

Republic of San Marino

National Bioethics Committee

Law January 29, 2010 n. 34

ANSWER TO THE REQUESTED OPINION ON ETHICAL ISSUES REGARDING THE "SHARE THE SOLIDARITY MASK" PROJECT

APPROVED ON JULY 13, 2020

Translated by Luisa Borgia

The National Bioethics Committee (CSB) of the Republic of San Marino was requested from the University of San Marino, Community Design Research Unit, and from the *"Il Filò"* Cooperative to express an opinion on the ethical aspects concerning the *"SHARE THE SOLIDARITY MASK"* project.

The project, accompanied by related documentation, was examined in the session of July 13, 2020.

<u>CSB, unanimously, positively evaluated the project in its bioethical aspects and respectful of</u> <u>human rights.</u>

The following Opinion was drafted by Luisa Borgia, Vice chair, and by Giampiero Griffo, external expert, then submitted to the evaluation of the entire Committee and approved:

COVID-19 emergency has highlighted, once again, the multiple and complex consequences on vulnerable persons to whom, in many cases, adequate protection has not been guaranteed.

Among the numerous problems regarding persons with disabilities, the one relating to the use of protective mask was also reported.

As most of the deaf or hard of hearing persons communicate through the reading movement of the lips and only a small part of them knows the sign language, masks, covering nose and mouth, strongly hinder the communication of with other persons.

During the pandemic, neither Europe nor China (which holds the lead in production) had considered that such face masks could, in fact, prevent the inclusion of deaf persons.

Only a small company in the USA grasped this need, producing a mask with a transparent strip that allows to read the lip movement.

This product has never been available on the market. Only visor masks or face shield were available, but they both involve a higher cost and do not guarantee adequate protection.

Starting from these considerations, CSB examined the multiple aspects contained in the request for evaluation of the process called "*SHARE THE SOLIDARITY MASK*", from a bioethical perspective and respect deaf or hard of hearing persons' human rights¹.

The reference document was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), ratified by the Republic of San Marino in 2008 and therefore recognized as an integral part of the San Marino Law.

The project submitted complies provisions of articles: 2 (Definition of communication and language), 4 (Obligations of states parties to undertake or promote research and development, and

¹ The technical data sheets attached to the project make known the appropriateness of the materials used (in nonwoven fabric with front in food-grade nylon), the hygiene of the solutions (they are disposable masks), the use of nonhazardous materials. These technical aspects, since they cannot be evaluated by the CSB, are referred to the competent authorities.

to promote the availability and use of new technologies, including technologies of information and communication at more accessible costs), 9 (Accessibility to communication), 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion and access to information) and 22 (Respect for privacy), and 24 (Communication in the field of education).

The proposal covers a vast need, not only in San Marino, identified as a critical element all over the world, in order to guarantee communication between deaf or hearing-impaired persons and the whole population, with particular regard to access to public services or facilities open to the public, including: educational communication and workplace, courts, police stations, hospitals, public and private professional services.

This kind of masks, defined as "community mask"², unlike the health protection masks, can be selfproduced³ since, not guaranteeing the coverage required for personal protective equipment, they do not require the relevant health authority certifications. Nonetheless, they guarantee partial protection, but do not prevent ordinary communication among persons.

From the documentation received by the Committee, it is clear that the associations of deaf persons from San Marino⁴ and other actors of sector⁵ were involved in the product definition process.

CSB considered particularly appreciable the desire to involve in the production of the mask, in addition to production and marketing companies, also community workshops based in San Marino⁶, thus ensuring employment for persons with disability and making the whole process non-profit.

The Chairman of the National Bioethics Committee of Republic of San Marino

Virgilio Sacchini

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Attachments: Requested opinion on ethical issues regarding the "share the solidarity mask" project.

² This definition is contained in art. 3 of the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic (May 17, 2020): *Implementing provisions of the decree-law of March 25, 2020, n. 19, containing urgent measures to deal with the epidemiological emergency from COVID-19, and the decree-law of May 16, 2020, no. 33, containing further urgent measures to deal with the epidemiological emergency from COVID-19.*

³ Republic of San Marino, Decree Law May 15, 2020 n. 78: Update of the provisions for the relaxation of restrictive measures relating to the emergency from Covid-19.

⁴ Emergency Deaf APS, Sports and Cultural Association of the Deaf of San Marino.

⁵ Territorial Home Service - ISS Republic of San Marino, Fab-Lab Castelfranco Veneto (Italy).

⁶ "Le mani" Atelier, "Il volo" Cooperative, mobile workers and pensioners' associations.

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		Presidente Alla c.a. egr. Prof.ssa Luisa Borgia Vice Presidente
		Comitato Sammarinese di Bioetio Segreteria Tecnica-Scientifica
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Progettisti

Massimo Renno, Presidente de Il Filò – Bdes Società Cooperativa e componente dell'Unità Ricerca DDC, Prof. Riccardo Varini responsabile scientifico dell'Unità di ricerca DDC, Dott. Mag. in Design Alessio Abdolahian, assegnista di ricerca dell'Unità di ricerca DDC - Design di Comunità / Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino

Con Prof. Massimo Brignoni e prof.ssa Karen Venturini componenti dell'Unità di ricerca DDC

Partner:

Emergenza Sordi APS Servizio Territoriale Domiciliare - ISS San Marino Fab-Lab Castelfranco Veneto Associazione sportiva e culturale Sordi di San Marino

Patrocinio:

Segreteria di Stato per la sanità e la sicurezza sociale della Repubblica di San Marino.



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