

# PRESS RELEASE

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### Ethics Council hears experts concerning coercion in psychiatry

On Thursday, 23 February 2017, the German Ethics Council is conducting a public hearing of experts in Berlin on the topic of coercion in psychiatry. Interested parties can also follow the hearing through live audio streaming and comment online.

The German Ethics Council is currently preparing an Opinion on questions concerning what forms of coercion are identifiable; what roles coercive measures play in fields of practice such as psychiatry, nursing, social work, child and youth services, as well as services for the disabled; to what extent this is ethically and legally problematic; and what need for change exists in practical fields and their legal regulation. Of particular interest for the Ethics Council are measures that are conducted on the grounds of self-protection of the affected person (so-called benevolent coercion).

In its hearing on 23 February, the Ethics Council will concern itself especially with involuntary commitment, liberty-depriving measures, coercive treatments, but also structural coercions in psychiatry and will obtain expert reports from affected persons, relatives and professionals.

Especially in inpatient facilities, measures can be observed that constitute, due to their compulsory nature, a grave intervention into the fundamental rights of the person concerned so that such measures notably require ethical and legal justification. Pertinent here, among others, are the liberty-depriving involuntary commitment of persons in clinics and other inpatient facilities; the involuntary treatment of psychological and somatic illnesses; the sedation through medication during challenging behaviour; as well as measures involving the deprivation of liberty such as the use of bed barriers or restraint straps and structural coercions.

The particular focus of the hearing lies on the challenges that arise in practice from the changed legal situation, but also from current discussions as well as constitutional and human rights factors.

Information about the programme of the hearing can be found at <http://www.ethikrat.org/veranstaltungen/anhoerungen/psychiatrie> (in German).

Due to limited room capacities, the registration list already had to be closed. Nevertheless, those who are interested can follow the hearing through live audio streaming at <https://voicerepublic.com/users/deutscher-ethikrat> (in German) and comment online.

In a further hearing in May, the German Ethics Council will follow up on the other fields of practice mentioned above.

#### German Ethics Council

The German Ethics Council shall pursue the ethical, social, scientific, medical and legal questions and the anticipated consequences for the individual and society that result in connection with research and development, especially in the field of the life sciences and their application to humankind. The German Ethics Council has 26 members who are appointed for a period of four years by the President of the German Bundestag, half on the proposal of the German Bundestag and half on the proposal of the Federal Government.

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