



netWorked Youth Research for **Empowerment** in the Digital society

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Initial Ethical Advisory Board Meeting

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Version 1.1



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Initial Ethical Advisory Board Meeting

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1 Introduction – The WYRED Project

The WYRED project (netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in the Digital society) is a 3-year project funded by the European Commission Horizon 2020 INEQUAL programme (García-Peñalvo, 2016, 2017; García-Peñalvo & Kearney, 2016). It runs from November 2016 to October 2019, with 9 partners from 7 European countries (listed below).

1.1 OVERVIEW OF WYRED

1.1.1 Project summary

The emergence of the young as a distinct social group, and their slowly increasing empowerment through the availability of digital technology, has brought with it an understanding that they have a key role to play in the digital society, as drivers of new behaviours and understandings. However, their active participation in society is not reflected sufficiently in policy and decision-making, especially in relation to digital issues. Because of this, they are not well represented and unheard, and this makes it hard for research and policy to identify and understand their needs. These issues are further complicated by the fact that the group is a swiftly moving target, it is as heterogeneous as the wider society, and young people can be unwilling to be subjects of research.

The WYRED project aims to provide a framework for research in which children and young people can express and explore their perspectives and interests in relation to digital society, but also a platform from which they can communicate their perspectives to other stakeholders effectively through innovative engagement processes. It will do this by implementing a generative research cycle involving networking, dialogue, participatory research and interpretation phases centred around and driven by children and young people, out of which a diverse range of outputs, critical perspectives and other insights will emerge to inform policy and decision-making in relation to children and young people's needs in relation to digital society.

The project is informed by the recognition that young people of all ages have the right to participation and engagement. It has a strong focus on inclusion, diversity and the empowerment of the marginalised. The aim is to replace the disempowering scrutiny of conventional research processes with the empowerment of self-scrutiny and self-organisation through the social dialogue and participatory research.

1.1.2 Partners

1	UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA (USAL)	Spain
2	OXFAM ITALIA ONLUS (OXFAM)	Italy

3	PYE GLOBAL (PYE)	UK
4	ASIST OGRETIM KURUMLARI A.S. (DOGA SCHOOLS)	Turkey
5	EARLY YEARS – THE ORGANISATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN (EARLY YEARS)	UK
6	YOUTH FOR EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL AISBL (YEU)	Belgium
7	MOVES (MOVES)	Austria
8	THE BOUNDARIES OBSERVATORY C.I.C (BOUNDARIES)	UK
9	TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY (TAU)	Israel

1.1.3 The work-plan

The project work plan involves 10 work packages. The first of these involves the definition of the different processes involved in the research cycle, and the second is dedicated to the preparation and implementation throughout the project of the inclusion strategy, the third focuses on the development of the WYRED platform, which will be used throughout the project as the space in which the activities and interaction take place, After these first three preparatory WPs. The next 5 cover the full cycle of research activity in WYRED. This starts with network building in WP4, in which the children and young people who will participate in the research cycle are attracted and engaged and the principal themes that represent their concerns are identified. The next work package (5) focuses on social dialogue around these themes which will explore the themes to identify key research questions relating to the digital society that concern children and young people. In the subsequent work package (6) these children and young people, supported by the partners, will focus on designing and implementing research activities to explore these questions and issues in a range of different ways. WP7 focuses on the interpretation and evaluation of the process and its results in the production types by the young research participants and the partners, of different formats and artefact that will be used to present the results, principally insights and recommendations to different target groups at policy level and in the wider society. The final phase of the cycle in WP8 focuses on the dissemination and exploitation of these results, though this work package runs throughout the project engaging in the valorisation of the WYRED activity through workshops, event participation, online activity and an association.

These 5 work packages form a cycle that is aimed to generate insights relating to the perspectives and concerns of children and young people in relation to digital society. The cycle repeats twice during the funding period of

the project and will continue after the funding period indefinitely under the aegis of the WYRED Association. The WYRED cycle is supported by 2 other work packages focusing on management (WP9) and quality (WP10).

WP1	WYRED PROCESSES DEFINITION	BOUNDARIES
WP2	INCLUSION	MOVES
WP3	WYRED PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT	USAL
WP4	BUILDING THE WYRED NETWORK	YEU
WP5	SOCIAL DIALOGUE PHASE	EARLY YEARS
WP6	PARTICIPANT RESEARCH PHASE	DOGA SCHOOLS
WP7	EVALUATION AND INTERPRETATION PHASE	PYE GLOBAL
WP8	VALORISATION	OXFAM
WP9	PROJECT MANAGEMENT	USAL
WP10	QUALITY MANAGEMENT	BOUNDARIES

2 Ethical issues in WYRED

The focus of the WYRED project is research involving human participants, many of whom will be schoolchildren and young people. Furthermore, due to the innovative nature of this project which aims to empower young people, the participants, rather than being passive objects of the research will actually be carrying out the research activities. In this sense, they will be carrying out activities usually implemented by adults. As minors, some will be unable to provide informed consent and due to the focus on diversity in the project some of them will be members of vulnerable groups.

This raises a series of ethical issues (duly flagged in the proposal checklist) that reflect the rights mentioned above. Principal among these are the following:

- Engagement and Informed Consent. Engaging the participation of children and young people in an innovative research project such as this requires careful attention to the ways in which recruitment is

managed. In particular, the process of informed consent needs special consideration, since an important number of participants, as minors, are unable to give informed consent.

- Data Protection. The work involved in the project involves the collection of personal data, and the time this will be sensitive personal data, such as data that can reveal racial origin, political opinions or religious or other beliefs, as well as data relating to health, sex life or criminal convictions, as well as other data defined as sensitive by domestic law. This data and the participants will be subject to tracking and observation, and it is envisaged that further processing of the data will take place, both by the participants themselves and possibly third parties.
- Safeguarding. The participants in the research activities in the project will be involved in a range of interactions, both online and off-line, with other young people and children, and with adults. This naturally introduces elements of risk and it is necessary to ensure that they are suitably protected and safeguarded throughout the process. A range of vulnerable groups of different kinds will be involved in the project and it is especially important to avoid the risk of increasing their vulnerability.
- Diversity and pedagogical aspects. A central objective of the project is to ensure that a wide range of voices is heard through the WYRED process. Diversity and heterogeneity form part of the design, and this raises issues since the different stages and rates of development of different participants from different cultures and contexts require different treatment. The design of the project aims to accommodate, and indeed celebrate this diversity. However, it is necessary to ensure that adverse effects are not generated.
- Approval and compliance. In addition to the ethical issues and described above, it is necessary also to ensure due compliance with the ethical standards of H2020, and that ethical approval is obtained from the relevant authorities. In addition to this it is important to have an independent view the full considerations in the project and the degree to which they been taken into account, in order to complement the work carried out in relation to ethics by the consortium.

At this point, it is also germane to comment on some overarching aspects of the project that show how due attention to ethical considerations is an integral part of the project design.

The first of these relates to the consortium. The project partners are experienced in research of this kind and habitually implement ethical review and informed consent processes for all research participants. These comply with internal requirements in their institutions and with legal requirements in their respective countries. Similarly, all the partners observe responsible data handling procedures and in general implement appropriate ethical treatment in all the work they do.

Secondly, ethics is an integral part of the work plan. Five of the 10 work packages explicitly provide for ethics-related work. In WP1 in the Definition of Processes, procedures such as the recruitment and informed consent

of participants will be addressed, as well as safeguarding procedures. This WP a deliverable will be produced that sets out all the ethics related procedures in the project, called the Participant Protection policy which is updated yearly (the current version is D1.5). This covers the issues mentioned above such as recruitment and informed consent, safeguarding and responsibilities of the participants in relation to each other as well as covering data protection issues. It is a living document, that is adapted progressively as the project evolves, building on insights and input from WP2, WP3, WP9 and WP10. WP2 focuses on inclusion and will especially address issues relating to the ethics around diversity. In WP3 where the platform is built, close attention will be paid to data related issues and procedures such as anonymization. In WP9, the creation of the project management guidelines in WP9 Task 9.1 will specifically define RRI guidelines, which will foreground ethical issues and liaise where appropriate with existing projects in RRI such as RRI-Tools. Lastly in WP 10, the evaluation of the quality of the project will include a focus on the ethical dimensions of the project and an external expert will be responsible for evaluating the ethical dimension, and ensuring that the work complies with H2020 ethical standards. These five work packages constitute the infrastructure of the WYRED project and as can be seen, in each of them ethical considerations are taken into account and form an integral part of the work furthermore covering all of the ethical issues that the project raises, as set out above.

Lastly, it is important to take into account that WYRED is itself an ethical project, since its central aim is to ensure that the young can exercise their right to be heard. Its focus is to take a very large and heterogeneous social group that is to a great extent disempowered and unheard and give it the tools and the wherewithal to participate in society. It is important to note that this participation is a fundamental objective of the project. Some approaches to ethics in relation to working with young people focus on protection of the young within a safe space, where all exposure to external factors is controlled. WYRED does create this safe space, in which diversity is celebrated, a in order to give due attention to the ethical issues the project raises. However, we believe that protection is insufficient, the young cannot remain indefinitely within our spaces and will have to move out into the wider world and engage with third-party spaces and stakeholders. Given this it would be unethical not to prepare them, and for this reason, the project also involves introductory training for the participants in the project around the ethical issues that the work raises, such as personal data, safeguarding, political issues diversity and gender among others. In this way we complement the ethics of protection with an ethics of empowerment.

3 Ethics strategy in WYRED

In order to ensure all these issues are appropriately addressed, a series of activities are planned as part of the project activity, as follows.

3.1.1 Internal approval

Internal attention to the issues is necessary. An Ethics Advisory Board (EB) ensures the alignment of tasks and activities within the ethical requirements and procedures established in the Participant Protection Policy. It is made up a representative of each partner. After an initial meeting for the purpose of constituting the Board and carrying out an initial reflection on ethical issues within the project, the Board meets whenever ethical issues arise and require discussion, usually online. This report contains a description of that first meeting. Partners will have to seek permission from the EAB before conducting any new activities that emerge during the project that are of an ethically sensitive nature.

3.1.2 External Independent Ethics Advisor

An external and independent ethics advisor will be appointed to oversee the ethical concerns involved in this research. Reports will be produced at M18 and M36 by this advisor, and submitted to the REA with the financial reports.

3.1.3 Ethical approvals

Copies of ethical approvals for the collection of personal data by the competent University Data Protection Officer and the National Data Protection authority were submitted to the European Commission by the coordinator.

3.1.4 Measures to ensure compliance with the ethical standards of H2020

The range of measures described in this section, and the different deliverables, tasks and procedures described give us the confidence that the WYRED project is in compliance with the ethical standards of H2020.

4 The Initial Ethical Advisory Board meeting

Though originally scheduled for the partner meeting in Vienna in June 2017, the first Ethical Advisory Board (EAB) meeting had to be postponed as other business took up the time during the face to face meeting. It was reconvened and held online on 15th September, due to the holiday period this was the first time that sufficient partners could be present. It was also held immediately after an Inclusion Board meeting to make the most of the time slot.

4.1.1 Participants

The participants in the meeting were:

- Nick Kearney (BOUN)
- Sabine Zauchner (MOVES)

- Panagiotis Chatzimichail (YEU)
- Valentina Zangrando (USAL)
- Danny Arati (DOGA)
- Mary O'Reilly (EARLY YEARS)
- Federica Cicala (OXFAM)
- Anna Renau (PYE)
- Tel Aviv University were unable to be present.

4.1.2 Proceedings

The object of the meeting was to convene the Board for the first time, and clarify its objectives and functioning. Nick Kearney, facilitating the meeting, introduced the idea of the EAB as an internal group that takes care to ensure that any ethical issues that arise during the project are appropriately addressed. The key reference document for the EAB is the Participant Protection Policy document which covers ethical issues and guidelines within WYRED. The key work of the EAB is to identify any issues relating to ethics such as informed consent, data protection, safeguarding. These are all covered in the Participant Protection Policy document.

At the start of the meeting, the rationale for holding the meeting after the Inclusion Group meeting was explained. Though the first meeting of the EAB had been planned for the Partner meeting in Vienna, this was not possible due to time considerations, as the make-up of the Inclusion Group and the EAB is the same it was considered most efficient to hold the first EAB meeting just after.

The next section was dedicated to a presentation of the Participant Protection Policy, and subsequent discussion of it. As it was still quite early in the 1st WYRED cycle, few issues have arisen and no changes were seen as necessary. It was suggested that the informed consent forms, particularly for older young people, might need some rewording in places. It was however agreed to wait to the end of the cycle to get a more rounded view of this, before deciding.

It was felt that at this stage of the project, the work so far, such as dialogues has mostly taken place within institutional contexts where consent is already implicit, so that not all have used the informed consent forms yet, and indeed in some cases institutions (eg AT) have insisted that it is not necessary. However, in cases where photos or recordings were to be made, it was considered necessary to get informed consent.

The meeting commented at some length on the importance of the next stage of the WYRED cycle where activity will take place on the platform. This is the environment where the most important ethical consideration in WYRED become important. It was felt that it would be important to be aware of this and pay attention to the issues especially the issue of informed consent, as the platform is launched.



Partners were asked for help in identifying an appropriate independent external ethics advisor, as the first ethical review is due quite soon.

After this discussion, it was asked if there was any further business. Other than some comments about the very good ethical quality of the project, in the view of the partners, no other aspects were commented on so the meeting closed. Further meetings will be held when needed.

5 References

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