

The 25th anniversary of the Bioethics and Law Observatory UB

The University of Barcelona's Bioethics and Law Observatory (OBD) has this year celebrated its 25th anniversary.

The severe pandemic affecting the world has prevented us from celebrating it in the style that we would have wished to at this moment. Nevertheless, to mark such a singular anniversary, we would like to offer an appraisal of the road we have travelled and the successes achieved.

As its [founder](#) and the director for all these years, I feel especially satisfied; for the work done and because my idea of uniting bioethics with human rights, which in 1995 was a disruptive proposal, has turned out to be an idea generally assumed, or at least advocated, in 2020.

In the last 25 years we can mention several important achievements:

In the field of [education](#) –besides the many tailor-made courses organized during these years– the emblematic [Master's in Bioethics and Law](#) has been running uninterruptedly for 23 years and enjoys maximum prestige internationally. We hope that the same will be the case with the [Master's in Food Ethics and Law](#), which is now beginning its fourth edition and is also a pioneer in the field of ethics and food law. Furthermore, we have a specific [PhD line](#).

In [research](#), the OBD is an extremely wide-ranging point of reference: the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan government) recognizes us as a "Consolidated Research Group", and in recent years we have developed numerous competitive national and international research projects, conducted research by agreement, and created international research and transfer networks, whose links have remained firmly in place beyond the duration of the calls for projects.

A great number of [publications](#) have resulted from the research conducted, appearing in prestigious journals and publishing houses; our [Bioethics Collection](#) has been awarded ANECA's certificate of quality.

I would also like to mention the OBD's collection of [Documents](#), which I began in 2002 in order to supply arguments for social debate in conflictive issues: the classics of bioethics –such as research with embryos, advance directives, abortion, euthanasia or conscientious objection– and also, on cutting-edge issues like the use of data in health, RRI, genome editing or nanotechnology. The published Documents have had a far-reaching normative impact; their recommendations are now part of numerous laws and protocols for action.



I must also point out the founding in 2004 of the online [Bioethics and Law Journal](#), recognized in the principal repositories of quality, which functions with a policy of open and free access, for both authors and readers.

All this is available on the [OBD's webpage](#), a valuable storehouse with a large bibliographical section, in Open Access, which I recommend you visit.

In the compilation of what I have created in these years, I must mention the [University of Barcelona Bioethics Committee](#) (1996), and the Network of Ethics Committees in Universities and Public Research Centres (2002). At that time there was nothing like them, and they have even been taken as models by the League of European Research Universities (LERU).

Lastly, but no less importantly, I wish to point out that the OBD is the seat of the [UNESCO Chair in Bioethics](#), of which I was appointed the holder in 2007. We therefore organize the International Symposium on the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights –we are now on the 15th edition– which picked up the baton from the Symposium on new genetic technologies and bioethics that had been held since the OBD was founded.

It has therefore been 25 years of incessant activity, which has been possible thanks to an enormously dedicated international interdisciplinary team, united by sharing a common idea of bioethics: secular, global and social.

I hope that in the coming years the natural generational handovers continue to take place harmoniously, and that our community of knowledge will expand even more.

There is work to do, at the present time, for another 25 years...

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