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Dear President,

Michiel, lieber Hans-Gert!

Thank you very much for your letter of 29 May expressing the European Parliament's interest in the further development of EU relations with Israel.

I agree with you that we should welcome aspirations of our partner countries for an upgrade of our bilateral relations, in particular in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In its recent Communication on the implementation of the ENP, the Commission has spelled out its views on the development of more intense and fruitful relations with our partners on the basis of the principle of differentiation.

The Association Council with Israel, on 16 June, saw the start of a process. The EU and Israel have identified areas of mutual interest for deepened cooperation. Discussions on these will take place over the coming months, and within the structures existing under the ENP. Negotiations have not started yet, and the Commission stands of course ready to keep the Parliament informed about any progress made in the areas falling under our competence.

I would however like to ask for your understanding when I refer you to the Presidency and the Council, respectively, on any information concerning the political aspects of the Israeli request.

Yours sincerely,

Benita Ferrero-Waldner
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Mr. Hans-Gert Poettering
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