Institute of Translation and Interpreting

Cardiff University
Prifysgol Caerdydd

ITI COFFEE HOUSE:

PROGRESS TOWARDS A CODE OF ETHICS

CONTEXT: CODES OF ETHICS VS CODES OF CONDUCT

In the translation profession, it is common to use the two titles interchangeably, despite them fulfilling quite different purposes:

- A code of ethics is designed to convey a bigger picture, vision or overall philosophy of an institution or industry as a whole, and should help guide members' or employees' decision-making
- A code of conduct, meanwhile, outlines the concrete, small-scale behaviours expected of an employee or member, which should be enforceable rules with obvious applications

ITI currently employs a Code of Professional Conduct, rather than a Code of Ethics.

THE PROBLEM WITH CODES OF ETHICS / CONDUCT

Shortcomings include coverage, enforcement, and problems of interpretation and application

Existing codes are static, outdated, and overly prescriptive; many are lengthy and not user-friendly

Fail to address today’s ethical challenges and emerging concerns like environmental sustainability, technology, and translators' emotional wellbeing

Updating codes is a tricky, debated process due to the inherent complexity of the topic and the many and varied viewpoints held by practitioners

CONCEPT OF POST-CODE ETHICS

Lambert's (2023, 134) "post-code approach" to ethics in the translation industry, where static, outdated, and prescriptive guidelines are softened, or even replaced, by dynamic, timely, and evolving resources on ethical issues:

- Post-code ethics replace fixed guidelines with flexible, evolving resources that adapt to changing challenges
- This approach allows nuanced ethical decisions that reflect technological and societal changes
- The model offers a framework adaptable beyond the UK to other regions and professions

The ITI Coffee House sessions

COFFEE HOUSE – FOSTERING AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

"Places where people gathered to drink coffee, learn the news of the day, and perhaps to meet with other local residents and discuss matters of mutual concern."

Brian Cowan (2005). *The Social Life of Coffee*

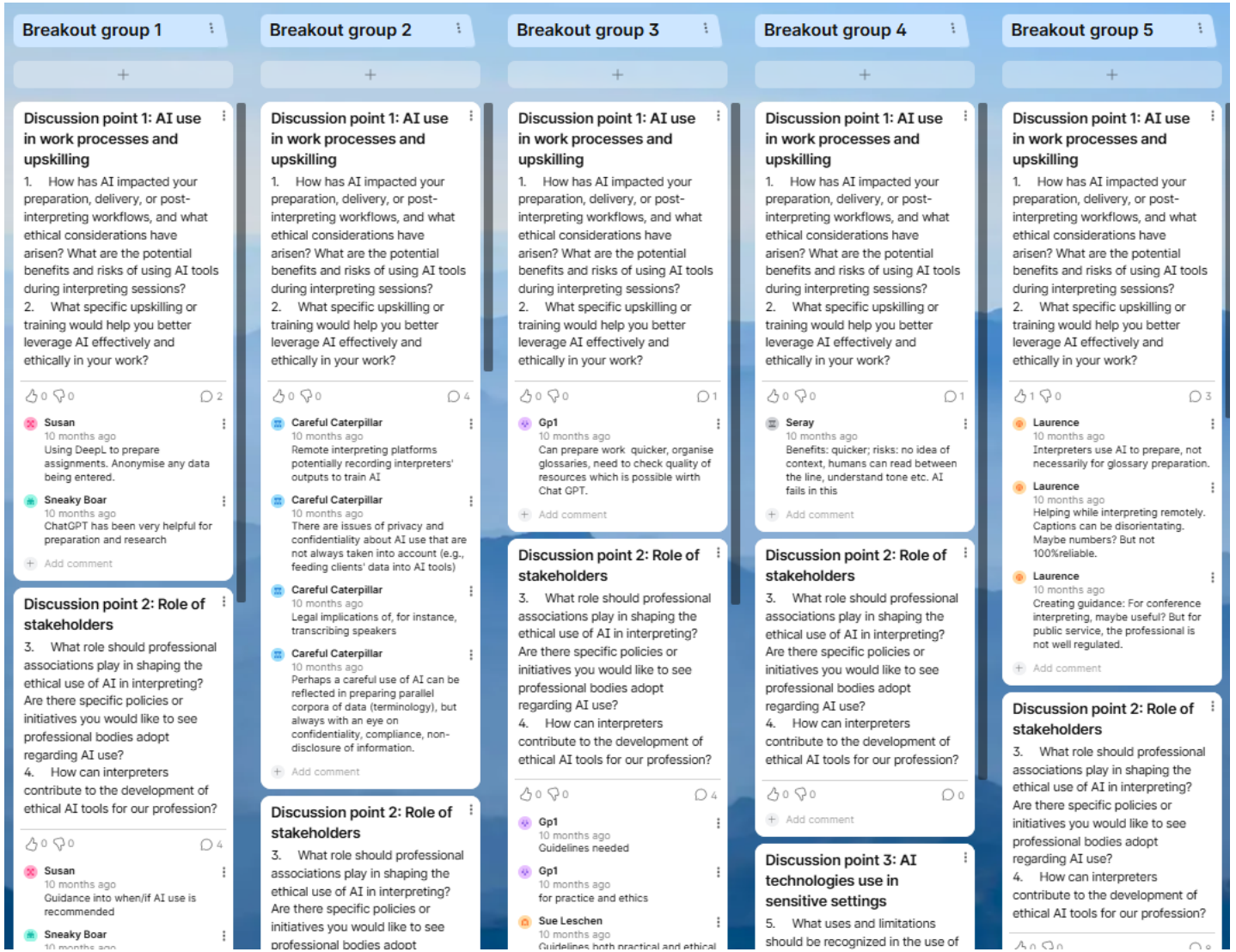
CO-CREATION AS AN UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE

AIM: Foster collaboration between academic and professional voices on ethics in translation

- Project developed in a very organic manner, with an openness to new ideas and changing directions
- Benefitted from being able to utilise existing academic networks to identify receptive, like-minded contributors
- No predetermined outcomes in mind
- Commitment to sharing the outputs openly
- Outputs are genuine reflections of attendees' thoughts

HOW IT WORKED

- Series of lunchtime sessions across 2024 and 2025 held online via Zoom
- Sessions combined expert insights with practitioner-led dialogue for real-world experience sharing
- Informal, free-flowing conversations in a relaxed atmosphere
- Ethics treated as an evolving conversation with actionable insights co-created by participants and captured on Padlet
- Presentation materials and AI-produced summaries based on the transcript and Padlet published after each session



Topic(s) discussed	Guest host(s)	Affiliation
Ethical payment practices	Anja Jones	Former Managing Director AJT
Environmental sustainability	Matt Riemland	Heriot-Watt University
Evolving translation technologies	Joss Moorkens	Dublin City University
Ethical practice within and outside of interpreting assignments	Rebecca Tipton & Beverley Costa	Manchester University & Pasolo
Trauma and audiovisual translation	Charlotte Bosseaux	Edinburgh University
Emotional wellbeing for translators	JC Penet	Newcastle University
Ethical issues in AI and interpreting	Rebecca Tipton & Deborah Giustini	Manchester University & Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU)
The role of LSPs in supporting freelancers	Sophie Howe	Comtec Translations
Ethics in interpreting for vulnerable populations	Xiaohui Yuan	University of Birmingham
ITI's Code of Professional Conduct - review	Sara Robertson & Joseph Lambert	ITI & Cardiff University
Ethics and self-care	JC Penet & Katerina Perdikaki	Newcastle University & freelance
Platform economies in translation and interpreting	Deborah Giustini & Dr Gökhan Firat	HBKU & formerly Surrey University

ITI COFFEE HOUSE PROGRAMME

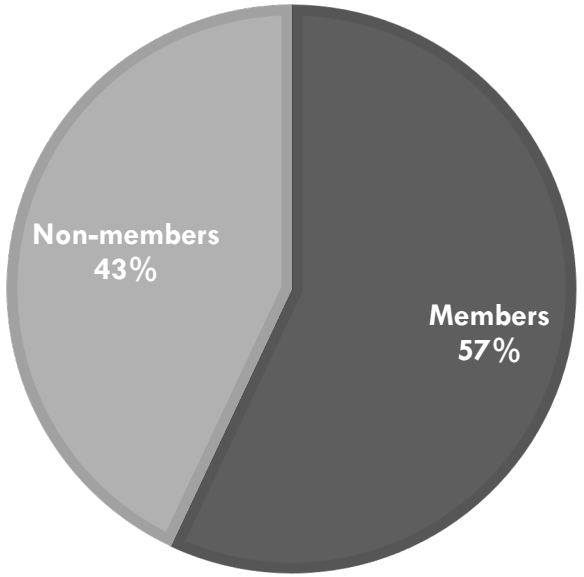
NUMBERS INVOLVED

12 sessions

596 total registrations

297 total live attendees

344 UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS



286 registered for 1-2 sessions

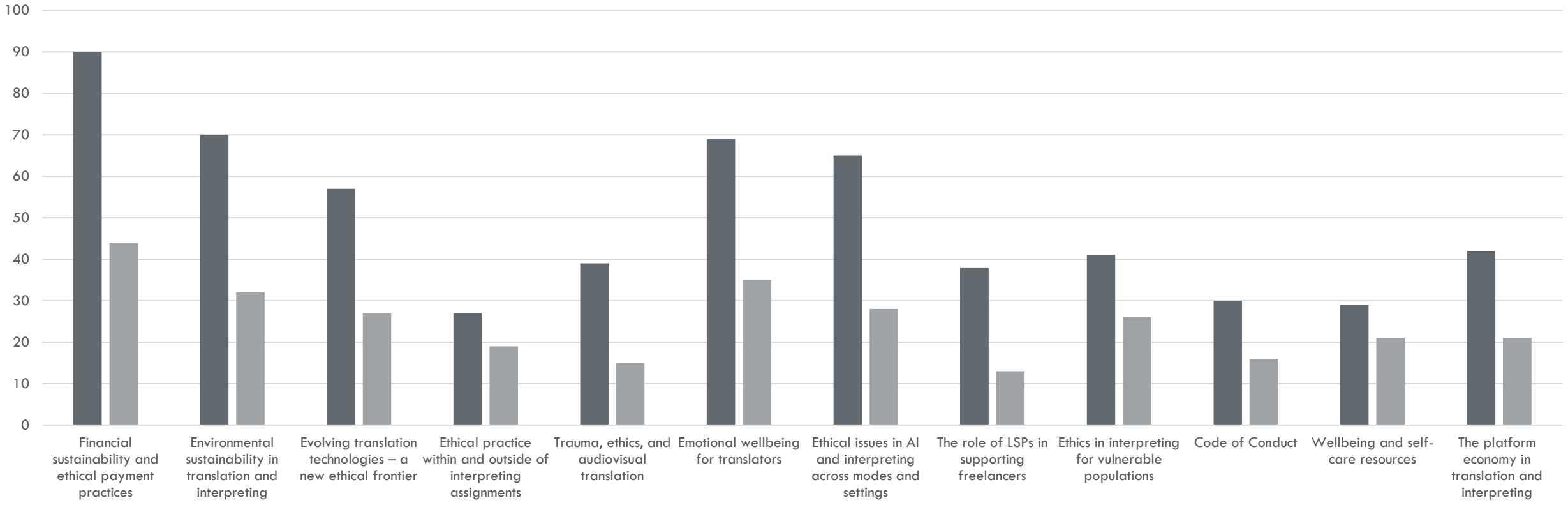
22 for 3 sessions

37 for 4+ sessions

1 registered for 11 sessions

(not including me and Sara)

REGISTRATIONS AND ATTENDANCE BY SESSION (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)



HOT TOPICS

- **Environmental sustainability** and **business** related topics dominated
- **Wellbeing** emerged as key concern
- Growing concern in **technology and AI ethics**, particularly around AI integration and ethical implications for professional practice

Largest three sessions

Financial sustainability (90 - highest single session)

Environmental considerations (70)

Platform economy challenges (42)

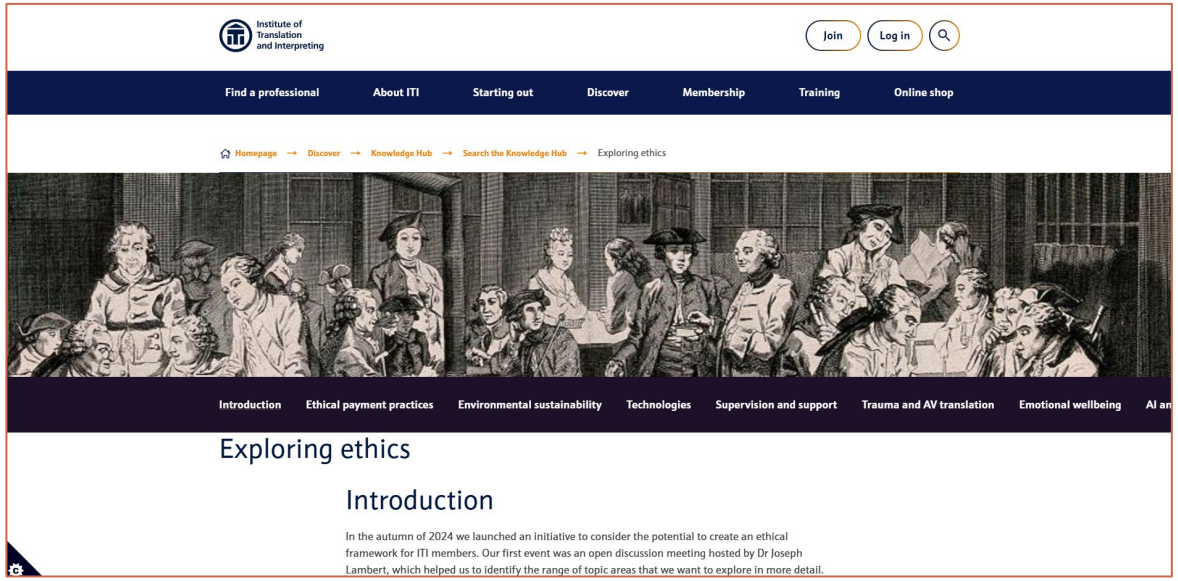
Large sessions (60+): Financial sustainability, environmental topics, wellbeing, and AI ethics

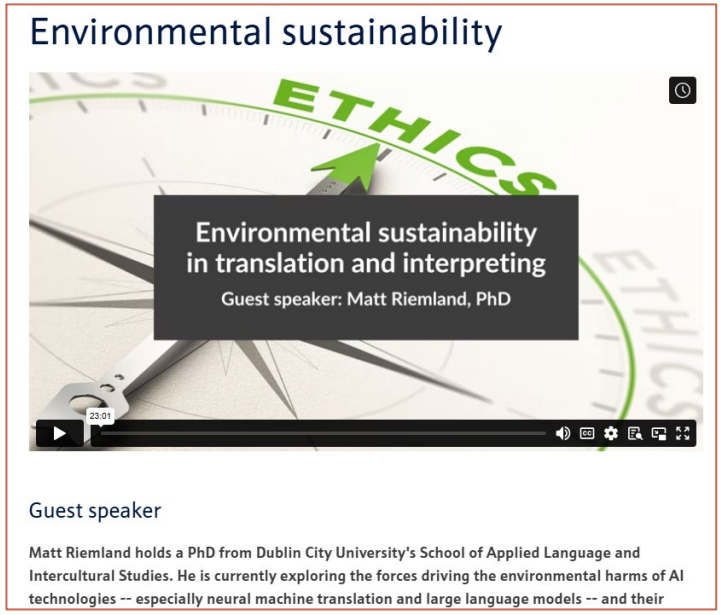
Medium sessions (35-59): Technology, platform economy, ethics topics

Small sessions (<35): Specialised ethics topics, professional conduct

OUTPUTS

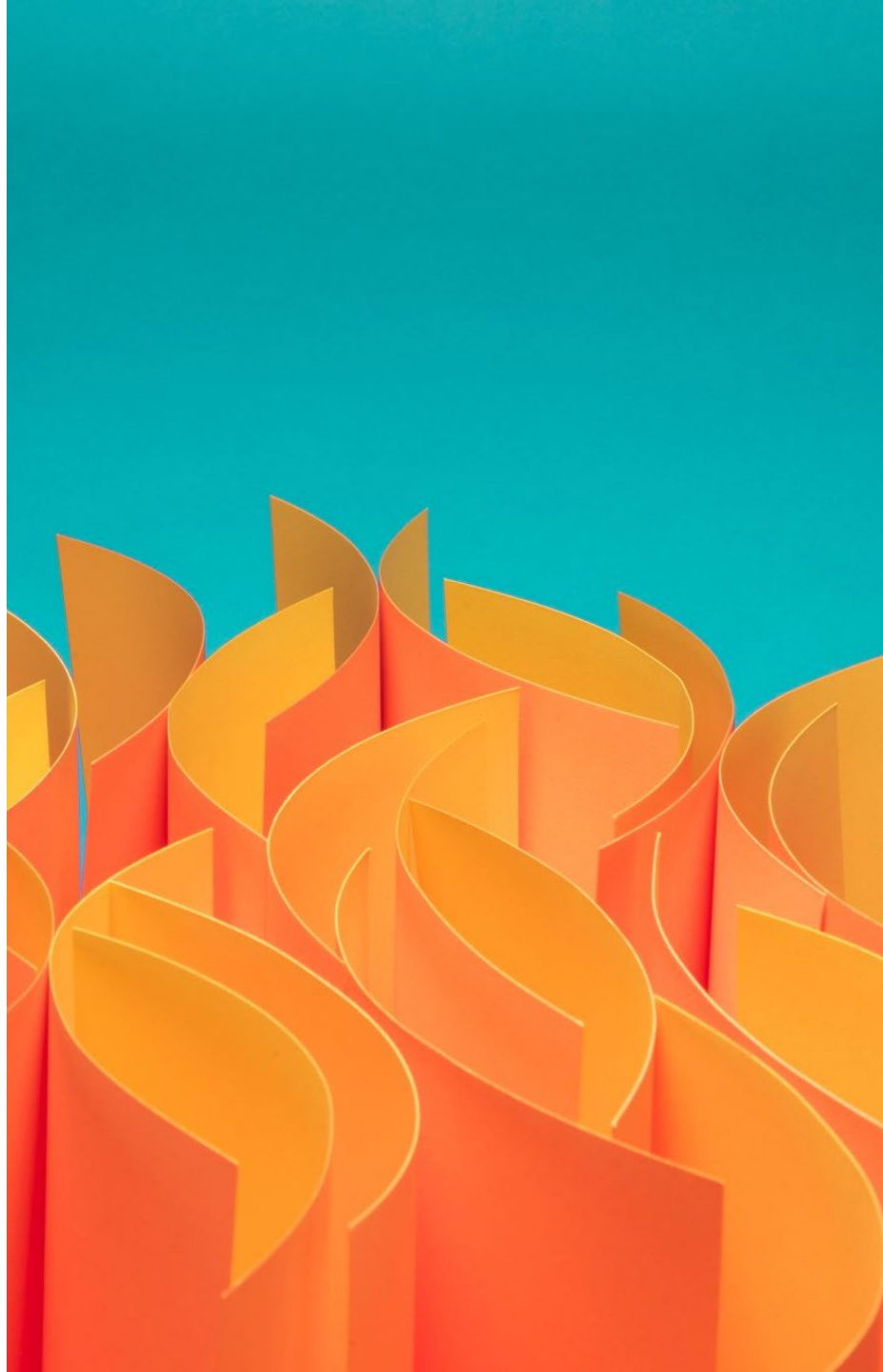
- A publicly-available web-based resource ('Exploring ethics') introducing the series and summarising all events
- Recordings of guest host presentations and/or slides from the 12 sessions and summaries of the discussions
- Article in the ITI Bulletin Nov-Dec 2024
- A conference paper in Madrid
- Additional, topic-specific content developed in response to demand (e.g. Wellbeing: what works for you?)





REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS SO FAR

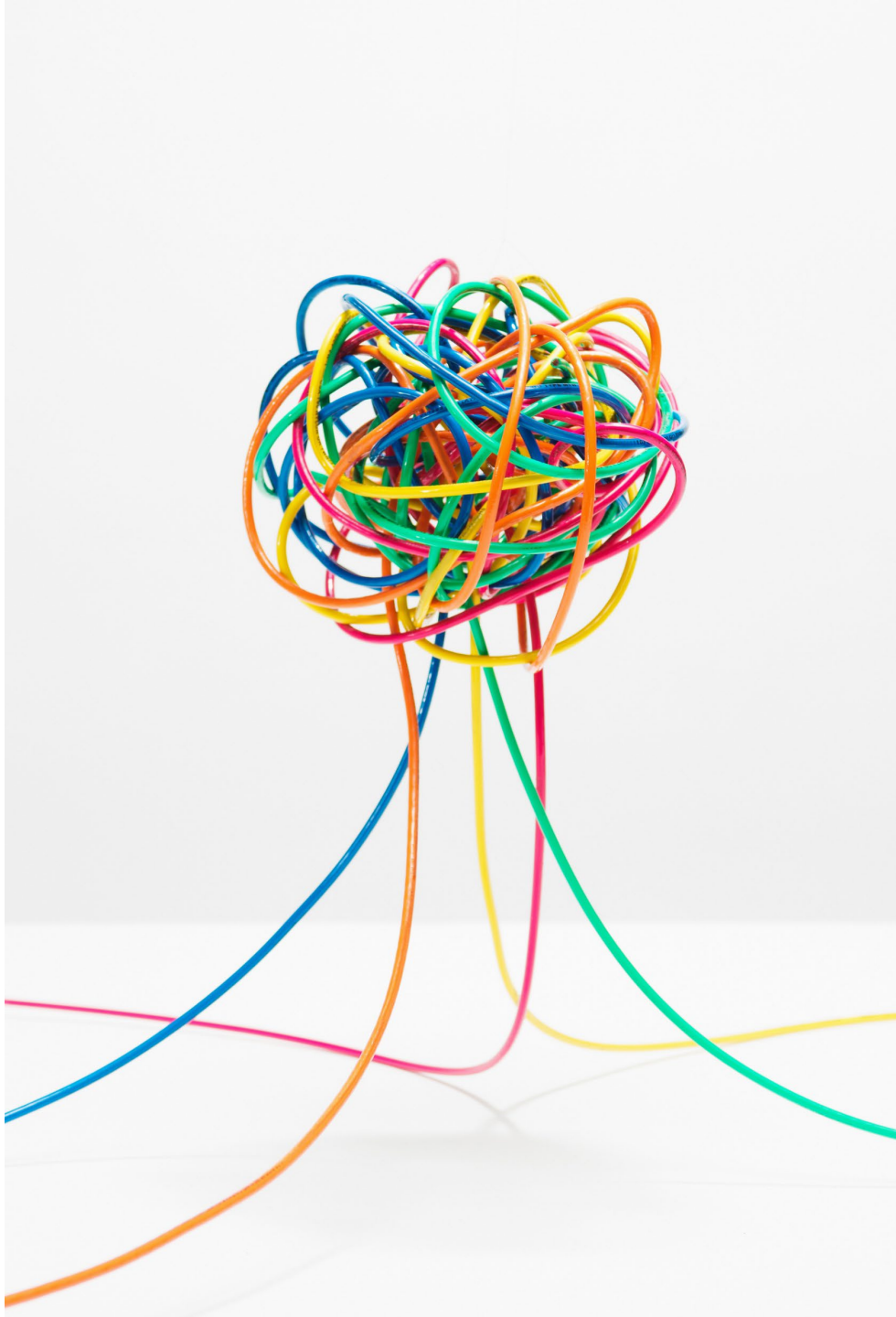
- Strong leadership and direction is required; although the outcomes were not predetermined there is still a need for a 'guiding hand'
- Collaboration is key; finding 'experts' was easy as one connection led to another and the academics participated because they could see value in the process
- A lot of work is need to make (often small-scale) progress so acknowledge – and celebrate – what has been achieved as you go along
- It's been fun!



THE MESSY REALITY

This kind of engagement is not easy.

- Professionals have limited time to commit; there's no guarantee that they will participate
- It's important to be realistic about what you can achieve, these things take much more time than you expect
- Ethics is a challenging topic and levels of understanding vary hugely; be prepared to invest time in 'warming up' your audience. Baby steps are required!
- Like AI, ethics draws strong, polarised opinions from everybody, regardless of the level of engagement/ understanding



Our audience (attendees?)

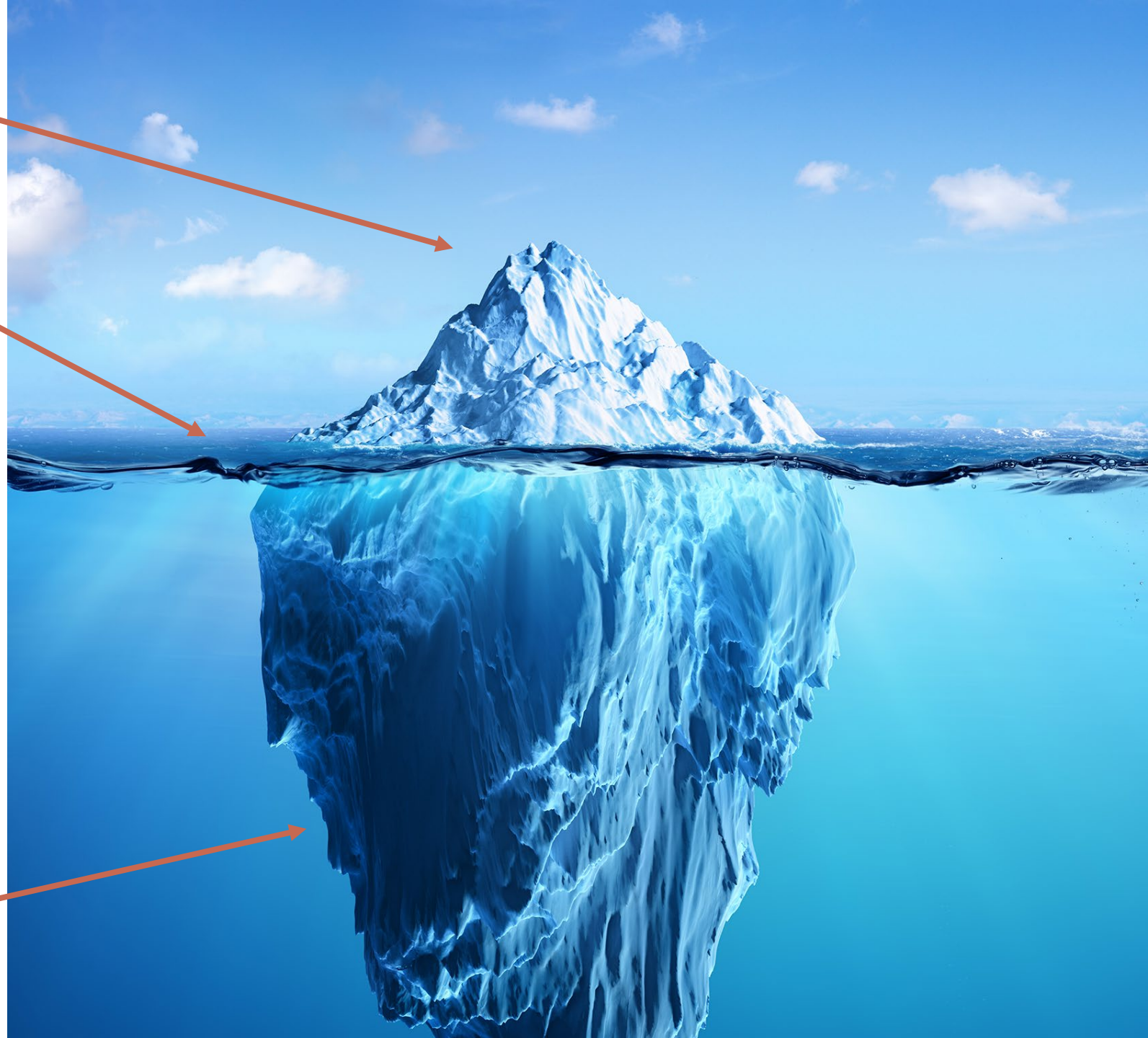
Definitely no sharks!

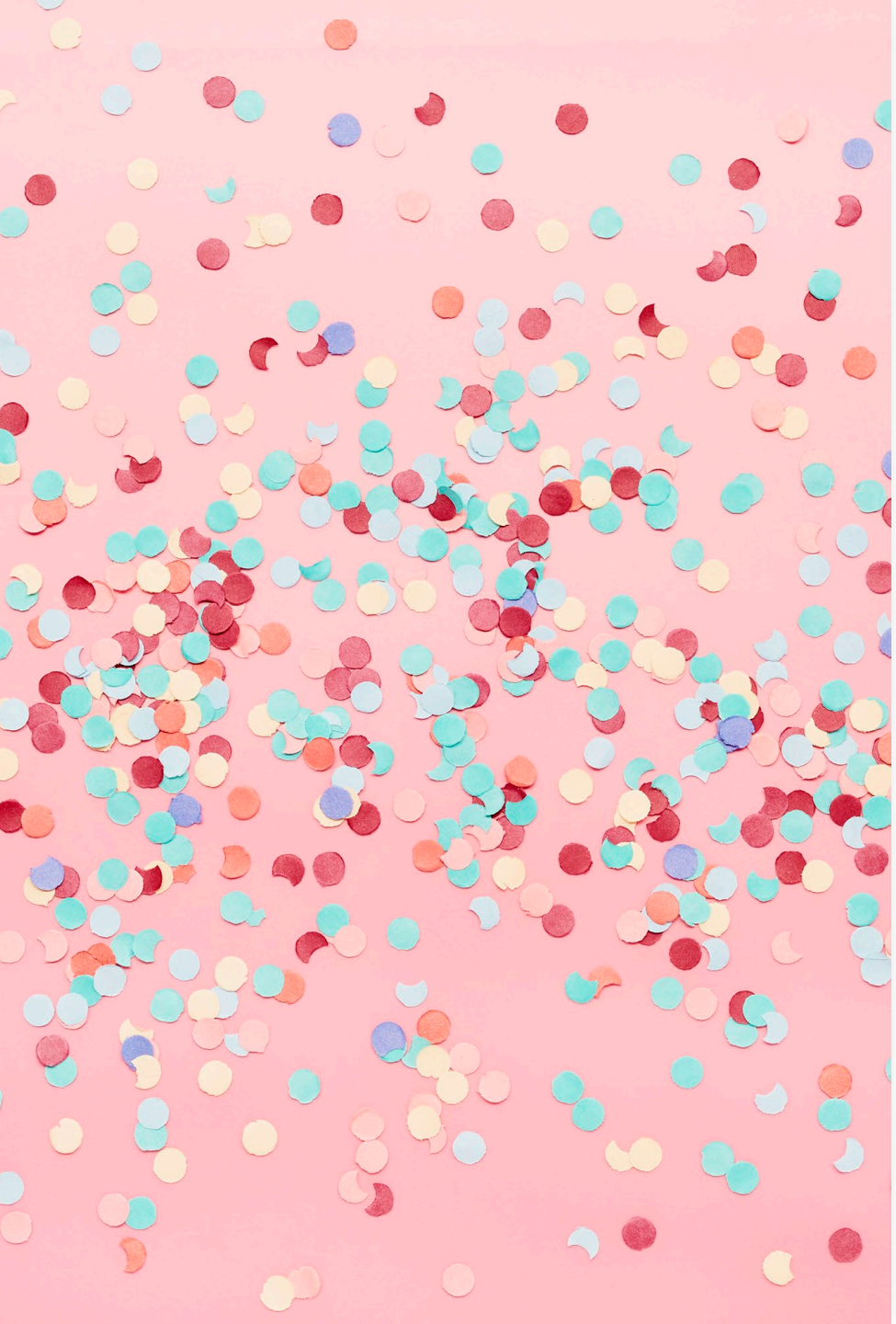
ONE QUESTION THAT REMAINS

Engaging people who are already interested is relatively easy...

But how do you engage a wider professional audience?

The others





FINAL THOUGHTS ON ETHICS IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- Ethical practice requires ongoing reflection, questioning, and adaptation to meet new challenges.
- Combining academic insights with practitioner experiences can help create responsive and effective ethical guidelines.
- Initiatives like the Coffee House emphasise collaboration and dialogue, and foster bottom-up engagement and inclusivity.
- A cohort of linguists now feel empowered and excited to talk to their clients / stakeholders about ethics

NEXT STEPS..?

- Survey of guest hosts and participants to evaluate their Coffee House experience
- Volunteer-led work to create "ethical guidance" for ITI members
- **Over to you: what should we do next?**