



Дружество на Психолозите в България  
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# **BULGARIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

## **E t h i c a l C o d e**

*Adapted and approved by the General Assembly of the Bulgarian Psychological Society (24 September 2005) and the Third National Congress in Psychology (29 October 2005) on the basis of the recommendations of the Ethical Metacode of the European Federation of the Psychological Associations and the Ethical Code of the Bulgarian Scientists*

### **1. Introduction**

Psychologists create and develop reliable and valid systems of knowledge, based on research and apply this knowledge to the mental processes, the human behavior and development in different scientific and social context. Performing this activity, they carry out variety of roles in areas, such as research and development, assessment in education, psychotherapy, counseling, and as experts. The psychologists promote in the institutions and among the society the creation and development of practice of informed considerations and choices, concerning the human behavior, and the improvement of the living conditions of the individuals and of the society as a whole.

As a member of the European Federation of the Psychological Associations, the Bulgarian Psychological Society holds responsibility and has an obligation to apply the ethical code of its member psychologists, which has been prepared in conjunction with the present valid fundamental principals. The Society accepts this code of the psychologist, showing its care for the professional moral in the community of the psychologists and as an expression of the principle, that without this moral, there cannot be effective professional activity. The idea of the principles, stated in the code, is to propose general directions for ethical professional behavior in the wide specter of situations, faced by the psychologists.

The Bulgarian Psychological Society demands from its members to continue to develop their sensitivity to the ethical issues and to organize professional seminars and public discussions in order to ensure this effectually happens. The Bulgarian Psychological Society provides consultation and assistance to its members, institutions and citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria on the ethical issues of the activities of the psychologists. The Society develops and applies corrective and disciplinary

procedures for investigating and reaching decisions in cases of complaints against its members.

As a member of the European Federation of the Psychological Associations, the Bulgarian Psychological Society supports the wide discussion and regular updating of this ethical code, prepared in conjunction with the recommendation from the European Federation of the Psychological Associations for the Associations-Members. The Ethical Code of the Psychological Society covers all aspects of the professional behavior of its members and is recommended to all psychologists and organizations of psychologists, conducting their activity in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Compliance and development of the Ethical Code is a duty of every member of The Bulgarian Psychological Society. The Ethical Codes of the Associations, members of the European Federation of the Psychological Associations are based on similar principles and don't contradict the ethical principles, stated in this present official document of the Bulgarian Psychological Society.

## **2. Ethical Principles of the Psychologist.**

### *2.1. Respect for the Dignity and the Rights of the Individual*

The psychologists pay the necessary respect and contribute to the improvement of the fundamental rights and dignity of all individuals.

The psychologists respect the right of privacy, confidentiality and independence of the people in accordance with the law and with the other professional obligations of the psychologist.

### *2.2. Competency*

In their work the psychologists make efforts to maintain high standards of competency. They know the boundaries of their particular skills and the limitations of their expert knowledge and observe the requirements for implementation of effective professional activity. The psychologists offer only services and use only techniques, for which they are qualified (through respective education, specialized training or practical experience). The psychologists aim in their activity towards well founded substantiation of the scientific authenticity of the used theoretical models and techniques, the supported hypothesis, conclusions and recommendations.

### *2.3. Responsibility*

The Psychologists are conscious of the professional responsibilities, which they have towards their clients, towards the community and the society, in which they live and work. The psychologists avoid causing damage and are responsible for their own actions and they guarantee to a maximum possible level that their services and methods are not applied illegitimately. The

psychologists have moral engagement towards social responsibility and humane use of the achievements and methods of the psychological science and practice.

#### *2.4. Respectability*

The psychologists support respectability and correctness in science, teaching and practical application of psychology, in their relationships with their colleagues. In these activities the psychologists are honest, impartial and respect the others, don't allow any form of misappropriation of somebody else's achievements in science and applied science, of somebody else's copyright, the theft of other people's ideas and the falsification of somebody else's work. They make efforts to clarify for the interested parties the roles, which they play in their professional activity and to work in compliance with these roles.

### **3. Content of the Ethical Code of the Psychologist**

In the present code the term "client" refers to every individual, patient, interdependent people or organizations, with which the psychologists have professional relationships, including indirect relationships.

The Ethical Code for professional activity of the psychologists, members of the Bulgarian Psychological Society recognizes the following aspects:

1. The professional behavior of the psychologists has to be consistent with the professional role, characterized by professional relationships.
2. Inequality in regard of knowledge, influence and power always affects the professional relationships of the psychologists with their clients and colleagues.
3. The larger the inequality in the professional relationships and the dependence of clients, the more serious is the responsibility of the professional psychologist.
4. The responsibilities of the psychologists have to correspond to the stage in the development of the professional relationships.

Interdependence of the four ethical principals – it has to be taken into account that there always will be strong interdependence between the four main ethical principals and their specifications in the Ethical Code of the psychologist. For the psychologist this means that resolving an ethical issue or dilemma will require consideration and often discussion with clients and colleagues and judgment of different ethical principles. The decision-making and taking action is necessary even when there are still disputable issues.

### **3.1. Respect for People's Rights and Dignity**

#### *3.1.1. General respect*

Awareness and respect for the knowledge, experience and the areas of competency of the clients, the interested third parties, colleagues, students and the public.

Awareness of the individual differences, caused by the cultural and role stereotypes, including these, caused by disorders, sexuality and ethnicity, sexual orientation, race, nationality, age, religion, language and social- economic status.

Avoidance of practices, which are caused by dishonest partiality and could lead to unfair discrimination.

#### *3.1.2. Confidentiality*

The quest and the supply of information is limited to the minimum required for professional purposes.

The information and records are kept in an adequate manner in order to secure confidentiality, including taking reasonably precautionous measures for the anonymity of the data, when this is appropriate and limiting the access to the data to the persons, who have right to know.

Clients and other parties with whom the psychologist has professional relationships are aware of the legal limitations for keeping confidentiality.

When information is required by others, authorized for that, the psychologist has the obligation to give only that part of the information, which concerns the problem and to keep the confidential character of the remaining information.

The psychologist has to recognize the signals for potential tension, which can arise between the requirement for confidentiality and the safeguarding of the client or the interested third party.

Clients have the right of access to materials (reports and records) which concern them, as well as to receive the necessary assistance and consultation, by being given precise and comprehensive information, and their interests are served in a best possible manner.

#### *3.1.3. Informed and Voluntary Consent.*

The psychologist explains the problems and the disputable issues concerning his professional activities, procedures and potential consequences of these actions,

in order to make sure that the client gives his informed consent before and during the psychological interventions.

The psychologist explains to the client the procedures, which he (she) follows in making and keeping work records, publications and reports.

#### 3.1.4. *Freedom of Will.*

The psychologist ensures maximum independence and freedom of the will of the client.

Specific limitations of the freedom of will are necessary with such factors like age of the client, mental health and the limitations, imposed by provided legal measures.

### **3.2. Competency**

#### 3.2.1. *Ethical Awareness.*

The psychologist is obliged to be aware of the good practice, concerning the ethics, included in the Ethical Code and to comply with the ethical rules in his (her) professional activity.

#### 3.2.2. *Limits of the Competency.*

The psychologist is obliged to work within the frame of his (her) professional competency, determined by his (her) education, training and experience.

#### 3.2.3 *Limitations of the procedures*

The psychologist is obliged to be aware of the limitations of the procedures for certain activities, as well as the frames of the conclusions, which can be drawn in different circumstances and for different purposes.

The psychologist is obliged to be aware of and to work within the frames of the critically assessed by the psychological community theories and methods.

#### 3.2.4. *Continuous education and professional development*

The psychologist has the obligation to continue his (her) professional development and improvement.

#### 3.2.5. *Disqualification.*

The psychologist is obliged to terminate the practice in cases, when his (her) abilities are temporary affected or there are temporary difficulties.

### **3.3. Responsibility**

#### 3.3.1. *General Responsibility.*

The psychologist bears moral responsibility for the quality and consequences of his (her) professional actions.

### *3.3.2. Maintaining High Standards*

The psychologist is obliged to encourage and maintain high standards in the scientific and professional activity, as well as to organize his (her) activity in accordance with the statements in the Ethical Code.

### *3.3.3. Avoiding the Infliction of Damage*

The psychologist avoids the fraudulent use of psychological knowledge or practice and reduces to the minimum the damage, which can be predicted and is unavoidable.

### *3.3.4. Continuous Care*

The psychologist has the duty for the necessary continuation of the professional care for the clients, including cooperation with other specialist and takes the necessary actions, when he (she) has to resolve difficulties or complications, which have occurred.

The psychologist has the responsibility towards the client, which continues even after the formal termination of the professional relationships, concerning new contacts following the initial professional engagement.

### *3.3.5. Extended Responsibility*

The psychologist takes full responsibility for his (her) scientific and research, teaching and applied professional activity, including for the conscious implementation of the ethical standards by the colleagues, assistants, individuals, to which the psychologist gives supervision, as well as his (her) students.

### *3.3.6. Resolving Dilemmas*

The psychologist is obliged to recognize the presence of a moral dilemma and has the responsibility for the clarification and resolution of such dilemmas and for the consultation with colleagues and/or with members of the Ethical Committee of the Society of the Psychologists in the Republic of Bulgaria as well as for informing the interested parties about the violations of the requirements of the Ethical Code.

## **3.4. Respectability**

### *3.4.1. Recognition of the Limitations of the Professional Competence*

The psychologist is obliged to be self-reflective and to recognize and accept his (her) personal and professional limitations and the recommendations to search for professional advice and assistance in difficult situations.

#### 3.4.2. *Honesty and respectability*

The psychologist has to be precise in presenting his (her) qualification, education, experience, competence and connections.

The psychologist has to be honest and precise when presenting information, to take responsibility for the confessions and not to conceal alternative hypothesis, evidence or explanations.

The psychologist has to be honest and precise regarding all financial issues with respect to the professional relationships.

The psychologist has to recognize the need for precision, as well as the limitations of the conclusions and opinions, expressed in the professional reports and conclusions.

#### 3.4.3. *Sincerity and Transparency*

The psychologist has the obligation to give precise information and not to tolerate misleading information or fraud in the research and in the professional practice.

The psychologist is obliged not to hold back information or to avoid his (her) involvement in fraud, if there are alternative procedures. If there is a misapprehension, he (she) is obliged to inform and to recover the truth.

#### 3.4.4. *Conflict of Interests.*

The psychologist has to be aware of the potential issues, which can be a result of double-natured relationships and he (she) is obliged to avoid such relationships, which diminish the necessary professional distance or could lead to a conflict of interests or to exploitation of a client.

The psychologist has no right to use the professional relationships as a basis for future personal, religious, economic, political and other ideological interests.

The psychologist has to be aware that the conflict of interests and the inequality of power in the relationships with the users of his (her) professional services can be present even after their end and that the professional responsibilities can be still applicable.

#### 3.4.5. *Unethical Actions of Colleagues*

When there are facts or doubts about unethical actions, the psychologist is obliged to make justified critic of the professional actions of colleagues and to undertake actions in order to inform them and when appropriate, to inform other relevant professional communities as well and the Ethical Commission of the Bulgarian Psychological Society.

The establishing of unethical actions requires their ascertainment in a valid and convincing manner by the Ethical Commission of the Society. In all other cases the psychologist, criticized for unethical actions, has right of defense.

## **REGULATIONS**

### **FOR THE CONDITIONS AND ORDER OF REGISTRATION IN THE INTEGRATED PUBLIC REGISTER OF THE PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

#### **I. General Principles.**

1. These regulations arrange the conditions and order of registration in the integrated public register of the psychologists in the Republic of Bulgaria, referred to in this text as “the Register”, which is kept and maintained by the Bulgarian Psychological Society.
2. Keeping records in the Register is a measure, aimed at exercising the activity of the psychologist in conditions of improved social and professional responsibility, bound by the authority of the Bulgarian Psychological Society.
3. The activity of registering the psychologists and the management of the Register is carried out by the Bulgarian Psychological Society and is run by the Managing Committee of the Society.
4. The register is public and is kept on a paper and electronic carrier in Bulgarian and in the English Language.
5. Information about the registered and stricken off psychologists is shown on the site of the Bulgarian Psychological Society and contains the three names of the psychologist, the number and date of registration and respectively of the striking off the Register, annotation of the professional qualification and the way in which the psychologist can be contacted through the intersession of the Society.

6. Information about work contacts with the registered psychologists can be given on request by citizens and organizations in a form of written information, containing the name of the psychologist, his (her) professional qualification, additional qualifications (specializations) and the way in which contact can be established with the psychologist through the intercession of the Society.
7. At the end of each calendar year the member of staff, who has the obligation to keep the register, gives the Managing Committee of the Bulgarian Psychological Society information (report) about the registered and the written off, respectively, about the stricken off the Register of psychologists.
8. The Bulgarian Psychological Society uses the Register for:
  - Registration of the Bulgarian Psychological Society with the European Federation of the Psychological Associations and for other international contacts;
  - Intercession in realization of scientific, work and business contacts between the registered psychologists and institutions, organizations, users of psychological services;
  - Wide information support and servicing of its members concerning different forums, training, services and events;
  - Managing the internal organizational life of the Society;
  - Writing and distributing of the printed publication of the Society – The Bulgarian Magazine of Psychology – and other scientific publications;
  - For organizing the members of the register for different activities, occurring throughout the year.

## **II. Conditions and Order of Registration**

1. In order for a person to be registered as a psychologist in the Register it is necessary for him or her to be able-bodied, to hold a diploma from an acquired accredited University educational-qualification degree in psychology (bachelor, master's, doctor [PhD]) and not to be convicted with imprisonment for a general crime.
2. Registered can also be Bulgarian citizens, holding a document for successfully completed education and training in psychology abroad under the criteria in item II.1.
3. Foreign citizens, who wish to and have psychological education under the criteria in item II.1. can be entered in the register.

4. Entry in the Register is made on the basis of a standard written application form, approved by the Managing Committee of the Psychological Society.
5. In the application form is written: the full name of the person, permanent and present address, if different, correspondence address, telephone, fax, electronic mail, the place of training and the specialization he (she) has acquired, education – type and course, foreign languages used, other qualifications.
6. The applicant attaches to the application the diploma for acquired educational-qualification degree in psychology, hand written signed declaration that he (she) is not convicted with a prison sentence for a general crime, and declaration of acceptance of the Ethical Code of the psychologist and the responsibility for declaring false information.
7. The application, together with the submitted documents, is recorded with an entry number in the office of the Society of the Psychologists with the date of applying stated as well.
8. The application and the other documents are checked by the official involved, who proposes to the Managing Committee of the Bulgarian Psychological Society the applicant to be registered or to be denied registration.
9. If the documents are in order, the person is registered within a month in the Register and he (she) receives a standard certificate that he (she) can exercise the activity as a registered psychologist in the Register of the Society. The Certificate contains the three names, register number and date of the registration of the psychologist.
10. In case the documents are invalid, the official informs the applicant, who within 14 days has to rectify the omissions. If the incompleteness is not rectified within this term, the procedure for registration is stopped and the interested party is informed in writing with a receipt or by electronic mail.
11. The refusal of the Managing Committee of the Society to register an applicant in the Register has to be motivated. It can be contested at the Commission of Professional Ethics and the General Assembly of the Bulgarian Psychological Society.
12. The registration in the Register is made for a term of three years. It can be renewed automatically for the same term after the three years expire, if there are no impediments to that.
13. In case of changes in circumstances and information, which are of importance for the registration, the psychologist should immediately inform the official, who maintains the Register.

### **III. Writing off and striking off the Register**

1. Each psychologist can by own will be written off the Register with a written statement, where there is no need to explain the reasons for that.
2. A psychologist is officially stricken off the Register, when he hadn't given information about circumstances, which are an obstacle for a registration.
3. Striking off can be done on the basis of a court act, with which he (she) has been sentenced for a general crime or was found guilty for causing damages while exercising the activity of a psychologist, or a violation of the Ethical Code of the Psychologist has been established after consideration of the case and a decision of the Commission of Professional Ethics of the Bulgarian Psychological Society.

*The present Regulations for the Conditions and Order of Registration in the Integrated Public Register of the Psychologists are approved at the regular session of the Managing Committee of the Bulgarian Psychological Society on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2007  
/Record of Proceedings N 21 from 26 of February 2007/.*