EURAXESS INDIA

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1. EURAXESS Country in Focus: Israel

1.1 Introduction

Israel is a country in Western Asia, located on the south-eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and the northern shore of the Red Sea. The country contains within its relatively small area. Israel's economic and technological centre is Tel Aviv, while its seat of government and capital is Jerusalem. The State of Israel currently has a population of approximately 9.1 million inhabitants.

Due to its immigrant nature, Israel is one of the most multicultural and multilingual societies in the world. Hebrew is the official language of the country, and Arabic is given special status, while English and Russian are the two most widely spoken non-official languages. A certain degree of English is widely spoken and is the language of choice for many Israeli businesses. Today Israel is an industrialized country with most of its manufacturing, including many traditional fields, based on intensive and sophisticated research & development and hi-tech processes, tools, and machinery. This is the outcome of very rapid and intensive development.

Hi-tech companies in areas ranging from software to biotechnology and cyber-security are a major driver of growth in the country's economy. Many leading international technology firms have opened research and development centres in Israel. In the last few years, out of the members of the OECD, Israel has spent the highest percentage of its GDP towards R&D, and in 2019 was ranked the world's fifth most innovative country by the Bloomberg Innovation Index.

Israel has a long tradition of academic excellence, boasting world class universities, colleges and research institutions. Israeli higher education institutions provide a diversity of academic programs in English for international students at the Bachelor and Master's degree level ranging from short-term courses to full degree programs. Israeli Institutions also
welcome international students and researchers for PhD and Post-Doctoral research who collaborate with leading researchers in their fields.

1.2 Facts and Figures

Universities in Israel

Education is highly valued within the national culture of Israel, and its higher education sector has been praised for helping to encourage the country’s economic development and recent technological boom. The high quality of Israel's higher education system was also recognized in the QS Higher Education System Strength Rankings, published for the first time in 2016, in which it ranks as the world’s 28th strongest national system.

Israel has 62 intuitions for higher education (recognised by the Council for Higher Education), comprised of universities and other higher education institutions, both private and government funded. These institutions teach 262,591 students for all academic degrees.

There are nine universities in Israel, as well as many higher education colleges; the main difference is that the universities offer degrees all the way up to the doctorate level. Courses are often taught in Hebrew, but many leading Israeli universities also offer English-taught programs. Six of Israel's nine universities were featured in the QS World University Rankings® 2018.

Israel is especially recognised for research in the fields of:

• Science and Engineering: Israel is a world leader in science and engineering. Israeli scientists have won 4 Nobel Prizes in chemistry, 3 Turing Awards (computer science) and 1 Fields Medal (mathematics). Israel ranks 7th globally in the number of citations per scientific publication and is particularly strong in fields such as computer science, engineering, chemistry, and life sciences.

• Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Leading companies from around the world chose to open R&D centres in Israel and some programs include opportunities to undertake internships in top companies from around the world, giving students the opportunity to ‘advance your career’ development.

• Agriculture and Sustainability: Israel's challenging environment and lack of natural resources has led it to become a kind of agricultural “incubator” of ideas, developing new kinds of plants as well as revolutionary agricultural technologies. Drip irrigation technology is one famous example of Israel's success in this field.

• Art, Design & Music: Areas of study include a range of arts-related fields including fine arts, fashion and jewellery, photography, industrial and urban design, and traditional and contemporary music. Many programs offer innovative and multidisciplinary elements, allowing you to develop your own particular interests.

• Israel and Mideastern studies: Higher education institutions in Israel offer a range of programs from ancient to contemporary studies of Israel and Middle Eastern states, to Hebrew and Arabic language. Israel offers an unparalleled opportunity to acquire an in-depth understanding of its and the region's political, social and economic dimensions.

• Jewish studies: Studying in Israel gives students the opportunity to work with leading scholars in this field and to immerse themselves in both ancient and contemporary Judaism.
Innovation and Excellence

For those interested in innovation and technology, Israel is the place for you! Israel is the land of innovation, also known as the “Start-Up Nation”. It is a hotbed of hi-tech activity, with the world’s highest investment per capita in start-up companies. Israel was ranked the 3rd most innovative country in the world (World Economic Forum Global Competitive Index). Studying in Israel gives you the opportunity to experience and participate in Israel's vibrant start-up culture and eco-system.

Israel's Technion Institute of Technology has been rated no. 77 in the Shanghai Academic Rating of World Universities (2018), and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 95th place (2018).

Patents: Israel has seen a steady rise in patent applications over the years. Between 2014 to 2018 the number of applications has risen by 17.37% to 7,363 patent applications in 2018.

Learn more about Study and Research in Israel: http://studyinisrael.che.org.il/

1.3 Funding Opportunities

Israel supports its R&D through many grants and scholarships; in 2018, the Ministry of Science and Technology signed 356 new engagement agreements to fund research, scholarships and Scientific Knowledge centers that include a program for Scientific Infrastructure Development and a program for Applied Engineering Research. In 2018 the total budget allocated for research, scholarships and knowledge centres was 147 million NIS. Applying to study in Israel only takes 3 Steps: 1) Search for a program; 2) Complete the forms; 3) Get a visa. Israeli higher education tuition fees are competitive on an international scale and tuition fees for PhD degrees are generally waived by the host institution.

Bilateral and international cooperation: As of 2019 Israel has 38 ongoing bilateral agreements with 29 countries all around the globe. Today there are significant collaborations through bilateral and multilateral agreements between institutions and organizations that include joint research funds, projects, exchange of researchers and faculty, and more. Israel's key collaborations today include: US-Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF), German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development (GIF), Israel-China Research Foundation (ISF-NSFC), Israel-India Research Foundation (ISF-UGC), and Israel-Singapore Research Foundation (ISF-NRF). Promoting Israel's international research relations is one of the key objectives in transforming Israel's higher education system to a high quality and competitive international level. The Israeli Ministry of Science and Technology helps organize and fund International Conferences, Bi-national conferences, Young Scientists Schools, the COST program, and offers assistance with international conferences in Israel. Israel is also an active member in several international organizations and
programs such as CERN, Horizon 2020, EMBL, EMBC, GSF, SESAME, ICDP and more.

In the academic year of 2019-2020 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel has funded scholarships for foreign students following cultural agreements, and special scholarship arrangements. The PBC Fellowship Program for Outstanding Chinese and Indian Post-doctoral Fellows—2020/2021 is one of the specific programs of the Israel Council of Higher Education (CHE). A scientific and technological collaboration agreement between the science ministries of India and Israel was signed in 1993; and since that time, more than 60 research studies have been conducted in a variety of fields: agricultural biotechnology, medical biotechnology, nanotechnology, advanced materials, electro-optics and lasers. The collaboration is conducted by publishing joint calls for proposals. In recent years, joint studies have been conducted in the fields of energy engineering, agricultural and medical biotechnology, nanotechnology, advanced materials, etc.

1.4 MSCA in Israel

Experienced researchers willing to move to Israel can apply for an Individual Fellowship (IF) of the Marie Skłodowska - Curie Actions (MSCA), irrespective of their country of origin. Since 2014, forty researchers from various countries (including Italy, India, Portugal, China, Germany and others) have come to Israeli organisations as part of the Individual Fellowship (IF) program. Eighty-seven other researchers came to Israeli as part of the RISE and ITN programs.

Israel is a very active member of Marie Skłodowska - Curie Actions, with hundreds of collaborative links with countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and France. The success rate of Israeli applicants is 15.7%, which is higher than the European average rate (12.66%).

1.5 EURAXESS Israel

Six academic institutions are currently members of the Israeli forum of EURAXESS: Technion Institute of Technology, Weizmann Institute of Science, Hebrew University, Ben-Gurion University, Haifa University and Bar-Ilan University. IP&D is an SME which serves as the EURAXESS Centre for Industry and as an organization representing EURAXESS’s Bridge Head Organization in Israel on behalf of the Ministry of Science.

EURAXESS Activity in Israel:

- Continuous contact throughout the year on issues relating to international researchers and the promotion of national policy on the subject;
- Participation in EU training and management meetings for the network;
- Organizing conferences and study visits in Israel in accordance with network activities;
- Conduct two meetings a year on forum topics;
1.6  **Israel as a destination**

Israel’s higher education institutions are known worldwide for their academic excellence, and many institutions offer programs in English, providing a unique international learning environment designed for students to learn and succeed. But there are a number of other reasons that Israel is an attractive destination for study and research. Israel, the land of innovation, also known as the “Start-Up Nation”, is the place to be for innovation and technology. It is a hotbed of hi-tech activity, with the world’s highest investment per capita in start-up companies. Israel was ranked the 3rd most innovative country in the world (World Economic Forum Global Competitive Index). Studying in Israel offers you the opportunity to experience and participate in Israel’s vibrant start-up culture and ecosystem.

Whether you live on campus or off, in or out of the city, there’s more to studying in Israel than just hitting the books. Israel has a vibrant student social scene with the opportunity to make life-long friendships with Israelis and other students from all over the world. You will also find yourself at the heart of a diverse, dynamic and constantly developing culture, with over 4,000 years of history, which have incorporated many different cultural influences. Whether it’s food, history, art or music, you will have many opportunities to immerse yourself in Israel’s fascinating culture throughout your studies. You can experience world-famous historical sites, float in the Dead Sea, go hiking in the beautiful Sea of Galilee region or the Negev Desert, marvel at the Baha’i Gardens in Haifa or enjoy a sunset on Tel Aviv beach.
2 Hot Topic – EU Insight, a glance at Horizon Europe

The European Commission has published its proposal for Horizon Europe, an ambitious €100 billion research and innovation programme that will succeed Horizon 2020. Set to launch in 2021, Horizon Europe will build on the achievements and success of Horizon 2020, bridging the past and the future of research and innovation in Europe.

The European Commission is proposing a total budget of €100 billion for 2021-2027 for Horizon Europe and the Euratom Research and Training Programme. The new Framework Programme is intended to be the most ambitious research and innovation funding programme to date, described by Commissioner Carlos Moedas as “the biggest increase in absolute amounts ever.”

2.1 The continuity: three pillar structure

The Open Science pillar (€25.8 billion) supports frontier research projects defined and driven by researchers themselves through the European Research Council (€16.6 billion), funds fellowships and exchanges for researchers through Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (€6.8 billion), and invests in world-class research infrastructures.

The Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness pillar (€52.7 billion) directly supports research relating to societal challenges, reinforces technological and industrial capacities, and sets EU-wide missions with ambitious goals tackling some of our biggest problems. It also includes activities pursued by the Joint Research Centre (€2.2 billion) which supports EU and national policymakers with independent scientific evidence and technical support.

The Open Innovation pillar (€13.5 billion) aims to make Europe a frontrunner in market-creating innovation via the European Innovation Council (€10 billion). It will help develop the overall European innovation landscape, including by further strengthening the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to foster the integration of business, research, higher education and entrepreneurship (€3 billion).

Horizon Europe will continue to drive Europe’s scientific excellence through the European Research Council (ERC) and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowships and exchanges and draw on the scientific advice, technical support and dedicated research of the Joint Research Centre (JRC). It will also add a new level of ambition and boost the scientific, economic and societal impact of EU funding.
2.2 Novel features in Horizon Europe

The European Innovation Council: one-stop shop to bring the most promising ideas from lab to real world application and support the most innovative start-ups and companies to scale up their ideas. It will provide direct support to innovators through two main funding instruments, one for early stages and the other for development and market deployment.

EU-wide R&I missions: ambitious, bold goals to tackle issues that affect our daily lives. Examples could range from the fight against cancer, to clean transport or plastic-free oceans. They will be co-designed with citizens, stakeholders, the European Parliament and Member States.

Open Science: will become the modus operandi of Horizon Europe. It will go beyond the open access policy of Horizon 2020 and require open access to publications, data, and to research data management plans.

A new generation of European Partnerships: Horizon Europe will streamline the number of partnerships that the EU co-programmes or co-funds with partners like industry, civil society and funding foundations.

Simpler rules: This will increase legal certainty and reduce administrative burden for beneficiaries and programme administrators.
- Continued principle of a single set of rules with further improvements,
- Stable funding rates,
- Further simplification of funding model,
- Increased use of simplified forms of grants where appropriate (including lump sums),
- More dissemination and exploitation of research result.

The proposed budget allocation of €100 billion for 2021-2027 includes €97.6 billion under Horizon Europe (€3.5 billion of which will be allocated under the InvestEU Fund) and €2.4 billion for the Euratom Research and Training Programme. The Euratom programme, which funds research and training on nuclear safety, security and radiation protection, will have an increased focus on non-power applications such as healthcare and medical equipment, and will also support the mobility of nuclear science researchers under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

2.3 Missions in Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe will incorporate research and innovation missions to increase the effectiveness of funding by pursuing clearly defined targets. This is in line with the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020 which delineated a need to make it easier for citizens to understand the value of investments in research and innovation; and to maximise the impact of investments by setting clearer targets and expected impact when addressing global challenges.
The Commission has engaged policy experts to develop studies, case studies and reports on how a mission-oriented policy approach will work. It has set up 5 mission boards, one for each mission area, that will help specify, design and implement missions in Horizon Europe:

- Mission Board for Adaptation to Climate Change, including Societal Transformation,
- Mission Board for Cancer,
- Mission Board for Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters,
- Mission Board for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities,
- Mission Board for Soil Health and Food.

On 30 July 2019, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos Moedas announced the names of the experts who have been selected as members of the mission boards to work on five major European research and innovation missions. This follows the announcement of the Chairs of the mission boards made at the Informal Council for Research Ministers in Helsinki, Finland.

Each mission board consists of 15 experts, including the chair. They will identify the first possible specific missions on cancer, climate change, healthy oceans, climate-neutral cities and healthy soil and food by the end of 2019. In addition, for each mission an assembly will be established, gathering a larger number of high-level experts. The assemblies provide an additional pool of ideas, knowledge and expertise that will be actively called upon to contribute to the success of the five missions.

Over 2100 individuals from across the EU and beyond applied to become member of a mission board. The selection process ensured that the boards are composed of creative and highly motivated experts from a wide range of backgrounds, including academics, innovators, civil society, industry, finance and end-users. A first discussion with citizens, stakeholders and experts from Member States has taken place at the European Research and Innovation Days in Brussels from 24 to 26 September 2019.

For more information, visit the European Commission’s official Horizon Europe website.

http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess
You are currently doing your post-doc studies at the Hebrew University in Israel. How did you get to know about the Post-doc Fellowship and what motivated you to apply?

Yes, I am a postdoctoral fellow in the Risk Management Ecology lab at the Ecology, Evolution and Behavior department in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I met Dror Hawlena (the principal investigator of the lab) at a conference, the Gordon Research Conference on Predator-Prey Interactions, in 2018. This was approximately a year before I finished my PhD. It was an unplanned meeting mediated by a common collaborator, Maria Thaker, who was also on my thesis committee. Dror is a big contributor in the field of predator-prey interactions and a remarkable mentor. Spending time with him at the conference helped me know him as a person and convinced me about wanting to work in his lab. Lucky for me he liked me and my work too. We stayed in contact and later I joined his lab as a postdoctoral fellow. We further applied for a few grants in order to continue my position.

What are the benefits of conducting your post-doc in Israel?

One obvious benefit is that Israel has a rich history in the subject of ecology. Even in the field of predator-prey interactions, conceptually novel and impactful ideas were proposed and tested in Israeli universities. Consequently, there’s a lot to learn in terms of ecological theory from many researchers here.

The postdoc culture here is truly international. My colleagues from USA, Europe and Australia bring their unique research culture to the table which allows us all to learn from each other. This insight will help me revisit some of my convictions and hopefully make me a better researcher and mentor.

Israel has robust research connections with Europe and USA and a strong collaborative culture which are important for an early career researcher.

From your experiences, how does the research environment in Israel differ from that in India?

The research culture between the two countries differs the most when it comes to academic hierarchy. Although the department in which I did my PhD, the Centre for Ecological Sciences was immune to it, hierarchy in Indian science can be a hindrance to open discussion of ideas. In most labs in Israeli universities that I have engaged with, students are upfront about their academic objections and are allowed space to make mistakes with minimal consequences.

The Indian research environment will benefit immensely from developing a postdoc culture. Beyond the obvious productivity-related advantages of
having postdoctoral fellows in labs, they can bring in different skill sets and perspectives to discussions in the lab. Importantly, graduate students can also discuss with postdocs their prior professional experiences and make informed decisions about their future in research.

Interestingly, I find the conversation on retaining women in STEM and mental health awareness to be fairly progressive in India, when compared to Israel. Students in some Indian institutes are at the forefront in discussing these problems and are demanding change in attitudes and policies. More importantly, there is a push to take institutional steps to address and mitigate these issues.

I have been fortunate to have worked with many undergraduate students during my PhD and postdoc. Undergraduate students in both countries are well-informed and diligent. One difference I feel is that students here are not expected to pursue a career in research just because they are participating in research during their undergraduate, which can be liberating both for the undergraduate student and the lab member guiding them.

**What motivates you as a researcher?**

That’s a tricky one. I guess different reasons have motivated me at different stages of my academic journey. When I gradually got into research, it was the pursuit of stimulating discussions with colleagues and finding something exciting that interested me. With time, I have gotten a better idea of how punctuated gratification in research really is, especially with rejection rates, including publications and funds, being so high. Consequently, I have started finding motivation in more day-to-day activities and in the academic success of others.

**What motivated you for contesting in the EURAXESS Science Slam?**

I am an ardent supporter of communicating science in ways that makes it understandable and entertaining without over-simplifying the message. Science comedy, for example, is a genre that I’m fond of and feel is vastly unexplored. Science slam by EURAXESS provided the perfect platform to experiment with some of these ideas. Since I had made a few simple science-related movies during my MSc, it was easier to make a video and send it in as an entry.

**How did the Science Slam help you as a young researcher?**

The slam helped me think about science communication in ways that I would not have otherwise. For instance, I realized firsthand the delicate balancing act between taking artistic liberties to convey the scientific message on one hand and staying true to the idea on the other.

I consciously chose to tell a research story that I had worked on during my PhD, instead of explaining a broad concept in my field. Not only did I enjoy the challenge of communicating a specific research question, but I felt I owed to my scientific discipline, ecology, to explain something that a non-academic audience member might not find on Wikipedia. Ecology, ever so important in today’s changing world, gets easily misunderstood as a science discipline without unifying concepts or predictive power. I subscribe to the idea that unless you choose to explain how complex ideas in ecology are...
disentangled using elegant experiments and/or analysis, it might continue to be summarised as only natural history. Since the slam did not straitjacket us on style, format or content, it made exploring these ideas possible. Also, since I participated in the slam towards the end of my PhD, I had more complete stories to tell and making this choice easier.

Additionally, I realized the similarities between scientific talks and slams. For example, how the audience determines the content of your talk/slam.

**How do you think EURAXESS India can further promote research collaborations between India and Europe?**

Depending on availability of funds, I feel encouraging more participation in conferences by offering multiple small travel awards (instead of few large awards), especially for early-career researchers would be a good idea. I feel fostering more research conversations between scientists is a great start to understanding what the other side can offer.

**Could you kindly share some tip to other Indian researchers who are considering to do a post-doc study or research in Europe or Israel.**

Europe and Israel have quite a few grants to pursue postdoctoral research. They are very prestigious and consequently very competitive. It is best to find the researcher with whom you would like to work with and contact them well in advance before you aim to finish your PhD. This gives both of you time to plan which grant to apply for, or whether the researcher already has funds to support you. Many universities in Israel also have university-specific grants that supplement your salary.

It is generally a good idea to experience a different research culture while doing your postdoctoral work. I have enjoyed my time in Israel both academically and socially. Anyone considering a postdoc in Israel can contact me to get a better idea of research life in this country.

**Thank You Viraj!**
4 In case you missed it...

4.1 From our Flashnotes (October - December)
(click on the respective link for more details)

Selected News and still open Calls (in order of publication on EURAXESS India website):

Call: 15 PhD positions in Connectivity Science as part of the i-CONN MSCA-ITN

News: Reuters - Europe's Most Innovative Universities Ranking 2019

Call: 15 PhD Positions in the EU funded Project: “Global Mercury Observation and Training Network in Support to the Minamata Convention”

Call: 14 PhD positions in pancreatic cancer research in the MSCA-ITN ‘PRECODE’

Call: 15 Fully Funded PhD Positions in the Project: “CHAMELEON: Virtual Laboratories for Exoplanets and Planet Forming Disks”

Call: Up to 15 PhD Fellowships offered by QUDOT-TECH MSCA Innovative Training Network (Quantum Physics)

Call: Call for Climate Change and Polar Research

Call: Denmark: AIAS-COFUND Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships in a Wide Range of Research Fields

News: Three €50,000 prizes awarded by the European Commission for the most innovative projects designed to reduce plastic waste

Call: Call Targeting the Participation of India to strengthen cooperation on Innovation

Call: ERC Consolidator Grants
Call: **Apply for a Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship**

Call: **Erasmus Mundus MA Euroculture: Society, politics and culture in a global context**

Call: **Spain: 35 PhD Fellowships at IdiPAZ Institute for Health Research in Madrid**

Call: **Germany/Switzerland - Postdoctoral Fellowships on MSCA-funded programme FP-RESOMUS**

Call: **15 PhD Positions in the EU Funded SOLARCHEM Project**

Call: **Post-doc fellowships in Computer Science/Software Engineering in Ireland - ALECS**

Call: **Sweden - COFUND-MSCA-EU program 'CanFaster' recruiting five fellows within Cancer and Entrepreneurship**

Call: **13 PhD positions on the MSCA ITN Project 'FLOWER' (offshore wind energy)**

Call: **15 PhD positions in the “Active Monitoring of Cancer As An Alternative To Surgery” (CAST) Project**

News: **ERC Synergy Grants awarded to 37 research groups to take on the biggest challenges**

Call: **Spain: 6 Postdoctoral Fellowships in Biomedicine**

Call: **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Networks (MSCA ITN) - open call 2020**

Call: **15 PhD positions in the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Project: C-PlaNeT**

Call: **15 interdisciplinary PhD scholarships related to neuroscience**

Call: **ThinkSwiss Research Scholarships 2020**

Call: **15 PhD Positions in a Nanovaccine Approach for the Treatment of Pancreatic Cancer**

Call: **Spain/Germany - 4 PhD positions on European Industrial Doctorate Innovative Training Network DRIVE-IN**

Call: **Ireland: 16 Postdoctoral Fellowships in Smart Manufacturing**

News: **Interview with Mr. Prabahan Chakraborty, Science Slam winner 2018**
4.2 Event Outlook

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<tr>
<td>The EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF)</td>
<td>Triest, Italy</td>
<td>5-9 July</td>
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<td>2 India</td>
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<td>12th Young Investigators' Meeting 2020</td>
<td>Mahabalipuram</td>
<td>14-18 February</td>
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About us

EURAXESS India is a networking tool for European researchers active in India and for Indian and international researchers wishing to collaborate with and/or pursue a career in Europe. EURAXESS India provides information about research in Europe, European research policy, opportunities for research funding, for EU-India and international collaboration and for transnational mobility. Membership is free.

Visit us at india.euraxess.org and Join the EURAXESS India community.

EURAXESS Worldwide has dedicated teams in the following countries and regions ready to assist you: ASEAN (focus on Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC, focus on Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Colombia), China, India, Japan, Korea, and North America (USA and Canada). Additionally, a EURAXESS information website for Australia and New Zealand went online in June 2018.