

ETHICS EDUCATION PROGRAMME (EEP)

Activity Report, May 2004 – March 2005

BACKGROUND

The 32nd General Conference of UNESCO in October 2003 adopted Resolution 26 concerning the work done by the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST). In this resolution the General Conference welcomed the new strategic objectives in regard to the training in ethics.

Following the General Conference, UNESCO developed work plans for the biennium 2004-2005. In the work plans, activities aimed at stimulating, promoting and implementing ethics teaching have been planned, with a priority for Latin America and East and Central Europe. In the forthcoming biennium, Arab region, Africa and Asia will be priority areas.

During the 169th Executive Board (April 2004) document 169 EX/15 reported on the evaluation of the impact of COMEST. In the document, the new areas of work have been discussed, as well as criteria presented for future assessment of COMEST activities. One significant area of work will be capacity building action, particularly in regard to the teaching of ethics (Ethics Education Programme). Many Member States expressed their interest in this programme, and they emphasised the importance of teaching ethics to new generations of scientists.

A series of activities have been undertaken in the recent past to underline the importance of teaching ethics in the member states.

In November 2002, the International Conference on Bioethics in Central and Eastern Europe has been convened in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Conference was the result of cooperation between UNESCO, the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO, The Council of Europe, and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. The Proceedings of the Conference have been published in January 2004. The Final Statement adopted at the close of the Conference stressed “the urgent need for education in bioethics in Central and Eastern European countries”.

Also in November 2002, the Sixth World Congress of Bioethics (International Association of Bioethics and Sociedad Brasileira de Bioetica) has been organised in Brasilia. During this conference, the need to improve ethics education was underlined by many participants.

In December 2003, the 3rd meeting of COMEST, taking place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, adopted the report of its working group on ethics teaching. In the report, not only the need for ethics teaching was emphasised but also practical recommendation provided for implementing these educational activities. The report also stressed that ethics education is not only important in the health care and biomedical programmes, but also in university education of

all future scientists. The report (published in English and French) has been widely distributed among the Permanent Delegations in UNESCO and the UNESCO National Commissions. It is also available on the website.

In March 2004, the UNESCO Office in Mexico convened a meeting in Panama to establish the Red Latinoamericana de Bioetica (REDBIOETICA). This network presently includes members from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela. A council of 7 members with as its President professor Volnei Garrafa was also established. It furthermore started a website, coordinated by dr. Jose Roberto Goldim, University of Porto Alegre, Brazil.

In March 2004 the Third International Conference in Ethics Education in Medical Schools was organised by the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics at the University of Haifa (Professor Amnon Carmi). The meeting convened in Eilat, Israel.

In May 2005, a conference, sponsored by the Council of Europe, and focused on teaching research ethics in East Europe has taken place in Vilnius, Lithuania. Following the 2002 meeting, the university of Vilnius, supported by the Lithuanian government, submitted a request to start a documentation centre in the area of bioethics. This centre will be an excellent facility to support the activities in the area of ethics education. The Model Regional Information and Documentation Centre in the University of Vilnius, with the support of UNESCO, has officially been opened on September 13, 2004 at the occasion of a rotating UNESCO conference in Vilnius.

Recently two requests for new chairs, one in Bioethics (Brasilia) and another one in Environmental ethics (Siberia) have been approved. The new chairs can be involved in the UNESCO programme, and together with the limited number of existing chairs, play an important role in the ethics education programme.

Since August 2003, the World Medical Association (WMA) has appointed a Director of Ethics, responsible for policy development and review but also for coordinating and expanding WMA activities in medical ethics education. Possible areas that are explored are standard development, core curriculum development, educational materials development, clearinghouse of information, and networking centre for medical ethics educators. WMA has made a modest start with a web page on medical ethics education on the WMA Ethics Unit web site. Current efforts are focused on dissemination of a concise manual in medical ethics for medical students worldwide.

OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of UNESCO activities in this area is to reinforce and increase the capacities of member states in the area of ethics education. This is a long-term objective.

For the current and forthcoming biennium the activities in the area of ethics teaching will be considered as pilot activities in order to explore the needs and opportunities for UNESCO's activities. During 2004-2005 East and Central Europe as well as Latin America will be priority regions, during 2006-2007 priority will be given to the Arab region, Africa and Asia.

COOPERATION

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EXPECTED RESULTS

1. Creation of networks of professional ethics teachers
2. Development and subsequent implementation of teaching programs
3. Constitution of a structural and long-term framework for teaching activities
4. Setting up of a fellowship fund
5. Establishment of UNESCO Chairs in ethics
6. Organization of a network of existing UNESCO chairs
7. Dissemination of samples of teaching programmes and materials (through the GEO database)
8. Development of teaching resources (books, cd's, digital resources)
9. Foundation of documentation centres in regions

PROJECTS

In order to accomplish the objectives, projects have been initiated and carried out. These projects focus on (a) the infrastructure for developing and implementing teaching programs, (b) the development and promotion of programs, (c) the resources required for implementing the programs, and (d) the creation of a fellowship fund.

During the period under review, the following activities have been undertaken.

1. Mapping of experts in ethics teaching
 The first step in promoting ethics teaching programs is identifying who are the experts in ethics as well as the experts in ethics teaching. The data concerning these experts are introduced into the ethics database (Global Ethics Observatory – GEO)

Activities:

- Integration of the available mailing lists of the Division into one general list with search terms is undertaken (July – December 2004). Before January 2005, all

individuals in the list have been contacted and has been sent a questionnaire for possible inclusion into GEO Database 1 of individual experts.

- Identification of experts in Central Europe in order to organise the regional meeting in Budapest (October 21-22, 2004).
- Identification of experts in East Europe in order to organise the regional meeting in Moscow (January 19-20, 2005).
- Identification of experts in South-East Europe in order to organise the regional meeting in Croatia (Spring 2005).

2. Sampling of teaching programs

In order to facilitate the development of programs, the comparison of programs, and the possible certification of programs, it will be necessary to make a collection of existing teaching programs in ethics. In this way, experiences can be sampled, compared and exchanged. It is important to collect samples of programs not only in bioethics (as taught in medical schools or nursing schools) but also in other areas of ethics, such as environmental ethics and science ethics (as taught in science schools and humanities departments). The samples collected will be introduced into the GEO database. For the time being, only English samples will be introduced into the database; in later phases these samples will be translated into other languages. Special registration forms have been developed in order to obtain standardised and comparable data concerning teaching activities. The forms have been and will be distributed among the experts identified in project A1 with the invitation to make a detailed description of their programs. Five special forms have been designed, according to the various phases of ethics teaching: in graduation programmes, in master programmes, in professional training programmes, in specialization programmes and in doctorate programmes.

Activities:

- June-September 2004: Five types of forms have been developed in order to standardise information concerning teaching programs.
- September 2004: Testing of the forms (completeness, coherence, usefulness).
- Distribution of the forms to the experts invited for the expert meetings in Budapest and Moscow.
- Discussion of the descriptions during the meetings in Budapest (October 2004) and Moscow (January 2005). Almost 50 descriptions for Central Europe have been received; almost 40 descriptions for East Europe. All descriptions are now in the stage of revision and perfection. They will be entered into the GEO database as soon as the prototype is ready.
- January-February 2005: identification of ethics teaching experts in South East Europe; planning of the conference in Split, Croatia (13-14 June, preliminary dates).

3. Creation of networks of experts

As soon as the relevant experts have been identified, networks will be created, bringing together the experts in particular regions. The networks will develop a more or less formal structure (e.g. “Schools of Ethics”), assisted by the Regional Offices and UNESCO Headquarters. The network will be the platform in a region for executing the various projects.

Activities:

- As outcomes of the conferences in Budapest and Moscow experts are invited to submit initiatives for future cooperation

4. Establishment of documentation centres

When activities in a particular region have started, an important resource for future activities will be the availability of adequate information and documentation regarding materials from the region itself, and in the official working language used in that region. It is imperative that the documentation and categorisation of materials will be consistent with the methods and rules used for the Global Ethics Observatory. In this way, efficiency will be maximised and the off-spin optimised.

Activities:

- On 13 September 2004, the Regional Information and Documentation Centre in Vilnius have been established.
- The Global Ethics Observatory in Paris will consists of 4 interlinked databases:
 - database 1 of individual experts
 - database 2 of centres, institutes and committees
 - database 3 of teaching programs
 - database 4 of samples of legislation and guidelines
- The database in Paris will take care for data and documents in the English and French languages.
- The documentation centre in Vilnius (Lithuania, prof. Gefenas) will take care for data and documents in the Russian language.
- A set of standardised forms is in development in order to guarantee homogeneity and comparability of data; the forms for individual experts as well as teaching programs have been developed.
- These forms will be used in the (future) network of documentation centres so that all information is identical and exchangeable.
- Future documentation centres will be established in order to cover the Arab and Chinese language (in the biennium 2006-7).

5. UNESCO Chairs

Early 2005, there are 5 chairs in bioethics; no chairs in the area of ethics of science and technology.

- UNESCO Chair of Bioethics (569) established in 2001 at Haifa University, Israel
Director: Professor Amnon Carmi
- UNESCO Chair of Bioethics (3), established in 1994 at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina
Director: Dr. Salvador Dario Bergel,
- UNESCO Chair in Bioethics (126), established in 1998 at Egerton University, Kenya
Director: Dr. Kimani Wa Njoroge
- UNESCO Chair in Bioethics: “Biojuridica y Bioetica” (487), established in 1999 at the University Feminina del Sagrado Corazon, Peru
Director: Professor Maria Dolores Vila-Coro
- UNESCO Chair in Bioethics: Bioethics and Society (498), established in 1999 at the University of Granada, Spain
Director: Professor Lorenzo Morillas Cueva

Two applications for new chairs have been approved :

- UNESCO Chair in Bioethics at the University of Brasilia (Brazil): “Bioetica en el contexto de America Latina”
- UNESCO Chair on Environmental Ethics at the East Siberia State University of Technology (Ulan-Ude, Russian Federation)

Activities:

- In 2004 a meeting has been arranged with Mrs Pinan (Education Sector, responsible for the chairs) to discuss the situation of the UNESCO Chairs.
- In May 2004 all existing chairs have been contacted by email and mail, requesting information about their activities and inquiring about their willingness to participate in the College. The response, however, has been discouraging.
 - The chairs in Haifa and Buenos Aires responded and forwarded information.
 - The chair in Peru presents a complicated situation; the professor is teaching and living in Madrid whereas the chair is established in Peru.
 - The chairs in Kenya and Spain (Granada) did not reply.
 - Given the results of this survey, the initial idea to establish a college of chairs does not seem feasible at this moment in time.
 - Follow-up is necessary of the two applications (Brasilia and Ulan-Ude); as soon as these chairs are functioning, the establishment of a college can be reconsidered.

6. Advisory body

In the process of promoting ethics teaching programs there is a need for setting standards and criteria for ethics teaching programs. The quality of existing programs is extremely heterogeneous. There is a niche for international action here, aimed at three goals of setting standards:

- identifying what should be a core curriculum in the area of ethics,
- developing standards and criteria for evaluating existing and newly developed teaching programs,
- and providing a system of certification of programs that have been positively assessed.

Activities:

- A meeting has been convened (4 July 2005) in Paris with a group of experts to start a preliminary Advisory Expert Commission on the Teaching of Ethics. This group is composed of experts from IBC (Evans, Guessous, de Castro), COMEST (Apressyan, Gracia), WMA (Williams), TWAS (Balasubramanian) and a representative of the UNESCO chairs (Carmi).