

Position of BAPS regarding registration of BAPS members at the Commission of Psychologists

In Belgium, the title of psychologist is a legally protected title and can be used only when registered at the Commission of Psychologists (Compsy; <https://compsy.be>). Compsy keeps a list of registered psychologists and organizes a Disciplinary Committee & a Board of Appeal. Registration at Compsy implies submission to the disciplinary power of the Disciplinary Committee & a Board of Appeal. As such, fellow psychologists and members of the general public can turn to the disciplinary bodies of Compsy if they have a complaint about a registered psychologist regarding potential violations of the code of ethics of psychologists. Moreover, people who use the title of psychologist without being registered at Compsy can be held accountable for misuse of the title of psychologist. Registration with Compsy also has benefits for the registered psychologists, such as the possibility of VAT exemption.

BAPS recognizes the important role of Compsy. Just like other professional titles (e.g., lawyer, cardiologist) should be used only by qualified persons who adhere to deontological rules, the title of psychologist deserves protection. Via the Belgian Federation of Psychologists (<https://www.bfp-fbp.be/>), BAPS is represented within the plenary council of Compsy. For BAPS, it is important that Compsy functions in line with the principles of good governance and serves the interest of all subdisciplines in psychology (click here for more information about the position of BAPS regarding the role and functioning of Compsy).

BAPS would like to remind its members that they are legally obliged to register at Compsy if they use the title of psychologist. This is the case regardless of whether you are self-employed. For instance, also BAPS members who work at a university or a center for mental health and who interact with the general public using the title of “psychologist” (e.g., expresses certain views in the media as a psychologist) should also be aware that they are legally obliged to register with Compsy. Otherwise, they may be held accountable for misuse of the title. According to our information, there is less legal clarity about whether the use of composite titles such as “social psychologist” or “organizational psychologist” requires registration at Compsy. This is also true for the title “clinical psychologist” but the use of this title certainly requires a visum and registration at regional level (for more info, see <https://vvpk.be/nieuws/inschrijving-bij-de-psychologencommissie> or <https://www.uppcf.be/visa-agrement-psychologie-clinique>). The use of diploma titles (e.g., “Doctor in Psychology”) does not require registration at Compsy from a legal point of view.

BAPS members who do not use the title of “psychologist” when interacting with the general public but who use other denominators such as “academic” or (behavioral, cognitive, psychological, ...) “scientist” might choose not to register with Compsy. Nevertheless, BAPS members who are not registered at Compsy should carefully consider with which title they present themselves to colleagues and the general public. BAPS also believes it is important that psychologists can be held accountable for their activities. Hence, BAPS recommends that members who choose not to register with Compsy because they use titles other than the title of psychologist, should do so only if they can be held accountable for their professional activities in other ways (e.g., by appealing to the disciplinary board of a university).

BAPS Executive Committee

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