

European Society of Endocrinology Conflict of Interest Policy

The European Society of Endocrinology (ESE) is committed to transparency and upholding the highest standards of integrity in the organisation of its programmes and the credibility of its published documents. This Conflict of Interest (COI) policy is designed to guide ESE in recognising, disclosing, and managing potential conflicts of interest across a range of affiliations, relationships, and financial engagements.

As a member of the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe (Biomed Alliance), the European Society of Endocrinology adheres to the Biomed Alliance Code of Conduct, which can be found [here](#).

Review of COI disclosures to evaluate any issues will be undertaken by the ESE COI Review Group. Information about individuals submitted COI are available from the ESE Office, and the availability of this is mentioned on the ESE website [here](#).

1. Introduction

This policy applies to:

- ESE Executive Committee members
- ESE Committee members
- ECE Programme Organising Committee, including the Local Organising Committee Chair
- Focus Area Leads and Focus Area Expert Panels
- Chairs and members of ESE Special Interest and other working groups (e.g. Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals Working Group)
- Chairs and Working Group members responsible for Clinical Guidelines, consensus and position statements
- Chairs and Working Groups members responsible for research and educational programmes

This policy defines the requirement to disclose any relationships, activities, or interests that may reasonably appear to influence their responsibilities within ESE.

2. Definition of COIs

Conflicts of Interest may arise from any situation where an individual's personal, professional, or financial interests (or those of a close family member, e.g. spouse) could compromise—or appear to compromise—their objectivity in ESE matters.

Conflict of Interest within the last 3 years should be considered.

Common sources of conflict include, but are not limited to:

Financial Interests: Direct or indirect financial interests from or in any entity (e.g., payments, fees, grants, investments, shareholdings, royalties, license payments, employment, consultancy, start-up companies, research funding) that might benefit from influence over ESE decisions.

Services provided on data safety monitoring boards for industry-sponsored clinical trials, in principle should be regarded as no COI, except in the case of current or recent significant direct compensation.

Professional Affiliations: Positions held in other organisations (e.g., board memberships, advisory roles) that may have competing or overlapping interests with ESE.

Personal Relationships: Relationships with individuals or entities that may impact the individual's ability to act in the best interest of ESE.

Intellectual Property and Research: Ownership or significant involvement in intellectual property, research, or patents that might intersect with ESE's objectives or actions.

For Clinical Guidelines, consensus and position statements and research and educational programmes:

- Any income generated in association with a company that produces a drug or treatment, diagnostic test or medical device which is considered relevant to the Clinical Guideline, Consensus or Position Statement, research or educational programme.
- In principle, industry employees cannot participate in any ESE Clinical Guideline, Consensus, Position Statement, research or educational programme because of obvious COI relationship.
- Current or recent (within the past 3 years) participation on related R&D Advisory Boards or R&D related consultancy in the field of Endocrinology, as well as participation on commercial or marketing initiatives by the company/entity should be regarded as a potential COI.

3. Type of organisation with which the relationship exists

- The type of organisation must be considered: pharmaceutical and diagnostic/medical device-producing companies, or any entity with a business or commercial interests or profit-aimed should be considered as a potential COI relationship.
- Talks or activities for scientific societies, such as for ESE, Endocrine Society USA, or others, as well as for other commercially-free meetings/societies should not be regarded as COI. On the contrary, industry-paid talks or lectures should be considered as potential COI.
- Governance or leadership roles in directly competing professional societies with ESE may be regarded as potential COI, however roles as committee or task force member or chair, as well as membership of other societies without a leadership role should not be regarded as COI.
- Editor-in-Chief roles in a medical journal directly competing with ESE owned or part-owned journals should be considered as it might entail a COI; an exception to this could be journals of societies with which ESE produces a joint guideline, position statements or educational/research programmes. Roles as associate editor, member of the editorial board or peer-reviewer is acceptable and should not constitute COI.

4. Classification of financial COIs

- Relationships with commercial partners does not necessarily mean an individual is precluded from a role within the ESE, if the relationships are declared and considered not to be inappropriate by the Executive Committee and the ESE COI Review Group.
- Conflict of Interest within the last 3 years should be considered.
- Conflicts of interest will be categorised based on the potential impact on ESE decision-making.

Personal payments

The values discussed below relate to personal financial benefit or to a close family member, e.g. spouse, rather than payments made e.g. to an institution. These values will be reassessed every three years:

No conflict: Zero personal financial income from financial engagements which could be considered a conflict of interest.

Potential Minor Conflict: Potential minor conflicts are defined as financial, professional, or personal engagements with outside entities:

- For ESE Clinical Guidelines, consensus statements and position statements a minor conflict is defined as a cumulative value of below €10k per year or between €3k - €5k from any single company, or those unlikely to impact ESE's decision-making.
- For other engagements a minor conflict is defined as a cumulative value of below €10,000 annually, or those unlikely to impact ESE's decision-making.

Potential Major Conflict: Potential major conflicts include financial engagements with a cumulative value which exceeds any of the thresholds mentioned under 'Potential Minor Conflict' or intellectual property interests that directly intersect with ESE's activities and decision-making.

Institutional payments

- Payments directly to the institution and not directly to the person (for example, institutional payments for a clinical trial or monetary support for a research project), in principle, do not constitute COI if the value is below €100k annually.
- Exceptions to this may include: i) if there is a recent history of significant funding paid to the same research group/ institution by the same company, or significant salary support for the principal investigator and/or researchers ii) if the person is a public spokesperson for an industry-initiated/sponsored clinical trial.
- Payments to an individual's institution (e.g. as the Principal Investigator) with a value of €100k or higher annually should be declared.

Clinical Guidelines, consensus and position statements and research and educational programmes:

- COI will be assessed by the ESE Clinical Committee members who will consider several aspects such as the position taken by the individual in the Clinical Guideline, Consensus or Position Statement, research or educational programme, as well as the type, the duration and the amount of received funding.
- Chairs should be free of relevant COI; any declared COI will be considered in the final approval from the ESE Clinical Committee and the ESE Executive Committee.
- Working Group Members: Preferably all members should not have relevant COI, any declared COI will be considered in the final approval of the ESE Clinical Committee and the ESE Executive Committee.

The definitions above are not exhaustive, and if an individual perceives a conflict which does not fit within this categorisation this should also be declared.

5. Nature and time frame of the relationship/payments:

- In considering a potential COI relationship with a company/entity, it is important to consider the relationship duration: short-term (below 1 year) or long-term (above 1 year). Longer relationships, and particularly for consultancy or advisory functions, are at high risk for raising potential COI.

- Another key aspect to judge is the date/year of the last payment. If a certain payment has occurred more than 2 years ago, the COI relationship may be milder (or absent) and may be subject to a less strict assessment than payments occurring in the present or less than 1 year ago.

6. Type of ESE activity or initiative

- The establishment of relevant COIs for Clinical Guidelines, Consensus and Position Statements, regarding working group members may be stricter given that such guideline documents can heavily influence clinical practice worldwide. However, it is important to ensure that the other activities and programmes are also free of commercial bias (i.e. cannot be pharma-driven).
- In principle, there is no COI for members engaging in concomitant initiatives of the ESE and/or other societies, if the COI declarations are provided for each one of the initiatives, and do not conflict among themselves. For example, a member can be part of the working group for a Guideline and at the same time take part in an education programme (but an individual COI assessment for each activity must be submitted and assessed).

7. Requirements for Disclosure

All persons required to submit a conflict of interest must:

- Disclose any relevant affiliations, financial interests, or relationships that could create conflicts of interest, including specific financial details for transparency via the COI form provided by ESE.
- Promptly update their disclosures if new interests arise or an existing relationship reaches a higher level of conflict during the year.

8. Review and Management of Conflicts

Details about any type of payment, including the paying company and the purpose of payment (e.g. travel, hospitality, direct compensation, honoraria, stock options, royalties) must be provided. It should be indicated if the money is paid to the individual themselves or to their institution.

The exact amounts should be disclosed. However, they can be provided as ranges of values, where the maximum limits must be indicated, and if possible, range intervals should depict the approximate amounts received.

Potential Minor Conflicts: Potential minor conflicts generally require disclosure to ensure transparency but may not require the person to abstain from related discussions or decisions unless recommended by the ESE COI Review Group.

Potential Major Conflicts: Persons with potential major conflicts must abstain themselves from decision-making on matters directly related to their disclosed interests. The ESE COI Review Group may review each case to determine if additional mitigation is necessary.

Process

- All Declaration of COI forms and relevant information will be sent from the ESE Office who will collate and review the information. The ESE Office will pass the COI forms and relevant information to the relevant ExCo member, Committee Chair or another project leader as appropriate.
- Further information can be requested from the individual concerned if needed.

- The ExCo member, Committee Chair, Committee members or other project leader as appropriate will assess the declarations in the first instance. They will then notify the COI Review Group where there is an individual with either minor or major conflicts which they consider requires a COI Review Group assessment.
- The ExCo member, Committee Chair or other project leader will communicate the approval or disapproval of each individual to the ESE Office, following the COI Review Group assessment if relevant. The decision will then be communicated with each individual.
- At its absolute discretion, the COI Review Group may recommend that an individual is not able to participate in ESE activities due to a major conflict. This recommendation would be made to the ESE Executive Committee who would discuss to make a final decision.
- The ESE COI Review Group will meet as needed to review conflicts and will ensure a regular (at least annual) meeting to review the management of existing major conflicts.

9. Transparency and Reporting

- ESE will maintain a record of disclosed conflicts and make them publicly available on request to ensure transparency and maintain trust among members and stakeholders.
- For Clinical Guidelines, consensus and position statements, and for research and educational programmes, all details of relevant COIs will be included in any publication(s).

10. Recusals

- Individuals who have been approved for an activity but have conflicts that are directly relevant to specific sections of the item under discussion must recuse themselves from all formal decision-making processes related to those sections.
- It is the responsibility of the individual to recuse themselves, and the Chair of the activity to ensure recusals are carried out and documented.

11. Consequences of Non-Compliance

Non-compliance with this policy, including the failure to disclose relevant interests, may result in removal of the individual from the ESE activity in which they are active, as considered appropriate by the ESE COI Review Group.

12. Exceptions

In compelling circumstances, exceptions to the above-mentioned ESE COI Policy may be granted if formally approved by the relevant committee or the COI Review Group and ratified by the ESE Executive Committee. In such cases, the rationale for granting an exception will be recorded.