

Commissioner Janez Potocnik
Commissioner for Science and Research
European Commission
Rue de la Loi, 200
Bruxelles 1049

30 January 2006

Dear Mr Potocnik,

I am writing to ask for the Commission's views on the granting of EU research funds to Israeli applicants, and the parallel situation of Palestinian research. I should also like to request information on how much research funding is currently going to Israel, including specifically to Israeli universities.

Respect for human rights is a core European value. The Commission stated in Communication COM(2001) 252 that "respect for human rights and democracy should be an integral, or "mainstream", consideration in all EU external policies."

One would expect that this primacy of human rights in external policies would extend to research policies. It would appear that it does: "violation of fundamental ethical principles" is stated as one of the exclusion criteria for the Framework Programmes, and in Communication COM(2003) 104 the Commission cites "opening of the European Research Area (ERA)" as one of the incentives offered to neighbouring countries "in return for concrete progress demonstrating shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms..." - with respect for human rights being cited in numerous places elsewhere in the document as one of the key "shared values" in question.

In this context, it is interesting to note that Israel became the first non-European country to be associated to the EC's Framework Programme when it joined the Fourth Framework Programme (FP4) in 1996; and that the Agreement for Scientific and Technical Cooperation associating Israeli enterprises with the Sixth Framework Programme was signed in June 2003 and concluded in April 2004.

Shortly after this, on 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) gave its advisory opinion that Israel's Separation Wall is a contravention of international law. The wall is seriously exacerbating the severe and frequently arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement in the West Bank, which are also imposed in Gaza and East Jerusalem - contributing to a serious humanitarian crisis marked by extreme poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity. The movement restrictions also have severely compromised Palestinian residents' access to health care, education, and other services. These are, of course, far from the only aspects of the human rights violations currently underway in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

In light of all of this, I would be grateful if you could advise whether the Commission has any concerns about the compatibility of providing funding to Israel with the stated primacy of human rights in all EU external policies, and with non-violation of fundamental ethical principles as a base criterion for eligibility to EU research funds. As mentioned I would also like to know how much European research funding is currently going to Israel, and in particular to Israeli universities?

Finally, please could you comment on reports that Palestinian universities are required to have an Israeli partner in making bids for EU research funding? If such a requirement exists, I would be grateful if you could inform me of where it is incorporated into official policy and the of the rationale for including such an obligation.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Caroline Lucas MEP