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Prof. Dr. Peter Dabrock elected chairperson of the German Ethics Council

Professor Dr. Peter Dabrock, Chair of Systematic Theology II (Ethics) at FAU, has been elected chairperson of the German Ethics Council, the most important advisory body in the field of ethics in Germany, at the inaugural meeting of the newly appointed council members held on 28 April in Berlin. 'This appointment is both a challenge and an honour. I am looking forward to being involved in the important and varied work that this council, which is so important for society, and its highly qualified members do,' Prof. Dr. Peter Dabrock says.

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From the challenges of embryo donation to questions of safety when it comes to biotechnology and controversial issues such as whether brain death can be a valid indicator for determining the time of death or whether it is acceptable for boys to be circumcised for religious reasons, the German Ethics Council has dealt with many politically sensitive and fiercely debated topics over the past four years. The new members, whose term of office has just begun, will certainly have plenty more issues to discuss, as Peter Dabrock explains: 'While the specific topics that the Ethics Council will be considering have not yet been determined, we can certainly expect some intense debates on a variety of issues, such as how to deal responsibly with big data technology that is affecting more and more areas of our lives.'

Since it was established in April 2008, the German Ethics Council has advised the federal government on decisions related to medical, biological and, in particular, social ethics. 'This is the range of issues that I focus on in my research,' the FAU theologian explains. For Peter Dabrock the council's work is particularly important because it acts as a crucial link between politics, research and the general public, meaning that it is a platform where opinions from all areas of society are discussed.

As the new chairperson, he sees it as his duty to act as a mediator for the wide range of disciplines and opinions within the German Ethics Council. 'My task is to pay attention to plurality, to encourage reflection and, at the same time, to develop shared standards for recommendations and assessments.' The chairperson's role involves co-ordinating the council's work and acting as its representative, particularly in collaboration with the Bundestag, the government, and different academic organisations, as well as maintaining good public and international relations. Prof. Dr. Katrin Amunts, Prof. Dr. Andreas Kruse and Prof. Dr. Claudia Wiesemann were elected deputy chairpersons.

Prof. Dr. Peter Dabrock has been Chair of Systematic Theology II (Ethics) at FAU since October 2010. He has previously held roles in other important bodies, such as the European Group on Ethics and the German Medical Association's Central Ethics Committee, and is currently a member of the DFG Permanent Senate Commission on Animal Protection and Experimentation, as well as various committees within the Protestant church in Germany and Bavaria. His current research focuses on interdisciplinary projects conducting ethical evaluations of synthetic biology, systems medicine and induced pluripotent stem cells.

More information on the German Ethics Council and its members is available on the German Ethics Council's website.

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