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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Trust is foundational for effective governance and societal well-being. This Code of Conduct (CoC) establishes principles and guidelines for EURCAW Aqua interactions with National Competent Authorities (NCAs), the European Commission, EU agencies, and stakeholders. It aims to ensure structured, transparent, and evidence-based exchanges that uphold scientific integrity and foster trust. Targets include aligning with EU regulatory frameworks, promoting open communication, and delivering practical, actionable outputs.

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

To build trustworthy outputs, EURCAW Aqua staff should adhere to principles of competence, transparency, fairness, and responsiveness, ensuring their work aligns with public expectations and addresses societal challenges. Key targets include delivering reliable and evidence-based outputs, fostering open communication, and actively engaging stakeholders to enhance credibility and inclusivity.

All interactions must adhere to the following principles:

- Transparency is achieved through open and clear communication on methods, processes, and findings.
- Scientific Integrity is ensured through a commitment to evidence-based discussions, free from bias.
- Practical Relevance is maintained by focusing discussions on real-world biological, veterinary, and regulatory challenges.
- Empathy and Respect are demonstrated by acknowledging different levels of expertise and fostering trust-based relationships.
- Confidentiality is upheld by respecting sensitive information shared during discussions.
- Legality is ensured by defining the EU legal basis for proposed actions.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity outlines fundamental principles for conducting and reviewing research, emphasizing reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability. For EURCAW Aqua staff, adhering to these principles ensures the credibility and societal impact of their work. This chapter aims to define best practices for contacting and reviewing published research literature,

aligning with EU standards, and highlights measures to prevent violations of research integrity. Targets include fostering transparency, upholding ethical standards, and promoting collaborative, high-quality research.

Best Practices for Contacting and Reviewing Research

- **Transparency:** Clearly document research methodologies, data sources, and analytical processes.
- **Accuracy:** Ensure all findings and citations are accurate, with proper attribution to original sources.
- **Fair Assessment:** Evaluate research objectively, avoiding biases or conflicts of interest.
- **Collaboration:** Engage with authors and peers respectfully, fostering open dialogue and constructive feedback.
- **Compliance:** Follow legal and ethical guidelines, including GDPR for data handling and Open Science principles.

Measures to Avoid Violations of Research Integrity

- **Training:** Regular workshops on research ethics and integrity for all staff.
- **Supervision:** Senior researchers mentor teams to ensure adherence to best practices.
- **Whistleblower Protection:** Safeguard staff reporting misconduct and ensure confidential, fair investigations.
- **Clear Policies:** Implement institutional guidelines for handling allegations of misconduct.
- **Audits:** Periodic reviews of research processes to identify and address potential risks.

FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT

Effective engagement with NCAs will be possible through structured but also through spontaneous interactions. Structured engagement ensures planned knowledge transfer, while unstructured

interactions allow for real-time discussions and collaboration during events that EURCAW Aqua will participate. EURCAW Aqua staff will tailor their approach to match the context and ensure meaningful exchanges with stakeholders.

Structured Interactions

1. Webinars (Digital Interactions)

- Exclusive webinars available via a dedicated portal will be created.
- Content focused on regulatory updates, scientific advancements, and case studies.
- Sessions recorded and available for review.

2. Physical Trainings

- In-person trainings for NCAs.
- Sessions include interactive exercises and case studies.

3. Roadshows (Field Visits to aquatic species farms)

- On-site visits, combining practical insights with regulatory discussions.
- Conducted in local languages, with a small group of participants.

Unstructured & Spontaneous Interactions

4. Scientific Conferences, Fairs, and Events

- EURCAW Aqua representatives will engage informally with NCAs.
- Any significant technical or regulatory discussions should be documented.
- Guide policy makers and inspectors to consult publications on EURCAW Aqua portal
- Advice police makers and inspectors to post queries through ticketing system for welfare topics not addressed so far

5. Expert Portal Ticketing System

- NCAs can submit queries through a ticketing system.
- Responses will be provided in prompt time and stored in a knowledge base.

FREQUENCY AND MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

To maintain consistent engagement, EURCAW Aqua will use a combination of digital and physical interactions. These efforts ensure continuous collaboration and accessibility for NCAs. Consistency in communication builds trust.

- Webinars: Sessions will be delivered via a secure digital platform.
- Training Sessions: In-person workshops.
- Roadshows: On-site farm visits.
- Conferences & Events: Ongoing, as opportunities arise.
- Ticketing System: Available continuously with structured response times.
- Summaries & Reports: Key takeaways from interactions will be documented.
- Translation & Accessibility: Webinars will include translated summaries, and field visits will be conducted in local languages.

FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW UP MECHANISMS

Collecting and integrating feedback from NCAs is crucial for improving engagement. Different mechanisms will be used based on the type of interaction.

- Webinars: Interactive quizzes and puzzles.
- Trainings: Digital apps or written questionnaires.
- Roadshows: Mobile apps or paper questionnaires.
- Spontaneous Interactions at Events: Documentation of significant discussions.
- Ticketing System: Satisfaction rating after each response.

RULES FOR AVOIDING COMMON RISKS

Ensuring practical relevance and accessibility in communications is essential for engagement effectiveness. To avoid common pitfalls, EURCAW Aqua staff will emphasize clarity and practicality and will work on:

- Prevention of Overly Academic Content – Use real-world case studies, infographics, and decision-making tools.
- Practical Relevance – Focus on regulatory challenges and provide problem-solving frameworks.
- Language Accessibility – Use clear, concise language and provide translated summaries.

RULES FOR BUILDING TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

Trust is earned through transparency and respect. This section guides EURCAW Aqua staff to acknowledge limitations and co-create solutions. To foster trust EURCAW Aqua staff should:

- Be transparent about scientific limitations.
- Acknowledge and respect local expertise in enforcement.
- Encourage two-way dialogue and co-creation of solutions.

RULES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH EU AGENCIES

Interaction with the EU Commission

- Project Coordinator or any other EURCAW Aqua member of Management Team designated by Project Coordinator, communicates directly with the European Commission, for topics of interest for EURCAW Aqua.
- Communication with the European Commission (DG SANTE, DG MARE) must align with EU regulatory priorities, the strategic objectives and the work plan approved by the DG Sante.
- The EURCAW Aqua staff must provide timely, accurate, and well-documented reports on relevant activities and outcomes, based on work plan approved by the DG Sante.

Collaboration with EU Agencies (EFSA, AAM, etc.)

- Engagements with EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) should focus on risk assessments, welfare guidelines, and scientific opinions.
- Collaboration with AAM (Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism, DG MARE) should include discussions on implementing the strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive European aquaculture towards the improvement of farmed aquatic species welfare.

CONCLUSIONS

Trust is the cornerstone of effective collaboration between EURCAW Aqua, National Competent Authorities, and stakeholders. By adhering to this Code of Conduct—grounded in transparency, scientific integrity, and stakeholder engagement—EURCAW Aqua staff will ensure their work remains credible, relevant, and impactful. Through structured interactions, continuous feedback,

and a commitment to ethical standards, we aim to strengthen trust in aquaculture welfare governance across the EU.

This Code is a living document, evolving with stakeholder input and regulatory advancements. This way we plan to foster a culture of openness, accountability, and shared progress in animal welfare.

WORKING TEAM – PEOPLE INVOLVED

1. Leonidas Papaharasis, UoC

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