



National Council of Ethics for the Life Sciences
Presidency of the Council of Ministers



National Council of Ethics for the Life Sciences

12th Report of Activities

2007



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Lisbon 2007

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1. INTRODUCTORY NOTE

An Ethics Council is a privileged place for the reflection on the ethical issues raised by the progress of science in its various domains. To reflect, give advice, recommend and promote reflection in society in general are some of its essential competences. Portugal was one of the first European countries to feel the need for a bioethics committee at national level, having founded the "Conselho Nacional de Ética para as Ciências da Vida" (CNECV) [National Ethics Council for the Life Sciences] by Law no. 14/90, of 9th June. The Council's third and current term of office began on 4th September, 2003.

Today almost all the countries in Europe have their own National Ethics Council and, even though they may differ in structure, they share the same goal. The promotion of meetings between the National Ethics Councils at European level thus meets the need for the exchange of experiences and brings about joint reflection upon issues which, far from being limited to regional confines, spread across borders and extend worldwide.

In 2007 the Council was involved in issuing opinions on current ethical themes, organising and participating in national and international events, striving to fulfil its responsibilities and to stimulate the bioethics debate at all levels of society.

This Report has been drawn up in compliance with article 14 of Law no. 14/90 of June (with the alterations introduced by Law no. 9/2003 of 13th May and Decree-Law no. 193/99 of 7th June) and refers to the activities carried out by the National Ethics Council for the Life Sciences (CNECV) during 2007.

Lisbon, 11th March, 2008

Paula Martinho da Silva
National Council of Ethics for the Life Sciences
President



2. THE COMPOSITION OF THE CNECV



Designating body:

Prime Minister

Minister of Health

Minister of Justice

Minister of Education

Minister of Science and Higher Education

Minister of Youth Affairs

The Bar Association

Commission on Equality and Women's Rights

The Medical Association

The Biologists Association

Lisbon Academy of Sciences

Foundation for Science and Technology

National Council of Legal Medicine

Assembly of the Republic

President: Paula Martinho da Silva

Dr. João Lobo Antunes

Dr. Marta Mendonça

Dr. Michel Renaud

Dr. José de Oliveira Ascensão

José Pedro Ramos Ascensão

Rita Amaral Cabral

Dr. Maria Fernanda Henriques

Pedro Nunes

Dr. Pedro Fevereiro

Dr. Daniel Serrão

Dr. Fernando Regateiro

Dr. Jorge Soares

Dr. Salvador Massano Cardoso

Dr. Agostinho Almeida Santos

Dr. António Vaz Carneiro



Dr. **Jorge Sequeiros**

Dr. **Rui Nunes**

Dr. **Miguel Oliveira da Silva**

National organisations representing activities connected with bioethics **Jorge Biscaia**

Portuguese Council of University Rectors **Dr. Maria do Céu Patrão Neves**

The Assessor for the President is Ana Sofia Carvalho.

The Council's Executive Secretary is Cíntia Monverde Águas.

3. PLENARY SESSIONS

The CNECV meets in an ordinary Plenary Session once a month, although extraordinary sessions may be convened whenever deemed necessary.

During the course of 2007, sessions 139 to 148 were held, a total of ten plenary sessions, according to the schedule and work agenda, which may be summed up as follows:

- **139th PS – 9th January**

Reflection on “Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis” and discussion of the report with a view to drawing up an opinion;

Introduction to the discussion of the theme relating to “Biomedical Research”.

- **140th PS – 6th February**

Further reflection on “Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis” and discussion of the report with a view to drawing up an opinion.

- **141st PS – 13th March**

Appreciation of the CNECV Project on the theme of “Biomedical Research”;

Discussion of the draft for the opinion on “Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis” with a view to its approval.

Presentation of the general ideas on the draft bill on the “Legal Regime for DNA Profile Databases” with a view to drawing up an opinion.



- **142nd PS – 10th April**

Conclusion of the deliberation on the opinion on “Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis”;

Presentation and analysis of the report on the draft bill on the “Legal Regime for DNA Profile Databases” with a view to drawing up an opinion.

- **143rd PS – 8th May**

Further consideration of the CNECV Project on the theme of “Biomedical Research”;

Analysis of the report on the draft bill on the “Legal Regime for DNA Profile Databases” with a view to drawing up an opinion.

- **144th PS – 12th June**

Analysis of the draft of the opinion on the draft bill on the “Legal Regime for DNA Profile Databases” with a view to deliberating on it.

- **145th PS – 10th July**

Reflection on Draft Bills n^o 126/X and 376/X, which establish the “legal regime for the use of stem cells, for research purposes and the respective therapeutic applications” , with a view to drawing up and approving an opinion.

- **146th PS – 18th September**

Reflection on the work project on “Biomedical Research” – first presentation of work underway.

- **147th PS – 13th November**

Reflection on the work project on “Biomedical Research” – Continued the presentation of work underway.

Reflection on the request for an opinion on the “proposal for the Decree-Law establishing the legal regime of quality and safety relative to the donation, procurement, testing, processing, preservation, storage, distribution and application of tissues and cells of human origin”.



▪ **148th PS – 11th December**

Reassessment of work pending and of the projects to be carried out in 2008.

Deliberation on the draft of the opinion on the “proposal for the Decree-Law establishing the legal regime of quality and safety relative to the donation, procurement, testing, processing, preservation, storage, distribution and application of tissues and cells of human origin”.

Reflection on the work project on “Biomedical Research” – continued the presentation of work underway.

The plenary sessions for the first half of 2008 have already been scheduled:

149th PS	8 th January
150th PS	12 th February
151st PS	11 th March
152nd PS	8 th April
153rd PS	13 th May
154th PS	3 rd June
155th PS	8 th July



4. THE CNECV'S ACTIVITIES

4.1 Opinions

4.2 Hearings

4.3 10th Forum of National Ethics Councils (10th NEC Forum)

4.4 XVIII Meeting with the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) of the European Commission

4.5 CNECV Publications

4.6 The CNECV Site

4.7 The Documentation Centre

Corresponding to the prominence of the CNECV in the arena dedicated to reflection in the field of Bioethics, in 2007 a significant number of requests for opinions were addressed to the Council, to which it responded in accordance with its competences, availability and the urgency of the requests.

As well as the aforementioned work, part of the Council's activity during the past year involved the organisation and participation of the CNECV and its members in national and international events important for bioethical reflection, as well as the publication of the documentation.

Among those events, the holding of the 10th Forum of National Ethics Councils (10th NEC Forum), under the auspices of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union, was particularly important in promoting the CNECV, as was the joint meeting of the CNECV and the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE), which also took place in October, 2007, organised by the CNECV.

4.1. Opinions

As usual, the CNECV dealt not only with a broad range of themes but also with requests for opinions from diverse origins.

This diversity reveals the scope of the subjects discussed as well as one of the most important aspects of the bioethics debate: the capacity for dialogue, the acceptance of divergence and the willingness to reach consensus.

The preliminary reports for the opinions were prepared with remarkable dedication, allowing for in-depth reflection which gave rise to much discussion and differences of opinion, whilst stimulating the execution of the work underway.

One should also stress the importance of the hearings in the drawing up of these opinions, through the sharing of different points of view, the clarification and broadening of scientific and ethical horizons inherent to the problem in question.

Over the course of the year, the CNECV drew up and concluded the following opinions:



Press conferences are normally held in order to publicly present and divulge each of the opinions, at which the CNECV is represented by the President and the Members responsible for relating the opinions.

The press conferences held in 2007 to present Opinions 51 to 53 were generally well attended by the media and resulted in a broader divulgation of the Council's work and the issues debated.

At the same time the press conferences were held, all of the opinions and respective reports and declarations were made available on the CNECV site on the Internet, for general public access.

4.2. Hearings

In the exercise of its duties, and with the aim of sounding out sensitivities, the technical aspects and institutional positions on some of the subjects of opinion, the CNECV organises the hearing of well known experts and representative bodies.

Within the scope of the **Opinion on «Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis» (51/CNECV/2007)**, the following experts had been heard, within the course of 2006:

Dr. Alberto Barros
Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto

Dr. Vasco Almeida
Faculty of Sciences of the University of Porto

Dr. Walter Osswald
Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto



4.3. 10th Forum of National Ethics Councils (10th NEC Forum)



Organisation: European Commission / CNECV

Date: 11th and 12th October, 2007

Venue: Lisbon – Pavilhão Atlântico

Participants: National Ethics Councils of the EU member states

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/page_en.cfm?id=3161

As well as the intense effort that went into the drawing up of reports and opinions, and the respective discussion, reflection and deliberation, the CNECV undertook other activities within the scope of its competences.

On the occasion of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2007, in joint organisation with the European Commission, the CNECV had the honour of hosting the international meeting of the **10th Forum of National Ethics Councils (NEC Forum)**, in Lisbon, on 11th and 12th October.

The NEC Forum is an independent platform for exchange of information, experience and best practices on issues of common interest in the field of ethics and science. The NEC Forum follows the «open coordination» method and the respective meetings are organised by one of the National Ethics Councils. The Forum meets biannually and is reserved for the presidents and secretaries of the National Ethics Councils of the European Union member states. The meeting is of the utmost importance, the only one of its kind within the European Union, and its organisation has played a key role in the sharing of good practices between EU member states.

In the exercise of her duties, the president of the CNECV has participated in all of the previous meetings of the NEC Forum, as representative of the National Ethics Council for the Life Sciences.

The President and the members of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies of the European Union (EGE), of which the President of the CNECV is currently the vice-president, were also invited to attend, the event having been preceded, on the 10th October, by a joint meeting of the EGE and the CNECV for the exchange of experiences between the two advisory bodies.



The holding of this Forum afforded a unique opportunity for an exchange of impressions on issues of ethical reflection in the area of the new technologies between the member states and the national participants. From the response obtained, the prominence of this event and the positive reflections that resulted from it are evident, both for the bioethical debate in our country, and in positioning Portugal at the international level on this issue.

The main theme of the forum was devoted to the 50 years of the Treaty of Rome and to the reflection upon the principal ethical values shared at European level, as well as the role of ethics in public policy in Europe.

The morning of the first day of the event comprised the joint EGE/NEC meeting, whose opening session was attended by the Portuguese Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, José Mariano Gago. The opening speech given by the President of the CNECV was followed by speeches by the Director of *DG Research – Science, Economy and Society*, Jean-Michel Baer, and the representative of the *Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA)*, Maurizio Salvi.

The first panel of the morning was dedicated to the fundamental values shared by Europe, in which the convergence and equilibrium of perspectives in a Pluralist Europe were discussed, as well as an update on the EGE's recent activities, with talks by the President of the EGE, Gören Hermerén,



and by the President of the Italian National Ethics Committee, Francesco Paolo Casavola. A presentation of the theme of ethics and biolaw was given by José Cruz Vilaça, former Advocate-General and President of the Court of First Instance of the EU.

On the first panel of the 10th NEC Forum, which was opened by the (representative of the) Portuguese Secretary of State of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Jorge Lacão, Pëteris Zilgavis, Head of the Governance and Ethics Unit, and George Maniatis, President of the Hellenic National Bioethics Commission, discussed recent activities in Governance and Ethics at the European Commission. The topic of new bioethical frontiers in a global world was also debated, with presentations by Rena Petridou, President of the Cyprus National Bioethics Committee, and Volnei Garrafa, Director of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics at the University of Brasília.

Jean-Michel Baer also gave a lecture on the theme “Ethics capacity building in developing countries”.

On the second day of the forum, the panel was dedicated to the influence of mobility on the fundamental values of the European Union, enriched by presentations made by the Executive Secretary of the Danish Council of Ethics, Anette Nilsen, the President of the Portuguese Parliamentary Health Commission, Maria de Belém Roseira, and the Coordinator of the Portuguese Observatory for Immigration, Roberto Carneiro.

The next topic discussed was the link between the bioethics debate at local, national and international level, and the respective infrastructures, with presentations by the President of EUREC (European Network of Local Research Ethics Committees), François Chapuis, and the President of the Slovenian National Ethics Committee, Joze Tronelj.

The subject of access to biobanks and DNA databases merited special attention due to its particular interest and pertinence, a concern shared by all the organisations represented.

Presentations on this theme were given by Hugh Whittall, President of the Nuffield Council on Ethics, Chris Womack, from the company AstraZeneka, and Jorge Soares, who related opinion no. 52/CNECV/2007 on the legal regime for DNA profile databases.

The principal objective of this event was a retrospective of Bioethics within the European framework, with a view to sharing values in the future. As has been mentioned, the programme of the 10th NEC Forum was enriched by a range of persons with particular responsibilities in this field. The contributions made were of high quality and stimulated debate on this theme. The meeting was supported by around one hundred participants, including Presidents, secretaries, speakers and guests.

Given the extensive organisation involved in holding the 10th NEC Forum, the regular CNECV national seminar was unable to be held.



4.4. XVIII Meeting with the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) at the European Commission

In connection with the 10th Forum of National Ethics Councils (NEC), the regular meeting with the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) was held on 10th October, in Lisbon.

This workshop, which involved the exchange of impressions amongst its members and a multidisciplinary reflection on the most important and pressing themes in bioethics in Europe, was attended by the members of the CNECV, which was the Ethics Council hosting the NEC Forum.

The workshop involved continued reflection on the ethics of cloning animals for human consumption, raised in “EGE Opinion no. 23 on the ethical aspects of animal cloning for food supply”.

The joint meeting of the EGE and the CNECV ensued, with a brief summary of the activities carried out by both committees, during which the President of the CNECV gave a perspective of the past, present and future panorama of bioethics in Portugal, followed by a commentary by the President of the EGE, Dr. Gören Hermerén, on the most relevant aspects of EGE Opinion no. 21 on the ethical aspects of nanomedicine.

The EGE also gave a hearing to Dr. Pedro Fevereiro, member of the CNECV and Director of the Laboratory of Biotechnology of Vegetable Cells of the Institute of Chemical and Biological Technology of the New University of Lisbon, on the subject of agri-food.

At the end of the day’s proceedings, the EGE and the CNECV were received by the President of the Portuguese Republic.





4.5. CNECV Publications



In a constant effort to update and divulge the opinions of the CNECV, the 11th Volume of the “Bioethics Collection”, on the proceedings of the 10th National Seminar, and the 11th Volume of the Documentation of the CNECV, containing the opinions issued in 2006, were both published in 2007.

The content of the documentation published reflects the dynamics of the CNECV and the range of subjects under analysis: to start with, the theme of ethics and the research in life sciences, the motto of the 10th National Seminar of the CNECV, but also the themes the opinions are based on, from the procurement and transplanting of human organs and tissue to carrying out HIV detection tests following occupational exposure or to human cloning.

These publications are available to the public, and their reading can be complemented by visiting the CNECV website— www.cnecv.gov.pt.



4.6. The CNECV Website – www.cnecv.gov.pt



The CNECV website is constantly updated.

In cooperation with the Management Centre for the Electronic Government Network – CEGER, the design and contents of the CNECV website were updated and restructured so as to become more appealing and user-friendly for whoever consults the site, be they students, institutions or the public in general.

In order to turn the CNECV site into a key channel of communication between the Ethics council and the public, the availability of additional content and divulgation of the Council's operations are under constant development.

The English version of the website has now been concluded, which includes the updated CNECV opinions translated into English. This version has brought the CNECV significant international prominence, which can be seen from the growing number of consultations and mentions by foreign entities.

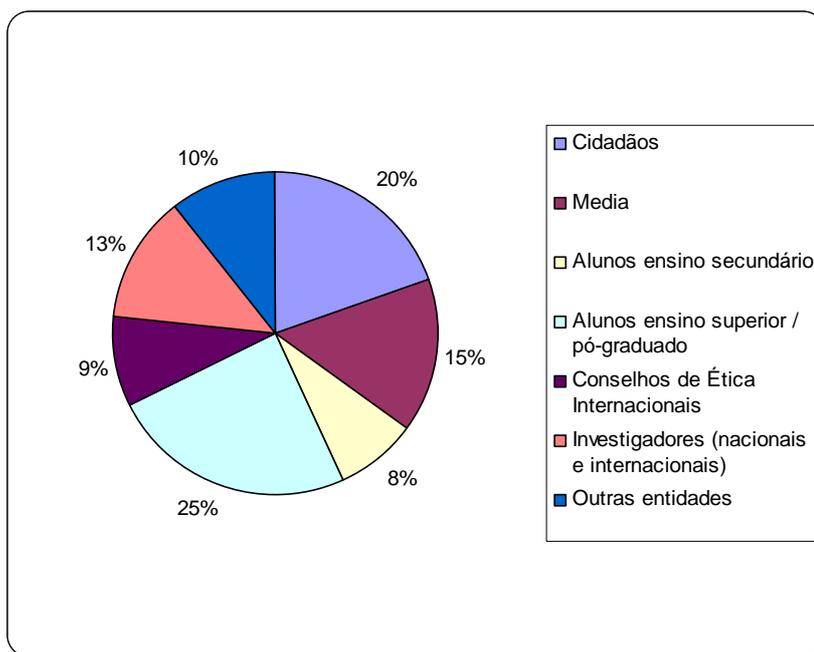


5. REQUESTS IN 2007

As well as fulfilling the duties attributed to the CNECV, the Council has received a growing number of requests for clarification and opinion from national and international bodies, secondary school pupils, undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers or members of the public interested in subjects discussed by the Council.

So that the public may become more aware of the ethical problems in the area of the life sciences the CNECV responds to and encourages the participation of the general public, whose requests are almost all received by electronic mail.

One should also mention the unregistered contacts by telephone and in person, on behalf of the media, to obtain clarification from the CNECV on subjects related to bioethics discussed in current affairs.



Groups	No. Of Requests
General public	17
Media	13
Secondary school pupils	7
Undergraduate/postgraduate students	21
International Ethics Councils	8
Researchers (national and international)	11
Others	9
Total	86



6. PROMINENCE OF THE CNECV

The intense activity of the CNECV, was, in the course of 2007, publicised by a range of means: electronically, through the availability and updating of the CNECV website, the English version of which contributed greatly to the divulgation of its opinions and activities. This information was spread worldwide by references to the CNECV website on other websites, portals and weblogs.

The participation of the Council members in seminars, conferences and events, discussion groups and workshops gave prominence to the documents of the CNECV in Portugal and abroad. The volumes of the CNECV publications also helped to publicise its contributions to the bioethics debate, especially in schools.

7. PARTICIPATION IN 2007

7.1 National Events

7.2 International Events

7.3 Regular participation

Throughout 2007, many of the members of the Council participated personally in conferences in Portugal and abroad, lecturing in the specific area of bioethics, whilst their participation in numerous activities as representatives of the CNECV should also be highlighted.

The President and the Council members also collaborated in the organisation of events within the scope of their duties.

Equal importance should be given to the participation of the Council itself, in organisations under international authorities, be they the **European Union**, the **Council of Europe** (participation in **COMETH** – the European Conference of National Ethics Committees of member states of the Council of Europe) or **UNESCO**, where it has been invited to collaborate.

7.1 National Events

In 2007, the CNECV was represented in the following events:

FEBRUARY

Seminar of the Medical Association

2nd and 3rd - The Medical Association, National Executive Board - Lisbon



MARCH

**National Congress of Pharmacists – The protection of individual data
8th – The Pharmacists Association - Lisbon**

**VI Cycle of Conferences of the Gulbenkian Health Forum
15th – Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – Lisbon**

APRIL

**Launching of the work “*Ordem dos Médicos: passado e presente*” [“The Medical Association: past and present”]
3rd – the Medical Association and *Centro Editor Livreiro* – Lisbon**

MAY

Ongoing Training Course – Medically Assisted Reproduction

“*Da necessidade de adequação da lei – questões práticas suscitadas pela aplicação da actual legislação sobre a Procriação Medicamente Assistida*” [“The need to adapt the law - practical questions raised by the application of the current legislation on Medically Assisted Reproduction”]

18th – Ministry of Justice – Centre of Judiciary Studies

Training provided by Paula Martinho da Silva

JUNE

Presentation session of the draft bill which contemplates the creation and use of a DNA profile database for criminal and civil identification

1st – Ministry of Justice – Lisbon

Commemorations of the 59th Anniversary of the Dr. Lopes Dias Higher School of Health – Paper on Bioethics

11th – Castelo Branco Polytechnical Institute

Paper on Bioethics by Paula Martinho da Silva

JULY

Award Ceremony of the Winning Projects of the Aids in Africa Research/Intervention Competition

26th – GlaxoSmithKline Health Foundation– Lisbon



SEPTEMBER

**António Champalimaud Vision Award Ceremony
7th (Champalimaud Foundation), Lisbon**

NOVEMBER

**6th National Congress of Legal Medicine
9th and 10th November, Guimarães**

Paper given by Fernanda Henriques

DECEMBER

**5th – Lisbon Academy of Sciences
Award session “L’Óreal Medals of Honour for Women in Science”**

**Masters in Religious Sciences – Speciality in Theological Ethics
“Ethics, Spirituality and Health”
14th and 15th**

Instruction provided by Paula Martinho da Silva

7.2 International Events

MAY

Ética e Ciência – Acerca dos limites da investigação científica e do desenvolvimento tecnológico - “Ética y Ciencias médicas” - “A influencia da reflexão bioética nas ciências médicas”

“Ethics and medical Science” - “The influence of bioethical reflection on medical science.”

2nd – University of Vigo – Campus Ourense, Faculdade de Direito – Vigo, Spain

Instruction provided by Paula Martinho da Silva

**1st International Consensus Meeting – New Horizons in the Cell and Tissue Banking
16th /20th – Vale de Santarém**

Representation of the CNECV – Participation in round table discussion on ethics with

Paula Martinho da Silva, Daniel Serrão and João Lobo Antunes



**First preparatory meeting of 9th COMETH Conference
23rd – Berlin - Germany**

**9th European Forum of National Ethics Councils – NEC Forum
23rd/ 25th Berlin - Germany**

Biannual International Meeting of the Presidents and secretaries of the National Ethics Councils of the EU member states, held under the auspices of the Germany Presidency of the European Union.

Representation of the CNECV – Paula Martinho da Silva and João Lobo Antunes, who gave a conference on “Scientific integrity and scientific publishing”.

JUNE

***I Jornadas Ibéricas – Saúde na Europa: a importância da excelência*
1st Iberian Congress – Health in Europe: the importance of excellence
21st/ 22nd – José de Mello Saúde - Lisbon**

Conference given by Paula Martinho da Silva

OCTOBER

**International Conference – "Uses and representations of reproductive technologies"
25th – Institute of Sociology of the Faculty of Arts, University of Porto**

Conference given by Paula Martinho da Silva

NOVEMBER

**World Healthcare Student's Symposium 2007
26th November/ 1st December – Albufeira**

Conference given by Paula Martinho da Silva on *Common Ethics Code*

**Fulbright Brainstorms – Pandemics, vaccines and new paradigms in public health
30th - – Fulbright Portugal – Hotel Ritz, Lisbon**

**Micro'07 Biotech'07 – XXXIII JPG
30th November/ 2nd December – Lisbon**



DECEMBER

Seminar on "Predictivity, Genetic Testing and Insurance" 3rd/ 4th - Strasbourg

Representation of the CNECV: Jorge Sequeiros

7.3 Permanent participation

Citizenship Education Forum

In order to promote citizenship values in a school context, the Minister of Education and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers jointly created a Citizenship Education Forum, in which individuals and organisations representing a wide range of interests and knowledge participated.

This space for wide-ranging reflection aims to develop a plan of action suited to non-disciplinary curricular areas, especially "Project Area" and "Social Studies".

To bring this about, the mission of the work group will be to present guidelines, to identify and divulge good practices, in order to give consistency to the initiatives underway and to help and promote the work of teachers and schools.

The members meet in a plenary session once every three months, and, between sessions, in "Reflection nuclei", smaller work groups coordinated by the Technical Group for Forum Coordination, which reflect on a general theme.

Representing the CNECV, the President, Paula Martinho da Silva, and the Executive Secretary, Cíntia Águas, participated in this project.

Em representação do CNECV, participa neste projecto a Sra. Presidente, participando nele ainda a Dra. Cíntia Águas, Secretária Executiva do Conselho.

For further information, please consult the respective site: <http://www.cidadania-educacao.pt>



8. Final Considerations

Bioethical reflection continues to be current, emerging, demanding and permanent. On the one hand, all citizens are constantly challenged by the knowledge of new techniques, new research, the definition of new frontiers, the pondering of new circumstances, new factors and new concerns.

That diversity and complexity is also mirrored in the reflections carried out by the CNECV during 2007.

In drawing up opinions and documents, organising its meetings and presenting communications, the CNECV has responded to the requests for its assessment of the ethical issues underlying legislative projects, such as the Opinions on the legal regime of quality and safety relative to the donation, procurement, testing, processing, preservation, storage, distribution and application of tissues and cells of human origin (54/CNECV/2007); on Draft Bills N° 126/X (which establishes the Principles of Scientific Research in Stem Cells and the Use of Embryos), and N° 376/X (which establishes the Legal System for the Use of stem Cells, for Research Purposes and the Respective Therapeutic Applications) (53/CNECV/2007)) and the Opinion on the Statutory Regime for D.N.A. Profile Databases (52/CNECV/2007), and also of wider-ranging, fundamental questions, as was the case of the Opinion on Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis (51/CNEV/2007).

The public recognition of the work developed by this Council has been particularly relevant (and, one might add, gratifying). The constant communication, comments, questions addressed to the Council and visits to the website are a clear indication of that recognition. It is also clearly demonstrated by the respect shown not only by international partners, in consulting the CNECV website, but also by the enthusiastic participation in the 10th NEC Forum organised by the CNECV in collaboration with the European Commission under the auspices of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union.

During the year of 2008 which has now begun, the Council intends to continue the projects which began in 2007 as well as to present new initiatives.