



STATE OF ISRAEL
MINISTRY OF FINANCE, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND PLANNING AND
BUDGET COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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Press Release

Six-Year Plan for the Higher Education System:

The plan includes a budget increase of NIS 7.5 billion for the higher education system.

At the core of the plan: emphasis on excellence in research and in the quality of education, integration of 2,000 new faculty members in universities and colleges, establishment of 30 research excellence centers, significant increase in the budgets for competitive research, and more

At a press conference held today, attended by the Minister of Education and Chairman of the Council for Higher Education, **Mr. Gideon Saar**, the Minister of Finance, **Dr. Yuval Steinitz**, the Chairman of the Planning and Budget Committee, **Prof. Manuel Trajtenberg**, and the Finance Ministry Deputy Budget Director, **Mr. Eran Polak**, a broad and comprehensive plan was presented for steering the Israeli higher education system in the next six years.

The plan, which was formulated with the support of the Minister of Education and Chairman of the Council for Higher Education, **Mr. Gideon Saar**, the Minister of Finance, **Dr. Yuval Steinitz**, and the Finance Ministry Budget Director, **Dr. Udi Nissan**, includes structural changes and the allocation of resources for upgrading Israel's higher education infrastructure, and will enable long-term planning in the higher education system and the implementation of programs for promoting the quality of instruction and research. The plan calls for the absorption of significant numbers of new, high quality researchers as well as a significant improvement in the quality of instruction and in the services received by students, by upgrading teaching facilities, developing the learning environment, increasing the number of lecturers and teaching assistants and other steps. The plan comes after two years in which, unlike in the past, the higher education system operated without a multi-annual plan, which hindered the formulation and implementation of long-term plans and the efficient allocation of resources to the system.



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The Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Council for Higher Education, **Mr. Gideon Saar**, said: "The agreement is an important turning point for Israel's higher education system. Following years of erosion, which led to serious consequences, the plan and the budget framework will help put higher education back on track. This step is being taken at a critical juncture for the higher education system and injects a much needed shot of oxygen into the system. It involves not just a budget increase but also meaningful actions that will bolster excellence and lead to the recruitment of young, high quality personnel, upgrading of the research and instruction infrastructures, doubling of the resources of the Israel National Science Foundation and increased accessibility, with emphasis on the minority and ultra-Orthodox sectors.

Minister of Finance **Dr. Yuval Steintz** offered congratulations on the signing of the agreement and said: "As part of the new economic plan, the Ministry of Finance has engraved on its banner the importance of upgrading the quality of the state's human capital, of which a key component is the development of Israel's higher education system, which will generate new growth. The multi-annual plan will allow stability in the higher education system, improve the quality of research and education and open up the system to new sectors such as the ultra-Orthodox community and the minorities. The channeling of new resources to higher education was enabled, among other things, by the cut in the defense budget."

The Chairman of the Planning and Budget Committee, **Prof. Manuel Trajtenberg**, noted that the plan is a turning point on the road of Israeli higher education back to the forefront of the international stage. **Prof. Trajtenberg** added that for the first time in the annals of the State of Israel, there is an agreement extending over six years (2011-2016), that will allow the higher education system flexibility, a long-term planning horizon and more effective execution.

Finance Ministry Budget Director **Dr. Udi Nissan** thanked the chairman of the Budget and Planning Committee for its professional cooperation and said: "The understandings we have reached reflect the great importance with which the government views the strengthening of research and education, alongside new, substantive changes in the management of the system and in the encouragement of competition and excellence."

Under the multi-annual plan, a cumulative **NIS 7.5 billion** will be added to the higher education budget, with **NIS 620 million** to be added already in the coming academic year and more than **NIS 2 billion** to be added at the end of the process, i.e. in the sixth year (2016).



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Below are the key principles of the plan:

1. Change in the Planning and Budget Committee's (PBC) budgeting model for the higher education system, including an emphasis on excellence in research and on the quality of instruction. Under the present model, some **75%** of the PBC budget, which stands at **NIS 7 billion**, is allocated to the different institutions.
2. Hiring of new academic staff. The multi-annual plans calls for increasing the number of faculty members in universities and colleges by more than 20%, equivalent to about **2,000** faculty members.
3. Significant increase in the budgets allocated by the PBC to competitive research through the Israel National Science Foundation and international foundations of which Israel is a member. Thus, the amount currently budgeted to the Israel National Science Foundation would be doubled, from NIS **270** million to NIS **540** million at the end of the plan.
4. Establishment of **30** research excellence centers. In each of these centers, a group of outstanding Israeli and foreign researchers will be brought together to focus on a specific subject within a single institutional framework, leading to brain gain, the creation of a critical mass in select areas and the encouragement of cooperation among Israeli institutions, which is not sufficiently developed today. The plan will help strengthen scientific research in Israel, improve and upgrade research infrastructures in universities, encourage innovative research by multidisciplinary researchers, better the quality of instruction and enable the development of international advanced degree programs.
5. Maintaining the accessibility of higher education to the entire population, with emphasis on expanding accessibility to special population sectors, such as the minorities and the ultra-Orthodox community. Thus, the number of students from the ultra-Orthodox sector, which currently stands at about **3,000**, is expected to double, and from the Arab sector to grow by **25%** from a current **15,000**,
6. Investment of NIS **300** million throughout the period in upgrading and renovating academic instruction and research facilities, including the renovation, construction and supply of classrooms, libraries, teaching aids, computerized systems, research equipment and laboratories.
7. Continued strengthening of the assessment of instruction and research quality, inter alia by increasing the independence of the assessment system, increasing the transparency of the results and taking corrective action.