



PRESS RELEASE

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European bioethics advisory committees meet in Berlin

In the context of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union, from 23 to 25 May 2007 the National Ethics Council will be welcoming to Berlin the delegates to the Ninth European Conference of National Ethics Committees (COMETH) and the Ninth Forum of National Ethics Councils (NEC), as well as the members of the European Group on Ethics in Sciences and New Technologies (EGE).

Representatives of the ethics committees of Council of Europe member countries are gathering for the Ninth COMETH Conference. Their deliberations will centre on the question of the role of advisory bodies on ethics in democratic societies. A new Chair for COMETH is also due to be elected.

The chairs and secretaries of each of the ethics councils of the EU Member States will meet in the context of the Ninth NEC Forum. They will exchange ideas on the potential for cooperation within the European Research Area, in particular under the conditions of the EU's Seventh Framework Programme for Research. The main topic addressed by the largest block of papers and discussions will be Governance and Ethics. Attention will focus, on the one hand, on the dual role of the scientist as both researcher and entrepreneur, and, on the other, on the effect of differing national legislations on the practice of artificial reproduction.

Joint COMETH–NEC meetings will focus on issues of brain research and the limits of scientific interpretation of human thought and action, as well as the boundary between medical and social problems.

The EGE and the NEC Forum will jointly discuss questions of scientific integrity and scientific publishing.

Bilateral meetings of the National Ethics Council and the EGE will address matters of organ transplantation and the shortage of organs as well as of biobanks.

The conference programme is available online at:

http://www.ethikrat.org/eu2007/Programm_COMETH_NEC_23-25_Mai_07.pdf

The German National Ethics Council

The German National Ethics Council's task is to provide a forum for interdisciplinary discourse between the natural sciences, medicine, theology and philosophy, and the social and legal sciences.

It expresses views on ethical issues relating to new developments in the field of the life sciences and on their consequences for the individual and society.

Members

Kristiane Weber-Hassemer, former Permanent Secretary of Justice in the State of Hesse (Chair)
Prof. Dr. Jens Reich (Deputy Chair)
Prof. Dr. Eberhard Schockenhoff (Deputy Chair)
Dr. Hermann Barth
Prof. Dr. Wolfgang van den Daele
Prof. Dr. Horst Dreier
Prof. Dr. Eve-Marie Engels
Prof. Dr. Detlev Ganten
Prof. Dr. Volker Gerhardt
Prof. Dr. Regine Kollek
Christiane Lohkamp
Prof. Dr. Martin Lohse
Auxiliary Bishop DDr. Anton Losinger
Prof. Dr. Eckhard Nagel
Prof. Dr. Therese Neuer-Miebach
Prof. Dr. Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard
Prof. Dr. Peter Propping
Dr. Peter Radtke
Dr. Jürgen Schmude, former Federal Minister
Prof. Dr. Bettina Schöne-Seifert
Prof. Dr. h. c. Richard Schröder
Prof. Dr. Dres. h. c. Spiros Simitis
Prof. Dr. Jochen Taupitz
PD Dr. Christiane Woopen

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Background information

Community promotion of research and technological development is one of the main planks of European research policy. Measures for the promotion of research are specified in the EU's Framework Programme for Research. Its aim is to strengthen scientific and technological development and international competitiveness in the Member States and to promote research in what the EU considers to be priority fields.

In view of the breakneck pace of advances recorded in the last few decades especially in the life sciences, and of the increasing internationalization of research, it is essential to reach a consensus on ethical standards for research not only in national legislations but also at supranational level.

COMETH

Every one or two years since 1992, representatives of the national ethics committees (or equivalent bodies) of member countries of the Council of Europe have met in the context of the European Conference of National Ethics Committees (COMETH). The purpose of the Conference is to promote cooperation between national ethics committees, to help countries wishing to set up a national ethics committee, and to promote public debate on ethical issues raised by scientific innovations in the fields of biology, medicine and public health.

http://www.coe.int/T/E/Legal_Affairs/Legal_co-operation/Bioethics/COMETH/

The NEC Forum

The Forum of National Ethics Councils (NEC) is an independent, informal platform of national ethics councils established to exchange information and experience on important scientific and ethical issues. The delegates to the NEC Forum, which has met at six-monthly intervals since 2003, are the chairs and secretaries of the national ethics councils of the EU Member States. The Chairs of the EGE and of COMETH also take part in the meetings of the NEC Forum.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/page_en.cfm?id=3161

The EGE

The European Group on Ethics in Sciences and New Technologies (EGE) is an independent, multidisciplinary body that was established in 1997 as the successor organization to the Group of Advisers on the Ethical Implications of Biotechnology (GAEIB, 1991-1997), and advises the European Commission on the ethical aspects of science and new technologies. Its 15 members are appointed by the President of the European Commission.

http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/index_en.htm