

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0319/04
by Dana Scallon (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Funding of research with embryonic stem cells

After the meeting of the Competition Council on 26 November 2003, several media sources quoted the corresponding statements of government representatives of different Member States (e.g. Germany, Italy, Austria, Luxembourg, Spain) which supported the Portuguese proposal.

Subsequently, Research Commissioner Busquin declared during lunch that he would support a Portuguese compromise proposal intending only to fund research on embryonic stem cells if they were created before a certain deadline, and not to fund research on embryos as such.

However, some days later, Commissioner Busquin declared that his statement was misunderstood.

Can the Commission confirm that the Portuguese compromise proposal was quoted correctly by the government representatives of Germany and Portugal, and can the Commissioner clarify in which form he signalled his consent to the Portuguese compromise? In the Commission's view, in what way exactly was he misunderstood; was the compromise proposal not clearly worded or did the Commissioner not clearly understand the consequences of the proposal?

At his press call on 3 December 2003, after the inconclusive Council meeting, Mr Busquin declared that the Commission would be careful to fund only those projects which would be acceptable to all Member States. Can the Commission confirm this? Can the Commission explain the reason for the difference between this statement by Commissioner Busquin and the present position of the Commission, which claims the legal right to fund research which is illegal or unconstitutional in a number of Member States?