

## Publishing and Peer Review Policy

EPIS maintains a high professional standard for the publications within its think tanks. Rigorous scientific diligence and an academically fair approach are crucial to achieving this. Therefore, EPIS aligns itself with the international standards of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). In practice, this means the following:

### Overview of Core Principles and Measures

#### 1. Responsibilities of the Stakeholders

- **Authors:** They bear the primary responsibility for the integrity of the published work. Specifically, this means:
  - **Authorship:** Every listed individual must have made a substantial scientific contribution (such as concept, data collection, or analysis) and approved the final text. Purely honorary or courtesy authorships (ghost or gift authorship) are strictly prohibited.
  - **Transparency & Quality:** Data and methods must be documented with such precision, integrity, and traceability that the research is fully replicable.
  - **Disclosure:** All financial support, third-party funding, and potential conflicts of interest (whether personal, commercial, or institutional in nature) that could influence the results must be fully and transparently disclosed.
- **Reviewers:** They act as a critical quality control mechanism for the academic community (Peer Review):
  - **Objectivity:** The evaluation of manuscripts must be based exclusively on scientific quality, logic, and methodology—free from personal biases or academic competition.
  - **Confidentiality:** The manuscript entrusted to them is a protected document. It must not be shared with third parties, nor can it be used for the reviewers' own research purposes prior to official publication.
  - **Conflict Management:** If reviewers find themselves in a direct competitive or collaborative relationship with the authors, they must decline the review immediately.
- **Editorial Team & Editors:** They bear the ultimate responsibility for the scientific profile and quality of the journal:

- **Independence:** Editorial decisions regarding acceptance or rejection must be based solely on scientific relevance and originality, independent of commercial interests, the authors' origins, or the political climate.
- **Procedural Guarantee:** They ensure a fair, unbiased, and transparent peer-review process and protect the identity of those involved (e.g., through double-blind review processes).

## 2. Forms of Scientific Misconduct

- **Plagiarism:** The conscious or unconscious adoption of texts, ideas, data, or graphics from other individuals without properly acknowledging them as external property through correct citation and source referencing. This also includes self-plagiarism (the unaltered reuse of one's own previously published texts without attribution).
- **Data Manipulation & Falsification (Fabrication & Falsification):**
  - *Fabrication* refers to the outright invention of research results or data that were never actually collected.
  - *Falsification* involves subsequently altering, smoothing, or selectively omitting data points, images, or statistics to artificially support a specific hypothesis.
- **Redundant Publication / Simultaneous Submission:** The parallel submission of the same manuscript to different journals is ethically unacceptable. Similarly, fragmenting a coherent study into the smallest possible individual elements simply to artificially expand a list of publications (*salami slicing*) violates good scientific practice.
- **Authorship Disputes:** This includes intentionally concealing contributors or adding individuals who made no scientific contribution in order to increase the chances of publication or citations.

## 3. Handling Violations and Suspected Cases

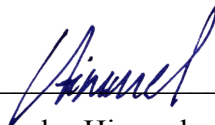
Whenever a suspicion of scientific misconduct is raised (whether by reviewers, readers, or whistleblowers), standardized, transparent investigation processes are triggered, which strictly follow the predefined flowcharts provided by COPE.

Depending on the severity of the offense, the escalation model provides for the following measures:

- **Correction or Errata:** In the case of verifiably unintentional, minor errors or misunderstandings (e.g., a typo in a formula or a forgotten source reference in minor passages), the journal will publish a formal correction notice (Errata/Corrigenda) while the article remains online.
- **Formal Investigation (Expression of Concern):** If there is a substantiated initial suspicion, the editorial team will initiate an internal review and seek a dialogue with the authors. If necessary, the authors' home institutions or employers will be involved

to convene an independent investigation committee. Until the matter is resolved, an *Expression of Concern* may be attached to the article.

- **Retraction of the Article:** In cases of severe, irreversible misconduct (such as data fabrication or massive plagiarism), the article is officially and permanently retracted. While the text will remain in the digital archive for documentation purposes, it will be unmistakably flagged as invalid. Furthermore, the relevant funding bodies and university administrations will be notified.



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– Chairman –