

Graciela M. Rusch
Christina Skarpe
Håkan Hytteborn

Vår ref.: 2011/168 Deres Ref.: Dato: 06.02.12

Concerning Shombe Hassan's publication in Open Journal of Ecology

We refer to your letter of December 20th 2011. In your letter, you ask the National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology (NENT) again to consider the measures that the scientific community should take in order to deal with professional misconduct of the type you have reported.

NENT considered your request on its meeting of January 25th 2012. Overall the committee believes that the matters you raise were addressed in our letter of November 25th 2011. A majority in the committee found that Hassan's conduct involves a breach of good research practice, with reference to international and national guidelines.

The committee also pointed out that good publication practice entails cooperation, and in particular that researchers clarify the individual areas of responsibility in teamwork and the rules of co-authorship. Clarifying these matters in a contract in advance of a research project is likely to prevent disputes on authorship and breaches of good publication practice. Research institutions have a responsibility for ensuring that researchers and students sign agreements when appropriate.

We would like to add that research ethics must be included in the teaching and supervision of Ph.D. students in order to prevent professional misconduct in various forms. The teaching should also include knowledge about the possible consequences of professional misconduct. The National Research Ethics Committees have recently contacted all institutions which offer a Ph.D. in Norway, with the aim of improving the content of the education in research ethics.

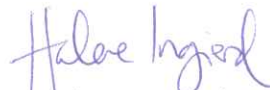
We wish to clarify that NENT's role in following up our guidelines is to inform and provide counsel upon request on questions involving research ethics. The committee has no judicial function in respect of accusations of breaches of the guidelines. Further, it does not have any authority to impose sanctions. In Norway, the National Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct is a body that investigates complaints of research misconduct. The Commission is to assess allegations of serious research misconduct and issue a statement on whether any scientific misconduct has occurred or not. The commission covers all research

fields and deals with research carried out by Norwegian research institutions. However, the responsibility for sanctions rest with the research institutions. You may contact the Commission at (+47) 23 31 83 24 for further information.

With kind regards,


Dag E. Helland

Chair NENT


Helene Ingierd

Director NENT