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NEUVOTTELUKUNTA

Case: Finland

National Advisory Board on Research
Ethics (TENK)

17.11.2008

Eero Vuorio, chair

Ethical evaluation of research
in Finland
Distribution of responsibilities

Legal regulation of medical research

The Advisory Board on Health Care Ethics (ETENE)
(Sub-)Committee on Medical Research Ethics (TUKIJA)
Ethics Committees of Hospital Districts
Institutional Ethics Committees

Ethical evaluation of research
in Finland
Distribution of responsibilities (cont'd)

Legal regulation of animal experimentation

Cooperation Group for Laboratory Animal Sciences
(KYTÖ)
Committee(s) on Animal Experimentation

Legal regulation of gene technology/ biotechnology

National Advisory Board for Biotechnology (BTNK)
Board for Gene Technology (GTLK)

Ethical evaluation of research
in Finland
Distribution of responsibilities (cont'd)

Research ethics (Research Integrity)
Good scientific practice (Responsible conduct
of research) researchers' own code of
conduct
National Advisory Board on Research Ethics



National Advisory Board on
Research Ethics (TENK)

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics was founded in 1991 to address ethical questions relating to research and to the advancement of research ethics in Finland (Decree 1347 of 15 November 1991). The Advisory Board, which is appointed by the Ministry of Education for a term of three years at a time, meets 7-8 times a year.

TENK Guidelines

- Good scientific practice and procedures for handling misconduct and fraud in science
- Signatories:
 - Universities (21/21)
 - Polytechnics (27/27)
 - Research Institutes [RPO's] (26/33)
 - Others [Funding organisations, learned societies etc.](12)





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Good scientific practice

1. Integrity, meticulousness and accuracy
 - research, recording and presenting results , evaluating
2. Ethically sustainable data-collection, research and evaluation methods and openness in publishing
3. Taking due account of other researchers
4. Planning, conducting and reporting according to standards set for scientific knowledge



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Good scientific practice

5. Status, rights, co-authorship, liabilities and obligations of the research team are determined and recorded in an acceptable way
 - ownership of data, storage, updates
6. Sources of funding and other associations are made known to those participating in research and to public
7. Good administrative practice and personnel and financial management are observed.



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Responsibility for maintaining Good scientific practice

- First and foremost it is the responsibility of the researcher him/herself to maintain GSP, but also
 - research team
 - supervisor
 - head of unit/research organisation
 - learned societies and editors of scientific publications
 - financing organisations.



Violations of Good scientific practice

- Misconduct in science (gross negligence)
- Fraud in science (intentional)
 - fabrication
 - misrepresentation (falsification)
 - plagiarism
 - misappropriation



Misconduct in science

- Examples:
 - Understatement of other researchers
 - Negligence in referring to earlier findings
 - Careless and misleading reporting
 - Publishing old results as new
 - Misleading the public and the research community



Fabrication

- Presentation of fabricated data or results to the research community
 - Fabricated data have not been obtained in the manner or by the methods described in the report
 - Fabricated results are not based on the data



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Misrepresentation/Falsification

- Intentional alteration or presentation of original findings in a distorting way
 - Scientifically unjustified alteration or selection of data or results
 - Omission to present results pertinent to conclusions



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Plagiarism

- Presentation of someone else's research plan, manuscript, article or text, or parts thereof, as one's own.



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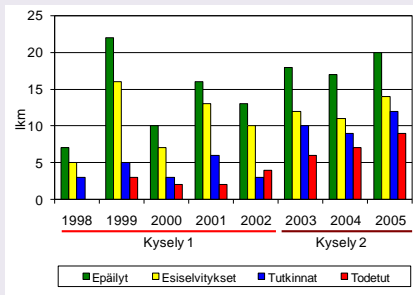
Misappropriation

- Illicit presentation or use of an original research idea, plan or finding disclosed to him/her in confidence, under his/her own name
 - E.g. manuscript in peer review or research plan under evaluation for funding

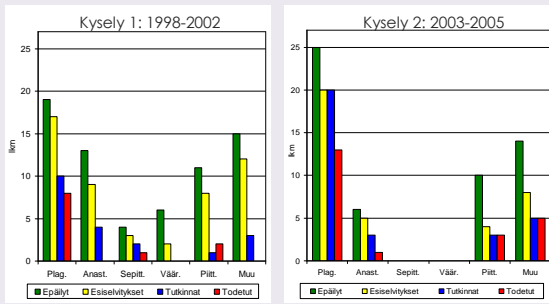
Procedures for handling alleged violations

- Handled at the first instance in the research organisation itself:
 - written notification to the rector/director
 - inquiry
 - investigation
 - final report (and a copy to TENK)
- Any party not satisfied with the local decision can request the National Advisory Board for an opinion on the matter
 - based on written material

Violations of good scientific practice in Finland 1998-2005



Violations by category



Proportion of violations of good scientific practice in 2003-2005 by category in Universities (Univ) and Polytechnics (Pol)

%	Univ	Pol
plagiarism	25	85
misappropriation	12	0
fabrication	0	0
falsification	0	0
misconduct	38	0
others	25	15

Consequences of scientific misconduct

The actions and sanctions warranted by the findings are decided on by the Rector or the Director of the Institution.

Depending of the severity and possible recurrence of misconduct the sanctions may range from oral or written warning to failure to approve master's, licentiate's or doctoral thesis, to more severe punishments as set in the Universities act (and other laws)

Special emphasis should be made to retract or correct any publication containing information judged to contain fraudulent material, and to publish the findings of the investigation in the same forum.

Also legal consequences are possible.

Does the system work?

Cases are rare: due to the low number of alleged violations Rectors/Directors have little experience of the implementation of the Guidelines and of of the procedures.

Although all organisations should inform the Advisory Board of all allegations, inquiries, decisions and decisions by the Rector or the Director of the Institution, only about 70 % seem to do this. Upon query, more cases are reported.

A majority of cases fall in the category of misconduct (often due to lack of knowledge and/or inexperience).

Does the system work?

Plagiarism appears to be increasing, but can nowadays be detected more efficiently.

Despite intensive training particularly at the doctoral programme level, a fraction of researchers does not seem to be aware of the guidelines.

Lack of international guidelines



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