

Singapore Conference

Some observations on CoC's

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1. Objectives of Codes

- Aspirational (ideal to pursue)
- Normative (collective understanding; reference base)
- Educational (training, supervision, guidance)
- Regulatory (controlling, monitoring)

2. Functions of CoC

- External: to show the world that scientists have their house in order and take 'accountability' seriously, to (re)build trust within the wider community.
- Internal: to function as guide for proper behaviour, to apply in educational context, to bring about change or complement in research objectives/criteria, to settle disputes, etc.
- Often both. Requires balance in terms of focus, scope and specificity.

3. Universality of values in Codes

- Some values and principles are universal, others are culture-bound. This requires careful choice of universal or differentiated principles.
- In line with European CoC: universal principles and infringements versus culture-/country-specific Good Practice Rules.

4. 'Hard law' or 'soft law'

- Legal codes, enforced with 'hard law'? Leads to 'legalisation' of RI with imposed laws and rules. Danger: legal discussions with lawyers. Some countries (US) tend to favour this.
- Most participants preferred self-regulatory system. Code: principles with a 'spirit'. More aspirational than regulatory.
- This also idea and philosophy behind European CoC.

5. International or Global Codes

- The more global, the less does enforcement makes sense, and the more a code becomes an advisory statement and a moral appeal.
- International Code is important stimulans and reference for countries that do not have developed such a code.

6. National or Institutional ?

- Institutions (universities, research institutes) should have a CoC.
- Some items can be institute-specific, but in general there should be harmonisation within a nation; avoid slivering.
- In ideal case there should be a national Code as general directive. Institutional Codes should be in line with national code.

7. Level of implementation

- Individual,
- Institutional,
- Discipline,
- Intermediate organisations (Academies, Research Councils, Rectors-conferences...)
- National level
 - national council
 - Governmental
- Supranational level (regional, continent, global)
- Here report WG 3 (Maura Hiney) was useful. Ideas were brought in and discussed.

8. Code for whom?

- In principle for all scientists and scholars, including those working in private sector or for governments.
- Difficult to enforce such a Code for the latter.
- Again: the prevalence of the normative, aspirational or educational function of a Code

9. Responsibility cases of alleged misconduct

- General agreement on primary responsibility (investigation sanctions) with employer
- But what about those who are working within institute but are not employed? Students, visiting scientists, honorary scholars...
- Or those who are no longer employed? Retired, resigned, deceased?

10. Publicity

- Rules, sanctions procedures regarding allegations should be made public. But individual cases?
- Should serious allegations be made public?
- Should all decisions re allegations be made public?
- Should sanctions taken against accused offender be made public?
- Should arguments pro and con be made public, or just decisions as such?
- Idem procedure and process within higher court or appeal committee?

11. Publication and editorial issues

- Looked after by COPE (Commission on Publication Ethics) of scientific journals. Many of principles and rules of good practice regarding publication and are in line with European CoC. In fact, COPE has advised us on the publication and editorial items. Cope deals with:
 - Principles (honesty, reliability, openness...)
 - Guidelines on policies (preferences, criteria, quality and relevance, proper crediting, authorship...)
 - Guidelines on processes (fair reviewing, fair decision making...)

12. Effects

- Ultimate goal is guiding/developing/changing/scientists' behaviour. Even if scientists are properly informed/trained/guided there is no guarantee of proper actions.
- This means that Codes need some regulatory framework.
- It remains an interesting research question whether CoC's lead to improved behaviour, and under which conditions this is achieved.