

CENTRE FOR ETHICS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TARTU



PROMOTING ETHICS AND VALUES
FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Ethics in a Changing World

Foreword by the Head of the Centre



Prof. Margit Sutrop, Professor of Practical Philosophy, University of Tartu, Head of the Centre for Ethics

Looking back on twenty-five years of the University of Tartu Centre for Ethics, I think about why it was created, whose support made it possible, and how we arrived at our work today. Its history is a story of ideas carried across borders, interdisciplinary cooperation, and people who believed that ethics should have a visible place in the university and society.

The idea arose at a turning point in Estonia's history. Following independence in 1991, the country spent a decade undertaking political, economic and legal reforms. By the turn of the millennium, people were asking: Is this the Estonia we wanted? The question was no longer only how to build a functioning state and economy, but what kind of society we wished to become. What is a good life, a just society and a good state? What responsibilities do freedom and democracy place upon us?

Letters were sent to the Rector of the University of Tartu calling for a centre that would address these

questions. Initially, it was envisaged as part of the Faculty of Theology. When I became Professor of Practical Philosophy in 2000 and returned after almost a decade of doctoral studies and academic work in the United Kingdom, Norway and Germany, I proposed an interfaculty, genuinely interdisciplinary centre, following a model I had encountered at the University of Tübingen. Ethical questions arise wherever knowledge, professional responsibility and human lives meet and therefore belong to no single discipline.

The Centre for Ethics was established on 1 June 2001 with the participation of physicians, legal scholars, philosophers, biologists, classical philologists, theologians and social scientists. The support of the then Rector, Prof. Jaak Aaviksoo, was crucial. He believed we could create a centre of expertise and bring different fields together to discuss values and responsibility.

Equally important was support from Germany. With the assistance of Prof. Jürgen Mittelstrass and the University of Konstanz, we secured five years of funding from the Volkswagen Foundation. This enabled us to invite visiting professors, including Hubert Schleichert and Theda Rehbock, establish a specialist library, organise conferences, and publish textbooks and collections. Doctoral scholarships supported fifteen researchers from different disciplines, helping to form a new generation of ethics experts across academic and professional fields.

To improve the teaching of ethics and foster cooperation across faculties, we began holding regular ethics colloquia. They created a shared intellectual space and embodied a principle that remains central to our work: ethical understanding develops through encounters—between disciplines, between theory and practice, and between people who may not initially speak the same academic language.

Our interdisciplinary research gained momentum through ELSAGEN, a European Commission project

examining the ethical, legal and social aspects of biobanks with partners from Iceland, the United Kingdom and Finland. It was followed by ETH-ICSWEB, coordinated by the German Reference Centre for Ethics in the Life Sciences in Bonn. The projects strengthened our connections with ethics centres across Europe and inspired the Estonian ethics portal, www.eetika.ee.

From the outset, our mission has rested on three connected pillars: to advance interdisciplinary research in ethics, integrate ethics into different curricula and fields, and lead public discussion on norms, values and justice. These activities are intertwined: questions arising in society generate research; research supports teaching and practical tools; and cooperation with practitioners helps us test and refine our ideas.

To promote public discussion, we organised colloquia, conferences and, with President Toomas Hendrik Ilves as patron, nationwide essay competitions. In 2008, at the request of the Ministry of Education and Research, we began preparing the national values development programme. It supported schools and kindergartens in analysing their values, developing organisational cultures and training teachers. It also helped professional communities formulate codes of ethics and examine the values guiding their work.

One of the most important lessons of these twenty-five years is that laws, codes and agreements on good practice are necessary, but not sufficient. Values acquire meaning in the way a teacher treats a pupil, a physician a patient, a researcher a participant, a leader an employee, and a state its citizens. Ethical conduct depends both on individual competence and on the institutions and cultures within which people act.

The Centre does not possess stamps marked 'ethical' and 'unethical'. Rather than pass judgement or provide ready-made answers, we help people recognise ethical questions, identify the values and responsibilities at stake, understand different perspectives, and reach publicly justifiable decisions. Disagreement does not necessarily signify moral failure: people may seek what is good yet interpret a situation differently or assign different weight to values. A democratic society is distinguished by its

ability to address disagreement without regarding opponents as enemies.

Today we are again living through profound change. Trust in institutions is under pressure, societies are becoming polarised, and the international rules-based order can no longer be taken for granted. Generative artificial intelligence is also transforming how we learn, work and decide, compelling us to ask anew what it means to be human. Artificial intelligence may expand our capacities, but it cannot understand human dignity or assume moral responsibility. That responsibility remains ours.

These changes make our work more necessary, not less. Ethics must help us understand how dignity, freedom, justice, care, and responsibility should be interpreted in new circumstances. An ethical society cannot be built once and for all; it must be renewed through every decision and generation. To paraphrase the Estonian poet Hando Runnel: Changing oneself may alter the world only by one person's measure, but when a million people change themselves, the impact becomes visible and powerful.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has shaped the Centre: our colleagues, students, advisory bodies, partners, practitioners, university leaders, funders, and friends in Estonia and abroad. The story of the Centre for Ethics is our shared story. I hope these pages convey both what we have accomplished and the spirit in which we have worked: with curiosity, openness and responsibility, and with faith in the power of thoughtful dialogue to make the world a better place.

Read the full story

<https://eetikakeskus.ut.ee/en/content/if-there-are-million-doers-changers-changing-estonia-and-twenty-five-years-centre-ethics>



Rector's Welcome



Prof. Toomas Asser, Rector of the University of Tartu

The 25th anniversary of the Centre for Ethics University of Tartu provides an opportunity to reflect on the Centre's work and significance both within the university and in Estonian society more broadly. Over a quarter of a century, the Centre has developed into an internationally recognised interdisciplinary hub, where philosophical analysis is combined with expertise from other fields of research and with questions emerging in society.

Many of today's challenges go beyond a single academic discipline. Climate change, population ageing, health technologies, the use of big data, and artificial intelligence all involve scientific questions that are intertwined with technological, legal, social and ethical choices. Solutions must be sought through cross-disciplinary collaboration, taking into account diverse perspectives and a willingness to assume shared responsibility. The Centre's 25 years of work demonstrate that ethical issues must be considered at the stage when new knowledge, treatments, or technologies are being developed, not after problems have arisen.

This embodies the idea of *universitas*: a university is not merely a collection of separate disciplines but a meeting place for diverse knowledge and perspectives. The Centre for Ethics exemplifies this by bringing together, as a consortium, phi-

losophers, physicians, biologists, lawyers, scholars in the humanities and social sciences, computer scientists, and technology experts to address shared challenges. Experience has shown that such collaboration makes it possible to examine ethical questions from multiple angles and arrive at more thoroughly justified solutions.

As a medical scientist, I am particularly able to clearly see the growing importance of medical ethics. New opportunities for preventing, diagnosing, and treating diseases also bring complex choices. How can we respect patients' autonomy and human dignity, protect their privacy, and ensure equitable access to healthcare? While biobanks and personalised medicine, the extensive use of health data, e-health, and the application of artificial intelligence in medicine offer great promise, the implementation of these innovations requires agreement on how patient data are used, on what basis decisions are made, and who bears responsibility for them. In introducing new solutions and making complex treatment decisions, professional expertise and legal regulations alone are not enough. Ethical competence is needed: the ability to recognise conflicts of values, listen to different stakeholders, weigh competing considerations, and take responsibility for decisions made.

The question of ethical responsibility concerns research as a whole. Public trust in research depends not only on the quality of research findings but also on how research is conducted and communicated to society. Under the leadership of the Centre for Ethics, the Code of Ethics of Estonian Scientists and the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity have been developed, alongside ethics education and advisory services for researchers. This work is particularly important at a time when research is expected to provide rapid answers to highly complex questions, and when trust in knowledge and expertise can no longer be taken for granted.

The Centre for Ethics has participated in numerous international research projects. Collaboration with researchers across Europe and beyond has brought new knowledge and perspectives to Estonia and to Tartu, while also providing opportunities to

share Estonia's experience in biobanking, e-health, research ethics, values education and digital society. The Centre's standing as a reliable international partner recently received significant recognition when Estonia was selected to host the 10th World Conference on Research Integrity in 2028.

No such development takes place in isolation. The support of the Volkswagen Foundation and the University of Konstanz was crucial in establishing and building the Centre for Ethics. Professor emeritus Jürgen Mittelstraß played a central role in establishing and sustaining this cooperation and has supported the Centre's development from the very beginning through his advice and reputation. As chair of the international board of trustees, he has helped maintain the Centre's close ties with the European academic community. Further development has been made possible by European Union research programmes, the Estonian state, the University of Tartu, and numerous other funders and partners. Their support has enabled the Centre to launch new research directions, establish international networks, and share ethics-related expertise beyond the university.

For years, the Centre for Ethics has cooperated with Estonian schools and kindergartens, supporting them in creating values-based organisational cultures, and developed discussion methods that help people understand their own value choices as well as those of others. This way, the Centre has

fulfilled one of the university's most important missions: helping to bring research-based thinking into society and conveying society's concerns to research and teaching.

I would like to thank all current and former employees of the Centre for Ethics, its students, partners, supporters, members of the council, and members of the international board of trustees. I would like to express my particular gratitude to Professor emeritus Jürgen Mittelstraß for his long-standing support and for his leadership of the centre's international board of trustees. My heartfelt thanks also go to the centre's founder and head, Professor Margit Sutrop, whose leadership has transformed the Centre for Ethics into a highly respected centre of expertise over the past twenty-five years.

I wish the Centre for Ethics University of Tartu the courage to continue asking difficult questions and the openness to listen to differing viewpoints. May it continue to have the strength to help shape a society in which scientific and technological development is guided responsibly and with respect for human dignity.

Welcome from the Chair of the Council

Science, Ethics, and Teamwork



Prof. Toivo Maimets, Chair of the Advisory Board of the Centre for Ethics, Professor of Cell Biology, University of Tartu

Twenty-five years ago, research ethics, and ethical questions more broadly, were not prominent topics of discussion among most researchers at the University of Tartu. For philosophers, ethics was, of course, an important field, and research ethics committees in medicine were already active, carrying forward the spirit of the Nuremberg Code of 1947. Yet for many natural scientists, ethics was regarded primarily as something whose requirements and questions obstructed the pursuit of “serious science.” Indeed, some of the methods we used half a century ago to isolate ribosomes from rat liver in the University of Tartu’s chemistry building are no longer suitable topics for polite conversation.

When I wrote my first (and successful) application to the European Union’s Third Framework Programme in the early 1990s, it did not yet contain a section on the ethical aspects of the research. Soon, however, times began to change. As science communication became more open, researchers increasingly had to explain – and therefore also think through for themselves – the ethical choices involved in planning, conducting and applying a

particular research project. Ethical questions thus began, gradually but inevitably, to reach every researcher.

European research funding was not, of course, the only reason ethics attracted growing attention within the scientific community. During those years, society increasingly came to understand that new freedoms bring greater responsibilities, including researchers’ responsibility for their own work. Researchers, in turn, became increasingly willing to accept that responsibility.

Around the turn of the millennium, I helped Professor Margit Sutrop develop an application to the European Union’s Fifth Framework Programme for a project examining the ethical, legal and social aspects of human genetic research¹. At the time, I was driven largely by curiosity and the excitement of finding out whether such “softer issues” could attract the attention of the European Commission. They certainly could. This “first swallow,” ELSA-GEN, was followed by the Centre for Ethics’ many successful research grants, which have enabled significant work in developing ethics across an ever-growing range of fields.

Ethical questions entered my own life as a researcher more profoundly when I began studying human embryonic stem cells. This was a logical continuation of my research into the causes of human cancer. It had become clear that early human embryonic cells were very similar to tumour cells: they proliferate as rapidly as they can, and initially they are all alike. It was important to understand the mechanisms that, during subsequent development, constrain this proliferation and induce the cells to differentiate, eventually producing all the cell types and tissues required by the human body. Such mechanisms might also be used later in life, when similar tumour-like cell proliferation occurs in the body. Research on human embryonic stem cells, however, raises numerous ethical, religious and political debates that are unlikely to subside any time soon.

¹ ELSAGEN – Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of Human Genetic Databases: A European Comparison. <http://www.elsagen.net/project.html>

In 2004, I became a member of UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and later served as its Vice-Chair. I also chaired an international working group tasked with developing principles for the regulation of human cloning at the United Nations level. The group included professors from Israel, China, Egypt, and Chile, who came from very different backgrounds and whose views diverged considerably. Our findings were widely discussed at the fifteenth session of the UNESCO IBC and at a joint session of the IBC and the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC). Alongside scientific considerations, this brought various diplomatic and political arguments to the fore. Ultimately, we were able to identify and record a rather limited area of common ground in a report², which, unsurprisingly, did not fully satisfy any of the parties to the debate.

The process was nevertheless highly instructive for me. Ethical discussions do not always lead to a single shared truth. People proceed from different values, interests, and aims, and the process of negotiation may often be more important than its final outcome. What mattered was recognising everyone's right to hold an opinion and to express it while preserving both their own dignity and that of others.

Today, questions of research ethics have, in one way or another, reached the desks of most researchers. Some are long-standing issues, while others arise from new developments in science and society. In certain cases, the boundary between "right and wrong" is relatively clear, even though it is still crossed. These cases include the "big three": falsification, fabrication and plagiarism. They are generally regulated and sanctioned by legal and institutional rules at various levels and are therefore widely understood.

Alongside them, however, there are numerous "grey areas," such as gift authorship or dividing research findings into the smallest possible publishable units – known as "salami slicing". Such practices are much more difficult to regulate. This is precisely why they must remain a continuous subject of discussion among both present and future researchers. The Centre for Ethics has made an important contribution to these discussions,

including through the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity³, which has now been endorsed by almost all Estonian research institutions and organisations. Here, too, the inclusive process through which the document was developed was at least as important as the final result.

Artificial intelligence and large language models are transforming both the way we formulate research questions and the way we seek answers to them. They have created many new ethical challenges. Or are these, perhaps, old questions in a new form? In his 1950 paper⁴, the English mathematician and founder of computer science Alan Turing argued that before answering the question "Can machines think?", we must begin by defining what we mean by "machine" and "thinking." Three-quarters of a century later, we are still grappling with the same questions.

In fact, these questions reach back to the seventeenth-century philosopher and scientist René Descartes (*cogito, ergo sum*) who sought to understand what distinguishes living beings from machines and human beings from all other living creatures. The question "What makes us human?" lies at the very heart of ethics. New developments in science and technology persistently lead us back to it.

The essence of science is the search for truth. Scientists do not claim to possess the final truth. They seek the explanation that best fits the available evidence. When the evidence changes, the explanation changes as well. Some explanations simply stand the test of time better than others. Some become the basis for practical solutions, while others must wait for their time to come.

Science is therefore a process. The ethical questions surrounding science must likewise be continually reformulated, and new approaches must continually be sought. This can only be done together, through cooperation among researchers and across disciplines. Ethics is inherently interdisciplinary.

For this reason, I believe that the most important achievement of the University of Tartu Centre for Ethics during its first quarter-century is that research ethics has become important to researchers in every field and that it remains continuously "on the table." Together, we can go further.

2 UNESCO International Bioethics Committee. (2009). *Report of the IBC on Human Cloning and International Governance*.

3 Centre for Ethics of the University of Tartu. (2017). *Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*. Revised edition 2023.

4 Turing, A. M. (1950). Computing Machinery and Intelligence. *Mind*, 59(236), 433–460.

Welcome from the Chair of the International Advisory Board



**Prof. Dr. Jürgen Mittelstraß, University of Konstanz,
Chair of the International Advisory Board of the
University of Tartu Centre for Ethics**

Ethics is both a theoretical form of knowledge, and as such has found its place in the canon of philosophy, and, under the name of applied ethics, it is a practical form of knowledge, and as such it is divided up into different disciplinary fields like bioethics, environmental ethics, medical ethics, and business ethics. Theory of praxis turns into praxis of theory. Therefore, both are at stake. And exactly this is the idea and the reality of the Centre for Ethics. The Centre does research in theoretical ethics and, as in applied ethics, in the field of its applications: within the academic sphere, this covers the whole range of teaching and research, and within the public sphere, a commitment to counselling and advice in legal and political matters and to the organisation of public lectures, initiating public discussions and keeping them alive.

With great success. I refer to the development and implementation of interdisciplinary teaching programmes in the fields of (general) ethics and application-oriented ethics, and to the work on a digital textbook on the ethics of science. I refer to the participation in more than 20 European research programmes dealing with the ethical, legal and societal aspects of science and technology,

among them the European project IANUS, which addresses the important question of trust in science, research and innovation. Trust in science, which is essential for the existence of rational and technical cultures like ours and without which the world as we know it would lose its future, seems to erode nowadays, not least because of the problem that the science- and technology-driven world which man has appropriated threatens in turn to appropriate man – the key words today are: climate change and artificial intelligence (artificial intelligence, too, is an important subject of the Centre). I refer to the active involvement of the Centre in the development of education strategies, to the development of institutional ethics, for instance, the Estonian Code of Good Scientific Practice and ethical codes of particular social institutions. In an impressive manner, the academic and the public work go hand in hand at the Centre. In Brussels, the Centre has an important and influential say in ethical matters, again in theory and societal practice.

As for theoretical ethics, it is dealing with principles of norms and values (and their foundation and justification), with principles of the relation between ethics and its applications (in research and society) and with principles which constitute an ethos in research and societal institutions expressed in codes of conduct. These principles and the problems they are applied to are often interrelated; there are no closed ethical or moral worlds, in each of which a single ethics or set of morals sways. This, too, is the subject of the work of the Centre.

The Centre does a great job and ranks today among the most important institutions of its kind – in academic as well as in institutional terms. Congratulations to the Centre and its team – and all the best for the next 25 years.

Why the Centre for Ethics Was Established

The Centre for Ethics was established on 1 June 2001 as an interdisciplinary unit of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Tartu. It was inspired by similar centres elsewhere in the world, particularly in Germany. The Centre's establishment was supported by the Volkswagen Foundation (*VolkswagenStiftung*) between 2001 and 2006.

Three main tasks were set for the Centre:

- to promote interdisciplinary research in ethics;
- to help integrate ethics into various curricula and fields of study;
- to initiate and lead public discussion on norms, values, and justice in Estonian society.

How We Work

The role of the Centre for Ethics is not to hand down judgements on what is ethical or unethical, nor to offer ready-made answers to complex questions. We help people recognise and formulate ethical issues, identify the values, interests and responsibilities at stake, and create conditions in which different views can be discussed respectfully and on the basis of knowledge.

Our work often begins with questions arising in professional and social life. We examine them through philosophical analysis, knowledge from different disciplines and the experience of practitioners. We then translate the results into practical tools: discussion games, self-evaluation models, survey instruments, handbooks, codes of ethics, guidelines, and decision-making frameworks. Their use in practice raises new research questions and helps us refine the methods further.

Real-life cases play a central role. Participants consider several imperfect courses of action, justify their choices and listen to the reasoning of others. This develops moral sensitivity, argumentation

These tasks have remained unchanged, but the topics and forms of work have expanded considerably. Alongside philosophy, the Centre now collaborates closely with medicine, genetics, information technology, education, the social sciences, and law. In addition to academic research, its activities have grown to include training, consultancy, discussion methods, codes of ethics, and policy development.

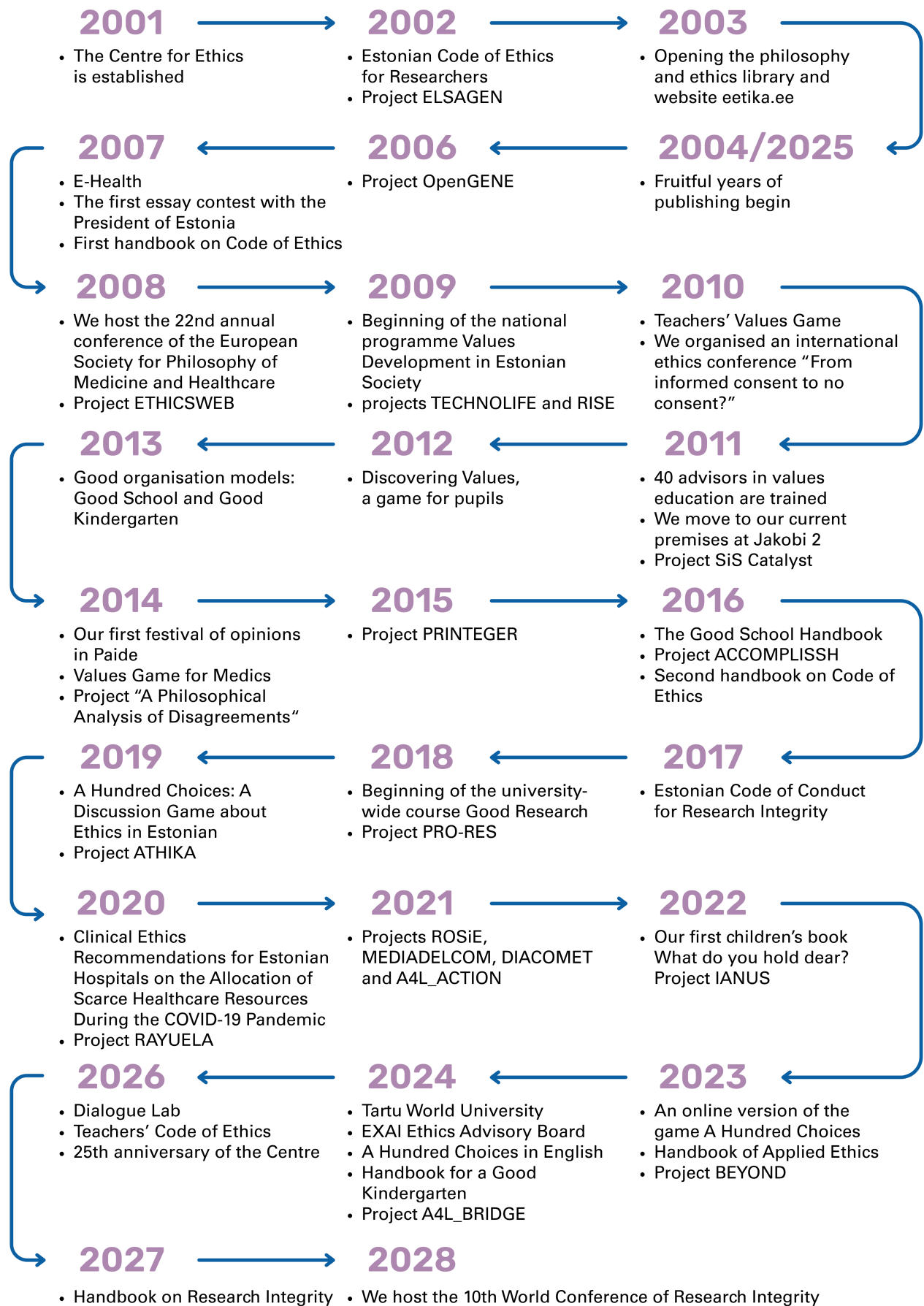
These three tasks form an integrated whole. Research clarifies concepts and analyses value conflicts; teaching develops the capacity to recognise ethical issues, understand different perspectives, weigh values and justify decisions; and engagement with society brings real-life questions to the fore. Experience gained in practice, in turn, feeds back into research and teaching.

skills, and moral imagination: the capacity to understand how a situation looks from another person's perspective. Disagreement is not treated as failure. The task may be to clarify why it persists and to determine how a fair and responsible decision can nevertheless be reached.

In organisational values development, we move through a continuous cycle: articulating values and commitments; discussing their meanings and possible conflicts; agreeing on shared principles; gathering evidence about everyday practices; and changing practices or agreements in light of the analysis. Self-evaluation, feedback, feedforward⁵ and critical friends support this process. The aim is not to rank organisations, but to strengthen their ability to learn and to put declared values into practice.

In addition, the Centre has organised countless lectures, seminars, workshops, colloquia, and public discussions.

⁵ A term describing a future-oriented communication process



Research

The Centre for Ethics at the University of Tartu was founded on the conviction that complex ethical questions cannot be adequately explored within the boundaries of a single discipline. Understanding ethical choices requires the integration of philosophical analysis with the knowledge and practical experience of other fields. For this reason, interdisciplinarity has been one of the fundamental principles underpinning the Centre's research from the very beginning.

The Centre's theoretical research encompasses value theory and moral philosophy, metaethics, epistemology and the philosophy of trust, philosophy of language and mind, philosophical anthropology, and the philosophy of education and technology. Operating as a consortium, the Centre brings philosophers, physicians, biologists, geneticists, legal scholars, education and social science researchers, communication scholars, computer scientists, and technology experts together around shared questions.

Research Areas

The Centre's various research strands are united by a shared interest in the human capacity to understand different perspectives, navigate a plurality of values, and form well-reasoned judgements and decisions in contexts marked by uncertainty, value conflicts, and disagreement.

Value Conflicts and Contextual Decision-Making

One of the Centre's recurring areas of inquiry concerns how to make well-reasoned moral decisions when several legitimate values come into conflict. It is important to avoid both the absolutisation of a single value and moral relativism. Ethical decision-making requires recognising conflicting values, analysing the morally relevant features of a situation, and assigning justified weight and priority to values in their specific context. This approach has been applied in bioethics, research ethics, education, and decision-making in times of crisis.



Values, Value Conflicts and Moral Disagreement

The causes of moral disagreement cannot always be reduced to differences in values. They may also stem from different concepts of the good life, differing hierarchies of values, emotions, or divergent views about which aspects of a situation are morally relevant.

Key projects

“A Philosophical Analysis of Disagreements” (2014–2019)

Selected publications

Sutrop, M. (2020). Deep conceptual moral disagreements: Over what do we disagree and why? *Trames*, 24(3), 295–314. <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2020.3.03>

Sutrop, M.; Simm, K. (2020). Developing Guidelines for the Distribution of Scarce Medical Resources during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Estonian Case. *Trames*, 24(2), 251–268. <http://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2020.2.08>

Sutrop, M.; Lõuk, K. (2022). Ethical Research in a Global Context: A Dynamic Tension between Universal Values, Principles and Contextual Applications. In: Iphofen, R.; O’Mathúna, D. (eds.), *Ethical Evidence and Policymaking*, 15–39. <https://doi.org/10.56687/9781447363972-004>

Dialogic Communication and Communication Ethics

Dialogic communication is essential for fostering a culture of participation, mutual understanding, and constructive relationships in families, organisations, communities, and society. It supports meaningful dialogue, collaboration, feedback, and joint problem-solving. As part of the DIACOMET project, six core dimensions of good dialogic communication and related ethical guidelines have been developed. These are supported by the Dialogue Lab online platform and board game, which help users recognise communication-ethical dilemmas and strengthen their skills in critical reflection, dialogue, and ethical decision-making in everyday situations.



Key projects

DIACOMET – “Fostering capacity building for civic resilience and participation: Dialogic communication ethics and accountability” (2021–2026)

Selected publication

Harro-Loit, H., Lauk, E., & Parder, M.-L. (2026). Dialogic communication ethics in practice: Navigating ethical engagement in contemporary discourse. *Communications*, 51(2), 336–352. <https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2026-0031>

Values Education and Ethical Competence

Research on values in education challenges both the idea of value-neutral education and the indoctrination of predetermined “right values”, emphasising instead the development of autonomous and reflective ethical judgement. Research on values in education has examined how schools and school culture can help learners recognise, reflect on and justify values, understand different perspectives, and deal constructively with moral disagreement. This work has led to a model of ethical competency that

includes recognising ethical issues, understanding different perspectives, reasoning about values, and making justified and responsible decisions in situations of moral disagreement.

Key projects

Values Development Programme 2009–2024

Selected publication

Sutrop, M. (2015). Can Values Be Taught? The Myth of Value-Free Education. *Trames*, 19(2), 189–202. <http://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2015.2.06>

Harro-Loit, H.; Sutrop, M.; Hirsnik, H.; Nummert, M.-L.; Parder, M.-L.; Punnar, N. (2024). Challenges and Opportunities for Character Education in Estonia. In: *Character Education in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities*, 123–137.

Sutrop, M., Harro-Loit, H., Tammeleht, A., Lilles-Heinsar, L., & Nummert, M.-L. (2025). Ethical reasoning or moral competence? In *Education for Human Flourishing: Towards Policy and Practice* (pp. 47–61). OECD High Performing Systems for Tomorrow Conceptual Framework.

Bioethics, Medical Ethics, and Clinical Ethics

Bioethics and medical ethics have been among the Centre’s core areas of activity since its establishment. The Centre has conducted research and fostered public discussion on patient autonomy and informed consent, the use of health data, genetic technologies, equitable access to healthcare, choices related to the beginning and end of life, and the professional responsibilities of healthcare practitioners.

The Centre has contributed to the establishment of hospital ethics committees and has provided training in clinical ethics for both committee members and healthcare professionals.

One of the Centre’s most significant contributions to public policy has been initiating and leading discussions on advance directives and patients’ end-of-life wishes. Dialogue between researchers, physicians, nurses, patient representatives, legal experts, and policymakers helped build a shared understanding of the issues and ultimately contributed to the adoption of new legislation by the Estonian Parliament.

Ethics of Biobanks and Personalised Medicine

The Centre for Ethics has examined the conditions under which the use of people’s genetic and health data in research can be ethically justified, and how advances in science and personalised medicine can be reconciled with the protection of individual rights, autonomy and public trust. Through international collaborative research, the Centre helped bring the experience of Estonia’s biobank and digital society into wider European bioethical debates.

Key projects

ELSAGEN – “Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of Human Genetic Databases: A European Comparison” (2002–2004)

“The ethical aspects of genetic databases and new technologies: individual versus common values and goods” (2005–2008)

OpenGENE – “Opening Estonian Genome Project for the European Research Area” (2006–2008)

“New ethical frameworks for genetic and electronic care record databases” (2008–2010)

Selected publications

Sutrop, M. (2011). Changing ethical frameworks: From individual rights to the common good? *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 20(4), 533–545. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180111000272>

Simm, K. (2011). The concepts of common good and public interest: from Plato to bio-banking. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 20(4), 554–562. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180111000296>

Ethical, Legal and Social Issues of e-Health

Between 2006 and 2007, a joint working group of the Centre for Ethics and Tartu University Hospital analysed the ethical considerations associated with the draft Health Information System Act. In collaboration with the Estonian Medical Association, the Estonian Nurses Association and the Estonian Hospitals Association, the group developed a code of good practice for informing patients about the processing of personal data in healthcare. It also prepared patient information materials, an informed consent form, and guidance documents for healthcare professionals.

Key projects

“An expert opinion about the handling of personal data connected to the digital case history in the context of bioethics and medical ethics” (2006–2008)

“New Ethical Frameworks for Genome Banks and E-Health Databases” (2008–2010)

Selected publication

Sutrop, M.; Simm, K. (2004). The Estonian healthcare system and the genetic database project: From limited resources to big hopes. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 13 (3), 254–262. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0963180104133082>

Ethics of Biometrics and Security Technologies

Through a number of international research projects on biometrics, the Centre for Ethics examined the ethical, legal and societal issues associated with identifying individuals on the basis of facial features, voice, movement patterns, and other physiological or behavioural characteristics.

Key projects

TECHNOLIFE – “A Transdisciplinary Approach to the Emerging Challenges of Novel Technologies: Lifeworld and Imaginaries in Foresight and Ethics” (2009–2011).

RISE – “Rising Pan-European and International Awareness of Biometrics and Security Ethics” (2009–2012).

Selected publications

Sutrop, M. (2010). Ethical Issues in Governing Biometric Technologies. In: *Ethics and Policy of Biometrics*, 102–114. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-12595-9_14

Sutrop, M., & Laas-Mikko, K. (2012). From identity verification to behavior prediction: Ethical implications of second generation biometrics. *Review of Policy Research*, 29(1), 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-1338.2011.00536.x>

Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

In recent years, the ethical, legal and societal dimensions of artificial intelligence have become one of the Centre's principal areas of research. The Centre examines how AI systems can be aligned with human values, how responsibility should be allocated when decisions are made with the assistance of AI, and under what conditions AI-based systems can be considered trustworthy.

Particular attention is devoted to the use of artificial intelligence in education. The Centre also contributes to the work of the Estonian Centre of Excellence in AI, helping to integrate the analysis of ethical and societal impacts into AI research and development.

Key projects

Estonian Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (EXAI) – research on the ethical and societal impacts of artificial intelligence (2024–2030)

AI Leap – analysis of the ethical, legal, social and technological risks of using artificial intelligence in education (2026)

Selected publications

Sutrop, M. (2019). Should We Trust Artificial Intelligence? *Trames. Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 23(4), 499–522. <http://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2019.4.07>

Simm, Kadri; Liu, Nan; Wu, Honghan (Ed.) (2024). Ethics of Artificial Intelligence in Health and Medicine. *BMC Medical Ethics*. SpringerNature.

Sutrop, M., Bogdanov, D., Laas-Mikko, K., Kamm, L., Siibak, A., & Trasberg, H. (2026). *Ethical, Educational, Social, Legal and Technological Risk Assessment and Value Analysis of the AI Leap Learning Application and Educational Programme*. AI Leap. <https://doi.org/10.12697/aileap-risk-analysis-2026>

Trust in Science, Responsibility

In exploring trust, we ask what it means to trust and under what conditions is trust in science, experts, and technological systems justified.

Key projects

IANUS – “Inspiring and Anchoring Trust in Science, Research and Innovation” (2022–2025)

Selected publications

Sutrop, M. (2007). Trust. In M. Häyry, R. Chadwick, V. Árnason, & G. Árnason (Eds.), *The Ethics and Governance of Human Genetic Databases: European Perspectives* (pp. 190–198). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611087.022>

Sutrop, M., & Seppel, K. (2026). Philosophical Insights into Trust in Science: Toward Better Surveys and Policy Design. In: Iordanou, K., Ravn, T., & Zwart, H. (Eds.). *Trust in Science*. (pp. 119–139). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-15723-2_11

Research Ethics and the Development of a System for Good Research Practice

Key projects

PRO-RES – “PROmoting integrity in the use of RESearch results in evidence based policy: a focus on non-medical research” (2018–2021)

ETHICSWEB – “Interconnected European Information and Documentation System for Ethics and Science” (2008–2011)

PRINTEGER – “Promoting Integrity as an Integral Dimension of Excellence in Research” (2015–2018)

Selected publications

Forsberg, E.-M.; Sutrop, M. et al (2018). Working with Research Integrity – Guidance for Research Performing Organisations: The Bonn PRINTEGER Statement. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 24(4), 1023–1034. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-018-0034-4>

Simm, Kadri; Parder, Mari-Liisa; Tammeleht, Anu; Lees, Kadri (2024). National cross-disciplinary research ethics and integrity study: methodology and results from Estonia. *Research Ethics*, 20 (3), 514–538. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17470161241239791>

Tammeleht, A., Antoniou, J., de la Cruz Bernabé, R., Chapin, C., van den Hooff, S., Mbanya, V. N., Parder, M.-L., Sairio, A., Videnoja, K., & Löfström, E. (2026). Manifestations of research ethics and integrity leadership in national surveys – cases of Estonia, Finland, Norway, France and the Netherlands. *Accountability in Research*, 33(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2025.2481940>

Developing the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

By the mid-2010s, Estonia's research landscape was developing rapidly, yet there was no shared national framework for research integrity. Institutions relied on their own approaches, and clear guidance on responsible research practices was lacking.

To address this, the Estonian Research Council launched the development of the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity in 2016. The Centre for Ethics was entrusted with leading the process, coordinating discussions, consultations, and extensive stakeholder engagement.

Rather than adopting an existing international model, Estonia chose to create its own code, ensuring that it reflected local values while remaining aligned with international standards.

Adopted in 2017 and signed by nearly all research institutions, the Code marked an important change. It sets out the values and

principles of good research, clarifies expectations for researchers, and emphasises the shared responsibility of individuals and institutions. Ethical research depends not only on researchers but also on supportive organisational and systemic conditions.

As a framework document, the Code guides Estonian research institutions, which develop their own procedures for raising awareness, monitoring research practices, and addressing misconduct. This coordinated approach helps ensure fair and consistent treatment across the research system.

The Code builds on the 2002 Code of Ethics for Estonian Scientists, responding to developments in science and placing greater emphasis on institutional responsibility.

Since its adoption, the Code has increased awareness, supported institutional policy development, and contributed to a more coherent national system of research integrity.

Formulating principles of good research practice is not enough on its own. The Centre has also examined how Estonia's research ethics and research integrity system functions as a whole: how ethical review is organised, what responsibilities researchers and research institutions carry, how misconduct can be prevented, and how alleged breaches can be investigated in a manner that is independent, fair and consistent.

The Centre has taken part in discussions with researchers, universities, research institutions, ministries, funding organisations, and policymakers. The aim of this work has been to move from a fragmented arrangement towards a coherent system in which ethical review, the promotion of good research practice, advisory support and the investigation of misconduct are integrated into a connected whole.

The Centre's long-standing research and development work has helped bring issues of research integrity, responsibility and good research practice into the heart of science policy discussions, for example in the preparation of the new Organisation of Research and Development and Innovation Act. The Act provides an updated framework for Estonia's research, development and innovation system, and defines more clearly the roles and responsibilities of its participants.

Practical outcomes

- Estonian Code of Ethics for Researchers (2002)
- Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017) →
- Analyses of Estonia's research ethics system and proposals for its reform
- Contributions to the preparation of Estonia's Research and Development and Innovation Organisation Act
- Recognition of the Centre's international standing and credibility is reflected in the decision to hold the **10th World Conference on Research Integrity** in Estonia in 2028.



The conference will bring leading experts in research ethics and research integrity from around the world to Tallinn and provide Estonia with an opportunity to make an even greater contribution to shaping a responsible global research culture.

25 Years in Our Publications

<https://eetikakeskus.ut.ee/en/content/publications-0>



Teaching

The Centre's teaching develops ethical competence: the ability to recognise ethical issues, understand different positions, weigh values, and justify decisions. Ethical issues are not the concern of philosophy alone; they form part of the responsibility of every discipline and profession.

University-wide Ethics Courses

The Centre developed the large university-wide courses *Foundations of Ethics* and *Key Topics in Ethics*. They introduce the principal concepts, problems and theories of ethics, engage students with classical and contemporary texts, and develop skills in argumentation, analysis and discussion.

Ethics Across Disciplines

Ethics teaching reaches students in philosophy, law, medicine, education, information technology, management, and many other fields. The Centre teaches pedagogical ethics, teacher ethics, and values education to education students, bioethics to medical students, and ethics to master's students in strategic management. Discipline-specific teaching connects moral philosophy with the real choices and responsibilities of professional practice.

Education Beyond the University

The Centre organises training programmes, seminars and workshops for teachers, researchers, public officials, healthcare professionals, businesses, and other specialists. Research provides their intellectual foundation, while practitioners' experience brings new research questions to light. Teaching, in turn, allows knowledge to be tested, refined, and developed further.

Learning Through Discussion and Case Studies

Alongside lectures, the Centre employs case studies, role-playing exercises, debates, values games, and other active-learning methods. Students analyse real-life situations, identify the values and interests involved, evaluate alternative courses of action, and justify their decisions. The aim is to develop the ability to act responsibly even when no single answer satisfies everyone.

Research Ethics for Doctoral Students

Since 2018, the Centre has taught the university-wide course *Good Research: Framework Requirements, Values, and Principles of Action* to doctoral students at the University of Tartu. It is offered in Estonian in the autumn semester and in English in the spring. The course connects the principles of research integrity with questions arising in researchers' everyday work, including participants' rights, data use, authorship, conflicts of interest, supervision, publication, communication, and responses to possible breaches.

The Centre also teaches research ethics to doctoral students at the Estonian University of Life Sciences and the Estonian Academy of Arts, to master's students at Tallinn University, and at Tallinn Health Care College. This cooperation enables teaching to respond to the needs of different fields while resting on shared principles of good research.

Textbooks and Independent Learning

In 2025, the *Handbook of Practical Ethics*, compiled and edited by Professor Kadri Simm, received the award for the best Estonian-language higher education textbook. The first comprehensive Estonian-language research ethics textbook *Good Research: A Textbook on Research Ethics for Higher Education* will be published online in 2026. It was completed through the collaboration of 38 authors from various disciplines of research, makes research ethics more accessible and learner friendly. It can be used both within courses and independently, allowing readers to select topics relevant to their discipline, project, or career stage.

International E-Learning Course on Research Ethics and Integrity

The Centre for Ethics is developing an e-learning course on research ethics and integrity for biomedical researchers across Alliance4Life_Bridge partner organisations. Informed by a 2025–2026 survey and an expert-led ethics seminar at the University of Tartu, the course addresses the research community's key needs and priorities. The course will be available through the project e-learning platform in December 2026.

Public Engagement and Discussions

The Centre for Ethics helps bring questions of values into focus, creates opportunities for meaningful and informed discussion, and supports decision-making that takes into account the needs and responsibilities of different individuals, groups, and institutions.

We work closely with government agencies, local authorities, educational and healthcare institutions, research organisations, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and communities. Our collaborations encompass consultancy, expert assessments, training, research, public discussions, codes of ethics, and guidance materials.

Values Development in Education

The Centre for Ethics has helped schools and kindergartens articulate their core values, integrate them into leadership, teaching and everyday relationships, and evaluate their activities as a whole. The Good School and Good Kindergarten models support institutions in self-evaluation and in setting goals for further development.

In 2011 and 2012, the Centre trained 40 values education advisers. Of these, 26 became the Centre's contractual partners, known as critical friends, who went on to support schools and kindergartens in processes of values development and self-evaluation. A critical friend did not come to assess an institution or provide ready-made solutions. Rather, they helped school leaders and staff to identify more clearly their strengths and areas for development, and to reflect on how their everyday choices aligned with their agreed values.

Values Development in Estonian Society

The first major national educational project the Centre for Ethics undertook was “Values Development in Estonian Society 2009–2013”, with continuing programmes in 2015–2020 and 2021–2025. The project, funded by the Ministry of Education and Research, had two targets: firstly, the education system – to increase learners' autonomy to be able to decide upon their values; secondly, society as a whole – to inspire discussion and reflection on values. To this end, the Centre published over 30 books and created methodological guidelines as well as value games (most notably “A Hundred Choices: A Discussion Game about Ethics”), organised multiple conferences, and held training sessions.

In an interview given near the end of the project, Professor Margit Sutrop, Head of the Centre, said:

The Centre for Ethics has provided the vocabulary, methodology, and framework in which to think about an organisation's activities. I am optimistic that schools and kindergartens can build on this. As we sometimes say at conferences: we have many, many good schools and kindergartens and they are worth maintaining and developing and exchanging experiences with.

Educators' Codes of Ethics

The Centre for Ethics coordinated the development of the Estonian Teachers' Code of Ethics, a process that began in 2023. In 2025, the Centre for Ethics also assumed a leading role in developing the Estonian Youth Workers' Code of Ethics. Both processes aimed to initiate discussion on the values and principles of professional ethics in teaching and youth work, as well as on the functions of a code of ethics. Nationwide working groups were established to draft the codes, bringing together numerous professional associations and representative organisations from the education and youth sectors. Public forums and a feedback process were also organised, culminating in the completion of the *Estonian Teachers' Code of Ethics* (2026) and the *Estonian Youth Workers' Code of Ethics* (2026).

Transition to Estonian-Language Education

Between 2023 and 2025, the Centre's education team led a project supporting kindergartens in Ida-Viru County in their transition to Estonian-language education through a values-based approach. Language change was addressed alongside questions of leadership culture, inclusion, mentoring, children's well-being, and the development of a shared values framework.

Supporting kindergartens in Ida-Viru County in transitioning to Estonian-language education through values education

In 2022, the Estonian Parliament (Riigikogu) adopted the amendments for a full transition to Estonian-language education by 2030. Previously, some kindergartens and schools provided education partly or fully in Russian. To ease the transition set to begin in 2024, and to reform not only the language being taught but also to include previously Russian-speaking education institutions in the Estonian educational value system, the Ministry of Education and Research provided funding for the project "Supporting a values-based transition to Estonian-language education" (2023–2025). The project was led and managed by the Centre for Ethics' education team.

Ene Tigas, one of the project managers, sat down with the participants after it ended to reflect on the process:

According to the kindergartens, the biggest changes took place in management openness and inclusion: employees better perceived what the manager was doing for them and for their good. Mentoring, supporting language development (language clubs and training) and developing a support system for children with special needs also emerged as strong areas. However, finding time for mentoring and motivating the mentees were cited as obstacles – mentors were often more active. Despite this, they found that launching a mentoring system laid the foundation for supporting employees and their cooperation.

Many kindergartens defined new values and developed a shared vision of a good kindergarten. Practical changes included updating daily schedules, for example by offering flexible rest time, where some children can sleep while others engage in quiet activities. Changes were also made to pedagogical meetings, with more time allocated to discussing practices and future actions.

Public Discussion and Policy Development

The Centre's experts take part in public debates, contribute to media discussions on ethical issues, and provide expertise for legislative processes and public policy development. The topics they address range from patients' end-of-life wishes and teacher ethics to research integrity, artificial intelligence, environmental responsibility, and intergenerational justice.

Tartu World University

Between 2022 and 2024, the science communication initiative *Tartu World University*, part of the European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 programme, brought researchers and communities into sustained dialogue across Southern Estonia. What began as knowledge-sharing evolved into a reciprocal process in which scientists and communities learned from one another.

The initiative engaged 13 communities and addressed topics ranging from local development and culture to environmental and social change. Across these discussions, a common theme emerged: a strong interest in community and belonging.

A distinctive feature of the project was its long-term collaboration with local organisers, which enabled in-depth interviews with community representatives. These explored understandings of community, challenges facing rural areas in Southern Estonia, and the role of local value cultures in everyday life. Additional insights emerged from dialogue evenings in Peipsiääre municipality, which fostered reflection and mutual learning.

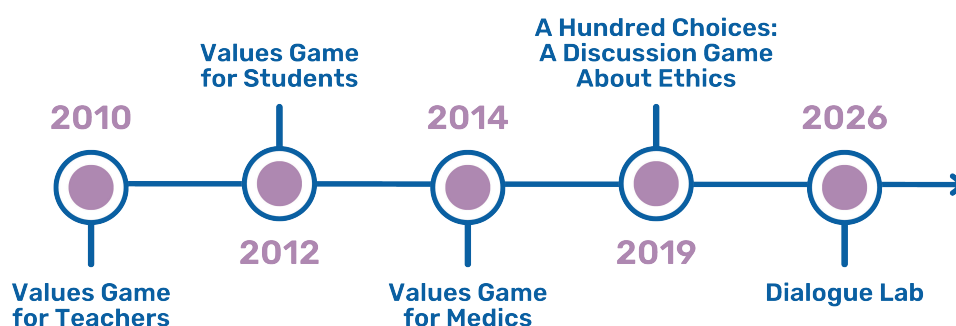
Tartu World University demonstrated that science communication is not only about sharing knowledge but also about creating spaces for dialogue, examining values, and learning together.

Discussion and Values Games

How can people be encouraged to talk about values in a way that leaves no one feeling attacked and makes everyone want to engage? This is the question that the Centre for Ethics set out to answer in 2011, laying out the foundation for what has since become one of its most influential areas of work: the development of discussion and values-based games.

Since then, the Centre for Ethics has consistently developed this distinctive and impactful field. It all began with a values-based game for teachers, offering an engaging and safe way to explore ethical questions and discuss complex issues. From this first step, something greater than a single project emerged. It set a snowball in motion that has grown into a strong area of expertise.

Over the years, the development of values-based games – for pupils, doctors and nurses, for anyone engaging in dialogic communication – has become both a substantive and methodological strength of the Centre. Each new game, every round of testing, and every discussion has added new layers to the understanding of how people think, debate, listen, and make sense of values.



A Hundred Choices: A Discussion Game About Ethics

A key milestone was the discussion game “A Hundred Choices: A Discussion Game About Ethics,” published in 2019. Based on real-life scenarios, it invites players to explore both serious and everyday ethical dilemmas in a safe and open environment. Beyond encouraging discussion, the game helps develop argumentation skills, broaden perspectives, and deepen understanding of oneself and others.



Designed for a wide audience, the game can be used in formal education as well as informal settings among friends or colleagues. Its versatility has made it a dynamic and enduring format.

Over time, “A Hundred Choices: A Discussion Game About Ethics” has undergone several rounds of development and renewal. Today, it exists both as a board game and a digital version, available in Estonian and English. The English version also includes a compact mini edition, easy to bring to the table and start a conversation. The games can be purchased and borrowed, helping them reach a wide range of audiences.

What began as a single game for teachers has since led the Centre for Ethics into international research projects. The accumulated experience in exploring values and designing discussions has proven to be applicable far beyond its original scope.

This is a story of how an idea grows into a movement: how discussion becomes a game, a game becomes a method, and a method becomes expertise that brings people together, opens minds, and creates space for meaningful dialogue.

Selected publication

Harro-Loit, H., & Parder, M.-L. (2025). Gamifying the didactics of communication ethics: Methodology of the serious game of moral choices. In *ICERI2025 proceedings* (pp. 3646–3652). IATED Digital Library. <https://doi.org/10.21125/iceri.2025.1117>

The People Who Have Shaped Our Story

The Centre for Ethics has been shaped by people united by an interest in ethical questions and a commitment to connecting research, teaching, and public engagement. Over the past twenty-five years, researchers, lecturers, advisers, project managers, students, and partners from many different fields have contributed to the Centre's development.

The Centre for Ethics Today – Autumn 2026

Margit Sutrop, Professor of Practical Philosophy – Head of the Centre

Halliki Harro-Loit, Professor of Journalism – Mentor and Associate of the Centre; former Chair of the Council of the National Values Development Programme

Staff Members

Sarah Bouirabdane ■ Kaisa-Maris Hagel ■ Marten Juurik ■ Tiia Kõnnussaar ■ Katrin Laas-Mikko ■ Laura Lilles-Heinsar ■ Kristi Lõuk ■ Mari-Liis Nummert ■ Triin Paaver ■ Mari-Liisa Parder ■ Tobias Pilv ■ Kertu Rajando ■ Carmen Helene Raudmets ■ Margit Sutrop ■ Anu Tammeleht ■ Ene Tigas ■ Katrin Velbaum

Council of the Centre for Ethics

Toivo Maimets, Professor of Cell Biology – Chair of the Council ■ Riho Altnurme, Professor of Church History ■ Ruth Kalda, Professor and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs ■ Ene Kõresaar, Professor of Oral History and Memory Studies ■ Made Laanpere, Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology ■ Marju Luts-Sootak, Professor of Legal History ■ Vahur Ööpik, Professor of Exercise Physiology ■ Triin Paaver, Administrative Manager, Centre for Ethics ■ Anne Reino, Associate Professor of Management ■ Anni Tamm, Lecturer in Developmental and School Psychology and Research Fellow in Developmental Psychology

Faculty-Based Advisers on Research Integrity

Professor Raul Kangro, Faculty of Science and Technology ■ Professor Kairi Kreegipuu, Faculty of Social Sciences ■ Professor Kadri Simm, Faculty of Arts and Humanities ■ Professor Andres Soosaar, Faculty of Medicine

The People Who Helped Build the Centre

We remember with gratitude all those whose ideas, knowledge, and commitment have helped the Centre grow during its first twenty-five years.

International Advisory Board, 2001–2005

Professor Dr Jürgen Mittelstrass, University of Konstanz – Chair ■ Professor Dr Timo Airaksinen, University of Helsinki ■ Professor Dr Dr Jürgen G. Backhaus, University of Erfurt ■ Professor Dr Ruth Chadwick, Lancaster University ■ Professor Dr Jüri Engelbrecht, Estonian Academy of Sciences ■ Professor Dr Dietrich von Engelhardt †, Medical University of Lübeck ■ Professor Dr Dr Eric Hilgendorf, University of Würzburg ■ Professor Dr Dres. h. c. Otto Kaiser †, University of Marburg ■ Professor Dr Rait Maruste, former Judge of the European Court of Human Rights

Founding Executive Board, 2001–2006

Head: Margit Sutrop

Deputy Heads: Professor Toivo Maimets ■ Professor Jüri Allik ■ Professor Wolfgang Drechsler ■ Professor Raul-Allan Kiivet † ■ Professor Anne Lill ■ Professor Jaan Sootak

Former Chair and Members of the Council

Former Chair of the Council: Professor Hele Everaus, Vice-Rector for Institutional Development – Chair of the Council, 2001–2006

Former members of the Council: Professor Rein Ahas † ■ Professor Jüri Allik ■ Dr Jüri Ginter ■ Professor Ain Heinaru † ■ Dr Aime Keis ■ Professor Raul-Allan Kiivet † ■ Professor Birute Klaas ■ Professor Anne Lill ■ Professor Jüri Sepp

Former student members of the Council: Kristi Lõuk ■ Helo Liis Soodla ■ Jay Allan Zemeska ■ Katrin Velbaum ■ Mats Volberg

Former Staff Members of the Centre for Ethics

Over the years, the Centre's team has included researchers, lecturers, project managers, coordinators, and support staff whose work has laid the foundations for what the Centre is today.

Õnne Allaje ■ Britten Dortmans ■ Jaana Eigi-Watkin ■ Hanna-Liisa Ennet ■ Anne-Mai Helemäe ■ Juhan Hellerna ■ Helen Hirsnik ■ Edydh Johanson ■ Nelli Jung ■ Kirsti Jõesalu ■ Margit Järvik ■ Marek Järvik ■ Gea Kangilaski ■ Triin Käpp ■ Külli Keerus ■ Egge Kulbok-Lattik ■ Tiina Kukkes ■ Triinu Laan ■ Urmas Loit ■ Kadri Lutt ■ Kirke Läänesaar ■ Heidy Meriste ■ Krõõt Nõges ■ Monika Pahla ■ Sigrid Parts ■ Triin Pisuke ■ Nele Punnar ■ Vivian Puusepp ■ Marko Ringo ■ Anna Elise Rohtmets ■ Olga Schihalejev ■ Kadri Simm ■ Riin Sirkel ■ Marie Soone ■ Sandra Sommer ■ Mari-Liis Tina ■ Aire Vahe ■ Liisi Veski-Kuldkepp ■ Mats Volberg

With Gratitude

We thank our students, visiting scholars, project partners, funders, and everyone who has contributed to the Centre's work. We are grateful to the schools and kindergartens, teachers and critical friends; hospitals, physicians, and ethics committees; research institutions and researchers; ministries, the Estonian Parliament, local authorities, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and communities with whom we have worked. Your questions, experiences, and engagement have helped the Centre grow and develop.

Our special thanks go to the University of Tartu and the Volkswagen Foundation, whose support laid strong foundations for the Centre during its formative years. We are equally grateful to all our Estonian and international partners with whom we have had the opportunity to learn, conduct research, and bring about meaningful change.

Our partners and supporters



Over to You!

As we look forward to the next years, we invite you to be part of the story still to come. Share a thought, a memory, a question, or a wish for the Centre for Ethics.



What's Next?

The Centre's task in the years ahead is to help society navigate situations in which technological capabilities, legal frameworks, and human values do not always evolve at the same pace.

We will continue our work in the following areas:

- education that supports human flourishing and the ethical competence of teachers;
- research ethics, research integrity, and a responsible research system;
- dialogic communication and the management of value-based and moral disagreements;
- the ethics of artificial intelligence and human-centred technological development;
- codes of ethics and mechanisms of professional responsibility and accountability;
- bioethics, clinical ethics, and practices that support patient autonomy.

Our goal is not to eliminate all disagreement from society. In a democratic society, disagreements are both natural and inevitable. What matters is the ability to recognise and articulate them, to listen to others, and to make decisions in ways that are well-reasoned, fair and responsible.

The Centre for Ethics will continue to serve as a place where research, teaching, and societal experience come together, helping to ensure that complex questions are met with deeper knowledge, richer discussion and wiser decisions.



Get in Touch!

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Collaborate for Impact

We welcome collaborations in research, education, and public engagement!