

The SLOVENTA Ethical Code

adopted at the regular annual general meeting of 11 March 2015.

The SLOVENTA Ethical Code is intended to provide guidance to its members (hereinafter jointly referred to as TA practitioners). It is intended to help the members working in psychotherapy, counselling, organisational and educational fields to act ethically.

The Ethical Code is binding for all members of the Slovenian Society for Transactional Analysis – SLOVENTA (hereinafter referred to as "SLOVENTA") who use transactional analysis and other concepts as models for understanding and influencing the personal development and personal growth of individuals, couples, groups or organisations. The Ethical Code arrangers professional liability of the members (TA practitioners) in their relationship towards clients, colleagues, trainees, other members of the SLOVENTA, professionals in the field and the general public. The term "client" denotes any user, patient, student, group or organisation which receives professional services of TA practitioners.

The SLOVENTA Ethical Code serves:

- to protect the users of services in all fields of transactional analysis from their unethical application;
- as an orientation to TA practitioners, users of transactional analysis in their work;
- as the basis for making complaints – to ensure an appropriate procedure of dealing with complaints within SLOVENTA in case of suspected or alleged violations of the Ethical Code.

In addition, the Ethical Code informs the general public of the kind of behaviour which can be expected from the members of SLOVENTA within this context.

The Ethical Code focuses on the criteria for professional ethical behaviour. Values and related ethical principles are the basis for constructing ethical behaviour and identifying unethical behaviours. This is the binding core document for all members of SLOVENTA and can only be changed by the assembly.

The SLOVENTA Ethical Code is used as a frame of reference to analyse specific situations for its members. Each SLOVENTA member needs to conform to it in their practice. If they fail to do so, sanctions – which are determined in this Ethical Code and the Rules of Operation of the Honorary Tribunal of the SLOVENTA Society – shall be imposed.

The Ethical Code comprises four sections:

Section I: Approach and the Principal Objectives of the Ethical Code

Approach of the Ethical Code

Principal Objectives

Section II: Ethical Premises

Basic Values

Fundamental Ethical Principles

Section III: Guidelines for Professional Practice

Section IV: Conclusion

Appendix: Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, related to the basic values

SECTION I: Approach and the Principal Objectives of the Ethical Code

In its broadest sense,¹ ethics is a philosophical discipline that studies human behaviour, the moral purpose and the will of man.

Deontology (professional ethics) studies the moral obligation and commitment of practitioners to act in an ethical manner.

Approach of the Ethical Code

The SLOVENTA Ethical Code identifies *the basic values*. These values offer a frame of reference to inform a practitioner about their personal and professional behaviour, in order to promote the well-being of people involved in a professional relationship. These values help to construct criteria for ethical and professional behaviour. The Ethical Code incorporates the basic values and related ethical principles, using them as the basis to inform ethical practice in all helping professions.

Deontological guidelines (guidelines for professional ethics) offer a set of prescriptive rules to regulate practitioners' behaviour for the protection of the rights of each client. These guidelines are strictly linked to a nation's laws, and are specific for different professional bodies.

The goal of the Ethical Code and deontological guidelines is to guarantee human rights as well as complying with national laws.

In this Ethical Code, the primary emphasis is on the importance of holding clear values and ethical principles, in order to create a frame of reference for managing a wide range of situations, even if these are not specifically described in the Ethical Code.

This approach moves the arena of ethical practice away from the application of a set of rules, which denotes what shall or shall not be done, to a consideration of the values and principles that guide practitioners in TA.

Principal Objectives:

1. Enhance the practitioner's awareness and thinking in terms of ethics (values and principles, as well as norms and prohibitions) in order to create a frame of reference for analysing human situations.
2. Give to SLOVENTA members a clear framework of ethics so that the practitioners have criteria to help them choose ethical positions and use as a template to analyse practical situations.

¹The definition is taken from the Italian dictionary entitled *Dizionario delle Idee*, Sansoni, 1977, p. 392

3. Provide some examples of applications of ethical principles, derived from values, so that practitioners understand the relationship between the two and do not simply overadapt to a set of rules.
4. Demonstrate the necessity of self-reflection, by presenting values and ethical principles instead of a list of rules and required behaviours.

SECTION II: Ethical Premises: Basic Values and Fundamental Ethical Principles

The Ethical Code makes explicit the basic values that guide the thinking and behaviour of human beings. These are universal values which support personal development and fulfilment of an individual. They refer to equity, which prescribes how people should behave towards themselves and others. The values prescribed by this Ethical Code overlap with human rights and are included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights².

Basic Values

The SLOVENTA Ethical Code focuses on the basic values which guide members in their personal and professional behaviour in order to support the well-being of persons included in professional relations. The basic values include:

1. Dignity of human beings³
Each human being is of worth, regardless of sex, social position, religious creed, ethnic origin, physical or mental health, political beliefs, sexual orientation, etc.
2. Self-determination⁴
Each individual is free to decide his or her own future within the national laws of their country, and with due consideration of the needs of self and others. Each person can learn from their experience to be in charge of themselves, whilst taking into account the nature of the world and the freedom of others.
3. Health⁵
Physical and mental stability is a right of every individual, and needs to be actively safeguarded.
4. Security⁶
Each person needs to be able to explore and grow in an environment that enables a sense of security.
5. Mutuality⁷
Each person, considering that they live and grow in an interpersonal world, is mutually involved

² The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

³ Articles 1, 2, 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see Appendix.

⁴ Articles 18, 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see Appendix.

⁵ Articles 24, 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see Appendix.

⁶ Articles 22, 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see Appendix.

⁷ Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see Appendix.

with the well-being of others, developing interdependency with others in order to build their own and others' security.

These values are directly related to each other and will influence TA practitioners in their own professional practice.

Basic Ethical Principles

Ethical principles are derived from the basic values and are intended as an indication of how to practice, in order to promote the well-being, development and growth of a person. They are prescriptive and offer criteria for ethical behaviour.

Using the values as the starting point, it is possible to determine a set of ethical principles. The principal ones are:

1. Respect
2. Empowerment
3. Protection
4. Responsibility
5. Commitment in a relationship

Within the helping professions, ethical principles need to address many target groups in order to influence ethical behaviour. The main ones include:

- a) Clients
- b) Self as a practitioner
- c) Trainees
- d) Colleagues
- e) Human environment/community

TA practitioners will consider each value and derived ethical principles, and self-reflect in order to decide what attitude to take, and how to behave in each of the target groups detailed above.

III. SECTION: Guidelines for Professional Practice

The purpose of the Guidelines for Professional Practice is to encourage thinking about the values and principles and their implementation in practice. In their work, members take them into consideration with regard to the situation and the target group they work with. It is not an exhaustive list, and each practitioner will find their own response, looking at the five target groups. This process will enable the practitioner to clarify the reasons for their behaviour.

1. RESPECT for each person as a human being, aside from any specific characteristic or quality.
 - a) toward clients: the practitioner will fully consider and seek to understand the personal perspectives of every individual. The practitioner will help the individual to be congruent with the individual's own perspective. The practitioner will provide their best possible services to the client. The practitioner will provide a safe and professional environment

and, being aware of the power of their position, will be careful to create a trustworthy environment, avoiding any situation that is exploitative to anyone.

- b) toward self: the practitioner will take into account their own perspective/difficulties/preferences, and refer to other competent colleagues any client or situation that they are not willing or able to handle;
 - c) toward trainees: the trainer, aware of the level of learning of the trainees, will give adequate support, provide all necessary learning resources and be open to address their own teaching style in order to attune to the learning needs of the trainee;
 - d) toward colleagues: the practitioner will maintain an awareness of the professionalism of colleagues and, when there are concerns, will directly address them with the colleague. After listening to the response, the practitioner will make an independent judgment on the issue, etc.
 - e) toward the community: the practitioner will take into account the specific culture of their community, and will not seek to impose their own values.
2. EMPOWERMENT that emphasises the importance of enhancing the growth of each person:
- a) toward clients: the practitioner will commit themselves to work on developing the awareness in clients of their dignity, responsibility and rights;
 - b) toward self: the practitioner will maintain ongoing education in their field of speciality in order to expand their knowledge, and take care of their professional and personal growth;
 - c) toward trainees: the trainer will evaluate the competency of their trainees and enable them to develop their potential, growth and well-being;
 - d) toward colleagues: the practitioner will respect a colleague's contributions and create occasions to expand their professionalism, aiming to share competences, instead of being jealous of their discoveries;
 - e) toward the community: the practitioner will think in terms of wider well-being of the community, as well of the individual.
3. PROTECTION implies taking care of both self and others (physically, mentally, etc.), bearing in mind the uniqueness and the worth of everyone.
- a) toward clients: the practitioner will offer adequate services to their clients, providing a safe working environment (e.g. confidentiality, physical safety, informed consent for high-risk procedures), and will hold an awareness of any destructive tendencies of the client. They will not enter into, or maintain, a professional contract in which other activities or relationships might jeopardise the professional contract. They will maintain confidentiality even when the therapeutic relationship has ended.
 - b) toward self: the practitioner will take care of their own values and learning process, and will refuse to work in situations that involve conflicts with self, or that require a higher level of competence. They will take care of their own safety and decide to terminate the relationship with a client if the practitioner experiences any physical or mental condition that impairs their ability to work effectively and competently with the client;
 - c) toward trainees: the trainer will encourage trainees to recognise their own preferences and limits, in order to protect themselves and clients from inadequate or harmful interventions. They will stimulate trainees to take care of their personal and professional

- growth, looking at their personal styles and addressing personal issues that interfere with their own or other's safety;
- d) toward colleagues: the practitioner will be willing to confront derogatory statements or actions by colleagues;
 - e) toward the community: the practitioner will provide services to clients in full compliance with the existing laws of the country.
4. RESPONSIBILITY implies taking into account the consequences of our own actions as clients, trainers, therapists, supervisors, counsellors, etc.
- a) toward clients: the practitioner will make clear contracts and conduct the professional relationship in such a way as to bring no harm to the client when a client is unable or unwilling to function autonomously and responsibly. They will not exploit the client in any manner or act in a way that causes intentional or deliberate harm to the client.
 - b) toward self: the practitioner will consider the impact of their position on the client and be careful in the way that they respond to clients, in order to promote well-being and prevent abuse;
 - c) toward trainees: the trainer will be aware of the learning needs of their trainees and provide them with the necessary tools and information to learn. If a trainee is not willing to change an unethical situation, they will confront them and decide a specific and ethical course of action;
 - d) toward colleagues: the practitioner will accept responsibility for confronting a colleague if they have reasonable cause to believe that the colleague is acting in an unethical manner and, failing resolution, will report that colleague to the appropriate ethical body;
 - e) toward the community: the practitioner will hold it as a professional responsibility to be concerned with the psychological and physical health of their community.
5. COMMITMENT in relationship means the development of a genuine interest in the client's well-being.
- a) toward clients: the practitioner will be careful to take into consideration the interpersonal world of the individual and to consider their impact on it;
 - b) toward trainees: the trainer will teach trainees to consider the interpersonal world of their clients;
 - c) toward colleagues: the practitioner will involve themselves in conferences and share their contributions;
 - d) toward the community: the practitioner will be aware and active in the life of their community.

IV. SECTION: Conclusion

In order to make an ethical decision, practitioners are supported by ethical principles, which enable them to evaluate different situations so that their choice of action can be a considered one. However, it could happen that practitioners will be involved in situations where it is not possible to reconcile all of the applicable principles. Despite this difficulty, the practitioner will still need to look at the specific situation, consider the different perspectives and be accountable for their decision.

Members of SLOVENTA undertake:

- To respect and apply the EATA Ethical Code and the SLOVENTA Ethical Code as a frame of reference for their ethical thinking and reflection, as well as guidance for their practice;
- To take into consideration deontological guidelines (professional ethical guidelines) with regard to the specific nature of their profession;
- Members of SLOVENTA which provide psychotherapy undertake to take into consideration the SLOVENTA Ethical Code, as well as the Ethical Code of the Slovenian Umbrella Association for Psychotherapy.
- The EATA teachers undertake to include discussion on the Ethical Code in all levels of training.

Each individual is responsible for their own professional conduct.

In the event the individual's behaviour does not comply with this Ethical Code, SLOVENTA shall carry out an investigation through their bodies and impose sanctions if assessed this is necessary. To ensure an appropriate procedure of dealing with complaints within SLOVENTA in case of a suspected or alleged violation of the Ethical Code, or in the case of unethical behaviour of a member of SLOVENTA, the procedures and sanctions defined in the Rules of Operation of the Honorary Tribunal of the SLOVENTA Society shall apply. Sanctions shall include temporary or permanent discontinuation of membership.

Appendix

Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, related to the basic values

Article 1 All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2 Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it is independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3 Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 18 Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19 Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 22 Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23 (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24 Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25 (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 29: (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible. (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society. (3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.