



Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

Code of conduct for scientific cooperation of ETH Zurich

20 August 2014

Preamble

As a consequence of the international interconnectedness of modern research, cooperation often takes place in very different cultural environments, each with its own set of values. In order for the completion of research to be successful, a common basis of ethical standards for cooperation is necessary. This code is intended to apply to concrete cooperation projects with their participating personnel, and not the immediate (e.g. university), nor extended (e.g. country or company) environment. This code of conduct indicates what ethical norms for cooperation are basic for ETH Zurich, and which in case of doubt for balancing conflicting values. Balancing values should include the expected research value and moral considerations, and in some cases of ethical questionability, the chance to improve the situation of the cooperation partners. Since research in addition to increasing scientific knowledge can also make significant contributions to the maintenance and advancement of health, welfare and human understanding, it can lead to conflicts of values that cannot be resolved by formalism, but rather require the balanced reflection of the responsible individuals.

I. Normative Principles

1. As an institution of the Federal Government, ETH Zurich is bound to observe the human rights that are laid down by the Federal Constitution as basic rights. In addition ETH Zurich is committed to assure that its partners in connection to concrete scientific cooperation follow the moral norms that are the basis of these human right. In particular for research, teaching and study, the personal and civil liberties of all persons involved in the cooperation are to be respected, namely of researchers, lecturers, students, test-persons, and technical-administrative personnel. Included in these rights are in particular freedom of research, freedom to teach, freedom to publish, freedom of opinion, freedom to travel, effective protection from racial, religious and sexual discrimination, and from infringement of physical integrity and human dignity.

2. Cooperation takes place under conditions for fair, respectful and responsible scientific collaboration among researchers, teachers and students. Among these conditions is the compliance with the requirements of good scientific practice (such as for example avoiding false data, plagiarism, unjustifiable demand of authorship, or knowledge of third-party falsification), renouncing threats of censorship and sanctions against dissenting opinions and disclosure of conflicts of interest. For the researchers of ETH Zurich, the *Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Good Scientific Practice at ETH Zurich (Richtlinien für Integrität in der Forschung und gute wissenschaftliche Praxis an der ETH Zürich) of 14 November 2007 (RSETHZ 414)* is applicable.
3. One is to refrain from relocating to other countries or private companies abroad, research projects that would be forbidden in Switzerland on the basis of ethically motivated legal norms (e.g. legally regulated embryonic research in contrast to legal determinations of conventions like traffic regulations), or that one could not justify in Switzerland.
4. Research, which due to the political context could be dangerous for research partners or ETH members, needs to be refrained from or ended.
5. ETH Zurich may not allow itself through cooperative participation to be exploited for the upgrading of actors, who are clearly disregarding human or constitutional rights.

II. Procedural Principles

6. All ETH-members are eligible to report ethical concerns regarding planned or ongoing cooperation to a confidant or ombudsperson, depending on who is responsible, according to the instructions pertaining to reporting by members of ETH Zurich regarding legally and ethically incorrect conduct (RSETHZ 130.1). Should further steps be necessary, the confidant or ombudsperson reports the case to the Vice-President for Research and Corporate Relations.
7. The Vice-President for Research and Corporate Relations informs the Executive Board of ETH Zurich regarding the potentially problematic cooperation. The Executive Board decides after hearing the ETH members responsible for the cooperation and the Ethics Commission, whether the cooperation is to be assumed or continued.
8. Should ETH Zurich, meaning the ETH project leader or an ETH external person (e.g. a member of the cooperative partner), receive during the duration of the contract written knowledge of a public infringement by the cooperation partner of the here specified normative principles, the cooperation partner is held to conform to the

respective norms by means of a formal letter from the Vice-President for Research and Corporate Relations with a set time limit. Should the cooperative partner not take appropriate action within the set time limit, the Executive Board of ETH Zurich has sufficient reason to decide to interrupt or terminate the cooperation.

9. In negotiating cooperation agreements for larger partnerships, or with partners with whom the non-adherence of specified normative principles in numbers 1 to 5 in the past is known, it is recommended that ETH project leaders already discuss these points during the preparation of the cooperation with the partners and review them before a contract extension. If however doubt persists regarding the adherence to the normative principles in the cooperation by the cooperation partners, an exit clause should be included in the agreement or an alternative to the cooperation considered.

10. The Ethics Commission of ETH Zurich is available to ETH-members for consultation pertaining to ethical questions in cases of cooperation.