# Palestinian Big Data Workshop

An informal workshop on Big Data in Palestine was organized by MOSAIC project (an EU project at Birzeit University) in cooperation with PITA, the Palestinian Information Technology Association, in August 5th, 2015. The workshop took place at PITA headquarter and brought main Big Data stakeholders, industries, and academics to discuss the Big Data issues in Palestine.

The workshop was attended by 17 participants from the private, public and academic sectors, including, PITA, PALTEL Group, Alpha International, Jerusalem Water Undertaking, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Birzeit university, An-Najah university, and Polytechnic University.

The workshop started with a discussion about what Big Data means, especially in the Palestinian context and according to the interest of each participant's organization, as well as, the challenges they are facing, the foreseen opportunities, and the technologies being used.
A majority of the participants agreed that Big Data has no one single meaning, and that it should also be seen as a new culture to be spread among all Palestinian organizations to add more value to their data. The participants, however, discussed the common characteristics of Big Data having the 4V model - the Volume because of its size, the Variety of forms it takes, the Veracity and the Velocity with which data arrives. In short, Big Data means there is more data coming more quickly, and in various forms. Palestinian organizations and companies should smartly consider the collection, storage, visualization, integration, and analysis of data, as this data can be used in creating a new generation of decision support, saving operational costs, and support daily business processes.

The participants also discussed that the culture of sharing data among organizations is one of the biggest challenges for Big Data projects in Palestine, since access to potential datasets is limited as many datasets are owned and concealed by the private sector. Thus, the culture of open data and sharing data needs to be encouraged, and the needed infrastructure for publishing open data should be overcome.

The lack of graduates in data technologies was highlighted, and universities were encouraged to play a vital role, not only in research, but also in introducing new graduate and undergraduate programs and courses in data science and data engineering. The need for such skills is high in demand not only in the Palestinian industry but also for the ICT outsourcing industry, which is growing rapidly in Palestine.

Additionally, PCBS formed a team to attempt exploring the possibility of harnessing Big Data as another source for official statistics as well as investigating the concepts, definitions, requirements, sources of Big Data and the current status of Big Data in Palestine. Also, PCBS published statistics on the web site and information and metadata about all microdata available in PCBS and if someone needs the microdata itself he/she can ask for it upon special request.

Dr. Yahya Salqan, the chairman of PITA, explained that PITA will take the responsibilities for facilitating upcoming activities on Big Data, and that they will be encouraging more potential stakeholders to join, and to seek funded projects in this direction.

Dr. Mustafa Jarrar, from Birzeit University, represented the EU-funded MOSAIC project, and highlighted the relevant calls to Big Data in the EU Horizon 2020 program. Horizon 2020 is one of the biggest EU research and innovation programs in history (70 billion euros). Dr.Jarrar explained that Horizon 2020 is open to Palestinians and that SMEs can join and benefit from the open calls.

At the end it was agreed that Alpha international and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics will be preparing for the next workshop, and will try to prepare and present several use cases of Big Data values.

It is worth noting that this workshop was originally organized to prepare for the Palestinian participation in the upcoming meeting for the Arab Big Data Initiative (ABDI), that will be held in Lebanon at the end of August, 2015. ABDI is a platform for different stakeholders to discuss how to establish the necessary infrastructure, and to exchange the know-how, best practices, opportunities and ideas on how to find more value to Big Data originating from the Arab world. The initiative target stakeholders are scientists, technology providers, industry representatives, SMEs, institutions and the Big Data owners; such as Telecom industries, water and energy utilities, hospitals, tourism companies, factories, and governments together with technology experts. The stakeholders are a group of speakers from several Arab countries - Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and others- in addition to keynote speakers.

**Attendance:**

| No. | Name | Organization |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Dr. Mustafa Jarrar | Birzeit University |
| 2 | Dr. Yahya Al-Salqan | PITA |
| 3 | Dr. Amjad Hawash | An-Najah National University |
| 4 | Mustafa Hassan | PALTEL Group |
| 5 | Dr. Faisal Awartani | Alpha International for research |
| 6 | Dr. Mahmoud Saheb | Palestine Polytechnic University |
| 7 | Hani Al-Ahmad | PCBS |

| 8 | Amjad Harb | PCBS |
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| 9 | Dr. Eyad Eleyyan | Eyad Eleyyan |
| 10 | Ziad Eleyyan | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| 11 | Abed Khooly | Data Scientist |
| 12 | Dr. Radi Jarrar | Birzeit University |
| 13 | Rami Asia | Birzeit University |
| 14 | Asma Alian | Birzeit University |
| 15 | Faeq Rimawi | Birzeit University |
| 16 | Marwan Barakat | PCBS |
| 17 | Haitham Zeidan | PCBS |

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