



Ethical charter

A responsible organisational culture

SCK•CEN recognises that its activities should be founded upon a responsible *organisational* culture. This culture should inspire all of SCK•CEN's activities as well as the way they impact society in general: research and development, services, safety and security and management. SCK•CEN recognises that, as a responsible stance towards colleagues, partners, clients, civil society or society at large, fostering this culture of responsibility comes down to embedding ethical values in all aspects of its working. These ethical values are the subject of this charter.

SCK•CEN endeavours in all activities to foster

a research and development culture based on

- scientific and technological excellence founded upon quality assurance and scientific integrity;
- responsibility towards society through openness and dialogue;

a safety and security culture based on

- responsibility for the health and safety of employees, subcontractors and the general public;
- protection of the environment and the public, as well as respect for the interests of future generations;
- prevention of military or illicit use of nuclear technology and know-how

a corporate culture based on

- responsible behaviour towards and from our employees;
- independence from and integrity towards partners and clients.

The ethical charter in relation to other existing regulations, guidelines and codes

The ethical charter aims to formulate specifications about individual and joint attitudes that would support the research & development, safety & security and corporate culture as specified above. The charter does not replace or re-interpret the labour regulations, which remain the only relevant regulations in case of disciplinary measures. SCK•CEN personnel should also abide by any regulations, guidelines and/or codes of conduct relevant to particular subject areas which are beyond the scope of this ethical charter (human rights, intellectual property rights, environmental protection, safety regulations, data protection and confidentiality, animal rights, informed consent, etc.).

[Research culture]**1 Scientific and technological excellence founded on quality assurance and scientific integrity**

The general principles of quality assurance and integrity should inform all research activities.

- Honesty, transparency and trust should be central to the relationship between the researcher, his/her colleagues, research partners and interested and/or concerned third parties.
- Every employee will keep him/herself up to date about the latest relevant rules of good practice, and follow these rules to the best of his/her ability. This applies in particular to scientific research, where scientific methodology must be strictly observed.
- Every employee has the right to make mistakes, as long as these are not the consequence of lack of effort, negligence or intransigence. Once identified, mistakes must be reported immediately and objectively to the line manager. The necessary measures will be taken as soon as possible so as to prevent a reoccurrence.
- The management will investigate all complaints concerning scientific integrity made by co-workers, clients, partners or the public, and will take the necessary actions and informs the employee(s) involved about the action being taken.
- Researchers are encouraged to reflect upon the ethical implications of their research, in terms of potential social, political, environmental, cultural and/or economic consequences. SCK•CEN is committed to providing its employees with regular opportunities to debate general and specific issues in this area, such that knowledge can be exchanged and deeper insights gained.

2 Responsibility towards society through openness and dialogue

SCK•CEN wishes to communicate openly with individuals and interest groups within society, either by generating and disseminating information in an integer way and by providing expertise and/or offering ways to involve them in interactive research where relevant.

1. Information about research practices and results, in particular publicly funded research and development and services, is available, in principle, to all citizens, providing that intellectual property rights and confidentiality restrictions (where applicable) are respected. SCK•CEN is committed to presenting such information in a form appropriate to the target audience, with the aim of facilitating correct interpretation.
2. SCK•CEN staff are prepared to participate in public discussions on subjects relating to their expertise. Employees who act as experts will do so in an open and honest way by demonstrating awareness for the character of - and limits to - their expertise and awareness of their expert mandate.
3. Every employee has the right to voice his/her opinion, although an employee can only act on behalf of SCK•CEN if he/she is authorized by management. In cases where it is difficult to assess the impact of a particular communication, for example to the media, the employee will consult with his/her line manager.

[Safety & security culture]**3 Responsibility for the health and safety of employees, subcontractors and the public**

SCK•CEN, as organisation, as well as each of its staff members regard the health and safety of employees, subcontractors and the general public to be of fundamental importance to its operations. Therefore, the following principles are to be applied:

1. Placing safety before commercial or personal gain.
2. Accepting responsibility for our own and others' safety, within a general safety culture based upon the ALARA principle (As Low As Reasonably Achievable).
3. Integrating safety and health considerations into daily practices.
4. Striving for continual improvement in safety awareness and performance.
5. Maintaining a blame-free reporting culture that encourages full reporting of unsafe practices, incidents and near misses, and which uses this information to continually improve safety.
6. Maintaining a high degree of interaction and dialogue with the local community, with the aim of maximising mutual understanding about health and safety issues.

4 Protection of the environment and the public, as well as respect for the interests of future generations

SCK•CEN, as organisation, as well as each of its staff members, operate within a framework of general respect for the environment. It does so by faithfully taking into account the precautionary principle within the context of sustainable development and, in particular, by:

1. Ensuring that all activities are in accordance with the ALARA principle, especially with regard to any possible environmental impact.
2. Informing all relevant actors, including the local population, about the impact of these activities on the environment and, in particular, paying attention to indirect and long-term effects on mankind and/or the environment;
3. Continuously improving the means available to put these principles into practice.

5 Prevention of the military or illicit use of nuclear technology and know-how

1. SCK•CEN, as organisation, as well as each of its staff members, shall refrain from initiating or cooperating in research activities with a military aim, and shall express this position openly in any negotiation context on future research policy or concrete projects. Cooperation in projects dealing with dual use material shall be evaluated on a case by case basis by the researcher or research group, the line management and the general management.
2. SCK•CEN, as organisation, as well as each of its staff members shall refrain from providing expertise and active dissemination of research results when there is a clear or presumptive external interest in the illicit use of this information.

[Corporate culture]**6 Responsible behaviour towards and from our employees**

The management ensures the well-being of its employees by:

1. Recognising its responsibility to be a role model for ethical behaviour;
2. Organising and assigning research tasks and related administrative and technical work in accordance with the mission and values of SCK•CEN as well as with the competences and capabilities of the personnel;
3. Recognising each employee as an individual, and giving each employee the possibility to develop his/her skills optimally;
4. Respecting the personal political, cultural and religious views of each employee;
5. Organising suitable education and training programmes aimed at professional and related personal development;
6. Ensuring a safe and pleasant working environment and a high-quality health service.
7. Ensuring good internal communication and dialogue.

Each employee maintain an appropriate loyalty towards SCK•CEN by:

8. Striving to use his/her competences and to carry out his/her duties to the best of his/her abilities;
9. Applying regulations (safety, environment, tax law, ...) and reporting possible risks;
10. Avoiding the spreading of unfounded information about SCK•CEN;
11. showing respect for mutual opinions and seeking a balance between individual (academic) freedom and community interests;
12. Collaborating to achieve an optimal work organisation;
13. Respecting the intellectual property of colleagues;
14. Respecting the personal political, cultural and religious views of colleagues;
15. Putting knowledge at the disposition of colleagues and encouraging teamwork.

7 Independence from and integrity towards partners and clients

1. The terms of any contract must not compromise the overriding principle of scientific integrity or any pre-existing legal obligations or rights.
2. Every employee ensures/fulfils, and respects strictly, contractual agreements with partners and clients.
3. Any possible conflict of interest or external pressure must be reported immediately.
4. Deviations from the quality assurance and scientific integrity approach as a result of external or internal pressure are unacceptable. This includes:
 - a. The acceptance of gifts or payments from, or the offering of gifts or payments to, (potential) contract partners or other external parties, when these gifts or payments could be perceived by one of the parties as having an influential character that would serve personal interest rather than the common interest;
 - b. The use of company resources for personal gain;
 - c. The purchase of products or services based on reasons other than their merit in the context of SCK•CEN's overall needs.
5. When information, which has been obtained as a result of an agreement or contract with partners and/or clients, is considered (by SCK•CEN and/or third parties) to be socially relevant, the possibility of publicly disseminating this information must always be discussed first with the partners and/or clients. In case of problems, the general management will assume responsibility for the decision.

The ethical charter as joint approval of all SCK•CEN staff members of the ethical values of SCK•CEN.

This charter is joint approval of the SCK•CEN staff members of the ethical values of SCK•CEN put forward in the charter. As the content and form of the charter are determined on the basis of dialogue in which every staff member is involved, the charter can be seen as a joint agreement among the SCK•CEN employees. The charter is considered as a guide to inspire as well daily activities as issues that require deliberation in the ethical committee. Every staff member has the right to consult the ethical committee, as well as the right to actively engage as member in its working. Only the continuous implementation of this charter, combined with an open discussion about the principles and their application, can keep the ethical process at SCK•CEN alive.