

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000409/26
to the Commission
Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR)
(2 February 2026)**

Subject: Awarding of a European Research Council starting grant to Dr Harry Pettit

Talented early-career scientists who have produced excellent supervised work can qualify for a European Research Council (ERC) starting grant. In September 2025, academic Dr Harry Pettit was awarded an ERC starting grant of EUR 1.5 million by the Commission ⁽¹⁾. His employer, Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, has since severed its ties ⁽²⁾ with Dr Pettit due to his openly expressed support of Hamas, the endorsement of terrorist acts against Israel and its people and association with antisemitic activism both on and off campus. Even following the termination of his contract with Radboud University, Dr Pettit is able to keep his starting grant. The ERC's ethical guidelines state that beneficiaries have to uphold fundamental EU values, including respect for freedom, democracy and human rights, including the rights of minorities.

1. Given the ethical review process attached to awarding ERC starting grants, why was this grant approved for such a controversial researcher?
2. Is the Commission considering suspending or withdrawing Dr Pettit's grant, and if not, on what grounds can he keep his grant?

Submitted: 2.2.2026

**Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission
(27 March 2026)**

All proposals selected for funding in the 2025 European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant call underwent peer review in accordance with the ERC's established procedures and were selected solely on the criterion of scientific excellence, in line with Article 28(2) of the Horizon Europe Regulation ⁽¹⁾.

In addition, each project selected for funding by the ERC under Horizon Europe undergoes an ethics review procedure. This ensures that all research activities included in the proposal conform to ethical standards and relevant national, EU, and international laws, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols.

The ethics review focuses on the research proposed by the applicant. The proposal in question has successfully obtained ethical clearance.

For more information on how the ethics review process takes place, please see the relevant Information for Applicants ⁽²⁾ and Annex A of the ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe ⁽³⁾.

During the preparation of the corresponding grant agreement, the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA) received allegations concerning certain public statements attributed to the person mentioned in the subject of the written question. The grant agreement has not been signed yet.

The ERCEA and the Commission are presently assessing these allegations, including the relevant facts and their possible implications for the grant's implementation, applying due process and proportionality.

¹ <https://www.ru.nl/en/research/prizes-and-grants/erc-starting-grants>.

² <https://www.voxweb.nl/nieuws/sociaal-geograaf-harry-pettit-verlaat-de-radboud-universiteit-er-is-gedreigd-met-ontslag>.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0695>.

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/information-for-applicants_he-erc-stg-cog_en.pdf.

⁽³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/erc-rules-for-submission-and-evaluation_he-erc_en.pdf.