

Embryology and stem cell research in Europe has proceeded at a rapid pace over the past decade with a high level of science being maintained in a field that has become globally competitive. Provided that adequate funding is continued and unresolved issues surrounding patents are addressed, there is hope that new treatments for many severe diseases could emerge. Embryos and stem cells offer the opportunity to study early human development, opportunities for drug discovery, as well as for a variety of revolutionary therapies and medical challenges of the 21st century. These challenges need to be met by the EU and ought to be based on certain ethical principles - principles that may differ among European countries to some degree, but that do have to respect human rights both within and outside EU frontiers, as well as the intellectual integrity that is the basis of the identity and democracy of today's Europe.