



PITA ANNUAL REPORT

2018

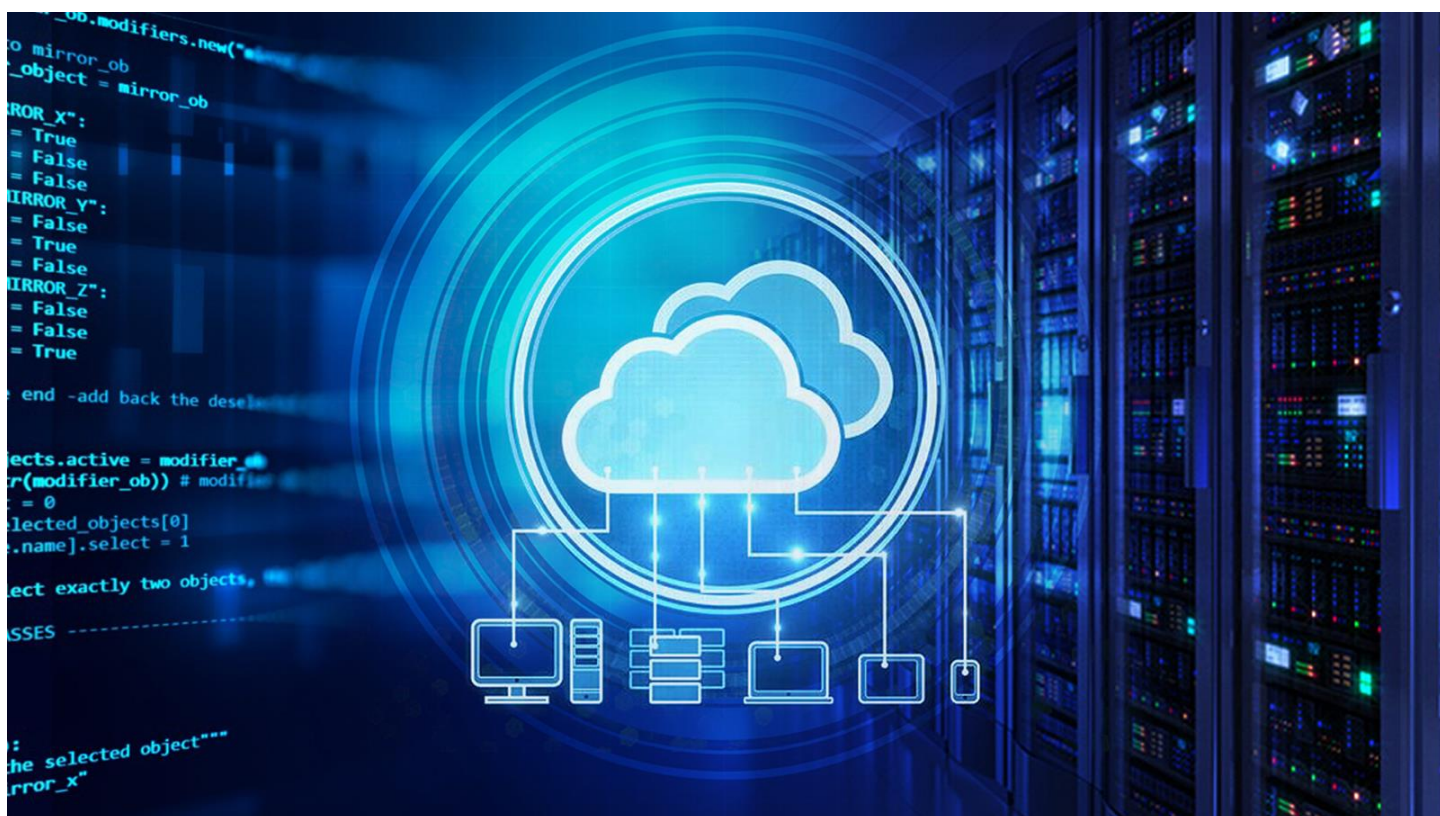


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Acronyms

AUG	Al-Azhar University of Gaza
HWTK	University of Applied Sciences in Germany
EU	European Union
UCAS	University Colleague of Applied Science
IUG	Islamic University of Gaza
PITA	Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies
PICTI	Palestine Information and Communication Technology Incubator
UNICAL	University of Calabria
GU	Gaza University
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
FIS	Faculty of Information Studies (University of Slovenia)
QIF	Quality improvement Fund
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
CTP	Computer Technology Program
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
ITIDA	Information Technology Industry Development Agency
SW	Software
HW	Hardware
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
CD	Curriculum Development
GCCTS	Gaza Community College for Tourism Studies

ICT DEVELOPMENT

Development of Information and Communication Technology generally refers to the application and effective utilization of Information Technologies towards social, economic and political development with a significant emphasis on poor and marginalized people and communities, thus aiming at providing equitable use and access to technologies as well as bridging digital divides within societies.

The Evolution of Technology

The way people connect, communicate, engage and discover is carrying great implications. It's not so much that technology indeed is part of almost everything in our daily lives. We are living in an era where technology and society are rapidly evolving and people perceptions' and behaviors' are constantly changing.

The Past	The Present	The Future
Meet the Internet	Today's Tech	New Horizons
<p>The internet was a new commodity many households and businesses began to gain access to.</p> <p>Thankfully, technology delivered faster connections to the World Wide Web.</p>	<p>A short decade later, access to internet is available almost everywhere.</p> <p>Technology perpetually reshaped our communication.</p> <p>And along with constant connections, we see instant availability.</p>	<p>As more existing technologies are developed into something greater, consumers and businesses are expecting to see more opportunities with future technology.</p>

ICT Trends

Information technology is one of the fastest moving career sectors out there. We are constantly seeing emerging trends and new horizons in technology. Here are a few of the top IT trends for 2018:



**Keeping our cyber space
safe, secure and reliable.**

“Where we’re going, we don’t need roads!”. In cyberspace, the challenge is similar, we don’t know what kinds of roads we’ll be on, but what we do know is that our daily lives are becoming more dependent on internet-based tools and services and as platforms accumulate more of our most sensitive data, the demand for knowledge in the field of cyber security is continuously growing. Furthermore, new technologies and business demands are rapidly growing with the rising need for use of cloud services for urgent data protection in an efficient and effective manner, where cyber security is no longer an option in our digital world.



**How block chain will change
the way we feel.**

For the very first time in history, you are able to go by your daily life through using your smart device to collect information and data about every product who have purchased over the internet, every person you met over social media platforms, every interaction you’ve made with



**Propelling Fintech from
back-end services to every
day's life.**

another party – and in fact, every event that happens around you!

Block chain allow consumers of all of these services to control access to records and to know who has accessed them. Moreover, it redefines the relationship between the individual and parties he/she has interacted with.

Over the past few years, the financial services industry has been technologically-led. Thanks to mobile and cloud computing, customers are embracing on-demand finance, through which they feel more comfortable in managing their money and business online.

Nowadays, Banking, Financial Services and Fintech companies are the beneficiaries that stand to gain tremendously by demonstrating innovation in their business conduct and the services they provide.



**Better carrier messaging for
everyone: Rich
Communication Services.**

wave of advancement and innovation, IOE is the main talk! Soon, we will be able to consult everything to decide anything.

Texting have changed the way we communicate and people want messaging that lets them do things like sharing high-resolution photos and larger files, chatting with a group, knowing when messages are read or making video calls. RCS makes all this possible, by bringing mobile industry users together.

RCS is a relatively new mobile communications technology that's aimed to replace traditional SMS and MMS messaging and redefine a more user-oriented messaging experience for all.

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

The Palestinian ICT sector is showing steady growth over the past 25 years under the leadership of PITA; the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies.

The Palestinian IT services industry is supported by strong ecosystem including venture capital funds, business incubators, trade and investment facilitation organizations, business associations and international cooperation agencies, in addition to having an excellent and stable communications infrastructure including high-speed internet and wireless networks, 3G and fiber optic connectivity, in addition to a very stable electricity supply.

CURRENT STATUS OF ICT SECTOR

The Palestinian ICT sector is a rapidly and continuously growing economic sector that is significantly contributing to the development of the Palestinian economy with an annual market growth of about 25% and an estimated market size of \$500-638 million.

Palestine's private sector led economy to 140,000 enterprises and 14 international & local banks.

Palestine is making the needed investments to become a player in the global digital economy; contributing around 7% to GDP with 20,000 direct and indirect employees and £102m annual output from IT & business process services industry. According to recent studies, the value added of the ICT sector amounted to half a billion dollars by 7.6% of the total value added in the private sector.

National Analysis

Factors that contributed to the growth of the ICT sector in Palestine:

- Possession of rich human capital that consist of a well-educated and young population.
- Investments by leading international companies.
- The steady inflow of international aid.

- The presence of multinational companies.
- The relative openness of the Palestinian people in building business relations with foreign customers and partners.

Local demand for IT

There are several factors in Palestine that boost demand for ICT goods and services:

- The move towards e-government.
- Access to information, communication, entertainment, studying and work.
- The political situation which increases the need for technology to aid virtual communication.

Weaknesses:

- The absence of leadership and coordination between the public and private sector groups.
- Limited access to foreign and international markets.
- Insufficient domestic capital.
- The need to further invest in fields of scientific research, innovation and creativity in product/service development.

Obstacles that hinder the expansion and growth of ICT sector in Palestine:

- The political situation that limits the ability to travel and move goods and services.
- Weaknesses in the legal and regulatory framework.
- The gap between the ICT skills that students receive at schools and universities and the labor market needs and requirements.

IT Infrastructure

At the beginning of 2018, the ICT sector in Palestine witnessed a quantum leap by launching 3G service in the West Bank and enabling Wataniya Mobile Company to provide services in Gaza Strip. Data from the Ministry of IT and Telecommunications showed a steady growth in the use of telephone lines. By the end of 2017, 472,292 telephone lines (home, commercial and governmental) existed in Palestine in comparison with 360,402 lines at the end of 2010; indicating an increase of 31%.

Fixed telephone penetration rate per 100 inhabitants reached 10.5 telephone line at the end of 2017 compared with 9.4 telephone line at the end of 2010. Furthermore, mobile cellular subscriptions reached 3,997,206 subscribers in Palestine by 2017 in comparison with 2,603,582 subscribers in 2010; showing an increase of 53.5%, whereas mobile penetration rate per 100 inhabitants reached 83.6 mobile at the end 2017 compared to 64.3 mobile at the end of 2010.

Data showed that the majority of households in Palestine have a mobile phone with a percentage of 96.6% (97.2% in the West Bank and 95.7% in Gaza Strip). The percentage of households that own a smartphone was 84.2% in Palestine (89.8% in the West Bank and 75.5% in Gaza Strip). 43.1% of households have a computer (Desktop or Laptop or Tablet and iPad) in Palestine (48.9% in the West Bank and 34.0% in Gaza Strip). As for the use of computers among individuals, 61.4% of households have users of computer (62.0% in the West Bank, and 60.4% in Gaza Strip).

Internet Access and Use

Recent studies such as “Policies for Scaling up Youth Entrepreneurship in the State of Palestine” (Abdulla et al., 2014) indicates an increase among youth in the use of the Internet, social networking platforms and mobile applications as means for acquiring new skills and knowledge, opening up to the world, expressing themselves and marketing their skills and ideas. And in light of the increased access to computers in Palestine between 2006-2016, the Palestinian society has become one of the most technologically interconnected societies in the Arab World.

3G Services	Internet Access	Internet Users
At the beginning of 2018, the ICT sector in Palestine witnessed a quantum leap by launching 3G services in the West Bank and enabling Wataniya Mobile Company to provide 2G services in Gaza Strip.	According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics; 51.7% of households in Palestine have internet access (60.6% in the West Bank and 38.0% in Gaza Strip) in 2017.	With reference to 7amleh – the Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, there were 1,110,582 internet users of Palestinian citizens living in lands under Israeli control and 3,018,770 internet users in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Access to Financial Resources

Financial assistance from international partners and donors makes up a significant part of the state budget. The largest donors of development assistance to Palestine are the EU, the UN, the USA, Japan and Arab countries of Persian Gulf.

International donor cooperation from GIZ, USAID, AFD, the World Bank, the United Kingdom and the EU has enabled a number of important initiatives that have made an attractive business for ICT sector investment.

Consequently, the sector has been fortunate in forging a number of strategic partnerships with international technology companies, notably Cisco (since 2008), Microsoft, Intel, HP and Google.

Partnerships with international corporations, foundations and donors have produced a number of progressive initiatives that have enabled the sector in all its fields.

ICT TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



<p>SDG 1: No Poverty</p>	<p>Technology has played a major and important role in fighting and overcoming poverty in our society. It has exposed many occupation practices to starve people and impose collective punishment on them. This in turn has contributed to the alleviation of sanctions in many remote areas, refugee camps and vulnerable and poor communities. Moreover, technology has contributed to raising the standards of living and income of many Palestinian families, creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities in order to reduce unemployment as well as opening the doors for telecommuting and self-employment, which has improved the lives of many families locally and globally.</p>
<p>SDG 5: Gender Equality</p>	<p>Technology has contributed in empowering women to have access to information, knowledge and learning channels in the easiest ways, at the lowest costs, and without the need for much mobility. Subsequently, this has given women new opportunities to claim their rights, to address the phenomenon of discrimination against women based on gender, and to improve the status of women in their societies.</p>

<p>SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth</p>	<p>Digital transformation has indeed created an economic revolution towards inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Technology has contributed to reducing unemployment, opening up new horizons, improving access to financial services and increasing productivity.</p>
<p>SDG 9: Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure</p>	<p>The concept of improving industry and economic sectors has been closely related to digital transformation. In addition, innovation has been one of the most important components of this sector, which has contributed to solving social, economic, commercial and other problems in easy ways through the use of different technologies.</p>
<p>SDG 11: Sustainable Cities & Communities</p>	<p>Sustainable development leads to comprehensive development at all levels. Technology has recently become a key indicator of sustainable economic growth through building sustainable smart cities and communities that consume less energy. And this leads to the sustainability of services for future generations.</p>
<p>SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals</p>	<p>Revitalizing the global partnerships for sustainable developments is a MUST! Partnerships and cooperation are needed for sustainable development. Such efforts require</p>

	an environment for sustainable development at all levels and the inclusion of all actors.
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Digital Divides within Society and Gender Equality

Nowadays, the available and free access and use of Information and Communication Technology has become significantly essential to the conduct of government operations, to business transactions and to individuals' day-to-day lives.

Even though these technologies offer opportunities in a wide range of areas such as education, health, finance, employment and so on, it may lead to social and economic disparities.

Gender inequalities do exist concerning the access and use of ICT, hence creating the so-called digital gap between males and females; which is widely reflected in the participation of females in life's different aspects.

Economic, social and cultural obstacles that prevent women's access to and use of ICT; is a phenomenon referred to as the "Gender Digital Divide".

Impediments to access to ICT:

- Socio-economic impediments: gender wage gap and the unequal division of paid and unpaid work between males and female, can significantly impact the affordability of ICTs for women.
- Socio-cultural impediments: lack of equality to ICTs as a human rights concern in many countries, can significantly impact the affordability and accessibility to information.
- Geographical isolation and poor technological infrastructure: in countries that have gender disparities in either education, income, employment or political participation, cultural and social norms do limit women's online access to information and digital resources.

A systematic approach to establish human rights in Information and Communication Technology should be taken into consideration when tackling the gender digital divide.

Therefore, and as part of its mandate, PITA has formulated its 2018 strategic direction towards the inclusion and empowerment of women entrepreneurs and start-ups in their societies, since they are becoming the backbone of our nation's economy, in addition to spotting the lights on how women entrepreneurs and start-ups drive growth and spirit of innovation, increase job opportunities hence reducing unemployment and transforming communities into ones with successful human capital.

PITA CELEBRATING ITS 20 YEARS OF ESTABLISHMENT



ANNIVERSARY

Historical Background

The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies represents more than 150 major ICT companies in Palestine's emerging technology and startup ecosystem. PITA has become the driving force in advancing the ICT sector's interest, and the leading information source about this sector in Palestine.

Based in Ramallah, PITA was founded in 1999 by a group of Palestinian entrepreneurs with the vision of creating a non-profit organization to advance the interests and positive societal impact of Palestine's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Sector.

A new generation of forward thinking entrepreneurs with a heritage that takes them back thousands of years in history is bringing together a profound change to the technology and start-up landscape.

Through its programming, contents, events and global outreach, PITA is now poised to not only continue advance its mission towards innovation, but also serves as the region's drive for its start-up ecosystem.

PITA's Mission

“To lead the ICT sector towards an innovation-based economy.”

PITA's Vision

“A Palestinian nation nurturing innovation and contributing to world knowledge.”

PITA's Strategic Goals

“The emergence of an open, secure cloud, the consumerization of IT, and ability to do business in a global, borderless environment, makes Palestine an ideal place to discover, innovate and disrupt traditional thinking.”

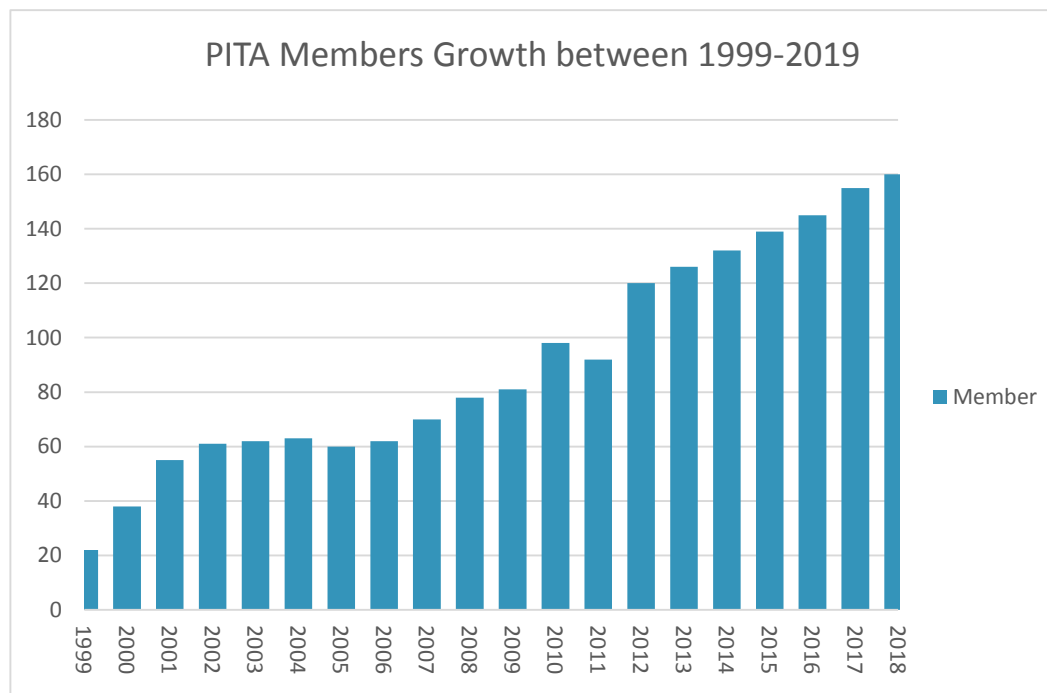
Strategic Goals:

- Institutional building of PITA.

- Enterprise and Start-up Development: Building, Developing and Empowering the Capabilities of the Companies.
- Research and Development – Human Development: Strengthening the Relationship with the Academic Sector.
- Policy and Advocacy: Advocating and Engaging with the Public Sector.
- ICT Sector Branding: Networking and Penetrating the ICT sector in Palestine.

Members Growth between 1999-2019

In 1999, a group of active Palestinian businessmen and entrepreneurs in the ICT sector have contributed to the establishment of the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies – PITA. The association started working through 20 ICT companies, who later became members under PITA's umbrella. And since then, members under PITA's umbrella have significantly increased to reach 160 strong and effective ICT companies.



PITA offers its members a wide range of exclusive services that help leverage members' investments and facilitate information exchange among them.

Through its varied programs, PITA provides a multitude of services which are aimed at promoting and facilitating the exchange of knowledge, information and deal flow with its members.

We also recognize the need for capacity-building where we help companies with technical skills, soft skills training, access to markets as well as legal and HR services.

In Palestine, and around the world, PITA's team is focused on advancing our ICT sector by helping its members with:

- **PITA Website:** a full time source of helpful information, contributed content, industry news, association events and members' contact information. It also features events, and is a source of several important links and downloads.
- **Members Directory:** gain access to free, international, regional and local exposure for your company and its services through one of PITA's most important publications. PITA will help its members create a high-impact member profile that will be circulated at industry events, international trade fairs and on PITA's website.
- **Email Address:** PITA provides a list of its registered members; in which members can share events and achievements through a mailing list that is designed for that purpose.

Main Achievements

- **Toward Entrepreneurship ... Digital Palestine**

Decision of the Council of Ministers No. (6) of 2018 on the regulation of incentive package contract for the purpose of encouragement of investment in the ICT sector.

Incentive package contracts is a crucial tool within the Palestinian Investment Encouragement law over regional legislations, and gives a competitive advantage for investors to invest in Palestine, as this contract can be granted to support strategic projects, geographic location or named sector to generate jobs, technology transfer or implement international standards to protect the environment or generate energy from alternative sources.

Article (4) - Project Incentives:

- New projects shall be exempted from the income tax (0%) for a period of four years.
- Existing projects that have benefited from the Law incentives shall be exempt from the income tax (0%) for a period of two years.
- Existing projects that have not previously benefited from the incentives, shall be exempted from the income tax (0%) for a period of three years.
- Investors and companies willing to finance or invest in research and development of Information and communication technology either in the entrepreneurs or new companies or universities or approved research and development centers, will enjoy deductions in the invested amount of profit subject to income tax, upon the approval of these contributions by the PIPA.
- Projects benefited from the Incentive Packages contracts shall be treated as the projects benefited from the law.

Article (5) - Financial Institutions Incentives:

Concessional loans, granted by finance institutions and banks to finance projects approved by PIPA, shall be treated in the same way as loans granted to small and medium- sized enterprises according to the provisions of the Income Tax Law and its regulations.

Article (7) - Charges:

- No allowances shall be collected in lieu of providing incentives for the Information and communication technology sector approved at the incubators and centers.
- An allowance shall be collected in lieu of entering into a contract and publication of incentive package contracts issued by the PIPA for the current or new projects or those projects which contribute in investment in the amount of (JOD140) or its equivalent in the legally circulated currency.
- The allowances set forth in this Article shall be imported to the public treasury account.

- **7% Tax Exemption**

Decision of the Council of Ministers No. (11/187/17) of 2018 on the telecom license revenues for small and medium-sized telecommunication service providers.

By the end of 2015, a cumulative 7% tax was deducted from the ICT companies between 2010 and 2015.

And as a result, the Council of Ministers decided in its meeting held in Ramallah on 16/1/2018 the following:

Article (1):

Exempting the companies with the following licenses from the Ministry of Telecommunications and IT: Broadband License, BSA License and VOIP License from the 7% tax. The decision states that companies whose revenues are less than one million dollars, are exempted from paying the 7% tax, whereas companies whose revenues are more than one million dollars, must pay the 7% tax.

The decision is valid under the following conditions set by the Ministry of Telecommunications and IT:

- The benefit of this exemption is related to the companies investing in the value of the exemption in the development of communications network and equipment.
- The exemption mentioned above applies to companies that comply with all the terms and conditions of the license only, particularly the payment of license renewal fees and the submission of the required reports.
- This decision shall be effective from 1/1/2016 until 31/12/2018.

Note: According to the Council of Ministers Decision No. (11/187/17), the tax exemption for the year 2016 reached \$351,513.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING WITH THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Building a sustainable ecosystem depends heavily on business leaders, policy makers and regulators by working together to pursue mutual beneficial objectives. They must fully understand the role that ICT is playing in such an increasingly dynamic digital economy.

Organizing summits for the creation of discussions and open dialogue between different sectors shall play a part in facilitating the private-public partnership in order to address major trends and challenges in the tech industry sectors for the greater good, thus redesigning digital policies and regulations that were once designed to serve the less dynamic and uncertain environment, in order to encourage innovation and investment in the long-term.

2018 IN REVIEW – ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED

Strategic Goal N.1: Institutional building of PITA.

Board of Directors – Dedication & Commitment to Work

PITA's Board of Directors provides local guidance and insight for PITA's member companies, while acting as a key driver in helping to spearhead the drive for innovation. They are all committed to embracing the next generation of entrepreneurs; who are the future.

Board of Directors:

- Dr. Yahya Al-Salqan; Chairman.
- Dr. Nahed R. Eid; Vice Chairman.
- Mr. Khalid Sabri; Secretary.
- Mr. Saeed Zeidan; Treasury.
- Mr. Mohanad Shurrah; Member.
- Mr. Raed Elayyan; Member.
- Mr. Mohammed Abu-Nahla; Member.
- Mr. Michael Younan; Member.
- Mr. Aref Hanaysheh; Member.

Executive Management – Aimed at Advancing our Nation's Economic and Social Capital

PITA's management team has its pulse on Palestine's emerging ICT and startup economy. In doing so, it helps to promote a culture of collaboration, mentorship and education – all aimed at advancing our region's economic and social capital.

Ramallah Office:

- Amani Maady; Acting General Manager.
- Maria Beirat; Administrative Assistant.
- Megan Qahoush; Project Officer.
- Saleh Sharif; Logistics.

Gaza Office:

- Mazen Abu Qamar; Business Development and Finance Officer.
- Islam Badwan; Administrative Assistant.

- Tamer Shurrab; Project Coordinator.
- Nour Haboub; Academia Industry Coordinator.
- Safwat Abu Thaher; Logistics.

General Assembly Meeting in June 23, 2018.

The Annual General Assembly Meeting was held in June 23, 2018 with the participation of members of the General Assembly in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. During the meeting, the administrative and financial reports were generally approved, members' issues were discussed in general and annual plans were reviewed.

Strategic Goal N.2: Enterprise and Start-up Development – Capacity Building Programs: Building, Developing and Empowering the Capabilities of the Companies.

Development of Managerial Skills and Technical Companies Project – Market Penetration

- Which aims to increase the competitiveness of companies by qualifying their employees to obtain international certificates.
- The implementation of the international certificate in the management of IT services was completed for 15 trainees and 8 trainees passed the international exam.
- Training is currently under preparation for the International Certificate in Quality Management - Green Belt.



Technical Excellence Project

The project aimed to develop the capabilities of companies in addition to small and medium sized enterprises in the ICT sector in specific technical fields, which were identified based on an analytical study and coordination with international partners to create a business development program (business model, technical training, knowledge transfer, staff exchange, etc.). That being said, five technical orientations were identified to build the capacity of the firms.

Women Empowerment Initiative Project to Increase the Number of Women Workers in the ICT Sector

Increasing the number of ICT workers aiming at reducing the gender gap, examining the low number of women in the ICT field, in addition to strengthening women's ICT leadership, capacity building and job training for approximately 50-100 women.

Palestinian IT Association of Companies – PITA has started an initiative to empower women and increase their vital participation in the community as an active workforce within traditional and untraditional employment tracks.

Women in the ICT sector are facing numerous barriers and challenges preventing them from accessing and fully participating in the market labor force; particularly in Gaza Strip.

The study concerning increasing the number of women workers in the information technology sector has been completed and once approved; the project will be launched to carry out on-the-job training in the member companies.



Quality Management Certificate ISO 9001

The project aims to develop the capabilities of competitive companies by qualifying them to obtain international certificates at the company level. Through studying the needs of companies, the company's international certificate in quality management was selected ISO 9001.

The consultant's reference document for the training, evaluation and qualification of a group of companies has been recently prepared to obtain the international certificate.

Market Penetration Project

The project aimed at penetrating European Markets as a result of meetings with companies. The reference document for the International Consultant for Assessing Products and Services has been

prepared and the matrix for attracting representatives of companies and their services abroad was also prepared.

Initiative to Build a Software Development System

A series of meetings and workshops on a software development system were completed.

Further work has been done to develop a final vision for the system and prepare a reference document to attract a consultant to compare with regional and international systems and provide feedback.

PITA aims to conduct a comprehensive intervention based on the growing maturity of the ecosystem in order to improve economic opportunities for individuals and firms in the ICT sector in Gaza Strip through strengthening the ICT Ecosystem in Gaza. This shall boost the innovation and entrepreneurial thinking, and improve research-industry links. This intervention will be based on a collaborative and multi-sectoral approach (horizontal and vertical strategy) as detailed below.

In summary, the intervention focused on three main pillars:

- 1- Maturity of Expertise.
- 2- Research and Innovation Empowerment.
- 3- ICT Reform and Access to Global Business Opportunities.

So, to promote the software sector and support entrepreneurship ecosystem in Gaza Strip, PITA and PICTI, in cooperation with the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, have organized a program that included a presentation of several milestones aimed at issuing recommendations for the development of the software sector and entrepreneurship ecosystem in Gaza.



Access to Finance – MEII

World Bank funded a training session in Access to Finance. This training aimed to build the capabilities of corporate employees in the ICT private sector (PITA members) to stimulate investment and finance with the Middle East Investment Initiative.

Around 15 participants attended this training. A series of corporate training courses will be designed to suit their current needs and with the participation of a number of ICT companies in Gaza.



Business Modeling Workshop

A workshop to promote innovation in information technology curriculum in the Palestinian universities. The workshop was presented by Dr. Sami Abu Shammala, business development consultant, and there was a distinguished presence of academics and representatives of the private sector.



PMP

This project aimed at providing technical capacity-building for the ICT companies in the West Bank.

17 ICT companies participated in a 7-days training in Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification.



Business Dinner at Rawabi

The Business man and Founder of Rawabi City, Mr. Bashar Masri and CEOs & Managers of ICT companies in the West Bank gathered up in a business dinner at Rawabi City to further discuss the potential and current status of the ICT sector in Palestine, share some of the success stories of well-known ICT companies as well as searching for new ways to promote and improve the ICT sector in Palestine.



Strategic Goal N.3: Research and Development – Human Development: Strengthening the Relationship with the Academic Sector.

Boosting Innovation in IT Programs – BITPAL UCAS Project (2017-2019)

The project aimed at boosting innovation in IT programs through developing the IT educational curriculum to meet the local market needs. A group of companies in the private sector in Gaza participated in this project. A series of advanced training programs were conducted by professional experts with high level expertise, in addition to establishing many ICT Labs operating in Gaza universities. The project was implemented by UCAS, in partnership with PITA and 9 Palestinian & EU Universities (University College of Applied Sciences, Al-Azhar University, the Islamic University, Al-Aqsa University, Gaza University, UNICAL University in Italy, FIS University in Slovenia and HWTK University in Germany.).



Freelancing and Outsourcing Project – IUG (2017-2019)

In coordination with companies, PITA initiated a needs assessment study that focused on evaluating market labor needs in order to secure on-job training opportunities for students. PITA will also help in building strategic partnerships with the private sector. The project is implemented by IUG, in partnership with PITA, PICTI and EUTD.



Developing Knowledge and Skills of Computer Technology Program – Students to Meet the Needs of Labor Market – GCCTS (2017-2019)

Gaza Community College for Tourism Studies (GCCTS) has received a grant from the Quality Improvement Fund (QIF)- Education to Work Transition Project/Additional Financing - Ministry of Education and Higher Education and funded by the World Bank under the project:

"Developing Knowledge and Skills of Computer Technology Program Students to Meet the Needs of Labor Market" in partnership with PITA. Accordingly, GCCTS seeks to select and employ a Computer Technology Program (CTP) Curriculum Development (CD) Consultant to work on the development of the curriculum based on the needs assessment results and recommendations.

CVET Project (2017-2018)

Technical training to PITA members in partnership with the concerned private sector organizations.

- Unity3d course:
12 trainees from PITA member companies participated in this training.
- IOS development course:
23 trainees from PITA member companies participated in this training.

I-Admin Project – GCCTS (2018-2020)

The project is implemented by GCCTS in partnership with PITA and Al-Aqsa University. The project aims to improve the quality of students and graduates of the Administration and Office Automation Program by providing them with digital technological skills which will easily integrate them in the labor market either directly or through freelancing platforms.

Meeting with the Center for Continuous Learning

A meeting was conducted between Dr. Yahya Al-Salqan, PITA's Chairman and Mr. Marwan Tarazi, Director of Center for Continuous Learning.

During the meeting, both parties discussed the technical assistance that PITA members could provide to the B-HUB center; a forum for innovation at Birzeit University. Such technical assistance is designed to encourage creativity, refine entrepreneurial ideas or create an attractive investment environment that contributes either in the creation of new projects or in the development of existing ones, through the use of business development tools and with the support of a dedicated team of mentors.



Strategic Goal N.4: Policy and Advocacy: Advocating and Engaging with the Public Sector.

Meeting with the Ministry of Higher Education

The meeting was attended by PITA's Board of Directors, represented by Dr. Yahya Al Salqan – Chairman, Dr. Sabri Saidam – Minister of Higher Education, Eng. Jihad Dridi – Director General of Vocational and Technical Education and Eng. Taleb Al Haj – Director General of Scientific Curriculum at the Ministry of Higher Education.

Both parties discussed the importance of enhancing cooperation in between concerning the digitization program, in order to reach the widest pool of schools and students.



Meeting with the Ministry of Labor (Gaza Strip)

A meeting was conducted between PITA and MoL on the following:

- PITA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MoL
- During the meeting, both parties discussed the potential of employment in TVET and the creation of employment opportunities for young people.
- Good results were observed during monitoring the graduates who were placed in companies; as 18% of them got opportunities to work as freelancers and remotely.
- A joint project is being developed between PITA and MoL to create opportunities for the graduates in PITA companies.

Meeting with the Ministry of Labor (West Bank)

As part of the cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Labor and PITA, both have discussed ways of cooperation in between through the establishment of a program for training and employment.



Meeting with the Ministry of Civil Affairs

A meeting was conducted between PITA and MOCA on the following:

- The facilitation and coordination of PITA member companies' work.
- Following-up the ICT materials and denied materials in addition to the suspended materials of the companies.



Committees' Meetings

- SW: a workshop in August was organized to discuss all challenges hindering the improvement of ICT sector and how collaboration among all concerned parties and sectors is important for the promotion of the ICT sector and for the facilitation of commercial exchange within and outside Palestine.
- HW: Activate the role of the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology to assist and follow up on the outstanding goods file. There was also a meeting to discuss the suspending license and goods on Israeli side, additional fees and Vat in Gaza.

ITIDA

In order to develop prospects for joint and fruitful cooperation and achieve the highest interest contributing to the rise of the Arab digital sector. Some PITA members visited Egypt ICT associations to learn from their experience for the purpose of enhancing the Palestinian ICT sector.

CEBIT 2018

PITA has supported a delegation of its member companies who work in the ICT sector to visit CEBIT 2018 exhibition from 10/6/2018 to 16/6/2018 as part of its continuous support to strengthen the ICT sector by providing linkages to international knowledge and access to latest trends and markets.

Meeting with the German Agency for Development

Meeting with the German Agency for Development to evaluate the outputs of technical and vocational training projects and discuss the proposed intervention mechanisms for new projects and initiatives. The upcoming activities during 2019 will focus on capacity building for private sectors (PITA member companies) such as green 6 Sigma (females will be integrated in most of activities.) In addition, a specific focus will be highlighted on sale representatives to empower ICT marketing and establish market penetrations. These upcoming activities shall include deep ICT diffusion and innovation.



7% Tax Exemption

Decision of the Council of Ministers No. (11/187/17) of 2018 on the telecom license revenues for small and medium-sized telecommunication service providers.

The Council of Ministers decided in its meeting held in Ramallah on 16/1/2018 the following:

Article (1):

Exempting the companies with the following licenses from the Ministry of Telecommunications and IT: Broadband License, BSA License and VOIP License from the 7% tax. The decision states that companies whose revenues are less than one million dollars, are exempted from paying the 7% tax, whereas companies whose revenues are more than one million dollars, must pay the 7% tax.

Incentives Package

Decision of the Council of Ministers No. (6) of 2018 on the regulation of incentive package contract for the purpose of encouragement of investment in the ICT sector.

Incentive package contracts is a crucial tool within the Palestinian Investment Encouragement law over regional legislations, and gives a competitive advantage for investors to invest in Palestine, as this contract can be granted to support strategic projects, geographic location or named sector to generate jobs, technology transfer or implement international standards to protect the environment or generate energy from alternative sources.

Signed MOUs with the Engineering Association and the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection (PFESP)

2 Memorandums of Understanding have been signed during the Gala Dinner at the Palestine Technology Week – Expotech 2018 with each of the following:

- The Engineers Association, whereas:
 - 1- The partners aim to improve economic conditions and contribute to the creation of specialized employment opportunities in areas related to the areas of work of the members of these institutions.
 - 2- The partners aim to develop and improve the level of professionalism at work in Palestine through building capacities and qualifying specialized teams at work as well as supporting the development of the companies operating in the ICT sector in Palestine.
 - 3- Partners agree to improve the social conditions of individuals within these institutions.
- The Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection (PFESP), whereas:
 - 1- Joint cooperation in planning, financing and implementing projects that support entrepreneurship and innovation, particularly among the youth.
 - 2- Cooperate in the design of related empowerment programs and seek to raise funds for them.
 - 3- Implementation of an electronic platform for technological training and qualifying of entrepreneurs.
 - 4- Ensure the readiness and efficiency of the ICT infrastructure and take appropriate actions to ensure the delivery of services on time/within the agreed time frame and continuity of service.

Strategic Goal N.5: ICT Sector Branding: Networking and Penetrating the ICT sector in Palestine.

Palestine Technology Week – Expotech 2018

Expotech is an event that is dedicated to the information and communication technology sector in Palestine, hence spotting the lights on the latest technological trends and opportunities happening on both local and global levels.

For its 15th anniversary, EXPOTECH technology week has proved itself globally and made itself a great platform to learn about new technologies & trends and offer innovative solutions in ongoing technologies through showcasing the success stories of Palestinian businesses and entrepreneurs who seek to tap into the potential of the tech sector in Palestine. In Expotech week, you can directly speak to industry leaders and generate great leads for your business by interacting with Palestine's well-known ICT companies. Along with other players in the business, it offers startups and innovators the chance to Learn more about the latest industry developments, experience a rich and highly focused event, participate in sessions to expand practical knowledge about the ICT sector, engage in networking activities, expand your vision of how technologies impact businesses and most importantly Work for a BETTER FUTURE.

Main Objectives

- Engage Palestinian innovators and mindsets in the event through networking with a wider pool of tech enthusiasts and experts.
- Connect the ICT sector in Palestine with trendy topics on the global level such as (mention the main pillars).
- Facilitate the private-public sector partnership through open dialogue in order to address some of the major trends and challenges in the tech industry sector for the greater good.
- Spread awareness about the need for adopting strategic thinking approaches and setting a new era of leadership and a new generation of business models that conform to the latest technology solutions.
- Provide a great platform to learn about new technology & trends and offer innovative solutions in ongoing technologies.
- **Expose many facets of technology through exploring the wide range of roles that technology can play in health, agricultural, educational, financial, economic and industrial sectors.**

During EXPOTECH

- Connecting with the Palestinian Diaspora: A group of Palestinian investors and businessmen from the diaspora are annually invited to this event as a way of networking and bridging future investments and joint work with them.
- Multinational meetings: Expotech will be an attempt to attract multinational companies to conduct several training courses and seminars in universities in order to contribute to the transfer of knowledge and create opportunities for innovation and creativity.
- Platform (bilateral business meetings): Special arrangements are made to facilitate business meetings between local and visiting companies, whether from different economic sectors or from foreign delegations.

West Bank

EXPOTECH is being organized by the main organizer the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) and its partner organizer the Palestine Information & Communication Technology Incubator (PICTI) under its 3 main components:

- The Gala Dinner: where key and high level representatives are invited to announce the opening of the tech event under the patronage of his Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas.
- The IT Conference Day: that shall address visionary leaders, experts and partners by covering topics under the main pillars (Innovation, FinTech & Investment, Challenges facing the telecom sector and International Cooperation).
- Palestine Smart Solutions Day: in which multiple sessions were organized for ICT companies to present the latest technological and smart solutions in Palestine.

Announcement Press Conference: On Sunday, September 16th 2018, the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) and the Palestinian Telecommunication Group (PALTEL) – the main sponsor of the event, have announced the launching of Palestine Tech Week Event – EXPOTECH 2018 for its 15th round, which is scheduled to take place in the West Bank and Gaza between the 24th and 26th of September 2018, under the slogan “Towards a Better Future”.

The launching was held in Jawwal Telecommunications Company headquarter with the presence of Dr. Yahya Al-Salqan, Chairman of PITA; Dr. Allam Mousa, Minister of IT and Telecommunications and Mr. Ammar Aker; CEO of PALTEL.



Gala Dinner: The opening ceremony took place in September 24, 2018 at the Millennium Palestine Hotel-Ramallah under the patronage of the Prime Minister Dr. Rami Al-Hamdallah. The event focused on the policies, procedures, laws and benefits that PITA has strived to achieve with various government agencies in order to develop the sector, improve its growth and investment opportunities and provide an opportunity to meet with well-known ministers, decision-makers and business men.

The event was moderated by Mrs. Amani Muady – Acting General Manager of PITA. The Gala Dinner was opened by a speech for Dr. Yahya Al-Salqan, Chairman of PITA; followed by Mr. Ammar Aker, CEO of PALTEL and Dr. Khayriya Rasas, Adviser to the Palestinian Prime Minister, Dr. Rami Al-Hamdallah.



IT Conference Day: Palestine Tech Week – Expotech 2018 themed up the importance of innovation to secure the consistency of development in the Palestinian ICT sector. This comes by promoting creativity, establishing economical partnerships, investing more in entrepreneurs and pioneers, thus enabling palestine to reach international and global markets.

The 2-days event held in Ramallah and Gaza spotted the light on the importance of investment in creativity to guarantee the continuous growth of the ICT sector in Palestine as well as facing the challenges imposed by the Israeli Government that might hinder the development of the ICT sector in palestine.

For its 15th consecutive year, the IT Conference Day was held in September 25, 2018 at the Millennium Palestine Hotel-Ramallah, under the Patronage of His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas. The event was organized by the main organizer the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) and its partner organizer the Palestinian Information & Communication Technology Incubator (PICTI) in partnership with the main sponsor Palestine Telecommunication Group (PALTEL) in addition to the Bank of Palestine; the silver sponsor.

The event was moderated by Mr. Omar Al-Sahili – CEO of Business Alliance. The IT Conference Day was opened by a remark for His Excellency Eng. Adnan Samara, President of the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence (HCIE) on behalf of the President Mahmoud Abbas; followed by Mr. Ammar Aker, CEO of PALTEL; Mr. Thaer Hamayel, Marketing Director, on behalf of Mr. Rushdi Al-Ghalayini, General Manager of Bank of Palestine and last but not least Dr. Yahya Al-Salqan, Chairman of PITA.

IT Conference Day Sessions

- Session 1: Innovation.
- Session 2: FinTech & Investment.
- Session 3: Challenges Facing the Telecom Sector.
- Session 4: International Cooperation.





Palestine Smart Solutions Day: Our view of technology is often limited to “smartphone”, “tablets”, or “other gadgets” that shall make our daily lives much better and easier. It’s unlikely that we tend

to consider that innovation and technology together are capable of changing people's lives in the developing world for the better.

During the 3rd day, 26 September 2018, PITA organized multiple sessions for its ICT companies to present the latest technological and smart solutions in Palestine in front of a wide pool of economic and government sectors, followed by several B2B meetings that shall connect the ICT companies with targeted clients.

What was special? A Geo Smart Locational Solution that shall transform the developing world!

The opening of the third day in Palestine Tech Week – EXPOTECH 2018, took place in September 26th 2018 at the Millennium Palestine Hotel-Ramallah with the presence of Dr. Allam Mousa, the Minister of IT and Telecommunication; Dr. Yahya Al-Salqan, Chairman of PITA and Mr. Kamal Ratroot, Representative from PALTEL – the main sponsor in the event.

The 3rd day, entitled “Palestine Smart Solutions Day” have hosted 17 Palestinian ICT companies to present the latest technological and smart solutions in Palestine, in addition to a specialized session for the Eng. Michael Younan, CEO of Good Shepherd Engineering Company, entitled “Geo Smart Locational Solutions.”

The presenting companies are: JAWWAL, PALTEL, Hadara Internet Services, Spark for Consulting and Training, Sabri for Computer, ULTIMIT Advanced Turnkey Solutions, PalPay- E-Payment Solutions, Jaffa.Net Software and Outsourcing, Badawi Information Systems (BIS), PCNC 2000 Networking Company, Isra Software & Computer Company, Good Shepherd Engineering, PITS, Engineers Association, Ministry of IT and Telecommunications, Bank of Palestine (BOP) and Afandie.



Gaza Strip

Announcement Press Conference: EXPOTECH 2018 Technology Week was launched through a press conference that was led by PITA chairman Dr. Yahya AlSalaqan, and H.E. Dr. Allam Musa Minister of Telecom and Information Technology, and Mr. Ammar Aker the CEO of PALTEL Group, the main sponsor of the week, at mid-day of September 16th in Ramallah.

Gala Dinner (Opening Ceremony) - September 24th: Focuses on networking with decision-makers and heads of relevant institutions in the private sector about policies, procedures, laws and benefits that PITA has struggled to achieve in order to develop the sector and improve its opportunities for growth and investment.

Technology Conference - September 25th:

Strategic and Leadership sessions: This is the main event that reflects the role of technology in economic development in which various topics were discussed by hosting experts in strategic sessions about the role of technology in employment and economic development, a session about

artificial intelligence and Modern technology, and another session on outsourcing to the Gaza Strip and regional and international orientations about freelancing.

Main Conference Sessions:

Session 1: The Role of Technology in Economic Development and Increasing Employment.

Session 2: Debate: Modern Technology as AI and Employment.

Session 3: Presentations: Models and experiences of the use of modern technology such as virtual reality in the development of economic sectors.

Session 4: Outsourcing to Palestinians: Local and International Experiences.

Session 5: Outsourcing Demo Session

Other Events:

Networking platforms and specialized sessions: networking platforms between graduates and technology experts, local and foreign companies, both from different economic sectors or from foreign groups, in addition to the women empowerment session in the technology sector, and the leadership session to encourage and support innovation.

Youth Session: Entrepreneurship & Hi-tech sessions.

Women Session: Women in ICT Empowerment.

Competition for the latest innovations of technology in solving existing community problems: A technology competition that was held earlier this year by PITA in cooperation with UNDP and Representative Office of Japan to Palestine, which presented an opportunity for competition among all segments of society to provide modern technological solutions and projects.

Multinational meetings: an attempt to attract experts to conduct several training courses to contribute to the transfer of knowledge and create opportunities for innovation and creativity.



Meeting with the Association of Banks

The meeting focused on searching for ways of cooperation between the Association of Palestinian Banks and PITA in the ICT sector in Palestine.



Multichannel Promotional Campaign – 3G Services

In partnership with Raya FM, the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies – PITA have launched a promotional campaign concerning the 3rd Generation Network Services and its potential impact on the development of a solid and sustainable economy.

The campaign spotted the lights on several issues related to 3G services, such as:

- The prices of the various 3G services' packages.
- The benefits of the 3G services.
- The impact of 3G services on e-commerce and investment opportunities.
- Challenges faced.
- IT Infrastructure.

Ja-Pal's DigiBiz Solution Competition 2018

The Ja-Pal's DigiBiz Solution is an initiative that was launched by the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) and Palestine Information & Communication Technology Incubator (PCTI) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) and funded by the Government of Japan. This competition aimed to identify creative change makers from East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza Strip. Those talented entrepreneurs who have innovative business ideas that make a difference in people's lives across any type of socio-economic issues were invited to submit their digital & smart tech ideas.

Competition Objectives

- Develop and promote potential Palestinian business ideas that have an information, communications or technological (ICT) focus.

- Promote the spirit of competition and reduce the gender gap among Palestinian entrepreneurs.

Prizes

- The five winning business ideas were announced and presented at JAIP and during Expotech 2018.
- \$1000 were awarded to each of the five winners of the competition.
- The 5 winning business ideas travelled to Japan to further develop their business ideas into prototypes. During their trip, they meet with well-known Japanese business men and entrepreneurs.

Winners

Ayham Bader (WB): Electronic Waste Recycling.

Jumana Saad (WB): Sky Gate Game.

Rabei Daraghme (WB): Automated Tool Diagnosis Sinusitis.

Wafaa Hmouda (WB): Developing Serious Games for Children with Autism.

Suzan Atallah (GS): New Technology in Agriculture.



Palestinian ICT Portal Project

A new web portal on PITA's home page "home.pita.ps" was established, in which it enables its member companies to update and edit their profile online. The portal will be digitally marketed to the outside world, this in turn will be the window to the outside world.

International Telecom Day (Hi-Tech Event)

The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology (MCIT) in cooperation with the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) organized the activities of

the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, titled "Enabling Everyone to Use Positive Artificial Intelligence".



TVET Week

The Palestinian Technology Association of Companies PITA have participated in the activities of the 4th Palestinian Technical and Vocational Education and Training Week, which was launched in April 16 and lasted for three days at the Chalets Resort in Gaza.

During this week, PITA participated as a member in the Steering Committee of the Council and a member of the Executive Committee of the exhibition and the technical interventions. A group of member companies representing various technological sectors who have partnerships with vocational and technical institutions have also participated in this event.

Around five PITA member companies have participated in the TEVT week.



Sports Even

A sport day was conducted for PITA member companies and other PITA stakeholders. Such social events aimed at strengthening the relation and networking between ICT stakeholders. This event was supported by JAWWAL one of the leaders in Palestine in Telecommunication company.



Meeting with the World Bank Group

A meeting was conducted with the World Bank to discuss proposals of intervention for future projects and opportunities for the purpose of providing ways of working for young people through technology. In February 2019, the World bank will announce a call for empowering ICT sector in short term job opportunities, freelancing and capacity building.



Meeting with Friedrich Neumann Foundation.

During the meeting, both parties discussed ways of cooperation in between through pointing out to the ICT sector in Palestine and any potential opportunities for expansion, growth and job creation as well as stressing out to the importance of bridging the gap between the academia and private sector.



Meeting with the American Embassy and USAID

The meeting focused on searching for ways of cooperation between the American Embassy, USAID and PITA for the promotion, development and improvement of the ICT sector in Palestine.



Meeting with the ICT Companies concerning “the Reality and Future of the ICT Sector in Palestine”.

The meeting was attended by PITA’s current Board of Directors, former Board of Directors and members. The participating parties discussed the importance of joining all efforts for the purpose of promoting the sector and opening new channels that shall contribute to the development of the sector and increase in employment opportunities and interest in emerging companies.



Participation of PITA in the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Arab Union for Information & Communication Technology in Bahrain.



Participation of the ICT companies in Palestine in the conference that is held in Jordan, under the title “The Palestinian Banking Sector in its Arab Environment”.

The conference was conducted for 2-full days with an exhibition in which the participating Palestinian ICT companies presented their smart technological solutions in the banking sector.

