



# Europäische Akademie

zur Erforschung von Folgen wissenschaftlich-technischer Entwicklungen  
Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler GmbH

Direktor:  
Professor Dr. Carl Friedrich Gethmann

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

***Please note: Not to be released before 15 December 2003, 19.00 hrs!***

***Bitte beachten: Sperrfrist bis 15. Dezember 2003, 19.00 Uhr!***

Europäische Akademie GmbH presents report:

### **Embryo Research in Pluralistic Europe**

Brussels, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003. – The Europäische Akademie zur Erforschung von Folgen wissenschaftlich-technischer Entwicklungen Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler GmbH presented its study „Embryo Research in Pluralistic Europe” today. The study resulted from a two-year co-operation of an independent and interdisciplinary project-group of the Europäische Akademie and proposes recommendations for scientifically sound und long-term stable science-policy for regulating embryo research in Europe.

As the recent row on the planned support of embryo research with EU-funds has shown a debate over the need for European-wide harmonised regulation of research activities is urgently needed. Taking up this important issue a group of scientists appointed by the Europäische Akademie investigated the bio-medical, moral, legal and social aspects of embryo research with a special focus on the national and cultural diverse strategies of evaluating and regulating embryo research in Europe.

On the basis of their interdisciplinary work, the project group came to the conclusion that research on embryos is morally admissible, or even a moral imperative, under the condition that the legitimate interests of persons who suffer from as yet untreatable or insufficiently treatable disabilities or diseases (including infertility) and the interests of researchers working in basis or clinical research, outweigh society's general interest in protecting embryos. A categorical ban on embryo research on a European level as it is propagated by some member states of the European Union, notably Germany, is hardly justifiable in the perspective of the project group.

Decisions on research regulations on a European level need to be made in accordance with legitimate procedures. It must be appreciated, however, that respect for procedural solutions is attainable only if even those individuals accept the decisions made that disagree with these decisions on moral grounds. The row on embryo research in Europe illustrates, however, that a procedural solution will be successful only when the involved parties share a certain common set of values. The extent to which such a consensus exists limits the efficacy of procedural solutions.

For these reasons, future legislation on embryo research and other controversial matters in science and technology policy will have to be both flexible and informed. A simple 'Yes or No' solution concerning legal harmonisation in Europe is, therefore, not in sight. Finally, since there is evidence that, for a large majority of Europe's population, attitudes to embryo research are based on knowledge, but on images of fear, stereotypes and beliefs, the public needs to be better educated.

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**Publication:**

D. Solter, D. Beyleveld, M. B. Friele, J. Holowka, H. Lilie, R. Lovell-Badge, C. Mandla, U. Martin, R. Pardo Avellaneda (2003) *Embryo Research in Pluralistic Europe*. Volume 21 of the series *Wissenschaftsethik und Technikfolgenbeurteilung* (ed. by C. F. Gethmann). Springer-Verlag, Berlin Heidelberg. ISBN 3-540-20379-6

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