

ANNUAL REPORT

2006



TUTKIMUSEETTINEN NEUVOTTELUKUNTA
FORSKNINGSETISKA DELEGATIONEN
NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD ON RESEARCH ETHICS



MISSION OF NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD ON RESEARCH ETHICS

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 OF THE BOARD

In 2006 the Chair of the Board was Chancellor Eero Vuorio (University of Turku) and the Vice-Chair was Professor Jaana Hallamaa (University of Helsinki). The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics has eight members, who do not have personal deputies.

Professor Katie Eriksson (Åbo Akademi University)
Director Merja Hiltunen (National Technology Agency Tekes)
Professor Liisi Huhtala (University of Oulu)
Professor Juha Karhu (University of Lapland)
Director Paavo Löppönen (Academy of Finland)
Vice-President Sinimaaria Ranki (EVTEK University of Applied Sciences)
Professor Ari Salminen (University of Vaasa)
Professor Terttu Vartiainen (National Public Health Institute and University of Kuopio)

The Secretary General Sari Löytökorpi, PhD, and the secretary Johanna Nieminen work at the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies in the House of Nobility, Hallituskatu 2 B, Helsinki.

This annual report for 2006 was adopted at the Board's meeting on 13 December 2006.

Eero Vuorio
Chair

Sari Löytökorpi
Secretary General

Translation: Leena Möttölä

ACTIVITIES

The Advisory Board convened seven times during 2006. The Board works to

- 1) prevent misconduct and fraud in science by disseminating information and arranging education and seminars on the principles of good scientific practice;
- 2) develop cooperation with universities and polytechnics and assist them and research institutes in arranging education about research ethics;
- 3) develop and monitor the investigation of ethical misconduct and fraud in research;
- 4) develop a distinct profile in disseminating public information about research ethics; and
- 5) contribute actively to Finnish and international debates on research ethics.

In 2006, the Advisory Board received fewer requests than before for opinion on decisions by rectors and directors general on alleged violations of good scientific practice. The Board's activities were more clearly focused on expert tasks in monitoring the ethical climate in research and creating a better operational culture. The Board considers it important to give ethics education in universities, graduate schools, polytechnics and in other sectors.

Preventive action and education

As before, the Advisory Board received a large number of requests for education on topics relating to research ethics from universities and polytechnics. The Chair, members and the Secretary General contributed actively to these educational events. Considering education a primary and vital priority, but lacking the resources to respond to all requests, the Board arranged six seminars during 2006. The programmes and papers read at the seminars (mostly in Finnish) can be accessed at the Board's web site www.tenk.fi/ajank.htm.

- An event on "Research ethics for educators" was organised on 10 April 2006 in cooperation with the Academy of Finland. The aim was to provide research organisations with knowledge needed to arrange research ethics education and promote networking between ethics educators. The seminar, where attendance was by invitation only, convened nearly one hundred representatives of graduate schools, universities, university institutes and polytechnics. It began with a presentation of the ethical guidelines and practices of the Academy of Finland, after which the Chair of the National Advisory Board talked on topical research ethical issues handled by the Board. Archivist Arja Kuula from the Finnish Social Science Data Archive spoke on research ethics education provided by the University of Tampere and presented her recently published book on the acquisition, use and preservation of materials titled *Tutkimusetiikka – aineistojen hankinta, käyttö ja säilytys* (Tampere, 2006). In the

afternoon, there were presentations related to special issues in research ethics and a panel and a discussion on the organisation of research ethics education. Although the discussion was lively, a number of questions still remained open.

- A seminar on résumé writing (curriculum vitae) was arranged on 1 June 2006 jointly with the University of Helsinki. In recent years, the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics has had to pay increasing attention to résumés written by researchers and to shortcomings and inaccuracies in them. However, there is no clear advice in any research ethical guidelines as to how a résumé should be composed. The seminar attracted an attendance of some 120, including representatives of the Academy of Finland and labour market organisations. The participants considered the subject-matter very topical and it aroused lively discussion, as was hoped. The Advisory Board received good feedback, which indicated a clear need for guidelines in the matter.
- A seminar to publicise the book *Etiikkaa ihmistieteille* (Ethics for the humanities) on 29 August 2006 dealt with ethical issues relating to the humanities and social sciences, including the role of ethical guidelines and ethical preassessment, and the creation of an ethically sound research community. Although research in social sciences and the humanities neither jeopardises human life nor should affect health, it may influence the research objects' well-being, behaviour or the behaviour of others towards them.
- On 30 September, the national ethical bodies – the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics (TENK), 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) – and the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies jointly arranged a panel and a discussion on the theme "Research ethics - what rules, who decides?" at the Turku Science Fair. The panel addressed the questions on What is the present Finnish legislation based? Does it restrict research activities too much or is it perhaps inadequate? and Who decides on the need for and formulation of common rules.
- An event on "Education in Research Ethics" was held on 11 October 2006. This was an invitational discussion on the development of research ethics education, need for education, the right timing of education and alternative forms of instruction. The discussion was based on three examples of research ethics education. One of the three keynote speakers was Professor Nicholas H. Steneck, who talked on "The History,

Impact and Future of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Education in the US". The event gave a solid foundation for the Advisory Board's work in preparing recommendations concerning education.

- A seminar on dilemmas in ethical preassessment on 8 November discussed research ethical rules and dilemmas faced by ethical boards. The aim was to find answers to questions: On what is our legislation based? Does it restrict research activities too much or is it perhaps inadequate? Who decides on the need for and formulation of common rules? To whom are we accountable: society, researchers, today's patients, tomorrow's patients, those participating in research?

In addition to arranging these seminars, the Advisory Board on Research Ethics contributed to ethical education by preparing a PowerPoint presentation of good scientific practice and making it available at its web site: www.tenk.fi/news.htm. The presentation is in Finnish, Swedish and English.

Development of mechanisms for handling misconduct in research

During 2006 the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics was notified of two new suspected cases of violation of research ethics – plagiarism and misconduct – which were handled locally. The Board was requested to give its opinion on four cases of alleged misconduct, which concerned misrepresentation in a résumé, authorship and publication of misleading data. The Board found no violation of research ethics.

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics undertook a survey among organisations committed to the guidelines "Good scientific practice and procedures for handling misconduct and fraud in science" concerning incidence of misconduct issues, the procedures for handling them and research ethics education in order to update the data collected earlier (1994-2002). The summary of the findings, compiled by the Secretary General, will be published on the Board's web site. Over the past three years, the total number of incidences has grown only by a few cases. It is important to bear in mind regarding the number of cases that several new organisations have committed themselves to the guidelines in the past few years. The majority of the reported cases had to do with plagiarism.

Publication and information

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics has actively disseminated information on its web site by means of seminar papers and articles published by the Board members. The brochure "Ethical Evaluation of Research in Finland" was jointly revised by the national ethical bodies (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, National Advisory Board on Health Care Ethics and its medical research subcommittee, National Advisory Board for Biotechnology, Board for Gene Technology, Cooperation Group for Laboratory Animal Sciences) and came out in August 2006. It can be accessed at: www.tenk.fi/publications.htm.

The working group deliberating research ethical questions in the humanities and social sciences (Vice-Chair, Professor Jaana Hallamaa, Professor Irma Sorvali, Professor Veikko Launis and LLD Salla Lötjönen) finished their work. The book *Etiikkaa ihmistieteille* (Ethics for human sciences) was publicised at an event jointly arranged by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics and the Finnish Literature Society on 29 August 2006, where the question of ethical preassessment in human sciences was also addressed (see Preventive action and education above). The working group noted that devising a code covering all human sciences is difficult and the best result can be achieved through input into educating researchers.

The Chair, Vice-Chair, members and Secretary General of the Advisory Board were interviewed during 2006 for articles and radio and television broadcasts. The Board also received a number of requests from abroad concerning information about its activities and composition, which were answered as far as possible. In addition, the Board members published articles on research ethics.

Statements issued, international activities and other cooperation

During 2006 the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics issued one expert opinion and one comment:

- Comment to the Ministry of Trade and Industry concerning the draft Seventh Framework Programme for Research of the European Community, 27 February 2006
- Opinion to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Department of foodstuffs and health) concerning a draft Bill on laboratory animals, 2 February 2006.

In 2006 the Advisory Board has been very active internationally. The six national ethical bodies arranged an information event on research ethical activities in Finland for the Minister of Education and Science of Kazakhstan and his delegation on 7 February 2006 at the House of Sciences.

The European National Ethics Committees cooperate by convening biannually at a forum, where they exchange experiences and best practices in ethical questions. In autumn 2006, when Finland held the EU Presidency, the Finnish national ethical bodies organised the forum in cooperation with the EU Commission. The forum topics have traditionally focused on medicine and bioethics. As organisers, the Finnish bodies could influence the programme and brought other ethical issues, such as science and society, to the fore. The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics opened a web site for the Eighth European Forum of National Ethics Councils (21- 22 September 2006) (www.tenk.fi/nechelsinki), where the forum programme, papers and other information can be accessed.

Other international meetings attended by the Chair, the members and the Secretary General in 2006:

- Director Paavo Löppönen: GSF Bureau Meeting, Paris, 5 February 2006
- Chair: Seventh European Forum of National Ethics Councils, Hofburg, Vienna, 9-10 March 2006.
- Director Paavo Löppönen (member of the OECD Expert Group): OECD/GSF Expert Group on Preventing Scientific Misconduct, OECD, Paris, 26 April 2006
- Chair: Regional consultation on Science Ethics and Scientists' Responsibilities. UNESCO, Geneva, 11-12 May 2006
- Secretary General: Forskningsetik (Research ethics), a meeting of the Finnish and Swedish councils of university rectors at Hanasaari, Finland, 24 August 2006
- Professor Katie Eriksson and Secretary General: Framtida hantering av oredlighetsärenden (Handling of misconduct of science in future), a Nordic seminar in Stockholm, 26 September 2006
- Director Paavo Löppönen: Conference on Evaluation of Scientific Potential of Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan 24-25 September 2006
- Chair: Business and Bioethics Workshop, Nordic bioethics committee, Malmo, Sweden, 15-16 October 2006
- Chair: Impacts of endocrine disrupters, European Commission and Academy of Finland, Helsinki, 10 November 2006
- Secretary General: Thirteenth Session of the International Bioethics Committee IBC, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 20-22 November 2006

In 2006 National Advisory Board on Research Ethics cooperated actively with the other national ethical bodies (National Advisory Board on Health Care Ethics and its medical research subcommittee, National Advisory Board for Biotechnology, Board for Gene Technology and Cooperation Group for Laboratory Animal Sciences). In addition to jointly arranged international events mentioned earlier and the aforementioned panel discussion on Research ethics - What rules, who decides?, the Chairs and Secretaries General of these bodies met four times to discuss topical issues in research ethics. From August 2006 the Chair has represented the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics on a Ministry of Social Affairs and Health committee which is drafting a Bill on bio-banks. The Advisory Board has also cooperated closely with the Ministry of Education, including a meeting with Director Henk ten Have, UNESCO Division of Ethics of Science and Technology, arranged by the Finnish National

Commission for UNESCO on 10 March 2006; meetings with representatives of the EU Commission Directorate for Science, economy and society, which were arranged by the Academy of Finland on 11 May 2006 and the Ministry of Education on 12 May 2006; a meeting with Director of Health Research Octavi Quintana Trias of the European Commission on 14 September 2006. Further, the Secretary General participated in the work of the national support group for the Sixth Framework Programme, which is coordinated by the Academy of Finland.

Personnel and finance

In 2006, the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics had only one full-time employee, Secretary General Sari Löytökorpi. The Advisory Board has had a secretary, Johanna Nieminen, jointly hired with the Committee for Public Information. In addition, the Board had the use of the telephone exchange, computer and caretaker services of the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies.

The Ministry of Education had granted an operational appropriation of € 33,400 to the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics for 2006: € 8,400 for running costs and € 25,000 for publication and seminars. These funds were administered by the Ministry of Education. The salary (Secretary General and secretary) and clerical funds (€68,800) were administered by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies.

The Secretary General participated in two training courses during 2006: Communications I (University of Helsinki); Basics of InDesign (Datafrank Ltd). The secretary participated in a basic course in archival work (National Archive) and in Basics of InDesign (Datafrank Ltd).

National Advisory Board on Research Ethics
Hallituskatu 2B
00170 HELSINKI
FINLAND
Tel. +358 9 2286 9234
www.tenk.fi