

Code of Conduct of the Association des Conseils en Innovation (ACI) providing advisory services in the context of the Accelerator and FTI Programmes (février 2020)

ACI Members providing Advisory Service in the context of the EIC-Accelerator (“Accelerator”) and Fast Track to Innovation (FTI) Programmes, by being member of ACI (hereinafter Association), obligate themselves to observe the rules laid down in this Code of Conduct.

“Service provider” is understood as an organization that provides support services to clients in the context of the above-mentioned Programmes administered by EASME¹ and includes specialized consultancies, research centres and independent consultants.

Purpose of this Code of Conduct:

It is in the best interest of all applicants that the evaluation process of projects is conducted in an objective, transparent manner and without any conflict of interest. A fair and transparent evaluation also benefits to service providers, European Commission and EASME.

This Code of Conduct seeks to self-regulate conflicts of interests that might originate from the involvement of service providers in the evaluation process of the Accelerator and FTI programmes.

- 1.1 **Transparency and honesty:** The service provider will uphold transparency and honesty not only in relation to his clients, but also towards his employees, cooperation partners, subcontractors, EASME, the European Commission, and the public. The service provider will enforce a strict due diligence process on the cases it is supporting, in order to avoid charging upfront fees for full proposal development to clients that have very little chance of success. The service provider will always seek to truthfully represent the value of the client’s innovation, impact and implementation.
- 1.2 **Fees and subcontracting:** The total support fees charged is open to negotiation with each client. However, subcontracting tasks in the project’s implementation phase, if any, are strictly limited to supporting the client in the successful project implementation and, consequently limited to costs incurred post Grant Agreement signature. As such, no costs related to setting-up the project or any form of success fees can be included in the costs charged for such subcontracting tasks.
- 1.3 **Conflict of interest² avoidance:** The service provider will avoid conflicts of interest in his work and will, in good time, point out to possibly affected clients’ potential conflicts of interest which might arise from its work for others. Specifically, in order to avoid a conflict of interest situation of the client itself, the service provider will make its best effort to ensure that the client has none of its staff acting as Accelerator or FTI evaluator.
- 1.4 **Pledge of non-involvement in the evaluation process:** The service provider acknowledges that having one of his employees or regular contractors involved in the evaluation process of cut-offs where it has clients, would create conflict of interests. The service provider will hence make its best to avoid such situation.
If a situation of conflict of interests happens, it is highly recommended that the concerned evaluator withdraws voluntarily from the evaluation process, which will end the conflict of interest’s situation.
- 1.5 **Collaboration practise with employees and independent contractors:** the service provider commits to ensure that its employees or independent contractors respects the present code of conduct. In particular, the service provider will inform the employees and independent contractors about conflict of interests’ terms settled in the code of conduct and will make sure that these are understood and applied.
- 1.6 **Consequences of infringement:** Suspicion of infringement of the rules will result in disciplinary consequences, as exposed in the status of the Association des Conseils en Innovation³ and Rules of procedure. In that event, the service provider suspected of infringement undertakes to collaborate with the representative of the Association in charge of the case.

¹ The Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) has been set-up by the European Commission to manage on its behalf several EU programmes. <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/about-easme>

² Conflict of Interest as defined in the European model contract for experts available at : https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/service-standards-and-principles/transparency/register-expert-groups/rules-experts-evaluating-tenders_en#code-of-conduct-for-experts

³ https://www.asso-conseils-innovation.org/uploads/medias/default/5b609a1270c79_association-des-conseils-en-innovation-statuts2017-vf.pdf