

Document 7: Conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure policy

This code applies to the independent observer, the Evaluation Committee and the external reviewers.

Conflict of interest

An important aspect of this code is the avoidance of any conflicts between personal interests and the interests of the applicants. The independent observer, the Evaluation Committee and the external reviewers must perform their work impartially and take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the work is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

Definition of the conflict of interest.

The following situations will automatically be considered as conflict of interest:

- Being involved in (the preparation of) any pre- and/or full proposal;
- Having submitted a proposal as a principal investigator or a team member, under the call;
- Being director, trustee or Partner or in any way involved in the management of an applicant;
- Being employed or contracted by one of the applicants;
- Having close professional proximity, e.g. being a member of the same scientific institution with a hierarchical or department relation or impending change of the external reviewer/EvC member to the institution of the applicant in a position with a hierarchical or department relation or vice versa;
- Having close family ties (spouse, domestic or non-domestic Partner, child, sibling, parent etc.) or other close personal relationship with the applicants of the proposal;
- Having (or having had during the last five years) a close scientific collaboration (for e.g., but not restricted to, acting as co-author on a publication) with an applicant of the proposal;
- Having (or having had) a relationship of scientific rivalry or professional hostility with an applicant of the proposal;
- Having (or having had), a mentor/mentee relationship with the principal investigator of the proposal;
- Having a current or prior (past five years) activity in advisory bodies of the applicant's institution, e.g. scientific advisory boards;
- Having direct or indirect benefit if any proposal submitted is accepted or rejected;
- Having personal economic interests in the funding decision.

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Other situation preventing the EvC members or external reviewers to participate in the evaluation impartially could be considered as conflict of interest and should be reported as such by the EvC members or external reviewers.

Biodiversa+ Partners (the list is available here: <https://www.biodiversa.eu/about-us/Partners>) and funding organisations that are part of the CSC (the list is available here: www.biodiversa.eu/research-funding/open-call/participating-funding-organisations/) cannot be part of a research proposals submitted under Biodiversa+ calls (would their participations be in-kind or in-cash). Their participation to a proposal makes it non-eligible. It will be the responsibility of the funding organisations to check during the eligibility check that no one from their organisation is part of a consortium.

Rules for the prevention of conflict of interest

The independent observer, Evaluation Committee members and external reviewers have to sign online a conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-Disclosure declaration to confirm that they will comply with the principles stated herein.

For each proposal they have to evaluate, Evaluation Committee members and external reviewers will have to declare online, through the electronic evaluation Submission system (EPSS) that they do not have a conflict of interest with the concerned proposal.

If Evaluation Committee members and external reviewers are (or become) aware of a conflict of interest, they must immediately inform the Call Secretariat and stop working until further instructions. External reviewers and EvC members must work independently, in a personal capacity and not on behalf of any organisation and should not be used in case of a conflict of interest.

Evaluation Committee members and the independent observer must leave the room during the discussion of a proposal in case of a possible conflict of interest.

Applicants included in a pre-proposal or a full proposal submitted to this call (including all the team members) may not serve as Evaluation Committee members or external reviewers.

The independent observer, external reviewers and EvC members may not apply for a project in the call.

Confidentiality and non-disclosure policy

All submitted proposals, the correspondence forwarded to you, the reviews and the identity of the EvC members / external reviewers must be treated as strictly confidential. They must not be revealed to third parties.

Therefore, the responsibilities of an EvC member / external reviewer may only be undertaken personally and may not be delegated to third parties.

The scientific content of the proposal may not be exploited for personal or other scientific purposes.

An EvC member / external reviewer should not identify themselves to the applicant or any third party.

The obligations under this document shall not extend to confidential information which is required to be disclosed by national applicable law or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction or other regulatory body.

Code of conduct for the independent observers, Evaluation Committee (EvC) members and external reviewers

Performing the task (for Evaluation Committee members and external reviewers only)

1. You must work independently, in a personal capacity and not on behalf of any organisation.
2. You must:
 - Evaluate each proposal in a confidential and fair way,
 - Perform your work to the best of your abilities, professional skills, knowledge and applying the highest ethical and moral standards;
 - Follow the instructions and time-schedule given by the Call Secretariat
3. You may not delegate the work to another person or be replaced by another person
4. If a person or entity involved in a proposal approaches you before or during the evaluation, you must immediately inform the Call Secretariat.
5. You may not be (or become) involved in any of the actions resulting from the proposal(s) that you evaluated (at any stage of the procedure).

Impartiality and Conflicts of Interests (for all)

As a member of the Evaluation Committee, an external reviewer or an independent observer, you will be asked to contribute to the evaluation process.

You must perform your work impartially and take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the work is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

You might have a conflict of interest (see definition above) with one or more submitted proposals. Should any conflict arise during your term, or when asked to do a review, you must bring the matter to the attention of the Call Secretariat who will determine how the matter should be handled and will tell you what further steps, if any, to take.

No Use of “Insider” Information (for all)

Your designation gives you access to information not generally available to the public. You must not use that information for your personal benefit or make it available for the personal benefit of any other individual or organisation.

Confidentiality of Proposals and Applicants (for all)

Proposals are received with the expectation of protection of the confidentiality of their contents.

You must thus keep confidential all call related data, documents or other material (in any form) that are disclosed to you (whether in writing, orally, or any other form).

You must keep your work under this Call strictly confidential, and in particular:

- not disclose (directly or indirectly) any confidential information relating to proposals or applicants, without prior written approval by Call Secretariat
- not discuss proposal(s) with other persons that are not directly involved in the evaluation of the proposals
- not disclose:
 - details on the evaluation process or its outcome, without prior written approval by the Call Secretariat
 - details on your position/advice;
 - the names of other experts participating in the evaluation (both external reviewers and Evaluation Committee members).
- not communicate with applicants during the evaluation or afterwards.

Confidentiality of the Review Process and Reviewer Names (for all)

The names of external reviewers won't be made public.

The names of the Evaluation Committee members will be made public after the announcement of awards. Which EvC members assessed which proposals will however be kept confidential.

SIGNATURE

When signing in on the EPSS, you will be asked to confirm reading and accepting the *Code of conduct for conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure* and its terms.

[END OF CALL DOCUMENTS]