Policy Brief:
Responsible and Ethical Governance of Research and Innovation in the Context of Globalization

The Stakeholders Acting Together on the ethical impact assessment of Research and Innovation (SATORI) project, funded by the European Commission (FP7 scheme), aims to develop a common framework of ethical principles and practical approaches. It also aims to strengthen shared understandings among actors involved in the design and implementation of research ethics.

Now in month 20 of the four-year project, the SATORI consortium of 17 partners has collected empirical insights to help formulate proposals for improved and more harmonised ethics assessment within scientific fields and among different kinds of ethics assessors and countries. The consortium is paying particular attention to ethics assessment in the context of globalisation.

In June 2015, consortium partners, leading authorities and experts met at a conference at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris to deliberate on the project's findings so far and to develop policy and legal options for developing ethics assessments for research and innovation within the context of globalisation. The conference generated recommendations in six areas:

Responsible Supply Chain
Scientific Misconduct
Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge
The Outsourcing of CO_2 Emissions
"The Brain Drain"
Clinical Research and Trials

http://www.satoriproject.eu

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Introduction

In recent decades, research and innovation have become global enterprises. Emerging economies have invested heavily in R&I, there has been a significant outsourcing of R&I activities from high-income to middle- and lower-income countries, and research organizations and firms have have developed global alliances or have become multinational themselves. These developments have benefited R&I overall, but there are also significant social, ethical and regulatory challenges that still have to be met. Research and innovation practices in different countries and regions are subject to divergent, or altogether lacking, regulatory and governing standards and practices, and burdens and benefits of the globalisation of research and innovation are being unequally spread across the globe. In this context, the globalization of R&I raises important ethical issues that should be addressed by all involved parties. These issues concern how the practice and impact of globalized R&I could and should respect civil and human rights, promote well-being, economic development and sustainability, and involve a just distribution of benefits and burdens, both within countries and between higher, middle and lower income countries. We hold that all parties involved – governments, industry, public research institutions, civil society, as well as individual scientists and engineers, have a responsibility to promote and uphold the ethical conduct of research innovation in a global setting – all the way from agenda setting to research, innovation, production and sales. We call on all parties to ensure procedures and mechanisms by which ethical issues are considered in globalized R&I activities, in particular respect for civil and human rights, protection of the environment, and sharing the benefits of research and innovation between peoples and nations.

We have identified six key issues in the globalised R&I for which we have developed specific recommendations.

All texts, including background documents listed below, are available for viewing and download at http://www.satoriproject.eu/deliverables

Responsible Supply Chain Governance

European industry often makes use of global supply chains that involve organizations and resources in many different countries. It is increasingly recognized that supply chains should be governed to address morally problematic issues, such as environmentally unsustainable practices, child labour, repression of freedom of association and collective bargaining, and unfair wages and price levels. Serious efforts are therefore needed for responsible supply chain governance.

Two models of responsible supply chain governance are the following:

Government dominates one model. In the other, industries regulate themselves (self-regulation). In the first case, the government would establish the standards and expect companies fulfil them. If a company did not comply with the standards, the government would take appropriate action.

However, the models are problematic: Today, there are various standards and tools which confuses industry. Industry (and other stakeholders) prefer harmonization of these different frameworks.

We recommend that governments create a multi-stakeholder platform on a global level, in which the UN, OECD, and the EU could collaborate in pursuit of a harmonized ethics assessment framework for ethical supply chains.

Conference participants noted that the EU needed both hard and soft law to remove excesses in the marketplace and to be the basis of standards.

The EU should base its actions on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and EU Regulations, but can also reference the principles of other organisations (e.g., UN, OECD).

Taking into consideration policy coherence, the EU should include the responsible supply chain governance and the proposed platform on its corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda.

The EU can motivate companies not only by adopting a "naming and shaming approach", but also by creating incentives for responsible companies (tax allowance, responsibility awards).

The EC could put more attention on consumer awareness and capacity building in regard to ethical values and ethical impact assessment.

Education is crucial in two ways. First, there is a need to include training on responsible supply chain management in the university curricula. Second, education is a part of the supply chain, for example, as manifested by citizens of developing countries who come to Europe or the USA, and then return to their countries where they use the acquired knowledge. There is a responsibility to ensure the knowledge is gained and shared in the native countries.

Scientific Misconduct

Scientific misconduct is increasingly recognized as a global problem with great economic costs and harms to society. It is in the interest of EU countries to develop a global approach to scientific misconduct that recognizes the global practice and organization of research.

Capacity-building at an early stage is critical to long-term ethical research conduct; thus specific provisions must be included at the local level to include positive mentoring of good ethical scientific standards.

The European Commission and the European Research Council policies on "Ethics for researchers" and "A comprehensive strategy on how to minimise research misconduct and the potential misuse of research.

Temper the pressure for rapid "cutting-edge" publications as a prerequisite for funding and job status, which can place an undue influence leading to scientific misconduct. Instead, promote the focus on ethical science. The European Commission should consider ways that existing guidelines can be better promulgated.

Background reading available at http://satoriproject.eu:
SATORI Scientific Misconduct Case Study
SATORI Scientific Miscondut Background Document

Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge

It is increasingly recognized that R&D should respect and reward the traditional & indigenous knowledge and biological resources from indigenous communities and ensure that commercial exploitation that draws from indigenous knowledge and resources is not exploitative but beneficial to the group in question. Not enough is done yet, however, to ensure that such exploitation does not occur.

The European Commission should develop a framework directing ethical conduct specifically for EU researchers who are involved with or conducting research or trials related to traditional knowledge of the groups that possess this knowledge.

Background reading available at http://satoriproject.eu:
SATORI Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge Case Study
SATORI Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge Background Document

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The Outsourcing of CO_2 Emissions

The outsourcing of CO_2 emissions by high-income countries to low- and middle-income countries is increasingly recognized as an impediment to solutions for global warming. To address these problem, we make the following recommendations:

Governments should take responsibility for addressing the outsourcing of CO_2 emissions:

- Governments are responsible for providing a framework that requires inclusion of the carbon footprint in each part of the supply chain.

- The EU should encourage other countries to reduce emissions by requiring companies to include offshore emissions in other countries in mandatory government reporting.

Companies have a responsibility to encourage their suppliers to reduce CO_2 emissions:

- Companies should benchmark the reductions in emission levels.

- Government and industry should establish an authority to regulate CO_2 emission outsourcing that is sector-specific, independent and has oversight over such outsourcing. This authority should be transparent and provide information about the regulatory process.

Government and industry should consider harmonisation with existing institutions.

On the EU Level:

- The EU should introduce a regulatory framework that requires companies to consider their entire carbon footprint, including that of their suppliers.
- The outcome of the Paris climate change negotiations may assist these efforts.
- Companies need incentives, for example:
    - o Tax allowances and trade allowances.
    - o Base awards and competitions on strict criteria (Eco-Design is a good example to follow).
    - o Provide 'greening taxation', including higher taxation for non-green activities and lower taxation for green activities.
    - o Establish clear, unified benchmarks (like Eco-labels)
    - o Certify environmentally friendly products and services (like Fair Trade certification)

Background reading available at http://satoriproject.eu:
SATORI The Outsourcing of CO_2 Emissions Case Study
SATORI The Outsourcing of CO_2 Emissions Background Document

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The "Brain Drain"

The emigration of highly skilled scientists and engineers from low- and middle-income countries outside the EU to the EU, where they have better employment possibilities, deprives countries of origin of human capital that cannot be easily replaced. Extra efforts are required to halt or compensate for such "brain drain":

EU policy-makers should make research more attractive in specific countries in order to address the "brain drain" and retain skilled individuals. International funding bodies can help these countries build and maintain a scientific infrastructure.

Policy-makers should remove hurdles in soft law that affect the brain drain, for example, citing fair access to research as a framework for immigration.

Policy-makers should promote global research exchanges (for example, Erasmus catered to a North-South bridging policy) as well as gender-focused programmes.

Policy-makers could support programmes for young researchers that include a strong foundation of training, so that the researchers can engage creatively in "giving back". Funds from global foundations should include provisions to encourage beneficiaries to return to their countries of origin.

The EU should promote policies aimed at ensuring that there are appropriate jobs for individuals when they return to their countries of origin.

The EU should facilitate double professorships, whereby individuals can have a position at a university in their home country and in an institution in another country as a way to facilitate trans-national contact, engagement and collaboration. The EU could incentivise teaching staff to teach abroad, which the EU can encourage through grant stipulations and other incentives. Non-European countries should also institute these policies to minimise the brain drain.

Clinical Research and Trials

The conduct of clinical research and trials by EU researchers in non-Western countries involves delicate questions regarding the ethical standards that are put in place.

International soft law as well as regional laws address clinical ethics trials; thus, however, policy-makers need to streamline and optimise existing policies. When policy-makers develop new policies, they should take into account global perspectives on clinical ethics. Intergovernmental bodies (responsible for framework development, training and capacity-building) and national level regulators to apply a globally cohesive framework of ethics evaluation This must also involve better communication between. Collaboration should also involve public and private funders of the research, whose discretion can ensure that ethically-sound research is allowed to proceed, as well as individual researchers who can ensure that their own research is adherent to ethical protocol.

We suggest policies that focus on educating people about the process of reviewing research while keeping in mind the relevant values of the research. Communities, with support from the EU, should put emphasis on capacity-building, specifically building preparedness infrastructure for health crises. Policies should also shift to ethics monitoring, rather than ethics review. In this way, ethics will be engaged throughout the research process. Furthermore, the responsibilities to the subject population post-trial, such as equitable access to treatments, should also be at the forefront of policy application.

The EU and other stakeholders should support generalised training for ethics regulators and one-on-one ethics training in parallel with efforts to achieve best outcomes. Furthermore, SATORI partners and stakeholders could benefit from concrete tool, such as a checklist, to ensure a competent review of ethical issues. The EU, the SATORI consortium, international research partners and other stakeholders should find a common ground for developing a globally consistent ethics policy. This must be done judiciously, however, without "over legislating".

Background reading available at http://satoriproject.eu:
SATORI Clinical Research and Trials Case Study
SATORI Clinical Research and Trials Background Document

This policy brief was compiled by UNESCO, a partner in the SATORI consortium.

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