Enhancement, paraphrased as the improvement of desired characteristics, means to apply a certain focus on abilities, capacities and quality of life. These categories can be viewed and defined from different value-driven perspectives which are based upon certain viewpoints on what constitutes “normality”. Furthermore they are framed by the concept of autonomy. The general approach towards the issue of enhancement can be understood in the context of consumerism – the “production” of enhanced persons as an act of individual freedom and choice. But another approach, which will be the main focus of the conference, is based upon the fact that perspectives of disabled persons on enhancement have been neglected so far. This is important as enhancement technologies can have different societal and political implications for disabled and non-disabled persons. The discussion about enhancement focuses on therapy of something in need of treatment. But with regard to disability, this debate about enhancement in contrast to therapy and treatment has to be re-thought and re-contextualised.

Hence, the conference takes as its starting point the view that it is socio-politically as well as ethically necessary and important to look at enhancement technologies from a “disability-perspective”. In the context of historic developments and the intersection of medicine and economy, enhancement technologies will be discussed from several different scientific perspectives. The conference is organised as an interdisciplinary dialogue and aims to provide an open forum for discussion and networking. This approach towards enhancement technologies is necessary, as the field of enhancement is an increasingly important area of intervention into life and the body. The conference will be the first international meeting to bring together Disability Studies, Science, Technology and Society Studies and Ethics.

The following are some of the questions that will be discussed: • To what extent and in what way does consumerism influence the current debate about enhancement technologies? • Which problems arise from this understanding of enhancement technologies for disabled and non-disabled persons and consumers of these technologies? • What are the consequences of enhancement technologies for disabled persons? • Is the “upgrade” an upgrade from old established norms or is a “new normal body” created? • Who is excluded by both starting points of enhancing the human being? • Do enhancement technologies carry a risk of excluding certain groups within society, such as disabled persons? • How can consumerism be embedded in an ethical framework? • What role does normativity play? • What new possible forms of exclusion and inequality on several levels might occur as a result of using enhancement technologies? Questions such as these make it quite clear that the conference is a necessary and important way of approaching enhancement technologies that already have implications for both human beings and for society.

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European Science Foundation | Research Conferences Unit
149 avenue Louise | Box 14 | 11 Tour Generali, 15th Floor | Brussels | Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 533 2020 | Fax: +32 (0)2 538 8486
Email: conferences@esf.org | www.esf.org/conferences

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