

## Ethical guidelines for publication in *Public Sector Economics*

To ensure the high quality of *Public Sector Economics* (below: *PSE*) and the best practice in publication ethics, the Institute of Public Finance as the publisher has established the following **ethical guidelines** for publication in *PSE*. The guidelines are continuously updated and the publisher makes every effort to align them with best practices for ethical publication in scientific journals as outlined, for example, in the Committee on Publication Ethics (**COPE**) and other professional guidelines in the field of economics and social sciences.

### Journal management

*PSE* is a double-blind peer-reviewed scientific journal **published by the Institute of Public Finance** (below: the publisher).

*PSE* is **published four times a year**: in March, June, September and December.

***PSE*'s objectives** are to disseminate high-quality policy-relevant and applied research in public sector economics, and to promote exchange among researchers in academic and policy analysis institutions in this field.

*PSE* is managed by the **Editorial Board** (below: the editors) comprising the Editor-in-Chief, Co-editors and Associate Editors. The editors meet at least twice each quarter to review the publication line-up and exchange views on the running of *PSE*. They are appointed by and report to the publisher. The staff of the publisher and outside scholars are both eligible to serve as editors. The editors are appointed for four-year terms and may serve up to three full terms. To create a staggering of terms, the publisher may appoint Co-editors for shorter terms. The editors support and promote *PSE* by actively encouraging submissions in the academic and policy analysis communities, reviewing manuscripts, and organising seminars and annual conferences.

The **Editor-in-Chief** is responsible for the general management of *PSE*, including the editorial decision process and day-to-day operational matters. The **Co-editors** advise the Editor-in-Chief on editorial issues and policies and assist her/him in strategic planning and the processing of materials for publication, and together with the **Associate Editors** evaluate the merit of submitted manuscripts, invite and process the referee reports, and coordinate seminars and annual conferences.

The editors nominate, subject to approval by the publisher, a slate of prominent scholars from academic and policy analysis institutions to serve as **Advisory Board** members. The Advisory Board members are appointed for four-year terms and may serve two full terms. The Advisory

Board meets biennially with the editors to review the activities and publications of *PSE*, as well as plans and other strategic issues related to the journal.

*PSE* is financed by the publisher and co-financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of the Republic of Croatia. There is **no submission fee**.

*PSE* provides **open access** to all its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports the exchange of knowledge in the most productive manner and increases readership and citation of authors' work. The publisher ensures that *PSE* is securely archived and accessible on its internet website.

## Ethical guidelines for the publisher

*PSE* adheres to the principle of an **open, transparent, and fair editing process** to ensure the publication of high-quality academic and policy analysis content.

In cases where editors, reviewers, authors or readers of *PSE* become aware of **ethical issues or allegations of ethical misconduct**, the publisher is committed to investigating the case and taking necessary measures to maintain the integrity of *PSE*. For papers considered for publication this may include declining the submission and informing about ethical misconduct Editors-in-chief of journals concerned, as well as responsible individuals from author's or reviewer's institution. For papers already published, the publisher may retract the paper and announce the retraction.

The publisher has developed **policies to handle conflicts of interests** concerning editors, authors and reviewers (see below).

The publisher guarantees **privacy of personal information** for all authors and reviewers. The names and email addresses submitted to this journal site will be used exclusively for processing the publication in *PSE* and will not be made available for any other purpose or to any other party.

The publisher makes provisions for regular **professional training of editors** to keep their editing skills up to date.

The publisher is committed to maintaining the **highest standards of internal quality control** to guarantee the integrity of the *PSE* publishing process.

To encourage **post-publication discussions**, broad professional verification and, if necessary, correction of results, the publisher regularly organises video and in-person seminars of published papers on its online platform or premises in Zagreb. The list and summaries of recent seminars are available at the [Institute of Public Finance news page](#).

## Ethical guidelines for *PSE* editors

### *Editorial process*

All submissions are first evaluated by the Editor-in-Chief and at least one more editor. In the interest of avoiding delays and using resources efficiently, they can determine that a submission does not fit the *PSE*'s objectives or is of insufficient quality or originality to be eventually published. Authors are usually informed within two weeks about the standing of their submission: editorial rejection or initiation of the peer-reviewing process. The editorial rejection cannot be appealed.

All manuscripts that pass the initial editorial review are checked for potential plagiarism with the aid of standard industry software. Those that satisfy the criteria of originality subsequently undergo double-blind peer review. Editors send the manuscript to at least two reviewers in anonymised form. The reviewers are asked to return their reports within four weeks.

After the first round of peer reviews, editors decide about the rejection or revision-and-resubmission and inform the authors.

Revised-and-resubmitted manuscripts, together with detailed responses to reviewers' queries, are sent back to reviewers for the second round of reviews. These follow-up recommendations are expected to be returned within two weeks.

Editors normally decide whether to publish the paper after the second round of reviews. Sometimes several rounds of review and revision may be required. Editors typically ask the authors to make additional changes based on the second round of reviews and their own recommendations before submitting a final version for professional language editing and copyediting.

### *Impartiality and objectivity*

Editors seek manuscripts of high analytical quality in all fields of public sector economics. They evaluate manuscripts and peer reviews solely based on their intellectual content, without regard to the authors' and reviewers' institutional affiliation, citizenship, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, ideology, or political philosophy.

### *Confidentiality and privacy of information*

Editors and *PSE* staff are not allowed to disclose any identifying information about the authors and reviewers to anyone other than the publisher. The editors and the *PSE* staff are not allowed to disclose information about the status of submitted manuscripts to anyone other than the authors, the reviewers, and the publisher.

### *Conflict of interest*

Editors are not allowed to engage in editorial review if they have any conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, personal, or other relevant relationships or connections with any of the authors, institutions, or companies associated with a submitted manuscript.

Editors must ensure that commercial considerations do not affect their editorial decisions.

Manuscripts submitted by the editors and papers they solicit for *PSE* from other authors are subject to the full review process like all other submissions to *PSE*.

Editors may not use unpublished material disclosed in submitted manuscripts in their own research. They are obliged to keep confidential and not use for personal advantage any privileged information or ideas obtained through the editorial review process.

### *Allegations of misconduct*

Editors are obliged to inform the publisher and take adequate steps when ethical complaints about a submitted manuscript or article published in the *PSE* have been presented. They are committed to follow the best practice recommended by the Committee on Publication Ethics (**COPE**) in such cases.

### *Ongoing development of ethical standards*

Editors make consistent efforts to align *PSE* publication policies and ethical standards with the best practices in academic publishing. They take all appropriate steps to train themselves and educate authors and reviewers about the publication ethics and to eliminate instances of academic misconduct.

## Ethical guidelines for *PSE* authors

### *Originality of work*

*PSE* accepts submissions with the understanding that they contain original work not published or submitted for publication in any other journal. Authors should not submit manuscripts describing essentially the same or marginally different research results already published in other journals.

### *Authorship and acknowledgment of contributions*

All those who have made significant contributions should be listed as co-authors. Others who have participated in certain aspects of the preparation of manuscript should be acknowledged.

The authors should ensure that the work of other researchers in the field of study covered in their manuscript is acknowledged in line with academic principles. They should cite the publications that have been influential in determining the nature of their work. Plagiarism in all forms constitutes unethical behaviour and is unacceptable.

Unless otherwise indicated, the author who submitted the manuscript for publication will be considered as the corresponding author and will be responsible for ensuring that all co-authors have approved the submission, re-submissions, and the final version of the paper.

### *PSE data policy*

All data used in manuscripts submitted to *PSE* should be acquired **legally**.

Underlying data should be represented in manuscripts **accurately and objectively**.

Authors of accepted papers that contain empirical work, simulations, or experimental work should be prepared to provide, prior to acceptance, **information about the data, codes, and other details of the computations** sufficient to permit replication, as well as information about access to data and codes. Authors are expected to preserve data and codes for at least five years after publication, and to offer assistance to requests for clarification and replication.

When authors discover a significant **error or inaccuracy** in their work published in *PSE*, they must promptly notify the editors and cooperate on the issue. If the editors learn from a third party that a work published in *PSE* contains a significant error, authors must correct or retract the article promptly, or provide evidence of the correctness of the original analysis. *PSE* uses Crossmark software to indicate whether the content of published papers has been updated, corrected, or retracted.

Information obtained by authors in the course of confidential services such as refereeing manuscripts or reviewing grant applications cannot be used without explicit permission of the persons concerned.

### *Studies involving the participation of human subjects*

PSE does not review or publish biomedical studies based, for example, on pharmaceutical or clinical trials. In studies based on interviews, surveys, experiments, and similar methods involving human subjects, authors are responsible for ensuring that legal rights of survey participants in each jurisdiction are fully respected. These rights include but are not limited to:

- *Obtaining consent from the research participants.* Ethical consent to participate should be voluntary, informed, unambiguous, and documentable. Authors have a particular responsibility to safeguard the freedoms, rights, and human dignity of research participants whose capacity to provide consent is impaired or absent. They must obtain consent from the parents and where appropriate from the children themselves if children participate in research.
- *Transparency about roles and responsibilities.* Authors are responsible for clarifying to the participants the boundaries, expectations, and requirements associated with the research relationship.
- *Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy.* Authors must ensure that anonymity of research participants is fully protected when it has been agreed upon or otherwise is prudent. They must handle the data confidentially and grant survey participants the right to decide how identifiable personal data and other information (e.g. photographs, recordings, other media) gathered during research will be used. They must respect privacy of participants in research, their personal integrity, and protect them from unwanted interventions and unwanted disclosure.
- *Reporting and storing research results.* Authors are responsible for reporting research results to the participants in a clear and responsible way, and for storing and sharing research data and other research material responsibly. If the material is to be stored, archived, or shared, authors must inform the participants clearly about how, in which format, and at which institutions this will be done prior to obtaining consent.
- *Information obtained by authors privately,* including in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, must not be used or reported without explicit permission from the source.

### *Disclosure statements*

Authors are requested to disclose **all sources of financial support** for the research described in their manuscript, including grants and other institutional and private funding. The disclosure requirement also includes in-kind support, such as obtaining access to data. If they received no research funding, they should state so.

Authors are requested to disclose any financial or other potential **conflicts of interest** that might be perceived as influencing the results or interpretation of their analysis. Examples

include, but are not limited to: employment, consultancies, unpaid positions, asset ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent applications or registrations, and other financial or commercial interests directly or indirectly related to the results of the study.

### *Ethical standards for use of AI*

*PSE* recognises the increased use of AI tools in academic research. We follow a consensus among scientific journals and recommendations of the Committee on Publication Ethics (**COPE**) by considering that AI tools cannot meet the requirements for authorship as they cannot take responsibility for submitted work. Authors are fully accountable for the originality, validity and integrity of the content of their submissions.

Authors are expected to use only the language bases of AI tools, not their knowledge bases. Specifically, authors **may use AI tools in an assistive role** for the following language tasks if they wish:

- Improving language quality, flow of the text, stylistic polishing, grammar checking;
- Proofreading and obtaining feedback on content and structure of parts of text;
- Summarising basic concepts.

Authors are **not allowed to use knowledge bases of AI tools** in their submissions, e.g.:

- Asking AI to suggest a theoretical framework or research project design;
- Asking AI to summarise specific texts;
- Producing full drafts of manuscript from input provided by authors;
- Drafting and structuring content from scratch;
- Ghost-writing all or part of manuscript;
- Inputting the manuscript title or confidential information into an AI platform as a prompt.

If authors use AI in any of the permitted ways in any stage of their work, they should acknowledge its use and reference in acknowledgements section the following information:

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- Publisher (company that made the AI system, e.g. OpenAI);
- URL of the AI system;
- Brief description (single sentence) of context in which the tool was used.

*PSE* uses industry standard software to detect when a text was generated by an AI writing tool. Misuse of AI in manuscripts submitted to *PSE* (e.g., by using AI for any of the tasks listed above that are not allowed) or failure to acknowledge its use may result in rejection of the submission or retraction of a published article.

### *Copyright material and legal responsibility*

Authors guarantee that the paper does not violate any copyright rules, e.g. on maps, drawings, literary quotes, lyrics and other copyright material used in their study.

Authors guarantee that ethical guidelines for publication in *PSE* have been followed. The publisher will not be held legally responsible should there be any claims for compensation arising from the publication of authors' work.

### **Ethical guidelines for *PSE* reviewers**

*PSE* reviews should be conducted **impartially and objectively**. *PSE* reviewers should base their comments on the manuscript's scientific merit, originality, quality of writing, the relevance to *PSE* objectives, and – should the reviewers come into possession of relevant information outside the *PSE* – without regard to the authors' institutional affiliation, citizenship, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, ideology or political philosophy.

*PSE* reviewers should **respect the intellectual independence of the author**. Personal criticism of the authors is inappropriate. Comments should be courteous and capable of withstanding public scrutiny.

Reviewer comments should acknowledge the positive aspects of the manuscript, identify negative aspects constructively, and indicate the improvements needed. The reviewers should explain and support their judgment clearly enough for editors and authors to understand the basis of the comments. The purpose of peer review in *PSE* is not to demonstrate the reviewer's proficiency in identifying flaws.

*PSE* reviewers should notify the editors promptly if they feel they do not have adequate expertise to provide an authoritative assessment of the research reported in a manuscript. They should also notify the editors if they cannot meet the standard four-week deadline for review in *PSE*.

Reviewers are asked to submit their reports on the standard *PSE* online review form and to add a separate file with detailed comments if they wish.

*PSE* reviewers should call to the editors' attention any substantial similarity or overlap between the manuscript under consideration and any other published paper of which they have personal knowledge, as well as any relevant published work that has not been cited by the authors.



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*PSE* reviewers should notify the editors and excuse themselves from the review process if they have **conflicts of interest** in a manuscript resulting from competitive, collaborative, personal, or other relationships or connections with suspected authors, companies, or institutions associated with the manuscript.

Reviews in *PSE* are **not remunerated**. *PSE* by default continuously updates the **list of reviewers** on its website. Reviewers may request not to be listed if they prefer so.

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