

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001403/25
to the Commission
Christine Anderson (ESN)
(7 April 2025)**

Subject: Clarification on the Commission's position regarding the COVID-19 lab leak theory

Multiple Western intelligence sources and legislative bodies have revived the theory that COVID-19 may have originated from a laboratory incident in China.

— The US Central Intelligence Agency now considers a lab leak to be a plausible origin, though with low confidence.

— In 2020, Germany's Federal Intelligence Service reportedly assessed that there was an 80-90% likelihood of an accidental lab leak.

— A 2024 US Congressional report concluded that the virus 'likely emerged due to a laboratory or research-related mishap', further revealing that gain-of-function research funded by the National Institute of Health was conducted at the Wuhan Institute of Virology prior to the outbreak.

Although no scientific consensus has emerged so far, these developments raise serious questions about biosafety, research funding oversight and international accountability.

In this context, I seek clarification on the following points:

1. Has the Commission reviewed or reassessed its position on the origins of COVID-19 in light of recent intelligence findings by US and German authorities?
2. Has any EU-funded research directly or indirectly supported the Wuhan Institute of Virology or other institutions engaged in high-risk virological work prior to the pandemic?
3. What measures is the Commission taking to ensure greater transparency, traceability and safety in EU-funded research involving gain-of-function or dual-use biological experiments, both within the EU and internationally?

Submitted: 7.4.2025

**Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission
(20 June 2025)**

The Commission has not been informed by any national or European authority about intelligence indicating that COVID-19 originated in a laboratory.

The Commission closely monitors scientific studies on the origin of SARS-CoV-2 and supports the research of the World Health Organisation (WHO) ⁽¹⁾.

The WHO's Global Study on the origins of SARS-CoV-2 suggests three possible zoonotic pathways for the introduction of the virus and concludes that the introduction through a laboratory incident is extremely unlikely ⁽²⁾. Furthermore, a 2023 scientific critical review concluded that the strongest evidence supports a zoonotic over a laboratory origin ⁽³⁾.

The Commission supported research on infectious diseases via its framework programmes for Research and Innovation ⁽⁴⁾. Prior to the pandemic, the Commission provided financial support to institutions engaged in high-risk virological research including Wuhan Institute of Virology via two EU-funded projects ⁽⁵⁾.

The Commission ensures transparency, traceability and safety in EU-funded research ⁽⁶⁾, including gain-of-function and dual use research.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-statement-who-led-covid-19-origins-study_en.

⁽²⁾ <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/origins-of-the-virus>, WHO-convened Global Study of Origins of SARS-CoV-2: China Part Joint WHO-China Study, page 9.

⁽³⁾ Alwine JC, Casadevall A, Enquist LW, Goodrum FD, Imperiale MJ. A Critical Analysis of the Evidence for the SARS-CoV-2 Origin Hypotheses. mBio. 2023 Apr 25;14(2):e0058323. doi: 10.1128/mbio.00583-23. Epub 2023 Mar 28. PMID: 36897098; PMCID: PMC10127682.

⁽⁴⁾ Including <https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/FP6>, <https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/FP7>, https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-2020_en and https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/horizon-europe_en.

⁽⁵⁾ Grant agreements: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/653316>; <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/871029>.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-results>.

The Commission implements ethics assessments and promotes transparency through open-access publication of research results. Security checks are conducted as part of the ethics and security scrutiny process ⁽⁷⁾, with clearance required from the Security Scrutiny Group ⁽⁸⁾ before funding is granted.

In addition, project monitoring is ensured until the end of a project to check its proper implementation and compliance with the obligations laid down in the grant agreement.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/funding-tenders-opportunities/display/OM/Special+procedures%3A+Ethics+review%2C+security+scrutiny%2C+Ownership+control+check>.

⁽⁸⁾ Composed of national security experts nominated in agreement with their national security authorities.