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4 RULES ON THE INTEGRITY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
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6

7 **Art. 1.**

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9 **General principles and considerations**

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11 1. Reputation is of fundamental importance to any research institution from a legal,
12 economic and social point of view. It translates into the consideration, trust and credibility
13 that the institution emanates towards its employees, the scientific community of reference,
14 and the public.

15 2. Conflict of interest is defined as the involvement and / or participation in the adoption of
16 decisions in the field of scientific research that may involve one's own interests or interests
17 of those with whom one has or has had a relationship of collaboration and / or habitual
18 attendance. Interest may be of financial nature or not.

19 3. Freedom of information must be intended as total accessibility to any administrative act
20 except those protected by EU and national regulations on sensitive data and ensured
21 through the publication of all information relating to administrative procedures.
22 Transparency has the aim of creating an open administration at the service of the citizen.
23 It must guarantee the integrity and legality of the administrative action, making sure that
24 the documents are correct and effective and that they can be widely used.

25 4. Scientific integrity is the pursuit of scientific knowledge in active adherence to the
26 ethical principles, norms, and professional standards essential for the responsible practice
27 of research. Research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in
28 proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.

29 5. The terms of this decree statute apply to all investigators of research institutions that
30 receive any type of research support from the government.

35 **Art 2.**

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37 **Prevention of conflict of interest**

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39 1. Following the issuing of calls for research project grants or for research positions with
40 tenure, boards of experts in the field of application of the call are established by the
41 issuing research institution, independently of its legal status.

42 2. The boards referred to under paragraph 1 shall be made up of fifty percent members of
43 domestic nationality and fifty percent members of foreign nationality.

44 3. The identity of board members referred to under paragraph 2 is disclosed in the call
45 text.

46 4. The serving of board members referred to under paragraph 2 is remunerated.

47 5. Those who assume the functions of board member, at any level and for any type of call,
48 must respect the principles of integrity and transparency, act in good faith, and refuse to
49 serve or resign in the event of a conflict of interest.

50 6. The members of the selection board of experts or those who have been associated with
51 them during the last five years cannot apply to the call (whether for research projects or
52 for research positions). Recusing himself or herself from specific cases in which there is a
53 conflict of interest (so-called "exit from the room") is not permitted.

54 7. The association of a proposing researcher / candidate with a board member is
55 determined by the presence of the proponent / candidate and of the board member as co-
56 authors in one or more scientific publications or by any other working relationship during
57 the five years preceding the date of publication of the call. The following situations include
58 examples of conflict of interest:

- 59 • The board member is named in the proposal in a major professional role.
- 60 • The board member has a direct financial interest: he/she or a close family member
61 would receive a direct financial benefit if the proposal is approved.
- 62 • The board member is from an institution that is included as a subcomponent of the
63 proposal.
- 64 • Within the past five years, the board member has been a collaborator (e.g. coauthor
65 in scientific publications) or has had any other professional relationship (e.g., served as a
66 mentor) with any person who has a major role in the proposal.
- 67 • The proposal includes a letter of support or recommendation letter from the board
68 member.

69 • The board member has indirect financial interests: he/she has received more than €
70 2000 (in the form of honoraria, stocks or fees) from the Principal Investigator or any
71 applying Institution in the previous 24 months

72 8. To ensure an adequate rotation, the board members referred to under paragraph 2 may
73 exercise their function for a single selecting procedure (whether for research projects or
74 for research positions) during a solar two years period.

75 9. Serving as a board member referred to under paragraph 2 is mandatory as it falls within
76 the duties of the office. Its declining must be adequately justified. Impossibility to
77 participate to the call on its own or through a collaborator is not a valid justification.

78 10. The rules of this article apply to every order and degree of scientific responsibility at
79 the issuing research institution, except for the mere organizational functions.

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81

82 **Art. 3.**

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84 **Obligations of the administrative director of the research institution and of the**
85 **director of the research unit on transparency**

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87 1. The administrative director of the research institution is responsible for the
88 completeness, clarity and updating of all published information.

89 2. The administrative director shall systematically monitor the fulfillment of the publication
90 obligations.

91 3. To this end, the administrative director is obliged to collect observations from any
92 interested person ["stakeholder" (call applicant or simple citizen)], on the usefulness and
93 completeness of the published data. The administrative director checks the reliability and
94 responds in writing to any comments and / or complaints within fifteen working days from
95 receipt.

96 4. Each selecting procedure, both for the allocation of funding and for job positions must
97 call for applications with the widest diffusion through IT (publication on the institutional
98 website) and conventional (media) procedures.

99 5. Each selecting procedure, both for the allocation of funding and for job positions, must
100 be eventually accompanied by the publication on the institutional website of detailed and
101 exhaustive minutes of the adopted procedure and the criteria, parameters used, and

102 scores assigned to all applicants. To the results of those minutes' report, observations and
103 / or appeals are allowed within the term of fifteen working days from the publication.

104 6. The administration of the research institution must respond to the submitted
105 observations within fifteen working days from receipt. Until the publication of this reply, the
106 results of the selecting procedure are suspended.

107 7. If the response is deemed insufficient, the observer may appeal second instance to the
108 competent National Administrative Law Organs.

109 8. The non-publication or incomplete publication of the prescribed information causes the
110 whole selecting procedure to be null and void, constitutes a violation of the research
111 institute's quality standards and must be assessed as management responsibility.

112 9. If the administrative director ascertains facts that may present disciplinary relevance in
113 terms of lack of transparency, he/she must promptly inform his hierarchical superior as
114 well as the institutional disciplinary proceedings office.

115 10. The directors of the research units are responsible for fulfilling the transparency
116 obligations for the administrative acts relating to their units.

117 11. The director of each research unit has full and exclusive responsibility for the
118 accuracy, completeness and timeliness of the transmission of administrative data relating
119 to his / her unit to the institutional administrative direction for the purpose of publication.

120 12. The lack of collaboration of the individual directors of research with the administrative
121 management to the aim of administrative transparency, represents element of managerial
122 responsibility according to the following art. 6.

123

124 **Art 4.**

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126 **Freedom of information**

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128 1. Anyone can submit a request to access information. The right to access information is
129 unconditional and can be exercised without the need for motivation. Applicants should be
130 able to access information free of charge.

131 2. The right to information applies to all documents, information or data that the public
132 administrations are required to publish pursuant to EU and national regulations (e.g. the
133 Italian Legislative Decree 14 March 2013, n. 33 and subsequent amendments), should
134 they have failed to make them available on the institutional website.

135 3. The right to information applies to all documents relating to the administration of public
136 funds at research institutions that receive such funds, including those involving
137 investigations and data processing. In general, access to the categories of documents that
138 allow punctual and general monitoring of the work of investigators at the research
139 institution is permitted.

140 4. The sensitive data that may be present in the document must be treated according to
141 the EU and national regulations (e.g. the Italian legislative decree 30 June 2003, n. 196).

142 5. Institutions must identify on their websites the person to whom request for access of
143 information must be submitted. Requests must be answered within 30 working days from
144 receipt by publishing the requested documents, information or data on the institutional
145 website and transmitting copy of it to the applicant.

146 6. The administrative director of the research institution is responsible for ensure
147 monitoring compliance with the provision of this section. Failure to comply in this regard
148 will represent an element of managerial responsibility according to the following art. 6.

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150

151 **Art. 5**

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153 **“Publish or Perish” and the reproducibility crisis**

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155 Scientific advances can only be based on robust and reliable data that may serve as a
156 solid foundation on which further advances can be built. The scientific community is
157 increasingly concerned with the proportion of published data that cannot be partially or
158 totally reproduced in subsequent studies [*Kaiser, J., (2015) Science 348: 6242*].

159 Reproducibility of results is a pillar of the Scientific Method and its crisis in basic and
160 translational research may be the result of failure to adhere to good scientific practice and
161 the desperation to publish or perish. The issue is prevalent and of concern and must be
162 monitored and addressed at the policy level [*Baker M. (2016) Nature, 533: 452*].

163 Researchers, in carrying out their activity, shall conform their conduct to the observance
164 of the ethical regulations and to the international principles of scientific integrity, ensuring
165 the reproducibility of the published data [*Munafò MR, Davey Smith G (2018) Nature.*
166 *553(7689):399-401*].

167 Misconducts related to principles referred to under paragraph 3 are regulated by the
168 institutional Committee for the quality control of scientific research referred to in Article 6
169 [*Begley et al (2015) Nature 525, 23-27*].
170

171 **Art. 6**

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173 **Committee for the quality control of scientific research.**

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175 1. Each research institution must establish a Committee for the quality control of scientific
176 research.

177 2. This Committee shall be comprised of three members, all of which must hold
178 permanent research positions.

179 3. Member of the Committee are appointed by the Administrative Director in consultation
180 with the heads of the departments. Members shall serve for a term of two calendar years.
181 Their appointment can be renewed one time.

182 4. The main task of the committee is to verify the quality intended as compliance with
183 ethical standards as well as reliability and reproducibility of scientific results published by
184 investigators working at the research institution.

185 5. To this aim, the committee shall draw each calendar semester one sample article
186 whose corresponding author is a scientist working at the research institution, published
187 online or in print during the preceding 36 months.

188 6. The committee requests the corresponding author of the article the documentation
189 concerning the raw experimental data from which the published scientific results were
190 generated.

191 7. The quality control committee verifies the correctness of the elaboration of the
192 published experimental data. In discharging this duty, the Committee may seek the
193 assistance of external experts in the field of published research.

194 8. In case of suspicions of scientific misconduct, the Committee shall hold a hearing at
195 which the corresponding author and / or one or more non-corresponding authors are
196 offered an opportunity to address the Committee's concerns.

197 9. In the event the Committee concludes that scientific misconduct occurred, the Chair of
198 the Committee must inform the journal where the data were published of its findings and
199 must begin disciplinary proceedings against the corresponding author as well as other
200 authors that, in the judgment of the Committee, engaged in scientific misconduct.

201 10. The disciplinary sanctions are graduated according to the entity and / or possible
202 reiteration of non-compliance according to the following art. 7.

203

204 **Art. 7.**

205

206 **Protection of whistleblowers and sanctions**

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208 1. Each employee, in relation to his / her duties, shall promptly report to his / her superior
209 with respect to possible violations of this law and, in the event of supervisor's inaction
210 protracted for a reasonable amount of time, shall inform to the senior managers in the
211 hierarchical ladder. Whistleblowers shall be protected according to EU and national
212 regulations (e.g. the Italian ANAC determination n. 6 of 28 April 2015).

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214 2. Failure to comply with the terms of this law may result in invalidating previous
215 appointments and the obligation to return research funds of the research institution as well
216 legal responsibility under current to criminal, civil, or administrative laws. Sanctions shall
217 be gradual and proportionate to the severity the violation.

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