Welcome to a special edition of the irecs newsletter: Highlights from our final event

On 11-12 December, the irecs project wrapped up with a final conference, "Understanding Ethics in Tech - irecs and the Future of Research Ethics Governance," held in Brussels. Hosted at the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union, the event brought together policymakers, researchers, industry leaders, and international partners to reflect on the project's achievements and explore the future of research ethics governance.

Across two days of keynote speeches, expert presentations and panel discussions, participants examined responsible research and innovation in industry, academic freedom, cultural sensitivity in research ethics, and the intersection of ethics, law, and emerging technologies. The conference also showcased irecs' training materials, presented and distributed the irecs implementation guide, and highlighted how the project's outputs will continue to shape future initiatives, including AIOLIA.

The event celebrated the outcomes of the irecs project and reinforced its lasting impact as a "Cluster of the Clusters," strengthening collaboration and advancing responsible ethics governance beyond the project's lifetime.

In today's newsletter, we're presenting highlights from the event. Read on or visit our website for more.

🌐   in   🦋
Website   LinkedIn   Bluesky

Event highlights

At a glance:

- Brussels, 11-12 December
- Speakers from across industry, policy, and academia
- International partners from Europe, China, and South Africa
- irecs training materials and implementation guide showcased
- Final discussions on sustainable ethics and governance

Keynotes

Opening speech by Joanna Drake, Deputy Director-General at the EC's DG for Research & Innovation

Keynote on responsible research & academic freedom by Christophe Markschies, President of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy

irecs partners Ana Marušić and Kate Chatfield deliver presentations on implementing research ethics governance and integrity

International perspectives

In order to ensure irecs outputs are applicable in a variety of contexts, the consortium included partners from regions outside of Europe (Wei Zhu from Fudan University in China and Francis Kombe from EthiXPERT in South Africa). Throughout the project and at the final event, they provided valuable perspectives on cultural sensitivity in research ethics, including insights from their national and regional contexts.

irecs partner Wei Zhu (Fudan University, China) delivers a presentation on research ethics governance in contemporary China

Notable guests:

- irecs partners representing countries across and beyond Europe, including China and South Africa
- Industry leaders, including Microsoft Germany's Michael Sahnau and Karl-Heinz Land from neuland.AI AG
- Academics, including Christophe Markschies (Berline-Brandenburg Academy) and Rafael Vale e Reis (University of Coimbra)
- Policy officials, including EC representatives from DG for Research & Innovation and the Research Executive Agency

Panels

- Best practices in research ethics governance
- Sustainable use of cluster networks
- Intersection of ethics, law, and policy
- Responsible use of emerging technologies

What's next for irecs

Now that irecs has wrapped up, our partners and stakeholders will continue generating impact via:

- Continued use of irecs training materials
- Ongoing collaboration through cluster networks
- Sustained dialogue on ethics governance
- Building on findings and networks in future research

Read the full report from our event

You can read a full recap of the event at our latest blog.

Access the irecs training materials

You can access the irecs training materials [here](#).

About irecs

In this digital era, technologies are appearing faster than their ethical considerations can be weighed. As research evolves, maintaining high ethical standards is essential to winning public trust in scientific work. Our teams across and beyond Europe collaborated to achieve irecs' mission to improve the understanding of research ethics and to train researchers and research ethics reviewers to anticipate and mitigate ethical issues in four technologies: genome editing, AI in healthcare, Extended Reality and biobanking.

The irecs project wrapped up at the end of 2025 after a busy few months that included the project's final event, the finalisation of key results, and several important publications. [Visit our website](#) for an overview of those achievements and the consortium's latest activities.

Website   LinkedIn   Bluesky