



REPHRAIN RESEARCH CENTRE

Newsletter - May 2021

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THE REPHRAIN NEWSLETTER - CELEBRATING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS!

The UKRI National Research Centre of Excellence in Privacy, Harm Reduction and Adversarial Influence Online (REPHRAIN) was launched in October 2020. REPHRAIN is exploring how to keep people safe online while allowing them to fully participate in digital technologies and the contributions they make to an innovative, inclusive and healthy digital economy and society. Through items such as this monthly newsletter, the REPHRAIN centre team aim to keep you all up to date with the latest centre enterprises, such as workshops, funding calls, collaboration opportunities and much more.

Since launching, we've already made some fantastic progress that we're excited to share with you below - read on for more detail.

[Find out more about REPHRAIN](#)

A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

AWAIS RASHID, PROFESSOR OF CYBER SECURITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL AND DIRECTOR OF REPHRAIN



“The Internet has provided a range of innovative ways to come together, share information and engage with each other across the globe. However, this large-scale information sharing has also highlighted a range of harms – from child abuse to hate campaigns and the spread of disinformation.”

“The urgency of new scientific advances to protect citizens from a variety of harms without stifling data-driven innovation is highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis. We have a pressing need for data-sharing to track and contain the pandemic, whilst preserving privacy and

preventing spread of disinformation through global scale social networks.”

“It’s a challenge that spans all areas of our lives and one that we are ready to tackle, by bringing together the greatest minds in the country, across a whole range of disciplines.”

**PROFESSOR MADELINE CARR (UCL
STEAPP), DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF
REPHRAIN**



"We see this as the challenge of our generation and getting it right will have huge implications for the digital economy, for human rights online, and for the future potential of utilising data to solve some of the world’s most pressing problems.

"We know these complex issues can only be addressed by working across disciplines and sectors, by bringing together technical experts, social scientists, industry and government – in pursuit of improving the human condition in the digital age. And we're delighted to be leading on this with a consortium of some of the most innovative thinkers on protecting citizens online."

SCOPING WORKSHOPS

The REPHRAIN Map aims to give a clearer picture and understanding of the wider landscape and to give a baseline of current state-of-the-art. The Map is a living socio-technical resource with the ability to drill down into advances that mitigate against particular harms. To help inform the Map the REPHRAIN core team held a series of community workshops in February and March 2021 to provide the opportunity for the community to engage and input.

The workshops were a successful endeavour, well-attended by more than 50 experts from various areas (including academia, law enforcement, policy makers and industry). These sessions were designed to focus on some key research questions and challenges and provided valuable input from the wider community and stakeholders into the REPHRAIN map and to help inform

future research. Thank you to all who attended - your contributions will shape our work!

REPHRAIN SCOPING DOCUMENT

As a consequence of the above, the REPHRAIN scoping document was released for public review and comment. This document combines insights from our workshops and literature review and will inform the UKRI Protecting Citizens Online funding call as well as our own Strategic Funding Call, by identifying potential research opportunities and key themes and challenges, as delineated below.

Overarching research theme	Research Challenges
Understanding citizens' needs and empowering them in ever changing threat contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usable harm mitigation tools.• Novel tools and methods for alerting users about imminent and potential harm.• User-oriented tools to prevent harm through impersonation.
Navigating information asymmetries between state, companies and citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Methods, tools and techniques for responsible data usage and dissemination.• Maximising users' agency through effective mechanisms for data transparency, traceability, assurance and portability.• Innovative methods for informed consent in seamless human-technological interactions in shared spaces
What does good or balanced look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Balancing privilege management and anonymous credentials.• Forensic readiness without violating data privacy rights.• Designing and validating metrics for assessing the effectiveness of harm mitigation mechanisms.

This period of consultation has now closed - the scoping document enjoyed a warm reception and we have received

useful and constructive feedback. Thank you to all who have contributed their thoughts and time to this exercise - activities such as this are key to REPHRAIN's central tenet of engaging with the community and public at large.

The scoping document, updated per the comments received, has been reissued and is available from our website.

Scoping Document

STRATEGIC FUNDING CALL

The REPHRAIN Strategic Funding programme has now launched with the first call from the programme released on 19 April 2021. The Strategic Funding programmes aims to fund proposals that support and enhance the missions of the REPHRAIN centre. As a result of the scoping work and the scoping documentation, we were able to identify five priority areas for further research projects. This formed the basis of our first Strategic Funding Call, launched on 19 April with a submission deadline of 21 May.

We are very pleased to announce that the first REPHRAIN Strategic Funding Call was a great success - there was a huge engagement and we are currently working through your applications. We are both excited and inspired by the ideas and research proposals in the broader community and look forward to welcoming you into the REPHRAIN fold.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted a proposal! Details of what happens next can be found on our dedicated website pages.

Strategic Funding Call

PRACTITIONER / RESEARCHER-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAMME

This programme gives the opportunity for both researchers and practitioners to spend time working within the REPHRAIN Research Centre and creates an environment for mutual engagement and learning. The programme offers the opportunity for researchers and practitioners to collaborate with other Centre academic staff, researchers and external partners and to input into the Centre's outputs.

The In-Residence programme will give access to the Centre's resources, facilities and expertise and will allow successful applicants inclusion into Centre level events and activities.

The programme is open to UK and international researchers and practitioners with a rolling application process of Expression of Interest (EoI) for practitioners, with a more formal funding proposal for researchers . The call for EoIs to the programme will be launched in June 2021.

REFRAIN IN THE NEWS

[Dr Asma Vranaki](#) is a key member of the REPHRAIN team, who, in addition to conducting research on the [LAWREG project](#), is also the Academic Lead on the Policy and Regulation research strand, as well as serving on both the Strategic Board and the Ethics Board. In recognition of her expertise in this cyber-security regulation, Dr Vranaki provided expert comment to several media outlets on Make UK's recent report into the surge in cyber-attacks on manufacturing companies and the costs thereof. A full report and Asma's comments can be found in many national and regional outlets, such as [here](#).

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

In addition to the scoping document, as discussed above, several of our members have been working on research papers since our launch. We will include these publications on our newsletter - if you can't wait, feel free to check the publications section of our website for regular updates.

[Publications](#)



**"TOWARDS DATA SCIENTIFIC
INVESTIGATIONS: A
COMPREHENSIVE DATA SCIENCE
FRAMEWORK AND CASE STUDY FOR
INVESTIGATING ORGANIZED CRIME
& SERVING THE PUBLIC INTEREST"**

[Read the full paper](#)

The REPHRAIN Centre's Practitioner-in-Residence, Erik van de Sandt, working in collaboration with others, recently published a white paper, presenting guiding

principles and best practices for data scientific investigations of organized crime, developed and put into practice by operational experts over several years, while connecting to existing law enforcement and industry standards. The associated framework is called CSAE (pronounced as 'see-say'): a comprehensive framework that consists of a business process, methodology, policy agenda and public interest philosophy for data scientific operations.

A copy of this paper can be downloaded above - as with all of our publications, further copies are also available on our website (www.rephrain.ac.uk/publications/)

UPCOMING EVENTS

REPHRAIN - UKRI PROTECTING CITIZENS ONLINE CALL INFORMATION EVENT - 9 JUNE, 11.00AM-1.00PM

To support the UKRI in the launch of the Protecting Citizens Online funding call, the REPHRAIN centre is running an information event on 09 June 2021, 11am-1pm, the focus of which will be to provide the opportunity for interested parties to engage and to support the synthesis of ideas for potential proposals.

This will involve information sessions on the Strategic Priorities Fund and the UKRI Protecting Citizens Online call given by EPSRC, as well as an overview of the UKRI funded REPHRAIN research centre. Panel discussion sessions focusing on each of the three research themes (identified in the REPHRAIN scoping document, copied above) included in the UKRI PCO call document will then follow. The panels will be made up from representatives from relevant industry and third sector organisations.

This is a key opportunity to obtain further information on the UKRI PCO call, ask questions directly to EPSRC and to engage with interested stakeholders.

Registration is now open, via the link below! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the REPHRAIN team.

[Register here!](#)

RECENT EVENTS

**REPHRAIN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
BRISTOL'S FACULTY OF**

ENGINEERING RESEARCH SHOWCASE - W/C 19 APRIL 2021

As part of the University of Bristol's Faculty of Engineering Research Showcase, several members of the REPHRAIN team presented as part of the Faculty of Engineering. Two key sessions were given to invited attendees from industry.

20 April, 2.00-2.45pm: *National Research Centre on Privacy, Harm Reduction and Adversarial Influence Online (REPHRAIN)*

23 April, 3.00-4.00pm: *REPHRAIN - Understanding the online harm landscape*

REPHRAIN AT THE SPRITE+ TOWN HALL EVENT - 28 APRIL 2021

SPRITE+ has launched a series of short virtual events for Members and Expert Fellows to highlight potential funding opportunities for research and knowledge transfer in digital security, privacy, identity and trust. At the second in this series members of the REPHRAIN team gave an insight into the work that we are doing and gave participants the opportunity to learn about our upcoming funding call.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

If you are interested in joining the REPHRAIN team, vacancies are posted on our website and our social media channels.

Find out more

TALK TO US!

At the REPHRAIN Centre, we're always looking for new ways to collaborate and new partners to work with - if you're curious, get in touch via the below button.

Contact REPHRAIN

FOLLOW US FOR REGULAR UPDATES!

Our Twitter account, administered by the REPHRAIN Centre Management Team, can be found at @REPHRAIN1 - follow us [here](#) for updates!

Credits:

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