

Hungarian Psychological Association – Association of Hungarian Psychologists

**ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND CODE OF CONDUCT
FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS
(EC)**

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I. INTRODUCTION AND APPLICABILITY

The Ethical Principles for Psychologists and Code of Conduct (hereinafter referred to as the Ethics Code) holds it as its primary aim to establish a set of fundamental rights and obligations relating to the professional activities of psychologists. In addition to pointing out obligations mandated by law, it emphasizes ethical responsibility and gives it specific content. The basic principles of the Ethics Code is the respect for and the protection of human dignity, a strive for a high level of professional competence and for an awareness of the boundaries of professional competence, and the protection of the psychologist's professional role and integrity. It is intended to provide guidance and standards of professional conduct for psychologists especially in situations involving ambiguity or conflict. The Ethics Code therefore contains the most important standards of conduct in addition to ethical principles. When disseminating these standards among a wide audience, organizations employing psychologists should be informed on the obliging nature of professional and ethical standards. This prompts respect for the psychological profession and at the same time provides a safeguard for the appropriate conditions necessary for psychologists to maintain their professional work at a high standard and provides protection against unreasonable expectations which are antagonistic to the standards of the Ethical Code.

Membership in the **Hungarian Psychological Association** (hereinafter HPA) and in the **Association of Hungarian Psychologists** (hereinafter AHP) commits members to comply with the standards of the Ethics Code and to the rules and procedures used to enforce them.

Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an Ethical Standard is not itself a defense to a charge of unethical conduct.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

General Principles are universal human values which shall guide and inspire psychologists throughout their professional activities toward the very highest ethical ideals of the profession. The Principles refer to qualities of an inspirational nature and therefore they cannot be enforced.

Respect for human dignity

Psychologists respect the dignity of all people and their rights for developing and their abilities and personality and for achieving their potentials. In accordance with the fundamental principles of the constitution human dignity is a quality inextricable from life, not to be divided or constrained, and for this reason it entitles everyone equally. Psychologists respect cultural, individual, and role differences and human rights. Their conduct and activities are void of any form of discrimination, such as discriminations along race, complexion, gender, language, political and other convictions, national origin, social background, socio-economic status, differences in birth or other factors.

Fidelity and Responsibility

Psychologists establish their relations on the basis of trust and mutual understanding. They are aware of their responsibilities to society, to the specific communities in which they work and to their clients. Psychologists cooperate with other professionals

and institutions. They conduct their activities considering the principles of mutual cooperation and the obligations of correct informing. They seek to ensure that their colleagues equally observe professional conduct and comply with the standards of the Ethics Code. For the cause of public good they contribute a portion of their professional time for little or no compensation or personal advantage.

Integrity

Psychologists seek to promote accuracy, honesty and truthfulness in the science, teaching and practice of psychology. Psychologists strive to keep their promises and avoid unwise or unclear commitments. In their activities they do not falsify facts or results and they do not steal, fabricate or consciously misinterpret them.

Competence

Psychologists are aware of the boundaries of their knowledge and skills and also of possible adverse effects. They are committed to the equal right of their clients for their services and for the equal quality of services received by them. They are aware of the fact that their decisions may affect the lives of others and they make a strong effort that these decisions should be professionally established void of any personal, financial, social, organizational or political influence.

Beneficence

In their activities psychologists give prime consideration to the principle of „primum non nocere“. They strive to benefit those with whom they work and take care not to do harm. Their strife is made clear in their oral or written communications and in their behaviour relating to clients. In the course of their professional activities they ensure that their physical and mental health should not interfere with their strife to benefit others.

III. ETHICAL STANDARDS

1. COMPETENCE

- 1.1. Psychologists possess a university degree in psychology, obtained in a full time or part time course or through distance learning, where psychology was a major subject. They apply the principles and methods of their science in practice, in education or in research on a professional basis.
- 1.2. Their professional activities extend to areas for which they have obtained the relevant training and education necessary to ensure the competence of their services. In their professional work psychologists consider the Ethics Code regardless of the professional field and the legal framework in which they work.

2. FIDELITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- 2.1. Psychologists accept responsibility for the decisions made and the procedures and methods employed within the boundaries of their competence and consider their outcome.

- They feel liable for the interventions regarding individuals, groups and the society. In their professional activities they meet the obligations of the Ethics Code.
- 2.2. Psychologists are aware of the effects of their work concerning the personality development, way of life and social position of people using their services. They are aware their responsibility in protecting the interests both of individuals and society. In all their activities they protect the rights of individuals as endorsed by law and the Constitution.
 - 2.3. Psychologists make the effort to do their work at the highest standards and in line with their convictions, complying with the standards of the Ethics Code and meeting legal obligations. They meet the demands and requests of employers and of those who have given commission in agreement with the obligations of the Ethics Code.

3. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

- 3.1 Psychologists planning to teach or provide services seek to employ the latest techniques, or technologies and ensure that others will take the same decision. In order to utilize the opportunities made available to them by advances in their professional fields they undertake ongoing efforts to develop and maintain their competence, and seek to promote the development of science.
- 3.2.1 In fields where specialist psychological training is made available by law psychologists not possessing such qualifications strive to obtain them as soon as it is feasible. Until then they seek the help of colleagues possessing special qualifications, if possible.
- 3.3 Psychologists providing services or engaged in teaching are aware of the scope of their professional knowledge. They take on responsibilities which are within the boundaries of their competence and which are based on their education, training, supervised experience, consultation, study, or professional experience. Should these conditions not apply they require supervision or hand over their commissions to others. They do not take on incompatible responsibilities or activities where their work might be abused.
- 3.4 Psychologists planning to provide services, teach, or conduct research involving populations, areas, techniques, or technologies new to them undertake relevant education, training, supervised experience, consultation, or study.
- 3.5 Psychologists refrain from initiating an activity when they know or should know that there is a substantial likelihood that their personal problems will prevent them from performing their work-related activities in a competent manner. When psychologists become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performing work-related duties adequately, they take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance, and determine whether they should limit, suspend, or terminate their work-related duties.
- 3.6 Psychologists are open to the different approaches existing within their discipline and acknowledge the authority of approaches different from the one they adopted. They do not express judgement concerning other approaches in client relationships.

- 3.7 Psychologists strive to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with their colleagues. As leaders they take care of the professional development of their colleagues such as psychologists, trainees and assistants. They regard it a particular honour to provide maximal help to psychology students and to those starting their careers.
- 3.8. In order to ensure the best results of their professional efforts they cooperate with other professionals from their own or related professions. They initiate such cooperation in cases where they are aware of the limited scope of their scientific or professional competence.
- 3.9. When the activities of psychologists concerning people under medical treatment might interact with the medical therapies applied, psychologists proceed with their work only in consultation with doctors.
- 3.10. Psychologists strive to ensure that their working conditions make the proper performing of professional obligations possible. If working conditions are unsatisfactory they do not take the risk of being exposed to adverse effects.
- 3.11. When choosing their methods and procedures psychologists act on the basis of their professional autonomy. They receive guidance or directions only from people who are authorized to do so. When controversy arises, in order to reach an appropriate position, they consult with qualified professionals and consider their opinions and judgment in an unbiased fashion.
- 3.12. Psychologists take care of the reliability of the diagnostic and therapeutic procedures they choose to employ and they use methods in which they received professional training. They take great care in assessing the results gained by utilizing new methods and use their assessment in their judgments. They do not base any diagnostic or therapeutic work solely on the basis of new procedures.
- 3.13 Psychologists –when need arises- establish the range of psychological activities which can be performed without having completed a degree course in psychology. Psychologists take reasonable steps to (1) avoid delegating work to persons who have a multiple relationship with those being assessed; (2) authorize only those responsibilities that such persons can be expected to perform competently either independently or with supervision being provided. For the participation of assistants in in-person assessments and data processing, and for the supervision of their work the professional responsibility is held by psychologists.
- 3.14 Psychologists do not pass on psychological test materials, such as tests, assessment and therapeutic instruments or other tools of psychological intervention, to people who are not psychologists. They do not train nonpsychologists for the use of psychological methods and do not teach the use of psychological tests in courses other than those leading to a psychology degree. They make reasonable efforts to prevent others from making such assessments. When they learn about the violation of this standard they make an attempt to resolve the issue by bringing it to the attention of the people violating the standard. If their efforts do not lead to the resolution of the problem they bring this fact to the attention of

the Ethics Committee.

4.RELATIONS WIH CLIENTS

- 4.1 The psychologist's clients constitute all those people, organizations or institutions with whom psychologists are professionally engaged individually or in a group setting for purposes of assessments, counseling, treatment or psychological care.
- 4.2 In client relationships psychologists take prime concern in the dignity and personal interests of their clients. They refrain from expressions, written or oral, and activities which might go against the dignity of their clients or represent an unfair discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, nationality, religion, disability, social-economical status or on other, legally prohibited factors.
- 4.3 In order to avoid multiple relationships psychologists do not establish psychological client relationships with family members, friends, close colleagues, or other people with whom they have been associated in other ways, or people who have been related to a person with whom the psychologist has a professional relationship. Multiple relationships that would not reasonably be expected to cause impairment or risk exploitation or harm are not unethical.
- 4.4 If a psychologists find that a multiple relationship, such as friendship or an emotional relationship, has developed that might potentially risk professional work, they terminate the work or ,if warranted, request supervision taking special care that the client's therapeutical interests should not be harmed.
- 4.5 Psychologists do not exploit their relationships with clients. Within a framework of cooperation they seek to clarify the terms of their services. .In private practices, as part of this clarification, they inform clients of the fees involved, at the outset of their relationship. The nature of the relationship with the client is specified orally or in writing which includes the arrangements for the services and possible payment.
- 4.6 Activities of psychologists such as making a diagnostic statement, conducting therapies or writing reports can only be done after psychologists have conducted an examination of the individuals. When individual examination is not feasible or warranted, as in the contexts of helplines through phone or the Internet, of crisis intervention, consultation or legal reports, a record review can be conducted which should state the source of information and the types of personal assessments made.
- 4.7 When providing services on the Internet psychologists give their credentials, such as official qualification, specialist trainings, for purposes of verification and they inform clients of the security risks posed by electronic transmissions. In their relationships with clients, established through the range of media psychologists maintain their adherence to the Ethics Code.
- 4.8 Psychologists are not obliged to get personal proofs as to the truth and verifiability of the statements and communications of the persons examined. If necessary the institution which has commissioned the psychologist can propose further professional assessments in line the regulations of the institution.

- 4.9 Before beginning personal examinations psychologists inform their clients of their obligations concerning confidentiality, and when warranted, of its limits and the foreseeable uses of information generated through psychological activities (see chapter 5 of the EC). They inform persons, including persons under age, about the purpose, results and possible consequences of the examination and discuss the clients' rights of refraining from the examination and its possible consequences in a language appropriate to the age, education and mental status of the persons involved.
- 4.10.1 For recording voices or images, or using semi-transparent mirrors during personal assessments psychologists obtain the informed consent of clients, or their legal representatives, orally or in writing, in advance and takes safeguards that the client's recorded behaviour should not be observed by people unauthorized.
- 4.11 Where psychological services are mandated by law or other regulations psychologists provide information beforehand on the nature of the proposed services and the limits of confidentiality.
- 4.12 Psychologists inform the persons assessed including persons with limited capacity to consent, and the parents or legal representatives of children, about the results of the examinations and on the written document made on the examination, by using language that is appropriate to their mental status, and that is reasonably understandable for them.
- 4.13 In situations when psychological services are provided or assessments are made clients have a right to insist that only people necessary for the conducting of these activities or people to whose presence they have given their consent should be present.

5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 5.1 Psychologists have a primary obligation to protect confidential information concerning the clients' psychological and personal data obtained during their professional activities. These information can only be disclosed to people authorized. Psychologists are obliged to treat these data confidentially even after the ending of their relationship with the clients.
- 5.1.1. Confidential information includes the following data: (a) psychological data, (b) data serving the identification of the client, (c) data relating to the treatment anticipated, completed or underway, and (d) data gained in connection with the treatment, regardless of whether they were obtained in oral or written communication or through assessments.
- 5.1.2. Prominent psychological information include (a) data concerning the intellectual and mental status and behavioural characteristics of the person involved, (b) data concerning the ability of prospective or current foster parents and custodians to meet the responsibilities of parenting (c) data concerning job suitability and (d) data concerning pathological addiction, regardless of whether these have been directly obtained, assessed or inferred, and furthermore, (e) any data that can be related to or have a bearing on these information.
- 5.1.3. Data of personal identification include family and Christian names, maiden name,

sex, place and date of birth, mother's family and Christian name, place of residence, social and health security identification code in combination or separately, if they can lead to the identification of clients.

5.1.4. In retaining and eliminating assessment and therapeutic documents psychologists comply with the 1992 LXIII Law on The Protection of Personal Data and the Disclosure of Public Data.

5.2 In obtaining and handling psychological data psychologists must also comply with the following requirements:

- Obtaining and handling data should meet the requirements of fairness and lawfulness.

- The data obtained must be accurate, complete and up to date.

- The way data are stored should ensure that individuals could only be identified for the period warranted by the purpose of the storing.

5.3 Psychologists respect their clients' wish of who should be the recipients of the information concerning the results of the examinations and of who should be precluded fully or partially from receiving this information.

5.4 Psychological data must be disclosed without the clients' consent if

- (a) it is mandated by law

- (b) it is regarded as necessary for the protection of others.

5.5 Psychological data of clients can be disclosed without consent to people in charge of the client's care if the lack of such disclosure would entail adverse psychological effects. Furthermore confidential information can be shared with parents provided this would not cause harm to the child. If however, psychologists come to the conclusion that disclosure of information would seriously interfere with the child's interests, they are obliged to retain them.

5.6 Psychologists seek to ensure that only people needed for carrying out assessments or other services should be present, or people to whose presence the clients have given their consent. The rule of confidentiality also applies to these people. Psychologists are obliged to bring this obligation to the attention of those involved, and they also explain what the obligation of confidentiality entails.

5.7 Psychologists discuss with persons and organizations with whom they establish a scientific or professional relationship (1) the relevant limits of confidentiality and (2) the foreseeable uses of the information generated through their psychological activities. They also retain the confidential information relating to their employers or commissioning organizations.

5.8 Psychologists providing information or other services through electronic transmission call their clients' attention to the potential risks regarding privacy and confidentiality.

5.9 Without legal authorization or the prior consent of those involved psychologists do not disclose in their writings, lectures, or other public media, confidential, personally identifiable

information concerning the recipients of their services. They take reasonable steps to disguise persons, organizations or conditions in order to make their identification impossible.

6. PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH

- 6.1 When designing and conducting academic or applied research psychologists strive to ensure reasonable professional competence (See chapter 3 of the EC).
- 6.2 When institutional approval is required, psychologists provide accurate information about their research proposals and obtain approval prior to conducting the research. They conduct the research in accordance with the approved research protocol.
- 6.3 The decision to participate in a research is made by the possible participants themselves. For obtaining informed consent in writing psychologists provide information in a language clear to those involved. Information covers the following details:
 - (a) the purpose of the research, expected duration, and procedures;
 - (b) the right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once participation has begun;
 - (c) the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing;
 - (d) reasonably foreseeable factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate such as potential risks, or adverse effects;
 - (e) any prospective research benefits;
 - (f) limits of confidentiality;
 - (g) incentives for participation; and
 - (h) whom to contact for questions about research participants' rights
- 6.4 If the participants are legally incapable of giving informed consent, such as mentally ill, disabled or under age participants, the decision is made by their legal representatives be it persons or organizations.
- 6.5 Psychologists may dispense with informed consent where (1) research would not reasonably be assumed to create distress or harm and involves (a) the study of normal educational practices, (b) the use of anonymous questionnaires and naturalistic observations, or (c) the study of factors related to job or organization effectiveness for which there is no risk to participants' employability, and confidentiality is protected or where (2) otherwise permitted by law or institutional regulations.
- 6.6 When conducting research psychologists refrain from including procedures or methods that might have adverse effects or consequences on participants.
- 6.7 When research necessitate the use of tape recorders, hidden microphones, video recorders or semi-transparent mirrors psychologists obtain the informed consent of clients, or their legal

representatives, orally or in writing, in advance and take safeguards that the client's recorded behaviour should not be observed by people with no authorization. If this arrangement interferes with the research design consent in writing for the use of the recording is obtained during debriefing involving information concerning the way behaviour was observed and recorded.

- 6.8 Psychologists do not conduct a study involving deception and a risk of emotional distress or physical pain during or after the research unless they have determined that the use that effective nondeceptive alternative procedures are not feasible for the studying of the problem in question. The distress caused by the research must not damage the person's dignity, it should be kept within reasonable limits and should only be used by taking all possible precautions. Psychologists explain any deception that is an integral feature of the design and conduct of an experiment at the conclusion of the data collection, and allow for the discussion of the participants' experiences.
- 6.9 When psychologists conduct research with clients, students, or subordinates as participants, they take steps to protect the prospective participants from any adverse consequences that might result from declining or withdrawing from participation.
- 6.10. When designing and conducting academic and applied psychological research psychologists take special care to minimize the possibility of misinterpretation. In analysing research results they consider all relevant data, and do not omit, disguise data that might change results or their interpretation. They also report of data that could not reasonably be interpreted.
- 6.11. Psychologists take care to store and maintain both the raw and the processed data of their research in order to be able to make them available for purposes of validation.
- 6.12 Following the publication of research results psychologists are ready to share their data with responsible professionals for purposes of re-analysis. Research data cannot be made available when such disclosure is prohibited by law or if it would constitute a violation of confidentiality.
- 6.13 Psychologists comply with the general ethical rules concerning the publication of research results, including formal requirements, such as proper referencing, co-authoring, the consent of the clients or their representatives, acknowledgements etc. (see Chapter 7 of the Ethics Code).
- 6.14. Psychologists engaged in research are aware of the fact that their relationships with their research participants might also constitute a client relationship or they might develop unintended into such relationship. In these situations they seek to resolve the issue. They can accept this new role, such as that of a therapist or a counsellor, provided they possess the relevant professional competence, and their new role is not incompatible with the purpose of the research. In these situations however, they also have the obligation to meet the special ethical standards of conduct germane to their new role. When a client role cannot be accepted, psychologists clarify the situation with the participant and if deemed necessary they ensure that the participant gets outside support.
- 16.15. Standards concerning psychological research with animals

- (a) Psychologists acquire, care for, use, and dispose of animals in compliance with the Law on Animal Protection and other legal regulations.
- (b) In experiments involving interventions affecting the health of animals, interventions take place with the participation of veterinary surgeons.
- (c) The placement, care and feeding of experimental animals are supervised by veterinary surgeons or other professionals competent in this field.
- (d) Psychologists use a procedure subjecting animals to pain, stress, or privation only when an alternative procedure is unavailable and the goal is justified by its prospective scientific, educational, or applied value.
- (e) Psychologists perform surgical procedures under appropriate anesthesia and follow techniques to avoid infection and minimize pain during and after surgery.
- (f) Following the completion of the experiment psychologists ensure that the animals' comfort and health is restored.
- (g) When it is appropriate that an animal's life be terminated, psychologists proceed rapidly, with an effort to minimize pain and in accordance with accepted procedures.

7. PUBLICATIONS

- 7.1. In publications, whether scientific or popular, psychologists observe the international standards of publications and consider the education and knowledge of their readers in the field. They use a language which is clear and seeks to avoid possibilities of misinterpretation. They seek to observe this standard in the oral or written reports aimed at members of other professions, such as doctors, engineers, teachers, or economists or at the people commissioning them.
- 7.2. Research reports written by psychologists and aimed at psychological scientific or professional audience ensure the the reviewing and validating the reported findings.
- 7.3. Psychologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have substantially contributed. Psychologists do not present portions of another's work or data as their own, even if the other work or data source is cited occasionally. If authors use the work of others, in the text they have an obligation to include proper and accurate references in the bibliography. Citations taken from another source should be marked by hyphenation.
- 7.4. Psychologists do not publish, as original data, data that have been previously published. This does not preclude republishing data when they are accompanied by proper acknowledgment.
- 7.5. Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are acknowledged appropriately, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement.

- 7.6. In popular publications or lectures intended for members of other professions, psychologists present psychological assessment instruments so that their applicability should not be diminished and their illegitimate application should not be facilitated.
- 7.7. Psychologists who review material submitted for presentation, publication, grant, or research proposal review respect the confidentiality and the proprietary rights of those who submitted it.

8. PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND ADVERTISING

8.1. Public statements include paid or unpaid advertising, grant applications, brochures, promotions, comments for use in media such as print or electronic transmission, statements in legal proceedings, lectures and public oral presentations, and published materials.

8.2 In their public statements psychologists strive to earn trust in and respect for their profession. They stand up against claims put forward by members of their own or other professions, which might distort psychological activities either from a professional or a social point of view, or are capable of compromising professional activities by raising excessive and unreasonable expectations.

8.3 Psychologists do not give their names to activities or work for which they can not take responsibility.

8.4. Psychologists do not intently make deceptive statements concerning their

- (a) training,
- (b) experience, or competence,
- (c) academic degrees,
- (d) credentials,
- (e) institutional or association affiliations,
- (f) services,
- (g) fees,
- (h) publications or research findings.

8.5 In their radio, press, television, or other communications psychologists take special care to uphold the standards established in the Ethics Code as they are aware of the diversity of their audience and the fact that its response cannot be directly perceived.

8.6 When psychologists provide public advice or comment via print, Internet, or other electronic transmission, they take precautions to ensure that their statements

- (1) are based on their professional knowledge, training, or experience in accordance with appropriate psychological literature and practice;
- (2) are otherwise consistent with this Ethics Code; and

(3)do not indicate that a professional relationship has been established with the recipients

(4)do not yield them unwarranted competitive gain.

8.7 Psychologists who engage others to create or place public statements that promote their professional practice, products, or activities retain professional responsibility for such statements.

8.8 Psychologists do not compensate employees of press, radio, television, or other communication media in return for publicity in a news item

8.9 To the degree to which they exercise control, psychologists responsible for announcements, catalogs, brochures, or advertisements describing workshops, seminars, or other non-degree-granting educational programs ensure that they accurately describe

(a) the audience for which the program is intended,

(b) the educational objectives,

(c) the type of degree or certificate to be obtained,

(d) the presenters,

(e) and the fees involved.

9.RESOLVING ETHICAL ISSUES

9.1. Examining and settling the complaints concerning violations of ethical standards belong to the authority of the joint Ethics Committee of the HPA and the AHP.

9.2. If psychologists learn of misuse or misrepresentation of their work, they take reasonable steps to settle the situation.

9.3. If psychologists' ethical obligations conflict with law or institutional regulations they attempt to resolve the conflict. If the conflict is irresolvable via such means, psychologists may adhere to the requirements of the law, or institutional regulations. For the overcoming of the incompatibility they report the case to the Ethical Committee.

9.4 When psychologists believe that there may have been an ethical violation by another psychologist, they attempt to resolve the issue by bringing it to the attention of that individual, if an informal resolution appears appropriate. If his attempt to solve the conflict informally fails he makes it known to the other psychologist that he will report the case to the EC.

9.5 Psychologists cooperate in ethics investigations, proceedings, and resulting requirements of the Ethics Committee. If a psychologist has been made or is being the subject of an ethics complaint, failure on his or her behalf to cooperate with the Ethics Committee is in itself an ethics violation. However, making a request for deferment of adjudication of an ethics complaint pending the outcome of litigation does not alone constitute noncooperation. The Ethics Committee can adopt a position even in the absence of cooperation on behalf of the person reported.

