Efforts to harmonise codes of conduct for research integrity in Europe: drivers, approaches and challenges in a multi-system context

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Evolution in thinking about research integrity
Themes of the five world congresses on RI

**Lisbon**
Can we agree that we have a problem?

**Singapore**
We have a problem but can we agree on common definitions and principles?

**Montreal**
What evidence, structures and processes do we need to tackle the problem such that we can collaborate?

**Rio**
How can we promote responsible conduct of research in our systems?

**Amsterdam**
How can we improve transparency, accountability and consistency?

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“Harmonisation is the process of minimizing redundant or conflicting standards which have evolved independently.”

Wikipedia
Drivers for harmonisation across Europe
A steady rise in investment and outputs

• In Europe approx. 2.03% of GDP is spent on R&D
• 25.5% increase in graduates in STEM since 2008 (18.2/1000)
• Governments and the public want to be confident that they are getting value for money
• But continued public support requires credibility and trust and this is not a given!
• Misconduct scandals, growing evidence of poor reproducibility, unreported research data, biased reporting……
## The international ‘harmonisation’ landscape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International governmental organisations</th>
<th>International NGOs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. European Commission</td>
<td>a. ALLEA</td>
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<td>b. OECD</td>
<td>b. Science Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. UNESCO (COMSET)</td>
<td>c. InterAcademy Partnership</td>
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<td>d. Etc. .....</td>
<td>d. Global Research Council</td>
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<td>e. ENRIO (+ ENERI)</td>
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<td>f. COPE; Council of Science Editors</td>
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<td>g. LERU/EUA</td>
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<td>h. EuroScience</td>
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<td>i. Etc. ...........................</td>
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Have these efforts had any impact?

- Research integrity is now discussed in a way that would have been unimaginable 20 years ago (800 delegates at this conference!)
- The Council of Ministers – Conclusions on Research Integrity
- Research integrity now seen as a legitimate area for research (EC and others)
- Changes in EC policy and contract clauses since FP6
- The revised European CoC (ALLEA) based on broad (including enterprise) stakeholder engagement and received significant media interest
- Greater understanding of the importance of climate and environment
- More and more organisations offering training, at least at post-grad level
- Since 2013 the number of European countries who have developed (or are developing) national CoCs, guidelines, policies has increased significantly
“Harmonisation is the act of making systems or laws the same or similar in different countries so that they can work together more easily”

Cambridge English Dictionary

- 2015: Ireland publish National Policy
- 2016: Luxembourg publish National Policy
- 2016: Spain publish National Policy
- 2016: Austrian Agency publish National Guidelines
- 2017: France publish National Guidelines
- 2017: Italy publish National Guidelines

Godecharle et al. (2013) Lancet 381:1097-1098

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“The current confusing situation concerning research integrity guidance [at a national level] hampers international research and possibly wastes research funds”


Heterogeneity in national policies is simply a reflection of heterogeneity in the European political, cultural and economic landscapes
Different Languages

Different National Legislation

Development of Crowdfunding legislation

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Different perception of corruption levels

Different levels of investment in R&D

R&D in Regional GDP (%) 2009.
EU 2020 Target = 3%

Below EU 2020 Target
- 0% - 1%
- 1% - 2%
- 2% - 3%

Above EU 2020 Target
- 3% - 4%
- 4% - 5%
- > 5%

No data

This map does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ESPON Monitoring Committee.

Notes:
Research and experimental development (R&D) comprises creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications.

Data for R&D were provided by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.
Data for TR, CH and NO are not available for country level.
Data for MA are shown for 2007 at country level, EL for 2008 and FR for 2010.
Different approaches to increasing internationalisation of research

Different levels of student participation in higher education

Share of students at ISCED* levels 5 - 6 in % of the population, 2008 - 2010**

- The international Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was developed by the UNESCO to classify and compare school types and systems on the international level. Level 5 and 6 cover the tertiary education sector (students at colleges and universities up to PhD and habilitation).

* Data GR, LU, of 2008
** Data BE, CY, LT, LV, MT, LI, IS, CH, MK, of 2009

Database: European Spatial Monitoring System, Eurostat REGIO
Geometric basis: GFK GeoMarketing, NUTS 1 or 2 regions

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Multifactorial influences in a resource limited environment on researcher/institutional behaviour

**DISSEMINATION**
- Results must be innovative/important
- Difficult to publish negative results
- Difficult to publish replication studies
- Open data/journal access still not the norm

**CULTURE/GOVERNANCE**
- Absence of robust policies, structures and sanctions in many countries
- Governments do not prioritise RI
- Organisation RI efforts often poorly resources/supported

**FUNDING/ASSESSMENT**
- ‘Winner takes all approach to funding
- Emphasis on high-impact publication and number of papers/citations
- Funding track record key assessment criterion

**CAREER SYSTEM**
- Broader activities rarely recognised in hiring/promotion criteria
- Strong personal ethics/behaviours not incentivised by career system

**PROMOTION /PREVENTION**
- Graduate education still not universal
- Quality of teaching/curricula patchy
- Little/no training available to senior researchers
- Responsibility of mentors not emphasised/supported

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Question
With so much heterogeneity across Europe (how) can we harmonise understanding, good practices, processes, policies, curricula .....?
What is the ultimate goal of a code / policy / guideline?

**Objective**

- Provide Framework (ground rules) within which localisation can happen – promote common understanding and consistency – facilitate cross-border collaboration

- Set out expectations for behaviour and achieve common national/local understanding – facilitate training and cross-sectoral/cross-disciplinary collaboration

- Focus on elements of the research process and take account of disciplinary difference, establish rules of behaviour at that level

**Level**

- Global/International
- National/Regional /Institutional
- Theme/Discipline /Field

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Where in the system are the **primary outcomes of international codes of conduct?**

**CULTURE/GOVERNANCE**
- Provides framework of principles and common understanding
- Facilitates national and local alignment
- Identifies new areas of concern
- Emphasises responsibility of all actors

**CAREER SYSTEM**
- Wider activities are rarely recognised in hiring/promotion criteria
- Strong personal ethics/behaviours not incentivised in career system

**FUNDING/ASSESSMENT**
- ‘Winner takes all’ approach to funding
- Emphasis on high-impact publication and number of papers/citations
- Little/no funding for replication studies

**DISSEMINATION**
- Results must be innovative/important
- Difficult to publish negative results
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**PROMOTION /PREVENTION**
- Raises awareness of research integrity in media and the public
- Facilitates political leverage
- Encourages diverse stakeholder engagement in formulation of codes

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Cascade effect .... Ireland as an example

Inclusion in National R&I Strategy

Universities strengthening policies and processes

Funders Group strengthening policies and processes

UKRIO memberships

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Where are the secondary impacts of international codes in national and local systems?

### CULTURE/GOVERNANCE
- Develop /disseminate national and local policies and structures
- Adequately resource training
- Encourage organisational responsibility

### FUNDING/ASSESSMENT
- Adopt diverse funding models
- Put emphasis on quality not quantity
- Broaden assessment criteria
- Adopt new peer review models/review

### CAREER SYSTEM
- Recognise wider activities in hiring/promotion
- Mentoring and career advice
- Incentivise positive behaviours

### DISSEMINATION
- Publish positive and negative results
- Provide open journal/data access
- Insist on trial registration
- Support replication studies

### PROMOTION /PREVENTION
- Part of graduate and CPD education
- Train-the-trainers /practice sharing
- Evidence-based and career-stage appropriate curricula
Conclusion

Complete harmonisation of governance models, policies and guidelines will be challenging in the crowded and diverse European landscape

**BUT**

Developing international/European Codes and guidelines is worth it because they have:

- primary outcomes of bring national systems closer together and enhancing shared understanding of the issues and potential solutions

- many beneficial secondary impacts at a national and local level of facilitating RI initiatives and leveraging political and organisational commitments

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Thank you for listening!

“All along I thought our level of corruption was consistent with community standards.”