

Abstract

Title: Interaction between research ethics and research integrity: overview and analysis of situation in Lithuania and Finland

Abstract (max. 500 words):

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The presentation has two objectives: 1) to present an overview of the European Union funded project European Network of Research Ethics and Research Integrity (ENERI) (<http://eneri.eu/>); and to 2) to analyze the need for interaction between two systems related to the field of responsible conduct of research, i.e. research ethics and research integrity.

The analysis will be based on the example of the systems of research ethics and research integrity in two selected countries – Lithuania and Finland. Both countries have developed a rather comprehensive systems of ethical review, however systems of research integrity differ – Finland has a long standing tradition of institutionalization of research integrity since 1991, while the only national institution in Lithuania that focuses on academic ethics (Office of Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures) was established only in 2011.

More generally, the scope and the remit of Research Ethics Committees' and Research Integrity Offices' are different. For example, Ethics Committees perform ethical evaluation of research projects and issue approvals in advance, that is, before the start of the project. On the other hand, Research Integrity Offices are mostly engaged in retrospective handling of alleged cases of misconduct.

The different institutions for research ethics and research integrity are also bound by different regulations and have developed separate guidelines. At the same time, they have much in common - both types of institutions are involved in the promotion of responsible conduct of research and there is a number of overlapping issues which are dealt with by both institutions, e.g. data protection and data quality, conflicts of interest, transparency to mention but few.

However, it seems that traditionally there has been almost no communication and interaction between research ethics and research integrity. Therefore, this presentation will raise the question whether such an interaction could have an added value in the existing system and explore possible forms of interaction between the two fields. We draw on examples from our own contexts. For instance, Finland is currently introducing a nation-wide system with trained Research Integrity Experts in all institutions of higher education and research institutes. This system of experts is anticipated to lower the threshold of voicing allegations. However, it is also anticipated that these experts will in practice engage in advising on research ethics as well. In the presentation we reflect on current developments in Lithuania and Finland in light of synergies that interaction between research ethics and integrity might bring. We hope to extrapolate these synergies also on a wider European level in the context of the ENERI project.

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