



# Press Release

## 01/2003

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Berlin, January 23, 2003

### National Ethics Council presents its Opinion on preimplantation genetic diagnosis

Germany's National Ethics Council unanimously recommends regulating the use of prenatal diagnosis (PND) and preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) in a special comprehensive reproductive medicine law.

The Council's 24 members once again urge an open discussion of the ethical, legal and social issues arising from advances being made in medicine and the life sciences, a discussion that acknowledges existing differences of opinion. The Council points out that mutual respect is a prerequisite for reaching a convincing political solution to the conflicts that have come to light in the course of this discussion. Furthermore, this particularly calls for a willingness to respect differing opinions and to examine the arguments behind these opinions equally conscientiously and objectively.

As already stated in its first Opinion on the import of human embryonic stem cells, issued in December 2001, the National Ethics Council consequently does not consider it to be its task to embrace a particular regulatory arrangement or indeed to recommend that arrangement to lawmakers as ultimately the only possible option.

The Council's job is, rather, to develop arguments and point out possible solutions connected with these arguments. It must be left to parliament to choose the legislative path that, in its view and in cognizance of these arguments, is appropriate.

Based on this understanding, the Opinion presents and discusses what are, from the Council's perspective, the two possible

#### The German National Ethics Council

The German National Ethics Council's task is to provide a forum for interdisciplinary discourse between the natural sciences, medicine, theology and philosophy, and the social and legal sciences.

It expresses views on ethical issues relating to new developments in the field of the life sciences and on their consequences for the individual and society.

#### Members

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Spiros Simitis (Chair)  
Prof. Dr. Regine Kollek (Deputy Chair)  
Prof. Dr. Dr. Eckhard Nagel (Deputy Chair)  
Prof. Dr. Wolfgang van den Daele  
Prof. Dr. Horst Dreier  
Prof. Dr. Eve-Marie Engels  
Bishop Dr. Gebhard Fürst  
Prof. Dr. Ditlev Ganten  
Prof. Dr. Volker Gerhardt  
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Prof. Dr. Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard  
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Heinz Putzhammer  
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Privatdozentin Dr. Dr. Bettina Schöne-Seifert  
Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Richard Schröder  
Prof. Dr. Jochen Taupitz  
Dr. Hans-Jochen Vogel (former Federal Minister)  
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responses to preimplantation genetic diagnosis, namely, strict rejection or allowing PGD only as an exception when stringent requirements have been met. As part of the possible regulatory arrangements it outlines, the Opinion also highlights various approaches that could be taken and, in doing so, further broadens the scope of its critical analysis.

The Council's members have therefore decided to dispense with a vote and have confined themselves instead to indicating their own position by signing the approaches they support.

With the Opinion issued today, the Council presents a document that

- describes the medical basis for PND and PGD and outlines the legal and social framework for their actual or possible use,
- assesses various arguments in favor of or against allowing PGD, and
- critically discusses the current practice of PND.