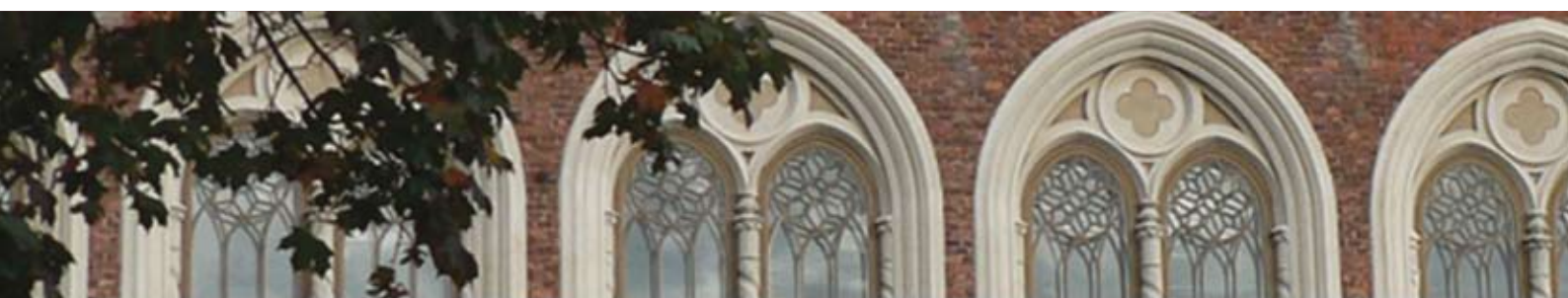


# *ACTION PLAN*

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*2010*



TUTKIMUSEETTINEN NEUVOTTELUKUNTA  
FORSKNINGSETISKA DELEGATIONEN  
NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD ON RESEARCH ETHICS



# NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD ON RESEARCH ETHICS

## Plan of action 2010

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 on the Advisory Board for Research Ethics 1347/ 1991). The first advisory board commenced its activities in 1992. The Secretary General of the Council and the assistant are attached to the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies in Helsinki.

## Tasks of the Advisory Board

The statutory tasks of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, which is appointed by the Ministry of Education, are:

1. To make proposals and issue statements to governmental authorities on legislative and other matters concerning research ethics;
2. To act as an expert body working towards the resolution of ethical issues relating to research;
3. To take initiative in advancing research ethics and to promote discussion concerning research ethics;
4. To follow international developments in the field and to take actively part in international cooperation; and
5. To inform the public about research ethics.

## Composition

The Ministry of Education has appointed the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics for a three-year period, 1 February 2010 – 31 January 2013. The Chair of the Advisory Board is Chancellor, Professor **Krista Varantola**, University of Tampere, and the Vice Chair is Professor **Veikko Launis**, University of Turku. The Secretary General of the Board is Docent **Liisa Nieminen**, and the Assistant is **Terhi Tarkiainen**. The members of the Advisory Board are:

Counsellor of Legislation **Markku Helin** (Ministry of Justice),  
Director **Arja Kallio** (Academy of Finland)  
Professor **Riitta Keiski** (University of Oulu)  
Senior Teacher **Irma Mikkonen** (Savonia University of Applied Sciences)  
Ministerial Advisor **Tuula Pehu** (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)  
Research Professor **Jussi Simpura** (National Institute for Health and Welfare)  
Chief Legal Counsel **Ari Suomela** (TEKES, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation),  
Professor **Pirkko Walden** (Åbo Akademi University).

This Action Plan was adopted by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics at its meeting on 28.4.2010.

Krista Varantola  
Chair

Liisa Nieminen  
Secretary General

# Priorities in 2010

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics has in its work seen the importance of preventive work. The Advisory Board has received positive feedback about the seminars and lectures it has arranged, and for their part these seminars have created opportunities for cooperation with other bodies. The Advisory Board will continue similar preventive work in 2010.

Main strategic objectives:

1. strengthening the integrity of research,
2. education in good scientific practice and prevention of violations of research ethics,
3. improving the functionality of the administrative clarification process for misconduct,
4. strengthening networking nationally and internationally,
5. open communication,
6. utilization of good international practices in Finnish research ethics culture.

In its work the Advisory Board aims to place increasing emphasis on offering expert advice in the monitoring of developments in research ethics and in creating better operating cultures. Improving education in research ethics in universities, graduate schools, universities of applied sciences, and in other sectors is considered to be vitally important. Due to their changing role the need for dealing with issues in research ethics has increased in the universities of applied sciences. The university reform is also creating new challenges for the Advisory Board.

## 1. Resources of the Advisory Board

In view of its growing activities, it is expected that the Advisory Board will be granted additional resources to cover the costs incurred from the projected activities. In 2009 the Advisory Board was allocated a total of EUR 35,000, of which EUR 10,000 was earmarked for operating expenditure and EUR 25,000 for the Advisory Board's publication and seminar costs.

In 2010, the focus of the Advisory Board's endeavours will be on training and seminar activities both in Finland and abroad.

## 2. Prevention of violations of good scientific practice and education

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics will continue to address violations of good scientific practice in 2010, and at the same time discourage the use of fraudulent practices in research. To date, altogether 89 research organisations – all universities and universities of applied sciences, and most research organisations in Finland – have pledged their commitment to the guidelines *Good scientific practice and procedures for handling misconduct and fraud in science*, published by the Advisory Board in 2002. The mergers taking place in the university sector and between the universities of applied science may in the future reduce the number of committed organizations.

The intention is also to clarify whether all research funding agencies (including foundations), as well as learned societies will pledge their commitment to these guidelines.

The Advisory Board will actively continue to promote and disseminate information about the guidelines during its term of office. Based on the feedback received, the Board will also consider a revision and update of the guidelines.

### *Guidelines for the ethical review of humanities research*

A working group was established by the Advisory Board for the years 2003-2005 to consider research ethics in the humanities and social sciences. As the result of its work the group published the book "Etiikkaa ihmistieteille" (Ethics for the humanities) (ed. Jaana Hallamaa et al.) in August 2006. The publication provided a solid basis for addressing ethical questions in the humanities but still left open the difficult issue of the scope of research that should fall under ethical regulation and how this regulation should be implemented.

On 1 November 2007 the Advisory Board appointed a new working group to deliberate the practical implementation of the ethical guidelines and review practices in the humanities and social sciences. The group consisted of representatives of the Advisory Board and members predominately nominated by the learned societies. The Secretary General of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics acted as secretary of the working group.

The working group's report was completed at the beginning of 2009, after which the Advisory Board organized an extensive comments round about the suggested measures. On the basis of these comments the working group made some further amendments. Following this, in April 2009, the Advisory Board approved the publication *Ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioural sciences and proposals for ethical review*. At the beginning of 2010 the Advisory Board sent the document (in Finnish, Swedish and English) to all the rectors and directors of universities and other research organisations which had signed up to *Good scientific practice and procedures for handling misconduct and fraud in science* guidelines. Commitments have been coming in steadily and by April 2010 around half of the abovementioned organisations had pledged their commitment to the ethical principles.

In autumn 2010 the Advisory Board will hold a training session for the ethical committees of universities and research organisations. As the establishment of the committees is still in progress in many places, it is advisable at this stage to share experiences in the matter. It seems that, at the time of writing, University of Tampere had advanced furthest in the process and could thus provide a model for other institutions

### *Guidelines on résumé writing (curriculum vitae)*

In recent years the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics has had to pay attention to incorrect usage and translations of degrees and job titles. Some of the uses are intentionally misleading and give a false impression of the merits of the applicant. In spring 2006 the Advisory Board arranged a seminar on résumé writing in collaboration with the University of Helsinki. The feedback received by the Advisory Board indicated a clear need for guidelines in the matter. Although each funding and employer organisation has its own preferences, a basic set of uniform recommendations would provide a sound basis for reliable résumé writing. The Advisory Board has discussed cooperation with the Academy of Finland and has initially undertaken to continue the preparation of these guidelines in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Academy of Finland, and with other research financing organisations. The project will continue in 2010, after which it will be brought to an end. The aim is also to get UNIFI (Universities Finland) involved in the collaboration. With universities discontinuing the use of the "nimikirja" (official Curriculum Vitae) the need for guidelines for résumé writing becomes even greater.

## **3. Development work and cooperation in research ethics education**

### *Training of the teaching and research personnel*

One important development target for the Advisory Board is to create a network between local research ethics contact persons in universities, research institutes and universities of applied sciences. The Chair of the Advisory Board, some members and the Secretary General have participated as lecturers at numerous educational events held in universities and other research organizations.

In 2004 and 2006 the Advisory Board, together with the Academy of Finland, organized an invitation-based seminar on research ethics "Tutkimusetiikkaa kouluttajille" to create a network of ethics educators in universities

and other research organisations. In the opinion of the Advisory Board, this form of training did not work in the desired way. Problems occurred both in participation and thematic coverage. In recent years, however, several textbooks on research ethics have appeared in Finland and there is thus a fair amount of up-to-date learning material available for educators. It is, however, probably too general in nature, and there is a need for more discipline-specific material. It is also becoming increasingly important to make sure that research ethics are not a separate and unintegrated module in the study process but a standard part of research methodology education in all disciplines

#### *Development of teaching and educational materials*

In autumn 2006 the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics arranged an invitation-based symposium on "Education in Research Ethics" to discuss the importance of ethical education, its correct timing and alternative forms of education.

During the current term, the Advisory Board will seek to cooperate with ethics educators in higher education institutions in order to develop the best forms of education and educational materials to respond to changes in the operating environment. In this process, the Board will pay particular attention to societal needs and the internationalization of research and research funding. In addition, the special needs of the universities of applied sciences will also be taken into account.

Several publications dealing with the ethics of child and youth research, and the ethics of social work research are under way and can be later used as learning materials. The Secretary General of the Advisory Board has participated in these projects. The former Chair to the Advisory Board also plans to write a book on the ABC of research ethics. The timetable for this publication is not yet known.

The Advisory Board will continue to anonymize the cases it handles so that they may be used for educational purposes. Case reports are published on the Advisory Board's website.

#### **4. Development and monitoring of processes for addressing misconduct**

In addressing research ethical problems, it is vital that the matters are dealt with justly, impartially, speedily and that all the parties concerned are heard. Since an allegation of violation of good scientific practice cannot be made anonymously, the position and legal protection of the denouncer is often felt to be problematic. The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics regularly collects information from the universities and other research institutions about the allegations of misconduct and fraud they have handled, but does not have empirical information about grassroots level cases (e.g. the real number of violations of good scientific practice), about the operating environments (the institutional framework for ethically sustainable research) nor about attitudes towards research ethics (research cultures conducive to ethically sustainable research).

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics has emphasized the importance finding out about the extent of plagiarism. There is, however, no research data available on the subject, but it is assumed that there are more occurrences of plagiarism than have been brought to public attention. In 2008, The Advisory Board proposed to the Ministry of Education that the ministry announce an open call for research on plagiarism. This is still a topical issue.

#### **5. Information**

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics will continue its active dissemination of information to the stakeholders and to the public at large in the form of articles, interviews and press releases.

The website of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, [www.tenk.fi](http://www.tenk.fi), will be further developed and updated as needed. For example, the site will provide papers given at the seminars as well as links to other national boards and different institutions of professional ethics and their guidelines.

## **6. National and international networking**

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics actively contributes to national and international debates on research ethics by means of articles and written comments in newspapers and periodicals. The Chair, many members and the Secretary General have actively attended national and international seminars and meetings on research ethics. International networking gained new momentum in autumn 2007 when the Chair and the Secretary General attended the first World Congress on Research Integrity in Lisbon and established cooperation relations with other Nordic research ethics bodies, the European Commission, the OECD, the European Science Foundation (ESF) and US and UK expert bodies. In addition, the Advisory Board is monitoring the further development of the themes raised in Lisbon within the EU, the OECD and other platforms. The Chair acts as Finland's representative on the ALLEA Standing Committee on Science and Ethics.

New cooperation partners may also be needed as the humanities and social sciences gain an increasingly important role in the work of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics. The Finnish Social Science Data Archive at the University of Tampere, and the Finnish Information Centre for Register Research at the The National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), have already proved to be valuable partners.

### *Cooperation between national ethics boards*

The Finnish national bodies – the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, the National Advisory Board on Health Care Ethics (ETENE) and its medical research subcommittee (TUKIJA), the National Advisory Board for Biotechnology (BTNK), the Board for Gene Technology (GTLK), and the Cooperation Group for Laboratory Animal Sciences (KYTÖ) – have had close cooperation for a number of years. The Chairs and Secretaries General continue their tradition of convening three to four times a year to discuss topical issues in research ethics. It has, however, at times, been difficult to find common discussion topics in this process.

### *EU cooperation*

European National Ethics Committees cooperate by meeting every six months at the NEC Forum to exchange experiences and information of best practices in research ethics in the member states.

The National Advisory Board also closely follows the activities of other European organisations dealing with ethics, such as the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) and the European Conference of National Ethics Committees (COMETH). The Secretary General will also continue participating in the work of the national support group for the EU's 8th Framework Programme initiative "Science in Society", which is coordinated in Finland by the Academy of Finland.

### *Other international cooperation*

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics also strives to disseminate information about its activities and its operating models at the international level. The guidelines published by the Advisory Board *Good scientific practice and procedures for handling misconduct and fraud in science* and the brochure *Ethical Evaluation of Research in Finland* jointly published by the national ethical bodies are now available in English. The ethical principles for humanities are also available in English.

The fact that several foreign universities send delegations to study the work of the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics can be regarded as an indication of the interest in the Finnish system.

The first World Conference on Research Integrity held in autumn 2007 confirmed the Advisory Board's own view that its guidelines and the Finnish model of research ethical regulation is of a high international standard and that Finland has a great deal to give to the international community both at the EU level and more widely. The former Chair of the Advisory Board, Professori Eero Vuorio, will also be a speaker at the second World Conference on Research Integrity to be held in Singapore in summer, 2010.

The ethical review system for the humanities has aroused a great deal of international interest, one indication of this being that a member of the previous Advisory Board, Development Manager Arja Kuula from the Social Sciences Archive, has been invited to the "IASSIST Conference 2010: Social Data and Social Networking: Connecting Social Science Communities across the Globe", to be held in New York in June 2010, to give a paper on the Finnish ethical review system for the humanities, and its principles.

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