

# Code of Conduct The Austrian Science Fund (FWF)

## Preamble

The Austrian Science Fund (FWF) is the country's main agency supporting basic research. It makes a significant contribution to Austria's cultural enrichment, to its development as a knowledge-based society, and thus to creating value and prosperity in the country. The FWF is aware of its social responsibility and is committed to the basic principles set forth in the corporate policy: excellence and competition, transparency and fairness, independence and diversity, gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities, internationalism and cooperation, integrity and ethics, and dialogue and cooperation.

The following Code of Conduct reflects the FWF's aim to create a framework within which the aforementioned basic principles can be regarded as essential guidelines for working at the FWF. The Code of Conduct therefore contains general principles of conduct which serve as the foundation of the detailed policies of the FWF.

## 1 Scope

The main people responsible for implementing the abovementioned principles are the employees and board members of the FWF. Therefore, this Code of Conduct applies to all employees and members of the supervisory and management boards in connection with their work for the FWF.

## 2 Basic principles

### 2.1 Excellence and competition

It is the quality of research that matters, which is why researchers compete in the global arena of ideas. The Austrian Science Fund (FWF) invests exclusively in those researchers whose proposals receive excellent reviews from international peers.

The FWF is committed, first and foremost, to scientific and scholarly excellence in the awarding of research funding. Applications are reviewed according to the highest international standards and research funding is awarded exclusively in accordance with the principle of competition based on scientific and scholarly excellence.

The FWF is aware of its position as a role model and pioneer of quality standards in Austria. The employees and board members consistently follow these guidelines.

## 2.2 Transparency and fairness

The FWF is committed to allocating funds in a transparent, fair, and inclusive manner, bearing in mind confidentiality considerations.

The employees and board members shall respect this principle in the design of funding programmes, the decision-making process, and the administration of research projects by preventing conflicts of interest and implementing checks and balances. Practices and decision-making procedures are communicated clearly to researchers and the public. Contributions of any kind from third parties shall be disclosed and made transparent.

## 2.3 Independence and diversity

The autonomy of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) is protected by law. Its funding decisions are taken independently. Researchers from all disciplines, regardless of their academic position, are given the time and freedom they need to gain new insights. The FWF is firmly committed to the freedom and independence of scholarship.

The FWF ensures in its decision-making structures and processes that employees and members of the supervisory and management boards can perform their duties conscientiously and impartially to avoid even the appearance of conflicts of interest. The employees and board members are especially obliged to comply with the relevant rules regarding conflicts of interest and the Guidelines for the Prevention of Corruption.

## 2.4 Gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities

The FWF promotes equal opportunities for all genders in world-class research. Career development programmes and gender mainstreaming across the board supports researchers in their diverse career paths.

The FWF ensures an accordingly diverse composition of its supervisory and management boards. The employees and board members respect this principle in the design of funding programmes, the decision-making process, and the administration of research projects.

## 2.5 Internationalism and cooperation

Successful research is based on obtaining facts and findings. International cooperation, open access to knowledge, and critical reflection bring together complementary fields of expertise and contribute to making research trustworthy. The Austrian Science Fund (FWF) is committed to facilitating and supporting research cooperation across national borders.

It promotes the internationalisation of the Austrian science and research system and helps shape the national and European research area. The employees and board members act in

accordance with the highest international and scholarly standards in the design of funding programmes, the decision-making process, and the administration of funding projects.

## 2.6 Integrity and ethics

As a founding member of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity, the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) promotes compliance with the rules of good research practice and internationally established ethical standards. Its own activities and funding effectiveness are also reviewed and evaluated by independent experts on a regular basis.

The employees and board members are aware of their role model function and the higher standards they have to meet as employees/contributors of a publicly funded organisation.

### **Confidentiality/Secrecy**

The employees and board members of the FWF are obliged to maintain confidentiality and secrecy in the performance of their duties, provided that this does not run contrary to the fulfilment of their duties. They know and respect the basic principles and the content of the *Leitfaden Zusammenarbeit ReferentInnen und Geschäftsstelle des FWF* (in German) as well as the Guidelines for the Prevention of Corruption. They comply with the legal obligations to protect sensitive data from unauthorised access by third parties and to ensure traceability. In doing so, they comply with the data protection guidelines of the FWF.

### **Use of resources**

The FWF allocates resources in a lawful, appropriate, economical, and transparent manner. Employees and members of the supervisory and management boards are expected to use the available resources with care and in an efficient way.

### **General legal and ethical standards**

As a public institution, the FWF is committed to respect applicable law and its underlying values as well as ethical standards.

## 2.7 Dialogue and cooperation

The FWF sees itself as a partner in dialogue and provides an open forum for the exchange of knowledge. It seeks to build bridges of cooperation between the scientific community, research institutions, business, politics, the media, and the public, and encourages critical debate on the role of science in an enlightened society fit for the future.

The FWF expects employees and members of supervisory and management boards to treat each other as well as applicants, grant recipients, other stakeholders, and contractual partners with appreciation and respect. All requests shall be handled in a swift, polite, reliable, and appropriate manner.

### 3 Application

The rules of conduct contained within this Code of Conduct shall be followed for the design and administration of funding programmes, all business processes, communicating with applicants, grant recipients and all other stakeholders, as well as public relations work.

### 4 Handling of Misconduct

Violations of the Code of Conduct damage the reputation of the FWF and can have legal consequences. Potential violations should be reported to the supervisor and/or the appropriate board and Compliance Management. The FWF will immediately investigate any suspected violations.

Complaints can be submitted using the [Online Complaints Form](#) on the FWF's website. The reporting party shall not suffer any disadvantages for reporting violations. Deliberately making a false report violates this Code of Conduct and can have legal consequences.

### 5 Implementation

Employees are expected to follow the Code of Conduct. They will be made aware of the content as part of compliance training courses and through the respective departments. Particular attention must be paid to prevention and information.

The board members declare compliance with the Code of Conduct by signing a voluntary commitment.

Compliance Management is available at any time to answer questions or give advice.

### 6 Additional Documents

The Code of Conduct therefore contains general principles of conduct which serve as the foundation of the detailed policies of the FWF.

The guidelines include, in particular:

- Leitfaden Zusammenarbeit Referent:innen – Geschäftsstelle (in German)
- Guidelines for the Prevention of Corruption
  - Employee Guidelines for the Prevention of Corruption
  - Board Member Guidelines for the Prevention of Corruption
- Finanzielle Organisationsrichtlinie Geschäftsstelle (in German)
- Richtlinien des FWF betreffend das Finanzierungs- und Veranlagungsmanagement (Finanzgeschäfte) (in German)

- Richtlinie für die Genehmigung von entgeltlichen und unentgeltlichen Nebenbeschäftigungen (in German)
- Unterschriftenordnung des FWF betreffend Unterzeichnung von Förderungsverträgen (in German)
- Befangenheitsregeln für FWF-Mitarbeiter:innen (in German)

## **7 Period of Validity and Amendment**

The Code of Conduct was originally adopted during the 85th Executive Board Meeting on 27 February 2018. The Code of Conduct (Basic Principles) was updated during the 112th Executive Board Meeting on 21 June 2022 and is valid until further notice in the existing form.