

PRESS RELEASE

Berlin, 28 June 2002

Second joint meeting of the German National Ethics Council and the French Consultative Committee on Ethical Issues held in Berlin on 28-29 June 2002

The German National Ethics Council and the French Consultative Committee on Ethical Issues in the Life Sciences and Health (Comité consultatif national d'éthique pour les sciences de la vie et de la santé, CCNE) came together for their second joint meeting in Berlin on 28 June 2002.

The two bodies had already decided at their first joint meeting, held in Paris on 22 November 2001, to intensify and institutionalize their bilateral collaboration.

On this occasion the proceedings centred for the first time on a common subject: "Biobanks – biomedical, ethical and legal aspects of the storage of substances from the human body and of genetic data".

The issues raised by biobanks are increasingly becoming a matter of public debate, not only in Germany but also in other countries:

The world of scientific research hopes that biobanks will stimulate the development of new diagnostic and therapeutic methods. However, the derivation, storage and use of bodily substances and genetic data have appreciable repercussions on the personal rights of patients and donors, their right to know or not to know, and their psychological and physical integrity. Furthermore, in view of the economic importance of biobanks, can the ethical principle of the non-commercialization of the human body continue to be upheld?

The German National Ethics Council and the French Consultative Committee on Ethical Issues propose to draw up a joint Opinion on this subject.

In the future too, the two bodies will seek to arrive at common positions on matters of central concern in both Germany and France.