



**EFPA**

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**ETHICS**

**Convenor : GEOFF LINDSAY**

**REPORT to the**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2003 in VIENNA**

**EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF PSYCHOLOGISTS ASSOCIATIONS:  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ETHICS**

**Report to General Assembly, Vienna  
12-13 July 2003**

**Executive Summary**

The Standing Committee on Ethics (SCE) has completed two tasks approved in principle at the 2001 General Assembly (London), completed a new set of guidance for Member Associations when a psychologist has been censured by another Member Association; continued to develop guidance in evaluation and disciplinary procedures; and organised a very successful Symposium on Professional Ethics (Prague, March 28-30, 2003).

**Recommendations**

1. That this report of the Standing Committee on Ethics be received.
2. That the Memorandum on Member Associations' Action Against Members Censured by Another Member Association be approved.

**Presented by**

Geoff Lindsay – Convenor

**Date**

That this report of the Standing Committee on Ethics was accepted as the position of EFPA at the General Assembly, Vienna, July 2003.

## **Introduction**

The Standing Committee on Ethics has continued to be busy and productive since the last General Assembly. The SCE has benefited from three new members; Hana Junova, Jurg Forster and Fredi Lang, who have joined a long-standing group of collaborators. The Committee is:

Geoff Lindsay (UK)    Convenor  
Victor Claudio (Portugal)  
Hana Junova (Czech Republic)  
Casper Koene (The Netherlands)  
Alain Letuve (France)  
Polona Matjan (Slovenia)  
Pierre Nederlandt (Belgium)  
Haldor Overeide (Norway)  
Vito Tummino (Italy)  
Juerg Forster (Switzerland)  
Fredri Lang (Germany)

Wim Mannien (Executive Committee – Liaison)

## **Meetings**

The SCE held four meetings, as follows:

Brussels 3-4 November 2001  
Prague 13-14 April 2002  
Amsterdam 2-3 November 2002  
Prague 28-30 March 2003

All were well attended. Minutes and papers discussed at each meeting have been sent to the Executive Committee through our liaison member, Wim Mannien.

We are grateful for the hospitality and support of the Associations that hosted our meetings.

The work undertaken over the period has focussed on three main tasks, discussed below. In addition, at each meeting we considered a number of less substantial matters and exchanged views of development with respect to ethics in our countries.

## **The Main Work of the SCE 2001-2003**

### **1. Completion of tasks from 2001 General Assembly**

Three papers were presented to the 2001 General Assembly. Each was approved in principle, but more discussions were sought. Consequently, Casper Koene and I attended the Presidents Council (Brussels, 27-28 October 2001) where a very useful, and more extensive discussion of the report was held. As a result, two reports were approved and made available through the web and EFPA office:

- *The European Psychologist in Forensic Work and as Expert Witness: Recommendations for Ethical Practice.*
- *Provision of Psychological Services through the Internet and other Non-direct Means.*

The third report was not approved. Indeed, the SCE itself had had reservations about this report. Consequently, this was sent back to the SCE for further work.

## 2. Recommendations on Evaluative Procedures and Disciplinary Actions in Cases of Complaint about Unethical Conduct.

Development of this guidance has proven problematic. It was undertaken to complement the Meta-code of Ethics which provided guidance to Member Associations on the context of their ethical codes. This document was intended to guide the procedure an Association may develop to undertake evaluations and discipline of a psychologist about whom a complaint was made.

The problems have largely been two-fold

- the need to take into account the different legal systems and their requirements on data protection.
- the tension between providing general guidance on principles or very specific guidance on procedures.

The SCE has discussed new drafts at each of its meetings. It has decided that the approach shall now be amended. A new format will comprise Part I - general guidance; Part II – an example of specific guidance on procedures.

The SCE plans to discuss a new draft in the autumn, and so no specific proposals are presented to the General Assembly.

## 3. Symposium on Professional Ethics, Prague 28-30 March 2003

The SCE organised a highly successful Symposium in Prague. This was planned for three main purposes.

- to consider new ethical challenges
- to review the EFPA Meta-code, especially in the light of such new challenges
- to develop an international network to share ideas on ethics and disciplinary procedures.

This was a joint venture between the SCE and the Czech - Moravian Psychological Society, and the Union of Psychologists Associations of Czech Republic.

The Symposium was a major success. A total of 28 delegates attended from 13 different countries. The 1.5 days, plus a reception on the evening prior to the Symposium, allowed very full and productive discussions to take place. A separate paper summarises some of the main issues which arose.

The SCE is particularly grateful to Haldor Overeide for facilitating the event, and Hana Junova for organising the Symposium in Prague.

The SCE will respond to delegates' wishes for another event along the same lines.

#### 4. Future Work

The SCE has identified three major tasks

- to complete the guidance on Evaluation and Discipline
- to review and revise the Meta-code
- to organise a second Symposium on Professional Ethics to the same format as that held in Prague.

#### 5. Conclusion

I would like to thank personally all my colleagues on the SCE who have made these 2 years so productive; Wim Mannien, Executive Committee, for his support, and my secretary Mrs Jean McElroy without whom none of this would have happened.

# **Memorandum on possible Member Associations' actions against members being censured by another Member Association**

## **European Federation of Psychologists Association**

### **Standing Committee on Ethics**

#### **1. Preamble**

Since its inception, the European Federation of Psychologists Associations (EFPA)<sup>1</sup> has sought to regularise the ethical guidelines available to psychologists of Member Associations. The development of the Meta-Code of Ethics provided a common basis from which Member Associations could ensure their own ethical codes were comprehensive and consistent. The Standing Committee on Ethics are developing further actions have been taken to provide guidance on disciplinary procedures, also to ensure consistency to high standards.

The present memorandum provides guidance to Member Associations regarding psychologists who have been subject to disciplinary actions by one Member Association, but who may be or apply to become a member of another Member Association in a different country.

As with the Meta-Code, the present guidance is addressed to Member Associations and recommends actions to be taken by them, including the inclusion of rules requiring disclosure of disciplinary offences by members or prospective members.

#### **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 The European Federation of Psychologists Associations (EFPA) adopted its European Meta-code on Ethics at its General Assembly, Athens, July 1995, as guidance for the content of the Ethical Codes of its Member Associations. This should provide – in the common interest of clients, psychologists and the profession of psychology all over Europe – one ethical frame of reference for Member Associations to base their professional conduct upon, and for professional psychological associations to evaluate their members' conduct.
- 2.2 In accepting the Meta-code, EFPA Member Associations ensure that their national codes are not in conflict with the Meta-code.
- 2.3 Member Associations should have procedures to investigate complaints against members, to evaluate the alleged unethical conduct and to take eventual disciplinary actions, in order to protect the integrity and rights of clients, to safeguard and improve the ethical quality of psychology practice, and in accordance to the Preamble of the Meta-code<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.4 It is in the interest of clients, of psychologists and of the profession of psychology if these procedures provide comparable and equally fair investigation and evaluation of psychologists' professional conduct all over Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Previously the European Federation of Professional Psychologists Associations EFPPA

<sup>2</sup> Guidance on such procedures is currently being developed by the EFPA Standing Committee on Ethics

- 2.5 This objective implies two basic principles:
- Comparable and fair investigatory and evaluative procedures;
  - Comparable cases leading to similar outcomes in evaluation and in disciplinary or other actions.

### **3. Need for transnational actions**

- 3.1 A psychologist may be a member of more than one EFPA Member Association at the same time, or successively, for example in case of international migration or when practising internationally. Consequently if a psychologist acts unethically in one country, there are implications for practice in other countries.
- 3.2 This issue is likely to become even more relevant as mobility of professionals across Europe increases. To find ways of acting appropriately in such cases will increase the credibility of EFPA and of its Member Associations as a responsible professional community within Europe.
- 3.3 A member of one EFPA Member Association may be the subject of disciplinary action. Such sanctions would apply only within the country of original jurisdiction, yet the psychologist may be practising as a psychologist in one or more other countries, or may seek to start to practise in a different country.
- 3.4 In such cases, the protection of the public requires action procedures to allow Associations in different countries to take appropriate action.
- 3.5 The procedures specified here relate only to those psychologists who are the subject of a complaint which has been determined as proven.
- 3.6 Therefore, it is recommended that Member Associations should have procedures:
- On being informed about such actions;
  - On evaluating the professional status of the psychologist in order eventually to take actions.

### **4. Procedures to be taken by Member Associations**

- 4.1 Procedures concerning the transmission of information about actions being taken elsewhere should take into account national and supranational legislation on privacy and data protection.
- 4.2 Member Associations should require applicants for membership to reveal any disciplinary action taken by any other competent body, to include psychological associations in the home country, or any other country, not only those within EFPA, and any state body with legal powers for the regulation of psychology.
- 4.3 Such self-disclosures, including nil responses, should be required from all applicants as a condition of membership, and be specified in the code of ethics, and statutes and rules of the Association.
- 4.4 Member Associations should include within the tariff of sanctions following a disciplinary process a requirement that the psychologist should inform other psychological associations, of which he/she is a member, of the outcome of the

disciplining procedure. This sanction, therefore, is an option for the Association to impose depending upon its judgement of the severity of the offence.

- 4.5 4.5 Where a Member Association has any concern about the validity of a psychologist's application, they should be free to contact any other Member Association for confirmation, and Member Associations should respond to such legitimate enquiries.
- 4.6 4.6 Where the law prevents an Association responding to such an enquiry without the member's specific permission the Association should include a clause in its application form requiring new members to agree to such information being provided in response to legitimate enquiries.

