# ETHICS GUIDELINES

# Guidelines and checklist for implementing

# the FUTURESILIENCE Labs

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# Executive Summary

The FUTURESILIENCE project aims to strengthen the economic and social resilience of Europe and thereby its ability to quickly respond to future crises. This will be achieved by facilitating the fast and effective use of policy relevant research and innovation (R&I) findings for actors at national, regional and local level in experimentation spaces. This will be done through 10 FUTURESILIENCE labs in which multiple stakeholders will discuss and test evidence-based strategies tailored to their specific context and matching their local needs. The experimentation will take place in a co-creation environment applying foresight and participative methodologies.

This ethics guideline aims to mainstream ethics and research integrity in the design and implementation of the FUTURESILIENCE labs activities. It includes a checklist of actions to guide the labs on learning, reflecting, making decisions, and reporting on ethical issues within each lab activity. It proposes a guided process through multiple resources in the field and a set of questions that could help the labs analyse the ethical perspective.

# 1 Introduction

This guideline on ethics is a supporting document for the 10 FUTURESILIENCE labs to **mainstream ethics and research integrity** in the design and implementation of their activities. This is requested by all beneficiaries and third parties participating and being funded by the Horizon Europe programme. The project counts on an External Independent Ethics Board that works together with the project coordination office to discuss and set up appropriate measures to facilitate this process.

The FUTURESILIENCE project emphasises two main aspects of ethics, including data management and involvement of various stakeholders in participatory designs. In terms of data management, all parties adhere to standard data management procedures in compliance with FAIR principles, GDPR legislation, as well as research integrity principles. For the experimentation phase, stakeholder engagement and invitation to participate rely on local networks and will be open to all citizens, with a focus on key stakeholders associated with the diversity of topics of the labs. The guiding principle for participation is to be as inclusive as possible to capture different angles of the connection between policymaking and resilience building.

This guideline includes a checklist of actions to comply with ethics standards and assist you in a responsible and ethically robust implementation of your lab. This is not a matter of ticking a box but taking necessary time to think about the ethically responsible implementation of activities. The last section includes a long list of resources developed by the European Commission and ethics-related projects funded by the European Union. Table 1 below serves as a summary checklist to help you track completed and pending tasks related to ethics within your lab.

*Table 1 Checklist summary*

| No | Item | Checked |
|----|------|---------|
| 1 | Watch the introductory videos | |
| 2 | Prepare a list of potential ethics issues | |
| 3 | Attend the FUTURESILIENCE webinar on methodologies | |
| 4 | Create an ethics journal for monitoring | |
| 5 | Prepare the informed consent form | |
| 6 | Discuss any emerging issues on ethics | |
| 7 | Report on ethics | |

# 2 Guidance on checklist

## 2.1 Watching introductory videos to ethics and research integrity

The first step of this guideline is introducing yourself and learning about ethics by watching a video on **ethical decision making in research** and **research integrity**. The video offers a dynamic and engaging presentation for researchers to explore ethical concepts, dilemmas, and best practices. You can familiarise on ethics and gain valuable insights into the practical application of ethical principles within their own research contexts.

## 2.2 Prepare a list of potential ethics issues

It is important to compile a bullet point list and develop action points of the main ethics issues that might arise from the design or implementation of the activities of your lab.

You can start by navigating the standard ethics self-assessment document developed by the EC to analyse some of the most relevant ethics issues on your lab and how to address them. Additionally, you can explore further sources listed in section 3 of this guideline for additional insights.

You should keep in mind the two main dimensions of the ethics pre-identified at project level: data management and involvement of different stakeholders, notably citizens. You can reflect on some **initial set of questions**, such as:

1. How will personal data collected through i.e. surveys or interviews be stored and protected to ensure confidentiality and privacy?
2. How will researchers ensure that the involvement of vulnerable or marginalized groups does not result in exploitation or harm?
3. How will the diversity of perspectives and experiences among stakeholders be recognized and incorporated into the research design and analysis?
4. How will feedback from participants be incorporated into the research process to ensure transparency and accountability?
5. What potential risks or disadvantages might participants face by engaging in the research process, and how can these be mitigated?
6. Are there any power imbalances or conflicts of interest that could affect the level of participation or the outcomes of the research?
7. How will the benefits of participation be balanced against any potential burdens or inconveniences experienced by participants?
8. Are there measures in place to ensure that participants have the autonomy to make informed decisions about their level of involvement in the research?

9. Are there opportunities for participants to provide feedback or express concerns about the research process, and how will these be addressed?

10. How would you handle the situation in which a participant wants to withdraw from the exercise and/or withdraw their data?

11. What steps will be taken to ensure that the research outcomes are used in ways that benefit the participants and their communities, and not exploited for external interests?

12. How will the long-term implications of participation be considered, particularly in terms of potential changes to relationships, perceptions, or power dynamics within the community?

13. How will the trade-offs of participation be reassessed and adapted over time as the research progresses and new information or challenges emerge?

## 2.3  Attend the FUTURESILIENCE webinar on methodologies

As part of the FUTURESILIENCE communication and dissemination activities, the consortium will organise a set of **thematic webinars** to promote the exchange of knowledge and learning from experts on different domains connected to the concepts and approaches of the project.

All FUTURESILIENCE labs will be welcomed to participate in the first webinar on methodological approaches, featuring a presentation on how to mainstream ethics in crisis settings and resilience-building processes.

This webinar will be an opportunity to reflect on the lab's methodological design and improve implementation by learning from experiences in previous projects, capitalising on lessons learned, dos and don'ts. You may incorporate your reflections into the initial set of ethics questions pre-identified in the previous step.

## 2.4  Create an ethics journal for monitoring

As good practice to ensure a rigorous monitoring and documentation of emerging ethical and research integrity issues is creating an online, living document: **the ethics journal**. This document, akin to a laboratory notebook, provides a structured way for recording and tracking various ethical considerations and dilemmas encountered throughout the course of the labs implementation.

**What should you include in the journal?**

1. Start with an initial list of ethics issues identified in previous steps.
2. Document ethical decision-making processes comprehensively, including the rationale behind each decision made, as the journal evolves over time.

3. Reflect on the implementation of ethical guidelines within lab research activities and participative processes, highlighting successful strategies and areas for improvement.
4. Meticulously document any unforeseen ethical challenges encountered during research, along with proposed solutions or mitigating measures adopted to address these challenges.

In practice, it should include reflections on the ethical implications of methodological approaches, data management practices, stakeholder engagement strategies, and any other pertinent aspects of the lab research design. By maintaining a comprehensive record of ethical considerations and actions taken, the journal will be the basis for reporting on ethics at the end of the lab journey.

## 2.5  Prepare the Informed Consent Form

The **Informed Consent Form (ICF)** stands as a cornerstone in upholding ethical standards within the participatory spirit of the labs. Its significance lies in its role as a mechanism for ensuring that participants fully comprehend the nature, risks, and benefits of their involvement in our studies, thereby empowering them to make informed decisions regarding their participation.

To streamline the process of obtaining informed consent and ensure consistency across all research activities within the FUTURESILIENCE project, an existing Informed Consent Form has been developed and made available on the project's shared folders (General Information for Labs > Informed Consent Form). This pre-established template serves as a valuable resource, providing the labs with a structured framework for crafting informed consent documents tailored to the specific requirements of each lab.

To mitigate burdens on participants, the consortium has developed a single Informed Consent Form (ICF) that will list all activities conducted within the lab in a unified document. Participants are required to sign this document only once, irrespective of their involvement in one or multiple activities. Additionally, for events such as workshops, a registration list has been devised. This enables participants to provide consent by signing on a single sheet, thereby streamlining administrative procedures and reducing paperwork and online document generation. It is imperative that the Informed Consent Form remains accessible to stakeholders.

## 2.6  Discuss any emerging issue on ethics

During the implementation of the labs activities, various ethical concerns may arise. Each lab could directly discuss them with their mentors or contact the coordination office to discuss possible actions to take, ensuring compliance with ethical standards.

Engaging in **continuous discussions with mentors** provides a crucial avenue for researchers to seek guidance, share concerns, and collaboratively explore ethical dilemmas as they arise. By leveraging the thematic and methodological expertise and perspectives of mentors, researchers can gain insights, identify potential ethical pitfalls, and collaboratively devise strategies for addressing emerging challenges. The mentors maintain constant dialogue with the project coordination office and have direct access to the External Independent Ethics Board to delve into more complex ethical issues in greater detail.

## 2.7  Report on ethics in the final report

The final step encompasses reporting on **ethics in the lab's final report**. This section serves as critical documentation of the ethical considerations, decisions, and actions undertaken throughout the course of the project. It summarises a detailed account of the ethical approach, including the processes for obtaining informed consent, managing data ethically, and addressing any ethical challenges encountered. Additionally, the ethics section provides insights into the strategies employed to ensure compliance with ethical standards and guidelines, as well as reflections on the ethical implications of the research findings. Documenting ethical practices in the journal and reflecting with mentors provides a fast avenue to create a consistent ethics section in the final report.

# 3 Additional resources

- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:083:0389:0403:en:PDF
- European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020-ethics_code-of-conduct_en.pdf
- Global code of conduct for research in resource-poor settings: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/coc_research-resource-poor-settings_en.pdf
- Guidance note — Research on refugees, asylum seekers & migrants: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/guide_research-refugees-migrants_en.pdf
- Ethics in Social Science and Humanities: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020_ethics-soc-science-humanities_en.pdf
- Embassy of good science resources, including guidelines, use cases, scenarios and trainings: https://embassy.science/wiki/Resources