



INTRODUCTION

The Association internationale de recherche en entrepreneuriat et PME (AIREPME) was founded in 1996. Its mission is to support and promote the communication and publication of French-language research on entrepreneurship and SMEs. With this in mind, AIREPME actively promotes networking and synergy between francophone and francophile researchers active in one or other of these fields.

AIREPME sponsors the Revue internationale PME (RIPME). Founded in 1988, this French-language journal publishes empirical and theoretical articles contributing to the body of knowledge on entrepreneurship and SMEs.

This code of ethics and deontology contains the main ethical principles or values that guide all those who wish to participate in any of the activities organized or sponsored - in whole or in part - by AIREPME, in particular, publishing in RIPME or presenting a paper at CIFEPME. It also contains the ethical principles or rules of conduct they undertake to respect. These ethical and deontological principles, therefore, apply to all those who wish to take part in an AIREPME activity, whether or not they are members of the association. It is intended for them in their role as researchers or producers of knowledge, whether in the context of empirical or non-empirical work they have carried out, but also in the role of reviewer they may be called upon to play, or as those responsible for an evaluation process.

This code was drawn up after extensive formal and informal consultation with AIREPME managers and members. It also draws on the content of numerous codes of ethics and professional conduct from learned associations, in particular the Academy of Management (AOM), and academic institutions. In addition to this introduction, it is divided into three parts, the first dealing with the ethical principles that should guide all participants in AIREPME activities, the second with the deontological principles that they undertake to respect, and lastly, on procedures for submitting and handling complaints, including confidentiality aspects.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Ethical principles are the key values to which participants in AIREPME activities adhere. These principles constitute a set of ideals that inspire and guide those who participate in AIREPME activities.

- **Integrity**

The most fundamental of these values is research integrity, which essentially refers to honesty and transparency on the part of researchers, reviewers, and those responsible for evaluation, between the preparation of a research project and the communication or publication of its results. This ideal excludes any deliberate conduct intended to delude or mislead others, in particular by making false statements or omitting important information about the identity or contribution of the authors of a research project, about the authorship or originality of the words, ideas or results contained in the text, or about the procedure followed and the results obtained.

- **Respect**

Respect for ideas and respect for people. Participants in AIREPME activities show the greatest openness to the different epistemological, theoretical, and methodological perspectives adopted by other researchers. They also recognize the contribution of previous work - that of others, but also their own - that is relevant to their current work. Finally, oral and written exchanges between researchers participating in the activities of this association, whether established or in training, are imbued with tolerance and courtesy; they are conducted without condescension, malice, or contempt.

- **Responsibilities**

Participants in AIREPME activities are aware that they are part of a community of researchers towards which they have responsibilities. These include, first and foremost, being familiar with the contents of this code of ethics and professional conduct. They also have a responsibility to give up some time to evaluate texts submitted for publication in RIPME or presentation at CIFEPME, if asked, and to do so according to the rules of the art. In addition, they are not insensitive to ethically dubious behavior by other participants in AIREPME activities and do not hesitate to report them to the head of the Ethics Committee, discussed below, particularly in cases of apparently serious misconduct or misconduct that does not lend itself to satisfactory informal resolution between the persons concerned.

PRINCIPLES OF DEONTOLOGY

The following deontological principles refer to the rules of conduct to which those wishing to participate in AIREPME activities related to the production, evaluation, and dissemination of knowledge must adhere. Failure to abide by these principles may result in sanctions, including exclusion from this association and a ban on submitting a text for publication in RIPME or for communication to CIFEPME for any length of time.

Researchers

- Participants in AIREPME activities do not invent or falsify data or other information in their work. They acknowledge that they have written the texts they sign independently and without technological assistance.
- Participants in AIREPME activities do not plagiarize. In other words, they clearly indicate the source of any words, ideas, results, or other information they borrow from someone else's work. When it's a full quotation, they must of course place it in quotation marks or indent it, and the author must indicate the page on which it appears in the document from which it was taken, as required by RIPME or CIFEPME.
- Nor do participants in AIREPME activities plagiarize themselves, a practice usually referred to as "self-plagiarism". In other words, they very explicitly mention the source of words, ideas, results, or any other information originating from work they have already produced themselves and disseminated, so that the reader can clearly distinguish between what is original in the submitted text and what is not.

- Even more generally, participants in AIREPME activities recognize that a text of which they are the principal author or co-author and which has already been published in a journal (or book), in the same language or not, may not be published in RIPME or communicated to CIFEPME, unless written authorization has been obtained from the persons in charge and explicit mention has been made of this situation. Similarly, they recognize that a text (or essentially the same results or ideas) that has already been presented at a conference (CIFEPME or other) and which appears in the proceedings of that conference can no longer be the subject of a communication at CIFEPME unless the first communication was presented in a language other than French and there is an explicit mention of this situation, an essential condition for there to be no self-plagiarism. Subsequently, a generally improved version of this text can of course be submitted for publication in a journal (or book). In the event of ambiguity, participants in AIREPME activities do not hesitate to discuss the situation with the relevant officials (journal director, head of the congress scientific committee, head of the ethics committee, etc.).
- Participants in AIREPME activities consider that to be principal author or co-author of a text (journal article, paper, volume chapter, etc.), they must have made a substantial contribution to it in terms of ideas; at the same time, they recognize that all those who have made such a contribution, even if they are deceased, must appear as author or co-author of the text, and in an order reflecting the actual contribution of each, including that of students unless otherwise indicated.
- Participants in AIREPME activities may submit a text for publication in RIPME or presentation at CIFEPME only after obtaining the agreement of any other person who may be the principal author or co-author of the text.
- Participants in AIREPME activities do not simultaneously submit the same text to more than one journal or conference, partly because they are aware of the resources that must be mobilized to evaluate a text. They wait for the official response following the evaluation process before, if negative, submitting the text elsewhere.
- Participants in AIREPME activities consider that submission of a text for publication in RIPME or participation in CIFEPME constitutes a commitment on their part not to withdraw the text during the evaluation process and, if accepted, to publish it in RIPME or participate in CIFEPME. A text accepted for CIFEPME may not be presented at the congress by anyone who is not its principal author or one of its co-authors.
- Participants in AIREPME activities must indicate the precise source of any financial contribution to the realization of their research and must do so at the same time as they submit the text for publication in RIPME or presentation at CIFEPME. If there is a confidentiality agreement that does not allow disclosure of this source, there must be an explicit indication to this effect.

Reviewers

- Participants in AIREPME activities seek to make themselves available to evaluate texts submitted to them by the RIPME editorial committee or the CIFEPME scientific committee, whenever possible.

- Participants in AIREPME activities evaluate the texts submitted to them with integrity and professionalism, i.e., their assessment is based solely on the quality of the work, without regard, in particular, to the relationship they may have with the presumed authors of these texts, their affiliation with a particular institution or research group, their more or less prestigious status, their nationality or the theoretical or paradigmatic orientation they adopt.
- Participants in AIREPME activities evaluate the texts submitted to them in a serious, courteous, and constructive manner, and within the prescribed deadlines.
- Participants in AIREPME activities refuse to evaluate a text when they are or feel incompetent to do so, in conflict of interest¹, or unable to maintain sufficient critical distance to evaluate with probity a text of which they would be persuaded to know the identity of the principal author or one of the co-authors.
- Reviewers undertake to pursue the evaluation process (revised text), even if the editorial decision was contrary to their recommendation, as objectively as possible.
- Participants in AIREPME activities maintain absolute confidentiality regarding the texts they evaluate or have evaluated, in particular with their authors or co-authors if they know or come to know their identity.
- Participants in AIREPME activities do not delegate the evaluation of a text to someone else (colleague, student, etc.) without having obtained authorization to do so from the person in charge.
- Participants in AIREPME activities make a point of informing the person responsible for the evaluation of a text submitted to them of anything that appears to them to infringe on the present code of ethics and deontology. Texts submitted to RIPME are first evaluated by a member of the editorial team. Texts deemed "relevant" and in keeping with the journal's mission are subjected to a similarity analysis (plagiarism detection) and, if deemed to have integrity, then submitted to a double-blind arbitration process involving three reviewers.

Person in charge of the evaluation process

Texts submitted to RIPME are first evaluated by a member of the editorial team. Texts judged to be 'relevant' and in line with the journal's mission are subjected to a similarity analysis (plagiarism detection) and, if they are deemed to have integrity, are then submitted to a double-blind refereeing process involving three reviewers.

- Participants in AIREPME activities who are responsible for an evaluation of texts submitted for publications (in particular, representatives of the RIPME editorial board) or communications (in particular, the head of the CIFEPME scientific committee) do not consciously demonstrate any personal or ideological bias in favor of accepting or rejecting a text that they must have evaluated and for which they must make the final decision. Among other things, they do not choose reviewers based on the favorable or unfavorable judgment they expect to receive from

¹ See the definition given by HCERES : https://www.hceres.fr/fr/web_tv/le-conflit-dinterets-au-hceres

them, and they do not accept or reject a text for reasons other than the quality of the work presented (personal relationship with the author, more or less prestigious status of the author or the institution with which he or she is affiliated, personal prejudices based on the author's gender, race, religion or nationality, etc.).

- Participants in AIREPME activities who are responsible for an evaluation ensure that the names of the authors and reviewers of a text remain strictly confidential throughout the review process. Thereafter, they never reveal the names of the reviewers of a particular text, whether or not it has been accepted, nor those of the authors whose texts have not been accepted.
- Participants in AIREPME activities who are responsible for an evaluation shall proceed diligently to have the texts submitted to them evaluated, within the deadlines usually announced to authors.

PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING AND HANDLING COMPLAINTS

AIREPME believes that, whenever possible, the informal resolution of an ethical problem is preferable to the filing of a formal complaint. Therefore, where appropriate, and in particular where a solution that is truly satisfactory or constructive in the eyes of those concerned is possible, AIREPME encourages anyone who believes they have been a victim or witness of misconduct to contact and discuss the matter with the person alleged to have committed the misconduct in the course of an AIREPME activity. If a satisfactory informal resolution of the problem does not seem possible or seems inappropriate, AIREPME invites any person, whether or not participating in an activity organized or sponsored in whole or in part by the association, to file a formal complaint with the Ethics Committee. In exceptional cases, the head of the ethics committee may file a complaint on behalf of AIREPME. The procedure for submitting a complaint is straightforward and will be dealt with as quickly as possible. In this code, this designation includes the principal author as well as any co-authors.

Deontology Committee

This committee is made up of three people who have been members of AIREPME for at least two years. The chairperson is appointed by the members of the Board of Directors for a four-year term, renewable once only. The other two members of this committee, plus a substitute member who only intervenes in exceptional circumstances, are also appointed by this Board of Directors, but for a period of two years, renewable twice. These individuals share to the highest degree the principles of ethics and professional conduct at the heart of this code and they are also committed to defending and even promoting them.

The responsibilities of this committee are essentially to examine and decide on complaints received. All decisions, particularly those relating to sanctions, are taken by a two-thirds majority. The head of this committee is also the person who responds to any request for information or clarification of an ethical nature. He or she may also provide informal advice to any person who makes an allegation of misconduct, or who is the subject of such an allegation.

Submitting a complaint

Complaints are normally forwarded to the person in charge of the Deontology Committee, either by e-mail or by post. If an allegation of misconduct has first been forwarded to the person in charge of an evaluation process, in particular the RIPME editorial board or the CIFEPME scientific committee, the

latter will forward it directly to the person in charge of the ethics committee. When an informal resolution of the problem seems unlikely or even desirable, the head of the ethics committee begins by ensuring that the complaint is "admissible". This means checking whether :

- it concerns conduct related to an activity organized or sponsored - in whole or in part - by AIREPME ;
- it relates to conduct covered by the deontology principles of this code;
- it lends itself to rigorous scrutiny, which would be the case, for example, of an allegation of plagiarism, self-plagiarism, or simultaneous multiple submissions;
- it is accompanied by any supporting documentation (if necessary, the head of the ethics committee may ask the complainant for additional documents or information);
- unless there are exceptional circumstances, the complaint must be filed within three years of the alleged misconduct.

If the head of the Deontology Committee, or one of the other two members of the Committee, has a clear or perceived conflict of interest concerning the person making the complaint or the person who is the subject of the allegation of misconduct, or if one of them believes that he or she is unable to perform his or her duties properly at any given time, he or she must step down. He or she will be replaced by a substitute member of the Deontology Committee.

Processing complaints

As soon as a complaint is deemed admissible, the head of the Deontology Committee informs the person against whom an allegation of misconduct has been made of the complaint lodged against him/her and of the procedure initiated. His or her version of the facts, explanations, or other comments in response to the allegation of misconduct will eventually be forwarded to the other two members of the Deontology Committee and, if necessary, to the complainant. If the complainant does not respond to the e-mail from the person in charge of the Deontology Committee within a reasonable period, not exceeding 30 working days (or a little longer if, for example, an out-of-office message indicates that the person will not be checking his or her e-mail), the person in charge of the Deontology Committee may contact his or her immediate superior, or any other person in charge of research activities at the institution where the person complained against works, and inform them of the situation.

The head of the Deontology Committee then arranges for one of the three committee members to carry out a detailed examination of the complaint and supporting documents (to ascertain, for example, the extent of the plagiarism or self-plagiarism, or the importance of the plagiarized or self-plagiarized passages). Following this assessment and subsequent discussions, the committee decides what action to take on the complaint. If it is not rejected, the complaint may lead to sanctions, such as temporary or permanent exclusion from AIREPME, or a ban for a more or less extended period on submitting a text for publication in RIPME or participation in CIFEPME. If the misconduct concerns a text already published in RIPME, it could result in a formal retraction by the editor-in-chief. If the misconduct concerns a text published in the CIFEPME proceedings, it could lead to the withdrawal of

this text from the association's website, with explicit mention of this withdrawal. All decisions of the Deontology Committee are final and cannot be appealed.

The head of the Deontology Committee informs the person against re the allegation of misconduct has been made and the complainant separately of the decisions taken by the Committee about the complaint. In the e-mail sent to the complainant, every precaution is taken to ensure that the identity of the person concerned is not revealed, either directly or indirectly. Where appropriate, he also informs any person directly concerned by these decisions, such as the RIPME editor or the head of CIFEPME's scientific committee. The Secretary General of AIREPME then archives all relevant documents (e-mails exchanged, documents justifying the complaint, etc.), even when the complaint has been rejected.

Withdrawal of articles²

The editor-in-chief of a scholarly journal is solely responsible for deciding whether or not to publish articles submitted to the journal and is also solely responsible for deciding whether or not to withdraw a published article, under the editorial policy that guides his or her actions.

An article published in RIPME may be withdrawn at the request of the authors or on the initiative of the editorial board in the event of a breach of the rules of ethics to which authors should subscribe. Such breaches may be detected after publication of the article, justifying the archiving of the various versions submitted by the authors up to the final edited and published version, as well as communications between them and the reviewers as well as the RIPME editorial team. This information is stored and archived on the journal's platform and in the publisher's archives.

If an article is to be withdrawn from an issue after publication:

- A retraction note is published in the table of contents of a subsequent issue indicating the title of the article and the name(s) of the author(s). This note contains a hyperlink to the original article published online.
- In the issue in which the article was published, the hyperlink to it leads to a PDF document whose first page indicates that it has been withdrawn, and on each of the following pages we find the mention "Text withdrawn".
- The HTML version² of the article is removed from the issue.

Confidentiality

AIREPME considers it very important that the entire process of submitting and handling an allegation of misconduct be conducted with the utmost confidentiality for all concerned, in particular the complainant and the person who is the subject of the allegation of misconduct. Only the members of the ethics committee, the general secretary of the association responsible for keeping records of each case examined and, where applicable, the head of the RIPME editorial committee or the head of the CIFEPME scientific committee will know their identity. All those involved are bound by the strictest secrecy, even after their term of office has expired.

² Following Elsevier's recommendations : <https://beta.elsevier.com/editor/perk>

Particular attention must be paid to the identity of the complainant, whether he or she claims to be a victim or witness of misconduct. Among other things, it must never be divulged to the person who is the subject of the complaint, even if the allegation of misconduct were to give rise to exchanges between these persons via the head of the Deontology Committee. In this way, AIREPME ensures that complainants are protected from possible reprisals by the perpetrators of misconduct or others. Anonymous reports of apparent misconduct are still admissible, especially if the documents attached to the complaint support the allegation of misconduct. Any AIREPME member or non-member wishing to participate in any of the activities organized or sponsored in whole or in part by this association, including in connection with the submission or evaluation of a text for publication in RIPME or communication to CIFEPME, is presumed to have read this code of ethics and to adhere to it. Ignorance of the deontological principles it contains cannot constitute a valid excuse for their transgression. Furthermore, all persons involved in the submission or handling of a complaint, in particular the complainant and the respondent, must cooperate with the Deontology Committee.

AIREPME is proud to have adopted this code of ethics and professional conduct. As an educational tool, it encourages all its members to promote the ethical and deontological principles on which it is based.