

**European Forest Institute**

**Staff code of conduct**

**Adopted by the Board**

**1 October 2012**

**Amended by the Board**

**13 September 2021, to come into force 15 September 2021**

## **1. General**

This Staff Code of Conduct gives instructions and guidelines for staff members of the European Forest Institute (hereinafter “EFI” or “the Institute”) regarding conduct in relation to ethical matters.

Explanation on who is a staff member can be found in the Staff regulations.

## **2. Standard of conduct**

Staff members shall observe the highest standard of integrity, and must refrain from any action which might reflect negatively on EFI.

Staff members shall in performance of their duties only take into account considerations relevant to the Institute's purpose, functions and operations.

Staff members must not allow personal relationships and considerations to influence the performance of their duties.

Staff members always have to show integrity and professionalism and exercise good judgement when performing their duties.

Actions contrary to this code of conduct may be considered misconduct on behalf of the staff member and may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with the Staff regulations.

If a staff member is unsure about how to act in a certain situation and cannot find the answer in this Staff Code of Conduct he/she must consult his/her supervisor. The supervisor will consult with EFI Legal Counsel as required. Staff members must comply with guidance and decisions issued by the Institute.

The Staff Code of Conduct is to be followed whenever official duties at EFI are carried out, no matter where, when, or how this is done.

## **3. Compliance**

Staff members have a responsibility to be aware of, and comply with, all EFI rules, regulations, policies and instructions. Through compliance it can be ensured that risks are identified and avoided or mitigated.

## **4. Confidentiality**

All information at EFI is valuable to the Institute and must be handled with caution. Information can for example be documents, emails, archives, or internal communication, and may also be of other types, both written and verbal.

Certain information staff members come across at work that is not in the public domain may in addition to this be confidential.

All staff members have an obligation to be aware of any specific non-disclosure arrangements that may apply to their work. Such arrangements may for example be agreed in funding agreements, consortium agreements, or other forms of collaborations agreements.

Staff members must also in the absence of any specific non-disclosure arrangement treat as confidential all information where unauthorised disclosure of the information may cause harm to EFI's interests.

It may be that a staff member have to apply certain measures in relation to information labelled confidential by other parties (including other staff members), or indicate certain information as confidential when disclosed externally or internally. Information must in any case never be handled with less than reasonable care.

A proper assessment must be made in each case whether information can be disclosed or not, or how it otherwise should be handled.

EFI's archives are inviolable according to its host country agreements. The term *archives* is a broad concept that is not limited to historical records but covers the entire collection of written information at the Institute. It is important that it always is assessed if EFI is under an obligation to disclose certain requested information.

The obligation of confidentiality according to this article continues also after termination of the staff member's contract with EFI.

## **5. Anti-corruption**

Staff members may not engage in *sanctionable practices* prohibited under the *EFI anti-corruption policy*. Any action by a staff member contrary to the *EFI anti-corruption policy* will result in disciplinary measures, which may range from an oral or written warning to termination of employment. Other measures may include financial recovery of losses to the Institute and referral to national authorities, when appropriate.

## **6. Conflict of interests**

Being subject to a conflict of interests means having a personal interest, which influences or may influence the objective and independent performance of that person's duties, or may reasonably be perceived as such.

Such situations may arise both internally at EFI and in relation to third parties.

Staff members must avoid situations which constitute or might lead to a conflict of interests.

Should an actual or possible conflict of interest arise, such conflict shall in the first instance be disclosed by the staff member to the staff member's supervisor. Disclosure must take place without undue delay.

If the matter cannot be resolved by the staff member's supervisor, the matter must be referred to the Director for decision.

## **7. Activities outside EFI**

Staff members shall not perform any work or otherwise engage in any activity or prepare for such work or activity that, taking the nature of the work or activity and the staff member's position into account, would be counter to the staff member's obligations towards EFI.

This also applies to work done or activities engaged in before taking up duties at EFI. This means that the staff member might have to stop with such work and/or activities when taking up duties at EFI.

Staff members do not require prior acceptance of activities by EFI, but EFI may prohibit activities should the need arise. If prohibited, the staff member must immediately stop engaging in/exercising the activity.

As an exception to the preceding, to hold public office a staff member must request leave of absence without pay, which will be granted by EFI for the time of the public office, however not longer than the length of staff member's contract.

## **8. External events**

### Business trip

When on a business trip staff members are the whole time representing EFI, also outside official business hours.

Staff members should familiarise themselves with the particular customs and practices of the countries in which they operate. What may be acceptable where living and working may not be appropriate in another location.

### External financial support to attend events

Staff members must seek and get approval from Head of Unit to accept and receive external financial support to attend activities organised by third parties.

Head of Unit must seek and get approval from Director to accept and receive external financial support to attend activities organised by third parties.

## **9. Gifts**

Staff members should exercise caution in accepting or giving any gifts or gratuities.

Any gift or gratuity that exceeds common business hospitality taking into consideration local cost and value levels is not to be received or given. In this respect any honours, decorations, favours, payments, and other benefits or advantages are considered as gifts and gratuity.

It is acknowledged that it sometimes is impossible to politely refuse an expensive gift or gratuity. If not possible to refuse a gift, the staff member must accept the gift on behalf of EFI and

immediately inform the supervisor and Legal Counsel as well as hand over the gift to the Secretariat after it will become the property of the Institute.

#### **10. Public relations**

To ensure consistent and professional messages from the Institute, public statements and contacts with the media must always be coordinated with the Communications unit.

#### **11. Use of resources**

The property and assets of EFI are to be used only when carrying out the official duties at EFI and not for personal benefit or for other activities without authorization.

All use shall be in accordance with the EFI rules and regulations.

All property of EFI must be returned to EFI at the end of the contract. Unless otherwise agreed this will be done at staff member's expense.

#### **12. Behaviour towards other staff members and members of other organs**

All staff members shall deal with each other, and with representatives and delegations of the organs of the Institute, in a fair and equal manner.

EFI strives to provide a good working environment in which dialogue, interaction, caring for and helping one another, and positive social relations are actively encouraged. Through dialogue a common understanding can be achieved – this involves finding a balance between listening and expressing oneself. Openness is the cornerstone of social relations and positive interaction strengthens coherence at the Institute.

Further information and instructions can be found in the *EFI equal opportunities and respect at work policy*.

#### **13. Whistleblowing**

Staff members must cooperate with any investigation initiated under the EFI Whistleblowing policy.

#### **14. Amendments**

The Board decides on changes to this Staff Code of Conduct after consulting the Staff Committee.