

Networking

International networking

Newly established committees will be connected with existing networks and activities in order to share experiences and enhance competencies

- Global Summit of National Bioethics Committees. The last Summit has taken place 1-2 September 2008 in Paris, France, organized by the CCNE; the next Summit will be organized in 2010 in Singapore.
- The European Commission will fund an international conference on capacity building in developing countries and emerging economies in Spring 2009. The aim of this meeting is to build the capacity of newly established National Bioethics Committees to effectively carry out their ethical mandates through networking, training and experience-sharing. The conference will have three major themes:
 - o Working Methods of National Bioethics Committees – practical advice and guidance on using bioethics committees as platforms for deliberations and policy recommendations.
 - o Emerging Bioethics Issues: local perspectives – series of presentations and discussions on bioethics topics relevant in different regions of the globe, with a focus on Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean
 - o Social Responsibility and Health: the role of NBCs – a thematic discussion on the role that the National Bioethics Committees can play in the promotion of the Social Responsibility and Health in their respective countries

Partnerships

Recently established national bioethics committees will be fragile in the first phase of their existence. They have to acquire appropriate working methods and they have to create a ‘corporate spirit’ among the membership. They also have to obtain status and authority within the country as the proper body for (bio)ethical reflection and advice. The new committee will therefore benefit from the opportunity to share information and experiences with a more experienced national bioethics committee in another Member State.

The proposal is to create partnerships (“jumelage”) between the new committee and a more experienced committee elsewhere that is willing to support the committee with advice and recommendations, and possibly documentation and materials.

Practical partnership options

Practical possibilities for partnership between a newly established committee and an experienced one include:

- Exchange of documentation (see Annex 3): newly created committees often lack documentation and bioethics literature as well as examples of the work (reports, recommendations, policy statements, publications) of other committees.
- Consultation service: members of experienced committees can help newly established committees to optimize their functioning and assess their needs in terms of IT, personnel, training; they can help addressing these needs. Site visits of the partner committees to assess the needs of the new committee may be necessary.
- Internships for secretaries (see Annex 5): a major feature of the training of newly established committee members is the ability for them to take an internship in an experienced committee and experience first-hand the daily routine of a functioning committee. The internship in itself is a significant resource but support may be needed for the travel as well as the accommodation.
- Support bioethics education for committee members (see annex 4): another training need for the secretaries of newly established committees can be formal bioethics education in a Master programme. Experienced committees can help with fellowships, accommodation, personal coaching, identification of master programmes and fellowships.
- Joint activities; the partner committees may initiate common activities such as conferences or publications.