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Health for all and everything? The German Ethics Council discusses One Health

Berlin, 20 June 2023

What is new about One Health? A question that the German Ethics Council asks at its annual meeting on 21 June 2023 in Berlin. Titled “One Health: Health for All and Everything?”, the conference at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities takes a closer look at an understanding of health that focuses on the global interconnections of humans, animals and the environment. The conference also highlights the difficult implementation of One Health in research, ethics and policy.

“We cannot consider our health solely as a medical treatment problem,” says Alena Buyx, Chair of the German Ethics Council. “Rather, we should increasingly understand health holistically. With the climate crisis, the complex interrelationships between ecological, animal and human health are becoming abundantly clear.”

The threats posed by zoonotic diseases such as SARS-CoV-2 highlight the importance of One Health. The approach also draws attention to more subtle threats such as the emergence of antibiotic resistance, environmental degradation and malnutrition. Climate change will aggravate many of these threats.

“One Health initially appears to be a promising approach in response to multiple crises of our time,” says Annette Riedel, member of the German Ethics Council. “But such a holistic approach may also run the risk of neglecting necessary differentiation.” For example, it is controversial what exactly health means when the term is applied not to individuals but to collectives or the planet. “What concept of health we use is not a purely academic question,” says Frauke Rostalski, member of the German Ethics Council. “How we understand One Health influences research, grounds ethical claims and has very practical consequences for public policy.”

The annual meeting of the Ethics Council starts with an introductory lecture by sociologist Gesa Lindemann. In the following panel discussion, experts from several disciplines will discuss the concept of One Health from different ethical perspectives. The panel discussion is followed by three parallel lectures on research fields in which One Health is relevant. The conference will conclude with a discussion of the practical consequences of One Health, in areas ranging from medical care to national and international health policy.

The event will be held in German. A video live stream of the conference is freely available at www.ethikrat.org/live. For on-site participation, registration is required. For the hearing impaired, there will be a translation into German sign language and simultaneous transcription/live subtitling, both on site and via livestream. A video recording and a transcription will be provided after the event.

Members

Prof. Dr. med. Alena Buyx (Chair)
 Prof. Dr. iur. Dr. h. c. Volker Lipp (Vice-Chair)
 Prof. Dr. phil. Dr. h. c. Julian Nida-Rümelin (Vice-Chair)
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Susanne Schreiber (Vice-Chair)

Prof. Dr. iur. Steffen Augsberg
 Regional bishop Dr. phil. Petra Bahr
 Prof. Dr. theol. Franz-Josef Bormann
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Hans-Ulrich Demuth
 Prof. Dr. iur. Helmut Frister
 Prof. Dr. theol. Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Dr. phil. Sigrid Graumann
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Armin Grunwald
 Prof. Dr. med. Wolfram Henn
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Ursula Klingmüller
 Stephan Kruip
 Prof. Dr. theol. Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl
 Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Annette Riedel
 Prof. Dr. iur. Stephan Rixen
 Prof. Dr. iur. Dr. phil. Frauke Rostalski
 Prof. Dr. theol. Kerstin Schlögl-Flierl
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 Prof. Dr. phil. Mark Schweda
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Further information on the programme and registration can be found (in German) at www.ethikrat.org/jahrestagungen/one-health.