

NEW ERA ACTIONS FOR THE ERA POLICY AGENDA 2025-2027
TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

Action title: <i>(Please use as a maximum two lines.)</i>	A harmonised framework to support integrity and ethics in R&I in the face of emerging challenges
Description of the action <i>(Please explain the proposed action in a <u>simple, clear and communicable</u> narrative).</i>	<p>Research must follow the highest standards of integrity and ethics, from the planning stages to the use and communication of results. Many actors are responsible for establishing and supporting these standards, and their roles may vary depending on the country as well as factors such as project or domain specificities. In addition, new issues pose complex challenges that require careful consideration in policymaking, research funding, and research management.</p> <p>This action aims to tackle emerging challenges (i.e., the expanding use of artificial intelligence) and support opportunities (increasing international collaboration) in light of the recent update of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity ('the Code'). While the Code is a valuable resource that primarily deals with addressing incidents of integrity and ethics breaches after they have occurred, this action seeks to provide ex-ante facilitation and guidance to foresee and prevent unethical behaviour and tackle new disruptive challenges to research integrity.</p> <p>In particular, the Code recommends developing context-specific policies and guidance, and this proposed action would bring that recommendation forward by gathering expertise and offering a platform to address emerging challenges.</p> <p>To do so, the Action will focus on developing practical guidelines for foreseeing, preventing, and avoiding emerging threats to research integrity and ethics. It will be developed through workshops.</p> <p>The Action will centre on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up a network of national integrity and ethics coordinators. - Develop and publish the guidelines, which will take the form of a communication from the European Commission. <p>It is proposed that the Network continue working after 2027 and would be able to oversee the implementation of the guidelines and coordinate follow-up activities after the conclusion of this Action. Such activities could be coordinating training actions, developing certification tools, or collecting best practices.</p> <p>It would be a first step in developing and functioning a European policy framework, bringing together national and EU-level representatives, to coordinate the creation of a coherent and forward-looking European policy on integrity and ethics.</p>
Actors <i>(Please explain who would take part in the action and who would benefit from it).</i>	<p>The primary actors will be the ERA Forum – Member States, the European Commission, and stakeholder organisations – and the Ethics and Integrity Sector of the Commission, which will be responsible for overseeing the process of adopting the Communication. The involvement of relevant actors outside of the</p>

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	<p>Forum – in particular, the network of integrity and ethics coordinators and experts that will be set up by this Action – is envisioned to support the development of the Communication.</p> <p>The Action would benefit both the research community – research funders, performers, universities, or individual researchers – and national authorities. First, it will support the research community in addressing challenges that lack harmonised solutions in Europe. Second, it will support national and EU authorities in addressing policy challenges – such as regulating AI in research or tackling the ethical aspects of international collaboration.</p>
<p>Expected impact</p> <p><i>(Please describe the expected impact of the action (including outside the scientific community), paying attention to the fact that it needs to focus on <u>concrete results and reachable deliverables</u>).</i></p>	<p>The Action is anticipated to have the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harmonise the actions to foresee and prevent breaches of integrity and ethics, and address barriers to implementing ethical guidelines and rules. - Provide clarity and direction in addressing common new challenges that are often tackled in silos and outside of R&I policy, and for which there is no existing initiative that aims at an EU-wide understanding of the national contexts of integrity and ethics actions. - Initiate the creation of a European ecosystem of actors and processes to develop a European policy framework on research integrity and ethics. <p>As research becomes increasingly international, multi-disciplinary, mobile, and technology-dependent, international collaboration on integrity actions is essential and will benefit all member states and stakeholders.</p>
<p>Why do we need this action?</p> <p><i>(Please indicate the need for this action in view of implementing the <u>Pact for R&I and achieving the ERA objectives</u> and explain why its <u>objective cannot be reached through existing programmes/ activities</u>. What is the action's <u>added value</u> at national and European level as well as for stakeholders? How does it <u>make a change</u> and how is <u>co-creation</u> ensured?)</i></p>	<p>Integrity and ethics are listed in the 'Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe' as the first point under the sub-heading "Upholding Values". Integrity and ethics underpin all activities across all research disciplines and contribute to high-quality, effective, and healthy R&I systems. The policy areas crosscut numerous current ERA actions, including but not limited to those related to Open Science, Research Assessment, and Research Careers.</p> <p>New challenges - such as the expanding use of artificial intelligence (AI), foreign interference, and the challenges/opportunities of international collaboration - further highlight the need for a concerted approach to integrity and ethics. Guidance is essential, and establishing an expert forum can facilitate the sector's response to this and other emerging challenges.</p> <p>Existing programmes and activities cannot achieve the objectives of this Action as no existing structure or comprehensive policy framework could tackle these emerging challenges and propose a European approach. Emerging challenges that pose complex problems to R&I systems in terms of ethics and integrity are also treated in silos (either in separate policy areas or forums) or</p>

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	<p>individually at the national level. This has led to difficulties in addressing these challenges that still need to be resolved.</p> <p>Furthermore, the implementation of this Action is expected to bring the following added value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At a national level, this will clarify the responsibilities of different actors, provide all stakeholders with a clear overview of support mechanisms and contacts, and promote further collaboration by offering a forum for exchange. - At a European level, this will provide a common reference point to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge, foster improved collaboration on research integrity support actions (as listed in the European CoC), and set foundations for more pro-active Europe-wide actions to improve research integrity and quality in the face of challenges such as AI use in research.
<p>Additional information</p> <p><i>(For example, timing and milestones, which already could be envisaged, can be indicated.)</i></p>	<p>Milestone 1 – Establish a network of national integrity and ethics coordinators through a process of nominations (by Month 6).</p> <p>Milestone 2 – A European Commission communication: guidelines for foreseeing, preventing, and avoiding emerging threats to research integrity and ethics (by Month 20)</p> <p>Possible follow-up actions beyond the 2025-2027 policy agenda period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A code of good practice to animate the guidelines presented in the communication. - Development of training resources to support the implementation of the guidance.