

UNESCO DRAFT RECOMMENDATION ON THE ETHICS OF NEUROTECHNOLOGY

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UNESCO's Mandate

- UNESCO is the only UN agency with a specialised mandate in the social and human sciences i.e. the socio-cultural perspective, values etc.
 - Science and technology related to values and protection of HR and FF.
 - Ethics Committees Advisory Boards: IBC and COMEST.
 - Global reflection: Normative action and implementation/capacity building.
- Strategic position to promote a global ethical framework for medicine, science and technology, taking into account technical and cultural differences.
- UNESCO's addresses: Member States as well as non government actors, private sector and civil society
- For Neurotech: UN Secretary General working group

Roadmap for the Recommendation

APR 2024

First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group

Multidisciplinary, plural and independent group of 24 experts from all regions of the world
Discussion nurtured by the Background document produced by the Secretariat and previous UNESCO work (IBC)

JUNE-JUL 2024

Regional subregional, national and global online consultation

An Inclusive process to gather comments on the first draft text. 25 N/SR/R: 110 countries + 7000 G

AUG 2024

Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group

First Draft text finalised capturing the outcome of the consultations

SEP-DEC 2024

First Draft text sent (23 September) to Member States for comments by 31 December

SPRING 2025

Intergovernmental phase : 160 experts, 80 countries and observers

Category II meeting of experts 12-16 May

2025

43rd General Conference of UNESCO (October-November)



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Main points of the Recommendation.

Ethical approach

The text was carefully crafted to address the features of neurotechnology that are of central ethical relevance, keeping the framework agile, dynamic and adaptable to the evolving environment and technological advancements, ensuring its long-term relevance.

It approaches neurotechnology ethics as *a systematic normative reflection based on a holistic, multicultural, multidisciplinary, pluralistic and evolving framework of interdependent human rights-based values, principles, and actions* aiming at guiding societies in dealing responsibly with the impacts of neurotechnology on human beings, societies, and the environment and ecosystems.

Similar structure to the Recommendation on Ethics of AI

Main points of interest in the Draft Recommendation.

- The Recommendation's scope includes data about the structure, activity and function of the nervous system referred to as neural data, even when collected outside of medical context. It covers health and other areas of applications beyond health
- It defines Neurotechnology as devices, systems and procedures that directly measure, access, monitor, analyze, predict or modulate the nervous system to understand, influence, restore or anticipate its structure, activity and function.
- It considers neural data as well as indirect neural data and non-neural data allowing mental states inferences as sensitive and personal data,
- It considers neurotechnology in its whole lifecycle and the diversity of actors who are involved in every stage (from early stages of conception, up to disposal and recycling). It also includes its convergence with other technologies in particular with AI
- All these choices contribute to make the present draft Recommendation (one of) the most comprehensive normative document(s) on the ethical aspects of neurotechnology available today.



VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

VALUES (7):

- Respect, protection and promotion of human rights, and fundamental freedoms and human dignity ,
- Promoting human health and well-being
- Ensuring and respecting diversity and fairness
- Consideration for cross-cultural perspectives on human knowledge and its sharing
- Global Solidarity and International Cooperation
- Sustainability
- Integrity and Responsibility

PRINCIPLES (9):

- Beneficence, Proportionality and Do No Harm
- Autonomy and Freedom of Thought
- Protection of Neural Data as well as indirect Neural Data and Non-Neural Data Allowing Mental States Inferences
- Non-Discrimination and Inclusivity
- Accountability
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
- Epistemic Justice, Inclusive Engagement and Public Empowerment
- Best Interests of the Child and Protection of future generations
- Global and social justice, enjoying the benefits of scientific progress and its applications

AREAS OF POLICY ACTIONS

- GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT, USE AND REGULATION
- DATA POLICY
- SECURITY
- COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND INFORMATION
- GENDER EQUALITY
- HEALTH AND RESEARCH ETHICS
- SPECIFIC DOMAINS OF APPLICATION OUTSIDE OF HEALTH
 - **EDUCATION**
 - **LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT**
 - **CONSUMER AND COMMERCIAL DOMAINS**
- **CONSIDERATION FOR SPECIFIC USERS**
- ENHANCEMENT
 - IMPLEMENTATION



THANK YOU!

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<https://www.unesco.org/en/ethics-neurotech/recommendation?hub=83294>