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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION

The Director-General

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**Subject: Suspected manipulation in the outcome of the EU research project
GRACE**

Dear Dr Then,

Following your letters of 8 December 2014 and 9 January 2015, the former addressed to Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, and the latter addressed to both Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis and Mr Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, I would like to refer to my previous reply of 17 December 2014 (Ref. Ares(2014)4299265) on the same matter.

DG Research and Innovation sees no reason to question the scientific independence and transparency of the study or more generally the GRACE consortium. As explained before, the establishment of links with existing activities (e.g. International Society for Biosafety Research) and the creation of networks with different stakeholders were both requested specifically by the European Commission. In order to ensure transparency and scientific soundness, from the initial design of the study to the interpretation of the results of the 90-days feeding trials, the GRACE consortium engaged in wide and open stakeholders consultations, with competent authorities, Civil Society Organisations (including Testbiotech itself), industry and other relevant organisations. The European Commission indeed has the obligation to ensure that the highest standards are met, in the case of this as well as any other project we fund. This is ensured, however, throughout the whole project lifecycle, beginning with a highly competitive selection process based on international peer-review and involving regular monitoring of the project's activities and progress.

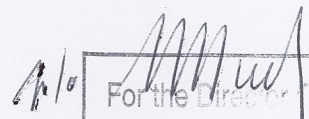
With regard to the disclosure of the names of the experts who assessed the GRACE project, and as already explained in my previous reply, the rules set forth in the FP7 submission, evaluation, selection and award procedures, allow the Commission to publish only on a yearly basis the overall list of experts used within each specific programme, without making, however, any explicit reference to specific calls or proposals for which they were asked to assist.

I appreciate the scientific debate driven by the publication of the results on the 90-day rats feeding trial by the EU-funded GRACE (GMO Risk Assessment and Communication of Evidence) project consortium. I would like to reiterate, however, that

given the Commission's aforementioned findings on the project, such a scientific discussion should take place through an appropriate forum, such as the dedicated platform hosted by the journal, where the results have been published.

I consider that through this reply the obligations of the European Commission with regard to the management of the projects we fund have been clarified. I trust you will continue to actively participate in the scientific debate on the outcome of the GRACE study, using the appropriate channels.

Yours sincerely,


For the Director General
W. BURT SMITS
Robert-Jan Smits
Deputy Director General