

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002369/25
to the Commission
Gerald Hauser (P/E)
(12 June 2025)**

Subject: Gain-of-function research as a security risk for the EU

Neither the Chinese nor the US Government officially disputes that the COVID-19 virus was artificially created in a laboratory as part of ‘gain-of-function’ research and that the global COVID-19 pandemic was triggered either by a laboratory accident or deliberate release. The US Government has therefore recently slashed funding for gain-of-function research or stopped it altogether in certain countries. In the last few months, a pair of Chinese researchers working at the University of Michigan was charged in the US with attempting to smuggle a dangerous pathogen — a potential bioweapon — into the United States. The US prosecutor in charge of the case described it as a matter of utmost importance for national security ⁽¹⁾.

1. Which gain-of-function research programmes and which laboratories involved have been and are being supported financially, organisationally or with personnel by the Commission, its bodies, agencies or entities since 2015?
2. What measures has the Commission taken to prevent the import, manufacture or release of potential biological weapons in the EU?
3. Does the Commission intend to ban gain-of-function research — i.e. the artificial creation of potentially dangerous pathogens of any kind — in the future?

Submitted: 12.6.2025

**Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission
(29 September 2025)**

Gain-of-function research involves genetically altering an organism to enhance its biological functions and is undertaken to better understand diseases and develop therapies and vaccines. The potential risks associated with creating more infectious or deadly pathogens need to be carefully managed and weighed against the benefits for public health.

The Commission’s approach to protection from potential biological weapons is guided by the 2017 Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) security risks ⁽¹⁾.

In this context, the Commission established the Customs Crisis Management function, enabling rapid response by customs authorities to security risks stemming from EU imports, including potential biological weapons. This mechanism has been activated in past crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The support to gain-of-function research is possible under the EU research and innovation framework programme ⁽²⁾, subject to strict eligibility criteria and ethical conditions, verified through a scientific and ethical evaluation and screening of proposals and projects raising ethical issues, and where appropriate a security check. The programme has supported gain-of-function research on influenza virus to improve the response to emerging infectious diseases ⁽³⁾.

The Commission will continue to implement the highest levels of ethics integrity in the research and innovation domain, and to protect in this context EU values and security.

¹ <https://www.foxnews.com/us/patel-chinese-nationals-charged-smuggling-known-agroterrorism-agent-into-us-direct-threat>

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52017DC0610>.

⁽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.

⁽³⁾ Horizon 2020 COMPARE project carried out at Erasmus Medical Centre, Rotterdam in the Netherlands: Collaborative Management Platform for detection and Analyses of (Re-)emerging and foodborne outbreaks in Europe (2014-2019; <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/643476>).