(English version)

Question for written answer E-001515/25
to the Commission
Fabrice Leggeri (PfE)
(13 April 2025)

Subject: Funding of 'The European Qur'an' project by the European Research Council

On 13 April 2025, an investigation published in the 'Journal du Dimanche' ([1]) highlights particularly worrying issues connected to the 'European Qur'an' project ([2]), the recipient of EUR 9.8 million in funding from the Commission's European Research Council.

The project aims to demonstrate that the Qur'an shaped European identity between the 12th and 19th centuries. Behind its scientific façade, however, the article reveals:

— the involvement of researchers linked to networks close to the Muslim Brotherhood;

— a desire to use ideology to rewrite European history;

— an educational component and plans to reach the general public, the scope of which is concerning (exhibitions, cartoons and publications);

— direct links to institutions known for their ties with political Islamism.

In view of the above:

1. What scientific and ethical criteria were behind the decision to award EU funding to this project?

2. Does the Commission find it acceptable that the EU is indirectly funding work connected to the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology?

3. What oversight, evaluation and suspension procedures are provided for in the event of ideological abuses that run counter to EU values?

Submitted: 13.4.2025

Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission
(19 August 2025)

The European Research Council (ERC) has funded since 2007 more than 17 000 projects and over 10 000 researchers, across physical sciences and engineering, life sciences, social sciences and humanities ([1]).

This led to over 2 200 patents and other Intellectual Property Rights applications. More than 200 000 articles were published in scientific journals and the ERC grantees have been awarded with 14 Nobel Prizes, 7 Fields Medals, 11 Wolf Prizes and dozens of important prizes.

The 'EuQu' project received funding from the EU's Horizon 2020 ERC's Synergy Grant call in 2018.

The ERC awards grants based solely on scientific excellence ([2]). Evaluated by renowned international scientific experts on the subject matter, the application met all necessary criteria and was selected among 27 successful out of 295 submissions in a highly competitive call.

To ensure that all funded actions adhere to the highest ethical standards and principles, the European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA) conducts an ethics appraisal process with the help of independent, highly qualified ethics experts ([3]). The project received ethics clearance before the grant was signed.

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1 [1]https://www.lejdd.fr/Societe/10-millions-deuros-pour-un-coran-europeen-enquete-sur-un-projet-polemique-finance-par-lunion-europeenne-157015

2 [2]https://institut-islamologie.fr/projet-erc-le-coran-europeen-euqu-2019-2025/#:~:text=Le%20Coran%20Europ%C3%A9en%20%3A%20l%27%C3%A9tude,Culture%20et%20Religion%20Europ%C3%A9enne%20(EuQu)&text=EuQu%20est%20un%20projet%20de,Conseil%20europ%C3%A9en%20de%20la%20recherche

([1]) Within the social sciences and humanities projects which represent around a fourth of ERC grants, topics span an extensive range of disciplines, including economics and finance, law and political science, sociology, psychology and linguistics, literature and philosophy, history and archaeology, geography and environmental studies, anthropology, arts and cultural and religious studies — the category in which falls the mentioned project.

([2]) ERC Work Programme 2018-2020, Commission C(2017) 5307 of 2 August 2017t: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2018_2020/erc/h2020-wp18-erc_en.pdf.

([3]) 'Annex A: The ethics review process', Commission Decision C(2017)4750 amending Decision C(2014)2454 on the ERC rules for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures relevant to the specific programme of Horizon 2020: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/sgl/erc/h2020-erc-se-rules-amended2_en.pdf.

This project is a major scholarly undertaking by a consortium of recognised academic institutions ([4]).

The research conducted concerns the development of knowledge and does not support any group or ideology.

The ERCEA oversees projects through regular monitoring, requiring periodic scientific and financial reports to ensure progress and compliance with all relevant legislation and ethical standards ([5]).

([4]) Led by the Spanish National Research Council, involving the University of Naples L'Orientale, University of Copenhagen, and University of Nantes, with additional academic partners across Europe and beyond.

([5]) Projects undergo rigorous initial peer-review evaluation and mid-term and final reviews. If a project fails to meet standards or breaches any of its obligations under the grant agreement, the grant may be suspended, terminated, or reduced and funds may be recovered, and other administrative sanctions may be adopted.