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CODE OF ETHICS LITHUANIAN ASSOCIATION OF POLITICAL SCIENTISTS (LAPS)

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Introduction

Just like practitioners of any other profession, political science professionals often face situations in their work where decision making requires more than merely abiding by the formal rules of a specific academic institution or national legal norms. In addition, the activities of political scientists – conducting research or publicly commenting on political events and their participants – may give rise to ethical dilemmas not typical of other professions.

The main objective of this Code of Ethics is to define the core principles of political scientists' conduct that would help establish a professional culture based on high standards. To be considered a political scientist, an individual should hold at least one degree in political studies (BA, MA or PhD) and/or be engaged in teaching or academic research and have published the results of such activities in political science journals.

Core principles of professional ethics

I. In their activities, practitioners of political sciences should be guided by the aim to pursue scientific truth and to responsibly present their academic research results to colleagues and society as a whole. In their work they should uphold intellectual integrity and keep developing their professional skills.

II. As citizens, political scientists are entitled to personal ideological convictions and to engage in consultancy or political activities, but they should always declare, clearly and openly, their interests arising from such activities, as well as any connections to political parties or other institutions that might influence their judgements. Said interests should not pose limits to intellectual freedom, and professional status and authority should not be exploited for covert political purposes. Individuals should also refrain from abusing their status, such as by collecting information not required for professional activities or research. The Association reserves the right to speak out against those who, without justification, present themselves publicly as political scientists or that abuse their position, regardless of whether they are members of the Association or not.

III. As teachers, political science practitioners should encourage continuous learning and critical thinking in their students. When teaching, they must strive for the highest professional standards, respect their students, their independent thinking and assess their knowledge objectively. One must avoid any discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, beliefs or other factors unrelated to academic assessment. Teachers should not accept material or other benefits from their students if it could influence a student's academic assessment. Teachers must publicly acknowledge students' contributions to ongoing research or in the preparation of publications.

IV. Political scientists must respect the opinion of their peers and always maintain due respect towards them in discussions. Discussions are to be welcomed and encouraged as they are an integral part of the search for truth, but the purpose of such discussions should be ideas, and not individuals. Political scientists must publicly acknowledge their peers' contributions whenever peers' work is used in their research, publications, lectures or public speeches.

V. When participating in public discussions, political scientists should limit their analysis and commentary to their area of competence. If the topic of a discussion exceeds the limits of one's competence, one may either suggest an expert in the field to participate in the discussion instead, or acknowledge the limits of one's abilities and knowledge during the discussion. Political scientists should be aware of the boundary between their personal judgements as citizens and research-based professional judgements, and avoid any confusion between the two. It is also necessary to make clear when practitioners of political sciences are speaking out on behalf of the institution they represent, and when they are merely expressing a personal opinion.

VI. As academic staff, political scientists need to understand institutional responsibility and pay due attention to properly performing their duties – teaching, research and work with colleagues. When taking up additional activities outside the institution, political scientists should properly consider the effect of such activities on their academic work and try to pursue the goals of the academic institution without considering personal benefit. At the same time, in accordance with the work rules of their institution, teachers should be able to critically evaluate the work of their institution and make use of it, if necessary.

VII. Members of the political science community should seek the widest possible dissemination of information on potential sources of research funding in Lithuania and abroad. For this purpose, information dissemination and contact options, provided by LAPS and specific Lithuanian academic institutions, should be more actively exploited. Upon receiving financial support for a specific project, it is obligatory to specify the source of the support. Sponsors are not responsible for the outcome of funded research, and must not support conditions that might restrict researchers' freedom. In turn, researchers may refuse support that, in their opinion, might limit their intellectual freedom and the outcome of the research.

Application of the Code of Ethics

The principles set out in the Code of Ethics differ from those regulating the work of institutions and other such rules – they are advisory in nature and should be regarded as an expression of a highly professional culture. Therefore, the main and most efficient means of enforcing them is an awareness of professional responsibility and a benevolent aspiration to follow them. At the same time, the main sanction against political science practitioners who blatantly ignore them is the negative opinion of their peers.

In extreme cases, LAPS members who blatantly violate these principles may be expelled from the Association. In such cases, the decision must be approved by the LAPS Council. The LAPS Council may also speak out publicly against persons presenting themselves as political scientists who do not belong to the community. In addition, since some principles of the Code of Ethics are closely connected to the work provisions of academic institutions, such as prohibition of plagiarism, political science practitioners who violate them may be subject to appropriate disciplinary sanctions.