ARENAS

ANALYSIS OF AND RESPONSES
TO EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

ETHICS GUIDELINE FOR THE ARENAS PROJECT:

RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH

D6.1 White book of ethics requirements

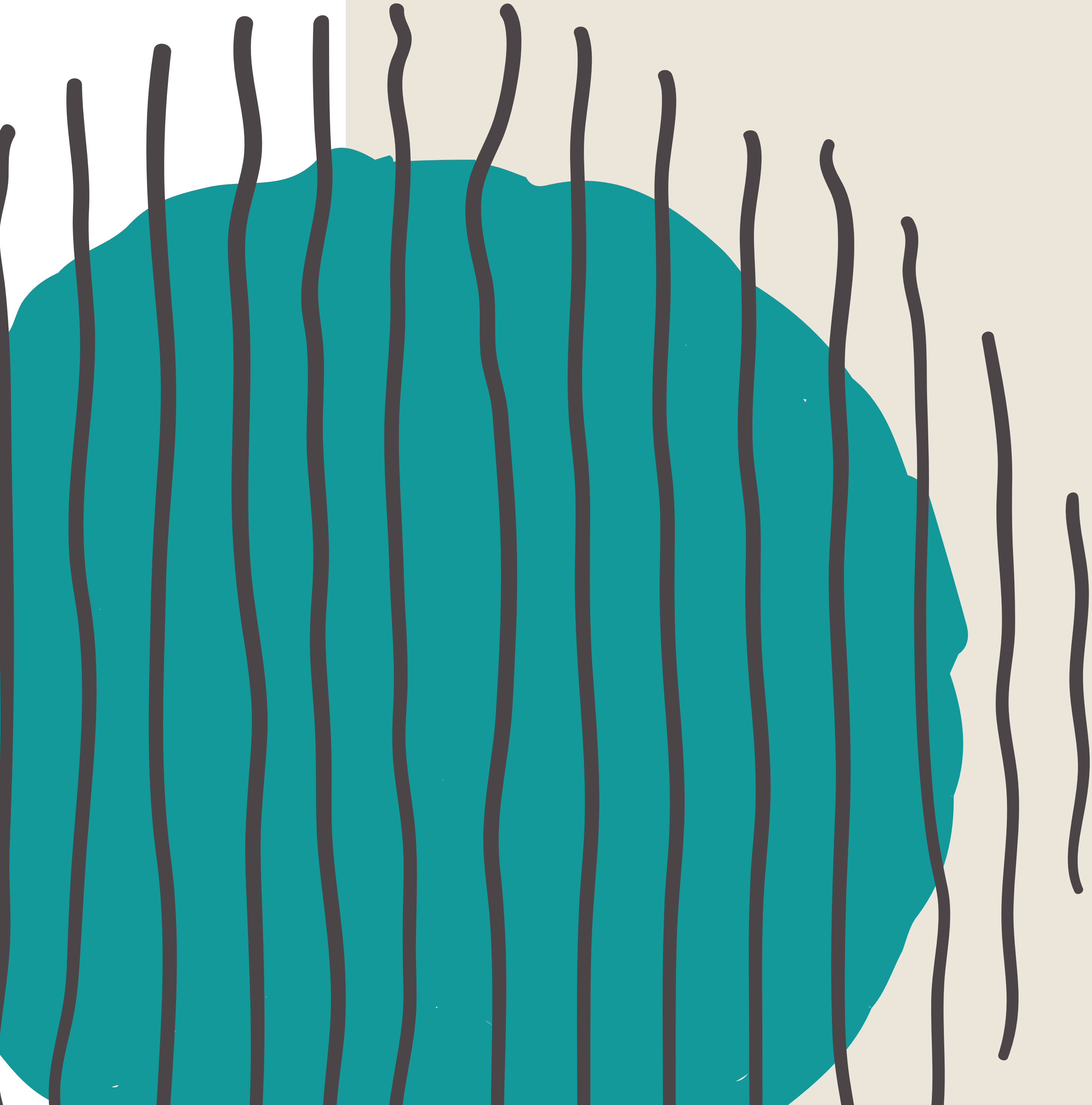
www.arenasproject.eu

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101094731

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

MAIN PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH



Main principles of responsible research

The EU Horizon project ARENAS (Analysis of and Responses to Extremist Narratives), specifically focusing on the nation, science, and gender domains, aims to counter the spread of harmful narratives and promote constructive dialogue. The objective is to promote responsible conduct in research while ensuring that all alleged violations are handled with competence, fairness, and expediency.

The effectiveness of these guidelines relies on a voluntary commitment by the research consortium to adhere to them and to increase awareness of the principles of research integrity. Applying the guidelines within the ARENAS community constitutes a **form of self-regulation**. Furthermore, responsible conduct in research is an integral part of **quality assurance** and is necessary for the credibility of the research results. Before beginning the research and recruiting new researchers, all parties in the Consortium (the lead institution, Cergy, and the principal investigators of the work packages and the team members) should agree on the researchers' rights, responsibilities, and obligations concerning authorship, archiving, and accessing the data.

Each individual researcher and research group working in any work package is primarily responsible for complying with the principles of responsible conduct in research. Nonetheless, the responsibility also rests on the whole research consortium, to include the administration of the ARENAS project and all attached partner institutions (namely Università degli Studi di Trento, Fundació OXFAM Intermon, Finnish Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres).

Furthermore, responsible conduct in research is an integral part of **quality assurance** and is necessary for the credibility of the research results. Before beginning the research and recruiting new researchers, all parties in the Consortium (the lead institution, Cergy, and the principal investigators of the work packages and the team members) should agree on the researchers' rights, responsibilities, and obligations concerning authorship, archiving, and accessing the data. Each individual researcher and research group working in any work package is primarily responsible for complying with the principles of responsible conduct in research. Nonetheless, the responsibility also rests on the whole research consortium, to include the administration of the ARENAS project and all attached partner institutions (namely Università degli Studi di Trento, Fundació OXFAM Intermon, Finnish Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres).

These guidelines are in accordance with The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, published in 2017 by the European Science Foundation (ESF) & All European Academies, which comprises 53 national Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA).

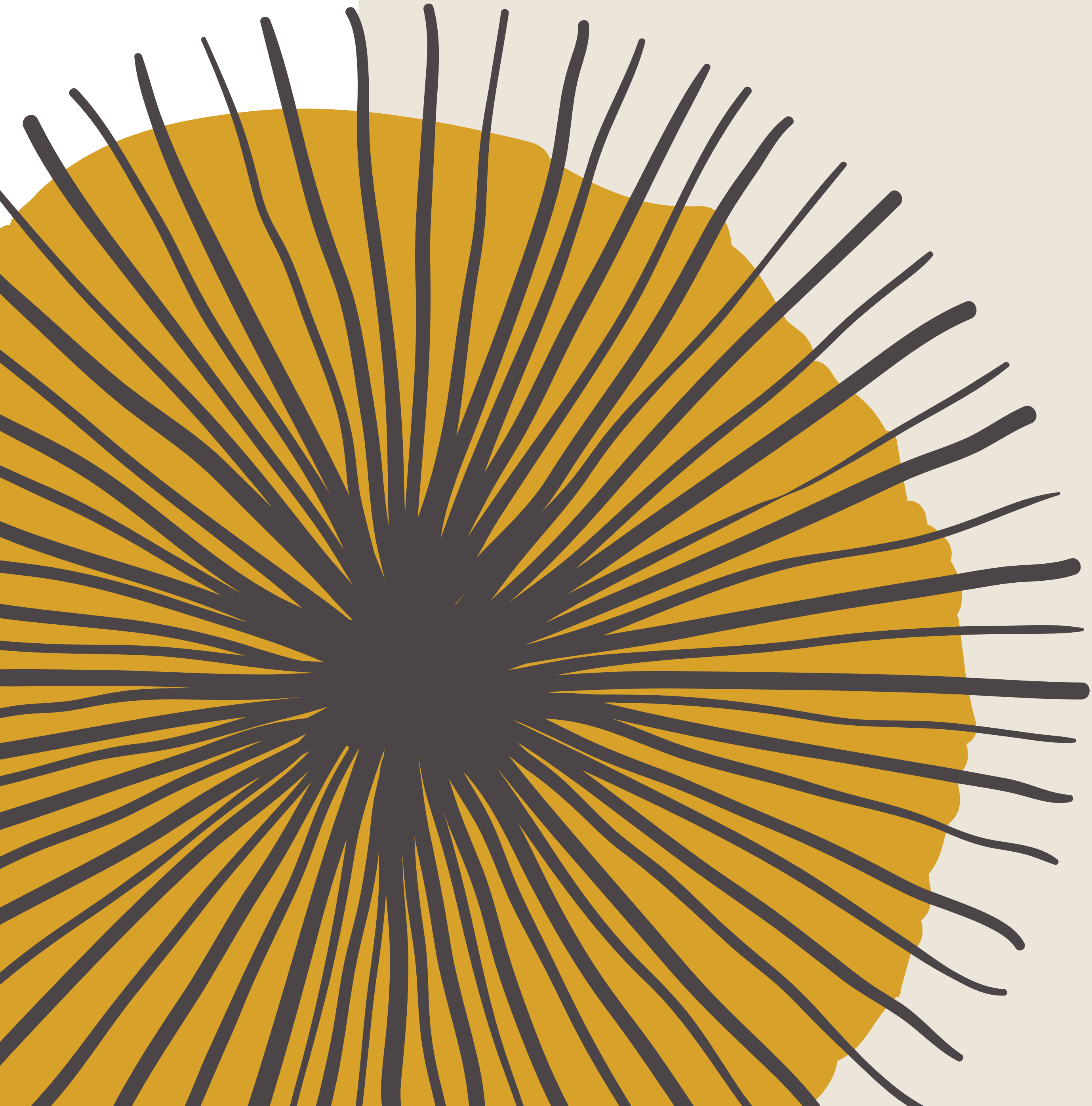
Please note, each participating partner is responsible for applying for ethical clearances from its home institution – if it is required nationally or by university regulations. Ethical clearances must be acquired before the data acquisition begins.

The main principles of research ethics concern three areas:

- Data acquisition, use and storage.
- Research procedures and collaboration.
- Dissemination of scientific knowledge.

02

DATA ACQUISITION, USE AND STORAGE



Data acquisition, use and storage

The ARENAS project considers the data protection legislation in the EU.

2.1. Principles of data acquisition

The ARENAS project focuses on extremist narratives. In this realm, acquiring or constructing datasets is subject to a selection process that is not only driven by disciplinary, methodological, and thematic aspects, but is also embedded in value-based, even political choices. The principles of data selection must be transparent, based on mutual agreement of the members of the project, and clearly articulated before the data acquisition process takes place.

Participation of informants in research should be voluntary and based on informed consent. Consent can be specific or general. **General consent** applies to research use in general. General consent can include conditions regarding the form in which data are recorded and archived and the conditions set for the use of data in secondary research. If the information obtained from subjects is combined with information in official registers, subjects must be given detailed information on the registers that will be used.

Specific consent concerns the use of information in a particular study. Specific consent with regard to the use of data may be justified on the grounds that data cannot be anonymised and that archiving the data with identifiers for secondary research would in all likelihood be harmful to subjects. Information regarding a study should include the following:

- the researcher's contact information,
- the research topic,
- the method of collecting data and the estimated time required,
- the purpose for which data will be collected, how it will be archived for secondary use, and
- the voluntary nature of participation.

Participants, upon request, can be given additional information regarding:

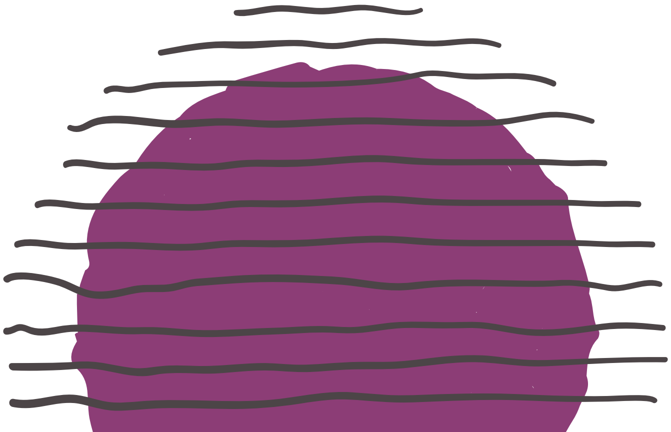
- the study's scientific orientation,
- how confidential data will be protected and where data will be archived after the study,
- how and when the results of the study will be published.

If the participants want further information about the research results they were involved in, they need to clearly address their interests, by email, and the ARENAS consortium will be responsible to share the results in due time of publication. Participants have the right to withdraw from a study at any stage, but this does not mean, however, that their prior input (interviews, etc.) cannot be used in the study

An exception from the principle of voluntary consent can be made when research is conducted on published and public information, and archived materials. Research concerning official registries and documents carried out without the consent of research participants is governed by legislation. In addition, observing subjects' actions in public places (e.g., in the context of ethnographic studies), within the confines of legal constraints, does not require their consent or an ethical review from the ethics committee. Exceptions from the principle of voluntary consent apply consequently also to the principles of data anonymization and use of data (see below section 2.2 and 2.3).

Published and public information, and archived material can be also legally restricted in a manner that affects the extent of their usage. Public content does not make the source (e.g., persons producing the content) public, therefore the rules of anonymity should be applied whenever necessary. It is important to differentiate between public content and the actors producing that content. Technical recording equipment can be used in a public place if the interviewer respects the principles of privacy and data protection, and the informant agrees with the place the interviewer suggested.

An important task of the humanities, social, and behavioural sciences is to produce information on the improper functioning of social and political institutions, and problems regarding the use of power. Possible harm resulting from research can stem from the collection of data, the storage of data, and consequences following the publication of studies. How sensitive a subject is and what the limits of privacy are, depend primarily on the research participants themselves.
If the participants know what matters will be dealt with based on the information that is supplied to them, by giving consent they have demonstrated their willingness to participate in the study while being aware of the study's scope and methods. If subjects participate in a study by writing about their experiences or answering a questionnaire, they regulate their participation by avoiding matters and questions that they consider damaging.



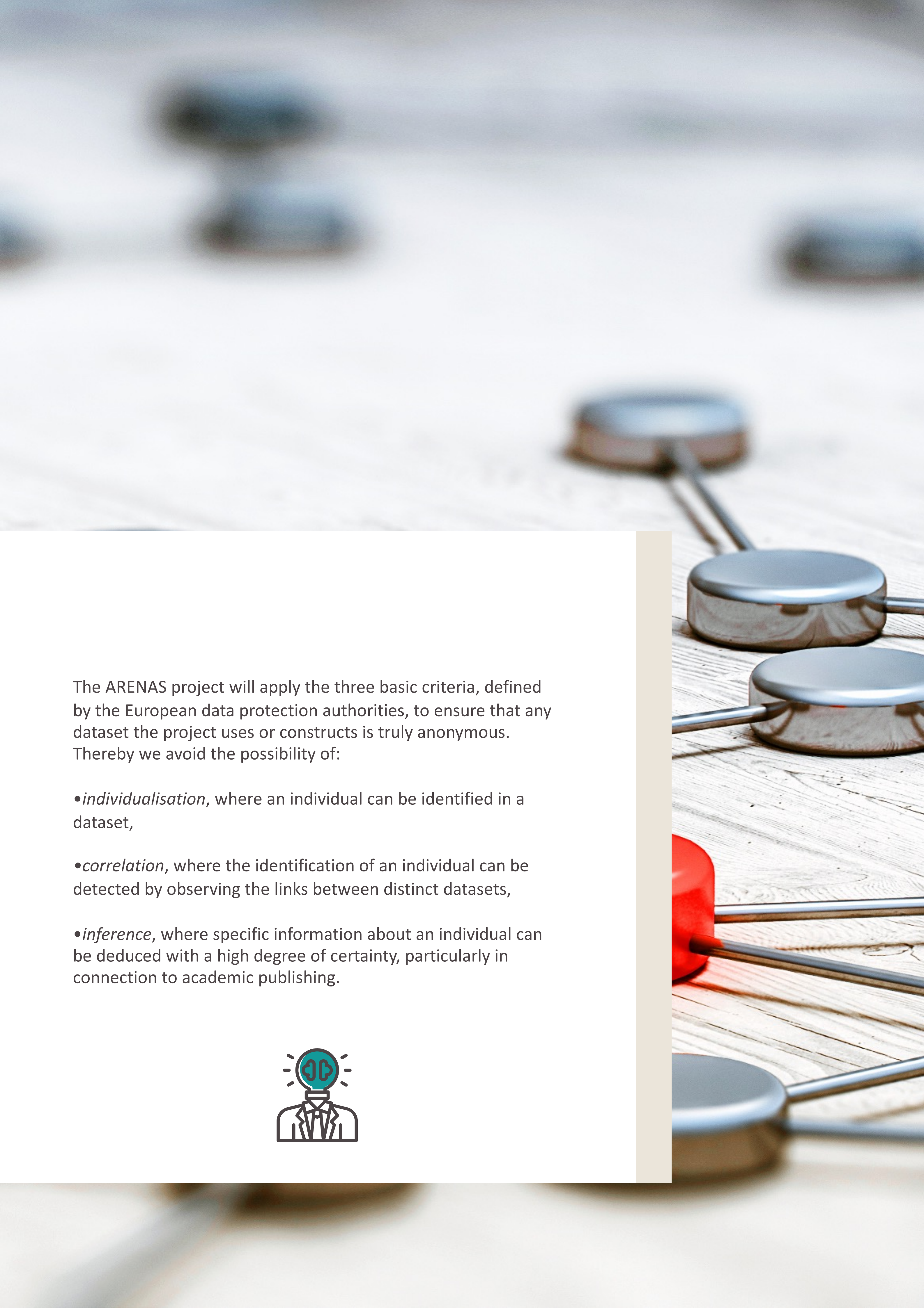
2.2. Principles of data anonymisation

To build a relevant anonymisation process, we will follow the guidelines of the Commission Nationale Informatique & Libertés, France (CNIL https://www.cnil.fr/fr/lanonymisation-de-donnees-personnelles):

- to identify the information to be kept according to its relevance,
- to delete direct identification elements as well as rare values that could allow easy re-identification of individuals,
- to distinguish important information from secondary or useless information, and
- to define the ideal and acceptable level of detail for each piece of information kept.

These principles allow us to determine which of the two types of anonymisation process to apply:

- randomisation: changing the attributes in a dataset so that they are less precise while retaining the overall distribution, or
- generalisation: changing the scale of the attributes in the datasets, or their order of magnitude, to ensure that they are common to a set of individuals.



The ARENAS project will apply the three basic criteria, defined by the European data protection authorities, to ensure that any dataset the project uses or constructs is truly anonymous. Thereby we avoid the possibility of:

- *individualisation*, where an individual can be identified in a dataset,
- *correlation*, where the identification of an individual can be detected by observing the links between distinct datasets,
- *inference*, where specific information about an individual can be deduced with a high degree of certainty, particularly in connection to academic publishing.

2.3. Use of data

ARENAS supports proper infrastructure for the management and protection of data and research materials in all their forms (encompassing qualitative and quantitative data, research protocols, processes, and associated metadata such as archiving written consents) that are necessary for reproducibility, traceability, and accountability. ARENAS ensures its members' access to all data in line with the FAIR Principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-usable) for data management.

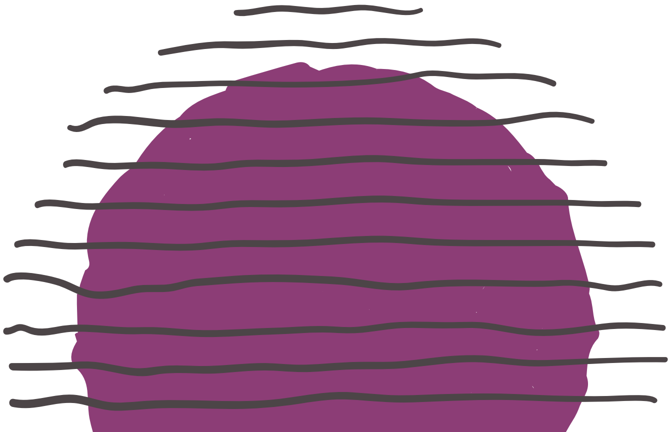
The protection of privacy is a right protected by the Constitutions of individual countries in the EU. Data protection forms the most important area of privacy protection regarding the collection and processing of research data and the publication of results. Research ethics principles concerning the protection of privacy fall into three categories:

- protecting research data and confidentiality,
- storing or disposing of research data, and
- research publications.

The goal is to find a balance between confidentiality and the openness of science and research.

Principles concerning the protection of privacy do not apply to materials that are in the public domain or published data, which can concern individuals and their activities in the fields of politics, business, official activities, and culture.

A basic principle regarding the collection and storage of personal data is the need for personal data in a study. Personal data may not be collected and stored unnecessarily. If research data can be reasonably analysed without direct identifiers and there are no research grounds for storing identifiers, only data from which identifiers have been removed may be produced for research purposes and stored for secondary research. Data with identifiers can be collected and used when this is appropriate from the viewpoint of that research. With the consent of the participants, data can also be stored for secondary research with identifiers. Research in the humanities, social, and behavioural sciences may require the processing and storage of identifiers. This may be based on the need to analyse data, further contacts with subjects, or the historical and cultural significance of data. All contemporary data may also have historical and cultural significance.



Data security solutions for data with identifiers include decisions regarding where paper materials containing identifiers will be stored, at what stage unnecessary data will be destroyed or how their storage and archiving will be arranged for secondary research. The ARENAS Consortium decides how electronic data containing identifiers will be protected (backup copies, usernames, processing, if necessary, on computers not linked to a network), and to what extent identifiers will be deleted or stored in connection with the data to be analysed. Researchers and other research personnel handling data with identifiers will be required to sign a pledge of confidentiality. The principal investigator of that WP is responsible for written pledges.

If subjects' personal data are not needed for data analysis, and there are no research grounds for storing them, identifiers must be removed from electronic files or else recorded, categorised, or otherwise masked. Identifiers that are stored for the purpose of further contact with subjects must be protected and stored separately from analysed data.

The confidentiality of research data relies on restrictions on the processing, use, and storage of data. This clause of confidentiality must be acknowledged in all contracts signed with the researcher hired or otherwise attached to the ARENAS-project.

Research data may not be used or handed over for other uses besides research. It is particularly unacceptable to reveal information on research data or hand over data in such a way that it could influence the evaluation, treatment, or position of individual subjects. Research data may not be handed over to the media or for commercial purposes. Protecting privacy as a constitutional right protects citizens, particularly against measures taken by public authorities. A researcher's task is to produce scientific information to help understand social problems or society and culture in general. This task does not include revealing information about individual subjects to authorities.

2.2. Data Storage

Research in the humanities, social, and behavioural sciences is not always repeatable, but the scientific community should have the possibility, if necessary, to verify research findings from the data analysed in a study. Openness is a key characteristic of science and a precondition for testing the validity of scientific information, critically evaluating information and advancing science. Data that are carefully archived for secondary research reduce the need to collect research data containing identifiers. Archiving also reduces the research pressure on small population groups. It is particularly important to archive secondary research data that have cultural, historical, and/or scientific value. The security of the data and the server hosting the data is ensured by the leading team of the ARENAS Consortium at the University of Cergy in France. The Water-on-Mars (WOM) Company is in charge of the data collection and storage related to the tasks of each Work Packages that are involved in data analysis. The members of the Consortium have access to the data, but the lead partner should monitor the rights of access regarding non-permanent staff.

When necessary, the protection of privacy should be ensured through anonymisation measures and through the regulation of access to data for secondary research. If it is necessary to remove identifiers from data stored for secondary use ,the goal of the anonymisation measures undertaken should be that secondary users of data cannot immediately identify individual subjects. In addition to direct identifiers (name, address, ID), indirect identifiers (workplace, school, place of residence, age, profession etc) can be removed from archived data or be recorded, categorised, or otherwise masked. The protection of subjects' privacy should be ensured by setting strict conditions on the secondary use of data. Data can only be used for research purposes. In addition, secondary users of data should be requested to sign an agreement on the conditions set for secondary research and if needed, also a pledge of confidentiality. If data containing identifiers are sensitive, and cannot be anonymized, and research subjects have not been asked to give permission to store the data, the datasets should be destroyed after the study has been completed.

If data are of scientific value or historically unique, a request for permission to archive data can be submitted to the national or other corresponding archives.

03

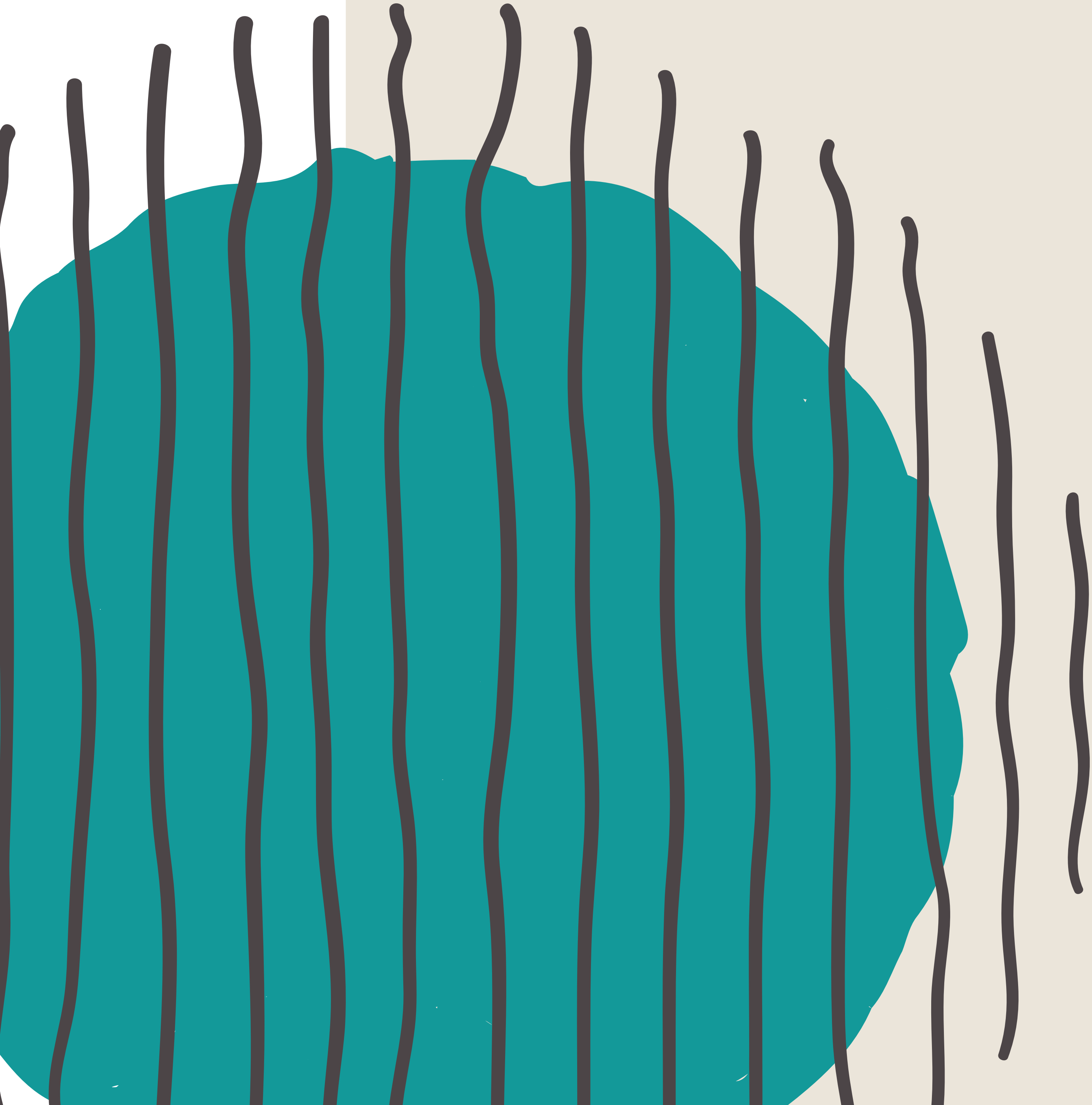
RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND COLLABORATION

Research procedures and collaboration

The principles of integrity, meticulousness, and accuracy in all phases of the research process are elementary for the success of the ARENAS project. The researcher complies with the standards set for scientific knowledge in planning and conducting the research, in reporting the research results and in recording the data obtained during the research. The necessary research permits have been acquired and the preliminary ethical review that is required for certain fields of research has been conducted. Research protocols take account of, and are sensitive to, relevant differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, culture, religion, ethnic origin, and social class. Researchers handle research subjects with respect and care, and in accordance with legal and ethical provisions.

04

DISSEMINATION OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE



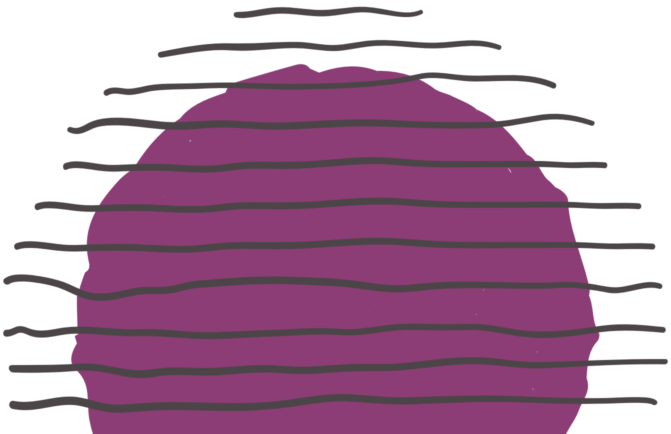
Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge

While research data can be partly confidential, research publications are publicly accessible. The need to protect privacy in publications must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For most studies, there is no need to present subjects in an identifiable way in published findings.

The results of quantitative research are reported statistically, which means that there is no risk of identification even when the publication is based on data containing identifiers. In the case of qualitative data, the risk of identification must always be evaluated before any samples/quotations from the data are published: what indirect identifiers (workplace, place of residence, age, profession, etc) will be left in the sample as such, what will be masked, and what will be omitted altogether. In studying organizations or other social actors (institutions, associations, work communities, public bodies, etc.), the identifiability of the organization and its individual representatives must be evaluated separately in each case. Subjects generally participate in a study as individual representatives of their social or professional role. Anonymity in research publications does not necessarily prevent identification among those who are familiar with the unit or organization in question, however. Subjects should not be promised complete anonymity unless it can reasonably be guaranteed. Research publications should strive to treat individual subjects and the research target in a respectful manner. Critical findings regarding the research target should be explained analytically, avoiding a labelling attitude.

In research, particularly in the humanities but also in the social sciences, it may be justifiable, both ethically and for research purposes, to present subjects by name in research publications. For example, a study based on interviews with experts can be published without removing the names of subjects or other identifiers. Agreement about this must be reached with the research participants in advance.

When publishing the research results, the results are communicated in an open and responsible fashion that is intrinsic to the dissemination of scientific knowledge. The researcher takes into account the work and achievements of other researchers by respecting their work, citing their publications appropriately, and by giving their achievements the credit and weight they deserve in carrying out the researcher's own research and publishing its results. Sources of financing and commitments to the ARENAS project are mentioned when publishing the research results. In addition, researchers need to comply with this practice when functioning as experts regarding their research activity linked to the ARENAS project both inside and outside the research community. These principles apply to teaching materials, as well as to societal interactions in both printed and electronic media.



On this point, it should be noted that WP7 is dedicated to the dissemination and communication of the project. The ARENAS partner *Momentum* oversees this work, with the help of the coordinator, and the active contribution of all partners. Concerning the tasks of communications and dissemination, making the project and its results comprehensible for the greater public and non-academic target audiences, without compromising on the content, analyses and academic interpretations, constitutes one of our major challenges.

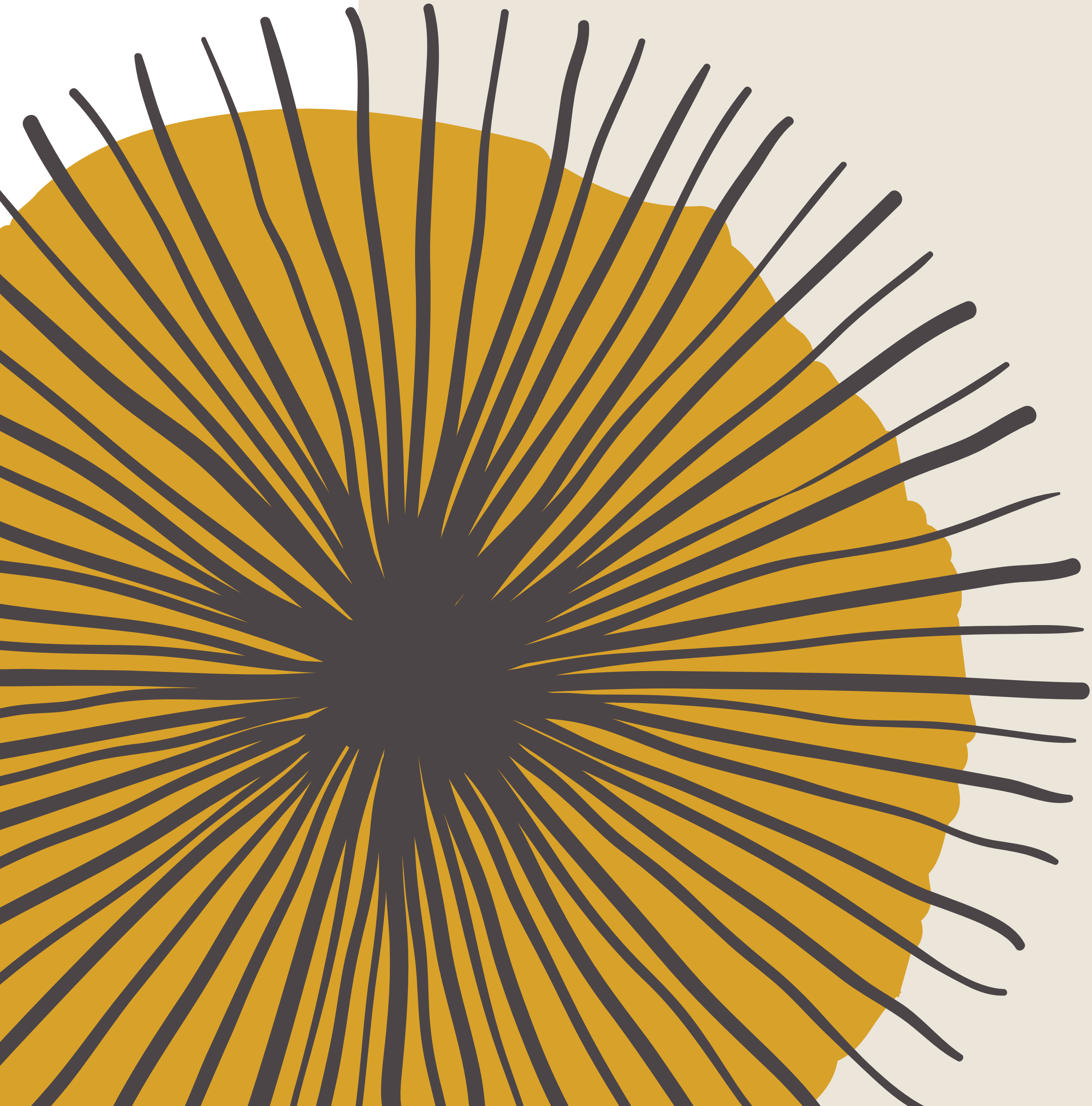
Researchers, research institutions and organisations ensure that any contracts or agreements relating to research outputs include equitable and fair provisions for the management of their use, ownership, and/or their protection under intellectual property rights. If research concerns archived materials, the identifiability or non-identifiability of subjects in research publications depends on the conditions the distributing archive has set for the use of the data.

Research publications can have harmful consequences for subjects. The risk of harm is greatest if results are presented judgmentally, in a prejudiced way, or disrespectfully. Harm can also be caused by publishing results which give a negative picture that is not based on comprehensive data or the systematic analysis of data.

Researchers should avoid any damage or harm to subjects that may be caused by research publications. However, this principle should not prevent the publication of research findings that may not be pleasing to subjects in all respects. A researcher's task is to produce new information without having to fear the reaction of authorities or other research subjects. In particular, research concerning the use of power and the functioning of social institutions must not be restricted on the grounds that results can have negative effects on subjects. The best way to ensure freedom of research is to conduct research carefully and systematically, to publish results with proper arguments, and to shed light on different perspectives in a balanced manner. Researchers and editors are responsible for compliance with ethical principles in research publications.

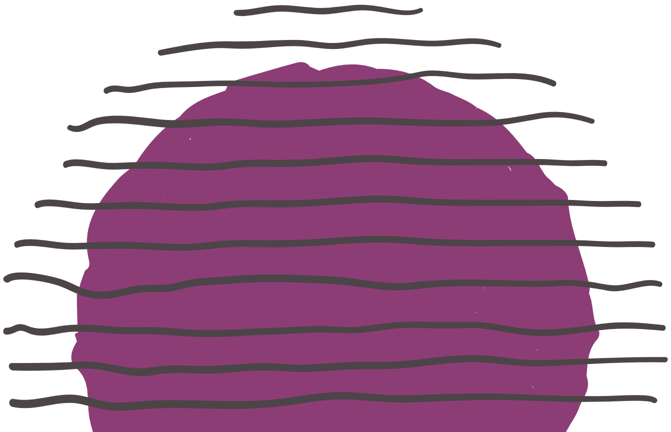
05

SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT



Social media interactions and engagement

Social media platforms provide a unique opportunity for engagement with a wide community, fostering dialogue, and the facilitation an exchange of ideas. The project will utilize social media as a means to disseminate information, share research findings, and invite public participation in discussions relating to extreme narratives. It is our intent to promote a diverse range of perspectives, encouraging respectful and constructive interactions. Designated project members will be responsible for engaging with the wider community on social media platforms and other relevant channels. These individuals will have expertise in the project's subject matter and possess a thorough understanding of the research objectives. Engagement will occur at appropriate intervals, ensuring timely responses and active participation in discussions, conferences, and events related to the project. All engagement by project members will adhere to a professional tone, maintaining neutrality, objectivity and respect for differing viewpoints. We expect project members to refrain from personal attacks, derogatory language or any form of discrimination in their interactions. The focus will be on fostering a positive and inclusive environment that encourages meaningful exchanges and fosters mutual understanding



The project acknowledges that individuals may encounter threatening or unsafe situations through social media postings or other interactions. In case a project member feels threatened or unsafe, the procedure is as follows:

- **Reporting**: It is necessary to promptly report the incident to safety supervisors, providing as much detail as possible about the incident and any evidence available.
- **Designated safety supervisors** are Consortium leader Julien Longhi, and WP6 leader Katalin Miklóssy. They also inform as standard procedure the Ethical Advisory Board.
- **Handling Incidents**: Reports of threats or feelings of unsafety will be taken seriously and confidentiality will be respected throughout the process. The safety supervisors, in collaboration with relevant project members, will thoroughly investigate the incident, ensuring appropriate action is taken. Following the investigation, the reporting individual will be informed of the steps taken to address the situation and provided with ongoing support and updates as necessary.
- **Resolutions and Communication:** The project is committed to seeking resolutions that ensure the safety and well-being of all project contributors. This may involve moderating or removing harmful content, engaging with platform administrators, or, in extreme cases, involving legal authorities. We aim to empower project members to continue their engagement while minimizing potential risks.

We are dedicated to creating a platform that encourages respectful dialogue and counteracts harmful narratives. By adopting responsible practices and prioritizing the safety and well-being of project contributors, we aim to foster an environment conducive to meaningful engagement and positive societal change.

06

VIOLATION OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH

Violation of responsible research

Violations of the responsible conduct of research refer to unethical and dishonest practices that damage research and in worst cases, invalidate the research results. Violations of the responsible conduct of research consist of actions that may have been committed either intentionally or through negligence.

6.1 Research misconduct

Research misconduct refers to misleading the research community and often also to misleading decision-makers. This includes presenting forged data or results to the research community or spreading forged data or results in a publication, in a presentation given in a scientific or scholarly meeting, in a manuscript that is intended to be published, or in study materials. Furthermore, misconduct refers to misappropriating other researchers' work or representing other researchers' work as one's own.

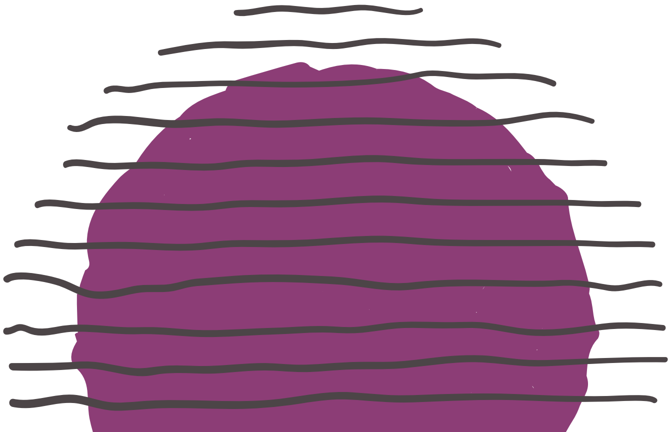
Research misconduct is further divided into the following four subcategories:

- **Fabrication** refers to reporting invented observations to the research community. In other words, the fabricated observations have not been made by using the methods as claimed in the research report. Fabrication also means presenting invented results in a research report.
- **Falsification** (misrepresentation) refers to modifying and presenting original observations deliberately so that the results based on those observations are distorted. The falsification of results refers to the unfounded modification or selection of research results. Falsification also refers to the omission of results or information that are essential for the conclusions.
- **Plagiarism**, or unacknowledged borrowing, refers to representing another person's published materials as one's own without appropriate references. This includes published manuscripts, articles, other texts or parts of them, visual materials, or translations. Plagiarism includes direct copying as well as adapted copying.
- **Misappropriation** refers to the unlawful presentation of another person's results, ideas, plans, observations, or data as one's own research.

6.2. Disregard for the responsible conduct of research

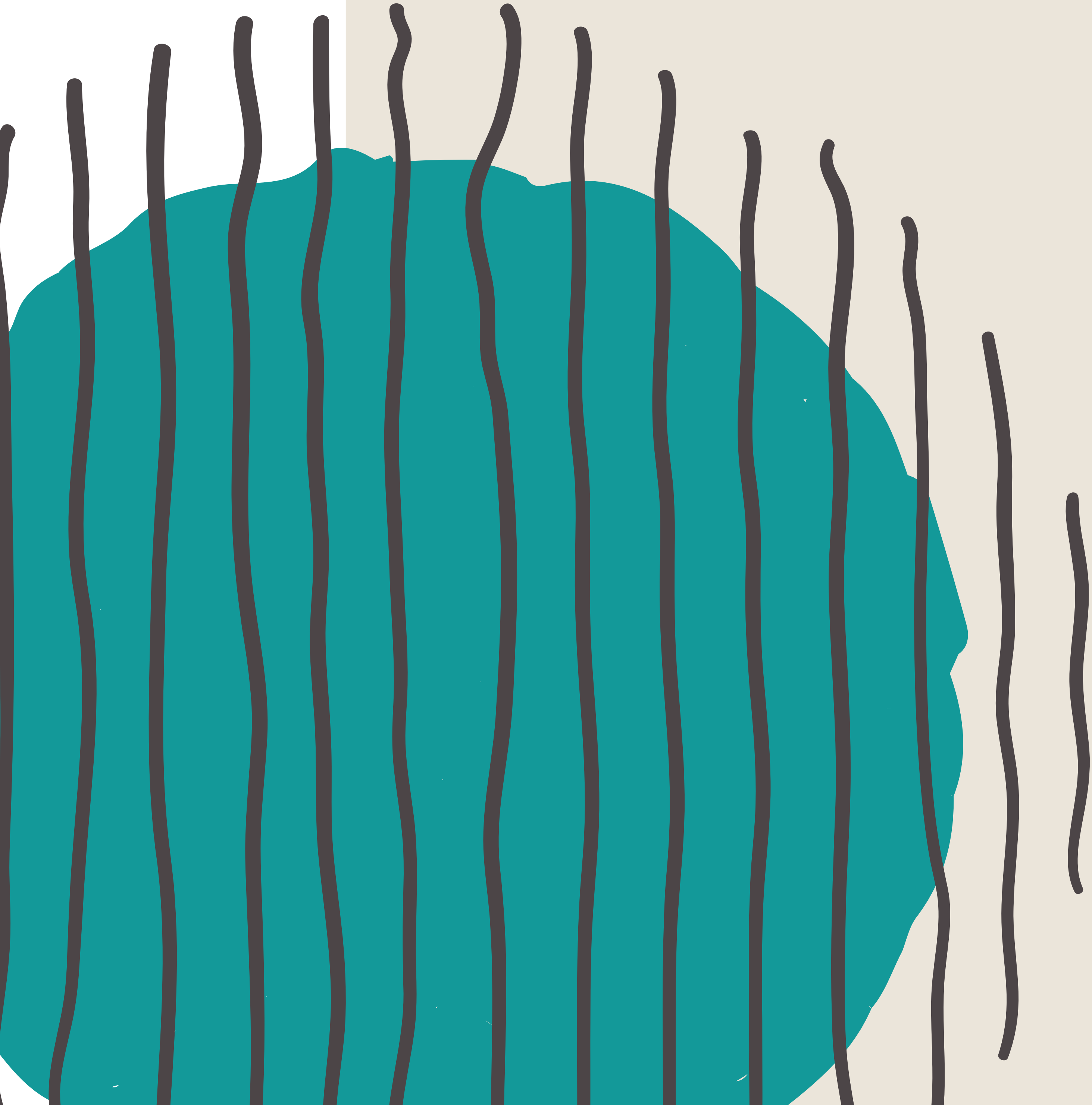
Disregarding the responsible conduct of research manifests itself as gross negligence and carelessness during the research process. This type of behaviour can be identified when researchers engage in:

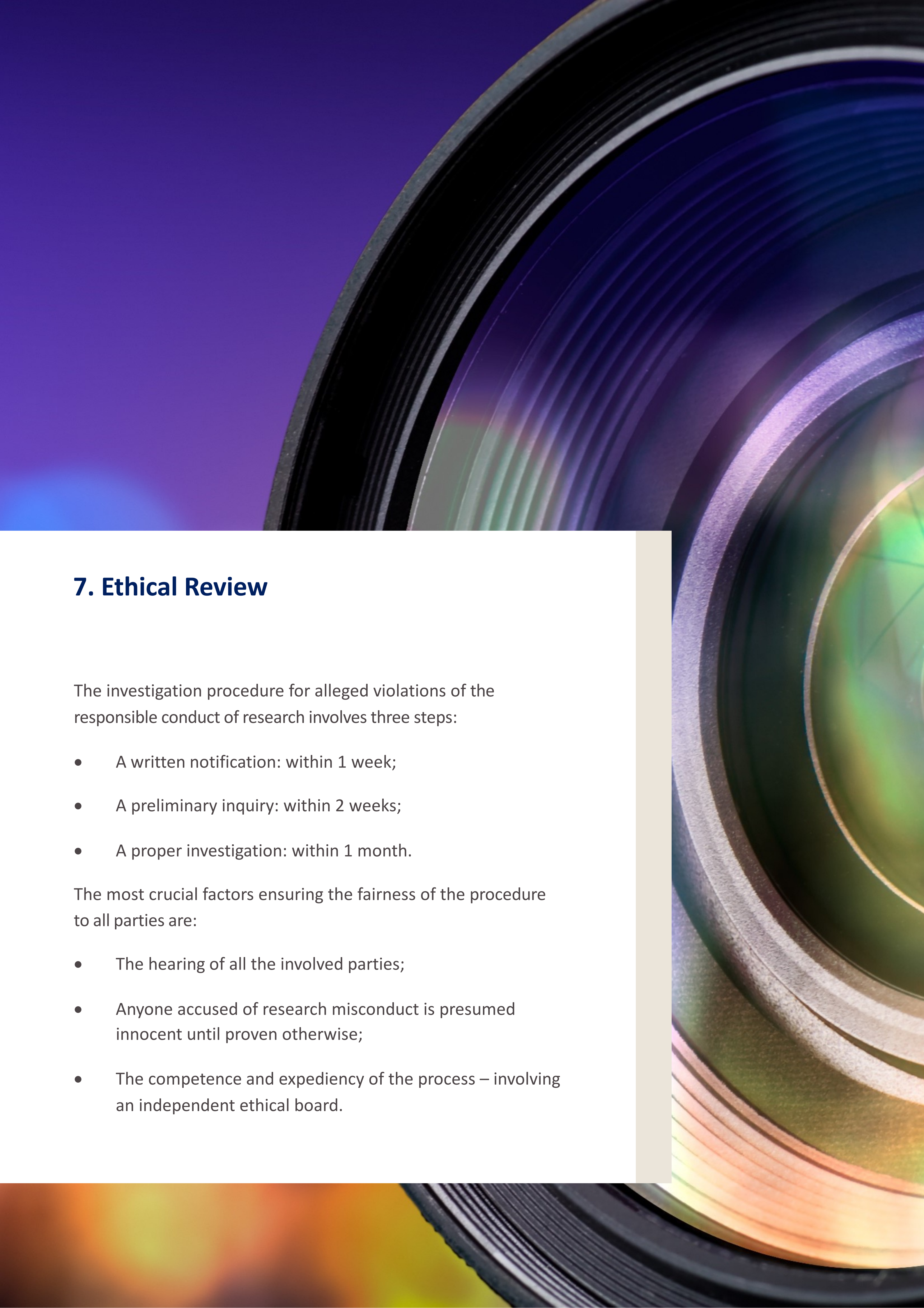
- hampering inappropriately the work of another researcher,
- misusing research leadership to encourage violations of research integrity,
- denigrating the role of other researchers in publications, such as neglecting to mention them, and referring to earlier research results inadequately or inappropriately,
- reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, resulting in misleading claims,
- inadequate record-keeping and storage of results and research data,
- incomplete informed consent where the participants are not fully aware of the purpose or procedures of research,
- publishing the same research results multiple times ostensibly as new and novel results (redundant publication, also referred to as self-plagiarism),
- manipulating authorship, for example, by including in the list of authors persons who have not participated in the research, or by taking credit for work produced by what is referred to as ghost authors,
- misleading the general public by publicly presenting deceptive or distorted information concerning one's own research results or the scientific importance or applicability of those results,
- maliciously accusing a researcher of ethical violations.



07

ETHICAL REVIEW





7. Ethical Review

The investigation procedure for alleged violations of the responsible conduct of research involves three steps:

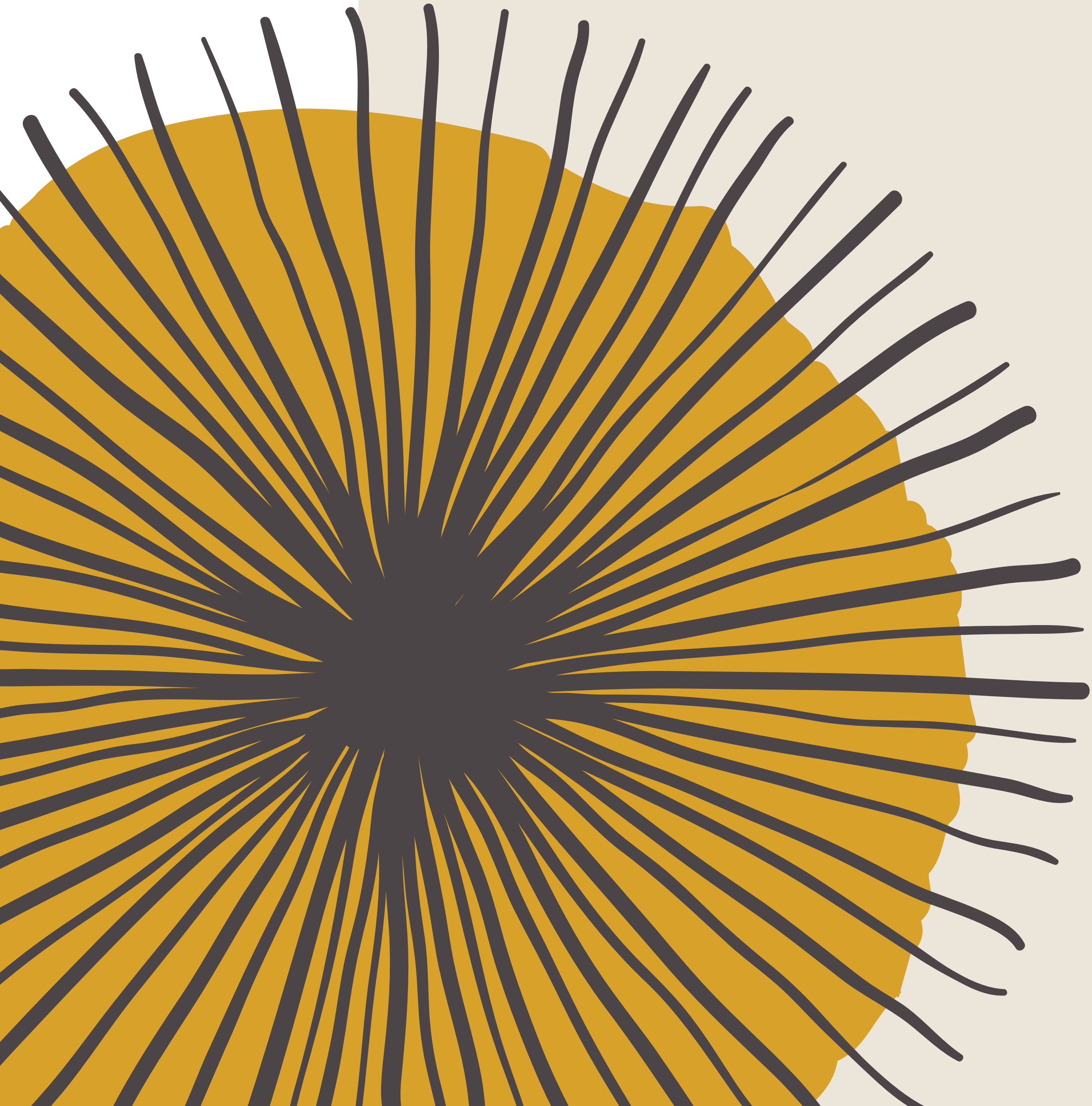
- A written notification: within 1 week;
- A preliminary inquiry: within 2 weeks;
- A proper investigation: within 1 month.

The most crucial factors ensuring the fairness of the procedure to all parties are:

- The hearing of all the involved parties;
- Anyone accused of research misconduct is presumed innocent until proven otherwise;
- The competence and expediency of the process – involving an independent ethical board.

08

ADVISORY BOARD



Advisory Board

The ARENAS Consortium establishes an Ethical Advisory Board by inviting 3 independent international ethics experts who are not attached in any ways to the project or its members. The Board members are: José Luis Molina (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Lilyana Petrova (ENSEA, École nationale supérieure de l'électronique et de ses applications), and Ruben van de Vijver (Henrich Heine Universität, Düsseldorf).

When alleged misconduct has been reported and the report has been finalised by the ARENAS organisation, the party dissatisfied with the ruling may request a statement from the Ethical Advisory Board. As the Advisory Board focuses solely on research integrity issues, its statements comment only on whether the investigation has been conducted in compliance with these guidelines, and whether there has been a violation of the responsible conduct of research. In other words, the Advisory Board does not comment on matters of opinion, such as on the different schools of thought.

If the Advisory Board find the ethical misconduct substantiated and the party refuses to accept the decision, ARENAS organization is to decide whether there is a reason to disengage with the person and terminate cooperation.

ARENAS

ANALYSIS OF AND RESPONSES
TO EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

Follow our journey

www.arenasproject.eu