

RICOMET session - The ethics of methods and the methods of ethics

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Reflections on ethics in relation to radiological protection to date have largely focussed on virtue ethics. They logically and reasonably follow from the question of what it would imply for a scientist, manager, policy advisor, medical doctor or regulator concerned with radiological protection to be 'responsible' or 'good'. In that sense, in its publication 'Ethical foundations of the system of radiological protection', the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) has identified the core ethical values underpinning the system of radiological protection as being 'beneficence and non-maleficence', 'prudence', 'justice' and 'dignity'. This set of core values is completed with three 'procedural values', being 'accountability', 'transparency' and 'inclusiveness' (stakeholder participation).

However, to what extent and in which way do formal regulatory 'systems' and specific 'cultures' (political, scientific, educational) enable, stimulate or eventually hinder the adoption of ethical values such as those mentioned above? In a series of invited presentations, the workshop will discuss this question in general, and the consequences thereof for the radiological protection system in particular. The idea is that ethical thinking in relation to radiological risk governance requires broader reflection than traditional virtue ethics alone, and that it should be completed with ethical reflection with regard to the potentialities and 'hindrances' that characterise the systems and cultures in which mandatories concerned with radiological protection are formed and meant to operate.