

PO-18

Research Integrity Country Report: Belgium

Bert Seghers¹, Inge Lerouge², Marianne De Voecht³, Stephanie Ruysschaert⁴, Stefanie Van der Burght⁵, Leyla Soslambekova⁶, Martyna Bajorinaite⁶, Danielle Balériaux⁷

¹Flemish Commission for Research Integrity, Belgium

²KU Leuven, Belgium

³University of Antwerp, Belgium

⁴UHasselt, Belgium

⁵Ghent University, Belgium

⁶Legal & Ethics office, VUB, Belgium

⁷Conseil Supérieur pour l'Intégrité Scientifique, Belgium

At the 2015 Rio de Janeiro World Conference on Research Integrity, it was suggested to follow up on the development of national systems with respect to research integrity, through the use of "country reports" or "country cards", to be presented at subsequent World Conferences [1, 2]. This presentation contributes to that effort by mapping the research integrity landscape in Belgium, a federal state with a strong research focus.

After setting the scene with some key figures about the research intensity in Belgium, we will outline the country's research integrity governance. Although governmental competence for research policy lies mainly with the Flemish and the French-speaking community, both parts of the country have very similar structures and policies. Research integrity is safeguarded by a reporting-based system: institutional commissions for research integrity, embedded in the institutions, investigate reported allegations. An overarching community-level body can give a second advice (comparable to Finland and the Netherlands). Given the scale of both communities, it is also possible to exchange best practice.

We highlight some unique features of the system, such as the Flemish modular online training course on research integrity "Mind the GAP (Good Academic Practice)" and the use of the ALLEA code (instead of a national code) as the primordial framework in assessing alleged violations of research integrity, as well as some persisting and new challenges we face as research integrity professionals and which we consider to go broader than the Belgian context.

This information will be gathered based on both institutional policies and the professional experience and practitioner's perspective of the authors involved. The authors coordinate the Commissions for Research Integrity at the five universities in Flanders (Dutch-speaking Belgium), or represent the second-advice bodies in both parts of the country.

[1] Kleinert S., Marusic A., Focus track on improving research systems: the role of countries, Proceedings of the 4th World Conference on Research Integrity. Res Integr Peer Rev 1 (Suppl 1), 9 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-016-0012-9>

[2] Perković Paloš, A., Roje, R., Tomić, V., & Marušić, A. Creating research ethics and integrity country report cards: Case study from Europe. Accountability in Research, 31(6), 620–654. (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2022.2163632>