ESSD SOCIETAL CODE

May 2026

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The European Society for Social Drug Research (ESSD) has been operating since 1990, and organising annual conferences ever since. For most of its history an informal ESSD Board has supported and guided the organisation of the annual conferences and an ESSD Editorial Board has organised and supported the dissemination and promotion of findings presented at ESSD conferences (through publications). It was agreed at a members' meeting at the 2015 conference that it was time to place some of the aspects of the organisation and running of the ESSD onto a more formal footing. An interim board to act as a working group to progress these changes was then set up and prepared a draft of the ESSD Societal Code. This interim board reported back to members at the 2016 conference in Frankfurt, and members voted to approve proposed changes to the draft code in principle. This version of the ESSD Societal Code was produced in February 2020 after minor changes were approved by ESSD members at the 2018 ESSD conference.

If at any stage, it is decided to turn the ESSD into a legal entity, this societal code may form the basis for by-laws. This version of the ESSD Societal Code was produced in February 2020 after minor changes were approved by ESSD members at the 2018 ESSD conference and discussed at the ESSD Board meeting in January 2020.

NAME

1. The name of the society will be **'The European Society for Social Drug Research'**, hereafter referred to as 'the society' or the ESSD.

OBJECT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2. The object of the ESSD is to promote social science approaches to drug research through supporting research and the publication and dissemination of the useful results thereof.

3. The guiding principles of the ESSD include:

- A European focus on its activities and the research it supports (but not to the exclusion of non-European members and contributions).
- Particular support for qualitative and novel research methods (but not to the exclusion of quantitative and other approaches).
- Support and nurturing of early career researchers (including research students).
- Informality, transparency, inclusiveness and goodwill in the operation of the society and its activities.
- No membership fees.

ACTIVITIES

4. To fulfil the ESSD's object, the society will engage in the following activities:

a. Organise an annual conference for the presentation of research papers and discussion of scientific issues in qualitative-oriented drug research (see 'Conference output fee', below).
b. Serve as a forum for social scientists working on drug issues to explore possibilities for future cooperation, collaboration and international comparative drug research.
c. Support and encourage early career drug researchers.
d. Engage in additional activities approved by the ESSD Board with the consent of the membership.

CONFERENCE OUTPUT FEE

Participants of the ESSD conferences are required to pay a conference output fee. This fee covers all of the costs related to the annual book (which is based on themes arising from the conference), such as the publishers' fees; editing; costs related to the board meeting(s) during which submissions are discussed and assessed for inclusion in the book; distribution costs and fees for open access publications.
The conference output fee is NOT a conference registration fee: it does not cover any aspects of the conference, such as the conference dinner, refreshments or catering during the conference, the rental costs of the conference venue, conference packs, book of abstracts, etc. Local conference organisers are responsible for covering all costs of hosting and organising the conference. The fee is intended only to support and ensure the output of the annual conference. Participants will receive access to the ESSD publications, and can order a print copy if they want.
The standard conference output fee is determined every year by the ESSD Board, and will be as low as possible in accordance with the principles and philosophy of the ESSD, as described in Article 3. ESSD Board members and students (bachelor, master and PhD students) pay a reduced rate. Local conference hosts are exempted from the fee and may negotiate a limited number of places for guest attendees (e.g. sponsors, dignitaries).

MEMBERSHIP AND CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

5. The membership of the society shall consist of **regular members** and **affiliate members**.

6. All applicants for regular membership must be scholars, researchers or analysts working on problems related to psychoactive substances (prohibited or otherwise). They will be admitted into the society by registering formally with it. Every five years, regular members will be asked to re-confirm membership.

7. **Regular members** will become a member with full voting rights and other privileges of membership upon submission of the completed membership application form available on the ESSD website. Membership does not require payment of annual dues.

8. Persons not eligible for regular membership, including politicians, policymakers and other stakeholders, as well as societies, institutions and other bodies, are eligible to become **affiliate members** by a majority decision of the ESSD Board. Affiliate members will have no voting rights. In all other respects they will have the same rights as regular members.

ESSD BOARD

9. The property and business of the society shall be managed by the **ESSD Board** consisting of a president, a vice-president, a secretary/treasurer and four other members. Ideally, the composition of the ESSD Board should be gender-balanced and reflect the diversity of the membership. The board members should represent a minimum of three different European countries. Each member of the ESSD Board shall be considered to represent the country of his or her primary institutional affiliation,

regardless of country of birth or citizenship. The ESSD Board will be elected from and by the membership, although candidates for the ESSD Board must have attended at least one ESSD conference in the last 5 years before the election. Membership of the board, whether as an officer or board member, is an unpaid position.

10. All ESSD Board shall serve for a four-year term, and may be re-elected.

11. The first election of ESSD Board members according to this societal code was held in the run-up to the 2017 ESSD conference by online poll (which remained open until the end of the first day of the conference). Subsequently, elections of ESSD Board members will be held every four years. If a board member resigns or dies, or is removed as per item 18, a special election will be held in conjunction with the next conference to replace them until the end of the four-year term.

12. At least three months before the end of the current term of office for board members, the Nominations Committee (see item 22) will issue a call for nominations. Members can nominate themselves as a candidate for the ESSD Board, and/or can nominate other members, and/or non-members. Non-members eligible for regular membership will be invited to join the ESSD by the Nominations Committee. Members and non-members nominated by other members can decline their nomination. Candidates for the ESSD Board must have attended at least one annual ESSD Conference in the last five years before the election. All nominations for board members shall be organised into one list in alphabetical order (by family name), to be distributed to members at or before the opening of the online ballot (item 13). All nominees will be invited to submit a short (300 word) bio plus (optional) photograph to accompany the list of nominees and to help inform members' voting decisions.

13. Elections will be held via an anonymous online ballot. The online ballot will open at least two weeks before the annual conference and will remain open until the end of the first day of the conference. The Nominations Committee or their representatives will announce the results of the ballot on the second day of the conference.

14. Each voting member is entitled to vote for as many candidates on the ESSD Board list as there are seats known to be open for election at the time the ballot is prepared. All votes carry equal weight. Candidates on the list are elected in order of the number of votes received until the 7 positions on the board are filled. In the event that two or more candidates receive an equal number of votes for the seventh seat on the ESSD Board, each candidate shall be requested to indicate whether they are willing to withdraw their candidacy. If all candidates maintain their candidacy, one name shall be drawn by lot by the impartial Nomination Committee. Terms of office of elected board members will begin at the conclusion of the conference at which the relevant election results are announced. Incumbent officers will remain in office until this time.

15. Once elected, the ESSD Board members will appoint a president, a vice-president and a secretary/treasurer, preferably by consensus, and in the absence of consensus, by a majority vote of the board. The president, vice-president and secretary/treasurer must be elected board members. Where possible, the incoming board will decide who will be these officers after the results of the election are announced on the second day of the conference and will announce this decision on the third day.

16. Meetings of the ESSD Board may be held at any time and place to be determined by the board. A meeting of the ESSD Board will be held without further notice at the annual conference. On the initiative of the president or vice-president, the ESSD Board may make decisions on any matter of business by e-mail.

17. A quorum for any decision of the ESSD Board will be one-half of the current members of the ESSD Board including the president or vice-president. In all cases, the ESSD Board aims to make decisions through consensus (based on the board members having access to appropriate information and

sufficient time for discussion and debate). The president reserves the right to move to vote where consensus cannot be reached after adequate discussion. All board members have one vote, and in the case of a vote, decisions will be by majority vote of those voting. In the case of a tied vote, the president (or vice-president if the president is absent) will have the casting vote.

18. If a board member has failed to attend meetings, or has become an impediment to the board's work, they can be removed by a two-thirds vote of the board. The vacated board position will be filled at the next conference as per item 11.

19. The ESSD Board shall take such steps as they may deem requisite to enable the society to receive donations and benefits for the purpose of furthering the objectives of the society.

20. The ESSD Board may seek associations with other organisations in order to further the objectives of the society. Any such association requires majority approval of voting on a mail ballot to the membership.

21. The ESSD Board may appoint from the members of the society (including members of the board) to a committee or committees, including the Editorial Committee (e.g. to oversee/contribute to the publication of the annual book or special issues of journals).

22. The ESSD Nominations Committee shall comprise two members who are not members of the ESSD Board. The members shall be appointed by the ESSD Board. This committee shall be responsible for preparing the list of nominations for the ESSD Board and for conducting the election.

23. The ESSD Editorial Committee shall carry out the organisation of the production of ESSD-related publications (the annual book, special issues of journals clustering ESSD-related papers, etc.).

24. The ESSD Board shall offer support and guidance to local members hosting the annual conference and provide oversight for the Editorial Committee.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ESSD BOARD MEMBERS

25. The ESSD Board members should be committed to the aims and objectives of the society. They should give adequate time and energy to the duties of being a board member. The main tasks of the ESSD Board are to:

a. Oversee, coordinate, support and guide the organisation of the annual conferences.

b. Oversee, organise and support the dissemination and promotion of the annual ESSD publication.

c. Provide strategic direction of the ESSD (including monitoring the effectiveness of the ESSD and direction on what needs to change in order that the society continues to be relevant).

d. Liaise and communicate with external organisations, stakeholders and partners.

e. Be accountable to the membership.

OFFICERS

26. The **president**, as chief executive of the society, will preside at the meetings of the society and the ESSD Board. The president will initiate and carry out policies in conformity with the society's purpose as specified by the ESSD Board. The president plays an important role in liaising and communicating with external organisations, stakeholders and partners.

27. The **vice-president** will assume the duties of the president if the incumbent president resigns, dies or is otherwise unavailable (e.g. illness) and will perform such duties until the ESSD Board has elected a new president from the ESSD Board.

28. The **secretary** is responsible for communicating society activities and plans to the members no less often than once a year. These include the time, place and details of the annual conference and any seminars and workshops sponsored by the society, and details and calls for papers for the society's publications. If any funds are available to the society, the secretary (or their nominee) shall act as **treasurer** and make disbursements under the supervision of the ESSD Board. The secretary shall keep the accounts up-to-date, report on the society's financial situation to members at the annual conference, and update the ESSD Board when requested (at least annually). The secretary (or their nominee) shall prepare and maintain a membership list to be used for election purposes. The secretary (or their nominee) shall announce to the membership the time and place of the annual conference and membership meeting. The secretary (or their nominee) shall be responsible for taking minutes at membership meetings, ESSD Board and Editorial Committee meetings and for making these available to the society members as appropriate.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

29. A general meeting of members shall be held at least once a year in conjunction with the annual ESSD conference. At the **membership meeting**, a discussion will be held of the future activities of the society, including the location of the next year's conference. Announcement of the membership meeting will be made to all members together with the announcement of the final programme of the ESSD conference, together with a draft agenda of business.

MAIL BALLOT

30. In general, only the members attending the membership meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting can vote on any issues presented there. When a member proposes that all members (including those not present at the membership meeting) are balloted, the membership meeting can, by majority of those voting, institute a mail ballot on any issue (to be executed by email or online poll) to the membership.

31. Upon a written petition of ten members to the president within six months after the membership meeting, concerning any issue presented at the general meeting, the issue must be submitted to the members by mail ballot.

32. The ESSD Board, by majority, can also instigate a mail ballot to the membership at any time.

REVISION OF THE ESSD SOCIETAL CODE

33. Upon written petition of ten members to the president or by a decision of the ESSD Board, an article or articles of this societal code can be submitted to the membership for revision. Any revision requires majority approval of those voting in a mail ballot.

DISSOLUTION

34. The society can only be dissolved by a decision taken at the annual conference, and by a vote requiring the concurrence of two-thirds of the ESSD members attending the conference. If the

members resolve to dissolve the society, the members of the ESSD Board will be responsible for winding up the affairs of the society in accordance with this clause.

35. The ESSD Board members must collect in all the assets of the society and must pay or make provision for all the liabilities of the society.

36. The society must apply any remaining property or money by transfer to any charity or charities for purposes the same as or similar to the society. The members may pass a resolution before or at the same time as the resolution to dissolve the society, specifying the manner in which the ESSD Board members are to apply the remaining property or assets of the society.