Developing guidelines for academic integrity

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This presentation aims to present the international experience of developing general guidelines on academic integrity under the Erasmus+ project "European Network for Academic Integrity". These general guidelines serve as a supportive document for the glossary for academic integrity developed by the project. They serve to help build common understandings of integrity issues in both academia and business. The guidelines outline minimum requirements and responsibilities of various stakeholders in academia, such as national ombudspersons, judicial authorities, compliance officers, research project managers and other related bodies or units in academia (such as policy units, educators/instructors, senior administrator/managers/coordinators) as well as students, the business sector and others. Many of the guidelines are necessarily general, but, where relevant, we provide country-specific examples as well as adjusting to meet to the needs of different fields of study/research.

The presentation is two-fold. In the first part we give a comprehensive snapshot on how they were developed while in the second part we as an international team share experiences and challenges originating from this exercise.

The development of the guidelines was divided into four stages. First, each guideline development group (GDG) member selected terms from the Glossary for Academic Integrity for which they have expert knowledge. At the end, 46 out of 208 terms remained free of guidelines as self-explanatory. Second, within the project aim and output description, GDG agreed on criteria for general guidelines development, such as: 1) a guideline should be country-and discipline-specific where appropriate; 2) a guideline should be concise; 3) a guideline should help avoiding misinterpretation of the words used in a term's definition; 4) a guideline should help make a distinction between terms; 5) if a guideline is inherent to particular stakeholders, it should be clearly stated; 6) only reliable sources should be included in guidelines; sources should be properly acknowledged, i.e. in-text citation and the list of cited sources; and 7) a guideline might provide short and clear examples/illustrations. Third, each GDG member made his/her contribution either individually or within a smaller group of those members who selected the same term for guidelines development. Fourth, all contributions were refined in relation to the definition of a term provided in the glossary for academic integrity and to the set of predefined criteria in order to ensure consistency of a guideline. Each guideline contains an excerpt from the glossary for academic integrity, i.e. only definitions of related terms are used in the box while the source could be consulted within the glossary for academic integrity. Each guideline is formatted with a few sub-headings, such as definitions of terms related to the guideline, additional clarification on glossary definition(s) (backed by reliable sources), related examples or requirements (where possible backed by reliable sources), recommended reading and references. In summary, general guidelines for academic integrity explicate 111 terms related to academic integrity that are further grouped thematically into i) guidelines about fundamental terms, ii) guidelines about institutional culture and practices, iii) guidelines about science and research, iv) guidelines about academic writing and publishing, and v) guidelines about academic integrity breaches. Finally, even though the GDG members come from various countries and disciplines, development of particular guidelines was done in smaller groups. This might have led to examples that are discipline-specific or country-specific. We believe this does not threaten usability of the guidelines in other contexts, but it has to be taken in account.

The second part of the presentation informs about the positive and negative experiences related to the development of general guidelines as well as challenges remained in this regard. Overall seven feedbacks from 12 authors of the report of general guidelines was received by filling an anonymised online questionnaire. Among positive experiences authors of the report of general guidelines list:

- *knowledge improvement* (e.g. hearing their [partners'] different interpretations of terms (R1), inter/transdisciplinary confrontation (R2), we all extended our understanding of the related terms considering different fields (R3), understanding different perspectives from other subjects and countries (R7));
- *collegial environment* (e.g. sharing of experiences (R2), sharing workloads (R5), collaborative and positive attitude of whole team (R6), working collaboratively with colleagues (R7));
- *community culture* (e.g. it was good to have a consensus on the guidelines (R3), a possibility to discuss and look for common agreement on academic and research integrity related

issues with partners from different scientific fields (R4));
- *task management* (e.g. surprisingly effective to take decisions when communicating via Skype (R1), timely reminders with manageable deadlines (R5), constructive feedback from reviewers (R6)).

Among negative experiences authors of the report of general guidelines identify:

- *complexity of a work* (e.g. it was very hard work, over a considerable time (R1));
- *engagement and commitment* (e.g. challenging to produce guidelines by the involvement of several colleagues because each of us wanted to prioritise different aspects or several colleagues wasted time producing similar guidelines to each other (R3), efficiently coordinate input from each partner (R4), occasional delays in partners contributions (R5), not all partners (fully) sharing the workload (R5));
- *structure of a guideline* (e.g. we often tended to start with some (philosophical) discussion rather than explanation (R6));
- *writing style and size* (e.g. since writing styles of academics at different fields are different from each other, we experienced some difficulty in adopting a common style (R3), too long texts from some partners (R6)).

Authors of the report of general guidelines point out few present challenges, such as usability of these guidelines in terms of completeness (e.g. we have no idea yet how useful this will prove to be, which terms we have missed and whether there will be disagreement about our definitions and interpretations (R1), there are still many aspects of academic integrity that seemed important to discuss but because of limit of human resources and time were not covered in current version of guidelines (R4), new terms coming into use all the time (R7)) and practicality (e.g. make guidelines more practical and applicable to daily issues (R2), the guidelines are not tested in practice yet. It would be great to have feedback "from the wild" (R6), we have no idea whether our efforts will be appreciated and used by others as intended (R7)) and fair contribution (e.g. equal contributions (R5)).

Bearing in mind all positive and negative experiences as well as challenges remained, the need to discuss efficiency and effectiveness of international project management is relevant.

Keywords: academic integrity; guidelines.