

Publications of the Inter-University Chair

Revista de Derecho y Genoma Humano/Law and the Human Genome Review. Issue number 24, January-June 2006, has been published with the following content: *To clone alone: The United Nations' Human Cloning Declaration* (Rosario M. Isasi / George J. Annas); *La protección de los datos sanitarios y genéticos en España. Un análisis desde los principios generales de protección de datos de*

carácter personal (Javier García); *Human genome and the protection of human rights in Croatia* (Nenad Hla?); *La cuestión jurídica de la obtención de células troncales embrionarias humanas con fines de investigación biomédica. Consideraciones de política legislativa* (Carlos María Romeo Casabona); *El caso Evans y el derecho a no ser forzado a procrear* (Itziar Alkorta Idiakez); *La Ley*

sobre técnicas de reproducción humana asistida: consideraciones científicas y éticas (Juan-Ramón Lacadena); *La situación de la clonación humana en el ámbito internacional* (Javier Rey Del Castillo); *Science and the Courts: a fruitful experiment of interaction* (Valentina Sallaroli / Amadeo Santosuosso)

Activities of the members of the Inter-University Chair

Carlos Romeo Casabona took part the 31 of may and 3 of June in the 11th Meeting on the Human Genome of HUGO (Human Genome Organization), celebrated in Helsinki, where the Ethics Committee of this organisation, of which he is a member, met. Furthermore, he has given a great number of conferencias among which we should mention "European Patent Law and Ethics", Paris, 15-16 January 2006; "Iniciativas legislativas actuales sobre Biomedicina en España" and "Responsabilidad penal derivada de prácticas genéticas", at the International Congress of Health and Law organised by the Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 23-27 January 2006; "Political, legal and regulatory situation in Europe –common aspects and differences: Spain", at the Congress entitled European Biopolitics Connecting Civil Society –Implementing Basic Values Civil Society, organised by Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung and the Institut Mensch, Ethik und Wissenschaft, Berlin, 17-19 March 2006; "Life, Technology and the Law: A Pluridisciplinary Panel", at the Congress "Life, Technology and the Law", organised by the Universidad Degli Studi di Trento, Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche Facoltà di Giurisprudenza, Trento, 9-10 June 2006; "Debate legal actual en Europa sobre investigación con células troncales", in the International Congress on Stem Cells organised by the Sociedad Internacional de Bioética (SIBI), Gijón, 19-21 June 2006; "Implicaciones legales de la utilización de muestras biológicas en la investigación biomédica", in the Summer Courses "La medicina individualizada, una oportunidad para la innovación", organised by the University of the Basque Country, Instituto Roche y CIC Biogune, San Sebastian, 22-23 June 2006. Additionally, he has taken part in diverse Masters and Doctorate Courses: Course on "Nuevas terapias basadas en el Trasplante y Manipulación Genética de Células madre" organised by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and el Centro Nacional de Biotecnología, Madrid, 3-7 April 2006 ("Bioética y Medicina Regenerativa"); Master in Health Law, held at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, 13 January 2006 ("Información y documentación clínica: ley 41/2002"); Master of Criminal Law organised by el Instituto de Criminología de la Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla, 9-10 March 2006 ("Medicina y el Derecho Penal"); International Master in Health Law organised by the Universidad Europea de Madrid, Madrid, 19 May 2006 ("Derecho y genoma humano").

Sergio Romeo Malanda joined last April 1 the Centre for Law and Genetics of the University of Tasmania (Australia), where he will research the "Legal aspects on the use of biological samples and biobanks", under the supervision of Professor Donald Chalmers. The stay is possible due to a postdoctoral research grant by the Ministry of Education and Science. Furthermore, he has published the following articles: "Efectos jurídicos de la contravención por parte de las Comunidades autónomas de la legislación básica estatal en

materia de derechos de los pacientes", in José María Vidal Beltrán/Miguel Ángel García Herrera (co-ords.), *El Estado Autonómico: integración, solidaridad, diversidad*, Volume II, Coléx-INAP, Madrid, 2005; "Responsabilidad penal por la omisión de tratamientos médicos a recién nacidos gravemente discapacitados (a la vez, una reflexión sobre el concepto de nacimiento en el ordenamiento jurídico español)", *Derecho y Salud*, nº 1 (2006); "Novedades legislativas en el ámbito de la investigación científica: algunas reflexiones", *Instituto Roche Informa*, nº 4 (2006). Likewise, he has addressed the following conferences: "Direito Penal Simbólico x Direito Penal Preventivo em Relação com a Biotecnologia Humana", 11º *Seminário Internacional del IBCCRIM (Instituto Brasileiro de Ciências Criminais)*, São Paulo, October 5, 2005; "Confidentiality and Biotechnology: Ethical and Legal Rights and Duties", *Congreso Anual 2005 de la Asociación Europea de Centros de Ética Médica (AECEMIEACME) y de la European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Healthcare (ESPMH): Ethics and Philosophy of Emerging Medical Technologies* (Barcelona, August 25, 2005).

Aitziber Emaldi Cirión has participated as a Professor in the Health Law Master of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and in the International Master of Public Policy and Territorial Development organized by the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology of the University of Deusto in Bilbao. She has published the article entitled "Panorama ético-jurídico de la Medicina Individualizada", in a book by several authors entitled *Preguntas éticas en cuestiones disputadas hoy*, Universidad de Deusto, San Sebastian, 2005. Furthermore, she has addressed the conferences "Consejo genético", in the I Congress on persons with physical disabilities, Bilbao, 24-26 May 2006, and at the "European bioethics approaches to understanding of Health: traditional and non-traditional medicine", Kyiv, Ukraine, May 2006.

Leire Escajedo San Epifanio has published the articles "Nutrigenómica, integración económica y protección jurídico-constitucional de los consumidores en la UE" (I) and (II), *Revista de Derecho Alimentario*, Year I, numbers 9 and 10, February and March 2006; and "Aspectos jurídicos de la nutrigenómica", in AA. VV. *Nutrigenética y Nutrigenómica*, Monografías Humanitas nº 9 (in collaboration with Carlos M. Romeo Casabona).

Amelia Martín Uranga in January 2006 has joined FARMAINDUSTRIA to manage the Office of the Spanish Technological Platform *Medicamentos Innovadores*, whose object is to promote the biomedical research in new medicines through the co-operation between all the agents involved: industry, academia, researchers, science societies, regulators of diverse public administrations, etc. She has also participated in the Master of Intellectual Property of the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas in Madrid (ICADE) teaching a module on

biotechnology and aspects of intellectual property. Likewise, as in earlier editions, she is in charge of the forum of experts in legal aspects in the course for Bio entrepreneurs BioAnces of Genoma España. Likewise, she has collaborated in the *Guía práctica para la utilización de muestras biológicas en investigación biomédica*, edited by the Instituto Roche, Madrid, 2006.

Pilar Nicolás Jiménez has given the following conferences: "Evaluación de estudios genéticos", *I Reunión de Comités Éticos de Investigación Clínica de la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco*, Bilbao, 21 February 2006; "Aspectos éticos, jurídicos y económicos relacionados con la medicina individualizada" in the *Seminario Fundamentos de la medicina individualizada y sus implicaciones sanitarias*, Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública, Granada, 2 March 2006; "La protección jurídica de los datos genéticos de carácter personal", Agencia Catalana de Protección de Datos, Barcelona, 13 March 2006; "La protección jurídica de los datos genéticos personales. Identificación de personas a partir del ADN. La investigación científica en genética", in Vitoria-Gasteiz, 5 and 9 of May 2006; "La información genética como objeto de derechos fundamentales", Universidad de La Laguna, 15 May 2006; "Aspectos legales de los ensayos clínicos en farmacogenética", in the Congress *Farmacogenética. Situación actual*, organized by the Pharmacy Service of the Hospital 12 de octubre and the Instituto Roche para las Soluciones Integrales de Salud, Madrid, 18 May 2006; "Aspectos éticos y jurídicos. La intervención de los CEICs" in the Conference *Utilización de muestras biológicas en investigación biomédica*, organized by the Instituto Roche para las Soluciones Integrales de Salud, Ministry of Health and Consumption, Madrid, 22 May 2006; "Ethical issues of genetic testing", in the *Curso Familiar Cancer*, Organised by the European School of Oncology and the Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Oncológicas, Madrid, 15 June 2006.

Asier Urruela Mora participated as an invited expert in the *Workshop on Ethical Approach of Biomedical Research* organised by the Europa Commission in Bucharest (Romania) the 4 and 5 of May 2006, addressing the following work entitled "Implications and risks in using genetic findings, i.e. in legal proceedings, employment, insurance, education and health care". On the other hand, he taught the speech entitled "Estatuto del embrión. Aspectos jurídicos y cambios legislativos", within the "Jornada de Medicina Regenerativa. Implicaciones para los Comités Éticos de investigación Clínica", held in Zaragoza the 8 of June 2006, which was organised by the Instituto Aragonés de Ciencias de la Salud and the CEIC of Aragón. Likewise, he addressed the conference in the Congreso de Medicina y Derecho (28-30 of June 2006) held in the Centre for Legal Studies (Ministry of Justice) with the work entitled "Estatuto Jurídico del Embrión".

Inter-University Chair in Law and Human Genome

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Perspectivas

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Director: Prof. Dr. iur. Dr. med. Dr. h.c. mult. Carlos María Romeo Casabona

This issue is also published in Basque and Spanish

Editorial

Professor Carlos María Romeo Casabona was awarded a Doctor Honoris causa by the University of La Laguna (Tenerife, Spain)



The last 12th of May, the University of La Laguna held a solemn academic act to award Carlos María Romeo Casabona as Doctor Honoris Causa by the University. The Rector of the University of La Laguna, Ángel Gutiérrez Navarro, along with the Rector of the University of the Basque Country, Juan Ignacio Pérez

Iglesias and the Vice-rector Carmen González Murua commenced the solemn session of investiture. After the reading of the resolution of the naming of Carlos María Romeo Casabona as doctor Honoris Causa by the Secretary General, Fátima Flores Mendoza, his sponsor José Ulises Hernández Plasencia made the eulogy of the doctorate. Professor Romeo Casabona in the act of investiture gave a speech entitled "Causality, determinism and scientific uncertainty in Criminal Law". The Rector of the University of La Laguna emphasized in his speech that the laureate met the two indispensable conditions for a master, important achievements among his class peers and the exercise of the teaching profession among his disciples.

This is the fourth honoris causa degree conferred upon Professor Romeo Casabona, along with those granted in 2004 by la Universidad Privada de Tacna (Peru), by la Universidad Nacional de San Agustín de Arequipa (Peru) and by la Universidad Católica de Santa María de Arequipa (Peru).

The days following the ceremony and in relation to such, the Law Faculty of the University of La Laguna held a Congress entitled "Nuevos retos del derecho penal: respuestas al desarrollo social y tecnológico" (13-16 May) in which besides Professor Romeo Casabona and other experts, the members of the Inter-University Chair in Law and the Human Genome participated. Aitziber Emaldi Ciriñón spoke on "Documentos de voluntades anticipadas y autonomía del paciente"; Amelia Martín Uranga dealt with the topic on "La lucha contra la piratería industrial e intelectual a la vista de las recientes reformas normativas"; Pilar Nicolás Jiménez made a dissertation on the "Protección jurídico-penal de los datos de carácter personal. Especial consideración de la documentación clínica"; Sergio Romeo Malanda made an intervention with a presentation on "Delitos genéticos: ¿función preventiva o función (meramente) simbólica?"; Asier Urruela Mora and Iñigo de Miguel Beriain spoke on "Los retos del Derecho Penal en la Sociedad de la Información" and "El Derecho en la era de la Globalización", respectively.

Opinion

The human embryo: a concept that needs updating

It is well known that Biology and Medicine will never be able to separate themselves from the facts. Likewise, both Bioethics and Biomedicine, in so far as they are humanistic disciplines, are enslaved to the concepts. Among all of them, few have obtained greater importance than the human embryo. Several monographs, a considerable number of articles, multiple round tables, debates and even some Congresses, Meetings or Conferences have been dedicated to it. In spite of this, an agreement has never been reached in matters that are as transcendental as that of its anthropological, ethical or legal status. This dysfunction, always troublesome, has special importance at times such as the present; in which the changes in our normative framework on artificial fertilisation co-exist with measures aimed to adequately channel the research on stem cells or the control on the bio banks. Therefore, we believe that it is worthwhile to try to overcome our discrepancies through the establishing of a new but clarifying debate, previous to those already known, the debate on the definition itself of the human embryo.

In order to be able to adequately focus on this idea, it is clearly necessary to previously bring back the traditional definition of human embryo, which is characterised as the "fruit of the fertilisation", that is, as the result of the meeting of a sperm and an ovule, a truly dysfunctional definition in so far as it encompasses beings of very diverse characteristics under the same umbrella. In this sense, it is convenient to remember that the fertilisation is an extremely complex process, being so that its final result can be seriously unlike. In this way, any fertilisation can be rise to a being capable of evolving in a balanced manner until becoming an adult individual of the species to which it belongs, but can also become part of a sample of aberrant creatures. For example, among these we can find the chimeras or the mosaicism, that is, cells whose DNA is altered in such a manner that they will never be able to adequately develop. All things considered, this matter is neither as spectacular nor worrying as that of the moles, which are a concoction of cells that fostered by an erratic DNA, systematically multiply, truly becoming cancers that must be extirpated from the body of a woman in order to avoid her death. The aforementioned cases are certainly not exceptional. In fact, and being optimists, data reveal that more than half of the fertilised ovules have anomalies that are so serious that they will never be used for implantation, either by the aforementioned circumstances or by some failure in any of the genes involved in the process of development, such as the OCT4 or the CDX2, without looking any further.

In spite of this evidence provided by biological data, our conceptual framework has been traditionally reluctant to make a distinction between the fertilised ova, thus uniting all the possible cases into the same denomination, that of human embryo. The only exception that we have been able to oppose to such a heavy panorama has been to add to some of them, those that seem capable of giving birth to a human being, the label of “viable”, while the others, those that inexorably died before that instant, were labelled as “non-viable”. This distinction, all things considered, has always been considered highly improper by ample groups. In this way and from the point of view of those who identify the fertilisation as the moment of the appearance of a being, a classification of this type establishes distinctions between some human beings and others in relation to the function of their capabilities. Others, as we, believe that to call an embryo, even with the surname of non-viable, to a being that has no capacity for development instead of simply saying that it is not an embryo is absurd. Nonetheless, the applicable terminology to the case has remained unvaried during years, until at last the advent of events such as the so called therapeutic cloning has highlighted the little functionality of the traditional definition of the human embryo in order to address the great debate of the beginning of life.

In regards to this matter, we deem convenient at this point to make a reminder that almost the totality of those who oppose the (wrongly called) therapeutic cloning or at least to the modality of this that uses the method of nuclear cell replacement, does so because they believe that the cells obtained through these procedures are embryos. Nonetheless, this argument would be very easy to refute in the event of maintaining the traditional definition of a human embryo: it would be enough to say that given that the cell at hand does not proceed from any fertilisation (this being understood in the sense of the union of a sperm and an ovule), it is obvious that it can't be a human embryo. The problem of this solution probably resides in that with it we won't have convinced absolutely anyone of those who defend the aforementioned argument. Furthermore, we will probably have increased the wrath, probably leading them to denounce some type of sophism of half truth or fraud in the use of these terms. Nonetheless, all that has been mentioned up until now has an overwhelming logic: if the embryo is the being that arises as the consequence of the fertilisation and in the therapeutic cloning there isn't any type of fertilisation, then it is obvious that a cell obtained through this procedure can't be an embryo. Where then will the complaints by those who hold stances contrary to this practice come from?

Following a method that usually allows us to reach happy consequences; we must note that if the failure is not found in the reasoning, then it

must necessarily be found in the premises from where it is based. More specifically, we believe that the difficulty with which we now find ourselves in this case is that those who believe that the cells that are obtained through the replacement of nuclear cells are embryos are using a definition of an embryo that is completely different to the earlier one and that could be summarised in the following: “being that has sufficient capacity to develop until reaching moment X” or if one prefers, using words that are a little more technical “being that has enough potentiality to develop until X”.

Therefore we find ourselves with the fact that to be against therapeutic cloning is only comprehensible if we accept that there can exist an alternative definition to that of the classic human embryo. This, of course, doesn't have to be negative, especially if we consider that this definition is much more useful than any other alternative. Nonetheless, this doesn't mean that it is problem free, but that in fact, poses two complex though exciting issues. The first is that this option certainly allows us to uphold that there may be embryos that proceed from alternative sources to that of fertilisation, but only at the expense of having to admit the contrary, that is, that there may be fertilised ova that may not be embryos due to a lack of this potentiality. The second issue, more problematic still than the first, is that the proposed definition contains the serious difficulty that it is necessary to elaborate a characterisation of a person that is previous to that of the embryo, if we truly want to provide it with any useful utility. The motive for this need is simple: if we have defined the embryo due to its potentiality to develop up until moment X, it is obvious that we will only be able to know if a being fits or not within the definition if beforehand we establish the limits of the predicate of the definition. With this we are bound to fix that point or moment X previously to defining the embryo. This impedes, all things considered, to uphold the idea that the person can be defined based on the idea of an embryo. On the contrary, it is our concretion of that X that will tell us what we consider a person. This certainly implies the idea that a person can't be considered as data previous to the human thought itself, with all the consequences that this entails.

Any of the two objections raised (and particularly the second) can certainly seem complex to resolve for the moralist. However, the jurist has more than enough tools to face it. In regards to the first, as in fact, the change of definition wouldn't mean much more than to change the old division between viable and non-viable embryos for another classification of the blastocysts that divide it into embryos and embryoidal bodies, to use any definition. In regards to the second objection, it is enough to bear in mind that in legal terms, the concept of a person has been traditionally well limited in each regulation; this so, there wouldn't be any difficulty

to conceptually establish the X in the expected definition. In the Spanish legal system, for example, an embryo would only and exclusively be a cell capable of developing until birth, which is the moment in which it acquires legal personality. In any other case, we would find ourselves facing another empty egg, a mosaicism, a chimera, an ovonucleus or an artefact, but not an embryo.

In exchange for these light inconveniences, a legal architecture of this nature would provide the legislator with important advantages. In this way, and in order to begin, it would finally establish a nexus of union between the figures of the embryo and the person, which at present do not have any connection: a person would be the born human being, while the embryo would be the cell that is capable of developing on its own until reaching that state. On the other hand, and thanks to it, it would be easy to provide a solution to the debate on whether a concrete cell that is created through a procedure that would not be fertilisation would be an embryo or not: it would be enough for us to know if it had reasonable probabilities of development in the aforementioned sense. This certainly would not be too complex in that nowadays we already have available indicators that are sufficiently precise to be able to know when we are facing a human blastocyst and what its characteristics are. Morphological analyses as well as the contrast of the information that is provided by the aforementioned genes are more than enough to discard any possibility of development in many of the cells that up until today we call embryos. Obviously, there will always be others in which there will exist a certain interval of doubt, but for those there would always remain the option to trace a presumption of potentiality, without changing at all the fundamental design, a presumption that in any case would always be *iuris tantum* and not *iuris de iure*.

The conclusion to all that has been exposed in the aforementioned lines must be, in our opinion, that the solution to the eternal debate on the status of the human embryo would be much easier to reach if we would bother to introduce a previous debate. As paradoxical as it may seem, the introduction of a new factor into the discussion, such as the redefinition of the human embryo, not only doesn't complicate matters even more, but rather it can be a ray of light to find the way out of the tunnel. From here we venture that if we don't have the courage or the prudence to take this step, the new extreme cases which biotechnology is placing before us will seem each time more complex to face.

Íñigo de Miguel Beriain

News on the Chair in Law and the Human Genome

The second edition of the Inter-University Master in Bioethics begins

The second edition of the Inter-University online Master in Bioethics has already begun. This course is organised by the Universidad of La Laguna, the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and the University of the Basque Country. It is co-directed by the director of the Inter-University Chair in Law and the Human Genome, Professor Romeo Casabona. Furthermore, the members of the Chair are responsible for teaching the course on "Law and Bioethics", co-ordinated by Professor Leire Escajedo San Epifanio.

This Master has as its main objectives to endow the health professionals with the capacity to recognise the ethical aspects of their professional practice; to provide the health professionals with knowledge that will allow them to critically and systematically analyse these aspects and to provide the professionals with the practical abilities to integrate these dimensions into the continuous process of decision making and to be capable of providing reasonable argumentation.

XIII Conference in Law and the Human Genome

The Inter-University Chair in Law and the Human Genome held during the 3 and 4 of April the traditional Conference in Law and the Human Genome that this year celebrates its 13th edition. The inaugural conference entitled "Nuevas iniciativas legales en España sobre investigación biomédica" was addressed by Prof. Dr. Francisco Gracia Navarro, Director of the Instituto de Salud Carlos III. The first session that followed it was centred on the "legal initiatives of the international bodies on the life sciences", which was chaired by Carlos Fernández de Casadevante, Professor of International Public Law and International Relations of the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid. During this session the following participated: Héctor Gros Espiell, Ambassador of Uruguay in France and Member of the International Committee of Bioethics of UNESCO who spoke on "la declaración internacional sobre bioética y derechos humanos de la UNESCO, 19 October 2005"; Javier Rey del Castillo, Secretary of the Nacional Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction, whose theme was "La situación de la clonación humana en el ámbito internacional"; and Daniel dos Santos Pinto Serrão, Member of the Bioethics Committee of the Council of Europe, who disserted on "Investigación con células troncales embrionarias y el Convenio de Oviedo".

La segunda sesión se centró en el tema "Las iniciativas en investigación genética". Isaac Merino Jara, Profesor de Derecho Financiero y Tributario de la Universidad del País Vasco fue el moderador y contó con la colaboración de José María Mato, Director del CIC bioGUNE, quien disertó sobre "La investigación en biociencias en Euzkadi"; Julio Font Pérez, Director del Noray Bioinformática, habló sobre "La bioinformática como herramienta fundamental en la investigación genética"; y Manuel Martín Lomas, Director Científico del CIC bioGUNE, habló sobre "Nuevas técnicas y nuevas implicaciones éticas: Bionanotecnología".

La tercera sesión se tituló "Genes facing the tribunals", moderada por Arantza Libano

Beristain, profesor de Derecho Procesal de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. Los participantes fueron José Antonio Martín Pallín, Magistrado de la Sala Segunda del Tribunal Supremo, quien presentó "Las recientes sentencias sobre la prueba de perfiles de ADN en el proceso penal"; Itziar Alkorta Ildiákez, Profesora de Derecho Civil de la Universidad del País Vasco que habló sobre el tema de "Cuestiones litigiosas relativas a reproducción asistida"; and Ricardo de Ángel Yágüez, Profesor de Derecho Civil de Deusto University disertó sobre el "responsabilidad médica por errores de diagnóstico prenatal: tendencias jurisprudenciales".

La cuarta sesión de "Genetics and Society" fue moderada por Xabier Etxeberria Mauleón, Director del Departamento de Ética de la Universidad de Deusto, y los participantes fueron Miguel del Campo Casanelles, del Departamento de Experimental y Health Sciences de la Universidad Pompeu Fabra, con el tema "La implantación de servicios de diagnóstico genético: su importancia asistencial"; Francisco García Olmedo, Profesor de Bioquímica de la Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, con la conferencia titulada "Deontología profesional y fraude científico"; and José Luis de la Serna Fernández de Córdoba, Director of the Health Section of Daily El Mundo, spoke on "medios de comunicación y difusión de la ciencia".

Current state of affairs of the research projects

The Chair will participate in two new research projects that are subsidised by the European Commission: the European project CHIMBRIDS, co-ordinated by Professor Jochen Taupitz (University of Mannheim) and the European project BIOTHET-ED, co-ordinated by Professor Franco Celada (University of Geneva).

The aim of the CHIMBRIDS project (www.chimbrids.org) is to analyse scientific, ethical, philosophical and legal issues that are posed by the use of hybrids and chimeras in European and international research. Experts from 15 member states of the EU, from Canada, China, Israel, Japan, Switzerland and USA have been invited to take part in CHIMBRIDS. The project will have three main objectives: analyse emerging matters related with the reproduction of a human being and an animal; associate the rapid advance of scientific research in this field with the development of basic ethical, philosophical and legal principles; and to bring science even closer to society in order to arouse an open debate on hybrids and chimeras within the European space of research and abroad.

The Chair in Law and the Human Genome held in Bilbao from the 23 to the 26 of June 2006 one of the workshops for the follow up of this program. The director of the Chair, Carlos Romeo Casabona, as host and Iñigo de Miguel attended this meeting.

The BIOTHET-ED project aims to foster cross disciplinary meetings with scientists, impart diverse courses in East Europe as well as establishing electronic data bases and publications in the field of Bioethics. The first of the scheduled courses (**European Course on Biotechnology Ethics**) was held in the Czech city of Brno from the 29 of June to the 6 of July and had the participation of Professor Romeo Casabona among the qualified professors as well

as the assistance, in representation of the Chair of Dr. de Miguel Berain. The web page of the project can be consulted in order to receive more information on this and other scheduled courses.

Professor Carlos María Casabona named member of the Steering Committee on Bioethics (Directorate General of Legal Affairs) of the Council of Europe

The Director of the Chair in Law and the Human Genome, Carlos María Romeo Casabona has been recently named member of the Steering Committee on Bioethics (Directorate General of Legal Affairs) of the Council of Europe. As a member elect, he attended the 30th meeting of this institution, organised by the Council of Europe, which took place in Strasbourg the 2-5 of May 2006.

Publication of the guide *Guía Práctica para la utilización de muestras biológicas en investigación biomédica*

A reputable group of experts of a cross disciplinary character, co-ordinated by Carlos María Romeo Casabona and Pilar Nicolás Jiménez have provided a joint vision of the technical, ethical and legal parameters in order to draft a guide aimed to guarantee an adequate use of biological samples, that each time are being stored in greater quantities and acquiring a greater clinical relevance.

The "Guía de muestras biológicas para investigación biomédica" promoted by the Roche Institute has been drafted in order to optimise the handling of the samples that come from biomedical research and to provide all the professionals involved in research with biological samples with clear and integral guidelines in the process of the use of such.

The main objective of this guide is to ease, unify and optimise the use of biological samples for biomedical research. Besides this, the authors note that it will also allow to create practical material for work, reference and education that will contribute to promote the research and the development of the rights and obligations of the researchers, patients and subjects from whom these samples come from. Likewise, the object is to provide answers to legal and ethical issues that are currently being posed in this field.

New Web Page

Since last June, the new web page of the Chair in Law and the Human Genome can be visited as well as its new address at: www.catedraderechoygenomahumano.es.

This new web page is much more modern and functional than the previous, with a structure that eases the access to its contents, which are also more abundant and complete. In this way, the novelties, news worthy of interest and information on up-coming events appear in the initial page. Among other services and information that is included in this renewed web space, it is noteworthy the information on the research projects that the Chair is undertaking as well as a refurbished section of links of interest that ease the access to Internet resources available in Law and Genetics.