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LIMITE

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WORKING PAPER

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WORKING DOCUMENT

From: ERAC Secretariat
To: ERAC (European Research Area and Innovation Committee)

Subject: ERAC plenary 16 June 2017 - agenda item 4.2
Research Integrity

ERAC Members will find attached a Note on Research Integrity relating to item 4.2 of the ERAC plenary on 16 June 2017 in Brussels.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Horizon 2020 and European Research Policy

Research integrity is one of the priorities of Commissioner Moedas for European Research policy. It is proposed to set European Standards to foster research integrity, which is also among the main policy ambitions for the development of Open Science.

In Horizon 2020, research integrity is an important dimension, which has been strengthened in comparison with previous Framework Programmes. Research integrity is considered as a prerequisite for research excellence. In the Rules for Participation and in the Grant Agreement (Article 34 on Ethics and Research Integrity), it is explicitly made clear to participants that activities funded under Horizon 2020 need to comply with the highest standards of research integrity.

Member States

The overall situation in the Member States is characterised by different approaches and attitudes to integrity. Since 2008, Member States' research integrity structures have started to cooperate on a voluntary basis to address European and national challenges. The European Network of Research Integrity Officers (ENRIO) that was set up is now supported by Horizon 2020, which funds the development of a European Network of Research Ethics and Research Integrity (ENERI).

Stronger focus on research integrity in the policy agenda

At the initiative of the Luxembourg Presidency, the Council conducted an informal debate on research integrity in July 2015. This constructive exchange led to the adoption of Council Conclusions at the formal Council of 1 December 2015. The Conclusions stress that research integrity is the foundation of high quality research and an essential element for a trustworthy knowledge base leading to socio-economic development, in particular in the context of Open Science. It notably calls for:

- an institutional culture of research integrity mainly through clear institutional rules and guidelines as well as education and training;
- adherence to the principles listed in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (from ALLEA and ESF);
- diminishing incentives for research misconduct;
- all research and innovation actors to define and implement policies to address misconduct and questionable research practices.

The new European code of conduct for research integrity

In this context and in order to strengthen the focus on research integrity at EU level and improve the overall coherence of the policy approach, a new Code was developed by national academies of sciences and humanities through their umbrella organisation, the All European Academies (ALLEA) federation, in close cooperation with the European Commission.

The key reason for the new format is the wish to give to the new Code the role of a common European reference framework, easily understood by all interested parties including those outside the research circles.

The new Code is consequently shorter than the previous one (March 2011), more focused and user-friendlier. The concepts are more clearly defined (notably the practices constituting a violation of the principles).

The new Code now comprises only 4 principles (Reliability, Honesty, Respect and Accountability) as compared to the 9 principles of the current Code. In that respect, it is aligned with and follows the current trend of "user friendliness" and "de-complexification". The objective is to have a text that is applicable to all scientific disciplines, including social sciences and humanities, as well as to all types of scientific research.

This document, produced on the basis of extensive consultations of public and private research stakeholders, has been presented to the Commission and published on 24 March 2017.

In addition to these general considerations, the main points to highlight are the following:

- The Code is a "living document" and subject to future revision on a periodic basis to respond to technological advances or societal changes.
- The Code positions research integrity within the overall research environment and the research culture. The positive role that institutions must have in supporting and promoting integrity is highlighted and their obligations are further detailed.
- The Code is drafted to assist the Member States and Research Institutions in revising their own codes. For the same reason, although the handling of cases and the sanction processes are addressed, the practical implementation of such measures should be the decision of the responsible organisations.
- The Code is not simply focusing on researchers, but now covers more substantially what has to be done at the level of organisations performing research.
- As regards the obligations for researchers and research institutions, the Code is self-contained and not referencing other documents containing other obligations.
- Education and training are core issues and the Code should help in increasing the awareness of the younger generations.