

1st Report of the OeAWI Commission for Research Integrity

The Commission for Research Integrity is an organ of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI). As such, the Commission conducts its activities independently and confidentially. The Commission promotes adherence to the rules of good scientific practice and ensures an independent investigation in cases of suspected scientific misconduct. The Commission operates on the basis of its Rules of Procedure and the accompanying *Guidelines for the investigation of alleged scientific misconduct* (Annex I to the Rules of Procedure), which are published on the OeAWI web site.

The Commission comprises five experts from outside of Austria and one advising member from Austria (see OeAWI web site). The Commission receives reports on possible violations of the rules of good scientific practice or on possible scientific misconduct and examines the relevant facts, carries out arbitration procedures (where possible) and prepares opinions on the basis of its fact-finding investigations. The Commission may call upon external experts when investigating the relevant facts in each case. In addition, the Commission advises Austrian scientists and researchers as well as the members of the Agency for Research Integrity.

The Commission began its activities in June 2009 and thus submits its first annual report as follows:

In the first year, a total of ten inquiries were submitted to the Commission. Of those inquiries, two were answered without the need to initiate a procedure; two were withdrawn by the parties submitting them; and two were not pursued further because the evidence pointed to potential misconduct which lay more than ten years in the past. In one case, the Commission was able to respond to the inquiry after calling in an external expert.

Three inquiries prompted the initiation of a procedure, and two of those procedures are currently being handled as cases by the Commission. One case has been suspended because it is being pursued internally at the research institution in question.

The inquiries received by the Commission referred to allegations of plagiarism, false information and possible falsification of data. The inquiries came from various disciplines, including medicine, law and mathematics.

In the year under review, the Commission held its constituting meeting, after which the Commission convened four times. Apart from handling the cases mentioned above, the Commission mainly concerned itself with drawing up its Rules of Procedure. In addition, it was necessary to establish an administrative office and management. In this process, the Commission relied on ad hoc assistance from FWF employees. However, since September 2010 the Commission's administrative office has been staffed by a salaried OeAWI employee, meaning that the Commission will be able to handle inquiries more quickly in the future.

Finally, we would again like to point out that in order to protect the parties involved, the Commission handles all inquiries in strict confidence and therefore only provides generalized reports on its activities. This confidentiality is a necessary prerequisite for the success of a self-regulating system in science and research. Only once suspicions of scientific misconduct have been confirmed does the public have a legitimate interest, which the relevant institution (or the Commission in coordination with the institution) should then satisfy.

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For the Commission:

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