

# Applying the EABP Code of Ethics in Everyday Practice

*A presentation by the Ethics Committee of the Greek National Association for Body Psychotherapy*

**Antigone Oreopoulou**

## ABSTRACT

During the last four years, the Ethics Committee of the Greek Association for Body Psychotherapy (PESOPS) held four meetings for its members. This article describes the committee's first meeting, titled *The Ethics Committee and the Code: What we need to know in everyday practice*, and relates the story of what happened behind the scenes that led to valuable conclusions.

**Keywords:** Ethics Code, Ethics Committee, EABP, PESOPS, Ethics workshop

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his article is written in my capacity as Chair of the PESOPS Ethics Committee for the period of 2017-2021. It is written with the agreement of all active members of the PESOPS Ethics Committee and Board during that period.

The article describes a PESOPS Ethics Committee presentation to its members, from its conception to its rewarding conclusion, and the teamwork of the Ethics committee members. The article focuses on the preparation for the event and the members' responses. It does not analyze or interpret their responses.

To maintain the authenticity of the presentation, the slides were translated from Greek to English, and are posted in the Appendix. The slides of the questionnaire could not be translated, thus these graphics are not included.

## Why Prepare a Presentation Regarding Ethics?

To become a member of the European Association for Body Psychotherapy (EABP) and the Greek National Association for Body Psychotherapy (PESOPS), members must confirm that they have read and agree with the Codes of Ethics of these Associations. David Trotzig (2020) notes that "*To maintain full membership, members must fulfill three basic requirements: meet the membership criteria, respect the Ethical Guidelines and pay the annual fee... body psychotherapists... have freely joined and signed an agreement to respect and follow its Ethical Guidelines (p. 116).*"

However, the evolution of professionalization in body psychotherapy, the ethical ambiguity that exists in psychological science regarding how we understand each other (on humanistic and/or scientific terms), the increasing importance of ethics and

*Before the presentation started, the first questionnaire was distributed, examining how members perceive and relate to the Ethics Code and Committee.*

ethos, the fact that we use touch in our profession, and the fine line between legal and ethical provisions, create a complicated situation that needs constant updating, monitoring, and reflection (Sollmann, 2019).

Despite having read and signed the Ethics Code, these factors may create grey zones in everyday professional practice, and lead to difficulties in the actual implementation of the Ethics Code.

## Brainstorming

In 2017, a new PESOPS Ethics Committee was elected, consisting of Therapia Mazaraki, Sofia Petridou, and me. Alkis Terstetis was elected as a reserve member. At our first meeting, we discussed our role and goals. There were no cases of complaints to discuss.

Simultaneously, the newly elected PESOPS board established a policy to have regular meetings – presentations to its members – to discuss topics of interest and share opinions. These presentations would include a variety of themes derived from the work of the different committees (Science, Ethics, Public Relations, and Communication), as well as legal and institutional issues, and reflect PESOPS' policy to support connection and promote its members' wellbeing and competence.

With no cases to focus on, we proposed to the Board a series of presentations discussing the principles in the Code of Ethics (EABP Ethical Guidelines, 2019) to see how members perceive the Code, how they apply it in their practice, what kind of difficulties they encounter, and how they solve ethical dilemmas they come across.

After some discussion, we proposed four meetings, one meeting per year of our term, which would also connect with the work of different committees:

1. **The first meeting** would refresh the relationship between the Ethics Committee and the Code of Ethics and underline their importance in our everyday professional life. The tentative title was: "The Ethics Committee: What do we need to know in relation with our everyday practice."
2. **The second meeting**, held in collaboration with the Public Relations and Communication Committee, would frame the use of Social Media in our profession, discussing Principle 8 of the Code (Public Statements). Since Social Media is in the foreground of promoting our knowledge and services, it seemed important to discuss the professional and ethical modes of doing so.
3. **The third meeting**, held in collaboration with the Scientific Committee, would discuss Principle 10 (Research). Considering that science begins from the moment of notetaking up to publishing case studies and research, it is important to bring these steps into the frame of an ethical code.

4. **The fourth and final meeting** would discuss Principle 6 (Professional Relationships). A professional code among colleagues and with professionals in other fields includes referrals, recommendations, and collaborations. It includes professional boundaries around specialization, training, and experience, which are important aspects of everyday professional life, and which may not be clearly defined.

The Ethics Committee would have liked to discuss and present each principle of the Ethics Code separately in additional meetings, which the available time frame unfortunately did not allow.

## Planning for the First Meeting

This section is about the first meeting.

The PESOPS Board accepted our proposal for all meetings, and it was agreed that the Ethics Committee would have a first meeting on its own.

The Ethics Committee began planning the first meeting. After discussion, we divided the meeting into three parts:

1. A theoretical presentation
2. A workshop
3. A discussion

We also planned to have:

- A questionnaire exploring the relationship between members, the Ethics Committee, and the Ethics Code.
- An evaluation of the meeting.

## Theoretical Presentation

The goal of the theoretical presentation was to reconnect members with the role of the Ethics Committee and the Code of Ethics.

During the workshop, members would be presented with three different cases. They would discuss them in groups, and then join a common discussion.

Several cases were written up. In terms of confidentiality and GDPR, the cases were adapted from real supervision cases (See Appendix A for all proposed cases).

Assuming that a greater number of members could relate to them, the questions finally chosen were the following:

1. Because of the latest financial crisis, some clients ask for an exchange of services. How do you cope with this request?
2. A client comes with a request for compensation for trauma caused by a previous therapist, who is no longer a member of the Association. This therapist purportedly exploited the transference and maintained an ongoing relationship with her, parallel to her therapy. How would you deal with this case?

3. What are the topics that you bring to supervision? Are you in a position to realize when you step into “grey zones” of therapy? How and when do you understand it? How do you cope with it?

The next step was to prepare a questionnaire examining how members perceive and relate to the Ethics Committee and the Code of Ethics. This included demographic questions and outlined the current knowledge and relationship of PESOPS members to the Ethics Committee and Code of Ethics. (See Appendix B).

An evaluation form would allow participants to evaluate the meeting, its content, and the presenter on a scale of 1 to 5 (1: Needs serious improvement, 2: Mediocre, 3: Satisfying, 4: Very good, 5: Extraordinary). It would also require answers to questions regarding topics of interest for the next meetings, related to Ethics. (See Appendix C)

## Presentation Day and Feedback

Before the presentation started, the first questionnaire was distributed, examining how members perceive and relate to the Ethics Code and Committee. Although we asked members to complete all the questions, only a fraction of attendees answered the instrument fully. The presentation then started.

### 1. The Theoretical Presentation

The theoretical presentation focused on reminding members why the Code of Ethics and the Ethics Committee exist. A short discussion followed the presentation. (See Appendix D for the presentation slides.)

The most notable comments from the participants were:

- *“Although I was taught Ethics in school, this is the first time I understand, on a practical level, why Ethics are important, and how I can use and communicate them to my clients.”*
- *“It is important for me to know about Ethics and discuss them in our professional association.”*
- *“This presentation underlined once again the importance of the Ethics Code and the Ethics Committee, and how it frames and legalizes our profession and professionalism.” (In Greece, psychotherapy is not yet an established profession, and it is important to have a description of professional conduct offered by an Ethics Code).*
- *“It is important to bring ethics issues to our PESOPS meetings and discuss them often. To study them, not academically, but on a very practical and experiential level.”*
- *“Ethics are connected with a spiritual dimension, and therapists need to constantly uphold them during both their practice and supervision.”*

Participants commented on:

- The need to expand the frame of ethics and discuss the philosophical dimensions of the code.
- The importance of asking permission before touching a client.
- The need to discuss and expand principles regarding the therapists’ general obligations, and especially their rights.
- The conflict between individuality and universality – how a therapist maintains his or her individuality in the universality of ethics?

They had questions regarding:

- Confidentiality regarding underage clients.
- How to protect relationships among colleagues.

Before proceeding to the next section, the Ethics Committee urged the members to print the Code of Ethics, have it in their offices, show it to their clients, and explain to clients their ethical rights.

### 2. The Workshop

Following the presentation, we asked members to divide into three groups. One member of the Ethics Committee sat with each group to answer questions and keep time.

- Each group received one of the prepared questions, discussed it, and then wrote down their thoughts and conclusions. The time frame was 20 minutes.
- Each group’s coordinator presented their question and responses/reflections to everyone.

The conclusions and points of view were graded on a scale of 1 to 10 (1: not interesting or relevant to 10: very interesting and relevant). The conclusions were as follows:

**Group 1, Question 1:** *Because of the latest financial crisis, some clients ask to exchange services. How do you cope with this request?*

A score of 10. All group members found this topic very interesting, and because of the continuing financial crisis in Greece, members found the topic realistic. Some had already encountered this situation.

The group first asked questions:

- Is it important to define the kind of requested exchange? What is the object of this exchange?
- The client proposes the exchange. How does the therapist set the limit?
- Do we use the same frame as when services are offered pro bono?
- Having established a stable relationship with a client, is it ethical to cut off the client’s therapy due to financial reasons? Especially if a person who is food-deprived chooses therapy over food?

Once the questions were answered, the group agreed on the following points:

- In a good therapeutic relationship, therapists must harmonize with their inner ethics and with the therapeutic contract.
- Therapists must avoid conflict of roles during a possible exchange – for instance avoid exchanging services for a massage.
- The client, if possible, should pay even a small nominal fee.
- The frame, duration, balance, and equivalence of exchange should be clearly explained, defined, and honored.
- The duration should be short and defined.
- If the therapist agrees to the exchange, always keep in mind the danger for the therapeutic frame and balance to change.
- In considering the request, always take into account the case and the conditions.
- In a couple of cases, where the clients were in extreme financial need, two therapists asked for a very definite exchange: translation of a text or designing business cards (one client was a translator and the other a graphic designer).
- Finally, it was suggested that the Association start working on a pro bono policy.

**Group 2, Question 3:** *What topics do you bring to supervision? Are you in a position to realize when you step into therapeutic “grey zones”? How and when do you understand it? How do you cope with it?*

A score of 10. Members graded this question in terms of interest and relevance, and everyone could relate to it.

The main question was: “How do we define grey zones?” The final unanimous answer was that a grey zone is defined as a conflict between the therapist’s values and the client’s values, and a non-clearly defined violation of the therapeutic contract. This was seen as a definite topic about which to seek supervision.

Once the questions were answered, the group agreed on the following points:

- Areas that raise alarms and for which it is important to seek supervision are sexual transference, boundary issues, touch, therapist abuse, countertransference issues, and when therapists feel a threat to their life.
- All participants commented that the Ethics Code protects clients, but there is no clear reference or provision for how therapists can be protected from abuse from a client or colleague.
- All participants reported that when ambiguous topics are brought to supervision, the therapeutic relation usually ends, either by the therapist’s action or the client’s action.

**Group 3, Question 2:** *A client comes with a request for restitution for trauma caused by a previous therapist, who is no longer a member of the Association. This therapist purportedly exploited the transference and maintained an ongoing relationship with her, parallel to her therapy. How would you deal with this case?*

A score of 10. All members commented that since, according to the Ethics Code, the therapist receiving the complaint is no longer a member of the Association, the Ethics committee could not examine the case.

Thus, the ensuing question was: “How could the client be supported?”

Once the questions were answered, the group agreed on the following points:

- All members emphasized the need to investigate the validity of the case in relation with the client’s perception.
- The next level was to create a safe frame to prevent retraumatization and move towards the healing process.

For a case to be examined by the Ethics Committee, the following conditions must be fulfilled. The person towards which the complaint has been filed must be a member of the Association, and the incident must have taken place within the past five years. A year after this presentation, the EABP Ethics Committee proposed a change to the period for cases of sexual abuse: regardless of the time when the sexual incident took place, the Ethics Committee would examine the complaint. This change was approved by the EABP General Assembly.

### 3. Discussion

After finishing the workshop, members unanimously proposed:

- To continue having periodical discussions and continuing education on ethics topics and be able to exchange viewpoints and opinions.
- To post ethical dilemmas on the PESOPS site for discussion.

### Questionnaire Results

The results of the questionnaire were presented at the last meeting of the Ethics Committee. Unfortunately, only 18 of the attending members completed the questionnaire. This small number of participants allows for only a descriptive analysis.

The results were shared with the participants in written form. They were then uploaded to a Google questionnaire for the descriptive analysis. The slides of the analysis could not be translated into English, thus, only the responses without graphics are presented.

**Question 1: Gender**

Gender: 89% women, 11% men.

**Question 2: Age**

76.5% of the members were above the age of 46 years old.

**Question 3: Education level and number of years**

The majority of people present were experienced therapists with more than 11 years of professional experience (second group). There were also supervisors (third group) and Trainers (fourth group). Trainees were fewer (first group).

**Question 4: Are you aware of the EABP Ethics code that frames the practice of body psychotherapy in Greece?**

89% were aware of the Ethics code. 11% were not.

**Question 5: If yes, how did you learn about the Ethics Code?**

60% learned about the Ethics Code from the PESOPS site, and 13.3% from the EABP site. The rest learned about the Ethics Code from other sources.

**Question 6: Have you read or studied the Ethics Code?**

69% said they had just read it, while 31% said they had studied it in depth.

**Question 7: Do you use the Ethics Code during your daily practice?**

87.5% used the code during their daily practice, and 12.5% did not.

**Question 8: Do you mention the Ethics Code to your clients?**

76.5% mentioned the Ethics Code to their clients and 23.5% did not.

**Question 9: Do you consider the contribution of the Ethics Code important to the practice and legitimacy of our profession, and for what reason?**

It creates a frame; it protects both therapist and patient. It is a prerequisite for professionalism.

Yes, for the safety that it provides.

Very important for safety and reliability.

It establishes the general frame of cooperation. It structures the relationship of patient and therapist.

It offers knowledge, basis, institutional frame, evaluation.

It is related with the life ethos.

It can be our flag.

It is proof of our seriousness and our trustworthiness.

It enhances the status of our profession.

**Question 10: Are you aware of the existence of the Ethics Committee?**

88.2% were aware of the existence of the Ethics Committee. 11.8% were not.

**Question 11: What is the value of the Ethics Committee?**

To research, provide knowledge, and share this knowledge with PESOPS members.

To establish awareness and appreciation of the ethics topics.

It helps to structure the psychotherapy profession, updates it relative to topics that occupy psychotherapists, and functions as a foundation for legal, ethical, and other issues.

It has the role of updating, advising, and exchanging reflections about boundaries and values.

Defends our profession.

Supports and offers safety to our members.

Updates and gives birth to dialogues.

Correct use of services, safety of therapist and patient.

Update and awareness of both therapists and clients.

Spirit of solidarity and teamwork, enhancement of principles and values.

Support for the therapist. Safety for the client.

Protection of rights for both sides.

**Question 12: Are your clients aware of their rights in relation to the Ethics Code and the Ethics Committee?**

43.7% responded yes; 37.5% responded no; 18.8% responded I do not know/did not answer.

This questionnaire is currently posted, with small variations, on Google forms to compare the answers over a time span of four years.

## Meeting Evaluation

At the end of the meeting, participants were handed an evaluation form regarding the meeting. Once again, only a fraction of the members present filled the evaluation.

The meeting was evaluated as follows.

*On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you grade today's meeting in the following areas?*

1. Needs serious improvement
2. Mediocre
3. Satisfying
4. Very good
5. Extraordinary

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Meeting organization</i>				1	16
<i>Structure of the meeting</i>			1	2	15
<i>Structure and topics</i>				2	16
<i>Preparation of main speaker</i>				2	16
<i>Presentation of the main speaker</i>				2	16
<i>Topics for each group</i>			1	1	16
<i>Organization of groups</i>				5	13

Please answer the following question:

*What topics regarding the Ethics Code and Ethics Committee are of interest to you?*

- Ethics Code and Social Media 10
- Updating your clients about the Ethics Code and the Ethics Committee 4
- Discussion regarding interpreting the Ethics Code 7
- Discussion regarding ethical dilemmas 10

#### Other: **Philosophy and Ethos**

Based on this evaluation, the next PESOPS meeting was organized by the PR and Public Relations Committee on the topic “How to Use Social Media Professionally.” It was presented by the Committee’s Coordinator, and the Ethics Committee Chair supported this presentation by discussing the ethical point of view regarding social media.

## Conclusion

The main points emphasized in these meetings created a frame for further discussion and action.

- All members present felt that discussion and analysis of the Ethics Code on a more frequent basis would be supportive, needed, and helpful. It would help more experienced members to exchange views, and less experienced members to be mentored regarding Ethics issues.
- The use of hypothetical cases and examples as a tool to discuss ethics was defined as a practical, useful, and pragmatic approach.
- The need to share everyday ethical dilemmas that are not described in the Ethics Code was noted.

- The Ethics Code is focused on the body psychotherapist’s professional conduct. All members present emphasized the need to discuss and expand the principles regarding therapists’ rights, and to develop a client code of ethics.
- The members present emphasized the conflict between individuality and universality – how therapists maintain their individuality in the universality of ethics – and also felt that more discussion on that area was needed.
- The need to have discussions connecting the Ethics Code with life philosophy and with the ideas of ancient Greek philosophers.
- The Ethics Committee urged the members to print the Code of Ethics, have it in their offices, show it to their clients, and explain to clients their ethical rights.

Both the PESOPS Board and the Ethics Committee considered that the meeting reached its goals:

- To refresh knowledge regarding the Ethics Code and the Ethics Committee.
- To offer connection and support to members.
- To create a platform for discussion and exchange of opinion regarding professional issues that colleagues encounter in their everyday professional life.
- To create a mentoring environment for younger colleagues who found this encounter useful and enlightening.

In addition, the results of the questionnaire offered valuable insight in terms of demographics related to the Code, leading to further courses of action.

The PESOPS Board remains vigilant about continuing to organize these meetings that have been accepted with enthusiasm by its members, even during the pandemic.



## Appendix A

### Case examples proposed for discussion during the workshop

1. You have a good client who is punctual and pays well, but as a therapist, you start becoming bored. What do you do in this case?
2. You have a client that you like as a person, although not sexually. You would like to have him as a friend and not a client. How would you deal with this issue?
3. A client brings a topic to a session that is similar to one that occupies your own thoughts. How would you deal with that?
4. You are currently going through a period of exhaustion in your life. You have concluded that this exhaustion affects your professional performance. However, you need the money. What would you do in that situation?
5. Because of the current financial crisis, some clients request an exchange of services. How would you cope with this request?
6. A client comes with a request for restitution for trauma caused by a previous therapist, who is no longer a member of the Association. This therapist purportedly exploited the transference and maintained an ongoing relationship with her, parallel to her therapy. How would you deal with this case?
7. Your client is desperately looking to rent an apartment in an area you have an apartment to let. The apartment is ideal for their needs. Would you offer to let them rent your apartment?
8. What are the topics that you bring to supervision? Are you in position to realize when you step into “grey zones” of therapy? How and when do you understand it? How do you cope with it?

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire Format

#### Gender

Male  Female

#### Age

20-25  26-30  31-35  36-40  41-45  45>

#### Level of Training and Years

Training  1  2  3  4  5

Psychotherapist  0-3  4-5  6-10  11-15  15>

Supervisor  0-3  4-5  6-10  11-15  15>

Trainer  0-3  4-5  6-10  11-15  15>

#### Are you aware of the EABP Code of Ethics which frames the practice of body psychotherapy in Greece?

Yes  No

#### If yes, how did you learn about the Code of Ethics?

EABP site  PESOPS site  Other (describe)

#### You have:

Read the Code of Ethics  Studied it in depth  It is not a concern of yours

#### Do you use it in relation to your everyday practice?

Yes  No

#### Do you mention it to your clients/trainees?

Yes  No

#### Do you find its contribution important to the practice and legitimacy of your profession? For what reasons?

*Explain your answer.*

#### Are you aware of the PESOPS Ethics Committee?

Yes  No

#### In what capacity could this Committee be most useful?

#### Are your clients aware of their rights in relation to the Code of Ethics and Ethics Committee? *Explain your answer.*

## Appendix C

### Meeting Evaluation Form

On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you grade today's meeting in the following areas?

[1: Needs serious improvement; 2: Mediocre; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Very good; 5: Extraordinary]

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Organization of the meeting</i>					
<i>Structure of the meeting</i>					
<i>Structure and topics of the presentation</i>					
<i>Preparation of the main speaker</i>					
<i>Presentation of the main speaker</i>					
<i>Topics for each group</i>					
<i>Organization of groups</i>					

Answer the following question:

#### **What topics regarding the Code of Ethics and Ethics Committee are of interest to you?**

- Ethics Code and Social Media
- Updating your clients about the Ethics Code and the Ethics Committee
- Discussion about interpretation of the Ethics Code
- Discussion of ethical dilemmas
- Other

## Appendix D

### Presentation Slides

**Code of Ethics** and  
the **Ethics Committee**

**What we need to know  
for our everyday practice**

A presentation by  
PESOPS Ethics Committee



**What is an  
Ethics  
Committee  
and an  
Ethics  
Code?**



**Why an  
Ethics  
Committee?**

- Complaints from a client to a professional
- Complaints from one professional to another professional
- Supporting a client who feels too weak to submit a complaint

**Why an  
Ethics  
Committee?**

Training on...

- Ethics Deontology
- Issues that we have to cope in our professional everyday life.
- Update regarding the actions of EABP

### What else can an Ethics Committee offer?



- Deontology and Ethics are not distant concepts
- We must often cope with ethic dilemmas in our professional life

### Why do we need an Ethics Code?



The Ethics Code is the frame that establishes the...

- Principles
- Professionalism
- Safety for therapists and clients
- Safety in the relationships among professionals

### Ethics Committee aims



- To inform you in regularly regarding developments in EABP Code of Ethics
- To update and connect the Code of Ethics with institutional and legal issues

### Ethics Committee aims



- To start educational meetings and discussions regarding the understanding and effective use of the Code of Ethics

## Why Ethical Code?



Clients feel secure when they are aware of the existence of both the Ethics Committee and the Code of Ethics and how they can use them

## Because in the end...



The Code of Ethics is the common denominator regarding the frame of practice of our profession.

This practice has an impact on all professionals.

## Please remember!



If you have any question, please feel free to communicate with us.

And urge your clients to communicate with us as well.

## The current Ethics Committee



Pepi Mazaraki



Sofia Petridou



Antigone Oreopoulou



Reserve Member  
Alkiviadis Terstetis



**Antigone Oreopoulou** studied Biology at the University of Thessaloniki, Greece, and continued her graduate studies in Nutrition (MSc, University of Toronto), Psychology (MA, University of Indianapolis), and PR Strategy and Communication (MA, American College of Greece). She is trained in Biosynthesis therapy and supervision, hypnotherapy, trauma therapy, EMDR, and Crisis Intervention. She holds a European Certificate of Psychotherapy. She has been elected to various administrative positions in professional associations, including PESOPS Board member, Chair of the PESOPS Ethics Committee, and a member of the EABP Ethics Committee.

For more than three decades, Antigone has focused on eating disorders and obesity, pre- and peri-natal psychology, and effective communication in relationships, especially between parents and children. In Greece and other countries, she also teaches effective communication to health and educational professionals, with an emphasis on nonverbal communication. She has written books and articles on infertility and new parenting, as well as a fairy tale.

She loves reading, drawing, dancing, walking in nature, swimming, animals, sunrises, and sunsets, and travel, and feels grateful for the experiences life has offered her and all the wonderful people she has met and connected with.

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