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Tematiske innspill til EUs kommende rammeprogram for forskning og innovasjon - 24/5497

The national research ethics committees (FEK) refer to the invitation from the Ministry of Education and Research (KD, 08.10.2024) regarding thematic input to the EU's upcoming framework program for research and innovation (FP10), which will run from 2028 to 2034.

FEK consists of three national research ethics committees, The National Research Ethics Committee for Medicine and Health Sciences (NEM), The National Research Ethics Committee for Natural Sciences and Technology (NENT) and The National Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH). In addition, there are The National Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct and The National Committee for Research Ethics on Human Remains. The committees are independent, collegial bodies consisting primarily of researchers. The FEK secretariat provides administrative and professional support. Through preventive work and advice, and through the investigation of cases of possible research misconduct, FEK contributes to ensuring that research is carried out in accordance with recognized research ethical norms and that society has confidence in research. All committees and the secretariat support this input.

FEK will not go into specific thematic areas linked to European partnerships and community missions, but rather highlight the importance of research ethics and integrity as an overarching theme throughout FP10 (cf. KD's questions 1 and 3):

FEK would like to highlight the following issues:

- a) Building a culture of trust and excellence requires a broad approach to research ethics
- b) Research ethics and integrity are fundamental for upholding values in research
- c) Research ethics and integrity should be integrated as cross-cutting topics
- d) Research ethics and integrity are shared responsibilities for all stakeholders
- e) Research ethics and integrity are crucial in balancing security and freedom
- f) Guidelines are necessary for strengthening research ethics
- g) Funding is required for fostering ethics in research

A possible summary could be as follows:

- *FP10 should strengthen ethics and integrity as fundamental for trust in research, emphasising the shared responsibility in building a culture of trust and excellence and providing funding and support for developing field-specific research ethics guidelines.*

a) Ethics and integrity

So far, the EU has primarily been promoting “research integrity” and the development of training, capacity-building and improved frameworks, tools and procedures. The focus has been on compliance and institutional responsibilities ([ALLEA, 2023](#)). Recent developments towards building a culture of trust and excellence also emphasise “research ethics”, stressing the need for ethical reflection and individual responsibility. This is more in line with the broader approach to research ethics in Norway (www.forskningsetikk.no/en).

FEK support this development towards a broader understanding of research ethics, focusing not only on the integrity of the research process, but also on equity, trust in society, knowledge as a public good ([European Parliament, 2022](#)), and identifying and preventing unintended negative consequences for people, society, and nature (including animals and the environment). FP10 should promote the “ethics by design” principle in order to stimulate reflection on ethical aspects. This would counteract the risk of ethics being considered as an ex-post add-on to simply meet administrative requirements.

b) Fundamental values

Research ethics and integrity are prerequisites for research excellence and for maintaining society’s trust in science. It is a hot topic in the European Commission and the Director General for Research and Innovation (DGRI); cf. Horizon 2020 and [Horizon Europe](#).

Research ethics and integrity should be emphasised as fundamental for upholding values in FP10, along with open science, gender equality and inclusion, and scientific freedom, cf. *A Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe* ([EU, 2024](#)).

c) Cross-cutting topics

Research ethics and integrity are relevant for all pillars and missions within FP10, and all research activities funded by the European Union should adhere to the highest standards of research ethics and integrity.

Research ethics and integrity should be integrated in FP10 as cross-cutting topics, and they should be explicitly emphasized in calls, assessments and contracts; cf. the current Ethics Appraisal Procedure in Horizon Europe ([EU, 2023](#)).

d) Shared responsibility

Since 2015, the European ambition to promote Open Science has been complemented by a parallel effort to promote research ethics and integrity. As the research system is opened up, and new stakeholders are involved, there are also new challenges concerning, for instance, conflict of interests, bias and propaganda, and the level of trust in science held by society. The shared responsibility for research ethics and integrity should be extended in FP10 to cover all stakeholders involved in research collaborations. All stakeholders should have an explicit co-responsibility promoting and protecting ethics and integrity in research.

e) Security and freedom

European initiatives for enhancing security impact the research sector in fundamental ways. Openness and international collaboration are integral values in scientific research. Protecting these fundamental values requires a tailor-made approach strongly rooted in academic freedom and institutional autonomy ([European Commission, 2024](#)).

While FP10 needs to be prepared for a more challenging geopolitical context and unforeseen crises and challenges, it is also important that FP10 provides both support and funding of research ethics and integrity; cf. the European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2024 with recommendations to the Commission on promotion of the freedom of scientific research in the EU ([European Parliament, 2024](#)).

f) Guidelines as tools for strengthening research ethics

Promoting research ethics in a broader sense requires development of field-specific guidelines on research ethics supplementing the general framework outlined in *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity* ([ALLEA, 2023](#)). One example is the guidance document developed for Horizon Europe entitled *Ethics in social science and humanities* ([EU, 2021](#)). In Norway, FEK has developed field-specific guidelines and other resources for different fields of research.

g) Funding is required for fostering ethics in research

Research ethics is an important research topic in itself. Developing research ethics guidelines also requires the involvement of researchers in the respective fields to ensure both quality and legitimacy, cf. principles of academic freedom and self-regulation. Therefore, it is important to support and establish a broader research ethics and integrity community, including the development of new guidelines and frameworks; cf. Horizon 2020 Science with and for Society (SwafS), research ethics and research integrity portfolio.

FEK emphasize that Norway is already well represented within this European research portfolio, for instance in the projects BEYOND, HYBRIDA, ROSiE and PRO-Ethics ([CORDIS 2024](#)).