

New report calls for sustained public endorsement and funding for human stem cell research

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A strategic report from the European Science Foundation examines the key scientific questions for human stem cell research in the context of the rapidly emerging field of regenerative medicine. In parallel to the potential new treatments for incurable diseases resulting from stem cell research, heated ethical and legal debates have arisen across the world. This report presents a comparative view of the legislative framework on human stem cell research across Europe and provides a selection of success stories in frontier research and clinical trials that underpin the advances achieved in Europe to date.

In recent years, international research on regenerative medicine and [stem cells](#) has yielded some promising results and even greater expectations in society. In this medical field, human [embryonic stem cells](#) could be applied in a variety of ways, for example to identify new compounds for drug development, or as cell-based therapies. The potential to use human stem cells to repair or replace tissue or organ functions lost through age, disease, damage or birth defects may raise ethical issues that must be considered integrally with any research. Europe is currently witnessing developments and debates that will impact regulation and public funding of stem cell research and innovation for years to come.

The report observes that Europe plays a leading role in [regenerative medicine](#) research, with most countries featuring legislative frameworks that are globally favourable to human stem cell research. The 30

countries' position on human stem cell research was grouped into five broad categories; very permissive, permissive with restrictions, restrictive by default, very restrictive and unlegislated. The report found that 63% of the countries fell into the first two categories.

"Europe has a valuable track record in the area of [stem cell research](#). The report highlights the need to continue to fund this research so that its full potential can be realised." said Professor Stig Slørdahl, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Norwegian University of Science and Technology, who chaired the report.

The authors recommend that sustained public endorsement and funding need to continue in order for further research to be carried out and public-private partnerships to develop, bringing safe and innovative therapies to the market, with a potential benefit to millions of patients worldwide.

Dr Vanessa Campo-Ruiz, ESF Science Officer to the Chief Executive and lead author of the report commented: "We hope this [report](#) may help to inform future policy and funding decisions across Europe and thus contribute to ensure this continent's scientific leadership, social welfare and economic growth."

More information: The strategic report 'Human Stem Cell Research and Regenerative Medicine: Focus on European policy and scientific contributions' is available online: www.esf.org/publications/medical-sciences.html

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