

Meeting Report

ALF Outreach Dialogue – First Mediterranean Ethics Bodies Informal Dialogue

Date: November 28, 2024

Time: 15:00–17:00

Location: Campus du Savoir, Oujda, Morocco

Languages: English, French, Arabic (interpretation provided)

Context

The First Mediterranean Ethics Bodies Informal Dialogue (Med-EB) was convened as part of the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) Outreach Dialogues, in cooperation with the Ethics Sector of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and with the support of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). It was held as a side event to the African European Symposium on Responsible AI Governance (SAE'IA). The dialogue aimed to initiate structured exchanges among Ethics Bodies from EU Mediterranean countries and Morocco, laying the groundwork for a sustainable community of practice around shared ethical challenges in the wider Euro-Mediterranean.

Objectives

- Establish connections between Ethics Bodies in the EU Mediterranean region and Morocco.
- Encourage knowledge exchange on ethical reflection, governance, and capacity building.
- Identify opportunities for cooperation and shape a Euro-Mediterranean ethics community of practice with policy impact.

Proceedings

Opening Session (15:00–15:05)

The dialogue opened with welcoming remarks highlighting the importance of fostering relationships between Ethics Bodies in the Euro-Mediterranean space and addressing shared ethical challenges.

Session I – Introducing Euro-Med Perspectives (15:05–15:40)

Speakers from France, Morocco, and Italy presented the ongoing work of their respective Ethics Bodies, outlining national initiatives and highlighting pressing ethical concerns. Key points included:

- Digital and biomedical ethics as common priorities across contexts.

- Diverse national frameworks reflecting local realities but converging around challenges of AI, public health, and social accountability.
- The need for cross-border dialogue to identify shared values and standards.

This session concluded with a moderated discussion on commonalities and divergences in ethical priorities across the Mediterranean.

Open Discussion (15:40–16:00)

Participants engaged in a first round of exchanges, underlining:

- The importance of sustained channels of communication.
- Opportunities for comparative learning between EU countries and Morocco.
- The need to translate ethical deliberations into policy relevance.

Session II – Shared Challenges and Opportunities for Cooperation (16:00–16:35)

Speakers from Portugal, Morocco, Greece, and UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee shared insights on capacity building, knowledge transfer, and policy impact. Key themes:

- Capacity gaps in training and institutional resources.
- Policy uptake of ethical recommendations is a recurring challenge.
- Potential to strengthen South-North and South-South collaboration through structured partnerships.

The panel emphasised the role of Ethics Bodies as bridges between science, society, and policy in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Open Discussion (16:35–17:00)

The concluding discussion stressed:

- The added value of networking Ethics Bodies across the Mediterranean.
- The importance of regular informal dialogues to build trust and shared understanding.
- Agreement on exploring a Mediterranean Ethics Community of Practice as a concrete outcome.

Key Outcomes

- Networking initiated: First direct connections established between national Ethics Bodies of EU Mediterranean countries and Morocco.
- Shared priorities identified: Biomedical research ethics, digital ethics, and AI governance emerged as converging concerns.

- Commitment to cooperation: Participants expressed interest in continued dialogue and structured collaboration, with potential to influence Euro-Mediterranean policy discussions.
- Foundation for Community of Practice: Broad consensus to explore mechanisms for sustaining engagement beyond this first meeting.

Next Steps

- Identification of potential frameworks (working groups, joint statements, or follow-up dialogues) for consolidating the emerging ethics community.
- Exploration of synergies with EU-Africa cooperation on responsible AI and bioethics.

List of Participants

Cíntia Águas	Executive Secretary, National Ethics Council for Life Sciences, Portugal
Claude Kirchner	Director, French National Committee for Digital Ethics
Hakkou Abdelkader	President of the Biomedical Research Ethics Committee of Oujda, Vice Dean of Pedagogy, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy
Imane Jroundi	Imane Jroundi, Professor, Public health specialist & Director of the Social Accountability Unit, School of Medicine and Pharmacy in Rabat
Dorian Karatzas	Active Senior for Ethics and Integrity, Former Head of Sector, Ethics and Integrity, DG Research and innovation, EC
Nadia El-Kadmiri	President of Moroccan Association for Research and Ethics, Ibn Zohr University in Agadir
Naima Abda	Member of CERB, Associate Professor, Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Oujda
Nouzha Guessous	Researcher in human rights and bioethics, former member (2000-2005) and former President (2005-2007) of UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee, Member of the National Human Rights Council (2019-2024)
Rim Amrani	Vice Dean for Research and Cooperation, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy of Oujda, Member of CERB
Stefano Semplici	Professor of Social Ethics, University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Member,

	Italian Committee for Bioethics
Vasiliki (Vicky) Mollaki	Scientific Officer, National Commission for Bioethics and Technoethics, Greece
Alessandro Lamonica	Manager, Public Policies, Anna Lindh Foundation