

Input to the OEWG 2.0 for the development of the Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.

Prerequisites for an Effective Science-Policy Panel

The need for authoritative, policy-relevant assessments produced through an independent, robust scientific process

The first lesson learned is the need for authoritative, independent synthesis of the weight-of-evidence produced by entities without a vested, financial interest in the output or outcomes from the science. Organizations try to avoid the influence of vested interests by adopting a Conflict of Interest (COI) policy. For OEWG 2.0 a Conflict of Interest policy has been proposed to “protect the legitimacy, integrity, trust, and credibility of the Panel and its deliverables as well as confidence in its activities and in individuals who are directly involved in the preparation of its reports and other deliverables”.

A strong COI policy is needed because of the ample evidence showing that some entities with a vested financial interest in the outcome of scientific assessments and public policies have used a wide variety of tactics to delay and influence public decision making aimed at human and ecosystem health protection.

However, many tactics used to exert undue influence circumvent COI policies by, for example, influencing the body of knowledge produced and its interpretation, influencing who is highly regarded as an expert, influencing public opinion, lobbying, and through involvement in scientific associations that present themselves as authoritative and unbiased.

The chemicals, waste and pollution prevention arena provides numerous examples of entities with direct financial interest exerting influence that circumvents COI policies. Chemical and allied industries have long histories of involvement in environmental and human health research and policy development, either acting directly as stakeholders, or indirectly by influencing research agendas, academic societies, and public relations campaigns, to name a few tactics.

Action - We urge that processes and procedures of the SPP address COI by:

- (1) adopting a strong COI policy to avoid undue influence of those holding a direct vested interest in the outcome of the Panel, **and**
- (2) conducting periodic audits to ensure that the intent of the COI policy is being upheld in the Panel's processes and products.

REFERENCES

UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2?INFO/10/Add.1 Proposal for a conflict-of-interest policy for the science-policy panel.
Schäffer et al. 2023. Conflicts of Interest in the global assessment of chemicals, waste and pollution. *Environ Sci Technol*. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.3c04213>
Gottesfeld 2022. Lead Industry Influence in the 21st Century: An Old Playbook for a “Modern Metal”. *AJPH*. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2022.306960>

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For detailed background information, please refer to our publication: Schäffer et al. 2023. Conflicts of Interest in the Assessment of Chemicals, Waste and Pollution. *Environmental Science & Technology*, <http://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.3c04213>



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