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Answer given by Ms Gabriel
on behalf of the European Commission
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Gene drives, using a variety of genetic engineering tools, hold great potential in the field of infectious diseases, vector/pest control, poverty-related diseases, and outbreak preparedness. However, there are still scientific uncertainties, which need to be addressed. Therefore, the EU has supported research in this area, in particular for the prevention of devastating infectious diseases as traditional vector control techniques are running up against environmental and resistance barriers.

During both the 7th Programme for Research and Horizon 2020, six projects researching gene drives with a budget of EUR 25 748 224 have been funded. These projects are the following: TRANSMALARIABLOC (ended 31 May 2013, EU contribution: EUR 2 993 964)[1], INFRAVEC (ended 28 February 2014, EU contribution: EUR 8 499 618)[2], VECSYN (ended 31 January 2019, EU contribution: EUR 1 497 606)[3], INFRAVEC2 (ongoing until 31 January 2021, EU contribution: EUR 9 998 845)[4], ANT-TOX (start date 1 March 2020, EU contribution: EUR 1 498 428)[5] and MOVE (start date 1 February 2020, EU contribution EUR 1 259 763)[6]. Details of the research institutions involved can be found under the web links in the footnotes.

All research funded under the EU Research Framework programme must comply with the highest ethical principles as well as relevant national, EU and international legislation. Any release of gene drive organisms into the environment needs to be authorised following a thorough risk-assessment. To date, no application for such authorisation has been made in the EU.

[1] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/223736/reporting/pl
[2] https://infravec2.eu/
[3] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/335724/reporting
[4] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/228421/reporting
[5] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/851470
[6] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/852957