



EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

12 September 2013
EMA/552322/2103
Press Office

Press release

Agency hears views from stakeholders on its conflicts of interests policy for scientific experts

'Highest quality scientific assessment requires the best scientific experts and protection of the assessment process from undue financial or other interests. We need a robust system to get the balance right between managing conflicts of interests and access to the best expertise to deliver high-quality scientific assessment. This must be underlined by utmost transparency to allow public scrutiny,' said Guido Rasi, Executive Director at the European Medicines Agency at the Agency's [best expertise vs conflicts of interests: striking the right balance](#) workshop which took place on Friday, 6 September.

The workshop brought together a broad spectrum of stakeholders, in order to seek their views on the Agency's conflicts of interests policy for scientific committee members and experts, this included a [panel of speakers](#) from academia, the pharmaceutical industry, scientific committees, patient groups, non-governmental organisations and the media. Representatives from national competent authorities, European Union institutions and other agencies also participated in the workshop.

Over the last few years, the EMA has taken several initiatives to further enhance the robustness of its policy and to increase transparency. The main challenge in operating the strengthened procedures has been to achieve the right balance between ensuring the impartiality and independence of experts involved in the Agency's work, versus the need to secure the best possible scientific expertise. A key aim of the workshop was to gauge how the Agency can maintain a pool of high-quality scientific experts while ensuring that these experts are free from undue financial or other interests.

"We have listened to our stakeholders today and will consider the feedback over the next two months as we review our policy," said Noël Wathion, Head of Patient Health Protection. "We have certainly no intention of lowering our standards on conflicts of interests, however we are open to further improving our approach."

Views raised by workshop participants included:

- Better recognition of experts: how can the Agency make it more attractive for experts to participate in its work;
- Defining a methodology for identifying the best expertise within the European Union;
- Moving away from blanket timeframes, e.g., within the past two years, within the past two to five years, over five years, when determining a conflict of interest, towards an approach that



first looks at the nature of the interest before determining how long it takes for the interest to be over;

- Prohibiting the use of experts in EMA activities who have, or have had, any involvement with the industry, and having all scientific assessments carried out by employees of competent authorities.

Inputs from the workshop will now be considered by the Agency as it moves into the revision cycle of its policy on conflicts of interests. It is anticipated that proposals will be presented for discussion at the Agency's Management Board in December 2013.

The Agency has also invited written comments on the Agency's policy on conflicts of interests for scientific committee members and experts over the last two months. Comments are still invited until Wednesday, 18th September to the following email address: coiworkshop@ema.europa.eu

The Agency will publish a report summarising the key outcomes of the workshop in the coming few weeks.

Notes

1. This press release, together with all related documents, is available on the Agency's website.
2. The Conflicts of Interests 'At a Glance' document is available here:
http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Other/2013/09/WC500148661.pdf
3. More information on the work of the European Medicines Agency can be found on its website:
www.ema.europa.eu

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