(English version)

Question for written answer E-001927/24
to the Commission
Dirk Gotink (PPE)
(2 October 2024)

Subject: Erasmus+ funding from the Commission for the controversial Gazientep University

According to an article ([1]) , there is an Erasmus+ partnership between the Commission and Gaziantep University and the university recently received EUR 250 000 from the EU. The article points to a host of anti-Israeli statements and states that the university rector actively supports the Hamas terrorist organisation. Accordingly:

1. Is this report about the Commission providing EUR 250 000 in Erasmus+ funding for Gaziantep University true?

2. When establishing relations with Gaziantep University, did the Commission also look into the statements by the rector and his possible links with Hamas?

3. Does the Commission concur that, in view of the rector's statements, the agreement with the university should be immediately terminated? If not, why not?

Submitted: 2.10.2024

Answer given by Ms Ivanova on behalf of the European Commission
(26 November 2024)

The Commission is fully committed and legally bound to ensuring that persons and entities involved in criminal, unethical practices or activities incompatible with EU values do not receive EU funding.

To safeguard EU funds, various mechanisms, framed by the EU Financial Regulation ([1]) and relevant agreements concluded with recipients of EU funds, have been put in place ([2]). Entities implementing EU funds also need to comply with EU restrictive measures ([3]).

Since its revision in September 2024, the EU Financial Regulation includes, under the Early Detection and Exclusion System, an exclusion ground in case of incitement to discrimination, hatred and violence against a group of persons or a member of a group, or similar activities incompatible with EU values, where the conduct may negatively affect the performance of the contract. Should the Commission become aware of any evidence in this respect, it can exclude these entities from EU funding.

Gaziantep Islam Science and Technology University has been a beneficiary of the Erasmus+ programme ([4]). All projects led by this university were selected by the national agency responsible for the implementation of Erasmus+, in line with standard procedures (indirect management). A cooperation project led by them (involving five other universities) was recently selected for funding ([5]).

The Commission is currently investigating allegations in the press, in close cooperation with the national agency in Türkiye. As a precautionary measure, pursuant to the newly introduced exclusion grounds mentioned above and in accordance with the EU Financial Regulation, the Commission asked the national agency to suspend the contracting process for the grant agreement on the recently selected cooperation project referred to in the Honourable Member's question, until there is clarity on the matter.

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1 [1]https://www.lejdd.fr/societe/erasmus-lunion-europeenne-sous-le-feu-des-critiques-pour-avoir-integre-une-universite-pro-hamas-150023

([1]) Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast).

([2]) e.g. suspension of contract or payments and contract termination.

([3]) Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

([4]) https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/

([5]) With a grant of EUR 250 000.