

**Question for written answer E-004913/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Richard Howitt (S&D)

Subject: 'Mission for Growth to Israel': business and human rights

On 22 and 23 October 2013, 65 companies from 17 Member States travelled to Israel as part of the 'Mission for Growth' organised and led by DG Trade, with the aim of fostering business links between European and Israeli businesses. To this end, a number of business-to-business networking or 'match-making' events were organised as part of the mission. Ahava – an Israeli settlement-owned business which is known to conduct a significant part of its activities from an illegal settlement in the occupied Palestinian territory, and to participate in the internationally unlawful exploitation of its natural resources – was listed as a participant in these events.

The EU has affirmed at the UN that it 'believes that the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights need to be applied globally and calls on European companies to implement the Guiding Principles in all circumstances, including in Israel and occupied Palestinian territory.'

1. As the organiser of this mission, what guidance did the Commission give to the businesses involved in order to clarify their responsibilities in light of the Guiding Principles and other relevant frameworks? If it did not give any such guidance, when and how does it plan to set out clear expectations for the businesses in this delegation as regards respect for human rights in this context, to give effective guidance in this regard, and to help ensure that they do not become involved in conflict-related human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law?
2. In light of the EU's position on the illegality of settlements and its obligation to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, were businesses in the delegation informed of the potential legal and other risks of business deals linked to the settlement enterprise? Is the Commission aware of the policies of caution or discouragement adopted in this regard by some Member States, in which a number of companies involved in the mission are domiciled?
3. What is the Commission's policy on the participation of settlement-linked companies in EU-supported networking fora? In particular, how does the Commission explain Ahava's participation in Mission for Growth networking events? What steps will be taken to avoid this form of support for settlement-linked businesses in future?