Press Release
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The EU and its partners launch the TVET Week in Gaza

TVET Graduates look forward to improve employment opportunities in Gaza

The Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the GIZ, the European Union (EU), the Belgian Development Cooperation (BTC), and five Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions have launched the 2016 "TVET Week in Gaza" under the theme of "*Transforming Skills into Work*".

The opening ceremony of the "TVET Week in Gaza" took place on Monday 15 February 2016, at the Shalihat Resort in Gaza city. The event was officially opened by the Palestinian Minister of Labor Ma'amoun Abu Shahla and attended by Alessandra Viezzer, the EU Head of Cooperation, Sabine Brickenkamp, the Deputy Head of Development Cooperation at the Representative Office of the Federal Republic of Germany in Ramallah, Florence Duvieusart, the Head of Development Cooperation at the General Consulate of Belgium, representatives of TVET institutions, and dozens of TVET students and graduates in Gaza strip.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, **Mr. Ma'amoun Abu Shahl** said that *"To promote and develop the technical and vocational education and training in Palestine, we need to have dozens of technical and vocational schools and colleges which are equipped with modern equipment as well as qualified staff along with advanced curricula that matches with the needs of our society and our economy. We do appreciate and need the help of our partners in this regard ".*He added that *"We have recently established the higher council for the technical and vocational education and training in Palestine, which is being chaired reciprocally by the Minister of Labour and Minister of Education"*

"The EU has a long-standing commitment to strengthening the skills and capacities of people in Gaza with the aim of boosting employment and raising living standards. Over the past five years, the EU has provided €14 million to support the Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme in Palestine. This is part of the skills development strategy that is essential for creating a growing and sustainable Palestinian economy," said **the EU Head of Cooperation Alessandra Viezzer** in her speech at the opening of the second annual TVET week in Gaza. *"The efforts made by the European Union and the international community are vital in reviving the Gazan economy and improving the quality of living for Gazans. But alone they are not sufficient to bring about the kind of fundamental change so desperately needed in Gaza. For this reason the European Union has repeatedly called for the lifting of restrictions on movement and access and for real progress in intra-Palestinian*

reconciliation leading to the return of a single Palestinian Authority to Gaza," she added.

Addressing the audience, **the Deputy Head of Development Cooperation at the Representative Office of the Federal Republic of Germany in Ramallah, Ms. Sabine Brickenkamp** noted that: "*We are glad to see our programs are implemented and most important demonstrated immediate impact for the beneficiaries. This applies to our support to the TVET sector in Palestine; it is about decent job opportunities for the youth who represent the Palestinian future," she added "More opportunities are especially important here in Gaza where the unemployment rate among young people have reached a state of emergency which needs urgent action".* Ms. Sabine concluded her speech by thanking "*the participating institutions for their active role in the preparation and implementation of this event,"* as well as "*thanking the EU, Belgium and Switzerland for the good cooperation*."

"Belgium sees in the TVET Week a unique opportunity to improve the bad reputation of TVET among young people and their families. We can chance this image easily if we unleash the high potential of TVET by increasing its quality and building strong partnerships with the private sector," **said the Head of Development Cooperation at the General Consulate of Belgium, Ms. Florence Duvieusart**. "*Belgium will invest more in equipping the youth with the needed skills and competences towards self-employment and entrepreneurship,"* she added.

In line with the theme of "Transforming skills into work", the "TVET Week in Gaza" aims to raise awareness among the public audience and media outlets about the TVET services and programmes in Gaza. This week will highlight the importance of acquiring skills and transforming those skills into employment opportunities. It helps promote TVET as a full-equivalent alternative to academic education, offering not only educational and career support but also opportunities for personal development.

The "TVET Week in Gaza" is taking place for the second year in a row, thanks to the support from the EU and GIZ. It is considered the largest of its kind in Gaza that gathers vocational training schools, industrial secondary schools, colleges, private training providers, and representatives from the private sector. The participating TVET institutions in Gaza are the University College of Applied Sciences, Near East Council of Churches, Palestine Technical College - Deir Al-Balah , Deir Al-Balah Industrial School, and Abed Almuti Al Rayyes Secondary Vocational Girls School.

The "TVET Week in Gaza" will span over the period from 15 to 18 February 2016, and will include different activities including open exhibition and several workshops. The event will host a live show with a group of TVET students who will share their success stories with the audience. The "TVET Week in Gaza" will be concluded with a career day on Thursday 18 February 2016.

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