



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

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## Initial Ethical Advisory Board Meeting

Deliverable number WP10\_D10.14

Copyright This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727066

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**H2020-SC6-REV-INEQUAL-2016**

**Grant Agreement number: 727066**

**1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019**

**Final Ethical Advisory Board Report**

**Deliverable number WP10\_D10.14**

Deliverable description			
Filename	WYRED_WP10_D10.14_v1.1.PDF		
Type	R		
Dissemination level	CO		
DOI	10.5281/zenodo.3571781		
Due Date (in months)	M8		
<b>Deliverable contributors</b>			
Version No.	Name, Institution	Role	Last update
1.1	BOUNDARIES	Nick Kearney	30/10/2019

\* cfr. GA – Annex I Part A – 1.3.2 WT2 – list of deliverable



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## 1 Introduction – The WYRED Project

The WYRED project (netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in the Digital society) (García-Peñalvo, 2016b, 2017, 2018; García-Peñalvo & García-Holgado, 2019; García-Peñalvo & Kearney, 2016; Griffiths et al., 2017) was a 3-year project funded by the European Commission Horizon 2020 INEQUAL programme. It ran 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 aimed 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 did this by implementing a generative research cycle involving networking, dialogue, participatory research and interpretation phases (WYRED Consortium, 2017b, 2017c) centred around and driven by children and young people, out of which a diverse range of outputs, critical perspectives and other insights have emerged to



inform policy and decision-making in relation to children and young people's needs in relation to digital society.

The project was informed by the recognition that young people of all ages have the right to participation and engagement. It had a strong focus on inclusion, diversity and the empowerment of the marginalised. The aim was 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 involved 10 work packages. The first of these involved the definition of the different processes involved in the research cycle, and the second was dedicated to the preparation and implementation throughout the project of the inclusion strategy, the third focused on the development of the WYRED platform (García-Holgado & García-Peñalvo, 2018; García-Peñalvo, 2016a; García-Peñalvo & Durán-Escudero, 2017; García-Peñalvo, García-Holgado, Vázquez-Ingelmo, & Seoane-Pardo, 2018; García-Peñalvo, Vázquez-Ingelmo, & García-Holgado, 2019; García-Peñalvo, Vázquez-Ingelmo, García-Holgado, & Seoane-Pardo, 2019; WYRED Consortium, 2017a, 2018), which was 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 dialogues around these themes which 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, 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 were 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 ran 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 aims to generate insights relating to the perspectives and concerns of children and young people in relation to digital society. The cycle was repeated



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 was an integral part of the work plan. Five of the 10 work packages explicitly provided for ethics-related work. In WP1 in the Definition of Processes, procedures such as the recruitment and informed consent of participants were addressed, as well as safeguarding procedures. In that WP a deliverable was produced that set out all the ethics related procedures in the project, called the Participant Protection policy which was updated yearly. 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 was adapted progressively as the project evolves, building on insights and input from WP2, WP3, WP9 and WP10. WP2 focuses on inclusion and especially addressed issues relating to the ethics around diversity. In WP3 where the platform was built, close attention was paid to data related issues and procedures such as anonymization. In WP9, the creation of the project management guidelines in WP9 Task 9.1 specifically defined RRI guidelines, which foregrounded ethical issues. Lastly in WP 10, the evaluation of the quality of the project included a focus on the ethical dimensions of the project and external review of the ethical dimension took place, ensuring that the work complies with H2020 ethical standards. These five work packages constituted the infrastructure of the WYRED project and as can be seen, in each of them ethical considerations were taken into account and formed an integral part of the work furthermore covering all of the ethical issues that the project raises, as set out above. The Independent Ethical Reviews carried out during the project corroborate this

Lastly, it is important to take into account that WYRED was itself an ethical project, since its central aim was to ensure that the young can exercise their right to be heard. Its focus was 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 was 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, 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 involved 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 complemented the ethics of protection with an ethics of empowerment.

### **3 Ethics strategy in WYRED**

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

#### **3.1.1 Internal approval**

Internal attention to the issues is necessary. The existence of an Ethics Advisory Board (EB) which can meet if necessary, ensured the alignment of tasks and activities within the ethical requirements and procedures established in the Participant Protection Policy. It was 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 was set up and remained dormant until such time as it might prove necessary. Though some minor consideration arose at times during the course of the project they were swiftly solved, and it was not considered necessary to call a meeting of the Ethical Advisory Board during the project.

#### **3.1.2 External Independent Ethics Advisor**

External and independent ethics advisors were appointed to oversee the ethical concerns involved in this research. Reports were produced at M18 and M36 by this advisor and submitted to the REA with the financial reports. These reports were in both cases very positive, corroborating the absence of any need for the Ethical Advisory Board to meet.

#### **3.1.3 Ethical approvals**

Copies of the 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 gave, and continue to give us, the confidence that the WYRED project is in compliance with the ethical standards of H2020.

## 4 The Ethical Advisory Board

The first Ethical Advisory Board (EAB) meeting was held online on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

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.

The object of the meeting was to convene the Board for the first time and clarify its objectives and functioning. There is a separate deliverable (10.13) containing the minutes.

It was agreed at that meeting (as per the proposal) that further meetings would be held when needed. However, it has not been considered necessary to do this during the project and the Board has not therefore met. There is therefore nothing to report. The Independent Ethical Reviews of the project provide a very complete picture of the WYRED project from an ethical perspective.



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