

Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission

Robert Jan-Smith - Director General for Research and Innovation

Brussels, 26 September 2016

Concerns : LAW-TRAIN project - Horizon 2020

Dear Mr Moedas,
Dear Mrs Mogherini,
Dear Mr Jan-Smith,

As Belgian and international civil society organisations, we would like to address to you our concerns regarding the Horizon 2020 funded project entitled LAW TRAIN.

The LAW-TRAIN project began in May 2015 and aims to share and harmonize interrogation techniques on an international basis, in order to tackle new challenges posed by transnational criminality. The project is coordinated by Israel's Bar Ilan University, and includes the participation of the Israeli Ministry of Public Security (responsible for the Police and Prison Services, among others), the SPF Justice of Belgium, the Ministry of Justice of Portugal, and the Civil Guard of Spain. In addition to these public institutions, some private actors, including the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) are involved. At the end of August, the Ministry of Justice of Portugal announced its withdrawal from the project due to its controversial nature.

In view of the fact of the involvement of Belgian institutions, and also of the fact of the European Union funds supporting this project, we want to draw your attention to the project's collaboration with the Israeli Ministry of Public Security, which appears to us as highly problematic, both ethically and legally speaking.

In its periodic review on Israel published in May 2016, the UN Committee against Torture denounced Israel's use of torture, its cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners, and its systematic use of illegal interrogation practices, particularly in cases concerning Palestinians and migrants. Primarily, therefore, the participation of the Israel Ministry of Public Security in the LAW-TRAIN project is ethically unacceptable, as it is this institution which is responsible for the national police, and the prison services. Furthermore it is legally problematic to collaborate with an entity which is participating in consistent violations of the Geneva Fourth Convention that this treatment constitutes, and also as the Israeli Police has its headquarters in East Jerusalem, which is in an occupied territory.

In light of these reasons, we must ask the European Commission and Horizon 2020 to immediately stop funding the LAW-TRAIN project. We are also firmly convinced that strong ethical guidelines must be set up without delay in order to avoid such cases in the future. These guidelines must be based on the respect and protection of human rights, and the avoidance of dual use of research funded by Horizon 2020 for military purposes. Regarding the issue of dual use, we are particularly concerned about a guidebook issued by the EC in 2014, *EU funding for dual use*, which recommends ways military companies can develop dual use products and technologies so that they can then apply for EU funds which are supposedly restricted for projects with civilian applications.

In order to move forward with these necessary steps and changes, we believe it is important that our delegation meet with you to further discuss the appropriate actions. We would therefore be grateful for this meeting to be set up as soon as possible, and we look forward to your response.

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