

**ROUNDTABLE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY,**

June 12, 2013, Zagreb, Croatia

Academic integrity has recently become one of the hottest issues in the international academic community due to the increased competitiveness of the research and different legacies in the research publications standards. The Croatian researchers and scholars make part of the world scientific network thus facing the same challenges in preserving and improving academic integrity; however, little so far has been discussed on this topic within the Croatian academic community. A roundtable held in Zagreb on 12 June 2013 on Academic Integrity was organized by Transparency International Croatia and the Institute of Economics, Zagreb to raise the awareness on academic integrity, to identify the prevalent risks of breaches of research and academic ethics and to advocate policy recommendation to improve ethical norms of behaviour of academics in Croatia.

The invited speakers at the roundtable included Dr. Pavel Gregorić from the University of Zagreb, Dr. Snježana Prijić-Samaržija from the University of Rijeka, and Dr. Sven Marcelić from the University of Zadar.<sup>1</sup>

Pavel Gregorić talked about the research/scientific integrity issues spotted in the international academic practice. Besides serious misconduct including fabrication, falsification and plagiarism there is an evidence of increasing unethical practices such as data mismanagement, conflicts of interest, selective reporting on research results, misuse of authorship acknowledgments, and other forms of misbehaviour. The World Conference on Research Integrity held in Lisbon 2007, Singapore 2010 and Montreal 2013 aimed to set the principles and guidelines for advanced research integrity. The developing European framework in this area is focused on the harmonization of national and institutional regulations, protection of whistle-blowers, cross-

border collaboration in insuring research integrity, and establishment of the European repository of academic misbehaviour cases. He mentioned that although some institutions in Croatia have ethical bodies and codes of conduct, the overall regulatory framework in Croatia does not provide adequate instruments to ensure academic integrity principles at the national level. The new act is expected to strengthen the responsibilities of the national ethical commission and to improve coordination and implementation of subsidiary ethical bodies' decisions.

The second presentation held by Snježana Prijić-Samaržija was based on two surveys conducted in 2012 and 2013 at the University of Rijeka. The selected data on academic integrity evidenced on unethical practices of faculty staff and students. The most prevalent misconduct was related to the authorship, followed by plagiarism and falsification, and at the lower extent, to the fabrication of data and research results. It is important to note that the University of Rijeka survey made part of IPA 2008 Project "Improving the Capacity of the University System to Create a Framework for Preventing Discrimination and Corruption aimed at Improving Academic Integrity" that included four Croatian universities (Zagreb, Split, Osijek and Rijeka). The findings pointed out similar attitudes and patterns of (un)ethical behaviour at Croatian universities and enabled deriving common policy measures applicable for the entire academic community in Croatia (<http://e-disco.ufzg.hr/>).

Sven Marcelić concluded the presentation section of the roundtable with the insight into the problem of plagiarism. He described the various plagiarism modalities including ghost-writing, copy-paste plagiarism, autoplagiarism and plagiarism via translation. He emphasized how difficult it is to discover the plagiarism during the regular peer review and publishing process. Furthermore, reporting on the suspicious work is hampered by unclear bureaucratic procedures, weak legis-



*Invited speakers at the roundtable*

lative protection of whistle-blowers, and stigmatization of rapporteurs by their academic colleagues. Often there are no strict sanctions for violators to follow so apparently the system is ignoring the problem and demotivating inner control mechanisms. Substantial tolerance of breaches in research integrity and unwillingness to report appeared to be the key problem related to academic integrity in Croatia.

The roundtable discussion was based on the examples of unethical behaviour and best practices that could be implemented in Croatia. The first set of policy measures advise education on the academic standards, starting from doctoral students. The next area of improvement is setting the appropriate and well-functioning institutional framework, including enlarged responsibilities and coordination of ethical

bodies. Finally, raising awareness of academic integrity has strong preventive effect, so the special offices promoting academic integrity should be established at every university in Croatia. The discussion on this topic should continue with more in-depth analysis of the situation and policy responses designed for particular issues of academic integrity in Croatia.

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<sup>i</sup> Presentations available at <http://www.eizg.hr/en-US/Roundtable-on-Academic-Integrity-1030.aspx>.

<sup>ii</sup> Author's personal opinion not necessarily corresponding to the point of view of the Institute of Economics, Zagreb.