Ethics for European Psychologists

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Preface

This book developed out of the work of the European Federation of Psychologists Associations Standing Committee on Ethics (SCE). The development of a Meta-code of Ethics was designed to guide and bring uniformity to the ethical codes of associations within EFPA. This proved a great success and attention was then given to developing other guidance for associations. Again, this proved successful. At this point, attention switched to supporting the development of national associations, both the organizations themselves and also their support for individual psychologists.

The development of a book on ethics for European psychologists is a unique venture. This book provides the first comprehensive attempt to examine ethical practice, its basis and execution from the experience of European psychologists and within the context of the culturally rich and varied countries of Europe. It is practice oriented, making it a useful resource for psychologists, whether applied practitioners or researchers. The book also explores basic issues in ethics and the wider societal context. Although firmly grounded in Europe, the principles explored within these pages have a wider applicability.

The idea for this book developed as a means to support the development of ethical practice by psychologists, drawing upon the experience of psychologists in many countries, and recognizing the need for consistent ethical principles to guide practice but also the fact that practical implementation occurs within a multicultural world in which the mobility of psychologists increases along with everyone else’s. It grew out of earlier work by one of the authors, Haldor Øvreeide, who published a book aimed at Nordic psychologists. The SCE supported the development of a book based on EFPA’s Meta-code (revised 2005). Although written by the four named authors, all current or recent members of the SCE, the book has benefited greatly from the work of the Standing Committee on Ethics as a whole, from the tremendous expertise of its members, who represent countries across Europe – from North to South and East to West. The current membership comprises: Victor Claudio (Portugal), Derek Deacey (Ireland), Henk Geertsema (The Netherlands), Jurg Forster (Switzerland), Hana Junova (Czech Republic), Yesim Korkut (Turkey), Fredi Lang (Germany), Alain Letuvé (France), Geoff Lindsay (United Kingdom), Polona Matjan (Slovenia), Pierre Nederlandt (Belgium), Haldor Øvreeide (Norway), Vito Tummino (Italy), and Wolf-Dietrich Zuzan (Austria).

We hope you enjoy and benefit from reading this book.

Geoff Lindsay
Casper Koene
Haldor Øvreeide
Fredi Lang
Chapter 1

Professional Ethics and Psychology*

Geoff Lindsay

The practice of psychology, whether as a scientific discipline or as a service to the public, is based upon two main foundations. The first foundation comprises a body of knowledge and skills which have been built up from research and from the practice of psychology. The second comprises the ethics of developing that knowledge and skills base, and of the actions taken when applying it to meet demands for services to be delivered to the public. Professions have these elements in common, but there are variations in each. For example, psychology is firmly grounded in scientific enquiry, with a strong basis in certain approaches such as experimentation, and in attempts to enhance objectivity and replicability of findings. At the same time meticulous observation, description and reflection of unique and naturally occurring events are important for scientific development in psychology.

In this book we focus on the ethical basis of psychology. We intend this to be a practical book that will help individual psychologists, at different stages of their careers, from the undergraduate starting out on a scientific subject at university, to the trainee professional psychologist or new researcher, to the experienced psychologist. In short, we consider that ethical practice is not something that is only learned at the start of a professional career. Rather, it develops as experience grows and new challenges arise.

Although primarily aimed at individual psychologists, this book is also intended to provide support to those engaged in the development of the profession. As psychology becomes a more popular and influential scientific discipline at universities across the world so new associations of psychologists are formed. Furthermore, as those countries develop their psychological science they also lay the foundation for professional practice. This development will require the further elaboration of thinking about ethics at the level of the national psychological association.

But what should be the basis or the organising principle for a book on ethics for European psychologists? Is it not the case that the rich diversity of cultures across Europe (and indeed across the world) effectively renders any attempt for commonality an impossible dream? Our answer is a resounding NO! We base this response not on prejudice or a “feel good” factor of pro-Europeanism. Rather, our opinions and our commitment to this project born out of the practical experience of having worked together over many years developing ethical guidelines for European psychologists and

* This chapter is based on a previous article that first appeared in the UNESCO-sponsored Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS) (see www.eolss.net), used here with permission.
their professional associations. This work has been in the Standing Committee on Ethics of the European Federation of Psychologists Associations (EFPA), in conferences and through the delivery of invited workshops in various countries.

In the first chapter I “set the scene” in two ways. Firstly I examine the nature of psychology and the impact that has on the development of an ethical code. In particular I consider that psychologists may be primarily professional applied practitioners (e.g., clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, forensic psychologists) but many are also researchers not directly engaged in providing services to the public. However, each group comprises psychologists. Should an ethical code apply to both or only the applied practitioners?

Secondly I briefly describe the development of the EFPA Meta-code of Ethics. The EFPA Meta-code forms the framework for chapters 3–7 of this book. It has become very influential as all member psychological associations of EFPA are required to ensure that their ethical codes are compliant with and certainly not in conflict with the Meta-code.

In the next two sections the nature of psychology as both a science and as an applied profession will be discussed: are there common or different ethical issues for those who psychologists who practise the science (researchers) compared with applied practitioners?

Psychology as a Science

Psychology has much in common with other sciences. Research in psychology may include either human or non-human participants. This raises questions about the generalisability of models of species and their location in an ethical hierarchy. Put simply, should our ethical concerns for researching humans differ from those when researching earthworms or rats? If so, on what basis will this be justified; is there a scale from lower to higher animals (including humans)? If so, where does each species sit, and what is appropriate or inappropriate for each?

This issue has led to differing positions which highlight two aspects. First, ethics and hence the determination of appropriate behaviour by psychologist researchers’ is grounded in values. Second, values are themselves linked to and determined by factors including religion, beliefs and culturally influenced expectations. This being so, it is necessary to undertake research within a framework which has acceptability within the host society. Such acceptability may change over time and differ between cultures.

As a discipline psychology cannot be viewed as “value free”. While some research may raise relatively few and fairly minor ethical issues other research may concern substantial and contentious ethical questions. An example of the former might be conducting reading tests with 11-year-old students, while the latter might comprise the investigation of religious beliefs, sexual behaviour or patterns of voting in elections: these are all essentially personal and private matters. With respect to research, the ethical issues concern the topic, the arrangements for conducting the research, publication and dissemination of results, and interaction effects.
The topic

Psychology as the study of behaviour and the mind covers a vast range. Consequently, the context of each particular research study will raise different ethical questions. It is not easy to categorise which topics are likely to pose fewer or more ethical problems, and these judgements might change over time. For example, research has been conducted which has examined basic cognitive processes, how these relate to each other and how they are applied in natural settings. While laboratory studies of reasoning may pose little ethical concern, the results of studies collectively may pose serious challenges. This is exemplified by findings which indicate mean differences between racial or ethnic groups in cognitive abilities. The scientific issues concern the rigour of the studies, and validity and usefulness of the findings (Phinney, 1996). In this example, the concept of race is now seen as contentious, affecting the scientific validity of findings. This in turn raises ethical questions regarding dissemination of findings from such studies. But there is a further ethical concern: should such research be undertaken at all? The work of Jensen and Eysenck, for example, was attacked not so much for the pure science but for the implications that might be drawn and consequent impact on, in this case, relations between different groups (e.g., Eysenck, 1971). This raises the sensitive issue – are certain topics for research to be avoided not on scientific grounds but because they are socially sensitive?

Conducting the research

Research methods in psychology cover a very broad field. At one end of the continuum there are invasive surgical procedures, e.g., planting electrodes in the brains of animals in order to examine the relationship between behaviour, thought or perception with brain activity. Here the technique is invasive and undertaken for the purpose of the experiment. This may be compared with research into brain activity in patients undergoing surgery for therapeutic purposes.

At the other end of the continuum may be placed interpersonal experimental techniques. One with a low degree of invasiveness is the completion of questionnaires, particularly in a large group. Compare this with a study by individual interview where the researcher asks probing and challenging questions about the participant’s personal behaviour and views.

These examples imply at least two dimensions: physical–interpersonal and low–high intrusiveness. Hence, intrusion may be conceptualised as either physical, e.g., surgery, or by questioning. Each of these has implications for the well being of the participant, which may also be considered with respect to physical and psychological health. That is, not only does physical intrusion pose potential ethical questions, so also does questioning.

An example, which also suggests how attitudes to what is permissible in experiments change, concerns an experiment by Landis in 1924 in the US (described in Crafts et al.,
1938). Twenty-five “subjects,” mainly adults but including a 13-year-old boy, and a hospital patient with high blood pressure, were exposed to various conditions to produce emotional responses, the purpose being to assess facial expression of emotions. The 17 situations included the playing of jazz, reading from the Bible – probably regarded as fairly benign depending on one’s views of jazz or the Bible in a predominantly Christian country. However, other conditions included deception, e.g., sniffing ammonia rather than the “syrup of lemons” as indicated by the experimenter. Other tasks involved asking the person to cut off a rat’s head; and requesting the participant to put their hand into a covered bucket, without looking, and feel around. The bucket contained several inches of water and live frogs, and a strong electric shock was delivered.

A third dimension implicit here is the vulnerability of the participant, with respect to their developmental status, both age and intellectual ability, and their physical and psychological health and resilience – in this case boy and a hospital patient.

Ethical consideration of the conduct of research therefore requires attention to several different dimensions concerning the participants, and indeed the experimenters. In addition there are ethical concerns regarding the practicability of research, including consent, verification of the participant and the validity and reliability of measures. While these may often be seen as technical matters, they have an ethical dimension: invalid data pose potential problems for the competence and integrity of the research findings and reputation of the researcher.

Publication and dissemination

Dissemination of research findings takes various forms; e.g., reports to sponsors, journal articles for other researchers or professionals, and presentations in the media. There are ethical considerations which apply to all of these, but there are also variations. In each case there is a requirement of integrity, characterised here by accurate, truthful and comprehensible presentation. At its most basic, data should not be fabricated or ignored if they confound the researcher’s preferred outcomes. An example of where this was open to question concerned Sir Cyril Burt, an eminent British psychologist who was the country’s first educational psychologist. After his death it was alleged that his influential work on IQ, using data from twins, was suspect: it was suggested that he had fabricated findings, and even made up at least one researcher worker, in order to bolster his views on the heritability of intelligence (Kamin, 1974).

While blatant fabrication may be unequivocally unethical, other examples may be less straightforward. Psychologists may legitimately report the findings of a study which lends support to their theories: however, not to consider opposing findings, or not to conduct studies which might challenge the findings would not be ethical. Consequently, in reporting one study, not to contextualise its worth with reference to the findings of other studies would represent a lack of integrity.

1 For a fuller discussion of this cause celebre, see Mackintosh (1995).
The nature of the medium represents a further ethical challenge. Different expectations are required if the recipient is a researcher or member of the public. These relate both to the medium of publication, and also the style of representation. While journal articles are generally carefully written in measured prose, a television programme or tabloid newspaper may accentuate, possibly distort, meanings. The responsibility ultimately is always with the psychologist, even if the (mis)representation is by another person or agency. This applies not only to deliberately questionable representation, but also to ensuring the avoidance of misunderstanding by the audience. Hence, ethical consideration includes not only honesty but clarity. The issues raised here apply also to the other main method of dissemination: teaching. There is the dimension of audience, e.g., the expert postgraduate seminar through to the invited presentation to a community group. In each case there is an ethical requirement to seek to communicate effectively not only on grounds of good science but also on the ethical basis of seeking to avoid misinformation being acquired.

Interaction

Finally it is necessary to consider the interaction of these three elements and of these with psychologists’ personal values. For example, it may be argued that some research is unethical in itself, but its effects are beneficial – the “end justifies the means” argument. One example is the work of Milgram on conformity (e.g., Milgram, 1963). In a classic experiment he required people to give shocks to a “subject”, positioned out of sight, if wrong answers were given to questions. The intensity of shocks delivered increased. Hesitation or reluctance led to a white-coated supervisor insisting the person continued. Despite increasingly apparent signs of distress, it was found that the participants did deliver these increasingly severe shocks, a finding which was interpreted as conformity in the setting and in the presence of an authority figure giving commands. It is difficult to imagine such an experiment being allowed now, yet it could also be argued that this experiment was a significant contribution to our understanding of an important social psychological phenomenon. A similar example is the famous Stanford Prison Experiment carried out by Zimbardo and now reported in detail for the first time in his book *The Lucifer Effect* (Zimbardo, 2007).

A different issue concerns the potential biases which may impact on any or all three of the elements above and consequently lead to a cumulative disposition to bias of the discipline. For example, it has been argued that psychology lacks socio-political diversity and that most psychologists are politically liberal, with conservatives being underrepresented in the discipline and profession. Research topics are chosen which, it is argued, are salient to the values of psychologists: these may be interpreted with a liberal bias; the findings may be reported within the values domains of the researcher. In such a case, there is a potential bias from start to end of the research process. This may not be intentional, but is rather a subtle manifestation of the psychologists’ individual value systems. The problem is confounded if, as is argued for psychology, the members of the profession have a high level of homogeneity of values.
Psychology as a Profession

The need for psychological associations

Organised psychology has only been around for a hundred years or so. It was towards the end of the 19th Century that laboratories for the study of psychology were established, but these did not necessarily represent psychology as an independent discipline. For example, in the university in the UK where I took my Bachelors degree it was well after the 2nd World War before a department of psychology was established. Before then there were lecturers in psychology in the department of philosophy. Such developments occurred at different rates within as well as between countries. Indeed, even now it is of little if any interest to some psychologists whether or not they practise within an organisation which is “psychological”, whether a university department, a public service, industry, commerce or private practice. Others are most concerned to be recognised personally as psychologists, and to operate within organisations or subsections of psychology.

Of more relevance to the present discussion therefore, is the development of formal organisations of psychology. The oldest are the American Psychological Association (APA), and the British Psychological Society (BPS), both over 100 years old. These have always been organisations of psychologists. That is, membership is open to those who meet certain requirements with respect to training in psychology.

These organisations have been central to the development of ethical codes as it is within these bodies that discussions have occurred, and ultimately where decisions have been made on the nature and substance of any codes which have been developed. Also, being typically democratic bodies, such organisations have needed the support of members to approve policies and regulatory procedures including ethical codes. Consequently, the development of ethical codes is dependent upon the existence, strength and organisation of psychological associations as well as universities and groupings of practitioners, on the procedures to inform and gain the support of members, and on the views of members on ethical matters. These factors will be influenced by various elements, not least the general societal context. For example, the development of psychological associations since the fall of the old communist regimes in Eastern Europe has allowed previously restricted associations to develop their practice, and to develop new ethical codes.

The importance for psychological associations of the development of ethical codes is probably most clear in those countries which have been later in instituting the professional bodies. However, their role can also be seen when tracing the development of ethical codes within well established associations. In doing this it is necessary to consider: what is a profession? And why have an ethical code?
What is a profession?

Pryzwansky and Wendt (1999) argue that a profession may be characterised by the following:

• Existence of a formal professional member organisation
• Systematic training
• Body of knowledge “to profess”
• Code of ethics
• Regulation of the members who provide a service

However, these are not simple issues. For example, in many countries psychologists have practised with limited organisation. Also, until relatively recently, psychologists had no specific code of ethics. That of the APA, generally argued to be the first, was not approved until 1953, well over half a century after the APA was set up, and when large numbers of psychologists had practised for many years. Within Europe, many countries have developed their ethical codes following the initiative of EFPA which set up a task force to develop an ethical code in 1990. Even now, there are psychological associations which do not have disciplinary procedures as one element of a regulatory system, a limitation recently addressed by the EFPA Standing Committee on Ethics.

The definition of professions, therefore, is complex. There are historical and cultural factors which challenge the generally agreed criteria. Furthermore, there are other factors to consider including:

• Specificity of knowledge and skills
• Level of skill application
• Self and societal interest

Psychology par excellence is a discipline which has contributed to a range of professions, including healthcare, teaching, social work, personnel and human relations and advertising, among others. Many, but not all, will have their own ethical code. For example, until recently there was no ethical code for school teachers in England and Wales, a limitation addressed by the newly instituted General Teaching Council.

The level of skill required may distinguish between or within professions. Again complexity is increased with overlapping sets of competencies. For example, a school teacher may train in educational measurement to a high level, but not have the breadth of experience of psycho-educational assessment of a school or educational psychologist. Hence psychology is applied by others as well as by psychologists – we must draw lines to define the psychologist in order to define who is competent and who is subject to an ethical code for psychologists.

The third issue concerns the nature of the work undertaken and the society in which it occurs. This is also problematic with the variation in private and state

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2 After the Meta-code was approved in 1995, the Task Force became the Standing Committee on Ethics.
provided practice and this varies across countries. Some argue that a primary orientation to community interest rather than individual self-interest is a characteristic of professional behaviour, but this is difficult to unpick. Traditional commitment to society characterised by low wages and poor working conditions has been challenged by organised labour and changes in society’s views of what is appropriate. Also, those in private practice essentially have a degree of self interest inherent in their practice – they need clients to survive. But more subtle pressures may be present for others, including those employed by the state or a voluntary agency. For example, critiques of special education have argued that professionals may maintain the system out of self interest as their livelihoods are implicated. Interestingly, such critics tend not to apply the same allegation to themselves, whose professional careers may be based on promulgating such critiques.

In summary, the question of what is a profession is problematic and contentious. However, for present purposes the primary focus will be on the development of an ethical code, and the regulation of professionals’ behaviour.

**Why Have an Ethical Code?**

Ethical codes are characterised, implicitly or explicitly, by two elements: a set of ethical principles and statements of practice typically written as enforceable standards. Ethical codes, therefore, are means of translating beliefs regarding necessary behaviour into statements which specify how the professional may act appropriately. These principles are derived from general moral positions including values. But why have an ethical code at all?

This question may now seem absurd, but in the development of the first APA code there was an active debate in which the argument for not having a code was put forcefully by Hall (1952). This was not an argument against ethical behaviour, but Hall argued that there was no need to have a formal code. Rather, he argued, ethical behaviour should be assumed of psychologists and, he argued, the institution of a formal code was a retrograde step as “I think it plays into the hands of crooks on the one hand and because it makes those who are covered by the code feel smug and sanctimonious on the other hand” (p. 430).

This view did not prevail but the point made is important. Firstly, it distinguishes ethical behaviour from a formal ethical code, but implicitly it raises the issue of training. Hall’s position was based upon a belief in the goodness of right thinking psychologists, but was silent on how they achieved their right thinking behaviour: “decent mature people do not need to be told how to conduct themselves” (p. 430) – experience shows this view to be naïve. For example, each year both the BPS and APA publish statistics regarding complaints made about their members. Although in percentage terms these are not high rates, the numbers are not insignificant. In 2006, the BPS received 109 complaints, appointed 20 panels to investigate complaints, and seven complaints went to a
full Conduct Committee hearing. The APA reported that 82 complaints had been received and 29 new cases had been opened.\(^3\)

A further issue concerns the range and comprehensiveness of any code, and its impact on the members of a profession. Ethical codes are typically designed to apply to practitioners. Psychology is unusual in its large number of psychologists who do not offer services to the public, namely researchers and educators. In typical professions the overwhelming majority of members will be practitioners, (e.g., medical practitioners, nurses). Ethical codes therefore are directed towards practice with clients. Psychology, however, has a substantial proportion of those who develop the discipline through research and disseminate through education.

One approach could be to limit ethical codes only to those members who offer services to the public. This was not the line taken by the major national societies in Europe or the APA. While there are practical factors, separating out members into distinct groups, there is also a tradition of bringing science and practice together. This can be exemplified by the situation in the APA at the end of the 1940s, early 1950s. At that time practitioners in psychology developed from researchers in that the doctorate was seen as the key qualification. This position was debated and challenged, and the Boulder conference of 1949 was an important event which firmed up the notion that clinical psychologists should be trained with a grounding in basic research and that clinical applications should follow from and be built upon this foundation. This approach often called the “scientist-practitioner” model has been followed in other fields of applied psychology (Lindsay, 1998) but continues to be a matter of contention (Rice, 1997). These debates took place at the same time as those about the first APA code of ethics and researchers, some of whom would have been in practice with clients, were important contributors. This policy of inclusiveness by psychological associations may not be matched by licensing authorities which may typically not require researchers or teachers of psychology to have a license to practice. These psychologists will therefore fall outside the remit of licensing authorities, and hence the psychological association must provide the necessary investigatory and disciplinary procedures, as well as ethical guidance.

This issue of coverage is important as there are different implications for ethical codes. When considering practice (e.g., as a clinical psychologist) an ethical code must address the behaviour of the psychologist with a client, an individual. On the other hand, research requires consideration of individuals who are not clients in the same sense (e.g., research participants) but also there is a need to address a more abstract concept, namely the body of knowledge of the science. This is not to argue for a simple dichotomy, the concept of client, for example, is complex (see chapter 3). Researchers may have clients in the form of organisations that provide finance, while those providing services may have multiple clients, or different orders of clients as with a child within a family, or workers within a company. Nevertheless, there is

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\(^3\) See the British Psychological Society’s Annual Report [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk) and the special issue of the *American Psychologist* published each August.
a legal position in many countries which acknowledges the particular relationship, and hence obligations, between a professional and identified client. This may be considered as a special duty of care for the welfare of one’s clients or patients. However, such a duty of care may also be attributed to the researcher, with respect to research participants in particular. Hence, ethical behaviour should be expected of all psychologists, and systems to ensure this occurs must address this full range, including researchers and educators.

The development of the EFPA Meta-code

The European Federation of Psychologists Associations (EFPA) was founded in 1981 as the European Federation of Professional Psychologists Associations (EFPPA), and changed its name in 2001. EFPA is a federation and hence has limited power over member associations which comprise a single body from each member country. It is the national associations that exercise direct power over individual members. The position of psychology in Europe is highly varied and this is matched by the nature of the associations. While some bodies are fundamentally scientific and/or professional associations, others are trades unions/syndicates. Also, while some countries (e.g., UK) have one predominant association for all psychologists, others (e.g., France) have many associations. Consequently, while the UK is represented by the British Psychological Society (BPS), France is represented by ANOP, a federation of associations.

These political realities are important when considering the development of a common ethical code. This was identified as a key aim in the very early stages of EFPA’s existence. A Task Force on Ethics was set up in 1990 with the aim of producing a common ethical code for psychologists in Europe. Given freedom of movement within the European Union (which covers much but not all of Europe) there are benefits in common procedures. There was concern that a psychologist disciplined in, say, Portugal could move to UK without this being known. This is not the case in the US and Canada where the Association of State Psychology Boards facilitates communication.

It was evident at the first meeting of the Task Force in Copenhagen 1990, however, that this aspiration was unrealistic. A number of associations had their own codes, but not all. These codes had much similarity (Lindsay, 1992) but there were also a number of significant differences, mainly with detail rather than principle (see Table 1)\(^4\). Nevertheless, each had been devised by the association in question to meet their specific requirements, and a common code might not ensure this occurred. Furthermore, in many cases (e.g., BPS) a vote of members was needed to change the code. Hence, it was decided that a common code was too difficult to achieve.

\(^4\) Since this analysis there have been developments of the ethical codes of these national associations.
Table 1.1. Contents of ethical codes of six European countries and the United States

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<th>Nordic</th>
<th>Germany</th>
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<th>Hungary</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Responsibility, general principles</td>
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<td>2. Competence</td>
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<td>3. Relationships with clients</td>
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<td>4. Confidentiality</td>
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<td>5. Psychological methods, investigations and statements, including research reports</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>6. Public statements, advertising</td>
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<td>7. Professional relationships</td>
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<td>7a. Relationships with employers</td>
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<td>8. Research, teaching</td>
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<td>9. Professional designation, title, qualifications</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Fees and remuneration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Working conditions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Personal conduct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Obtaining consent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The alternative model was to devise a Meta-code. Rather than a code for psychologists, the Task Force devised a Meta-code for the national associations. This set out what the code of each member association should address, but left it to the associations to produce specific codes and elements within codes. This approach was successful and the Meta-code of Ethics was approved by the General Assembly.
of EFPPA in 1995. It is the EFPA Meta-code (as revised in 2005\textsuperscript{5}) that sets the framework for this book.

The development of the Meta-code is of interest as it represents a specific inclusive strategy designed deliberately to attain maximum generalisability and acceptance. An early analysis, mentioned above, had indicated similarities but also differences between the codes of different national associations of psychologists. Furthermore across Europe at that time it was known that some associations had no code or were in the process of developing their code. Consequently there were variations in stage of development; in content, to varying degrees, when codes existed; in the size and status of different national associations; and differences in language with the possibility of conceptual and linguistic challenges in producing one Meta-code. Furthermore, it was also important to recognise the variations between nations (at the socio-political rather than psychologist association level) including culture, history and politics as well as language(s).

The success of the Meta-code can be attested to by two main sources of evidence. Firstly, it was approved by the 1995 EFPA General Assembly. Secondly, associations without codes or developing their code used the Meta-code as their template, as intended. Thirdly, the 2005 revision was successfully achieved with few amendments.

The process that led to this success was straightforward. Member associations were invited to send one member each to the Task Force on Ethics. From its beginning, membership consistently comprised at least 10 countries from the full range of Europe from the Nordic north to the Latin south, and including post-Communist Eastern Europe. The Task Force considered different models that existed in their own countries as well as those from non-European associations, particularly the APA code and the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) code. The latter was particularly attractive because of its strong educative orientation with an accompanying extended manual with vignettes (Sinclair & Pettitfor, 2001).

The Task Force drew on a range of material but from the start was committed not simply to replicate another code, however positively that was viewed. The structure of ethical principles followed by more specific standards was agreed to be appropriate but the Task Force decided, after much debate, to structure around four principles rather than, for example, the five that characterised the then current version of the APA code. That decision was partly influenced by a wish not simply to follow the APA – a determination that this should be European – but more importantly there was disagreement with the APA’s 5-principle structure (the current APA code has four principles).

The exact specification of the principles and of the different standards took place over several years, with the Task Force meeting twice a year. An early decision by the group was crucial in simplifying the process: the code should be written in English. By this decision the Task Force was able to focus on a single version. However, this also allowed a relatively straightforward approach to deal with linguistic variations. At

\textsuperscript{5} See www.efpa.eu and Appendix 1.