

5. EUROPEAN HEALTH FORUM GASTEIN –

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**Dr. Peter Liese, Member of the
European Parliament:**

„No cloning!“

**Background on the compromise
of the EU on embryonic stem cell research**



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The import of embryonic stem cells has led in the past few months to heated debates all over Europe. Currently European politicians deal with the question, whether the European Union should (co-)finance research on human embryos, in particular embryonic stem cells, or not. On Monday, 30 September 2002, the EU Council of Ministers is going to decide on an informal compromise paper of the Danish Presidency of the European Union. On Friday, 27 September, Peter Liese, Member of the European Parliament, explained the background of this decision at the 5th European Health Forum Gastein.

While some countries, like Great Britain, have a liberal legislation regarding research on human embryos and embryonic stem cells, other EU member states, like Austria and Germany, prefer a rather restrictive regulation. Together with Ireland, Portugal and Italy, these two countries demanded, that specific research programs can only be approved, if clear ethical guidelines are layed down, Liese reports. Against the resistance of these five countries, no research programs can be passed – this is why the Danish EU Presidency suggested a compromise. "The compromise suggests sort of a one-year moratorium, which is to be used for intensive debates in the EU member states", the Member of the European Parliament explains.

According to the paper, reproductive cloning, the production of embryos for research purposes as well as the production of stem cells are out of question. Research on already existing embryonic stem cells is not prohibited, though. "The cloning of human beings is not going to be supported by the European Union. I consider this an important success", finds Liese. Disadvantages, the politician discovers, are "numerous

gaps". Other than in the US, there is no cutoff date until which the embryonic stem cells have to had been produced. "Furthermore it is unclear what will happen if the member states do not manage to find a commonly accepted position within this year", Liese criticizes. "Nevertheless this compromise is a step in the right direction."