

Scottish Council on Human Bioethics

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Briefing to EU Parliament**European funding of research requiring the destruction of human embryos**

I am writing on behalf of the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics to express concern over the proposed allocation of European research funds to research projects requiring the destruction of human embryos.

As this is a deeply ethical issue, it is not within the remit of the EU, but is a matter for the Council of Europe. The latter has stated, in article 18 of the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, that "where the law allows research on embryos in vitro, it shall ensure adequate protection of the embryo". Article 18 also prohibits the creation of human embryos for research.

Furthermore, as it is the case that in many EU countries such research is illegal, we do not believe that European research funds can be used in this way. Member states should not be asked to contribute financially to research they have outlawed. In at least eleven Council of Europe countries, including Germany, Slovakia, Poland, Ireland, Norway and Italy, research involving the destruction of human embryos is illegal.

More generally, the SCHB is concerned about the unnecessary destruction of human embryos. There are already more than 110 000 frozen human embryos stored in the UK, which are available for this kind of research, and 18 000 human embryos have already been destroyed by UK scientists. This is the case, despite the fact that there are alternative forms of research using umbilical cord or adult stem cells, which have shown more promise than the ethically dubious instrumentalisation of human embryos. Meanwhile many infertile couples are seeking to adopt these embryos but cannot.

The SCHB wishes to urge you not to support the European funding of research requiring the destruction of human embryos, and to support amendments calling for EU funding to be spent on alternative forms of research, including adult stem cell research and umbilical cord stem cell research.