

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002573/25
to the Commission
Gerald Hauser (P/E)
(25 June 2025)

Subject: Bias and conflicts of interest on medical committees

US Health Secretary Robert Kennedy Jr. recently sacked all members of the US Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The committee's remit is to decide whether given vaccines are necessary, how they should be used and to make the appropriate recommendations. The committee should no longer be a mere 'rubber stamp' body serving for the commercial interests of the pharmaceutical industry, since it now must be made up exclusively of individuals with no conflicts of interest. Kennedy has stated that it is high time that the focus returned to scientific facts and people's health, rather than the profits of the pharmaceutical lobby and its billionaire investors. A few days ago, the committee was restaffed with independent and critical leading scientists such as mRNA pioneer Dr Robert Malone. This leading US virologist, immunologist and molecular biologist is the co-author of pioneering studies that led to the development of mRNA vaccines and a renowned expert on the risk-benefit profile of vaccinations.

1. What specific conflicts of interest exist among Members and employees of the Commission and its agencies, e.g. the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Medicines Agency (EMA) or the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP)?
2. Have these conflicts of interest been publicly declared, and the details made available to the public, as has been standard practice for decades in medical publications and at specialist conferences?
3. How does the Commission ensure the full independence of Members and employees of the Commission and its agencies?

Submitted: 25.6.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(10 September 2025)

1. In addition to the Staff Regulations and the independence policy adopted by each Agency, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) adopt policies which define cases of field-specific competing interests, for members of scientific committees and experts.

The EMA's policy identifies competing interests both as direct and indirect interests. The list is non-exhaustive, further measures can be adopted on a case-by-case basis. This policy also applies to the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use. The EMA code of conduct ⁽¹⁾ and the policy on competing interests ⁽²⁾ are publicly accessible.

The ECDC-specific conflicts of interests may stem from previous involvement of the member or expert in the pharmaceutical industry, research grants and consultancy. The ECDC independence policy for staff ⁽³⁾ and non-staff ⁽⁴⁾ and the policy on scientific integrity and independence ⁽⁵⁾ are publicly accessible.

The Commission supervises the independence of EU agencies, focusing on strong policies, transparency, and inter-agency collaboration. The above-described system protects the decision-making process from arising conflicts of interest.

2. Both the ECDC ⁽⁶⁾ and the EMA ⁽⁷⁾ publish the declarations of absence of conflict of interest of management staff and members of their governance bodies.
3. The above-mentioned policies are periodically reviewed. Declarations on interests are submitted before appointment, annually or whenever the situation of the member or expert changes. In duly identified cases, members or experts are prevented from participation to meetings if a risk of conflict is envisaged in relation to one agenda item.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/other/code-conduct-european-medicines-agency_en.pdf.

⁽²⁾ https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/other/policy-44-european-medicines-agency-policy-handling-competing-interests-scientific-committees-members-experts_en.pdf.

⁽³⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/independence-policy-ecdc-staff>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/revised-independence-policy-non-staff>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/ecdc-policy-scientific-integrity-and-independence>.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/about-ecdc/who-we-are/our-guiding-principles/annual-declarations-interest-and-declarations>.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/about-us/who-we-are/management-board/members>.