

The EU-Israel Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of industrial products (ACAA)

In March 2010, following the proposition of the European Commission, the European Council approved the signing of a protocol to the EU-Israel association agreement called ACAA (agreement on conformity assessment and acceptance of industrial products).

What is ACAA? ACAA is a mutual recognition agreement which will align the legislative systems of the EU and Israel, contribute to the eliminations of technical barriers to trade and therefore increase the accessibility of the EU's markets to Israel and vice-versa.

The agreement covers industrial products in general but requires the adoption of annexes by sector to become operational. The only annex that has been negotiated so far covers pharmaceutical products. The EU and Israel could easily add supplementary annexes without having to renegotiate the whole agreement. The fact that only pharmaceutical products are concerned so far should therefore be seen as a means to ease the adoption of the agreement (by getting the support of the powerful pharmaceutical lobby and convincing more easily Members of the European Parliament).

ACAA is not part of what is called the "upgrade" of EU-Israel relations. Nevertheless, its adoption will further strengthen EU-Israel relations.

The decision of the Council was forwarded to the European Parliament for its consent, which has therefore the power to block it.

However, the committee of the European Parliament in charge of this agreement (INTA - international trade) decided to freeze the discussion on ACAA following the Israeli attack on the freedom flotilla.

A few months ago, INTA decided to "unfreeze" the discussions and asked the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (AFET) to assess the political context in which ACAA will be applied, assuming it is concluded.

The current balance of power, in the different Committees and the Parliament, when it comes to this agreement, is the following:

The Socialists, the Greens and the European United Left are opposed to the agreement

The 3 conservative groups (EPP, ECR and EFD) support the agreement

The group of the Liberals (ALDE), quite supportive of the Palestinian cause, is this time likely to vote in favour of ACAA as its members consider that it's just a trade agreement.

Note that EPP, ECR and EFD hold together 356 seats (out of 753). They therefore

need the support of the Liberals (85 seats) to adopt the agreement.

We should particularly insist upon the members of

The Socialist group, in order to ensure they will not split during the vote

The Liberals, the EPP, the ECR and the EFD and the non-aligned, to convince them that trade cannot outweigh human rights

The timetable is the following:

Vote in AFET on the 24th of April

(most likely outcome : the AFET Committee will give its green light, stating that ACAA is a purely technical agreement and that it should not be used as a means to pressure Israel , see for example arguments used in this article: [HYPERLINK "http://www.europolitics.info/social/europe-needs-access-to-high-quality-and-affordable-medicines-art326458-26.html"](http://www.europolitics.info/social/europe-needs-access-to-high-quality-and-affordable-medicines-art326458-26.html) <http://www.europolitics.info/social/europe-needs-access-to-high-quality-and-affordable-medicines-art326458-26.html>).

Vote in INTA on the 26th of April

(most likely outcome : adoption of ACAA)

Vote in plenary in May

(most likely outcome : adoption of ACAA).

We need a huge mobilisation to stop ACAA from being adopted. This is our last chance to step in and intervene in the decision-making process. ACAA is a highly symbolic agreement, and one of the very few subjected to the consent of the European Parliament. We can therefore obtain results by pressuring the Members of the European Parliament.

Full list of MEPs with their email addresses: [HYPERLINK "http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/full-list.html"](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/full-list.html) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/full-list.html>;

You can also make a selection by country or political groups here: [HYPERLINK "http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search.html"](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search.html) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search.html>.

The EU-Israel ACAA agreement: the EU must be consistent with its own stated positions!

The Additional Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an EC-Israel Association on an EC-Israel Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA) is currently being debated at the European Parliament and is likely to be adopted. The adoption of ACAA would contribute to the elimination of technical barriers to trade, thereby increasing the accessibility of the EU's markets to Israel which would benefit Israeli companies, many of which are known to conduct lucrative activities in the settlements, considered by the EU and the UN to be in breach of international law.

The ECCP calls upon the European Parliament to ensure respect for the Lisbon Treaty which promotes the need for consistency: *“the Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law... **The Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies.** The Council and the Commission, assisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect”.*

Moreover, the “Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on Human Rights and Democracy at the Heart of EU External Action”, recently presented by Catherine Ashton, stipulates that *“the EU's trade and human rights agenda needs to be coherent, transparent, predictable, feasible and effective”.*

When it comes to the stated positions of the EU on the Middle East, they could not be clearer - both in relation to Gaza and reiterated EU calls to lift the blockade, as well as the West Bank and the illegality of the settlements, which the EU considers to be an obstacle to

peace. In addition, in the past months, three internal EU reports by the EU Heads of Missions in the OPT thoroughly described human rights violations committed by Israel in the West-Bank (including East-Jerusalem) and against the Palestinian citizens of Israel itself.

In this context, the consistent trade policy regarding Israel would be rejection of the ACAA, or any other agreement, that would in any manner benefit Israel and/or its industries. This is a question of credibility, accountability and justice. We therefore urge you not to consider those values as irrelevant or subordinate to short-term trade interests. At stake are the EU's long-term strategic interests, as well as its credibility as defenders of human rights.

For all the reasons stated above, ECCP is calling for the unambiguous rejection of the EU-Israel Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products.

E C C P

**E U R O P E A N C O O R D I N A T I O N O F C O M M I T T E E S A N D
A S S O C I A T I O N S F O R P A L E S T I N E**

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