Eesti Teadusagentuur
Estonian Research Council

Guidelines for Completing Your Ethics Self-Assessment for Application of Personal Research Funding

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These guidelines are designed to help you think about the ethical issues of your project and to describe these issues in your application.

NB! If it is impossible to submit the relevant documents together with the application, then it is necessary to keep these documents on file and submit them later on when requested by the Estonian Research Council, or before the start of the experiments.

	NO	YES	If the answer is "YES", please refer to page
1. HUMANS			2
Does your research involve humans (volunteers, children, minors, patients, vulnerable people)?			3
Does your research involve physical interventions on the study participants?			4
2. PERSONAL DATA			5
Does your research involve personal data collection and/or processing?			6
Does your research involve further processing of previously collected personal data?			7
3. HUMAN EMBRYOS AND/OR FOETUSES			7
Does your research involve the use of human embryonic stem cells?			8
Does your research involve the use of human embryos?			8
Does your research involve the use of human foetal tissues and/or cells?			9
4. HUMAN CELLS AND/OR TISSUES			9
Does your research involve the use of human cells or tissues (other than from human embryos and/or foetuses, i.e., in section 3)?			9
5. ANIMALS			11
Does your research involve animals?			11
6. GENETIC RESOURCES AND/OR ASSOCIATED TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE			11
Do you plan to use genetic resources (e.g., animal tissue samples, microorganisms, live animals, materials of historical value, endangered fauna or flora samples, etc.) and/or associated traditional knowledge?			12
7. LOW INCOME COUNTRIES			13
Is it planned to use local resources of low and/or lower middle income countries (e.g. animal and/or human tissue samples, genetic material other than covered in section 6)?			13

In case your research involves low and/or lower middle income countries, are any benefit-sharing actions planned?			13
Could the situation in low and/or lower middle income country put the individuals taking part in the research at risk?			13
8. ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, and SAFETY			14
Does your research involve any activities or the use of elements that may cause harm to the environment, animals, or plants (e.g., GMO plants, microorganisms, etc.)?			14
Does your research deal with endangered fauna and/or flora and/or protected areas?			14
Does your research involve the use of elements (toxic chemicals, explosives, radioactive material, etc.) that may cause harm to humans, including the research staff?			14
9. POTENTIAL MISUSE OF RESEARCH RESULTS			15
Is it possible that the research results could be misused?			16
10. OTHER ETHICS ISSUES			16
Are there any other ethics issues that should be taken into consideration (e.g., new developments in the fields of neurobiology, nanotechnology, genetic technology, man-machine interaction, the creation of androids and cyborgs, etc.)?			16

If your project has no ethics issues described in this table and all the answers are "NO", then you have to comment on only that in the ETIS application form.

1. HUMANS

This section refers to any research involving humans as research objects (research or study participants), regardless of its nature or topic.

Examples: collection of biological samples, personal data, medical interventions, interviews, observations, tracking, or the secondary use of information provided for other purposes, e.g., other research projects, officially collected information, social media sites, etc.

When conducting surveys, interviews, or focus groups where personal information is gathered and stored, data storage, protection, and other relevant issues have to be explained in the data management plan. The data management plan has to be submitted to the Estonian Research Council after the grant contract has been signed.

You must obtain all relevant authorisations from the specific ethics committee and/or from the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate[1] and submit them to the Estonian Research Council before the beginning of the experiments.

1. HUMANS		YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Does your research involve human participants?				Confirm that the informed consent has been or will be obtained in advance.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets 2) Copies of ethics approvals (if required)
If YES:	Are the reseach objects volunteers, including medical or other students?			Description of the recruitment, inclusion, and exclusion criteria as well as the informed consent procedures.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets 2) Copies of ethics approvals (if required)
If YES:	Are the reseach objects people who are unable to give informed consent (incl. children and minors)?			1) Describe the procedures for obtaining the approval from the guardian or legal representative and the agreement of the children or other minors. 2) Describe which steps will be taken to ensure that the participants are not subjected to any form of coercion.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets 2) Copies of ethics approvals
If YES:	Are the reseach objects vulnerable individuals or groups?			1) Explain the type of vulnerability. 2) Describe the recruitment, inclusion, and exclusion criteria as well as the informed consent procedures demonstrating appropriate efforts to ensure fully informed understanding of the implications of participation.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets 2) Copies of ethics approvals

[1] If there is no ethics committee in the scientific area, including any analyses and studies by executive power which are carried out for the purposes of policy development, the compliance with the requirements shall be verified by the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate. With regard to any personal data retained at the National Archives, the National Archives shall have the rights of the ethics committee.

If YES:	Are the reseach objects children and/or minors?			1) Give details of the age range. 2) Describe your assent procedures and parental consent for children and other minors. 3) Describe the steps you will take to ensure the welfare of the children or other minors. 4) Describe why there is a need for involving children and/or minors.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets 2) Copies of ethics approvals
If YES:	Are the reseach objects patients?			1) Describe what disease/condition /disability they have. 2) Describe the recruitment, inclusion, and exclusion criteria as well as the informed consent procedures. 3) Describe your policy on incidental findings and informing the participants about that.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets 2) Copies of ethics approvals
Does your research involve physical interventions on the study participants?					
If YES:	Does it involve invasive techniques? (e.g., the collection of human cells or tissues, surgical or medical interventions, invasive studies on the brain, etc.)			1) Provide the risk assessment for each technique and describe the accompanying risks in general.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets 2) Copies of ethics approvals
If YES:	Does it involve collection of biological samples?			1) Describe what type of samples will be collected. 2) Describe your procedures for collecting biological samples.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets 2) Copies of ethics approvals

Background document
Declaration of Helsinki

2. PERSONAL DATA

This section concerns research which involves the processing of personal data, regardless of the method used (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, direct online retrieval, etc.). Personal data means information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person.

Examples: name, address, identification number, pseudonym, occupation, e-mail, CV, location data, internet protocol (IP) address, cookie ID, phone number, data provided by smart meters, data held by a hospital or doctor.

If such data will be used, please ensure that the usage complies with the Estonian Personal Data Protection Act.

If personal information is gathered and stored, data collection, storage, protection, and other relevant aspects have to be explained in detail in the data management plan, which has to be submitted to the Estonian Research Council after the grant contract has been signed.

You must obtain all relevant authorisations from the specific ethics committee and/or from the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate[2] and submit them to the Estonian Research Council before the beginning of the experiments.

2. PERSONAL DATA	YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Does your research involve personal data collection and/or processing?			1) Confirm that the informed consent has been or will be obtained in advance. 2) Describe why all of the processed data are relevant and limited to the purposes of the project (by taking the "data minimisation" principle into account).	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets used (if relevant) 2) Copies of ethics approvals (if relevant)

[2] If there is no ethics committee in the scientific area, including any analyses and studies by executive power which are carried out for the purposes of policy development, the compliance with the requirements shall be verified by the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate. With regard to any personal data retained at the National Archives, the National Archives shall have the rights of the ethics committee.

				3) Describe the anonymisation /pseudonymisation techniques or justify why the research data will not be anonymised/pseudonymised.	
If YES:	**Does it involve the collection/processing of special categories of personal data** (e.g., genetic, health, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political opinion, religious or philosophical conviction) **and/or sensitive personal data**?			1) Describe why special categories of and/or sensitive personal data will be processed. 2) Describe why the research objectives cannot be reached by processing anonymised/ pseudonymised data (if applicable).	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets used (if relevant) 2) Copies of ethics approvals (if relevant)
If YES:	**Does it involve profiling, systematic monitoring of individuals or processing of large scale of special categories of and/or sensitive data, intrusive methods of data processing** *(such as tracking, surveillance, audio and video recording, geolocation tracking, etc.)*, **or any other data processing operation that may result in high risk to the rights and freedoms of the research participants**?			1) Describe the methods used for tracking, surveillance, or observation of participants. 2) Describe the methods used for profiling participants. 3) Describe how the participants are informed of their rights and the potential risks that data processing may bring. 4) Desribe the procedures for informing the research participants about profiling as well as its possible consequences and the protection measures.	1) Informed consent forms + information sheets used (if relevant) 2) Copies of ethics approvals (if relevant)

Does your research involve further processing of previously collected personal data?			1) Describe the database (registries, repositories) used or of the source of the data. 2) Describe how the participants are informed of their rights and the potential risks that data processing may bring. 3) Explain how is all of the processed data relevant and limited to the purposes of the project (by taking the "data minimisation" principle into account). 4) Explain why the research data will not be anonymised pseudonymised (if relevant).	1) Permission by the owner/manager of the data sets (registries, repositories, if applicable) 2) Copies of ethics approvals (if applicable) 3) Informed consent forms + information sheets + other consent documents (if applicable)
Does your research involve publicly available data?			Confirm that the data used in the project is publicly available (e.g., open data registries or repositories) and can be freely used for the project.	The permission by the owner/manager of the data sets (e.g., open data registries or repositories, if applicable).
Is personal data going to be exported to other countries or imported from other countries to Estonia?			1) Describe what types of personal data will be exported or imported. 2) Describe how the rights of the research participants will be safeguarded.	Permission from the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate (if relevant)

Background document

Estonian Personal Data Protection Act

Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate – Personal data (in Estonian)

3. HUMAN EMBRYOS AND/OR FOETUSES

This section covers research on human embryos, foetuses, and human embryonic stem cells (hESC).

The Estonian Research Council does not fund research which is not allowed based on §35 or is not in compliance with §32 of the Artificial Insemination and Embryo Protection Act.

3. HUMAN EMBRYOS AND/OR FOETUSES		YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Does your research involve the use of human embryonic stem cells?					
If YES:	Are they previously established cell lines?			1) Describe the origin and line of cells. 2) Provide information about the licensing (conditions).	1) Copies of ethics approvals. 2) Declaration that the human embryonic or pluripotent stem cell lines used in the project are registered in the European Human Embryonic Stem Cell Registry. 3) Declaration confirming that the 6 following specific conditions for research activities involving human embryonic stem cells are met: *1) the cells have NOT been derived from embryos specially created for research or by somatic cell nuclear transfer;* *2) the project uses existing cultured cell lines only;* *3) the cell lines have been derived from supernumerary non-implanted embryos resulting from in vitro fertilisation;* *4) informed consent has been obtained for using donated embryos for the derivation of the cell lines;* *5) personal data and privacy of the donors of the embryos for the derivation of the cells are protected;* *6) NO financial inducements were provided for the donation of embryos used for the derivation of the cell lines.*
Does your research involve the use of human embryos?				1) Explain the origin of the embryos. 2) Describe the recruitment, inclusion, and exclusion criteria	1) Copies of ethics approvals 2) Informed consent forms + information sheets

			as well as the informed consent procedures. 3) Confirm that the informed consent has been obtained. **NB! For research purpose only these embryos can be used, which justify the §32 of the Artificial Insemination and Embryo Protection Act.**	
Does your research involve the use of human foetal tissues and/or cells?			1) Describe the origin of the human foetal tissues and/or cells. 2) Describe the details of the informed consent procedures. 3) Confirm that the informed consent has been obtained.	1) Copies of ethics approvals 2) Informed consent forms + information sheets

Background documents
Declarations of the Commission (Framework Programme) (2013/C 373/02)
Artificial Insemination and Embryo Protection Act

4. HUMAN CELLS AND/OR TISSUES

This section refers to research using, producing, or collecting human cells or tissues other than from human embryos and/or foetuses.

You may obtain cells or tissues:

- from commercial sources;
- as part of this research project;
- from another research project, laboratory, or institution;
- from a biobank.

4. HUMAN CELLS AND/OR TISSUES		YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Does your research involve human cells or tissues (other than from human embryos and/or foetuses, i.e., section 3)?				Describe the details of the cells or tissue types.	1) Copies of ethics approvals 2) Copies of authorisation, licensing for using, processing, or collecting the human cells or tissues (if required)
If YES	Are the cells and/or tissues available commercially?			Describe the details of the provider (company or other).	Copies of import licences (if relevant)
If YES	Will the cells and/or tissues be obtained during the project?			1) Describe the source of the material, the amount to be collected, and the procedure for collection. 2) Describe the duration of storage and what you will do with the material at the end of the research. 3) Confirm that the informed consent has been obtained.	1) Copies of ethics approvals 2) Informed consent forms + information sheets
If YES	Will the cells and/or tissues be obtained from another laboratory, project, institution, or biobank?			1) Give information about the name of the laboratory, institution, biobank, and country from which the material has been obtained. 2) Describe how long the material will be stored during the project and what you will do with it at the end of the research project. 3) Confirm that the material is fully anonymised and that the consent for secondary use has been obtained.	1) Copies of import licences (if relevant) 2) Statement of the laboratory, institution, biobank, or other provider that the informed consent has been obtained

Procurement, Handling and Transplantation of Cells, Tissues and Organs Act

5. ANIMALS

When the research involves animals, it is important to implement the principles of replacement, reduction, and refinement.

Endangered species cannot be used, except for very important research purposes when it is impossible to use non-endangered species to achieve the objectives and if the animal experiments are in compliance with the Nature Conservation Act , and the animal experiments meet the objectives described in the Animal Protection Act.

You must obtain all relevant authorisations from the specific ethics committee and submit them to the Estonian Research Council before the beginning of the animal experiments.

5. ANIMALS	YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Does your research involve animals?			1) Give information about the species and rationale for their use, nature of the experiments, procedures, and techniques to be used. 2) Describe why alternatives cannot be used.	Copies of ethics approvals for use of animals

Background documents
Animal Protection Act
Nature Conservation Act

6. GENETIC RESOURCES AND/OR ASSOCIATED TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

This section concerns research involving the users of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their utilization, e.g., the compliance with the international EU 511/2014 regulation, e.g., the Nagoya Protocol.

NB! Human genetic resources are out of scope of the Nagoya Protocol regulation and are covered in Sections 1 and 2 of this document.

Pathogenic organisms that pose a threat to human, animal, or plant health are generally covered by the Nagoya Protocol, except for the WHO's Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework, which is outside of the scope of the Nagoya Protocol.

Before submitting the application, please find out if your project necessitates compliance with the Nagoya Protocol.

A due diligence declaration is required only for genetic resources and/or traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources obtained from a Party to the Nagoya Protocol that has established relevant access and benefit-sharing legislation or regulatory requirements.

If the project necessitates compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, then the due diligence declaration has to declared in the EU database DECLARE. The due diligence declaration must be submitted to the Estonian Research Council after the first payment has been made by the Council and after all genetic resources and/or traditional knowledge used for the implementation of this project has been received, but no later than at the time of the final report.

6. GENETIC RESOURSES AND/OR ASSOCIATED TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE	YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Do you plan to use genetic resources (e.g., animal tissue samples, genetic material, live animals, materials of historical value, endangered fauna or flora samples, etc.) and/or associated traditional knowledge?			Decribe what type of genetic resources will be used and how exactly. NB! When using genetic material from animals, plants, micro-organisms and/or associated traditional knowledge which are in compliance with Nagoya protocol, then the explanation should be added under the tab "Compliance with the Nagoya Protocol" in the ETIS application form. If the project needs the due diligence declaration, then tick the box "Does the project	The documents demonstrating the compliance with the Nagoya Protocol: 1) due diligence declaration; 2) access permit; 3) benefit-sharing agreement. The due diligence has to declared in the EU database DECLARE. NB! Due diligence declaration has to be declared only if the utilisation of the genetic resources in question is within the scope of the Regulation (EU) No 511/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

			necessitate compliance with the Nagoya Protocol?“	

Background documents
EU regulation 511/2014 Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
Nature Conservation Act
Explanation of Nagoya protocol in Estonian

7. LOW INCOME COUNTRIES

This is the case where countries with low and/or lower middle income are involved:

- research activities are conducted, partially or wholly, in such country;
- participants or resources come from such country;
- material is imported from or exported to such country.

Being outside the reach of Estonian and European laws and standards, such research can raise specific ethical issues (particularly in developing countries), such as:

- exploitation of research participants;
- exploitation of local resources;
- risks to researchers and staff;
- research that is prohibited in the EU.

7. LOW INCOME COUNTRIES	YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Is it planned to use local resources of low and/or lower middle income countries (e.g. animal and/or human tissue samples, genetic			Describe what type of local resources will be used and how exactly.	Copies of ethics approvals and other authorisations.

material other than covered in section 6)?				
In case your research involves low and/or lower middle income countries, are any benefit-sharing actions planned?			1) Describe the benefit-sharing measures. 2) Describe the responsiveness to local research needs.	Any relevant document
Could the situation in low and/or lower middle income country put the individuals taking part in the research at risk?			Describe the safety measures you intend to take, including training for staff and insurance cover.	Any relevant document

Background document
EU Global Code of Conduct for Research in resource-poor settings

8. ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

The precautionary principle requires that where there is plausible scientific evidence for serious risks, you must prove that a new technology will not harm the environment.

The health and safety of all human participants in research – as subjects, investigators, or uninvolved third parties, must be a priority in all research studies.

8. ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, and SAFETY	YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Does your research involve any activities or the use of elements that may cause harm to the environment, to animals, or plants (e.g., GMO plants, microorganisms, etc.)?			*1)* Risk-benefit analysis. *2)* What safety measures will you take?	1) Certificate of the safety classification of the laboratory for the contained use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) 2) An emergency plan 3) Copy of the approval from a genetic technology committee for the transfer of GMOs into the environment **NB! You must obtain all relevant approvals and submit them to the Estonian Research**

				Council before the beginning of the experiments.
Does your research deal with endangered fauna and/or flora and/or protected areas?			*Please specify.*	1) Approval from the specific ethics commitee (if required) **NB! You must obtain all relevant approvals and submit them to the Estonian Research Council before the beginning of the experiments.**
Does your research involve the use of elements (toxic chemicals, explosives, radioactive material, etc.) that may cause harm to humans, including the research staff?			Details of the health and safety procedures.	1) Certificate of the safety classification of the laboratory

Background documents
Directive 2009/41/EC of The European Parliament and of The Council on the Contained Use of Genetically Modified Microorganisms
Release into Environment of Genetically Modified Organisms Act
Nature Conservation Act

9. POTENTIAL MISUSE OF RESEARCH RESULTS

This section concerns research involving or generating materials, methods, technologies, or knowledge that could be misused for unethical purposes. Although such research is usually carried out with benign intentions, it has the potential to harm humans, animals, or the environment.

Some questions that could be used to identify potential misuse are:

- Could the materials, methods, technologies, and knowledge involved or generated harm humans, animals, or the environment if they were modified or enhanced?
- What would happen if the materials, methods, technologies, and knowledge involved or generated ended up in the wrong hands?
- Could the materials/methods/technologies and knowledge involved or generated serve purposes other than those intended? If so, would such use be unethical?

Examples: biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear security-sensitive materials and explosives, research with a potential impact on human rights, etc.

9. POTENTIAL MISUSE OF RESEARCH RESULTS	YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided/kept on file
Is it possible that the research results could be misused?			1) Explain the possible risks and describe the risk assessment. 2) Describe the applicable legal requirements. 3) Describe the measures to prevent misuse.	1) Copies of authorisations (if required) 2) Copies of security clearances (if applicable) 3) Copies of ethics approvals (if applicable)

Background document
Guidance note of the EU – Potential misuse of research

10. OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES

Since the Estonian Research Council intends to support ground-breaking and innovative research, it may be that your research raises new ethical issues and concerns that are currently not (fully) covered by these guidelines (e.g., participation of military partners, new developments in the fields of neurobiology, genetic technology, nanotechnology, man-machine interaction, the creation of androids and cyborgs, etc.).

If you know of any such other ethically relevant issues that apply to your project, describe them in this section and explain how you intend to address them. This allows you to alert the Estonian Research Council in time and get appropriate assistance for addressing them. It also avoids the problems you would have if such issues were discovered later (when assessing the project for the continuation of funding).

OTHER ETHICS ISSUES	YES	NO	Information to be provided in the application form in ETIS	Documents to be provided
Are there any other ethics issues that should be taken into consideration? Please specify.			Any relevant information.	Any relevant document