



FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD ON  
RESEARCH INTEGRITY TENK

Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK

# Annual report | 2020

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# Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK

## Annual report 2020

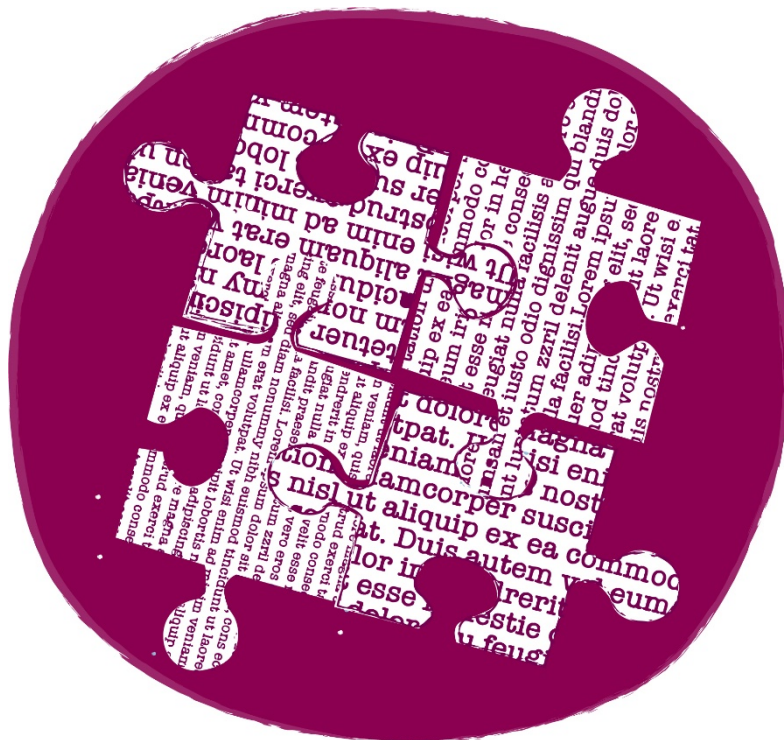
### 1 | TENK'S COMPOSITION AND MEETINGS

The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK is an expert body appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, which handles ethical issues concerning research. Its task is to promote responsible conduct of research and to prevent research misconduct (Decree on the Advisory Board on Research Integrity 1347/1991). The Ministry of Education and Culture appoints the members of TENK for a three-year term based on a proposal from the scientific community.

During TENK's term of office running from 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2022, Professor **Riitta Keiski**, Dean of the University of Oulu, serves as Chair, and Professor **Erika Löfström** from the University of Helsinki as Vice Chair. In addition, TENK has eight other members:

- Chief Researcher **Kari Hämäläinen**, VATT Institute for Economic Research
- General Counsel **Matti Karhunen**, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland
- Development Director **Leena Liimatainen**, JAMK University of Applied Sciences
- Senior Advisor **Susanna Näreaho**, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
- Professor **Riitta Salmelin**, Aalto University
- Vice President, Natural Resources, **Sirpa Thessler**, Natural Resources Institute Finland
- Assistant Professor **Aleksi Tornio**, University of Turku
- Professor **Risto Turunen**, University of Eastern Finland





*allegations of misconduct in Finland. Guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity 2012 (RCR guidelines).*

In order to increase the effectiveness of the RCR guidelines, TENK also invited learned societies to commit to the guidelines in 2020. By the end of the year, already twenty societies and associations had signed the commitment. On 31 December 2020, the total number of signatories was 100.

All in all, the RCR guidelines apply to approximately 25 000–30 000 members of research staff in Finnish universities, universities of applied sciences and research institutions.<sup>1</sup>

The trilingual guidelines can be ordered free of charge from TENK's office. The PDF and a text version of the instructions are available at [www.tenk.fi](http://www.tenk.fi).

In 2020, TENK issued several expert statements to the authorities on issues such as legislative work in the social and health care sector, and open science. Two specific examples of these include an opinion on the draft of ethical guidelines for Sami research, and a statement to the Ministry of Education and Culture on the establishment of an ethical body in the field of culture.

At the end of 2020, TENK began the updating process of the RCR guidelines. The updating is the responsibility of TENK's own working group, chaired by TENK's Chair Riitta Keiski. The members include Erika Löfström, Kari Hämäläinen, Matti Karhunen, Susanna Näreaho and Krista Varantola, and Sanna-Kaisa Spoof and Iina Kohonen from the secretariat. The working group's secretary is Terhi Tarkiainen, part-time Planning Officer of TENK. The intention is to publish the updated RCR guidelines in 2022.

## **2.2. Research Integrity Advisers**

By the end of 2020, the network of Research Integrity Advisers created by TENK included 71 research organisations and 133 integrity advisers. The advisers provided guidance to researchers in their own organisations on various problems and questions concerning research integrity. The training and networking events for Research Integrity Advisers were organised online in May and November.

TENK monitors the situation of Research Integrity Advisers' activities through an annual survey. The results of the surveys are summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland – R&D activity, <https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/higher-rd-activity/Pages/Tutkimus--ja-kehitysty%C3%B6.aspx>

<b>GUIDANCE SITUATIONS AND CASES, NO.</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
Guidance situations	138	172	206	176
Cases	93	95	94	90
Advisers who responded to the TENK survey	52	72	53	60

*Table 1: Activities of Research Integrity Advisers in the light of the number of guidance situations and cases.*

<b>REASON FOR CONTACTING, NO.</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
fabrication	2	1	0	1
falsification	4	2	1	2
plagiarism	14	13	28	8
misappropriation	12	15	7	6
authorship	19	32	22	27
other forms of disregard	8	18	14	5
other irresponsible conduct	13	10	14	4
other than RCR matters	68	173	45	48

*Table 2: Number of contacts received by Research Integrity Advisers by topic.*

## 2.3. Communication and publication activities

The website of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK was renewed as part of the Responsible Research website. As a result of the reform, you can find the websites of TENK, the Committee for Public Information (TJNK), Open Science and the Publication Forum, as well as the *Responsible Research Articles* at [www.vastuullinentiede.fi/en](http://www.vastuullinentiede.fi/en). With the website reform, the project *Vastuullinen tiede -tietopankki avoimen tieteen aikakaudelle* [*Responsible Research Database for the Era of Open Science*] was completed. Running from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020, the project was carried out by TENK together with the Committee for Public Information (TJNK). The project was funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

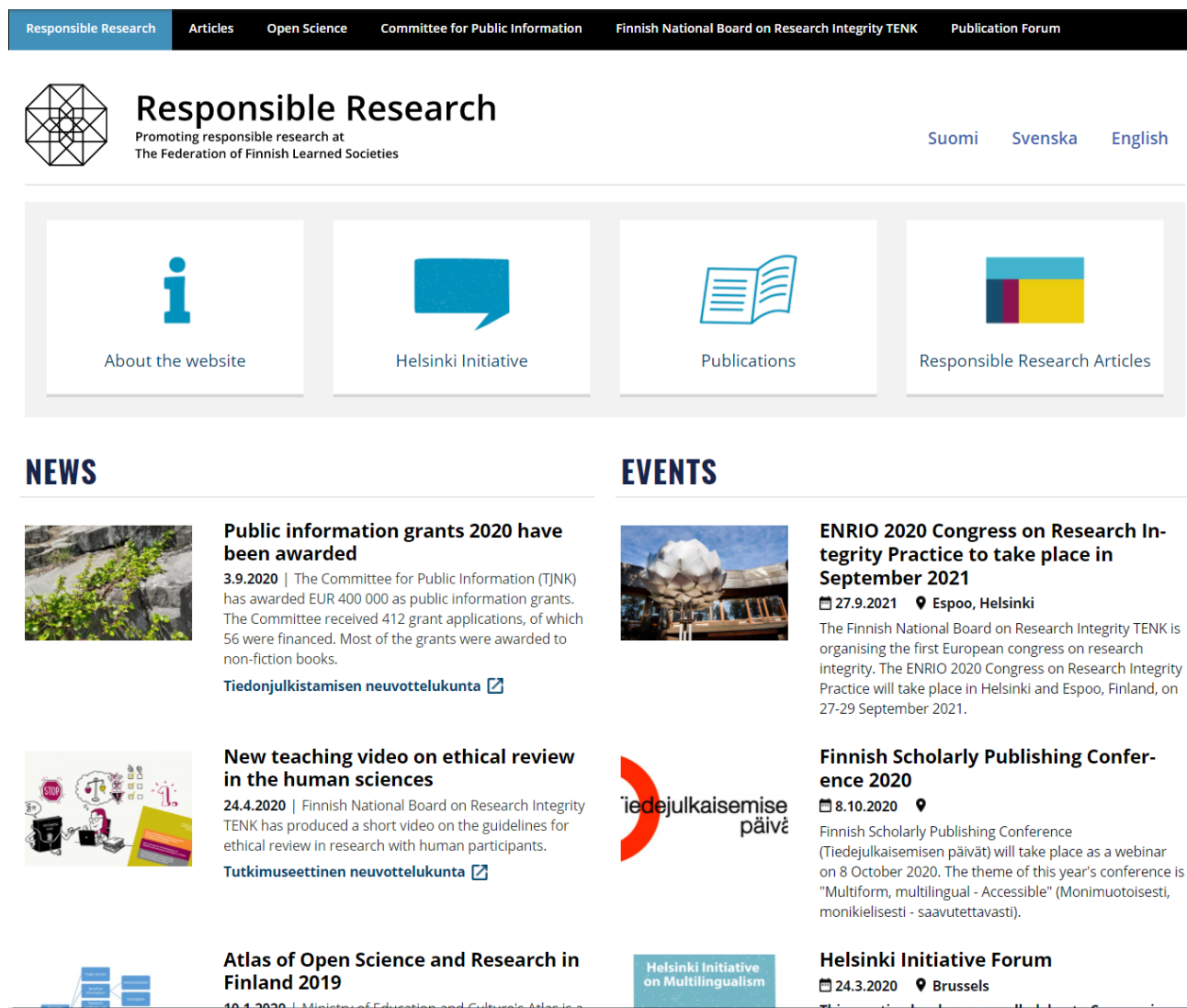


Figure 1: Screenshot of the Responsible Research website on 1 October 2020.

One of TENK's objectives for the current three-year period is to better respond to the need of Finland's international research community for information on research integrity. In connection

with the renewal of the website, particular attention was paid to increasing the availability of material in English. In cooperation with the Responsible Research project, TENK produced new translations of teaching videos that present the responsible conduct of research (RCR) and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland. Short videos for teaching purposes are available in Finnish, Swedish, English, Russian and French at [tenk.fi](http://tenk.fi).

Three new publications were released in the series **Publications of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK** (ISSN 2669-9427).



TENK renewed the template for researcher's CV, drawn up in 2012 in cooperation with the Academy of Finland, Universities Finland UNIFI, and the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences Arene. *Researcher's Curriculum Vitae Template. Recommendation of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2020* was published at the Tutkijan vastuullinen arviointi [Responsible evaluation of a researcher] seminar on 18 March 2020. The CV template was published in three languages: Finnish, Swedish and English.

In addition, two new translations came out in the publication series when the *Research Integrity Barometer 2018* was translated into Swedish and English.

All of TENK's publications can be downloaded from the website [tenk.fi/en/advice-and-materials](http://tenk.fi/en/advice-and-materials).

TENK also reviewed the Finnish translation of ALLEA's *European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity* guidelines and prepared a foreword for it. Permanent TENK expert Krista Varantola worked on the instructions as a member of the ALLEA Permanent Working Group on Science and Ethics. All researchers receiving EU funding must comply with the principles of ALLEA's European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

## 2.4. Events

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the **Etiikan päivä 2020: Tutkittavan oikeudet** [Ethics Day 2020: Rights of research participants] seminar was postponed to be organised as an online event in spring 2021. TENK organises the Ethics Day in cooperation with the national advisory boards on research ethics.

Originally planned to take place in the morning of Ethics Day on 18 March 2020, the **Vastuullisen arvioinnin seminaari**, [Seminar on responsible evaluation], was organised as an online event in cooperation with the Coordination of Open Science and the Publication Forum. An updated *Researcher's Curriculum Vitae Template* was also published at the event.

A decision was made to postpone the first European congress on research integrity organised by TENK and the European Network of Research Integrity Offices ENRIO by one year. The original plan was to organise the congress in October. The **ENRIO 2021 Congress on Research Integrity Practice** will take place as an online event in autumn 2021.

Two training events were organised for Research Integrity Advisers. In addition, TENK organised a training and discussion event in English for international researchers in Finland. The event reached a record audience and it was considered that there is a need for similar training in the future. The training sessions were carried out online due to the situation with the pandemic.

## 3 | HANDLING OF ALLEGATIONS OF RCR MISCONDUCT

### 3.1. Allegations of RCR misconduct reported to TENK and verified violations

In 2020, 43 new allegations of misconduct in the responsible conduct of research (RCR) were reported to TENK by Finnish universities, universities of applied sciences and other research organisations that are committed to the RCR guidelines. Two of these allegations concerned RCR violations in Master's theses in universities of applied sciences.

Each allegation was investigated in the organisation where the research or thesis under suspicion was or had been carried out.

According to the notifications received by TENK, 47 RCR processes were completed during the year, some of which had already been started in the preceding years. Four of these cases concerned Master's theses, and research misconduct was found in two of them, while disregard for the responsible conduct of research was detected in one case. In one case, both research misconduct and disregard for the responsible conduct of research were found.



An RCR violation was found in eight of the cases investigated at universities and other research organisations, one of which included research misconduct and five disregard for the responsible conduct of research. In two cases, both research misconduct and disregard for the responsible conduct of research were found.

Ten of the reported cases had been closed without a decision on an RCR violation (the matter was not considered to fall within the competence of the organisation concerned, and/or within the scope of the RCR guidelines). In some cases, the processing was still ongoing at the end of the year.

Summaries of the verified RCR cases are given in Section 3.2.

<b>Allegations of RCR misconduct reported to TENK and verified violations, no.</b> (number of cases concerning theses in universities of applied sciences are shown in parentheses)	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
Reports from research organisations to TENK on new allegations of RCR misconduct	43 (2)	34 (13)	40 (16)	21	20
Finalised RCR processes at research organisations, in which the RCR violation was verified: <b>misconduct</b>	6 (3)	13 (9)	12 (7)	1	2
Finalised RCR processes at research organisations, in which the RCR violation was verified: <b>disregard</b>	9 (2)	6 (4)	7 (0)	4	1
Finalised RCR processes at research organisations, in which no RCR violation was verified	24 (0)	22 (6)	15 (0)	17	16

*Table 3: Table 1: RCR allegations of misconduct reported to the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK and verified RCR violations, number (number of cases concerning theses in universities of applied sciences are shown in parentheses).*

### **3.2. Verified RCR violations at research organisations**

#### ***Case 1: Carelessness in the references of an encyclopaedia was not serious enough to fulfil the criteria for plagiarism***

Four researchers from the field of humanities suspected that an encyclopaedia published by Professor A and Docent B included plagiarism and self-plagiarism. According to the allegation, the book contained unauthorised quotations of both text from different sources and images from a publication by the two researchers who submitted the report.

The preliminary inquiry conducted by the university concluded that an encyclopaedia does not need to be as detailed in terms of references as a research publication. However, the university decided that A and B were guilty of disregard for the responsible conduct of research because the work contained direct quotes and photographs without appropriately listing the sources. According to the university, however, the seriousness of the act did not fulfil the conditions for plagiarism.

During the RCR process, author B had announced that they would assume responsibility for the disputed parts of text written by them. However, the university considered that, as its authors, both A and B are equally responsible for the book's content.

#### ***Case 2: Omitting the other author's name from joint articles was found to be disregard for the responsible conduct of research***

Professor A of social sciences suspected that researcher B had omitted A's name from two scientific publications. The articles were sent to the publisher and approved for publication under both names, but A's name was missing from the final list of authors. B responded that A had only commented on the draft versions and therefore A's contribution was not sufficient enough for A to be mentioned as an author.

However, in the university's preliminary inquiry, A's contribution to the publications proved to be undisputed. The university found B guilty of an RCR violation as he had asked the publisher to omit A's name from the articles.

As B did not accept the outcome of the preliminary inquiry, the university also carried out an investigation proper in the matter. The investigation committee reached the same decision as the preliminary inquiry. The university decided that B was guilty of disregard for the responsible conduct of research.

See also TENK's statement 2020:8.

### ***Case 3: Incorporating the results of a Bachelor's thesis into a Master's thesis was self-plagiarism***

A student of a higher education institution was suspected to have included parts of their Bachelor's thesis in their Master's thesis under review. Based on the preliminary inquiry, the higher education institution considered that the same results had been published ostensibly as new in the thesis. In other words, the student was found guilty of so-called self-plagiarism. The student admitted the deed and there was no need for an investigation proper.

### ***Case 4: A health test was based on a study that had not been peer-reviewed***

In 2017, the university received an RCR notification in which a foreign physician A suspected that a test package producing health information was unreliable because its scientific base had not been peer-reviewed. The test package had been developed by university lecturer B and their research group. The only scientific justification for the commercialised test was an article published on B's website, including five other authors in addition to B. It was also unclear whether research permits had been obtained for the study and whether an ethical review should have been carried out.

The case progressed to the phase of an investigation proper at the university and proved so challenging that the investigation committee delivered several final reports on the matter.

In its decision, the university took the view that B and the other principal researcher C were guilty of falsification, reporting research results or methods in a careless and deceptive manner, and misleading the general public in the disputed joint article. The other authors of the article were found innocent.

The investigation lasted almost three years. According to the university, the processing of the matter was delayed due to requirements of professional secrecy in relation to business activities and ethical review in medical sciences.

### ***Case 5: Faculty ignored the guidelines on research integrity when deciding on the editors of a publication***

In 2017, social sciences researcher A submitted an RCR report to the university on a publication in which A should have been listed as an editor. The case concerned a guidebook prepared on the basis of a research project. The three researchers listed as compilers of the work would also have been prepared to include A's name in the list of compilers. However, according to the decision made by the faculty, only persons who have carried out the actual editing are marked as editors of the work.

After TENK's statement on the matter (TENK 2019:19), the university carried out an investigation proper. According to the university's decision, A was to be mentioned as one of the compilers of

the work, as the RCR guidelines also apply to non-scientific publications the content of which has been influenced by the researcher's work. The university also reminded the faculty that TENK's guidelines should be taken into consideration in decisions on authorship. The other three compilers of the work were not considered guilty of an RCR violation.

#### ***Case 6: Research institute detected plagiarism but considered it unintentional***

In 2019, company X had submitted an RCR notification on a customer report produced by a research institute. (See paragraph 3.2 of TENK's Annual Report 2019, case 4). The research institute did not launch a preliminary inquiry because it considered that it was not a scientific publication. X was dissatisfied with the decision and requested a statement from TENK.

After TENK's first statement (TENK 2019:10), a preliminary inquiry was carried out. As a result, an error was detected in the references of the report. However, the decision did not explicitly state that the report included plagiarism.

Company X remained dissatisfied with both the decision and the RCR process carried out by the research institute and requested a statement from TENK. After TENK's second statement (TENK 2020:4), the research institute launched an investigation proper in the matter.

In its decision, the research institute found that plagiarism had taken place, but considered it to be unintentional and due to negligence, inadequate instructions and the authors' misconceptions on the correct course of action. On the other hand, no evidence was discovered to substantiate the allegation that the suspects had manipulated authorship or distorted the report's conclusions, for bias, or for lack of expertise in the report.

#### ***Case 7: Incomplete references, self-plagiarism and plagiarism were detected in a Master's thesis***

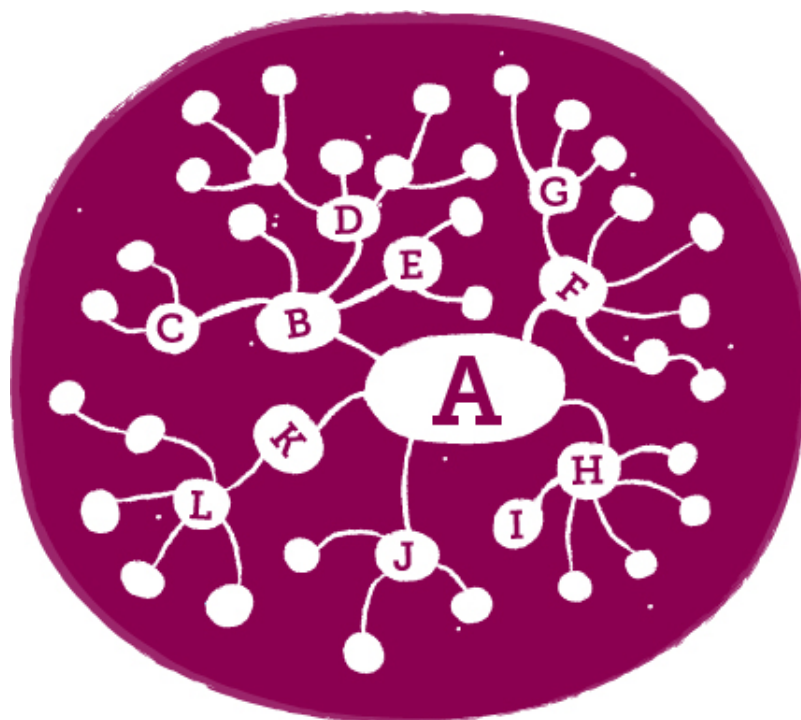
A Master's thesis in the field of humanities was suspected to include plagiarism. The notification of the allegation was based on information provided by an adult education centre located abroad. The university carried out a preliminary inquiry on the matter and found that the thesis contained material from the educational centre in question without referencing the source in an appropriate manner. The Master was found guilty of disregard for the responsible conduct of research by self-plagiarism and inadequate references, as well as of research misconduct by small-scale plagiarism.

***Case 8: Postgraduate studies with a similar research plan at two different universities was considered disregard for the responsible conduct of research***

A doctoral candidate in the field of social sciences was suspected to have acted contrary to the responsible conduct of research by applying for and being accepted as a postgraduate student with a very similar research plan to a Finnish university and a university located abroad. The doctoral candidate had also published an article in their own name, which was suspected to contain parts of a joint article that had not yet been published. The notification of the allegation was based on information provided by two other authors of the joint article. They worked as supervisors of the doctoral candidate at the foreign university, but did not want to participate in the RCR process in Finland.

Based on the preliminary inquiry, the university found the doctoral student guilty of disregard for the responsible conduct of research. This was mitigated by the fact that the research plans were not identical, although the doctoral candidate should have informed their supervisor in Finland of the fact that they also started studying at another university. As regards the article, the university recommended that the names of the supervisors at the foreign university be mentioned in an appropriate manner in the dissertation.

The remaining verified RCR violations at research organisations reported to TENK in 2020 concerned plagiarism found in Master's theses at universities of applied sciences.



### 3.3. RCR statements requested from and issued by TENK

In 2020, TENK received a total of 14 requests for a statement concerning the practical investigation process of an alleged RCR violation, and 9 other requests for a statement. TENK issued a total of 13 RCR statements.

<b>Statements issued by TENK, no.</b> (numbers of statements requested and issued concerning theses in universities of applied sciences are shown in parentheses)	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
New requests for a statement received by TENK that concerned the RCR process	14 (2)	23 (10)	16 (2)	9	9
Statements issued by TENK that concerned the RCR process; also including different requests for a statement other than those found in the previous section	13 (0)	22 (12)	9 (0)	10	8
Other expert statements than those that concerned the RCR process	7	1	2	1	1

*Table 4: Number of statements issued by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK (numbers of statements requested and issued concerning theses in universities of applied sciences are shown in parentheses).*

Summaries of RCR statements issued by TENK in 2020:

***Statement 1 (TENK 2020:1): Failure to refer to an individual study was not falsification and sources of financing had been announced appropriately***

Doctor of Natural Sciences A suspected that researchers and directors of a research institute were guilty of falsification or disregard for the responsible conduct of research by failing to refer to A's doctoral dissertation published in 2007. A suspected that the researchers' independence had been compromised by financial links with the industry.

TENK's statements 2020:2 and 2020:3 are related to the same issue.

According to TENK, failure to refer to an individual study does not indicate such research misconduct by falsification of observations as described in the RCR guidelines that the criteria of an RCR violation would be met.

According to the RCR guidelines, denigrating the role of other researchers in publications could also be examined as disregard for the responsible conduct of research. However, in order to

establish an RCR violation in such a case, the actions of the researcher alleged of a violation should constitute gross negligence and carelessness in various stages of the research.

Based on the material submitted to TENK, there was no reason to conclude that the researchers or management of the research institute had acted in such a way that their behaviour could be interpreted as an RCR violation by gross negligence. The researchers under suspicion had also announced the sources of financing when publishing the results. According to TENK, the independence of the researchers had not been compromised by any provider of funding.

***Statement 2 (TENK 2020:2): A delay in a dissertation did not constitute deliberate delaying the work of another researcher.***

Doctor of Natural Sciences A alleged that between 2005 and 2006 a university's Emeritus Professor B had made it difficult for A to complete their doctoral dissertation, and thus B had prevented the publishing of A's research results.

TENK's statements 2020:1 and 2020:3 are related to the same issue.

When assessing whether a violation of responsible conduct of research has occurred, the RCR guidelines in force at the material time must be applied in the assessment. TENK's RCR guidelines from 2002 were thus applicable.

The 2002 guidelines state that it is harmful for the scientific community and reprehensible to intentionally delay or impede another researcher's work. However, the RCR procedure is applied to investigating cases only in situations when the activities can also be considered a violation against the responsible conduct of research. In this case, the person alleged of misconduct should also have demonstrated gross negligence.

In the light of the documentation submitted to TENK, there was no reason to conclude that B had deliberately sought to delay the completion of the work of A. Moreover, there was no mention of such gross negligence or carelessness in B's activities that there would have been reason to investigate the matter as an RCR violation.

***Statement 3 (TENK 2020:3): Failure to refer to an individual study did not constitute falsification or disregard for the responsible conduct of research***

Doctor of Natural Sciences A alleged that researchers and directors of a university had been guilty of falsification or disregard for the responsible conduct of research by failing to refer to A's dissertation published in 2007. TENK's statements 2020:1 and 2020:2 are related to the same issue.

According to A, the research results of their doctoral dissertation were completely or almost completely ignored in seven joint publications of researchers. A suspected the researchers of both falsification and disregard for the responsible conduct of research.

In TENK's opinion, the fact that, in accordance with A's interpretation, the researchers under suspicion had not sufficiently acknowledged the results of A's doctoral dissertation in their publications, did not fulfil the conditions for research misconduct by falsification. In addition, the researchers' behaviour did not demonstrate gross negligence or carelessness at the different stages of the research process, and therefore the criteria for disregard for the responsible conduct of research were not fulfilled.

***Statement 4 (TENK 2020:4): An investigation proper was initiated in an RCR allegation regarding a commissioned report***

Company X suspected that a report written by technology researchers was not impartial. The report had been used as an expert statement in legal proceedings related to a breach of a business secret to which X was party. In addition, X suspected that the list of authors of the report had been expanded and that the report included plagiarism.

After TENK's first statement (TENK 2019:10), the research institute carried out a preliminary inquiry on the matter. According to X, not all suspects were consulted during the preliminary inquiry. Moreover, the CEO's decision does not state whether plagiarism took place, or identify who committed it.

According to TENK, the contribution of all persons included on the list of authors had to be examined because all persons mentioned on the list of authors of a publication are jointly responsible for its content, unless the publication states otherwise. The final decision of the RCR process must state whether disregard for the responsible conduct of research or research misconduct has been detected, as well as information about the person or persons who have committed the violation. As a result, an investigation proper in accordance with the RCR guidelines had to be initiated in the case.

***Statement 5 (TENK 2020:5): University acted in accordance with the RCR guidelines by sending the final report only to the funder***

Researcher A welcomed the outcome of an RCR process carried out by a university, in which researcher B was found guilty of research misconduct (plagiarism) after copying A's research plan in a funding application. However, A was dissatisfied with the manner in which the university had published the final report of the RCR investigation committee and the corrective measures that the university had announced it would take in the matter. After the research plan had been



misappropriated, A was no longer able to use it or the ideas presented in it for which funding had been granted.

The case is related to the same issue as TENK's statement 2019:18.

When research misconduct is detected during the RCR process, the RCR guidelines state that the findings of the final report must be published at least in the publication channel where the fraudulent research findings have already been published. In A's case, the plagiarised text had been published in a research plan submitted to the funding body, and the research plan was covered by the obligation of professional secrecy. The text had not been published anywhere else.

According to TENK, the university had thus acted in accordance with the RCR guidelines by sending the final investigation report and the rector's decision to the funder only instead of publishing them more extensively. It was the responsibility of the unit in charge of the RCR investigation to decide on the consequences of a possible RCR violation.

***Statement 6 (TENK 2020:6): No RCR violation was found in connection with preventing the preliminary examination of a dissertation***

Postgraduate student A in the field of medical science considered that their doctoral supervisor B and head of department C had used their scientific authority to prevent A's doctoral dissertation from proceeding to preliminary examination by invoking false requirements and promises. As the doctoral programme of the university had also acted the same way, A considered this to be persecution directed at A.

A was dissatisfied with the university's decision according to which an RCR violation had not taken place.

TENK examined A's allegation in terms of finding out whether *other irresponsible practices*, such as delaying or hampering the work of another researcher, could be applicable in the case. According to TENK, for example a difference of views on the scientific nature or evaluation of a study does not violate the responsible conduct of research.

However, TENK was not informed of any such irresponsible conduct against A's doctoral dissertation process which could have been considered serious enough to initiate an investigation process to find out whether the conditions for an RCR violation were met. In its statement, TENK concluded that the university had investigated the alleged RCR violation presented by A in accordance with TENK's guidelines.

***Statement 7 (TENK 2020:7): Even if an ethical review might have been necessary, the act did not involve gross negligence or carelessness***

Docent A considered that interviews implemented in a project in the field of humanities had been partly carried out in a manner that could cause emotional harm to the participants. A had worked as a researcher in the project. In addition, A suspected that professor B had misled the investigator conducting the preliminary inquiry by submitting a modified questionnaire for the inquiry.

In its statement 2018:9, TENK concluded that the university should carry out an investigation proper to find out whether the project should have undergone an ethical review in human sciences prior to the data collection. It was also necessary to establish which version of the questionnaire was used in the study and whether the criteria for an RCR violation were met in this context.

Based on the material submitted to TENK, the versions of the questionnaire were indisputably different. However, it was not possible to conclude that B's actions were deliberate or flagrantly careless.

Based on the material submitted to TENK, it was possible that the principle of informed consent was not fully realised in the study and that the study should have been subjected to an ethical review before the data collection. However, it was not possible to establish such gross negligence or carelessness in B's activities during the various stages of the study that the conditions for disregard for the responsible conduct of research would have been fulfilled.

In its statement, TENK pointed out on a general level that, in Finland, ethical review in the human sciences is a central part of the system of self-regulation in science. Whenever research involves human participants, the researcher is responsible for ensuring that the ethical risks and intended research methods of the study are addressed already in the research plan, regardless of the field of science. In the role of an employer, an organisation committed to TENK's guidelines is responsible for ensuring that researchers belonging to its scientific community are familiar and comply with the guidelines and recommendations related to research ethics and the ethical review.

***Statement 8 (TENK 2020:8): Conflict of interest, malicious accusations and international cooperation in the RCR process***

Professor A's research group in the field of social sciences included a foreign researcher B, who worked as a visiting researcher at university X. According to A's report on an alleged RCR violation, A and B had, by consensus, written several joint scientific articles together until B had, without A's knowledge, asked for A's name to be removed from the list of authors of two scientific articles during the evaluation process of the draft version.

On the basis of the RCR investigation proper, the rector of X considered that, by publishing the articles in question in their own name, B was guilty of disregard for the responsible conduct of research, that is, denigrating the role of other researchers in publications.

In the request for a statement, B expressed their dissatisfaction with the way in which X had carried out the RCR process. According to B, members of the rectorate and the investigation committee had a conflict of interest due to their close friendships and cooperation relationships, and should therefore not have assessed the RCR notification made by A.

However, according to TENK, being colleagues or members of the same administrative body of a university does not result in a conflict of interest in the RCR process unless some other links are also involved, such as significant joint research projects. In addition, the researchers themselves should have reported their possible conflict of interest in relation to the persons or matter under review.

As B had been working at university X on a personal international research grant, B considered that their case should have been investigated in cooperation with the body similar to TENK in the country that had awarded the grant. According to TENK, however, this was not the case: in special cases, not only the national TENK guidelines, but also the *code of conduct* used in the international organisation in question may be applied to researchers working in international research consortia managed from outside Finland. According to TENK, B's position as a visiting researcher was not comparable with the international research consortium as referred to in the RCR guidelines. In other words, X had been competent to act (alone) in the matter.

As a new issue in the request for a statement from TENK, B argued that, by submitting the RCR notification, A was guilty of falsely and maliciously accusing B of an RCR violation. According to TENK, this was not the case, as A unquestionably had clear grounds to request X to investigate the matter in an RCR process.

As A and B had differing views as to whether A's contribution had been significant enough to merit authorship in the controversial publications, TENK addressed a critical remark to the university. In the future, the university must ensure that the principles of authorship are agreed between employees and other parties in advance, before the publication process is started. Research organisations are also obliged to do this by TENK's recommendations *Agreeing on authorship. Recommendation for research publications*.

See also Verified cases of RCR violations, case 2.

***Statement 9 (TENK 2020:9): An investigation proper was necessary because, in addition to inadequate anonymisation, there was a suspicion of a more serious RCR violation than reported***

Professor A of university X suspected that professor B and researcher C of university Y were guilty of inadequate anonymisation and dissemination of research without informed consent. The article described the working community of university X, whose member C had previously been.

The preliminary RCR inquiry carried out by university X stated that the authors were guilty of disregard for the responsible conduct of research by reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, and by misleading the scientific community. It was also considered that the publication included fabrication, and that it inappropriately hampered the work of another researcher, as the research participants were also researchers themselves.

In the request for a statement, B argued that X was not competent to carry out the RCR process because both B and C were employed by Y at the time when the publication under suspicion was compiled. B also contested the outcome of the RCR process because the preliminary inquiry had not understood their research method. In addition, B pointed out that the case did not concern a scientific article, but an essay not covered by the RCR guidelines.

In its statement, TENK stated that X was the correct body to investigate the matter, as C had been part of X's scientific community during the time when material for the disputed study had been collected. As the suspects had not accepted the outcome of the preliminary inquiry and the preliminary inquiry found a more serious RCR violation than the original allegation, TENK concluded that an investigation proper should be initiated.

At this stage, TENK did not comment at all on whether B and C were guilty of possible disregard for the responsible conduct of research and/or research misconduct.

***Statement 10 (TENK 2020:10): Making an RCR allegation public during the process did not constitute disregard for the responsible conduct of research***

Docent A in the field of humanities had been suspected of an RCR violation. Persons who submitted the notification of the allegation had discussed the matter in social media before the end of the RCR process. According to A, the instigators of the allegation had behaved unethically, and the negative consequences to the suspects had been disproportionate.

Freedom of expression and the related scientific criticism, even if strong terms are used, is a fundamental right of science. However, in TENK's opinion, researchers must conduct themselves according to the responsible conduct of research also in situations of interaction outside the scientific community, including social media, if the context is related to their field of education or research. In their public performances, researchers should use their freedom of expression within

the parameters of responsible conduct of research if the matter is related to their work or role as a researcher.

On the basis of the material submitted to TENK, the texts published in social media by the researchers under suspicion included parts that, from the point of view of irresponsibility, were testing the boundaries of responsible research conduct. However, the irresponsible behaviour had not been serious enough to fulfil the conditions for an RCR violation.

Although publishing an alleged RCR violation while the RCR process was in progress was not, in itself, deemed as a violation against the responsible conduct of research, public debate should not jeopardise the impartiality or fairness of the RCR process, or the legal protection of the parties involved.

See also Verified cases of RCR violations, case 1.

***Statement 11 (TENK 2020:11): Freedom of teaching is part of university autonomy, the teaching was not found irresponsible***

Student A suspected that doctoral candidates B and C in the field of humanities had presented inappropriate learning material when teaching a course. A also considered that the requirement for confidentiality imposed on students regarding course work and discussions during the course was contrary to the Act on the Openness of Government Activities.

In its statements, TENK does not take a stand on the methods or scientific content of teaching taking place at universities. The freedom of research and teaching fall within the scope of the autonomy of universities, and TENK does not have competence to take action in matters related to the content of teaching. As the application of the Act on the Openness of Government Activities or the Copyright Act to university education does not fall within TENK's scope, TENK did not comment on these matters.

However, researchers must comply with the responsible conduct of research when acting as teachers and instructors. In addition to research activities, these policies apply to teaching materials.

TENK considered that the teaching materials used or produced by B and C did not meet the criteria for an RCR violation. On the other hand, the parties had different views on the scientific nature of the teaching material used. According to the RCR guidelines, genuine scientific differences in interpretation and evaluation are part of the scientific debate and do not violate the responsible conduct of research.

***Statement 12 (TENK 2020:12): There was no need to investigate an allegation regarding a Master's thesis dating back over 20 years***

A suspected that B's Master's thesis in the field of humanities, approved in 1997, included falsification, fabrication and plagiarism. The rector of university X did not initiate an RCR process, as the notification of the allegation concerned a thesis that had been completed and approved approximately 23 years ago.

According to TENK's RCR guidelines, an organisation may decide against initiating an RCR process if such a long time has passed since the alleged violation that the investigation would have no impact on ethically sustainable research practices, ensuring the quality of research, or the legal protection of other people.

In TENK's opinion, the rector of X exercised their discretion provided by the RCR guidelines regarding how long after and for what justified reasons a decision can be made not to initiate a preliminary inquiry on a Master's thesis.

***Statement 13 (TENK 2020:13): Producing background material did not merit authorship in a research report***

Research institution X published an annual report in the field of social sciences, and included the names of researchers A and B on the cover. Working in the same research institution, researcher C considered that the expertise of his research group, which studied the same topic, had been overlooked because they were not mentioned as authors of the report. Consequently, A would thus have been guilty of disregard for the responsible conduct of research by denigrating the role of other researchers and by referring inadequately to earlier research results of C's research group.

In a response to the allegation, A explained that the cover of the publication contained, in line with X's prevailing practice, the names of persons who would provide further information on the topic. X carried out a preliminary inquiry into the matter, according to which no RCR violation had taken place.

According to both the RCR guidelines and TENK's recommendations on authorship, it is necessary for the participants to agree in advance whose names will be included in the list of authors of the research publication, and how other types of authorship will be recorded in the publication. Unless otherwise specified, in TENK's view, the authors of publications are presumed to be those whose names are marked on the front cover of the publication.

According to TENK, in this case, it remained unclear whether A and B were originally thought to act as authors of the disputed report, as editors, or merely as providers of additional information. However, criteria for disregard for the responsible conduct of research were not met, as in addition to this, no gross negligence or similar occurred in the preparation of the report. In addition, X had

corrected its publication practices to comply with TENK's guidelines immediately after C had filed the notification of an alleged RCR violation.

## 4 | ETHICAL REVIEW IN HUMAN SCIENCES

TENK coordinates the ethical review of research in the field of human sciences and promotes cooperation between regional and organisation-specific ethical committees in the field of human sciences. The human sciences ethics committees issue ethical review statements by researchers' requests concerning the ethical aspects of research plans and other risks in research. The statements are based on TENK's guidelines *The ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland. Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK guidelines 2019* to which the organisations are committed. The guidelines have been prepared together with the scientific community.

TENK's office is following up the status of ethical review by collecting data on the cases processed by the human science ethics committees annually and maintaining a list of the committees' contact information. At the end of 2020, a total of 75 organisations were committed to TENK's ethical principles in the human sciences.

According to the organisations committed to the guidelines, the pandemic year was reflected in the fact that some committees received research plans for reassessment that had been modified due to the situation with the coronavirus.

Awareness of the need for a statement has still clearly increased. Issues related to data protection and data management are more prominent in researchers' projects. However, the projects are often multidisciplinary and international in nature, which significantly increases the committees' workload. The requirements of the changed data protection legislation continue to employ ethical committees. Cooperation between the organisation's data protection personnel and lawyers is therefore regarded as useful. However, TENK's guidelines, updated in 2019, were praised for being clear and for facilitating both advisory and evaluation work.

The committees are often asked for a statement at the publisher's request also in cases where according to TENK's guidelines an ethical review is not required. In such cases, a description of the Finnish system may be given to the person requesting the statement. The researcher can submit the description to a journal, for example, if they so wish. For these situations, a template for the use of organisations committed to the guidelines can be downloaded from the TENK website.

On 5 December 2020, TENK organised an online discussion event for the human science ethics committees.

<b>Cases handled by human science ethics committees, no.</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
Requests for statement related to ethical reviews	432	432	468	412	392
Statements given by ethics committees	395	389	457	385	324
Negative statement <sup>2</sup>	7	0	13	27	24
No statement (ethical review not considered necessary or request for statement directed to another committee)	21	36	26	35	41
Organisations replying to TENK's follow-up survey, no.	25	27	24	30	25

*Table 5: The number of cases handled by human science ethics committees each year.*

## 5 | INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

TENK's Secretary General Sanna-Kaisa Spoof acts as Chair of the European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO) for the term 2018–2021. Spoof is also the leader of ENRIO's whistleblowing working group. At the end of 2020, ENRIO had 32 member organisations from 24 European countries.

In November 2020, ENRIO was registered as a non-profit association working under the Belgian legal system, the European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO) vzw. TENK is one of the founding members of the ENRIO association together with approximately 15 other European national bodies for research ethics. As the first organisation to chair ENRIO as a non-profit association, TENK was responsible for the practicalities related to registering the association.

In addition to creating the ENRIO association, another objective for TENK's ENRIO presidency was to initiate and establish a biennial congress for research integrity in Europe. Due to the corona pandemic, a decision was made to postpone the first ENRIO congress planned for autumn 2020,

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<sup>2</sup> In 2019 thereafter, a negative statement means that no positive statement could be given, or the required revisions have not been made to the research plan, or the requested additional material for the statement has not been delivered. Before 2019, the numbers also included cases where the request for statement returned with a demand for amendment.



the ENRIO 2020 Congress on Research Integrity Practice, by one year. The ENRIO 2021 congress will be organised as an online event in autumn 2021, together with ENRIO and in collaboration with Aalto University.

In spring 2020, ENRIO issued a joint statement according to which compliance with the responsible conduct of research is of paramount importance also during the COVID-19 crisis, as decisions on the crisis require reliable research data based on scientific evidence. For example, ENRIO's established partner, EUREC, the European Network of Research Ethics Committees in the field of medicine, published it on its website. TENK also published the statement in Finnish on its website.

During the year, the chair and secretariat of TENK made only one trip for a meeting abroad:

- ENRIO Board meeting, Berlin 19 February 2020.

## 6 | PERSONNEL AND FINANCES

In addition to Secretary General Sanna-Kaisa Spoof, TENK's secretariat included Senior Adviser **Iina Kohonen**, DFA, and part-time Planning Officer **Terhi Tarkiainen**, MA, and part-time Office Secretary **Kaisu Reiss**, BSc (Econ).

The Coordinator of International Affairs and ENRIO Secretary was **Kalle Videnoja**, MSc.

The Responsible Research project involved part-time Communications Coordinator **Maija Lähteenmäki**, MA, and Coordinator **Anni Sairio**, PhD, who also worked as the Conference Secretary for the ENRIO 2020 congress (part-time from 1 May to 31 December 2020).

TENK's secretariat works at the location of The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (TSV) at Snellmaninkatu 13, Helsinki. TSV offers TENK financial and personnel administration services, network connections, IT services as well as the office premises. The facilities of the House of Science and Letters are in TENK's use free of charge for meetings and seminars. As of March 2020, the secretariat mainly worked remotely due to the coronavirus pandemic.

This annual report has been approved at the meeting of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK held on 15 April 2021.

*Riitta Keiski*  
Chair

*Sanna-Kaisa Spoof*  
Secretary General