

Journal of "Engineering Geology and Hydrogeology"

JOURNAL POLICY

PUBLICATION ETHIC AND PUBLICATION MALPRACTICE STATEMENT

The ethical rules for receiving and publishing materials in the journal "Engineering Geology and Hydrogeology" are based on internationally recognized ethical rules and standards in accordance with The European Charter for Researchers (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/european-charter>) and Bulgarian legislation. The journal follows the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors (<https://publicationethics.org>).

The editorial board decides to accept or refuse to publish a proposed material based on its compliance with the principles of academic morality, its ethical principles and rules, as well as the editorial policy and criteria for publication of the journal. It may return the author's material for correction or revision, as well as refuse to publish it.

The journal **does not accept** for publication materials that:

- do not comply with its scientific policy and publishing criteria;
- contain unacceptable theories and statements;
- contain pseudo-scientific statements;
- express the political and personal biases of the authors;
- include texts that discredit persons and institutions or offensive qualifications on scientific, religious, political and personal basis.

Authors are directly responsible for the authenticity of their scientific publications and must follow the specified rules for citation.

It is not allowed:

- plagiarism in all its forms;
- falsification of data and results in the presented paper;
- sending simultaneously for publication the same manuscript in different journals or other publications;
- inclusion as co-authors of persons who do not have a real contribution to the research and writing of the respective text;
- use of unscientific arguments;
- omission of contributions of other authors in the researched problem;
- use of an image or text in the submitted manuscript without proper permission or appropriate citation.

Plagiarism check

The Journal has three-level procedure to identify and prevent the publication of papers where research misconduct has occurred. First, when the paper is received the Editor-in-chief checks the scientific base (methodology and applied methods) and plagiarism of the research. Free online plagiarism checker programs are used. In case of identified problems the Editor-in-chief returns the manuscript and the Authors have one month to correct the research. In case of nonproblematic research the text is submitted to the reviewers. In case of identified any problems by them, the authors have again one month to correct the research, otherwise the paper is cancelled. Finally, when there are two positive reviews, the Board of Editors has the final decision to publish the paper.

DUTIES OF THE EDITORS

Publishing decisions

The editor of the scientific journal, in collaboration with the other members of the editorial board, is responsible for which manuscript will be published. These decisions must always be based on the importance of the work for scientists and readers. The editor may be guided by the policy of the magazine's editorial board in accordance with legal requirements regarding issues such as defamation, copyright infringement and plagiarism.

The editor must evaluate the intellectual content of the manuscripts regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, citizenship, or political views of the authors.

The journal's editorial policy should promote transparency and full, objective reporting, and the editor should ensure that reviewers and authors have a clear understanding of what is required of them. The editor uses the standard electronic system for receiving manuscripts, as well as for all editorial messages in the journal.

The editor, together with the publisher, establishes a transparent mechanism for appealing editorial decisions.

Peer-review process

The editor ensures that the review process is fair, impartial and timely. Submitted articles should be reviewed by at least two external and independent reviewers, and the editor should seek additional feedback when necessary.

Each article is being reviewed by two reviewers, whose identities are unknown to the authors but the reviewers know the identities of the authors (*a single-blind peer review process*). The affiliation of the Reviewers and the Authors is always from different institutions. There are at least four or more reviewers for the total number of articles in each issue.

The editor selects reviewers who have relevant experience in the field and follows established practices to avoid the selection of unscrupulous reviewers. The editor reviews all signals of potential conflicts of interest and citation suggestions made by reviewers to determine if there is a possible bias (attempt to influence). Finally the article is accepted by the editorial board.

Reviewer's comments to the Editor and to the Author should be submitted only to the Chief Editor or the Editorial Secretary of the journal. These should also include any possible conflicts of interest. Comments and constructive criticism of the manuscript should be filled out in the Reviewer's Checklist. Reviewers' comments should be constructive and designed to improve the manuscript. Comments should also clearly remark on the strengths, weaknesses, relevance, originality and contributions of the manuscript. Reviewer's comments should contain clear and reasoned recommendations for the publication of the manuscript. When preparing the review, reviewers should take into account:

- ✓ Is the topic of the manuscript suitable for publication in the Journal and is the research ethical?
- ✓ Are the title, abstract and keywords informative, relevant and clearly reflecting the content of the manuscript?
- ✓ Is the content well structured? Is the text clearly and understandably written?
- ✓ Does the introduction summarize and critically evaluate previous research on the topic and does it comprehensively formulate the objectives of the current research?

- ✓ Are the authors accurate in describing the research methodology? Do the authors accurately explain how the data was collected?
- ✓ Does the paper contain unpublished data, new interpretations and/or hypotheses?
- ✓ Are the results and interpretations supported by data?
- ✓ Are the number and quality of the illustrations and tables suitable?
- ✓ Are all illustrations and tables correctly referred to in the text?
- ✓ Do the references cover both recent and past research in the field? Are there any key citations missing? Are some quotes superfluous?
- ✓ Do the conclusions sound convincing?
- ✓ Does the manuscript comply with the Instruction for Authors?
- ✓ Is there a need for revision and a recommendation to publish the manuscript?

Confidentiality (Privacy Policy)

The editor must protect the confidentiality of all materials presented in the journal, the identity of the reviewers, as well as all communications with the reviewers. In exceptional circumstances and after consultation with the publisher, the editor may share limited information with the editors of other journals and, when deemed necessary, investigate alleged research violations.

Unpublished materials presented in a manuscript should not be used in the editor's own research without the express written consent of the author. Privileged information or ideas obtained during the review should be kept confidential and not used for personal gain.

The integrity of the image

It is not acceptable to enhance, cover, move, remove or introduce new information in the image. Brightness, contrast, or color balance adjustments are acceptable if and until they obscure or remove information in the original. Manipulating images for greater clarity is accepted, but manipulating for other purposes will be considered ethical abuse.

DUTIES OF REVIEWERS

Contribution to editorial decisions

Reviewing assists the editor in making editorial decisions and through editorial communications can also help the author to improve the article while maintaining good ethical etiquette.

Any selected reviewer who feels unqualified to review the submitted manuscript, or knows that it would be impossible to review it quickly, must notify the editor and refuse to participate in the review process.

Confidentiality (Privacy Policy)

All manuscripts received for review must be treated as confidential documents. The reviewer should not share the manuscript information with anyone or contact the authors directly.

Reviewers should discuss issues with the editor first to ensure that confidentiality is respected and that everyone receives appropriate information.

Unpublished materials presented in a manuscript should not be used in the reviewer's own research. Privileged information or ideas obtained during the review should be kept confidential and not used for personal gain.

Standards for objectivity and conflict of interest

Reviewing must be done objectively. The reviewer should be aware of any personal bias and take this into account when reviewing the manuscript. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate. Reviewers should express their opinion clearly, with supporting arguments.

The reviewer should consult with the editor before agreeing to review a manuscript when there are potential conflicts of interest arising from a competitive, collaborative, or other relationship or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions associated with the manuscript.

The reviewer should monitor for any ethical issues in the manuscript and inform the editor.

Any statement in the manuscript that an observation, result, interpretation or argument has been reported before must be accompanied by a corresponding citation. This must be for genuine scientific reasons, and not with the intention of increasing the number of colleagues cited or increasing the visibility of a particular publication (or that of their institutions).

If the reviewer assumes that the author includes citations for the work of his colleagues (or his collaborators), with the intention of increasing the number of their citations or increasing the visibility of their work (or that of their institutions), he should note this in his review.

DUTIES OF THE AUTHORS

Reporting standards

The authors of articles presenting original research must provide an accurate report of the work performed, as well as an objective discussion of its significance. The basic data must be presented exactly in the article. It should contain enough details and references to allow others to repeat the research. Fraudulent or deliberately inaccurate statements are unethical and unacceptable.

Authors must adhere to the specified specific standards for graphic images applied by the journal, such as providing the original images as additional material to the article or depositing them in an appropriate digital repository.

Authors should be prepared to provide research data to support their article to editorial review and/or to comply with the open data requirements of the journal.

Originality and recognition (acknowledgement) of sources

Authors should make sure that they have written entirely original articles. If they have used data and/or sentences from other publications, they must be cited in an appropriate manner and permission must be obtained from the authors of the cited publications where necessary.

Plagiarism in all its forms is unethical and unacceptable.

Objective recognition of the work of others must always be given. Authors should cite publications that have influenced the work reported and that give the work an appropriate context within the larger scientific information array. Information obtained privately, such as in conversation, correspondence or discussion with third parties, should not be used or reported without the express written permission of the source.

Multiple, redundant or concurrent publications

An author should not publish manuscripts describing essentially the same study in more than one journal as a primary publication. Submitting the same manuscript to more than one journal at the same time is unethical and unacceptable.

In general, an author should not submit for consideration in another journal an article that has been previously published, except in the form of a summary, as part of a published lecture or academic thesis, or as an electronic reprint.

The publication of certain types of articles (e.g. translations, information materials) in more than one journal is sometimes justified, provided that certain requirements are met. Authors and editors of the respective journals must agree to the secondary publication, which must reflect the same data and interpretation of the main document. The main reference should be cited in the secondary publication.

Confidentiality (Privacy Policy)

Information obtained in the course of confidential services, such as refereeing manuscripts or grant applications, must not be used without the explicit written permission of the author of the work involved in these services.

Authorship of the paper

Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the creation, design, implementation or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made significant contributions should be identified as co-authors.

Where there are persons who have been involved in some essential aspects in the preparation of the manuscript (e.g. language editing), they should be recognized in the thanks section.

The lead author must ensure that all relevant co-authors are included and that no inappropriate co-authors are included in the manuscript, and that all co-authors have seen and approved its final version and have agreed to submit it for publication.

It is expected that the authors consider carefully the list and order of authors' names before submitting the manuscript and provide their final list at the time of initial submission. If changes are required, all authors must agree to any such addition, removal or rearrangement of the authors after the submission of the manuscript.

The authors take collective responsibility for the work. Each of them is responsible for ensuring that issues related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are properly investigated and resolved.

Declaration of conflict of interest

All authors must disclose in their manuscript all financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that could be considered as unduly influencing (bias) their work.

All sources of financial support for the conduct of the research and/or the preparation of the article should be disclosed, as well as the role of the sponsor (s), if any, in the design of the research; in data collection, analysis and interpretation; when writing the article; and in the decision to submit the article for publication. If the source of funding has not had such a contribution, this must be stated.

Examples of potential conflicts of interest that need to be disclosed include: employment, advice, share ownership, fees, paid expert certificate, patent applications and/or registrations, and grants or other funding. Potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed as early as possible.

Notification of fundamental errors

After accepting the article, it is sent to the authors who must check it and agree or disagree with it. Corrections only for technical reasons are desirable. Before it is finally printed, the article is uploaded to the journal's website in draft form, with minor adjustments still allowed.

When the author finds a significant error or inaccuracy in his own published work, he is obliged to notify the editor or publisher of the journal in a timely manner and to cooperate with the editor to withdraw or correct the article if the editor deems it necessary. If the editor or publisher learns from a third party that the published article contains an error, the author is obliged to cooperate with the editor, including providing him with evidence when requested.

If there is a suspicion of misconduct or alleged errors, the Publisher will investigate the case. If there are good reasons, the relevant authors will be contacted and will be given the opportunity to resolve the issue. Depending on the case, this may lead to the application of the following measures by the editorial board or the publisher:

- If the manuscript is still under review, it can be returned to the author for corrections and clarifications or to be rejected.
- If the article has already been published online, the following measures are applied depending on the nature and severity of the violation:
 - A clarifying amendment may be published to the article.
 - A notice of the editor or an editorial expression of concern may be attached to the article.
 - In severe cases the article may be suspended.

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