

Conflict of Interest and Transparency Policy

This document outlines how the Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastics Treaty (Scientists' Coalition) deals with transparency and conflicts of interest (Col) amongst its membership

The Scientists' Coalition is committed to safeguard its independence and the rigorousness and transparency of its operations from undue external influence. The Coalition is anchored to the principles of scientific evidence, concerted building of scientific consensus among peers and the precautionary principle. To guarantee fulfilment of these principles, the Coalition applies a robust set of measures and practices aimed at avoiding conflicts of interest, while reinforcing truthfulness, accountability, and credibility of its outputs and action.

Members of the Steering Committee and Expert Working Groups, as well as members presenting in external fora, are selected among the Coalitions associates according to their scientific competence and expertise, as well as balancing fields of expertise, regional representation and gender. During the candidate selection process, the Coalition Secretary scrutinizes the Applicants' Declaration of Interests (DoI) to ensure there are no conflicts of interest with the work to be undertaken.

Why is a transparency and Col policy needed?

As a coalition of scientists and technical experts, transparency on any interests held are crucial of the coalition to uphold its values and ensure the legitimacy of its membership, and to make clear the position the membership speaks from. The aim of this policy is to ensure that conflicts of interest are identified, disclosed, and managed in order to protect the legitimacy, integrity, trust, and credibility of both the Coalition and the individuals involved in its activities

How does the Scientists' Coalition define 'Conflict of Interest'?

'Conflict of interest' means any situation where an individual is either associated or involved in any way with an organisation that has a particular interest that may either 1) compromise or be reasonably perceived to compromise the individual's capacity to act independently and in the public interest when providing advice to public entities and that runs contra to the mission and guiding principles of the Scientists' Coalition, or 2) create an unfair advantage for any person or organization.

How does the Scientists' Coalition apply its transparency and Col policy?

The Scientists' Coalition requires all members to submit a declaration of interest, providing an overview of one's financial, professional and non-financial interest e.g. any affiliations, sources of funding, ownerships any affiliations, sources of funding, ownerships and financial interest held related to actors with an interest in issues surrounding plastics pollution. This may include funding from governmental, private sector, or non-governmental organisations, membership and affiliations in interest groups and ownership or stocks in companies, etc.

Besides unconditional restrictions applying to experts employed by or holding financial and business interest or receiving funding for research or any other activity by plastic business operators, having a specific interest may not necessarily constitute a Col. The Steering Committee of the Scientists' Coalition has the discretion to determine whether or not a member's stated interests may constitute a Col at odds with the mission of the Scientists' Coalition.

If the Steering Committee finds that there is a Col, they are at liberty to determine the remedial action. This may entail requiring the member(s) in question to declare Col in plenary meetings discussing relating issues, resolve the conflict, exclusion from specific working groups, to exclusion from the organisation and its work as a whole. A contact point within the Scientists' Coalition is established for stakeholders who is not allowed to be in the working groups to provide input.

If an expert is found to have omitted relevant information this will constitute a breach of the rules of procedure, which may lead to the exclusion of the concerned expert from the Steering Committee or the Expert Working Group. Failure to reveal interests may constitute a reason for exclusion from the organisation as a whole.

This policy is principles-based and does not provide an exhaustive list of criteria for the identification of such conflicts. It's subject to be updated when needs are identified to better protect the credibility of the Scientists' Coalition and the individuals involved in its activities.

Scientists' Coalition Register of Declarations of Interest

- On taking up their appointments, all working group and committee members must declare any private, professional, financial or commercial interests that could conflict with the Scientists' Coalitions' interests. These interests may be direct or indirect, monetary or non-monetary, which the public might reasonably think could influence the Steering Committee or committee members' judgement.
- The Scientists' Coalition will record the declarations of interest centrally and update them every year.
- Members should provide updated information as changes occur.
- The Scientists' Coalition will put the register on its website for public inspection at: ikhapp.org/scientists-transparency