**Press Release**
**Jerusalem**
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***Changing lives, opening minds*: the EU celebrates 30 years of Erasmus in Palestine**

**This year, the EU celebrates the 30th anniversary of 'Erasmus' programme – now Erasmus+ - in Europe as well as in neighbouring and partner countries. In Palestine, EU Representative Ralph Tarraf, Palestinian Minister of Education Dr. Sabri Saidam, and Director of Erasmus National Office in Palestine Dr. Nidal Jayousi joined over 200 Palestinian Erasmus alumni to celebrate 30 years of Erasmus in Ramallah.**

The Erasmus programme started as a voluntary cooperation of 11 European countries. This cooperation has developed to 33 programme countries. This is in addition to the 27 partner countries. What started back in 1987 with only 3200 students in its first year has grown over the last 30 years into a flagship programme benefiting nine million people.

"*Erasmus has helped in building bridges of trust, respect, and mutual understanding within Europe and then between Europe and the world. This programme has invested in human beings, in education and knowledge*," said the **EU Representative Ralph Tarraf**. "*Today, we celebrate 30 years of Erasmus and our partnership with Palestinian students and universities. We are proud that Erasmus alumni –Europeans and Palestinians- are working together to build the Palestinian institutions. We are also proud with your efforts to connect and share experiences,*" he added.

The Erasmus Programme has been enriching lives for the past 30 years. It is not just a time in someone's existence, it is a turning point. Under Erasmus+, it is now

possible for students, staff and young people from all over the world to come to Europe, just as Europeans can go to other parts of the world.

The Erasmus programme is one of the most successful programmes of the EU. In Palestine, the National Erasmus Office (NEO), was established in 2001. As a partner country, Palestine currently participated in the Erasmus+ under several actions opened to cooperation. Almost 1400 grants were provided so far from Palestinian and European universities.

## Background

Erasmus+ is a broad programme offering European opportunities to the Southern Mediterranean region and other regions in the fields of education, training, youth and sport with almost EUR15 billion. The programme also adopts a single, unified structure with different key action areas: Mobility, Capacity Building in higher education and Support to Policy reform along with Jean Monnet Activities.

**#EU4Youth**

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