

**Policy on
Safeguarding Good scientific Practice and
Addressing Research Misconduct at Ecologic Institute**

11.02.2026

Employees of Ecologic Institute who are involved in scientific work are required to comply with this Policy on Safeguarding Good scientific Practice in the course of their duties.

Ecologic Institute regards adherence to these principles as a mandatory prerequisite for conducting scientific work.

Based on the recommendations of the German Research Foundation (DFG), Ecologic Institute has adopted the following Policy on Safeguarding Good scientific Practice and Addressing Research Misconduct.

1 Mission Statement

Scientific integrity forms the foundation of trustworthy scientific work. It contributes to the quality of Ecologic Institute's work and to its reputation. This includes, in particular, adherence to good research practice, the critical review and scrutiny of results, and maintaining honesty with regard to one's own contributions and those of others.

2 Commitment to Good Research Practice

All employees of Ecologic Institute who are involved in scientific work ("scientists") are required to adhere to the principles of good research practice. In addition, compliance with good research practice is also the duty and responsibility of the Management Board and of project leads. In addition to the provisions set out in this Policy, scientific standards may also arise from the standards of the respective academic discipline relevant to the work in question, as well as from requirements set by the Management Board, the project lead and the commissioning client.

3 Mandatory Participation in Training

All scientists are required to participate at least once in training on this Policy and on good scientific practice at Ecologic Institute.

4 Application of the Four-Eyes Principle

Project leads and work package leads must, as a matter of principle, review work results (in particular scientific publications and project reports) prior to their publication or submission to the commissioning client. This review must include, at a minimum, an assessment of plausibility, linguistic quality and, on a sample basis, scientific quality.

Work results produced by a project lead or work package lead should accordingly be reviewed by a second suitably qualified scientist.

5 Attribution of Sources and Use of AI Applications

Scientists must cite the original sources of third-party texts, data, materials, software, etc. used in their scientific work. As a rule of thumb, recipients of texts and other outputs must be able to identify at any point who is speaking to them.

All sources used must ultimately be independently reviewed and assessed. Blind citations, regardless of whether they originate from literature, AI systems or other sources, are not permitted. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) applications that contribute to substantive content, rather than merely editorial support, must be reported internally and disclosed in externally published outputs. The Ecologic Institute's guidelines on the use of AI must be observed.

Copyright must be respected. The contributions of partners, competitors and predecessors must be duly recognised and consistently and accurately acknowledged.

6 Documentation and Retention of Data

All documents and data relevant to a project or publication – in particular funding applications, grant award notices, contracts, relevant internal agreements and agreements with the commissioning client and third parties, work results and publications – must be stored in the designated institutional repository and retained for a minimum period of ten years.

7 Responsibility of the der Director

The director of Ecologic Institute shall ensure, through appropriate organisational principles, defined responsibilities, structures and procedures, that compliance with this Policy is enabled and that its application is effectively implemented.

In particular, the director shall ensure that this Policy, and any subsequent amendments, are communicated within Ecologic Institute, are accessible to all scientists, and are explained to them in an appropriate manner.

8 Responsibility of the Project Lead

The project lead shall ensure that all project team members are familiar with this Policy on Good scientific Practice and comply with it in practice. This shall be achieved through regular meetings, instructions and other appropriate measures.

The project lead shall define any project-specific standards that may be required for the project concerned.

9 Confidential Advisers

Ecologic Institute shall appoint up to three independent confidential advisers (ombudspersons) to whom research staff may turn in cases of conflict relating to good scientific practice, as well as in cases of actual or suspected scientific misconduct (see Section 8).

These confidential advisers (ombudspersons) shall be available to all scientific staff of Ecologic Institute as points of contact. The director may not serve as a confidential adviser.

10 Handling of Breaches of this Policy

The consequences of breaches of this Policy shall depend on the nature and severity of the breach. In particular, scientific misconduct (see below) may result in employment-related disciplinary measures.

A breach of this Policy may also arise from active involvement in the misconduct of others, knowledge of falsification committed by others, the knowing co-authorship of publications affected by falsification, or gross neglect of supervisory duties.

10.1 Research Misconduct

Not every breach of the principles of good research practice constitutes scientific misconduct.

Scientific misconduct occurs where, in a context relevant to scientific work, false statements are made intentionally or through gross negligence, where the intellectual property of others is infringed, or where the research activities of others are otherwise impaired. The specific circumstances of the individual case are decisive.

Examples of scientific misconduct include:

- a) False statements: Fabrication of data; Falsification of data, for example by selectively including or excluding undesired results without disclosure, or by manipulating representations or figures; Providing incorrect information in a job application or in a funding application (including false statements regarding the publication venue or the status of publications claimed to be in press).
- b) Infringement of intellectual property in relation to a copyrighted work created by another person, or to substantial scientific findings, hypotheses, teachings or research approaches developed by others: Unauthorised use under the false claim of authorship (plagiarism); Misappropriation of research approaches or ideas, in particular in the capacity of a reviewer (idea theft); Unjustified claim to, or acceptance of, authorship or co-authorship; Falsification of content; Unauthorised publication or disclosure to third parties while the work, finding, hypothesis, teaching or scientific approach has not yet been published.
- c) Claiming (co-)authorship of another person without their consent.
- d) Destruction of primary data where this violates statutory provisions or discipline-specific recognised principles of scientific work.

10.2 Procedure

Suspected breaches of this Policy should, as a rule, first be discussed and clarified within the project team.

If a suspected breach cannot be resolved within the project team, it should be reported to the Institute through one of the following channels: to the Director, to the relevant superior (Programme Directors, Navigators), or to the appointed confidential advisers (ombudspersons).

If, on the basis of the information provided, the superiors or confidential advisers consider that there are reasonable grounds to suspect research misconduct, the Director shall be informed. Acting on the assessment of the confidential advisers, the Director shall decide on the establishment and composition of an investigation committee.

Any potential conflict of interest on the part of members of the investigation committee or of the confidential advisers may be raised at any time, either by the individuals concerned themselves or by the person against whom the allegations are directed. The Management Board shall decide on the existence of a conflict of interest in consultation with the confidential advisers.



The person concerned by the allegations shall be given the opportunity to respond at every stage of the procedure.

The investigation committee shall examine the matter and hear the parties involved. If the committee concludes that the suspicion is not substantiated, it shall terminate the procedure in consultation with the Director. Otherwise, it shall submit recommendations on further action to the Director. The Director shall decide on the measures to be taken in the individual case.

Until culpable misconduct has been established by the investigation committee, all parties involved (confidential advisers, investigation committee, Director) shall maintain strict confidentiality regarding the persons involved and the findings of the procedure.

The proceedings and outcomes of each stage of the procedure shall be documented in writing.