MLE Research Integrity Challenge paper on Incentives
What do we mean by incentives?

- Opposite of sanctions/punishments
- Sanctions:
  - aim to change behaviour with the threat of a penalty – penalty that comes in the form of a cost paid in terms of career, social reputation, finances or even personal freedom
- Incentives:
  - aim to encourage desirable behaviours by offering rewards of the same nature
- Anything used to sanction can be converted in an incentive
- Forced requirements are not ideal incentives
  - “carrots” make people give their best.
Who has the power?
Incentives are not just set top-down

- Inter-university/national
- Research Integrity organizations
- Funding institutions
- University leadership
- School/Dep. leadership
- Lab leaders
- Senior researchers
- Trainees, students, future researchers
What aspects of research integrity can be incentivized?

• Conducting research with integrity, responsibility, transparency and accountability
• Encouraging good research practice in other actors
• Fostering an environment supportive of research integrity
• Seek training for oneself and actively training colleagues in research integrity
• Actively promoting RI and preventing, reporting and amending behaviours that constitute research misconduct
  • Special efforts in aiding self-correction, e.g. helping uncover flaws of a commonly used methodology or ensuring the correction or retraction of flawed publications.
  • Correcting or retracting one’s own flawed work.
### Who can do what? Most, most.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trainees</td>
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<td>Lab lead</td>
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<td>School/dep</td>
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<td>University</td>
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<td>Funding</td>
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What kinds of incentives can be offered?

• **Informal acknowledgement**
  • private and public praise, citations
  • e.g. for researchers who self-retract

• **Formal acknowledgements**
  • Badges, awards and other symbolic but official signs of recognition
  • e.g. journal badges for Open Science

• **Formal honours and other marks of prestige**
  • Exclusive access to prestigious roles and positions

• **Material access to resources**
  • Research grants and monetary awards
  • e.g. Nobel and other prizes, COS registration challenge
Perverse Incentives

• Are pressure to publish and bibliometrics threatening research integrity?
  • No hard evidence, possibly contrary evidence

• Perverse incentives beyond pressure to publish
  • By-product of competitive “tournament model”
  • Competition good, connect RI with winners

• Science as a changing enterprise
  • Radical and rapid developments call for innovation

• Setting positive incentives to encourage the adoption of new and better practices
Beware of unintended consequences

• E.g. Incentives to share and re-use data
  • Nourishment for “data parasites”?

• NIH regulation 2017: all brain imaging studies need to register, report etc. like clinical trials
  • Slowing neuroscience and killing small labs?

• DFG include only you 5 “best” publications
  • New revised to 10.

• In general:
  • Any activity or resource directed at incentivizing RI is by definition subtracted to other objectives
  • Need optimal balance, monitoring and dialogue
Incentives in EU countries

• A clear mandate to set incentives in principal documents and reports
• Little evidence of incentives in practice
  • Growing activities of promoting RI, preventing RM
  • A few “stick” approaches:
    • Require compliance to access funds, do PhD etc.
  • Very few known carrots
  • (but list in Table 2 is incomplete)
Lessons to be learned

• Printeger suggests new promotion activities
  • Integrity Café
  • Value vision workshops
  • Ethics reflection workshops
  • Content tools – topics to explore and discuss

• Ongoing SOPs4RI project
**Challenge**

- Which activities related to research integrity can be incentivized?
- What types of incentives can be implemented?
- What may be the unintended consequences of a given activity-incentive?
  - *What advantages and disadvantages would such incentives have compared to compulsory regulations?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages/desirable outcomes</th>
<th>Disadvantages/challenges/unintended consequences</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths:</strong></td>
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