



# Risk and evidence: Some European reflections

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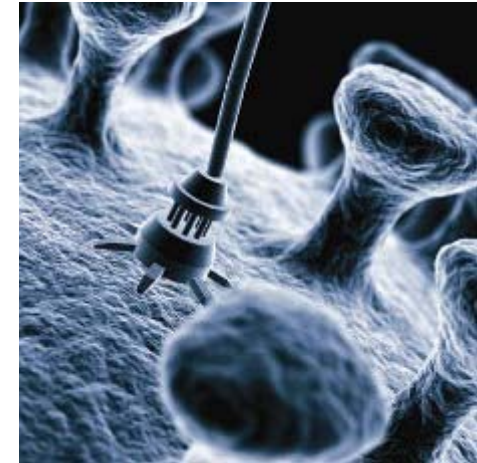
# Let's start with a simple fact: Risk is part of our daily life







**As a society we need to  
take risks to make progress**



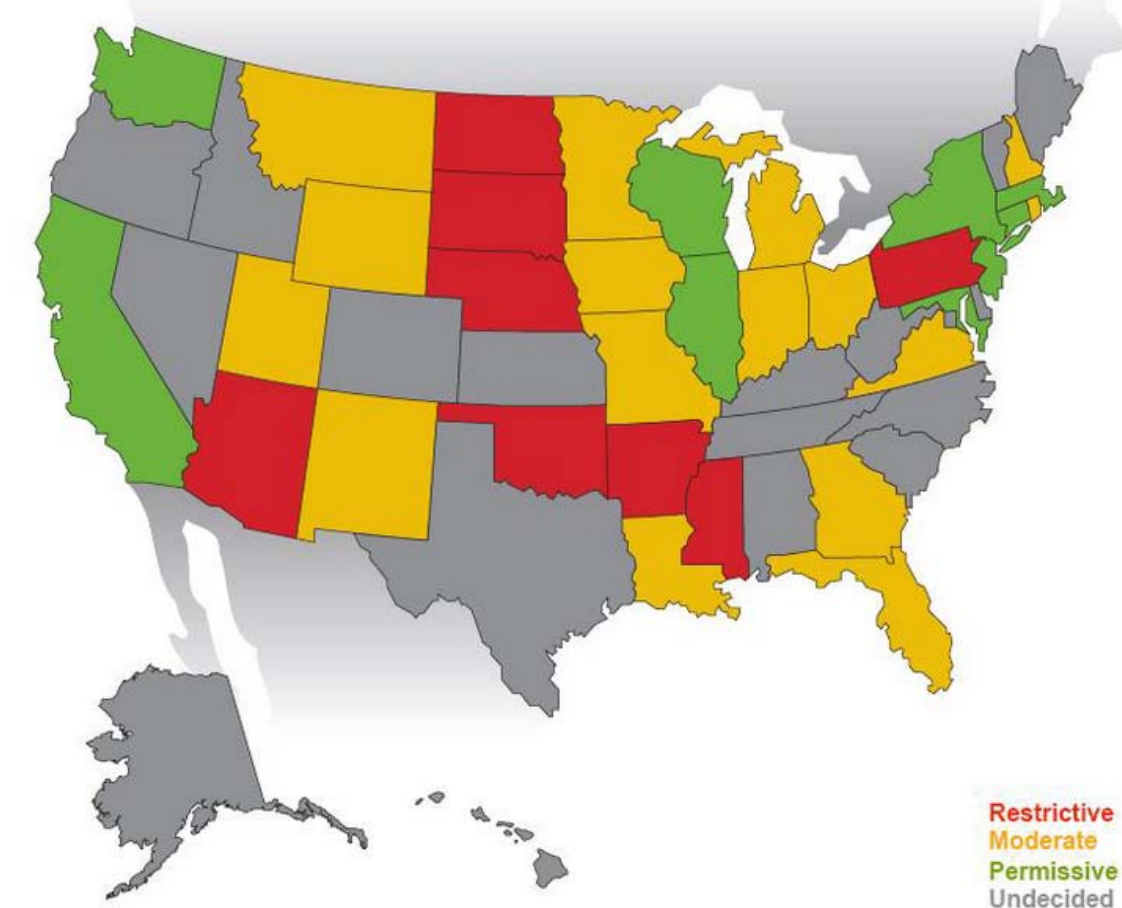
# Is Europe more risk-averse than the rest of the World?





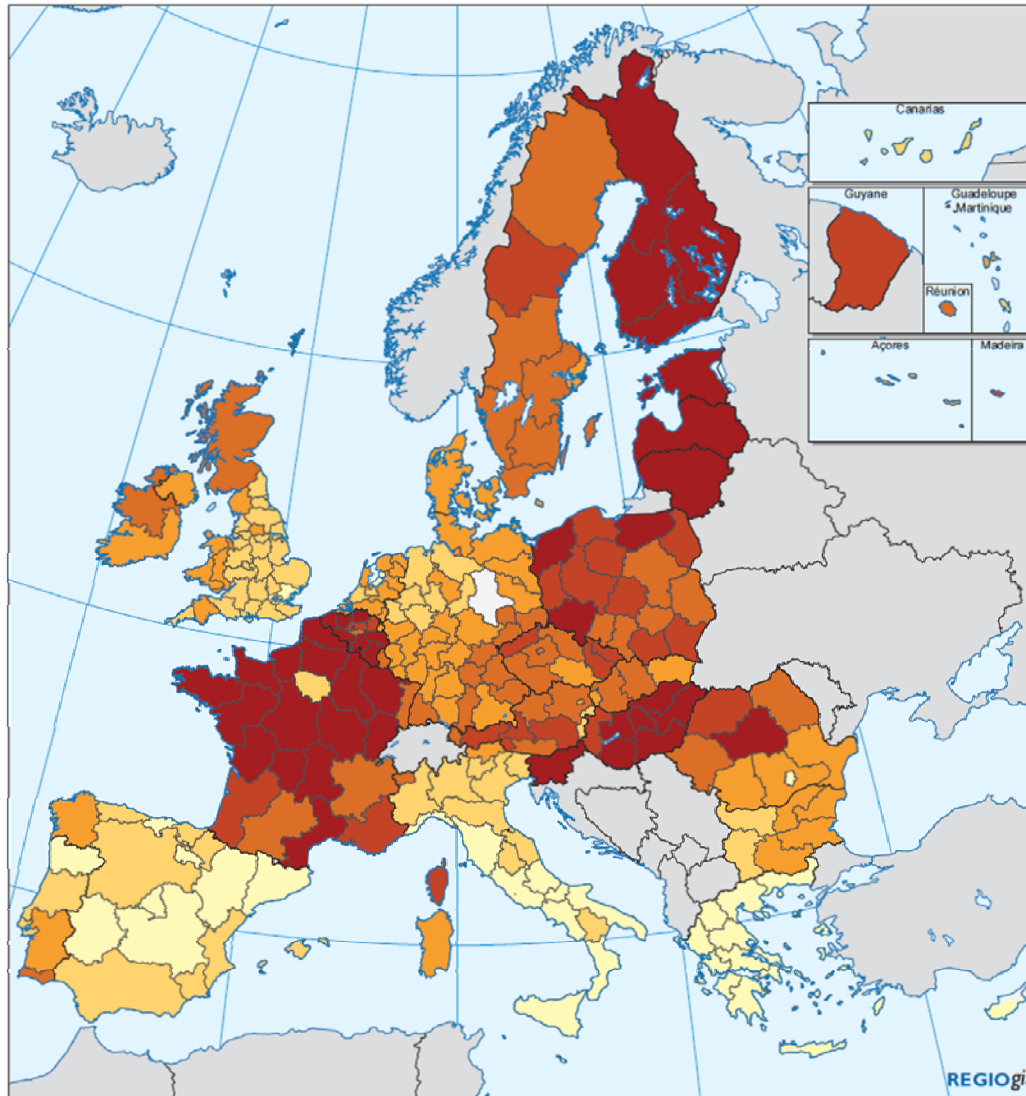
## Not necessarily....

US State policies about stem cell research



Source: [blog.chron.com](http://blog.chron.com)

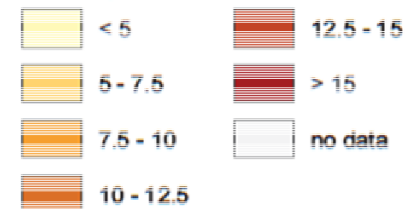




**But people are not always rational...**

Standardised death rate from suicides for population under 65, 2006-2008

Deaths per 100,000 inhabitants

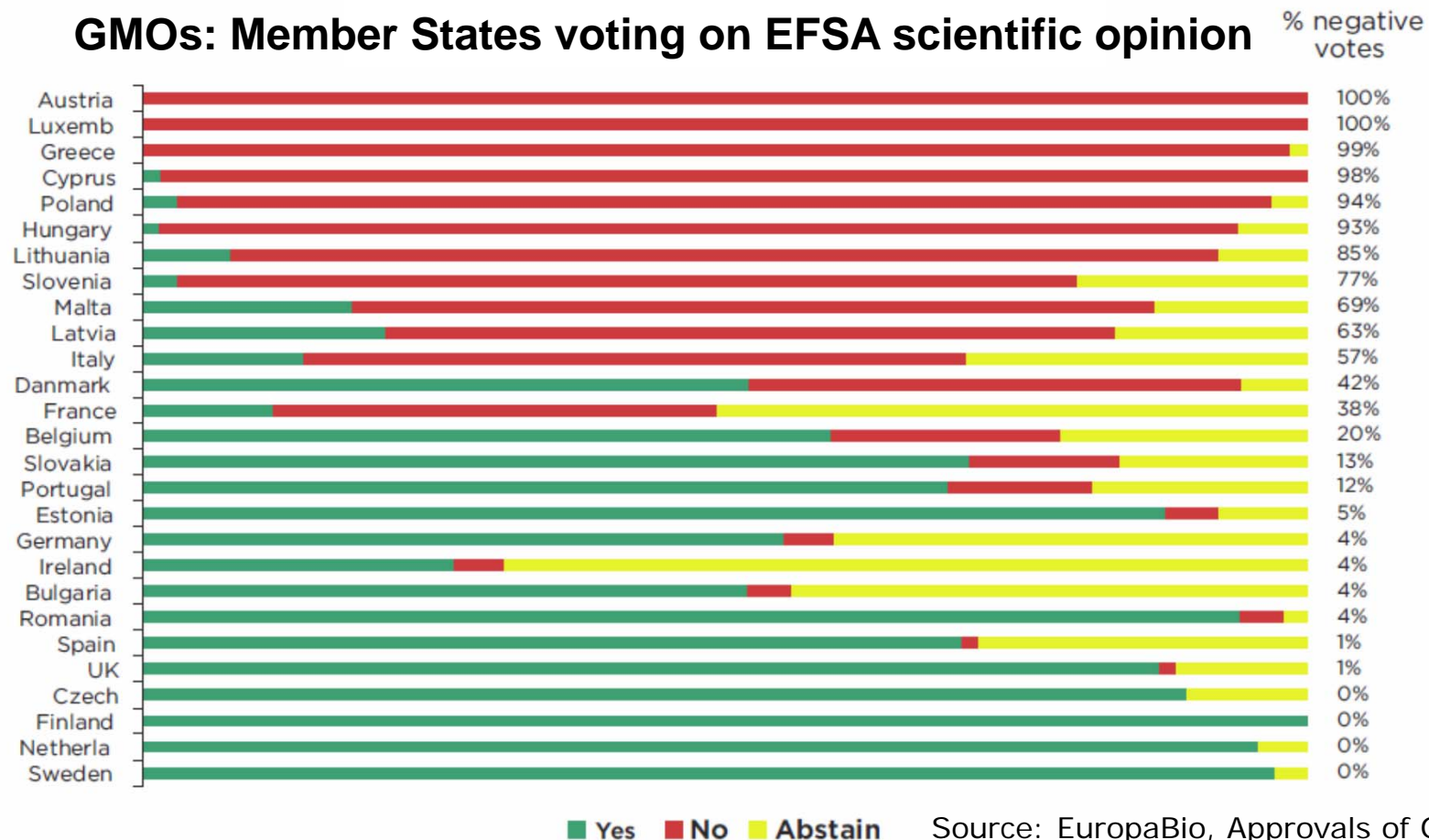


Source: Eurostat, DG REGIO



## ...and politicians do not always take rational decisions

### GMOs: Member States voting on EFSA scientific opinion



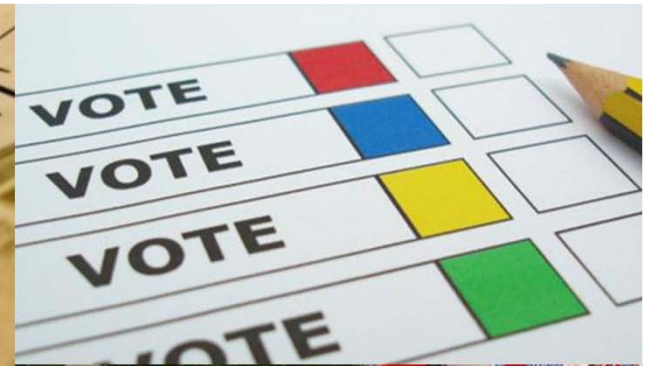
Source: EuropaBio, Approvals of GMOs in the European Union, Oct. 2011



**Politicians are elected and have the right to ignore the evidence – but they should be honest about their motivation**

## Ethics

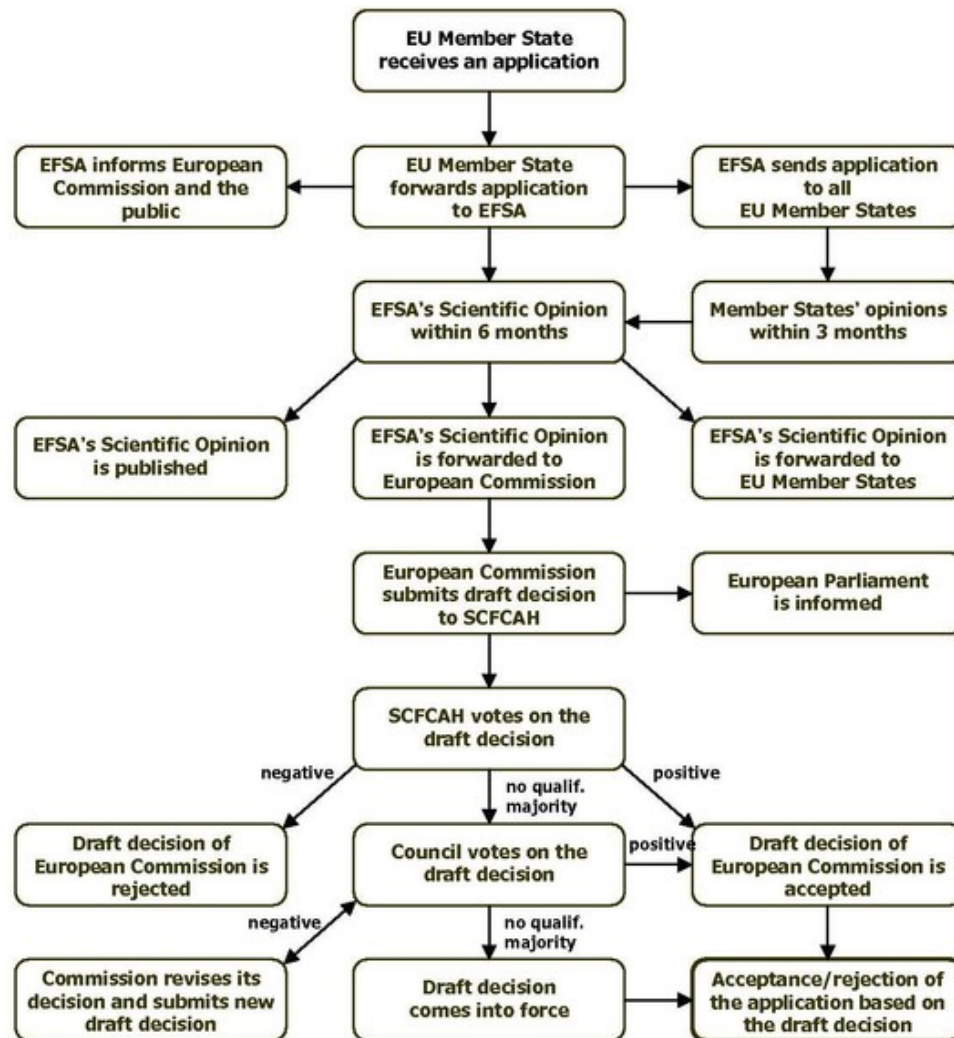
Ethics in business  
**moral principles**  
rules and regula  
of right conduct  
values that gui







## Approval process of GMOs in the EU



If politicians are not honest, then we get processes that look straightforward on paper, but which are lengthy, cumbersome and dishonest in real life.



**If people don't want GMOs  
for whatever reason:**

**It's OK!**

**That's democracy.**

**Scientists must accept that not all political  
choices are based on evidence.**

**Scientists must not accept to be blamed  
if politicians don't like the evidence.**





# How to shape a society that embraces and demands innovation (and the risks associated with it)?







# Build trust!





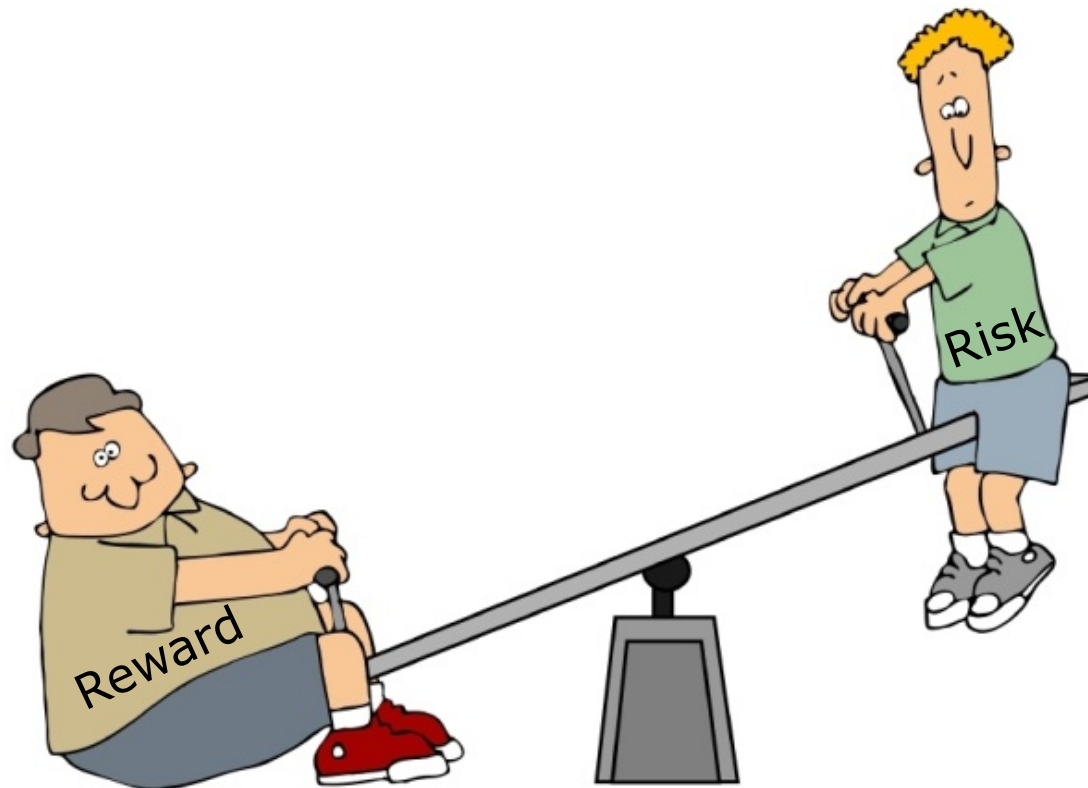
## Be open and transparent (this applies to everybody!)



**WIKIPEDIA**  
*The Free Encyclopedia*



# Put the risks of new technologies in relation to the potential rewards







# Engage in societal dialogue and answer the "What's in it for me?" question



Image credit: picture alliance





**The Precautionary Principle is a tool  
the EU is using when there is not  
sufficient evidence available...**



Image credit: dpa

**...but it is meant to enable innovation,  
not to prevent innovation from happening**





**Populism is based on gut feelings –  
and gut feelings flourish when evidence  
is not properly used or communicated**







# Thank you for your attention!



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