

Ethics and justification – On the need for reflection on the justification of radiological protection research itself.

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RICOMET 2017, Vienna, 29 June 2017

Context of CONCERT subtask 2.6.1. 'Ethics and justification'

info: <http://www.concert-h2020.eu/>

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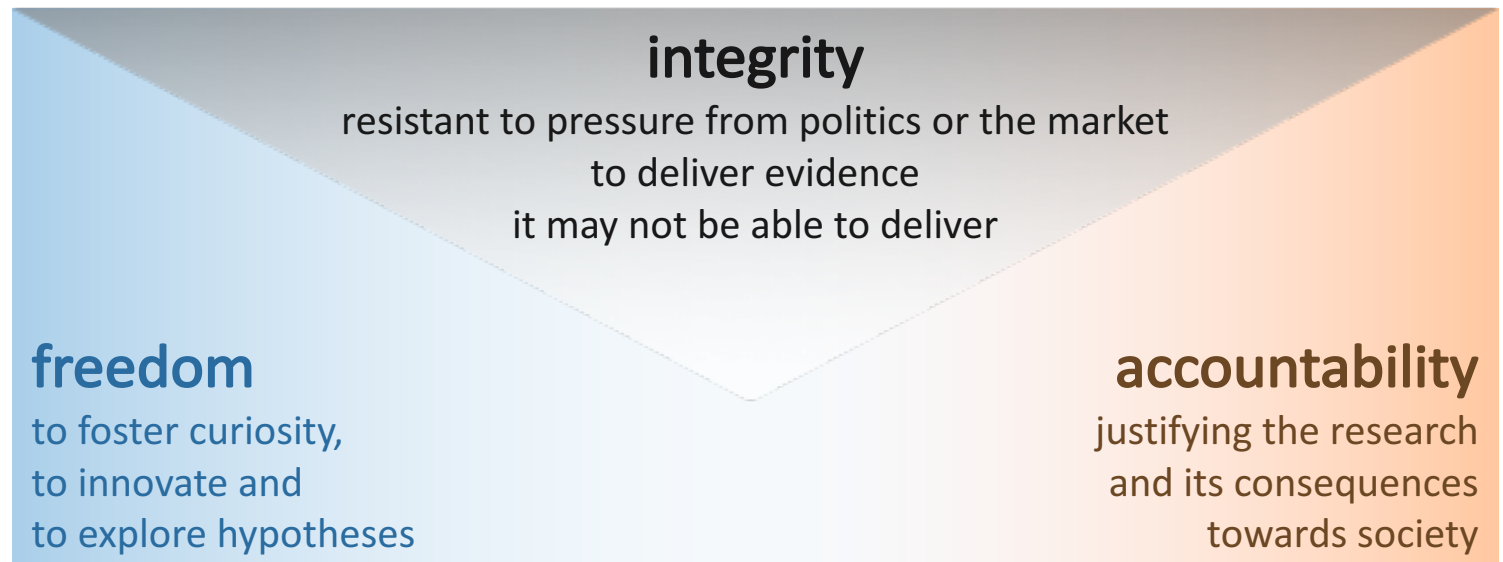
accountability

justifying the research
and its consequences
towards society

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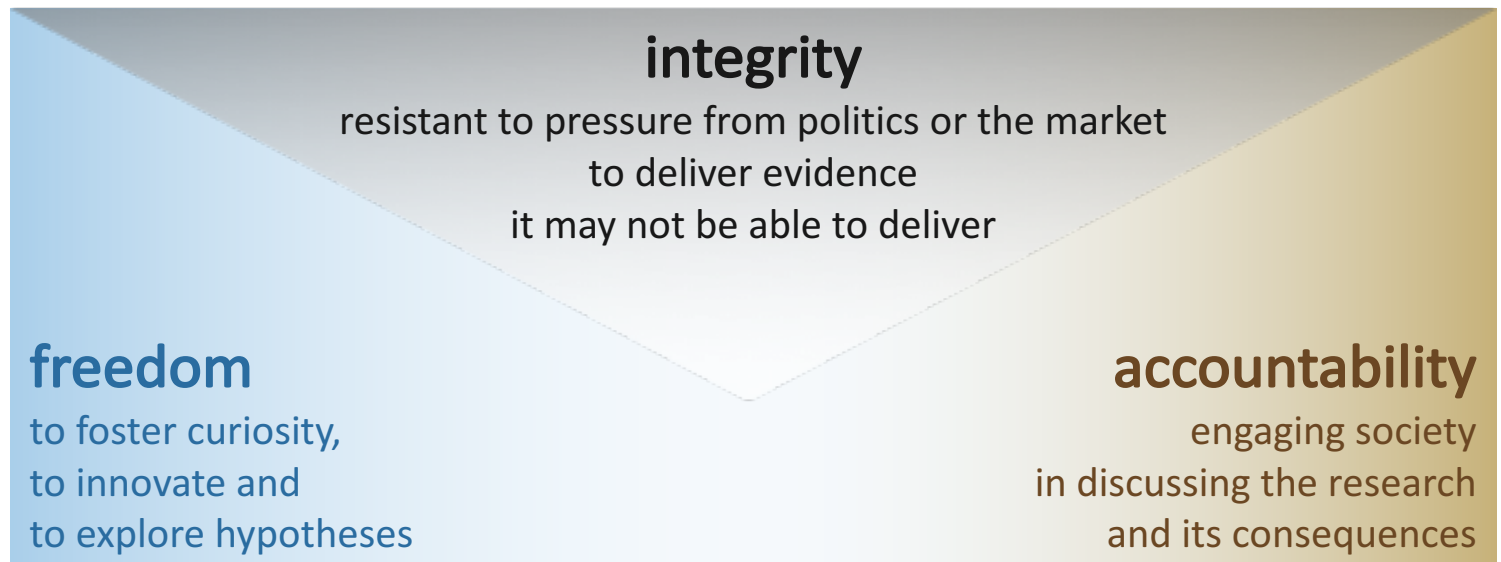


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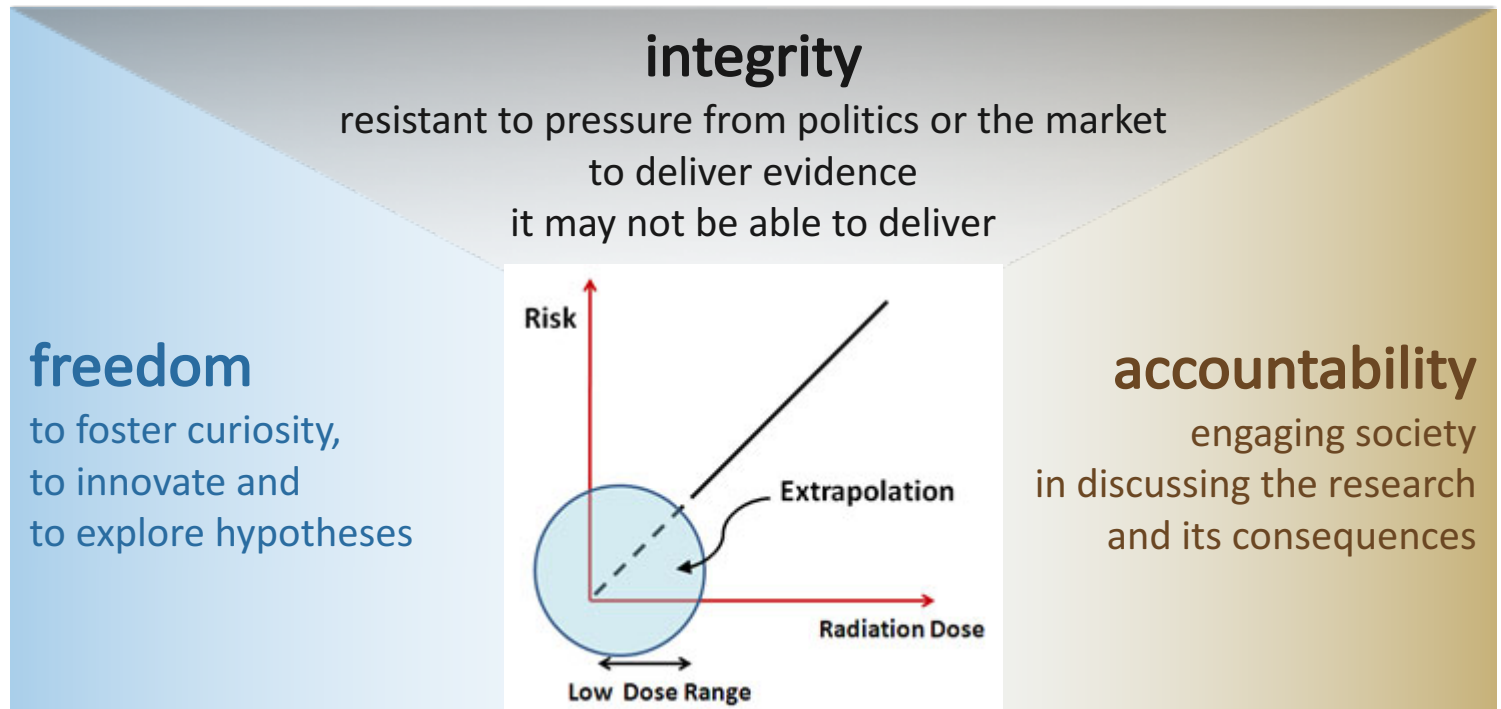
Accountability can also be seen as 'forthcoming': engaging society in discussing the research and its consequences.



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a first one

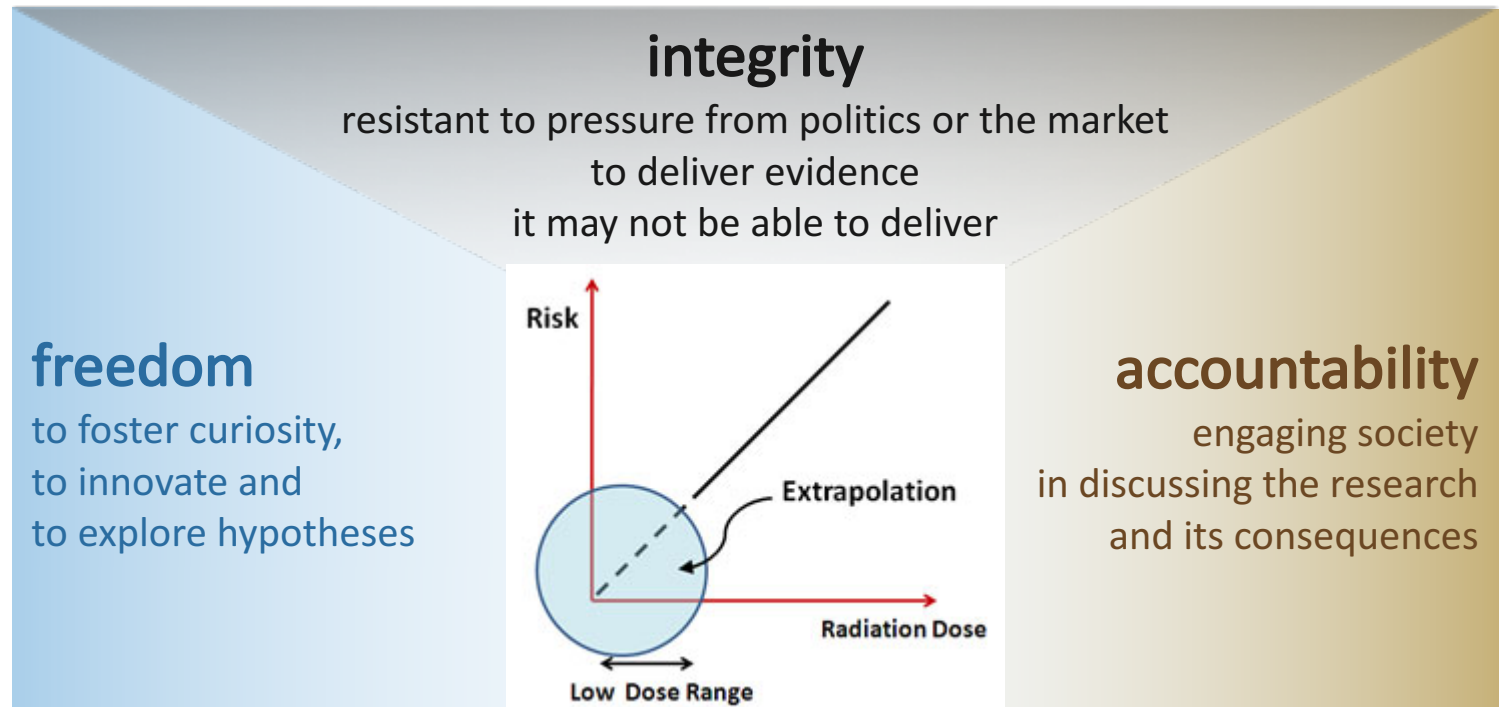
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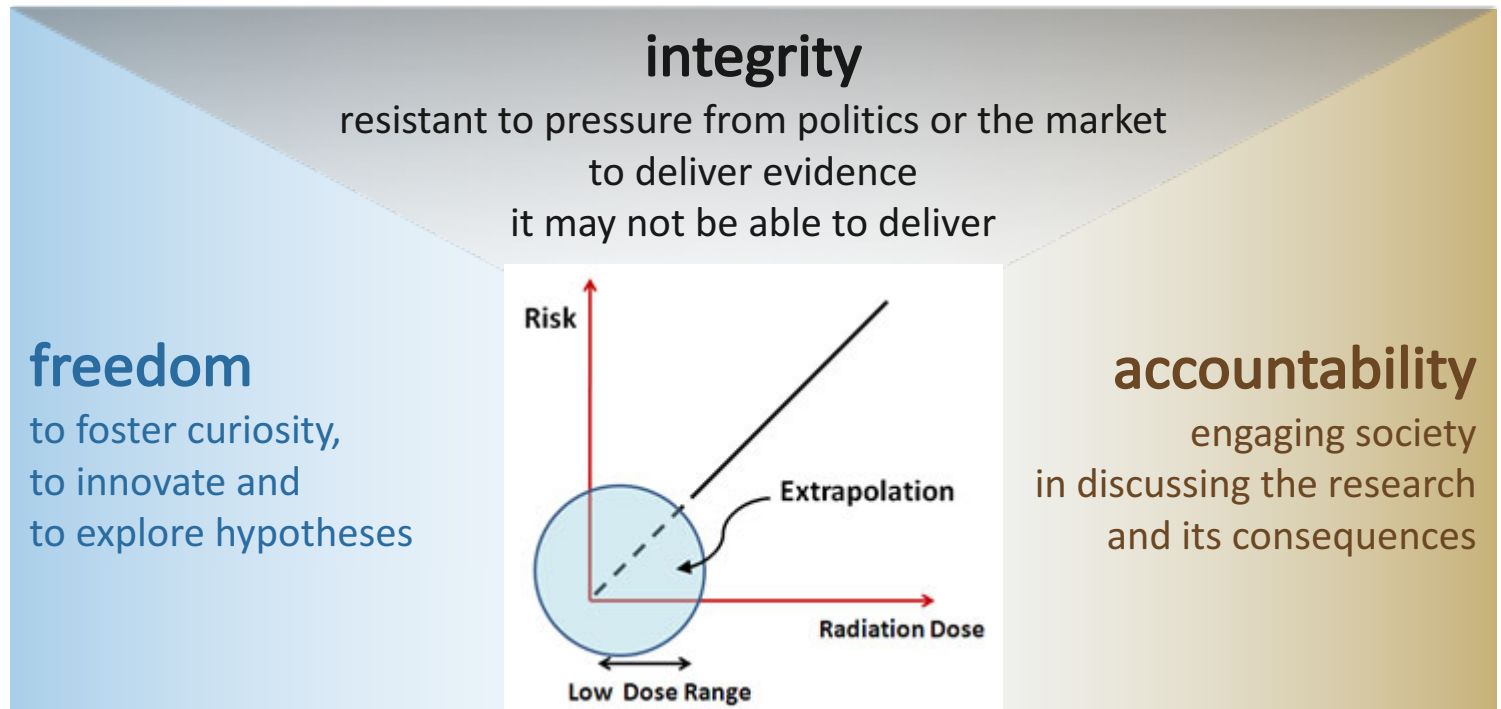
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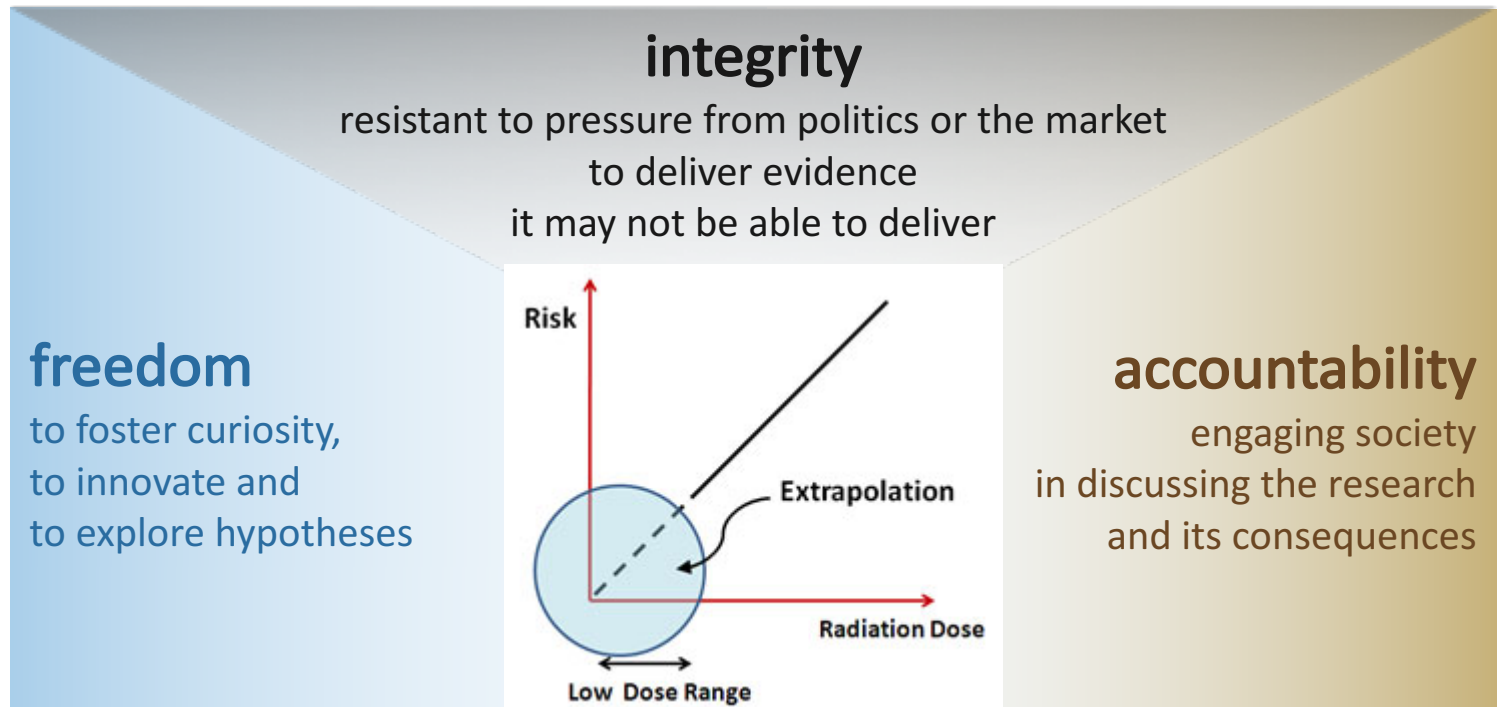
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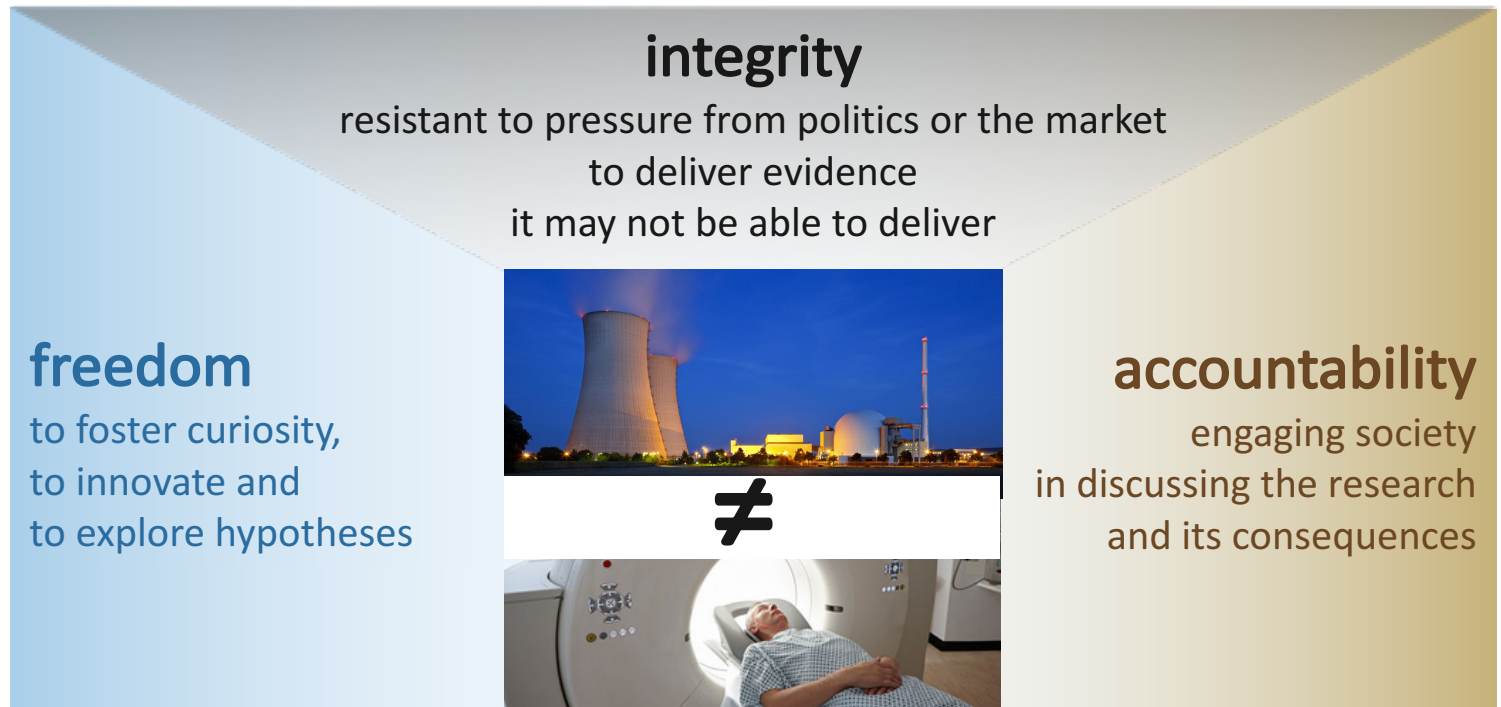
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- **integrity** as resisting political pressure to provide 'strategic tools' for risk calculation in the low dose area.
- ↗ **accountability** as the responsibility to refer to the precautionary principle (based on the Linear Non-Threshold hypothesis) as an ethical principle to guide policy.



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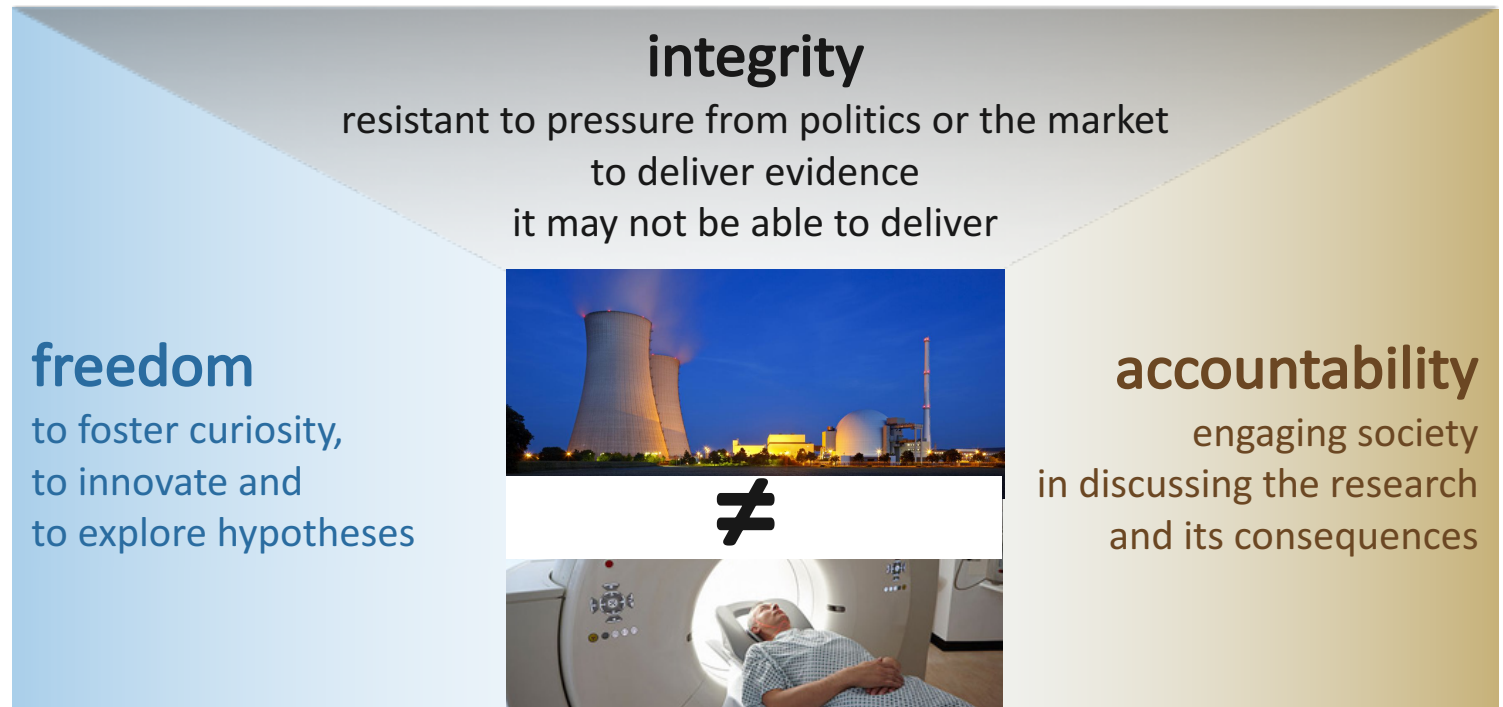
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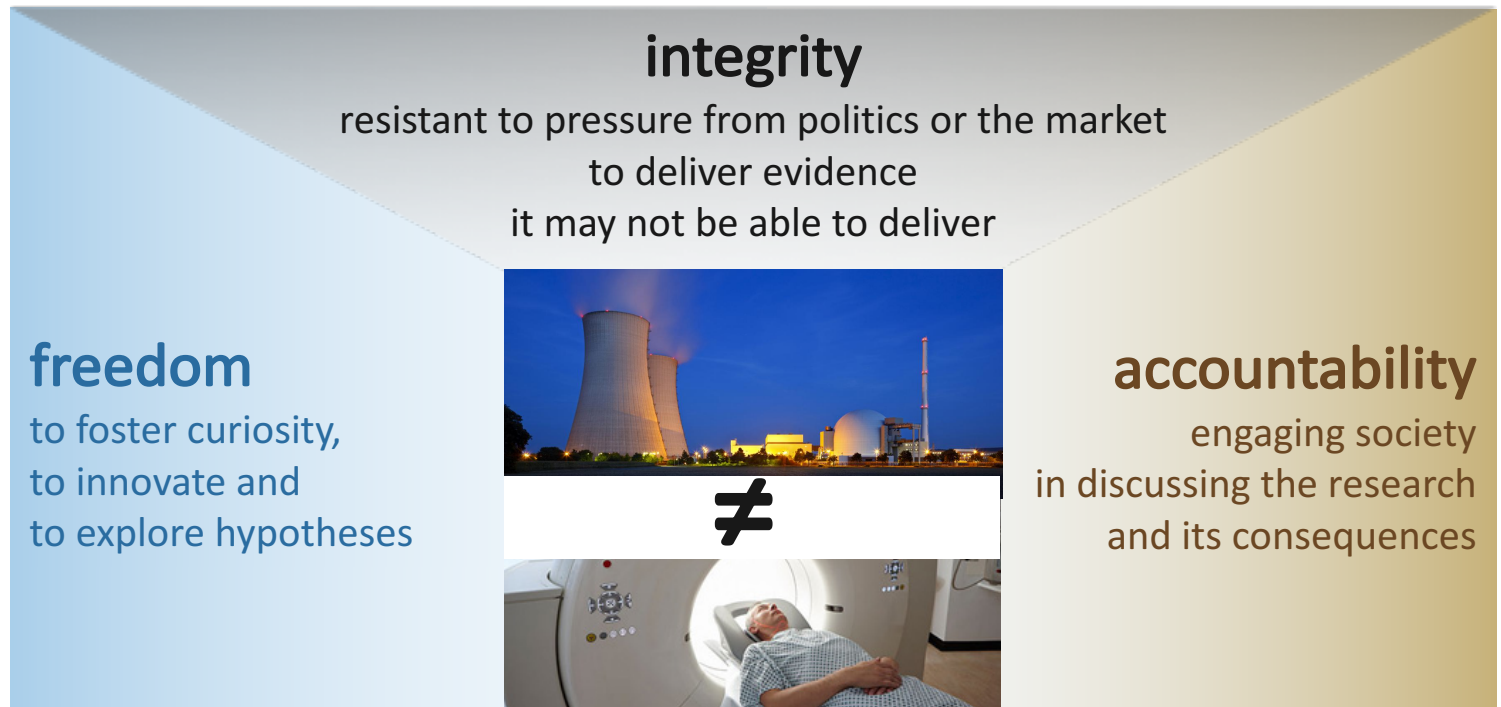
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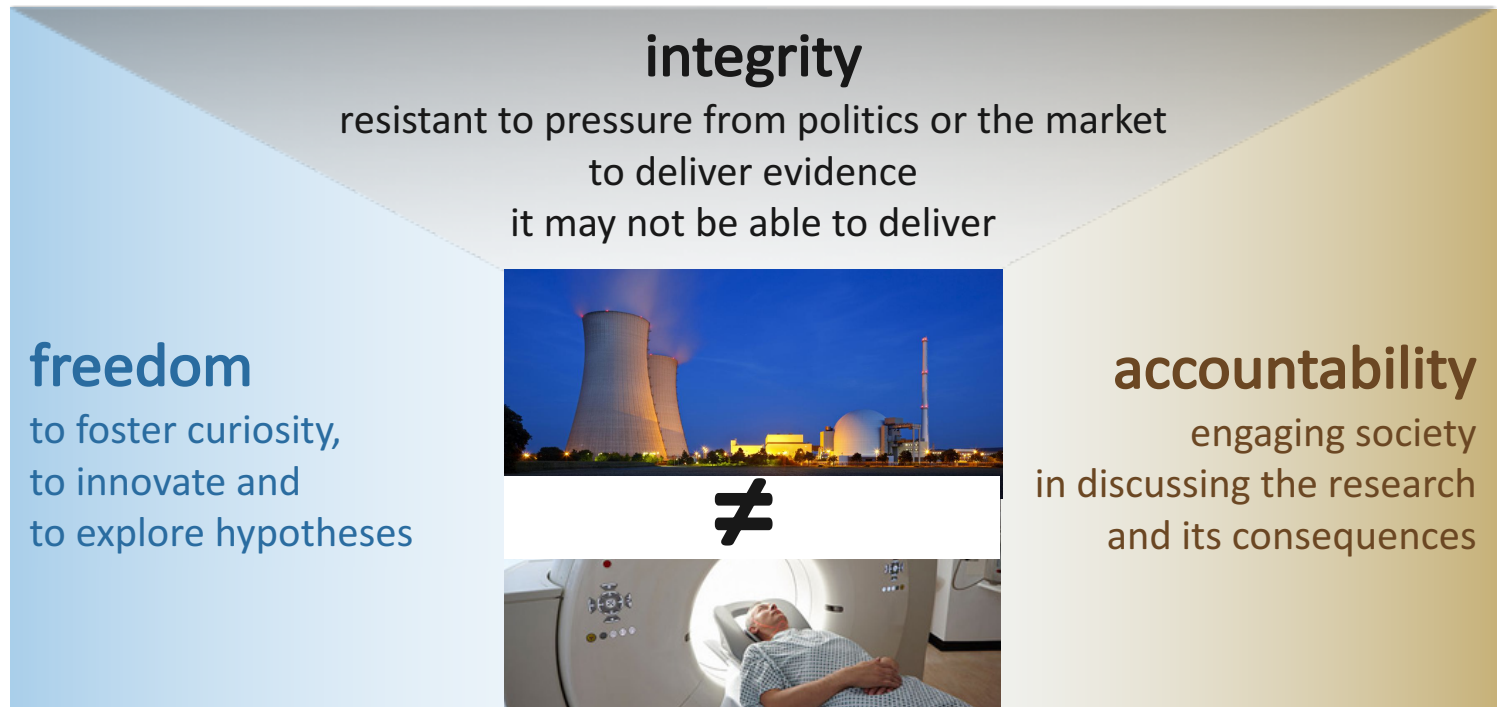
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- **integrity** as resisting to 'compare' risks of different application contexts at the service of (anti-)nuclear lobbyists or politics.
- ↗ **accountability** as the responsibility to refer to justification not as a calculation of benefits over risks but as an act of democracy within a specific application context.



The 'triple' tension related to justification and its different application contexts is a challenge for the RP community

This becomes apparent in discussions on the why and how of stakeholder participation in RP research

Reflections from a discussion on stakeholder involvement in CONCERT roadmap building

(organised as part of the CONCERT meeting on individual and joint roadmap building in Budapest in March 2017)

reflections

The 'triple' tension related to justification and its different application contexts
from a discussion on stakeholder involvement in CONCERT roadmap building
Need for self-reflection

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- Importance of understanding stakeholder involvement
not as a mean to convince society of something
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not as a mean to convince society of something
but as a dialogue in light of a higher common interest.
- Seeing stakeholder involvement as a dialogue in light of a higher common interest
leads to the following questions:
 - What is the common interest?
 - What can we (the RP community) learn? What can they learn?
 - Is there a 'we' versus 'they'?
 - Is there actually a we?
 - Do we actually know what we want?

The 'triple' tension related to justification and its different application contexts from a discussion on stakeholder involvement in CONCERT roadmap building

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- Statement for discussion

If we are serious about stakeholder involvement and about deliberating the higher common societal interest with society, then we will need to go for a structuring of our outreach according to application contexts.

reflections

The 'triple' tension related to justification and its different application contexts
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Justifying research

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Justifying research

- We want to discuss radiological protection research challenges with society.
But what is often forgotten: we should not expect that society simply takes the justification of our research for granted.
Therefore every dialogue should start with a reflection on the very justification of the research itself.
Which means that the research should be situated in a 'thematic context' that is meaningful for society.

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Therefore every dialogue should start with a reflection on the very justification of the research itself.
Which means that the research should be situated in a 'thematic context' that is meaningful for society.
- We have to acknowledge that the thematic contexts of
 - 'radiological protection'
 - or 'low dose risk' research
 - or 'applications of ionizing radiation' in general
 - or 'existing exposure situations' or 'planned exposure situations' in generalas such are meaningless for society.
Every time we approach society to involve them, the question will come:
Radiation, for what purpose? In which context? How does it affect me/us?

reflections

The 'triple' tension related to justification and its different application contexts
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Justifying research > focus on contexts meaningful for society

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Justifying research > focus on contexts meaningful for society

- Contexts meaningful for society are the **technology application contexts**
nuclear technology in **energy** production,
 in **medical** applications,
 in **industrial** applications
and the **natural occurrence contexts** (NORM, radon).
- In organising these dialogues, there is no reason to engage society in 'comparisons' or 'holistic integrations' of these different contexts. On the contrary: Every attempt from the research community to do so would be perceived as suspicious.

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- Society is concerned with energy, health, food, transport, ...
Reflections and dialogues with stakeholders would thus need to be organised 'within' thematic application contexts.
Holism then means a holistic approach to understanding the theme as such (energy, medical/health, ...).
- The underlying motivation to do so is not only pragmatic but primarily ethical, as it opens up questions with regard to the very justification of radiological protection research itself.

On the need

Conclusions

for reflection on the justification of radiological protection research itself

- Caring for
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 - the democratic character of justification within different nuclear technology application contexts
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- However, given that RP starts from the justification principle, the RP community has an important role to play towards policy in general and towards EURATOM and the European Commission in particular:
 - **to refer to the precautionary principle** (based on the Linear Non-Threshold hypothesis) **as an ethical principle to guide policy**.
 - **to refer to justification** not as a calculation of benefits over risks but **as an act of democracy within a specific application context**.
 - **to join discussions in specific governance contexts** if they would be organised as part of European or national policy.

Conclusions

for reflection on the justification of radiological protection research itself

- Reflection on the justification of radiological protection research itself should be an integral part of research roadmap building.

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- European research policy is too much driven by the idea of economic growth as the remedy for social well-being, and knowledge risks to become entirely seen as a product to be left in the hands of a ‘competitive knowledge economy’.

Also radiological protection research risks to become affected by that.

- Is competition really benefiting scientific research such as that on RP?

The premise that competition will lead to innovative ideas and methods in the general interest of society is questionable. The test space for these ideas and methods is not that of society but a review process done by reviewers selected by the EC itself.

Alternatively The EC could engage the research communities in discussing research challenges, priorities and contexts while taking up the role of moderator in allocating tasks and resources, in organising public participation and in organising reviews and eventual reorientations.