



► D2.1 – Setting up an Ethics Advisory Board

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Abstract

This deliverable reports on setting up an Ethics Advisory Board for the project. The members, role and procedures of the Ethics Advisory Board are described.

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History

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Executive Summary

This deliverable reports on setting up an Ethics Advisory Board for the project. The members, role and procedures of the Ethics Advisory Board are described.

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1 Introduction

The Ethics Advisory Board's purpose is to review the design and implementation of The Whistle and each prospective reporting campaign. Ethical considerations around reporting campaigns are numerous, complex and high-stakes, requiring a specialised team of advisors that bring relevant expertise from a number of domains – rather than relying on an existing more general ethical review committee.

The Ethics Advisory Board (EAB) will convene remotely on at least five occasions over the course of the project term (see section 3 below). Meetings of the EAB will be chaired by the project's Principal Investigator at Cambridge (Dr. Mónica Moreno Figueroa until March 2017, then Dr. Ella McPherson for the remainder of the project). Members of The Whistle team will also be invited to attend these meetings as appropriate.

Outcomes of these meetings will be reported to the EC through quarterly reports for WP2.

The EAB also has a role to play in ensuring that the project complies with some of the requirements outlined in the Ethics Screening Report. Work Package 9 deliverables explain which aspects will be reviewed by the EAB and how these will subsequently be communicated to the EC.

As the EAB will discuss sensitive issues, communications with and of the EAB will utilise encrypted communications channels.

2 Members of the Ethics Advisory Board

In recruiting for the EAB we have sought individuals with a variety of backgrounds and expertise, encompassing both academic and practitioner perspectives. The following people have agreed to participate as members of the EAB for The Whistle:

Danna Ingleton manages the responsible data program at The Engine Room¹, an international organisation that helps activists, organisations, and other social change agents make the most of data and technology to increase their impact. Danna also has experience as a Research and Policy Adviser at Amnesty International, where she worked extensively on developing ethical standards for human rights research and integrating technological strategies into human rights programs.

Molly Land is a Professor of Law at University of Connecticut (UCONN) and conducts research focusing on the effect of new technologies on human rights fact-finding, advocacy, and enforcement, as well as the role of human rights norms and framing strategies in organizing around human rights issues.

Madeleine Blair leads the WITNESS Media Lab², which is dedicated to addressing the challenges of sourcing, verifying, and contextualizing eyewitness video to advance its use as a powerful tool for human rights documentation and advocacy.

Jacob Metcalf is a consultant and independent scholar specializing in data and technology ethics. Jacob is a researcher for Data & Society, a member of the Council for Big Data, Ethics and Society and the co-founder of Ethical Resolve, an ethics consultancy company. Jacob's academic background is in applied ethics, particularly in science and technology. His scholarship in data ethics is recognized as influencing this nascent field, particularly around issues of research ethics policy and practice in academia and business.

Chitra Nagarajan is a human rights activist with ten years of experience promoting and protecting human rights, particularly those of women, in China, the United Kingdom, United States and West Africa. Chitra has conducted and overseen a variety of research projects and developed guidelines on research ethics and working in conflict and post-conflict zones.

¹ <https://www.theengineroom.org/>

² <https://lab.witness.org/>

Jen Tarr is Assistant Professor in Research Methodology in the Department of Methodology at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and former Lecturer in Sociology at Trinity College Dublin.

Jenny Chan is a Departmental Lecturer in the Sociology of China at Oxford University, Board Member of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Labor Movements, Editor of the *Global Labour Journal*, Contributing Editor of the *Asia-Pacific Journal*, and Editorial Board Member of the Springer Book Series of Work, Organization, and Employment. Jenny also has experience of conducting field research with workers in Chinese factories.

Bendert Zevenbergen is a researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute, working on projects related to ethics in networked systems and ethical privacy guidelines, as well as in multidisciplinary teams such as the EU funded Network of Excellence in Internet Science. Bendert has worked on legal, political and policy aspects of the information society for several years. Most recently he was a policy advisor to an MEP in the European Parliament, working on Europe's Digital Agenda.

Any changes to the composition of the Ethics Advisory Board will be communicated to the EC through quarterly reporting for WP2.

3 Meetings of the Ethics Advisory Board

3.1 Initial Ethics Advisory Board meeting

The first meeting of the EAB will be scheduled for Q4 of 2016. The purpose of this meeting will be to:

1. Review the design and security provisions of The Whistle platform and offer feedback.
2. Discuss general ethical and security considerations for The Whistle, towards finalising an application form for prospective reporting campaigns.

3.2 Ethics Advisory Board reviews of prospective reporting campaigns

Reporting campaigns will be constructed in collaboration with NGO partners. When the details of a prospective reporting campaign have been determined, an ethics application form will be completed and submitted. This application will be circulated (securely) to all members of the EAB, each member will be asked for an initial written appraisal and efforts will be made to schedule a meeting of the EAB within 5 weeks.

Written appraisals will be reviewed by The Whistle team and some aspects may be brought to the attention of the NGO partner, offering a chance to refine the proposal before the EAB meets to discuss it. Representatives of the NGO partner for the campaign will be invited to attend the meeting of the EAB.

Before a reporting campaign is allowed to launch it must have **unanimous approval** from the EAB. The EAB may also approve a reporting campaign subject to minor modifications, and may nominate some member(s) to check that requested modifications resolve the issues in question once these have been made. The EAB may also reject a reporting campaign outright, if no way can be found to conduct the campaign without sufficiently mitigating associated risks.

At least three reporting campaigns will be conducted over the course of the project term, each of these will be reviewed by the EAB before being deployed. The first reporting campaign is scheduled to launch before the ChainReact Beta Milestone in M18, and as such its review by the EAB is likely to take place in Q5 of the project term at the latest.

3.3 Producing ethics and security guidelines for reporting campaigns

Towards the end of the project term, the EAB will meet to discuss learnings from the test campaigns. The project team will work with the EAB to formulate a set of ethical and security guidelines for future projects to follow. These guidelines will be submitted as part of Deliverable 4.2 (Execution Evaluation).

3 Conclusion

This report describes the setting up of ChainReact's Ethics Advisory Board. In selecting individuals to invite as board members we have sought expertise and experience from a variety of backgrounds. We are confident that this group is well equipped to review all relevant aspects of both The Whistle platform itself and each prospective reporting campaign. An outline of planned EAB meetings is also described, along with a method of communicating the outcomes of these meetings to the EC.