



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Attorney Ethics: Where Is the Line Between Defense and Manipulation

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### Abstract

The article examines a key issue of the legal profession — compliance with professional ethics. It analyzes where the boundary lies between the lawful defense of a client's interests and impermissible manipulation of the court, opponents, or public opinion. Special attention is given to the Code of Professional Ethics of the Attorney (CPEA), judicial practice, and examples of violations. It is emphasized that adherence to ethics is not only a moral duty but also a strategic tool that affects an attorney's reputation and effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Attorney Ethics; Professional Ethics; Criminal Procedure; Defense; Manipulation; CPEA; Judicial Practice; Reputation

### 1. Introduction

Legal practice is inevitably associated with tension between the interests of the client and the requirements of the law. The main task of an attorney is to ensure the most effective defense possible, while at the same time being obliged to act within the framework of professional ethics.

According to data from the Federal Chamber of Lawyers of the Russian Federation, hundreds of disciplinary cases related to violations of the Code of Professional Ethics of the Attorney are considered annually. The most common accusations include abuse of rights, distortion of facts, and attempts to exert pressure on the court. Such cases raise an important question: where does an acceptable defense strategy end and manipulation begin?

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**Figure 1** Trends in Disciplinary Cases Against Lawyers in Russia, 2019–2024

### 1.1. Block 1 Fundamentals of Attorney Ethics

- Code of Professional Ethics of the Attorney.

The CPEA establishes key principles: legality, honesty, respect for the court and colleagues, and a prohibition on misleading. An attorney is obliged to act in the interests of the client, but these interests cannot justify a violation of the law.

- Judicial Practice.

Courts have repeatedly noted that an attorney has no right to knowingly present false evidence or distort facts. Such violations may lead to disciplinary liability, deprivation of professional status, and even criminal prosecution.

- Reputational Aspect.

For an attorney, ethics is capital. A reputation is built over decades, and any violation is perceived particularly harshly by the professional community. In a competitive market, client trust becomes decisive.

### 1.2. Block 2. The Boundary Between Defense and Manipulation

- Defense as a Duty.

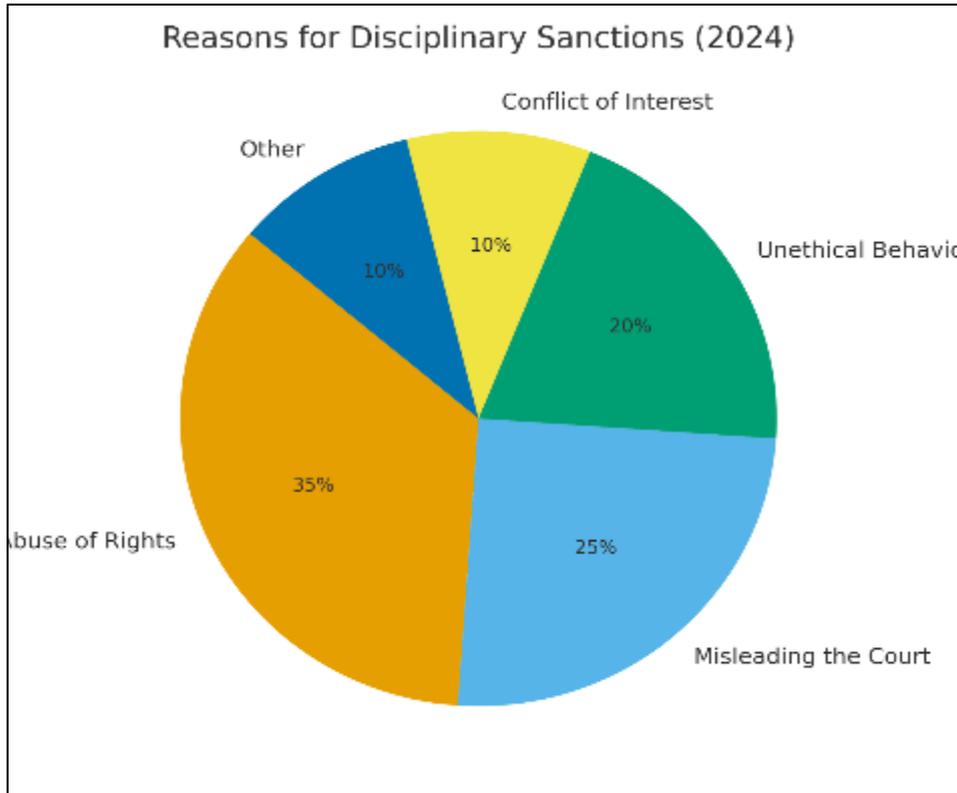
An attorney has the right to use all lawful means of defense, including active challenging of the prosecution's evidence, engaging experts, and обращения to the media.

- Manipulation as a Violation.

Manipulation includes deliberate attempts to distort information, delay proceedings without legal necessity, exert pressure on witnesses, or use the media to discredit the court.

- The Gray Zone.

At times, the line is blurred: for example, aggressive questioning of a witness may be perceived either as an acceptable tactic or as impermissible pressure. In such situations, not only formal rules but also the professional culture of the legal community are of significance.



**Figure 2** Reasons for Disciplinary Sanctions Against Lawyers in Russia (2024)

### 1.3. Block 3. Contemporary Challenges of Attorney Ethics

- Pressure of the Digital Environment.

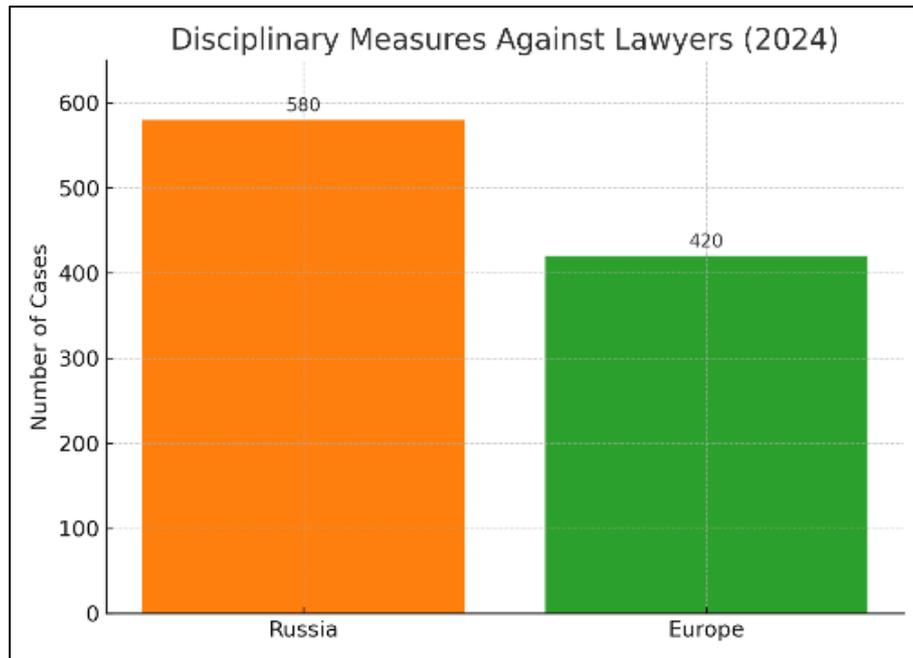
With the emergence of social media, attorneys have gained new communication tools, but also new risks. Public comments on a case may be perceived as an attempt to exert pressure on the court or to shape public opinion.

- International Experience.

In European countries and the United States, similar codes of attorney ethics exist. Violations are treated extremely seriously: sanctions include not only revocation of a license but also bans from practicing the profession for years.

- Education and Prevention.

Many bar associations introduce mandatory ethics courses, training sessions, and seminars for young attorneys. This demonstrates that the development of professional culture requires continuous renewal of knowledge.



**Figure 3** Disciplinary Measures Against Lawyers

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## 2. Conclusion

Attorney ethics is not a formality but a strategic foundation of the profession. The boundary between defense and manipulation lies where an attorney begins to act contrary to the law or misleads the participants in the proceedings. Adherence to ethics increases trust in the legal profession, strengthens justice, and fosters respect for the profession. For an attorney, it is both a guarantee of a stable reputation and a basis for long-term success.

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