

Commission signs Joint Declaration with Israel to reinforce co-operation and dialogue in education and training

On the occasion of an official visit to Israel, the European Commissioner in charge of Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel', today signed a Joint Declaration with the Israeli Minister of Education, Prof. Yuli Tamir. This Joint Declaration on co-operation and dialogue in education and training will be an effective tool to contribute to the objectives of the 2005 Action Plan under the European Neighbourhood Policy, namely to gradually integrate Israel into European policies and programmes. For this purpose, the Commission and the Israeli Government want to launch an enhanced policy dialogue on greater compatibility of education systems and to increase educational mobility and exchanges through the EU's Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes.

Commissioner Figel' said: "The European Union is determined to develop a closer partnership with Israel. This process needs to be seen in the context of the broad range of our common interests. I strongly believe that enhancing co-operation and dialogue on education and training is instrumental for improving our mutual understanding and for strengthening our position with regard to the challenges facing us in an ever-globalising knowledge-based society and economy. Our education and training systems are adapting to this new reality and we can learn a lot from each other."

The Joint Declaration marks the starting point for a sectoral policy-oriented dialogue between the EU and Israel. These regular exchanges will cover jointly identified issues of common interest, such as the modernisation agenda for higher education, including the Bologna process, and vocational training aspects covered by the Copenhagen process, lifelong learning policies, school twinning, language learning, means of promoting the transferability and recognition of qualifications, as well as of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

The Commission and the Israeli Government also expressed their intention to increase inter-university cooperation between European and Israeli universities for further mobility and exchange of academic staff and students, notably through the new generations of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes. Israel now fully participates in both programmes and the Commissioner's visit was also marked by the opening of the first National Tempus Office in Jerusalem.

The legal basis for the EU's relations with Israel is the 2000 [EU-Israel Association Agreement](#) (the so-called Euro-Mediterranean Agreement). This Agreement foresees co-operation in the areas of education, training, youth and culture, notably through exchanges and co-operation among universities and other educational and training institutions.

As the main objective of the 2005 EU-Israel [Action Plan](#) is to gradually integrate Israel into European policies and programmes, it proposes some more concrete actions, in particular enhanced policy dialogue, increased educational and cultural mobility and exchanges and greater compatibility of the education systems. The 2007-10 National Indicative Programme for Israel goes on to foresee support to activities in the field of higher education on priority areas of common interest, in particular with a view to approximation of education and training policies in a global knowledge-based economy, including workshops, exchanges and academic co-operation.

Later today, Commissioner Figel' will continue his visit to the region to discuss co-operation on education and training with the Palestinian Authority. He will open a National Tempus Office in Ramallah and visit universities in Birzeit (Birzeit University) and Nablus (An-Najah University).

More information:

Text of the Joint Declaration

<http://www.delisr.ec.europa.eu/English/whatsnew.asp?id=1017>

The European Commission's Delegation to Israel

<http://www.delisr.ec.europa.eu/>

European Neighbourhood Policy: Israel

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp_israel_en.htm

The Erasmus Mundus programme:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc72_en.htm

The Tempus programme:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc70_en.htm