INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO VIOLATIONS OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY

- COPE European seminar *Publication Ethics from student to professional*, London 22-03-'13

- Pieter J.D. Drenth, Prof. Em. VU University Amsterdam, Hon. President All European Academies (ALLEA)
References

- *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity* (ESF/ALLEA, 2011)

- *Responsible Conduct in the Global Research Enterprise* (IAP, 2012)


- *The fraudulent research practices of social psychologist Diederik Stapel* (Stapel Investigation, WordPress, 2012)
Institutional Responses

- Universities and research institutes
- Funding agencies
- Academies of Sciences and Humanities
- (Journals and publishers)
Violations of research integrity

- Fabrication (making up results)
- Falsification (manipulating research processes or data)
- Plagiarism (appropriation of ideas/results/words without credit)
- Improper dealing with violations
- Minor misdemeanours (falsification *in statu nascendi*)
Responses

- Depend on *seriousness* of misconduct (level of intent, consequences, aggravating/mitigating factors)

- To be shown that misconduct was committed *intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly*

- No honest errors or differences of opinion
Universities and Research Institutes

Practices and Measures

- Code of Conduct, set of good practices, well defined procedures in cases of misconduct

- Educating, training, mentoring

- Supporting conditions and regulations:
  - Procedures reporting
  - Integrity officers/c’tees
  - Protection of whistle blowers
  - Plagiarism detection systems
  - Data storage and archiving
  - Pledge students/employees

- Impartial investigation mechanisms regarding suspected cases of misconduct (confident, fair, comprehensive, expedient, timely), followed by appropriate actions. Minor misdemeanours?
Universities and Research Institutes

Practices and Measures (II)

- Transparency, collegial control; responsibility of supervisors e.o.; co-authors fully responsible for the whole publication (unless otherwise indicated)

- Retractions (preferably with mentioning the reason)

- Allevation of emphasis on metrics; additional ways of quality measurement
Funding Agencies

- Insist on responsible research practice; condition for grants

- Actual power and opportunities to investigate in Europe are limited (integrity control considered to be responsibility of university/research institute)

- Instruments and means:
  - Funding research into nature and prevalence of research misconduct
  - Increasing alertness and sensitivity of reviewers
  - Provide funding only if responsible research practices are warranted
  - Require storage and accessibility of data
  - Support more replication and verification studies
  - Avoid publication bias
Academies of Sciences and Interacademy Organisations

- Reflection on basic norms and standards; assistance in developing and disseminating standards and codes

- In dialogue with other national players: National Research Council, Association of Universities/Rectors Conferences

- Foundation (and (wo)manning) of National Council for Research Integrity

- Not: Investigation bodies, or decisive court of appeal

- (In case of Academy research institutes: regular employer’s responsibility)

- Same applies *mutatis mutandis* for associations of Academies at supra-national level
All-embracing enquiry

- In cases of demonstrated fraud the university or research institute has the responsibility to scrutinise the whole of the fraud’s body of scientific work (own publications, co-authored publications, dissertations under his/her supervision)

- In case of Stapel:
  - proven fraud in 55 of the 137 publications examined,
  - high probability of fraud in another 10 publications
  - fraud in 10 out of 18 dissertations
Statistical evidence

- Stapel in Amsterdam period:
  - No data available
  - No confession

- Statistically highly implausible results/irregularities; Baysian formula indicating ‘proof of manipulation’

- Rating all publications on scale: (not applicable –) none – negligible – slight – relatively strong – strong

- Wider applicability of the Baysian formula: C’tees of enquiry, boards of faculty/university, journal editors
Annulment of granted degree

- In many countries degree can be nullified if there is proof that serious infringements of research integrity have taken place in preparing the dissertation; Question: Is ‘statistical’ evidence sufficient for judge?

- Withdrawal of degree on the bases of misconduct perpetrated *after* the conferral of the degree?
Conclusion

- In this presentation we have seen:
  - Various measures and actions of responsible academic institutions available
  - Not always one best approach
  - Some questions remain unanswered
  - Practical or legal obstacles may hinder desired response

- Discussion may contribute to raising awareness and a sense of urgency to develop policies and strategies how to deal with and (more importantly) how to prevent unethical and harmful violations of the principles of research integrity