

PRESS RELEASE 02/2026

Public hearing: Novel neurotechnologies – ethics, law and society

Berlin, 16 March 2026

In the workplace, during leisure time, in education or wellness: Neurotechnology could soon become part of our everyday lives. What ethical, legal and social challenges does this pose? In preparation for its Opinion, the German Ethics Council will be questioning experts in a public hearing on 19 March.

“Smart glasses, EEG headsets and AI headphones represent only the beginning,” Aldo Faisal, computer scientist and spokesperson for the working group on neurotechnology at the German Ethics Council, states. “Neurotechnology is becoming increasingly useful as a consumer technology thanks to AI and the convergence of a huge variety of data. But what does that mean for individuals and for society as a whole? We need to take a closer look and, beyond our enthusiasm for and concerns about technology, address the ethical considerations that arise as result.”

“With consumer technologies that get so close to the way we think and act, we need to ask ourselves whether individual consent to the use of these technologies is sufficient, or whether we as a society need additional guidelines,” Helmut Frister, Chair of the German Ethics Council and legal scholar, adds. “This is also something we want to discuss in our Opinion and consult our experts on.”

At the hearing, the German Ethics Council will talk to seven experts about the application scenarios that are expected to carry the greatest ethical, legal and social risks, what action they believe is needed and what solutions they propose. Topics such as freedom of thought, mental self-determination, enhancement and the protection of mental data will be discussed. The focus will be on the following questions:

- What challenges arise when neurotechnologies capture or influence the emotions, attention or thoughts of large numbers of people?
- Who bears responsibility when neurotechnologies influence brain processes and human actions in the context of advancing human-machine interfaces – possibly without our awareness?
- How can individuals and their perception of themselves change through the use of neurotechnologies?
- What new dependencies and constraints could arise if neurotechnologies are widely used, e.g. at work, in education or in other everyday situations?
- What are the social risks arising from the major involvement of large tech companies in current neurotechnology developments?
- How could social interaction change if, as a result of ubiquitous neurotechnologies, notions of normality change, inequalities increase or values shift?

Members

Prof. Dr. iur. Helmut Frister (Chair)
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Susanne Schreiber (Vice-Chair)
 Prof. Dr. phil. Judith Simon (Vice-Chair)
 Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Eva Winkler (Vice-Chair)

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Jutta Allmendinger
 Prof. Dr. phil. Cornelia Betsch
 Prof. Dr. iur. Hans-Georg Dederer
 Dr. rer. nat. Uta Eser
 Prof. Dr. Aldo Faisal
 Military Bishop Dr. theol. Bernhard Felmberg
 Prof. Dr. rer. pol. Nils Goldschmidt
 Prof. Dr. theol. Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt
 Prof. Dr. med. Winfried Hardinghaus
 Dr. phil. Ute Kalender
 Hedy Kerek-Bodden
 Prof. Dr. phil. Armin Nassehi
 Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Annette Riedel
 Prof. Dr. iur. Dr. phil. Frauke Rostalski
 Prof. Dr. rer. soc. Dr. theol. Jochen Sautermeister
 Prof. Dr. theol. Kerstin Schlögl-Flierl
 Dr. med. Dr. h. c. Josef Schuster
 Prof. Dr. phil. Mark Schweda
 Prof. Dr. iur. Gregor Thüsing
 Prof. Dr. Achim Wambach

Press Contact

Katrin Arnholz
 Phone: +49/30/20370-246
 Email: presse@ethikrat.org

Office

Jägerstraße 22/23
 D-10117 Berlin
 Phone: +49/30/20370-242
 Fax: +49/30/20370-252
 Email: kontakt@ethikrat.org
 Website: www.ethikrat.org

The hearing is open to the public and will be streamed at www.ethikrat.org/live. Registration is not required. The hearing will be held predominantly in German, with some parts held in English with an optional simultaneous translation into German.

Public hearing

Novel neurotechnologies – ethics, law and society

When: 19 March 2026 from 1:00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Where: www.ethikrat.org/live

The **programme** and an **event brochure** including information about the **speakers** (in German only) can be found at www.ethikrat.org/veranstaltungen/anhoeerungen/neue-neurotechnologien-ethik-recht-und-gesellschaft.