

ACTRIS Ethics Policy

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1 Introduction

This policy describes the main ethical principles to be applied within the ACTRIS activities. They are to be recognised and followed by all persons associated with ACTRIS and should be supported by all participating institutions. This policy does not exclude other ethical issues (e.g. related to professional and scientific responsibility, governance, social and environmental responsibility and compliance with the law) that may be raised by the ACTRIS ERIC and its contractual ACTRIS partners, or by the Ethical Advisory Board of the ACTRIS ERIC.

In general, everyone in ACTRIS should work in a socially ethical way, maintaining integrity and fairness and maintaining a high level of trust and respect among the people working in ACTRIS and with users and other stakeholders. One should always keep in mind that the mission of ACTRIS is to provide effective access to its resources and services to a wide user community, in order to facilitate high quality Earth system research, to enhance excellence in Earth system research, and to provide information and knowledge for the development of sustainable solutions to societal challenges.

Ethical aspects related to the utilisation of Artificial Intelligence within ACTRIS as well as environmental sustainability in ACTRIS will be defined in separate documents.

2 Gender equality and equal treatment

ACTRIS is committed to actively promoting gender balance and equality throughout the research infrastructure (RI), ensuring that gender equity is embedded in all stages of planning and implementation, and setting an excellent example as a well-balanced and inclusive working community. Concrete measures to achieve these goals in ACTRIS ERIC are outlined in ACTRIS ERIC's Gender Equality Plan, which is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure continuous progress.

Equal opportunities for employees should be promoted in all ACTRIS activities. Discrimination against individuals on the basis of their sex, gender identity, disability, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, personal beliefs or age, will not be tolerated. However, gender balance should also be actively promoted and considered in recruitment processes, ensuring that gender equity is reflected in the composition of the workforce. ACTRIS is committed to using gender-sensitive language in all recruitment materials and job advertisements, aiming to avoid unconscious bias and to create an inclusive environment where all candidates feel welcome to apply.

All employees should have equal opportunities for career advancement and professional development, regardless of their personal characteristics and roles, and should receive equal pay for work of equal value.

ACTRIS maintains a zero –tolerance policy towards any form of harassment, including gender-based violence, and ensures that all employees are treated with respect and dignity in a safe and supportive environment.

3 Conflict of interest

Since ACTRIS involves several organisations and countries, conflicts of interest may arise when the same organisations or their staff are present in several places in the management or operation of ACTRIS.

A conflict of interest may arise when an individual or legal entity is involved in several activities, e.g. financial, scientific, managerial, or other, or when an individual has a secondary occupation, which may affect his/her motivation and personal or organisational interests. All persons involved in the ACTRIS activities should conduct their affairs in such a way as to avoid or minimise conflicts of interest. However, if a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, the person should declare it openly and, if necessary, disqualify him/herself. Disqualification ensures that decisions are not influenced by competing interests and are made solely for the benefit of ACTRIS. If a person is disqualified, he/she shall not participate in, or be present during, the consideration of a matter.

3.1 Personal conflict of interest

Persons involved in the ACTRIS activities should disqualify themselves if at least one of the following grounds for disqualification applies:

- a close person of the person involved in ACTRIS is a party to the matter being discussed in relation to a decision;
- the person involved in ACTRIS or a person close to him/her assists or represents a party or a person in a matter from which he or she stands to gain or lose a particular advantage;
- the person involved in ACTRIS or a person close to him/her stands to gain or lose a particular advantage from the decision on the matter; or
- the person's impartiality is otherwise compromised.

A close person is defined as a family member (e.g. a spouse, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, or other person who is particularly close to the person involved in ACTRIS), a family member of the spouse of the person involved in ACTRIS and other similarly close persons to the person involved in ACTRIS (e.g. a former spouse of the employee and a comparable half-relative). A spouse is defined as a partner in marriage, a cohabiting partner, or a partner in a registered partnership.

3.2 Financial conflict of interest

ACTRIS ERIC and its contractual ACTRIS partners are expected to conduct their financial management ethically.

In general, a financial interest is anything of monetary value received or held by a person or a close person, whether or not the value is readily ascertainable. A financial interest includes, but is not limited to, salary or other payments for services. A financial interest becomes significant when it appears to be related to the person's institutional responsibilities. Therefore, individuals should avoid participating in decisions where their financial interest could be affected by the outcome of the decision.

Sponsorship by commercial companies must not influence purchasing decisions or scientific content. This should be made clear to potential sponsors. Publications supported by private companies or foundations with an ideological agenda, or resulting from activities funded by such sources, must clearly declare this sponsorship.

3.3 Conflict of interest at the institutional level

ACTRIS is a complex and large research infrastructure with a governance structure involving many organisations and therefore multiple interests may arise at an organisational level. A person should disqualify himself/herself from holding positions or duties in other organisations at least in the following situations:

- if a member of the governing bodies of ACTRIS ERIC, e.g. the General Assembly, represents a scientific organisation that has a contractual relationship with ACTRIS ERIC and a contractual issue with this organisation is under discussion in the governing body; or
- if a member of the governing bodies of ACTRIS ERIC or a person within ACTRIS or a person closely associated with them is a member of the board of directors, the supervisory board, or a corresponding body of, or the managing director or in a comparable position in a corporation, foundation, state enterprise or institution that competes with ACTRIS or that stands to gain or lose a particular advantage from the decision under discussion.

4 Ethical principles concerning ACTRIS data and access

4.1 Data production

ACTRIS follows the rules of good scientific practice in research and data production as in more detailed defined in the ALLEA Code of Conduct.

The basic principles of good scientific practice and data production are:

- the highest professional standards in the design and conduct of research,
- a critical, open-minded approach to the conduct of research and scholarship,
- openness and fairness in the contributions of partners, collaborators, and predecessors,
- reviewing and minimising ethical risks related to bias in algorithm, and
- integrity at all stages of scientific inquiry, data quality assurance and quality control, in particular the avoidance of:
 - any form of fraud, such as fabrication or falsification of data or records;
 - any form of fraud in the analysis of data and any form of misleading analysis;
 - any misuse of data including plagiarism;
 - sabotage of other scientists' work;
 - breach of confidence as a reviewer or supervisor, and complicity in such actions by other scientists.

Data production procedures and protocols should be written in clear and unambiguous terms. They should include specific details of the aim, materials, methods, timetables and analytical approaches to be used. It is essential that all participants in the research infrastructure adhere to the Data Management Plan, which describes specific procedures. Particular attention should be paid to the completeness, integrity and security of data sets and associated metadata.

4.2 Data management

The preservation of primary data, the good and correct management of data, the storage and documentation of all relevant data, and the appropriate processing of data are of the highest priority and should always follow good scientific practice.

Each party to ACTRIS should develop mechanisms, appropriate to their particular role, discipline and situation, to ensure compliance with good practice for compliance monitoring. Responsibility for compliance monitoring should be assigned to an experienced member of each unit.

4.3 Data access and access to facilities

In order to ensure fair scientific competition, no user should be privileged.

The administrative burden associated with requesting and granting access to data or ACTRIS facilities shall be kept to a minimum. Users shall be provided with instructions to ensure effective and efficient access.

Users should provide their data resulting from the available access in accordance with the FAIR principles, including data format specifications, and users should respect the ethical principles defined in these guidelines.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize and address the potential risks of knowledge colonialism. Efforts should be made to ensure that data access and sharing do not perpetuate power imbalances or exploit communities, particularly those from marginalized or historically underrepresented regions. Collaborative and equitable partnerships should guide the collection, use, and distribution of knowledge, fostering a fair and inclusive scientific environment that respects local expertise and ownership of data.

4.4 Acknowledging contribution

Users of ACTRIS data or ACTRIS facilities are encouraged to disseminate the results of work carried out through the access provided in peer-reviewed publications, acknowledging the contribution and support provided by ACTRIS. In accordance with good scientific practice, users are encouraged to offer co-authorship to those persons working at ACTRIS facilities who have made genuine scientific contributions to their work. Users are encouraged to make their publications available through open access repositories.

Individuals and organisations, that originally generated ACTRIS data or digital tools, or produced different levels of ACTRIS data, are given appropriate acknowledgement and credit. Authors of publications shall be acknowledged in accordance with applicable copyright laws and scientific practice.

4.5 Use of animals

In accordance with the Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes, the use of animals shall be based on the 3R's principles of the directive (*Replacement, Reduction and Refinement*)

- a) whenever possible, a scientifically satisfactory method or testing strategy that does not entail the use of live animals, shall be used, and alternative methodologies should be promoted.
- b) the number of animals used in projects shall be reduced to a minimum without compromising the objectives of the project; and
- c) the refinement of husbandry, accommodation and care, and the methods used in procedures, shall eliminate or reduce to a minimum any possible pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm to the animals.

5 Personal data protection

Everyone should always take special care to ensure the protection of personal data and process personal data in accordance with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council and respective national laws and carefully implement the principles of the regulation in practice in every situation that involves processing of personal data.

6 Managing ethical issues

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, violation of the policy related to ACTRIS activities- will be handled locally in accordance with the local regulations. However, the information on the violation of the policy and the local process on matters involving staff within the ACTRIS activities should also be communicated to the Ethical Advisory Board by reporting it to the Director General who will then inform the Ethical Advisory Board.

Anyone witnessing or experiencing violation of this policy can contact the Director General or in case the complaint concerns the Director General, the Chair of the General Assembly directly. ACTRIS ERIC shall protect the integrity of anyone informing of violation.

The ACTRIS Ethical Advisory Board advises both ACTRIS ERIC, its advisory bodies, and its contractual ACTRIS partners on all ethical issues. Anyone from these organisations can contact the Director General or the members, permanent observers or observers of the General Assembly and raise an ethical issue to be discussed and dealt with by the Ethical Advisory Board.

The Ethical Advisory Board reports to the General Assembly of ACTRIS ERIC.

References

Access Management Plan [ACTRIS D6 5 Access Management Plan.pdf](#)

ACTRIS Access and service policy [ACTRIS ERIC GA approved ACTRIS access and service policy.pdf](#)

ACTRIS Data Policy [ACTRIS ERIC GA approved ACTRIS data policy.pdf](#)

ACTRIS ERIC Gender Equality plan [https://www.actris.eu/sites/default/files/inline-files/ACTRIS ERIC GA approved ACTRIS%20ERIC%20Gender%20Equality%20Plan signed 0.pdf](https://www.actris.eu/sites/default/files/inline-files/ACTRIS%20ERIC%20Gender%20Equality%20Plan%20signed%200.pdf)

Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003) <http://finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2003/en20030434.pdf>.

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf.

ALLEA Code of Conduct <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>

Data Management Plan [data-management-plan/DMP/ACTRIS-DMP.md at master · actris/data-management-plan · GitHub](#)

Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32010L0063>.

European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures (2016) https://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/pdf/2016_charterforaccessto-ris.pdf.

European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017) <http://www.allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ALLEA-European-Code-of-Conduct-for-Research-Integrity-2017.pdf>.

European Science Foundation (2000). Good scientific practice in research and scholarship http://archives.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/ESPB10.pdf.

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OECD Global Science Forum, (2007). *Best Practices for Ensuring Scientific Integrity and Preventing Misconduct* <http://www.oecd.org/sti/sci-tech/40188303.pdf>.

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The European Charter for Researchers The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers https://www.euraxess.at/sites/default/files/am509774cee_en_e4.pdf.