

Statement of the Estonian Research Council on the use of generative AI in research funding

February 2024 (updated February 2025)

Artificial intelligence systems are already in use in the Estonian research system and the search for new applications continues. Along with the growing use of artificial intelligence, new questions are emerging about the permissible use of such applications.

With this statementⁱ, the Estonian Research Council defines general limits for the use of generative AI applications in the context of applying for research funding and evaluating grant applications. The position does not concern other issues related to the use of artificial intelligence and potential societal impacts, including the potential misuse of generative models in research. The Estonian Research Council supports Estonian researchers in the development of AI methods and applications on the assumption that this is done in the interests of the society and by following relevant ethical principles.

Considering the potential of AI, the Estonian Research Council will not limit its use in activities where it can reasonably be expected to simplify the work of researchers without compromising society's trust in science. At the same time, AI technologies are developing rapidly, and new problems and challenges may arise, so these principles need to be renewed regularly.

General principles

1. **Responsibility:** the responsibility for the use of AI applications lies with the researcher who must adhere to the general scientific ethical principles, respect the rights of people, and avoid harming them.
2. **Transparency and explainability:** the researcher always reports on the use of artificial intelligence and specifies which AI applications have been used for which activities.
3. **Human oversight:** all important stages of research must be controlled and confirmed by a human, even if AI assistance has been used. Minimally, this requirement includes the following activities: formulating hypotheses, formulating research objectives, identifying missing knowledge, analyzing and interpreting data, writing manuscripts, and peer-review.

Use of Artificial Intelligence at the Estonian Research Council

1. **Preparation of applications:** The Estonian Research Council permits the use of generative AI in the preparation of grant applications and other materials, provided that such use has been clearly declared and sufficiently explained.
2. **Reviewing applications:** generative AI may not be used for reviewing and evaluating grant applications. This is due to the need to protect the confidentiality of the evaluation and to prevent the release of confidential information into the training material for language models.
3. **Supporting the evaluation process:** The Estonian Research Council is not currently using AI at any stage of the evaluation process but is considering ways to enhance the evaluation process using AI tools without compromising the reliability of the evaluation. We ensure the transparency of the evaluation process and make sure that a human is accountable for each step of the process.

ⁱ The statement of Estonian Research Council was informed by the following materials:

Bockting, C. L., van Dis, E. A. M., van Rooij, R., Zuidema, W., & Bollen, J. (2023). Living guidelines for generative AI - why scientists must oversee its use. *Nature*, 622(7984), 693–696. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-023-03266-1>

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (2023). *Statement by the Executive Committee of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft on the Influence of Generative Models of Text and Image Creation on Science and the Humanities and on the DFG's Funding Activities*.

<https://www.dfg.de/resource/blob/289676/89c03e7a7a8a024093602995974832f9/230921-statement-executive-committee-ki-ai-data.pdf>

European Commission, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, (2019). *Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI*, Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2759/346720>