



The Academic Boycott – Report No. 4
Winter 2025–2026 in Europe
May 2026

Background

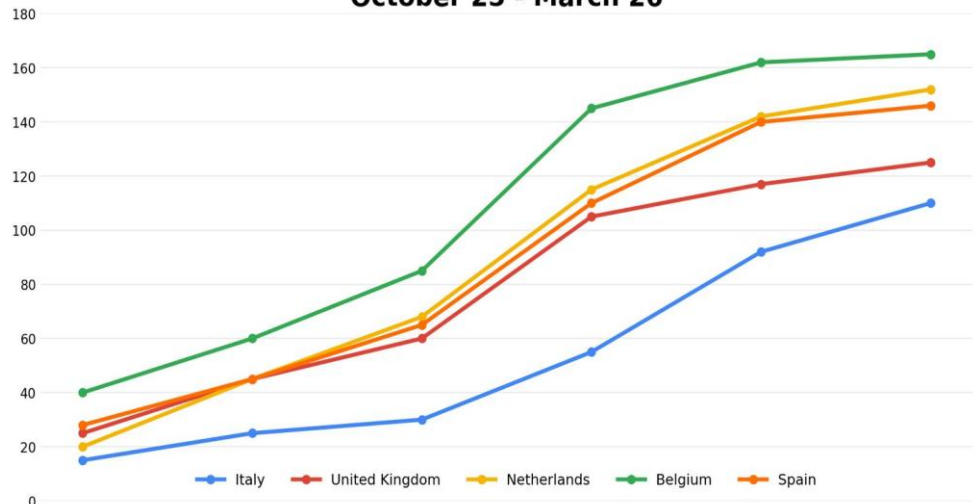
This report reflects the reports submitted by researchers at the Israeli research universities (VERA). The data and information included in this report was collected by the Task Force Against the Academic Boycott (VERA) from October 2025 through March 2026. This report addresses the period following the ceasefire in the “Swords of Iron” war, before and during operation “Roaring Lion” which began on 28 February 2026 through the end of April 2026.

Key Conclusions

1. There has been a relatively moderate increase in the number of overall reports concerning new academic boycotts of all types, whether boycotts targeting individual researchers, academic institutions, or professional associations. This moderate increase likely reflects the fact that many of those inclined to boycott Israeli researchers and institutions have already done so over the past two years, and therefore the number of new actors joining these efforts is now smaller.

2. However, there has been no decrease in the scope or scale of existing boycotts. This means that the broader trend of academic boycotts against Israeli academia continues, and there are clear signs of a gradual strengthening, as demonstrated below:

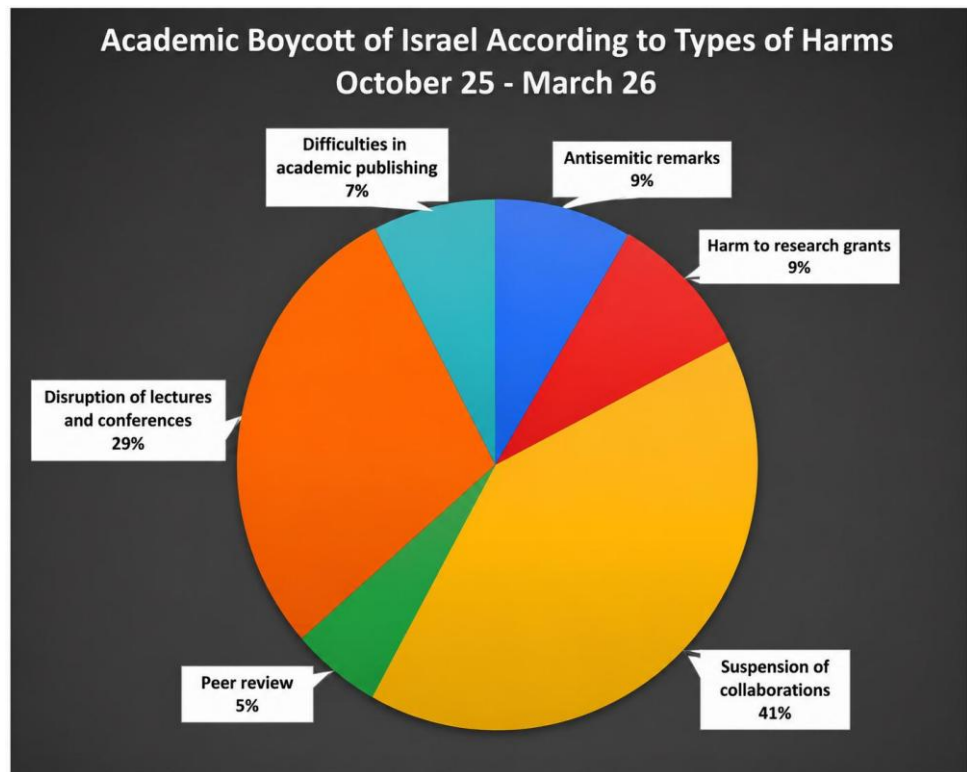
Reporting on Academic Boycott by Countries
October 25 - March 26





3. The academic boycott is changing in both form and emphasis. In particular, the relative share of boycott incidents connected to Horizon Europe projects has increased significantly. Israel's participation, and the participation of Israeli academia, in the scientific framework of the Horizon Europe agreements is a strategic objective and a flagship national project. Unfortunately, we are seeing that both competitors and adversaries recognize this vulnerability, and are targeting it accordingly.

Meanwhile, initiatives aimed at excluding Israeli researchers and Israeli professional associations from international academic organizations continue. The phenomenon of severing academic ties, both at the individual and institutional levels, remains ongoing, and many Israeli researchers continue to report cancelled conference invitations and sanctions related to lectures and academic appearances.



4. The original assumption that a ceasefire in Gaza would reduce boycott activity has clearly not materialized. Monitoring of boycott organizations and their public discourse demonstrates that these organizations adapted very quickly to the changing circumstances, including the war with Iran and developments involving Israel's activity in Lebanon.



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Boycott organizations are also taking advantage of a growing hostility toward the Trump administration among progressive circles and among segments of European decision-makers, in order to reinforce hostility toward Israel, which is perceived as the United States' closest ally and, in their view, as pursuing increasingly aggressive regional policies.

Strategic Implications

1. Israel's participation in the Horizon Europe association agreements is a strategic objective and a national priority for the State of Israel. For Israel's adversaries, Horizon Europe is viewed as a vulnerable pressure point. Attempts to weaken Israel's international standing are not limited to academic boycott efforts directed specifically at Israeli research institutions.

Rather, there is an organized campaign focused on influencing the policies of European Union member states, which increasingly view the economic, scientific, and strategic dimensions of the Association Agreement and the Horizon framework as highly effective tools for exerting political pressure on Israel. The combination of political pressure, together with the expansion of academic boycott efforts - particularly those focused on Horizon Europe - requires preparation and the construction of effective response mechanisms, alongside proactive activity at every level: the researcher, the institution, and the state.

2. The foreign policy of the Trump administration has generated concern, resistance, and rejection at almost every level among decision-makers in Europe. These sentiments are also reflected among the leadership of the European Union, including among decision-makers directly connected to Horizon agreements. The actions of President Trump regarding Venezuela and Iran, his statements concerning Greenland, the reduction of support for Ukraine in the face of Russia, the imposition of tariffs, and of course his open criticism of NATO - have all generated resentment among many European leaders.

Israel's close identification with the United States, both in security and military terms and in its critical approach toward international institutions, has raised among European Union leaders the fundamental question regarding the existence of shared values ("Like-mindedness") between Europe and Israel. It is important to mention that this condition formally appears within European Union regulations as a necessary requirement for Israel's continued participation in Horizon agreements.

3. Within this increasingly hostile atmosphere toward Israel, strong criticism is also being voiced regarding various policies advanced by the Israeli government concerning Judea and Samaria, proposals relating to the death penalty for terrorists, and statements made by ministers and members of parliament in support of violence against Palestinians.





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All of these factors contribute to Israel being viewed by many European Union decision-makers as an increasingly controversial partner. This situation creates a significant threat to Israel's continued participation in the current Horizon agreements and poses a serious danger regarding Israel's inclusion in the next Horizon agreements, which are expected to be signed during 2027 and implemented beginning in 2028.

Nearly 25% of recent boycott reports are now related to Horizon Europe! compared with approximately 10% six months earlier — an increase of 150%!

4. It is important to maintain bilateral programs with friendly countries and to expand cooperation with new target countries, especially in Asia. Clearly, efforts to strengthen academic relations with these countries should continue. However, such frameworks are clearly not a substitute for a program such as Horizon Europe. Bilateral programs are not part of a structured and carefully planned framework for scientific research in the manner provided by Horizon Europe. They operate on a more ad hoc basis, without long-term planning or a supporting system of knowledge exchange, researcher mobility, and student exchange.

In addition, they depend on changing budgetary capabilities and shifting national priorities, which limit the ability for effective long-term planning. Bilateral academic cooperation cannot replace Horizon Europe, the world's most prestigious and important research and development framework, in which Israel has successfully established a place for itself over the course of approximately three decades.

5. Today more than ever, it is important to warn Israeli decision-makers that scientific research in Israel depends upon the connection between our researchers and colleagues abroad. Participation in Horizon Europe provides not only irreplaceable and valuable funding, but also enables Israeli researchers to build research partnerships, maintain interactions with researchers from Europe and beyond, and influence the scientific and academic agenda within Europe from within the system itself.

The Israeli science community cannot isolate itself. It is not by chance that countries outside the European Union continue seeking entry into the Horizon framework. Only in recent months, Japan, South Korea, India, and Australia have joined the program, while scientific powers such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Norway have already participated for many years. Horizon Europe is the world's largest and most prestigious scientific framework. Israel succeeded in becoming part of it, and every possible effort should be made to ensure that Israel remains part of Horizon Europe in order to preserve Israeli scientific excellence and Israel's status as the "Start-Up Nation."





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Conclusion

1. Despite the ceasefire and the end of the “Swords of Iron” war, there remains a continuing trend of academic boycotts against Israeli academia.
2. The clear and immediate danger today concerns Israel’s continued participation in the current Horizon Europe association agreements and the serious threat of exclusion from the next Horizon agreements beginning in 2028.
3. Only coordinated and proactive action by governmental, academic, and public actors aimed at halting the dangerous deterioration in attitudes toward Israel among European Union decision-makers can preserve Israel’s international standing.
4. This objective should be treated as a national strategic priority by Israeli decision-makers.

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