

Research Integrity Investigation Group of the SNSF Administrative Offices

Annual report 2025

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1 Research Integrity at the SNSF - Overview

[Research integrity](#) is of high importance to the SNSF. The [Research Integrity Regulations](#) specify the procedures to be applied in cases of suspected misconduct along with possible sanctions and the procedural rights of the parties concerned. In order to clarify the difficult issues that arise when these principles are violated, and to detect plagiarism and conduct the relevant proceedings, the SNSF has set up its own ad hoc Commission on Research Integrity (the Commission) and Research Integrity Investigation Group of the SNSF.

In 2025, the institutional and regulatory framework governing the handling of scientific misconduct at the SNSF was fundamentally revised as part of the wider restructuring of the Research Council. The new [Research Integrity Regulations \(RI Regulations\)](#) were adopted on 19 March 2025 and entered into force on 1 April 2025. These Regulations replaced both the former 2016 Regulations on scientific misconduct and the former 2016 Regulations on the Commission on Research Integrity.

The new regulatory framework introduced a new division of responsibilities between three bodies: the Research Ethics & Integrity Policy Group (PG REI), the ad hoc Commission on Research Integrity, and the Research Integrity Investigation Group of the SNSF Administrative Offices. Under the transitional provisions, proceedings pending on 31 March 2025 continued to be governed by the former regulations until their conclusion; however, the new powers and new terminology already applied, including the replacement of the former Plagiarism Investigation Group by the Investigation Group.

The year 2025 was therefore a transition year. During the onboarding phase running until 31 October 2025, the newly created PG REI began its work in transitional form. Its first meeting took place on 6 May 2025 and brought together Thomas Südmeyer (chair ad interim), Nadja Capus, Olivier Devuyst, Gudela Grote and Jean-François Molinari. The final composition of the PG REI was later endorsed by the Policy Committee on 16 September 2025, and the group began its mandate by 1 November 2025.

2 Framework and bodies

2.1 Investigation Group

The Research Integrity Investigation Group of the SNSF Administrative Offices is the successor to the former Plagiarism Investigation Group. It deals with matters of scientific integrity and has three principal tasks: (i) conducting the preliminary examination in cases of suspected scientific misconduct; (ii) carrying out checks for plagiarism in applications on a regular and random basis or in response to complaints from third parties; and (iii) developing and completing the current standards and procedures for detecting plagiarism together with the REI Policy Group. The new RI Regulations specify that the Investigation Group is made up of between 6 and 15 members and in principle comprises at least one scientific officer from the Administrative Offices supporting each of the five Programme Committees, thereby ensuring adequate disciplinary representation, as well as the delegate of the Legal Department or their deputy.

The Investigation Group employs the software iThenticate by Turnitin to compare texts and to investigate plagiarism. The software analyses research plans submitted with applications for research funding by searching for identical passages. In cases of suspected scientific misconduct – when research plans either contain an increased number of such passages or are reported as suspected cases by persons inside or outside the Administrative Offices of the SNSF – a detailed analysis is carried out.

2.2 Commission

Under the new RI Regulations, the former standing Commission on Research Integrity was replaced by an ad hoc Commission on Research Integrity. This body examines suspicions of scientific misconduct as part of the formal investigation procedure and, where appropriate, submits a sanction request to the Academic Board of the Research Council.

The Commission no longer has a fixed annual membership. Instead, it is constituted on a case-by-case basis and is composed of four members: (i) the external expert from the PG REI, who acts as chair and conducts the formal investigation procedure; (ii) a delegate from the PG REI whose profile is most appropriate for the case concerned; (iii) a scientific officer from the Investigation Group who supports the concerned Programme Committee or whose disciplinary profile is most appropriate for the case; and (iv) the delegate of the Legal Department to the Investigation Group or their deputy.

2.3 Academic Board

The role of the Academic Board of the Research Council is to decide on the sanction and the other legal consequences of the proceedings, on the basis of the formal investigation report issued by the commission.

3 Plagiarism checks

3.1 Practice

5% of the submitted applications¹ are randomly selected and their research plans checked for plagiarism. The Investigation Group conducts these analyses using the software iThenticate, which compares the research plans with texts on the internet and scientific databases. Only results with a similarity index² of $\geq 10\%$ and/or the largest possible degree of correspondence³ of >200 words are followed up more in detail. Besides these checks, the Investigation Group investigates all suspected cases reported to them by evaluators (referees and external reviewers), by rule-breaking researchers themselves, by members of the Administrative Offices or by other informers such as whistleblowers. Based on detailed analyses, the Investigation Group then decides whether the suspicions are justified and whether the case should be forwarded to the PG REI which convenes the Commission.

¹ 5% per funding scheme, only for full research applications. Lead agency projects, which are assessed by an external partner, so-called "excellence grant" projects, which are subject to a simplified evaluation process, and pre-proposals are excluded.

² Percentage of texts identified by the software as identical with other published sources; not yet an indication of scientific misconduct.

³ Largest source identified by the software.

The severity of cases of plagiarism is judged based on the amount of text copied without proper referencing (share of whole text, number of words), structure (longer passages, individual sentences or fragments), location in the research plan (general, current state of research, methods or research hypothesis) and content. Incorrectly quoted passages from the applicant’s own publications can also constitute a case of self-plagiarism. In particular, making earlier research work / publications not transparent may be regarded as scientific misconduct. The decision to investigate a suspected case also depends on the results of a comparative analysis of the recently examined cases. In minor cases, the Investigation Group sends applicants a written statement reminding them of the rules of good scientific practice. This reminder does not constitute a sanction of any kind and it does not affect the evaluation of the application in any way. The applicants’ institution is not informed.

3.2 Analyses in 2025

In the year under review, the Investigation Group ran 381 research plans through the software and carried out a detailed analysis for 84 research plans. In comparison with the previous years, the Investigation Group examined fewer research plans in detail and this despite an overall larger number of tests (see Fig. 1).

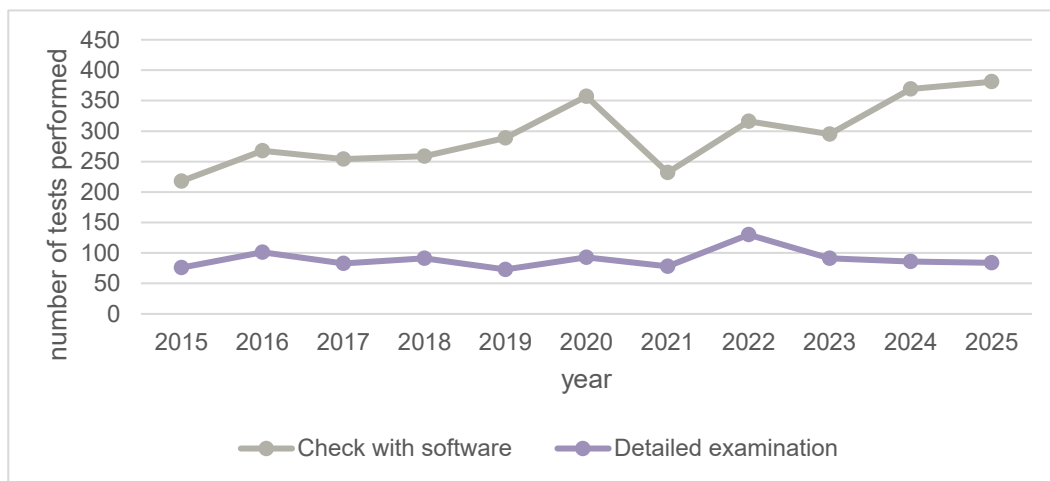


Figure 1: Overview of the applications examined by the Investigation Group from 2015-2025

3.2.1 Random checks

In 2025, the Investigation Group conducted random checks on 375 applications (see Table 1). For 294 of them, plagiarism could already be ruled out based on the analysis conducted by the software; 81 research plans needed to be checked in detail. The Investigation Group identified 2 applications from random checks that had breached the rules of good scientific practice. In these cases, (i) isolated passages and/or (ii) few works of the applicants themselves had not been correctly cited. Based on that, the Investigation Group considered the cases to be of minor gravity and sent the applicants a written reminder of the rules of good scientific practice. The applications analysed had neither to be forwarded to the Commission for further clarification nor to be sanctioned.

3.2.2 Reports on suspected scientific misconduct

In addition to the random checks, 6 cases of suspected scientific misconduct were reported to the Investigation Group by persons inside and outside the Administrative Offices (see Table 1). Most of these reports were sent by referees or external reviewers. Of the 6 reported cases, 3 were studied in detail by the Investigation Group. In 2 out of the 3 cases, suspicions of scientific misconduct proved to be unfounded, and no further action had to be taken. In 1 case, the Investigation Group found minor irregularities as regards the citation of original sources or the research output list and concluded the analysis by sending the applicant a written reminder of the rules of good scientific practice.

Table 1. Checks with software on plagiarism or upon hint by others and decisions by the Investigation Group in the report period.

	Examinations		Decisions	
	Checks with software/upon external hint	Detailed analyses	Minor errors *	Forwarded to Commission
Random checks	375	81	2	0
Reports by externals	6	3	1	0

* If the detailed control yields a minor research misconduct, the case is closed by sending the applicants a reminder of the rules of good scientific practice.

4 Formal investigations

During the reporting year 2025, the Commission, still operating under the previous framework, dealt with one case and concluded that research misconduct had occurred. The case was referred to the Academic Board to issue the sanction. Table 2 provides more detail on this case whereas figure 2 summarizes the number of investigations and sanctions between 2015 und 2025.

Table 2. Formal investigations and decisions by the SNSF in 2025

Investigations			
Investigations during the report period	1		
Decisions		Type of misconduct	Sanction
Sanctions imposed in the report period	1	Making false statements or committing falsifications	Exclusion from applications to the SNSF for two years; notification of exclusion to current employer
Total number of cases investigated	1		

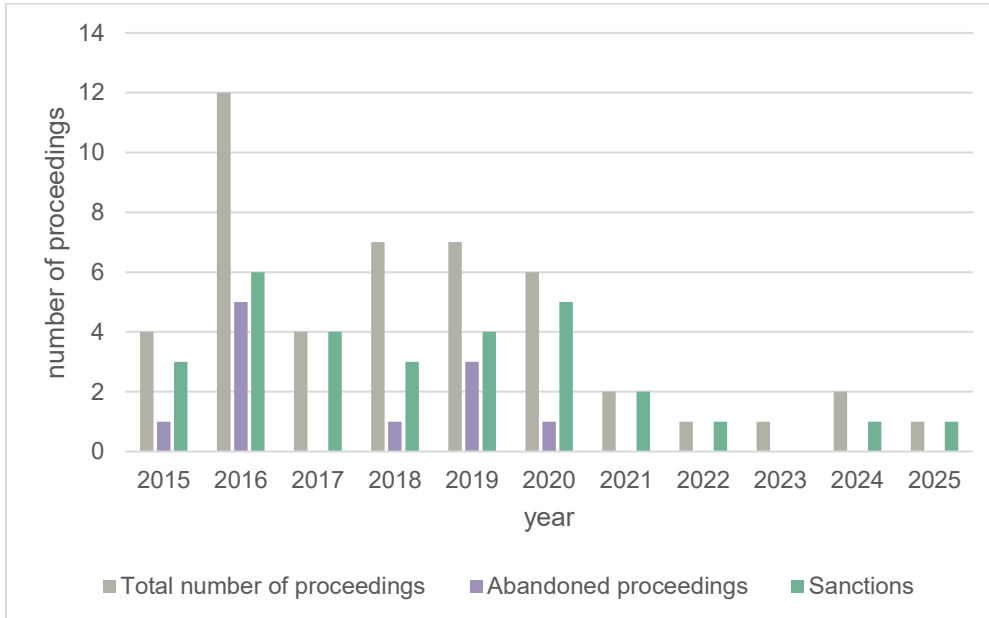


Figure 2: Overview of the cases that the Commission dealt with from 2015-2025

5 Further activities and events

5.1 iThenticate

5.1.1 Licence renewal

The licence for iThenticate was renewed for a further year at a similar price (\$ 10'251), factoring in the steadily increasing number of tests. The licence includes 400 tests and unrestricted access to the repository that enables the highly efficient matching of documents. Since 2024, IT management and administration services are responsible for the licensing and maintenance of the contract with Turnitin for the use of iThenticate.

5.1.2 Deletion of uploaded research plans

To provide an adequate level of data protection, research plans uploaded to the Turnitin servers and analysed by the software are deleted after saving of the analysis report according to the guidelines elaborated by the Investigation Group.

Annex I

Composition of the ad hoc Commission on Research Integrity according to new RI regulations

As of October 2025, the Commission is composed as follows:

Chair (external expert from the REI Policy Group)

- Prof. Dr. iur. Bijan Fateh-Moghadam

Delegates from the REI Policy Group

- Prof. Dr. Jean-François Molinari, Programme Committee Projects
- Prof. Dr. Gudela Grote, Programme Committee Careers
- Prof. Dr. Thomas Südmeyer, Policy Committee and Programme Committee International Cooperation
- Prof. Dr. Olivier Devuyst, Programme Committee International Cooperation
- Prof. Dr. Ralph Weber, Policy Committee and Programme Committee International Cooperation
- Prof. Dr. Mira Burri, Programme Committee Long-Term Research and Infrastructures and Programme Committee Thematic and Solution-Oriented Research
- Prof. Dr. Roberto Coppari, Programme Committee Long-Term Research and Infrastructures and Programme Committee Thematic and Solution-Oriented Research

Scientific officers (also members of the Investigation Group of the Administrative Office)

- Dr. Daniel Krämer, Projects
- Dr. Cornelia Sommer, Projects
- Dr. Claudia Ellenrieder, Projects
- Dr. Margot Mütsch, Projects
- Dr. David Svarin, Thematic and Solution-Oriented Research (lead Investigation Group)
- Dr. David Möller, Careers
- Dr. François Lavergne, Careers
- Dr. Ladina Knapp, International Cooperation

Representatives of the Legal Department

- Milva Franceschi
- Sophie Kohli (deputy)

Administrative secretariat

- Daniela Büschlen, Secretariat Legal Department

16 April 2026, mlf / sko / dsv / fla