

**EPOS
ERIC**

**CODE
OF ETHICS**

EPOS
EUROPEAN PLATE OBSERVING SYSTEM



EPOS ERIC

CODE OF ETHICS

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Foreword

EPOS ERIC balances its role in facilitating research in the field of Solid Earth Science while also managing public strategic investments with socio-economic implications¹. This dual focus highlights the ethical considerations necessary for fulfilling its mission and underscores the importance of sound governance and societal responsibility. EPOS ERIC strives to build trust with all stakeholders², individuals, groups, or institutions that support or contribute to its mission. The EPOS ERIC Code of Ethics outlines the ethical standards that apply to all operators dedicated to its mission, including decision-makers, executives, and staff members under the ERIC umbrella. Moreover, since research infrastructures play a crucial role in shaping the scientific frameworks that impact society, it is necessary to note that EPOS ERIC's initiatives align with the UN 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By linking the Code of Ethics to the SDGs, the document clearly emphasises SDGs 8³ and 5⁴, especially focusing on “Individuals and their relationships” in the workplace. Additionally, it articulates EPOS ERIC's ethical position on issues such as access to Data, Data Products, Software and Services (DDSS), the interaction with external stakeholders, reliable communication, and respect and protection of the environment, echoing with other SDGs. The EPOS ERIC Code of Conduct further guides actions and contextualises the values of the Code of Ethics, mainly with respect to the individual and their relationships in the workplace and EPOS ERIC interaction with external stakeholders. Both documents must be referenced regularly to ensure decision-making meets stakeholders' expectations and fosters a positive internal culture.

Carmela Freda
Executive Director

¹ OECD (2017). *Strengthening the effectiveness and sustainability of international research infrastructures*. OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers, No. 48, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/fa11a0e0-en>

² Here “stakeholders” are defined as those investing in EPOS ERIC's activities, primarily the Consortium Members, followed by employees, collaborators, users, providers, suppliers, and partners. More broadly, it includes individuals or groups—including organisations or institutions that represent them—whose interests are affected, directly or indirectly, by EPOS ERIC's actions. This encompasses local and national communities where EPOS ERIC functions, as well as other RIs, National Research Organisation, environmental organisations, young researchers, and others.

³ Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

⁴ Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Executive summary

The EPOS ERIC Code of Ethics provides a set of shared values and outlines core principles to guide behaviour, emphasising the ethical commitments of decision-makers, executives, operators, and staff members under the ERIC umbrella, with reference to the EPOS ERIC Statutes, articles 1 and 3. This code fosters a workplace that is fair, respectful, and inclusive, which is crucial for individual well-being and high-quality outcomes. This document is rooted in the cumulative efforts of the EPOS Community, encompassing findings since EPOS's inception and guidance from the EPOS ERIC Ethics Board.

The EPOS ERIC Code of Ethics will be supplemented by the “EPOS Community Position Paper on Ethics” aimed at defining a shared ethical framework that governs conduct across the entire EPOS Community, thereby facilitating cooperation in solid Earth science within such a heterogeneous environment.

The EPOS ERIC Code of Ethics comprises three chapters. Chapter one clarifies the purpose and context, chapter two delineates the values and principles that articulate the ethical dimensions within EPOS ERIC across five identified contexts, namely “areas of applicability”. These areas define the organisation's stance concerning the individual and their relationships, access to Data, Data Products, Software and Services (DDSS), the organisation-stakeholders interface, reliable communication, and environmental protection. For each area of applicability, the document provides information regarding the tools EPOS ERIC offers to implement these principles effectively. Chapter three places the document within its appropriate context and discusses the methodologies and actions for fostering a positive culture within EPOS ERIC.

The EPOS ERIC Code of Ethics targets decision-makers, executives, operators, and staff members within EPOS ERIC. Moreover, regardless of an individual's position, ethical conduct must be maintained in all activities relating to EPOS ERIC. This encompasses, but it is not limited to participation in or organisation of meetings, conferences, internal and external relationships, and all EPOS-related activities.

1. Purpose and Context

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in the long-term sustainability of European Research Infrastructures⁵, the outcomes of which are intricately connected to effective management and the enhancement of public goods. EPOS ERIC sees ethics as essential for aligning its vision, mission, and strategy with values that promote a positive culture by fostering trust and enhancing reputation.

The Code of Ethics is crucial in the integrated management system, addressing integrity and compliance for effective operations. However, in EPOS Research Infrastructures ethical considerations go beyond organisational challenges. Indeed, EPOS acts as a cohesive entity that integrates various scientific communities, IT experts, managers, decision makers by connecting individuals from different backgrounds, educational fields, expertise, organisations, and countries which may have their own ethical standards. Nonetheless, EPOS ERIC outlines its ethical principles to guide its actions and decision-making, providing the community with its ethical stance. This commitment aspires to ensure integrity through ethical behaviours, aligning with societal and stakeholder expectations, while advancing EPOS's mission. It is worthwhile to emphasise that since its inception, EPOS ERIC has recognised the importance of ethical considerations in its interactions with all stakeholders. The EPOS ERIC Statutes - Art. 11(3) document this commitment, stating that to uphold the Consortium's integrity and ethics, EPOS ERIC must establish an Ethics Board. Furthermore, in 2024, EPOS ERIC established a Working Group on Ethics to strengthen the connection between science and ethics. This group, represented by members from each Thematic Core Services, formulates ethical guidelines, such as the EPOS Community Position Paper on Ethics, promotes awareness, and identifies ethical

⁵ European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) recommendation for the Long-Term Sustainability of the RI (2017).

issues for discussion with the EPOS ERIC Ethics Board. Articulating its ethical stance, EPOS ERIC considers the perspectives of all stakeholders involved in the Research Infrastructure, including national authorities, funding agencies, scientists, and the general public.

2. Values, principles and areas of applicability

EPOS articulates a clearly defined mission to establish sustainable and long-term access to solid Earth science Data, Data Products, Software and Services (DDSS) integrating diverse European scientific organisations under a federated framework, with a vision to ensure the sustainable and universal use and re-use of multidisciplinary solid Earth science DDSS, thereby promoting cutting-edge research and innovation. All initiatives undertaken by EPOS ERIC are consistent with this mission and are rooted in the fundamental values that drive EPOS toward excellence. The founding values become principles translated into concrete action when applied in key areas as outlined herein.

2.1 Individuals and their relationships

EPOS ERIC promotes a work environment that upholds the values of integrity, responsibility, equality, inclusivity, positive behaviour, and respect. This will foster a trustworthy atmosphere for the operation and development of EPOS Research Infrastructure.

- Within EPOS ERIC, all individuals foster a responsible workplace, irrespective of their positions. This commitment is evidenced through their honest conduct, integrity, respect, and the contributions they provide to others while executing their responsibilities.
- EPOS ERIC promotes a professional working culture that enhances competence and talent whilst placing a high value on effective collaboration and information sharing. It promotes the development of individuals and, as a crucial factor for its operational effectiveness, ensures that EPOS ERIC is adequately staffed and supported by personnel with specialised skills in appropriate positions⁶.
- EPOS ERIC encourages behaviours that consider the consequences of one's actions and decisions.

Harassment, bullying, and retaliation are categorically unacceptable and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Comprehensive documentation concerning the practices of EPOS ERIC in this area

- EPOS ERIC Employment policy
- EPOS ERIC Gender Equality Plan
- EPOS ERIC Code of Conduct
- EPOS Inclusive Language Guidelines

2.2 EPOS Data, Data Products, Software and Service (DDSS)

Effective data management is significant for EPOS ERIC, which is dedicated to establishing sustainable, long-term access to solid Earth science Data, Data Products, Software and Services (DDSS). This commitment, supported by the values of transparency, scrutiny, critique and reproducibility, aims to sustain and universally utilise multidisciplinary solid Earth science Data, Data Products, Software and Services (DDSS)

- EPOS ERIC responsibly manages personal and scientific data under EU regulations in an effort to prevent such data's misuse or ambiguous utilisation.
- EPOS is dedicated to ensuring a reliable supply chain, emphasising liability, transparency and quality. The requirements for quality and bias prevention in data preparation remain consistent, particularly with the presence of artificial intelligence within the system.

⁶ ESFRI Scripta Volume II, (2017). Long-Term Sustainability of Research Infrastructures.

- EPOS ERIC adheres to the principles of making scientific data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR) and it employs infrastructure, technologies, data-sharing methods, and policies for responsible, privacy-preserving data sharing.
- EPOS ERIC recognises individuals and organisations that have authentically generated or processed data. It grants users broad rights to utilise and re-utilise data and create products based on the data, providing that the data ownership is respected and transferred and appropriate credit is given to the data provider and to individual authors.

Data, Data products, Software and Services and information relating to EPOS remain unaffected by economic interests, political influences, or dominant public opinions. Any form of fraud, including the fabrication or falsification of data or records, as well as any misleading analysis that neglects the consideration of low data quality, is deemed an unacceptable act by EPOS ERIC.

This paragraph will also reference the EPOS Community Position Paper on Ethics, aimed at defining a shared ethical framework for ethics across all EPOS research communities, facilitating data sharing and cooperation in Solid Earth Science within the Research Infrastructure.

Comprehensive documentation concerning the practices of EPOS ERIC in this area

- *EPOS Data, Data products, Software and Services (DDSS) Citation Guide-*
- *EPOS Data Policy*
- *EPOS Digital Assets Management Policy*
- *EPOS ERIC Privacy Policy*
- *EPOS DATA PORTAL Terms and Conditions*

2.3 Interaction with external stakeholders

EPOS ERIC recognises the values of responsibility, impartiality, and public good underpinning the EPOS ERIC's social responsibility, particularly given its public funding and the associated potential societal implications.

- EPOS ERIC is committed to maintaining its reputation and authoritativeness and fostering societal trust. It aims to be a reliable entity for scientific endeavours, prioritising public and collective interests. Initiatives to fulfil this mission are conducted independently and decisions are made in a fair and transparent manner.
- EPOS ERIC treats its suppliers and consultants fairly and objectively when assessing independent resources. EPOS ERIC rejects favours or bribes and tokens of appreciation. Personal connections will not affect EPOS ERIC judgment. Family, religious, ethnic, or political ties will not influence contract awards.
- EPOS ERIC values collaboration with other organisations and the private sector, reflecting professionalism, transparency, and directness. EPOS ERIC collaborates with organisations likely to understand and adhere to principles of fair dealing and integrity, along with all relevant laws, rules, and regulations.
- Individuals involved in EPOS ERIC must avoid exposing other individuals or institutions to conflicts of interest.

Comprehensive documentation concerning the practices of EPOS ERIC in this area

- *EPOS ERIC Statutes*
- *EPOS ERIC Strategy 2024-2028*
- *Code of Conduct*
- *Procurement Rules*
- *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*

2.4 Reliable communication

EPOS ERIC is dedicated to clear communication and delivering trustworthy information and insights to diverse stakeholders, guided by integrity, engagement, and user-friendliness. This encompasses two key components: communicating scientific knowledge and sharing EPOS activities and values.

- EPOS ERIC will interact with the EPOS Community and other stakeholders by communicating honestly, transparently, and reliably.
- While recognizing that science does not yield absolute truths, EPOS ERIC is committed to providing well-structured and precise information to facilitate informed decision-making, thereby addressing uncertainties in information dissemination.
- EPOS ERIC is committed to transparent communications, offering clear and accessible information to its target audience. The organisation actively fosters dialogue, aiming to reduce misunderstandings and prevent the misuse of data and information.

Comprehensive documentation concerning the practices of EPOS ERIC in this area

- *EPOS Inclusive Language Guidelines*
- *EPOS Data, Data products, Software and Services (DDSS) Citation Guide*
- *EPOS Communications operational plan 2024-2028*

2.5 Environmental respect and protection

The EPOS mission is deeply linked to environmental respect and protection, highlighting the significance of studying the Earth system and raising awareness. Guided by the values of responsibility and sustainability, EPOS ERIC is committed to implementing and advocating for best practices in the sustainable management of natural resources across its data lifecycle, research initiatives, potential collaborations, and overall research infrastructure management.

- EPOS ERIC aims to minimise its environmental footprint, particularly any adverse effects from its operations, and will ensure full compliance with applicable environmental protection standards. This includes adopting sustainable e-infrastructures with low energy consumption and reasonable carbon footprint.
- EPOS ERIC is committed to reducing pollution and waste and will prioritise using renewable and recyclable materials whenever possible. Additionally, we will encourage all partners and stakeholders to adopt similar practices.

Comprehensive documentation concerning the practices of EPOS ERIC in this area

- *EPOS ERIC Statutes*
- *EPOS ERIC Procurement Rules*
- *EPOS ERIC Code of Conduct*

3. Final remarks

Non-compliance with the EPOS ERIC Code of Ethics document is regarded as a failure to meet the prerequisites for participation in EPOS ERIC activities. Every initiative pursued by EPOS ERIC aligns with its mission and is rooted in the core values of quality, integrity, openness, inclusiveness, equity, and responsibility, propelling EPOS toward excellence. This perspective reflects the insights gathered from the EPOS Community since the launch of EPOS Research Infrastructure.

The EPOS ERIC Code of Conduct has been established to consolidate ethical expectations and to enhance staff engagement in EPOS ERIC activities. This Code will guide actions and detail the values of integrity, responsibility, equality, inclusivity, positive behaviour, and respect embodied in the EPOS ERIC Code of Ethics, particularly concerning the “application area” discussed in 2.1 and 2.3.

Regular reference to both documents ensures that decision-making aligns with stakeholders' expectations and promotes a positive culture. The relevant policies delineate the EPOS ERIC approach to specific issues, while particular procedures articulate the necessary actions required.

The EPOS Community contributes valuable knowledge to scientific research and the broader society while acknowledging that ethical considerations in science reflect the complexity of a system where researchers' subjective perspectives intersect with “evidence-based knowledge”. Therefore, the EPOS Community Position Paper on Ethics aims to enhance the EPOS ERIC Code of Ethics by establishing a unified ethical framework across the entire EPOS Community.

Importantly, the entire EPOS ethics framework is represented by the complementarity of the three above mentioned documents.

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