

The SEFI Ethics Reader

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Engineers will face ethical questions in their professional careers. Engineering degree programmes should have prepared the graduates for moral decision making. Engineering ethics should thus have been part of the education of engineers at the universities. In some countries it is and in others not. European and national organisations of engineers recommend engineering ethics to become a mandatory subject of instruction. Only in a few countries like Ireland and the UK are ethical issues constitutive to engineering programmes, and their delivery is monitored in the accreditation of degree programmes. The EUR-ACE Framework - Standards and Guidelines is vague and simply demands that engineers should be able to reflect on ethical issues.

However, engineering education at European institutions of higher education (with the exception of Ireland and the UK) rarely includes educational components devoted to engineering ethics. Although it would be more than desirable that engineering ethics becomes a mandatory subject in engineering education, the de facto situation in most European countries does not allow to change the curricula appropriately in the immediate future.

Graduates from engineering degree courses are left alone with ethical questions unless they start studying literature on ethics on their own. Here however, they might be lost in an abundant amount of literature on ethics that is neither meant for them nor would be of much use for them due to the philosophical jargon.

In this situation SEFI should develop an Ethics Reader. How to organise such an endeavor should be discussed at a meeting of the SEFI Ethics Group during the Annual Conference in the Azores.

Until now only ideas for such a reader are around. The SEFI Ethics Reader might consist of e. g. 12 philosophical core texts on ethics, augmented by comments and examples on the chosen texts. The core texts themselves should not exceed 12 pages each, and also the comments and the examples should not be longer. It would be essential that the comments and the examples are written by engineers in the language of engineers.

The SEFI Ethics Reader might be used in courses on engineering ethics if appropriate, but it is mainly meant for self study by students and young professionals.

The first edition should be in English, but editions in other European languages with additional country-specific texts might follow.

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