The ultimate responsibility for good research practice lies with individual researchers. However, such practice can only flourish in a favourable research and funding environment. According to the findings of the latest report from Science Europe, who surveyed its members on research integrity policies and practice, there are still a number of measures that research organisations and funding agencies can take to guarantee a higher level of research integrity. Read on to learn about the Science Europe working group findings and recommendations.

Shaping tomorrow's research integrity

European research integrity could stem better uptake of good practices across funding agencies and research organisations

The ultimate responsibility for good research practice lies with individual researchers. However, such practice can only flourish in a favourable environment. Addressing research integrity requires a

holistic approach encompassing all aspects of the research system, such as access to publications and data, research careers, evaluation, peer review and research collaboration.

The [Science Europe working group on research integrity](#) set out to understand the prevailing policy and processes currently in place in Europe. Our objective was to identify future actions that our members - who are mainly large public research organisations and funding agencies - could take to effect change. The working group thus undertook a members' survey, which led to the recent [publication of a set of recommendations](#).

Among others, the report suggests the need to further raise awareness of research integrity among researchers. In addition, it points to the need to introduce greater levels of training and to design new measures to take into account the cross-border nature of research. Ultimately, it is hoped that these measures could drive behavioural change at both institutional and individual level. The objective is to promote research excellence and to ensure an unsullied research record; continuing societal support for public investment in research; avoidance of harmful impacts and research waste; and enhanced economic advancement.

Variable practices

The report gives an account of various approaches to dealing with research integrity across Science Europe member organisations, which are diverse by nature and operate in different regulatory and legal environments. In analysing the survey responses, it became clear that organisations take the issue of research integrity seriously.

However, there are some differences in definitions and approaches. Some member organisations have detailed policies, guidance and procedures in place, while others are still refining them. Most member organisations display irregular promotion of research integrity and varying levels of implementation.

The report recommends that, at a minimum, policies should include promotion of good research practice, clear procedures for dealing with misconduct and the possible sanctions available. In addition, whistle-blower protection should be integral to research integrity policies.

Meanwhile, policies should be clear as to what types of misconduct are covered. To encourage transparency, the report underlines that the outcomes of proven misconduct cases should not be hidden. And data on cases - either under investigation or proven - needs to be collected centrally to help with monitoring and future planning.

Raising awareness

Raising awareness of research integrity helps to promote its importance amongst the research community. This approach may contribute to preventing research misconduct. However, the survey found that member organisations often struggle to raise awareness and achieve adequate support for research integrity policies and processes among their stakeholders.

Further recommendations towards greater awareness include the need for policies to be publicly accessible, downloadable and available in English. A named responsible person for such policy -

including contact details - should be provided.

It should also be clear that these policies and procedures apply from the earliest stages of proposal writing, right through to publication of completed work. For example, application forms for funding should emphasise research integrity, and grant terms and conditions, as well as contracts, should have provisions for good research practices and the consequences of misconduct.

Training is vital

Training is vital in engendering a culture of responsible conduct among researchers at all stages of their careers. However, provision of research integrity training at national and local level is highly fragmented in most countries. Many member organisations are not in a position to offer training.

Nonetheless, the report recommends that, given its importance, training should be actively supported, either directly or as a condition of funding. The authors of the report believe that training should not be optional; it needs to start at undergraduate/PhD level and continue throughout a researcher's career. Those delivering training also need to be trained: train-the-trainer courses to introduce knowledge sharing and harmonisation and to maintain training standards need to be developed.

Mobility challenge

The huge increase in the mobility of researchers and the increasingly collaborative and cross-border nature of European research pose particular challenges for the protection and promotion of research integrity, the report finds.

For example, where there is a national body responsible for research integrity, there are processes in place to ensure that investigations of misconduct allegations will continue if a person moves from one institution to another. In the absence of a national body, this is not the case, and whether an investigation continued is *ad hoc*.

Furthermore, the survey unveiled that no organisation explicitly requires applicants for a position or a grant - or their current employer host institution - to declare any previous proven cases of research misconduct. The report proposes that misconduct cases should be pursued by the employer at the time of misconduct, even where a researcher subsequently moves to another institution or country.

As part of the recruitment process, the report suggests that employers should check with potential employees whether they are involved in an ongoing investigation or have any proven misconduct case against them. All collaborative agreements should include a clause on research integrity and potential collaborators need to reach agreement on a common approach to research integrity.

Next steps

Safeguarding research integrity is undoubtedly a shared task between scientists, institutions, funding agencies and publishers. Science Europe's member organisations are committed to continue to work towards improving research policies and processes to ensure maximum benefit from public

funding of research. They are also keen to encourage other research organisations to place integrity at the core of the research endeavour.

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