

Commissioner Figel' opens Tempus offices in Jerusalem and Ramallah to upgrade co-operation on education and training

The European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel', today opened a National Tempus Office in Israel and reopened one in the occupied Palestinian territory. The move intensifies co-operation on education and training matters with Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Both Israeli and Palestinian universities now fully profit from participation in the EU's external co-operation programmes in higher education, Tempus and Erasmus Mundus.

Commissioner Figel' said "*Tempus is our programme for modernising higher education in the countries neighbouring the EU. It emphasises cooperation, and it is in this light that I am especially glad to be opening these two new National Tempus Offices. They will be instrumental for the development of closer ties between the EU and higher education institutions in the region.*"

The Tempus programme started life in 1990, following the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is now in its fourth iteration, and there are 28 participating partner countries. The National Tempus Offices will serve as focal points and facilitators on the ground, and have the mission to contribute to the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the **Tempus programme**.

The National Tempus Office opened at the Council of Higher Education in **Jerusalem** is the first ever such office in Israel, which joined the Tempus Programme at the beginning of its present, fourth phase (2007-13). Under the first Tempus IV invitation to submit projects for support, eight Israeli institutions participated in projects submitted as *partners*, and there were two projects in which institutions from Israel were involved as *coordinators*.

In **Ramallah**, the Commissioner will today re-open the National Tempus Office, to be hosted by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Palestinian participation in the Tempus programme dates back to 2002, and most of its higher education institutions have participated in the programme through 11 Joint European Projects and three Structural Measures. In addition, 49 Individual Mobility Grants have been awarded to university professors. The opening of the Tempus Office will give Palestinian higher education institutions the possibility to build on previous activities and re-establish their participation in the Tempus programme.

Israeli and Palestinian universities are also participating in **Erasmus Mundus**, the EU's co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education which promotes the EU as a centre of excellence in learning. Erasmus Mundus provides - inter alia - scholarships for high calibre third-country students and academics to participate in joint masters courses selected under the programme.

The main share of funds under Erasmus Mundus is for **mobility actions**, which means that students and scholars are the main beneficiaries of the programme. By the end of the academic year 2008-09, ten Palestinian students and scholars, and 54 from Israel will have profited from this. Another 161 students and academics from Palestinian and 139 from Israeli universities will have been supported through the complementary **External Co-operation Window**, which promotes inter-university partnerships between EU and neighbourhood universities. Several Israeli and Palestinian universities also participate in cooperation projects with Erasmus Mundus masters courses and in projects that aim at enhancing the attractiveness of European Higher Education in the world.

To find out more:

The European Commission's Delegation to Israel

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

The European Commission Technical Assistance Office for the West bank and Gaza Strip

<http://www.delwbq.ec.europa.eu/en/index.htm>

The Tempus programme

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

The Erasmus Mundus programme

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