E-Portfolio Activity 4: Codes of Ethics – Michael Geiger

The German Federal Office for Information Security (BSI) is Germany's cyber security authority and defines the central security standards in the IT space as well as digital forensic practices (BSI, N.D.). The BSI sets out a number of ethical principles that must be observed in digital forensics (BSI, 2020):

1. Integrity and Trustworthiness

   Integrity establishes trust and thus creates the basis for the reliability of a judgement. Inspectors pay attention to the value and property of the information received and will not disclose it without proper authorization unless required to do so by law or professional practice. As a result, unlawfully disclosing information or using it for personal gain is considered unethical.

2. Expertise

   Auditors only take on those tasks for which they have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience and use them in the performance of their work. It follows, therefore, that examiners have an obligation to continuously improve their skills and knowledge.

3. Objectivity and diligence

   An auditor shall demonstrate the highest level of professional objectivity and diligence in collating, evaluating and reporting information about audited activities or business processes. All relevant circumstances must be assessed in a balanced manner and must not be influenced by one's own interests or by others.

4. Factual representation

    An inspector has a duty to report truthfully and accurately to his client about the test results. This includes the objective and comprehensible presentation of the facts in the test reports, the constructive evaluation of the facts presented and the specific recommendations for improving the measures and processes. Concealment or even changes to the object of investigation are to be rated as unethical.

5. Evidence and traceability

    The rational basis for coming to reliable and comprehensible conclusions and results is the clear and consistent documentation of the facts. This also includes a documented and comprehensible methodology with which the audit team comes to its conclusions.

6. Independence and neutrality

    The examiner must carry out the examination independently and impartially. The examiner must be able to document the test results in a comprehensible manner. Each audit team should consist of at least two auditors to ensure independence and objectivity. Impartiality is a basic requirement for an objective assessment.

While the ethical principles of digital forensics are kept general by the BSI, they imply clear codes of conduct that must be observed in forensic investigative work.

References:

BSI (N.D.) Auftrag. Available from: https://www.bsi.bund.de/DE/Das-BSI/Auftrag/auftrag_node.html [Accessed 11 October 2022].

BSI (2020) Orientierungshilfe zu Nachweisen gemäß § 8a Absatz 3 BSIG. Available from: https://www.bsi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/BSI/KRITIS/oh-nachweise.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=8 [Accessed 11 October 2022].