

## ECCO CODE of Conduct (Finalised Version – May 2025)

ECCO endorses the governance practices of its umbrella organisations, [UEG](#) and Biomedical Alliance in Europe, and its [Code of Conduct for Healthcare Professionals and Scientific Organizations](#), which maintains that:



*"As health care and knowledge are highly valuable public benefits, it is of the utmost importance that they are delivered in an independent way. It follows that governance, organisation, and activities are independent from any interest – such as governmental, commercial or personal interests – but those of the medical specialty and its practitioners. Assuring this necessitates transparency to allow the assessment of independence; and, when assessed, accountability to the members, to the patients and to society."*<sup>1</sup>

The ECCO Code of Conduct complements these principles, with its own approach to and implementation of our shared core values: **Quality, Integrity, and Transparency.**

### Quality & Integrity

Standards and integrity are essential to the scientific method of enquiry. The high levels of objectivity, precision and reason required necessitate independence of thought, free from personal interests, intimidation or bias. Therefore, ECCO promotes responsible and fair conduct and the pursuance of quality in all our activities.

- **Good Faith:** fair dealings and honesty are the basis for the interaction of the ECCO Membership and its community of health care professionals and scientists.
- **Scientific independence:** ECCO ensures its scientific independence, implementing a strict separation between scientific and commercial interests, by:
  - keeping the ECCO-authored publications (Guidelines, Consensus Papers, Topical Reviews, Scientific Workshop Papers and Position Statements) in JCC strictly separate from collaborations with Corporate Partners
  - accepting only unrestricted grants for support to the e-Learning & e-Guide
  - accepting only unrestricted grants for support to the Fellowships and Grants portfolio
  - offering sponsorship packages for educational initiatives without sponsor access to the attendees during the actual course or the curricula
  - offering separate corporate educational courses at the ECCO Congress
  - offering separate industry satellite symposia and product theatres at the ECCO Congress, whereby ECCO is not responsible for any content. Governing Board Members, Operational Board members (i.e. Committee Chairs) and Editors-in-Chief of JCC and JCC Plus cannot contribute in any way.
  - automatically excluding current employees, independent directors or executives from pharmaceutical, industry and commercial entities from any manuscript project authored by ECCO

**ECCO also follows the relevant codes of practice for live events, publications, CME accreditation, and external partnerships from these organisations:**

[Committee on Publication Ethics](#)

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors ([ICMJE](#))

European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations ([EFPIA](#))

[MedTech](#) Europe

European Union of Medical Specialists ([UEMS](#))

- stipulating that Corporate Members' representatives do not hold voting rights in the General Assembly
- ensuring that all ECCO Governing Board members, officers and editors of JCC and JCC Plus do not hold roles in other organisations that pose direct conflicts with their ECCO role; and they are expected to recuse themselves if they do.
- **Mutual oversight:** with its broad portfolio of educational, research and other opportunities for involvement and exchange of opinion, ECCO relies on respectful, professional, mutual oversight to ensure adherence to due process and quality standards, and, if needed, constructive criticism.
- **Representation:** ECCO Officers and staff shall follow the Biomedical Alliances' principles of representation<sup>ii</sup>, and do not use their positions for inappropriate influence.
- **Confidentiality:** ECCO Officers, the Reviewers of ECCO and ECCO staff shall follow the ICMJE principles of confidentiality in peer review processes, noting that:<sup>iii</sup>
  - abstracts and protocols submitted to ECCO, and manuscripts submitted to JCC are privileged communications that are authors' private, confidential property, and authors may be harmed by premature disclosure of any or all of a manuscript's details
  - abstracts, protocols and manuscripts may therefore not be shared beyond the review process without prior clarification with the respective authors
  - using AI technology in the processing of manuscripts and ECCO documents may violate confidentiality
  - Additionally, ECCO Officers are required to maintain confidentiality of all internal meeting discussions, ongoing projects, proposed activities and ideas. This includes but is not limited to disclosure through social media channels, other online platforms, emails and chats.
- **Publication ethics:** ECCO fosters scientific excellence over experts' eminence and refers to the ICMJE [Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals](#) and COPE Ethics of Data Sharing, in particular:
  - the inclusion of a standardised Data Availability Statement is a requirement for articles published in the ECCO Journal of Crohn's and Colitis (JCC), providing access to the data directly where possible<sup>iv</sup>
  - the ICMJE Reporting Guidelines:<sup>v</sup> *"for different study designs; including include [CONSORT](#) for randomized trials, [STROBE](#) for observational studies, [PRISMA](#) for systematic reviews and meta-analyses, and [STARD](#) for studies of diagnostic accuracy. Journals are encouraged to ask authors to follow these guidelines because they help authors describe the study in enough detail for it to be evaluated by editors, reviewers, readers, and other researchers evaluating the medical literature. Authors are encouraged to refer to the [SAGER](#) guidelines for reporting of sex and gender information in study design, data analyses, results, and interpretation of findings."*
  - avoidance of citing articles from so-called [Predatory or Pseudo-Journals](#),<sup>vi</sup> often with similar names as prestigious journals, fake credentials, per-fee publishing, and little or no peer review process. Authors should take care to reference only from reputable sources: see WAME<sup>vii</sup> for more information.

## Transparency

Transparency in science is critical for credibility: not only are the results of empirical research and the method of collecting data examined but also those who conduct the research are scrutinised for possible bias. ECCO is diligently maintaining a **Disclosure Policy** of potential conflicts of interest [CoI] based on the ICMJE guidance.<sup>viii</sup>

- **Governing Board members should not be in roles in other organisations which are in direct conflict with their ECCO role,** except those representational or ambassadorial roles on behalf of ECCO.
- **Annual disclosure update for all ECCO activities:** ECCO collects only one completed CoI disclosure form per year for all ECCO officers, manuscript authors and ECCO congress faculty. These

CoI are updated every autumn, and all involved experts are requested to list all consultancies, speakers' honoraria or other remunerated activities undertaken in the past 3 years.

- **Abstract submission for the ECCO Congress:** all speakers' CoI disclosures are currently published on a separate [ECCO webpage](#) with full public access:<sup>ix</sup> As of 2026, this will move to the JCCx Online Abstract Book on the publisher's website. These COIs are important for indicating "company neutrality" in the ECCO Congress Scientific Programme.

*"Public trust in the scientific process and the credibility of published articles depend in part on how transparently an author's relationships and activities, directly or topically related to a work, are handled during the planning, implementation, writing, peer review, editing, and publication of scientific work.*

*The potential for conflict of interest and bias exists when professional judgment concerning a primary interest (such as patients' welfare or the validity of research) may be influenced by a secondary interest (such as financial gain). Perceptions of conflict of interest are as important as actual conflicts of interest.*

*Individuals may disagree on whether an author's relationships or activities represent conflicts. Although the presence of a relationship or activity does not always indicate a problematic influence on a paper's content, perceptions of conflict may erode trust in science as much as actual conflicts of interest. Ultimately, readers must be able to make their own judgments regarding whether an author's relationships and activities are pertinent to a paper's content. These judgments require transparent disclosures. An author's complete disclosure demonstrates a commitment to transparency and helps to maintain trust in the scientific process."*

ICMJE [Disclosure of Financial and Non-Financial Relationships and Activities, and Conflicts of Interest](#) § 1, 2, 3

- **The Reviewers of ECCO** are highly appreciated for their time, expertise and oversight of all manuscripts, abstracts, and proposal submissions to ECCO, thereby upholding the scientific standards, quality and relevance our stakeholders expect. Reviewers are equally expected to hold themselves accountable and to follow the best peer-review practices, including:

- confidentiality regarding the authors, institutes, and content they review
- timely, useful and professional feedback
- recusing themselves in case of any or even a potential CoI.

- **Relationships with Partner Societies:** the ECCO Governing Board (GB) is responsible for developing and maintaining partnership relations with European and international associations relevant to IBD. Based on [clear policies](#)<sup>xi</sup> ECCO's involvement in external projects involving one or more external societies can take the following forms:

- joint initiative
- collaboration
- endorsement.

All requests and initiatives for partnership are reviewed and approved by GB in advance. ECCO external projects include live events, publications, and surveys. ECCO as a legal entity cannot be involved in any study project.

- **Relationship with industry:** ECCO offers [Corporate Membership](#) as per the Austrian Association Act of 2002, whereby membership fees contribute to the goals of the society and are not used for any specific services, access or influence.

- The ECCO Congress is organised by the daughter company of ECCO: OCEAiN GmbH. Sponsorship and exhibition bookings for the ECCO Congress via the Industry Webshop constitute an important income source for the association. Nevertheless, ECCO maintains a **distinct separation between industry and all the ECCO scientific and educational activities.**
- The ECCO Congress is annually evaluated and accredited for its compliance by the respective authorities and agencies and has never failed.
- Any **Grants supported by industry**, are provided to ECCO on an unrestricted basis.

- **ECCO-authored publications in JCC:** such as Guidelines, Consensus Papers, Topical Reviews, Scientific Workshop Papers and Position Statements are drafted according to defined standard operating procedures (SOPs) maintaining the high standards of methodology and accumulated know-how over the years.

- The officially approved versions of the SOP documents are considered internal and confidential documents for Intellectual Property (IP) reasons and author groups are given step-by-step guidance from ECCO Office.
- ECCO Governing Board Members may complete Guidelines, Consensus Papers, Topical Reviews and Scientific Workshop Papers that were started before their election but cannot start any new ones during their term.
- More details can be found under [Manuscript Preparation](#) on the publisher's website.
- Only official ECCO papers (i.e.: Guidelines, Consensus Papers, Topical Reviews, Scientific Workshop Papers and Position Statements) are allowed to use the name ECCO in their title.

### Diversity, Equitable Access and Inclusion

In addition to ECCO's core values of quality, integrity and transparency, ECCO also encourages all members and staff to be mindful of **equity, diversity, and inclusivity**: from valuing international, cultural and professional differences, to designing projects, meetings and methods that reduce bias and increase access.

- For all ECCO Committees and project teams, ECCO promotes the inclusion of healthcare professionals with diverse backgrounds from early career to experienced professionals, from different disciplines, geographies and genders.
- Particularly for authorship projects, such as Guidelines, **diversity**, managed in an atmosphere of trust, can not only boost creativity and collaboration **but can also counter cultural partiality and other types of subconscious bias in the scientific method.**

<sup>i</sup> Ref: [https://www.biomedeuropa.org/images/pdf/Code\\_of\\_Conduct\\_2024\\_02\\_06.pdf](https://www.biomedeuropa.org/images/pdf/Code_of_Conduct_2024_02_06.pdf) P5 §2-3

<sup>ii</sup> Ref: [https://www.biomedeuropa.org/images/pdf/Code\\_of\\_Conduct\\_2024\\_02\\_06.pdf](https://www.biomedeuropa.org/images/pdf/Code_of_Conduct_2024_02_06.pdf) P7-8 §1

<sup>iii</sup> Ref <https://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf> P5-6 §2a-f

<sup>iv</sup> Ref <https://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf> P14-15 §2

<sup>v</sup> Ref <https://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf> P15-16 §2

<sup>vi</sup> Ref <https://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf> P5 §C2af

<sup>vii</sup> World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) [Identifying Predatory or Pseudo-Journals](#) & [Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing](#)

<sup>viii</sup> Ref <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/author-responsibilities--conflicts-of-interest.html> §1,2

<sup>ix</sup> NB: for technical reasons and workflow processes, the ECCO abstract submission system cannot be connected to the main annual CoI disclosure workflow.

<sup>x</sup> Journal of Crohns and Colitis (JCC)

<sup>xi</sup> <https://www.ecco-ibd.eu/congresses-and-events/quality-assurance-endorsement.html>