasmus+ projects.

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Meetings, exchanges, and discussions with the focal points of the Erasmus program together with officials in Brussels, African, and European higher education institutions, are planned throughout these days.

Registration link:
<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/plans-attend-erasmusweeks2024>.

In addition, it is also possible to follow by videoconference, the regional presentation meeting of the Erasmus program for sub-

Saharan Africa will take place from 26 to 28 June in Abidjan by registering at:

<https://events.ringcentral.com/events/regional-erasmus-week-2024-for-sub-saharan-africa> ■

The third mission of universities

Traditionally, two missions are assigned to universities, namely the training of skills (teaching) and the production of new knowledge (research). In many countries, a third mission has emerged concerning the impacts on society with two components of requirement and evaluation, the first for each teacher-researcher and the second for universities or higher schools as a whole.

By impact on society, various visions are possible, some countries rather consider economic impacts such as the number of patents, the number of start-ups, the creation of incubators, research projects with companies. Others give more importance to social or societal aspects, such as conferences and publications for the general public, popular education (universities of the third age), the creation of museums, contracts with local authorities, the organization and animation of scientific cafés, science festival, visit of high school students, etc.



In our view, although often not mentioned, assistance to universities in developing countries falls entirely within the scope of this third mission. Let us not forget that one of the disastrous consequences of the so-called Shanghai ranking was to push universities to conclude partnerships that could make them climb in this ranking at the expense of international solidarity.

For example, it should be noted that Italy has set up a rigorous system for evaluating the third mission in each of the higher institutions.

For further information, please contact Professor Robert Laurini, <Robert.Laurini@usf-awb.org>. ■

Paradox: computing and environment

Presently, we observe two antagonistic evolutions; the first is the increasing use of computing for environmental control, and the second concerns the increasing impacts of computing that deteriorate it.

Indeed, facing global warming, the deterioration of the planet, the amplification of the greenhouse effect, it becomes urgent to develop effective procedures. Thus, sensors have been disseminated to measure many parameters, which combined with drones and satellites make it possible to regularly send data that will be the basis of modeling and projections made by computers. Therefore, computing, in the broad sense (Information and Communication Technologies), plays a key role in the fight for the preservation of the planet.

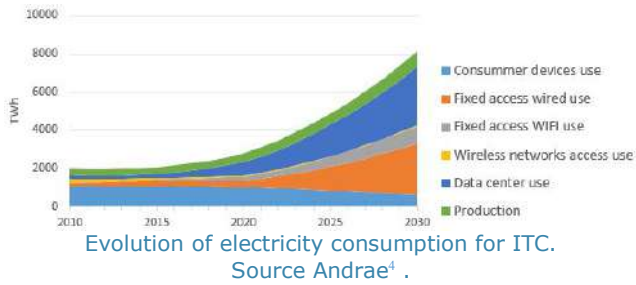


On the other hand, more and more human actions are computer-assisted. Whether we think of the multiplication of smart phones, the dematerialization of administrative procedures, business management, e-commerce, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, games, video, etc., all these activities require more and more not only electrical energy, but also copper and essential heavy metals. And recycling solutions are not up to the challenges.

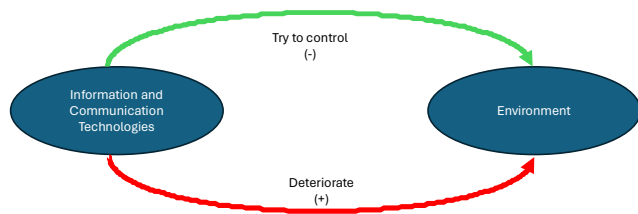
In 2020, computing alone used 4 to 6% of global electricity² and had an estimated evolution between 6% and 9% per year. Projections³ for 2030 propose a share of 10% to 20% of global electricity consumption.

² <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0677/>

³ <https://www.enerdata.net/publications/executive-briefing/between-10-and-20-electricity-consumption-ict-sector-2030.html>



When comparing gains and costs and their respective evolutions, it is urgent to advocate computer sobriety. However, few actors launch in such directions in contrast to mobility, which can be considered as the heart of ecologists' struggles. What do we have to deal with such challenges?



A law to this effect is being drafted in France. Indeed, according to a French Senate fact-finding mission, the share of digital in greenhouse gas emissions in France was 2% in 2019. And above all, these emissions could increase by 60% by 2040 reaching 6.7% of total emissions in France (by comparison, the share of air transport is 4.7%). In detail, where do these programs come from? "Digital users often forget that the so-called "dematerialized" digital exchanges can only exist by relying on a well-equipped sector composed of terminals, data centers and networks," French senators note. ■

Open Forum: Restoring university functioning in Gaza

Israel's military operation in Gaza triggered after the tragic Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, resulted in the total destruction of the 15 Gaza settlements and the paralysis of the West Bank settlements by the occupation of the access routes by Israeli settlers protected by the Israeli army.

Exact figures of civilian casualties in Gaza are under discussion, but all sides agree that this is the highest number of daily civilian casualties ever recorded in history, one of the deadliest wars. Many university officials, professors, researchers, students are among the victims.

⁴ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.patter.2021.100340>



Al-Aqsa University, Gaza, February 15, 2024

The world is urging the Government of Israel and Hamas leaders to reach a ceasefire that will pave the way for a diplomatic end to this tragedy in Gaza and finally find the way to peace in the region by respecting international agreements.

How can we support Gaza in its efforts to maintain an open, dynamic and inclusive university system for its people in the current conditions?

The Palestinian universities in the West Bank are mobilizing to welcome students enrolled in universities that have been destroyed or inaccessible due to blocked access and the Virtual University of Gaza has managed to restart its platform in a third country.

The solidarity of academics to help these initiatives is gradually growing worldwide but it remains difficult for higher education institutions to take a stand before the end of military action in Gaza. A gradual coordination of these different initiatives is taking place and an effort to recruit scientists ready to support efforts to maintain access to scientific knowledge in the occupied Palestinian territories is launched.

It is proposed to participate in this effort by mobilizing a pool of potential stakeholders so that people who are sensitive to this action make known their interest to support it concretely and for example to:

- Participate in the co-supervision of research work in their discipline (Master or Doctorate level) remotely or face-to-face whenever possible.
- Offer Palestinian students or colleagues to be associated with research teams as invited professors.
- Participate as guests in research teams in Palestine.
- Participate in thesis committees (Master or

Doctorate) remotely or in person whenever possible.

- Provide support for educational activities within the framework of virtual university platforms: several universities have equipped themselves with such a platform to ensure the continuity of teaching and assessments. The teaching materials are in English or Arabic.
- Facilitate the mobility of Palestinian students and colleagues for conferences, seminars.
- Involve Palestinian students or colleagues in international research projects, especially European ones.
- Facilitate access for Palestinian students and colleagues to bibliographic resources in different disciplines.

There are undoubtedly other ways to participate in maintaining and developing the capacity for access to higher education and research in Palestine, the most important is to have a pool of potential stakeholders who can be asked for concrete actions.

To participate in this pool of potential speakers, please contact Professor Alain Mille, <alain.mille@univ-lyon1.fr>, animating a collective of academics in Lyon « Palestine Lyon Solidaires Universities » and member of USF. ■
