

D8.3 Handbook on EBRAINS Good Governance



Figure 1: Key Elements of Good Governance in EBRAINS 2.0

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Abstract:	<p>This Handbook on EBRAINS Good Governance (D8.3) is intended to be a comprehensive and user-friendly resource for all stakeholders in the EBRAINS 2.0 project. It outlines the governance framework tailored to the project's specific scale and structure. The document defines the roles, responsibilities, and communication channels necessary for effective oversight and emphasizes how principles of good governance are applied throughout the project. Its primary goal is to demonstrate how clear structures, inclusive practices, and conflict-resolution mechanisms can build trust, foster collaboration, and strengthen decision-making, ultimately helping the project run more efficiently and achieve its objectives.</p>		

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1. Governance Terminology and Definitions

Term	Definition
Chairperson	The Chairperson or Chair is the person who leads a body, a working group, or a committee
Conflict of Interest (Col)	A Col is a situation where competing links of interest (Lols) create a risk that judgment or actions related to a primary responsibility (e.g., in the EBRAINS 2.0 project) may be inappropriately influenced by a secondary Lol. Cols can be perceived, potential, or actual. For more information on Lols, please see the term "Link of Interest" in this table.
Consortium Agreement (CA)	The CA is an internal agreement signed by the consortium partners and associated partners (parties). It defines the terms and conditions under which the grant is awarded, and the project is implemented. It serves several key functions e.g., specify scope, aims and resources of the project, outline the obligations and responsibilities of both the project consortium members and the EU funding body, define payment procedures and include provisions for making amendments to the agreement.
Declaration of Links of Interest (DLI)	A DLI is an annual declaration completed by members of the Leadership Board, advisory bodies, and any task forces or committees deemed necessary. A completed DLI summarizes a person's professional connections within their field of expertise, e.g., affiliations, collaborations, or financial ties.
EEEDI	The umbrella term EEEDI (" <i>Triple E D I</i> ") will be used as an abbreviation for Ethics, Gender Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Adding "EEDI" raises awareness for the European strategy for Gender Equality, the intersectionality of gender with further diversity traits and the request to create an inclusive collaborative culture within the project and for its communities where diverse perspectives are valued, and everyone is empowered recognised for their contributions (see also Ethics Advisor and Ethics Advisory Boards: v2.0 – 15.02.2023, p. 3 ¹).
EBRAINS Ethics and Society Committee (EESC)	EBRAINS Ethics and Society Committee of the EBRAINS AISBL. Members of the EESC also serve as advisors for the EBRAINS 2.0 project.
EBRAINS Research Infrastructure (RI)	EBRAINS is a distributed and open RI for cutting-edge brain research and technologies that the EBRAINS 2.0 project is developing and expanding.
EBRAINS Science and technology Committee (ESTC), Standing subgroup	EBRAINS Science and Technology Committee of the EBRAINS AISBL. Several members of the ESTC also serve as advisors as standing group of the ESTC in the EBRAINS 2.0 project.
Ethics Advisor (EA)	The Ethics Advisor is an expert who provides advice on ethics in any EC-funded project.
General Assembly	The General Assembly is the ultimate decision-making body of the project consortium. To avoid confusion with the abbreviation of the Grant Agreement (see below), the term General Assembly is always spelled in this deliverable.
Grant Agreement (GA)	The purpose of the GA is to establish a formal framework for collaboration among the various entities participating in the EBRAINS 2.0 project. It

¹https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/roles-and-functions-of-ethics-advisory-ethics-advisory-boards-in-ec-funded-projects_he_en.pdf

	clarifies e.g., roles and responsibilities, how to manage intellectual property and resolve disputes. Overall, the GA plays a crucial role in providing a clear and structured framework for collaboration, helping to ensure the success and smooth operation of the project.
Human Brain Project (HBP)	The HBP ² is a European Flagship project in the field of Future and Emerging Technologies (October 2023 - September 2023). The EBRAINS research infrastructure was developed within the HBP.
Leadership Board (LB)	The LB is the body responsible for the executive management, communication, and coordination of the project. WP leaders of the eight WPs form the LB.
Link of Interest (LoI)	A link of interest refers to any professional connection that a person has within their field of expertise. In any professional field, it is common for individuals to have such links of interest, such as affiliations, collaborations, or financial ties. However, such links of interest do not necessarily constitute a conflict of interest. For more information, see the EBRAINS 2.0 Policy on Management of Interests: https://drive.ebrains.eu/f/7a82f5acb84945e18256/
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	An MoU is a formal agreement between two or more parties outlining their mutual understanding and intentions regarding a specific matter or collaboration.
Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)	Responsible research and innovation is an approach that anticipates and assesses potential implications and societal expectations about research and innovation, with the aim to foster the design of inclusive and sustainable research and innovation.
Terms of Reference (ToR)	ToRs define the purpose and structures of a project, committee, meeting, negotiation, or any similar collection of people who have agreed to work together to accomplish a shared goal.
Work Package (WP)	WPs are central building blocks of any Horizon Europe project. The WP structure is the means through which the concept presented in the project proposal is realised.

Table 1: Governance Terminology and Definitions

For access to some sensitive documents such as the Consortium Agreement and Grant Agreement, which cannot be made available on public websites, an EBRAINS account is required to open some links in this document.

2. Introduction

This *Handbook on EBRAINS Good Governance* (D8.3) is designed to be a comprehensive and user-friendly document for all stakeholders in the EBRAINS 2.0 project. It sets out the governance framework for the project, tailored to its specific scale and structure. It defines the roles, responsibilities, and communication channels needed for effective oversight and highlights how good governance principles are applied throughout the project. Its main purpose is to show how clear structures, inclusive practices, and conflict-resolution mechanisms can build trust, support collaboration, and strengthen decision-making, ultimately helping the project run more efficiently and achieve its objectives.

Provided in this handbook are:

² <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/>

- a good understanding of the governance structure of EBRAINS 2.0 at the interface to EBRAINS RI and EBRAINS AISBL
- a summary of the distribution of responsibilities regarding decision-making, monitoring of progress, and reporting lines
- a description of the underlying principles of good governance (EEEDI)
- an outline of the roles, responsibilities, and communication mechanisms essential for effective project oversight
- links and references to all relevant resources

This handbook presents the project's approach to governance management (section 3) and highlights key reference documents that underpin this framework (section 4). It then also outlines the governance framework of the project, including the roles and responsibilities of governing bodies and advisory committees (section 5). Finally, it describes the core principles guiding good governance throughout the project (section 6).

Ethics, Gender Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EEEDI) are foundational to effective governance in research and innovation projects. A strong EEEDI approach ensures that decision-making processes are transparent (openness), participatory (inclusion), accountable (equitable governance), and effective (ensuring diverse voices contribute to impact). Integrating EEEDI across governance structures strengthens institutional coherence by embedding ethical and diversity considerations into project activities, avoiding fragmentation or tokenistic approaches. Moreover, ensuring diverse representation enhances the legitimacy, creativity, and resilience of project outcomes. By treating EEEDI as an integral aspect of governance rather than a separate or optional concern, EBRAINS 2.0 aims to foster more inclusive collaboration as well as socially responsible, and scientifically rigorous research.

3. Governance Management

Governance management, anchored in T8.3, encompasses designing a framework of structures, responsibilities, and processes to manage the project effectively, transparently, and inclusively so that the project can reach its goals. The responsibilities of T8.3 in this include to date:

- Setting up the project's governance framework based on principles of good governance to support the Work Packages in fulfilling their obligations.
- Striving to implement EEEDI principles across Work Packages and support WPs in doing so.
- Providing logistical and strategic support to governing bodies, members, and chairpersons, including coordinating meetings, agendas, and minutes.
- Facilitate timely decision-making by governing bodies.
- Ensuring a flow of information between governing bodies, advisory boards, and work packages.
- Drawing on the experience of established advisory committees.
- Coordinating the process to identify and manage Links of interest (LoIs).
- Coordinating ethics requirements and the project's Ethics report.
- Draft Code of Conduct, set up processes for solving conflicts, draft and facilitate implementing a Gender Equality Plan.

Maintaining a constant flow of information between governing bodies and work packages is integral to the governance strategy. This exchange ensures alignment of objectives, timely decision-making including clear decision-making-lines and effective resource allocation.

Compliance with EU principles and values, including ethical and societal acceptability, is central to the projects mission. The project is committed to upholding these principles in all aspects of its work, ensuring integrity and credibility. To address potential conflicts of interest (ColS), the project will

coordinate a thorough process to identify and manage them effectively, maintaining the integrity and impartiality of decision-making processes.

Finally, the project is dedicated to meeting all ethics requirements and deliverables associated with its workplan. Upholding the highest ethical standards is non-negotiable, and we are committed to fulfilling our responsibilities in this regard.

4. Reference Documents

The organisational framework of the consortium revolves around two central agreements: the Consortium Agreement (CA) and the Grant Agreement (GA). These have been meticulously crafted to define the work plan, allocate responsibilities, and specify the nature of collaboration in contractual terms.

These agreements serve as foundational pillars of the project, providing a robust framework within which the consortium operates. They establish a clear roadmap for coordinated action, delineating the roles and obligations of each participating institution. Moreover, they serve as legal instruments that formalise collaborative efforts, fostering a structured and transparent environment conducive to effective project management and the achievement of objectives.

By adhering to the CA, the GA, and the guiding principles of good governance (see section 6), consortium members uphold the highest standards of legal and regulatory compliance, mitigating risks and ensuring accountability throughout the duration of the project. This contractual framework not only safeguards the interests of involved parties but promotes trust, cohesion, and synergy in reaching the project's objectives.

4.1 Consortium Agreement

The purpose of the CA is to establish a formal framework for collaboration among the various entities participating in the EBRAINS 2.0 project. It clarifies roles and responsibilities, conflict resolution, and how to manage e.g. intellectual property.

Link to CA: <https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/00628660-9c96-41c8-b068-74dc4efe9767/> (with EBRAINS account)

4.2 Grant Agreement

The GA defines the terms and conditions under which the grant is awarded, and the project is implemented. It specifies the scope of the project, defines the aims and resources of the project, outlines obligations and responsibilities of both the consortium members and the EU funding body, and defining payment procedures. The GA also includes provisions for making amendments to the GA.

Link to GA: <https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/1e66f83b-34cf-487f-9c1c-f5c100535049/> (with EBRAINS account)

4.3 Other Documents

Not all aspects concerning the governance of the project can be fully covered in the CA. Roles and responsibilities, expertise required, election processes, and the nature of the cooperation are specified in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for specific boards and committees, e.g. the Leadership Board and advisory committees. If necessary, ToRs and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) will be drawn up for additional working groups and task forces and committees, mandated to handle specific topics as required by the project (see also section 5.3). Additional documents guiding the project's governance

include the ALBA Declaration on Equity and Inclusion³ and the European General Data Protection Regulation⁴. This is being complemented by e.g., the EBRAINS 2.0 Data Management Plan⁵ (D8.2) and the EBRAINS 2.0 Policy on Management of Interests⁶ (see section 6.2 for more information on conflicts of interest). Key resources from the broader EBRAINS RI are also referenced, such as the EBRAINS Handbook⁷, which provides additional context and practical guidance for the EBRAINS 2.0 project members.

5. Governance Structure

EBRAINS 2.0 is not an isolated project; rather, it is meticulously designed to bolster, cultivate, and assist the EBRAINS RI in a manner that is both sustainable and impactful. This requires special attention in terms of aligning and integrating project governance with the overarching goals and governance of the EBRAINS RI being embedded in the EBRAINS AISBL.

- **RI-Focused Governance:** The project's governance structure is set up to align decisions with the strategic needs and priorities of the EBRAINS RI. The project governance should not contravene that of EBRAINS RI. Processes that are set up via EBRAINS 2.0 can also be transferred to the higher-level governance of EBRAINS RI.
- **Synergies:** Activities within EBRAINS 2.0 are designed to foster collaboration between scientific teams, technology developers, and infrastructure providers within the project and beyond to ensure integration and reduce redundancy.

When creating this document, a central element was a lean, efficient, and effective governance structure that works well with the existing governance structure of the EBRAINS network, in particular the EBRAINS AISBL and its centrally managed projects. This matches the results of the independent review of the Human Brain Project (HBP).⁸ The EBRAINS project received positive feedback during the final review in November 2023. The reviewers said that EBRAINS should... *“streamline the governance structure of EBRAINS AISBL as well as HBP and EBRAINS legacy projects.”* EBRAINS was encouraged to *“try to use existing EBRAINS/AISBL bodies in the project governance of centrally managed projects.”*

To align governance structures, processes, and objectives, the EBRAINS 2.0 WP structure was adapted to the central tasks of the EBRAINS RI, addressing atlases, medical analytics, modelling and simulation, FAIR data, a collaborative platform, and compute services. Synergies with existing governing structures in EBRAINS AISBL⁹ are being created:

- Members of the EBRAINS AISBL advisory committees (EBRAINS Ethics and Society Committee (EESC) and EBRAINS Science and Technology Committee) advise the Leadership Board of EBRAINS 2.0. This will ensure regular exchange, a flow of information, and close collaboration between projects and governing bodies.
- Some people act in different key roles in EBRAINS 2.0 and the EBRAINS AISBL (see table 2 below) by historical reasons which entails careful handling of the conflict of interests.

A particular challenge for governance is the close interweaving of governance and decisions in EBRAINS 2.0 at the interface with the EBRAINS RI and the governance of EBRAINS AISBL. It is

³ <https://www.alba.network/declaration>

⁴ <https://gdpr.eu/>

⁵ <https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/208c74d1-9254-4081-87e3-c7229918e2b5/>

⁶ <https://drive.ebrains.eu/f/7a82f5acb84945e18256/>

⁷ <https://handbook.ebrains.eu/>

⁸ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/>

⁹ <https://www.ebrains.eu/about>

important to clarify where the project and its decision-making powers end on the one hand and higher-level structures take effect and on the other hand where EBRAINS 2.0 can lay a foundation that can be adopted in higher-level structures of the EBRAINS network (RI, AISBL, National Nodes).

EBRAINS 2.0 Leadership Board		EBRAINS AISBL Management Board	
WP	WP leaders and deputies	Role	Name
WP 1	Timo Dickscheid	Joint CEO	Katrin Amunts
	Trygve Leergaard	Joint CEO	Philippe Vernier
	Svenja Caspers	Chief Science Officer	Viktor Jirsa
WP 2	Maurizio Corbetta	Chief Infrastructure Officer	Jan Bjaalie
	Alessandra Bertoldo	Chief Technology Officer	Yannis Ioannidis
WP 3	Viktor Jirsa		
	Lea Domide		
WP 4	Jan Bjaalie		
	Lyuba Zehl		
WP 5	Yannis Ioannidis		
	Amaryllis Raouzaiou		
WP 6	Lena Oden		
	Johannes Schemmel		
WP 7	Francesco Pavone		
	Irene Costantini		
WP 8	Katrin Amunts		
	Julia Kämpfer		

Table 2: WP leader and deputies in EBRAINS 2.0 and EBRAINS AISBL as of May 2025.

5.1 Overview of EBRAINS 2.0 Governance Structure

EBRAINS 2.0 has its own project governance, but is simultaneously embedded in a large EBRAINS network, which includes several entities, e.g. the EBRAINS AISBL, the entire EBRAINS RI, National Nodes and other EU-funded projects. While respecting the independence of entities in the network, processes and decisions in one area/entity can have implications for another area/entity in the network.

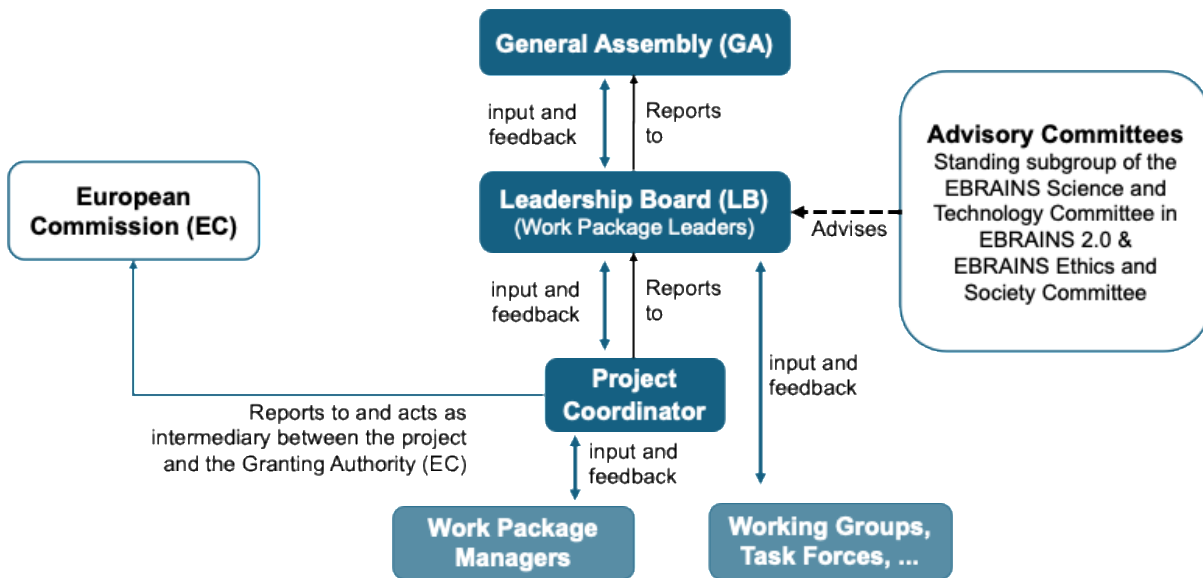


Figure 2: EBRAINS 2.0 Governance Structure

5.1.1 General Assembly

The General Assembly is the ultimate decision-making body of the project consortium.

General Assembly Members and Chairperson	The General Assembly shall consist of one representative of each party to the Consortium Agreement. The affiliated entities shall be allowed to participate in General Assembly meetings but do not have voting rights. The Coordinator, represented by the individual leading the Coordination and Management Work Package (WP8), shall chair all meetings of the General Assembly, unless decided otherwise in a meeting of the General Assembly.
Main Responsibilities	The General Assembly shall make decisions on content, finances, and intellectual property rights, on proposals for changes to Annexes 1 and 2 of the Grant Agreement and changes to the consortium plan as well as the evolution of the consortium, defaulting party statutes, and litigation.
Meeting Frequency	At least twice a year
Documents and Links	List of representatives in the General Assembly (as of June 2025): https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/a5f7d6ce-3ab3-4dcd-87f6-4e3e62d5e2d9/

Table 3: General Assembly

5.1.2 Leadership Board

The Leadership Board (LB) is the body responsible for the executive management, communication, and coordination of the project.

LB Members and Chairperson	The LB shall consist of representative members, who are the individuals leading the eight WPs (WP Leaders). The Chairperson of the Leadership Board is elected by the representative members of the Leadership Board. The Chairperson of the Leadership Board cannot be the same individual who is the Chairperson of the General Assembly.
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Main Responsibilities	The LB makes proposals to the General Assembly for allocation of the budget of the action in accordance with the Grant Agreement; reviews and proposes budget reallocations to the parties; manages the action; is responsible for the proper execution and implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly; ensures the effective day-to-day coordination and monitoring of the progress work affecting the action as a whole; ensures the consortium fulfils its obligations as set out in the work plan, including objectives, deliverables, and milestones; monitors that the approved workplan is implemented appropriately; identifies corrective actions when a WP fails to implement adequate corrective actions itself; supports the Coordinator in preparing meetings with the Granting Authority (EC) and in preparing related data and deliverables; makes proposals to the General Assembly about serving notice to a defaulting party; and steers actions concerning dissemination, communication, and open science.
Meeting Frequency	At least once a month (practically twice a month)
Documents and Links	See table 2 and list of LB representative members (as of June 2025): https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/a5f7d6ce-3ab3-4dcd-87f6-4e3e62d5e2d9/

Table 4: Leadership Board

5.1.3 Coordinator

The Coordinator is the intermediary between the parties and the Granting Authority and performs all assigned tasks as described in the GA and CA. In particular, the Coordinator is responsible for:

- monitoring the compliance of parties with their obligations in the CA and GA,
- keeping the address list for the parties and other contact persons updated and available,
- leading and coordinating communication with the Granting Authority
- collecting, reviewing, verifying the consistency of, and submitting reports, deliverables, financial statements, and other requested documents to the Granting Authority,
- planning, proposing decisions for, and implementing General Assembly meetings,
- promptly transmitting documents and information connected with the project to any party concerned,
- administering the financial contribution of the Granting Authority and fulfilling the required financial tasks,
- upon request, providing the parties with official copies or originals of documents that are in the sole possession of the Coordinator, when such copies or originals are necessary for the parties to present claims,
- providing a copy of the GA and its Annexes to the associated partners, and
- actively supporting gender equality and non-discriminatory practices (e.g. fairness, transparency and ensuring equal opportunities and active career support, considering gender and diversity in research).

5.2 Advisory Committees

As outlined in the GA, EBRAINS 2.0 aims to work with the established advisory committees of EBRAINS AISBL, the ESTC and the EESC, drawing on their expertise as external advisors to the project. As agreed in the CA, advisors of the project should neither be partners/associated partners in the project nor receive funding from the project to avoid conflict of interests.

5.2.1 Standing Subgroup of the EBRAINS Science and Technology Committee

Members of the Standing Subgroup of the ESTC in EBRAINS 2.0	Consists of members of the overall ESTC advising the EBRAINS AISBL. Members standing subgroup are neither actively involved in the EBRAINS 2.0 project or receive funding from the project. Additional independent experts (not yet related to EBRAINS AISBL via the ESTC or other EBRAINS boards) may be invited to complement this group.
Main Responsibilities (as outlined in ToR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serve as an EBRAINS 2.0 project advisory board by providing constructive feedback and guidance on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the general progress of the project and its Work Packages written Periodic Reports and review presentations (around M9, M18 and M36) • strategic directions of (1) education and training activities and (2) outreach and innovation activities of the project • strategic cooperations and synergies with research institutions, infrastructures and initiatives within the project context • produce a brief written assessment about the progress of the project (above points) and their work as advisors around M18 and M36 • report periodically about its work to the ESTC of EBRAINS AISBL to ensure flow of information
Meeting Frequency	At least quarterly
Documents and Links	List of members of the Standing Subgroup of the ESTC in EBRAINS 2.0 (as of June 2025): https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/a5f7d6ce-3ab3-4dcd-87f6-4e3e62d5e2d9/

Table 5: ESTC - Overview

5.2.2 Ethics and Society Committee

Members of the EESC	Experts who are appointed members of the already established EESC of the EBRAINS AISBL. Members of this board are neither actively involved in the EBRAINS 2.0 project nor receive funding from the project.
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Main Responsibilities ¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing guidelines, recommendations, and requirements in terms of ethics, data governance and protection, Responsible Research and Innovation practices, and societal impact • deriving an agenda in close collaboration with the Work Packages • raising awareness of and supporting reflection about potential gaps, new developments, and regulations • recommending experts for specific questions that may arise • reflecting on the follow-up actions undertaken by boards and Work Packages, and suggesting topics and actions if needed • reporting to the EC if requested • collaborating with the EA and in this respect contributing to the EA's independent ethics report (collaboration to be clarified in an MoU)
Meeting Frequency	At least quarterly
Documents and Links	List of members of the EESC in EBRAINS 2.0 (as of April 2024): https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/a5f7d6ce-3ab3-4dcd-87f6-4e3e62d5e2d9/

Table 6: EESC - Overview

Ethics Advisor (EA)

Fully independent from the ESTC and the EBRAINS 2.0 governance, an EA will assess the ethical merits of the work performed and give independent recommendations to the EBRAINS 2.0 project. The roles and competences of the EA¹¹ include reporting on the ethical character of the activities of the consortium, monitoring and spotting potential ethical issues, and advising the consortium in case of ethical dilemmas over the duration of the project. The EA is an ethics requirement determined in the GA.

5.3 Task Forces

In addition to the governing bodies and advisory committees, task forces from within the project and beyond can be formed to:

- address a specific problem or issue that requires a dedicated coordinated effort
- develop recommendations or solutions
- create or improve processes or procedures
- inform decision-making
- serve the EBRAINS 2.0 and the overall EBRAINS RI

The need for a dedicated task force can be identified bottom up or top down. A Task Force is mandated by the LB. T8.3 can support the setup by providing templates for ToRs and facilitating exchange with the LB.

Task forces currently actively supporting EBRAINS 2.0 are:

- EBRAINS Education Task Force
- Task Force on RI-wide User Strategy

¹⁰ See also D9.1 concerning the role of the EESC in the project.

¹¹ The appointment of the EA as well as roles and competences outlined in D9.1.

In addition to the task forces there are more flexible structures within the project, that take the form of cross-WP thematic recurring meetings and discussion forums e.g.

- Exploitation Working Group
- Open Calls Coordination Group
- OSCA Meetings
- Co-Design Meetings
- Technical Coordination Meetings

These networks are essential to discuss and identify potential issues, rank topics, to escalate with a higher instance.

6. Good Governance and EEEDI in EBRAINS 2.0

The European Commission published a white paper¹² already in 2001 on good governance principles on both the national and European Union level. These principles include openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. As a European-funded project with more than 50 partners and associated partners, these principles are understood as supporting the governance of interdisciplinary collaborative science based on ethics, gender equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EEEDI):

- Openness involves governance processes and sharing information openly with all project members involved. This transparency fosters trust and ensures that everyone has access to the necessary information regarding project goals, processes, and decision-making. For EBRAINS 2.0, governance openness requires:
 - Transparent communication: Regularly updating all stakeholders about project progress, decisions, and changes via newsletters, project portals, and regular stakeholder meetings.
 - Accessibility of information: Ensuring that all project documents are available on a shared platform where all partners can access and review them.
 - Public engagement: Identifies opportunities to involve users and the broader public that align with the available resources.
- **Participation** stresses the importance of involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process, particularly those who will be affected by the decisions. This principle aims to create more informed and accepted outcomes. For EBRAINS 2.0, governance participation requires:
 - Inclusive Decision-Making: Designing formats and workshops where all partner institutions and specifically all project members can contribute. Encouraging contributions from project members that might typically be underrepresented.
- Stakeholder Engagement Plans: Identifying external and internal stakeholders and outlining how they will be involved in the project processes to ensure diverse representation and to reflect and integrate diverse perspectives.
- Open science practices: Upholding key principles such as open access to data and publications, models, tools, and software, collaboration, training and education.
- Accountability means that all actors are responsible for their actions and must be able to explain and justify them to the public and to the institutional stakeholders. EBRAINS 2.0 defined:
 - Roles and Responsibilities are defined and documented, for all boards and committees. The governance handbook but also Terms of References (ToRs) offer further guidance.

¹² Emanuel Bertrand: "The European Commission's White Paper on European Governance (2001)", Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe [online], ISSN 2677-6588, published on 22/06/20, consulted on 24/04/2024. <https://ehne.fr/en/node/12261>

- Code of Conduct and follow up procedures enhance accountability and support the resolution of internal conflicts and taking appropriate steps in case of severe breaches if necessary.
- Conflicts of interest: ensure that potential conflicts of interest are identified, declared, and acted upon. A monitoring system supports the reflection with the EESC.
- Effectiveness refers to achieving the desired strategic results through the most efficient use of resources at a reasonable cost. For EBRAINS 2.0 governance effectiveness requires:
 - Resource Allocation: Ensure resources are allocated optimally among partners based on the project requirements and expected outcomes.
 - Project Management: planning within the governance framework, including risk management and ensuring high quality (see also D8.1, Quality and Risk Management Plan). Executing, and monitoring all phases of the project efficiently, supported by project-wide monitoring and reporting tools.
 - Continuous learning, reflection, and improvement: Structured feedback formats, evaluation and adaptation of strategies as well as managerial practices are essential to ensure the project stays on track to deliver its intended outcomes effectively.
- Coherence involves consistency and logical connection between various policies and actions. It ensures that all policies and actions are aligned and pull in the same direction. For EBRAINS 2.0 governance coherence requires:
 - Integrated planning: The project plan aligns with all objectives and activities across partner institutions Specifically, policies related to human resources, research ethics, and stakeholder engagement, are developed with EEEDI considerations.
 - Policy Alignment: The project's policies are applied across all levels of the project, regularly reviewed and adjusted, if necessary, which includes alignment with EEEDI principles.
 - Protection of sensitive information: Personal data, are handled in adherence with the European data protection regulations, ethics, fair, and transparent processing. Transparency and open science must be aligned with the responsibility to safeguard data and individuals.
- Representation asks who is representing the project and who is therefore directly involved in strategic planning and decision making. It is related to equal opportunities across all genders and further diversity traits in leadership and to counteracting discrimination. For EBRAINS 2.0 governance representation requires:
- Recruitment processes: Are mainly the responsibility of the partner institutions however, it is also a criterion in open calls to provide information how EEEDI is actively supported.
 - Inclusive Culture: fostering procedures and designs that insure, everyone feels valued, respected, empowered to contribute and is recognised fairly for their contributions.
- Encouragement and Inclusion: offering open meeting formats across hierarchy and functions, encourage and support underrepresented groups to take leadership positions or to represent EEEDI refers to Ethics, Gender Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as cross cutting governance principles by integrating EEEDI across governance structures and procedures EBRAINS 2.0 aims to foster more inclusive collaboration as well as socially responsible research. Meetings to anticipate, reflect, engage, and act upon findings (AREA) should thereby be inclusive, without requiring specific expertise. The following sections present concrete examples how good governance was considered in the project, including specific meeting designs and managing interests. The promotion and implementation of E³DI principles are considered to contribute to the expected outcomes and to enhance the project's innovation capacity and impact.

6.1 Open Space for Collaborative Achievements (OSCA)

The implementation of good governance based on EEEDI in EBRAINS 2.0 is challenging due to the complexities of collaborating remotely in specialised WPs and tasks, each requiring focus and expertise. While this specialisation is a source of strength, it also carries the risk of fragmentation that threatens interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, perceptions of which EEEDI aspects are most

relevant and how to implement them will differ throughout partner institutions – and individual project members.

OSCA is our proactive answer to this challenge, which is designed as an innovative, inclusive, and dynamic online event. Occurring at least every three months, OSCA is a unique opportunity to share updates, tackle challenges, and seek support from diverse disciplines, hierarchies, and functions.

OSCA also serves as a think-tank and platform to explore how EEEDI can easily and deeply be integrated into our operations. By aligning with European ethical requests and providing confidential ethical consultation, we create a safe and secure environment for all consortium members to voice concerns and seek advice. OSCA has been designed to comply with formal requirements and to nurture a research culture where ethics are an integral part of our collaboration:

- Knowledge sharing and interdisciplinary support: Participants will share recent challenges within their respective tasks to gain cross-disciplinary perceptions and ideas how to proceed in an open dialogue with colleagues from the consortium.
- Keynotes and EEEDI discussion: Each OSCA session features a keynote on topics highly relevant to the project, such as engagement with ethical issues, EEEDI challenges, GDPR, or FAIR data practices.
- Confidential consultation: For participants seeking anonymous advice, private sessions with external advisors will be offered, providing a safe space for sensitive discussions.
- Overview and conclusion: Participants, especially governing body, and advisory board members, share the insights and action steps as closing remarks.

6.2 Links and Conflicts of Interest

The EBRAINS 2.0 Policy on Management of Interests¹³ sets out to manage the interests of various stakeholders in the project. This policy builds on Transparency and the Management of Interests of the HBP SGA3 project (no. 945539)¹⁴. However, the updated EBRAINS 2.0 Policy introduces the concept of Links of Interest (LoIs), providing a more nuanced and realistic framework for assessing interests. In highly specialised fields like those covered by EBRAINS 2.0, professional connections such as affiliations, collaborations, or funding relationships are common and often essential. By distinguishing between ordinary links of interest and actual conflicts of interest (ColIs), the policy ensures that access to expertise is preserved without compromising integrity. This new approach was developed with the support of the Chair of the EESC, whose suggestion to include LoIs helped trigger a broader reflection on how to manage professional connections in a balanced and transparent way.

Each party to the CA is responsible for preventing conflicts of interest (ColIs) within their own institution. While LoIs are common and often necessary within specialized domains like digital neuroscience, they do not inherently constitute a ColI. A ColI arises when an LoI risks compromising the impartial and objective implementation of the project. The parties must take all measures to prevent any such situation where EBRAINS 2.0 could be compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties, or any other shared interest.

Members of the EBRAINS 2.0 Leadership Board and advisory bodies are asked to annually declare interests with regards to their respective roles in the project via a Declaration of Links of Interest (DLI). The register of DLIs is maintained by the governance management task (T8.3) and is available to any member of the project or the public upon request.

The annual DLI procedure is managed by T8.3 and includes:

- Collecting DLIs from members of the Leadership Board and advisory bodies.

¹³ <https://drive.ebrains.eu/f/7a82f5acb84945e18256/>

¹⁴ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/about/transparency-and-management-interests-human-brain-project/>

- Providing the completed DLIs to the chairperson of the relevant body and collecting the subsequent report from the chairperson.
- Compiling all chairperson reports and submitting them to the EESC for review and advice.
- Organising all the necessary checks and contributions to the reports.
- Storing the DLIs (in accordance with GDPR).
- Collecting and incorporating feedback on the exercise from the EESC (e.g. suggestions for new questions on the form) and implementing this feedback in future exercises.

Additionally, T8.3 continuously encourages all governing and advisory bodies to create space at the beginning of meetings for spontaneous declarations of interest to be made pertaining to the agenda items for that meeting. If declarations are made at the beginning of such meetings, it is the responsibility of the chairperson to decide whether this declaration is sufficient to ensure transparency and accountability or whether the member should abstain from the agenda item and/or meeting. If in the creation of the meeting agenda the chairperson identifies a potential conflict of interest for themselves, the EESC and/or EA may be consulted.

6.3 Governance Mechanism for Internal Conflicts

To avoid legal actions and resolve conflicts within EBRAINS 2.0, for example disputes over publications, workload distribution, task assignments, resource distribution, role assignments through elections or selections, T8.3 provides support following a three-level resolution based on the severity of the conflict and the parties involved.

Level 1: Internal Peer Mediation for Work Packages and Working Groups

Conflicts should first be addressed within the project through open discussion. T8.3 can be addressed as peer mediator to facilitate a difficult conversation or an internal conflict. To ensure impartiality and fairness the T8.3 Task member must have no personal relationships that favours one of the people involved over others. Alternatively, if the T8.3 mediator has a conflict of interest or lacks neutrality, the involved project members are supported to find an alternative peer mediator.

Examples of actions at this stage are:

- Resolving authorship disputes before manuscript submission.
- Clarifying workload expectations to ensure fair task distribution.
- Addressing interpersonal misunderstandings.

Level 2: Project-Level Resolution

If a conflict cannot be resolved within a WP, or working group for example, due to the involvement of several WPs or WP leaders, T8.3 will encourage to setup a Conflict Resolution Panel which includes representatives of the General Assembly (see consortium agreement 4.3), involved partner institutions and an external mediator.

Examples of actions at this stage:

- Redistributing (authorship) roles when unfair practices are detected.
- Addressing favouritism by promotional disputes within the project.
- Investigating bullying or discrimination allegations, ensuring protection for affected individuals.

Level 3: External, Legal, or Formal Institutional Action

Severe conflicts requiring formal investigation or legal intervention, and include:

- Confirmed harassment, discrimination, or abuse of power.
- Legal violations (GDPR breaches, fraud, or financial misconduct).
- Severe scientific misconduct (data falsification, plagiarism).

The General Assembly must be informed, and the case must be escalated for external intervention, depending on the topic and the severity:

- The Ethics and Society Committee (EEESC) for further investigation.
- The coordinator’s or partner institution’s legal teams if the conflict is institution specific.
- The EU Ethics and Legal Compliance Authorities if the matter affects the entire EBRAINS 2.0 project.

Examples of actions at this stage:

- Formal warnings, reassignment, or contract termination.
- Sanctioning researchers involved in data falsification.
- Ethical review with external experts in severe disputes.
- Engaging legal teams for GDPR violations, harassment, discrimination, or ethical violations.

Conflict Type	Example	Governance Action to be taken
Publication Dispute	A junior researcher is unfairly excluded from authorship.	T1 Peer Mediation, if unresolved: T2, T3
Work Distribution Bias	A team member is given disproportionate tasks compared to peers.	T1 Peer Mediation, if unresolved: T2, T3
Unfair project specific promotion	A less-qualified candidate is selected due to favouritism for an important role within the project.	T2, if unresolved: T3
Power Imbalance or Bullying, Harassment or Discrimination	A junior scientist is afraid to address a topic WP internally due to the networks of the PI within the project. A researcher experiences discrimination.	T1 to setup T3
Scientific Misconduct, Misuse of data	Data falsification, plagiarism.	T3

Table 7: Examples of Conflict Scenarios & Actions

6.4 Fostering Exchange and Discussion

To identify potential issues related to EEEDI within the project, measures have been and will continue to be launched at various levels. Regular meetings have ensured and will continue to ensure exchange and discussion across the work package and greater governance structure of the project. A preliminary meeting schedule is outlined in table 6, detailing the project members involved and the aim and purpose of the exchange.

Meetings and Participants	Description	2024				2025				2026			
General Assembly	Discuss project progress; address issues; plan strategic direction	■		■		■		■		■		■	
EC and EBRAINS 2.0 Coordinator	Update on project progress, amendments, upcoming needs	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Leadership Board	Lead the overall project; ensure EEEDI, coherence of different WPs, excellence of deliverables	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Work Package Managers	Manage the project and formal requirements coherently	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Work Package Teams	In-depth discussion on specific tasks within each WP, progress updates, coordination	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Technical Coordination for all Work Packages	Encourage collaboration; align towards the development and operations of EBRAINS RI	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Advisory Board ESTC (& LB)	Discuss project progress; address issues; advise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ethics Review EESC and Independent EA	Review ethical aspects; discuss any concerns; review progress and activities across all WPs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
OSCA meetings	Facilitate interdisciplinary and inclusive collaboration across the project; reflect on EEEDI		●				●				●		
SUMMT for EBRAINS 2.0	Comprehensive review, team building, and strategic planning										●	●	●

Figure 3: Different types of meetings supporting interaction at all project levels

6.5 Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

This GEP outlines the project’s approach to supporting gender equality across the consortium. All participating institutions maintain compliant institutional GEPs in line with Horizon Europe eligibility requirements. EBRAINS 2.0 is committed to complement these efforts. **A major objective of EBRAINS 2.0** in this respect is to enable the integration of the European Gender Equality Strategy into the future of the EBRAINS RI infrastructure. On project level, T8.3 serves as EEEDI contact point and is responsible for reporting on the related Key Performance Indicator (KPI), as well as to develop meeting formats and procedures that support EEEDI reflection and follow up actions by the Leadership Board. Work Package (WP) Leaders are responsible to ensure alignment of EEEDI-related activities with the overall work plan, to reflect and consider gender equality as part of the ethics reporting.

While gender equality has been understood and implemented as an integral part of good governance as outlined in the chapters above, the following table summarises the specific responsibilities at project level which are monitored by T8.3. Concrete implementation and results are integral part of deliverables and periodic reports.

Domain	Institutional Responsibility (locally)	Project-Level Coordination (at project level)
GEP Implementation	Maintain institutional GEPs in compliance with national legislation and Horizon Europe eligibility criteria.	Provide templates and guidelines , e.g. for reporting. Facilitate reflections on gender equality, equity, diversity and inclusion as ethical responsibility (EEEDI) in meetings.
Leadership and Decision Making	Implement inclusive hiring and promotion practices in line with local GEPs and HR policies.	Monitor gender balance at project level , aim for gender balanced governing boards and leadership positions
Recruitment and career development	Integrate gender-sensitive practices in recruitment, mentoring, and career development.	Support fair, gender sensitive work distribution and assignment of responsibilities within the project. Install procedures to report potential violations and to act accordingly.

Training and Capacity Building	Deliver gender awareness training to local staff based on national/institutional offerings.	Disseminate available resources , including related information and good practices in presentations for meetings and workshops.
Data Collection and Monitoring	Collect and report anonymised gender-disaggregated data	Track and compile data related to the project's gender KPI as set out in the Grant Agreement; integrate results into periodic reports.
Integration in Research Content	Apply national and institutional frameworks to incorporate sex/gender analysis where relevant.	Ensure that the gender dimension is addressed in open calls for research proposals and workshops, raise awareness for intersectionality.
Measures against gender-based violence, Work Culture	Manage local policies for work-life balance, harassment prevention, and parental support.	Promote an inclusive collaborative culture via a code of conduct , applicable across the consortium. Establish safe reporting channels.
Outreach and Dissemination	Reflect institutional policies in communications.	Contribute to newsfeeds, encourage gender-balanced representation in public-facing events, speaker panels, and dissemination materials.

Table 8: GEP Governance and Responsibility Allocation at institutional and project level