

# SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: AN INTERACTIVE PORTAL AND SUPPORT NETWORK

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### Keywords

Academic misconduct, victims, web portal, facing academic integrity threats

### Abstract

*My paper was plagiarized. My data was stolen and published without my concern. My teaching materials are being sold online. My co-author fabricated data for our paper. My teacher used my dissertation in his paper without acknowledging me.*

These are a few examples of issues that might bother victims of academic misconduct. Sometimes they are not able to get appropriate support from their institution or a respective publisher. Sometimes they are afraid to call because the “academic villain” is in a stronger position. Sometimes they simply do not know what to do and who to turn to.

Institutional support services are often not able to provide clear guidance on how to respond to external threats of this nature, therefore European Network for Academic Integrity decided to include support of victims of academic misconduct among its activities. In 2019 a special working group on this matter was established. Members of the group decided to create a special interactive web portal for the victims of academic malpractice. The portal should be a place where the victims can look up

useful information, anonymously discuss their problem or ask for personalized guidance. In cooperation between Mendel University in Brno (Czechia) and University of Nicosia (Cyprus), the portal was designed and a prototype was created. The prototype was presented at the ENAI annual conference in Dubai in 2020 (Chochula et al., 2020).

To enable further development of the portal and to build a support network of people who can help, the activities on supporting victims of academic misconduct were included in an Erasmus+ Strategic partnerships project “Facing Academic Integrity Threats” (FAITH). The three-year project was granted in late 2021 and started in February 2022. This project is being conducted by a consortium consisting of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, European Network for Academic Integrity, University of Konstanz, University of Maribor, and University of Porto.

The portal is available at [www.academicintegrity.eu/victims](http://www.academicintegrity.eu/victims) and it will be officially launched and introduced on the occasion of the European Conference on

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism 2022 in Porto. The aim of this presentation is to demonstrate the portal and the means of support that it provides. We will show the functions of the portal and explain how the victims can search and receive support and how the community can assist them.

Thanks to the web portal, the ENAI and the FAITH project are establishing a confidential support network and providing an advisory service for people affected by unethical academic conduct. The target audience of the portal will include people whose work has been plagiarized, people who genuinely contributed to research but were denied credit due to unfair practices, authors who have been persistently tormented/entrapped by predatory publishers (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021), whistleblowers, who have been specifically targeted for reporting academic misconduct, etc.

Through the portal, we aim to provide impartial and eventually personal advice. The portal has a public and private section and includes various resources - frequently asked questions, a discussion forum overseen by a supporting group, a space to share an individual question which will be dealt with by an assigned mentor, and anonymized stories of victims.

The FAQ section will grow gradually based on ongoing operations and the issues bothering the

portal users. Discussion forum users will be directed to a private and secure area to post questions, and there will be a network of advisors providing support. The advisors will be experts from the ENAI working group and the FAITH project, but also other users, potentially former victims. When someone makes an individual contact to ask for help, a mentor will be assigned to establish the nature of their situation, assess their needs, and decide what expertise is needed. The experts will be assigned from within the FAITH project and help may be sought from our global partners to establish bespoke support. The section with stories of victims will be based on publicly available and known cases (which is the content at the time of launching) and also there will be new articles based on stories of the portal users - after obtaining their consent and anonymization. Creating this community-backed support group is itself innovative as it provides a freely accessible service not currently available.

We believe that the platform will raise awareness of how to defend against violations of academic integrity and support people disadvantaged by unethical conduct of others, through inclusivity. By providing assistance via mentoring and support, we will provide new opportunities for those who have unintentionally been involved in academic dishonesty to overcome their difficulties.

## References

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