The World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology

Extraordinary Session, Paris, 12 -13 November 2008

COMEST objectives and modalities, 2008 - 2009

Alain Pompidou, Acting President
Background

By 29 C/Resolution 13 (1997), the General Conference of UNESCO invited the Director-General “to promote ethical, multidisciplinary and multicultural reflection on a number of situations that might become a risk to society as a result of advances in science and technology, by setting up the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) ...”.

COMEST was established by the UNESCO Executive Board at its 154th session in 1998 (154 EX/Decisions)
Composition

Body of experts to advise the Director General of UNESCO (18 appointed *intuitu personae*, 8 sitting ex officio)

- From different regions of the World

- From various disciplines— education, sciences, engineering, history, law, mathematics, philosophy, ethics, politics and sociology.
✓ Extensive experience to build on

✓ New directions to map
COMEST has held five Ordinary Sessions:

- **Oslo** (Norway), April 1999
- **Berlin** (Germany), December 2001
- **Rio de Janeiro** (Brazil), December 2003
- **Bangkok** (Thailand), March 2005
- **Dakar** (Senegal), December 2006

The 6th will be held in 2009. (Venue to be determined)
Key achievements in the main thematic areas explored by COMEST

- Science ethics
- Teaching ethics
- Environmental ethics/Energy
- Freshwater use
- Nanotechnology
- Precautionary principle
- Outer Space
Science ethics

Aim: to pursue reflection on the question of science ethics

- Consultation meetings in different regions (2006)
  • Tokyo
  • Geneva
  • Brazil
- Analysis of existing codes of conduct
Teaching of ethics


Aim: provide advice on how to integrate ethics and responsibility into scientific training.

Report on Teaching of Ethics 2003

- Survey of existing programs
- Analysis of their structure and contents
- Curriculum advice on how to integrate ethics into scientific education

Basis for ethics education programme
Environmental ethics

Experts Group on Environmental Ethics

Aims:
- clarify what is the state of the art in environmental ethics
- examine what are issues for international policy

Meetings:
- Paris: September 2004
- New Orleans: November 2004

Policy document
Not formally adopted
Energy

COMEST sub-commission on energy

Aims:
• pose the ethical problems of energy
• foster dialogue between consumers and producers
• promote essential balance between economic needs, human and environmental necessities

Meeting:
Paris: 2-3 November 2000

2004

The Ethics of Energy: A framework for action
COMEST sub-commission on Ethics of Fresh Water Use

Aims:

- stimulate the implementation of ethical principles
- shape the society – best ethical practice is recognised and practised

Meetings:
- Paris: 10 January 1999
- Oslo: 26 April 1999
- Almeria (Spain): 31 July and 1 August, 1999

The Ethics of Freshwater use : A Survey

2000

2004
Nanotechnologies and ethics

COMEST group of experts (2005)

Aims:
-to analyse the ethical dimensions, reviewed
the state-of-the-art in ethical considerations of nanotechnologies.

2007
Precautionary Principle

Working Group on the Precautionary Principle

Aim: to clarify the PP for decision makers and scientists

March 2005: COMEST Bangkok
Ethics of outer space

- awareness raising concerning ethics of outer space

Objectives (2008 - 2009)

✔ Report on science ethics including recommendations to DG

✔ Report on ethical implications of climate change including recommendations to DG

✔ Review and assess new areas of concern
Science ethics

2008
- International events
  - UNESCO
  - COMEST discussion
  - Other meetings
    - Arab regional consultation (Oct 2008)
    - OECD - GSF committee on research misconduct activities

2009
- EXB (2009)
  - Ordinary session (2009)
    - OECD – GSF (March 2009)
  - Report
  - EXB/GC

2010
- 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity (Singapore 2010)
- Member State questionnaires (2010)
- COMEST working group : 2 meetings to be scheduled in 2009
Environmental ethics

2008

- Refined strategy for Climate Change (EXB, 2008)
- Extraordinary session (2008)
  - Moscow (July 2008)
  - Summer School
- Meetings of Energy Ethics Network

2009

- Action Plan on Climate Change (Apr. 2009)
- Ordinary session (2009)
  - Monaco (March 2009)
  - Niamey (June 2009) ??
- Regional Expert Meeting on environmental ethics teaching
  - Energy
  - Report on ethical implication of climate change

UNESCO

COMEST discussion

Working group meetings

Other meetings
Emerging Challenges

**International events**

**UNESCO**

**COMEST discussion**

**Other meetings**

2008

- Expert meeting on EC recommendation on responsible research and development of nanotechnology (May 2008)
- 2nd World Forum on Biosecurity (Apr 2008)
- Biological Weapons Convention (Aug 2008)
- Dual use in life science (Nov 2008)
- Extraordinary session (2008): Follow up of nanotechnology activities

2009

- Ordinary session (2009)
- Arab/Africa Nanotechnology development meeting ??
- COMEST working group meetings