

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003206/25
to the Commission**

**Mimmo Lucano (The Left), Ilaria Salis (The Left), Benedetta Scuderi (Verts/ALE), Leoluca Orlando (Verts/ALE),
Cristina Guarda (Verts/ALE)**

(7 August 2025)

Subject: Compatibility of Horizon Europe cooperation with Israeli arms company Rafael with EU law and ethical standards

According to media reports, including an article in *il manifesto* dated 15 July 2025, the Israeli weapons manufacturer Rafael — involved in the production of lethal drones and missile systems used in Gaza — has benefited from EU research funds through participation in Horizon Europe projects.

Rafael is a major contractor for the Israeli Ministry of Defense and is directly involved in the ongoing military operations in Gaza, which have resulted in large-scale civilian casualties and multiple violations of international humanitarian law.

Regulation (EU) 2021/695 ⁽¹⁾ establishing the Horizon Europe funding programme stipulates that projects must comply with ethical principles, including international law and human rights, and Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union affirms the EU's commitment to human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and respect for human rights.

Given this, can the Commission clarify:

1. Whether Rafael currently benefits from Horizon Europe funding directly or through consortia?
2. What measures are in place to ensure that participants in Horizon Europe-funded projects do not contribute to or profit from violations of international humanitarian law?
3. Whether the Commission considers Rafael's participation in Horizon Europe to be compatible with EU legal and ethical standards, and if not, whether it will move to suspend or exclude Rafael from future EU-funded research activities?

Submitted: 7.8.2025

**Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission
(22 October 2025)**

Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Limited is a beneficiary in Horizon Europe (HE) project 'Sensor-based prototype system for underwater security' ⁽¹⁾ within a consortium of 21 beneficiaries.

Under the HE ⁽²⁾ legal framework, all research and innovation actions funded under the programme must comply with ethical principles and applicable national, EU and international legislation.

Article 19(1) of the HE Regulation explicitly requires that: '*Actions carried out under the Programme shall comply with ethical principles and relevant Union, national and international law, including the Charter and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Supplementary Protocols*'.

This includes principles and norms of international humanitarian law. These obligations are also embedded in the HE Model Grant Agreement ⁽³⁾ (e.g. Article 14) and are applicable to all beneficiaries of EU funding under the programme.

In this context and at the level of HE implementation, several mechanisms are put in place to prevent that EU funds are used for activities that could be contrary to international or EU law. Projects financed under HE are selected by independent experts. The HE ethics appraisal scheme ensures a rigorous ethical evaluation ⁽⁴⁾.

Compliance with such requirements is also checked at project level. Any ethical concerns arising during implementation are taken very seriously and may lead to ethics related checks or reviews when appropriate. Currently, the project cited above is under ethics assessment.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe — the framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj>).

⁽¹⁾ 'Sensor-based prototype system for underwater security': <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101121288>.

⁽²⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en.

⁽³⁾ Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf.

⁽⁴⁾ Applicants must complete an ethics self-assessment. All proposals considered for funding will undergo an ethics review carried out by independent ethics experts. Proposals with serious or complex ethics issues must undergo an ethics assessment and may be made subject to specific ethics requirements which become obligations in the grant agreement as 'ethics deliverables'. Furthermore, Article 19 (3) of the HE Regulation in its first sentence sets out the systematic screening of the ongoing actions regarding the observance of the ethical standards under paragraph 1.

A non-compliance may trigger contractual measures such as reduction of the EU funding or termination of the grant or termination of the participation of the respective beneficiary.
