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**Science Education and Research**  
**Ethics in Practice: Experiences**  
**from Science Education**  
**FP7 Projects**



18th National Ethics Councils (NEC) Forum and European Group on Ethics Meeting.  
3rd to 5th of October 2012, Nicosia, Cyprus

## Practice: Experiences from Science Education FP7 Projects



- Initial reluctance and a personal dilemma
- Why?
- My way out of this dilemma
- **Science Education and Research Ethics in Practice**
- **Experiences from Science Education FP7 Projects**

The Example of ESTABLISH:  
European Science and Technology in Action:  
Building Links with Industry, Schools and Home



More specifically, I plan to address two really important issues from the perspective of Ethics:

1. Initially, I would like to discuss the results of the panel's assessment and the Ethical issues raised in relation to the ESTABLISH proposal.
1. Secondly, I would like to comment on the ways the ESTABLISH consortium addresses these issues during the on-going implementation phase

# Panel's Assessment: Identification of Ethical Issues Raised by the Project



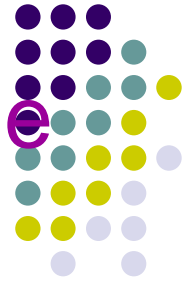
**E**uropean **S**cience and **T**echnology in **A**ction: **B**uilding **L**inks with Industry, Schools and Home :

- **Children and Adults**
- **Data Protection and Privacy**



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# Questions and Answers concerning the Identified Ethical Issues

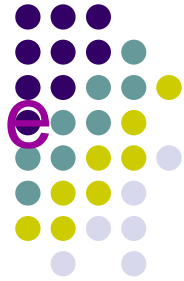


Q1. Were the ethical aspects of the proposed research well described in relation to the objectives?

A1. Ethical Aspects-YES

- Researchers will take informed consent and support parents/guardians during the project
- The research will be voluntary, and research participants will be given the right to opt out
- Children will not be discriminated in any sense.

# Questions and Answers concerning the Identified Ethical Issues

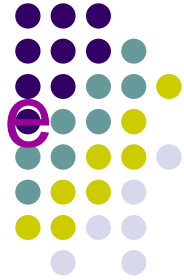


Q2. Were the ethical aspects of the proposed research well described in relation to the methodology?

A2. Main Ethical Aspects-NO

- Informed Consent procedures have not been described in detail.
- The Informed Consent Forms from teachers, students and their parents/guardians and the Information Sheet are missing.
- The data protection measures and privacy issues are not clarified. (This is a critical point considering the fact that the project involves a lot of data transfer between different countries, many different databases and non secure communication network).

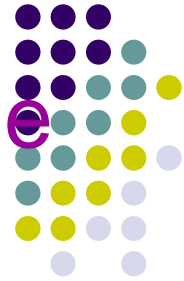
# Questions and Answers concerning the Identified Ethical Issues



## A2. Main Ethical Issues-NO

- The consortium has to ensure that also SME participating in the project will comply with the ethical rules of data protection and privacy.
- The applicants have to describe the data handling and coding and identify the responsible persons for data protection and privacy issues.
- Web-based platforms for learning were mentioned, but not described in detail. It is not clear how children would be protected on-line from unauthorised persons wishing to gain access to children.

# Questions and Answers concerning the Identified Ethical Issues



## A2. **Main Ethical Aspects-NO**

- The selection criteria of the teachers and schools involved in the study and the recruitment procedures need to be clarified.
- The applicants included ethical monitoring in the management work package, but periodic ethics monitoring reports should also be scheduled and then submitted to the EC.



# Questions and Answers concerning the Identified Ethical Issues



**Q3. Were the ethical aspects of the proposed research well described in relation to the possible implication of the results?**

## **A3. Main Ethical Issues-NO**

- Insufficient detail on benefit sharing and protection of intellectual property rights of the partners.
- All the partners have to be aware of the potential economical value of the outputs of the project.

Questions and Answers concerning  
the Identified Ethical Issues

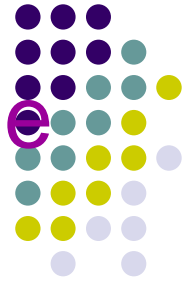


**Q4. Was the indication on how the proposal meets the national legal and ethical requirements of the country where the research is performed, clearly mentioned?**

**A4. Main Ethical Issues-NO**

- The countries in which the proposed research will take place are clearly specified, but the applicants did not give any details of relevant legislation, except for the Dublin City University **Research Ethics Committee** (REC).

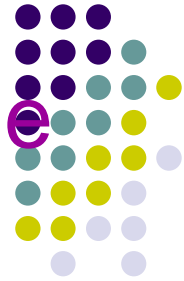
# Questions and Answers concerning the Identified Ethical Issues



## A4. **Main Ethical Aspects-NO**

- “Where activities warrant ethical approval, this will be done at the lead national partners institutions where available, but in the absence of such a facility, decisions will be deferred to the **Research Ethics Committee** in DCU”.
- Relevant national/local REC approvals should be provided to the Commission by all partners. It is not sufficient that the lead partner obtains approvals for research actions in other member states.
- The applicants were very vague **on the legal requirements** (for example, data and privacy protection of child participants, although they showed awareness of occupational health and safety policies).

# Questions and Answers concerning the Identified Ethical Issues



**Q5. Was the timing for approval by any relevant authority at national level indicated?**

**A5. Main Ethical Issues-NO**

- No timing for the approvals has been provided.

# Requirements (Requirements become contractual obligations)



1. The data protection and privacy issues must be addressed. Protection of data should be described in detail (i.e., for how long the data will be kept)
2. The access of the participants to the results should be clarified and described in detail in accordance with Data Protection Regulations. For example, the Directive 95/46/EC must be followed to ensure correct handling of data and privacy.
3. The consortium should identify the responsible persons for data protection and privacy issues.
4. The procedure of obtaining informed consent and recruitment needs to be clarified.

# Requirements (Requirements become contractual obligations)



5. Copies of the official approvals from the relevant national or local ethics committees must also be provided to the EC, **prior to the start of the respective research.**
6. Researchers must ensure that they themselves, and any collaborators or research assistants and students under their supervision, comply with legal requirements in relation to working with school children or vulnerable young people and/or adults.
7. Any on-line activity involving children must be secure, carefully organised and supervised to prevent unwanted access to children by unauthorised persons.
8. The applicants must provide **periodic ethics monitoring reports** to the EC.
9. It needs to be clarified why the applicants identified on the Ethical issues table the “developing countries” as an ethical issue.

# Reflections, Implications and Responsibilities



1. There exists a **top-down mechanism** for externally regulating that the conduct of Research in Science Education, and in other fields as well, is aligned with important rules of ethics or within a framework of ethics.
2. It is questionable whether this declared orientation is strictly implemented.
3. The economic situation is a kind of excuse for closing related committees or institutions, such as the ICB in 2010.
4. Obviously, there is priority of saving money at the expense of allowing or not strictly regulating behaviors aligned with an ethical framework (**money makes the world go round**)

# Reflections, Implications and Responsibilities



6. Under the circumstances, can we completely trust the so called movement for RRI, which implies a close association between ETHICS and business or economic interest?
7. Is it an appropriate strategy to use checklists or written reports for confirming that complex behaviors are based on theoretical ethical codes?
8. Is our orientation similar to the American slogan “No child left behind” that did not have any implications on the majority of the American Children that are always left behind?



# Reflections, Implications and Responsibilities



9. Is it possible to be successful in fostering **islands of ETHICS** for the conduct of RRI or other research areas?
10. Do we believe in the UNITY of human personality and human consciousness?
11. Can we behave ethically only in certain circumstances or spheres of action, but not in general?
12. What kind of ethical framework is followed for the selection of **people who are evaluating the proposals?**

# Reflections, Implications and Responsibilities



13. Are there any lobbies of interest (countries, organizations, or individuals) that consistently circumvent the ethical framework of acting and behaving?
14. Why the submitted research proposals are not evaluated to a certain extent anonymously, that is, without knowing the coordinator and the members of the consortium?
15. Why do we as European Citizens are guided to selectively exhibit extreme sensitivity to ethics, but not in general?

# Reflections, Implications and Responsibilities



16. To what extent we exhibit the same sensitivity for serious and long lasting violations of human rights in Syria, for example, or even in or even in Cyprus? (why do we close our eyes in certain cases?)
17. Which are the guiding principles of our (European citizens') behavior or to which ethical ideals we aspire?

# Conclusion



- Are there unanimously accepted answers to the previous and many other questions? **YES/NO**
- We do live in a totally **BRAVE NEW WORLD** and the same question is even now relevant. “**Who is going to control the controllers?**”
- The challenge of **ETHICS** was always and will continue to be a **pivotal issue** in human life, but not only as a theoretical or philosophical issue, but as a pragmatic issue guiding (or not guiding human behavior) human behavior

# Conclusion



- Societies do not consist however of stones or bricks but of humans whose individual characters and behaviors determine the direction of the WHOLE (Plato)
- The necessity or the urgent demand is to really consider EU as federation of societies or a single society of well informed and empowered citizens able to control the controllers, following a bottom up approach.

# Conclusion



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- The necessity or the urgent demand is to really consider EU as federation of societies or a single society of well informed and empowered citizens able to control the controllers, following a bottom up approach.

# Conclusion



- **Fortunately, just YESTERDAY, the Ministers of Education of the MS of EU, during their informal meeting in Cyprus, sent a very optimistic message (theory) concerning spending for education and human resources development, despite the economic crisis.**
- **Can we put theory into practice?**
- **There is an urgent need to educate the future citizens of Europe not just to be successful in high stakes exams, but to empower them to be successful in life ahead of them and become compassionate and ethically responsible human beings able to control the controllers and contribute to the common European well being and to the future direction of our GLOBALIZED humanity**

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**THANK YOU!**  
Any constructive Criticism,  
Feedback and/or Questions  
are really welcome and  
will be extremely appreciated



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