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DUTCH SOCIETY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Code of Professional Standards

(Accepted during the general membership meeting on May 2008)

I General considerations

The Code of Ethics of the Dutch Society of Political Science (NKWP) fixes a number of guidelines that the members of the NKWP should keep in mind when exercising their profession. The starting point of the present Code is the acknowledgement that, whilst dealing with political sciences, various values and interests are at stake and they may be in mutually conflicting positions: the interests of science and the researcher itself, those of the investigated persons or groups, those of the employer or client and those of society as a whole. In the following sections, we will define further, with respect to each of these parties, what rules political scientists must comply with.

The following Code of professional standards is not overarching and complete. This is a deliberate choice because it is almost impossible to establish rules for all conceivable cases. These rules are, however, intended to stimulate mutual discussion and to mutually seek advice on specific cases. In cases where the Code makes no provision, one should contact the Code of Professional Standards Commission.

The Code of Professional Standards Commission is set by the Board of the NKWP.

The Commission studies the reported cases, sets hearings and, if necessary, may propose sanctions, which must be approved by the Board. Possible sanctions include: a personal warning, a public warning and in the worst case expulsion.

Within the global rules, political scientists must obviously also comply with the laws and regulations of the country or countries in which they operate. Additionally, there are two other general principles. Political scientists should commit themselves to the highest standards of professional competence and integrity, both as professionals and in political science in general.

In case of conflict or if there are compelling reasons to deviate from the code, political scientists must first seek solutions among themselves. If this provides no outcome, contact should be made with the Code of Professional Standards Commission established by the Board.

II Rules regarding political science and its promoters

1. Political scientists should exercise their profession in the pursuit to increase and disseminate knowledge of politics.
2. Political scientists must, as thoroughly and comprehensibly as possible, show their theoretical insights and empirical findings without omitting important information. In their reports, they should, to the best of their ability, distinguish between statements for which an empirical evidence has been found and statements for which this has not been found, and they should indicate the conditions under which statements are respectively true, valid and morally correct.
3. Political scientists should distinguish between statements with an empirical character and statements with a normative character.
4. Political scientists must thoroughly refer to all the sources from which they derived their theoretical and / or empirical knowledge and also to every form with which they are introduced to the public. In cases where (almost) literal passages are quoted from other sources, these should be stated and clearly recognizable.
5. While doing their research, political scientists must be extremely careful of the inter-subjective verifiability of their findings, which should be available both to fellow political scientists and to third parties who do not belong to the Society of Political Scientists. To this end, after the first publication on a subject, they are obliged, with the possibly of certain restrictions, to make their original data and relevant documentation available for consultation and use by third parties in order to allow for responses and confrontation. It is highly recommended that the mentioned information be kept in a public data archive, for at least two years.
6. Political scientists need to list all sources of scientific and financial support in their reports. If financial or other personal interests impede the impartial exercise of a certain professional activity, that activity should be terminated.

7. Political scientists must refrain from holding or reviewing reports of people with whom they have a personal commitment. With the term holding or reviewing reports, we refer to examinations and assessments, coaching, reviewing or evaluating manuscripts of books or articles, deciding on appointments and promotions, judging at competitions or advising on research funding. With personal commitments we refer to any family relationships, love relationships or friendships, but also to conflicting relationships.
8. Political scientists should do their best to introduce the developments in their field.

III Rules with respect to informants

1. Political scientists should only rely on the cooperation of informants if the information they provide is not already available elsewhere.
2. The informants must be informed about the purpose and nature of the political science research, unless the design of the study prevents this. In such cases, the informants should be informed afterwards, if possible. Misleading informants is never permitted. It is highly recommended that information on the identity of the client, the theme of the research, the expected returns and the burden on the informants be provided. The investigator shall, when requested, share with the informant information on whether, how and when the results of the study will be published.
3. If information has been obtained, during the research, from informants with particular vulnerabilities, political scientists are bound to take special care that the voluntary nature of the participation in the study is fully understood. This applies when informants are less able to judge the research situation, such as in particular with minors.
4. Data for scientific purposes is collected and may only be used for scientific research and not be applied for judicial or commercial purposes.
5. Directly identifying data from informants must remain anonymous towards third parties, unless the informants have given explicit permission to expose their identity publicly. Amongst the directly identifying information we include: name, address, telephone number, tax number, and, in brief, any data that is immediately traceable to one person. The data collection process should already identify which personal data needs to be handled confidentially. Confidentiality, at this stage, will imply that the directly identifying personal data be separately stored from the other data and be saved after encryption. If political scientists allow data collection to be performed by others, they must see to it that they take into account the provisions of this section. Political scientists must ensure that directly identifying data does not fall into the hands of third parties, unless such third parties are bound by the rules of this code. Directly identifying information will be destroyed after completion of the field work when there no longer is a need to cross check collected data. As a rule, a term of six months custody is suggested after the fieldwork's conclusion.

IV Rules with respect to clients

a. General

1. Political scientists must, at an early stage, share with their client that they, as members of the society, have undertaken an obligation to comply with this code. It is recommended that the client be provided with a copy of the code.
2. Political scientists should accept no assignment that they deem to be scientifically impracticable. They also should accept no assignment which they can reasonably assume will bring them into conflict with the code. However, they may seek consultation with the client in order to reformulate the assignment so that the risk of such a conflict be reduced.

b. The political scientist as professional

3. Political scientists provide peer assistance where needed and comment on their work within the limits of reasonableness.
4. Political scientists do not invoke their authority as political scientists in the exercise of public functions.

c. The political scientist as researcher

5. Political scientists have to do everything possible to clarify the client's aims of the investigation, even in the cases where it provides less openness. They should make themselves completely aware, to their best ability, of the way the client thinks of using the research findings. If they suspect that they will not agree with the use of the research results, they have to abandon the research.
6. Already in the preparatory stage, clear agreements should be made about the problem, the study design, supervision, duration, progress and costs of the investigation. Clear agreements also need to be documented in writing regarding the method of publication of the results and on which forums these results will be made public.

7. Political science research, as well as commissioned research, needs to be made public so that others can review and make judgements. When publishing, research results will need to refer to the name of the researcher and the research organization.

8. The client may not relate directly to informants without the investigator's permission.

9. Amendments to the draft report of the study may be made only by the researcher, not by the client. When the client wishes for changes to be made in the final report, there must be an agreement on this. The investigator will never consent to changes that bring him into conflict with what is included in this code.

d. The political scientist as policy designer

10. Political scientists have the right to oppose policies that are inconsistent with the research results available to them. If they determine that policymakers defend a new policy by referring to research, while they are convinced that the policy proves to be exactly the opposite in the available research, they can make it public as such.