



FEPSAC Position Statement # 9

Ethical principles of the European Sport Psychology Federation

Preface:

The term sport psychology refers to psychological aspects of sport, physical recreation, physical education and the European Sport Psychology Federation (FEPSAC) works for the development of the field of sport psychology from the European and global perspectives. Thus, the standpoint of the following text is to provide ethical principles oriented towards the European researcher and practitioner.

Due to sport psychology professionals' specialised knowledge and the hypothetical potential for harm, the following ethical principles are guidelines for European researchers and practitioners to act responsibly and ethically in the provision of sport psychology services. These principles are intended to ensure the dignity and welfare of all groups, organisations and individuals with whom European researchers and practitioners may interact with and provide professional services to. The application of the ethical principles may vary across contexts (i.e., country, organization and/or professional role), and should be used in conjunction with national organizations codes of ethics, if such exist. The ethical principles outlined in this statement¹ are not exhaustive; the absence of principles does not indicate that FEPSAC endorses them as either ethical or unethical.

It is a responsibility of each sport psychologist to aspire towards the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct and practice. It is expected that sport psychologists will act in accordance, and not violate, the values and rules described in the ethical principles, as well as the values and norms of their culture.

¹ Documents and material in this ethics statement is based in large parts on guidelines by: The American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the British Association of Sports and Exercise Sciences - Code of Conduct, Ethical principles of International Society of Sport Psychology, Code of Ethics for the Australian Psychological Society, the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct, Code of Ethics for the Canadian Sport Psychology Association, Deutsche Vereinigung für Sportwissenschaft (Berufsethische Grundsätze für Sportwissenschaftler/innen), and the Ethical Principles of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology.

Principle A: Professional and Social Responsibility

European researchers and practitioners should uphold professional standards of conduct and accept appropriate responsibility for their behaviour. They are responsible for safeguarding the society and FEPSAC from members who are deficient in ethical conduct. The moral conduct and professional standard of European researcher and practitioners requires personal maintenance of their own mental and physical health. European researchers and practitioners are also concerned about the ethical compliance of their colleagues' scientific and professional conduct. European researchers and practitioners should consult with, refer to, and cooperate with other professionals and institutions to best serve the interests and needs of the recipients of their services. When undertaking research, European researchers and practitioners should strive to always protect the rights and welfare of the all clients, professionals and research participants, avoid the misuse of their work and comply with the law.

Principle B: Competence

European researchers and practitioners should maintain the highest standards of competence in their work through maintaining their knowledge related to the service they render, and recognize the need for ongoing education. They must recognize the limitations of their expertise, and the boundaries of their particular techniques and methods. They should not misrepresent their qualifications or expertise in any way. Sport psychologist's should provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. Only in an emergency should European researchers and practitioners intervene outside of their expertise with the aim of seeking adequate professional support as soon as possible. They should be aware of the role and function of psychological testing, and should use only those tests for which they have received appropriate education. Claims for the effectiveness of sport psychological interventions and other training should not be exaggerated or misleading. European researchers and practitioners are cognizant of the fact that the competencies required in servicing, teaching, and/or studying individuals or groups of people vary with the distinctive characteristics of those individuals or groups. In the event of being requested to work in any way beyond their training, they should refer the request to a suitable colleague. In those areas in which recognised professionals standards do not exist, European researchers and practitioners should exercise careful judgment and take appropriate precautions to protect the welfare of those with whom they work.

Principle C: Consent

It is the European researchers and practitioner's responsibility to ensure that no work is undertaken without first having the informed consent of all participating clients. Primarily, informed consent should be demonstrated through the client signing a document about information relevant to the proposed investigation, intervention, treatments or test. This should include: a description of the investigation; its' objectives; the procedure to be followed; an outline of the risks and benefits; an offer to answer any queries; an instruction that the client is free to withdraw at any point without prejudice; and an explanation concerning confidentiality and its limits. In some cases, informed consent may be obtained verbally employing an appropriate written record confirming that informed consent had been obtained.

Principle D: Confidentiality

It is of paramount importance that all European researchers and practitioners preserve the confidentiality of the information acquired in their work. Information may not be obtained or passed on without prior written consent of a client or a research participant. All clients should be informed that they have a right to a copy of such information relating to them if so requested. Exceptions for confidentiality should be mentioned, e.g. a threat for health/life of the person or/and other people around as well limitations of confidentiality permitted by national organisations.

Principle E: Integrity

European researchers and practitioners are responsible for maintaining and promoting integrity in the research, teaching, and practice of sport psychology. They are honest, fair, and respectful to other professionals, clients and the public. When describing or reporting their qualifications, services, products, fees, research, or teaching, they do not consciously make statements that are fake, misleading, or deceptive. European researchers and practitioners should clearly define to all parties the roles they are performing and the obligations they adopt. European researchers and practitioners should avoid improper and potentially harmful dual (or multiple) relationship and conflicts of their personal and professional interests. Moreover, they should be sensitive to the sub/cultural norms in which they practice or research. European researchers and practitioners should appropriately consider their actions and intentions to prevent crossing boundaries of

appropriate practice (i.e., therapeutic use of touch) resulting in harmful violations of appropriate practice parameters (i.e., sexual boundary violations within professional relationships).

Principle F: Personal Conduct

European researchers and practitioners shall conduct themselves in a manner beneficial to the well-being of their clients and in a way that brings credit to the field of sport psychology.

European researcher and practitioners:

- a. Should conduct themselves in such a way that brings credit to their specialist areas.
- b. Should not exploit relationships with clients for personal gain or gratification.
- c. Should not in any way jeopardise the personal safety or interests of their clients.
- d. Should consistently remain unbiased and objective in their practice and actions in matters involving gender, race, culture, and professional conflict.
- e. Should apply high standards of safety, research and practice undertaken by themselves or by others under their supervision.
- f. Should not engage in or omit any act or behaviours that as a result will bring or is likely to bring FEPSAC into disrepute.

Principle G: Research

European researchers and practitioners should comply with the highest ethical and professional standards in conducting, publishing and disseminating research. Following publication, sport psychologists should make the data on which their conclusions are based available to other professionals who seek to verify the substantive claims through reanalysis, provided that: a) the data will be used only for the purpose stated in the approved research proposal; and, b) the identity of the participants is removed. European researchers and practitioners will ensure they and their colleagues accurately report the data they have gathered and the results of their research, and state clearly if any data on which the publication is based have been published previously.

In summary, it is recommended that:

- a. European researchers and practitioners are responsible for safeguarding the public and the FEPSAC from members who are deficient in ethical conduct. They should uphold *professional and social standards* of conduct and accept appropriate responsibility for their behaviour.
- b. European researchers and practitioners should strive to maintain the highest standards of *competence* in their work.
- c. No European researchers and practitioners should undertake any work without first having the *informed consent* of all participating clients. Primarily, through the client signing a document setting detailing all information relevant to the proposed investigation, intervention, treatments or test.
- d. European researchers and practitioners should preserve the *confidentiality* of the information acquired in their work which should not be developed without prior written consent of a client. Clients should be informed that they have a right to a copy of such information relating to them if so requested .
- e. European researchers and practitioners should promote *integrity* in research, teaching, and practice of sport psychology.
- f. European researchers and practitioners shall *conduct themselves* in a manner beneficial to the well-being of their clients and in a way that brings credit to the field of sport psychology.
- g. European researchers and practitioners should *comply* with codes, statements, guidelines and other directives developed. Moreover, they should *accurately report* the data they have gathered and the results of their research, and state clearly if any data on which the publication is based have been *published previously*.

FEPSAC

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