Preface

The section "Ethical and social implications of biometric identification technology" of this issue of Annali dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità* *includes publications from the Project Biometric Identification Technology Ethics (BITE), coordinated by the Centro per la Scienza, la Società e la Cittadinanza, with which the Istituto Superiore di Sanità has established a productive collaboration relationship. The BITE Project is a 2 year support action funded by the EU Commission in the scope of the Science and Society Action Plan of the FP6 (Contract number 006093). BITE aims to prompt research and to launch a public debate on bioethics of biometric technology. BITE is a preliminary action that aims to pave the way for future wider research projects on ethical and societal implications of biometric identification technology.*

Consortium members are:

- *Partner 1: Coordinator Emilio Mordini, Centre for Science, Society and Citizenship, CCSC, Rome (IT)*
- *Partner 2: Centre for Clinical Research and Bioethics (CERBIC) Rome (IT). Group leader: Ermelando V. Cosmi*
- *Partner 3: Centre for the Economic and Social Aspects of Genomics (CESAGen), Lancaster (UK). Group leader: Ruth Chadwick*
- *Partner 4: ESA Communication, ESA, Rome, (IT). Group leader: Rita Tittoni*
- *Partner 5: Humanscan GMBH, HS, Erlangen (DE). Group leader: Robert Frischhholz*
- *Partner 6: Institute for Healthcare Management and Policy (IBMG) Rotterdam (NL). Group leader: Irma Van Der Ploeg*
- *Partner 7: International Biometric Group (IBG) London (UK), New York (USA). Group leader: Kush Wadhwa*
- *Partner 8: International Organisation for Migrations (IOM) Geneva (CH). Group leader: Danielle Grondin*
- *Partner 9: OPTEL Ltd, Wroclaw (PL). Group leader: Wieslwaw Bicz*
- *Partner 10: European Institute of Bioethics, Brussels (BE). Group leader: Bernard Ars.*

Progress in science and technology always means an increasing number and complexity of problems. In this special section of the Annali dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità *we are addressing a vast range of questions.*

The ethical aspects of biometrics are extremely interesting for the Istituto Superiore di Sanità. The Institute is, indeed, committed to focusing on individual health, but at the same time it considers the collective dimension of public health.

Emilio Mordini and Carlo Petrini outline an overview of ethical and social implications of biometric identification technology, also in an historical perspective. The authors summarize the main reports issued by official bodies on this subject. Gary Marx, professor emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and one of the founder of modern sociology of surveillance, discusses new trends in surveillance and social control. In his paper he argues that the culture of social control is changing by shifting towards "soft" means for collecting personal information. Juliet Lodge, director of the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence at University of Leeds and coordinator of the European Network of Excellence e-Justice, examines an area of EU policy where the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) poses acutely difficult problems for policymakers: freedom, security and justice. Lodge argues that the application of biometrics to an ever widening sphere of e-governance will require a comparative assessment of cultural values, standards and ethical concerns. Jillyanne Redpath, legal officer of the International Migration Law and Legal Affairs Department of the International Organization for Migration in Geneva, focuses on the impact of the rapid expansion in the use of biometric systems in migration management on the rights of individuals. Redpath aims to propose clear, consistent parameters at the national and international levels to ensure adequate protection for the privacy of the individual and procedures to avoid the arbitrary frustration of the individual's ability to move freely and lawfully. Paul Johnson and Robin Williams from the School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University, discuss the current limitations on the use of DNA profiling in civil identification practices and speculate on futures uses of the technology with regard to its interoperability with biometric databasing systems. They note that the renewal of interest in a wide variety of methods capable of providing the reliable determination of singular individual identities is emerging at a time when the dominant cultural discourse of identity has increasingly stressed the inde-

* The opinions expressed by the authors of the paper of this monographic issue do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità.

terminacy, plurality and flexibility of individuality. Irma van der Ploeg, from the Erasmus University, is interested in the general development to which all biometric technologies contribute. A development that can be characterized as the informatization of the body*, a relatively new phenomenon in which the human body appears to be redefined as an entity made of information. Analysing this complex anthropological phenomenon, van der Ploeg makes an appeal for an ethical focus on citizenship rather than on individual privacy. Emilio Mordini and Corinna Ottolini, managers of the BITE project, examine biometric applications in biomedicine and draw a map of current and potential ethical implications. Serge Gutwirth, from the Free University fo Brussels, addresses the huge philosophical issue of biometrics and democratic processes of governance. Any democratic state should guarantee a high level of individual freedom and an order in which such freedom is made possible and guaranteed. This is the political context – argues Gutwirth – in which biometrics should be evaluated.*

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