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Answer given by Ms Gabriel
on behalf of the European Commission
(5.3.2020)

At the level of the implementation of Horizon 2020, several mechanisms have been put in place to prevent that EU funds are used for activities that could be contrary to international or EU law, including any relevant Commission decisions.

Article 19 of the Horizon 2020 Framework Regulation provides that all the research and innovation activities carried out under Horizon 2020 must comply with ethical principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols. Research and innovation activities carried out under Horizon 2020 must have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

Horizon 2020 projects are being closely monitored by the Commission services. This includes a rigorous ethical evaluation through the Horizon 2020 ethics appraisal scheme¹. This practice is expected to continue under Horizon Europe and further measures could be considered at implementation level once legislation becomes stable.

In the GEO-CRADLE proposal there was no indication that the Tel Aviv University, one of the partners, intended to take soil samples in occupied territories or cooperate with stakeholders in these areas. Once the violation was detected, the Commission immediately took action recalling the rules² to the coordinator who instructed Tel Aviv University to stop cooperation with Ariel University and Golan Heights Winery. The project excluded all soil samples in question and did not recognise any related activity for collecting them in the occupied territories. Costs claimed for these activities and the subsequent rectification were considered not eligible and therefore not covered by EU funding.

¹ It consists of an ethics self-assessment by the applicant, two-stages ethics review comprising an ethics screening, an ethics assessment by independent ethics experts, and if necessary, ethics checks, review and audits with possibility for penalties in case of non-compliance.

² Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards,
http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/israel/documents/related-links/20130719_guidelines_on_eligibility_of_israeli_entities_en.pdf