



PRO-RES

PROmoting integrity in the use of **RE**search results in evidence based policy: a focus on non-medical research

Deliverable Title: Research Councils, Research Integrity focused on PRO-RES key findings

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whereas research ethics, in non-biomedical fields in particular, is increasingly a crucial issue in research practices within universities and research centres, it is still less understood as an important element by those who access research for policy. The International Network of Governmental Science Advice (INGSA) is a gateway to the community of professional science advisers working inside governments, not just in the EU but globally. INGSA provides a forum for policy makers, practitioners, academies, and academics to share experience, build capacity and develop theoretical and practical approaches to the use of scientific evidence in informing policy at all levels of government. The Vice chair of INGSA, James Wilsdon is a member of the PRO-RES advisory board and professor at Sheffield University, UK. He is also the funder of a new research centre co-funded by Wellcome Trust called RORI: Research of Research Institute.

EASSH organised a first series of ‘dialogues’ with few INGSA senior representatives. They all asked to remain unnamed as they expressed their own views on how INGSA is looking at research ethics and integrity from within the network. This deliverable is only part of the overall task. Over the three years of PRO-RES, EASSH will continue to test the results of the project during different phases of PRO-RES with a significant stakeholder community – like research counsellors, government science advisers, and research managers. These dialogues help to refine the principles and contents of the PRO-RES framework.

The members of the PRO-RES consortium are contributing to building on the experiences gained from the consultation meetings in WP2 and the theoretical and practical work of WP1 and WP4.

THE SCIENCE ADVISORS' DISSEMINATION RESULTS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Science advisors are often the link between science and research, and policy makers. The aim of this case study is to discuss with science advisors the details of the PRO-RES ethical framework and interactive platform on people who directly or indirectly are involved in assessing if their research has been implementing the values and principles of the ethical framework.

1.2 ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR GOVERNMENTAL SCIENCE ADVISORS

INGSA is a collaborative platform for policy exchange, capacity building and research across diverse global science advisory organisations and national systems. Through workshops, conferences and a growing catalogue of tools and guidance, the network aims to enhance the global science-policy interface to improve the potential for evidence-informed policy formation at sub-national, national and transnational levels. INGSA operates under the auspices of the International Science Council (<https://council.science/>), which acts as trustee of INGSA funds and hosts its governance committee. INGSA's secretariat is based in the Centre for Science in Policy, Diplomacy and Society (SciPoDS) at the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

Mission

The mission of the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) is to provide a forum for policy makers, practitioners, national academies, and academics to share experience, build capacity and develop theoretical and practical approaches to the use of scientific evidence in informing policy at all levels of government.

Its primary focus is on the place of science in public policy formation rather than advice on the structure and governance of public science and innovation systems.

It operates through:

- Exchanging lessons, evidence and new concepts through conferences, workshops and a website;
- Collaborating with other organisations where there are common or overlapping interests;
- Assisting the development of advisory systems through capacity-building workshops;
- Producing articles and discussion papers based on comparative research into the science and art of scientific advice.

Operational Principles

INGSA is committed to diversity, recognising the multiple cultures and structures of governance and policy development. It is not intended to lobby for, or endorse, any particular form or structure of science advice to governments. INGSA's primary objective to improve the use of evidence in informing public policy, rather than providing advice on the structure and governance of public science and innovation systems.

As a loosely-knit association of individuals and organisations with interests in both the theory and practice of science advice, it is expected that the network will be shaped and reshaped over time according to the arising needs and interests of INGSA affiliates. Working groups are developed to take on targeted projects such as workshop planning and development of publications and other resource materials.

1.3 FEEDBACK FROM THE DIALOGUES

The dialogues involved senior representatives of the organisation. A fundamental element of their feedback was that most of their interests in the discussion about science advice focus on how to identify good evidence and what does actually constitute good evidence. Consideration of reputed science publications, high reputation scholars and institutions and reliable sources providing robust and reproducible results are crucial for identifying good evidence.

However, research ethics especially for non-biomedical sciences (including engineering, politics and finance for example) is difficult to identify. Furthermore, integrity of scholars in presenting their results is usually guaranteed by the host institution or the reputation itself of the scholar. Whereas there seems to be a number of mechanisms to look into research results assessments, there seems to be little concern and therefore no scrutiny around if those evidence are ethically sounded. Particularly, in certain research areas such assessment is beyond the capacity of the advisors' capacity to engage.

Therefore, the Manifesto is mainly based on the capacity of advisors to bridge between the scientific output and its most complex publications and the narrative of policy making and policy focus of interest. This exercise presents already a numerous steps of difficulty and the robustness of the research or the ethical approach to research topics remains assumed as it is mainly related to the primary aim to produce research results.

This should not emerge as a surprise given that we are aware that ethics of research and integrity of scholars are still considered to be in the realm of scholars' training. However, from the interviews emerged that a platform as INGSA does not engage its members with conversation about the effects of drawn from research results, which are not ethically sounded. Paradoxically, the role of integrity in research, reproducibility of experiments and validation of results are embedded in the search for 'good evidence', whereas research which has not followed ethical protocols is not even highlighted as a source of misinterpretation and even misleading results.

CONCLUSIONS

The outcome of this deliverable shows three main points:

- a) The need for the development of a simple to use framework which would sensibiliser organisations to work in ethically sounded and methodologically robust environment;

- b) The understanding that organisations like INGSA are aware that ethics in research is relevant, they do not see an objective to include ethics conduct codes within their own manifesto or documentations
- c) The relevance reach out to organisations like INGSA who play a crucial role at the interface between science and policy, well beyond the role of scientists and away from the policy makers neutrality to engage with science directly.