Council of the European Union

Brussels, 25 November 2015
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RECH 278

NOTE

From:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
To:	Council
No. prev. doc.:	13930/15 RECH 272
Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on research integrity *- Adoption*

1. The Luxembourg Presidency considers research integrity as one of its top priorities in the R&I domain. In this context, the Presidency has proposed draft Council conclusions on the issue. The draft conclusions have been discussed at the Research Working Party on 5 and 26 October and on 5 November 2015.

2. The Permanent Representatives Committee, at its meeting on 20 November 2015, examined these draft conclusions, resolved the remaining open issues and agreed to forward the draft conclusions to the Council (Competitiveness) of 30 November - 1 December 2015 for their adoption. PL has a general scrutiny reservation on the text, following the recent national elections (as indicated in a footnote in the annex to this note).

3. The Council (Competitiveness) is therefore called upon to adopt the conclusions as set out in the annex to this note.

ANNEX

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY[1,2]

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

– The Commission Recommendation on the European Charter for Researchers[3], setting out the basis for ethical practices and fundamental ethical principles for researchers and related organisations to act responsibly within their working environment;

– The respect to fundamental ethical principles and integrity in EU research and innovation activities, as complied with by the activities covered by Horizon 2020 - The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation[4];

– The respect to academic freedom and to free-of-constraint scientific research, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;

– The "European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity"[5] developed by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and All European Academies (ALLEA);

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1 PL: General scrutiny reservation.

2 For the purposes of these conclusions, research integrity relates to the performance of research to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour, and to the accuracy, objectivity and truth of the research record in publications and elsewhere. Good research practice includes research ethics in the proposal and experimentation phase, as well as publication ethics in its analysis and dissemination (main source: Irish Universities Association -www.iua.ie- and Royal Irish Academy -www.ria.ie-).

3 7321/05.

4 Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 - The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020).

5 The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ESF and ALLEA, 2011), available at http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/Code_Conduct_ResearchIntegrity.pdf

Research integrity as key to research excellence and socio-economic relevance

1. CONSIDERS research integrity as the foundation of high quality research and as a prerequisite for achieving excellence in research and innovation in Europe and beyond. STRESSES the importance of research and innovation based on academic freedom and integrity as an essential element for a trustworthy knowledge-base leading to socio-economic development and advancement as well as to the improvement of living standards, health and wellbeing of citizens;

2. ACKNOWLEDGES the increase in scientific output and dissemination worldwide and, in such context, HIGHLIGHTS the importance of good practice through all stages of the research and innovation cycle;

3. RECOGNISES the importance of open science as a mechanism for reinforcing research integrity, while, at the same time, research integrity contributes to open science;

Socio-economic impact of research misconduct and its prevention

4. ACKNOWLEDGES that integrity in both public and private research can be damaged by research misconduct[6] and RECOGNISES that research misconduct, including questionable research practices, can lead to considerable negative economic impact and costs for both the public and private sector, and have consequences for:

   a) *Individuals and society*: false results or unsafe R&I products or processes may be released or may become public and widely accepted by the community or by other scientists with serious consequences, including hampering scientific progress;

[6] Research misconduct is understood as breaches of research integrity. Research misconduct includes fabrication, falsification, plagiarism (FFP) or misappropriation in proposing, performing, or reporting of results and other questionable research practices, because these violations damage the research record (main source: OECD (2007): "Best practices for ensuring scientific integrity and preventing misconduct").

b) *Public policies:* unreliable data or untrustworthy advice may lead to poor policy-making;

c) *Public institutions*: institutional abilities to foster and promote research in a competent and responsible manner can be undermined;

d) *Public trust*: research misconduct and the misuse of public funds can lead to the disruption of public confidence and support in science, and thereby endanger the sustainability of R&I funding;

5. CONSIDERS that, while respecting academic freedom, the primary responsibility for research integrity is with researchers themselves, with an overarching responsibility also being existent at institutional level; Consequently, CALLS for the fostering of an institutional culture of research integrity in order to create, mainly through clear institutional rules, procedures and guidelines as well as training and mentoring based on the exchange of best practices, a climate in which responsible behaviour is expected at individual and institutional level;

6. EMPHASISES the need for measures to prevent and address research misconduct, including questionable research practices; INVITES research organisations and Member States to find appropriate channels for the examination of alleged misconduct towards researchers and, if appropriate, institutions where research misconduct takes place; and HIGHLIGHTS the role that education, training and life-long learning at different stages of the researchers' careers can play in this respect;

Promotion of research integrity at EU and Member State level

7. AGREES on the value and benefit of the promotion of research integrity at individual and institutional level and CONSIDERS that research at EU and Member State level should be founded on the principles listed in the "European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" developed by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and All European Academies (ALLEA), as follows:

   – Honesty;

   – Reliability;

   – Objectivity;

   – Impartiality and independence;

   – Open communication;

   – Duty of care;

   – Fairness;

   – Responsibility for future science generations;

8. STRESSES the need for the implementation of research integrity principles as a guarantee for high quality research in Europe while avoiding additional administrative burden; in this respect, ACKNOWLEDGES the efforts carried out by the scientific community, including ERA stakeholders and other international organisations, as well as the relevant national authorities in supporting the implementation of existing principles and codes;

9. WELCOMES the application by the Commission of the aforementioned "European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" in Horizon 2020; and CALLS for the consistent application of the Code in EU-funded research;

10. INVITES Member States and the Commission to promote existing research integrity networks, such as the European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO), including training activities based on the "train-the-trainer" principle in order to move towards a higher degree of consistency of research integrity practices in Europe;

11. INVITES Member States, in collaboration with the Commission, to step up efforts on their mutual learning exercises, including within the framework of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) as well as of the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility tool; ENCOURAGES the exchange of best practices in the field of research integrity such as in education-related activities, including doctoral and relevant life-long training programs, as well as in promoting institutional change;

12. CALLS on Member States, research funders and the research community together to explore ways for diminishing incentives for research misconduct, focusing on positive incentives for the promotion of the quality of research and on them to develop guidelines to address misconduct;

13. CALLS on all actors involved, including individual researchers, the research community, research performing and research funding organisations, universities, public authorities and scientific journal editors, to define and implement policies to promote research integrity and to prevent and address research misconduct, including questionable research practices.