

PRESS RELEASE

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## **Ethics assessment in Europe: values, ethical principles and norms that matter to researchers and innovators**

### **SATORI project heads towards a shared European framework for ethical assessment of research and innovation**

Should we alter human DNA in embryos using gene-editing technologies? How should we deal with issues of privacy and information-sharing in the Internet of things? Should human enhancement be for the privileged few? These sorts of questions raise ethical issues, and the way those issues are treated varies significantly across the European Union.

SATORI, an EC-funded project, has mapped the ethics assessment landscape in nine European countries: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Serbia, Spain, The Netherlands and the UK. The project partners also reviewed the practices and institutions for ethics assessment across scientific fields in the US and China. The project conducted more than 230 interviews and reviewed the literature on value systems, ethical principles, international frameworks, institutional structures, national laws and policies related to ethics assessment in research and innovation. The SATORI project looked at various issues and principles in research ethics, e.g., the treatment of human subjects, the use of animals in experiments, and scientific and institutional integrity.

The project found that personal and cultural value systems are an important basis for decision-making by policy-makers, scientific researchers and lay audiences when ethical issues arise. The SATORI researchers found a need for a shared approach to ethics assessment, especially as emerging technologies raise new ethical issues. While new technologies promise improvements in human life, they also challenge existing norms and values and present new risks.

SATORI researchers have been investigating to what extent harmonised ethical principles and a harmonised approach to ethics assessment is possible in Europe. The researchers have identified good ethical practices and shared standards across different scientific disciplines. “Our aim is to develop a robust methodology for carrying out an ethical impact assessment (EIA),” explains David Wright, deputy co-ordinator of the SATORI project and Director of Trilateral Research, a London-based research company. “We want a tool that will help researchers and institutions consider ethical impacts in the design, management and evaluation of their research and innovation projects.”

“The SATORI results will help policy-makers, researchers and innovators to be more responsive to the needs and ambitions of current and future generations on our planet,” adds Philip Brey, professor of Philosophy of Technology at University of Twente (NL) and co-ordinator of the SATORI project.

The SATORI researchers want companies to consult stakeholders regarding ethical risks. “Stakeholders may spot risks – and solutions – that companies haven’t even thought about,” said Mr Wright.

All SATORI reports are available at: [www.satoriproject.eu](http://www.satoriproject.eu).

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**The SATORI project** is a 45-month project on ethics assessment of research and innovation (R&I) supported by the European Commission through its FP7 funding scheme. SATORI aims to improve ethical assessment practices and strengthen respect for ethical principles. SATORI comprises 17 partners from 12 countries and is co-ordinated by the University of Twente in the Netherlands. Follow us on Twitter: @SATORI\_EU