



European Association for Somatic Experiencing®

EASE Ethical Guidelines, 2021

by Manfred Burmeister (D), Christel Segander (S) & Katarzyna Małkowicz (PL)

1. FUNDAMENTALS	2
1.1. Preamble	2
1.2. Presumptions	2
1.3. Aims	3
1.4. General ethical attitude of individual SEPs	3
2. ETHICS COMMITTEE FUNCTION & STRUCTURE:	4
2.1. Function	4
2.2. Organisational Structure	4
3. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES	6
3.1. PRINCIPLE 1. RESPONSIBILITY	7
3.2. PRINCIPLE 2: COMPETENCE	8
3.3. PRINCIPLE 3: MORAL AND LEGAL STANDARDS	9
3.4. PRINCIPLE 4. CONFIDENTIALITY	10
3.5. PRINCIPLE 5: WELFARE OF THE CONSUMER	11
3.6. PRINCIPLE 6: PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	13
3.7. PRINCIPLE 7: PUBLIC STATEMENTS	14
3.8. PRINCIPLE 8: ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES	16
3.9. PRINCIPLE 9: RESEARCH	17
4. PROCEDURE	20
4.1. Preamble	20
4.2. Running a procedure on a complaint without an ethical impetus ...	20
4.3. Opening a procedure on an ethical complaint	20
4.4. Information Gathering Phase	21
4.5. Evaluation Phase	22
4.6. Required actions and sanctions	22
4.7. Towards re-establishing professional trust	22

1. FUNDAMENTALS

1.1. Preamble

The word 'ETHICS' has slightly different meanings and implications in different languages and cultures and, as a European Association we need to be aware of this.

Ethics refer to the values, which animate the attitudes and behaviour of the Somatic Experiencing® Practitioners (SEPs) in Europe and the members of EASE, who comprise the TAO (that is, the Trainers, national Associations of SEPs and Organizers of SE in Europe).

The values, which we recognize as an integral part of Somatic Experiencing®, are mutual respect, transparency, process work, the building of resources, and the ability to titrate strong energies. By honouring these values, we practice the process of deep democracy in our relationships and ways of making decisions.

The members (TAO), as well as the EASE General Assembly, the Board and the Committees and Administration of EASE, are committed to the ethical guidelines of EASE in all internal and external relationships.

1.2. Presumptions

- 1.2.1 We understand the specificity of Somatic Experiencing® as a basic concept and approach for understanding, preventing, working through, and coping skilfully with the consequences of shock, trauma and/or stress conditions. *(TAO)*
- 1.2.2 SEPs in Europe, represented by EASE, have, in addition to their SE education, a basic training in a profession in the health, social or educational sector, and are, therefore, also bound by the ethical guidelines for their profession. *(TA)*
- 1.2.3 SEPs have a basic knowledge of psychological patterns and some understanding of psychotherapeutic dynamics, as well as of bodywork. *(TA)*
- 1.2.4 SEPs all have a professional responsibility to relate their knowledge of Somatic Experiencing® to their basic education, and to work with Somatic Experiencing® within the boundaries of their profession, for example, as physiotherapists, medical doctors, nurses, emergency aids, social counsellors, teachers, psychologists and psychotherapists. *(TA)*
- 1.2.5 We expect that all persons in charge of running an SE training (Organizers) who are not SEP's follow at least one SE-Intro to get an understanding and self-experience of the SE-work and values. *(O)*

To the top of this document

1.3. The ethical guidelines of EASE have the following aims:

- 1.3.1 To offer tools to support ethical reflection between SEPs, Trainers, Associations, Organizers and the different working bodies in EASE.
- 1.3.2 To support keeping the standards of Somatic Experiencing® at the professional level [checking and updating the skills].
- 1.3.3 To provide a frame for quality control of SE treatments as well as of SE trainings.
- 1.3.4 To serve as a base for TAO to commit themselves to these ethical responsibilities in their work.
- 1.3.5 To be used as a base for the clients to complain, as well as a frame for dealing with the complaints.
- 1.3.6 To serve as a base for handling conflicts, between SEPs, Trainers, Associations, Organizers, the different organs of EASE and others.

1.4. General ethical attitude of individual SEPs and TAO

All members of these categories recognise that in all therapy, training, supervision and consultation, they are professionally involved in varying degrees of asymmetrical relationships. They have the primary responsibility for appropriateness of content, context and boundaries. Their actions are, therefore governed by their perception of the requirements of the relationship in question. They realise that their goals are influenced by both their overt actions, and their state of being. They accept responsibility for keeping up with new developments in trauma coping and psychotherapy, for improving and updating their skills and knowledge, for obtaining advice and support from their colleagues and supervisors, and when necessary for seeking therapy themselves to resolve personal problems. In providing services, they seek to maintain the highest standards of their profession. They accept the responsibility for the consequences of their acts and make every effort to ensure that their services are used appropriately.

To the top of this document

2. ETHICS COMMITTEE FUNCTION & STRUCTURE:

2.1. Function

The function of the Ethics Committee is to continually explore how the ethical spirit of EASE can be sustained and made as explicit as possible. It is to remain attentive to how the qualities of humanity, respect and honesty are involved in the dealings of EASE and its members.

The Ethics Committee has therefore four main functions:

- It looks for ways of making the spirit of EASE more explicit, through ethical guidelines that, once accepted by the General Assembly of EASE, become representative of the Association's spirit.
- It promotes discussions on the attitude of an SEP, T, A and O.
- It defines the forms of behaviour, which are incompatible with the ethical guidelines, and ways of dealing with persons who use such behaviours.
- Supplementary the EC could be used to help to clarify the best procedural method to deal with a complaint (without or no clear ethical impetus) as well as a conflict of interests between two (or more) parties.

2.2. Organisational Structure

The members of the EASE Ethics Committee are chosen by the General Assembly, and answer directly to it.

The size of the Ethics Committee is 5 in total, plus 2 substitutes, and at least 3 members are necessary to finalise an ethical case. To ensure continuity as well as congruity with General Assembly wishes, half the Committee (2 and 3) stands for election on alternate Assemblies, thus giving members a service period of 4 years; the 2 substitutes will be elected every 2 years concurrently with these elections. The Ethics Committee constitutes itself with a Spokesperson and with rules of procedure.

2.2.1 Relationship to the EASE Board

The Ethics Committee keeps the Board informed about cases and other activities. The Ethics Committee involves the Board in the processing of ethical complaints cases wherever these involve matters of general policy and wherever a case involves the recommendation to suspend or exclude a member.

The Ethics Committee and the Board have an advisory capacity towards each other, and the EASE board supports the Ethics Committee when the EC requires legal advice.

To the top of this document

2.2.2 Meetings

All 5 members of the Ethics Committee meet together at least once a year:

- to collect, analyse and process received information on incoming ethics cases.
- to work on possible areas of research relevant to the clarification and development of ethical positions.
- to develop ways of teaching and sharing ethical reflection and how to implement ways of improving exploration and self-regulation.

2.2.3 Substitutes

One or if necessary two substitutes can to be co-opted if there is a vacant place on the EC, for example:

- if the ordinary EC member will be absent for a longer period due to illness or other reasons;
- if an ordinary EC member has a conflict of interests in a concrete case and must stand down;
- if an ordinary EC member resigns.

[To the top of this document](#)

3. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

While demanding for themselves freedom of inquiry and communication, SEPs and TAO accept the responsibility this freedom requires: competence, responsibility in the application of skills, and concern for the best interests of clients, colleagues, students, research participants, and society members. In the pursuit of these ideals, SEPs and TAO subscribe to detailed ethical principles in the following areas, which follow:

Principle 1. Responsibility

Principle 2. Competence

Principle 3. Moral and Legal Standards

Principle 4. Confidentiality

Principle 5. Welfare of the Consumer

Principle 6. Professional Relationships

Principle 7. Public Statements

Principle 8. Assessment Techniques

Principle 9. Research.

TAO and SEPs cooperate fully with their own professional, national, and European organizations and associations and with the European Association for Somatic Experiencing® (EASE) by responding promptly and completely to inquiries from and requirements of any *of* the duly constituted ethics or professional committees of such associations or organizations of which they are a member or to which they belong.

To the top of this document

3.1. PRINCIPLE: RESPONSIBILITY

General Principle:

In providing services, SEPs and TAO maintain the high standard of their profession. They accept the responsibility for the consequences of their acts and make every effort to ensure that their services are used appropriately.

Specifications:

- 3.1.1 SEPs and TAO know that they bear a social responsibility because their recommendations and professional actions may alter the lives of others. They are alert to personal, social, organizational, financial, environmental, or political situations and pressures that might lead to misuse of their influence.
- 3.1.2 SEPs and TAO appropriately clarify with their clients, matters that might pertain to their working together. They avoid relationships that may create a conflict of interest.
- 3.1.3 SEPs have the responsibility to attempt to prevent distortion, misuse, or suppression of their findings by an institution or agency of which they are employees.
- 3.1.4 As members of national or organizational bodies, SEPs remain accountable as individuals to the standards of their profession.
- 3.1.5 As Teachers or Trainers, SEPs recognize their obligation to help others acquire knowledge and skill. They maintain high standards of scholarship by presenting information as accurately as possible. *(T)*
- 3.1.6 As representatives of an Association, SEPs recognize their obligation to help others acquire knowledge and skill. They maintain high standards of support for the SEPs in their daily practice, and develop high professional standards by networking and presenting postgraduate programs. *(A)*
- 3.1.7 The Organizers recognize their obligation to help others acquire knowledge and skill. They create optimal conditions for learning and teaching. *(O)*
- 3.1.8 As researchers, SEPs accept responsibility for the selection of their research topics and methods used in investigation, analysis and reporting. They plan their research in ways to minimize the possibility that their findings will be misleading. They provide thorough discussion of the limitations of their data, especially where their work touches on social policy or might be construed to the detriment of persons in specific age, sex, ethnic, socio-economic, or other social groups. In publishing reports of their work, they never suppress disconfirming data, and they acknowledge the existence of alternative hypotheses and explanations of their findings. SEPs take credit only for the work they have actually done. They clarify in advance with all appropriate persons and agencies the expectations for sharing and utilizing research data. Interference with the milieu in which data are collected is kept to a minimum.

3.2. PRINCIPLE: COMPETENCE

General Principle:

The maintenance of high standards of competence is a responsibility shared by all SEPs and the profession as a whole. SEPs recognize the boundaries of their competence and the limitations of their techniques. They provide services and use techniques for which they are qualified by their basic education, trainings and experience. In those areas in which recognized standards do not yet exist, SEPs take whatever precautions are necessary to protect the welfare of their clients. They maintain knowledge of current health, scientific and professional information related to the services they render.

Specifications:

- 3.2.1 SEPs accurately represent their competence, education, training, and experience. They ensure that they adequately meet the professional standards of a SEP.
- 3.2.2 SEPs, Trainers, and Organizers perform their duties on the basis of careful preparation and readiness so that their work is of a high standard and communication is accurate, current, and relevant. *(TO)*
- 3.2.3 SEPs, Trainers, the national Associations and not least EASE recognize the need for continuing education and personal development and are open to new procedures and changes in expectations and values over time. *(TA)*
- 3.2.4 SEPs, Trainers, national Associations and Organizers recognize differences among people, such as those that may be associated with age, sex, socio-economic, and ethnic backgrounds or the special needs of those who might have been specifically disadvantaged. They obtain suitable training, experience, or counsel to assure competent and appropriate service when relating to all such persons. *(TAO)*
- 3.2.5 SEPs responsible for decisions involving individuals or policies based on test results have an understanding of psychological or educational measurement, validation problems, and test research.
- 3.2.6 SEPs, Trainers and Organizers recognize that personal problems and conflicts may interfere with professional effectiveness. Accordingly, they refrain from undertaking any activity in which their personal problems are likely to lead to inadequate performance or harm to a client, colleague, student, or research participant. If engaged in such activity when they become aware of their personal problems, they seek competent professional assistance to determine whether they should suspend, terminate, or limit the scope of their professional activities. *(TO)*
- 3.2.7 SEPs and Trainers entering into new fields of activity recognize the necessity of having the professional requirements related to that field of activity, prior to practicing. *(T)* ^{TO}
the top of this document

3.3. PRINCIPLE: MORAL AND LEGAL STANDARDS

General Principle:

TAO's and SEPs' moral and ethical standards of behaviour are a personal matter to the same degree as they are for any other citizen, except where these may compromise the fulfilment of their professional responsibilities or reduce the public trust in Somatic Experiencing. Regarding their own personal behaviour, they are aware of prevailing community standards and to the possible impact that conformity to or deviation from these standards may have upon the quality of their performance as TAO and SEPs. TAO and SEPs are also aware of the possible impact of their public behaviour upon the ability of colleagues to perform their professional duties. (TAO)

Specifications:

- 3.3.1 As professionals, TAO and SEPs act in accordance with the principles of EASE and their national organizations' standards and guidelines related to practice.
- 3.3.2 As employees or employers, TAO and SEPs do not engage in or condone any practices that are inhumane or that result in illegal or unjustifiable actions. Such practices include, but are not limited to, those based on considerations of race, handicap, age, gender, sexual preference, religion, or national origin in practice, in hiring, promotion, or training.
- 3.3.3 In their professional roles, TAO and SEPs avoid any action that will violate or diminish the human, legal and civil rights of clients or others who may be affected.
- 3.3.4 TAO, SEPs and researchers are aware of the fact that their personal values may affect their communication, the use of techniques, selection and presentation of views or materials and the nature or implementation of research. When dealing with topics that may give offence, they recognize and respect the diverse attitudes and individual sensitivities that clients, students, trainees or subjects may have towards such matters.

To the top of this document

3.4. PRINCIPLE: CONFIDENTIALITY

General Principle:

TAO and SEPs have a primary obligation to respect the confidentiality of information obtained from persons in the course of their work. They do not reveal such information to others, except in those unusual circumstances in which this would probably result in clear danger to the person or to others. TAO and SEPs inform their students / members / clients of the legal limits of confidentiality. Consent to reveal information to others would normally be obtained in writing from the person concerned. (TAO)

Specifications:

- 3.4.1 Information obtained in relevant relationships, or evaluating data concerning clients, students, members, employees, and others, is discussed only for professional purposes and only with persons (or their legal representatives) clearly concerned with the case. Written and oral reports present only data relevant for the purposes of the evaluation or for a referral, and every effort is made to avoid undue invasion of privacy.
- 3.4.2 TAO and SEPs who present personal information obtained during the course of professional work in writings, lectures, or other public forums either obtain adequate prior consent to do so or adequately disguise all identifying information.
- 3.4.3 TAO and SEPs make provisions for maintaining confidentiality in the storage and disposal of records, and in the event of their own unavailability.
- 3.4.4 When dealing with minors or other persons who are unable to give voluntary, informed consent, TAO and SEPs take special care to protect these person's best interests and consult others involved appropriately.

To the top of this document

3.5. PRINCIPLE: WELFARE OF THE CONSUMER

General Principle:

Because of the degree of asymmetrical relationships, TAO and SEPs are conscious of and careful with issues of power. They respect the integrity and protect the welfare of the people and groups with whom they work. To the extent that it serves their clients' / students' / members' wellbeing, SEPs and TAO inform them as to the purpose and nature of any evaluative, treatment, educational, or training procedure. They openly acknowledge that clients / students / members, or participants in research have freedom of choice with regard to participation, and work towards enhancing their capacity to make appropriate choices. Coercion of people to participate or to remain in receipt of services is unethical.

Specifications:

3.5.1 TAO and SEPs aim to be continually cognizant of their own needs and of their potentially influential position vis-a-vis persons such as clients, students, trainees, subjects and subordinates. They avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. SEPs and TAO make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair their professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. *(TAO)*

3.5.2 TAO and SEPs do not exploit their professional relationships with clients, supervisees, students, members, employees or research participants in any way. SEPs help their clients to express clearly both their needs for closeness and for distance, and respect these boundaries.

TAO and SEPs do not condone or engage in abuse, such as sexual, economic and narcissistic abuse and abuse of services. This applies even when the client proposes such exchanges.

Examples:

- a) Narcissistic abuse takes place when the SEP or assistant or trainer builds up his/her self-esteem at the cost of the client, student or someone else.
- b) Abuse of services could happen when the client / trainee does scientific, administrative or other forms of work for the SEP, Trainer or SE institutions (A or O).
- c) Abuse of service could take place when there are economic transactions in relationships between client, SEP, TAO outside the professional setting.

SEPs, assistants and TAO are aware of the need for supervision on these issues. *(TAO)*

3.5.3 When a SEP agrees to provide services to a client at the request of a third party, the SEP assumes the responsibility of clarifying the nature of the relationships to all parties concerned.

3.5.4 SEPs or Trainers should make clear all financial arrangements in advance and ensure that they are understood by those who are involved. SEPs or Trainers neither give nor receive any remuneration for referring clients for professional services. *(T)*

[To the top of this document](#)

- 3.5.5 SEPs terminate a clinical or consulting relationship as soon as it is reasonably clear that the client is not benefiting from it, or whenever the process requires this, for example the client needs different skills. They offer to help the client locate alternative sources of assistance.
- 3.5.6 When conflicts of interest arise between clients and SEP' employing institutions, SEPs clarify the nature and direction of their loyalties and responsibilities and keep all parties informed of their commitments, providing the integrity or interest of the client is protected.
- 3.5.7 Where the demands of an organization require SEPs to violate these or any ethical principles, SEPs clarify the nature of the conflict between the demands and the principles. They inform all parties of their ethical responsibilities as SEPs and take appropriate action.

To the top of this document

3.6. PRINCIPLE: PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

General Principle:

SEPs and TAO act with due regard for the needs, special competencies, and obligations of their colleagues in psychotherapy, psychology, medicine and other professions. They respect the prerogatives and obligations of the institutions or organizations with which these other colleagues are associated.

Specifications:

- 3.6.1 TAO and SEPs understand the areas of competence of related bodies and professions. They make relevant use of all the professional, technical, and administrative resources that serve the best interests of consumers.
The absence of formal relationships with other professional workers does not relieve SEPs of the responsibility for securing for their clients the best possible professional service, nor does it relieve them of the obligation to exercise foresight, diligence, and tact in obtaining the complementary or alternative assistance needed. *(TAO)*
- 3.6.2 SEPs know and take into account the traditions and practices of other professional groups with whom they work and they cooperate with these groups. If a person is receiving similar services from another professional, the SEP carefully considers that professional relationship and proceeds with caution and sensitivity to the therapeutic issues as well as the client's welfare. The SEP discusses these issues with the client so as to minimize the risk of confusion.

[To the top of this document](#)

3.7. PRINCIPLE: PUBLIC STATEMENTS

General Principle:

SEPs and TAO present the science and art of Somatic Experiencing® and offer their services, products, and publications honestly, fairly and accurately, avoiding misrepresentation through sensationalism, exaggeration, or superficiality. SEPs and TAO are guided by the primary obligation to aid the public in developing informed judgments, opinions, and choices. (TAO)

Specifications:

- 3.7.1 In announcing or advertising the availability of SE services or publications, SEPs / TAO do not present their affiliation with any organization in a manner that falsely implies sponsorship or certification by that organization.
- 3.7.2 SEPs / TAO do not compensate or give anything of value to a representative of the press, radio, television, internet, or other communication medium in anticipation of, or in return for, professional publicity in a news item. A paid advertisement must be identified as such, unless it is apparent from the context that it is a paid advertisement. If communicated to the public by use of radio or television, an advertisement is pre-recorded and approved for broadcast by the SEPs and TAO, and copies of advertisements and recordings of broadcasts are retained by them.
- 3.7.3 Announcements or advertisements of special-interest group sessions, courses, clinics, trainings and agencies give a clear statement of purpose and a clear description of the experiences or training to be provided. The education, training, and experience of the staff members are appropriately specified and available prior to the commencement of the group, training course or services. A clear statement of fees and any contractual implications is available before participation.
- 3.7.4 SEPs and TAO associated with the development or promotion of SE techniques, products, books, or other such offered for commercial sale make reasonable efforts to ensure that announcements and advertisements are presented in a professional, scientifically acceptable, ethical and factually informative manner.
- 3.7.5 SEPs and TAO do not participate for personal gain in commercial announcements or advertisements recommending to the public the purchase or use of proprietary or single-source products or services when that participation is based solely upon their identification as SEPs.

[To the top of this document](#)

- 3.7.6 TAO and SEPs ensure that statements in catalogues and course outlines are accurate and not misleading, particularly in terms of subject matter to be covered, bases for evaluating progress, and the nature of course experiences. Announcements, brochures or advertisements describing workshops, seminars, or other educational programs accurately describe the audience for which the program is intended as well as eligibility requirements, educational objectives, and nature of the materials to be covered. These announcements also accurately represent the education, training, and experience of the one presenting the programs and any fees involved.
- 3.7.7 Public announcements or advertisements soliciting research participants in which clinical services or other professional services are offered as an inducement make clear the nature of the services as well as the costs and other obligations to be accepted by participants in the research.
- 3.7.8 TAO and SEPs accept the obligation to correct others who represent the SEP's professional qualifications or associations with products or services, in a manner incompatible with these guidelines.
- 3.7.9 Individual diagnostic and therapeutic services are provided only in the context of a professional relationship with the SEP. When personal advice is given by means of public lectures or demonstrations, newspaper or magazine articles, radio or television programs, mail, or similar media, the SEP utilizes the most current relevant data and exercises a high level of professional judgment.
- 3.7.10 Products that are described or presented by means of public lectures or demonstrations, newspaper or magazine articles, radio or television programs, mail, or similar media meet the same recognized standards as exist for products used in the context of a professional relationship.

[To the top of this document](#)

3.8. PRINCIPLE: ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

General Principle:

In the development, publication, and utilization of Somatic Experiencing® assessment techniques, SEPs make every effort to promote the welfare and best interests of the client. They guard against the misuse of assessment results. They respect the client's right to know the results, the interpretations made, and the bases for their conclusions and recommendations. SEPs make every effort to maintain the security of tests and other assessment techniques within the limits of legal mandates. They strive to ensure the appropriate use of assessment techniques by others.

Specifications:

- 3.8.1 In using assessment techniques, SEPs respect the right of clients to have adequate explanations of the nature and purpose of the techniques in language the clients can understand, unless an explicit exception to this right has been agreed upon in advance. When the explanations are to be provided by others, SEPs establish procedures for ensuring the adequacy of these explanations.
- 3.8.2 SEPs responsible for the development and standardization of psychological tests and other assessment techniques utilize established scientific procedures and observe the relevant EASE and national standards.
- 3.8.3 In reporting assessment results, SEPs indicate any reservations that exist regarding the validity or reliability because of the circumstances of the assessment or the inappropriateness of the norms for the person tested. SEPs strive to ensure that others do not misuse the results of assessments and their interpretations.
- 3.8.4 SEPs recognize that assessment results may become obsolete and do not represent a complete picture of the assessed. They make every effort to avoid and prevent the misuse of obsolete measures or incomplete assessments.
- 3.8.5 SEPs offering scoring and interpretation services are able to produce appropriate evidence for the validity of the programs and procedures used in arriving at interpretations. The public offering of an interpretation service is considered a professional-to-professional consultation. SEPs make every effort to avoid misuse of assessment reports.
- 3.8.6 SEPs do not encourage or promote the use of psychotherapeutic or psychological assessment techniques by inappropriately trained or otherwise unqualified persons through teaching, sponsorship, or supervision.

To the top of this document

3.9. PRINCIPLE: RESEARCH

General Principle:

The decision to undertake research rests upon a considered judgment by an SEP or TAO about whether this contributes to human science and wellbeing and to the knowledge of trauma solution. Having made the decision to conduct research, the researcher considers alternative directions in which research energies and resources might be invested.

On the basis of this consideration, the researcher carries out the investigation with respect and concern for the dignity and welfare of the people who participate and with cognizance of regulations and professional standards governing the conduct of research with human participants. The rights of the individual predominate over the needs of the researcher to complete the research. *(TAO)*

Specifications:

- 3.9.1 In planning a study the researcher has the responsibility to make a careful evaluation of its ethical acceptability. To the extent that the weighing of scientific and human values suggests a compromise of any principle, the researcher incurs a correspondingly serious obligation to seek ethical advice and observe stringent safeguards to protect the rights of the participants.
- 3.9.2 Considering whether a participant in a planned study will be a 'subject at risk' or a 'subject at minimal risk', according to recognized standards, is of primary ethical concern to the researcher.
- 3.9.3 The researcher always retains the responsibility for ensuring ethical practice in research. The researcher is responsible for the ethical treatment of research participants by collaborators, assistants, students, and employees, all of whom, however, incur similar obligations.
- 3.9.4 Except in minimal-risk research, the researcher establishes a clear and fair agreement with research participants, prior to their participation, that clarifies the obligation and responsibilities of each. The researcher has the obligation to honour all promises and commitments in that agreement. The researcher informs the participants of aspects of the research that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate and explains other aspects of the research about which the participants inquire. Failure to make adequate disclosure prior to obtaining informed consent requires additional safeguards to protect the welfare and the dignity of the research participants. Research with children or with participants who have impairments that would limit understanding and/or communication requires special safeguarding procedures.

[To the top of this document](#)

- 3.9.5. Methodological requirements of a study may make the use of concealment or deception seem necessary. Before conducting such a study, the researcher has a special responsibility to
- 1) determine whether the use of such techniques is justified by the study's prospective scientific, educational, or implied value;
 - 2) determine whether alternative procedures are available which do not use concealment or deception; and
 - 3) ensure that the participants are provided with sufficient explanation as soon as possible.
- It is preferable not to use such techniques.
- 3.9.6 The researcher respects the individual's freedom to decline to participate in or withdraw from the research at any time. The obligation to protect this freedom requires careful thought and consideration when the researcher is in a position of authority or influence over the participant. Such positions of authority include, but are not limited to, situations in which research participation is required as part of employment or in which the participation is as a student, client, or employee of the researcher. The rights of the individual predominate over the needs of the researcher to complete the research.
- 3.9.7 The researcher protects the participant from physical and mental discomfort, harm, and danger that may arise from research procedures. If risks of such consequences exist, the researcher informs the participant of that fact. Research procedures likely to cause serious or lasting harm to a participant are not used unless the failure to use these procedures might expose the participant to risk of greater harm or unless the research has great potential benefit, and fully informed and voluntary consent is obtained from each participant. The researcher should be appropriately insured for the costs of the repair of eventual harm. The participant should be informed of procedures for contacting the researcher within a reasonable time period following participation, should stress, potential harm, or related questions or concerns arise. Consent obtained from the participant does not limit their legal rights or reduce the investigator's legal responsibilities.
- 3.9.8 After the data are collected, the researcher provides the participant with information about the nature of the study and attempts to remove any misconceptions that may have arisen. Where scientific or humane values justify delaying or withholding this information, the researcher incurs a special responsibility to monitor the research and to ensure that there are no damaging consequences for the participant.

[To the top of this document](#)

- 3.9.9 Where research procedures result in harmful consequences for the individual participant, the researcher has the responsibility to detect and remove or correct these consequences, including long-term effects.
- 3.9.10 Information obtained about a research participant during the course of an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed upon in advance. When the possibility exists that others may obtain access to such information, this possibility, together with the plans for protecting confidentiality, is explained to the participant as part of the procedure for obtaining informed consent.

To the top of this document

4. PROCEDURE

4.1. Preamble

The Ethics Committee (EC) works on written questions and complaints, so that it has time to discuss and understand what is asked. This allows members of the EC to consider an issue in a calm atmosphere, without being under pressure from interactive passions. In some ethical cases or for clarifying how to deal with a complaint (without or no clear ethical impetus) as well as a conflict of interests between two (or more) parties the committee can need to meet the persons who are involved in a case via a personal or in a video meeting.

Confidentiality principle:

All information that is given or sent to the EC is treated as confidential. Some of the information may have to be discussed with all parties involved, and in some cases with the EASE Board.

The information received is not communicated to other persons or institutions unless it is required by legal procedures. In each situation the EC uses its judgement and knowledge of the context to decide how this information is used with the other parties and the EASE Board. In these cases the complainant is informed that information has been exchanged.

The procedures described in the following pages allow the reader

- to know how to proceed when he/she wants to present a complaint to the EC concerning the behaviour of an SEP, Assistant, Trainer, Organizer and Association.
- to be informed of what procedures the EC follows once it has received an inquiry or complaint.

4.2. Running a procedure on a complaint without an ethical impetus as well as on a conflict of interests

The EC in a role of a “Complaint Counsellor” will provide this service to all members of EASE. It will have the assignment to answer questions about any complaint concerning our community. The EC will help to address the problem to the appropriate instance in our organization or outside EASE. For example:

- if there is a complaint of ethical matters give advice to proceed as described below;
- if there is a complaint on structural or systemic matter give advice how to proceed to the Board and
- if there is a complaint that is around a conflict between persons, advise for a mediation process and help to find the mediator that is best for the case.

4.3. Opening a procedure on an ethical complaint

The EC will process any inquiry or complaint if the complainant follows and accepts the following procedure:

- As EASE is an international organisation, the EC only can consider enquiries or complaints if they are in writing, signed by the complainant him/herself and in English.

To the top of this document

Concerning persons involved:

- The EC is an EASE Committee, which is dealing with ethical issues of Somatic Experiencing® in Europe under the principle: what can be done locally will be done locally.
- The issue in question must not date back longer than seven years.
- The complainant must be personally directly involved with the persons complained about.
- Although the EC cannot make a case based on third party complaints, it welcomes written information and questions on ethical issues from EASE colleagues. The Ethics Committee informs the complainant if and how it can proceed with the question/information.

Concerning content of the matter:

- The EC needs to know the specifics of the complainant's question/complaint (with documents if available) and if the person involved has been informed about the step that is being made, and if not, why not.
- The EC needs to know if any resolutions have been attempted, and if so, in what form and with what outcome.
- Some questions/complaints fall outside of the task of the Ethics Committee and cannot be processed further. The complainant is informed if this is the case, and of the reasons for this.

After having received and discussed all the relevant material, the Ethics Committee informs the complainant if the enquiry/complaint is related to a transgression of the Ethical Guidelines of EASE and if so, it moves on to the information-gathering phase.

4.4. Information Gathering Phase

Having decided to proceed, the EC's next step is to inform the parties concerned of the complaint (if this has not already been done) and asks for his/her/their point of view.

- The EC may, in some cases, send some of the information it has received to both parties, in order to gather more specific information on some points. Given the complexity of transferential dynamics the EC has to deal with in ethical cases, it is up to the EC to decide what information is passed on to the other party.
- If a mediator is required to gather necessary information, the parties involved share the costs. If there is a disagreement between the parties about the sharing of any costs of the mediation process, this disagreement is dealt with as part of the mediation.
- If the mediation fails, the EC decides if the complaint can be processed further by the Ethics Committee or not and informs the parties about the decision and the reasons behind it.

[To the top of this document](#)

4.5. Evaluation Phase

Once the EC has gathered sufficient information, it discusses and evaluates the situation and informs all parties concerned of its conclusions, and on what grounds it bases these conclusions, referring to the relevant points in the EASE Ethical Guidelines.

These conclusions are the basis for the actions and sanctions required, described in the following section:

4.6. Required actions and sanctions

General remarks:

Conclusions and requirements of the EC are binding for the parties involved, except recommendations for suspension or exclusion of an EASE member, which must be ratified by the EASE Board.

Ethical requirements and sanctions are applied to repair both the evaluation capacity of the transgressor and the association's trust in the transgressor. They should be considered in terms of the following question:

- What must change in him or her in order to become a trustworthy colleague and SEP in the EC's eyes?

This implies that the EC has an educational function in order to help colleagues become clearer on ethical issues.

However, if the EC does not believe that the colleague can behave in a trustworthy fashion according to the Ethical Guidelines of EASE, the relationship will come to an end.

The goal of these professional requirements and sanctions is to help re-establish professional ethical functioning wherever this is considered possible and to maintain high ethical standards of behaviour in EASE.

4.7. Towards re-establishing professional trust

This starts with an evaluation of professional ethics, in which the motives, knowledge, feelings and actions of the transgressing person(s) before, during and after the transgression are evaluated to determine why the breach has occurred.

On this basis a number of professional sanctions may be imposed on the transgressing person:

- A reprimand will be given in case of transgressions of lesser severity, accompanied by clarification of the ethical issues involved.
- Requirements of mediation process: The transgressing member is required to process the issue with the injured person(s) in the presence of a mutually acceptable mediator. This procedure may or may not involve separate meetings between the mediator and transgressing member. No involved person except the mediator will be paid for the time spent in this process but the transgressing person may be required to pay partial or total fee for the mediation. The chosen mediator must be approved by the EC.

To the top of this document

- Requirements of supervision, education or personal therapy on the problem issue, will end with a written statement from the transgressing person on the nature and completion of this process and present understanding, countersigned by his therapist or supervisor. The chosen therapist or supervisor must be approved by the EC. The transgressing person may or may not be suspended from his membership until the processing has finished. Subsequent transgression(s) of the same nature are dealt with in a progressively severe fashion.
- The EC may demand that the SEP, Trainer or supervisor stops working with a client, in a case where an ethically or professionally problematic relationship between individuals has led to an ethical complaint, even if the client wishes to continue the professional relationship. This also applies when there is a problematic relationship between an association and a person.
- The Ethics Committee recommends suspension of a member when the offence is considered serious enough to exclude the member from the Association, but is considered redeemable with the passage of time and effort.
- Exclusion is the recommendation of the Ethics Committee on offences described in the examples of the Ethical Guidelines when they are wilful or premeditated. Attempts at camouflaging transgressions or refusal to comply with EASE sanctions are also grounds for immediate exclusion. The Ethics Committee may recommend exclusion at its discretion, on such matters.

In its deliberations, the Ethics Committee functions as follows:

- EC advice and arbitration are generally carried out by a minimum of three EC members, none of whom is directly or secondarily involved in the issue under consideration. The arbitrators of this case are responsible not to take any opinions of EC members who are personal involved.
- A decision to be valid takes a minimum of three EC members. For any disciplinary decision to be valid four of the five must be in agreement.
- Advice or arbitral decisions are reached by consensus.

To the top of this document

EAG's gratitude:

We would like to thank the EABP (European Association for Body Psychotherapy) for the brilliant model (or better: pattern?) of their Ethical Guidelines and Lisbeth Steen Jensen spending a weekend with "EAG" (the Ethical Guidelines Group) to discuss and explain their experiences within the EABP.

We would also like to acknowledge the comments from members of EASE, especially our discussion while meeting and GA in Zurich, June 2010.

Vienna, 2013, Lida Ruiters (NL), Lis Høhne Ratcliffe (DK) and Manfred Burmeister (DE)