

## **Information Note 22/2014 - *Corrigendum***

**Subject: Declaration of Interest Policy for Experts**

**Distribution: All Staff**

**Date: 22 October 2014**

This Information Note is intended to inform staff members of the introduction of a revised Declaration of Interest Policy for Experts to be implemented throughout WHO.

WHO's work on global health issues requires the assistance of external parties whose expertise may entail specific interests. To ensure the highest standards of integrity and public confidence, WHO requires that those external participants<sup>[1]</sup> serving in an advisory role disclose any circumstances that could give rise to a conflict of interest related to the subject of the activity in which they will be involved.

The revised Declaration of Interest (DOI) policy refines existing definitions, outlines responsibilities, clarifies guidance on how to assess conflicts of interests, and recommends specific courses of action. Previously managed by the Office of the Legal Counsel, the DOI policy is now under the auspices of the Office of Compliance, Risk Management and Ethics (CRE). CRE works with Technical Units in reviewing the completed DOIs and provides advice on potential conflicts of interest.

The following changes have been introduced in the revised DOI policy:

### **1. Intellectual Bias and Unfair or Competitive Advantage**

The revised policy now includes definitions of “Intellectual Bias” as well as “Unfair or competitive advantage”.

### **2. Note for the record**

The revised policy reinforces the requirement for a Note for the Record to be prepared by the Responsible Officer, following the review and assessment of the DOI forms. The Note for the Record should record the decisions made and the reasons behind such decisions and should be approved by the Director or Coordinator of the unit concerned.

### **3. Public notice and comment**

The revised policy seeks to strengthen public trust and transparency by introducing a Public Notice and Comment process. In connection with WHO meetings, technical units are required to:

- (i) publish on the WHO website the names and brief biographies of individuals considered for participation on WHO's advisory bodies together with a description of the objectives of the relevant meetings;

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<sup>[1]</sup> For the different categories of participants please consult the Policy.

- (ii) ensure that the public notice and comment process is open for no less than two weeks and well ahead of the first meeting planned.

Practical guidance in relation to this new process will be made available in due course by CRE.

#### **4. Threshold for financial interest**

Under the revised policy, the threshold for what is considered as a significant financial interest has been reduced from USD 10,000 to USD 5,000.

#### **5. Practical considerations to assess conflicts of interest**

The revision outlines practical considerations to manage information relating to individual experts before their selection. In particular, technical units need to:

- (i) seek to identify any obvious public controversies or interests that may lead to compromising situations, and ensure that they are adequately reflected in DOI forms;
- (ii) ensure that experts are aware that their participation in a WHO expert committee meeting or activity is in a personal and individual capacity notwithstanding their employment relationships with entities or organizations;
- (iii) communicate to experts the need to submit short biographies along with their completed DOIs.

#### **6. DOI Form update**

The DOI Form has been updated to include language relating to failure by an expert to be forthcoming in his/her disclosure.

#### **7. Guidance and code of conduct for experts**

The revised policy also provides **Guidance for the completion of the DOI Forms for Experts** to assist experts in completing the DOI Form. It also introduces a **Code of Conduct for Experts** outlining the responsibilities of individual experts to safeguard the integrity and credibility of WHO's work.

The revised DOI policy, DOI form and Annexes 1, A, B, C are effective immediately and are available on the Office of the CRE Ethics intranet site at:

<http://intranet.who.int/homes/cre/ethics/doiexperts/>. The revised DOI Policy supersedes the previous policy and respective forms.

Technical Units are requested to familiarize themselves with the revised DOI policy. Information sessions regarding the updated DOI policy will be conducted throughout WHO in the near future.

For any information regarding the revised DOI policy please contact the Office of CRE at [ethicsoffice@who.int](mailto:ethicsoffice@who.int).

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