Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Deliberate germline editing in human beings

Motion for a resolution
tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

In accordance with Recommendation 2115 (2017) on the use of new genetic technologies in human beings, deliberate germline editing in human beings would cross a line viewed as ethically inviolable. Most scientists agree that the techniques currently used are not "safe", leading to a *de facto* moratorium worldwide, and a prohibition on interventions aimed at modifying the germline in human beings in all European Union, and many Council of Europe member States. However, this has not stopped the birth of the first children whose genome has been intentionally altered (in China).

According to Article 13 of the 1997 Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, deliberate germline editing in human beings is prohibited. However, there is pressure from parts of the scientific community to modify or re-interpret this Article, to allow such germline editing to go ahead once the techniques used are considered safe, and as long as it is undertaken for preventive, diagnostic or therapeutic purposes.

The Parliamentary Assembly is amongst those actors who have repeatedly called for a broad and informed public debate on the medical potential and possible ethical and human rights consequences of the use of the technology, to little avail.

The Assembly should thus revisit the question with a view to making recommendations to the Committee of Ministers to ensure that human rights and human dignity are upheld with regard to deliberate germline editing in human beings. With the current state of the technology, this precludes establishing a pregnancy with germline cells or human embryos having undergone intentional genome editing. However, the Assembly should consider already now which limitations on the use of the technology it wants to recommend once germline editing in human beings is considered "safe", or whether it wants to support a continued total ban.