Council of Europe Bioethics Convention

1995/2122(INI) - 16/07/1996

The European Parliament rejected (by a very small majority of 197 votes to 192, with 30 abstentions) the report by Mr Seppo Viljo PELTTARI (ELDR, FIN) on the Council of Europe's draft Convention on Bioethics. The rapporteur, who had abstained during the vote in legal committee, left the general voting to the discretion of the House. It will be recalled that the draft Convention lays down minimum standards of protection which do not prevent the signatory countries from applying more stringent measures. In particular, it bans the sale of human organs and tissue and prohibits any alteration of the germ line. It also underlines the importance of not blocking research which might lead to advances in therapeutics. The adoption of the report, which was modified by some fifteen amendments, would have resulted in Parliament taking up a position which drastically reduced the possibilities of research and the recourse to certain therapeutic methods and screening processes. It would therefore have recommended banning the production of embryos, with the exception of a maximum number of 3 embryos in the case of in vitro fertilization, with such a ban complementing a ban on preservation. In circumstances similar to those anticipated by the draft Convention, research on persons who are incapable of giving their consent, particularly those suffering from neurodegenerative diseases, would have been prevented without any direct benefit for the patient. Tests designed to predict genetic diseases could only have been carried out in those cases where the life of the patient would have been at stake and where effective treatment was practicable.