

Internal policy on conflicts of interest of the EMS Ethics Committee

Contrary to other ethical misconduct, such as plagiarism, an actual conflict of interest does not have to be objectively established to be considered a breach of scientific integrity. Already the failure to declare what may appear, viewed from the outside, as a potential conflict of interest constitutes unethical behaviour. Therefore, Ethics Committee members must avoid, not only the reality, but also the appearance of a conflict of interest. As a consequence, they must follow strict rules on this matter. The following guidelines shall be applied.

1. No current member of the Committee shall bring a case to the Committee; former members may present a case only if at least two years have passed since their term ended. An exception can be made, at the discretion of the Committee, if the case does not concern the former member personally, but is presented, for example, when acting in the capacity of journal editor.
2. A member of the Committee who is accused of unethical behaviour in a case that the Committee accepts to consider is expected to resign.
3. Whenever a case is brought to the Committee, all members should consider if they are in a position that could be seen as creating a potential conflict of interest. In that case, they should inform the Chair as soon as the circumstance appears.
4. In the realm of the Ethics Committee, members should declare a potential conflict of interest if, in relation to a person substantially involved in a case:
 - They have a current or previous personal relationship.
 - They are personal friends.
 - One is or has been an adviser, PhD student or post-doctoral mentee of the other.
 - They are co-authors of a mathematical work.
 - They are or have been associated with the same grant.
 - They work in the same institution, meaning the same Department, Laboratory, Unit or Faculty (but not a multi-site institution such as the French CNRS).
 - They have previously worked in the same institution and, at that time, had close professional contact.
5. A potential conflict of interest should also be declared if a Committee member is an editor of a journal against which a case is brought or in which an allegedly plagiarised work has been published.
6. Each member of the Committee will excuse himself or herself from the discussion of and any participation in the decision concerning any case submitted to the Committee where he or she has, or might appear to have, a conflict of interest. He or she will not receive any papers or information related to the relevant case. When it is the Chair who declares a potential conflict of interest, his or her role will be taken over by the Vice-Chair.
7. If the member in question has doubts on whether or not he or she should be excused from a case, the other Committee members will consider the situation and make a decision, always keeping in mind that even the appearance of conflict of interest should be avoided. If the Committee is split, the Chair (or the Vice-Chair if the conflict concerns the Chair) will have the decisive vote.