

EARTO Contribution to the Stakeholder Consultation on the Revision of the ESF-ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

30 August 2016

On the occasion of the review of the ESF-ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, EARTO has been invited to provide feedback on its content. Accordingly, this document summarizes the main comments and issues identified by the EARTO Working Group Human Resources, which was consulted for this exercise.

Most RTOs already follow ethical norms based on rather universal principles. Therefore, RTOs do not see major difficulties to use the ESF-ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity for EU research projects **if it is well adapted to the specificities of all research actors, at all the stages of research: not limited to science but encompassing as well applied research, technology and innovation.** To ensure this, EARTO members would like to forward comments as follows:

- In order to adapt the Code to encompass the reality of applied research, technology and innovation actors, the definitions and subtitles in chapter 2.2 should be adapted and the parts on education of young scientists and scholars developed in chapter 2.2.3 should be extended to researchers in general. RTOs already have professional management and robust processes in place and since RTOs are working also on innovation, therefore not restricted to science work, they developed competences that should not be lost due non-adapted binding standards.
- The Code should not include the principle of “*impartiality and independence*” in the definition of research integrity (Chapter 2.2.3). Indeed, this principle is not necessary since the other principles included in the definition are sufficient to warranty integrity of research for all types of funding conditions and organisations. Furthermore, it also implies that researchers working for RTOs on the many projects co-funded by industry are not impartial whereas RTOs’ strong codes of conduct for ethics and research integrity apply in a similar way to 100% publicly funded research projects and to those with a part of industrial funding. Accordingly, viewing what it implies, this principle is not acceptable to RTOs’.
- The Code urges for “*openness and accessibility of research results*” but seems to respect at the same time commercial interests: “where legitimately required, researchers should respect the confidentiality of data” (Chapter 1.4.2 and 2.3.2). This should be further clarified and stressed in the text. Indeed, RTOs work in close partnership with companies. This often requires strong and efficient confidentiality and IPR rules, which would therefore make it impossible for RTOs’ researchers to be granted the complete “freedom to work with and talk to others” at any given stage of their research (Chapter 1.4.1 and 2.2.3). As explained in the [EARTO Position Paper on Open X](#) published in November 2015, a significant part of RTOs’ activities rely on principles such as Open Access, Open Data and Open Source. However, RTOs apply such principles in a “balanced” way. The envisaged benefits from “openness” for society at large should always be balanced against the proven needs of the technology marketplace for a clear competitive edge and return on investments in innovation activities, where collaborative research plays a crucial role. It should therefore be made very clear that research results, i.e. data, should be “Open” where reasonably possible and “Restricted” where reasonably required, protecting confidentiality and personal privacy and clearly recognizing proprietary interests, business confidential information and IPRs. This is essential to protect innovation and European’s competitiveness. Such a balanced approach should be found back in the Code.
- In general, defining and complying to the “Guidelines for Good Practice Rules” should not be restricted to the “scientific society” (academies, universities, RTOs): the “wider innovation community” should be included as well. This would imply that, for instance, public funding organisations for innovation should explicitly adhere to the Code of Conduct (Chapter 2.3).
- The Code also suggests that international collaboration projects should have special clauses about research integrity in the collaboration contracts and should agree in advance about the guidelines and procedures to follow in case of misconduct. It is important to stress that if these clauses were to be added to EU grant agreements, procedures would have to be agreed upon beforehand and adapted to the specificities of all research partners for the whole

duration of the project. Furthermore, such extra obligations with formal treatments of allegations of misconduct and procedural requirements would lead to extra administrative and managerial work for the partners. This could put small RTOs under considerable pressure.

- The Code does not deal with the wider ethical & social context of science but focusses instead on the responsible conduct of research (Chapter 2.2.2). However, the ethical context of science is closely linked with the question of policy and relevance, which is very important to RTOs. This should be considered in the Code.

EARTO members welcome the chance to contribute to the Code's review and remain ready to discuss the above-mentioned comments with the relevant stakeholders and EC services in order to achieve a well-adapted Code of Conduct.

EARTO - European Association of Research and Technology Organisations is a non-profit international association established in Brussels, where it maintains a permanent secretariat. The Association represents the interests of about 350 Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) from across the European Union and "FP-associated" countries.

EARTO Vision: a European research and innovation system without borders in which RTOs occupy nodal positions and possess the necessary resources and independence to make a major contribution to a competitive European economy and high quality of life through beneficial cooperation with all stakeholders.

EARTO Mission: to promote and defend the interests of RTOs in Europe by reinforcing their profile and position as a key player in the minds of EU decision-makers and by seeking to ensure that European R&D and innovation programmes are best attuned to their interests; to provide added-value services to EARTO members to help them to improve their operational practices and business performance as well as to provide them with information and advice to help them make the best use of European R&D and innovation programme funding opportunities.

EARTO Working Group Human Resources: is composed of 32 experts working within our membership. Established in 2014, this Working Group focusses on several policy topics related to human resources such as mobility for researchers, gender & diversity, European pension schemes, ethics, research integrity, etc. It also organizes a mentoring and training programme for researchers.