

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brussels, June 22, 2017



How ethical is EU science?

SATORI project developed a unique document aimed at ethical assessment of research and innovation, for researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders

In 2015 the wider public was surprised to learn that a team of Chinese scientists had conducted a highly controversial research: they edited the genome of a human embryo. Two of the most famous science journals, *Nature* and *Science*, have rejected the paper due to its ethical implications.

The lack of a balanced and harmonized approach, and of regulations and procedures in ethical assessment of research and innovation (R&I) in different countries, sometimes lead to unwanted outcomes and sharp debate. The aim of the FP7 SATORI project is to overcome this issue: to develop a common framework for ethics assessment in Europe and beyond.

“Having joint standards is going to be very useful to be able to talk about quality, to talk about how to improve quality and to have joint approaches and standards that improve ethics assessment across borders”, said Philip Brey, SATORI project coordinator and professor at the University of Twente, the Netherlands.

The Framework

The SATORI consortium has developed an ethics assessment Framework of R&I for European Union member states. A general toolkit was developed, as well as a set of specialized tools for specific types of organizations and scientific fields.

Project members first mapped stakeholders’ expectations about a shared European framework. The analysis was based on 153 interviews with different kinds of stakeholders. The current state of ethics assessment was reviewed in nine European countries: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Serbia, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK, and in the US and China as well.

The SATORI framework proposes a set of ethical issues and principles that are applicable to a broad range of R&I activities, and also those relevant to specific research contexts, such as research involving human subjects, personal data, animals or environmental risks.

The issues and principles refer to respect for human research subjects, respect for privacy, protection of vulnerable people, respectful treatment of animals in experiments, safety, social responsibility, sustainability, scientific integrity, respect for biodiversity and cultural diversity, among others.

Another set of recommendations and procedures was outlined in the Framework, aimed at institutions, organizations and bodies in charge of assessment of research ethics. Assessment procedures are designed not only to protect stakeholders from undue harm and risks, but also to raise awareness of the ethical impact of R&I.

"So far, there wasn't an adequate approach towards ethical impact assessment of R&I. For the past three years we have been developing a comprehensive methodology that will be useful not only to scientists and policy-makers, but also to individuals and institutions responsible for assessing the ethical impact of R&I", explains professor Brey.

Who could benefit?

The SATORI Framework could be used by governance bodies to set up new regulations in relation to ethics impact assessment, but also by research funding organisations (RFOs) to set up new procedures in this respect. In addition, the Framework is dedicated to companies in order to set up internal procedures for conducting ethics impact assessment of R&I.

The Framework also offers ethics assessment guidance and step-by-step procedures for universities, CSOs, industry and RFOs. The proposal for the institutional structure of ethics assessment was proposed in eight different types of organisations in the EU member states.

The SATORI framework does not seem to have any clear areas of conflict with international regulations or guidelines. SATORI draws heavily on the notion of human rights issues and principles as a basis for ethics assessment and guidance.

The SATORI Framework is publicly available via the website:

<http://satoriproject.eu/framework/section-1/>

Read our extensive report:

http://satoriproject.eu/media/D4.1_Proposal_Ethics_Assessment_Framework.pdf

Watch the Framework video:

<http://satoriproject.eu/publications/framework-video/>

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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

SATORI FINAL CONFERENCE

Ethics Assessment of R&I: Looking to the Future

Brussels, 18-19 September 2017

The conference will present and discuss state-of-the-art developments in research ethics assessment and the ethics of technological innovation. It will feature leading ethicists, researchers, innovators, and representatives from policy organisations, research funding organisations, industry, civil society, science media, and academia. **Contact:** final-conference@satoriproject.eu