

The UNESCO Bioethics Programme: a forum for progress in the regulation of genetics?

Adèle Langlois, University of Lincoln
(alanglois@lincoln.ac.uk)

BioCentre, 21 July 2011

The UNESCO Bioethics Programme

- Established 1993
- 3 declarations on genetics and bioethics (1997, 2003, 2005)
- International Bioethics Committee – 36 independent experts
- Reports: human cloning, PGD, IP and genomics, germ-line intervention, human vulnerability, social responsibility and health
- Future work: genetic testing, regenerative medicine, biobanks, cell transplantation, non-discrimination?

How it works

- Work programme set by states (IGBC)
- IBC working groups draft reports, declarations
- Public hearings at national, regional, international levels
- States make suggestions on reports, have final say on declarations
- Decisions made by consensus (all levels)

Good enough?

- Expert/state tensions
- IBC really expert?
- Not reaching all stakeholders (through international and national channels)
- Meetings run inefficiently
- Implementation follow-up difficult – states refused reporting provisions (2005)

Quick enough?

- 2005 declaration – IBC tried to make provision for future developments; states decided this was inappropriate
- 2009 cloning report – now outdated; further developments dropped (no consensus)

Improvements?

- More systematic appointments to IBC and delegations
- Better communications between UNESCO HQ and country offices
- Better use of meeting time (more in-depth)
- Drop the consensus requirement?