

EBRAINS 2.0

D8.9 Plans and Processes for the Governance of the Project



Figure 1: Key Elements of Good Governance in EBRAINS 2.0

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|------------------------------------|--|----------------------|-------------|
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| Author(s): | Karin GRASENICK, CONVELOP (P37) Julia KÄMPFER, FZJ, (P2) | | |
| Compiled by: | Julia KÄMPFER, FZJ, (P2) | | |
| Contributor(s): | Sara ANDERSON, EBRAINS AISBL (P1) Philippe VERNIER, CEA (P8) | | |
| WP QC Review: | Marie COUËDIC, EBRAINS AISBL (P1) | | |
| WP Leadership Sign-off: | Katrin AMUNTS, FZJ (P2) | | |
| Project QC Review: | Marie COUËDIC, EBRAINS AISBL (P1) | | |
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| Abstract: | <p>This deliverable is a summary document describing plans and processes for the governance of the EBRAINS 2.0 project, mainly carried out and supported by task 8.3. This includes setting up the governance framework to manage the project based on principles of good governance; implementing equality, diversity, and inclusion principles across all work packages; and providing support to all governing bodies of the project. Moreover, the project will draw on the experience of established advisory committees of EBRAINS AISBL (ESTC and EESC) and leverage the external view and advice on how to better develop the infrastructure and its services. Plans and processes to identify and manage conflicts of interest (ColS) are described and the ethics requirements arising for the project work plan and objectives being are discussed.</p> | | |

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1 Governance Terminology and Definitions

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Chairperson | The Chairperson or Chair is the person who leads a body, a working group, or a committee |
| Consortium Agreement (CA) | The CA is an internal agreement signed by the consortium partners and associated partners (parties). It defines the terms and conditions under which the grant is awarded, and the project is implemented. It serves several key functions e.g., specify scope, aims and resources of the project, outline the obligations and responsibilities of both the project consortium members and the EU funding body, define payment procedures and include provisions for making amendments to the agreement. |
| E³DI | The umbrella term E ³ DI will be used as an abbreviation for Ethics, Gender Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. In organisations and projects dealing with medical data ethics (the first “E” in E ³ DI) is often primarily related to data collection, storage, and processing. Ethical considerations also cover informed consent, where participants are fully aware of how their data will be used. The EU ethics appraisal process encompasses legal, regulatory, moral, and value-based considerations within research collaborations. This governance process safeguards the rights and interests of all involved, upholding fundamental EU values and human rights, and preventing misuse of EU-funded research. Adding “EEDI” raises awareness for the European strategy for Gender Equality, the intersectionality of gender with further diversity traits and the request to create an inclusive collaborative culture within the project and for its communities where diverse perspectives are valued, and everyone is empowered recognised for their contributions (see also Ethics Advisor and Ethics Advisory Boards: v2.0 – 15.02.2023, p. 3 ¹). |
| EBRAINS Ethics and Society Committee (EESC) | EBRAINS Ethics and Society Committee of the EBRAINS AISBL. Members of the EESC also serve as advisors of the EBRAINS 2.0 project. |
| EBRAINS Science and technology Committee (ESTC), Standing subgroup | EBRAINS Science and Technology Committee of the EBRAINS AISBL. Several members of the ESTC also serve as advisors as standing group of the ESTC in the EBRAINS 2.0 project. |
| Ethics Advisor (EA) | The Ethics Advisor is an expert who provides advice on ethics in any EC-funded project. |
| General Assembly | The General Assembly is the ultimate decision-making body of the project consortium. To avoid confusion with the abbreviation of the Grant Agreement (see below), the term General Assembly is always spelled in this deliverable. |
| Grant Agreement (GA) | The purpose of the GA is to establish a formal framework for collaboration among the various entities participating in the EBRAINS 2.0 project. It clarifies e.g., roles and responsibilities, how to manage |

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/roles-and-functions-of-ethics-advisory-ethics-advisory-boards-in-ec-funded-projects_he_en.pdf

intellectual property and resolve disputes. Overall, the GA plays a crucial role in providing a clear and structured framework for collaboration, helping to ensure the success and smooth operation of the project.

| | |
|--|--|
| Human Brain Project (HBP) | The HBP ² is a European Flagship project in the field of Future and Emerging Technologies (October 2023 - September 2023). The EBRAINS research infrastructure was developed within the HBP. |
| Leadership Board (LB) | The LB is the body responsible for the executive management, communication, and coordination of the project. WP leaders of the eight WPs form the LB. |
| Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) | An MoU is a formal agreement between two or more parties outlining their mutual understanding and intentions regarding a specific matter or collaboration. |
| Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) | Responsible research and innovation is an approach that anticipates and assesses potential implications and societal expectations about research and innovation, with the aim to foster the design of inclusive and sustainable research and innovation. |
| Terms of Reference (ToR) | ToRs define the purpose and structures of a project, committee, meeting, negotiation, or any similar collection of people who have agreed to work together to accomplish a shared goal. |
| Work Package (WP) | WPs are central building blocks of any Horizon Europe project. The WP structure is the means through which the concept presented in the project proposal is realised. |

Table 1: Governance Terminology and Definitions

For access to some sensitive documents such as the Consortium Agreement and Grant Agreement, which cannot be made available on public websites, an EBRAINS account is required to open some links in this document.

2 Executive Summary

D8.9 Plans and Processes for the Governance of the Project lays the ground for establishing effective governance structures within the EBRAINS 2.0 project framework. In line with the principles of good governance, this document aims to define the scope, objectives, and principles necessary for guiding the project towards its intended outcomes while ensuring good governance and project member participation.

The scope of D8.9 encompasses the development and implementation of governance mechanisms tailored to the specific needs and complexities of the project. It outlines the roles, responsibilities, and communication mechanisms essential for effective project oversight. Moreover, it addresses the integration of governance principles across all project phases and levels.

The primary aim of this deliverable is to describe how to establish a robust governance framework that fosters trust, collaboration, and efficiency among project members. By clearly defining lines of authority, promoting inclusivity, and facilitating the resolution of conflicts, the document sets out strategies how to mitigate risks, enhance decision-making, and ultimately optimise project performance.

Project management tasks and activities are described (see section 2) and the governance structure is set out including the hierarchical and functional components of the project governance framework, including the roles and responsibilities of project governing boards, advisory boards, and other relevant stakeholders (see section 3). Guiding principles will help to plan and implement good governance in the project (see section 4, also illustrated in figure 1/ cover page):

² <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/>

- Openness involves being transparent and sharing information openly with all project members involved. This transparency fosters trust and ensures that everyone has access to the necessary information regarding project goals, processes, and decision-making.
- Participation is crucial for engaging relevant project members throughout the project lifecycle. By involving people with diverse perspectives and expertise, project members can benefit from valuable insights, and enhance the overall quality and relevance of project outcomes.
- Accountability entails establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and mechanisms for oversight within the project framework. When everyone understands their role and is held accountable for their actions, it promotes responsible decision-making, efficient resource allocation, and ultimately, the successful delivery of project objectives.
- Effectiveness is about achieving project goals efficiently and maximising the impact of project activities. Regular evaluation and adaptation of strategies are essential to ensure that resources are used effectively and that the project stays on track to deliver its intended outcomes.
- Coherence ensures that all aspects of the project, including objectives, and activities, fit together seamlessly. When there is coherence in project governance, it minimises confusion, reduces the risk of duplication of efforts, and enhances overall efficiency in project implementation.
- Representation is fundamental that the interests, needs, and perspectives of all relevant stakeholders are considered and incorporated into project processes. By ensuring inclusivity and equity in project governance, project managers can build consensus, promote project members engagement, and ultimately, achieve project success.

D8.9 will be complemented by D8.3 Handbook on EBRAINS good governance at M18. This is also an opportunity to reflect on which of the planned measures set out in this deliverable have been implemented in day-to-day project work and which still need to be improved.

3 Governance Management

Governance management, anchored in T8.3, encompasses designing a framework of structures, responsibilities, and processes to manage the project effectively, transparently, and inclusively. This framework, which will be provided as a governance handbook, prioritises gender equality, diversity, and inclusion as ethical principles. The responsibilities of T8.3 include:

- Setting up the governance framework based on principles of good governance.
- Striving to implement E³DI principles across all work packages.
- Providing logistical and strategic support to governing bodies, members, and chairpersons, including coordinating meetings, agendas, and minutes.
- Ensuring a flow of information between governing bodies, advisory boards, and work packages.
- Drawing on the experience of established advisory committees.
- Coordinating the process to identify and manage conflicts of interest (ColS).
- Coordinating ethics requirements and deliverables.

Maintaining a constant flow of information between governing bodies and work packages is integral to the governance strategy. This exchange ensures alignment of objectives, timely decision-making, and effective resource allocation. Drawing on the experience of established advisory committees, in particular the ESTC and EESC will enriches the p understanding and guides the project in meeting the project needs.

Compliance with EU principles and values, including ethical and societal acceptability, is central to the projects mission. The project is committed to upholding these principles in all aspects of its work, ensuring integrity and credibility. To address potential ColS, the project will coordinate a thorough process to identify and manage them effectively, maintaining the integrity and impartiality of decision-making processes.

Finally, the project is dedicated to meeting all ethics requirements and deliverables associated with its workplan. Upholding the highest ethical standards is non-negotiable, and we are committed to fulfilling our responsibilities in this regard.

4 Reference Documents

The organisational framework of the consortium revolves around two central agreements: the Consortium Agreement (CA) and the Grant Agreement (GA). These have been meticulously crafted to define the work plan, allocate responsibilities, and specify the nature of collaboration in contractual terms.

These agreements serve as foundational pillars of the project, providing a robust framework within which the consortium operates. They establish a clear roadmap for coordinated action, delineating the roles and obligations of each participating institution. Moreover, they serve as legal instruments that formalise the collaborative efforts, fostering a structured and transparent environment conducive to effective project management and the achievement of objectives.

By adhering to the CA, the GA, and the guiding principles of good governance (see section 4), consortium members uphold the highest standards of legal and regulatory compliance, mitigating risks and ensuring accountability throughout the duration of the project. This contractual framework not only safeguards the interests of all involved parties but also promotes trust, cohesion, and synergy in advancing the goals of the project.

4.1 Consortium Agreement

The purpose of the CA is to establish a formal framework for collaboration among the various entities participating in the EBRAINS 2.0 project. It clarifies roles and responsibilities, conflict resolution, and how to manage e.g. intellectual property. Overall, the CA plays a crucial role in providing a clear and structured framework for collaboration, helping to ensure the success and smooth operation of the project.

Link to CA: <https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/00628660-9c96-41c8-b068-74dc4efe9767/> (with EBRAINS Account)

4.2 Grant Agreement

The GA defines the terms and conditions under which the grant is awarded, and the project is implemented. It serves several key functions such as specifying the scope of the project, defining the aims and resources of the project, outlining the obligations and responsibilities of both the consortium members and the EU funding body, and defining payment procedures. The GA also includes provisions for making amendments to the GA.

Link to GA: <https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/1e66f83b-34cf-487f-9c1c-f5c100535049/> (with EBRAINS Account)

4.3 Other Documents

As aspects concerning the governance of the project and in particular specific working principles cannot be fully covered in the CA, additional aspects such as roles and responsibilities, expertise required, election processes, and the nature of the cooperation will be specified in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the Leadership Board and Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) for the advisory committees. If necessary, ToRs and MoUs can be drawn up for additional working groups and committees, which are established and tasked with specific topics as required by the project.

Other guiding documents include the ALBA Declaration on Equity and Inclusion³ and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)⁴. Additional guidelines and plans from within the project will also influence the governance of EBRAINS 2.0, e.g. the Data Management Plan which is due in M6.

³ <https://www.alba.network/declaration>

⁴ <https://gdpr.eu>

5 Governance Structure

When creating the governance structure, a central guiding element was a lean governance structure generating synergies with the existing governance structure of the EBRAINS network, in particular the EBRAINS AISBL and its centrally managed projects. This was also a result of the independent evaluation of the Human Brain Project (HBP)⁵ and the preliminary feedback at the final review of the HBP in November 2023, where reviewers stated that EBRAINS should “streamline the governance structure of EBRAINS/AISBL as well as HBP and EBRAINS legacy projects.” EBRAINS was encouraged to “try to use existing EBRAINS/AISBL bodies in the project governance of centrally managed projects.”

To align governance structures, processes, and objectives, the EBRAINS 2.0 WP structure was adapted to the central tasks of the EBRAINS research infrastructure, addressing atlases, medical analytics, modelling and simulation, FAIR data, a collaborative platform, and compute services. Synergies with existing governing structures in EBRAINS AISBL⁶ are being created: Members of the EBRAINS AISBL advisory committees (EESC and ESTC) will advise the Leadership Board of EBRAINS 2.0. This will ensure regular exchange, a flow of information, and close collaboration between projects and governing bodies. In addition, several WP leaders and as such members of the EBRAINS 2.0 Leadership Board (LB) serve as members of the Management Board of EBRAINS AISBL. They are therefore also active on other projects in the EBRAINS network and oversee the overall activities and developments of the research infrastructure.

Figure 2 presents the overall governance structure of EBRAINS 2.0. In section 5.1 and 5.2 the different governing bodies and advisory boards are introduced.

5.1 Overview of project Governance Structure

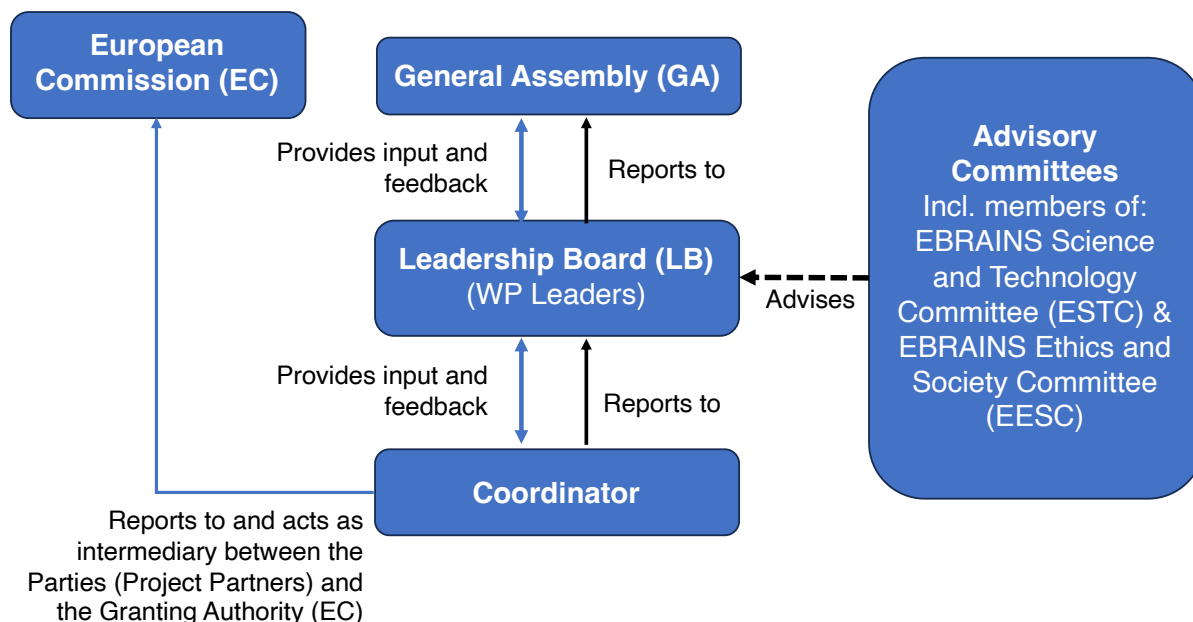


Figure 2: EBRAINS 2.0 Governance Structure

⁵ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/>

⁶ <https://www.ebrains.eu/about>

5.1.1 General Assembly

The General Assembly is the ultimate decision-making body of the project consortium.

| | |
|---|---|
| General Assembly Members and Chairperson | The General Assembly shall consist of one representative of each party to the Consortium Agreement. The affiliated entities shall be allowed to participate in General Assembly meetings but do not have voting rights. The Coordinator, represented by the individual leading the Coordination and Management Work Package (WP8), shall chair all meetings of the General Assembly, unless decided otherwise in a meeting of the General Assembly. |
| Main Responsibilities | The General Assembly shall make decisions on content, finances, and intellectual property rights, on proposals for changes to Annexes 1 and 2 of the Grant Agreement and changes to the consortium plan as well as the evolution of the consortium, defaulting party statutes, and litigation. |
| Meeting Frequency | At least twice a year |
| Documents and Links | List of representatives in the General Assembly (as of April 2024): https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/a5f7d6ce-3ab3-4dcd-87f6-4e3e62d5e2d9/ |

Table 2: General Assembly

5.1.2 Leadership Board

The Leadership Board (LB) is the body responsible for the executive management, communication, and coordination of the project.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| LB Members and Chairperson | The LB shall consist of representative members, who are the individuals leading the eight WPs (WP Leaders). The Chairperson of the Leadership Board is elected by the representative members of the Leadership Board. The Chairperson of the Leadership Board cannot be the same individual who is the Chairperson of the General Assembly. |
| Main Responsibilities | The LB makes proposals to the General Assembly for allocation of the budget of the action in accordance with the Grant Agreement; reviews and proposes budget reallocations to the parties; manages the action; is responsible for the proper execution and implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly; ensures the effective day-to-day coordination and monitoring of the progress work affecting the action as a whole; ensures the consortium fulfils its obligations as set out in the work plan, including objectives, deliverables, and milestones; monitors that the approved workplan is implemented appropriately; identifies corrective actions when a WP fails to implement adequate corrective actions itself; supports the Coordinator in preparing meetings with the Granting Authority and in preparing related data and deliverables; makes proposals to the General Assembly about serving notice to a defaulting party; and steers actions concerning dissemination, communication, and open science. |
| Meeting Frequency | At least once a month |
| Documents and Links | List of LB representative members (as of April 2024): https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/a5f7d6ce-3ab3-4dcd-87f6-4e3e62d5e2d9/ |

Table 3: Leadership Board

5.1.3 Coordinator

The Coordinator is the intermediary between the parties and the Granting Authority and performs all assigned tasks as described in the GA and CA. In particular, the Coordinator is responsible for

- monitoring the compliance of parties with their obligations in the CA and GA,
- keeping the address list for the parties and other contact persons updated and available,
- collecting, reviewing, verifying the consistency of, and submitting reports, deliverables, financial statements, and other requested documents to the Granting Authority,
- planning, proposing decisions for, and implementing General Assembly meetings,
- promptly transmitting documents and information connected with the project to any party concerned,
- administering the financial contribution of the Granting Authority and fulfilling the required financial tasks,
- upon request, providing the parties with official copies or originals of documents that are in the sole possession of the Coordinator, when such copies or originals are necessary for the parties to present claims,
- providing a copy of the GA and its Annexes to the associated partners, and
- actively supporting gender equality and non-discriminatory practices in accordance with the project's commitment to these values. These include fairness, transparency and ensuring equal opportunities and active career support for the involved staff as well as considering gender and diversity in research.

5.2 Advisory Committees

As outlined in the GA, EBRAINS 2.0 aims to work with the established advisory committees of EBRAINS AISBL, the ESTC and the EESC, drawing on their expertise as external advisors to the project. The task will work at developing the operation and composition of this new external Advisory Committee to optimise its contribution to the governance of EBRAINS 2.0 and make best practices available to the EBRAINS network. The ESTC and EESC will provide the EBRAINS 2.0 project with an external view and advice on how to better develop the infrastructure and its services for the benefits of the neuroscience community at large. As agreed in the CA, advisors of the project should neither be partners/associated partners in the project nor receive funding from the project to avoid conflict of interests.

5.2.1 Standing Subgroup of the EBRAINS Science and Technology Committee

Members of the Standing Subgroup of the ESTC in EBRAINS 2.0

Some members of the ESTC were invited to join and form the standing subgroup of the ESTC, serving as advisors to the EBRAINS 2.0 project. The members invited to the standing subgroup are neither actively involved in the EBRAINS 2.0 project nor receive funding from the project. Additional independent experts (not yet related to EBRAINS AISBL via the ESTC or other EBRAINS boards) may be invited to complement this group.

Main Responsibilities (to be agreed upon in an MoU)

- Serve as an EBRAINS 2.0 advisory board.
- Meet quarterly (online) and invite EBRAINS 2.0 project members to its meetings to receive project updates and exchange with project members.
- Give advice on the general progress of the project as well as specific areas the project needs advice or feedback on.
- Produce a brief written assessment about the progress of the project and their work as advisors around M18 and M36.
- Nominate and elect a Chairperson of the Standing Subgroup among its members.

- Report periodically about its work to the ETSC of EBRAINS AISBL to ensure flow of information.
- The Standing Subgroup of the ESTC will be assisted by a secretary for organisational, logistical, and administrative support.

Meeting Frequency At least quarterly

Documents and Links List of members of the Standing Subgroup of the ESTC in EBRAINS 2.0 (as of April 2024):
<https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/a5f7d6ce-3ab3-4dcd-87f6-4e3e62d5e2d9/>

Table 4: ESTC - Overview

5.2.2 Ethics and Society Committee

Members of the EESC Experts who are appointed members of the already established EESC of the EBRAINS AISBL have accepted the invitation to serve as an advisory board for the EBRAINS 2.0 project. Members of this board are neither actively involved in the EBRAINS 2.0 project nor receive funding from the project.

Main Responsibilities⁷ (to be agreed upon in an MoU)

- developing guidelines, recommendations, and requirements in terms of ethics, data governance and protection, Responsible Research and Innovation practices, and societal impact,
- deriving an agenda in close collaboration with the Work Packages,
- raising awareness of and supporting reflection about potential gaps, new developments, and regulations,
- recommending experts for specific questions that may arise,
- reflecting on the follow-up actions undertaken by boards and Work Packages, and suggesting topics and actions if needed,
- reporting to the EC if requested,
- collaborating with the EA and in this respect contributing to the EA's independent ethics report (collaboration to be clarified in an MoU).

Meeting Frequency At least quarterly

Documents and Links List of members of the EESC in EBRAINS 2.0 (as of April 2024):
<https://drive.ebrains.eu/smart-link/a5f7d6ce-3ab3-4dcd-87f6-4e3e62d5e2d9/>

Table 5: EESC - Overview

5.3 Ethics Advisor

EBRAINS 2.0 will be supported by an independent EA who will assess the ethical merits of the work performed and give independent recommendations to the EBRAINS 2.0 project. The roles and competences of the EA⁸ include reporting on the ethical character of the activities of the consortium, monitoring and spotting potential ethical issues, and advising the consortium in case of ethical dilemmas over the duration of the project.

⁷ See also D9.1 concerning the role of the EESC in the project.

⁸ The appointment of the EA as well as roles and competences outlined in D9.1.

5.4 Expert Working Groups and Committees

In addition to the governing bodies and advisory committees, working groups and committees with experts from within the project and beyond may be formed and mandated to support informed decision-making. These working groups and committees will report to the LB and provide recommendations for LB endorsement when matters go beyond the scope of the mandate of the LB. These groups and committees will provide transparency and bottom-up input through the involvement of experts and create essential synergies with the top-down hierarchical governance structure.

6 Good Governance and E³DI in EBRAINS 2.0

The European Commission published a white paper⁹ already in 2001 on good governance principles on both the national and European Union level. These principles include openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. As a European-funded project with more than 50 partners and associated partners, these principles are understood as supporting the governance of interdisciplinary collaborative science based on ethics, gender equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion (E³DI):

- **Openness** implies that the governance processes should be transparent and accessible to the public. This means that decisions and their rationale should be clearly communicated and available to everyone affected by these decisions or who has an interest in them. For EBRAINS 2.0, governance openness requires:
 - Transparent communication: Regularly updating all stakeholders about project progress, decisions, and changes via newsletters, project portals, and regular stakeholder meetings
 - Accessibility of information: Ensuring that all project documents and communications are available on a shared platform where all partners can access and review them
 - Beyond making information accessible, engaging the broader public is considered as contribution to align openness with E³DI.
- **Participation** stresses the importance of involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process, particularly those who will be affected by the decisions. This principle aims to create more informed and accepted outcomes. For EBRAINS 2.0, governance participation requires:
 - Inclusive Decision-Making: designing forums and workshops where all partner institutions and specifically all project members can contribute ideas and feedback. Detail participative decision-making models that encourage contributions from all levels within the project team, especially from groups that might typically be underrepresented.
 - Stakeholder Engagement Plans: identifying all external and internal stakeholders and outlining how they will be involved in the project processes. To enhance E³DI the plans will aim to ensure diverse representation to genuinely reflect and integrate diverse perspectives.
 - Open science practices are upheld, in key aspects of the project, such as open access to publications, data, models, tools, and software, data sharing, integration and collaboration, training and education.
- **Accountability** means that all actors are responsible for their actions and must be able to explain and justify them to the public and to the institutional stakeholders. For EBRAINS 2.0 ensuring accountability requires:
 - Roles and Responsibilities: clearly defined and documented, for all boards, committees, WPs and task leaders, etc. They include the implementation of E³DI, and if violated action must be taken. The governance handbook but also ToRs and project wide used documents and procedures offer guidance, for example on selection procedures, decision making or communication.
 - Conflicts of interest: ensure that potential conflicts of interest are identified, declared, and acted upon. This includes the protection of potential whistle-blowers to ensure that any breaches of E³DI

⁹ Emanuel Bertrand: "The European Commission's White Paper on European Governance (2001)", Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe [online], ISSN 2677-6588, published on 22/06/20, consulted on 24/04/2024.
<https://ehne.fr/en/node/12261>

principles can be reported without fear of retribution. A monitoring system is needed to track compliance with E³DI principles and regular reflections with the EESC and the EA.

- **Effectiveness** refers to achieving the desired results through the most efficient use of resources at a reasonable cost without wasting time or effort. For EBRAINS 2.0 governance participation requires:
 - Resource Allocation: Ensure resources are allocated optimally among partners based on the project requirements and expected outcomes. The promotion and implementation of E³DI principles are part of these expected outcomes and are expected to enhance the project's innovation capacity and impact.
 - Project Management: planning within the governance framework, including risk management while ensuring high quality (see also D8.1, Quality and Risk Management Plan). Executing, and monitoring all phases of the project efficiently, supported by project-wide monitoring and reporting tools.
 - Continuous learning, reflection, and improvement: Flexibility in governance structures and decision-making processes for timely adjustments. Structured feedback loops are important to allow lessons learned about the project in general and E³DI specifically to be integrated back into project planning and execution processes.
- **Coherence** involves consistency and logical connection between various policies and actions. It ensures that all policies and actions are aligned and pull in the same direction. For EBRAINS 2.0 governance coherence requires:
 - Integrated planning: Ensuring that the project plan aligns with all objectives and activities across partner institutions. Specifically, policies related to human resources, research ethics, and stakeholder engagement, are developed with E³DI considerations.
 - Policy Alignment: Ensuring that the project's policies are consistently applied across all levels of the project and that they align with the overarching E³DI goals, via regularly reviews and adjusting if necessary to maintain alignment.
 - Protection of sensitive information: Personal data, are handled in adherence with the European data protection regulations, ethics, fair, and transparent processing. Transparency and open science must be aligned with the responsibility to safeguard the data and individuals.
- **Representation** asks who is representing the project and who is therefore directly involved in strategic planning and decision making. It is related to equal opportunities across all genders and further diversity traits in leadership and to counteracting discrimination. For EBRAINS 2.0 governance representation requires:
 - Recruitment processes: counteracting biases, attracting, and encouraging diverse individuals who not only possess the requisite expertise but also share our ethical ethos.
 - Inclusive Culture: to foster procedures and designs that insure, everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute and where everyone is recognised fairly for their contributions.
 - Design of election and selection processes: Transparent criteria and clear procedures to be followed have been setup. Additionally underrepresented groups are encouraged and supported if in a leadership position for the first time.

The following sections present good governance using some concrete examples and plans in the project, including specific meeting designs, overview on collaborative meetings throughout the project and managing interests.

6.1 Open Space for Collaborative Achievements (OSCA)

The implementation of good governance based on E³DI in EBRAINS 2.0 is highly challenging due to the complexities of collaborating remotely in specialised WPs and tasks, each requiring focus and expertise. While this specialisation is a source of strength, it also carries the risk of fragmentation that threatens interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, perceptions of which E³DI aspects are most relevant and how to implement them will differ throughout partner institutions – and individual project members.

OSCA is our proactive answer to this challenge, which is designed as an innovative, inclusive, and dynamic online event. Occurring at least every three months, OSCA is a unique opportunity to share updates, tackle challenges, and seek support from diverse disciplines, hierarchies, and functions.

OSCA also serves as a think-tank and platform to explore how E³DI can easily and deeply be integrated into our operations. By aligning with European ethical requests and providing confidential ethical consultation, we create a safe and secure environment for all consortium members to voice concerns and seek advice. OSCA has been designed to comply with formal requirements and to nurture a research culture where ethics are an integral part of our collaboration:

- Knowledge sharing and interdisciplinary support: Participants will share recent challenges within their respective tasks to gain cross-disciplinary perceptions and ideas how to proceed in an open dialogue with colleagues from the consortium.
 - Keynotes and E³DI discussion: Each OSCA session features a keynote on topics highly relevant to the project, such as engagement with ethical issues, E³DI challenges, GDPR, or FAIR data practices.
- Confidential consultation: For participants seeking anonymous advice, private sessions with external advisors will be offered, providing a safe space for sensitive discussions.
- Overview and conclusion: Participants, especially governing body, and advisory board members, share the insights and action steps as closing remarks.

6.2 Conflicts of Interest

Each party to the CA is responsible for preventing CoIs within their own institution. The parties must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of EBRAINS 2.0 is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties, or any other shared interest.

Members of the EBRAINS 2.0 governing and advisory bodies will be asked to annually declare interests that may lead to a CoI with regards to their respective roles in the project via a declaration of interest (DoI). The register of DoIs will be maintained by the governance management task (T8.3) and is available to any member of the project or the public upon request. Through this process, we will build on the policy on Transparency and the Management of Interests of the HBP¹⁰.

The annual DoI exercise will be managed by T8.3 and includes:

- Collecting DoIs from members of the governing and advisory bodies.
- Providing the completed DoIs to the chairperson of the relevant governing or advisory body and collecting the subsequent report from the chairperson.
- Compiling all chairperson reports and submitting them to the EESC and/or EA for review and advice.
- Organising all the necessary checks and contributions to the reports.
- Storing the DoIs (in accordance with GDPR).
- Collecting and incorporating feedback on the exercise from the EESC and/or EA (e.g. suggestions for new questions on the form) and implementing this feedback in future exercises.

Additionally, T8.3 will encourage all governing and advisory bodies to create space at the beginning of meetings for spontaneous declarations of interest to be made pertaining to the agenda items for that meeting. If declarations are made at the beginning of such meetings, it will be the responsibility of the chairperson to decide whether this declaration is sufficient to ensure transparency and accountability or whether the member should abstain from the agenda item and/or meeting. If in the creation of the meeting agenda the chairperson identifies a potential conflict of interest for themselves, the EESC and/or EA may be consulted

¹⁰ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/about/transparency-and-management-interests-human-brain-project/>

6.3 Fostering Exchange and Discussion

To identify potential issues related to E³DI within the project, measures have been and will continue to be launched at various levels. Regular meetings have ensured and will continue to ensure exchange and discussion across the work package and greater governance structure of the project. A preliminary meeting schedule is outlined in table 6, detailing the project members involved and the aim and purpose of the exchange.






















































| Meetings and Participants | Description | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| General Assembly | Discuss project progress, address issues, plan strategic directions. |   |   |   |
| EC and EBRAINS 2.0 Coordinator | Update on project progress, amendment, upcoming needs. |         |         |         |
| Leadership Board Meeting | Lead the overall project, insure E ³ DI, coherence of different WPs, excellence of deliverables. |                                |                      |           |
| Work Package Managers | Manage the project and formal requirements coherently |  |  |  |
| Work Package Teams | In-depth discussion on specific tasks within each WP, progress updates, coordination |                                |                      |           |
| Technical Coordination for all Work Packages | encourage collaboration, align towards the development and operations of EBRAINS RI |  |  |  |
| Advisory Board ESTC (& LB) | Discuss project progress, address issues, advise |     |     |     |
| Ethics Review EESC and Independent EA | Review ethical aspects, discuss any concerns arising. Progress review, activities across all WPs. |  |  |  |
| OSCA for EBRAINS 2.0 (see section 6.1) | Facilitate interdisciplinary and inclusive collaboration, across the project, reflection of E ³ DI |     |     |     |
| SUMMT for EBRAINS 2.0 | Comprehensive review, team building, and strategic planning |  |  |  |

Figure 3: How WPs and project members will ensure exchange across all project levels

7 Outlook

D8.9 describes the intricate framework designed to cultivate robust governance practices within EBRAINS 2.0. This document not only serves as a beacon for future activities but also reflects the ongoing efforts already underway. The various governing bodies have commenced their regular deliberations, setting the stage for effective decision-making and oversight. The formation of the LB is concluded, with its chair and deputy chair duly elected to steer the course. The General Assembly prepares for its inaugural gathering scheduled for June, poised to unify stakeholders, and jointly set the strategic direction for the project's future endeavours together.

The advisory committees are gearing up to convene in May, eager to glean insights from project members and foster a collaborative spirit that will steer EBRAINS 2.0 towards success. These committees serve as vital conduits for harnessing diverse perspectives and expertise, ensuring that the research infrastructure remains responsive to the evolving needs of its community.

Internal meetings, technical coordination sessions, and gatherings of WP managers ensures a regular exchange, flow of information across WPs and fosters active participation.

Meanwhile, the commitment of T8.3 to uphold the tenets of good governance and promote E³DI remains - through a multifaceted approach encompassing education and the implementation of tangible measures such as refining processes outlined in ToRs and MoUs, as well as the managing the Col process, the project continues to fortify its governance.

As EBRAINS 2.0 reaches its midway point, the forthcoming Handbook on EBRAINS good governance (D8.3) promises to be a cornerstone resource, offering stakeholders a comprehensive and user-friendly guide to the project's governance mechanisms. This document will include processes of decision-making, provide clear guidelines, and empower stakeholders to actively engage in shaping the project's trajectory. Anchored in principles of transparency, accountability, and effective governance practices, the Handbook will serve as a roadmap for navigating the complexities of collaborative research endeavours.