

SEPTEMBER 2025

# NEWSLETTER

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF  
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEES



## Welcome to the Summer 2025 Edition of the EUREC Newsletter

As summer draws to a close and the new academic year gets underway, we are pleased to share an overview of recent highlights from the EUREC Office, news from across our working groups, and updates from our expanding project portfolio.

So far, the year has been marked by international collaboration, policy engagement, and training and capacity-building initiatives. Whether in-person or online, EUREC continues to connect research ethics and integrity experts across borders and disciplines. This summer update presents our milestones, meetings, and moments of shared progress.

## News from the EUREC Office



February 2025 was dedicated to outreach: we hosted a three-day online training on research ethics, integrity, and open science at United Nations University.

March and April, in turn, brought important developments within our team. In March, we welcomed **Elena Lazutkaite** and met in Bonn for our annual EUREC Office meeting, aligning priorities for the year. In April, **Toby Wardman** came on board to support our expanding activities.

# Updates from our Working Groups

*Our two working groups are the driving force for ethics-based change in the research ecosystem. **Working group 1 explores legal and policy matters concerning RECs in the field of health-related research. Working Group 2 promotes inclusion and collaboration among RECs reviewing research beyond the biomedical field.** Through dynamic discussions, engaging webinars, and the development of position papers, we strive to make a lasting impact.*

## Working Group 1: Legal and Policy Issues of RECs

### Working Group 1 Wraps Up Webinar Series on Vulnerability

Working Group 1 has concluded a five-month webinar series exploring how research ethics can better support participants in vulnerable or high-risk contexts. Launched in October 2024, the series brought together hundreds of REC members from around the world to discuss practical approaches, regulatory developments, and ethical considerations for responsible inclusion in research.

The series was inspired by recent revisions to the Declaration of Helsinki and other international guidelines, which signal a clear shift toward recognising vulnerability as a dynamic, context-specific condition rather than a fixed category. Over three sessions, experts from law, medicine, and patient engagement shared their perspectives, sparking rich discussions about how ethics review can evolve to better protect and empower research participants.

### Session Highlights

**Session 1: The New Vulnerability Paradigm (29 October 2024)** opened the series by situating vulnerability in the context of updated global ethical frameworks. Speakers included **Otmar Kloiber** (World Medical Association) on changes in the Declaration of Helsinki, **Samia Hurst-Majno** (CIOMS) on the treatment of vulnerability in the 2016 International Ethical Guidelines, and **Monique Al** (MedEthics EU) on how the EU Clinical Trials Regulation addresses these issues.

**Session 2: Case Studies in Responsible Inclusion (23 January 2025)** translated principles into practice. **Pirkko Lepola** shared special considerations for paediatric inclusion, while **Mary McCarron** discussed research involving ageing populations with intellectual disabilities.

**Session 3: Patient and Public Involvement (11 March 2025)** closed the series with a focus on how engaging research participants and communities can strengthen ethical protections. **Laura Palazzani** (Università LUMSA) spoke on tailoring informed consent to vulnerable populations, and **Jenny Preston** (University of Liverpool) explored children's involvement as partners in health research decision-making.



Recordings of all three sessions are available online [here](#).

# Updates from our Working Groups

## Working Group 2: Broadening the Scope of RECs

### Contributing to European Policy

Earlier this year, WG2 provided detailed feedback to the European Commission on the **2021 Guidance Note on Ethics in Social Sciences and Humanities**.

Our input focused on three areas:

- Highlighting **emerging ethical challenges in AI, internet and social media research, and research involving indigenous peoples**.
- Making the guidance more **accessible** and **user-friendly**.
- Offering **other practical improvements** to support researchers applying for Horizon Europe funding.

Our **overarching aim**: helping researchers better identify and address ethical issues across disciplines.

### Learning from National RECs

WG2 also advanced its exploration of how RECs beyond the medical field operate across Europe.

- In February, the **Finnish** national REC system was presented.
- In May, WG2 hosted an inspiring session with guest speakers from the **UK and Denmark**, sharing their national approaches. This meeting was opened virtually to the wider EUREC community, reinforcing the value of cross-border dialogue.



### New Country Reports

WG2 is developing a **series of country reports on RECs reviewing non-health related research**. These reports aim to highlight how different countries structure, support, and regulate ethics review in fields such as the social sciences, humanities, and engineering.

Recent additions include:

- **Sweden**
- **UK**
- **France**

These reports are available on the EUREC website under **"RECs in Europe"**, providing a growing resource for the community.



# What's New in Our Projects?

## VERITY

As part of the VERITY project, EUREC contributed to shaping the “**Protocol of Recommendations for Stewards of Trust**”, an actionable framework explicitly addressing **RECs as research oversight and protection bodies**. These recommendations have been turned into an interactive tool—try it to see how RECs can enhance trust in science.

In May, a Science4Policy brief, co-authored by EUREC, was presented at the Brussels final event. VERITY also featured at the EARMA/INORMS Congress in Madrid and the EMBL Science and Society Conference in Heidelberg. Looking ahead, a **public webinar on 4 September** will present project findings—register here. Final outcomes will also be shared onsite at the ENRIO Congress in Ljubljana.



<https://verityproject.eu/>

## AIOLIA

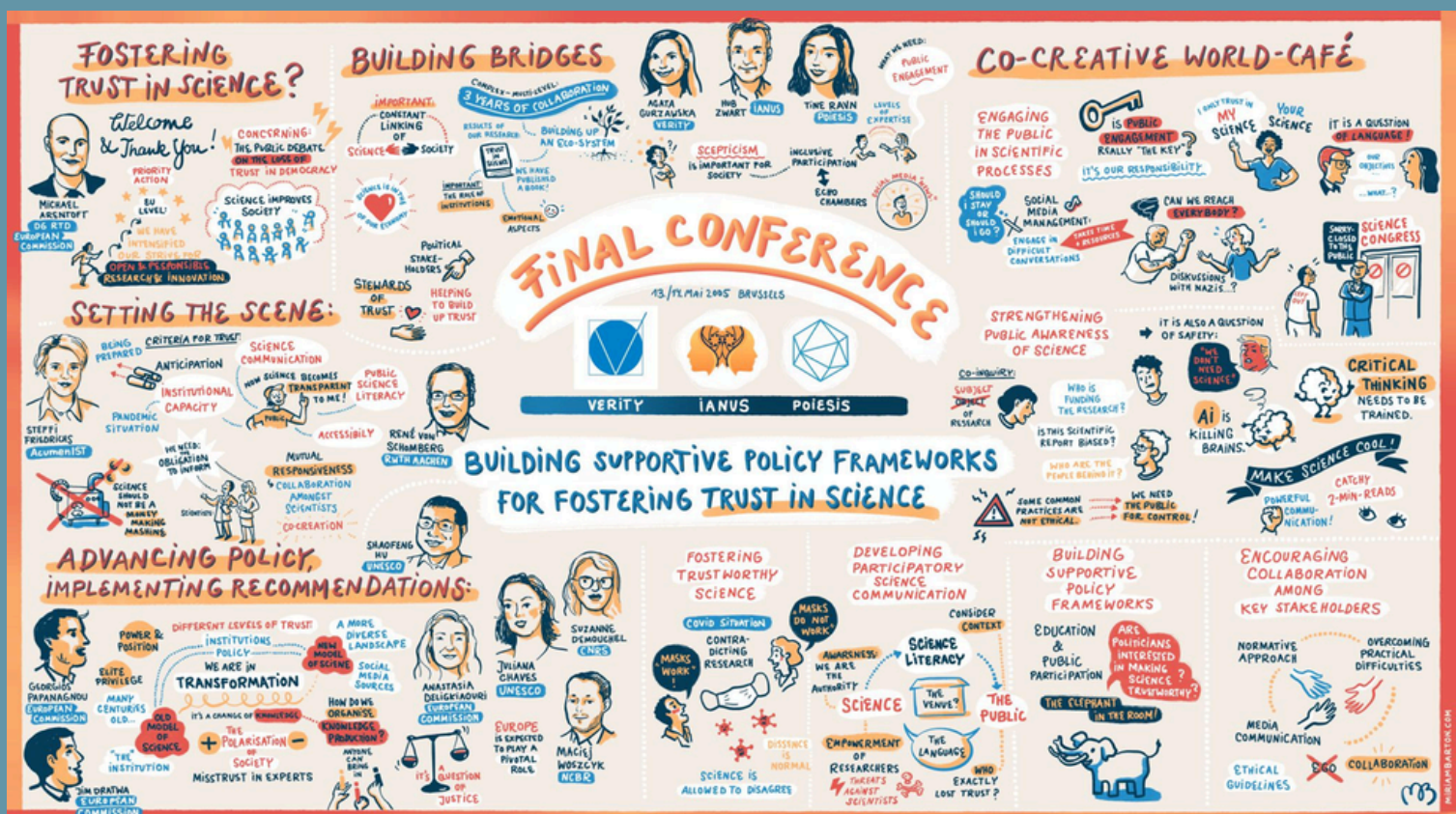
The AIOLIA project officially began with a **kick-off meeting** in Paris in February, bringing together a consortium of innovation and ethics experts. The goal of the project is to put AI ethics into practice by focusing on human cognition and behaviour, ensuring that AI systems are not only innovative but also ethically responsible.

In May, EUREC hosted the **first meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Board**, including thought leaders from Europe, Israel, and India. This diverse group explored how artificial intelligence might reshape human cognition and behaviour—both in professional and personal contexts and in everyday life.

The project team prepared a **short video** to walk you through its core ideas—watch it here.



<https://aiolia.eu/>



# What's New in Our Projects?

## BEYOND

The BEYOND BAD APPLES project broadened its training offerings with new **real-life cases for early-career researchers**. A new **Trainer Guide** has been published on the Embassy of Good Science platform along with additional resources on [ZENODO](https://zenodo.org/record/3844441). The project's General Assembly convened in Helsinki in January. Despite the winter chill, the discussions were lively and forward-looking. [Online training for early-career researchers](https://zenodo.org/record/3844441) continues to be a central activity of the project, as moving toward its culmination with outputs such as the **BEYOND Guidelines and Best Practices Manual** and the **2030 Roadmap**.



<https://beyondbadapples.eu/>

## STRATEGIC

STRATEGIC's initial findings have brought attention to **pressing ethical and legal concerns on digital health technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa**. In April, when the project team met in Cameroon for its first on-site General Assembly—a gathering reflecting the spirit of North-South collaboration—EUREC facilitated a hands-on consortium workshop. Building on both these findings and the developed **use cases**, the workshop focused on developing **tailored training materials for National Ethics Committees and National Regulatory Authorities**, strengthening local capacity and fostering ethical resilience.



<https://www.strategic-project.org/>

## RE4GREEN

EUREC contributed to a survey which explored learner competence in **sustainability training**, offering insights into how climate and environmental ethics can be better embedded in research ethics and integrity practices. In addition, EUREC conducted an analysis to identify gaps in research ethics, revealing a **striking absence of climate and environmental considerations in existing ethics and integrity guidelines**. The full report can be accessed [here](https://re4green.eu/). The project's mid-term meeting, held in June in Bonn, offered a valuable opportunity to deepen collaboration and exchange in person.



<https://re4green.eu/>





# What's New in Our Projects?

## irecs

The IRECS project has made significant progress in accessibility and community building. **Train-the-Trainer** workshops are now running, and an online community for early-career researchers has been launched on LinkedIn, providing a space for peer exchange. EUREC is also proud to share that the IRECS training materials are now available in **Croatian, French, German, Italian, and Russian**—with more languages to come. This **multilingual expansion** makes the materials widely usable and underscores IRECS's commitment to practical, inclusive learning tools. The final conference for the project will be held on 11–12 December in Brussels.



<https://www.irecs.eu/>



## PREPARED

In June, the PREPARED project celebrated its final event at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Leading up to the event, a survey examining the **pandemic-related funding and prioritisation challenges of Research Ethics Committees** was completed, gathering the views of more than 300 global RECs. The results are available in preprint form here. The PREPARED training app was recently featured in a Nature correspondence piece, and a dedicated chapter titled **"Implementation Support for the PREPARED Code"** is included in a Springer Nature volume on ethics during health emergencies. These milestones mark a strong close to the project, which concluded in August.



<https://prepared-project.eu/>



# Looking Ahead

The months ahead promise more opportunities to connect, share, and advance ethical practice across the research community. From planned publications—including work on navigating trust and bias with regard to women researchers' self-perceptions of authority in scientific communication—to in-person meetings such as the annual EUREC Network onsite meeting in Bonn, and project presentations at the European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO) Congress in Ljubljana, we invite you to stay engaged. Explore the many training resources now available, and take part in the events and conversations unfolding across our network.

Thank you for being part of the EUREC journey—we look forward to what's next.

*The EUREC Office Team*



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