

# Correspondence

## Emphasize ethics for peer reviewers

Initiatives to address bullying in science (see, for example, *Nature* 571, 14–15; 2019) should extend to the conduct of peer reviewers, particularly given the impact of toxic reviews on the mental health of researchers (see [go.nature.com/2z2urcx](http://go.nature.com/2z2urcx)).

Learning to accept criticism is part of surviving the fierce competition in research. But an invitation to review the work of a peer, usually anonymously, is not a licence to patronize, intimidate or otherwise act in a way that would be unprofessional in the workplace. Such reviews are unnecessarily discouraging, particularly to an early-career researcher with limited experience of the system.

Journals and editorial boards must accept their responsibility to guide positive reviewer behaviour and constructive feedback. Some journals provide clear ethical guidelines for reviewers (see, for example, [go.nature.com/2kjbjrr](http://go.nature.com/2kjbjrr) and [go.nature.com/2kmgngv](http://go.nature.com/2kmgngv)). Others — including *Nature* — need to devote more webspace to ensuring that reviewers provide important criticism and abide by high standards of integrity and impartiality (see [go.nature.com/2h2osn4](http://go.nature.com/2h2osn4)).

Why not prominently display a code of conduct at the start of a review? Editors must not turn a blind eye to reviewers who fail to meet ethical expectations; neither should authors feel compelled to accept poor treatment.

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## Expose institutions' bullying records

As scholars of abusive academic supervision, we suggest that tying institutions' reputations to their treatment of staff could

help to prevent such bullying.

Some funding agencies — the US National Science Foundation, for example — have policies that guard against sexual harassment. These need to be universally adopted and to take account of bullying in all its forms. Grant applicants should be required to include evidence that laboratory members are treated fairly. And targets of abuse must be encouraged to speak out. It should also be compulsory for institutions to release publicly accessible reports on bullying.

If establishments and individual supervisors knew that their reputations would be tarnished by such reports, and if grants were awarded only to scientists and institutions with clean or rectified reputations, leaders would be forced to deal directly with abusers and to drive out persistent offenders — rather than covering up their abuse (M. Mahmoudi *Nature* 562, 494; 2018).

And ideally, the yardsticks for evaluating academic performance should be reset. In our view, the current system relies too heavily on research-performance ratings. These put pressure on supervisors, who often respond by bullying lab members. More credit could be given to research that benefits humanity, for example.

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## A critical boost for green banking

The introduction last month of the US National Climate Bank Act is a boost for 'green' banks worldwide (see [go.nature.com/33anbt1](http://go.nature.com/33anbt1)). These banks are mobilizing investment around the world to accelerate the transition to clean energy and

mitigate climate change (see [go.nature.com/33vfwf](http://go.nature.com/33vfwf)). Those investments reduce energy costs for consumers while generating returns for investors. I suggest that green-bank policymaking would benefit from a greater academic input.

Modelling and attribution studies, for instance, could assess the economic impacts of existing green banks. Research is also needed into the economic barriers to clean-energy uptake, and into new tools and solutions that green banks might use.

We must also evaluate the potential market effects of expanding green-bank incentives. Hawaii's green bank, for example, is pioneering a programme that encourages tenants to invest in renewable power ([go.nature.com/2ttfadb](http://go.nature.com/2ttfadb)). And, on an international scale, the European Commission's incoming president has suggested turning parts of the European Investment Bank into a climate bank, which would unlock €1 trillion (US\$1.1 trillion) of investment ([go.nature.com/2ta4tku](http://go.nature.com/2ta4tku)).

Experts in clean-energy economics and policy must use their platforms to increase public understanding of the benefits of affordable, low-carbon infrastructure.

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## Greece: research minister responds

As the incoming deputy minister of development and investments responsible for research in Greece, I find your Editorial upholding the previous government's research reforms blatantly one-sided (*Nature* 572, 153; 2019). And I am surprised that it fails to report accurate information about my academic and professional track record (see [go.nature.com/2ttfyq](http://go.nature.com/2ttfyq)).

You suggest that "researchers are right to be concerned"

about the new administration. In fact, their overall response is one of relief at the appointment of this government and the opportunity for change. They are concerned that Greece currently ranks 18th out of the 28 EU member states in terms of its R&D intensity indicator ([go.nature.com/33vtqb](http://go.nature.com/33vtqb)) and 20th on the European Innovation Scoreboard ([go.nature.com/33wddt](http://go.nature.com/33wddt)); the *Global Competitiveness Index 2017–2018* ranks it 129th out of 137 countries for university–industry collaboration in R&D and 131st for government procurement of advanced technology products ([go.nature.com/2txrjy](http://go.nature.com/2txrjy)).

The country's complex bureaucratic system for research programmes is widely held responsible for these dismal rankings. Costas Fotakis, the previous minister of research, contributed substantially to this bureaucracy. In January this year, for example, his government introduced a law obliging researchers to submit detailed budgets up to a year in advance. This is counter-productive in research, where decisions are results-driven and flexibility in planning is crucial. Institutions must now employ more administrative staff to manage the extra bureaucracy — hardly an enticement for Greek scientists to repatriate.

It is a top priority for the new government to improve research and innovation in Greece.

We have already outlined our realistic but ambitious agenda (see [go.nature.com/2twensm](http://go.nature.com/2twensm)).

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### CONTRIBUTIONS

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