



SIGNON

Sign Language Translation Mobile Application and Open Communications Framework

Deliverable 9.6: Second Annual Ethical Report on Internal Affairs



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Overview: This deliverable provides an overview of activities of the SignON Research Ethics Committee across 2022. It also outlines briefly some plans for 2023. Please note that D9.3 and D9.6 are mirror copies, as there are no issues arising that require handling in an internal versus external facing document. For this reason, Deliverable D9.3: Second Annual Ethical Report on Practices Towards the Stakeholder Communities, has been delivered as a dummy document. This decision was made after

discussion and approval by the Project Officer in order to avoid redundancy. Both deliverables are due at the same time.

Revision History

Version #	Implemented by	Revision Date	Description of changes
V1.0	Lorraine LEESON	01/12/2022	

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Approval Procedure

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V1.0	D9.3/9.6	Rehana Omardeen	EUD	6/12/2022
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Acronyms

The following table provides definitions for acronyms and terms relevant to this document.

Acronym	Definition
REC	Research Ethics Committee
DMP	Data Management Plan
DPO	Data Protection Officer

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1. Introduction

This report presents an overview of the work undertaken by the SignON Research Ethics Committee across 2022.

Please note that D9.3 and D9.6 are mirror copies of each other, as there are no issues arising that require handling as an internal versus external facing document.

2. SignON Research Ethics Committee Membership and Meetings across 2022

The SignON Research Ethics Committee was established at the outset of the project and comprises the following members:

	Name Institution	Country
1	Prof. Lorraine Leeson TCD	IE
2	Dr. Dimitar Shterionov TiU	NL
3	Dr. Vincent Vandeghinste INT	NL
4	Dr. Bob Boelhouwer INT	NL
5	Dr. Henk van den Heuvel RU	NL
6	Prof. Josep Blat UPF (until June 2022)	ES
7	Prof. Horacio Saggion UPF (from June 2022)	ES
8	Caro Brosens VGTC	BE
9	Prof. Myriam Vermeerbergen KUL	BE
10	Dr. Catia Cucchiarini DLU	NL
11	Aoife Brady DCU	IE

The Committee has met five times across 2022 - we had four online meetings and met once in person, as follows:

- 21 January 2022 - Online
- 27 May 2022 - Online
- 14-15 June 2022 - in person (14 June), adjacent to our SignON Consortium meeting, University of Tilburg, with a presentation on the work of WP9 to the consortium (15 June).
- 21 November 2022 - Online
- 12 December 2022 - Online

There was also engagement in reviewing/advising on ethics applications that were submitted between formal meeting dates, especially where partners were working to tight deadlines.

Additionally, we actively engaged in meetings to discuss ethical considerations associated with gathering additional use case related data across autumn 2022, led by SignON REC member, Dr. Henk van den Heuvel and attended by several SignON REC members:

- 31 August 2022
- 14 September 2022
- 6 & 25 October 2022
- 15 & 23 November 2022
- 5 December 2022

After a few meetings where the main ideas were established, the main use case group was split up into two smaller subgroups that subsequently met in parallel to work on specific subtasks, that is 1) participant recruitment and ethics, and 2) recording design and tech implementation.

3. Research Ethics Applications

During 2022, five research ethics applications were reviewed, and input and advice provided by the SignON REC ahead of their submission to institutional research ethics committees. This has allowed for useful feedback to be incorporated into consortium members' applications. This has been especially fruitful with regard to the consortium's about to be submitted application for REC approval via Dublin City University for collection of a broad range of signed and spoken language data. The opportunity to engage in collectively planning this application allowed for highly productive dialogue across the

consortium around the ethical and data management challenges that we need to address comprehensively as a team, especially where we seek to work towards having open data sets that we can share beyond the life of the SignON project. The challenges that arise when identifiers such as ‘deaf’ (also used by community members to self-identify an alignment with a signing community) are perceived by institutional REC committees as purely medical data, have been discussed as a team. This is important as obligations that hold when considering medical data are necessarily greater than when working with non-medical data.

We have also discussed the ways in which institutions categorise ‘vulnerable populations’, and typically classify ‘disabled people’ within such categorisations. We have noted that some institutions have provided guidance to researchers around this (e.g. the [Trinity College Dublin Good Research Practice Policy](#), noting that “Participants who are at risk of vulnerability are not always vulnerable - their vulnerability may change with their situation and environment, and this should be considered in our research to manage the balance between protection and risk.” (2021, p.15)).

3.1 REC Applications across 2022

3.1.1 Trinity College Dublin

Rachel Moisselle and Professor Lorraine Leeson submitted an application for a study entitled, “Language Planning in Action: The Development of New Terminology in Irish Sign Language” to Trinity College Dublin’s School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences to run a series of focus groups with deaf community members who have engaged in language planning exercises to develop new vocabulary in Irish Sign Language. The goal is to document and interrogate the language ideologies that underpin what appears to be an intentional drive towards greater depiction, and to provide a theoretical analysis of the vocabulary emerging, drawing on cognitive linguistic and gesture studies approaches. Full approval for the study was granted in September 2022 (See Appendix X: HT47).

3.1.2 KU Leuven

Prof Dr Myriam Vermeerbergen, Prof Dr Tim Van De Cruys and Lien Soetemans successfully applied for ethics approval from KU Leuven for data collection work to investigate whether and in which way certain

grammatical mechanisms, tendencies and language use in Flemish Sign Language are influenced when deaf signers communicate with each other through live and postponed video-mediated communication (2D situation) instead of face to face communication (3D situation). The REC application title for the study is: "Online taalgebruik bij dove Vlaamse Gebarentaligen in live en uitgestelde settings" (See Appendix 2: G-2022-5482-R2(MIN)). Results of this explorative study could support the development of translation software and applications involving signed languages like the SignON application.

3.1.3 Tilburg University

Dr Mirella De Sisto and Dr Dimitar Shterionov submitted an application to facilitate engagement of participants in the SignON focus groups conducted in collaboration with Nederlands Gebarententrum and TaalUnie on 26 April 2022. These had the goal of ensuring that deaf and hard of hearing people in the Netherlands views fed into the design of use cases for the SignON project. Full approval for the study was granted in April 2022 (See Appendix 3: REDC 2022.28).

A second application for REC approval was also granted to Dr Mirella De Sisto and Dr Dimitar Shterionov in September 2022 to run focus groups interviews and discussions with deaf, hearing and hard of hearing participants for SignON user requirements and case-studies (See Appendix 4: REDC 2022.32). An additional amendment was requested in order to include surveys. This was approved in November 2022 by the TiU REC.

3.1.4 Dublin City University

This application, which is the result of significant cross-consortium engagement (see Section 3 above) will be submitted by Dr Elizabeth Mathews on behalf of the consortium in early January 2023 via Dublin City University. This application seeks to collect signed and spoken language data for the SignON hospitality use cases which were agreed on as a result of our co-creation exercises in WP1 via the SignON MTSL App.

3.2 Ethical Concerns

Thus far, all activities associated with data collection have been fruitful. No ethical concerns around research related activities occurring under the auspices of the project have been raised with the SignON REC.

4. Data Management Plans (DMPs) for 2022

The SignON REC also engaged in the process of reviewing and cross-checking the consortium partners' Data Management Plans. For each DMP, two REC members were assigned to review content and offer feedback to support our goal of consistency across the partnership submissions.

5. Recruitment

A postdoctoral researcher (Dr David Loughrey) and a research assistant (Ms Lianne (Gillian) Quigley) were recruited in November 2022 to engage in research around the ethics of MT from the perspective of deaf and hard of hearing communities, building on learnings from WP1. Based at Trinity College Dublin, their work will seek to document, interrogate and inform our understanding of the epistemic standpoint of DHH people, feeding forward into AI and MTSL work to follow. Our goal is to undertake engaged research which may be disseminated in non-traditional ways to ensure that DHH communities are reached in addition to publishing academic articles.

6. Other Initiatives for 2023 arising from the SignON Ethics WP

We are planning a data management plan training session, which will be delivered by the Trinity College Dublin DMP advisors (based in the Trinity College Dublin Library) in Spring 2023. This will facilitate training for the whole consortium, and aims, in particular, to support early career researchers working with us to access a solid introduction to preparing and updating DMPs, with a focus on long term (meta)data preservation.

We are also engaging with the Horizon2020 funded Human+ team¹, exploring the potential for SignON's REC to engage with the Human+ researchers on the topic of ethics and AI related research.

¹ [Human-centric approaches to technological innovation - HUMAN+ \(humanplus.ie\)](https://humanplus.ie)

7. Summary

This report presents an overview of the work of the SignON REC during 2022, demonstrating strong engagement with the consortium at large, and shows how our co-creation work has been embedded into our research design, folding in learnings from WP1, and informing the collective goals of the SignON project team.

APPENDIX 1

Research Ethics Approval - TCD - HT47



Application	Academic Year 2021/22
Applicant Code	HT47
Applicant/Supervisor Name	Rachel Moisele / Prof Lorraine Leeson
Title of Research	Language Planning in Action: The Development of New Terminology in Irish Sign Language
Date of this letter	29/09/2022

Dear Rachel,

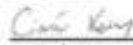
Your amended submission (received 14/09/2022) for ethical approval for the research project above was considered by the Research Ethics Committee, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, Trinity College Dublin and has been approved in full.

Please note:

- (i) On completion of research projects, applicants should complete the *End of Project Report Form* (which can be found at: <https://www.tcd.ie/slscs/research/ethics/>) and submit one electronic copy (to slscs@tcd.ie)
- (ii) The REC requests, in particular, that you attend to your commitments regarding the storage and destruction of data arising from this research, in keeping with REC policy and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines.

We wish you every luck with your research.

Best wishes,



Dr Cláirín Kenny
Chair, Research Ethics Committee
School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

APPENDIX 2: KU Leuven REC Approval G-2022-5482-R2 (MIN)

Re: Aanvraag AVG/Ethische toetsing - G-2022-5482-R2(MIN) /... - Lien Soetemans

29/11/2022 11:54

R2(MIN)", is ondertussen afgerond.

Met betrekking tot de AVG toetsing bevestigen wij hiermee dat de door u beschreven verwerking van persoonsgegevens verenigbaar is met de vereisten van de Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming (AVG). Vanuit het oogpunt van de AVG bestaat er bijgevolg geen bezwaar om daarmee te starten. Als u nood heeft aan een formele bevestiging van dit bericht door de functionaris voor gegevensbescherming ('DPO') van KU Leuven mag u dit aangeven via pret@kuleuven.be. Overeenkomstig de AVG werd deze aanvraag opgenomen in het KU Leuven register i.v.m. de verwerking van persoonsgegevens i.h.k.v. onderzoek en maatschappelijke dienstverlening.

Met betrekking tot de ethische toetsing bevestigen wij dat de SMEC tijdens de plenaire bespreking van uw dossier concludeerde dat uw aanvraag voldoet aan de gestelde normen met betrekking tot wetenschappelijk onderzoek. De beslissing met betrekking tot uw aanvraag voor ethische toetsing is bijgevolg gunstig. Deze goedkeuring is 4 jaar geldig. SMEC beschouwt uw dossier bij deze als afgehandeld. Indien u bijkomende vragen heeft kan u ons steeds contacteren via pret@kuleuven.be.

Vriendelijke groeten,
De medewerkers privacy en ethiek

Gelieve deze mail niet rechtstreeks te beantwoorden. Met vragen kan u terecht bij pret@kuleuven.be of smec@kuleuven.be.

Dear researcher,

The GDPR assessment and ethical review of your application "*Online taalgebruik bij dove Vlaamse Gebarentaligen in live en uitgestelde settings*" with reference number "*G-2022-5482-R2(MIN)*" have now been completed.

With regard to the GDPR assessment, we can confirm that the proposed processing of personal data meets the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Consequently, from a GDPR perspective, there is **no objection** to starting the processing operations. If you require formal confirmation of this message by KU Leuven's Data Protection Officer ('DPO'), please contact pret@kuleuven.be. In accordance with the GDPR, this application has been included in KU Leuven's register of processing activities in the context of research and public service.

With regard to the ethical review of the project, we can confirm that during its plenary discussion, SMEC has decided that your application meets the standards for academic research. It has therefore received a favourable opinion. This approval is valid for 4 years. SMEC therefore considers your application as completed. For any further questions, please contact us at pret@kuleuven.be.

Kind regards,
The Privacy and Ethics team

<https://owa.groupware.kuleuven.be/owa/#viewmodel=ReadMessa...2pBbK4uQABb2i96gAAAA%3D%3D&lsPrintView=1&wid=97&ispopout=1>

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APPENDIX 3: Tilburg University REDC 2022.28



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND DIGITAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS AND DATA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

To whom it may concern
Declaration of Ethical Clearance

Identification code: REDC 2022.28

Date
25-04-22

Subject
Ethical clearance
research project by
Dimitar Shterionov
(PI), et al.

REDC # 2022/08

E-mail
tblr.rede@tut.nl

This is to certify on behalf of the Research Ethics and Data Management Committee of Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences that Dimitar Shterionov (PI), et al. received ethical clearance for the SignON focus group that will be conducted in collaboration with Nederlands Gebarencentrum and TaalUnie on 26 April 2022. The focus group is part of the research project "Study of use-cases and acceptance of machine translation-based communication services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and hearing people". Ethical clearance is valid from 25 April 2022 until 31 December 2022 according to the criteria of Tilburg University and the applicable Dutch regulations.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. dr. J. Schaafsma
Chair REDC



M.M.R. Lensink, MA
Secretary REDC

APPENDIX 4: Tilburg University REDC 2022.32


TILBURG UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND DIGITAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS AND DATA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

To whom it may concern
Declaration of Ethical Clearance

Identification code: REDC 2022.32

Date
15-09-22

Subject
Ethical clearance
research project by
Dimitar Shterionov
(PI) and Mirella De
Sisto

REDC # 2022/32

This is to certify on behalf of the Research Ethics and Data Management Committee of Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences that Dimitar Shterionov and Mirella De Sisto received ethical clearance for the research project titled "Focus groups interviews and discussions with deaf, hearing and hard of hearing participants for SignON user requirements and case-studies". This ethical clearance is valid from 30 June until 31 December 2023 according to the criteria of Tilburg University and the applicable Dutch regulations.

Yours sincerely,

E-mail
info.redc@uvt.nl


Prof. dr. J. Schaafsma
Chair REDC


M.M.R. Lensink, MA
Secretary REDC

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