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Interdisziplinäre Forschung
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Maschinenbau
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Ökologie Umwelt- Naturschutz
Physik Astronomie
Studien Analysen
Verfahrenstechnologie
Verkehr Logistik
Wirtschaft Finanzen

Weitere Förderer

Home → Fachgebiete → Gesellschaftswissenschaften → Nachricht

The UGR sets up an international project for the genetic identification of disappeared children

23.11.2006 nächste Meldung

Incorrect identification of people – especially children – or the lack of it creates a series of legal problems in civil law. Unfortunately, this also happens in criminal law, in which crimes such as traffic of human beings and false adoption, together with sexual and economic children exploitation, are universal concerns.

Such concerns are particularly frequent in developing countries, but they are also present in the developed world when adoptions - both legal and illegal - take place. The most affected areas are Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia.

Today, the technology developed in the field of DNA identification (genetic identification) enables authorities to carry out a correct and unequivocal identification of any person, both by direct comparison with themselves (reference samples) and by comparison with their parents, especially with their mother.

Having full operational capability and proven experience in the field, the University of Granada (Universidad de Granada [http://www.ugr.es]) has set up PRO-KIDS, a programme intended to create, at a first stage, two civil and voluntary DNA databases containing, on the one hand, DNA from mothers of disappeared children and, on the other hand, DNA from children identified as rootless, without relatives, victims of illegal adoptions or of sexual or economic exploitation, etc.

Once both databases are created their contents will be crossed and, when there is a match, relatives will be informed of the child's whereabouts. Furthermore, complete confidentiality of the results is guaranteed, as well as more than 99.99% reliability, thus meeting the possibilities currently offered by science.

After Mexico and Guatemala's support to this project, PRO-KIDS will be extended to other Latin-American countries, Africa and Asia. Brazil has already shown its interest in endorsing the genetic database.

Professor Lorente, head of the UGR [http://www.ugr.es] Genetic Identification Laboratory, said that PRO-KIDS represents a "scientific and professional challenge" showing that scientific progress can have "an immediate social benefit". "It is regrettable", he added, that we know about the traceability of the food we eat and, however, "if we find a child who has been illegally adopted, we can't get him to his parents". This scientific programme has been designed to put an end to this situation.

Professor Lorente Acosta is the UGR coordinator in the Fénix project, the first experience of the like in the world, in which the University of Granada jointly works with the Spanish Security Forces so as to identify disappeared citizens thanks to a programme similar to PRO-KIDS. He is also a visiting lecturer at the American FBI and has worked with Chile, Argentina and Guatemala's governments in the identification of the disappeared during the dictatorships and of Christopher Columbus' remains.

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