REMEDIES Code of Ethical Conduct

Code of Ethical Conduct outlines the principles for maintaining integrity, transparency, and respect in all research activities. The below principles are in line with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and are intended to guide partners, citizen scientists, and any stakeholders involved in the project towards responsible and ethical behaviour, aligned with international standards of research integrity.

1. Principles of Research Integrity

The core principles guiding the project include:

Reliability in the quality of research methods and dissemination of results.
Honesty in all aspects of research, including reporting and communication.
Respect for colleagues, partners, volunteers, any stakeholders involved, society at large, and the environment.
Accountability for the entire research process, from planning to dissemination.

2. Integrity and Honesty

All participants must ensure that research data, results, and methods are reported transparently and truthfully, while respecting data ownership rights. Data shared by the partners and produced within the project may only be used and/or shared externally with the consent of the data owner. This also applies to the disclosure of confidential data to third parties, who are not project partners, such as subcontractors, etc.

Research must be free from fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism.

Conflicts of interest should be disclosed and managed openly to maintain trust and transparency.

3. Respect for Persons and Human Dignity

Researchers must treat all participants with the utmost respect and uphold their dignity throughout the research process. This should include providing clear, transparent information about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and obtaining informed consent before involving a human subject in research.
Special care and additional precautions must be taken in cases where participants belong to vulnerable populations (e.g., children, the elderly, people with disabilities, or economically disadvantaged groups), such as tailoring communication to the needs of participants and ensuring a full understanding of the research, to prevent any form of exploitation or harm.

4. Equity and Diversity

The project should promote equity by ensuring equal opportunities for participation and recognition, regardless of background.

Diversity should ensure inclusivity, fostering a representative environment where varied perspectives are valued and sought within the project, either internally by partners, or externally, for example by stakeholders.

Research must consider differences such as gender, culture, age, and socio-economic status to ensure fair treatment and access for all subjects and contributors, as well as beneficiaries.

The project should follow and participate in different European initiatives on DEI (Diversity - Equity - Inclusion), for example European Diversity Month.

To ensure inclusivity and wider participation (people with disabilities, non-English speakers, underprivileged groups, etc.), the majority of audiovisual communication content produced will be as accessible as possible (e.g. English subtitles, audio description, etc.). By leveraging collaborations with relevant organizations and projects addressing these communities, opportunities for participation in events and activities will be provided through online and hybrid methods.

5. Collaboration, Mutual Respect, and Stakeholder Relations

Effective collaboration among international/national/local teams is essential. All participants must respect and actively embrace cultural differences and contribute to a collegial environment.

Relationships with stakeholders, including funders, industry partners, and communities, must be built on trust.

All communication and interaction with stakeholders should be transparent and ensure that expectations, goals, and responsibilities are clearly outlined and understood by all parties.

Open communication should be maintained to address stakeholder expectations, concerns, and interests in a timely and transparent manner.

Confidentiality and data protection must be upheld in all interactions, adhering to legal requirements such as the GDPR.

Clear agreements on authorship, data sharing, data management and intellectual property must be established early in the project and maintained throughout.

6. Environmental Responsibility

The project must adopt sustainable practices and seek to minimize its environmental impact.

Researchers, technology providers and organisations should assess the potential risks to ecosystems and take preventive measures to mitigate negative outcomes.

7. Transparency and Accountability

The project should operate transparently, with clear lines of responsibility and decision-making.

All stages of the research should be documented comprehensively to ensure accountability and enable reproducibility of results.

8. Data Practices and Management

Data must be handled in accordance with international standards, ensuring transparency, accuracy, and compliance with privacy regulations.

Data should be managed and shared responsibly, while handled through a concrete user-access structure, ensuring that access is as open as possible but as closed as necessary, and in line with the FAIR principles, as mentioned in D7.3.

Actions related to data (i.e., collecting, storing, licensing, sharing, etc.) should always be planned and approved in advance, including how this data is going to be managed during the project.

9. Social Responsibility

The project must aim to benefit society by contributing to knowledge, innovation, and well-being as well as to follow Sustainable Development Goals.

Researchers must be mindful of the societal implications of their work and avoid contributing to potential harm through the misuse or misapplication of research findings.

Researchers must actively seek to include or engage all societal bodies in the development of the research process or/and findings.

10. Citizen Science and Citizen Engagement

Involvement: To the extent of the project, an effort will be put in place to engage as many citizens as possible in the participation on the different REMEDIES activities. The main objective is to raise environmental awareness of plastic pollution and to promote the project and its initiatives.

Citizen science approaches will be carried out when foreseen and feasible and whenever the REMEDIES technologies allow it, encouraging the participants to contribute meaningfully to the research process, from data collection to analysis and dissemination, under clear guidance and training.

Ethical Participation: Citizen science and citizen engagement initiatives must follow the same ethical standards as other research activities, ensuring informed consent, respect for privacy, and protection of participants.

Data Quality: Data collected by citizen scientists must be evaluated, integrated and validated through a standardized method, in the research process with careful oversight, ensuring that the contributions are reliable and contribute to robust outcomes.

Acknowledgment: The outcomes of citizen science contributions should be recognized in publications, reports, and other forms of dissemination, following fair and transparent criteria for authorship and acknowledgment.

Capacity Building: Training and accessible resources must be provided to citizen scientists to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage in the research effectively.

Inclusive Engagement: Efforts should be made to include a diverse range of participants and/or citizen scientists, ensuring that participation is accessible and inclusive of people from different backgrounds and communities.

11. Professional Development and Competence

All participants are encouraged to pursue ongoing training to stay updated with ethical guidelines, research methodologies, and advancements in technology, to ensure high-quality and responsible research practices.

Senior researchers must mentor, guide and support junior researchers, fostering a culture of professional growth, collaborative learning environment and integrity.

12. Intellectual Property (IP) and Fair Use

IP refers to the ownership rights of technologies, methodologies, innovations, patents, and other creative outputs that arise from REMEDIES project activities, tasks, and deliverables. IP generated during the project must be shared fairly among the participating partners, with clearly defined agreements on authorship, ownership, and usage rights.

Proper credit must be given to contributors, and plagiarism or unauthorized use of IP is not permitted.

Only contributors of data/solutions/innovations are considered as “contributors” that are considered authors, owners or co-owners. Reviewers are not contributors and therefore have no claim to authorship or (co)ownership rights.

Conclusion: This Code of Ethical Conduct encourages participants in the REMEDIES project to adhere to the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and respect. By aligning their behaviour with these guidelines, participants ensure the project’s success while maintaining common ethical standards in research, collaboration, and citizen science engagement.

Acknowledgment: *By participating in the REMEDIES community, all members commit to uphold this Code of Ethical Conduct, contributing to an environment of respect, inclusivity, integrity, and responsibility.*