



**European Cooperation  
in the field of Scientific  
and Technical Research  
- COST -**

**Brussels, 3 June 2010**

**Secretariat**  
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**COST 4160/10**

**NOTE**

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To : COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)

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Subject : COST Code of Conduct<sup>1</sup>

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Delegations will find attached the "COST Code of Conduct" approved by the CSO at its meeting on 25 – 26 May 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> This document replaces the doc. COST 319/04.

## **COST Code of Conduct**

### **I**

COST is striving to foster scientifically honest and responsible exchange of knowledge in order to advance scientific and societal developments.

The present document concerns all players involved in the Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation of COST Actions belonging to the COST Community (e.g. CSO President, Vice-President, CSO member, COST National Coordinator, JAF member, DC member, DC Chair, DC Rapporteur, MC Chair, MC member) and to any member of the scientific community involved (e.g. external reviewers).

The Conflict of Interest issues are handled in accordance with the principles established in the "Guidelines for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions", document COST 4115/10, approved by the CSO at its 177th meeting on 23 - 24 March 2010.

COST expects from all participants ethical behaviour of researchers involved in COST activities at all levels. COST strives to avoid any kind of conflicts of interest in its framework. Standard good practice in science funding schemes requires that any individual with an interest in a proposal for funding should not take part in the respective approval process.

All participants in COST should follow good practice in terms of a code of conduct and should not plagiarise or copy or use material in any unauthorised manner and should respect the rights and confidentiality of their colleagues, including IPR.

To ensure the 'bottom-up' characteristics of an Action, the proposition and execution of an Action shall not be performed by any member of a body that has executive or advisory power over its assessment, management or evaluation (e.g. the function as COST National Coordinator (CNC), the membership of a Domain Committee (DC) and Chairmanship of an Action are mutually incompatible.)

It is mandatory that any potential conflict of interest be declared.

Any member of a DC who has a conflict of interest is not permitted to participate in the assessment, monitoring or evaluation of the Action concerned. The same principle applies to any other person who may be approached to assist with any COST quality control task. Any direct personal interest of COST committee members in Actions or other matters under discussion should be declared at the beginning of the meeting and minuted. Committee members having such direct personal interest should absent themselves during the discussion of such Actions and should refrain from voting.

In the case of the assessment of proposals for COST Actions, DC members and other assessors should not involve themselves in the assessment of proposals in which they have a personal or financial interest. This also applies in the case of proposals involving colleagues from the same institute or university department. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. the uniqueness of expertise), such a bar may be waived with the agreement of the other DC members involved, if the interest is declared and considered not to compromise the potential decision. These rules also apply for the monitoring of Actions, in particular in the context of Annual Progress Conferences (APC), and their final evaluations. The conflict of interest at the Action level and at the DC level are illustrated in Tables I and II respectively (Annex).

Evidence of contravention of these guidelines with respect to bias or interest may result in notification to the appropriate CNC and the possible removal of the member from the respective committee.

## II

The basic principle of this Code of Conduct is to rely on the trustworthiness and own sense of responsibility of the persons involved. Self-certification and open declaration of potential Conflicts of Interest is the first expected action. This means that a member of any COST activity reports in writing a possible Conflict of Interest to the Chair of that activity. The body in question will discuss the possible existence of a Conflict of Interest without the member in question being present, as well as the method of dealing with it. As a general rule, the member of any COST activity will be asked to abstain from making any decision related to the activity with which the Conflict of Interest exists.

Where a Conflict of Interest has not been declared at the appropriate moment, the body will set up from amongst its members an investigation board to examine:

1. The potential impact and consequences of the Conflict of Interest.
2. If required, possible ways to redress such consequences.
3. Whether the future functioning of the member of the body has been compromised and whether further actions in this respect are required.

If the situation would so require, the Conflict of Interest will be made known to the CSO, in order to ensure openness and fairness of the resolution process.

The President of the CSO has the right to assume the lead in any resolution process of a Conflict of Interest situation at any stage of the procedure.

**Table I**  
**Conflict of Interest at the DC Level**

	DC Chair	DC Member
CSO President/ Vice President	X	X
JAF Member	X	X
CSO Member (not CNC)		
CNC	X	X

**Table II**  
**Conflict of Interest at the Action Level**

	Action Assessor	Action Rapporteur	Action MC Chair	Action MC Member
CSO President/ Vice President	X	X	X	X
JAF Member	X	X	X	X
CSO Member	X	X	X	
DC Chair			X	X
DC Member			X	
Action Assessor			X	X
Action Rapporteur			X	X

*Table II refers to a single Action, not Actions in general. For example any MC chair can act as assessor for any proposal unless submitted by him/herself, but may not then join its MC; and a DC Member may join an Action as an MC Member (but not as MC Chair) if he/she has not been an assessor of the proposal for that particular Action.*