

**Question for written answer E-002175/2018/rev.1
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Kenyan and Tibetan nomadic herders boost research and employment in Europe. A costly joke at EUR 2.5 million

The Commission is constantly proclaiming the need for the EU to fund innovative research projects based in Europe as a way of leading Europe out of decline and boosting employment. Grants from the European Research Council (ERC) are supposed to be awarded to top-class researchers who have been experts in their fields for more than 10 years. To be awarded this European funding, researchers have to demonstrate that their scientific proposals are innovative, ambitious and feasible¹.

It is galling, therefore, to hear about the ludicrous PASTRES project²: EUR 2.5 million funding for an Englishman to travel around Tibet, Kenya and Sardinia. By studying nomadic yak, goat and camel herders, he hopes to find answers to new global challenges³.

As part of this project, an online game has been developed which puts players 'in the shoes of African farmers'⁴. Is this game really going to boost industry in Europe?

Today, the criteria of 'renowned for industrial innovation and five registered patents' are optional when evaluating candidates' grant applications. When will the Commission require the ERC to make these criteria obligatory and put an end to costly mistakes like the one described above?

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/erc-2016-adg.html>

² https://twitter.com/PASTRES_erc - https://erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/erc-funded-projects/results?search_api_views_fulltext=pastres&=Apply

³ 'We will engage in a dialogue involving wider debates in five areas – the environment and climate change, financial and commodity systems, infrastructure design, migration policy, and conflict and security – on ways to respond to risks and uncertainty and to strengthen resilience, offering both new theories and practical answers. With its cross-cutting and innovative rethinking of uncertainty and resilience, the research will build significantly on past work, creating a link between the experiences of marginal herders and wider global challenges of resilience.'

⁴ <https://steps-centre.org/african-farmer-game>