

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **29 actionable recommendations to boost technology transfer & commercialization in Lebanon**

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**Marseille, 14 May 2020** - Berytech, through THE NEXT SOCIETY Advocacy Panel, has been leading on setting a national innovation strategy for Lebanon since 2017, as part of THE NEXT SOCIETY action plan initiated by ANIMA Investment Network and implemented in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia with the financial support of the European Union.

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Experts hired by Berytech have written a report which proposes a roadmap of 29 actionable recommendations for universities and other key ecosystem players to boost the technology transfer dynamics in Lebanon. They defined a financing mechanism and a reward system for applied research adapted to the Lebanese academic context in order to incentivize researchers to develop projects with a commercialization potential, tailored to the needs of at least 5 universities in Lebanon: Lebanese American University, Saint Joseph University, American University of Beirut, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, and the University of Balamand.

Findings have highlighted that while Lebanese researchers may be good publishers, there is a need to incentive them and create rewards systems to push them to develop projects with commercialization potential. The Lebanese ecosystem is indeed challenged by the lack of funding for applied research, lack of Intellectual Property (IP) policies and support as well as weak links between academic research and industrial needs.

“Generally speaking, there is a need to plant the innovation seed in academia,” comments Krystal Khalil – Programs Director at Berytech and lead on the Advocacy Panels. “Most industries claim to be innovative, but they don’t even have an R&D department, which is crucial for innovation.”

Therefore, there is a need to develop the technology transfer landscape and encourage the development of research that address market needs being turned into commercial growing startups, or better connected with industrialists.

“Connecting local research and industry - in other words technology transfer, is a major driver of value creation and innovation for MENA countries,” confirms Mathias Fillon, THE NEXT SOCIETY coordinator at ANIMA Investment Network. “We address it both at the micro level, through the Tech Booster acceleration programme supporting success stories of research-based startups, and at the policy level through Advocacy Panel and technical assistance activities.”

### **Technical Assistance Mission**

Championed by Berytech, the Technical Assistance Mission was conducted in 2019 as a follow-up of the public-private dialogue initiated during two previous advocacy panel meetings.

The objective was improving the process of technology transfer landscape in Lebanon by proposing a methodology able to empower researchers and students’ end of year projects in the process of turning their research projects into viable businesses.

The Technical Assistance Report provides an analysis of the Lebanese technology transfer ecosystem, identifies its gaps, and proposes actionable recommendations, to be implemented by the different ecosystem stakeholders of technology creation and valorization.

### **Findings**

Out of more than thirty gaps identified in the report, affecting factors mostly revolve around the following issues: Lebanon's weak collaborative culture, the so-called 'valley of death' syndrome caused by the lack of activities and funding available for researchers in the prototyping stage, lack of incentives and reward mechanisms, lack of awareness and knowledge of commercialization-related topics, weak IP protection on the national level, lack of players involved in managing intellectual property and licensing, poor and disconnected information services, and limited activities focusing on technology transfer.

In a nutshell, a general lack of support in the 'go to market' process for researchers, as well as weak intellectual property knowledge and transfer.

Mohab Anis – CEO of INNOVETY, a leading innovation management consulting firm and the expert hired to conduct the Technical Assistance Mission, explains, "The gaps and areas of opportunity were refined through the inputs of several specialists, coming from different backgrounds including universities, governmental institutions and private sector." This combination of multiple approaches resulted in a well-rounded picture of the current Lebanese status, and a promising outlook on its future positioning in technology transfer and commercialization.

### **Recommendations**

29 recommendations are proposed in the report to address the identified gaps, areas of opportunity and growth. They include reward mechanisms – monetary and non-monetary - that act as incentives for researchers and entrepreneurs to commercialize technologies.

Given that universities are a key stakeholder in the technology transfer and commercialization ecosystem, the responsibility of revolutionizing this process in Lebanon, falls largely on their shoulders. The roadmap, as a concluding directory of the recommendations developed, is mainly focused on five universities: Lebanese American University, Saint Joseph University, American University of Beirut, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, and the University of Balamand.

The report concludes by categorizing the recommendations into three main sections: top down actions, bottom up actions, and support mechanisms. The roadmap follows a chronological order that each university is recommended to follow depending on the level of maturity, and available resources.

The main goal is to transfer research into marketable products, whereby they can either be sold/licensed, or spun-off into a venture, which mainly requires top down actions. In the selling/licensing track, the roadmap unveils the steps needed to be taken from mapping of opportunities between university research and their different applications in various value chains, to matchmaking with industry and the promotion of success stories. In the spinning-off track, universities must ensure that they are providing their staff and students with the rightful resources to support them in starting up their venture.

All of this is likely to happen while the internal intellectual property policy is being developed, updated, and disseminated to students and faculty. In addition, several bottom up activities should take place to strengthen and nurture the culture for innovation within universities, such as the changing of curricula, and introduction of entrepreneurial extracurricular activities.

Finally, in parallel, government and intermediaries play a crucial role as the support mechanisms that encourage, directly and indirectly, the strengthening and efficiency of this process through policies, matchmaking, fund provision and facilitations, and more.

### **Request Report**

If you are an active player in technology transfer and would like to implement the best practices and framework to grow the ecosystem in Lebanon, please [fill in this form](#) to receive the full report.

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#### About THE NEXT SOCIETY

THE NEXT SOCIETY is an open community of changemakers, entrepreneurs, investors, corporates, NGOs, public and private innovation, research and economic development hubs from Europe and 7 Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

It aims at mobilizing, promoting and reinforcing innovation ecosystems and economic development in the MENA region. To reach these goals, THE NEXT SOCIETY launched a four-year action plan (2017-2020), co-funded by the EU up to 90% for a global amount of EUR 7.8 million budget. It supports the emergence of talents and innovative leaders who will drive the next trends and usages by targeting startups, clusters and technology transfer offices to accompany their development. [www.thenextsociety.co](http://www.thenextsociety.co)

#### About ANIMA Investment Network

ANIMA Investment Network is an international economic development network that aims to work to the promotion and development of the Mediterranean. The ANIMA network brings together 80 members from 18 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean area, including national and regional investment promotion and economic development agencies, business federations, innovation centres, international investors and research institutes. ANIMA's objective is to contribute to the continued improvement of the business and investment climate, as well as encourage shared and sustainable economic development in the Mediterranean. To know more about ANIMA Investment Network, please visit [www.anima.coop](http://www.anima.coop).

#### About Berytech

Berytech is the ecosystem for entrepreneurs, providing a dynamic environment for the creation and development of startups, fostering innovation, technology and entrepreneurship in Lebanon.

Since 2002, Berytech has housed more than 330 entities, assisted more than 3,700 entrepreneurs, helped create more than 1,800 job opportunities, granted more than \$1.7M to startups, raised \$19.5M in funds to manage programs, and has been investing more than \$70M in Lebanese technology companies.

Member of the European Business Network, Berytech was the first in the region to receive EU accreditation as a Business Innovation Center (BIC). Berytech is also Gold member of the InBIA, the largest member-based entrepreneurial support network in the world. [berytch.org](http://berytch.org)

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