ANSWER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

Questionnaire
on the common values of the regulated professions in Europe

Would you agree that, at the European level, the liberal professions consider that they should be identified as exhibiting the following values?

GENERAL COMMENT: These questions do not only concern liberal professionals but also doctors working as employees, in hospitals and in university-hospitals. (Comment from the Section of Medical Biopathology and from the French Medical Association)

1- Professional Confidentiality

Professional confidentiality is the cornerstone of the building of trust between professionals and their clients or patients, ensuring a personalised service adapted to the specific needs of the individual to whom the service is provided.

Liberal professionals are bound by professional confidentiality. They cannot reveal any information obtained by them in their professional practice. A professional who fails to observe this code will face sanctions.

Yes

COMMENTS: - Confidentiality is regulated by national laws and may be removed in certain specified situations, stipulated in national legislation. (Comment from the Section of Infectious Diseases)

- This is true except where public safety is an issue. (Comment from the Section of Internal Medicine)
2- **Conditions of Access to the Profession**

Liberal professionalism activities comprise intellectual tasks for the proper discharge of which a high level of scientific, legal and technical knowledge is required. This knowledge is acquired through the successful completion of a study curriculum of high quality, certified by the award of a degree or diploma of higher education and/or the award of a recognised professional title. There may be additional requirements, leading to registration with a professional body.

Yes  
No (2)

3- **Life-long Training**

Maintenance of professional competency is an essential requirement for continuity of practice as a liberal professional. Whether or not confirmation in continuing professional development is a requirement for continuing registration, all liberal professionals are bound to participate in life-long learning and to ensure that they update and/or to deepen their competencies on a regular basis in order to be ever able to provide their client or patient, with the most efficient and adequate service.

Yes

COMMENTS: **The Swedish Medical Association answered “Yes and No”**. According to the SMA, Lifelong Learning is something of great importance but which should not be related to recertification or the like.

4- **Independence and Impartiality**

Independence of professional action is guaranteed by the freedom of liberal professionals to exercise personal judgement and thus to provide a service to meet the specific needs of their clients or patients, without any application of external influence. In the provision of services, liberal professionals are bound to set aside any personal religious, political, philosophical or other convictions.

Professional regulation is designed to ensure that technical assessment are conducted impartially, that professional advice given is objective, there are no conflicts of interest and external pressures are avoided. Professional regulation also ensures that the impartiality of judgement of liberal professionals is not jeopardised by any other activity.

Yes

COMMENTS: **Independence is linked to the absence of any financial burden i.e. to the property of work tools and to governance when a professional provides services in liberal exercise. (Comment from the French delegation to the Section of Medical Biopathology)**
**Loyalty**

5.1- to clients or patients

Liberal professionals are required to offer sound, specialised advice to their clients or patients, respecting a relation of mutual trust. And providing to them before and during the provision of services, information on the procedure they propose to follow to meet the desired objective; this information will include details of fees.

Yes

5.2- to professional colleagues

Liberal professionals are bound by professional rules to abstain from any disloyal behaviour towards professional colleagues.

Yes

**COMMENTS:** Except where public safety is an issue. *(Comment from the Section of Internal Medicine)*

**5- Professional Integrity and Dignity**

The first priority in practising as a liberal professional must always be the best interests of clients and patients, rather than the financial interests of the professional. In the provision of services, professionals are bound to ethical rules. All necessary information on the proposed services is provided to the clients and patients in a manner that satisfies the principle set out above in the respect of the public interest.

Yes

**6- Professional Responsibility**

7.1- Engagement of the Professional Responsibility

Liberal professionals exercise personal professional responsibility in the provision of their services, thus ensuring high quality in the procedures adopted to achieve the desired outcome.

Failure to exercise professional responsibility properly, leaves the individual liberal professional subject to disciplinary, either under legislation or through the relevant professional body.

Yes

7.2- Subscription of Insurance

As liberal professionals exercise professional responsibility in the provision of their services, professionals subscribe to a genuine insurance.

Yes No (1)
7- **Quality of Services**

Clients and patients have the right to expect, and liberal professionals have a duty to provide, a service of high quality at all times. Professional bodies have a responsibility to adopt principles and procedures particular to each profession in order to preserve and improve the quality of the services provided.

Yes

**COMMENTS:** The obligation of the liberal professional aims always to preserve and improve the quality of the service provided. *(Comment from the Pan-Hellenic Medical Association)*

---

**Codes of Conduct**

In order to ensure high quality in the provision of services, professional bodies have a responsibility to provide codes of conduct and ethics for individual professions. Self-regulation is one of the important, defining characteristics of the liberal professions.

Yes

**COMMENTS:** Governments and patients often do not agree with self-regulation. *(Comment from the Section of Geriatric Medicine)*

In Greece, codes of ethics concern all medical specialists. *(Comment from the Pan-Hellenic Medical Association)*

---

**Control**

Considering the search for the highest quality service and for the satisfaction of the client or patient’s expectations in the respect of values and principles, professional bodies set up various mechanisms, systems or procedures of control towards liberal professionals.

Yes

**COMMENTS:** In Greece, procedures of control exist even for the excessive use of high-value services. *(Comment from the Pan-Hellenic Medical Association)*