

# Research Integrity as a Safeguard for the Freedom of Scientific Research in Responsible International Collaborations

Statement by ENRIO, the European Network of Research Integrity Offices



21 May 2025

---

Research is a common enterprise, across disciplines, institutions and countries. Today, many countries, research performing organisations, institutions (including research funders, academies, and publishers), and individual researchers are facing increasing pressure on the freedom of scientific research and the principles of research integrity. The freedom of scientific research is a universal right, embedded within the foundational principles of research. Upholding research integrity and adhering to good research practices are essential to safeguard this freedom.

In Europe, the principles of research integrity are outlined in The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity by ALLEA, which identifies four overarching principles: Reliability, Honesty, Respect, and Accountability.<sup>[1]</sup> These principles ensure the production of reliable, responsible, and trustworthy knowledge. Together, research integrity and freedom of scientific research form essential conditions for producing, sharing, and applying knowledge that benefits individuals, society, and the environment.

Pressures on the freedom of scientific research and the principles of research integrity manifest in various ways, including:

1. Certain topics are being excluded from research agendas, with funding allocated only to those aligned with political priorities.
2. Research that yields results contrary to political agendas being disregarded or shelved.
3. Findings being presented in biased ways to serve specific interests.

Such practices undermine the core principles of research integrity.

In high-risk countries—where the freedom of scientific research is suppressed, and fundamental principles of research integrity are routinely violated—international collaboration may provide valuable opportunities to pursue trustworthy knowledge.<sup>[2]</sup> However, these collaborations also raise serious ethical dilemmas for researchers in low-risk countries. On the one hand, valuable partnerships may be at risk due to the challenge of maintaining fundamental standards and contributing to reliable, science-based advice. On the other hand, there is a risk that these standards may be compromised to preserve cooperation.

To minimise these risks, the European research community must consider key questions: How can we best balance competing considerations? Where should we draw the line in collaborating with high-risk countries? How can we support researchers and organisations operating under pressure?

We call on research performing organisations to:

- Evaluate their (in)dependence from national governments and funding sources and examine their resilience to future threats.
- Support researchers in assessing potential collaborations by evaluating the political context of the country, the academic environment of the partner institution, and potential threats to research integrity and the freedom of scientific research.
- Develop clear, transparent policies and procedures for risk assessments and provide guidance in complex cases.
- Clearly define the scope of joint work with countries where there are known threats to scientific freedom or other fundamental standards.
- Establish, in advance, the criteria that would trigger the termination of a collaboration and ensure support for researchers is provided in such cases.

We call on all institutions across the research ecosystem to identify and initiate actions to foster and protect both the freedom of scientific research and research integrity.

Looking ahead, we recognise the need for continued collaboration on this topic. ENRIO remains committed to strengthening research integrity and to recognising its essential connection to the freedom of scientific research—working closely and in dialogue with partners across the international research community.

---

[1] ALLEA (2023) The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity – Revised Edition 2023. Berlin. DOI 10.26356/ECOC. <https://www.allea.org/code-of-conduct> See also the Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations, which serves as a global guidance on the responsible conduct of research in collaborations, WCRI (2013). Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations. <https://www.wcrif.org/guidance/montreal-statement>

[2] The Academic Freedom Index is a useful tool which provides an overview of the state of academic freedom across 179 countries, [https://academic-freedom-index.net/research/Academic\\_Freedom\\_Index\\_Update\\_2025.pdf](https://academic-freedom-index.net/research/Academic_Freedom_Index_Update_2025.pdf)

## About this statement

This statement emerged from the ENRIO Meeting in April 2025 in Oslo, Norway. ENRIO Board member Helene Ingjerd took the initiative for this statement and held the pen of the first version. It was adopted by the ENRIO Board on 20 May 2025.

## About ENRIO



**ENRIO strengthens research integrity in Europe.** We are a network of organisations shaping or implementing research integrity governance in European countries. We network to exchange ideas, learn from each other, monitor developments and professionalise. We publish practical guidance, tools and recommendations as synthesis of the collective expertise of our members.

ENRIO brings a strong voice for research integrity and contributes to research integrity policy, thanks to the cumulative knowledge, experience and vision of its members. We strengthen European research integrity stakeholders, build partnerships and convene the European research integrity community.