

PRESS RELEASE

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Berlin, 22 February 2018

German Ethics Council and Members of Parliament debate Big Data and Health, Benevolent Coercion, and Interventions in the Human Germline

On Wednesday, 21 February, around 30 members of the German Parliament (Bundestag) accepted an invitation to join the German Ethics Council at its eighth Parliamentary Evening in Berlin. Among those present were Annette Widmann-Mauz (CDU/CSU), Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Health, as well as Ernst Dieter Rossmann (SPD), Chair of the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment.

Hans-Peter Friedrich (CDU/CSU), Vice President of the Bundestag, welcomed the Members of Parliament and the members of the Ethics Council, and expressed his appreciation of the fourteen opinions published by the German Ethics Council over the past ten years. Given the rapid pace of scientific development, Friedrich stated, the Ethics Council fulfils an important advisory role in the political process by developing a structure and argumentative basis for current challenges, which in turn provides important orientation to Members of Parliament when making decisions.

Peter Dabrock, Chair of the Ethics Council, thanked the Vice President for encouraging the Council to continue to offer valuable input to the work of the Parliament. He explained that the Ethics Council pursues numerous different activities to accomplish its mission, i.e. to respect plurality on the basis of human dignity and human rights, to foster an attitude of contemplation, and to provide orientation.

The main theme of the evening was the presentation and discussion of the most recent recommendations and the current work of the Ethics Council. First, Council member Steffen Augsberg presented the most recent Opinion published by the Ethics Council, titled “Big Data and Health – Data Sovereignty as the Shaping of Informational Freedom”. Afterwards, Council member Sigrid Graumann reported on the current stage of the Opinion being prepared on the topic of ‘Benevolent Coercion’. Finally, Council member Alena Buyx gave an overview over the Opinion on interventions in the human germline, work on which is currently in its initial stages. This Opinion expands on the ad hoc recommendation recently published by the Ethics Council, in which the Council calls for a global political debate and international regulation regarding this topic.

Considering the importance of this issue, which concerns all of mankind, many of the Parliamentarians present expressed their conviction that an Opinion published by the Ethics Council would make an important contribution not only to advising members of parliament, but also to the international debate.

The Opinion “Big Data and Health – Data Sovereignty as the Shaping of Informational Freedom” and the ad hoc recommendation on “Germline intervention in the human embryo: German Ethics Council calls for global political debate and international regulation” are available at www.ethikrat.org.

Members

Prof. Dr. theol. Peter Dabrock (Chair)
 Prof. Dr. med. Katrin Amunts (Vice-Chair)
 Prof. Dr. phil. Dr. h. c. Dipl.-Psych. Andreas Kruse (Vice-Chair)
 Prof. Dr. med. Claudia Wiesemann (Vice-Chair)
 Constanze Angerer
 Prof. Dr. iur. Steffen Augsberg
 Prof. Dr. theol. Franz-Josef Bormann
 Prof. Dr. med. Alena M. Buyx
 Prof. Dr. med. Dr. iur. Dr. h. c. Dagmar Coester-Waltjen
 Dr. med. Christiane Fischer
 Prof. em. Dr. phil. habil. Dr. phil. h. c. lic. phil. Carl Friedrich Gethmann
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Dr. phil. Sigrid Graumann
 Bishop Prof. Dr. theol. Martin Hein
 Prof. Dr. med. Wolfram Henn
 Prof. Dr. iur. Wolfram Höfling
 Prof. Dr. (TR) Dr. phil. et med. habil. İlhan İlkilic
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Ursula Klingmüller
 Stephan Kruijff
 Prof. Dr. phil. Adelheid Kuhlmeier
 Prof. Dr. med. Leo Latasch
 Prof. Dr. iur. Dr. h. c. Volker Lipp
 Prof. Dr. theol. Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl
 Prof. em. Dr. iur. Reinhard Merkel
 Prof. Dr. phil. Gabriele Meyer
 Prof. Dr. med. Elisabeth Steinhagen-Thiessen
 Dr. phil. Petra Thorn

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