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Celebration of World Bioethics Day 2016 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

On Wednesday, October 19, 2016, students of Genetics and Bioengineering Department of International University of Sarajevo (IUS) organized series of events in the city of Sarajevo as a part of the first celebrations of the World Bioethics Day around the world. Citizens of Sarajevo as well as fellow students had the opportunity to find out more about the recent breakthroughs in the fields of biology and medicine and how they might impact their contemporary lives. They were asked to answer an apparently simple question: “Would you design genes of your children?” by leaving their hand prints on a hanging laboratory coat. The responses were numerous and so were the questions and discussions that were raised afterwards. Except their interest to leave their response, participants were kind to share reasons of their color selection and ideas about these topics. Most frequent reasons for “yes” were possibility to avoid certain genetically predisposed diseases, and for “no” were that activity of this and any similar kind are maybe not needed and may not follow ethical norms. Citizens showed a great interest in the burning biomedical issues and were not at all indifferent towards both positive and negative consequences of biomedical research. More information about this event can be found at <https://news.ius.edu.ba/news/celebration-world-bioethics-day-held-ius-bbi-and-scc>

These activities were held as a prelude to the International conference “**Bioethics in the Era of Genomics and Personalized Medicine**”, which was organized by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Unit of UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and International University of Sarajevo on October 28, 2016 (<https://bioethics.ius.edu.ba>).

Recent developments in the natural sciences and technology have greatly facilitated better living conditions and offered novel diagnostic and therapeutic options to people worldwide. However, the current ethical and regulatory frameworks are often found not to be synchronized with these revolutionary events, particularly in the area of genomics and personalized medicine. Thus, this Conference offered a great opportunity for physicians, geneticists, pharmacists, biotechnologists, philosophers, and other professionals in the area

of bioethics, law and the legal system to exchange their ideas regarding the current practices and challenges in the modern genomics era, such as:

- Analysis of the ethical, legal, and social implications of genomics in the modern society
- Collaboration between private and public sector
- Capacity development through the team work of the experts in genomics, social sciences, and bioethics with public institutions and start-up companies
- Training and networking of young researchers

Among attendants of this Conference were Fahrudin Kulenović, president of Medical Chamber of Canton Sarajevo, Amira Redžić, Head of Department for Culture – State Commission for UNESCO of B&H, Indira Mundžić, advisor of president of Office of Medical Insurance, Vice-Rectors Ali Gürsel and Farut Berat Akcesme, as well as other professors and students from IUS and other universities. The Conference was opened by Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, Sabina Semiz, who was also the president of the Organizing Committee. A special award was given to Fahrudin Kulenovic, MD, a member of the Steering Committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina Unit of the International Network of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics, for his active contribution in this Unit's activities.

The invited speakers were experts in the field of Bioethics, including Heidi C. Howard, from the Centre for Research Ethics & Bioethics (CRB), Uppsala University, Sweden; Vojin Rakić, Director of the Center for the Study of Bioethics; Head, European Division of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics; Chair, Cambridge Working Group for Bioethics Education; University of Belgrade, Serbia; Bogi Eliassen, Head, Danish Unit of UNESCO Chair in Bioethics; Institute for Future Studies, Copenhagen, Denmark; and Kasim Bajrovic, Institute for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are pleased to conclude that both of these events were very successful, with almost 200 participants at the Conference, and many positive comments. Our students contributed a lot to both events and were very enthusiastic with their voluntarily contributions.