



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

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1993-2013 : 20 years of bioethics at UNESCO

Created in the 1970s, with the objective of developing a reflection on the social responsibility of scientists at a time when the world was witnessing extremely rapid development in science and technology, bioethics is more than a discipline involving the sole responsibility of scientists.

It is a democratic challenge, which must be shared by all members of a society, from the expert to the layman, because the resolution of ethical issues raised by scientific advances determines the way we live together. Societies' choices affect our future and the future of coming generations.

MAKE BIOETHICS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

In a world undergoing fundamental changes, the mission of the «critical conscience» of the United Nations bestowed on UNESCO at its inception, is becoming more important than ever. As a leader of the United Nations in the areas of ethics and bioethics since the 1970s, UNESCO has, in this respect, unrivaled and widely recognized expertise.

Since 1993 and the creation of its Bioethics programme, the Organization has helped identify and explore emerging ethical challenges by acting as a laboratory of multidisciplinary, multicultural and pluralist ideas on the ethics of science and technology, not only through the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC), but also through coordinating the UN Inter-agency Committee on

Bioethics which catalyzes and enhances international cooperation in this field.

Having been the cradle where international legal instruments in bioethics have been developed and adopted, UNESCO seeks to disseminate these standards and to assist Member States to transpose them into national law through, in particular:

- > The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (1997, approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1998)
- > International Declaration on Human Genetic Data (2003)
- > The Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005)

By supporting the development and strengthening of capacities of its Member States, as well as the establishment and functioning of their national bioethics infrastructure, UNESCO created in 2004 and 2005, two core programmes that have already proved their worth,

STATUTORY BODIES

The International Bioethics Committee (IBC):

The International Bioethics Committee (IBC) was created in 1993. It is a permanent committee of 36 independent experts appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO, for a term of four years on the basis of equitable geographical representation. It promotes reflection on the ethical and legal issues raised by research in the life sciences and their applications, and it encourages the exchange of ideas and information in order to ensure respect for human dignity and freedom.

The Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC):

Created in 1998, the IGBC is comprised of 36 Member States, elected by the General Conference of UNESCO, whose representatives meet at least once every two years to examine the advice and recommendations of the IBC. It informs the IBC of its opinions and submits these opinions, along with proposals for follow up to the IBC's work, to the Director-General of UNESCO for transmission to Member States, the Executive Board and the General Conference.

particularly in developing countries and most especially in sub-Saharan Africa:

- > Assisting Bioethics Committees' programme
- > Ethics Education programme

UNESCO also launched, in 2005, the Global Ethics Observatory (GEObs), which provides free access to six databases, in six languages, on experts, institutions, education programmes, legislation and principles, codes of conduct and resources in bioethics and applied ethics in science and technology worldwide.

In the field of bioethics, the Organization benefits from an effective network of partners, ranging from specialists in bioethics to students of the Associated Schools of UNESCO, and through the network of UNESCO Chairs, established in universities around the world and the spheres of political decision-making (governments, regional organizations, local legislators and members of the International Union of Parliamentarians, etc.).

Science and technology need to be used to eradicate poverty and promote health and the protection of the environment; otherwise, sustainable development will never be achieved.

For UNESCO, Bioethics Must Become More Than Ever Everyone's Business

Bioethics is indeed a shared and considered examination of the ethical issues raised by the life sciences, technologies and their applications, and medicine and health policy. It is a reflection based on a multidisciplinary and pluralistic dialogue that takes into account all areas affected by scientific developments which affect humans, including social, legal and environmental dimensions.

Thus, the bioethics debates are not, and should certainly not be limited to

SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEES

In trying to make Bioethics everyone's business, UNESCO supported the establishment and strengthening of national bioethics committees, essential platforms for the implementation of international legal instruments.

On 1 January 2013, 17 countries had established a bioethics national committee with the support of UNESCO:

Armenia (2007); **Guinea** (2007);
Azerbaijan (2000); Jamaica (2009)
Belarus (2006); **Kenya** (2009);
Chad (2011); **Malawi** (2011);
Dominican Republic (2012); **Malaysia** (2010);
Ivory Coast (2002); **Oman** (2011);
El Salvador (2009); **Russian Federation**
Gabon (2008); (2007); and
Ghana (2009); **Togo** (2007).

At the same date, many other countries had approached UNESCO to create similar structures, including **Argentina; Bolivia; Cape Verde; Chile; Comoros; Ecuador; Namibia; Nigeria; Paraguay; Tanzania; Trinidad and Tobago; Uganda; Uruguay; and Venezuela.**

TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF THE BIOETHICS COMMITTEES IN THE FIELD

UNESCO's bioethics capacity building initiative, in the framework of its Assisting Bioethics Committees (ABC) programme, has guided countries in the development of their National Bioethics Committees (NBC) over a three year period, providing them with three training sessions and various of resources.

Provided by UNESCO staff and the international expert partners of the Organization, the content of the training courses is based on a series of guidebooks that UNESCO has produced specifically for this aim - and also on the UNESCO Bioethics Core Curriculum, which is primarily designed around internationally agreed ethics and human rights standards, while encouraging its adaptation to local specificities.

Since the implementation of the ABC programme, training courses have been conducted in 10 countries:

Kenya (2009, 2010 and 2011); **Ghana** (2009 and 2012); **El Salvador** (2010 and 2012);
Côte d'Ivoire (2009, 2011 and 2012); **Guinea** (2009 and 2012); **Malawi** (2012) and
Gabon (2009 and 2012); **Jamaica** (2009, 2012 and 2013); **Chad** (2012).
Togo (2009 and 2012);

Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire and Jamaica were thus the first countries to have completed the cycle of three courses of the ABC programme..

11 Chairs UNESCO in Bioethics

By 1 January 2013, 11 UNESCO Chairs in Bioethics had been established in the following countries:

Argentina (Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires, 1994)
Brazil (University of Brasilia, 2005)
Côte d'Ivoire (University of Bouaké, 2010)
Israel (Haifa University, 2001)
Italy (Università Europea di Roma, 2009)
Roma (Egerton University, 1998)
Mexico (University of Monterrey, 2011)
Portugal (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2009)
Slovakia (University of Presov, 2010)
Spain (University of Barcelona, 2007)
Sudan (Khartoum University, 2010)

specialists. In any case, they are not limited to research. On the contrary, human cloning, access to medicines and medical care facilities, organ trafficking, bio- and nanotechnology, genetically modified organisms (GMO), bio-banks and the protection of the integrity of the treated participants are all «bioethics» subjects.

Faced with a multidimensional crisis that threatens to further increase the gap between rich and poor - in a context where the pursuit of profit risks being accompanied by the abuse of human dignity, the principles of universal human rights must be respected in the scientific and technological development.

Science and technology need to be used to eradicate poverty and promote health and the protection of the environment; otherwise, sustainable development will never be achieved. The convergence of technologies is opening new ethical, social and legal challenges for both developing and developed countries. Responsible scientific and technological innovation makes possible sustainability, ethics and social desirability. Furthermore, a new way of global governance on issues such as the ethics of science and technology must be promoted.

The establishment and sharing of global bioethics norms, rules and practices is essential so that every citizen of the world can not only take stock of the impact of

scientific advances on his life and that of his community, but also so that every citizen can be involved in the development of life sciences and health policy and receive its benefits.

Scientific research and the advances it brings can be a key driver of development. However, if the ethical perspective is not taken into account at the same time as the epistemological and methodological considerations, it may not only lead to abuses of human rights, but also to inequality in economic and social development between and within countries.

The development of national infrastructures in bioethics, by stimulating the establishment of national bioethics committees and promoting awareness, public debate and bioethics education for all stakeholders - such as policy makers, health professionals, scientists, journalists, lawyers, etc. is a way to promote systematic decision-making which is multidisciplinary and pluralist at all levels.

This process - from bottom to top and from top to bottom - can only contribute to a greater respect for human rights by facilitating, in the same way, the participation of citizens in decisions that affect them. For UNESCO, reflection on bioethical issues is as important for scientific development as it is for economic, social and democratic development.

SPECIALIZED NETWORKS IN BIOETHICS

In addition to the network of UNESCO Chairs in Bioethics coordinated by the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics at the University of Haifa (Israel) since 2011, UNESCO's partners include many networks of bioethics in all regions of the world. .

Thus, on 1 January 2013, no less than eight regional networks of bioethics had been created at the initiative or with the support of UNESCO:

- > The network of specialist and academics from Latin America REDBIOETICA (2003)
- > The Regional documentation and information center in the Medical Faculty of the University of Vilnius, Lithuania (2004)
- > The Regional documentation and information center in Egerton University, Kenya (2007)
- > The Regional Network of National Bioethics Committees of the Commonwealth of Independent States (2008)
- > The Regional Documentation and Information Centre for Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology in the Academy of Scientific Research and Technologies in Cairo (2010)
- > UNESCO Regional Network of National Bioethics Committees in Latin America, Dominican Republic (2011)
- > Bioethics Network on Women's Issues in the Arab Region, Egypt (2011)
- > UNESCO Asia-Pacific School of Ethics Network (2012)

TRAINING FOR TEACHERS OF ETHICS

Training courses for teachers of ethics are a key component of the UNESCO programme for ethics education to strengthen the capacity of countries in this field.

Provided by a team of local and international experts with flawless experience in ethics education, these courses are aimed at young teachers who have already started their careers or are just about to.

The courses introduce participants to the use of educational resources to ethics; teach them the main methods and teaching methodologies of the discipline; and evaluate and comment on their teaching skills.

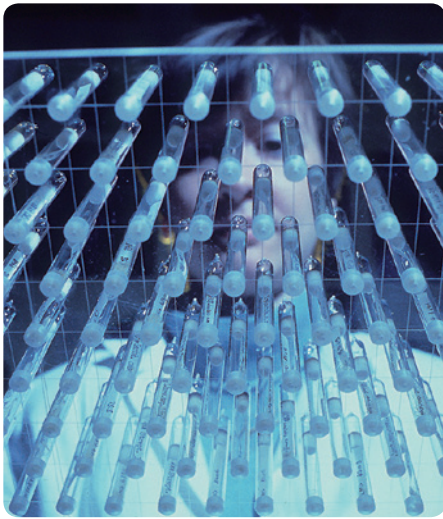
Since the implementation of this training programme, courses have been offered in 10 Member States of UNESCO:

Romania (Bucharest, 2006);
Kenya (Egerton, 2007);
Slovakia (Bratislava, 2007);
Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, 2007);
Belarus (Minsk, 2008);

Croatia (Dubrovnik, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013);
Serbia (Belgrade, 2011); Azerbaijan (Baku, 2012);
Lithuania (Vilnius, 2012); and
Namibia (Windhoek, 2012).



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GEObS : A GLOBAL ETHICS OBSERVATORY ON THE INTERNET



Launched by UNESCO at the end of 2005, GEObS offers free access to six databases on experts, institutions, in six languages (English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, French and Russian).

The platform is intended to facilitate the creation of ethics committees, the drafting of public policies and the development of ethics teaching programmes.

Two regional documentation centres which have been established, in Lithuania (2004) and Kenya (2007) are particularly related to GEObS.

By 1 January 2013, GEObS had collected information on:

- > 1,510 experts
- > 497 institutions
- > 235 education programs
- > 738 legal or regulatory instruments
- > 151 codes of conduct
- > 416 resources in bioethics and applied ethics in science and technologies

To consult GEObS :

<http://www.unesco.org/shs/ethics/geobs>

KEY PUBLICATIONS

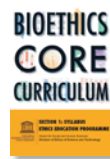


A Collection of Guides for Bioethics Committees

Entitled «Establishing Bioethics Committees», «Bioethics Committees at Work: Procedures and Policies» and «Educating

Bioethics Committees», three manuals for governments, scientists, lawyers and health professionals have been published by UNESCO to support the creation and development of national bioethics committees. Available in English, French, Chinese, and Spanish or, for some, Arabic and Turkish, these guides are freely downloadable from the website of UNESCO.

Printed versions can be requested from the team in charge of bioethics.



Bioethics Core Curriculum

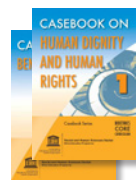
Published by UNESCO in October 2008, under its Global Ethics Education Programme, the Bioethics Core Curriculum is already applied in twenty universities around the world.

It is well integrated in the scientific fields of the universities of Bouake (**Côte d'Ivoire**) and Egerton (**Kenya**). It is also available at the University of Litoral and the National University of Córdoba (**Argentina**); the Medical University of Yerevan (**Armenia**); the State University of Baku (**Azerbaijan**); the International Sakharov ecological University (**Belarus**); the University of São Paulo (**Brazil**); the Loyola College and the Saveetha University (**India**); the Faculty of Medicine of Indonesia; the Hebrew University/Jerusalem and Hadassa University of Haifa (**Israel**); the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (**Japan**); the Academy of Medicine of Kyrgyzstan; the University Sains Malaysia (**Malaysia**); the Lomonosov Moscow State University and the Kazan State Medical University (**Russia**); and the University of the Republic (**Uruguay**).

In 2013, memoranda of understanding to adapt courses in three additional universities in **Argentina** and one in **Costa Rica** are being signed.

Available in English, French, Arabic and Russian, the Bioethics Core Curriculum consists of two parts: one provides the content and objectives of each module of the program, syllabus and guide for teachers; the other is study material available for each module.

It can be downloaded from the website of UNESCO.



Casebook series

With the support of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics at the University of Haifa, a series of casebooks on bioethics was launched by UNESCO in 2011. Intended to be used alone or in addition to the Bioethics Core

Curriculum, these collections deal with ethical dilemmas in the health sector and have precedence in some countries. The first volume was on human dignity and human rights (English and French), while the second was on the benefits and the harmful effects of scientific and medical advances (in English).

They are freely downloadable from UNESCO's website.



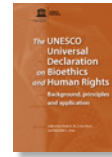
Bioethics and Journalism

Available in English and Russian on UNESCO's

website, this book, entitled Bioethics and Journalism, emphasizes the role of the media in the emergence and evolution of bioethics by highlighting the responsibility of journalists in popularizing key issues related to bioethics.

To help train media actors, UNESCO has also created an online training programme which can be accessed at:

<http://lms.iite.unesco.org/?lang=en>



History, principles and Application of a Declaration

Published by UNESCO in English and French, this book explains the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, giving a new impetus to the dissemination of this document, which is intended to be a safeguard against the irrational use of advances in science.

UNESCO: The Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights

History, principles and application

26 €

370 pp. UNESCO Publishing, 2009

ISBN 978-92-3-104088-7

To order this book:

<http://publishing.unesco.org>



IBC reports

To promote the dissemination and application of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005), the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) is engaged in the exploration of

the ethical implications of many of the principles contained in this Declaration.

The outcome of broad consultations, each of these reports is published on UNESCO's website, to be shared with as many people as possible.

JACOB: a Conference to Strengthen Cooperation in Bioethics

Jointly organizing, for the first time, a conference on National Infrastructures for Bioethics, UNESCO and the European Commission facilitated the sharing of experiences to help boost North-South and South-South cooperation in this field. Over 100 experts from all over the world participated.

The conference report is available in English on UNESCO's website.

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