Research integrity—what it means, why it is important and how we might protect it

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As today's EU Competitiveness Council's is due to adopt Conclusions on research integrity, Science Europe publishes a comprehensive review of developments in research integrity across Europe and the US.

Research integrity is about "the performance of research to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour, in an ethically robust manner", says the report. The report argues that research integrity is vital because it creates trust, and trust is at the heart of the research process. Researchers must be able to trust each other's work, and "they must also be trusted by society since they provide scientific expertise that may impact people's lives".

Research misconduct is what happens when standards of integrity and ethics are ignored or abused. The report explores the damage that such misconduct can inflict on the research community, on academic institutions and on society as a whole.

"The fact that research integrity is on the agenda of today's Competitiveness Council sends out an strong signal to European governments and the European research community: it acknowledges the importance of this topic and is a positive step in raising awareness of the centrality of research integrity to the European research ecosystem", said Dr Maura Hiney, Chair of the Science Europe Working Group on Research Integrity. "I am honoured that I was invited to contribute to the development of these Conclusions during the Luxembourg Presidency's preparatory work ahead of today's ministerial meeting", she added.

The Science Europe report published today explores available data on the frequency of research misconduct and the possible reasons for researchers to commit misconduct. It also looks at the potential costs of misconduct, how national and international organisations have approached the promotion of research integrity, and how allegations of misconduct are handled. It provides an evidence base that can underpin action taken to address research integrity issues.

"The evidence gathered in the report shows the complexity of this issue and the multiple actors who need to be involved in tackling it", added Dr Hiney. "Providing training in research integrity, not just at post-graduate level but throughout researcher's career, as well as training-the-trainers initiatives, are definitely important steps in promoting good practices and preventing misconduct, but fostering the appropriate research environment and culture will be equally influential", she added.

As the [report](#)'s conclusions highlight, "research integrity has the potential to increase the quality of research in the European research ecosystem, thereby increasing its overall effectiveness and impact into the future". The inclusion by Science Europe members of research integrity amongst their core priorities shows their commitment to addressing the challenge.

  More information: The report is available here: scieur.org/integrity-paper

Provided by Science Europe

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