

CODE OF ETHICS
for scientific research activity within
National Institute for Research and Development in Informatics -
ICI Bucharest

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Contents

1. General provisions

- 1.1 Purpose
- 1.2. Scope of application
- 1.3. Importance of RDI activities
- 1.4. The role and conduct of the researcher

2. Regulatory framework

3. Definitions and terminology

4. Ethical principles in research activities

- 4.1. General ethical principles
- 4.2. Ethical principles in research activity

5. Rules of conduct in RDI

6. Breaches of research ethics

7. Ethics committee

- 7.1. Structure, composition, attributions
- 7.2. Procedure for managing complaints

8. Sanctions

9. Final provisions

- 9.1. Information measures
- 9.2. Review and updating the Code of Ethics
- 9.3. Entry into force

1. General Provisions

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to define the ethical framework that ensures the research staff of ICI Bucharest carry out their duties with professionalism, objectivity, honesty, and loyalty.

The Code of Ethics sets out the principles, rules, responsibilities, and procedures that guide the activities within ICI Bucharest, so that scientific research and innovation are conducted in accordance with current legislation, the requirements of the European Research Area, and the ethical principles recognized by both the national and international scientific community.

Proper conduct is based on a set of disciplined behavior norms and clear procedures designed to ensure their observance, including compliance with the law, the guarantee of freedom in science and research, respect for the principles of good scientific practice, and the assumption of responsibilities in professional and academic activity.

1.2 Scope of application

This Code of Ethics is mandatory for all institute personnel. Every employee involved in scientific research is required to uphold the ethical standards necessary to fulfill the institute's mission.

The Code of Ethics promotes the values and principles that guide research activities, establishing general guidelines for conducting specific activities in accordance with the highest ethical standards, and regulating the norms of professional conduct applicable to all employees of the institute.

1.3. Importance of RDI activities

The research, development, and innovation (RDI) activities carried out by the staff are of national interest and include:

- the development of scientific knowledge, including through the publication of scientific articles;
- participation in the transfer of knowledge and technologies across all areas of economic and social life;
- the efficient valorization of research and development results in support of the sustainable development of society.

1.4 The role and conduct of the researcher

Research and development personnel have the responsibility to assimilate, apply, and generate new knowledge, by employing best practices in their field of activity. In the exercise of their profession, researchers are expected to uphold the mission of scientific research, as well as the rules of ethics and professional deontology.

2. Regulatory framework

The Code of Ethics has been developed with consideration of both national and international regulations in the field, as well as the European Union legislation and standards concerning ethics in scientific research, namely:

- Law no. 183/2024 on the status of research, development, and innovation personnel;
- Law no. 53/2003 – Labor Code;
- Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, republished;
- Law no. 167/2020 amending and supplementing Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, as well as supplementing Article 6 of Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men;
- Government Ordinance no. 57/16.08.2002 on scientific research and technological development, as approved by Law no. 324/08.07.2003, with subsequent amendments and completions;
- Government Decision no. 1621/2003 on the organization and functioning of the National Institute for Research and Development in Informatics – ICI Bucharest, with subsequent amendments and completions;
- Guide to Integrity in Scientific Research – Ministry of Education and Research, National Council for Ethics of Scientific Research, Technological Development and Innovation, Bucharest, 12 November 2020;
- Council Recommendation C/2023/1640 of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation, and entrepreneurship talents in Europe.

3. Definitions and terminology

- a) Self-plagiarism – The republication of substantial portions of one's previous publications, including translations, without proper reference or citation of the original work.
- b) Co-author of a publication – Any individual listed as an author of a scientific publication.
- c) Fabrication of results or data – The reporting of fictitious results or data that are not the actual outcome of a RDI activity.
- d) Falsification of results or data – The selective reporting or omission of undesired data or results, manipulation of visual representations or illustrations, alteration of experimental or numerical apparatus to obtain desired data without reporting such changes, with the purpose of distorting scientific truth.
- e) Plagiarism – The presentation, as one's own scientific creation or contribution in a written work, including in electronic format, of texts, ideas, demonstrations, data, theories, results, or scientific methods taken from other authors' works – also

including electronic format – without proper acknowledgment and reference to the original sources.

4. Ethical principles in research activities

4.1. General ethical principles

Honesty – A fundamental ethical principle, the absence of which can negatively affect both the researcher's reputation and the image of the institute. For research activity to be considered honest, there must be a real correspondence between the researcher's conduct and the way it is publicly presented. Additionally, research – whether individual or institutional – must align with the positive expectations associated with scientific knowledge and rely on methods and practices that adhere to generally accepted goals and standards in the scientific community.

Responsibility – An essential principle requiring every researcher to take accountability for their actions and decisions, within their work. This involves awareness of the consequences of one's actions, adherence to institutional rules, and commitment to the integrity and quality of the performed activities.

Verifiability – A fundamental principle for ensuring credibility and cooperation in research. For research to be verifiable, public presentation of the methods, steps, and challenges related to the collection, processing, and interpretation of data must be clear and accessible so that any other researcher can understand the scientific process, regardless of whether they intend to replicate it. This principle is supported by transparency in work methods, access to resources, and validation through alternative methods or data sources.

Validation of knowledge – A core scientific research principle that requires results to be related to existing knowledge in the field, relevant external criteria, and established theories. Measurements and interpretations should reflect all dimensions or aspects of the investigated concept, thus contributing to the consolidation, refinement, or reevaluation of scientific knowledge in a coherent and justified manner.

Impartiality and Non-Discrimination – Fundamental principles that require researchers to adopt an objective and equidistant attitude in scientific activity. Researchers must refrain from political, economic, religious, or other types of influence and treat all individuals and ideas fairly, without prejudice or discrimination, promoting a respectful, fair, and intellectually free academic environment.

Moral integrity – A crucial principle requiring all researchers to act with integrity and dignity in all professional matters. It is strictly forbidden for any person to request or accept, directly or indirectly, for themselves or others, any form of advantage or benefit – moral or material – that could compromise the objectivity, independence, or ethical standards of research.

Freedom of thought and expression – An important principle that guarantees researchers the right to express their opinions and ideas freely, in compliance with the rule of law and ethical and moral standards. Researchers have the right to engage in academic debate, promote innovation, and express their viewpoints in a respectful and responsible manner, thereby contributing to intellectual diversity and scientific progress.

Confidentiality – An essential principle requiring researchers to protect confidential information in their possession and to refrain from accessing such information unless explicitly authorized under applicable laws. It is prohibited to use confidential information for purposes unrelated to professional activities, ensuring data protection and trust in scientific research.

Justice and fairness – Core values consistently promoted by ICI Bucharest, which always adopts a fair attitude toward all its members. The institute firmly rejects any form of discrimination or exploitation, whether direct or subtle.

Discrimination or unequal treatment based on non-professional criteria – such as race, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, and others – is unacceptable and seriously undermines individual fundamental rights. Such practices disturb equal opportunity and are prohibited within the institute, regardless of their form.

The principle of justice and fairness also implies that the right not to be discriminated against on racial, ethnic, religious, political, or other grounds cannot be used to justify or create forms of reverse discrimination. Maintaining a balance and fair treatment is essential for a just and equitable working environment.

Transparency – A core ethical principle that significantly contributes to ensuring equal opportunities in competitions and fair access to resources. At ICI Bucharest, transparency is practiced and encouraged by providing all relevant information to those entitled to receive it so they can make informed decisions.

ICI Bucharest guarantees transparency regarding conditions and rules for recruitment competitions, periodic staff evaluations, interviews, and promotion procedures. It also ensures that information related to evaluation criteria, their application, and the conduct of competitions is available and accessible to all, and that job responsibilities are clearly communicated to selected candidates.

Respect for intellectual property and integrity – Preventing fraud and plagiarism, ensuring the recognition and protection of copyright and original creations.

4.2. Ethical principles in research activities

The work of research and development personnel must be conducted in accordance with the following basic principles:

The principle of competence - defines the professional capacity required to carry out scientific research activity, stipulating that only persons with the appropriate knowledge, skills and training may participate in such activities.

The principle of objectivity - covers both the way in which the object of scientific research should be analysed and the researcher's attitude towards it, requiring an impartial, detached and rigorous approach, based on scientific methods and verified arguments, independent of the researcher's personal beliefs or interests.

The principle of truthfulness - implies strict adherence to reality at all stages of the research activity, including in the preparation of documents required for national or international competitions, prohibiting any form of falsification, exaggeration or intentional omission of information.

The methodical principle - refers to the rigorous and appropriate use of scientific methodology in the research process, ensuring the correlation between the requirements of objectivisation of data on the object under study and the need to discover the scientific truth. This principle implies the conscious and systematic application of appropriate methods to obtain valid and relevant results.

The principle of demonstration - states that any statement, conclusion or result derived from scientific research must be supported by clear, verifiable and rigorous evidence, confirming both the veracity of the statement and its direct connection to the object under study as an intrinsic feature of the object.

The correlation principle - requires that research results should be related to existing data in the field of science in question, as well as to relevant information in related fields of science, in order to integrate knowledge and develop a coherent and interdisciplinary perspective on the subject under study.

The principle of evaluation of results - refers to the application of rigorous and transparent methods for analysing the results obtained from scientific research activity, ensuring the objective assessment of their value, relevance and validity, and their responsible use in academic, professional or social contexts.

Principle of utility - establishes that research should aim not only at the generation of theoretical knowledge but also at the practical applicability of the results obtained, thus contributing to scientific and technological progress and to the development of society as a whole.

The psychomoral principle - refers both to the inner profile of the researcher and to the way in which the researcher carries out his or her work, implying seriousness, honesty and ethical commitment. This principle emphasises the researcher's dual responsibility - scientific and moral - for the quality and accuracy of the results obtained, but also for the impact that the theoretical or practical application of these results may have on society.

The key values that define essential ethical behaviours and standards in the work of the RDI are the following:

- **Freedom of scientific research** - free access to information sources and protection of research from external influences

Freedom of scientific research is guaranteed through access to information sources, the promotion of the free exchange of ideas, independence from political influences in RDI activities, and the absence of censorship of scientific results.

- **Co-operation and collegiality in research** - free exchange of ideas, protection against scientific error and ensuring transparency

Co-operation and collegiality in scientific research groups should facilitate the exchange of ideas, constructive criticism and mutual verification of results, thus providing protection against scientific error and fraud. This process helps to ensure transparency of results and to increase the quality and value of scientific outputs.

- **Relevance and impact of research results** - linking quantitative assessment to originality and effectiveness of research

The quantitative criteria used to assess the results of scientific research must be harmonised with qualitative criteria aimed at the originality and efficiency of the knowledge process.

- **Traceability** - preservation and archiving of scientific data

The primary data underlying the launch of the scientific product on the market must be securely stored for the entire period determined by the institute in accordance with archiving regulations.

- **Research replicability** - reproducibility of results by other research groups

The primary data must be structured in such a way as to allow replication of the scientific product in other research groups, thus ensuring transparency and validity of results.

- **Debate ethics** - treating differences of opinion and interpretation as an integral part of the scientific process

Conflicting data, differences in experimental or practical approach, differences in interpretation of data and diverse opinions are inherent to the R&D process and are not violations of good research conduct.

5. Rules of good conduct in RDI

The rules of good conduct in RDI include:

- a) Rules of good conduct in research, development and innovation;

- b) Rules of good conduct for scientific communication, publication, dissemination and popularisation, including in the context of applications for funding submitted in the framework of publicly funded project competitions;
- c) Rules of good conduct in the activity of institutional evaluation and monitoring of RDI, evaluation and monitoring of RDI projects and evaluation of individuals for the award of degrees, titles, positions, prizes, awards, honours, bonuses, attestations or certificates in RDI activities;
- d) Rules of good conduct in managerial positions in the RDI activities;
- e) Rules of good conduct relating to respect for the human being and human dignity, the protection and restoration of the natural environment and ecological balance.

6. Breaches of good conduct research

(1) The breaches of good conduct set out in Chapter 5. a), insofar as they do not constitute offences under criminal law, include:

- a) fabrication of results or data and their presentation as experimental data, as data obtained by calculations or numerical computer simulations or as data or results obtained by analytical calculations or deductive reasoning;
- b) falsifying experimental data, data obtained by calculation or numerical computer simulation, or data or results obtained by analytical calculation or deductive reasoning;
- c) deliberately obstructing, hindering or sabotaging the work of other persons, including by unreasonably blocking access to the RDI facilities, damaging, destroying or tampering with experimental apparatus, equipment, documents, computer programs, electronic data required by other persons for the conduct, realisation or completion of the RDI activities;
- d) obstructing the work of an ethics committee, a review committee or the National Council for the Ethics of Scientific Research, Technological Development and Innovation (CNECSDTI), during the investigation of deviations from good conduct in the subordinate RDI activities;
- e) failure to comply with the legal provisions and procedures intended to comply with the rules of good conduct in the RDI activities, provided for by Law 183 / 2024, including failure to implement the sanctions established by the ethics committees or by the CNECSDTI.

(2) The breaches of good conduct set out in Chapter 5, letter b), in so far as they do not constitute offences under criminal law, include:

- a) plagiarism;
- b) self-plagiarism;
- c) the inclusion in the list of authors of a scientific publication of one or more co-authors who have not contributed significantly to the publication or the exclusion of co-authors who have contributed significantly to the publication;
- d) inclusion in the list of authors of a scientific publication of a person without that person's agreement;

- e) unauthorized publication or dissemination by authors of unpublished scientific results, hypotheses, theories or methods;
- f) the inclusion of false information relating to the RDI activities in the applications for grants or funding, in the applications for habilitation, or in the applications for competitions or examinations for RDI positions.

(3) The breaches of good conduct set out in Chapter 5., lit. c), in so far as they do not constitute offences under criminal law, include:

- a) failure to assess situations of conflict of interest or incompatibilities or violation of the legal regime of conflict of interest and incompatibilities in carrying out or participating in evaluations;
- b) evaluation fraud;
- c) disregard of confidentiality in the evaluation;
- d) discrimination in assessments on the basis of age, ethnicity, gender, social origin, political or religious orientation, sexual orientation or other types of discrimination, except for affirmative measures provided by law.

(4) The breaches of the standards of good conduct set out in Chapter 5., lit. d), to the extent that they do not constitute offences under criminal law, include:

- a) abuse of authority to obtain authorship or co-authorship of publications by subordinates;
- b) abuse of authority in order to obtain salary, remuneration or other material benefits from RDI projects directed or coordinated by subordinates;
- c) misuse of authority to obtain authorship or co-authorship of publications by subordinates or to obtain salary, remuneration or other material benefits for spouses, relatives or relatives up to and including the second degree;
- d) abuse of authority to impose one's own theories, concepts or findings unjustifiably on subordinates;
- e) obstructing the work of an ethics committee, a review committee or the CNECSDTI during analysing misconduct in the activities of RDI under its authority;
- f) failure to comply with the legal provisions and procedures designed to ensure compliance with the rules of good conduct in RDI activities, including failure to implement the sanctions laid down by the ethics committees or by the CNECSDTI.

(5) The following situations may also give rise to ethical liability by association for misconduct in RDI activities:

- a) knowledge of misconduct by others and failure to notify the ethics committee or CNECSDTI;
- b) co-authoring publications containing falsified or fabricated data;
- c) failure to fulfil legal and contractual obligations, including those relating to the contract of office or grant contracts, in the exercise of management or coordination duties in relation to RDI activities.

(6) The following do not constitute misconduct: contradictory data, differences in theoretical, experimental or practical conceptions, material errors of citation, differences in the interpretation of data, differences of opinion, which are factors specific to RDI.

(7) In the RDI activities, conflict of interest arises in the following situations:

- a) simultaneous holding of positions by individuals who are spouses, relatives by affinity, or blood relatives up to and including the third degree, in such a way that one is placed in a direct position of authority, supervision, institutional evaluation, or hierarchical control over the other at any level within the institute;
- b) participation as a member in doctoral committees, evaluation committees, or selection boards, in cases where the decision affects spouses, blood relatives, or relatives by affinity up to and including the third degree;
- c) the participation, within the same legally established committee, of individuals who are spouses, relatives by blood or affinity up to and including the third degree;
- d) the participation of an individual who is a member of committees or councils of the relevant ministry in the evaluation of a matter related to ICI Bucharest, of which they are a member of the research community;
- e) other specific situations established in normative acts applicable to evaluation procedures, including in the information packages of project competitions, in compliance with the legal regulations in force.

(8) A person may not participate directly, as an expert evaluator, or indirectly, by making individual decisions regarding the selection or exclusion of evaluators assigned to assess a research organization, a project, a proposal, or a candidate, if that person is listed as staff within the evaluated research organization, project, or proposal, or in any other project or proposal submitted under the same funding call, tender, or request for proposals. Likewise, participation is prohibited if the person has the following relationship with the candidate or with individuals listed as staff in the evaluated projects, proposals, or research organizations: spouse, relative by affinity, or blood relative up to and including the second degree.

(9) The analysis of complaints concerning breaches of good conduct in the RDI activities is carried out in two stages:

- a) analysis at the level of ICI Bucharest, referred to as the first stage, which is carried out in accordance with subchapter 7.2;
- b) analysis at CNECSDTI level, referred to as the second stage, in compliance with the legislation in force.

7. Ethics Commission

7.1. Structure, composition, attributions

(1) The structure and composition of the Ethics Commission shall be proposed by the Scientific Council and approved by Decision of the General Director.

(2) The Ethics Commission is composed of 5 persons: a Commission Chairperson, 4 members who will be assisted by a Commission Secretary. The dismissal of members of the Ethics Commission is done for a reasoned decision by the General Director on the proposal of the Scientific Council. Resignation from membership of the Ethics Commission shall be by reasoned request to the General Director.

(3) Persons holding any of the following positions within the Institute may not be members of the Ethics Commission: General Director, Chairperson of the Administration Board or Chairperson of the Scientific Council.

(4) Responsibilities of the Ethics Commission:

a) monitors compliance with the ethical codes specific to the field;

b) appoints review panels to examine notifications regarding breaches of good conduct in RDI activities, brought to its attention through complaints or self-reports.

7.2. Procedure for managing complaints

(1) The ethics committee and the review committee keep the identity of the complainant confidential, in accordance with the procedures detailed in the Code of Ethics.

(2) The review committee draws up a report within 60 days of the date of receipt of the complaint, which is approved by the ethics committee within 30 days of receipt of the review committee's report; it is communicated to the complainant in writing and it is made public on the website of ICI Bucharest within 10 calendar days of the date of the final judgement of the ethics committee's decision by uncontested appeal to the CNECSDTI or of the date of the final judgement of the CNECSDTI, by which the appeal against the report approved by the ethics committee has been settled, or from the date of the final judgement of the court of law, by which the application for administrative contentious proceedings has been settled, having as its object the cancellation of the report approved by the ethics committee and/or the CNECSDTI decision by which the appeal against the report approved by the ethics committee has been settled, as the case may be.

(3) The period provided for in paragraph (2) shall be suspended pending the receipt of views/responses/documents from the parties involved in the complaint.

(4) The report shall remain posted on the website of ICI Bucharest for a maximum duration equal to the longest duration of the sanctions adopted, but not less than 2 years.

(5) In the event of a breach of good conduct in the RDI activities, the report shall mention the guilty persons, as well as one or more of the sanctions provided for in sub-chapter 6.2, paragraph (1). The guilty parties may be persons other than those named in the complaint.

(6) The report of the review committee is endorsed by the legal counsellor of ICI Bucharest. The research organisation is legally responsible for the decisions and the work of the review committee.

(7) The report of the review committee, approved by the ethics committee, may be contested before the CNECSDTI by the person or persons found guilty or by the author of the complaint. The review committee will forward to the CNECSDTI all the documentation on which the contested report was based.

(8) If an appeal has not been submitted to the CNECSDTI within 20 working days of the date of the communication provided for in paragraph (2), the sanctions determined by the review committee shall be implemented by the head of the research organisation, as appropriate, within 60 calendar days of the date of communication of the report.

8. Sanctions

(1) Sanctions that may be applied to ICI Bucharest employees by the management of the Institute for violation of the provisions of this Code of Ethics are as follows:

- a) written warning;
- b) definitive withdrawal and/or correction of all works published in violation of the rules of good conduct;
- c) reduction of the basic salary by a maximum of 20%, for a maximum period of 6 months, cumulated, where appropriate, with the management, guidance and control allowance and the allowances related to the R&D function;
- d) suspension, for a determined period, ranging from one to five years, of the right to register for an exam or competition for obtaining a higher professional grade or to be appointed to a management, guidance, supervisory or supervisory position or membership in examination or competition selection committees;
- e) dismissal from a leadership position within the research organisation;
- f) disciplinary termination of the individual employment contract.

(2) Sanctions are intended to prevent misconduct and to preserve the reputation of the Institute. They will be applied in accordance with the provisions of the Labor Code and may be cumulative where appropriate.

(3) The sanctions provided for in this code do not absolve the offenders from the application of other legal rules in force. If it is considered that certain situations meet the constituent elements of criminal offences, the management of the Institute will refer the matter to the competent bodies.

9. Final provisions

9.1. Information measures

The Code of Ethics will be made available to all employees by publishing it on the Institute's website in the Rules and Regulations section. It is the responsibility of each employee to go through this Code of Ethics and to comply with the regulations stipulated in it.

9.2. Reviewing and updating the Code of Ethics

Any additions and/or amendments to the Code of Ethics are the responsibility of the Scientific Council, which, through its members, is obliged to keep the provisions of the Code of Ethics up to date and applicable. The Code will be revised whenever relevant legislative changes occur or when the Scientific Council deems it necessary to improve the content in order to ensure compliance with national regulations and ethical standards in force.

9.3 Entry into force

This Code of Ethics will be approved in the Scientific Council and endorsed in the Steering Committee. The Code of Ethics will come into force after approval by the Administration Council (board of trustees) of ICI Bucharest.