

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0338/08

by Hiltrud Breyer (Verts/ALE), Peter Liese (PPE-DE), Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM), Margrete Auken (Verts/ALE), Vittorio Prodi (ALDE), Anna Záborská (PPE-DE), Bernd Posselt (PPE-DE), Johannes Blokland (IND/DEM), Mario Mauro (PPE-DE), Carlo Casini (PPE-DE), Patrizia Toia (ALDE), Sepp Kussstatscher (Verts/ALE), Gay Mitchell (PPE-DE), Maciej Marian Giertych (NI) and Iles Braghetto (PPE-DE)

to the Commission

Subject: EU human embryonic stem cell research

Japanese scientists have recently announced a scientific breakthrough. They have managed to reprogramme human skin cells directly into cells that look and act like embryonic stem cells. The cells were pluripotent, meaning that they had the potential to grow into any tissue in the body. The technique is ethically uncontroversial, because it does not use embryos or oocytes. The result has also led Ian Wilmut to give up embryonic stem cell research, of which he was formerly the main promoter.

1. What consequences does the Commission draw from the new scientific fact? Will the Commission now change its attitude towards human embryonic stem cell research? Why would the Commission now think it is necessary to continue research which destroys embryos?
2. The EU currently gives funding for projects on embryonic stem cell research which are based on the destruction of human embryos. In light of the scientific results will the Commission cease giving EU money for this research, which is ethically controversial in the EU Member States?
3. In light of the scientific results, does the Commission not agree there should be a moratorium on research with human embryonic stem cells?
4. In the answer to the written question E-1384/07 the Commission had to admit that there is no private funding for embryonic stem cell research in Europe. Does the Commission not agree that the exclusive financing of human embryonic stem cell research with public money is problematic?
5. Does the Commission not agree that it is time for a clear statement on the non-patentability of embryonic stem cells, given the clear rejection of this patentability by the German Patent Office and the European Patent Office, as well as the European Parliament's resolution?