

June 5, 2025

Administrative response of the Executive Board EUR to the advice of the Advisory Committee on Sensitive Collaborations Regarding Bar-Ilan University, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and The University of Haifa.

The Executive Board (CvB) of Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) has taken note of the first advisory report from the EUR Advisory Committee on Sensitive Collaborations (hereinafter: the Committee), concerning Bar-Ilan University, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and The University of Haifa.

The Executive Board's decision following the Committee's advice

In its first report, the Committee examined EUR's collaborations with three Israeli universities: Bar-Ilan University, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and The University of Haifa. These collaborations include planned and existing partnerships in the form of exchange programs, research programs, and participation in consortia.

Following a thorough investigation, the Committee assessed the extent to which the three universities are systematically involved in, contribute to, or benefit from violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. As described in the report, the Committee consulted various sources, reviewed the collaborations, and engaged with the relevant EUR faculties. Additionally, the Committee organized several meetings to speak with representatives from the broader EUR community.

Bar-Ilan University

Based on the considerations and reasoning described, the Executive Board (CvB) has decided that institutional collaboration with Bar-Ilan University is no longer tenable. The collaboration with Bar-Ilan University will be frozen with immediate effect.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The University of Haifa

Regarding institutional collaborations with The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The University of Haifa, the Committee's analysis indicates that these universities have close ties with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). It has been established that the IDF is implicated in suspected war crimes and human rights violations.

Based on the Committee's analysis, the CvB has decided to immediately freeze relations with The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The University of Haifa: no new research collaborations or exchange programs will be initiated with these universities, and existing exchange programs will be suspended. In the case of collaborations within consortia such as Horizon programs, EUR/faculties may participate only if there is no direct collaboration with the universities in question.

The CvB has made this decision because it considers the risk of involvement in human rights violations too high, due to the universities' ties with the IDF. The CvB will inform the universities that

EUR is only willing to continue or initiate institutional collaboration if the university demonstrably distances itself from the IDF, as long as there are serious suspicions of structural human rights violations and war crimes and related activities.

As long as the CvB lacks confidence that this condition can be met, institutional collaboration will remain frozen. If the CvB determines that the above minimum requirement for collaboration is met, or if the war in the region ends, collaboration may resume, subject to a periodic evaluation every three months or sooner if necessary.

The CvB will contact the administrations of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The University of Haifa within the next two weeks. Discussions will also continue with EUR deans regarding the implications of this decision for affected staff and students, the future of the collaborations, and the implementation of evaluation moments. Operational frameworks will be used for this purpose. The experience gained from this process may contribute to shaping future frameworks for how EUR wishes to operate in accordance with the values and standards of responsible science.

Implications for the EUR Community

The Executive Board (CvB) is aware that its administrative decision, following the Committee's advice, evokes a wide range of reactions within the EUR community. For some staff and students, the decision goes too far; for others, not far enough. As long as the conflict in Gaza and the broader region continues, feelings of concern, powerlessness, and indignation will persist on campus—along with the tensions that have long been felt in society and at universities.

The CvB acknowledges that the ongoing stream of distressing news and images from the conflict zone evokes deep emotions. These also affect our community, in which people feel connected to the situation in various ways—personally, through family, ideologically, or otherwise.

The CvB is concerned about reports that some members of the EUR community no longer feel free to express themselves, or feel unsafe because of their background, beliefs, or involvement in social movements. This strikes at the heart of what a university should be: a place where multiple perspectives are welcome, where respectful disagreement is possible, and where safety—both physical and mental—must be guaranteed for all.

The CvB is committed to ensuring that EUR remains an inclusive and safe environment, while also recognizing that feelings of insecurity cannot always be easily resolved. Therefore, the CvB calls on everyone in the community to contribute to an open, thoughtful, and respectful dialogue—especially when differences of opinion are significant.

The CvB will continue to support initiatives from within the EUR community that foster dialogue, reflection, and connection. In the coming period, in consultation with the deans and the University Council, it will explore what additional steps are necessary and desirable to realize this ambition.

Background

Although universities are, in principle, independent scientific institutions, it is conceivable that through various collaborations and government regulations, they may become involved in negative developments in society—and in extreme cases, even in situations where fundamental human rights are at risk. With the establishment of the independent Committee in June 2024, the CvB commissioned a careful evaluation of planned and existing collaborations, starting with Israel and Palestine, given the ongoing devastating war in the region since the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023.

This request from the CvB to the Committee also stemmed from the strong emotions expressed within the EUR community. The collaboration with universities in the war zone—and the question of whether EUR is still contributing positively in line with Erasmus values—has been and continues to be a recurring topic.

The Committee has delivered the first in a series of advisory reports, starting with three universities in Israel. In the near future, the Committee will also advise, at the CvB's request, on the existing collaboration with Birzeit University in Palestine and Tel Aviv University in Israel.

The Committee's Mandate

The CvB explicitly instructed the Committee that EUR's policy on collaborations is based on academic freedom and scientific diplomacy. This means that the CvB will, in principle, always encourage collaborations between EUR and international partners—wherever they may be—provided they promote a positive impact on people and society in accordance with Erasmus values.

However, when there are doubts about a partner's conduct in terms of compliance with (inter)national law and/or respect for fundamental human rights, EUR will critically assess the partnership.

Each collaboration is assessed on its own merits, taking into account the type of collaboration (exchange program, scientific research, participation in consortia) and the institution involved. There are, in principle, no higher standards applied to institutions in conflict zones. EUR also explicitly does not intend to make political statements by choosing whether or not to engage in a collaboration.

The CvB greatly appreciates the thorough investigation and comprehensive advice provided by the Committee and thanks them for the extensive work carried out over the past year.