Ethical recommendations for active ageing at work

For a Road Map of ICTs for Employment in our Ageing Societies

Extract from D4.4

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Partner(s)/Author(s):	AGE Platform Europe (Ilenia Gheno, Ophélie Durand)

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The Goldenworkers Consortium consists of:

	IESE	UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA
	VTT	TEKNOLOGIAN TUTKIMUSKESKUS VTT FRAUNHOFER-GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FOERDERUNG DER
	Fraunhofer	ANGEWANDTEN FORSCHUNG E.V
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LIST OF ETHICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In the attempt to provide a comprehensive view, while underlying key cross-cutting elements, the following recommendations have been gathered and presented in relation to three essential axes worth to be reminded, regardless of employment fields, kind of technology in use, level of pervasiveness, etc, and acting transversally, across the various domains, namely:

1. **Ethical recommendations concerning the (golden) stakeholders**

2. **Ethical recommendations concerning the involvement of (golden) users**

3. **Ethical governance for ICT and employment (and beyond)**

1. The primary focus has been placed on the stakeholders, in order to highlight what recommendations should be taken into account and can be developed in order to allow the correct considerations around ethics, employment and the implementation of new technologies in the work place.

2. A second axe is established around the pivot of the stakeholder. How to address the users, how to empower them and engage them in the discussion is key. Ethical recommendations related to this wide strand of reflection have therefore been developed, also in preparation to the discussion around the ethical governance.

3. This latter axe, which constitutes the third core-column of these recommendations, has been identified on the basis of its importance for the establishment and assessment of values and norms and their transpositions into practice.

Discussions around each single axe have been gathered in synthetic tables, apt to summarize and focus on the main punctual recommendations.

1. Ethical recommendations concerning the (golden) stakeholders

The role of stakeholders is an important starting point. Golden workers, golden employers, golden managers, golden work seekers, their needs, expectations and suggestions are central in the elaboration and implementation of all guidelines, recommendations, legislations and every disposition that concern them. Their involvement should be a constant priority in any work setting and should not be taken for granted. While the second axes will focus on the users' engagement per se, here it seemed important to stress on some basic ethical recommendations addressed to each user, regardless of his/her role in the society, in the employment chain and in the use of technology, but taking into account what is always worth to be kept in mind when dealing with human beings. These recommendations are therefore addressed to golden stakeholders, and apply to all ranges of stakeholders.

Table 1. Ethical recommendations concerning the (golden) stakeholders

Recommendations
Ensure the freedom of expression
To allow the expression of opinions among stakeholders in free, relaxed settings and give heed to instances coming from different categories of workers.
This is one of the first steps leading to an effective empowerment of (golden) workers, essential for the well-being in the workplace and for the well-being of the overall work organisation itself.
Listen to opinions, respect human dignity, integrity and autonomy
To consult workers before taking decisions, inform them beforehand and listen to their opinions.
To find the compromise and reciprocal understanding when needs are conflicting, to be open to different opinions and to the possible change of decision *in itinere*.

<u>Non discrimination, proportionality and adequacy</u> To avoid any form of discrimination among workers at all phases of work, to take decision affecting them having in mind ethical values and principles (justice, proportionality, adequacy, vulnerability, pertinence...)
<u>Respect of privacy</u> Workers' privacy and protection of data cannot be threatened. Their vulnerability must always be taken into account, especially when settings and contexts change deeply and rapidly, as it is the case with the introduction and deployment of new technologies. Informed consent, the right to opt out, the centrality of one's choices must be also respected.
<u>Work for sustainability (constancy and consistency)</u> Sustainability matters also in ethics; the provision of ethical trainings and the periodical assessment of ethical guidelines in place are definitely good practices to be spread. But they also allow development and renewal of practises. A management informed by ethical recommendations and consideration is a key for ensuring their translation into practice.
<u>Acquiring and recognizing skills, knowledge and experience</u> This is particularly important in the case of golden workers and raise further awareness on the need of an ethics of intergenerational learning and solidarity.
<u>Highlight personal qualities</u> Not only professional and personal skills value in the workplace. Personal qualities such as sensitivity, insight, empathy and intuition must be recognised and promoted in the workplace, as well as in the society.
<u>Find the trade-off between personalisation and mainstreaming</u> The issue of balance is basic; when ICT and non-ICT solutions are put in place, the balance between tailored and personalised products and services, and mainstreamed ones comes at stake. The discussion among workers (see user involvement) is part of the answer.
<u>Opt for Inclusion and e-Inclusion</u> Technology should not establish new barriers or deepen the existing ones, but rather help overcome them and support an inclusive (and e-inclusive) workplace and society.
<u>Encourage opportunities beyond the workplace</u> Employment is an essential part of people's life and it affects the personal and collective spheres of life as well. Recognizing and concretely respecting the time for work and the time for life gain relevance in the context of seamless labour markets and changed life-cycles[1].
<u>Offer support for mental and physical well-being</u> Besides basic occupational health services, workplace should offer help and support for individual and collective well-being of workforce. In case of conflicts procedures for resolving conflicts should be predefined.[2]
<u>Transparency in communication, rules and regulations</u> Stakeholders should be aware about various rules, regulations and recommendations considering performance or other work related issues. Transparency and openness in communication will also support anticipation of forthcoming issues in management of workforce.

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[1] Dávila A, Ikonen V, Gheno I, Leikas J, Kantola K, Pujol L (2012), "Goldenworkers Trends and Needs Analysis Report" Goldenworkers project, Deliverable 1.2, available on line: http://www.goldenworkers.org/index.php/public-materials/deliverables

[2] For example : Policy on "Lifelong Wellbeing in the Workplace" at
http://www.csreurope.org/pages/en/wellbeing_in_the_workplace_for_ageing_employees.html

2. Ethical recommendations concerning the involvement of (golden) users

Users are not alone and isolated. The personal context, as well as the working environment and the place of each of us in the society, raise questions and concerns that can be better solved with the help of discussions, the uptake of recommendations, and the elaboration of guidelines, among others. Taking into due account the nature, role and weights of the stakeholders involved leads quickly to tackle one of the principle on which this report has particularly insisted because of its relevance and valence: the principle and practice of engaging the stakeholders.

Table 2. Ethical recommendations concerning the involvement of (golden) users

Recommendations
<u>Fully understand the meaning, relevance and benefits of user involvement</u> To fully understand the meaning of engaging the stakeholders into the decision-making processes, the managerial choices, the technological research steps is very important. Besides, acting in this sense since the very beginning of each action is essential. This is needed to then completely appreciate the benefits carried by a proper involvement (e.g. user acceptance, quality of research, improved applicability, right investments and savings, avoided risks of discrimination, limited vulnerability...)[3]
<u>Apply ethical methods for user involvement</u> Depending on the decisions to be taken and the discussion to be carried out, different users can be called to participate. A right and fair planning of user involvement help ensure good qualitative results and outcomes. It is important to take care, since the recruitment phases, of ethical principles mentioned, such as the informed consent of the worker (encompassing the clear definition of the objectives of research/action/decision and benefice to the user), safety, the respect of workers' autonomy, dignity and integrity, gender balance, equality, privacy and data protection. On a very practical ground, stakeholders involved need to build a partnership based on respect; trust among the different parties has to be ensured from the early beginning and this includes, being flexible on the agenda as topics which were not decided by beforehand may arise[4]. "*Differences and gaps in communication is a central issue that needs to be addressed. Concepts need to simplified and explained; users need encouragement to say what they want but also guidance to avoid navel-gazing; observing and empowering older people is an essential element for effective user involvement; narratives or dramatization may also be used to stimulate discussions. Users should also have the possibility to opt-out and this is not necessarily a failure; on the contrary, it should be valued and analyzed, as the opt-out can say more than an unfruitful involvement.*"[5].
<u>Offer ethical warranties</u> While involving users, it is vital to ensure the leading team/worker/manager/department... has the necessary professional experience and can provide the support needed and correctly manage the consequences of engagement for all participants. Besides, unwarranted material gain or loss to any participant must be avoided, as well as factual accuracy and falsification.[6] This particular issue will be then further explored in the explanation of the ethical governance as third pillar of the present recommendations.

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[3] Parent A-S, Georgantzi N, Gheno I (2012), "Ensuring A Fruitful Future to Innovation And Research: Practical Guidance for the Involvement of Older People in Research", Springer.

[4] Ibidem, p2.

[5] Ibidem, p8.

[6] Dench S, Iphofen R, Huws U (2004), " An EU Code of Ethics for Socio-Economic Research", The Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton, UK, Respect Project.

Recommendations
Ensure ethical exploitation
Alongside a good relationship between the leading team and users, disseminating results broadly through various appropriate channels and engaging users in evaluation and peer review processes are essential elements for efficient innovation. Users must be considered as participants to and not subjects of research.
To avoid power imbalances between the leading team and participants ensures benefits for community.

3. For an ethical governance for ICT and employment (and beyond)

Certainly the stakeholders, their roles, relationships and activities are central. Nevertheless there is the need to provide an architecture where ethics can be established, assessed and guaranteed. It is therefore matter of thinking about ethical governance and this should be done at various grounds, both within the domain of employment per se and of technological research and deployment, and beyond, to encompass the political guidance from local level to the International one. As expressed by the ETICA project[7], there is the need for supporting both the theoretical approaches and the practices, around the long-term employability and the use of emerging technologies in the specific case of Goldenworkers, with ethical governance, able to provide an ethical assessment and not just e.g. an assessment of social acceptance, of economic convenience, or political opportunity, etc.

Within this framework, the richness of contributions, views and values, gathered from the various stakeholders and result of their engagement, can represent even a hindrance to ethical governance, and it is one of the greatest challenges to be tackled. Agreements are easier to be found in the domain of science and technology, for instance when a problem can be solved by applying a specific scientific model. On the contrary, when the ethical dimension is at stake, it is not possible to apply specific models to specific cases, as the variable of the context and the values of each stakeholder enter in the discussion. Sharing norms (therefore sharing different values, views, cultures and beliefs) implies to no longer focus on the question of "true" or "false", but to consider the "right" and "wrong" and contextualize the answer. Therefore the correct involvement of stakeholders becomes key to lead to ethical governance that takes these aspects into account and elaborates guidelines and provides advice from this ethical perspective.

Besides, it is moreover useful to underline that ethics are not equal to law. In a very simplified way, ethics are continuous questions on morals, on the value each stakeholder belongs to and on their clash with the context and situation in which each stakeholders lives and acts; laws are institutional agreements that a community enforces over its members, with the goal of preserving its values and its rights. Unlike laws, ethics cannot be enforced, as they imply freedom of choice, where the choice is driven by intrinsic and/or collective values and norms of each stakeholder[8]. This aspect must also be constantly reminded.

With these concepts in mind, it becomes clear that the ethical governance should not focus on the results of actions and thoughts, but rather on the process itself, as this is what counts to approach the value of "right" and "wrong" and to assess the nuances among these two extremes. Therefore it is key to establish conditions for real and true dialogue among stakeholders (workers, golden workers at all levels, developers, designers, researchers, project leaders, social actors, decision makers, …) and among disciplines. Within such a structure dialogue there should be the room for sharing reflections on different views, values, norms and facts; the ethical governance can therefore be appointed as the "place" where this can happen.

Table 3. For an ethical governance for ICT and employment (and beyond)

Recommendations
Define and use guidance documents
The provision of guidelines underlying key issues e.g. making explicit the ethical sensitivity of technological

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[7] Rayner S, Goujon P (2009), « Governance Recommendations », ETICA project, Deliverable 4.2, p. 51.

[8] The EGAIS project provides the example of actions that are legal but that are not accepted from the ethical point of view, e.g. the racial segregation laws in the U.S. EGAIS deliverable, p. 146.

and employment related topics, is in the interest of all stakeholders, from workers to providers.

Guidance documents should be elaborated taking into account the stakeholders' roles and the principles and practices of user involvement.

Separate law and ethics

To distinguish between law and ethics and see that following legal requirements is not always sufficient to address ethical issues[9].

Facilitate ethical reflexivity in ICT projects and practice

"To realise that ethical issues are context-dependent and need specific attention of individuals with local knowledge and understanding

To simultaneously consider the identification of ethical issues and their resolutions

To be open about the description of the project and its ethical issues

To encourage broader stakeholder engagement in the identification and resolution of ethical questions"[10].

Provide regulatory framework which will support Ethical Impact Assessment for ICTs

For establishing a good ethical governance, the definition of responsibilities within a regulatory framework is an essential part of the solution. Such a tool helps moreover raise awareness on the relevance of ethics in new ICTs and provides with appropriate tools and methods for the identification and treatment of ethical issues, besides modelling them along the lines of environmental, privacy or equality impact assessments[11].

In line with the principle of stakeholders' involvement, users should be encourage to support with their inputs, e.g. in position papers and policy inputs.

Establish an ICT Ethics Observatory

"To collect and communicate the conceptual, methodological, procedural and substantive aspects of ICT ethics.

To provide a community-owned publicly accessible repository and dissemination tool of research on ICT ethics.

To give examples of approaches and governance structures that allow addressing ethical issues.

To disseminate past and current research ethics and ICT.

To facilitate the Ethical Impact Assessment.

To provide an early warning mechanism for issues that may require legislation"[12].

This latter issue can be linked to the ethical warranties seen for the second axe on users'involvement; rules of participation, rights and duties should be guaranteed and comply with ethics especially in the framework of an ICT Ethics Observatory, as well as in all the other possible infrastructures related to the ethical goverance.

Establish a forum for stakeholder involvement [13]

In line with the recommendations related to the involvement of users, the establishment of a such a forum would perfectly fit among the provisions for an ethical governance. Such a consultative body would allow and encourage stakehoolders (encompassing civil society and its representations, industry, NGOs, among others) to exchange ideas and express their views.

Besides, such a forum could serve for "*exchanging experience and developing ethical reflexivity in the discussion, for reaching consensus concerning good practice in the area of ethics and ICT and for building a bridge between civil society and policy makers*"[14].

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[9] Rayner S, Goujon P (2009), « Governance Recommendations », ETICA project, Deliverable 4.2, p. 51.

[10] Ibidem.

[11] Ididem.

[12] Ibidem.

[13] Ibidem.

[14] Ibidem.

> **Provide political guidance**
>
> Policy makers at all levels, from local to international level, have an important role to create the regulatory framework and the infrastructure to allow ethics to be considered in ICT and therefore political guidance can be part of the ethical governance.
>
> Here again, political guidance must be informed and comply to the ethical principles established and ethical warranties should be put in place.

Furthermore it seems valuable to mention some meaningful ethical recommendations delivered by the SENIOR project. What follows is an enlightening extract[15], in line with the issues and recommendations developed so far:

- Ageing society is a social phenomenon, besides a biological one; it implies a shift within different age groups in a society toward the older ones. Therefore "*an ethical scrutiny of policies which addresses ageing should be based on a thoughtful distinction among biological and social facts*".

- Ageing always implies a certain weakening of the ageing persons, and consequently modifies the relations of power which affect them. "*An ethical analysis should consider the tension between the individuals and the collective, and should address the change of power among actors*".

- "*Time and knowledge are the most precious good than human beings can even possess; it is an ethical tenet to avoid that any social dynamics create people that, for any reason, perceive themselves without time and knowledge*".

- ICT can effectively address the two main issues related to ageing, which are the increasing population of frail old people, and the decrease in the proportion of people in the workforce. "*Reducing the social and economic burden of these two social trends is ethically tenable if it is part of a larger strategy aiming at reshaping the old people's role and empowering them*".

- The lack of accessibility can become a serious barrier to the uptake of ICT.

- "*Self-exclusion and social victimisation are likely to be the most dangerous factors which may lead to a failure in e-Inclusion processes. The symbolic value of retirement should not be underestimated*".

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[15] Mordini E (2010), "Ethical Recommendations", SENIOR project, Deliverable 5.5.