



ESF INTERNAL CODE OF CONDUCT

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CODE OF CONDUCT OF THE EUROPEAN SCIENCE FOUNDATION

This ESF Code of Conduct formally sets out the principles and ethics according to which the organisation functions. As such, it establishes clear principles on how all ESF employees, whether permanent or temporary, internal or external, as well as partners and other relevant stakeholders can expect to be treated, and what is in turn expected of them.

The Code of Conduct presents ESF's ways of working based on inclusive participation of its staff, anticipation and reflection on ESF needs, and proactive response to the changes of its dynamic environment.

The Code of Conduct reflects the commitment of the ESF to demonstrate workplace ethical standards beyond those of legal compliance and serves as a framework for day-to-day operations, decision-making and communication in the organisation. All employees of the ESF are expected to sign on to these principles and to apply them in their daily work. In addition, and with connection to the Grant Evaluation stream of activities conducted by the ESF, a specific appendix to the Code of Conduct will be integrated for the purpose of the Research Associates working for the ESF on a contractual basis.

The ESF Code of Conduct is divided in **four** main sections – **1. Principles; 2. Team; 3. Respect of assets and the environment; 4. Information security** – covering issues falling under legal, ethical, HR, Human Rights, and corporate responsibility areas.

I. Principles

The aims of ESF consist of initiating, supporting, developing, and implementing all actions striving, at the European and international levels, to:

- serve and strengthen all disciplines of science,
- foster cooperation between the various research stakeholders,
- support and assist the conduct of scientific research.

By mobilising highly skilled and experienced staff and deploying proven procedures, ESF strives to deliver the best outcome for its partners and members.

ESF's actions are politically and religiously neutral and are guided by scientific excellence, openness, responsiveness and ethical awareness. To reach its aims, ESF relies on its corporate values:

- Integrity
- Transparency
- Partnership

The *integrity* of ESF's approach and the *transparency* and excellence of its processes allow it to cultivate long-term *partnerships*.

Integrity

Maintaining the trust of its partners is fundamental to the achievement of ESF's mission, and accordingly ESF is committed to upholding integrity in its approach.

All policies, processes and procedures are designed and conducted to avoid negligence, haste, carelessness and inattention, and at all levels of the organisation, ESF has a responsibility to ensure that a culture of research integrity prevails. This entails training and mentoring of collaborators, robust management methods and vigilant implementation of the organisation's processes and guidelines.

ESF staff approach their work with a sense of responsibility and trustworthiness. They take responsibility for their own actions and are careful not to accept misconduct on the part of their associates, internal or external. ESF staff are expected to report in a timely manner all cases of misconduct they may become aware of. Misconduct throws discredit on an organisation and leads to lack of trust on the part of all partners and will be sanctioned by the ESF according to the disciplinary procedures laid down in the Internal Regulations¹.

For ESF, dealing promptly and appropriately with cases of scientific misconduct - fabrication, falsification, plagiarism - is particularly important.

Investigations will be:

- Fair
- Without undue delay
- Based on evidence
- Confidential when appropriate

¹ Internal regulations will be available in January 2022

And responses will be:

- Appropriate to the severity of the breach
- Dependent on whether the breach was intentional, accidental or reckless.

In cases of honest errors remedies to improve will be taken, and for differences of opinion amiable resolutions will be sought out.

Transparency

Clarity on actions and ways of working is key to efforts to create trust and to demonstrate that ESF is a reliable and trustworthy organisation. This means providing access to accurate and specific information about procedures and decision-making process, income, members and partners, and the management of potential biases and conflicts of interest.

Conflict of Interest

In all its dealings, ESF must apply principles of objectivity and impartiality. A conflict of interest arises when an individual's interests (personal, financial or professional) interfere with the interests of the organisation. This may be in any field of activity, and may not always be clear-cut, but it is the duty of every manager and staff member not to deviate from the principles of the organisation.

Definition

A Conflict of Interest: a situation in which someone's private interests are opposed to that person's responsibilities to other people.

Conflicts of interest are divided into three types:

- **Actual:** a direct conflict between duties and responsibilities and a competing interest or obligation.
- **Perceived:** exists when it could be reasonably perceived, or the impression could rise, of a competing interest improperly influencing the performance of duties and responsibilities.
- **Potential:** arises where an interest or obligation could in the future conflict with duties and responsibilities.

Staff must see whether their private and personal interests conflict or have the potential to conflict with their official duties. This practice will also help them identify conflicts of interest generally, which is fundamental to ESF's goal of excellence. In no case, staff members should compromise the interest of the organisation for personal benefits. All bribes, favours, attempts to wield influence are forbidden and must be reported.

ESF staff are expected to report in a timely manner all cases of Conflict of Interest they may become aware of when arising in any of the ESF activities.

All conflicts of interest (actual, potential and apparent) should be immediately reported to management. Many of these will have no impact at all when reported in a timely fashion, whereas even the slightest undeclared conflict of interest can have serious consequences for the reputation of both its beneficiary and the organisation. In cases of undeclared conflicts of interest, the staff member concerned risks incurring disciplinary measures.

For more info:

- Internal Regulations on disciplinary procedures

Partnership

The aim of ESF to become the premier partner for independent science support activities in Europe relies on its network and ability to offer its partners the highest standard in scientific processes. ESF serves its members, partners, research stakeholders and the broader science community by reliably:

- enabling them to access its portfolio of competencies and tools.
- enhancing the development of sound, responsible and responsive scientific processes.

As a privately held, non-profit organisation financed by funds dedicated to research and scientific advancement, the ESF has a duty to ensure that such funds are spent efficiently and without waste, according to determined budgets.

All employees are directly accountable for their part in the management of budgets or in the use and spending of funds; should they have any doubt as to the legitimacy of any payment they should contact their manager and relevant members of Administration and Finance for clarification.

All employees are also expected to have a responsible approach when using and/or committing ESF's partners' funds. These should be mobilised to the best interest of the partner, following the tasks and objectives delegated to ESF, in compliance with ESF financial rules.

For more info:

- Internal Regulations
- Travel Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Internal payment rules

II. Team

Equal Opportunities & Non-Discrimination

The ESF aims to provide an attractive and conducive environment, based on principles of equal opportunities, respect and non-discrimination. It does so with the intrinsic conviction that these are fundamental not only to the promotion of equal Human Rights but also to the fostering of excellence in science, and that these are in the best interest of the ESF's own development strategy.

The ESF gives high value to **diversity** in its team, as key to its expertise of the promotion of science in Europe. It encourages the involvement of people from all backgrounds in recruitment opportunities and valorises the diversity and richness of skills and expertise (i.e. thematic areas, languages spoken) brought by the team to the institution in its external and internal communication. Diversity is also sought in the involvement of external stakeholders in all ESF activities and endeavours, and explicitly advertised.

The ESF is committed to the principle of **equal opportunities**, based on individual skills and talents, and with awareness of potential biases based on any possible grounds. It values the need of its team members for recognition and professional development opportunities, as well as for equal treatment in these areas.

Non-discrimination

As part of its equal opportunities policy, the ESF is committed to averting all forms of discrimination, whether intentional or unconscious, direct or indirect on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnic, national, cultural or social origin, skin colour, physical appearance, religion or beliefs, marital or parental status, mental or physical disability, political opinion, social or economic situation, health status, among others.

Discrimination is defined as any unequal or unfair treatment against a person or a group, based on any or a combination of the categories listed above. Two types of discrimination are identified:

- *Direct Discrimination* occurs when a person or group is treated less favourably than others.
- *Indirect Discrimination* occurs when a measure which does not seem discriminatory in itself effectively disadvantages a certain group. Indirect discrimination is thus the discriminatory result of a measure that was not necessarily applied with a direct intention to discriminate and that cannot be objectively justified by the employer. (For example, a higher standard of language than that actually needed to do the job discriminates on the grounds of nationality/race; a training policy which excludes part-time staff may discriminate against women, who fill the majority of part-time positions.)

The ESF firmly defends the stance that the prohibition of discrimination is paramount to protecting the dignity of the person. Every employee is expected to comply with these principles. Non-compliance with these rules will be considered as misconduct and sanctioned according to the Internal Regulations.

All job announcements are open to all candidates indiscriminately:

“The ESF will not discriminate, nor allow its staff to discriminate, against any member of staff or applicant for employment or ex-employee on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnic, national, cultural or social origin, skin colour, physical appearance, religion or beliefs, marital or parental status, mental or physical disability, political opinion, social or economic situation, or health status.”

Gender Equality promotion

The ESF, through its Gender Equality Plan (2022-2025), is committed to continuing and further developing all necessary actions to ensure gender equality and gender mainstreaming within its internal and external activities, and in all aspects of human resources management.

The ESF is committed to upholding a transparent, open and equitable system of recruitment and career development. It abides by principles of fairness and equity.

Recruitment:

Selection criteria in recruitment are based strictly on competencies, professional experience and qualifications, and are identical for all genders alike. Job offers, for whatever position, are open to all genders, and the terminology used in the text is carefully chosen so as not be discriminatory. HR personnel participate in trainings on tackling gender biases and non-discrimination in recruitment.

Equal pay:

The ESF's remuneration principles are based on salary equality between all genders. Starting salaries for jobs at the same level are identical for all genders with the same qualifications and/or experience, and increases are based only on competency, professional experience, qualification and performance. A comparative analysis of the staff salaries according to professional category is carried out regularly to check that gender gaps do not appear over time.

Approach and inclusivity of disability status

The ESF embraces a forward-thinking approach to all forms of disability, understanding that disability is caused by the way society is organised and not by a person's impairment. In its internal processes, it promotes the inclusion of people with special needs in society via their access to paid employment, through the contracting of their services or the services of dedicated associations for ESF ad hoc or recurring activities.

Should a member of the staff enter a situation of temporary, progressive and/or permanent disability, the ESF commits to making all technical and organisational adjustments possible (i.e. provision of special equipment, adapted working hours) in order to maintain his/her services, in a way that guarantees individual dignity and quality of work environment. The ESF aims to improve its facilities to make it accessible to all persons with physical disabilities.

Work-life balance

A good work-life balance is a priority at the ESF, which acknowledges its importance in contributing to a healthy individual lifestyle with direct impacts on the existence of a positive, efficient and collaborative working environment.

Flexible working arrangements

In the spirit of a good and flexible work-life balance and in order to promote and maintain the employment status of all staff members independently of their individual situation, the ESF has put in place a [Teleworking Policy](#).

Staff members in difficult family circumstances - such as situations when staff members are main caregivers for a family member/third person - necessitating a reduction in, or adaptation of, their working hours are given special consideration.

Temporary and extended leave arrangements (with or without payment) can be envisaged under particular circumstances. ESF helps its employees on temporary/extended leave to stay connected to encourage re-entry. Measures to facilitate re-entry also apply to staff members taking a parental leave or having to take a medical leave.

Part-time working arrangements are considered with a defined but renewable period following return from parental leave. Such arrangements are considered in a manner indiscriminate to the gender of the parent requesting them.

Parenthood-friendly working environment

The ESF seeks to encourage equality in parenthood. It does so as a way to promote individual rights as well as promoting a gender equal approach to parenthood.

The ESF abides by the French labour law which stipulates that, when taking parental leave, employees are guaranteed the right to return to the same job position.

A quiet and sanitary room including all necessary equipment (i.e. comfortable couch, toilet, fridge) is made available for employees choosing to breast-feed.

To promote a parenthood-friendly atmosphere and a healthy work-life balance, ESF encourages its employees to schedule meetings before 5PM., and always have fixed start and end times.

Positive actions towards a healthy work environment

A good work-life balance promotes physically and emotionally well-balanced employees with a positive attitude towards their work, while also avoiding excessive stress, which can result in medical issues. At any moment, employees suffering from stress can discuss with their line managers, with HR or with the Staff representatives (from CSE, *Comité Social et Économique*), ESF is committed to creating a space of safe communications where employees feel free to discuss their workload.

ESF gives particular attention to its employees' workload in way of avoiding excessive stress and/or demotivation. It is the responsibility of managers to not only motivate employees to do their work professionally and conscientiously, but also to keep an eye on their wellbeing, and to avoid their having to regularly work beyond their normal working hours.

ESF HR department follows-up closely in case of absenteeism and turnover of staff, to understand their cause as they may be indicators of highly stressful or unhealthy work environment.

Harassment, including Sexual Harassment

The ESF does not tolerate harassment, in any form or expression (based on gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, physical appearance, ethnicity, race, national origin, political affiliation, age, religion or any other reason) that it may be and acknowledges the strong and long-lasting impacts that it may have on individuals' well-being and productivity.

Harassment is defined as: [...] *Any improper or unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person.* ²

The following behaviours are some examples of harassment at the workplace:

- offensive or intimidating comments or jokes;
- isolating or making fun of a co-worker;
- inappropriate staring;
- bullying or aggressive comments;
- making remarks on the appearance of a colleague;
- unwelcome solicitations or advances;
- circulating offensive pictures or materials.

The ESF takes a strong stance against sexual harassment, acknowledging that this form of harassment predominantly affects women and is deeply rooted in historically unequal gender relations, with strong impact on staff members' individual well-being and the institutional culture. The ESF communicates and applies a Zero-Tolerance Policy towards sexual harassment. The Harassment Policy provides information on what constitutes sexual harassment, existing complaints mechanisms and relevant contact points at the ESF.

The ESF abides by the French Labour Law which protects an employee experiencing harassment from any form of sanctions, dismissal, or suffering discriminatory measures such as concerning salary, training, change of category, posting, qualification, promotion, transfer or renewal of contract as a result of (or refusing to be the subject of) repeated incidents of harassment, or of witnessing or reporting such harassment.

The ESF is committed to taking all necessary measures to prevent, address and sanction all forms of harassment. It engages in regular actions of awareness raising among staff on this and related issues; it keeps information on harassment and internal procedures updated and accessible to all. All perpetrators, irrespective of their position (i.e. employees, members of the management) or affiliation (i.e. ESF staff, collaborators) with the ESF will be held accountable and incur relevant disciplinary proceedings.

Complaints process for harassment/bullying

Internal complaint process

A CSE Harassment Representative has been appointed to detect, prevent and address any case of harassment at ESF. To report a case of harassment, employees can contact the CSE Harassment Representative or the HR department. The HR will launch a procedure of enquiry with the purpose to: build a clear and holistic understanding of the case at hand; document and collect evidence relevant for the procedure (i.e. individual interviews, examination of documents, e-mails, etc.); identify adequate measures of support for the victim; and identify adequate accountability measures for the perpetrator/s.

All enquiry procedures are conducted keeping the rights and well-being of the victim at its centre.

Conflict Resolution and Complaints/Appeal

The ESF's commitment is to provide a calm, comfortable and professional environment in which all staff members may use their skills and creativity to the maximum. Conflict is a normal ingredient in

² UN Code of Conduct to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, at UN System Events
<https://www.un.org/management/sites/www.un.org.management/files/un-system-model-code-conduct.pdf>

human relations and should not always be considered as negative: it can be healthy, potentially nurturing original ideas and creativity. However, it should always be promptly addressed so that it does not become negative or toxic, affecting not only those involved directly but those around them. Conflicts that are not promptly addressed may quickly escalate and lead to dissatisfaction, stress and absenteeism. It is therefore responsibility of a manager to resolve any conflict within the shortest delay and, when necessary, liaising with the Human Resources department.

In the first instance, the manager will serve as mediator and arrange an informal meeting with both parties so that they may freely discuss the problem. Usually, this will suffice to settle the disagreement. Only if it persists the formal conflict resolution procedure will be applied.

Should a member of staff wish to make a formal complaint about his/her treatment by management, the first step will be to discuss this with his/her manager and/or the HR department. Should the problem not be settled in this meeting, it will be taken to the HR department which will intervene and if necessary, take the matter to appeal to the Chief Executive Officer.

All arrangements are made so that a person involved in a conflict does not directly participate to the resolution of this conflict.

III. Respect of assets and the environment

Respect of tangible and intangible assets

ESF staff members are responsible for the care of the company's assets in their charge and under their control. These assets refer to tangible property such as buildings, furniture, computers, telephones and mobile phones, equipment and office supplies provided, as well as software, files and funds. Assets also involve intangible property such as intellectual property, know-how and any sensitive data handled by ESF.

Records of these assets are kept by the ESF, and staff may be required to answer for those in their care. Regular audits are carried out for receipt and expenditure of funds.

The ESF's assets, tangible or intangible, must not be used for any unauthorised or non-business purpose or for personal gain.

Positive attitude towards the environment

Respect for the environment is a major priority at ESF. The ESF understands its corporate responsibility in limiting its impact on the environment, in connection to its activities. It aims to regularly monitor its ecological impact and encourages all staff to take action at individual and collective level.

The commitment of all employees is key to ensuring ESF's commitment to reduced environmental impact and sustainable development. ESF efforts consist in:

- Internal awareness-raising activities (i.e. *Au Boulot à Vélo*);
- Conscious efforts to limit energy and water consumption;
- Individual and collective recycling;
- Responsible approach to parcel shipping/ordering;
- Responsible approach to event organisation (i.e. use of local, environment-friendly suppliers, no use of plastic bottles and cutlery, reasonable catering orders to avoid food waste)
- Eco-conscious choice of transportation when attending ESF events (i.e. whenever possible, favouring train over plane travel)

IV. Information security

As maintaining the trust of its partners is fundamental to the achievement of its mission, the ESF puts a high value on information and knowledge management. It handles information confidentially, protects it securely, and discloses it responsibly.

ESF approach has two equally important aspects:

- Confidentiality
- Data protection

While there are overlaps between these two, it is important to be aware where they do not overlap.

Confidentiality applies to all forms of information, written and oral – it does not matter whether it was recorded or not.

Data protection applies to information which is recorded – whether in electronic or manual format.

Confidentiality

Confidential information is:

- 1) information **identified as confidential** – the clear-cut case
- 2) information **that should be treated as confidential** - the trickier case: ask for guidance.

There are very few scenarios where disclosing information is legally or otherwise required, so volunteering information is not something that you should feel compelled to do.

Keeping information confidential involves basic do's and don'ts:

- **Do not**
 - o disclose information,
 - o permit the disclosure of information
 - o make information available to the public or accessible
 - o make any other use of the information than it is meant for
- **Do** any of the above only with prior written consent to do so.

However, not all information is confidential even if identified as such.

- information known to you already prior to the declaration
- information already in the public domain, or legally released there
- information that becomes known to you through legal disclosure by other sources
- Information proven to have been developed independently

Trust

ESF commitment to confidentiality applies equally to information about ESF, its staff, partners and stakeholders. Respecting the confidentiality of all information entrusted to the ESF is fundamental, as any inappropriate use or disclosure of information can expose the institution to liability, damage its reputation and cause serious harm.

Confidentiality does not mean that nothing can be discussed. The guiding principle is whether people have a right to know, and what they need to know. Some specific examples include:

- Personal medical issues: HR may have a right to know, but not other colleagues
- Serious violation admitted to you in confidence: not covered by confidentiality, your manager needs to know
- Trying to find reviewers: talking about particularly difficult cases does not constitute a breach of confidentiality. However, such cases are to be discussed only in general terms and in no case shall names or revealing details be mentioned. Act responsibly.

Responsibility

Even in cases where you divulge information in the public domain, your responsibility does not end. All information emailed, chatted, posted on the internet can affect the persons mentioned, their image and reputation. Once disclosed, emailed or posted, information can no longer be called back.

Due diligence, care, and consideration about possible effects must be made, and it is expected that ESF staff communications are at all times accurate, verifiable, and professional. Act responsibly when disclosing information, statements or opinions. Do not comment or discuss content about ESF activities posted by third parties or the general public.

When you need to address confidential topics, pay due attention to your external environment. Unsecured wi-fi networks must be avoided, and trains, planes, waiting rooms, restaurants, conferences, etc., should be used with great caution.

Trustworthiness and commitment are expected both from ESF to its employees and from the staff to the organisation.

Data protection

The ESF provides the necessary tools for safe, secure and user-friendly electronic communication systems so that staff may work confidently in the knowledge that their files are constantly protected and backed up in the cloud. Fast and effective anti-virus, anti-spam scans and intrusion protection stop malware and protect data; back-up and replication of data is fast; transfer of sensitive data off the network is monitored, and malicious and inappropriate websites are blocked.

Rules on data security and general security, how to disclose, reproduce, retain and destroy data, documents and any other stored information are set out in the IT security charter.

The ESF trusts its staff to use these systems sensibly and in a proper manner, aware that their actions reflect on the ESF as well as on themselves. The systems have been put in place to guarantee a safe and confidential business environment for all ESF staff. Always report to your manager and/or IT any situation that suggests the protection or confidentiality of information may have been compromised (phishing emails or other unusual requests for information, any indications of potential tampering with security measures, broken locks, etc).

GDPR

In addition to general data security, dealing with personal data involves specific requirements laid out in General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and supplementary French national legislation.

Following the IT charter will help, however it is recommended to keep GDPR's six principles in mind when facing with personally identifiable data.

1. Lawfulness, fairness and transparency

Do not collect personal data without a legal basis: check the privacy policy for the available categories. Think what you would answer if the person asked why you are collecting the data. Using clear and plain language is always a good idea - with GDPR, it is a legal requirement.

2. Purpose limitation

Only collect personal data for a specific purpose that can be clearly stated. Keep data only for as long as necessary for the purpose.

3. Data minimisation

Collect only the data that is actually needed for the purpose, nothing extra. If there's a breach – unintentional disclosure or theft – this limits the amount of data that is lost.

4. Accuracy

Minimising the amount of data collected makes it easier to keep it accurate and up-to-date. Inaccurate or incomplete data is generally useless and must be either rectified or erased.

5. Storage limitation

Delete personal data when it is no longer necessary to store it. This time period will vary depending on the purpose; therefore, it is important to be aware of what the purpose is.

6. Integrity and confidentiality

The security principle: the technical and organisational measures are part of the IT charter. Encryption, pseudonymisation and anonymisation are part of these measures, but best suitable practices evolve. Sometimes non-collection of personal data is the best option.

For more info:

- IT Charter

ANNEX 1

Harassment policy

Teleworking policy

GEP Dec 21/ Jan 22

IT Charter Dec 21/Jan 22

Staff manual (Onboarding Manual)/ Jan 2022

Internal Regulations (legal) / Jan 2022