

Workshop 3: Ethics and Responsible Internationalisation

What About Ethics?

Navigating Ethical Perspectives in
Science Diplomacy and International Higher
Education Cooperation

*Nordic TCA on Responsible Internationalisation,
Erasmus+
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Terminology

Moral/Morality: Personal or cultural beliefs and value systems, shaped by upbringing, religion, tradition and established community norms.

Moral philosophy: theoretical study of moral terms and systems governing ethical thought. In Anglosaxon tradition, often divided into metaethics, applied ethics and normative ethics.

Ethics: study of moral phenomena, application of moral principles; Informed exercise of moral judgement; Often refers to applied ethics, incl. standards governing conduct in a particular context or professional field.

(Re)defining normative principles or codes – a **political process**, moving from political reflections/ politicisation to policy to law.

A normative framework is a broad, theoretical structure of principles and values used to determine what is right or wrong, acting as a "blueprint" for moral reasoning.

An ethical code is a practical, documented set of rules or standards adopted by an organization or profession to guide behaviour and ensure compliance.

In higher education: Academic Integrity/ Research Integrity/ Ethical conduct in teaching; Governance and accountability in institutional processes, Due diligence; Organisational Codes of Conduct/ Ethical Review Boards.

Ethical dimensions of international academic cooperation?

Partnership work at HEIs is under stress – the re-calibration of global politics and related ethical questions is affecting all areas of cooperation (EAIE taxonomy):

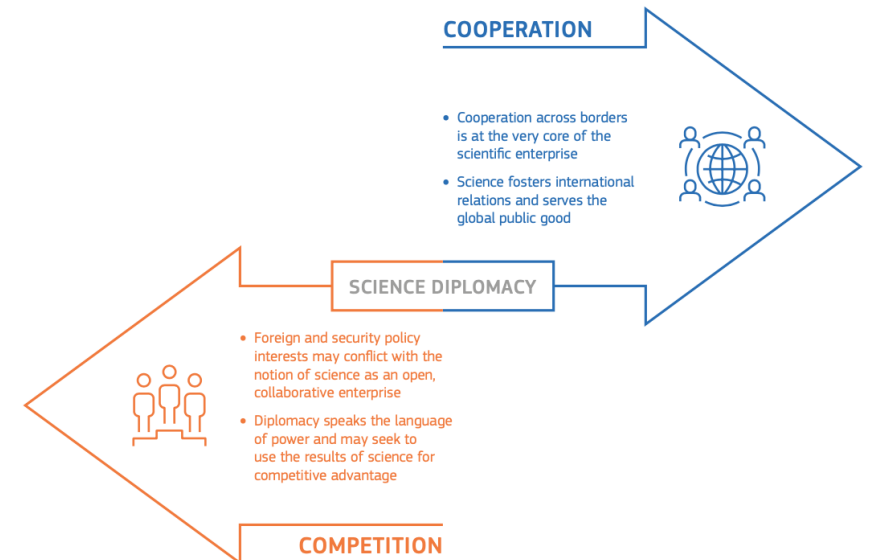
- **International funding** (e.g., Erasmus+; European Universities Initiative; Horizon Europe; non-European funding; research services)
- **Leadership, strategy and policy** (e.g., academic freedom, ethics and integrity; knowledge diplomacy; advocacy, stakeholder engagement; crisis management; international office management; quality assurance; regulatory compliance and accreditation; risk assessment; staff skill development; strategic planning; global data and market insights; holistic internationalisation outlook)
- **Marketing, recruitment, admissions and international communication** (e.g., admissions and recognition; admissions testing; credential evaluation; international marketing, international student and staff recruitment; international communication; visits)
- **Partnerships** (e.g., capacity development partnerships; collaborative degree programmes; community and business partnerships; donor engagement; industry engagement; joint research and doctoral research partnerships; mobility agreements; strategic partnerships; association, network and consortia partnerships; transnational education partnerships)
- **Social responsibility** (e.g., climate action and environmental sustainability; community engagement and dialogue; diversity, equity and inclusion; immigration, asylum and refugees; post-colonialism and decolonization; global citizenship; United Nations sustainable development goals)
- **Student and alumni services** (e.g., academic advising; alumni engagement; career advising; student entrepreneurship; student safety and security; student mental health support)
- **Student and staff mobility** (e.g., internships, traineeships and work placements; mobility service providers; short-term programmes; staff mobility; student exchange and study abroad; virtual mobility; travel services and support)
- **Teaching, learning and curriculum** (e.g., internationalisation at home; intercultural competencies; language learning; internationalisation of the curriculum; online, blended and hybrid learning; soft/transversal skills)
- **Research on internationalisation**

Science Diplomacy: a strengthening interface between foreign policy and science

SD frameworks are evolving at global, regional and country levels (UNESCO, EU, India for example). 2/2026: EU Commission adopted a *proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing the first EU framework for Science Diplomacy*:

- Stronger ties with foreign ministries and missions (“**science for diplomacy**” and “**diplomacy for science**”), new platforms
- Expanded roles and **career paths at the science–policy–diplomacy interface**: training for academics and diplomats;
- Increased **use of research and technology infrastructures in external engagement**; Use of existing assets (Horizon Europe, NDICI, EEAS and Member State STI counsellors), a virtual European Science Diplomacy Platform (Team Europe approach), an ad hoc ERA-based coordination mechanism for R&I positions in geopolitically sensitive moments.
- Activation of alumni and mobility (e.g., Marie Curie, Erasmus Mundus) for people-to-people linkages;
- Focus on cooperation priorities across the world’s regions, and contributions to **equitable partnerships and capacity-building** with lower and middle income countries (LMICs).
- **Clearer expectations on European values** (academic freedom, integrity, open science/data with data protection), research security, and evidence-informed policymaking, including emphasis on broad-based technology foresight and responsible AI use in science.

Tension: Cooperation and competition in science diplomacy



Source:

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/europe-world/international-cooperation/science-diplomacy_en

Science Diplomacy

Current agendas

Cooperation, trust-building, visions of the future and strategic RDI competition between countries/ regions.

Ethical questions related to scientific and technological developments, the role of science in society and its potential **global societal impacts**.

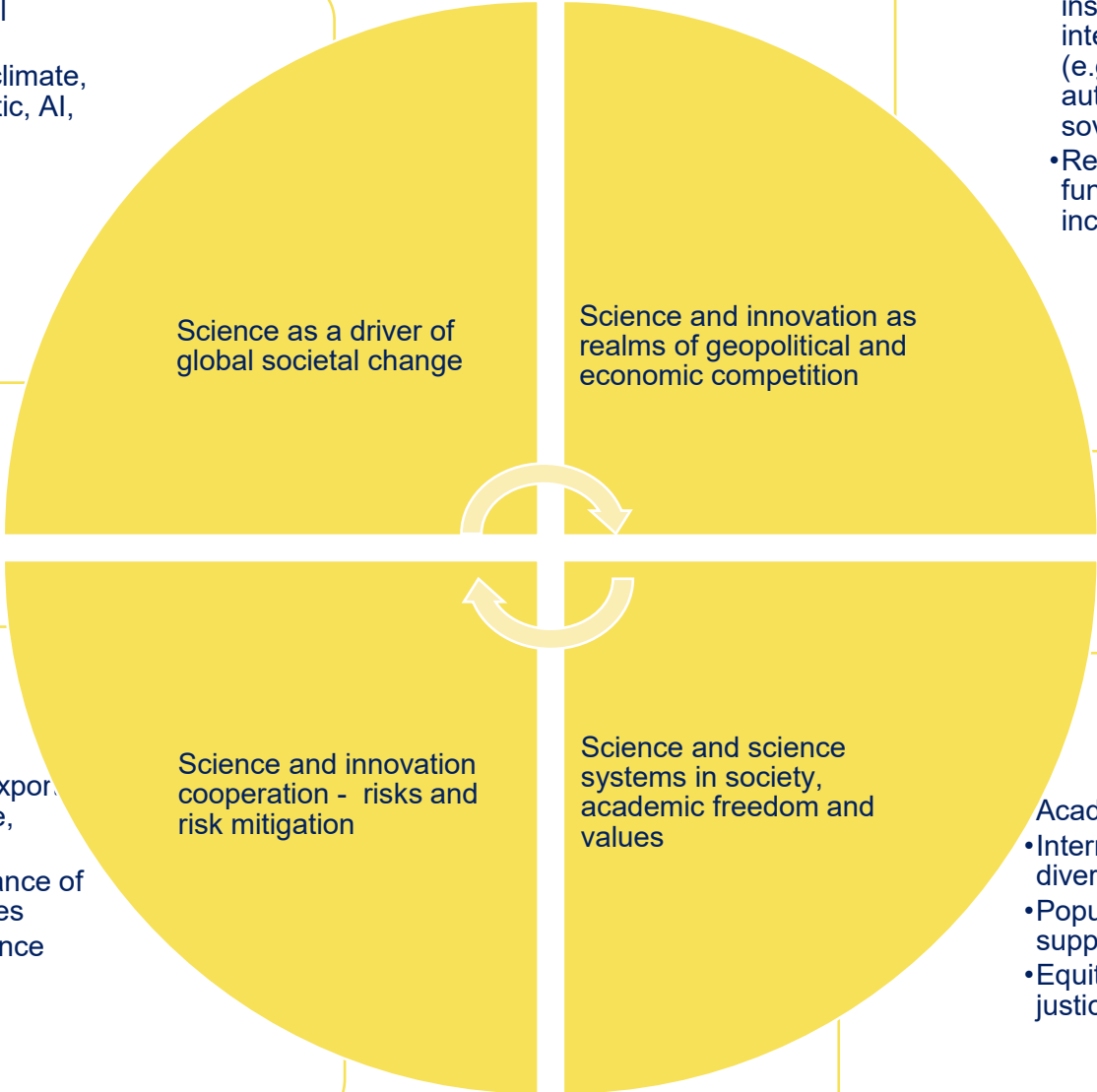
Transnational research partnerships, policies and infrastructures.

- Protection of global commons;
- Sectoral policies (climate, oceans,space, arctic, AI, data...)
- SDGs, health

- Science as an instrument for state interests (e.g. strategic autonomy, tech sovereignty)
- Regulation, targeted funding, partnership incentives

- Research security, export control, due diligence, sanctions
- Responsible governance of emerging technologies
- Securitisation of science

- Academic freedom
- International equity and diversity
- Popular attitudes and support for science
- Equitable access and justice



Ethics: current themes

Academic Freedom Index (AFI), March 2026

Assesses de facto levels of academic freedom through 5 indicators:

1. Freedom to research and teach “To what extent are scholars free to develop and pursue their own research and teaching agendas without interference?”
2. Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination “To what extent are scholars free to exchange and communicate research ideas and findings?”
3. Institutional autonomy “To what extent do universities exercise institutional autonomy in practice?”
4. Campus integrity “To what extent are campuses free from politically motivated surveillance or security infringements?”
5. Freedom of academic and cultural expression “Is there academic freedom and freedom of cultural expression related to political issues?”

The State of Academic Freedom 2025

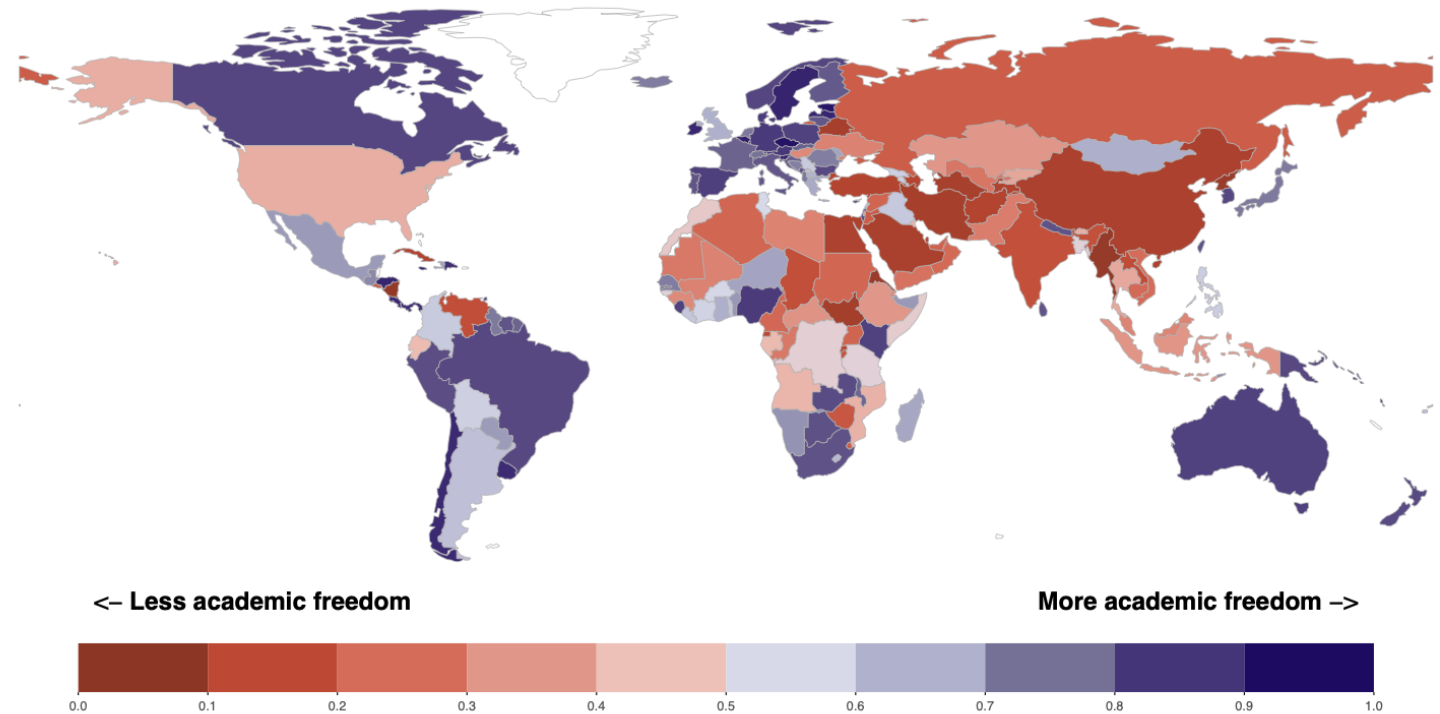


Figure 2: The State of Academic Freedom in 2025 (0–1, low to high)

International cooperation of universities on academic freedom

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of over 650 higher education institutions in more than 40 countries, **protecting and offering sanctuary to threatened scholars and students**. The network and its member institutions work through direct protection of individuals, advocacy aimed at preventing attacks and increasing accountability, and research and learning initiatives that promote academic freedom and related values. (Annual Free to Think report).

SAR Europe, national SARs: Monitor academic freedom across the region; develop concrete tools, funding mechanisms and support to universities for hosting threatened international scholars.

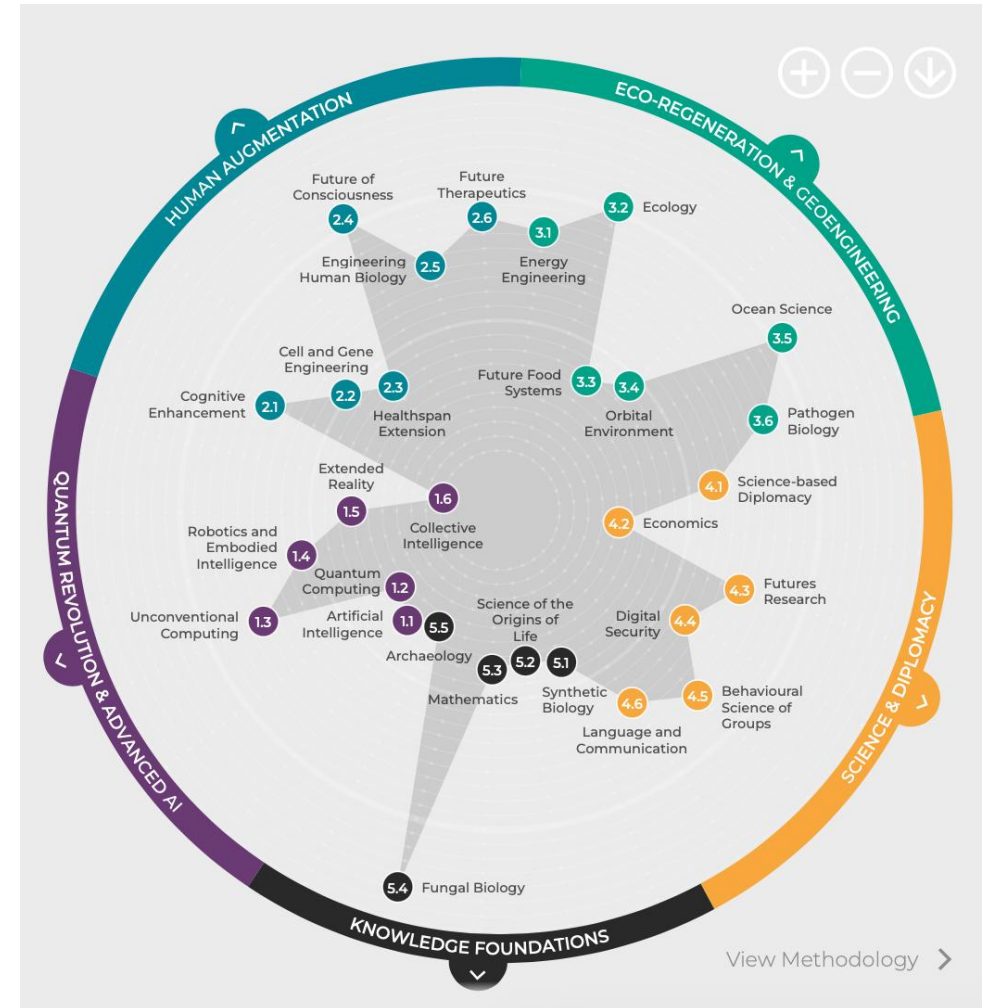
In Finland, SARF: New *Finnish Scholar Protection Scheme (FSPS)*, operating under SAR Finland (with coordination under UniPID). Establishing a national funding mechanism to support 3-year grants for hosted international SAR-scholars.

Within universities: scholar protection activities, development of internal process for receiving and hosting scholars. Match-making, self-financing, proactive hosting efforts.

Global Challenges – Global Responsibilities



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Foresight and emerging global societal impacts

Example: GESDA Science Breakthrough Radar

- Aim: mapping the anticipated evolution of scientific advancements over 5-, 10-, and 25-year horizons with insights on required policies, partnerships and infrastructure to address global challenges.
- Developed by an academic forum with 30+ anticipation committees

<https://radar.gesda.global>

<https://radar.gesda.global/2026.pdf>

Responsible internationalisation at Aalto University (more details in the workshop)

Aalto core values: Responsibility/ Courage/ Collaboration. Commitment to academic freedom, global & local responsibilities of HEIs (Magna carta universitatum)

Responsible internationalisation is about **assessing the opportunities and challenges** related to international collaboration, increasing the **awareness of risks** and developing **new practices to address ethical challenges**. It is not only about controlling risks, but part of our **competitiveness**, including:

- Operational competence and competitiveness in **international RDI networks and partnerships**
- **Global competencies** of faculty, students and staff to operate in international settings
- Advancing open and equitable **intercultural community** development (100++ nationalities, 50% of academic staff, richness of diversity and talent)
- Deepening and deploying **academic expertise in evolving global challenges** (SDGs, technology, societal impacts).

Updating internal operational tools and guidelines, such as:

- ✓ Aalto **Code of Conduct; Data and cyber security** (revised training/guidelines)
- ✓ Risk analysis and **due diligence tools**, support systems revised (sanctions compliance: Implementing “prospective partner screening” and “know your partner” process and sanctions screening; Implementing export controls screening for contract research and other selected externally funded research)
- ✓ **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** principles
- ✓ **Scholars at Risk**, process revision
- ✓ **Academic visitor policy** updated; **Travel safety** measures revised
- ✓ Academic **recruitment**; International **student recruitment**
- ✓ Evaluating **academic / corporate partnerships** (Partnerships Screening Group PSG)
- ✓ **Ethics self-assessment** in research projects (steep increase in requests for assessments)
- ✓ **Research ethics and integrity** trainings.
- ✓ Preparation of **students engaging in international cooperation** projects

Partnerships, codes, guidelines?

Everyday decision-making balancing openness, collaboration, and institutional safety

New geopoliticised environment – Revised policy frameworks are only being formulated. Regional and sectoral policies (Oceans, Arctic, Space...) and science diplomacy are evolving.

→ Destabilisation or absence of normative frameworks. General guidelines provide increased clarity of principles, but do not replace the need to exercise ethical judgement. Operational adjustments reflect caution.

Value compatibility – Highly context specific and sometimes at odds with Global competencies: we have much to learn from the world as seen from other regions' perspective.

→ Deep partnerships and value dialogue gain importance. Ethics reviews on both sides allow to trace parallels and differences.

The voice of academic communities: **International Science Council ISC** (National Academies are members), develops position papers: <https://council.science>



Global North/Global South – Responsible academic partnerships

Guidelines and resource materials

- [Finland-wide \(TENK-UniPID\) Ethical Guidelines for Global South Academic Partnerships](#)
- [EDUFI Guidelines for Global South partnerships](#)
- Aalto experiences from Global South cooperation: [Aalto Global Impact - a cross-continental journey in sustainability education](#)
- [TRUST Guide on Involving Vulnerable Populations in Research](#)
- [Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings](#)
- [Equitable Research Open Source Book](#)
- [Research Fairness initiative](#)
- [European Commission ethics for researchers](#), p. 21 on research involving developing countries
- [European Commission - Human Rights Based Approach](#)

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSIBLE ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH



- Complementing TENK's (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity) guidelines, to ensure specific issues related to academic collaboration with the Global South (as partners and/or research participants) are addressed
- **Concepts:**
 - Integrity, transparency
 - Inclusivity, diversity
 - Decolonial approach
 - Open dialogue, joint agenda setting, power dynamics
 - Ethics dumping
 - Helicopter research or parachute science
 - Conflict of interest
 - 3Rs (recognition, representation, redistribution)
- **Guidelines:** concepts, recommendations and tips combination of values, ideals, standards, references for further reading, and information on other guidelines consulted

Link to guidelines: <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/566406>

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSIBLE ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH



**Counterbalance
inherent inequalities**



Context matters



**Manifest integrity in
academic partnerships**



**Shift from 'knowledge
transfer' to 'knowledge(s)
in dialogue'**



**Manage conflicts
of interest**



**Shift from 'do no
harm' to 'ethics
of care'**

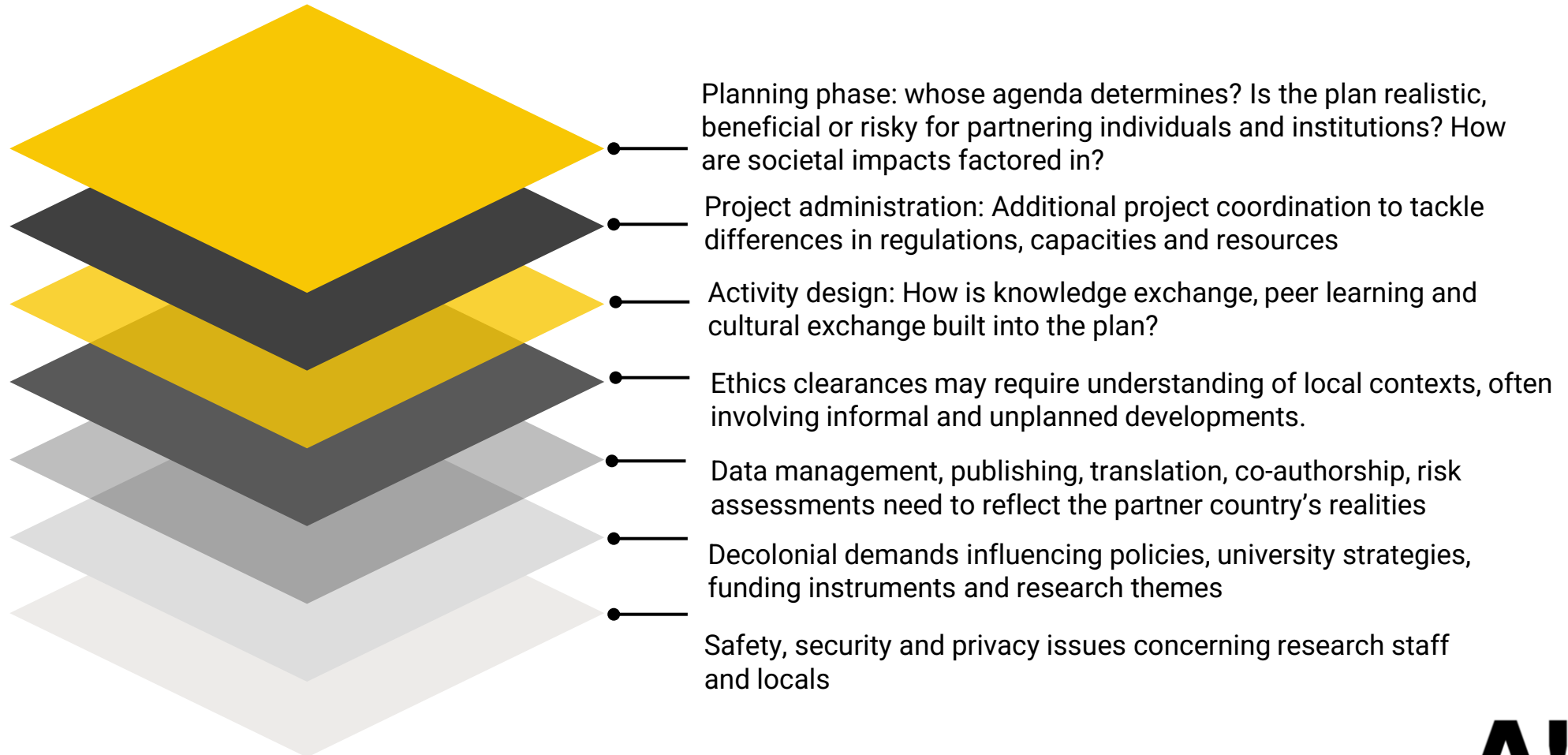
ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSIBLE ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Recognition: Identify, acknowledge and validate the different identities, experiences, struggles and rights of team members, collaborators, research participants and institutions involved.

Representation: Ensure that marginalised and underrepresented groups in academic partnerships have a meaningful presence and voice in decision-making processes, institutions and public discourse.

Redistribution: Address economic disparities and social inequalities with practices, initiatives and policies that seek to provide fair access to education, healthcare, housing, employment, insurance and other essential resources.

Examples of partnership areas where ethical balancing acts often arise (beyond due diligence and other regulated factors)



**Thank
you!**



Ethical questions at IRO

Workshop 3: Ethics and responsible internationalisation

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27.3.2026 Nordic TCA on responsible internationalisation, Helsinki



Aalto University in a nutshell

Our community in numbers

14 500 degree students

(full-time equivalent)

Over **100 000** alumni

A staff of over

5 200 of which

437 are professors.

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Annually, our students complete approximately

250 doctoral degrees,

2 100 master's degrees,

1 600 bachelor's degrees and

300 MBA and Executive MBA certificates

Students from all over the world

Share of international students:

8%

bachelor's degree students

27%

master's degree students

38%

doctoral degree students

Aalto University's degree students represent approx. 120 nationalities.

Six dynamic schools

School of Arts, Design and Architecture architecture, art and media, design, film

School of Business accounting and business law, economics, finance, information and service management, management studies, marketing

School of Chemical Engineering bioproducts and biosystems, chemical and metallurgical engineering, chemistry and materials science



School of Electrical Engineering electrical engineering and automation, electronics and nanoengineering, information and communications engineering

School of Engineering built environment, civil engineering, energy and mechanical engineering

School of Science applied physics, computer science, industrial engineering and management, mathematics and systems analysis, neuroscience and biomedical engineering

**High quality research and
education with impact**

#1

in Finland
(QS World University
Rankings 2025)

#113

globally
(QS World University Rankings 2025)

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#23

**in university-industry
collaboration globally**
(Leiden Ranking Industry
Collaboration 2024)

#53

**most international
university in the world**
(THE Most International
Universities Ranking 2026)

#3

**patent applicant and
the only university on the list**
(Finnish Patent and Registration
Office 2024)

Ethical questions at IRO

- what are we talking about?

Ethical questions at IRO?

- **International partnerships**
- **Students, staff**
- Respect for diversity, EDI/DEI
- Sustainability
- **Professionalism in our work**
- Transparent and smooth processes
- Universal values, the European dimension
- Academic freedom and integrity
- **Institutional values**

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Aalto University Code of Conduct – Values into practice

“The Code helps us all make ethically and legally right choices – so we can be proud of what we achieve as well as of how we do it.”

The Code is one way of putting our values and way of working into practice.

We bring the Code to life through **dialogue**.

[Link to Code of Conduct \(aalto.fi\)](https://aalto.fi)

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The five pillars of the Code of Conduct

On these pages, you can also find useful tips and links to further information



I Our responsibility for people

We want every community member to feel welcome and safe.

Aalto University



II Our responsibility for sustainability

We are committed to advancing sustainability through research, education, campus development and daily practices. We strive to engage also our partners.

Aalto University



III Our responsibility to act ethically / part 1

Our teachers have the freedom to teach, researchers have the freedom to research and students have the freedom to learn.

Aalto University



III Our responsibility to act ethically / part 2

We are committed to performing all our activities with integrity and promoting fair and honest practices.

Aalto University



IV Our responsibility for assets

Aalto University accepts donations that help fulfil our community's purpose. Our fundraising principles are based on respect for the dignity of the donor's will, ethics and integrity.

Aalto University



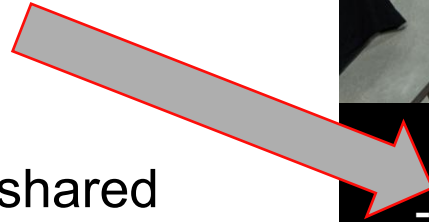
V Our responsibility for information and data

We advance responsible and innovative data usage practices and culture in order to build data driven operations and to maximise the value of data in all activities of Aalto University. We value the transparency and openness of data.

Aalto University

International Partnerships

- Know your partner and your collaboration (partnership evaluation criteria)
- Let your partner know you
- Partnership = shared interest, shared responsibility, mutual benefit, reciprocity, transparency
- Verbalising this in the partnership agreement
- Dialogue in partnership
- Ethical behaviour builds trust



- Academic partnership evaluation criteria
 - o Institution – academic and strategic fit
 - o Collaboration – content and context
 - o Risk assessment, exit criteria
- Due diligence: Prospective Partner Screening process
 - o Comply with laws and regulations
 - o Align with our values, strategy
 - o Prevent putting our reputation at risk

Students

- Educating global citizens
- Curriculum development
- Student mobility
- International student recruitment:
Finnish Agent Code of Conduct (2024)
 - Establishes standards for education agents involved in international student recruitment
 - Responsible and professional conduct in all interactions with prospective students, parents, education providers etc.
 - Ethical guidelines, instructions and standards for collaboration



- Demonstrate integrity
- Prioritize client interests
- Embrace transparency and honesty
- Adhere to ethical marketing practices
- Safeguard confidentiality
- Comply with legal standards
- Establish feedback mechanism
- Commit to professional development



Photo: Aalto University/Mikael Niemi

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**Kiitos
aalto.fi**

Meet the world
VIA University College



Ethics and values in international cooperation

Who are we?

Ida Funder

Global Engagement, Educational Development

Been part of VIA since 2024

Tasks: Erasmus, mobility in Health Sciences...

Camilla Israelsen

Erasmus Institutional Coordinator

Global Engagement, Educational Development

Been part of VIA since 2010

Tasks: Erasmus, MoveON, IIA partnership agreements, OLA, mobility windows.....

VIA University College is one of 6 university colleges in Denmark and, geographically, it covers the Central Denmark Region.

University colleges offer most of the country's medium-term higher education programmes – also called **professional bachelor's education programmes**.

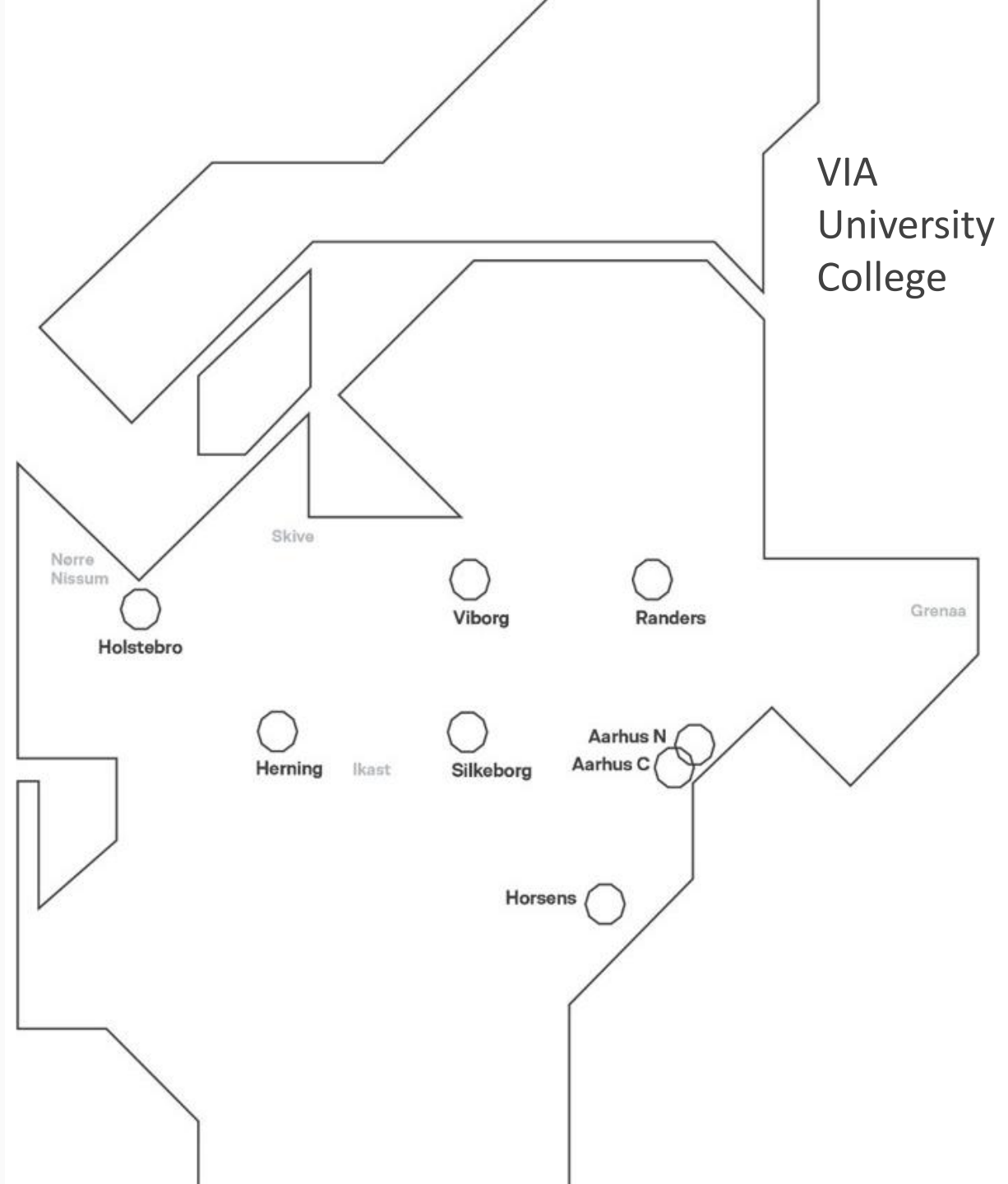
VIA educates teachers, pre-school and early childhood learning specialists, nurses, social workers, engineers, designers and much more.

In numbers:

Approx. 18.000 students and 30.000 further and continuing education course participants

Approx. 2100 members of staff (1350 employed within teaching and research and 750 in administration)

VIA University College



Navigating rules and strategies

Strengthen professional competence

Develop global citizenship

VIA's vision for internationalisation

Develop partner strategy

Strengthen VIA's knowledge base

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Travel Guide

ECHE & Erasmus+ Programme Guide

Many degree programmes and many historic partnerships

"The selection of focus countries and partners must be based on the needs and wishes of the students and the study programmes, academic relevance and level, as well as considerations related to democracy, security, and Danish representation"
(VIAs Strategic Development Plan for Internationalisation)



Dilemmas in international mobility in welfare sector

Social Education and Teaching

- Different views and laws on disciplinary methods

Health care:

- Different views / possibilities in terms of patient involvement and autonomy

Danish Ministry of
Foreign Affairs'
Travel Guide

Gain in depth
knowlegde of
partner e.g.
through staff
mobility and
additional partners
on the ground

Ensure in depth
knowledge
through fewer and
deeper
partnerships

Prepare students
on safety &
culture; e.g.
presentation of
dilemma case pre-
departure

Constant
evaluation and
follow-up and
share experiences
in sector

Small group discussions

Wrap-up at 11:50

