

*Survey about the fate of surplus
human embryos from the ART
programme after expiry date*

Borut Kovačič

September 2019

Participants

- The heads of IVF laboratories from the leading European MAR clinics:
 - Brussels, Belgium
 - Helsinki, Finland
 - Stockholm, Sweden
 - Madrid, Spain
 - Lisbon, Portugal
 - Leicester, UK
 - Nijmegen, Netherlands
 - Toulouse, France
 - Maribor, Slovenia

Does your law restrict the number of picked-up or inseminated oocytes?

UK	No
Spain	No
Portugal	No
Belgium	No
Netherlands	No.
Finland	No
Sweden	No
France	No
Slovenia	No

Are mild stimulation protocols or natural cycles used to reduce the number of excess embryos or they are used only for specific medical indications?

UK	For medical indications only.
Spain	Only in few clinics
Portugal	For medical indications only.
Belgium	For medical indications only.
Netherlands	For medical indications only.
Finland	For medical indications only.
Sweden	Only in few clinics
France	For medical indications only.
Slovenia	Only in few clinics

...and if patients' wish due to religious views.

How long can embryos be stored?

UK	10 years or longer due to a medical reason
Spain	No time limit
Portugal	3+3 years and iadditional 3 years due to a medical reason
Belgium	5 years or longer due to a medical reason
Netherlands	5 years or longer due to a medical reason
Finland	No time limit. Storage time regulated only for donated gametes and embryos produced from donated gametes being 15 years.
Sweden	10 years
France	10 years (new law)
Slovenia	5+5 years

By what maximum age can patients use their frozen embryos?

UK	Depends on clinic. Private clinics may go up to 49 with donated embryos.
Spain	Until the end of fertile life. Spanish Fertility Society recommends until 50 .
Portugal	Women 50 years and men 60 years
Belgium	Before the 48th birthday
Netherlands	Women 50 years (for OPU and fresh ET is 43)
Finland	Not regulated by law but most private clinics has max age 45- 49
Sweden	Not regulated. In practice up to 49 years.
France	Not defined
Slovenia	Women should be of childbearing age.

Which are the options for unused embryos after the expiry of storage period?

UK	Destruction, Research, Donation
Spain	Destruction, Research, Donation
Portugal	Destruction, Research, Donation
Belgium	Destruction, Research, Donation
Netherlands	Destruction, Research., Donation (only 1 clinic)
Finland	Destruction, Research., Donation
Sweden	Destruction, Research., Donation (the last option is still very new and not regularly used)
France	Destruction, Research, Donation
Slovenia	Destruction, Research

Is the method of destroying of frozen embryos after expiry date prescribed by the law / guidelines?

UK	No
Spain	No
Portugal	No
Belgium	No
Netherlands	No
Finland	No
Sweden	No
France	No
Slovenia	Yes. Thaw and leave to die.

The clinic/embryologist decide how to do.

Removed from the tank and put in the same container as for other biological waste.

Proportion of frozen embryos remained in storage after the expiry date?

Leicester, UK	70%
Madrid, Spain	No expiry
Lisabon, Portugal	25%
Brussels, Belgium	55%
Nijmegen, Netherlands	10-20%
Helsinki, Finland	No expiry, but 40% remained unused
Stockholm, Sweden	30-40%
Toulouse, France	50%
Maribor, Slovenia	54%

The fate of frozen embryos in your lab after the expiry date?

	% destroyed	% donated to couples	% donated for research
Leicester, UK	95	2.5	2.5
Madrid, Spain	5 (No time limit)	15	80
Lisabon, Portugal	70	10	20
Brussels, Belgium	16	26	57
Nijmegen, Netherlands	90	<1	5-10
Helsinki, Finland	40-50	<5	50-60
Stockholm, Sweden	90-95	0	<5
Toulouse, France	30	25-30	20-25
Maribor, Slovenia	100	-	0