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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The EU launches a EUR 3.5 million programme to support start-up businesses and boost private sector development and employment.



RAMALLAH, PALESTINE (25 July, 2016) - the EU launched today a new programme to support Business Start-up Incubators in Palestine. The programme will be implemented by the Belgium Development Agency (BTC).

The Business Start-up Incubators Programme aims at helping entrepreneurs to translate their ideas into new businesses. It will enhance entrepreneur's skills to make their start-ups more competitive and financially sustainable. The programme will support start-up incubators in Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Incubators provide entrepreneurs with shared office space and resources, business advice, training and coaching.

Activities will include institutional capacity building to incubators, awareness raising on entrepreneurship,

business training and coaching, information sessions and creation of a digital platform on access to finance. Women associations and youth organisations will be supported.

In addition, in order to improve the quality of business support services to business start-ups, 30+ Small Business Advisors will receive training to prepare them for international accreditation. A proposal for national accreditation of business advisers will be developed. Small business services will be promoted through a Business Voucher Scheme for business start-ups and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. Finally, a pool of 20+ mentors will be trained to provide business coaching to incubatees / start-ups.

“Supporting the creation of new companies is essential to promote private sector led sustainable development and employment. This is one of the main priorities of the EU support to the Palestinians”, said Riccardo Rossi, Head of the Economic Development, Trade, and East-Jerusalem Programme section in the Office of the EU Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA).

Her Excellency Abeer Odeh, the Minister of National Economy, said "the establishment of business incubators can form a protective shield and protect projects emerging and incubated from various aspects through support of all kinds to be able to start and grow and succeed. Therefore, the program's focus on spreading awareness about entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in society must receive all support from us and our partners in the eco-system, especially that this project comes within the framework of the Palestinian national development plan (2014- 2016). "

BTC Resident Representative, Mr. Dirk DEPREZ, added "BTC aspires through its programs in Palestine to support state building and economic prosperity for the Palestinian People. The Business Incubators project is complementary with our support to the Technical and Vocational Training and our support to the local economic development. "

At the end of the programme, 120 start-up businesses are expected to be operating and be fully supported in the local market.

Background

A vibrant private sector is critical in creating prosperity and meeting the employment needs of a rapidly growing Palestinian population. High employment also assists in broadening the tax revenue base, which is a necessary requirement for funding essential public services and infrastructure. The **EU** supports initiatives that promote inclusive, sustainable, private sector-led Palestinian economic development.

The Palestinian Authorities have established an Educational Developmental Strategic Plan to improve the quality of education. **BTC** supports different components of this plan. We improve infrastructure and create a healthy and safe educational environment. We also aim at supporting foundational reforms and new policies in education. Through capacity building we try to improve the quality and labour market relevance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) by developing Work Based Learning schemes and entrepreneurship programs through Private Public Partnerships.

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