

Assessment of «ethical issues» at the Research council of Norway

Mutual Learning Exercise (MLE) on "Research Integrity"

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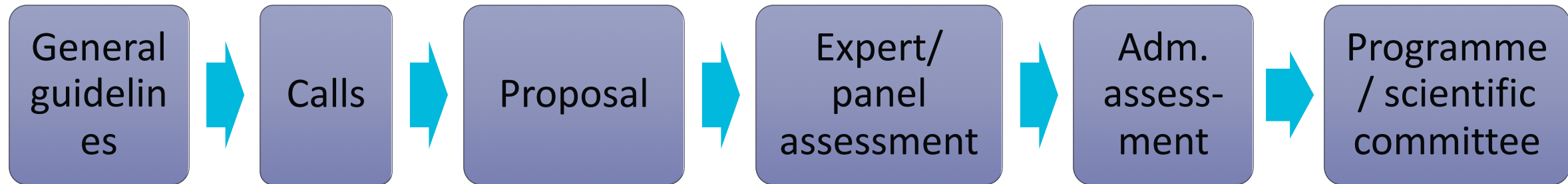


The strategic role of The Research Council





Ethical issues are adressed through the investment process





RCN - Ethical guidelines and good research practice

- *“Projects funded by the Research Council are to maintain high ethical standards and uphold fundamental principles for good practice, integrity and ethics in research.”*
- *“Grant applications submitted to the Research Council must explain any relevant ethical questions and will be assessed on the basis of this.”*
- *“The project description must be written in compliance with good research practice.”*
- **Substantial reference to the The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (REC)**
- *“The researchers and the organisation or entity responsible for the project have the primary responsibility for ensuring good practice, high integrity and ethics in research.”*
- *“The awarding of funding from the Research Council therefore in no way entails an approval of the project relative to the applicable legislation and norms.”*



Ethical issues i calls

- Normally only short reference to «Ethical guidelines» and/or assessment criteria
- For calls within ICT and Biotech, Nanotechnology etc there is reference to the RCN's "Responsible Research and Innovation framework" – a quite comprehensive definition of RRI!
- For calls with "RRI framework", RRI will be assessed by "RRI-knowledgeable experts"
- Calls for "Innovation projects" or involving industry can include reference to Corporate social responsibility (CSR)



Ethical and research integrity issues in proposals (project description for Researcher projects)

Old template (under «Key perspectives and compliance with strategic documents»)

- *The question of whether there are any ethical issues relating to the implementation of the project must be clarified. If there are ethical issues to consider, a description of how these will be dealt with must be provided. (reference to REC guidelines)*

New template (under «Excellence - Research questions and hypotheses, theoretical approach and methodology»)

- *If there are ethical issues to consider, describe how these will be dealt with.*



Expert assessment of ethics in Research project proposals

Old assessment model

- Ethical perspectives are assessed as **“Special points to consider”**
- *The Research Council emphasises the need for projects to maintain high ethical standards and not conflict in any way with the fundamental principles for ethics in research.
More information on ethical perspectives may be found in the guidelines for ethics in research drawn up by the national committees for research ethics and in the Act on Ethics and Integrity in Research.*
- ***Does the project conform satisfactorily with the guidelines for ethics?***
(A= Yes, B= Pending, C=No)

New assessment model (Excellence-Impact-Implementation)

- Assessed under **Excellence - The quality of the proposed R&D activities**
- *Where relevant, the extent to which appropriate consideration has been given to ethical issues, safety issues, gender dimension in research content, and appropriate use of stakeholder/user knowledge*



Administrative assessment

- Normally to assess programme specific «relevance» that expert are not supposed to have knowledge of
- Can address ethical issues and other «irregularities» experts might have overlooked or other aspects experts can't assess, i.e. partners, “hidden risks”
- All administrative assessment will be formulated as “recommendations” to the funding boards programme and scientific committees.⁷



Programme committee

- Ultimate responsibility for funding decisions, ensuring that the proposal assessment process is based on Research Council's guidelines
- Committees will normally read proposal abstracts and expert assessments together with the programme officers' written/ranked recommendation
- Not very specific guidelines regarding overruling expert assessments or recommendations based on procedural errors/breach of guidelines
 - Reject proposals based on own reading disregarding expert and administrative assessments
 - or
 - Overrule the assessment based on its quality and ask for new assessment before making funding decision