

ECDC CORPORATE DOCUMENT

ECDC Policy on authorship and acknowledgement of contribution to scientific work and related outputs

ECDC/POL/07

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to describe guiding principles of authorship and open access for publications based on work performed by, and on behalf of, ECDC. Being a publicly funded institution implies obligations towards the European Union and its citizens with regards to independence, scientific quality, transparency and efficiency, and involves responsible handling of resources as well as responsible conduct and reporting of ECDC's activities and their results.

This is of special importance as the Centre relies heavily on internal and external professional relationships, networking and collaboration to be able to fulfil its mandate.

This policy supports these goals by:

- providing authorship and acknowledgement criteria;
- outlining concomitant roles and responsibilities for publications of work performed on behalf of ECDC, whether by ECDC staff during their official duties or by commissioned externals within a service contract with the Centre;
- providing guidance regarding joint and personal publications and on authorship ethics, and for determining the author order.

2. Scope and applicability

This policy concerns all ECDC outputs with scientific content that are intended for use outside of the Centre, and therefore require formal clearance, and are based on work performed on behalf of ECDC, whether by ECDC staff during their official duties or by commissioned externals within a service contract with the Centre. This includes, but is not limited to, submissions to scientific journals and scientific conferences or similar events. The same principles should be applied to ECDC outputs with scientific content planned for publication on the ECDC web portal.

The policy applies to all ECDC staff, non-permanent personnel working at ECDC (e.g. trainees, interims and seconded national experts), as well as external experts and contractors engaged by ECDC for the development and publication of an ECDC output with scientific content.

3. Governance

Recognition of authorship in disseminating publications shall be governed by the key principles of transparency and independence. For every activity or project performed on behalf of ECDC that results in the publication of scientific work, there shall be an ECDC assigned expert with overall responsibility to ensure compliance with this policy.

The ECDC assigned expert ensures that responsibilities and tasks including the possibility of publication in peer-reviewed journals and/or presentation at scientific conferences or similar events are determined early in the process and openly discussed and agreed with all potential internal and external contributors, including data providers from Member States. Data providers should be given the opportunity to contribute more than solely data, and eventually fulfil the criteria set out in Section 4.1 for full authorship.

Together with the individuals who conduct the work, the ECDC assigned expert, is responsible for identifying who meets the criteria for authorship and acknowledgment, ensuring that everyone with a substantial, direct and active contribution to the work is given the opportunity to also actively contribute to the writing, critical review, revision and approval of the final output before publication. This should ideally be done at an early stage in order to avoid later conflicts and disputes. As the work progresses, modifications may be needed, and all changes during the course of a project need to be discussed and agreed by all contributors and documented accordingly.

Who contributed what should be put in writing, whether all contributors are finally formally listed as authors or named in the acknowledgments. At the latest, this information should be available when submitting the final output for formal ECDC clearance, and whenever feasible, also be available to the reader. In addition, some scientific journals request a more or less comprehensive contribution or contributorship statement, usually as free-text statement or selection from a pre-defined list of roles at submission.

The corresponding author is accountable for and ensures that the administrative, intellectual, legal and ethical requirements related to publication are met and is responsible for the respective communication e.g. with co-authors, acknowledged contributors, editors and reviewers throughout the full submission and peer review process as well as following the publication. It can be any in the author list, but the role is usually carried out by the first or the last author. Most scientific journals accept only one corresponding author per article.

4. Authorship and acknowledgement requirements

4.1 Authorship qualifying criteria

In general, authorship for ECDC outputs with scientific content and intended for use outside of the Centre, and based on work performed on behalf of ECDC, whether by ECDC staff during their official duties or by commissioned externals within a service contract with the Centre, should be based on the principles set out in the ICMJE recommendations (also known as Vancouver guidelines).

This means that to be listed as author one needs to fulfil criteria 1-4 below:

CRITERION 1: Everyone finally listed as an author should have made a substantial, direct and active intellectual contribution to essential parts of the work leading to a publication like conception/ design of the work and elaboration of the methods; collection, analysis and interpretation of the data and results.

CRITERION 2: Everyone that made a substantial, direct and active intellectual contribution to the work should be given the opportunity to also actively contribute to the writing, critical review and revision of the final output regardless of whether the person has left the position held at the time of contribution.

CRITERION 3: All listed authors have fulfilled criteria 1 and 2 and have given their final approval of the version to be published.

CRITERION 4: All listed authors have agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work and ensure that questions related to accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

The following situations do not qualify for authorship:

- Honorary authorship is not allowed, nor is ghost authorship.
- As for scientific journals, review alone does not constitute authorship.

- The sole contribution of data does not qualify for authorship. Contributors of data and other relevant information should be named in the acknowledgments.
- Being part of the ECDC internal approval process of project plans and/or interim outputs or being responsible for line management of the ECDC assigned expert or having performed the formal ECDC clearance of the final output does not qualify for authorship.
- Formal ECDC clearance cannot be performed by a listed author.

4.2 Qualifying criteria for acknowledgement of contribution

- Everyone that made a contribution to the work, that does not fulfil the above criteria 1 AND 2 for full authorship should be acknowledged, e.g. for contributing data from a country.
- Internal peer-review by colleagues before submission for publication is highly encouraged to further improve the quality of the output, and if the review was thoroughly done, and critical for the final output, the reviewer can be named in the acknowledgments.
- General supervision or line management or purely administrative, technical (e.g. data management) or writing support (e.g. proof-reading or editing) does not qualify for authorship or acknowledgement of contribution, without devaluing the importance of these tasks.

4.3 Author sequence

The meaning of first and last authorship and author sequence in general varies between disciplines and countries, and although usually unofficial, can affect career development, promotion and evaluation, and is therefore often a source for tension and conflict. In biomedical or life sciences, the first author is expected to have coordinated and performed most of the work and drafted the final output. The last author often gets as much credit as the first or even more, assuming that the last name in the author list belongs to the principal investigator and/or supervisor and the driving intellectual force behind the work. Some journals allow joint first and/or joint last authorship.

If the number of authors is large it may be appropriate to use group or organisational/corporate authorship. For publications on the ECDC website, the number of listed authors should not be a limiting factor if all equally fulfil above criteria for authorship. However, some scientific journals have restrictions with regards to the maximum number of possible authors. Whether group authorship is possible and how it is handled differs between scientific journals. This applies also to the way group authorship is indexed and displayed in publication databases.

For ECDC outputs with scientific content, the following principles should apply:

- The contributor that fulfils above authorship criterion no. 1 and writes the initial draft of the final output should be offered first authorship.
- The contributor that fulfils above authorship criterion no. 1 and takes the main responsibility for and supervises the totality of the work ensuring good scientific practice and responsible conduct, as well as scientific quality and integrity, should be offered last authorship (unless they also took the lead in writing the initial draft of the paper, in which case they might assume the position of first author).
- Following the criteria for authorship defined above, the other or middle authors are all the other individuals that have substantially, directly and actively contributed to the output.
- Authorship and author sequence are not determined by seniority or hierarchy.

4.4 Publication and authorship ethics

Withholding information for personal benefit, for example in prospect of future publication in higher impact journal or in order to publish multiple articles, is not allowed. The interest in publishing in a peer-reviewed scientific journal or presenting at an international conference must in no case hamper the timely sharing of data and information that could be of relevance to public health to ensure appropriate and timely preventative and mitigation measures, especially in outbreak and emergency situations.

Publications in scientific journals based on work led and/or paid for by ECDC, whether with or without ECDC staff authorship, should be made available to the reader immediately following publication and without payment, i.e. on the ECDC web portal or as 'gold standard' open access article in a peer-review scientific journal (see the ECDC Policy on open access publication of scientific content, including articles submitted to peer review journals).

All listed authors do not only take credit for and are responsible and accountable for their own contribution but also for the publication as a whole. All authors should therefore make sure that they are confident about the accuracy and integrity of the publication's content and underlying work, and able to answer related questions should they arise before, during and/or after publication.

All listed authors and the coordinating ECDC staff shall ensure that the moral rights of all authors are respected. This means that, without the consent of the author, no alteration, distortion, or mutilation of the work shall be made that may be prejudicial to the authors honour or reputation.

4.5 Conflicts of interest

Excellence, independence, and transparency are essential elements of ECDC's work. For this reason, ECDC shall for all its outputs ensure independence from the influence of industry, other stakeholders and lobby groups. Not only actual independence, but also the perception of independence is important since it can impact upon ECDC's reputation.

For publications made by ECDC staff as part of performance of their tasks, the respective line managers shall ensure that there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest. Declarations of Interest are submitted by all staff members upon recruitment and made available to the line manager.

For activities and projects performed on behalf of ECDC, the ECDC assigned expert ensures that Declarations of Interest are collected from all authors that are not ECDC staff members and that there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest.

4.6 Copyright and intellectual property

All contributors and listed authors are responsible for taking all necessary precautions to avoid plagiarism, i.e. the authors are responsible and accountable for correct citation, quotation and attribution, ensuring that the final ECDC output does not contain copied and plagiarized content and that all necessary permissions have been obtained before submission for publication. ECDC reserves the right to perform checks for duplications. Suspected cases will be managed following the respective internal procedure.

The outputs of work performed on behalf of ECDC, whether by ECDC staff during their official duties or by commissioned externals within a service contract with the Centre, remain the intellectual property of the Centre and the Centre holds the copyright.

When it comes to publication in scientific journals, rights and obligations are usually determined by a publishing agreement between the author and the publisher. Preference should be given to peer-reviewed journals that allow ECDC to retain ownership of copyright, i.e. journals that request the author to sign a license agreement rather than a transfer of copyright agreement.

As far as possible, open Creative Commons licenses shall be used for publications of ECDC (see ECDC Copyright policy).

4.7 Joint publications

Joint publications based on work done with ECDC partner organisations or institutions and led by ECDC should follow the authorship requirements according to this policy, if publication and authorship was not otherwise formally defined — e.g. in a Memorandum of Understanding, Collaboration Agreement, Terms of Reference or contract signed by the concerned parties.

Joint publications based on work done with ECDC partner organisations or institutions and led by the partner organisation or institution should follow their authorship, if publication and authorship was not otherwise formally defined — e.g. in a Memorandum of Understanding, Collaboration agreement, Terms of Reference or contract signed by the concerned parties.

ECDC staff shall ensure that the application of this policy is expressly provided for in the respective agreements with partner organisations.

4.8 Personal publications

An ECDC staff member may publish, whether alone or with others, outside of their official duties for the Centre, except where this may reflect adversely upon their position in ECDC. Any such publications shall clearly bear a disclaimer¹ that the views expressed are the ones of the author and do not represent ECDC's official position. Unless the publication can be reasonably considered to be a hobby or leisure activity, the staff member shall submit an Outside Activity application in accordance with Article 12b of the Staff Regulation. Permission shall be

¹ Disclaimer to include in personal publications including personal presentations: "The views and opinions expressed herein are the authors' own and do not necessarily state or reflect those of ECDC. ECDC is not responsible for the data and information collation and analysis and cannot be held liable for conclusions or opinions drawn."

refused, only if the publication would interfere with the performance of the ECDC staff member's duties or is incompatible with the interests of ECDC.

In the case of publications dealing with any matter within the scope of the work of the EU, the ECDC staff member needs to request permission from the ECDC Director in advance in line with Article 17a of the Staff Regulation. This can be done as part of the Outside Activity application process (using the dedicated Outside Activity form available from the HR Focal Point).

4.9 Resolution of conflict related to authorship

Any conflict related to authorship that could not be resolved among the conflicting parties through dialogue within a reasonable timeframe and despite efforts by the ECDC assigned expert, shall be referred to the Chief Scientist for mitigation and resolution.

5 Publication of this policy

As this policy is of general public interest, and in the interest of transparency, it shall be published on the ECDC website following its adoption.