

INTERVIEW

with Serina Al-Massu, biology student at Bethlehem University, about her participation in the workshop on wastewater treatment by Algal Turf Scrubber (ATS), organized at Bethlehem University, Palestine, in the framework of the Palestinian-German Science Bridge (PGSB) Project.

„I WANT TO SERVE MY COUNTRY!”



How did you learn about this workshop?

Serina Al Massu: The organizers, Rami Arafeh and Loay Alshawamreh, asked me to help prepare for the workshop. For example, I sent information about the event to students from my university and other universities to advertise the workshop.

What did you think of the workshop?

Serina Al Massu: The workshop was great! I already had some knowledge about working with algae, but I still learned a lot. The entire event was very productive. My favorite part was the dialogue: the exchanging of ideas. The researchers from Jülich Ladislav Nedbal and Silvia Schrey encouraged us to give them ideas for improvement after the workshop. They are going to consider them in the further development of the technology. What really stood out about this event was that we had the opportunity to be involved in applied research. Normally, we only have theoretical science, since we don't have much infrastructure for experiments.

At what point are you in your studies?

Serina Al Massu: I have already successfully completed my verbal Bachelor tests. Now I am writing the second part of my thesis (the first part was about Alzheimer's disease). For this, I am working with the Algal Turf Scrubber at the Museum for Natural History two days a week. My goal is to improve the mesh that the algae settles in and to experiment with differences in the ground that the algae is used to fertilize. We are very excited about this new infrastructure and see a lot of potential, for example for farming, that this could be a good alternative to chemical fertilizers.

What are your plans for after your Bachelor degree?

Serina Al Massu: I want to stay in research and focus on applications. I would like to go abroad and learn as much as I can. Then, I want to apply this knowledge in my home country. What good is knowledge if you don't use it to improve people's lives? I would like to contribute to improving the situation in my country. I don't mean the political situation – I don't have any influence over that – but the economic and ecological problems. I want to serve my country, and perhaps also other countries. That is the mission of science. To this end, we need real research centers in which scientists from different disciplines work together, such as in Jülich. The next step for me will be to apply for a Master thesis project at the Forschungszentrum Jülich through the Palestinian-German Science Bridge Project.

This interview was conducted by Kristin Mosch