

# Science and Society: Economic and Social Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Ethical Charters, Citizens' Conferences

## Introduction

The relationship between science and society is complex and interdependent. Science influences society through its innovations and discoveries, while society shapes science through its values, needs and expectations. In this course, we will explore the different dimensions of this relationship, with particular emphasis on economic and social ethics, codes of conduct, ethical charters, citizens' conferences and ethics committees.

## 1. Economic and social ethics

### 1.1. Definition and importance

Economic and social ethics is a crucial area in the fabric of modern society. It encompasses the moral principles and values that guide economic and social interactions, while taking into account the implications for collective well-being and social justice. This branch of ethics examines individual and institutional behavior in the context of economic, commercial and social activities.

The importance of economic and social ethics lies in its ability to promote fair, responsible and sustainable practices within society. By integrating ethical considerations into economic and social decisions, we can aim to reduce inequalities, promote respect for human rights and protect the environment. In addition, an ethical approach fosters trust and cooperation between individuals and organizations, thereby reinforcing the stability and prosperity of society as a whole.

### 1.2. Fundamental principles

- **Social Justice:** Social justice aims to ensure an equitable distribution of resources, opportunities and benefits in society. This involves recognizing and addressing the socio-economic inequalities that limit access to resources and opportunities, ensuring that each individual has the means to realize his or her full potential.
- **Solidarity:** Solidarity implies a sense of responsibility and mutual support between members of society. This manifests itself in a willingness to help the most vulnerable, to share burdens and benefits equitably, and to work together to overcome common challenges.
- **Sustainability:** Ethical sustainability recognizes the interdependence between economic and social activities and the environment. It encourages practices that conserve natural resources, reduce harmful ecological impacts and promote long-term ecological resilience.

### **3. Ethical charters**

#### **3.1. Definition and scope**

Ethical charters are documents that establish the values, principles and ethical standards to which an organization, company or community adheres in its activities and interactions. They represent a formal commitment to ethical and responsible practices, and serve as a guide for making decisions in line with high ethical standards. Ethical charters aim to promote a culture of ethics within the entity concerned, by making its members aware of ethical issues and providing them with guidelines for acting ethically in all situations.

#### **3.2. Examples and Impact**

- **Corporate Ethics Charter**

The Corporate Ethical Charter sets out an organization's ethical commitments to social responsibility, environmental sustainability and respect for human rights. It defines the company's core values and establishes guiding principles for its activities. For example, a company may commit to respecting fair labor standards, minimizing its environmental impact, promoting diversity and inclusion, and adopting transparent and fair practices in its operations. This charter helps build stakeholder trust, attract ethically-minded investors and customers, and create an organizational culture focused on ethical values.

- **Ethical Charter for Researchers**

The Ethical Charter for Researchers defines the ethical principles to be followed in the conduct of scientific research. It emphasizes values such as intellectual integrity, respect for participants, transparency and honesty in communicating results. The charter establishes ethical standards for the design, conduct and publication of research, and encourages researchers to consider the ethical implications of their work. For example, it may require informed consent from participants, protection of their privacy and dignity, and disclosure of potential conflicts of interest. By adhering to this charter, researchers undertake to maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethics in their scientific practice, thus contributing to the credibility and reliability of research.

### **4. Citizens' Conferences**

#### **4.1. Definition and methodology**

Citizens' conferences are forums for democratic deliberation where ordinary citizens are invited to participate in in-depth discussions on complex societal issues. Unlike traditional conferences where experts or decision-makers dominate the conversation, citizens' conferences give the floor to citizens to express their opinions, concerns and ideas on important issues. The methodology of citizens' conferences is often based on a deliberative approach, where participants are guided through a structured process of discussion and reflection to arrive at informed recommendations or opinions.

#### **4.2.Examples and results**

- **Bioethics conferences:**

In these conferences, groups of citizens deliberate on complex ethical issues related to bioethics. This can include topics such as genetic manipulation, medically assisted reproduction, the use of information technology in healthcare, and many others. Participants are exposed to objective information and diverse perspectives, then encouraged to discuss, debate and make recommendations on how to manage these issues ethically and responsibly in society. The results of these conferences can provide valuable insights for policy-makers, researchers and healthcare professionals in the development of bioethics policy and practice.

- **Climate Change Conferences:**

Climate change conferences bring citizens together to discuss pressing environmental challenges and the actions needed to address them. Participants examine policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, strategies to adapt to climate change, and ways to transition to renewable energy sources. These conferences provide a platform for citizens to share their concerns, ideas and experiences, and contribute to the development of viable and inclusive solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change. The recommendations emanating from these conferences can influence government policies, local initiatives and individual actions to combat climate change.

In short, citizens' conferences are powerful tools for promoting democratic participation, encouraging public dialogue and developing collaborative solutions to complex societal challenges. By giving a voice to ordinary citizens, these conferences help to strengthen the legitimacy, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making processes in society.

#### **Conclusion**

Science and society are closely linked, and ethics play a crucial role in managing this relationship. Ethical principles guide economic and social interactions, codes of conduct establish professional

standards, ethical charters promote a culture of ethics, citizens' conferences foster democratic participation, and ethics committees offer advice on complex ethical issues. By combining these different tools, we can create an environment where science and society can thrive in an ethical and responsible manner.