

Czech-Moravian Psychological Society – Board of Ethics



**CODE OF ETHICS  
OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFESSION**

*Version 2017*

# CODE OF ETHICS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFESSION

## Preamble

The psychological community, dedicated to its commitments towards the psychological profession and the public, releases this Code of Ethics to govern the exercise of the psychological profession in research, teaching and practice<sup>1</sup>.

The psychological community recognizes that the exercise of the psychological profession is influenced by its socio-cultural and political context, and places therefore great emphasis on its members' (including students of psychology) honesty and responsibility and on their permanent sensitivity towards ethical issues and dilemmas.

The psychological community defines in the present Code of Ethics a psychologist's<sup>2</sup> professionalism, competence, professional relationship and the process of professional cooperation. In doing so, it aims for a psychologist to be ethically correct and knowledgeable of the promoted set of values while fulfilling **the purpose of psychology which is to describe, understand, anticipate and influence human experiences, thinking and actions.**

This Code of Ethics contributes to the public trustworthiness of the profession and to the protection of clients and representatives of the profession. This Code of Ethics also represents a professional standard because the Czech Republic currently lacks a common professional standard setting out requirements for the profession<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>"Practice" means awareness raising, publishing, psychological diagnostics, counseling, therapy, community actions and other activities – i.e. a psychologist's efforts aimed at influencing other people's thinking, actions, experiences or situation.

<sup>2</sup> The Code of Ethics uses the term "psychologist" to refer to psychologists in general with an emphasis on individual responsibility.

<sup>3</sup>The European Federation of Psychologist's Associations (EFPA) seeks to set out European professional standards in psychology in its Regulations for European psychologists from July 2015 (EFPA Regulations on *EuroPsy* and Appendices), see <http://www.europsy-efpa.eu/regulations>. It includes six primary competences of a psychologist (goal specification; assessment; development and testing of procedures on the basis of psychological theory; intervention; evaluation; communication), as well as enabling competences (ranging from the ability to choose an appropriate strategy for dealing with the problem, through continuing development, professional relations and management, to quality assurance and self-reflection).

## I. A PSYCHOLOGIST'S PROFESSIONALISM

A psychologist's **professionalism** is governed by the **values and expertise of the profession, a psychologist's personal and social responsibility and his/her relationship** with clients, other parties, colleagues and other stakeholders (the public). These values, responsibility and the nature of the relationship also imply the duty to respect confidentiality.

### I. 1 Values and principles of the psychological profession<sup>4</sup>

A psychologist's ethical framework is formed by the European values of **freedom and solidarity**<sup>5</sup> and by fundamental human rights and freedoms included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights which has the same legal standing as the Czech constitution. This means respecting people's freedom and **equal dignity and rights** regardless of their sex, race, skin color, language, belief and religion, political or any other opinion, ethnic or social origin, membership of a national or ethnic minority, property, birth or other standing, and also no discrimination based on genetic traits, handicap, age, sexual orientation<sup>6</sup> or gender identity.

Psychology's established interest in a person means that, besides this set of values, psychology ethics also adheres to the principles of personal rights protection<sup>7</sup>. Which primarily means protecting, supporting and respecting **life, health, freedom<sup>8</sup>, honor, dignity and privacy** of all people involved, including psychologists themselves, as well as their **involvement in the decision-making process** concerning their matters<sup>9</sup>. It also means that a psychologist is responsible and honest in honoring the commitments resulting from these values and principles.

Psychology views a person as a **social being**. Psychology ethics therefore looks at psycho-social health of individuals within the context of the above mentioned values and through the lens of their **relation to self, to others and the world**.

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<sup>4</sup> Ethics is based on values. The values and principles of the psychological profession reappear throughout the whole Code of Ethics. For more details about ethical competences see chapters I. 5, II. 4, III. 2 and IV.

<sup>5</sup> European values, on which the European identity is built, include the respect of human beings, their freedoms, rights and dignity; the principles of solidarity and responsibility; legal order and equality before the law; cultural diversity; strengthening the European social model; the development of local autonomy and civil society. (*EU Committee of the Regions, Conclusions of the Conference-debate of the Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, Münster, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007.*). See also *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* from 2000.

<sup>6</sup> *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (2000, Article 21).

<sup>7</sup> Act no 89/2012 Sb., Civil Code s. 3 (2) (a)

<sup>8</sup> Psychologists also cooperate with people sentenced to imprisonment. A psychologist honors the values and principles stated in this Code with these circumstances in mind.

<sup>9</sup> People in general (including minors and people with limited legal capacity) decide about their matters relying to various extents on the support of other people. Helping professions operate within the continuum ranging from "the best interest" of the child to the "rights, will and preferences" of adults including people with limited legal capacity. (See the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.)

## **I. 2 Expertise<sup>10</sup>**

The exercise of the psychological profession is based on a psychologist's competence, i.e. knowledge, skills and ethical attitudes acquired through appropriate university and postgraduate education, expert supervision (meaning control)<sup>11</sup> and enhanced reflexivity<sup>12</sup>. Life-long development of this competence includes practical experience with an emphasis on critical reflection of knowledge and self-reflection about one's own skills and attitudes.

Over their professional career, psychologists may enhance their psychological competences by additional expertise and serve subsequently in various roles (researcher, therapist, supervisor, manager, court-appointed expert, etc.) while still honoring and defending the values and principles of the psychological profession stated in this Code.

## **I. 3 Personal and social responsibility<sup>13</sup>**

In the exercise of the psychological profession, as well as in civil life, a psychologist acts within the context of human rights and psycho-social health, and actively protects and promotes the values and principles advocated by this Code. A psychologist is aware of the political and power circumstances of this engagement.

## **I. 4 Relationship with clients, other parties, colleagues and other stakeholders (the public)<sup>14</sup>**

A psychologist's expert role is articulated in his/her professional relationship with clients, other parties<sup>15</sup>, colleagues and the public, i.e. the relationship that reflects the values and

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<sup>10</sup> For further description of professional competences see chapters II. 2, III. 2 and IV.

<sup>11</sup> The term “expert supervision” (meaning control) is used in Healthcare Service Act no 372/2011 Sb.; the EuroPsy System in the Czech Republic uses the term “mentoring”. Expressions such as “methodical guidance”, “internal supervision” etc. are used in a similar meaning. Based on expert supervision during initial training, a psychology graduate may even be refused entry into the psychological community. This responsibility is currently emphasized in the field of clinical psychology and in the notion of European psychologist (EuroPsy) with the assumption that this protection against bad practice will be subsequently required also in other fields of psychological action.

<sup>12</sup> Reflexivity can be regarded as the ability to discern not only one's own convictions but also the way they are formed.

<sup>13</sup> For further description of personal and social competences see chapters II. 1, II. 3 and for the consequent responsibilities also chapters III. 2. and IV.

<sup>14</sup> For further description of relationship competences see chapters III. and IV.

<sup>15</sup> The term “client” is mostly employed in psychological helping where it nevertheless remains only one of the options (healthcare speaks of “a patient”, community psychology prefers “a counterpart”, a client in family therapy is “a family”). The term “student” is used in the teaching of psychology, psychological research uses the term “respondent” etc. A client can also be an organization, a government, a company, etc. In full awareness of this diversity, this Code of Ethics uses the word “client” as a generic term for the set of situations of direct cooperation of a psychologist and his/her counterpart. This cooperation may be requested by a third party (a court, the police, etc.) while other parties (the client's parents, for instance) may intervene.

principles stated in this Code of Ethics and forms therefore a good basis for **trust, cooperation and mutual learning**<sup>16</sup>.

The more pronounced is the imbalance of knowledge and power between a psychologist and a client, the bigger is a psychologist's responsibility for the relationship<sup>17</sup>.

Psychologists know that the roles of clients, other parties, colleagues and the public change according to circumstances. They honor the above mentioned values and principles in relation to everyone, making no difference. They recognize **a multilateral contractual field**<sup>18</sup> and make it understandable using written contracts and informed consents<sup>19</sup>, while primarily keeping in mind and clearly identifying the **client's interest**<sup>20</sup> or **several interests** (in research, for instance).

## I. 5 Confidentiality / Privacy

When the cooperation is terminated, a psychologist still has an obligation to protect the client's confidential and personal information and not to disclose facts related to this information and obtained during the exercise of psychological profession to avoid harming the client's **honor, dignity and privacy** and **mutual trust**.

A psychologist is exceptionally **permitted to disclose confidential information** without the consent of the client, but preferably with the client's knowledge, when fulfilling the civil duty to report or to prevent a crime<sup>21</sup> or when this information is used for legal protection of the psychologist at trial. Further **disclosure of information** is governed by an informed consent<sup>22</sup> agreed between a psychologist and a client.

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<sup>16</sup> We can take quotation, presentation and publication ethics (respect to copyright) as an example.

<sup>17</sup> See Lindsay, G., Koene, C., Oevreeide, H., & Lang, F. (2010). *Etika pro evropské psychology*. Praha: Triton, Hogrefe - Testcentrum, p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> A **multilateral contractual field** might arise when the work provided by a psychologist is ordered (or paid for) by a third party (when a company pays for the psychological evaluation of its employees or job applicants, for instance) or when a psychologist cooperates with an individual within a family context (psychological evaluation of a child while respecting parental rights of both parents, for instance) or within a group (group psychotherapy, for instance) or is publicly giving an opinion on an expert topic.

<sup>19</sup> When drafting an informed consent with a client (or in a multilateral contractual field with parents and with their child, for instance), psychologists should bear in mind a possible cooperation with other experts within the helping network or within a multidisciplinary team and to facilitate it.

<sup>20</sup> **An interest** is usually understood as a tendency to define and meet important objectives based on one's needs and values (paraphrasing Kříž, Z., 2002, ÚSS/2002–S–1–031, p. 38). An interest therefore means striving for some kind of **good** which is also often expressed in an individual's will, preferences and rights. A psychologist and a client might not share the same notion of good; their cooperation must nevertheless remain within the boundaries of the set of values promoted by this Code. Example: In a traffic psychology assessment, the driver's interest is to obtain a driving license, while diagnostic findings make the psychologist believe that the driver is not eligible. But both the driver and the psychologist share a set of values that prioritizes life and health.

<sup>21</sup> See § 367 and 368 of Act no 40/2009 Sb. of the Criminal Code.

<sup>22</sup> For further details see chapter IV. 1.

## **II. A PSYCHOLOGIST'S COMPETENCE**

The exercise of the psychological profession is based on a psychologist's competence, i.e. knowledge, skills and ethical attitudes acquired through appropriate university and postgraduate education, expert supervision (meaning control) and enhanced reflexivity. A psychologist engages in a life-long development of this competence which includes practical experience with an emphasis on critical reflection of knowledge and self-reflection about one's own skills and attitudes.

### **II. 1 Diversity competence**

A psychologist

- a) respects peoples' equality in dignity and rights and consciously strives to be open to difference;
- b) is aware of the diversity of values and actively considers (reflects upon) own values, preferences, attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices;
- c) does not see own opinions as universally shared beliefs and makes them understandable to others;
- d) understands and actively considers his/her possible bias in a multilateral contractual field; strives for impartiality or, as the case may be (in circumstances when the promoted values and principles are at risk), for clear and reasoned explanation of partiality;
- e) in conflicts relies on and refers to the values and principles promoted by this Code and sees conflicts besides other things as an opportunity for understanding and personal development of the parties involved.

### **II. 2 Professional competence**

A psychologist

- a) has a general responsibility towards the psychological profession and a specific responsibility for own expertise;
- b) acts only within the boundaries given by her/his university or postgraduate degree and practice, expert supervision (meaning control) and enhanced reflexivity;
- c) does not harm the psychological profession by procedures or statements in areas in which he/she lacks the appropriate level of expertise;
- d) does not lower the standards of the profession even when urged to do so in various manners;

- e) engages in life-long learning and fostering of the ability of critical reflection; is aware of contemporary environment of permanent and critical changes and of rapidly developing knowledge and procedures in psychology and related fields;
- f) follows the principles of evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence<sup>23</sup> and understands the benefits and limitations of both procedures by relying on methodological knowledge and critical thinking;
- g) understands the current legal, ethical and professional context<sup>24</sup> of the psychological profession and adjusts the procedures used accordingly;
- h) is aware of own abilities and limitations, actively seeks feedback from clients, colleagues, supervisors and subordinates, and when professionally in doubt requests support through methodological guidance or consultations with colleagues within a professional association.

## II. 3 Personal competence

A psychologist

- a) strives for personality development and enhanced self-reflection over the whole course of practice;

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<sup>23</sup>Evidence-based practice in psychology is defined as “the integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture and preferences” (American Psychological Association, 2005).

The recent approach of practice-based evidence integrates “both individual clinical expertise and service-level parameters with the best available evidence drawn from rigorous research activity carried out in routine clinical settings”. (Barkham, M., Stiles, W. B., Lambert, M. J., Mellor-Clark, J. /2010/: Building a rigorous and relevant knowledge base for the psychological therapies. In Barkham, M., Hardy, G. E., Mellor-Clark, J. (Eds.), *Developing and delivering practice-based evidence – a guide for the psychological therapies* (21-61). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.) This approach means to rely more on procedures and results representing “good practice” and on the organizational framework. Organizations (such as hospitals) embrace their mission, values and vision and thus ensure a certain level of service based on quality standards.

The definitions speak of “clinical expertise” because they come from an environment where it is assumed that psychologists practice psychotherapy within the healthcare system.

Nevertheless, the movement of “evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence” is currently affecting all helping professions, education included. It is advisable to bear in mind that it is only one of many options of achieving quality of care and integrity of the profession. Recently, the “real world evidence” approach based on data collected from sources outside of traditional clinical trials has emerged. (See National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine /2017/. *Real-world evidence generation and evaluation of therapeutics: Proceedings of a workshop*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.)

<sup>24</sup> Law and ethics develop constantly. Professional organizations (such as various psychological associations) protect the profession by defining qualification prerequisites for the provision of specialized services, guaranteeing the corresponding postgraduate education and methodological guidance for practice, overseeing performance quality and backing their members’ professional identity.

- b) cares for staying in good shape; strives to be understandable; is conscious that he/she is the main resource of psychological practice;
- c) deals with potential complaints with honor and dignity; in case of a mistake admits to the error, apologizes and, when possible, takes remedial action.

## II. 4 Ethical competence

A psychologist

- a) cultivates his/her ethical sensitivity, knowledge of ethical approaches and the skills of ethical thinking and decision-making for the whole time of the psychological career;
- b) actively seeks to respect the Code of Ethics and other ethical guidelines (such as ethical standards drafted by professional associations);
- c) promotes and defends values, principles and procedures stated in the Code of Ethics in all areas of activity;
- d) is aware that he/she acts as a representative of psychology while engaging in research, teaching, publishing, expert communication, cooperation with colleagues, leadership, experience sharing, promotion of own work and public appearances, and respects therefore the promoted values for enhanced **trust, cooperation and mutual learning**.
- f) understands the political and other pressures surrounding the exercise of the profession and strives to face them with honor;
- e) makes another psychologist or a colleague aware of their violation of ethical principles or, if need be, notifies the Ethical Committee;
- f) engages in a career-long cultivation of conscience, decency and thorough overall ethical reflection; uses various methods of reflexivity enhancement, including support from colleagues while dealing with ethical dilemmas.

### III. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Professional relationship with clients, other parties, colleagues and the public is based on the values and principles stated in the present Code of Ethics. A psychologist strives to establish a **working alliance** supporting **trust, cooperation and mutual learning**. Which means, besides other things, recognizing the **interests** of individual parties entering the negotiations about the purpose of the cooperation, and assuming responsibility for the ways of using **power** and influence.

#### III. 1 Field of interests

A psychologist

- a) knows whose interest guides the undertaken action and clearly identifies this interest; protects the rights and legitimate interests of a client;
- b) is aware of the various interests involved and knows when it is appropriate to negotiate a multilateral written contract<sup>25</sup>;
- c) clearly identifies a situation when his/her position or engagement within a multilateral contractual field changes and negotiates contract modification, i.e. even possible termination of cooperation<sup>26</sup>;
- d) is aware of a possible conflict of interests<sup>27</sup> and takes steps to make the interests clear and resolve the conflict correctly.

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<sup>25</sup> The notion of “the child's best interests” can be used as an argument by all parties in the context of a child custody court proceedings to justify the opposing solutions proposed by both parents and the child protection body. A psychologist in such a situation must clarify and define individual responsibilities and what is expected from the psychological intervention without assuming that everybody wants the same thing.

<sup>26</sup> In a situation, for instance, when a psychologist receives a family for family therapy, the parents eventually begin divorce proceedings and the psychologist gradually starts supporting one of the parties. In such a case, the psychologist should properly terminate service provision to the family and sign a new contract with the new client, i.e. the family member the psychologist intends to support. A reverse process (a psychologist supporting one family member becomes a therapist of the whole family) is not possible.

<sup>27</sup> Such as a psychologist providing career counseling or skill assessment covered by a labor office or a different public body to a client and then taking on the same client for private therapy in less than two years.

### III. 2 Responsibility for using power

A psychologist

- a) actively reflects the various forms of his/her power and influence in his/her relationship with clients, other parties, colleagues and the public;
- b) while cooperating with all the parties involved, uses his/her power and influence in a responsible manner and in the name of the values and principles promoted and defended by the present Code<sup>28</sup>;
- c) recognizes the nature of the relationship with the client and its level of asymmetry and establishes an adequate distribution of responsibility, this also applies to the risks inherent to the psychologist's or the client's conduct or situation<sup>29</sup>;
- d) protects the client's honor, dignity and privacy on a long-term basis, i.e. even in circumstances when the client did not make any such request (primarily in media and in indirect forms of psychological help, such as on-line counseling), and discusses these issues with the client;
- e) makes public statements (in media, for instance) while taking into account his/her responsibility towards the psychological profession, as well as current scientific methods or findings, even if critical of some of these methods or findings. A psychologist's responses are based on a greater knowledge of a wider background and not on questions taken out of context, for instance.
- f) does not make any statements about an individual that he/she did not have the possibility to observe or assess, even if under pressure to do so;
- g) protects clients from inappropriate or wrong<sup>30</sup> usage of psychological methods and from the consequences of such usage;
- h) protects psychological methods from misuse, devaluation and other risks that might arise from their inappropriate or wrong usage;
- i) proceeds with extreme caution when conducting research or making expert statements about an individual without his/her consent;

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<sup>28</sup> For example a psychologist turns to the family or a child protection body etc. for cooperation if the behavior of a child in therapy indicates maltreatment, sexual abuse or neglect. He/she limits all statements to the description of the signs manifested by the child because he/she is aware that making unfounded assumptions public is similar to defamatory statements and it could harm the reputation of another.

<sup>29</sup> For instance a researcher agrees not to provide identifiable information collected from employees to their employer even if the research was ordered by the employer. The risks of this situation are a lack of trust on the side of employees (respondents), dissatisfaction on the side of the ordering party etc.

<sup>30</sup> An inappropriate usage means for example using a diagnostic method that cannot answer the question that led to the psychological assessment. A wrong usage of a diagnostic method means for example making diagnostic conclusions without regard for various contexts (cultural, developmental, gender, situational) or without regard for the sufficient or insufficient validity of test results.

Inappropriate or wrong choices must also be avoided in research, counseling or therapy.

- j) does not use psychological knowledge to ridicule, shame, downplay or disadvantage another, such as in conflict or in dispute<sup>31</sup>.

### **III. 3 Working alliance and its protection**

A psychologist

- a) protects the working alliance and encourages mutual trust. Therefore, a psychologist avoids situations that could disrupt mutual trust and harm the contractual or emotional nature of the working alliance;
- b) refrains from entering into multiple relationships, especially those that would allow him/her to benefit from the dependency of another person and exploit that person to meet own needs<sup>32</sup>;
- c) protects himself/herself from exploitative or otherwise harmful relationships;
- d) operates in an environment suitable<sup>33</sup> for the chosen type of psychological cooperation.

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<sup>31</sup> Interpreting or explaining the behavior of an individual with the aim of degrading or otherwise harming this individual must also be considered as misuse of professional power on the side of the psychologist.

<sup>32</sup> Such as entering into a sexual relationship with a client, accepting reciprocal services and gifts, psychological assessment of acquaintances etc.

<sup>33</sup> A psychologist can operate in various environments – in an office, at the premises of an employing organization, at the client's apartment. A psychologist should always consider whether the given environment allows to act with the appropriate professional, personal and ethical competences, and whether it is friendly for the client and the given task. Environmental influences are understood as a specific kind of communication. Examples range from health (the client should not be exposed to passive smoking), to dignity (the client is not forced to take off his/her shoes) or privacy-related issues (the client is not asked to fill out questionnaires in the waiting room surrounded by other clients) etc.

## IV. PROCESS OF PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION

A psychologist cooperating with a client in research, teaching, expertise or helping practice observes ethical principles in all stages of work: from **contract** negotiation and signing, when **the purpose and objectives of the cooperation** and the corresponding **psychological methods to be used are defined**, through **results sharing and reporting**, to various manners of **documentation protection**.

### IV. 1 Contracts and informed consent<sup>34</sup>

A psychologist

- a) **provides full information** to all the parties involved while respecting their freedom to decide for themselves according to their will, preferences and rights;
- b) **refuses** to conduct research, teach, provide assessment or intervene outside of the boundaries of his/her knowledge, skills and responsibility;
- c) **establishes** the purpose of the cooperation within the boundaries set by the values promoted by this Code of Ethics, with primary focus on the **client's interest**. In case of a **multilateral contract**, considers also other interests, implied or agreed<sup>35</sup>.
- d) **negotiates the terms and conditions** of cooperation and puts them in writing, especially in the case of a multilateral contractual field. **Informed consent** consisting of an information sheet and a consenting declaration is an example of such a contract. A consenting declaration without an information sheet is invalid<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup>Oral contracts and oral informing are also acceptable. A written contract is necessary in a multilateral contractual field, i.e. also when a client is giving consent to inform other parties.

<sup>35</sup> A psychologist takes these various interests into consideration even when (and especially when) these interests are not represented in the contract. Such as in the context of a child custody court proceedings: if working only with one parent, a psychologist does not disclose (in a report for the court, for instance) the parent's statements about the other parent who has no means of defense or protection.

<sup>36</sup>The contents of the information sheet may vary according to circumstances. In any case it includes: purpose and expected course of cooperation; involvement of third and other parties; terms and limitations of confidentiality/privacy; fees/remuneration (therapy payment terms, remuneration for research participants); procedure risks and benefits; documenting/reporting/results sharing procedures; contact information of a person or an organization for further information or complaints. A contract on follow-up or continuation of psycholo-gical care is adjusted to the agreed nature of the cooperation. The information sheet and the consenting declaration must always emphasize the voluntary nature of partici-pation and the possibility to opt out anytime.

- e) **Information sharing rules**<sup>37</sup> are also part of the contract and usually deal with result reporting and information sharing with persons 1) selected by the client, 2) relevant to the client's continuity of care or to cooperative care (in a multidisciplinary team, for instance), 3) relevant to a psychologist's professional stability and development (supervision, inspection, complaints etc.).

## **IV. 2 Formulating the objectives of cooperation and the corresponding use of psychological methods**

A psychologist

- a) is in charge of formulating the case or defining the purpose of research or education, i.e. establishing with the client the procedure<sup>38</sup> of cooperation and its objectives with respect to its purpose/outcome;
- b) is fully responsible for using verified<sup>39</sup> and quality<sup>40</sup> psychological (research, teaching, diagnostic, intervention) methods and for respecting the applicable standards and recommended procedures in research, teaching, assessment and intervention.
- c) interprets expert findings within the comprehensive notion of the theory of human psyche<sup>41</sup> while applying theoretical fundamentals and historical development of the diagnostic, research or intervention methods used, indicating their methodological contexts and limits and focusing on the purpose of the given research, teaching, assessment or intervention;<sup>42</sup>
- d) knows and offers interpretation alternatives to research and diagnostic results and applied interventions.

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<sup>37</sup>Sharing information with a client's consent means, besides other things, that the information shared relates only to the client and not to the individuals whose consent was not obtained. A psychologist proceeds with extreme caution if, for some reason, information about individuals whose consent was not obtained must be shared.

<sup>38</sup> The usage of somehow non-standard or non-verified procedures must be agreed with extreme precision. In such cases the written informed consent gains on importance because the information sheet contains the procedure's possible risks and benefits and emphasizes that the procedure is not outdated and suits the given purpose.

<sup>39</sup>When speaking of psycho-diagnostic methods, "verified" means standardized or based on expert psychological experience (see evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence).

<sup>40</sup> Using tools of verified validity, or tools the validity of which can be derived from international comparison.

<sup>41</sup> A psychologist is able to answer the following question: "On which theory is your assumption based?" The answer should mirror the current set of available findings, taking into account, besides other things, personality psychology, gender, developmental and cultural context, including the psychologist's own notion of the human being.

<sup>42</sup>Especially in the field of diagnostics, a psychologist refrains from using methods that are not obtained in appropriate pre-graduate or life-long psychological education or the weight and theoretical explanation of which he/she is unable to provide in the given diagnostic context.

### **IV. 3 Presenting results and written reporting**

A psychologist

- a) presents the results of his/her efforts to the client in a comprehensive manner and indicates their limitations; sufficiently explains his/her conclusions, respects test validity, separates assumptions from facts and opinions from suppositions; encourages questions and verifies the client's understanding; respects a client's wish not to be informed about the results of the psychological activity;
- b) releases written reports while keeping in mind his/her inability to influence who is going to handle them and for which purpose; always keeps proper documentation<sup>43</sup>;
- c) refuses questions from a third party (child protection body, court, etc.) if they are not covered by a contract with the client or a multilateral contract or if by answering, the psychologist would question his/her ethical or professional standard or the reputation of psychology.<sup>44</sup>

### **IV. 4 Protection and maintenance of documentation**

A psychologist

- a) documents his/her activity for many reasons<sup>45</sup>;
- b) keeps the documentation in a way that does not harm the honor, dignity and privacy of the client and other parties, including colleagues;
- c) defines with the client or in a multilateral contract how, where, by whom, and for how long the documentation is stored and respects the applicable legal standards governing documentation collecting, storage and shredding;
- d) bears in mind the client's rights and values promoted by this Code of Ethics, even in circumstances when the documentation is stored by someone else.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Written reports must always include: their purpose; who, when, to whom and why is submitting the report; conclusions and their explanations; date, signature.

<sup>44</sup> Examples: A psychologist can't make statements about people and their relationships without having had the possibility to observe or assess these people and their relationships. A court's questions (addressed to a court appointed expert in a court proceedings on limiting a person's legal capacity, for instance) that do not take into consideration society's development towards inclusion should not be answered.

<sup>45</sup> Documentation allows to follow the fulfillment of established objectives, to verify the agreed distribution of responsibility and power, reassess diagnostic results, track research data, repeat an experiment etc.

<sup>46</sup> If for instance a psychologist is involved in a job applicant selection process in a company that collects and keeps applicants' data, the psychologist should insist on a written multilateral contract identifying the responsibilities and rights of all parties. This means, besides other things, clearly defining the scope of control that the psychologist has over the use of test results and that the clients (job applicants) have over their personal data and results, to provide for a re-assessment of these results, for instance.

## V. SANCTIONS

When a psychologist's behavior or procedure is found to be in violation of the Code of Ethics of the Psychological Profession, it's up to the Ethics Committee to propose measures based on the seriousness of the violation.

- a) In case of a less serious misconduct, the Ethics Committee may recognize that the violation proceedings alone serve the desired punitive function. It may also recommend to the psychologist, whose behavior or procedures were found to be in violation of the Code of Ethics, to take on additional education/training reflecting the nature of his/her misconduct, professional role<sup>47</sup> and task and responsibilities in the given role.
- b) In case of a serious violation of the Code of Ethics, the Ethics Committee can impose a range of disciplinary measures: a reprimand; a suspension of membership in a professional organization (psychological association); a revocation of membership in a professional organization (psychological association).

## VI. The obligation of the Ethical code of the psychological profession

This Ethical code is obligatory for all members of the Czech-Moravian Psychological Society. They are required to get acquainted with this code and to comply with it. The obligation of the Ethical code is established by its adoption and publication. The Code of Ethics for psychological profession was approved by the Czech-Moravian Psychological Society on 1st of December 2017 and it becomes effective on the date of its subsequent publication.

Prague, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017

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<sup>47</sup>Such as the role of researcher, counselor, teacher, student, court-appointed expert etc. Professional roles are mirrored in education/trainings usually provided for given field by different psychological associations.

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