

European geneticists condemn use of testing to establish 'racial purity'

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The use of genetic testing to establish racial origins for political purposes is not only scientifically foolish, but also unethical and should be condemned, the European Society of Human Genetics (ESHG) said today (Thursday June 14). The society, which promotes research in basic and applied human and medical genetics and ensures high standards in clinical genetic practice, said that the use by a member of parliament from the Hungarian far-right Jobbik party of a genetic test to attempt to prove his 'ethnic purity' was ethically unacceptable.

The company Nagy Gén scanned 18 positions in the MP's genome for variants that it said were characteristic of Roma and Jewish ethnic groups and concluded that Roma and Jewish ancestry could be ruled out.

Professor Joerg Schmidtke, President of ESHG, said on behalf of the Executive Board: "This is a gross distortion of the values of [genetic testing](#), which is intended to be used to diagnose disease rather than to claim racial purity. In addition, the test proves nothing; it is impossible to deduce someone's origins from testing so few places in the genome. I am sure that clinical geneticists worldwide will join me in condemning this scandalous abuse of a technology that was developed to help the sick, rather than to promote hatred."

Professor Béla Melegh, President of the Hungarian Society of Human Genetics added: "We were shocked to hear that a laboratory authorised to carry out genetic analysis for diagnostic purposes carried out such a test. Not only does it not serve a diagnostic purpose, but it has been used

to create tension between people of different ethnic origins. We are asking the Hungarian government to prosecute the company concerned under the 2008 law on genetics, and to take action to ensure that similar abuse of genetic testing cannot take place in our country in future."

The 2012 European Genetics Conferences in Nuremberg, Germany (June 23-26) will provide a further opportunity for the ESHG to denounce such an unethical perversion of genetic science, and insist, at the same time, on the importance of [genetic](#) testing in the medical or scientific context of good practice.

Provided by European Society of Human Genetics

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