

HUMAN RIGHTS,
DEMOCRACY
AND THE RULE OF LAW

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

DROITS DE L'HOMME,
DÉMOCRATIE
ET ÉTAT DE DROIT

Bioethics

Developments in time of COVID-19

Laurence Lwoff
Head of Bioethics Unit, Secretary of the Committee on Bioethics
DGI- Human Rights Directorate

Bioethics at CoE



Objective of CoE activities in bioethics:

Protection of human rights in the field of biology and medicine

Pioneering work of the Council of Europe –

Continues to be **unique by its human rights approach**

Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine « Oviedo Convention »

- **Only legally binding international instrument** in the area of human rights in biomedicine
- **Fundamental principles applicable to:**
 - daily medical practice (« European treaty on patients' rights »)
 - new technologies in the area of biology and medicine
- **Links to the European Convention on Human Rights:**
 - Key concepts, terminology
 - serves as a reference in the case-law of the ECtHR
 - Formal link in Art.29 Oviedo Convention



→ **Reference legal instrument to address human rights issues at times of pandemic**

DH-BIO Statement on human rights considerations relevant to the COVID 19 pandemic (April 2020)

Severe cases, scarce resources, uncertainties...



Major ethical challenges
Respect for human dignity
Upholding Human Rights
(Consent, Privacy, Equitable access to health care)



Council of Europe – Health – Pandemic

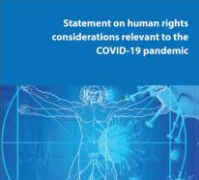
- **Secretary General**



[A Council of Europe contribution to support member states in addressing healthcare issues in the context of the present public health crisis and beyond](#)

« *The situation of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the fundamental importance of everyone's **right to health protection**.* »

- European Convention on Human Rights
- European Social Charter
- **Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine**
 - « *Under the **HELP** programme, the online **course on key human rights principles in biomedicine** provides strong and structured support for health and legal professionals alike.* »
- Medicrime Convention
- Convention on the elaboration of a European Pharmacopea



Other relevant works on protection of human rights in biomedicine - Covid-19 pandemic

- [Dedicated webpage COVID-19 \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int)
- Statement on human rights considerations relevant to COVID-19 pandemic
- Statement on equitable access to vaccination
- Statement on « vaccination pass »
- [Webinars](#):
 - Covid-19 testing
 - Health literacy in a context of a pandemic
 - Covid-19 and public debate
- In preparation
 - Guidelines on Equity of access to treatment and equipment in a context of scarce resources
 - Guidelines on Health literacy



HELP course on Key human rights principles in biomedicine

All based on principles laid down on human rights instruments referred to in the HELP course

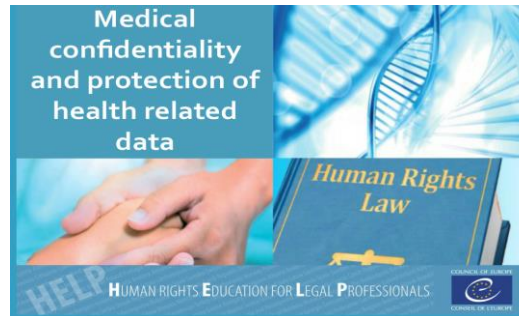
Key human rights principles in biomedicine

Bioethics

Free and informed consent

Medical confidentiality and protection of health related data

Biomedical research



Covid-19: Human rights in health field and Digitalisation

Language	No. of users in this language/country version for Self-Learning (S-L)					
	December 2019	June 2020	December 2020	N.of 'statements of accomplishment' in S-L in December 2020	June 2021	N.of 'statements of accomplishment' in S-L in June 2021
English	74	370	625	62	1188	90
Armenian		7	15	2	31	4
Belarus	61					
French	5	87	143	13	184	18
German	1	15	25	0	34	3
Greek						
Italian	8	163	421	39	707	81
Italian CNF					1103	503
Macedonian						
Latvian			4	0	11	1
Moldova						
Poland					2	0
Portugese						
Romanian	1	38	53	5	67	9
Russian	62	163	231	16	419	41
Spanish	3	271	404	63	465	81
Ukrainian		55	98	13	126	21
TOTALS	215	1169	2019	213	4337	852

Language	TUTORED courses	
	June 2021 enrolled participants	June 2021 succesfull participants
Armenian	40	13
Belarus	24	21
Greek	32	20
Italian	220	26
Macedonian	34	30
Latvian	29	21
Moldova	80	27
Poland	33	24
Portugese	15	10
Spanish	48	16
Ukrainian	27	25
Course called 'HELP in the EU - Key Human Rights Principles in Biomedicine 2019'	60	49
TOTALS	642	282

July 2020 - July 2021
11 tutored courses

HELP course on essential human rights principles in biomedicine

Cooperation activities

- **Armenia** Action Plan
 - **Russian Federation**
 - OCEAN project : academic network
 - **Multilateral Cooperation project** presented by the Secretary General
« Protection of human rights in healthcare during sanitary crisis »
- HELP course on Key human rights principles in biomedicine:
instrumental in reaching the objectives set for these projects

CONCLUSIONS

- Pandemic : fundamental importance of everyone's **right to health protection**
- Need to restore confidence and **trust** – Upholding rights and responsibilities
- Relevance of **common human rights principles** laid down in Council of Europe legal instruments
- **HELP** online courses **increased relevance**: content and format – Multiple target audience
- Essential tools in cooperation activities



« **HELP – A connecting factor** »



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dCxAzxBSto>

THANK YOU

www.coe.int/bioethics
laurence.lwoff@coe.int