



**UNESCO Moscow Office**

for Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia,  
Republic of Moldova, and Russian Federation

**National Commission of the Republic of Belarus for  
UNESCO**

**Ethics Committees Forum of the CIS Member States**

**Ministry of Health Care of the Republic of Belarus**



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**FINAL DOCUMENT**

**International Seminar**

**«National Committees and Activity of Local (Regional) Bioethics Committees in Central and Eastern Europe»**

*6-7 June 2006 – Minsk, Belarus*

International development trends in modern health care, biomedical technologies, and scientific research are intrinsically tied with control over maintaining moral norms and human rights. Currently, the civilised world exercises this control through institutionally organised social technologies with the system of standardised moral values ensuring human rights and freedoms, including the areas of biology and medicine. The requirement to safeguard human rights against negative consequences of modern biomedical technologies is met in the currently being developed ethics codes, statutes, and standards by enhancing the area of responsibility of medical and biology professionals, and expanding the sphere of their social responsibilities—both on personal and legal levels. All these control and support mechanisms are activated by creating new institutions (i.e. Ethics and Bioethics Committees) within international health care system. One of their functions is control over basic principles of biomedical ethics in the course of treatment and biomedical research.

Based on the above, the establishment of the National Bioethics Committee (NBEC) in the Republic of Belarus follows the universal trend. The Committee is aimed at consulting, decision-making, and evaluation of ethical, legal, and social issues related to protecting human rights and dignity in the spheres of biology and clinical medicine, conducting independent ethics tests of biomedical and other types of research involving humans and animals, and bioethical education of specialists and community. Its success is dependent on regional collaboration, effective coordination of activities, support of numerous parties involved, international sharing of knowledge, methods, and developments in the areas of rationalising and discussing ethical issues related to scientific progress and new technological developments.

Given the importance of these issues, a seminar “National Committees and Activity of Local (Regional) Bioethics Committees in Central and Eastern

Europe” was held in Minsk. It was organised with the participation of, *inter alia*, UNESCO Moscow Office, National Commission of the Republic of Belarus for UNESCO, Ethics Committees Forum of the CIS Member States (ECFCIS), Good Clinical Practice Alliance, and Ministry of Health Care of the Republic of Belarus.

Seminar participants,

- representing the CIS member states and Baltic countries (Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine), UNESCO Moscow Office, National Commission of the Republic of Belarus for UNESCO, ECFCIS, Ministry of Health Care of the Republic of Belarus, and local (regional) bioethics committees of the Republic of Belarus,
- having met with the aim of discussing the framework of the NBEC of the Republic of Belarus and development of local (regional) ethics committees at clinical and science-and-research health care institutions of the Republic of Belarus,
- agreeing that following universal ethics norms and principles is the necessary prerequisite for protecting human rights and dignity under the conditions of expanding scope of applying scientific-and-technical achievements in various spheres of human and society life,
- considering enhanced potential of national ethics bodies to be a necessary condition of maintaining standards aimed at protecting human rights and dignity in the sphere of biomedicine,
- being guided by provisions of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (UNESCO), the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (UNESCO), the International Declaration on Human Genetic Data (UNESCO), and other applicable international and national documents,
- recognising and taking into consideration the existing accumulated experience of the Central and Eastern Europe states and Bioethics Committees Forum of the CIS Member States in ethics committees activities in the areas of locating and analysing ethical issues in science, technology, and clinical medicine,
- accepting the need for enhanced quality of education, improved access to existing information resources in the area of ethics of science, technology, and bioethics for specialists and general population,
- emphasising the importance of developing and implementing educational programmes, approaches, and methods ensuring that specialists and various strata of the society thoroughly understand main ethical issues evolving as a result of development of human studies, progress in the sphere of health care, and practical application of relevant knowledge,
- admitting the significance of international cooperation and regional collaboration potential in development and practical application of universal ethics principles and norms, and also, taking into consideration specific ethical, historical, and cultural traditions of various countries,
- recognising the role and importance of institutional forms of ethical regulation of clinical practice and scientific research in the areas of medicine, genetics, pharmacology, and implementing modern biotechnologies in the process of treatment,

and based on the results of the Seminar,

**AGREED** on the following:

- welcome the establishment of the NBEC of the Republic of Belarus;
- approve Statement on the NBEC of the Republic of Belarus and its stated main goals, tasks, structure, and framework;
- recommend that the government and National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, respective Ministries and organisations, non-government organisations, and media provide comprehensive support to the initiatives related to the establishment and activity of ethics and bioethics committees at various levels, and to developing bioethical education in the Republic of Belarus on the basis of existing national and international experience;
- endorse – within the framework of the UNESCO project “Bioethics Education in the Republic of Belarus” – development and subsequent utilisation of educational modules and materials in accordance with the regional requirements in the area of differential ethics and bioethics education of diverse society groups, including decision-makers responsible for ethics testing of science projects, members of ethics committees, researchers, medical staff, social workers, teachers, and future specialists;
- consider cooperation and coordination of the activities of the NBEC with the Republic of Belarus Health Care Experimental Test Centre to be beneficial and fruitful in the sphere of organisational support of the republican bioethics service, in particular, related to issues of establishing, regulating, coordinating, and monitoring activities of local ethics committees and educating their members;
- recommend that local ethics committees at clinics, hospitals, medical educational and scientific-and-research institutions intensify their activity in implementing standard operational procedures (SOPs) developed for ethics committees engaged in testing biomedical research;
- consider it to be instrumental and support interaction in the ethics of science and bioethics with such international organisations as UNESCO, World Health Organisation, European Council, European Commission, World Medical Association, European Forum for Good Clinical Practice etc.
- utilise accumulated intellectual and information resources (including those within the framework of existing mechanisms of international and regional collaboration) – such as UNESCO Global Ethics Observatory, ECFCIS, European Forum for Good Clinical Practice, national and regional committees of Central and Eastern European countries;
- approve initiatives and practice of the UNESCO SHS Sector of Ethics in Science and Technology in providing relevant information on bioethics issues to local (regional) ethics committees through National Commissions for UNESCO, ECFCIS, and National Ethics Committees;
- support and develop inter-disciplinary projects embracing the issues of ethics of science and technology, ecological ethics, biomedical ethics, human rights, social responsibility, legal and ethical aspects of the issues of the day (e.g., HIV/AIDS, patients’ rights, reproductive health, transplantology, euthanasia etc.);

- recommend that NBEC and local ethics committees of the Republic of Belarus be guided by and use the results and outcomes of implementing the joint Russian/Belarusian project “Socio-Philosophical and Ethical Problems of Genome Research and Clinical Medicine” and UNESCO Moscow Office’s social and humanitarian studies project “Bioethics Education in the Republic of Belarus”;
- adopt the practice of holding regular international, regional, and national meetings, with the participation of experts in the areas of ethics of science, biotechnology, and biomedical ethics;
- recommend that the Seminar Organising Committee prepare and publish the Seminar Materials Compendium, including the founding documents on establishing NBEC, shared experience of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and recommendations relating to conducting SOPs, with its subsequent distribution at medical educational establishments and local ethics committees;
- express appreciation to the organisers of the Seminar, i.e. UNESCO Moscow Office, National Commission of the Republic of Belarus for UNESCO, ECFCIS, Good Clinical Practice Alliance, Ministry of Health Care of the Republic of Belarus, Belarusian State Medical University, the Republic of Belarus Health Care Experimental Test Centre, Belarusian State Economic University, Institute of Socio-Humanitarian Education at the Belarusian State Economic University, Belarusian Academy of Postgraduate Education, International State Ecological University Named after A.D. Sakharov;
- request that UNESCO Moscow office, in collaboration with their partners, Seminar organisers, finalise this Final Document, distribute it among and get it endorsed by the Seminar participants, and forward two copies (English and Russian) to appropriate national bodies and UNESCO Headquarters.

Minsk, 7 June 2006