

Set of principles and procedures guiding the work of IPBES

This short note has been prepared by the IPBES secretariat to provide information on how IPBES ensures credibility, relevance, legitimacy and transparency through its rules of procedure and processes approved by its Plenary.

Credibility, relevance, legitimacy and transparency:

According to the operating principles of the Platform, in carrying out its work IPBES must be scientifically independent, and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes, and use clear, transparent and scientifically credible processes for the exchange, sharing and use of data, information and technologies from all relevant sources, including non-peer-reviewed literature, as appropriate. In essence, IPBES aims to provide policy-relevant information but not policy-prescriptive advice.

From its inception, IPBES has been based on open, inclusive and extensive series of consultation and engagement processes involving governments and stakeholders from non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, indigenous and local communities and the private sector. The IPBES Plenary is working very carefully to build an open, inclusive, credible and transparent process.

In summary, the strength and credibility of IPBES assessments will depend on the involvement of all relevant experts in the preparation and peer-review processes which will provide strong safeguards to ensure that bias and conflict of interest are avoided.

Selection of experts:

In order to ensure credibility and transparency for nominating and selecting experts, the Plenary of IPBES has adopted "[Procedures for the preparation of the Platform's deliverables](#)" (decision IPBES-2/3 in [document IPBES/2/17](#)). These procedures are publically available on the IPBES website. All experts are nominated by both governments and stakeholders and are selected by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) of IPBES, based on merit, their CVs, regional, disciplinary and gender balance and according to IPBES rules and procedures. All selected experts will be listed with their affiliation on the IPBES website.

Range of views and expertise:

IPBES assessments have been requested by the Platform's member states and will be compiled by teams of hundreds of scientists nominated by governments, observer organizations and the scientific community. To maintain scientific balance and to ensure legitimacy and relevance to different interest groups, IPBES assessments will include a full range of expertise and bring together all available credible evidence from multiple viewpoints.

While recruiting the leading experts in their fields, the IPBES also seeks to incorporate the greatest possible diversity of voices. The scientists and other knowledge holders who will be selected to develop all IPBES assessment reports will represent a wide range of geographic, cultural and sectoral backgrounds. Balance will also be of essence with respect to disciplines, perspectives and gender.

A sheer number of scientists and other groups will be involved in the IPBES process, many of which will be connected to academic institutions, governments or NGOs. The IPBES seeks input from as broad a range of scientists as possible, including those with industry ties. Other global and regional biodiversity assessment reports routinely include experts from business or industry sectors (e.g. IPCC, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the Intergovernmental Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development, UK-NEA and Global Environment Outlook).

Safeguards that eliminate bias:

The IPBES assessment process has multiple and robust mechanisms to safeguard against any risks of bias: all texts will be extensively peer-reviewed internally by the assessment team, and then externally by a wide range of experts, stakeholders and governments, with independent review editors for each chapter. These review editors will be seasoned scientists, who will review chapters in their own capacity and on a volunteer basis. To ensure full transparency, the Platform will publish on the IPBES website the names of these review editors, their comments, as well as how these comments will be addressed by IPBES.

Following repeated drafting and review, a final draft of the report will be sent to governments for comments. Governments may propose changes in order to improve clarity but the scientists will have the last word on whether to accept, based on scientific grounds, the changes that will be proposed.

This unique process of international assessment by scientists and review by the scientific community, governments and stakeholders will be central to the authority and quality of IPBES reports. Through this collaboration and peer-review of all texts, bias and lack of objectivity will be eliminated. The final assessments will represent an exhaustive consensus process, which will ensure the full involvement of experts from all relevant stakeholder groups.

Conflict of interest:

The role of IPBES demands that it pay special attention to issues of independence and bias in order to maintain the integrity of, and public confidence in, its products and processes. It is essential that the work of IPBES is not compromised by any conflict of interest for those who execute it.

The fourth Plenary of IPBES is expected to approve in January 2015 a [Conflict of Interest \(Col\) policy](#) based on an initial discussion that was conducted at the Plenary's third meeting in December 2013. In the meantime, an interim Col policy has been agreed by the Bureau and is already being applied to all experts. This very strict set of rules includes filling out a Col disclosure form, and listing the origin of research funds. Both are available from the IPBES secretariat upon request.