

**Austrian Commission
for Research Integrity**

Annual Report 2015

Preface by the Commission Chair

In the year 2015, the trend from previous years continued: The number of inquiries remained stable at a rather low level, as did the number of cases investigated by the Commission. Therefore, the appraisal provided by former Commission Chair *Peter Weingart* in the preface to our 2013 Annual Report still applies: "This could very well be the same pattern as that observed in other countries after the establishment of a research integrity agency: After an initially high level of attention, a certain 'routine' sets in. Reports of actual or alleged misconduct have dropped to a low level, as have the frequency of those reports and the number of cases actually pursued. If activities stabilise at this level, it will mean that the establishment of the OeAWI has fulfilled its purpose, but by no means has it become superfluous. In fact, it would mean that the agency has established itself firmly as a 'corrective institutional measure' which has apparently become necessary in the Austrian science and research system."

In other words, the very existence of the Austrian Agency and Commission for Research Integrity (OeAWI) means that researchers have an enduring and effective means of protecting themselves against potential research misconduct and of demanding compliance with the standards of good scientific practice. In its activities, the Commission for Research Integrity cooperates closely with the relevant ombudspersons and commissions at the Agency's 37 member organisations, and this cooperative relationship will be intensified even further in the future.

One key contribution in this regard is OeAWI's Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice, which were **revised by the Commission and adopted by the OeAWI General Assembly in April 2015**. By international comparison, the guidelines are among the most up-to-date in the field of research integrity, and they include numerous suggestions received from OeAWI's member organisations. This demonstrates that research integrity can only be realised in a network of responsibilities in which the Commission is one of many parties involved. In one focus area for the year 2016, the Commission will work together with OeAWI members to identify ways to implement the guidelines effectively in the day-to-day operations of those organisations.

Safeguarding research integrity is clearly an ongoing, multifaceted task. Since its inception, one of the Commission's core duties has been to investigate cases of alleged research misconduct. In the future, the Commission hopes to make an even greater contribution to developing the overall system of ensuring research integrity so that it is even better equipped for future challenges.

Stephan Rixen

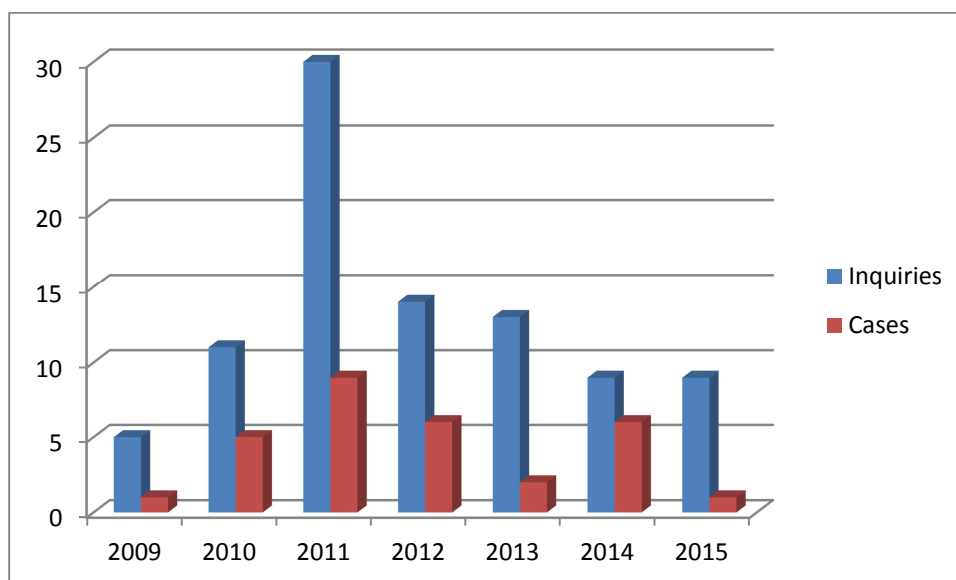
Austrian Commission for Research Integrity

The Austrian Commission for Research Integrity is an independent body of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI), an association established under Austrian law. The Commission examines allegations of scholarly misconduct involving researchers and research institutions in Austria. It consists of six scholars from outside Austria whose expertise covers a broad variety of disciplines. For issues related to Austrian law, an advisor is called in when necessary.

The Commission operates on the basis of its Rules of Procedure and the Guidelines for the Investigation of Alleged Scientific Misconduct (available at www.oeawi.at). One important principle underlying the Commission's work is confidentiality, which must be ensured in order to protect the parties who submit inquiries as well as any persons accused of misconduct.

Overview of inquiries and cases, 2009 to 2015

By the end of 2015, the Commission for Research Integrity had handled a total of 91 inquiries since it began its work in June 2009. Thirty of those inquiries have met the criteria to qualify as “cases” and have thus led to the initiation of a formal procedure.



Inquiries and cases brought before the Commission between June 2009 and December 2015

Inquiries and cases in 2015:

In 2015, the Commission held two ordinary meetings and received nine inquiries, of which one (A 2015/07) led to the opening of a case. Along with several inquiries, that case is still being investigated by the Commission.

Inquiry A 2015/01:

The party submitting this inquiry voiced suspicions of plagiarism in a doctoral dissertation; these allegations were already under investigation at the university in question. The Commission contacted the university's research integrity office repeatedly in order to inquire about the status of the investigation.

Inquiry A 2015/02:

In this inquiry, a person requested the re-opening of a case from the year 2009 (F 2009/01). The Commission rejected the inquiry because no new data or information was available.

Inquiry A 2015/03:

This inquiry came from an anonymous party, meaning that the Commission was unable to request more specific information.

The inquiry was related to the field of medicine and listed several allegations, including improper data reporting, data falsification, "salami publications", and others. Among other things, the inquiry cited surgical complications and contained the personal data (name, address, birth date, etc.) of the patients affected.

In this particular instance, the Commission forwarded the inquiry to the medical university in question, as only that institution was in a position to verify the allegations, especially with regard to the patients' data.

Inquiry A 2015/04:

This submission referred to an authorship conflict between an Austrian and a Polish researcher. The specific question was whether the provision of access to a special library of chemical substances justified co-authorship. In this instance, the Commission obtained two expert opinions, both of which argued in favour of the party submitting the inquiry and concluded that his claim to co-authorship was justified.

Inquiry A 2015/05:

The allegations in this inquiry referred to defamation and the assertion of untrue claims in a doctoral dissertation. The Commission refused to accept the case because it is not within the Commission's remit to judge what is "good" and "bad" research.

Inquiry A 2015/06:

This allegation was submitted by a researcher outside of Austria who felt that an Austrian researcher had failed to mention the former's contributions to publications and grant proposals. This inquiry is being investigated by the ombudsperson at the Austrian university in question, who has repeatedly contacted the Commission to discuss the investigation procedure.

Inquiry A 2015/07:

This inquiry led to the initiation of Case F 2015/01 and is still under investigation. The case is related to allegations of duplicate publications.

Inquiry A 2015/08:

This inquiry, which was submitted by an anonymous party, referred to an allegedly plagiarized doctoral dissertation. However, the dissertation was published in 1989, and due to the ten-year limitation period on such cases, the Commission decided not to pursue this inquiry.

Inquiry A 2015/09:

This inquiry is still under investigation and relates to an allegation that data and laboratory records were not handed over properly.

Preparation of national guidelines for good scientific practice

In 2015, the Commission revised the OeAWI Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice. In the process, all 37 member organisations (as of January 2015) were invited to submit comments and appraisals. The new guidelines were adopted by the OeAWI General Assembly in April 2015 and can now be downloaded on the OeAWI website:

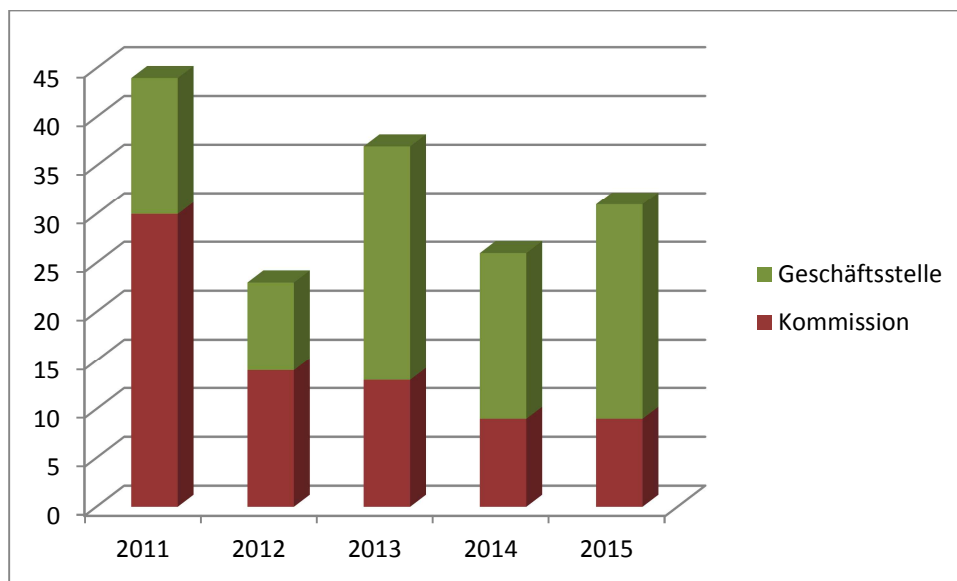
http://www.oeawi.at/downloads/Richtlinien_OeAWI_final_April%202015_e.pdf

The member organisations have been asked to implement the guidelines appropriately.

Inquiries to and advising by the OeAWI Office

In 2015, an additional 22 inquiries (in the form of e-mails, telephone calls or face-to-face advising) were received by the Office of the Agency for Research Integrity. In terms of content, these inquiries related to the following topics: authorship conflicts, data ownership, duplicate publishing, ethical issues, issues related to *venia* procedures, (centralised) data management and data documentation, and procedural questions raised by integrity officers.

In such instances, the OeAWI Office takes on an advisory function or serves as a mediator between the parties to a conflict.



Overview: Inquiries submitted to the Commission and the OeAWI Office (Office inquiries documented from 2011 onward)

Members of the Commission for Research Integrity:

Prof. Dr. Peter Weingart (Chair until September 2015)

Prof. Daniela Männel (Deputy Chair)

Prof. Beatrice Beck-Schimmer

Prof. Pieter C. Emmer

Prof. Stephan Rixen (Chair since October 2015)

Prof. Gerhard Wegner (member until October 2015)

Prof. Gerd Müller (successor to Prof. Wegner from November 2015)

OeAWI Office:

Nicole Föger

Martina Frey (since September 21, 2015)

Daniela Rubelli (until September 30, 2015)

Haus der Forschung

Sensengasse 1

A-1090 Vienna, Austria

Tel.: (+43-1) 402 4052

www.oeawi.at