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Building Internationalization Strategies in the Palestinian Universities

Technical Assistance Mission (TAM) Webinar

September 22-23, 2026



○ **Webinar Overview**

This Technical Assistance Mission (TAM) webinar aims to support Palestinian universities in developing and strengthening their internationalization strategies, with a particular focus on practical approaches, institutional priorities, international partnerships, and sustainable engagement in international cooperation.

The webinar will provide participants with an opportunity to explore key concepts and approaches to internationalization, share experiences and good practices, and identify practical steps that can be adapted to the Palestinian higher education context.

The sessions will also encourage discussion among participating universities and experts, with the aim of strengthening institutional capacity and supporting the development of realistic, inclusive, and sustainable internationalization strategies.

○ **Webinar Context:**



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Internationalization has become a strategic priority for higher education institutions worldwide, driven by the need to enhance academic quality, research impact, global visibility, and graduate employability. For Palestinian universities, internationalization is not only an academic objective but also a strategic tool for resilience, capacity building, and global engagement under complex political, economic, and mobility constraints¹.

Over the past decade, Palestinian universities have made tangible progress in international cooperation, particularly through participation in European and international programs such as Erasmus+², Horizon Europe³, and various bilateral partnerships. In parallel, they have strengthened their global engagement by joining international and regional higher education associations, including UNIMED, the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)⁴, the International Association of Universities (IAU), and the Association of Arab Universities. However, internationalization efforts often remain project-based, fragmented, and dependent on external funding, rather than embedded within comprehensive institutional strategies.

Developing coherent internationalization strategies tailored to the Palestinian context is therefore essential to move from ad hoc activities to sustainable, inclusive, and impact-oriented international engagement, aligned with national higher education priorities and global trends.

Against this background, the Technical Assistance Mission (TAM) webinar aims to provide Palestinian universities with practical knowledge, tools, and examples to support the development or strengthening of their institutional internationalization strategies, taking into consideration the specific opportunities and challenges of the Palestinian higher education context.

- **Current practices**
- **Institutional Frameworks:**

¹ <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Union-for-the-Mediterranean-Report-160621-FINAL-WEB.pdf>

² <https://erasmus-plus.mohe.pna.ps/>

³ <https://researchgate.ps/#/>



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Most Palestinian universities have established International Relations Offices (IROs) that serve as the main institutional units responsible for managing international engagement. Their work is primarily focused on partnership coordination, administration of academic mobility, and implementation of externally funded projects. However, internationalization is still only partially embedded in university governance structures, with limited integration into overarching strategic planning, academic decision-making, and institutional performance frameworks.

- Academic Mobility:

Palestinian universities actively participate in Erasmus+ mobility schemes, particularly under Key Action 1 and Key Action 2, which have enabled student and staff exchanges and capacity-building activities. Mobility flows remain largely outbound, reflecting both strong demand and structural constraints. Inbound mobility is still limited, mainly due to visa restrictions, access challenges, and logistical arrangements.

- International Cooperation and Projects:

There is strong engagement in European-funded cooperation projects, especially those aimed at capacity building in higher education and collaborative research. These initiatives have contributed significantly to curriculum development, quality assurance systems, and staff capacity building. Nevertheless, international cooperation tends to be concentrated in a relatively small number of institutions with greater experience and administrative capacity, leading to uneven participation across the higher education system.

- Research and Innovation:

Participation in international research networks has gradually increased, offering Palestinian universities greater exposure and collaboration opportunities. At the same time, research activities face persistent constraints related to infrastructure, continuity of funding, and limited mobility for researchers. Despite these challenges, there is strong potential for applied and socially oriented



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research, particularly in areas that address local development needs and contribute to global knowledge from a Palestinian perspective.

- **Key Challenges**

Internationalization in Palestinian universities is constrained by restrictions on movement and academic travel, limiting access to conferences, laboratories, and fieldwork, alongside financial challenges stemming from heavy reliance on external funding and limited institutional budgets. These challenges are compounded by limited institutional capacity due to understaffed International Relations Offices and high administrative burdens. In Gaza, the destruction of universities has had a devastating impact, disrupting teaching, research, and international cooperation through damage to campuses, laboratories, libraries, and digital infrastructure, and the displacement of students and staff. This has further weakened institutional capacity, reduced participation in international programs, and intensified challenges related to access, funding, underscoring the urgent need for targeted international support, reconstruction efforts, and long-term partnerships to enable Gaza universities to re-engage with the global higher.

- **Opportunities**

There are growing opportunities to develop long-term, mission-driven international partnerships, including South–South and regional cooperation. Digital and blended internationalization models, such as virtual exchange and COIL, offer effective alternatives to physical mobility. Aligning internationalization with global agendas, including the SDGs, enhances relevance and impact. The Palestinian academic diaspora represents a valuable resource for mentorship, research collaboration, and visiting professorships, supported by an enabling policy environment and increasing interest from European partners.

- **Strategic Goals**

Key priorities include embedding internationalization within institutional missions, strategies, and governance frameworks; shifting toward quality-focused academic and learning outcomes;



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ensuring inclusive access to international opportunities; strengthening international research collaboration aligned with national priorities; and enhancing sustainability and global visibility through diversified funding, strategic communication, and active participation in international networks.

○ **Target Audience:**

This webinar is intended for key stakeholders involved in the internationalization and development of Palestinian higher education institutions, including:

- University leadership and senior management, including vice presidents for internalization, and staff involved in institutional strategy and international cooperation.
- International Relations Offices (IROs), staff responsible for international partnerships, mobility, and externally funded programmes.
- Academic and research staff involved in international cooperation, joint research, academic networks, and global engagement.
- Administrative and programme staff responsible for student and staff mobility, international projects, partnerships, and related institutional processes.
- Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) and other stakeholders involved in higher education policy development and reform.
- Other relevant institutional stakeholders involved in strategic planning, quality assurance, research, innovation, and international engagement.



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○ **Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Understand the key concepts, principles, and components of effective internationalization strategies in higher education institutions.
- Identify institutional strengths, challenges, and opportunities related to internationalization within the Palestinian higher education context.
- Explore and apply practical tools and approaches to strengthen academic mobility, international partnerships, research cooperation, and broader international engagement.
- Develop strategic approaches to move from project-based international activities towards more coordinated and sustainable institutional internationalization.
- Apply the knowledge and approaches gained to support institutional strategic planning and contribute to higher education reform and development.

○ **Expectations from Experts**

The expert is expected to:

- Present key concepts, principles, and international best practices in university internationalization.
- Provide practical guidance, frameworks, and tools for developing, implementing, and monitoring institutional internationalization strategies.
- Share relevant case studies and examples from universities with different internationalization contexts and levels of experience.



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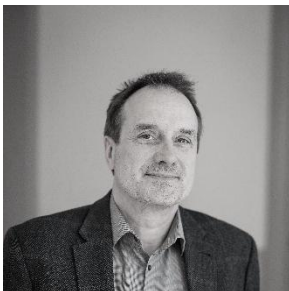
- Facilitate interactive discussions and encourage participants to reflect on their own institutional practices, challenges, and priorities.
- Address the specific opportunities and constraints affecting internationalization in the Palestinian higher education context.
- Provide practical and context-sensitive recommendations that Palestinian universities can adapt to strengthen their international engagement and institutional strategies.

○ **Expected Results**

By the end of the webinar, the following results are expected:

- Enhanced knowledge and practical capacity among university leadership and staff to develop, implement, and monitor effective internationalization strategies.
- Initial institutional action plans or priorities developed by participating universities to strengthen academic mobility, international partnerships, research cooperation, and global engagement.
- Improved coordination and networking among Palestinian universities and increased opportunities for collaboration with international partners.
- Greater institutional readiness and capacity to participate effectively in Erasmus+ and other European and international cooperation programmes.
- Stronger integration of internationalization into institutional planning, supporting sustainable international engagement and broader higher education reform.

○ **Expert Profile**





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Michael Gaebel is the Director of the Higher Education Policy Unit at the [European University Association](#) (EUA), and represents EUA in the Bologna Follow-up Group, and several of its working groups. He and his team work on the Bologna Process, the European Education Area and Erasmus+. Thematic foci are learning and teaching, equity and inclusion, and internationalisation.

Next to thematic reports on a wider range of topics, it publishes on regular basis the [Trends reports](#), which explore how European higher education institutions respond to European reforms. It is also in charge of EUA's participation in the [Global University Associations Forum](#) (GUAF).

Since the beginning of EUA's engagement in the "Support for Higher Education Reform Experts" initiative in 2015, Michael has been involved, since 2021 as the team leader. With his unit, he also in charge of EUA's engagement for academics and students at risk, and engages in particular for higher education institutions in Ukraine.

Before joining EUA in 2006, Michael held various positions in international higher education exchange and cooperation in Asia and the Middle East.

About the [European University Association](#) (EUA)

EUA is a membership organization representing around 900 members in 49 European countries, composed mainly of higher education institutions and national university associations. Working closely with its members, EUA plays a key role in shaping European policy and promoting institutional best practices. It is a consultative member of the Bologna Process, representing Europe's universities in the Ministerial Meetings, in the [Bologna Follow-up Group, and in its working groups](#).



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Webinar Agenda

Day 1: Tuesday, September 22, 2026

Foundations & Strategic Frameworks (3 hours)

From: 10:00-13:15

10:00–10:15 | Session 1 – Opening & Introduction

- Welcome remarks – Ministry / NEO
- Objectives of the TAM webinar
- Overview of HERE priorities

10:15–11:00 | Session 2 – The Global Landscape of Internationalization: Concepts & Institutional Frameworks

Input: Michael Gaebel, EUA

- Key trends in higher education internationalization
- Why internationalization matters for universities and countries
- Key components of effective internationalization strategies
- Governance and institutional decision-making structures
- Linking institutional strategies with national priorities
- Implications and opportunities for Palestine and Palestinian universities

Followed by discussion

11:00–11:45 | Session 3 – Case Study: The Institution's Internationalization Strategy

- Presentation of the university's institutional internationalization strategy
- Student and staff mobility, including internships
- Virtual exchanges and international learning opportunities



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- Joint programmes and degrees
- International partnerships and cooperation
- University alliances and networks
- Communication, visibility, and international positioning

Followed by discussion on transferable practices

11:45–12:00 | Break

15-minute break

12:00–12:45 | Session 4 – Group Work: Assessing Current Institutional Capacity

Chaired by Dr. Amir Khalil, Director, Erasmus+ National Office

- Participants assess their university's current internationalization practices and capacity
- Identification of key strengths, gaps, challenges, and opportunities
- Group discussion on institutional priorities and areas for improvement
- Feedback from participants and experts

12:45–13:15 | Session 5 – Plenary Feedback & Reflections

Chaired by Michael Gaebel

- Presentation of group findings
- Expert reflections and commentary
- Identification of common priorities and transferable lessons
- Key takeaways and recommendations for participating universities



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Day 2: Wednesday, September 23, 2026

Tools, Practices & Action Planning (3 hours)

From: 10:00-13:15h

10:00–11:00 | Session 7 – Quality Mobility

Input: – approximately 20–25 minutes, with time for Q&A and participant reactions

- Strengthening student and staff mobility
- Enhancing international student support and services
- Managing partnerships and collaborations to support quality mobility
- Identifying challenges and opportunities for sustainable mobility

Followed by exchanges with participants

11:00–12:00 | Session 8 – Internationalization at Home & Virtual Exchange

Input:– approximately 20–25 minutes, with time for Q&A and participant reactions

- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and virtual mobility
- Internationalization of the curriculum
- Creating international learning opportunities for students who do not participate in physical mobility
- Integrating international and intercultural dimensions into teaching and learning

Followed by exchanges with participants

12:00–12:15 | Break

15-minute break

12:15–13:15 | Session 9 – Workshop: Designing an Institutional Action Plan



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Facilitated by the experts with participation from university representatives

- Reflection on the current institutional capacity for internationalization
- Developing an institutional internationalization strategy or strategic approach
- Governance and management structures
- Sustainable funding and resource mobilization
- Building and managing sustainable strategic partnerships

Participants, with support and guidance from the experts, will develop initial institutional action points focusing on:

- Key opportunities and priorities
- Open questions, challenges, and areas requiring further support
- Immediate and medium-term actions
- Outlook and preparation for the follow-up event

Day 3: Follow-up event

(60-90 min)

Participants will have 5-10 days to develop their action plans, and present them.

- Each institution shares key priorities
 - Peer and expert feedback
 - Summary of outcomes & closing
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