# A8.3, O3: Sharing of lessons learned while piloting a joint ethical framework in pilot action at the ECIU University

*This document has been developed during the pilot phase of the ECIU University Erasmus+ project between 2019 - 2022.*

# Beneficiaries

- Aalborg University, Denmark
- Dublin City University, Ireland
- Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
- Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania
- Linköping University, Sweden
- Lodz University of Technology, Poland
- Tampereen Korkeakoulusäätiö sr, Finland
- Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal
- Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona, Spain
- University of Stavanger, Norway
- Universita degli Studi di Trento, Italy
- Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Toulouse, France
- University of Twente, The Netherlands

- Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico

# Abstract

This document reflects on the experience of four of the ECIU member universities on the ethical issues concerning research activities, also in the background including collaboration with external stakeholders. The basis for the considerations in this document is another project document, Deliverable 8.3.2 (Best practices of ethical framework for stakeholder engagement), towards which ethical experts of the ECIU member universities have provided their reflections. To maintain the clear focus of the document, aspects are restricted to research context only. The reflections here support the current plans of ECIU University to develop a comprehensive ethical framework for the entire ecosystem and community, covering all required aspects of ethical considerations.

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# 1   Introduction

This concise document summarises certain aspects of the experience of four of the ECIU member universities on the ethical issues concerning research activities, also including collaboration with external stakeholders as part of the activities in the background. The basis for the considerations is Deliverable 8.3.2 (Best practices of ethical framework for stakeholder engagement) towards which ethical experts of the ECIU member universities have provided their reflections. To maintain the clear focus of the document, aspects are restricted to research context only. To understand the contents of this document, the reader should familiarise him/herself with Deliverable 8.3.2.

Since ECIU University plans to develop a comprehensive ethical framework for the European wide ecosystem including external stakeholder collaboration in the near future, this document concentrates mostly on research aspects of ethics and should be considered as a partial input to the future work. Thus, the format of the document is simplified and serves more as a list of issues to be considered in the future.

# 2   Aspects to be considered in the future work

- The recent work on gender and intersectionality in research and innovation: https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3601&NewSearch=1&NewSearch=1

- Non-medical research involving human subjects, it might be interesting for the authors of the document to have a look at the results of the SATORI project:  https://satoriproject.eu/framework/section-1/

- The work of The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, e.g. the 5th edition of the Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (Published: 5/26/2022): https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/

- For ethics on new science and technologies, the following review: Reijers, W., Wright, D., Brey, P. et al. Methods for Practising Ethics in Research and Innovation: A Literature Review, Critical Analysis and Recommendations. Sci Eng Ethics 24, 1437–1481 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-017-9961-8

- More elaboration on the side of ethics challenges of big data and AI (cited as smart technologies in the text) would be advisable.

- Overall, there is hardly any attention for gender equality, which is an important topic currently. So, it would be good to develop a gender equality plan in the future.

- Given the closeness to business and industry, it would be good to develop a solid stance on independence of research, academic freedom, and conflict of interest.

- There are rapid changes in academic publishing. For example, with the development of contributor role ontologies and taxonomies. It would be good to pay attention here as well.

- Term "university ethics" should be replaced with "responsible research innovation" (RRI) largely used at the EU level at the moment. RRI includes research integrity, ethics but also gender balance, open access, science education, public engagement.

- The codes of conducts of **all** ECIU universities / member states should be looked into to understand the current (possibly varying) contexts: Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, or Spain. Moreover, the ENRIO website – a network for the advancement of research integrity – offers interesting information on institutional structures at the national level with country reports containing information on initiatives taken towards a national structure on research integrity, on established national structures on research integrity and on information on national boards and committees such as the National Research Ethics Committees (FEK) in Norway, the Royal Irish Academy (RIA), the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) in Portugal, the German Research Ombudsman, etc.. In Italy the main reference is the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee of CNR and the code of CNR: https://www.cnr.it/sites/default/files/public/media/doc_istituzionali/ethics/guidelines-for-research-integrity-2019.pdf.

- Take full advantage of already existing frameworks. There is a European Code on RI (the ALLEA code) already representing the synthesis of many European HIS contributions. ECIU partners could formally adopt the code, essential requirement also to participate in the Horizon Europe programme. Instead, the effort of the Consortium could be concentrated to

define a common structure for the definition of Research Integrity Plan, translating principle in practice. Not many HEI at the moment have a RIP.

- Depending on the domain focus of ECIU University now and in the future, certain domains might require specific ethical considerations (e.g., animal research).
- Procedures for complaints about possible breach of scientific integrity allow complaints of research being done within at least ten years. Therefore, researchers are expected to store research data over that period and thus need to store these data responsibly. The timeframe, however, might vary depending on the country.
- Open data, data management and privacy require separate dedicated considerations.
- Check the concreteness of ECIU University value "Impact on society" in terms of ethical reflections.

# 3 Next steps

This document has provided valuable additional aspects to be considered when the ECIU University ethical framework. It is clear that the work is yet very much in the beginning in the new European University, and it will require substantial discussion throughout the community to establish a shared ethical framework. At the same time there is no need to reinvent the wheel but rather take advantage of many already existing aspects of the ethical work across Europe. In addition, this document has taken a closer look at research ethics whereas the broader ethical framework will take a more comprehensive approach to ethical questions, such as

- Non-discrimination and anti-harassment
- Academic freedom, freedom of expression and speech, assembly, and association
- Quality of teaching and grading
- Plagiarism and ownership of work in education and research
- Research integrity and ethics
- Anti-corruption and bribery
- Whistle blowing
- Conflict of interest
- Internal audit
- Risk management
- Employment
- Collaboration
- International students

The exact aspects of the future ethical framework will be decided on once the work proceeds to the next steps.

# Acknowledgements