

On the basis of the freedom of scientific and artistic creation guaranteed by Article 59 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia and Article 28 of the Statute of the Science and Research Centre Koper, the Scientific Council of ZRS Koper, at its 20th regular meeting on 10 November 2020, adopted the following

## **CODE OF ETHICS of the Science and Research Centre Koper**

### **PREAMBLE**

The Code of Ethics of the Science and Research Centre Koper (hereinafter "Code of Ethics") defines the minimum ethical standards for all employees (hereinafter "staff members") of the Science and Research Centre Koper, which, as a public institution, strives for ethical relations in society, progress and the prosperity of the community as a whole.

The purpose of the Code is to establish and maintain the high professional and ethical standards of the staff members, thereby strengthening their affiliation to ZRS Koper, the transparency and social responsibility of the staff members and, consequently, of the public institution, the freedom of research and teaching, as well as the reputation of ZRS Koper.

The Code of Ethics is a moral contract between the staff members that promotes liaison and cooperation and strengthens the reputation of ZRS Koper. It is a commitment of all staff members to act with integrity and impartiality and to be diligent in their work and faithful to the duties set out in their employment contract, the Statute of ZRS Koper and the Acts of ZRS Koper.

The Code of Ethics shall be observed by the staff members in their relations with each other and with ZRS Koper as an institution. The relationship with colleagues and customers is based on trust and cooperation. The staff members shall maintain clear and correct relations based on respect and personal dignity.

It is the responsibility of each individual to identify potential ethical issues in their research work and, in the case of ethically sensitive issues, to seek guidance from their supervisor (e.g. Mentor, Research Project Leader, Director of the Institute/Head of the Unit) or approval from the Ethics Committee.

The Code of Ethics for researchers of ZRS Koper also addresses general ethical issues that arise in any research work. In addition to the standards set out in the Code of Ethics, each researcher must also comply with the ethical standards that apply specifically to their field of research. If for a particular field of research, there is a body or organisation at the national level (e.g. the Medical Ethics Committee of the Republic of Slovenia, the UVHVVR – Administration for Food Safety, the Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection – for work with test animals) that reviews ethical issues in the field, the researcher must obtain the opinion of this body or organisation before conducting research with human subjects or animals, and in all other cases of ethically sensitive issues in the relevant field of research, it is the responsibility of the Director to decide whether it is necessary to obtain the opinion of this body or organisation. If no such body or organisation exists at the national level, the researcher must obtain the opinion of the Ethics Committee of ZRS Koper before conducting research with humans or animals.

The Ethics Committee of ZRS Koper takes into account Ethics in Social Science and Humanities of October 2018 when considering applications in the social sciences.

The Ethics Committee of ZRS Koper takes into account Ethics in Social Science and Humanities of October 2018 when considering applications in the humanities.

The Ethics Committee of ZRS Koper follows the guidelines of the Medical Ethics Committee of the Republic of Slovenia when considering applications in the field of natural sciences.

## **I. FUNDAMENTAL VALUES**

### **Article 1**

The fundamental values of ZRS Koper are: scientific excellence and integrity, autonomy, freedom of scientific and research work, respect for human dignity, humanism, social justice, equality and truth.

Researchers and other staff members strive for dignity, a responsible attitude to work, a critical approach, tolerance and openness to new ideas in the pursuit of these values.

ZRS Koper staff members will not use their position or influence for personal gain.

They will strive to improve and support research work at ZRS Koper:

- by maintaining impeccable standards of integrity in professional and personal relationships among colleagues within the organisation and with people outside it;
- by reinforcing the highest standards of professional competence in the fields they are active in;
- by taking the best possible care of other staff members and making the best use of the resources for which they are responsible.

The staff members show their commitment to the mission of ZRS Koper by fully and consistently fulfilling their research obligations, by participating responsibly in the institution's bodies and by acting in accordance with the fundamental values of ZRS Koper outside its premises.

The dignity of a researcher is reflected primarily by their professional excellence and ethical conduct.

The staff members are liable for their contractual obligations and are consistent in complying with the letter and spirit of the applicable legislation, the Statute of ZRS Koper and the Acts of ZRS Koper. They are committed to following other comparable standards of professional practice and strive to be role models for others.

The fundamental aims of the research work are to impart knowledge, to encourage creative, critical and responsible thinking, and to be intellectually independent, maintaining a critical attitude towards phenomena in the environment and in the field of scientific or professional activity. A critical view requires a constructive attitude and the rejection of prejudice.

Openness to new ideas is the cornerstone of creativity and one of the main virtues of researchers. A critical and responsible approach to accepting new ideas maintains a high level of quality and avoids simplification and extremes.

The tolerance of the researcher and other staff members means critically allowing dissent. A responsible commitment to values ensures that tolerance does not turn into indifference and inaction.

The affiliation to ZRS Koper is reflected in a comprehensive effort to maintain and enhance its reputation and values through work in the research and artistic fields, as well as in engagements outside ZRS Koper.

The fundamental values of ZRS Koper are:

**Objectivity:** The researcher shall approach each task with an awareness and transparent indication of potential personal bias.

**Conflicts of interest:** The researcher must disclose situations in which financial or other personal considerations may influence decisions, the conduct of research, peer review or editorial work.

**Openness:** Subject to any confidentiality requirements, the researcher shall openly share data, results, ideas, tools and resources with other researchers and welcome criticism and new ideas.

**Responsibility:** The researcher shall comply with all commitments and agreements in the performance of all tasks undertaken.

**Due diligence:** The researcher shall avoid carelessness and negligence and shall check their work thoroughly and critically, and thoroughly document their research activities. If the researcher finds deviations from the academic standards in the work of a colleague, they are obliged to bring it to their attention.

**Documentation:** The researcher shall document the sources of information and the research procedures for each task in sufficient detail to allow the study to be repeated.

### **(1) Training, supervision and mentoring**

ZRS Koper shall ensure that researchers receive in-depth training in research design, research methodologies and research analysis.

ZRC Koper shall develop appropriate and adequate training programmes on research ethics and integrity and ensure that all the stakeholders are aware of the applicable codes and other regulations.

Researchers shall receive training in research ethics and integrity at all career stages, from entry to the top.

Senior researchers, research team leaders and mentors shall provide leadership and mentoring to the members of research teams and ensure that researchers receive appropriate training and guidance for the purpose of developing, designing and structuring research work properly and promoting a research culture based on research integrity.

### **(2) Attitude to research**

Researchers shall take into account the latest findings and developments in the field of research when developing research ideas.

Researchers shall exercise due care in the design, conduct, analysis and documentation of their research.

Researchers shall use earmarked funds prudently and in accordance with the rules.

Researchers shall publish research findings and interpretations in a manner that ensures the accessibility, truthfulness, transparency and accuracy of the findings and interpretations, taking into account the confidentiality of data or findings where necessary.

Researchers shall publish their research findings in a way that is consistent with the standards of the branch of science that is the subject of the research and that allows the findings to be validated and reproduced wherever possible.

### **(3) Supervision and safeguard measures**

Researchers shall comply with this Code and with the codes and regulations applicable to their scientific discipline.

Researchers shall treat the research subjects (whether human, animal, other biological, environmental or physical) with respect and care and in accordance with applicable laws and ethical principles.

Researchers shall comply with the rules on health, safety and protection of the community, colleagues and other persons involved in the research.

Research protocols shall take into account and be designed in a way that takes into account age differences, gender differences, cultural and religious differences, ethnic differences and differences based on social status.

Researchers shall identify and appropriately manage potential hazards and risks arising from their research work.

### **(4) Data practices and data management**

Researchers shall ensure the appropriate management and handling of data and other research materials, including unpublished materials, and shall ensure that the data and materials are stored for an appropriate period of time.

Researchers shall ensure transparency on how to access and use data and other research materials.

The researchers agree that the data collected also constitutes the result of the research, which can be referred to in the context of the research work.

Researchers shall ensure that contracts and other agreements relating to research results contain equitable and fair provisions on the use, ownership and/or protection of the results in the context of the protection of intellectual property rights.

### **(5) Collaborative research**

All partners involved in the research accept full responsibility for the integrity of the research.

All partners involved in the research shall agree, before the start of the research work, on the expected objectives of the research work and on a process for communicating the research findings that ensures the highest possible level of transparency and openness.

At the start of the research work, all the partners involved in the research shall agree on the expectations and standards of research integrity, the application of the law, the protection of intellectual property rights, the economic exploitation of the results of the collaborative research work of the participating partners, and the procedures for managing potential conflicts and violations.

All the partners involved in the research are duly informed about the publication of the research findings and are given the opportunity to comment on the publication.

## **II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **Article 2**

In order to follow the guidelines, the staff members accept the following guiding principles:

#### **(1) Declaration of intent**

A staff member is obliged to disclose any personal interest that might conflict with impartiality or with any aspect of their professional obligations.

#### **(2) Data confidentiality and accuracy**

The confidentiality of data held by a staff member in the course of the performance of their contractual obligations must be respected and the data must not be exploited for personal gain. The data transmitted by a staff member to other staff members in the course of the performance of contractual obligations must be true, honest and unambiguous.

#### **(3) Non-competition clause**

While ZRS Koper strives for lasting and good relations with other related institutions for the benefit of its employees, the institution and its staff members must permanently avoid organising any activities that could interfere with the successful work of its staff members and their fair competition.

#### **(4) Hospitality**

Simple hospitality is a widely accepted form of business courtesy. But guests should not be put in a position where they are influenced in their business decisions because they have accepted an invitation, even if it is only assumed. The frequency of the invitations accepted and the extent of the hospitality that the guest's employer is likely to try to return should not be significantly greater than that which they themselves have received.

If there is any doubt as to what is acceptable, either as a business gift or as a hospitable invitation, the offer should be declined and/or the Director should be informed.

#### **(5) Handling assets of ZRS Koper**

Staff members have a duty to use the equipment and financial assets entrusted to them in accordance with their purpose and with due diligence. In using these assets, they have a duty to strive to make the best use of them and to maximise the benefit to the community. They shall not use the assets for private benefit, except by agreement or in line with practice.

## **(6) Integrity**

The personal integrity of all staff members is essential to their research and to ensuring appropriate working and research conditions. Every staff member must carry out their work and duties diligently and responsibly, with high standards of integrity. Professionalism, responsiveness and accessibility ensure efficiency, success and excellence.

Every staff member must endeavour to avoid situations that might call into question their honesty, integrity and trustworthiness, and in particular to avoid conflicts of interest.

In relationships between staff members, the principles of integrity are upheld by actions such as:

- refusing to offer, accept or solicit any favours or gifts with the intent of bribing or influencing decisions;
- refusing to offer, accept or solicit gifts of any kind;
- eliminating conflicts of interest in decision-making;
- refusing contact with a lobbyist if a conflict of interest has arisen;
- refusing to work with unregistered lobbyists;
- refusing to provide paid services for a researcher, their close relative or spouse;
- refusing to independently assess or to sit on a committee for a researcher who has a family or intimate relationship with a mentor (colleague).

In scientific research and professional activity, the principle of integrity presupposes scientific honesty, manifested in consistent respect for authorship and the correct acknowledgement and citation of foreign scientific achievements, as well as the consistent use of correct scientific methods, the honest and professionally impeccable interpretation of the results of scientific work, and the objective verification of scientific hypotheses.

## **(7) Responsibility**

The status of a staff member presupposes that the staff member takes full responsibility for their actions and omissions. Staff members must take good care of the things entrusted to them and use them to do their job. They shall only use assets, data and other resources for the purposes for which they are intended.

A responsible attitude to work is demonstrated by full and regular compliance with the work obligations, as well as the initiative and willingness to take on other tasks when necessary. For mentors and researchers, a responsible attitude to work is also reflected in a commitment to research and in keeping abreast of and building on scientific achievements in their field, even when this does not have a direct impact on career progression or income.

The responsibility of staff members also includes:

- safeguarding and properly handling the property of ZRS;
- complying with the house rules, such as parking restrictions and the smoking ban;
- prohibition of the excessive consumption and offering of alcohol and consumption of illegal substances on the premises of ZRS Koper, with the exception of consuming alcohol at special events, such as: protocol events, gala dinners, ceremonial events and other events organised by ZRS Koper and insofar as the Director expressly authorises the consumption of alcohol.

## **(8) Achieving (enforcing) equal opportunities**

- We want to enforce, maintain or strengthen equal opportunities for all researchers, both in terms of gender and other parameters that define their position.
- We are committed to eliminating all forms of gender discrimination in all areas of research.
- In the field of science, we are working to address the imbalance in the representation of women at the senior levels of their scientific careers, as well as the (too) small influence they have on decision-making in science.
- In our efforts to ensure equal gender opportunities in science, we follow the objectives and measures of the Resolution on the Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011–2020 (RISS), the provisions of the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2020, the objectives of the National Strategy for the Implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) and the recommendations of the European Commission (EC).
- With our Action Plan, we have committed ourselves to remove barriers to improving the career prospects of women and men in line with the principles of gender equality, to improve the gender imbalance in decision-making, and to strengthen the gender equality perspective in the content of research programmes and projects, through concrete and ambitious targets.

#### **(9) Prohibition of sexual and other harassment and bullying at work**

Sexual and other harassment is prohibited. Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct or behaviour of a sexual nature with the effect or intent to violate a person's dignity, in particular when it creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, embarrassing or offensive environment. Harassment is any unwanted behaviour related to any personal circumstance, with the effect or intent of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, embarrassing or offensive environment.

Bullying at work is prohibited. Bullying at work is any repeated or systematic, reprehensible or flagrantly negative and offensive treatment or behaviour directed at individual workers in the workplace or in connection with work.

#### **(10) Prohibition of defamation**

It is prohibited to spread untruths that may damage the honour or reputation of a colleague.

#### **(11) Knowledge**

Staff members shall create a constructive atmosphere to promote the knowledge of all colleagues. In particular, they must strive for excellence in research and professional excellence.

#### **(12) Academic freedom**

Academic freedom is a right and a fundamental responsibility of staff members, which they exercise through their research and creative work, subject to the generally accepted ethical values and the values of ZRS Koper. The transfer of knowledge is rooted in scientific evidence and fundamental experience.

Academic freedom refers to the unrestricted right of staff members to freely express their scientific and expert opinions at conferences, panel discussions, interviews and other forms

of public speaking, and in books, scripts and other written works. However, when expressing their opinion, staff members should avoid:

- political or religious propaganda on the premises of ZRS Koper;
- deliberately insulting colleagues or any other person or institution;
- disseminating inappropriate content that offends an individual or group of people.

### **(13) Scientific and research work**

Scientific and research work is based on freedom of scientific creation, academic freedom, personal and scientific integrity.

In addition to applicable regulations, researchers must also comply with all internationally recognised ethical rules and standards that apply to their particular field of research. This is especially true for research involving animals and humans, the results of which can affect a person's position and reputation.

Scientific integrity is the consistent respect for authorship and the correct recognition and citation of foreign scientific achievements, as well as the consistent use of correct scientific methods, the honest and professionally impeccable interpretation of the results of scientific work, and the objective verification of scientific hypotheses.

Citation of sources is also necessary, inter alia, when:

- researchers use products from previous research in further research;
- funds earmarked for research are involved;
- documents produced as a result of sponsored research are used.

### **(14) Performing managerial functions at ZRS Koper**

Staff members who hold managerial positions at ZRS Koper strive to set an example of ethical behaviour.

In the spirit of academic tradition, they carry out their duties with dedication and responsibility, taking into account the long-term effects of the measures they propose and implement.

They strive to reach a consensus and avoid overruling when making decisions.

### **(15) The engagements and conduct of staff members outside ZRS Koper**

Staff members shall implement the values of ZRS Koper and the ethical rules of conduct enshrined in this Code in their engagements and conduct outside ZRS Koper and in public.

As private citizens, they are free to join political parties, professional and interest groups, religious communities and other forms of civil society, and to express their views publicly on their own behalf. They shall take into account potential conflicts of interest in their engagements so that these do not jeopardise the work of ZRS Koper.

Staff members who analyse political developments in society as experts and according to academic standards can present their findings publicly and in the context of the research process.

In their engagements outside ZRS Koper, staff members must remain faithful to the



fundamental values of ZRS Koper and the rules of this Code, in particular scientific integrity, criticality and the dignity of the academic profession.

#### **(16) Confidentiality**

The researcher must respect the confidentiality of data or findings when required by the ethical standards in research or when reasonably requested by the sponsor or employer. The researcher is not bound by confidentiality if the non-disclosure of data could cause wider social harm.

#### **(17) Authorship**

**Authorship:** The researcher shall ensure that all those who have contributed to the research results are acknowledged as authors. Authorship must be based on a creative and meaningful contribution to the research (e.g. contribution to the design, data collection, data analysis or reporting). Formal project management, institute management, proofreading a paper or reviewing a text are not sufficient for authorship of a scientific paper. All authors are fully responsible for the content of their publication, unless it is specifically stated that they are responsible for a particular part of the study and publication.

Unless otherwise agreed, the authors assume full responsibility for the content of their contributions.

Authors shall ensure that the results of the research are made available to other researchers in a timely manner and shall ensure the accessibility, transparency and accuracy of the results, unless otherwise agreed. Authors shall also ensure honesty when communicating with the public, whether through traditional media or social networks.

Authors shall acknowledge the efforts and intellectual contributions of other researchers, assistants and funders and acknowledge their contribution to the research in an appropriate manner.

Authors are obliged to disclose any conflicts of interest and any financial or other forms of support for the research or publication of the results.

Authors and publishers are obliged to publish corrections or withdraw publications if necessary.

**Order of authors:** All co-authors must agree with the order in which the authors are cited.

**Citation:** Significant works and personal and other intellectual contributions that have influenced the research must be duly acknowledged. Related works must be properly cited. Agreed citations are unacceptable.

**Communicating with the public:** Standards of honesty, credibility and accountability must be maintained when communicating with the general public and the general media.

**Publication:** Researchers are obliged to cite the Science and Research Centre Koper when referring to their institution. The multiple publication of the same work (or substantial parts of the same work) is only acceptable with the permission of the editors and with proper acknowledgement of the first publication. Such related articles should be mentioned as a single contribution in the author's CV. Researchers should aim to publish the results of their

research as soon as possible, unless commercial and intellectual property considerations (e.g. patent applications) justify a delay.

### **III. ETHICS COMMITTEE**

#### **Article 3**

Compliance with the Code of Ethics shall be examined by an Ethics Committee appointed by the Scientific Council of ZRS Koper and composed of:

- 2 members holding the title of Principal Research Fellow,
- 2 members holding the title of Senior Research Fellow,
- 1 member who is a professional.

The Director and Assistant Directors are not members of the Committee, but may act in an advisory capacity at meetings.

The Committee shall, for the duration of its two-year term of office, designate a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson by majority vote. The Committee receives administrative support from a member of the Secretariat.

#### **Article 4**

The tasks of the Ethics Committee are:

- adopting positions on the compliance of staff members' conduct with this Code;
- providing opinions on the compliance of the methodology for conducting research with this Code;
- providing opinions on ethically sensitive issues;
- adopting initiatives and making proposals to amend the Code of Ethics;
- examining reports of violations of the Code of Ethics and proposing follow-up procedures in relation to violations;
- drafting the annual report for the Scientific Council of ZRS Koper.

### **IV. PROCEDURES IN CASE OF VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF ETHICS**

It is essential that researchers possess the appropriate knowledge and a good command of the methodologies and ethical practices that are relevant to the scientific discipline in which they are working. Failure to adhere to good research practices constitutes a violation of professional duties, damaging the research process, impairing relations between researchers, undermining trust and devaluing research, leading to the inefficient use of resources and unnecessarily endangering research subjects, users and society as a whole.

The definition of research misconduct includes fabrication, falsification and plagiarism (the so-called FFP classification) in the application, conduct or peer review of research or in the publication of results:

- fabrication means making up results and documenting them as if they were real;
- falsification means manipulating research materials, equipment or procedures, or altering, omitting or concealing data or results;

- plagiarism is the appropriation of other people's work without citing or acknowledging the source, which constitutes an infringement of the original copyright or an infringement of the intellectual property rights belonging to the author(s).

Such an act is a serious violation, as it distorts the research documentation. At the same time, there are other violations of good research practices that seriously damage the integrity of the research process or the researchers.

In addition to the direct violations of good research practices set out in this Code of Conduct, some other examples of unacceptable practices are listed below:

- manipulating the authorship or denying the authorship of published papers by other researchers;
- republishing a significant part of one's own contribution, including a translation of the contribution, without proper acknowledgement or citation of the original work (so-called "self-plagiarism");
- selectively citing sources to enhance the relevance of your own findings or to please editors, reviewers or other researchers;
- concealing research findings;
- conduct that allows research funders or sponsors to influence the independence of the research process, thereby causing or encouraging research bias;
- unnecessarily citing (too) many sources and references in the research work;
- deliberately falsely accusing another researcher of violating or acting contrary to the principles;
- misquoting research achievements;
- inflating the relevance of findings or their potential for practical application;
- slowing down or inappropriately delaying research work carried out by other researchers;
- abusing a superior position for the purpose of encouraging violations of research integrity;
- failing to act on allegations of violations of research integrity committed by others or concealing inadequate responses by research institutions to dishonesty or other misconduct;
- founding or supporting scientific journals that do not respect the principles of quality control of research (so-called predatory journals).

The Ethics Committee is responsible for dealing with misconduct in mutual relations, in particular when it comes to:

- sexual and other harassment and bullying at work; and
- defamation.

While the most serious misconduct and dishonest behaviour can be punished, every effort must be made to prevent or discourage such behaviour through appropriate training, supervision and mentoring, and by developing a positive and supportive research environment.

In order to deal with misconduct and alleged cases of unfair treatment, ZRS Koper shall accordingly set up a special committee, which shall act as a permanent committee at the

level of the entire JRZ. The Committee shall adopt specific rules of procedure for its operation and for the enforcement of the provisions of this Code.

The Committee's work is guided by the awareness that the consistent and transparent handling of misconduct is always in the best interests of society as a whole, as well as of the research community at ZRS Koper.

#### **Article 5**

Violations of the Code of Ethics must be addressed in writing to the Ethics Committee and submitted to the ZRS Koper Secretariat. The report of a violation must include the name of the violator, the name of the whistleblower and a description of the actions deemed not to have been in compliance with the Code of Ethics. The Committee is not obliged to review anonymous reports, but the whistleblower may request to remain anonymous in their report and the Committee must grant this request.

The Committee may also find violations on its own initiative.

### **V. TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS**

#### **Article 6**

The Ethics Committee can be consulted on guidelines, instructions, principles and standards. The Chairman of the Ethics Committee shall be informed first, and the Chairman shall inform the members of the Ethics Committee.

#### **Article 7**

The Code of Ethics shall enter into force on the date of its adoption and shall be published on the ZRS Koper website.

dr. Mateja Sedmak, Principal Research Fellow,  
President of the Scientific Council of ZRS Koper

Number: 03-09/20