



NeurotechEU

The European University of Brain and Technology

D3.5

Charter of NeurotechEU++ values / Guidelines for practitioners including a pathway for social impact

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D3.5 Charter of NeurotechEU++ values / Guidelines for practitioners including a pathway for social impact

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Building on **NeurotechEU Phase I**, the current deliverable is an opportunity to review and update our shared values using a fresh perspective and improved understanding of the common challenges we face at all levels of society.

D3.5 Charter of NeurotechEU++ Values 2024 highlights the importance of co-creation, dialogue and collaboration in the implementation of said values across our operational procedures and at all levels of the alliance. The current document is based on *D1.9. Working plan and initiation of the process for continuous dialogue and embedding of shared values throughout and at all levels of the Alliance*. With input from partners, several new living values and sections are proposed for your review and further consideration.

1. NeurotechEU (Phase I)

1. a). Introduction and overall purpose

European Universities are transnational alliances involving several EU partners, with a vision of creating future universities that will promote European values and identity and revolutionize the quality and competitiveness of European higher education. The alliances include partners from all types of higher education institutions and cover a broad geographic scope across Europe. These are based upon a co-envisioned long-term strategy focused on sustainability, excellence and European values and offer student-centered curricula jointly delivered across inter-university campuses, where diverse student bodies can build their own programmes and experience mobility at all levels of study. Alliances adopt a challenge-based approach according to which students, academics and external partners can cooperate in inter-disciplinary teams to tackle the most significant issues facing Europe today.

NeurotechEU is an Alliance of eight universities from seven EU countries with geographical coverage across Europe (NL, ES, SE, DE, RO, HU, IS), one recently departed state (UK) and one candidate country (TR). Three of these universities (RU, UBO, IS) are geographically western, two are located in the south (UMH, BOUN), two are in central/eastern Europe (UMF, UD), and one is in the north (KI). To live up to the vision of a strong alliance with shared values, rather than several different universities, departments, and administrative units, the NeurotechEU partners are committed to developing a shared understanding of the core values that must permeate the activities of the Alliance, which will allow NeurotechEU to meet its goals.

The aim is to establish the use of values as a permanent and ongoing feature of the NeurotechEU organization, engaging staff and students and embedding them across the network and its activities. Within NeurotechEU, the students and faculty of the partner universities will study, educate, research and innovate within the scientific field of neuroscience and neurotechnology. This will require **strong mutual trust between the institutions and their students, staff and stakeholders**. For this reason, there is a need to establish a continuous and open dialogue about the core values of the individual academic institutions in the NeurotechEU alliance and MC how such values should be implemented throughout the alliance.

To live up to the vision of a strong alliance with **shared values**, rather than several different universities, departments, and administrative units, the NeurotechEU partners are committed to strive towards a shared understanding of the core values that must permeate the activities of the Alliance, which will allow NeurotechEU to meet its goals. The aim is to establish the use of values as a permanent and ongoing feature of the NeurotechEU organisation, **engaging staff and students and embedding them across the network and its activities**.

1.b). Governance structure and initiation plan

Initially, Deliverable 1.9 was described as a manifesto but with a strong focus on creating dialog and collaboration with the purpose of implementing shared values across NeurotechEU's activities:

A NeurotechEU manifesto that will be implemented across the Alliance. It will provide a road map for responsible conduct in all aspects of the Alliance function and activities, abided by all current and future members of the Alliance.

Alliance governance is particularly challenging for large consortia such as NeurotechEU, in a context in which discrepancies exist between national and European policies, international laws and processes operating within specific academic environments.

The shared culture aspect is thus highly complex considering the national variation in many of these factors, which must be considered. Therefore, forming of shared trans-alliance cultural and institutional procedures, values and norms presents both challenging and opportunities.

The final deliverable D1.9 was approved by the Board of Governors (BoG) and the Board of Rectors (BoR) in 2022, and it contains two main parts that we will build upon in Phase II:

- A Working plan and initiation of the process for continuous dialogue, and embedding of shared values throughout and at all levels of the alliance
- NeurotechEU Living Values 2022

1.c) Living Values 2022 Initial Project Development and Timeline (Summary from D1.9)

Considering this described complexity, for the NeurotechEU alliance to engage in a helpful dialogue about its values, the Magna Charta Observatory Living Values project, which is a project devoted to supporting universities in enacting their values, was used as a contextual template. By the guidelines and tools developed in the Living Values project, a plan for the continuous dialogue within NeurotechEU was initially defined to follow the following steps (adapted from Magna Charta Observatory Living Values Guidelines):

Phase I: Discussion on why the project is needed in the alliance. Initial Initiation and Plan (Board of Governors and Board of Rectors) Initial Identification of a Map of Values

Phase II: Initiation and Plan (Board of Governors and Board of Rectors)

Phase III: Identification of a Map of Values

Phase IV: Definition of operational manifestations of selected values

Phase V: Conversion of behaviours into alliance functions

Phase VI: Conversion of behaviours into desired behaviour patterns of actors in the university – how to live out the values

Phase VII: Conversion of outcomes into the university's Strategic Plan and other policy and strategic documents and continuous iteration.

Phase VIII: *Reflection on the process, its effectiveness, and the commencement of the next cycle and iteration.*

Background Information

Across NeurotechEU, students and faculty will study, educate, research and innovate within the scientific field of neuroscience and neurotechnology. This will require strong mutual trust between the institutions and their students, staff and stakeholders. For this reason, there is a need to establish *a continuous and open dialogue* about the core values of the individual academic institutions in the NeurotechEU alliance and how such values should be implemented throughout the alliance in the coming years.

Representing the academic traditions of our partner universities, the shared values identified by the alliance are of utmost importance in highlighting the roles of integrity, creativity, and professional responsibility towards a strong alliance. The efficient implementation of these values at all levels of governance and operationalization will require a deep understanding of various challenges at all levels of NeurotechEU's ecosystem.

2. Charter of NeurotechEU++ Values 2024 (living document)

To live up to the vision of a strong alliance with shared values, rather than several different universities, departments, and administrative units, the NeurotechEU partners are committed to developing a shared understanding of the core values that must permeate the activities of the Alliance, which will allow NeurotechEU to meet its goals. The aim is to establish the use of values as a permanent and ongoing feature of the NeurotechEU organization, engaging staff and students and embedding them across the network and its activities.

The Magna Charta Observatory 'Living values' devoted to supporting universities in developing and implementing their values, was the initial framework upon which **NeurotechEU's shared values** were brought forward in Phase I to guide the materialization of our goals. NeurotechEU Phase II builds on the previous foundational work going back to 2018 when the alliance started forming across Europe.

During the subsequent phases, NeurotechEU's commitment to inclusiveness, diversity and equality of opportunities will be evidenced by **empowering learners and staff in practical ways**. Therefore, the following aspects are essential in keeping up with a dynamic future:

- Striving for excellence in both education and research by holding the highest academic standards.
- Commitment to broadening access to education and creating mobility by removing structural barriers to education for our learners.
- Empowering learners and staff by preparing them for a dynamic future of work.
- Promoting leadership among all our partners towards breakthrough innovations and solving real-world challenges.

- Aim towards an inclusive education and research, acknowledge both historical and current barriers to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) & Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for girls and women
 - Actively work towards removing barriers to STEM and ICT education and research for girls, women, and other learners facing systemic barriers.
 - Employability and equal pay post education and during education.

2. b) Section on Values

Three Living Values (LV1.Integrity, LV2.Commitment and professional responsibility, LV3.Creativity) have been identified during Phase I. During Phase II (January-February 2024) two other values were identified as important **LV4. Borderless Learning and Responsible Internationalization** and **LV5. Equal Opportunities**.

These are considered to be:

- appropriate for both existing full partners, associate partners and future partners
- possible to be implemented by all partners
- generically applicable to an EUI consortium

LV1. Integrity

One of the fundamental foundations of a successful collaboration is the trust between partners reflected by open-mindedness in operations discussions, which can only be achieved through mutual respect and honesty. Another critical aspect is keeping a firm sense of reality, with operations being strategically evaluated for feasibility.

LV1 Integrity reflects a code of conduct for partners to demonstrate in all NeurotechEU meetings and all communication forms conducted within the European Universities Initiative (EUI):

- Be transparent, open and honest in all our activities
- Foster a culture of mutual respect in all our activities
- Be realistic in defining our strategic goals and implementation plans

Implementation

- Work Package (WP) communication, meetings, workshops.
 - During Phase II, WPs established open lines of communication at the level of WP leads and within each WP.
 - In a transparent manner, WP leads made decisions about the creation of working groups, communicated these decisions in a timely manner, identified overlaps between work packages and established priorities related to the deliverables.
 - WPs worked in a similar, standardized manner.

- WP roster includes the institutional lead and co-lead and at least one representative per partner who have tasks and deliverables allocated to them.
- All institutional partners have been informed about this process through multiple channels: during WP and Working Group (WG) meetings and via documents uploaded in the shared folders.
- Disagreements were handled in a respectful and transparent manner without blocking progress. There was willingness to find solutions for each of the problematic aspect discussed during WP meetings.
- BoG communication, meetings, summits.
 - BoG met bi-weekly to discuss and decide on priorities.
 - The BoG Chair was available and actively encouraged progress by offering suggestions, feedback and concrete alternatives to emergent and persistent issues across the consortium.
- BoR communication, meetings.

LV2. Commitment and Professional Responsibility

- Be loyal to and take full responsibility for the challenges of the EUI.
- Engage in professional, respectful and collaborative relationships with colleagues within the EU institutions.
- Contribute to a professional culture that supports and upholds the Living Values within the EU institutions.
- Engage in professional and ethical relationships with students and staff that respect professional boundaries.
- Promote **EDI (Equal opportunities, Diversity, Inclusivity)** practices to support the needs and abilities of all participants in the EU institutions.

Implementation

- The Alliance's overall organizational activities shall be characterized by a good physical, organizational, and social study and work environment, free from discrimination, offensive behaviour, and harassment.
- Creates a living infrastructure for the integration of multicultural and multilingual learners and staff.
- Align conflicting needs and priorities by using preventive measures described in our forum for reconciling differences.

Alliances such as EUIs bring together partners in collaborative projects where all partners are considered equal. However, variables such as university economy and physical and human resources may result in variations in the ability of partners to engage in consortia activities fully. The emergence of 'strong' and 'silent' partners is a common phenomenon in consortia characterized by varied engagement and commitment. LV2 thus aims to ensure that all partners are actively involved in NeurotechEU activities irrespective of conditions. Each partner is expected

to lead in a defined NeurotechEU activity and be actively involved in the planning and discussing all other activities.

Moreover, EDI should become an integral part of the culture of each partner's participation in all NeurotechEU activities, applied to colleagues at all levels. This aspect should include all stakeholders at all levels within the alliance, including associated partners (e.g. industrial organizations, health service providers and patient organisations). Finally, there is a collective responsibility to monitor the implementation of the Living Values in all NeurotechEU activities.

LV3. Creativity and Innovation

- Continuous intention to improve our operations
 - Provide a clear project framework where boundaries for creativity could be clear (input proposal MHO/Management and Coordination Office [MCO])
 - Foster the proposal of result-oriented actions under a roadmap of expected Impact. (input MHO/MCO)
 - Emphasize measuring impact, rather than time and task progress (input proposal MHO/MCO)
- Fully embrace cross-disciplinary interactions across partners
- Always seek innovation in our scientific and educational activities
 - Foster a mindset of openness to ideas from any individual/institution. (input proposal MHO/MCO).

Implementation

WPs – design & interaction of partner participation

Management & Coordination: monitoring framework under a change management mentality.

WPs/BoG - Internal Communication plan to spread the project impact roadmap to all key stakeholders.

BoG – reflecting and deciding strategies with a responsible vision

BoR – embracing visions of our role in Europe/Globally

The nature of research and education within Higher Education Institutes often balances tradition in practices and the desire for development and improvement. Self-reflection is an integral part of a quality assurance system within an organisation. For an EUI such as NeurotechEU, with its critical ambition for expansion over time and subsequent inclusion of multiple new partner organisations, there is a constant need to assess the quality of operations to define areas for improvement of innovation.

LV4. Borderless Learning and Responsible Internationalization (new in Phase II)

- Incorporating international and global dimensions relevant to teaching and learning with a focus on long-life learning, innovation and entrepreneurship, and social impact. NeurotechEU aims to create a multidisciplinary, international, and intersectoral way of learning in the context of a multicultural and multilingual environment. The joint vision is one of crafting innovative programs and opening up new pathways for lifelong

learners particularly for those overcoming inequities in the process of pursuing higher education.

- Responsible Internationalization. Raise awareness and effectively address emerging issues related to privacy issues.

Implementation

- Facilitate the ability to access education and resources for all learners without geographical or physical barriers;
- Promoting shared leadership among all our partners towards breakthrough innovations and solving identified neurotechnology challenges.

LV5. Equal Opportunities (New in Phase II)

Equal opportunities are the overall terminology promoting equal rights, widening access to opportunities, and securing a fair working environment free from discrimination, harassment, victimization and exclusion for NeurotechEU's learners and staff.

Aim towards an inclusive education and research, acknowledge both historical and current barriers to STEM & ICT for underrepresented groups of learners and staff.

- Actively work towards removing barriers to STEM and ICT education and research for girls, women, and other learners facing systemic barriers.
- Equal access to employability and equal pay.
- Promoting gender equality is an important Sustainable Development Goal. Aiming to reduce the gender gap in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education areas could help reduce the skills gap, increase women's employment and productivity, and reduce occupational segregation. Ultimately this would foster economic growth via both higher productivity and increased labor market activity.

Implementation (concrete action plan to be developed)

- Empowering learners and staff by preparing them for a dynamic future of work.
- Commitment to widening access to education and creating mobility by removing structural barriers to education for our all learners, with a focus on vulnerable but overlooked groups, such as older students, carers, refugees, ethnic minority students and vocational students, disabled students, and LGBTQAI students.
- Widening access and participation, equal opportunities, and fair and equal treatment must be well established by partners.
- It should be continuous, high-quality competence development in widening access and participation, leadership, work environment, equality, diversity, and sustainable development.
- Promotes equality of opportunities at various levels of the alliance.

2.c) Section on Research Ethics (New in Phase II - an outline should be developed)

- Scientific and technologic developments will be carried out with respect for human rights, maintaining physical and mental integrity.

- Open science principles for ethical innovation

2.d) Section on Conflict resolution/Reconciling differences (New in Phase II)

While working on common projects, differences between partners might result from various reasons: different priorities, lack of consensus, differences in understanding operational procedures, conflicts between national and international policies, individual preferences, etc.

Given the high ethical standards NeurotechEU upholds throughout the alliance, the **Forum** will provide a reliable and impartial opportunity to find a satisfactory solution for all parties involved in a conflictual situation.

Within the Consortium, the reconciliation of differences will follow a process in which all parties involved will actively cooperate toward an amicable arrangement.

Option A:

The differences solved by the Forum will focus on administrative or legislative differences, particularly those arising from implementing tasks in regular operations. All other matters will be re-directed and solved internally by each university partner via national or internal structures.

The strategic focus of the Forum:

- Reconciliation of differences should be a process that is independent, fair and timely, emphasizing early resolution, practical remedies for members of the alliance and concrete improvements to daily work processes.
- Promoting core values and an ethical governance culture with an emphasis on feasible decision-making processes.

The proposed process could involve all or some of these proposed resolution procedures:

- a) Complete a Request for Reconciling Differences Form. Differences should be addressed in writing to the (dedicated Forum) and will also include a proposed solution which is reasonable to implement in a timely manner.
- b) After submission, an assistant will provide immediate feedback.
- c) Further reconciling procedures will follow until a satisfactory solution is agreed upon by all parties involved. The procedures will be regulated in a separate guideline in which the alliance will propose scenarios for navigating differences across the Alliance.

Option B

An Ombudsman will receive, investigate and resolve complaints in a fair and timely manner, focusing on practical and feasible solutions that benefit all parties involved.

APPENDIX A

Process of updating and co-creating the Charter of Values in 2024

- This initial version of the **Charter of NeurotechEU++ Values 2024** builds upon [D1.9. Living Values](#), approved and revised in 2022 by the members of the Magna Charta Observatory and the NeurotechEU's Board of Rectors.
- At the beginning of January 2024, the [following proposal](#) was sent for approval and validation to the BoG.
- WP3 Empowering Learners and Staff held a meeting on January 10, 2024 when members of the work package were invited to provide input into co-creating this initial version. The co-creation of the deliverable should reflect the current needs required to navigate a complex project and foster in-depth collaboration, mutual respect and understanding.
- Approval of the proposed plan is pending and a second request to the BoG was sent on January 29, 2024.
- Between January 16th - February 7th, we encouraged active involvement so that BoR can provide feedback at their first meeting on 8th of February 2024.
 - RU, KI & U Lille provided resources and suggestions.
 - UMH had direct input into the Charter proposing a change management framework to the implementation of the values. (please see below)
- Update on progress February 16, 2024: Pending approval from BoG. On February 14, the WP3 started the working group on Ethics and Equal Opportunities (EEO).
 - Until the formation of the new ad hoc working group, Partners, work package (WP) leads and WP co-leads were informed about this document and were invited to provide direct input or express their suggestions related to the living values and their implementation.
 - WP3 will continue to monitor the development of the Charter, provide updates and add content to the current version.
 - On February 21st two UMH were proposed to participate in the EEO working group, while, at the same time, the MCO group started to work independently on the D3.5 Deliverable.