



European Mathematical Society

EMS Policy on Conflicts of Interest

Preamble

Mathematicians typically function in structures, such as universities, research institutes, or committees. Their duties derive from the missions of the institutions and from the nature of the responsibilities that they accept. The aim of these guidelines is to assist mathematicians to recognize possible and/or perceived conflicts of interest so that they can, in good faith, seek to disclose, manage, and resolve such situations.

There is *a priori* nothing wrong with pursuing personal interests, but a conflict of interest occurs when personal interests interfere with the independent judgment required from individuals in order to perform their duties and/or responsibilities.

Committee members have a responsibility to avoid situations that would constitute, or have the appearance of constituting, a conflict of interest. Therefore they must be held to a high standard of conduct, and discouraged from pursuing their own interests at the expense of institutions or the community.

Potential conflicts of interest of members of committees must first be considered in terms of any legal constraints and of the specified policies of the relevant institutions. In particular, EMS policies must be respected by members of EMS Committees. Nothing in this document should be construed as impinging on such existing constraints or upon the principle of academic freedom.

The guidelines proposed here apply to committees who are awarding EMS prizes, and to those who are selecting speakers at EMS Congresses and other EMS-organized scientific meetings. They can be extended, by analogy, to other EMS committees if the Executive Committee so decides.

Principles

In these guidelines the word *award* is used to mean both the award of a prize and the award of the distinction of being a speaker.

- Already the mere appearance of a conflict of interest may cast doubt on the integrity of the work of a Committee. Committee members should declare anything that, viewed from the outside, may appear as a potential conflict of interest.
- Committee members, and those who make nominations for an award, should be aware of the breadth of the class of people who are eligible for the award, and not, deliberately or inadvertently, be biased towards promoting or excluding candidates from a special subclass, such as, for example, those determined by gender, country of origin or employment, association with particular institutions, or areas of research (provided that that area is covered by the award).

Also, they should not be unduly influenced by the standing of the person making a nomination.

Policy

- Every committee member has the responsibility to declare potential conflicts of interest promptly. Occasions to do so have to be provided officially by committee chairs; all parties involved then have a joint responsibility for handling issues related to conflicts of interest.
- Conflicts of interest may occur at different levels. When declaring a potential conflict of interest, its level should be indicated.
- The different levels of conflicts of interest, along with corresponding actions to be taken, may be illustrated as follows:
 1. A committee member who has a (current or previous) personal relationship with a candidate should resign from the Committee as soon as this circumstance appears.
 2. A committee member should resign if a recent PhD student or post-doctoral mentee is short-listed as a candidate. The same rule applies whenever a committee member had an active role in the candidate's work that is under consideration.
 3. Whenever a committee member and a short-listed candidate have a close professional relationship, such as co-authorship, association with the same grant, one of them being a sometime student or supervisor of the other, or the existence of a (recent or predictable future) close institutional connection between them, the committee member should be excluded from discussions of the candidate's file and leave the room.
- The Chair should decide whether a connection is sufficiently close to create the appearance of conflict of interest and, as a consequence, should request that the committee member resigns, respectively takes no part in the discussion concerning the relevant person, or should state that in fact there is no conflict of interest. In case it is the Chair who declares a potential conflict of interest, the Vice-Chair should make the decision.

Role of the Ethics committee of EMS

The Ethics Committee of the EMS will consider submissions concerning alleged conflicts of interest that mathematicians have failed to disclose, but only in relation to the EMS committees operating under these guidelines, as described in the preamble. These submissions will be handled using the procedures specified in the EMS Code of Practice.