

Wednesday late afternoon session Track C, Wednesday, Sep 24 2025, 14:00-15:30

Location: Seminar 5

Session: Concepts and Definitions

Chair: Maura Hiney

OR-66

Towards a Fair Recognition of Research Performed by Members of Consortia - Approaching Challenges Observed in Germany

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The national Ombuds Committee for Research Integrity in Germany (OWID) provides advice and mediation in conflicts related to good research practice (GRP). It regularly offers guidance on authorship and has also assisted members of consortia in resolving authorship conflicts. Certain cases dealt with by OWID indicate that research conducted in consortia can encourage questionable authorship practices. Due to the number of researchers involved and the length of research projects, researchers' individual spheres of responsibility, expertise, intellectual contributions and scientific achievements become intertwined in a way that makes it difficult to allocate adequate credit within consortia [1]. Hosseini et al. 2024 [2] have systematically outlined the complexities of solving the challenge of recognising consortia members' scientific synergies by choosing so-called group authorships.

In this presentation, we will discuss possible solutions for the German context based on existing policies on group authorship. Due to a lack of data on research integrity breaches within consortia, we will analyse enquiries submitted to OWID and reports from members of consortia to delineate the nature of authorship conflicts in consortia, factors reinforcing questionable practices, and specific challenges researchers, whistleblowers, and research integrity advisors are confronted with in this context.

A major challenge to tackling this issue is to define the nuanced differences between the common ways of recognising contributions. Thus, we will discuss criteria of (a) authorship, (b) group authorship, (c) acknowledgment, and (d) citation of relevant publications of the consortium (e.g., on the data, equipment, software, methods used within the consortium) and their role in recognising contributions. To reflect upon the applicability of these criteria beyond the cases dealt with by OWID, we will interview several actors in the field of research integrity, from different disciplines, consortia, and funding agencies. Building on their expertise, we hope to better understand obstacles that might hinder large research teams from following the general guidelines of GRP.

To sustainably establish adequate recognition practices in the present-day realities of consortia, this presentation aims to stimulate preventive reflection on how to recognise consortia members' contributions to a manuscript in line with the rules of GRP. While the focus of the presentation will be on the German context, we would like to conclude by inviting the audience to bring in ideas on the challenges faced by transnational research consortia and how to address them.

[1] Hosseini, M., Lewis, J., Zwart, H. et al., *Sci Eng Ethics* 28, 25 (2022).

[2] Hosseini, M., Holcombe, A. O., Kovacs, M., et al., *Account Res*, 1-23 (2024).