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Use of Artificial Intelligence in Research: Research Integrity and Ethical Principles. Recommendation of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) DRAFT

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1. Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) affects research across all disciplines and fundamentally changes the ways in which research is conducted. However, the ethical principles of research have not changed. The basic principles defined in *The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland 2023*: **reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability,** also apply to the use of AI in research.

The purpose of this recommendation is to support researchers and research organisations in identifying and assessing risks related to the research use of AI. The recommendation also supports ethics committees when they assess the ethical acceptability of research settings that use AI.

AI has become widely and in part unobtrusively integrated into many digital tools that are also used in research. AI can enhance research work, support ideation, and enable new research settings and novel research questions. When used responsibly, it can improve the quality of research, reduce human error, and enable the analysis of larger datasets than before. AI can also promote the accessibility, comprehensibility, and multilingualism of research.

The use of AI is ethically justified when it supports the researcher's own expertise rather than replacing it. Potential risks must be identified in advance, and appropriate safeguards must be put in place to avoid them. The use of artificial intelligence also involves issues related to confidentiality, data protection, and information security. Material that is confidential or contains personal data should not be entered into openly accessible online AI services if doing so would mean disclosing the data to an external party. A researcher must also distinguish between information security (the technical protection of data) and data protection (the lawful processing of personal data).

Responsibility for complying with research integrity when using AI lies with researchers, research organisations, and the entire research community. Researchers are always responsible for the content of the research and its conclusions. In research projects, identifying applicable ethical principles and laws and ensuring compliance with them is the responsibility of the principal investigator. Organisations that conduct research are responsible for ensuring that members of their research community are familiar with guidance and recommendations relating to research ethics and ethical review, and that they comply with them. Organisations must also provide adequate resources and tools to enable the responsible use of AI. The research community is responsible for advancing shared practices, openness, and critical discussion about the use of AI, and for sharing best practices to advance research integrity.

Use of Artificial Intelligence in Research: Research Integrity and Ethical Principles Recommendation of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity is part of the self-

regulation system of the research community of Finland. The recommendation will be updated as necessary.

There is no single exhaustive definition of AI. Rather, it concerns different kinds of information processing, inference, problem-solving, and learning capabilities that different systems may have. In this recommendation, AI refers to all systems and tools that can, without continuous human guidance, independently perform complex tasks of information processing, inference, and problem-solving.[1]

In research, AI systems and tools can be used to replace and/or support the researcher in the above tasks as part of research. Research may also focus on developing these systems.

1.1 Scope of application of the recommendation

In Finland, scientific research is guided by legislation and by TENK's national guidelines on **research integrity (RI)** (Finnish: HTK). TENK's *The ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland* (Finnish: IEEA) applies to research that is directed, broadly understood, at humans and human activity and that is not regulated by specific legislation. TENK has also issued recommendations on agreeing on authorship of scientific publications, as well as ethical principles for research directed at nature and the environment (Finnish: LYTE).[2] This recommendation specifies how TENK's existing guidelines and recommendations are to be applied to the use of AI in research. These guidelines and recommendations must also be followed in research related to the development of AI.

This recommendation applies to all types of academic research, including artistic disciplines and other research as well as RDI projects during the life span of these activities. For brevity, the term *research* is used below to refer to this whole; the term *researcher* refers to the actor carrying out the activity.

In addition, all research must comply with Finnish legislation and European Union regulation, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the AI Act, and relevant national supplementary legislation, as applicable.[3]

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[1] This definition covers both various machine-learning–based systems and generative AI tools when they are used in research. Rather than relying on a strict or narrow definition, what is essential for the purposes of this recommendation is whether the use of these systems and tools in research involves the ethical issues and risks highlighted in the recommendation.

[2] Ethical principles for research on nature and the environment (LYTE) – TENK's recommendation will be published in June 2026.

[3] The EU Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) does not apply to systems developed exclusively for scientific research. The Regulation must not restrict research, testing, or development before systems are placed on the market or put into service. When a system resulting from such activity is put into service or placed on the market, the Regulation must be complied with. In any event, any research and development activity should be carried out in accordance with recognised ethical and professional standards for scientific research and should be

Researchers must follow the guidance of their own research organisation. Any discipline-specific clarifications and any additional guidance issued by publishers, funders, and other key actors relevant to the research in question must also be taken into account.

The recommendation also applies when research is carried out in international joint projects in Finland or outside Finland. In multidisciplinary and international projects, shared operating principles are agreed before work begins. Research must not be relocated elsewhere in order to benefit from weaker ethical oversight.

The recommendation also applies to national and international research collaboration with companies and other parties. Projects may additionally have more detailed rules defined in agreements, which must be followed. The ethical principles described in this recommendation are also followed and their application promoted in higher education teaching tasks and in supervising theses.

The recommendation is divided into two parts. The first describes the use of AI in relation to research integrity. The second describes how the use of AI must be taken into account when ensuring that the planned research is ethically acceptable, or example through ethical review.

2. Artificial intelligence and research integrity (RI)

2.1 Recommendations for researchers

Research integrity

- The RI principles, **reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability,** also apply to the use of AI in research. (Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta)
- When an AI tool or method is used in research, its significance and effects on the reliability of the work must be assessed and reported in the same way as other key research methods and instruments. The use of AI must be documented and described appropriately.[4]
- If AI is used to support the writing process, it must be ensured that the use does not compromise the reliability of the research. The researcher must ensure that erroneous or fabricated content does not enter the research. AI may also copy existing texts, and the researcher must ensure that this does not inadvertently lead to plagiarism. The

conducted in accordance with applicable Union law. Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, recital 25. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj/eng

[4] A more detailed definition of "significant use of AI" and the related reporting practices will be specified during the further drafting of the recommendation. In this work, TENK will monitor and draw on international preparations, in particular the policy to be developed on disclosing the use of AI in research in connection with the World Conference on Research Integrity 2026 (WCRI2026) https://wcri2026.org/focus-track/

researcher's own sverification of contents and, where needed, human collaboration are essential for the quality assurance in/of the research.

- Generative language models may produce plausible-looking but incorrect or fabricated information (so-called "hallucinations"). Researchers must verify claims and sources generated by AI.
- The use of AI cannot replace the researcher's methodological competence, which is needed, for example, to assess the accuracy of the research process and results. Responsibility for the content of research and its conclusions always remains with researchers.
- The researcher must be familiar with the risks of the AI system used and stay up to date on the development and terms of use of the systems employed. It is the responsibility of the researcher using AI to acquire the necessary competence, for example by familiarising themselves with up-to-date and critical research literature on the use of AI in their field.
- AI models and their outputs, as well as trained neural networks, code, or other model components, may form a part of the research data or results and must be referred to appropriately.

Handling and management of data

- The data management plan must describe how data will be processed using AI and how information security and data protection will be ensured. The metadata of stored research data must also state how AI has been used in processing, analysing, or producing the data.
- If research involves confidential or sensitive data, the AI tool used must be an organization-approved and information-secure solution. Responsibility for the lawful processing of data always remains with the researcher.
- If AI is used in data processing, analysis, or synthesis, the researcher must ensure that automation does not replace good knowledge of the data or its critical assessment.
- If data produced by AI or modified using AI is used in the research, the researcher must assess the suitability, limitations, and potential biases of the data and document how the data were created or [how they were] modified.

Authorship, publishing and communication

- AI must not be listed as an author of a research publication, because authorship requires both ethical and scientific accountability. AI also cannot own copyright nor can legal copyright be transferred to it. It should be noted that AI outputs may include copyrighted material.

- If the use of AI significantly affects the content, results, or interpretation of the research, its use must be disclosed transparently in publications, research plans, and research communication and dissemination. Publishers and funders may have more specific instructions and policies on the use of AI, and these must be followed.[5]

2.2 Recommendations for organisations

Training and support measures

- Organisations are responsible for providing researchers with practical support for the responsible use of AI, for example in risk assessment, ensuring data protection, and addressing copyright issues.
- Research organisations must provide researchers with information-secure AI tools and other infrastructure that supports responsible research use, and ensure regular evaluation and updating of the tools. Researchers are instructed to use AI tools approved by the organisation.
- The EU Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) requires that individuals who use AI systems have an adequate level of AI literacy. Research organizations must provide training and guidance and take into account the needs of staff, researchers, and students in developing AI literacy.
- Research organisations provide training and guidance, taking into account the needs of staff, researchers, and students in developing AI literacy.
- Organisations establish policies on the use of AI in theses, for example on how AI can be used responsibly to support analysis or writing.

AI and responsible assessment

- Organisations must provide guidance on the responsible use of AI in different assessment situations. Researchers and evaluators must follow the guidance provided.
- Because AI introduces new risks and questions into research, organisations can establish ethics committees or expert groups focusing on AI to support researchers and assessment bodies in evaluating complex projects.
- Organisations must ensure that ethics committees have sufficient expertise regarding ethical questions related to the use of AI.

[5] See footnote 4.

- Funders must take into account the use of AI and related research-ethical questions in funding applications and in their own assessment processes.

Info box 1 (or a similarly layout-separated section): Examples of situations in which the use of AI may constitute a violation of the Guidelines for the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR), taking into account the factors affecting the severity of the negligence mentioned in the RCR guidelines (such as extent, recurrence, scientific significance, and harmfulness).The listed examples are indicative and do not limit the discretion of organisations. Depending on the case, other types of activities may also be handled through the RI process, which is intended for dealing with suspected violations of research integrity.

- Failure to disclose the use of AI in situations where transparency about methods and tools used is essential for the assessability and reproducibility of the research.
- Producing fabricated, misleading, or distorted research results or conclusions by using AI, in whole or in part.
- Careless or negligent use of AI without verifying its outputs, resulting in plagiarism and thus constituting a violation of the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) guidelines.
- The use of AI systems classified as high-risk under the AI Act without an appropriate prior ethical review.[6]Manipulating research participants using AI in a way that compromises participants' right to self-determination or the ethical acceptability of the research.
- Identifying individuals included in research data or combining datasets using AI in a way that compromises the protection of privacy.
- Processing research data or training AI models in a way that compromises participants' privacy or confidentiality.
- Failing to take foreseeable AI biases into account in a way that compromises the reliability or impartiality of the research.

3. Research-ethical questions in research settings that use artificial intelligence

In research that uses AI, the same principles, guidelines, and recommendations apply that guide the ethical research more generally. When a research project or a part of it is directed,broadly understood, at humans and human activity, TENK's guideline **The ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland** (IEEA) must be applied. (Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta) Medical research is governed by the relevant legislation and decrees. Where a research project or part of it is

[6] The detailed enumeration of these high-risk categories is found in **Annex III of Regulation (EU) 2024/1689**

directed at nature or the environment, TENK's recommendation on ethical principles for research on nature and the environment (LYTE) must be applied.

3.1 General research-ethical principles

The general ethical principles[7] of research also apply to research that uses AI:

Respect for participants' autonomy

- It is the researcher's responsibility to conduct research in a way that respects the human dignity and right to self-determination of research participants.
- Informed consent to participate in research is a core ethical principle of research with human participants, and it must also be upheld in research that uses AI.
- AI-assisted technology may be difficult to understand. The researcher must find a way to express the role and functionality of the AI used in the research so that the people participating in the research understand it.

Avoidance of harm

- Research must be conducted so that it does not cause significant risks, damage, or harm to the people studied, communities, environments, or other research subjects.
- Significant risks related to the use of AI may concern, for example, people's privacy and the protection of personal data. The right of research participants to privacy and personal data protection must be ensured throughout the entire lifecycle of the AI system.
- Risks may relate not only to personal data, but also, for example, to location information about endangered natural sites or species, or to the disclosure of security-sensitive information.
- The use of AI and potential data protection risks (e.g., related to combining datasets) and risk management measures must be described in the research plan, when informing participants about the research and in reporting.

Proportionality of benefits in relation to harms

- Research must be designed so that the benefits of the research justify the harms it may cause.

[7] Beauchamp and Childress (1979) presented these four main principles of research involving human participants, and they have since been widely referenced (e.g., in the Belmont Report). These principles also underpin TENK's IEEA guideline and the LYTE recommendation. In the IEEA guideline, the conditions for ethical review emphasise respect for participants' autonomy and avoidance of harm, but the review itself also examines the realisation of the other principles.

- Before starting research, risks related to the use of AI and the measures to manage them must be assessed, and it must be considered whether the use of AI is justified in light of the risks.
- For example, the use of AI may cause considerable environmental impacts without materially advancing the research objectives. AI should be used in proportion to the objectives of the research. Unnecessary use should be avoided.

Just distribution of benefits and harms

- The researcher must ensure that the benefits and harms of the research are distributed fairly.
- For example, risks stemming from bias in AI used for creating or processing data may, if realised, affect how research benefits and harms are distributed among participant groups or more broadly across groups in society.
- In addition, in AI research the benefits and harms are often distributed asymmetrically globally, especially between the global North and the global South.

The use of AI in research does not change these ethical principles. However, the inclusion of AI in the research setting may require interpreting and specifying existing principles, guidelines, and recommendations. If the use of AI significantly increases risks related to the research, weakens the position or rights of participants, or involves large-scale processing of sensitive personal data (see Info box 2), ethical review should be conducted for AI-applying research settings to assess risks.

Info box 2 (or a similarly layout-separated section): AI-using research settings that require special ethical consideration and may constitute grounds for ethical review. The examples listed are indicative and do not limit the discretion of ethics committees. Depending on the case, other types of situations may also require ethical review before the research begins.

Data linking and re-identification

- AI systems may combine and interpret data in ways that neither researchers nor participants can foresee. As methods develop, the risk of re-identification of anonymised data increases.
- **Safeguards:** Risks are assessed in advance and datasets are limited to what is necessary for the research. The use of AI is described transparently. Participants are provided appropriate information related to data linking and anonymisation.

Managing bias

- Structural biases embedded in AI may affect the reliability of research and the fair distribution of benefits and harms. The fair distribution of research outcomes must therefore be taken into account. **Safeguards:** Potential biases are identified and their effects on research results are assessed as part of the research plan. Biases are mitigated, for example, throughselection of data, careful design of prompts, and critical review of outputs.

Automated data compilation and interpretation

- Using AI in data analysis can lead to errors if the researcher relies on automated interpretations without sufficient methodological understanding.
- **Safeguards:** AI is used as a tool that supports the researcher's expertise. The validity of analyses is critically assessed, and the researcher is responsible for the reliability of the research process and results.

Use of artificial data (synthetic or synthesised)

- Artificial data can blur the boundary between real and modelled information, distort the experiences of groups of people, or create a misleading impression of participation. In addition, creating synthetic data to protect participants' privacy and to avoid the inclusion of personal data in the dataset may introduce biases. The use of artificial data does not remove the obligation to respect the human dignity of the participants and their right to self-determination.
- **Safeguards:** The use of artificial data is limited to appropriate stages, such as piloting, or it is used alongside real data. The limitations, purpose, and effects of the data are critically assessed and reported openly.

Explicability and transparency

- If the operation of an AI model cannot be sufficiently explained, assessing the reliability of results becomes more difficult and the risk of erroneous conclusions increases.
- **Safeguards:** The operating principles, known limitations, and uncertainties of the models used are described systematically.

Dual use (use of results for both civilian and military purposes)

- Results of research applying AI may be used both for civilian and military purposes or for other harmful uses, which may lead to unforeseeable societal consequences.
- **Safeguards:** Potential contexts of use and impacts of research results are assessed in advance. Reporting, openness, and scoping of results are considered responsibly in relation to identified risks.

High-risk use cases referred to in the AI Act

- The fact that a particular use of AI is prohibited or classified as high-risk under regulation does not, as such, mean that research on the phenomenon is prohibited. In such cases, assessing the proportionality of the risks in relation to the objectives of the research requires prior ethical review.
- Safeguards: Careful risk management; appropriate information to research participants and their informed consent (where the research involves human participants); limiting impacts to the research setting; and adequate data protection and information security measures.

3.2 Ethical review

In accordance with TENK's guidelines, ethical review must be conducted before data collection when the research setting meets the conditions for ethical review under the IEEA guideline (a–f) or under the LYTE recommendation, or when required by field-specific legislation. (Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta)

The use of AI does not change the basic principles of ethical review, and the use of AI does not automatically require ethical review. However, research settings and practices related to the use of AI (Info box 2) may increase risks concerning the rights and freedoms of research participants, research reliability, the environment, or society in a way that constitutes grounds for ethical review, even if the IEEA conditions (a–f) are not met.

Ethical review is conducted primarily by the ethics committee of the discipline that the research predominantly represents. Ethical review primarily follows discipline-specific ethical guidance.

“. If the ethics committee does not itself have sufficient expertise to evaluate the risks of a research, the committee may call in an expert in the discipline concerned regarding the specific request for a statement or approach an ethics committee for a particular field, where available..” (The ethical principles of research with human participants 2019, p. 21) (Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta)

3.3 Requesting ethical review in the human sciences

In ethical review, the plan for data collection and the planned implementation of the research are examined from the perspective of risk and avoidance of harm. The realisation of ethical principles is weighed against the potential knowledge value of the research and the presumed significance of the research results.

The request for an ethics statement should include a description of at least the following:

- at which stages of the research AI will be used,
- what tasks the AI system will perform, and
- what ethical risks, data protection risks, security risks, or research-reliability risks may be involved.

he significance of risks and where they may occur must be assessed case by case. The researcher must present the means by which the identified risks will be prevented or minimised.

Changes in the research design that may substantially affect the operation of the AI system or the results it produces may require a new ethical review.

Info box 3 (or similar): Attachments to a request for an ethics statement include

Grounds for requesting a statement
A description of how the use of AI relates to the requirements for ethical review and/or the research settings included in this recommendation (Info box 2), and how the use of AI affects the risk profile of the research, the position of participants, or the way the research is conducted.

Research plan and its summary
An account of the stages at which AI is used, what tasks the AI system performs, and how the use of AI affects the research setting, data processing, or interpretation of results.

Assessment of the ethical acceptability of the research by the person responsible for the research
An assessment of the ethical risks related to the use of AI, their significance, and a justification for why the use of AI is proportionate and justified in view of the research objectives.

Participant information sheet, consent form, and other material provided to participants
A description of the use of AI in an understandable form to the extent that is relevant to participants; for example, information about what the AI is used for and how it may affect data processing or research results.

Data management plan
A description of how AI is used in processing, analysing, or producing data. An assessment of data protection, information security, and re-identification risks related to the use of AI and how these are managed. Information on whether a data protection impact assessment under the GDPR has been carried out.

Privacy notice
An account of the use of AI in the processing of personal data to the extent that is essential in the research.

3.4 Ethical questions related to the development of artificial intelligence

This recommendation does not cover all ethical questions related to the development of AI, but it specifies how research-ethical principles are applied to specific questions in the development of AI.

In research projects that develop AI applications, in addition to research ethics it is necessary to take into account from the start the broader impacts of the technologies being developed. This means that, in addition to conducting research ethically, researchers should anticipate and assess the societal and environmental impacts of the innovations they develop over the long term, and seek ways to manage potential risks during the research. The ethics of AI cannot be examined in isolation from its applications, technological maturity, or cases of societal use.[8]

Ethical considerations must be taken into account throughout the entire lifecycle of the research and at all stages of the process:

- In defining the intended purpose of the AI system,
- In clarifying the role of the AI system in relation to humans,
- In drafting and testing the principles that guide design and use,
- In software implementation and the selection of training data,

[8] European Commission (2021). Ethics by design and ethics of use approaches for artificial intelligence. https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ethics-by-design-and-ethics-of-use-approaches-for-artificial-intelligence_he_en.pdf

- In training users, and
- In interaction between users and the AI system.

When AI applications operate in the social, psychological, and physical living environments of people, it is essential to examine the impacts of AI use on the communities affected by the use of the application.

In *Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI*, the European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on AI has developed principles for the responsible development of AI systems. These principles correspond in many respects to the ethical principles of research mentioned above. Based on these principles, seven practical requirements for the ethical implementation of AI have been identified:

1. human agency and oversight,
2. technical robustness and safety,
3. privacy and data governance,
4. transparency,
5. diversity, non-discrimination and fairness,
6. societal and environmental well-being, and
7. accountability.

According to these principles, AI should function as a human-controlled tool that respects human dignity and self-determination. Systems must be controllable and overseen by humans. They must be technically robust and safe, respect privacy and data protection, and be transparent, explainable, and traceable. The use of AI should promote diversity, non-discrimination, and fairness, and support social and environmental well-being. These principles should guide the design and use of AI systems and serve as a basis for codes of conduct, best practices, and standards.

4. Key guidelines and materials

- All European Academies ALLEA (2023). *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. Revised Edition 2023.* https://allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/European-Code-of-Conduct-Revised-Edition-2023.pdf (DOI: 10.26356/ECOC)
- Beauchamp, T. and Childress, J. (1979). *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. Oxford University Press.

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- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1979). *Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html

APPENDIX 1

Drafting of the recommendation and the working group

The recommendation was prepared by a working group appointed by TENK:

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