

*Ethical and Social Implications of Biometric
Identification Technology:
Towards an International Approach*

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Session II

**Biometrics for screening &
surveillance**

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Main themes

- Dualities and paradoxes of biometric identification
- The status of biometric data
- Left-over basket

Dualities & paradoxes

- Identification: simultaneously about *unicity and categorization*.
- Two faces of surveillance: *exercise of rights and exercise of control*
- *Security and privacy/liberty*: balance or compatibility?
- Technocracy vs democracy

Status of biometric data 1

- In isolation:

Biometric data constitute merely another type of *personal data* or are *intrinsically different* and more sensitive.

(may even divulge more (medical) info than sought)

Hence: application of existing data protection and privacy law suffices *or*

Informatization of the body and creation of ‘virtual bodies’ enables ‘virtual bodily searches’, therefore requires invoking more fundamental values (bodily integrity, human dignity, real consent etc.)

Status of biometric data 2

- Significance derives from connection to other data and extended technological configurations.
- Even biometric authentication creates linkability of events/actions
- *The elephant in the room*: Creation of (large, even population-wide) databases: increased surveillance; power balance state-citizen.
- Databases will be used for extended (bio-)profiling and KDD

Left-over basket (but no less important)

- Function creep: outlawed or (un)official policy?
- ‘Human dignity’ : a relevant / useful concept?
- Implementation of regulation:
‘We have our privacy policy in place’ or:
serious external and democratic controls?

“It’s usually better than you feared,
and worse than you hoped.”

(Donna Haraway on the dangers of
technoscience)