



The Netherlands: Cloning

April 1998

LL File No. 1998-1903
LRA-D-PUB-000835

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At this time, the Netherlands has no law specifically prohibiting the cloning of human beings. A majority of ethicists and politicians agree that the cloning of people should be outlawed.¹ Until legislation has been enacted concerning the complicated matter of cloning, embryologists and the Government of the Netherlands have reached a voluntary agreement to abstain from cloning human beings.

On January 12, 1998, nineteen European states signed the Council of Europe's Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights Regarding Cloning. The Protocol bans the cloning of human beings. This is the first binding international treaty on this topic. Initially the Government of the Netherlands decided not to sign the Protocol; however, it reversed its decision and added an interpretive declaration to the Protocol. In the text the Government declared its opposition to the cloning of human beings; however, it does not oppose research of human embryos at an early stage if this is limited to research with respect to fertility problems and the search for hereditary deformities.²

The Minister wants to start a broad national debate about cloning. As a result, she has requested that the Royal Dutch Academy on Science and other institutions initiate the preparations. It is expected that by way of national legislation, a complete clarity will be given concerning the question as to which methods of cloning will be permitted in the Netherlands. The proposal of law will be introduced during this year to the Second Chamber of the Parliament.³

Prepared by Karel Wennink
Senior Legal Specialist
Directorate of Legal Research
Law Library of Congress
April 1998

¹ N.R.C.-Handelsblad, Feb. 25, 1997.

² *Id.* Jan. 24, 1998.

³ Official Parliamentary Reports, Jan. 14, 1998 (<http://www.sdu.nl/handelingen/H2>).