

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-001524/24
to the Commission
Céline Imart (PPE)
(19 August 2024)**

Subject: Funding of NGO Al Sharq Forum through Erasmus+

In an article published on 14 August 2024, the *Journal du Dimanche* reveals that the Istanbul-based NGO Al Sharq Forum received EUR 110 279 between 2021 and 2023 from the Commission under the Erasmus+ programme.

On 2 August 2024, in a post on X (Twitter), the organisation's youth section called for homage to be paid to Ismail Haniyeh, who was the head of Hamas — recognised by the EU as a terrorist organisation — between 2017 and 2024.

The association's organisational chart includes members with values far removed from those of the EU. For example, the director of Al Sharq Research, Mohammad Affan, used to be a member of the Salafi movement and the Muslim Brotherhood (see *The New Yorker* interview with Mr Morsi of 11 June 2012)

It also only takes a quick search on their website to find a comprehensive course on political Islam provided by Al Sharq Academia, another section of Al Sharq Forum.

1. On the basis of what criteria was this funding awarded?
2. What measures will the Commission take to sanction this association?
3. What will it do to step up its monitoring efforts to prevent such errors in the allocation of funding from being made in future?

Submitted: 20.8.2024

**Answer given by Ms Ivanova on behalf of the European Commission
(14 October 2024)**

Currently, the Turkish organisation Şark Forum Derneği ⁽¹⁾ is not receiving any funding from Erasmus+. It has however received funding in the past for projects now finalised.

As coordinator of four projects, this organisation received (to be shared with their partner organisations) EUR 85 173 in 2021 and EUR 18 755 in 2020 ⁽²⁾.

Applications for funding are assessed against the admissibility, eligibility, selection, exclusion, and award criteria laid down in public calls for proposals. The Erasmus+ selection procedure is published in full transparency ⁽³⁾.

The mentioned projects were selected by the national agency in charge of implementing Erasmus+ in Türkiye, as a third country associated to the Erasmus+ programme.

Erasmus+ is mainly implemented by national agencies in charge of selecting projects, managing grants and following up on project implementation, under supervision of their national authorities and the Commission.

In rolling out the Erasmus+ programme, the Commission, pursuant to the Financial Regulation ⁽⁴⁾ and the grant agreements ⁽⁵⁾, is legally bound to ensure that programme beneficiaries commit to and ensure the respect of EU values and do not commit grave professional misconduct.

If there is evidence that a beneficiary violated the applicable legislation during the implementation of a project and did not comply with EU values, the Commission and the national agency shall make use of all available means to terminate the cooperation and recover the EU funds.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.sharqforum.org/>

⁽²⁾ These figures are those granted by the national agency to the entire consortium managing each project after finalisation.

⁽³⁾ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-c/what-happens-submission>

⁽⁴⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/eu-financial-regulation_en

⁽⁵⁾ Article 14 : https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf

Furthermore, the Financial Regulation recast that was proposed by the Commission in 2022 and was adopted in September 2024 ⁽⁶⁾ will introduce some specific provisions reinforcing the current setup on EU values and extend the list of grounds for exclusion from EU funding to entities when it is established that they have activities contrary to the values on which the EU is founded.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/09/19/financial-regulation-council-greenlights-simpler-rules-for-executing-eu-budget/>