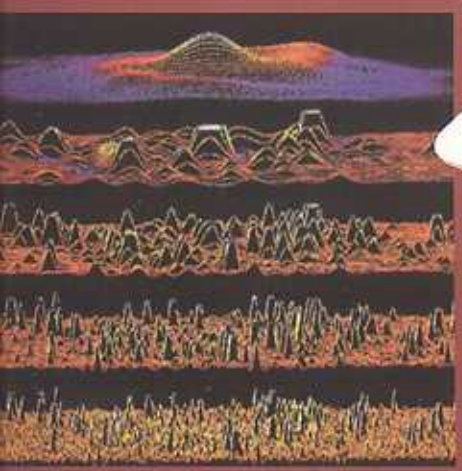

ISRAEL IN EUROP

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Israel has long been a member of individual pan-European science initiatives, such as the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) and the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN). More recently the Israeli Government has begun making annual pro-rated national contributions (approximately $40 million a year) to the European Union's IV Framework Programme (FP-4), to enable its scientists to participate freely with their European counterparts in this $14.5 billion dollar initiative.

Although Israel, entering in August 1996, missed the crucial first year-and-a-half of this four year program, in which many Calls-for-Proposals were announced, it has been making up for lost time. Israeli researchers have submitted over 430 proposals to FP-4 in the last year-and-a-half, of which 207 projects, totalling $35 million, have been accepted for funding, almost twice the usual European success rate. "All projects must involve academic and/or industrial scientists in at least three countries," notes Prof. Paul Singer, Chairman of the Israel Science Foundation and the academic community's representative on the Israeli Steering Committee. "These results show that Europeans recognize Israeli research excellence, are anxious to cooperate with their Israeli counterparts, and that Israeli ideas can compete successfully in Europe."

Since most of Israel's $6 billion international trade imbalance involves Europe, observers hope that FP-4 industrial R&D cooperation will help Israeli high-tech industries learn European standards, make European contacts, benefit from European technical expertise and large R&D facilities, penetrate European networks and markets, and boost Israeli exports. Although about 70% of the projects, and 60% of the funds, currently go to academic rather than industrial researchers, that is expected to change as the latter become more familiar with such programs.

Given the FP-4's multiple scientific and economic goals, the cost of Israel's participation is currently shared by the academic community (through VATAT, 25%), the Ministry of Industry and Trade (20%) and the Ministry of Science (5%), with the Israeli Treasury providing matching funds. Areas of particular interest include: Biotechnology, Materials Sciences, Communications, Information Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Agriculture.

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A high-level European Union delegation from Brussels recently visited their Israeli colleagues for a three-day meeting at the Dead Sea to assess Israel's participation, progress and problems to date. But Israel is already gearing up for the $18 billion Framework V Programme, scheduled to begin in January 1999.

"We would like to double our annual proposal submission rate, maintain our high success rate and achieve a better balance between industrial and academic research," notes Prof. Singer. "Our hard-won experience and the continuing eagerness of European scientists to cooperate with Israel gives us much cause for optimism that all three goals can be reached during FP-5."

On the academic level, the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities has long had a fruitful relationship with the European Science Foundation (ESF), which represents 62 major national science funding agencies in 21 countries. The ESF acts as a catalyst for bringing together senior scientists and science administrators to explore, debate, plan and implement international science and science policy initiatives. Israel, through the Israel Academy, has been an active member in all ESF undertakings and sends a delegation, as "Observers with Special Status," to the annual meeting of the ESF General Assembly in Strasbourg. Israel also has representatives on all five major ESF Standing Committees: Prof. Jacob Ziv, President of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities (Physical and Engineering Sciences), Prof. Ruth Arnon (Life and Environmental Sciences). Prof. Shaul Shakked (Humanities), Prof. S.N. Eisenstadt (Social Sciences) and Prof. S. Feldman (Medical Research).

The ESF also has a wide variety of 3-6 year scientific programs, each headed by a Steering Committee. Recent Israeli ESF Steering Committee members include: Profs. R. Rachamimoff of the European Neuroscience Programme, S. Malkin of the Biophysics of Photosynthesis Programme, E. Toledano of the Individual and Society in the Mediterranean Muslim World, and S. Schwartz of the Blueprint for a European Social Survey. The ESF Scientific Network for European Communication, Transportation Activity and Research (NECTAR, founded 1986) will be holding its 4th Euro-Conference in Israel in April 1998.