

ERGA Code of Conduct v2.0

Developed by the ERGA JEDI Committee

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Authors: Chiara Bortoluzzi, Elena Buzan, Christian de Guttry, Diego de Panis, Fabrizio Ghiselli, Giulio Formenti, Jennifer Leonard, Ann Mc Cartney, Merce Montoliu, Alice Mouton, Sadye Paez, Robert Waterhouse.

The [European Reference Genome Atlas](#) (ERGA) Code of Conduct has been developed by the community for the community, reflecting our commitment to ensuring an inclusive and respectful environment. Feedback is always welcome, and constructive suggestions will be reviewed and implemented regularly to ensure continuous improvement. The development of the ERGA Code of Conduct was inspired by the [ELIXIR Code of Conduct](#).

- 1. General Introduction:** The European Reference Genome Atlas (ERGA), is a community of peers dedicated to advancing genomic research and fostering international collaboration in the field of high-quality reference genomes. This Code of Conduct is designed to ensure a welcoming and safe environment for all ERGA Members, whether as participants in community activities or representing ERGA in activities organised by others. The Code of Conduct provides guidelines for ERGA Members, outlining expectations for interactions within the community to be characterised by professionalism, inclusiveness, and ethical conduct. It is expected that ERGA Members act in accordance with these guidelines, fostering a culture of responsibility both at the individual level and as a collective responsibility for ERGA as a community. In adhering to its principles, we collectively contribute to the creation of a collaborative environment that encourages innovation and idea exchange.
- 2. Summary of the Content:** The ERGA Code of Conduct contains important and binding guidelines for all ERGA Members that engage in any ERGA-related activities and/or when representing ERGA. The document is structured into two sections: membership and scientific, providing clarity and specificity to set out expectations of irreproachable conduct of ERGA Members and to highlight the rigorous standards we expect in the ERGA-related scientific endeavours of ERGA Members, respectively.

3. Membership: Expectations of Irreproachable Conduct

- a. **Motto:** Our foundation is respect, our tradition is inclusion, our ethos is safety.
- b. **Motivation:** The creation of the ERGA Code of Conduct emerged from a collective commitment to guiding interpersonal interactions within the ERGA community and for ensuring a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all Members.
- c. **Background:** The mission of ERGA is scientifically motivated: to advance biodiversity genomics efforts across Europe. To maximise scientific outcomes and realise its ambitious goals, ERGA requires a foundation that fosters a culture of respect and research integrity across all Members, collectively ensuring a collaborative, inclusive, and supportive environment.

Our Principles

- i. **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI):** A thriving community is one where members feel a strong sense of belonging. Key aspects that contribute to fostering a sense of belonging are expressed by the JEDI principles ([GA4GH's working definition](#)). Justice: ensuring systems that allow participation by all. Equity: ensuring fairness in access to resources and opportunities by all. Diversity: recognising and valuing the differences amongst all members. Inclusion: fostering environments where all feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued. ERGA as a community is committed to upholding JEDI principles across all actions and activities. Participants in ERGA actions and activities are therefore expected as individuals and collectively to behave in a manner that supports, promotes, and upholds these key principles to continue to foster belonging. Concretely, this includes but is not limited to: strive to always learn from diverse individuals; show respect for and value psychological, physical, and social similarities and differences such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, political beliefs, and learning styles; and strive to always recognise challenges and consider how actions and systems can be improved to ensure fairness and opportunities for participation by all. By doing so, we can build an accommodating and inclusive community that can thrive with a strong sense of belonging.



ii. **Ethics and Integrity:** ERGA is committed to upholding the highest ethical standards and integrity in all interactions and endeavours. This means embracing a spirit of kindness and mutual respect, treating others as one would expect to be treated, cultivating a positive, safe, and welcoming atmosphere, where honesty and universal moral principles are valued and serve to guide interpersonal interactions within the ERGA community.



iii. **Trust and Collaboration:** ERGA is committed to creating a collaborative environment that transcends geographical, cultural, political, and spiritual boundaries, promoting the exchange of ideas and collaboration among researchers with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Open dialogue that welcomes questions and values diverse points of view is key to establishing trust and building fruitful collaborations. Building trust through open dialogue requires active consideration from all participants, to promote a safe and supportive environment where everyone is comfortable expressing their views. By nurturing an atmosphere of trust where each voice is heard, ERGA aims to cultivate a collaborative space for meaningful scientific exchanges and personal growth within our community.



iv. **Respect:** ERGA is committed to creating an environment where everyone feels respected. Respect means showing due consideration of the feelings, wishes, opinions, or rights of others. In all interpersonal interactions, ERGA Members are expected to demonstrate respect and courtesy, both in-person and online, orally or in writing. To actively promote a culture of respect, ERGA Members are encouraged to use welcoming language, be open to different viewpoints and experiences, exhibit courtesy towards fellow ERGA Members and guests, and contribute to scientific and technical discussions with constructive feedback.



v. **Accountability and Transparency:** ERGA is committed to ensuring transparency across all actions and activities and taking accountability for their outcomes. Accountability entails being willing to accept responsibility for one's actions. Accountability takes bravery and courage, and ERGA Members are encouraged to express compassion in such circumstances. Transparency entails being open to scrutiny by others. By striving for accountability and transparency, ERGA Members help to build a responsible and open community that can thrive with a strong governance.



4. Scientific: Expectations of Rigorous Standards

- a. Introduction:** The foundation of ERGA's expectations of rigorous scientific standards is grounded in the principles outlined in [the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#). This supports a research community focused on ethics, integrity, and collaboration, whilst transcending boundaries, upholding freedom of independent inquiry, and providing a framework to promote scientific excellence. Emphasising research integrity, the European Code establishes principles, defines proper conduct, and ensures the quality and reliability of research results.
- b. Principles:** The European Code highlights four key principles (copied here in points i. ii. iii. and iv.) that help to promote good research practices. As a community, ERGA endorses these principles, and the accompanying guidelines on good research practices that cover: Research Environment; Training, Supervision, and Mentoring; Research Procedures; Safeguards; Data Practices and Management; Collaborative Working; Publication, Dissemination, and Authorship; and Reviewing and Assessment. ERGA further endorses the European Code's guidance on preventing, recognising, and responding to violations of research integrity that cover: Research Misconduct and other Unacceptable Practices; and Dealing with Violations and Allegations of Misconduct. ERGA aims to uphold and promote these principles and guidelines within our community to ensure the expectations of rigorous scientific standards are met across all ERGA scientific actions and activities.
- i. Reliability** in ensuring the quality of research, reflected in the design, methodology, analysis, and use of resources.
- ii. Honesty** in developing, undertaking, reviewing, reporting, and communicating research in a transparent, fair, full, and unbiased way.
- iii. Respect** for colleagues, research participants, research subjects, society, ecosystems, cultural heritage, and the environment.
- iv. Accountability** for the research from idea to publication, for its management and organisation, for training, supervision, and mentoring, and for its wider societal impacts.

5. Guidance for Addressing Concerns Raised

a. Introduction: The ERGA Executive Board is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the ERGA Code of Conduct and ensuring that it is upheld, and maintained. The whole ERGA community is responsible for ensuring adherence to the Code of Conduct as part of all ERGA actions and activities and for raising concerns when any breach is perceived to have occurred.

b. Addressing concerns:

- i. From the ERGA Governance document *“All ERGA Members are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, collegial manner that is in accordance with the ERGA Code of Conduct. Should any conflicts arise between ERGA Members, the individuals concerned are encouraged to first attempt to resolve matters amicably amongst themselves. Should this not be possible and an ERGA Member feels that they have been subject to behaviours that are not compliant with the ERGA Code of Conduct, they can raise this matter with a member of the ERGA Executive Board. A member of the Executive Board who can declare that they are not in a position of conflict of interest will then proceed to convene a Conduct Compliance Group to oversee the conflict resolution procedure.”*
- ii. Please refer to the [ERGA Governance document](#), section “Conflict Resolution and Disciplinary Matters” for a complete description of the procedures to be followed to convene a Conduct Compliance Group to oversee the conflict resolution procedure.
- iii. To report a concern or incident, it is recommended to compile a report of the concern or incident that includes at least the following key information:
 1. *Name(s) of the Claimant(s) - person(s) reporting the issue/concern*
 2. *Name(s) of the Respondent(s) - person(s) believed to have breached the code*
 3. *Summary description of events (overview) - a clear description of the perceived breach, including any attempts to resolve the issue prior to reporting it (if applicable)*
 4. *An indication of what would need to be achieved in order to reach an amicable resolution of the concern or incident*
 5. *Supporting information (email conversations, public meeting recordings etc.)*

6. Bibliography

- a. GA4HG www.ga4gh.org/document/working-definition-of-edi-for-rews-diversity
- b. ALLEA (2023) The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity – Revised Edition 2023. Berlin. DOI 10.26356/ECOC