**SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARD**

# 6th Working Group meeting on Food safety culture

24 and 25 August 2026
14:00-19:00 / 08:30-13:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 3 September 2026

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

**Location**: Web conference

**Attendees**:

- Working Group Members:
  Alessandra De Cesare, Liesbeth Jacxsens (Chair), Mojca Jevšnik, Pieternel Luning, Lapo Mughini-Gras, Peter Vlerick, Laís Mariano Zanin
- Hearing Experts[1]:
  Not Applicable
- Applicants participating in a technical hearing[2]:
  Not Applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
  Not Applicable
- EFSA:
  BIOHAW Unit: Pietro Stella

  COM Unit: Joana Sousa-Lourenco, Giorgia Zamariola

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. No apologies were received; as agreed during the previous WG meeting, due to the specific aims of this meeting only part of the WG was invited (sub-WG).

## 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## 3. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[3] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[4], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. For further details on the outcome of the screening of the Annual Declarations of Interest, please refer to the Annex. Oral Declaration(s) of Interest were asked at the beginning of the meeting and no additional interest was declared.

[1] As defined in Article 34 of the document "Implementing Rule of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and of their Working Groups": https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/paneloperation.pdf

[2] As defined in the "EFSA's Catalogue of support initiatives during the life cycle of applications for regulated products": https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6472

[3] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 5th Working Group meeting held on 18th June 2026, via web-conference

The minutes of the 5th Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on 26th June 2026.

## 5. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

**a. Draft opinions on Food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU (EFSA-Q-2025-00553 and EFSA-Q-2025-00554)**

The WG discussed the newly drafted sections of the draft scientific opinion and decided how to further develop the structure and text of the document. A visual model of FSC was drafted, it will need to be finalized in the coming meetings. The WG was briefly updated on the progress of the initiative to interview relevant stakeholders to gather information on food safety culture. The overall workplan and related timelines were agreed, and tasks assigned to WG members and EFSA staff, in view of presenting the draft opinion for first reading to the BIOHAZ Panel Plenary meeting in September 2026.

## 6. Any Other Business

No AOB discussed.

## 7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 23th September, by webconference.

**Annex**

**Interests and actions resulting from the screening of Annual Declarations of Interest**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH WAIVER: In the Annual Declaration of Interest filled by Prof. Vlerick, the following interest has been declared: providing in September 2024 a presentation behind closed doors to FEVIA, an organization representing transversally the Belgian food industry, on a topic overlapping with the mandate of the WG in question, which constitutes a conflict of interest with the mandate of the EFSA Working Group in hand. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[5] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[6], and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, a waiver was granted in accordance with Article 21 of the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management. Pursuant to Article 21(6) of the above-mentioned Decision, the concerned expert was allowed to take part in the discussion and in the drafting phase of the EFSA Scientific Opinion on food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU, and has not been allowed to be, or act as, a chairman, a vice-chairman or rapporteur of the Working Group.

[5] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf
[6] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

**SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARD**

5th Working Group meeting on Food safety culture

18 June 2026
10:00-14:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 26 June 2026

**Location**: Web conference

**Attendees**:

- Working Group Members:
Alessandra De Cesare, Liesbeth Jacxsens (Chair), Mojca Jevšnik, Pieternel Luning, Lapo Mughini-Gras, Peter Vlerick, Laís Mariano Zanin
- Hearing Experts[1]:
Not Applicable
- Applicants participating in a technical hearing[2]:
Not Applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
Not Applicable
- EFSA:
BIOHAW Unit: Laura Cabral, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella

  MESE Unit: Fulvio Barizzone, Ana Carolina Pereira

# 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. No apologies were received; as agreed during the previous WG meeting, due to the specific aims of this meeting only part of the WG was invited (sub-WG).

# 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

# 3. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[3] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[4], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. For further details on the outcome of the screening of the Annual Declarations of Interest, please refer to the Annex. Oral Declaration(s) of Interest were asked at the beginning of the meeting and no additional interest was declared.

[1] As defined in Article 34 of the document "Implementing Rule of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and of their Working Groups": https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/paneloperation.pdf

[2] As defined in the "EFSA's Catalogue of support initiatives during the life cycle of applications for regulated products": https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6472

[3] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 4th Working Group meeting held on 20th May 2026, via web-conference

The minutes of the 4th Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on 29th May 2026.

## 5. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

**a. Draft opinions on Food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU (EFSA-Q-2025-00553 and EFSA-Q-2025-00554)**

The WG discussed the progress with the screening of references retrieved with the literature search performed by the WG and of the review and validations of the AI-supported extraction of information from a first batch of references. Following steps and related timelines for the validation were discussed and agreed. The WG also discussed a first review of activities for the promotion of food safety culture activities and the structure and indicative length of the draft opinion, allocation of responsibilities for drafting and related timelines. The WG was briefly updated on an initiative to interview relevant stakeholders to gather information on food safety culture. The overall workplan and related timelines were agreed, and tasks assigned to WG members and EFSA staff.

## 6. Any Other Business

No AOB discussed.

## 7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 24th and 25th August, in Parma.

**Annex**

**Interests and actions resulting from the screening of Annual Declarations of Interest**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH WAIVER: In the Annual Declaration of Interest filled by Prof. Vlerick, the following interest has been declared: providing in September 2024 a presentation behind closed doors to FEVIA, an organization representing transversally the Belgian food industry, on a topic overlapping with the mandate of the WG in question, which constitutes a conflict of interest with the mandate of the EFSA Working Group in hand. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[5] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[6], and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, a waiver was granted in accordance with Article 21 of the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management. Pursuant to Article 21(6) of the above-mentioned Decision, the concerned expert was allowed to take part in the discussion and in the drafting phase of the EFSA Scientific Opinion on food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU, and has not been allowed to be, or act as, a chairman, a vice-chairman or rapporteur of the Working Group.

[5] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf
[6] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

**SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARD**

# 4th Working Group meeting on Food safety culture

20 May 2026
10:00-13:30 / 14:30-18:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 29 May 2026

**Location**: Web conference

**Attendees**:

- Working Group Members:
Alessandra De Cesare, Liesbeth Jacxsens (Chair), Pieternel Luning, Lapo Mughini-Gras, Peter Vlerick, Laís Mariano Zanin
- Hearing Experts[1]:
Not Applicable
- Applicants participating in a technical hearing[2]:
Not Applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
Kris De Smet (EC SANTE)
- EFSA:
BIOHAW Unit: Laura Cabral, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella

COM Unit: Joana Sousa Lourenco, Giorgia Zamariola

MESE Unit: Fulvio Barizzone, Ana Carolina Pereira

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. No apologies were received; as agreed during the previous WG meeting, due to the specific aims of this meeting only part of the WG was invited (sub-WG).

## 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## 3. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[3] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[4], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. For further details on the outcome of the screening of the Annual Declarations of Interest, please refer to the Annex. Oral Declaration(s) of Interest were asked at the beginning of the meeting and no additional interest was declared.

[1] As defined in Article 34 of the document "Implementing Rule of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and of their Working Groups": https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/paneloperation.pdf

[2] As defined in the "EFSA's Catalogue of support initiatives during the life cycle of applications for regulated products": https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6472

[3] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 3rd Working Group meeting held on 21st April 2026, via web-conference

The minutes of the 3rd Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on 30th April 2026.

## 5. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

**a. Draft opinions on Food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU (EFSA-Q-2025-00553 and EFSA-Q-2025-00554)**

The WG discussed the progress with the screening of references retrieved with the literature search performed by the WG, and the outcome of a trial extracting information from a subset of papers by means through AI tools and how to adjust, check and validate such extraction. Following steps of the literature search were discussed and agreed. The WG also discussed an initiative to gather information on food safety culture from relevant stakeholders through the support of EFSA social scientists. The structure of the draft scientific opinion (part I) was discussed and agreed, and responsibilities for drafting sections were split among the WG. The overall workplan and related timelines were agreed, and tasks assigned to WG members and EFSA staff.

## 6. Any Other Business

EC representative reported to the WG and discussed a recent exchange of views with the co-chairs of the WG on food safety culture of the Heads of Agencies.

## 7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 18 June 2026, via web conference.

**Annex**

**Interests and actions resulting from the screening of Annual Declarations of Interest**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH WAIVER: In the Annual Declaration of Interest filled by Prof. Vlerick, the following interest has been declared: providing in September 2024 a presentation behind closed doors to FEVIA, an organization representing transversally the Belgian food industry, on a topic overlapping with the mandate of the WG in question, which constitutes a conflict of interest with the mandate of the EFSA Working Group in hand. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[5] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[6], and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, a waiver was granted in accordance with Article 21 of the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management. Pursuant to Article 21(6) of the above-mentioned Decision, the concerned expert was allowed to take part in the discussion and in the drafting phase of the EFSA Scientific Opinion on food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU, and has not been allowed to be, or act as, a chairman, a vice-chairman or rapporteur of the Working Group.

[5] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf
[6] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

**SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARD**

3rd Working Group meeting on Food safety culture

21 April 2026
09:00-13:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 30 April 2026

**Location**: Web conference

**Attendees**:

- Working Group Members:
  Alessandra De Cesare, Liesbeth Jacxsens (Chair), Pieternel Luning, Laís Mariano Zanin
- Hearing Experts[1]:
  Not Applicable
- Applicants participating in a technical hearing[2]:
  Not Applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
  Not applicable
- EFSA:
  BIOHAW Unit: Laura Cabral, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella

# 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Lapo Mughini-Gras and Peter Vlerick.

# 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

# 3. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[3] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[4], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in these meetings have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

[1] As defined in Article 34 of the document "Implementing Rule of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and of their Working Groups": https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/paneloperation.pdf

[2] As defined in the "EFSA's Catalogue of support initiatives during the life cycle of applications for regulated products": https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6472

[3] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 2nd Working Group meeting held on 30th March 2026, via web-conference

The minutes of the 2nd Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on 7 April 2026.

## 5. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

**a. Draft opinions on Food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU (EFSA-Q-2025-00553 and EFSA-Q-2025-00554)**

The WG discussed the draft protocol and finalised it for presentation to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible approval during the next BIOHAZ Plenary meeting (22-23 April 2026). This included review and discussion of the clarification of the terms of reference, of the assessment questions developed from the terms of reference and of the methodology to be used to answer them, including details on the search of relevant scientific literature, extraction of information from selected scientific papers and from grey literature and their synthesis within the draft opinion. The WG also discussed the topics that would need gathering of information from relevant stakeholders through the support of EFSA social scientists. Tasks were assigned to WG members and EFSA staff.

## 6. Any Other Business

No AOB discussed.

## 7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 20 May 2026, via web conference.

**SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARD**

2nd Working Group meeting on Food safety culture

30 March 2026
14:00-16:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 7 April 2026

**Location**: Web conference

**Attendees**:

- Working Group Members:
  Liesbeth Jacxsens (Chair), Pieternel Luning, Peter Vlerick, Laís Mariano Zanin
- Hearing Experts[1]:
  Not Applicable
- Applicants participating in a technical hearing[2]:
  Not Applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
  Not applicable
- EFSA:
  BIOHAW Unit: Laura Cabral, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella

# 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. No apologies were received; as agreed during the previous WG meeting, due to the specific aims of this meeting only part of the WG was invited (sub-WG).

# 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

# 3. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[3] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[4], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. For further details on the outcome of the screening of the Annual Declarations of Interest, please refer to the Annex. Oral Declaration(s) of Interest were asked at the beginning of the meeting and no additional interest was declared.

[1] As defined in Article 34 of the document "Implementing Rule of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and of their Working Groups": https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/paneloperation.pdf

[2] As defined in the "EFSA's Catalogue of support initiatives during the life cycle of applications for regulated products": https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6472

[3] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 1st Working Group meeting held on 9th and 11th March 2026, via web-conference

The minutes of the 1st Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on 23rd March 2026.

## 5. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

**a. Draft opinions on Food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU (EFSA-Q-2025-00553 and EFSA-Q-2025-00554)**

The WG discussed a preparatory document shared ahead of the meeting aimed at defining: i) the questions to be answered during the review of scientific papers identified through the literature search; ii) inclusion/exclusion criteria for the screening of the scientific papers. It was agreed to perform a first search based on simple and generic terms to identify a wide range of studies, and then use the core concepts identified to classify papers for the different assessment questions (AQs).

## 6. Any Other Business

No AOB discussed.

## 7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 21 April 2026, via web conference.

**Annex**

**Interests and actions resulting from the screening of Annual Declarations of Interest**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH WAIVER: In the Annual Declaration of Interest filled by Prof. Vlerick, the following interest has been declared: providing in September 2024 a presentation behind closed doors to FEVIA, an organization representing transversally the Belgian food industry, on a topic overlapping with the mandate of the WG in question, which constitutes a conflict of interest with the mandate of the EFSA Working Group in hand. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[5] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[6], and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, a waiver was granted in accordance with Article 21 of the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management. Pursuant to Article 21(6) of the above-mentioned Decision, the concerned expert was allowed to take part in the discussion and in the drafting phase of the EFSA Scientific Opinion on food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU, and has not been allowed to be, or act as, a chairman, a vice-chairman or rapporteur of the Working Group.

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[6] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

**SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARD**

# 1st Working Group meeting on Food safety culture

9 and 11 March 2026
09:00-12:30 / 14:00-17:30
MINUTES - Agreed on 23 March 2026

**Location**: Webconference

**Attendees**:

- Working Group Members:
  Alessandra De Cesare, Liesbeth Jacxsens (Chair), Pieternel Luning (11 March), Lapo Mughini Gras, Peter Vlerick, Laís Mariano Zanin
- Hearing Experts[1]:
  Not Applicable
- Applicants participating in a technical hearing[2]:
  Not Applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
  EC: Kris De Smet, SANTE (9 March)
- EFSA:
  BIOHAW Unit: Laura Cabral (11 March), Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella

  COM Unit: Joana Sousa Lourenco, Giorgia Zamariola (parts of the meeting)

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Pieternel Luning for the first part of the meeting (9 March).

## 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## 3. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[3] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[4], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. For further details on the outcome of the screening of the Annual Declarations of Interest, please refer to the Annex. Oral Declaration(s) of Interest were asked at the beginning of the meeting and no additional interest was declared.

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[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf

# 4. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

**a. Draft opinions on Food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU (EFSA-Q-2025-00553 and EFSA-Q-2025-00554)**

EFSA staff introduced to the WG the mandate, the way of working of EFSA WGs, the roles of experts in the WG and the expected contributions, related administrative issues, and EFSA cross-sectorial guidance documents relevant for the mandate.

The WG discussed the mandate and clarified a number of aspects of the terms of refence of the mandate with a representative of the European Commission.

The WG discussed the draft protocol for the scientific assessment, focusing in particular on the formulation of the assessment questions derived from the terms of reference and on the methodology to be followed in the assessment. The draft protocol will be finalised during the second and third WG meetings, with the aim of presenting it for approval by the BIOHAZ Panel at its April's plenary meeting.

# 5. Any Other Business

No AOB discussed.

# 6. Next meeting

The next meeting (sub-WG meeting, with part of the WG invited) will be held on 30 March 2026, via web conference.

**Annex**

**Interests and actions resulting from the screening of Annual Declarations of Interest**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH WAIVER: In the Annual Declaration of Interest filled by Prof. Vlerick, the following interest has been declared: providing in September 2024 a presentation behind closed doors to FEVIA, an organization representing transversally the Belgian food industry, on a topic overlapping with the mandate of the WG in question, which constitutes a conflict of interest with the mandate of the EFSA Working Group in hand. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[5] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[6], and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, a waiver was granted in accordance with Article 21 of the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management. Pursuant to Article 21(6) of the above-mentioned Decision, the concerned expert was allowed to take part in the discussion and in the drafting phase of the EFSA Scientific Opinion on food safety culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU, and has not been allowed to be, or act as, a chairman, a vice-chairman or rapporteur of the Working Group.

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[6] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf