



## **COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE CENTRE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDIES INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPATION**

With a view to ensuring the conformity of NCN-financed research with high ethical standards and to assist researchers in settling ethical dilemmas related to designing and conducting research, with particular consideration for:

- the need to promote the realisation of high-quality research, published in journals and by the internationally circulated press, which requires ensuring the conformity of the research with the prescribed standards;
- the necessity to design mechanisms instrumental in ensuring due respect for the dignity of the human being and our basic rights and freedoms in scientific research, taking into account ethical principles and standards;
- the fact that the regulations provided for in the Polish legal system address only a certain section of research,

the Council of the National Science Centre is calling upon research organisations and other entities applying for NCN grants, to appoint committees of research ethics within their confines. The Council will not impose the manner of the committees' organisation or functioning, based on the assumption that they will be composed of persons with specialist qualifications and outstanding high moral authority.

The Council of the National Science Centre recommends that applicants planning studies with the participation of humans, belonging in any of the categories listed below, secure the opinion of the committee in question. This recommendation is not limited to a particular research domain or discipline and applies to all studies where impacts on humans – in whatever form – are anticipated.

The positive recommendations of such committees shall be required by the Council of the National Science Centre for:

1. studies that include the participation of individuals with a limited ability to express their consent for participation consciously or freely, and with a limited opportunity to express possible refusal before or during the study, in particular:
  - children and adolescents up to 12 years of age,
  - individuals with intellectual disabilities,
  - individuals whose consent to participate may not be fully intentional, e.g. pupils, students (when a study is carried out as part of classes or immediately related to classes), prisoners,



soldiers, police officers, employees of companies (when the study is carried out at their workplace),

- individuals who express their consent to participate in the study based on untrue information regarding the aim and course of the study (withholding information, deception) or are altogether oblivious of their being subject to study (in so-called natural experiments);

2. studies that include the participation of individuals particularly prone to psychological trauma and, specifically:

- the terminally ill,
- survivors of catastrophes, war traumas etc.,
- patients treated for psychotic disorders,
- family members of the terminally or chronically ill;

3. studies that entail active intervention in human behaviour, aimed at modifying same, without direct intervention in brain functions, e.g. cognitive training, psychotherapy, psycho-correction etc. (applies also to situations where the intervention is supposed to be of benefit to the subject, e.g. improving his or her memory);

4. studies concerning controversial issues (abortion, *in vitro* fertilisation, capital punishment) or requiring special tact and thoughtfulness (e.g. religious beliefs, attitudes to minorities);

5. protracted, physically or mentally exhausting studies<sup>1</sup>.

The recommendation of the committee of research ethics is not required if the intended research is required by law to secure a positive opinion or approval of another committee or body opining on the ethical aspects of the intended research.

Once a positive recommendation of the appropriate committee of research ethics has been secured for a study, no exemption is granted from other requirements and conditions for scientific research as defined by law and good practice for the given research domain/discipline.

Prof. dr hab. Michał Karoński

Chair

Council of the National Science Centre

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<sup>1</sup> Types of studies for which the Council of the National Science Centre recommends securing a positive opinion of the committee for research ethics, set forth using the suggestions of the Committee of Psychology, Polish Academy of Sciences. Cf. attachment to *Minutes of the Plenary Meeting of the Committee of Psychology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, of 21 June, 2013.*