



SIGNON

Sign Language Translation Mobile Application and Open Communications Framework

Deliverable D9.7: Final Annual Ethical Report on Internal Affairs



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Overview: This document presents the final annual ethical report on internal affairs. It documents the listing of all ethics applications that were supported across the life of the project. Please note that D9.4 and D9.7 are mirror copies, as there are no issues arising that require handling in an internal versus external facing document. For this reason, Deliverable D9.4: Final 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
V0.1	Lorraine Leeson	09/11/2023	First draft of the deliverable
V1.0	Lorraine Leeson, Aoife Brady	08/12/2023	Final version of the deliverable

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Approval Procedure

Version #	Deliverable Name	Approved by	Institution	Approval Date
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Shaun O'Boyle	DCU	22/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Marco Giovanelli	FINCONS	06/12/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Vincent Vandeghinste	INT	23/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Adrián Núñez-Marcos	UPV/EHU	22/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	John O'Flaherty	MAC	22/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Santiago Egea Gómez	UPF	23/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Irene Murtagh	TU Dublin	05/12/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Lorraine Leeson	TCD	xx/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Jorn Rijckaert	VGTC	29/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Henk van den Heuvel	RU	xx/xx/202x
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Lisa Rombouts	KU Leuven	28/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Davy Van Landuyt	EUD	23/11/2023
V1.0	D9.4 & D9.7	Mirella De Sisto	TiU	27/11/2023

Acronyms

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

Acronym	Definition
REC	Research Ethics Committee
AI	Artificial Intelligence
DHH	Deaf and Hard of Hearing
MT	Machine Translation
SLMT	Sign Language Machine Translation

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1. Overview

This report presents an overview of the work of the SignON Research Ethics Committee (REC), with particular focus on work that supported research ethics approvals across the life of the SignON project.

2. Ethics Approvals

The SignON REC comprised the following consortium members who brought a multidisciplinary perspective on the work at hand alongside invaluable expertise in research integrity, GDPR, and data management as well as significant multimodal multilingual capacity which was essential in reviewing applications made in the many languages of the consortium:

	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 (2021-22)	NL
5	Dr. Henk van den Heuvel, RU	NL
6	Prof. Josep Blat, UPF	ES
7	Caro Brosens, VGTC	BE
8.	Prof. Myriam Vermeerbergen, KUL	BE
9.	Dr. Catia Cucchiarini, RU	NL
10.	Aoife Brady, DCU	IE
11.	Prof. Horacio Saggion, UPF (2023)	ES

As agreed by the consortium (and described in D9.1), all ethics applications were reviewed by the SignON REC ahead of their submission to the home institution of the academic applying for REC approval, adding an additional layer of quality assurance for the process. This interim point of review also helped us to ensure consistency across our ethics applications and an opportunity to ensure that the shared values that we, as a consortium, had committed to were embedded into our REC applications.

Across the life of the SignON project, 12 applications for ethics were reviewed and supported. A complete listing of all ethics applications approved across the project can be found in the table below.

No.	Our Ref	Lead Applicants	Institution	Study Title	Local Reference Number (if available)	REC (if available)
1	2021/1	Dimitar Shterionov, Andy Way, Aoife Brady	DCU	Amendment to a preliminary (2019) application that had been approved to support the collection of data via focus groups for the SignON project	DCUREC/2019/182	
2	2021/2	Lorraine Leeson	Trinity College Dublin	SignON Project: facilitating the exchange of information among deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing individuals across Europe	TT66	
3	2022/1	Rachel Moisselle and Lorraine Leeson	Trinity College Dublin	Language Planning in Action: The Development of New Terminology in Irish Sign Language	HT47	
4	2022/2	Lien Soetemans, Frank Van Eynde, Myriam Vermeerbergen	KU Leuven	SignON - Mobiele applicatie voor gebarentaalvertaling en open communicatiekader This application was adapted and re-submitted at KU Leuven in April 2023 to make it possible for other partners to roll out the survey in their own countries	G-2021-4194-R2(MIN) An amendment was approved in April 2023 - G-2021-4194-R3 (AMD)	
5	2022/3	Myriam Vermeerbergen, Tim Van De Cruys and Lien Soetemans	KU Leuven	Online taalgebruik bij dove Vlaamse Gebarentaligen in live en uitgestelde settings	G-2022-5482-R2(MIN)	

6	2022/4	Mirella De Sisto and Dimitar Shterionov	University of Tilburg	SignON focus groups conducted in collaboration with Nederlands Gebarentrum and TaalUnie	REDC 2022.28
7	2022/5	Mirella De Sisto and Dimitar Shterionov	University of Tilburg	Focus groups interviews and discussions with deaf, hearing and hard of hearing participants for SignON user requirements and case-studies	REDC 2022.32 Also an amendment approved - REDC 202232a
8	2023/1	Dimitar Shterionov and Mirella De Sisto	University of Tilburg	Focus groups interviews and discussions with deaf, hearing and hard of hearing participants for SignON user requirements and case-studies	REDC 2022.32ab (Note: "amendment a" was for the survey, and "amendment b" was to facilitate collection of video data for the two data collection projects, NGT-HoReCo (funded by the ELE project) and GoSt-ParC-Sign (partially funded by the EAMT).
9	2023/2	Andy Way and Elizabeth Mathews	DCU	SignON Use Case Hospitality (with and for the whole consortium)	DCUREC/2023/008
10	2023/3	Lorraine Leeson	Trinity College Dublin	SignON Use Case Hospitality (additional approval was also needed from TCD)	TT78
11	2023/4	Horacio Saggion	CIREP - Universitat Pompeu Fabra	SignON - Sign Language Translation Mobile Application and Open Communications Framework (Spanish Survey)	287

12	2023/5	Lisa Rombouts and Myriam Vermeerbergen	KU Leuven	Parallel (NL-VGT)	HoReCo corpus	G-2023-6729
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The significant work that went into preparing these ethics applications, many of which entailed significant cross-institutional collaboration to prepare, must be noted.

2.1 Some Challenges that Emerged

There were some challenges around explaining to institutional RECs which did not have much experience of working with sign languages that video capture of signed content was a necessary condition in data collection. It was also necessary to point out on several occasions that research with deaf communities is not automatically ‘research with vulnerable subjects’ nor is it automatically ‘health related research’. Our project sought to engage with deaf adult signers who use the sign languages considered in our project to discuss their thoughts on AI and SLMT. We also engaged with hard of hearing people who used spoken language inviting them to share their thoughts on AI and MT, and with regard to how new technologies might better benefit them. We set out to ensure that DHH people led these interactions. Through SignON we have had the opportunity to engage with many of our institutional RECs on these matters but note that there is still significant work to be done to ensure that medical models of deafness do not get in the way of work that supports linguistic, social, and human rights related research.

There were also challenges in ensuring access to the relevant documentation to be submitted, especially where ethics applications are processed via online systems. However, it was possible to create a PDF of the draft submission, which was shared with SignON REC members.

3. Conclusions

This report has outlined the work of the SignON Research Ethics Committee across the life of the SignON project, with particular focus on the work undertaken to support ethics applications via our institutions that supported the SignON project workflow. The expertise of colleagues from different disciplines, with

multiple languages, with expertise in research integrity and data management was invaluable and offered an opportunity to share learning across the REC and via the consortium with positive results.