

Summary on the Bioethics Working Group meeting on 27 and 28 October 2006

Present:

Rev Kirsti AALTO (FI), Prof Sven ANDERSON (DK), Prof Stavros BALOYANNIS (GR), Dr Donald BRUCE (UK), Dr Mireille JEMELIN (CH), Prof Karsten LEHMKÜHLER (F), Prof Elena MASAROVICOVA (SK), Prof Anna ROLLIER (IT), Prof Egbert SCHROTEN (NL – Moderator), Rev Dr Stefan-Ioan STRATUL (RO)

Apologies:

Rev Anton ILIN (RU), Dr Andrea DÖRRIES (DE)

Invited as external expert:

Mrs Katrin HATZINGER

Staff:

Mme Marie-Madeleine LINCK, Rev Richard FISCHER.

Meetings in 2007:

At the request of Andrea who informed the Secretariat that she would be unable to participate at the dates chosen at the last meeting, the group tried hard to find alternative dates, taking into account the indications by Andrea about dates to be excluded. Unfortunately this proved impossible. All the envisaged alternative dates were impossible for several members of the WG.

Therefore the dates 2007 remain unchanged:

- Friday 23 and Saturday 24 March
- Friday 9 and Saturday 10 November

Change regarding the WG agenda:

From now on there will always be a point on “Information about the agenda of the EU Institutions” made by Katrin

Ageing:

Stefan-Ioan is ready to volunteer to put all the present parts together. The method used will comprise following steps:

- he will send to all one after the other (in turn) a first general draft
- everyone will have a quite short deadline to respect strictly to send him corrections and amendments, before the general draft enriched by these corrections and amendments is sent to another member, who will have to do the same, etc
- at the end of the process of collecting corrections and amendments, Stefan-Ioan will write a second general draft and send it to all before the next meeting 23-24 March.

The aim is to finish the work at the next meeting.

Human Enhancement:

The 4th draft by Egbert is discussed. On the basis of his involvement in this topic on the level of the European Commission, Donald will work together with Egbert.

Decisions:

- Donald will circulate his notes soon after the present meeting on the tour de table on “image of God” we had at the meeting
- On the next meeting, we shall have a tour de table on “human dignity”
- Donald will soon send a suggestion on restructuring the paper in the context of converging technologies, linking it up to discussions within the EU
- The theologians (and maybe other members) will react and be creative regarding what is important from a theological point of view (the need for criteria for instance? Which ones? etc)

Ethics of Health Care Systems:

- Due to the absence of Andrea (leader of the sub-group on this topic), this point was postponed

- Andrea should write the expanded version of the broad outline she presented at the last meeting, i.e. an actual first draft (following the indications given in the Notes on the last meeting)
- She needs to act as the leader of the sub-group and ask for the contributions and comments from those who are committed to write them.

Recent developments in the EU: (by Katrin)

- Stem cell research in the 7th Frame work Programme: projects involving the destruction of human embryos will not be EU funded, but projects using embryonic stem cells without themselves involving the destruction of human embryos can be funded
- Dispute at the European Patent Office (EPO) on human embryonic stem cells cultures: can they be patented under EU law?
- Advanced therapies related to tissue engineering products: there is a new regulation in preparation involving ethical issues
- Recent report adopted by the European Parliament on nanosciences and nanotechnologies, linked to our work on human enhancement
- GMO (genetically modified organisms): difficult discussions between the European Commission and the USA on GM rice imports
- EC consultation on the mid-term review of the life sciences and biotechnology: common contribution CEC-COMECE

Other information about the EU (by Donald):

- He draws attention to the possibility for the member of the WG to be involved in projects involving science, ethics and society issues. Calls will be on the European Commission website by the end of December
- He refers to events he participated in: the European Forum on nanosciences this month in Brussels; a conference on nanotechnology in food and one on nanotechnology and ethics.

HIV/sexual health:

The WG agrees **not to work on it**, because of the good work already done by others: WCC (www.wcc-coe.org) and EAA (www.e-alliance.ch). See also www.aids2006.org

End of life issues:

The WG agrees that every member of the WG writes, on the basis of the 2004 paper written by Egbert, 10 lines up to half a page on what the important theological issues are in connexion with her/his own church/state/society context. Everyone sends her/his paper to Kirsti until the 13 December 2006. Kirsti will then work on these contributions and send to all members a general paper by February 2007.

Project of an International Conference on Biotechnology:

Donald makes an update on the preparatory meeting in Toronto in May 2006. The principle of such a Conference at the end of 2007/beginning of 2008 has been decided. We are now in the phase of exploring possibilities for financial support. The venue should be somewhere in the South. If the money is available, a Steering Committee should be established with representatives of different parts of the world.

CDBI meeting in 2007:

If 4-8 June, Mireille is ready to participate with Richard ; if 18-22 June, Mireille and Stefan-Ioan are ready to go, without Richard who will be at the CSC Plenary meeting.

Suggestions for possible future working themes:

- Bioethics of mental diseases
- Post-menopausal maternity
- Following-up patenting issues.