

Media release



Opposition to patent on human sperm cells

Company Ovasort holds a patent on sex selection

15.05.2012 Testbiotech has filed an opposition to a patent (EP1263521) held by Ovasort (UK). The patent covers human sperm cells selected for their sex intended for use in in-vitro fertilisation and the production of female offspring. The patent violates European Patent law, which prohibits patents on human germ cells and the development of the human body. Nevertheless, the European Patent Office has granted such patents several times.

“Some companies are trying to use the human body as a resource that can be exploited for commercial interests. Thousands of patents on human gene sequences have already been granted. There are, in addition, human organs, blood cells and tissue registered as patents. Our opposition aims to clarify ethical boundaries within patent law”, says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. “Patents must not be abused for commercialisation of the human body.”

Testbiotech has placed the Ovasort patent on a “Black List of European Patents”. Amongst others on the list there is a patent on the usage of human oocytes held by Merck-Serano (Germany) which was opposed by Testbiotech in 2009.

Ovasort is aiming to use its patent for in vitro fertilisation in humans as well as in animal breeding. The patent also covers the production of non-human female embryos. Just a few weeks ago, the EPO revoked for technical reasons another patent on sperm cells used in animal breeding. Further, the European Parliament very recently adopted a resolution against patents in plant and animal breeding. It is now 20 years since the EPO granted the first patent on mammals.

Contact: Christoph Then, Testbiotech, info@testbiotech.org, Tel. + 4915154638040, www.testbiotech.org

Link to the patent of Ovasort: <http://www.testbiotech.de/node/663>

Link to the opposition of Testbiotech: <http://www.testbiotech.de/node/662>

Link to the Black List of European Patents:
http://www.testbiotech.de/sites/default/files/BlackList_Patents_en_0.pdf

link to the resolution of European Parliament:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2012-0202+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>