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Research integrity is also for the private sector! Early lessons from an ongoing initiative in France

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While public policies in support of research integrity are mainly geared towards academia and public research sector, research and innovation in the private sector are also expected to comply with the same requirements. This is particularly the case as public authorities seek to strengthen the private sector's involvement in research, in close partnership with public research, as reflected in the concepts of the Knowledge Economy and Innovation Triangle.

In France, where private sector R&I expenditure accounted for 65.8% of gross domestic spending on R&D (GERD) in 2021 [1], Ofis (French Office for Research Integrity) has taken steps to roll out initial actions aimed at private companies. In this communication, we propose to report on the initial lessons learned from this approach.

We will first present initial reflections arising from the work of Ofis with regard to private R&I. We will present the stakeholders identified for our initiative, the contacts we have met and the initial initiatives taken among them. In particular, we will show that without challenging the requirements of research integrity, the tactic used is based on taking into account the specific characteristics of the economic world (issues, vocabulary, etc.) as well as the benefits of relying on public support mechanisms for private R&I.

More specifically, working on the French "Crédit Impôt Recherche" (CIR - Tax Credit for Research) scheme is a promising lever for addressing the issues of research integrity in the private sector. Indeed, while it represented €6.9 billion in 2021 [2], the effectiveness and relevance of the CIR is the subject of much debate, with its detractors fearing a windfall effect, as some companies are tempted to pass off activities that are not research in order to benefit from tax exemptions. In this context, scientific integrity is a welcome reinforcement for better understanding the demarcation between what does and does not fall under the scope of research. This approach can thus prove useful for public authorities, as well as for companies for whom research integrity makes it possible to clarify the standards expected of sincere and high-quality research activities.

[1] "La dépense de recherche et développement expérimental en 2021", French Ministry for higher education & research (2023)
[2] "Le CIR en 2021 (données provisoires)", French Ministry for higher education & research (2023)