

News item: 2005-09-28

## **Changes in the Ethical Review Act**

A Swedish Government Official Report recommends extending the scope of the Ethical Review Act, changing the procedures for appointing members to ethical review boards, and raising the fee charged for ethical reviews.

The report identifies deficiencies in the current Ethical Review Act, which addresses how to conduct ethical reviews of research involving human subjects and biological material from humans. One of the proposed changes would extend the Act to include ethical standards in handling sensitive personal information under the Personal Data Act, regardless of whether or not consent is given.

## **Proposed that the Swedish Research Council Appoint Members and Alternates**

Currently, the Swedish Government appoints all of the 590 members and alternates on the regional ethical review boards. The report recommends that the Swedish Research Council perform this work, based on nominations from universities and county councils/regions. The Government should continue to appoint the board chairs and the members and alternates of the Central Ethical Review Board.

## **Fee Increase for Ethical Reviews**

The recommendations proposed in the report would increase the workload of the Swedish Research Council. To finance this work and part of the economic deficit from these activities, the report proposes an increase in the lowest fees.

## **Voluntary Reviews**

Currently, a research project is reviewed only once, unless there is a change in the project. Swedish universities depend largely on external funds for research. Before paying out funds, some foreign investors require an annual ethics review. To help Swedish universities obtain research funds from foreign investors, the report recommends the implementation of voluntary reviews to reconfirm approved research projects.

## **Future Updates**

The report identifies a need to regularly update information concerning confidentiality, certain research databases, and the organization of ethical review committees.