

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION-UNESCO CONFERENCE:
JOINT ACTION FOR CAPACITY-BUILDING IN BIOETHICS**

Mexico City, Mexico, 26-28 November 2009

**Conclusions in order to promote international cooperation
for knowledge-sharing and mutual capacity-building
among national bioethics committees**

The participants in the UNESCO – European Commission Conference: Joint Action for Capacity-Building in Bioethics (JACOB), held on 26 to 28 November 2009 in Mexico City, Mexico,

Noting that in accordance to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, adopted by acclamation on 19 October 2005 by the 33rd session of the General Conference of UNESCO, independent, multidisciplinary and pluralist ethics committees are indispensable at the appropriate level for shaping and guiding bioethics discourse and practices,

Acknowledging the contribution made by the existing national bioethics bodies to the development of bioethics in their respective countries, and the accumulation of significant experience in shaping related debates and policies,

Considering the growing number of countries having recently established, or being in the process of establishing bioethics committees at the national level, and the expressed need for capacity-building for these committees,

Welcoming the commitment of UNESCO, the European Commission, WHO, and other international and regional organizations to provide assistance to countries in establishing and developing their national bioethics infrastructures for meaningful and effective engagement in ethics-related policy issues,

Recognizing the mutual benefits for the national bioethics committees in sharing the experiences and knowledge, especially for the recently established and planned committees,

Acknowledging the proliferation and strengthening of regional bioethics networks, such as the Latin American and Caribbean Bioethics Network (Redbioética), the Forum of National Ethics Councils of the European Commission (NEC Forum), as well as the West African Bioethics Forum and other regional networks being currently in progress,

Emphasizing the value of experience and knowledge exchange at the regional level regarding issues and challenges shared by bioethics committees from the same region,

Aware of the challenges of globalization of biomedical research and healthcare, particularly for developing countries, and the need for appropriate policy responses on the basis of international solidarity and global justice,

Hereby conclude that we find it necessary to:

- Encourage countries to establish independent, multidisciplinary and pluralist bioethics committees at the national level and to empower them for an effective engagement in ethics debates arising from inequalities in the access to health care, new scientific advances, new biotechnologies, and the related government policies and regulations;
- Support bilateral and multilateral initiatives designed to raise the capacity of the newly established committees, including professional exchanges between the secretariats of experienced and newly established committees;
- Use and promote the available resources, such as the databases of the UNESCO Global Ethics Observatory (GEObs), as platforms of exchange of knowledge and information regarding the existing ethics institutions, as well as ethics teaching programmes, ethics related legislation and guidelines, codes of conduct and ethics resources;
- Promote regional bioethics networks that actively facilitate exchange of knowledge and best practices concerning bioethical issues of common concern;
- Explore ways to bring together existing bioethics networks to foster exchange of knowledge and ideas about the emerging bioethics trends and challenges in various regions.
- Invite the European Commission and UNESCO to continue to collaborate to further promote these activities.