

Training in Working Methods

Background

This training is the first activity in the Assisting Bioethics Committees (ABC) project as soon as the national (bio)ethics committee has been established. Each committee has to develop its working methods and procedures, which will imply further specifications and applications of its mandate as formulated in its terms of reference. However, practical experiences and best practices of committees that are operational for a much longer time can be shared and discussed, so that the recently established committees can learn from the successes and failures of other committees.

Objectives

- ❖ clarify the role and mission of the committee
- ❖ develop clear working methods
- ❖ draft rules of procedure
- ❖ develop policy for record management
- ❖ develop policies for public information
- ❖ develop policies for networking

Expert teams

- ❖ French speaking team (2 experts plus Dir/EST)
- ❖ English speaking team (2 experts plus Dir/EST)

Programme

Day 1: Morning: Visions and perspectives

Welcome and introduction

- ❖ Presentation: The ABC project of UNESCO: how to make the committee sustainable?

Exercise 1: The committee (discussion and work in small groups)

Reflection on the goals and role of the committee

- ❖ What is the mission of the committee? Can a mission statement be formulated?
- ❖ What are the opportunities and challenges of the committee?

Presentation: The chairperson

- ❖ What is the role of the chairperson?

Presentation: The secretariat

- ❖ What is the role of the secretary?

Day 1: Afternoon: Working methods

Meetings of the committee

- ❖ how is the committee going to deliberate
 - rules of procedure
 - examples: International Bioethics Committee
 - decisions by consensus or voting
- ❖ policy for agenda setting
 - what kind of issues will be discussed
 - who is authorized to bring such issues
 - how are they prepared
- ❖ open meetings
 - criteria for presence of non-members
 - criteria for participation of non-members
- ❖ publication of decisions
- ❖ provide written justifications of decisions

Day 2: Morning: Working methods - continued

Exercise 2: Rules of procedure (work in small groups)

- ❖ draft rules of procedure
- ❖ discussion of drafts

Day 2, afternoon Operational procedures

Where and how to get information for the committee

Records of meetings

- ❖ custody of records and documentation
- ❖ who has access to the records
- ❖ under what circumstances
- ❖ how is confidentiality and privacy of members guaranteed
- ❖ how long are records retained in the files

Financial support and annual budget

Day 3, morning: Effective membership

What is the role of members

Procedures for recruitment of committee members

- ❖ Who has selected and appointed committee members
- ❖ criteria for membership
- ❖ are members representing various constituencies
 - what does representation mean?
 - how are we going to do that?
- ❖ what is the range of specialties and expertise in the committee
- ❖ can members be removed

Education of members

Day 3, afternoon: Outreach of the committee

Relationship to the media

- ❖ how will the public and the media be informed
- ❖ public events

Relationship with other bodies

- ❖ other ethics committees in the country
- ❖ bioethics committees in other countries
- ❖ academic institutions
- ❖ governmental bodies

Independency of the committee

Summary and conclusion