

D1.3 Ethics Check

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Social Economy Transition Skills

D1.3 Ethics Check

Introduction and Background

The process of drafting the D1.3. Ethics check started in July after the WP2 deliverable D2.1 was submitted to provide identified ethical issues, the mitigation strategy and activities and the recruitment processes to be documented as early as possible. This deliverable delivery date was due on December 31st which should have included the participant's recruitment process within WP4 – Training tests in France and Slovenia. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, WP4 – Training tests in France and Slovenia are being postponed to the first quarter of 2025, particularly M15 and the reporting for the training tests to M16, for which we will submit an addendum to this Ethics check report, including the vital ethical issues and mitigation activities, if any identified and undertaken, during this process.

During the research gap analysis conducted in WP2, the participants were involved voluntarily. Participants were informed of the study's aims and objectives during the communication with the researchers related to taking part in the focus groups. No risks were identified and associated with participating in the focus groups. However, a few questions were focused on their personal experiences in social entrepreneurship relating skills needed.

The researchers explained to the participants their rights to privacy and confidentiality, as well as the researchers' duty of confidentiality regarding the data collected, for example, in the context of a publication or a conference, never to reveal any data that could identify the participants. Nor will individual results ever be published. The collection and processing of data is in accordance with the legal principles imposed by the new European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR or AVG), which has been in force since 25 May 2018. The researchers supervised the correct processing of their personal data and the associated information obligation, including the personal data they collected about the participants related to skills needed in social economy organisations.

Ethical Issues Identified

Objectives of the activities:

- The project included a Skill Gap Analysis (WP2), involving a review of literature based on baSE and B-WISE Blueprint outcomes.
- The validation of results has been conducted through focus groups.
- Ethical concerns arose due to the involvement of human participants and the requirement for collecting and processing personal data.

Methodology:

- The research methodology included surveys, interviews, and focus groups, which involved human participants and the processing of personal data.
- Ethical risks involved obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and complying with relevant data protection laws (e.g., GDPR).
- The management of piloting and testing activities (WP4) also will require careful oversight to address any ethical concerns regarding data handling and participant welfare.

Potential impact:

- No significant adverse impact on the environment, social groups, or political/financial outcomes is anticipated, however, a potential risk for misuse of personal data or failure to adhere to ethical recruitment processes for participants was identified during the project drafting process.

Addressing Ethical Issues

Recruitment of human participants:

- An expert from SOGA and the coordinator advised the members of the Steering Group about the process of request for ethics approvals from competent authorities/bodies when included in activities involving human participants (surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.)
- The coordinator advised the responsible persons of each partner organisation about the collection and processing of personal data from participants, ensuring that the recruitment processes both for WP2 analysis and WP4 piloting and testing, are transparent, voluntary, and fully compliant with ethical guidelines and with the GDPR code of conduct.
- Informed consent forms will be prepared to inform participants about the purpose, scope, and risks of the testing and piloting activities, including data usage and their right to withdraw at any time.

Data collection and processing:

- All personal data collected during surveys, interviews, and focus groups have been handled in compliance with EU/national regulations, particularly the GDPR.
- Informed consent forms filled in by the participants to the testing and piloting activities will explicitly outline how personal data will be collected, processed, stored, and shared.

Ethics Check Report on Month 12

This report provides an overview of how the project is meeting its ethical obligations. It covers the status of ethics approvals, participant recruitment processes, data protection and privacy compliance. Any issues or deviations that have arisen are addressed, along with recommendations for corrective measures.

Participant recruitment processes

Participant recruitment is being carried out in full accordance with the approved protocols. Informed consent procedures, whether written or verbal, have been strictly followed, and all recruitment materials, such as participant information sheets and consent forms, align with the approved ethical standards. Recruitment methods remain transparent, voluntary, and free from coercion. Regular checks have been performed by the coordinator, and no issues have been identified to date.

Data protection and privacy compliance

The project complies fully with applicable data protection regulations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for EU-based projects, as well as national and institutional guidelines. Personal and sensitive data are handled responsibly, adhering to key principles such as transparency, purpose limitation, data minimization, accuracy, and confidentiality. These standards ensure that participants' data are both protected and respected.

All personal and sensitive data are securely stored using encrypted servers and password-protected systems. Access is strictly limited to authorized personnel, ensuring that data privacy remains intact.

Participants have been fully informed of their rights regarding their personal data. These include the ability to access, correct, or delete their data and the freedom to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. Clear processes are in place to handle any participant requests promptly and efficiently.

At this stage, no significant issues or deviations have been identified. Should any concerns arise, they will be documented and addressed in future updates. The project team will continue to monitor compliance through regular internal reviews. If any deviations occur, corrective measures will be implemented immediately to ensure continued adherence to ethical and regulatory standards.

This report has been submitted to the project consortium for their review and feedback. Moving forward, the project team will continue to maintain regular monitoring to ensure ongoing compliance and will provide periodic updates as necessary.

This report confirms that the project is meeting its ethical commitments, including compliance with participant recruitment processes and data protection regulations. Through consistent oversight and proactive measures, the project team remains committed to upholding the highest ethical standards throughout the project.

Partners

