

## **A Statement from the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) on the concepts of 'Parent Alienation Syndrome' (PAS) and 'Parental Alienation' (PA)**

The European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) considers that the terms and concepts of 'PAS' and 'PA' are unsuitable for use in any psychotherapeutic practice.

The EAP recognizes that there is a high risk and potential of PAS/PA concepts to be used in a manner allowing for violence against children and their mothers to remain undetected, and/or contested, since it ignores essential aspects of child welfare and the gender-based nature of domestic violence.

In cases of allegations of child abuse in a divorce or custody situation, one of the basic assumptions of PAS/PA is that the allegations made by the child or parent are untrue. This concept alone can allow for - and/or - cause further victimization, and a pathologization of children and other victims of domestic violence. In addition, neither PAS nor PA are included in any international classifications of mental disorders (DSM and ICD) and psychotherapists should therefore not use these terms as diagnostic categories.

The EAP believes that all European psychotherapists must also take, very seriously any report of domestic violence in divorce and child custody cases. Psychotherapists need to distinguish between a contentious divorce/separation and a divorce/separation in which there is domestic violence in order to be able to adjust psychotherapeutic interventions accordingly. This requires a case-by-case determination and a mutual understanding and cooperation between all psycho-social and legal professions, in accordance with universal standards relating to domestic and international legal documents concerning the protection of the best interests of the child and the protection of victims of domestic violence.

Final version for EAP: Dec. 2017

*Voted by EAP Board on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Vienna*