

National Advisory Board on Research Ethics

TENK

Annual report 2003

1 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.

2 Composition of the Board (1.2.2001-31.1.2004)

In 2003 the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics was chaired by Rector Gustav Björkstrand (Åbo Akademi University) and the vice-chair was Professor Jaana Hallamaa (University of Helsinki). The Secretary General is Salla Lötjönen, LL.M., M.A. The Board's office is attached to the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies.

The Board has eight members and a permanent expert, Docent Marja Simonsuuri-Sorsa. The members, who do not have personal deputies, are:

Secretary General Arja Kallio, Academy of Finland
Special Researcher Veikko Launis, University of Turku
Professor Olli Mäenpää, University of Helsinki
Senior Assistant Sinikka Parkkinen, University of Joensuu
Professor Amos Pasternack, University of Tampere
Research Professor Matti Sarvas, National Public Health Institute
Director Mervi Sibakov, National Technology Agency TEKES
Professor Irma Sorvali, University of Oulu

3 Activities 2003

The Board convened six times during 2003 with the aim of

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

3.1 Preventive action and education

During 2003, the Board organised four seminars. At the Finnish Medical Convention on 9 January 2003 there was a seminar on *Tutkimusetiikka – kaltevan pinnan kysymys?* (Research ethics - a question of a slippery slope?) jointly arranged by the ethical bodies subordinate to different ministries (the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, the Cooperation Group for Laboratory Animal Sciences, the National Advisory Board on Health Care Ethics, the National Advisory Board for Biotechnology, the Board for Gene Technology). The same bodies also arranged a seminar on *Tiedon omena – hyvän vai pahan tiedon puusta?* (The apple of knowledge - from the tree of good or evil?) at the Science Forum organised by the Delegation of the Finnish Academies of Science and Letters and the Finnish Cultural Foundation on 10 January 2003. Both seminars were well attended.

Further, the ethics bodies jointly arranged a seminar on stem cell research at the University of Helsinki on 28 April. The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, together with the Tampere University of Technology, arranged a seminar on plagiarism and its prevention in Tampere on 30 September. All these seminars were open to public, but there is an attendance fee at the Medical Convention.

The taskforce set up in December 2002 to look into the need for ethical guidelines for the humanities and social sciences continued to work actively in 2003 by interviewing representatives of different disciplines. The taskforce members were the Vice-Chair, Professor Jaana Hallamaa, Professor Irma Sorvali and Special Researcher Veikko Launis, with Salla Lötjönen as secretary. The taskforce decided not to formulate separate ethical guidelines for the humanities and social sciences but to publish a book geared to promote discussion in this area. The taskforce will submit its final report by the end of the Board's current term, which is in January 2004. At its meeting on 4 November, the Board authorised the taskforce to continue with the book project in 2004, irrespectively of any changes in the composition of the Board.

3.2 Cooperation with universities and polytechnics

As in previous years, the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics received a large number of requests from universities and polytechnics for research ethics education.

During 2003, education events were arranged for the Faculties of Law and Social Sciences of the University of Helsinki, the University of Turku, Helsinki University of Technology, the Technical Research Centre of Finland, the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland, the Graduate School in Forestry and the Graduate School in Circumpolar Wellbeing, Health and Adaptation. A full list of lectures given by the Board members in 2003 is appended.

Considering research ethics education as its key priority but lacking the resources to respond to all requests for education, the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics has concentrated on planning a seminar for persons responsible for ethics education in their organisations. To this end, it set up a taskforce composed of Docent Marja Simonsuuri-Sorsa and Professor Irma Sorvali, with Secretary General Salla Lötjönen as secretary. The taskforce has also consulted Director Arja Kallio from the Academy of Finland. The seminar will be held in cooperation with the Academy on 30 January 2004. During 2003, another two research organisations registered their commitment to the Ethical Guidelines issued by the National Advisory Board on Research, which makes a total of 72 commitments.

3.3 Development of mechanisms for handling misconduct in research

Survey of the incidence of research ethics questions

In January 2003, the Board sent a questionnaire to all the universities, research institutes, polytechnics and other organisations committed to the Guidelines. The questions concerned the number and type of suspected cases of violations against good scientific practice during the period 1998 - 2002, the procedures used to address these allegations, and research ethics education. Altogether 47 of the 70 recipients answered the questionnaire, which makes a response rate of 67%.

The responses showed that the statistics kept by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics were fairly up-to-date. During the period under review, the Board had been advised of nine confirmed cases, whereas according to the responses the number is 11. The number of confirmed cases of misconduct or fraud is considerably smaller than that of alleged cases or cases that had led to a preliminary investigation. All in all, only 16.2% of the allegations made between 1998 and 2002 were found to be cases of misconduct or fraud. On the other hand, the questionnaire revealed an obvious need for research ethics education. The survey report was published in the periodical *Korkeakoulutieto* (Higher education bulletin) 2/2003.

Cases reported to and processed by the Board

During 2003 the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics was notified of six new cases of misconduct or fraud, three of which had been, or were being, handled locally. In 2003, the Board was requested to give its opinion on three cases, two of which were not appraised because their investigation was either still in progress or had not been initiated by the research organisation. One case is currently being handled by the Board.

The cases handled by the National Board between 1998 and 2002 are presented in a statistical form below (Table 1). The alleged cases of misconduct or fraud reported to the Board comprise notifications of cases adjudicated by research organisations, as provided in the Guidelines, and cases on which the Board was requested to give its opinion. The cases handled by the Board only include suspected cases in which it has given its opinion of alleged violation or has recommended reappraisal by the research organisation. The statistic does not contain requests for opinion in cases which the Board has forwarded, for instance, to be primarily handled locally. The figures are indicative only, because the data on all locally treated cases are not available and the statistical principles have not been identical in all years.

CASES HANDLED BY AND NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD ON RESEARCH ETHICS 1998-2003

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Plagiarism		5 (4) [1]	1 (0) [1]	2 (1) [0]	6 (0) [5]	0 (0) [0]
Misappropriation of an original research idea, plan or finding	3 (3) [0]	4 (3) [0]	1 (1)	2 (1) [0]	1 (1) [0]	2 (0) [0]
Fabrication or misrepresentation of research findings	1 (1) [0]	1 (1) [0]	2 (1) [0]	1 (1) [0]	0 (0) [0]	
Misrepresentation of facts or of research merits		2 (2) [0]		0 (0) [0]	1 (0) [0]	
Misconduct in science	2 (1) [1]	1 (0) [0]	7 (1) [0]	2 (1) [1]	1 (1) [0]	3 (1) [2]
Other violation of good scientific practice		6 (2) [0]			3 (1) [0]	1 (0) [0]
TOTAL	6 (5) [1]	19 (12)[1]	10 (2) [1]	7 (4) [1]	12 (3) [5]	6 (1) [2]

Reported to the Board X

Processed by the Board (X)

Noted fraud/misconduct [X] (Some cases ongoing.)

3.4 Information

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics has pursued active dissemination of information with its frequently updated net site, articles and information events held at the seminars. Worth special mention are the publication of the research ethics survey in *Korkeakoulutieto* 2/2003 and the televised public lectures given by the Vice-Chair, Professor Jaana Hallamaa and Secretary General Salla Lötjönen in February 2003 in the *Studia Generalia* series organised by the liberal education committee of the University of Helsinki.

During 2003, the humanities and social sciences taskforce planned the research ethics guidebook to be published in 2004. The book *Tutkijan eettiset valinnat* (The researcher's ethical choices; Karjalainen – Launis – Pelkonen – Pietarinen, eds.) published by Gaudeamus in 2002 on the initiative of the Board sold 273 in 2003 (the total sale so far 867). The brochure *Ihmisen kantasolut, kloonaus ja tutkimus* (Human stem cells, cloning and research), jointly edited by all the ethics bodies, was also finalised during 2003.

Both the Board members and the Secretary General published a number of articles on research ethics during 2003 and were interviewed for newspaper and periodical articles and for radio and television. The Board also received several requests for information about its activities and composition, which have been answered as far as possible.

3.5 Statements issued and international activities

During 2003 the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics issued four statements:

1. To the Ministry of Education concerning European Union financing for human embryonic stem cell research (22.4.2003),
2. To the Ministry of Trade and Industry concerning European Union financing for R&D projects using embryonic stem cells (29.8.2003),
3. To the Ministry of Education on documents relating to research ethics on the agenda of the 32nd General Conference of Unesco (18.9.2003), and
4. To the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health concerning a Government Proposal for amending the Medical Research Act and the Drug Act (16.12.2003).

In 2003, the Board was very active in international affairs. Together with the Åbo Akademi University, it arranged a Nordic-Baltic meeting for research ethics bodies in Turku on 4 and 5 November, which had a wide attendance (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and received very positive feedback. Nordic cooperation has been further promoted by the fact that the Chair, Rector Gustav Björkstrand has recently conducted a review for the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Secretary General is one of the two Finnish members on the Nordic Committee on Bioethics.

The Secretary General was appointed by the Ministry of Education as a member of the CREST Cluster 7: Ethics, which is charged with generating ideas for and assisting the European Commission and Council in the development of pan-European ethics

projects. It met twice and took a number of initiatives during 2003. The proposal of the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics for developing a European network of committees handling misconduct and fraud in research met with wide support and the project will be initiated during 2004. In support of its international contact interface and the European networking project, the Board commissioned Dr Anna Mäki-Petäjä-Leinonen in October 2003 to survey the ethics bodies in different countries.

The Board's Secretary General has acted as liaison in cooperation between national ethics boards, which was initiated by the European Commission and meets every six months. The 2003 meetings were held in Athens and Rome. The Secretary General was also appointed by the Ministry of Education to participate in an expert meeting held in Paris on 25 and 26 June to draft the Unesco Declaration on Human Genetic Data. The Declaration was adopted by Unesco at its General Conference on 15 October 2003.

4 Personnel and finance

In 2003, the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics had only one full-time employee, Secretary General Salla Lötjönen. In 2003, the Board had the use of the telephone exchange, computer and caretaker services of the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies. The international survey was conducted by Anna Mäki-Petäjä-Leinonen from 15 October to 31 December 2003, and the archiving was done by Ms Kaisa Pulliainen 15 December 2003 - 9 January 2004.

The Ministry of Education had granted an operational appropriation of € 18,400 to the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics for 2003: € 8,400 for running costs and € 10,000 for publication and seminars. These funds were administered by the Ministry of Education. The salary and clerical funds (€ 53.600) were administered by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies.

The annual report was adopted at the Board's meeting on 30 January 2004.

Gustav Björkstrand
Chair

Salla Lötjönen
Secretary General

APPENDIX**List of lectures by the members and Secretary General of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics in 2003**

Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, 9.-10.1.2003
 Research Professor Matti Sarvas on the need for research ethics and the rules of the game

University of Turku, 10.2.2003-2.4.2003
 Special Researcher Veikko Launis, 12 hours on different subjects

University of Helsinki Studia Generalia, 13.2.2003
 Professor Jaana Hallamaa on manipulating nature

University of Helsinki Studia Generalia, 13.2.2003
 Secretary General Salla Lötjönen on responsibilities in the application of research findings

Graduate School in Forestry, Joensuu, 19.2.2003
 Senior Assistant Sinikka Parkkinen on the ethics of research

Nordic Teaching Bioethics Course, Klekken, Norway 6.3.2003
 Secretary General Salla Lötjönen on misconduct in research in Finland

BioTurku Studia Generalia, Turku 12.3.2003
 Special Researcher Veikko Launis on people's right to knowledge about their health

Väinö Tanner Foundation and Tanner Academy (Tanner- Lecture), Helsinki, 13.3.2003
 Special Researcher Veikko Launis on genuine and ostensible bioethics problems

University of Helsinki, Faculty of Law postgraduate seminar, Helsinki 13.3.2003
 Secretary General Salla Lötjönen on research ethics for lawyers

Technical Research Centre of Finland, Espoo, 20.3.2003
 Docent Marja Simonsuuri-Sorsa on research ethics in the researcher's everyday work

Biotech Helsinki 03, 26.3.2003
 Special Researcher Veikko Launis on genuine bioethical problems

University of Turku, Faculty of Law, 27.3.2003
 Special Researcher Veikko Launis on good scientific practice and misconduct and fraud in research

Philosophical Society of Finland, Helsinki, 23.4.2003
 Special Researcher Veikko Launis on genetic information

University of Joensuu, 20.5.2003

Special Researcher Veikko Launis on research ethics issues at the turn of the millennium

Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland, 28.5.2003.

Secretary General Salla Lötjönen on good scientific practice

Helsinki-Uusimaa hospital consortium, 5.6.2003

Special Researcher Veikko Launis on humanities and social sciences research

Nordic Sea research programme Bireme, 28.8.2003

Secretary General Arja Kallio on good scientific practice and its violations

TerBio Course (functional genomics), Turku, 9.9.2003

Special Researcher Veikko Launis on bioethics

Graduate School of Circumpolar Wellbeing, Health and Adaptation, 19.-20.9.2003

Professor Irma Sorvali on ethical scientific research

A seminar in Tampere University of Technology, 30.9.2003

Rector Gustav Björkstrand on the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics

Secretary General Salla Lötjönen on research ethics and plagiarism in the light of statistics

Helsinki University, Faculty of Social Sciences, 15.10. 2003

Secretary General Salla Lötjönen on ethical problems in jurisprudence

Nordic-Baltic Workshop on Scientific Dishonesty, Turku, 4-5.11.2003.

Special Researcher Veikko Launis on research ethics in the humanities and social sciences

Helsinki University of Technology, Espoo, 6.11.2003

Secretary General Salla Lötjönen on the mission and work of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics