



# EU TAXPAYER-FUNDED RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AND ILLEGAL ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ENTITIES



Ariel University Non Recognition Campaign

European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine

March 2021

*Updated April 2021*

## ► EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The EU does not recognise, and has a duty under international law not to recognise Israeli sovereignty over the territories it has occupied since 1967.

EU guidelines stipulate that Israeli entities established in or activities conducted in occupied territories are ineligible for EU grants.

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The Commission is failing to properly instruct against, monitor for, and rectify project management transgressions:

- Tel Aviv University collected soil samples from the occupied West Bank for a Horizon 2020-funded project.
  - Illegal Israeli settlement-based Ariel University and settlement company Golan Heights Winery have been involved in past and ongoing Horizon-funded projects.
  - EU-funded research papers include Ariel University affiliations falsely indicating it is located in Israel.
  - Ariel University professors admit to devising schemes to circumvent the guidelines to gain access to EU research funding and mobility programmes.
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The EU is shirking its duty to monitor and ensure compliance with its obligations under domestic and international law, leaving it to civil society to identify and denounce transgressions. The cases above show this is a widespread, ongoing issue that must be dealt with in a systematic manner.

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**The EU Council, Parliament and Commission must devise, fund and implement:**

- effective monitoring of EU research projects, and
- effective accountability measures for transgressors, including official project participants facilitating the contraventions.

## ➤ INTRODUCTION

The EU does not recognise, and indeed has a **duty under international law** not to recognise Israeli sovereignty over the territories it has occupied since June 1967.

However, the EU is **failing to ensure** that its taxpayer-funded research programmes are not used to **legitimise illegal Israeli settlements** in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights.

In response to a parliamentary question, the EU Commission recently [reiterated](#) that:

“Article 19 of the Horizon 2020 Framework Regulation provides that all the research and innovation activities carried out under Horizon 2020 must comply with ethical principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation...”.

EU guidelines on the ineligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in occupied territories for EU grants state their aim is:

“to ensure the respect of EU positions and commitments in conformity with international law on the non-recognition by the EU of Israel’s sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967”.

The criteria applied by the EU Commission to determine the eligibility of projects and participants for EU funded support, the terms of its contracts with participants, and its monitoring of the activities and the beneficiaries of the projects must comport with these requirements and their purposes.

For these same purposes, the Commission must also ensure that the management of activities conducted under EU-funded research projects both respects and comports with the EU’s:

- **duty of non-recognition of Israel’s sovereignty over the OPT,**
- **consequent non-recognition of Israeli settlement entities** as lawfully established, and
- **consequent non-recognition of settlement-based activities** as lawfully conducted.

However, multiple cases demonstrate failures of the Commission to properly instruct against, monitor for, and rectify project management transgressions.

## ➤ ARIEL UNIVERSITY

Ariel University is located in the illegal Israeli settlement of Ariel in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT).

A recent [letter](#) signed by more than 500 academics and researchers from over 20 EU countries as well as Israel documents the involvement of Ariel University in past and ongoing Horizon 2020 projects.

### BOUNCE

Ariel University [hosted](#) a dissemination [event](#) for the [BOUNCE](#) project in June 2020 and is included as a "[Stakeholder](#) in Israel" for the project.

In addition, a professor from Ariel University is [listed](#) as a co-researcher on the project, as "a [member](#) of the Israel BOUNCE TEAM", and as one of the "[Researchers](#) Involved in Data Collection" on a project deliverable, raising serious questions as to whether research activities were carried out with an Israeli settlement institution in the OPT.

**Update, 20 April 2021:** Following the initial publication of this briefing, incriminating documents, including project deliverables, demonstrating the involvement of Ariel University in the BOUNCE project were redacted or removed from the project website in an attempt to conceal evidence of the project's, and thereby the EU's involvement in enabling Israel's illegal settlement institutions.

The briefing has been updated in order to include links to archived copies and screenshots of redacted and removed documents.

In addition, the name of an Ariel University professor was removed from two remaining documents on the BOUNCE website. The professor's name was [removed](#) from a [February 2020 article](#), leaving the other authors' names intact. In an article in the February 2021 newsletter, [the names of all authors](#), including the professor from Ariel University, were [replaced](#) with "HUJI Dissemination Team". There are no indications of the revisions on the documents.

We reiterate our call on the EU to put in place effective monitoring of its research projects and, importantly, accountability measures for transgressors. Repeated retroactive redaction of project websites simply permits a serious ongoing problem to continue and does nothing to end EU contraventions of its own position on the illegality of Israel's settlement enterprise and its obligation under international law not to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the OPT.

## GEO-CRADLE

Ariel University was also listed as a stakeholder in the Horizon 2020 project GEO-CRADLE. It was initially removed from the stakeholder database by [request](#) of the project coordinator to the Commission following calls from civil society, though its stakeholder profile was later [restored](#). Following recent correspondence with civil society organisations, the project coordinator once again [removed](#) Ariel University from the GEO-CRADLE stakeholder database.

However, Ariel University's Eastern R&D Center remains listed as a GEO-CRADLE [stakeholder in Israel](#) in project documents and in an [inventory](#) of in-situ instrumentation and regional networks.

Professor Naftaly Goldshleger from Ariel University, who is listed in several project documents, gave a [presentation](#) at a GEO-CRADLE regional [workshop](#) at Tel Aviv University, raising questions as to whether official project participant Tel Aviv University facilitated the involvement of Ariel University and whether research activities were carried out in the OPT in contravention of EU positions and commitments.

In addition, in both Horizon 2020 projects, Ariel University is falsely listed on project material as located in Israel.

## ➤ TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

Tel Aviv University was a participant in the Horizon 2020-funded [GEO-CRADLE](#) project, for which it [received €130,625](#) in EU funding.

As one of the GEO-CRADLE pilot activities, Tel Aviv University provided [data on soil samples](#) (original data file) for a soil spectral library. Roughly 30% of the samples were from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the occupied Palestinian territory, many of which near illegal Israeli settlements, including in the occupied Jordan Valley, possibly contributing to the large illegal Israeli agricultural operations there.

The soil sample data file was [replaced](#) on December 27, 2018, following an inquiry from a Greek civil society organisation.

## ➤ GOLAN HEIGHTS WINERY

Golan Heights Winery is an Israeli business illegally located in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

It is falsely listed on the GEO-CRADLE project website as a stakeholder in Israel. As with Ariel University, Golan Heights Winery was initially [removed](#), later [restored](#) and recently [removed](#) again from the GEO-CRADLE stakeholders database, following calls from civil society.

Golan Heights Winery also gave a [presentation](#) at a GEO-CRADLE [workshop](#) on pilot activities in Limassol. The illegal settlement business is falsely [listed](#) as "Golan Heights Winery in Israel" under "End-users and key stakeholders" in project pilot activities.

## ➤ RESEARCH PAPERS

Papers indicating funding from EU programmes include authors with Ariel University academic affiliations falsely indicating that this illegal Israeli settlement-based institution is located in Israel.

These include [two papers](#) for the Horizon 2020-funded [CONTEXT](#) project, a [paper](#) for the [CMBSPEC](#) project and a [paper](#) for the [PROSEQO](#) project, as well as a [paper](#) for a European Social Fund project.

Not only do these examples show a failure of the EU to fulfil its duty to not recognize illegal Israeli settlements, but also raises questions as to whether research was carried out in the occupied Palestinian territory.

## ➤ CIRCUMVENTING THE RULES

In the paper "[Hyperpoliticised internationalisation in a pariah university: An Israeli institution in the occupied West Bank](#)", researchers from University College London and Tel Aviv University [document](#) how faculty members of Ariel University circumvent rules banning participation of settlement institutions in EU research funding and mobility programmes.

Interviews with senior Israeli academics from Ariel University illustrate the strategies they employ. One senior Ariel University academic explains that they apply for EU research funding via colleagues at other Israeli institutions, forfeiting recognition of Ariel University in order to access funds for which the university would otherwise be ineligible. Another senior academic says they

participate in Erasmus + programmes by using an alternative affiliation such as head of a professional organisation to obscure Ariel University's direct involvement.

In fact, professor Naftaly Goldshleger involved in the GEO-CRADLE project above alternately presents his affiliation within the same project as Ariel University and the [Israeli Ministry of Agriculture](#).

## ➤ LACK OF MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The EU is shirking its duty to monitor and ensure compliance with its obligations under domestic and international law, leaving it to civil society to identify and denounce transgressions.

In the case of GEO-CRADLE, the involvement of illegal Israeli settlement entities was discovered and raised by Greek civil society actors. Once the project coordinator, the National Observatory of Athens (NOA), was aware, it contacted the European Commission, requesting that ineligible stakeholders be removed from the project, that data concerning occupied territories be removed from the database, and that respective European funds be returned.

The European Commission did agree with the request, as noted in its [response](#) to a parliamentary question. However, it failed to recognize any deficiencies in its monitoring of tax-payer funded projects or to even respond to the [questions](#) on what it will do to ensure that "EU-grant-receiving Israeli entities comply with EU guidelines in the future" and what measures it will put in place to "improve the screening of Israeli entities' compliance with EU guidelines".

In addition, the cases above show this is a widespread ongoing issue that must be dealt with in a systematic manner to ensure the EU:

- **fulfils its obligations under domestic and international law** not to recognise Israeli sovereignty over the territories it has occupied since June 1967;
- **does not further empower Israel's unlawful military occupation** and its oppression of millions of Palestinians, and;
- **does not further undermine** the Palestinian people's inalienable and universally-recognised human rights.

## ► RECOMMENDATIONS

At a time when the EU is finalising Horizon 2020's successor, the €100 billion Horizon Europe programme: the EU Council, Parliament and Commission must devise, fund and implement:

- **effective monitoring of EU research projects**, and
- **effective accountability measures for transgressors**, including official project participants facilitating the contraventions.

**Specifically, the EU should:**

- Incorporate **systematic reference to the Guidelines** and its policy of **non-recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the OPT** in the ethics appraisal procedure for all projects where the Guidelines are applicable.
- Request **ethics checks** for projects where the Guidelines are applicable
- Conduct an **ethics audit** for projects where violations are detected;
- **Increase the Commission services' engagement** in projects where the Guidelines apply throughout the project cycle;
- **Appoint an ethics expert/qualified staff familiar** with the Guidelines and the EU's Israel and OPT policy (such as non-recognition and differentiation) in the ethics panel for projects where the Guidelines apply.

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Horizon Europe's stated goal is to "provide new knowledge and innovative solutions to overcome our societal, ecological and economic challenges".

Funding should not be used to benefit illegal Israeli settlement institutions furthering Israel's military occupation and annexation of Palestinian land.

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## ABOUT



### Ariel University Non-Recognition Campaign

International academics supporting the call from authoritative Palestinian higher-education bodies for non-recognition of and non-collaboration with illegal Israeli settlement-based Ariel University.

[noarielties.org](http://noarielties.org)



### European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine

The European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP) was founded in 1986 as a network of European committees, organisations, NGOs and international solidarity movements, dedicated to the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and justice. ECCP is based in Brussels and has a legal status as a non-profit organisation under Belgian law.

[eccpalestine.org](http://eccpalestine.org)

