



DZHK Policy Conflict of Interest

Preamble

The DZHK is responsible for funds financed by tax payers. Membership in the DZHK is exclusive and it is obvious that the DZHK is under legitimate observation concerning Conflict of Interest (COI). We need to define rules, which protect our proceedings and participating decision makers and which ensure that assessments and decisions are taken independently and impartially.

We are aiming at a culture, in which decision makers actively consider whether they are bound by a potential COI, a culture which allows and encourages to declare COI and a culture in which decision makers – where appropriate – renounce to participate in discussion and voting.

We are aware that rules for COI are always delicate. They are even more delicate in a consortium like the DZHK where close collaboration and close personal connection are essential for the success of the DZHK. This means that we have to be extra cautious and that we have to find the right sense of proportion.

These rules shall apply to all assessments and decisions and to all committees of the DZHK. They shall also apply to the assessment of proposals by external experts. In each stage of the review process the DZHK e. V. examines whether or not a COI may exist. Since the main office is not able to examine all circumstances that could create a COI, the members of a committee should declare any potential COI.

Conflicts of Interest

A COI is given when a reason exists that is suitable to raise doubts about the impartiality of your specialist evaluation. In the following we quote the regulations from the ERC.

You have a COI if you:

- Have close family ties or personal relationship (spouse, domestic or non-domestic partner, child, sibling, parent, etc.) with the principal investigator of the proposal*;
- Were involved in the preparation of the proposal;
- Stand to benefit directly should the proposal be accepted or rejected;
- Have a significant mentor-mentee relationship with the principal investigator of the proposal in the past 10 years;
- Have a close family relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity in the proposal;
- Are a director, trustee or partner of the principal investigator legal entity of the proposal;
- Are employed, or were employed within the previous three years, by one of the principal investigator legal entities in the proposal or other legal entities involved in the proposals (e.g., as partners with allocated budget);
- Are in any other situation that would compromise your ability to evaluate the proposal impartially.



When this type of conflict exists, you must not influence the peer review evaluation of the proposal concerned. You should then neither assist in the individual assessment (usually remote), nor speak and vote in any panel discussion related to this proposal. In such a case you have to leave the room (or electronic forum) when the panel discusses the individual proposal.

If you believe that you have this type of relation, we request that you consult the responsible DZHK official.

Potential COI may exist in cases not covered by the situations indicated above, if you:

- Are already involved in a contract or research collaboration with the principal investigator's legal entity, or have been so in the previous three years - whereby the sole affiliation to or cooperations within the DZHK do not constitute a relevant conflict of interest by itself;
- Are in any other situation that could cast doubt on your ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear as lacking impartiality in the eyes of an external third party.

When such a type of conflict of interest exists the DZHK will consider the circumstances of the case and take a decision. It may be decided that you can take part in the peer review evaluation of the proposal concerned (you must then sign a declaration to that effect), or on the contrary, that you cannot participate in the evaluation of the concerned proposal.

Procedure and Regulations

The main office will point out the possible reasons for COI in every review process and before every decision on funding recommendations. Participants of review processes or funding recommendations are obliged to declare a COI if any of the above mentioned reasons exist. If a person is not sure whether a particular setting leads to a COI this person is obliged to disclose the situation. A representative of the main office and the chair of the meeting will decide on the matter.

Persons with a COI shall not participate in the presentation of the project, the discussion and in the voting.

If a ranking of several applications is required all participants eligible to vote can do so, regardless of the COI.

All relevant matters related to COI shall be part of the meeting minutes.

Confidentiality

The participants of a review process or a funding recommendation shall treat all impressions from the process and the meeting confidential. This includes positive and negative statements from other participants and assumptions on voting.

Presentations

Possible bias or COI as well as connections to industry shall be made public on one of the first slides of the presentation.