

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001947/25
to the Commission**

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(14 May 2025)

Subject: Embryo research funded under the Horizon Europe programme

Under the Horizon Europe funding programme, 47 projects involving human embryonic stem cells or human embryos have been funded by the EU for approximately EUR 14 million ⁽¹⁾. Article 18 of Regulation (EU) 2021/695 ⁽²⁾ sets clear limitations on the types of activities that are eligible for funding under Horizon Europe, including creating human embryos solely for the purpose of research or stem cell procurement. Furthermore, under Article 19, all research activities must comply with ethical principles and relevant Union, national and international law.

With regards to these principles, we would like to ask the following questions:

1. Available information on the 47 listed projects is very limited. How does the Commission ensure that these projects fully comply with the above-mentioned regulation and how does it ensure public access to this information?
2. Several listed projects aim to improve embryo selection during *in vitro* fertilisation. How does the Commission ensure that these projects do not promote or normalise eugenic practices in contradiction to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights?
3. Some listed projects mention that human embryos are used to replace animal testing. Does the Commission consider this ethically acceptable and how is human dignity safeguarded in these cases?

Submitted: 14.5.2025

Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission
(16 July 2025)

Research activities involving human embryonic stem cells (hESCs) under Horizon Europe can be funded, subject to strict conditions in accordance with the ‘Statement of the Commission on ethics/stem cell research — Artikel 19’ ⁽¹⁾.

The scientific evaluation experts must ascertain that there is a necessity to use these cells to reach the scientific objectives. The conditions on the use of human embryos (hE) are even stricter. No activities leading to embryo destruction can be undertaken.

All proposals with hE/hESCs undergo an in-depth ethics assessment by independent ethics experts, to ensure compliance with relevant EU and international regulations, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Horizon Europe Regulation.

All resulting requirements become contractual obligations. Proposals that put at risk human embryos or promote eugenic practices are ineligible.

Each proposal is subjected to the approval by the Member States (Programme Committee) via the Comitology procedure. Only then are the contracts concluded.

The Commission and funding bodies closely monitor ethics deliverables during project implementation. Relevant project information is publicly available via the human pluripotent stem cell registry ⁽²⁾ and EU CORDIS ⁽³⁾.

hESC-based models provide unique insights into early human development or disease pathways, enabling the creation of advanced, human-relevant *in vitro* systems that offer greater predictivity than conventional animal models.

Responsible and tightly regulated use of hESCs contributes to improving human health and supports the principle of human dignity by upholding strict ethical safeguards and by advancing medical innovation that better respects and protects human life.

¹ Written answer by Commissioner Iliana Ivanova as a follow-up to the hearing of 4 November 2024.

² Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe — the framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013, OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj>.

⁽¹⁾ Statement 2021/C 185/01: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021C0512\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021C0512(01)).

⁽²⁾ <https://hpscereg.eu/browse/projects>.

⁽³⁾ <https://cordis.europa.eu/>.