



BACKGROUND

Public debate enables fundamental questions about developments in biology and medicine to be the subject of open and collective discussion and dialogue. As a potential source of important benefit for human health, such developments can also have implications which raise concerns related to inter alia autonomy, privacy, integrity and non-discrimination, as well as equity of access to health care. Such implications are questions not only for experts or authorities but for individuals, groups and society as a whole.



AIM

The Guide aims to assist member States in raising public awareness about biomedical developments by encouraging the circulation of information, views and opinions. The Guide also aims to help to develop, plan and promote exchanges between different people and actors with a view, where appropriate, to informing policy making based on shared values and respect for human rights. The Guide does this with reference to a selection of good practices and experiences in member states which illustrate aspects of public debate in action.



GUIDE OUTLINE

The Guide highlights the need for public debate, how to prepare for it, and ways to make it effective and meaningful. The main sections of the Guide are:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The need for public debate**
(the need for public debate in relation to health and biomedicine; why public debate is especially important now; aspects that deserve special attention)
- 3. Preparing for public debate**
(reasons for initiating public debate, what are the objectives? who should be involved? when is the appropriate time to initiate a public debate?)
- 4. Effective public debate**
(effectiveness through design, effectiveness through conduct)
- 5. Public debate that counts**
- 6. Conclusions**



ACCESS AND ORIGINS OF THE GUIDE

The Guide is freely available on the Council of Europe Bioethics website at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/bioethics/public-debate>. It is available in English and French and is being translated into several other languages. The Guide was developed by the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) in the light of Article 28 of the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (ETS No 164), the only international legally binding instrument addressing the protection of human rights in biomedicine.



TARGET AUDIENCE

The Guide is primarily addressed to government officials, public authorities, national ethics committees and other relevant educational and academic institutions and organisations.