

BREAKOUT SESSION SUMMARY

Aligning and Implementing Research Integrity Standards Across Europe

12 participants from across Europe, representing a range of ages, career stages, and disciplines, discussed how research integrity (RI) principles can be more consistently embedded in institutional practice – ahead of the upcoming revision of the ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ECoC).

Main Topics Discussed

The session focused on three questions: (1) the main gaps between RI standards and practice; (2) how countries and academies can align while respecting differences; and (3) priorities for the ECoC's next revision amid emerging technologies such as AI and research security concerns.

Key Findings

- Awareness of and access to RI training remain uneven. Most participants felt that RI training is often a one-off, high-level exercise rather than a daily practice, and that refreshers are needed throughout a career, not just for early-career researchers, as senior researchers are often the least engaged.
- Effective implementation needs top-down oversight and bottom-up training. Independent bodies with real authority must be paired with discipline-sensitive training integrated into daily research practice.
- Enforcement is inconsistent; only high-profile cases trigger action, while smaller breaches often go unaddressed. Some countries' ombudspersons can investigate but lack authority to impose consequences.
- A gap exists in research outside traditional academic institutions. Industry and private funders are outside the ECoC's remit, raising questions about trust and collaboration guidelines with academia.
- Using AI in research is a key future focus. Still, questions remain about the level of AI guidance needed, how disclosures should be made, discipline-specific norms, and maintaining awareness of AI bias.
- Funding structures matter. Several participants noted pressure on blue-sky, curiosity-driven research and proposed linking funding eligibility to the demonstrated implementation of RI standards.

Illustrative Examples

- Switzerland: The national Department for Science and Education coordinates the implementation of RI policy with universities and other organisations.
- Finland and Nordic countries: A National Board of Research Integrity may handle misconduct cases centrally, and some researchers – including those outside Europe – sign commitments to their codes of conduct as part of employment.
- Latvia: No single national authority oversees RI policy implementation, though the University of Latvia has taken a strong lead independently.
- Lithuania and Finland: Shared challenges around data management plans and reliance on the same third-party service providers, prompting Nordic countries to coordinate around common providers.

Outcomes and Follow-up Actions

- Broad support for starting RI education earlier – at the high school and undergraduate levels – rather than introducing it only at the PhD or early-career stage.
- Call for independent national supervisory bodies to oversee the implementation of RI policy.
- Desire to see Research Funders make funding conditional on demonstrated RI code/ECoC implementation.
- Interest in stronger cross-country mutual learning and collaboration to share best practices and reduce fragmentation (some Young Academies are already doing this informally).
- Encouragement for Young Academies to play a more active role in promoting the Code among early-career researchers.
- Consensus that the ECoC's revision should give significant attention to AI (including disclosure norms), extend consideration to industry-based and third-party funded research, and address the persistent fragmentation across national systems, without which, participants warned, public trust in science risks further erosion.