

Child Protection Policy of Eurocarers



CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	2
1. Purpose of the Policy.....	2
2. Scope of the Policy.....	3
3. Principles underpinning the Policy.....	3
II. DEFINITIONS.....	4
III. CHILD PROTECTION RULES AND PROCEDURES.....	5
1. Participation of Children in Events.....	5
2. Rules and guidelines for behavior towards children.....	5
3. Rules for filming and publishing photo and video materials.....	6
4. Rules and guidelines for managing information and mediated communication.....	7
5. Staff Recruitment and Trainings.....	7
6. Reporting and Procedures.....	8
IV. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY.....	9
APPENDICES.....	10
Appendix 1: Signs of abuse.....	10
Appendix 2: Declaration of commitment.....	11
Appendix 3: Parental consent.....	12

I. INTRODUCTION

Eurocarers brings together carers' organisations as well as relevant universities & research institutes – a unique combination that enables evidence-based advocacy. Our network works to ensure that care is valued and unpaid care is recognised as central to the sustainability of health and long-term care systems. We believe that carers' know-how and needs are worth listening to and people should have the right to choose freely whether they want to be a carer and to what extent they want to be involved in caring. Our aim is therefore to act as a voice for informal carers, irrespective of their age or the particular health need of the person they are caring for.

This policy has been developed with the active involvement of the Eurocarers Young Carers Working group.

1. Purpose of the Policy

This Child Protection Policy (CPP) serves as a guiding framework for the organisation in its engagement with young carers and other children. It delineates specific tasks aimed at safeguarding the welfare of children, employees and the organisation as a functional unit.

In the field of child protection:

- It entails the development and implementation of clear and actionable rules and measures for the protection of children;
- It endeavours to mitigate potential risks of violence and exploitation among the children with whom the organisation works.

With respect to the employees of the organisation:

- The policy clearly defines expected behaviour and communication boundaries for employees when working with children;
- It helps employees in recognising potential risks inherent in their interaction with children;
- It outlines appropriate action for staff in cases of suspected or confirmed cases of violence or abuse.

Regarding the organisation as a whole:

- The implementation of the Child Protection Policy sets clear parameters regarding the organisation's involvement with and outreach to children;
- It serves as a prerequisite for improving personnel selection, training and professional development efforts;
- It establishes standards for engaging external consultants and forming partnerships with other organisations and structures involved in child-related work.;
- By reducing the risk of unfounded or malicious accusations of child abuse, the policy safeguards the organisation's reputation and integrity.

2. Scope of the Policy

This Child Protection Policy applies to all employees and partners of Eurocarers.

For the purposes of the CPP,

- the term "employee" encompasses all individuals under permanent, temporary employment or civil contract, including consultants, experts, interns and volunteers engaged with the organisation.

the term "partners" encompasses a broader array of entities, including external supervisors and consultants; donor organisations and their partners; International collaborators; Media representatives; Visitors and guests associated with Eurocarers.

All employees, interns and volunteers stationed at the organisation's office and centres are required to acquaint themselves with this document and acknowledge their understanding by signing it. In carrying out their duties, they are expected to adapt the policy and procedures to suit the specifics of their roles.

The CPP is introduced as a mandatory component of the training provided to newly-appointed staff, trainees and volunteers.

In collaborative activities and projects, the organisation's partners will receive an introduction to the CPP. Future affiliate agreements will incorporate this policy or ensure compliance through a signed declaration.

Eurocarers will encourage its partners to develop their own Child Protection Policies and procedures.

3. Principles underpinning the Policy

Eurocarers adheres to specific values and principles that underpin its overarching mission: **Children's rights are a core value:** This sets a clear standard that places the well-being and interests of children at the forefront of all endeavours, emphasising their importance.

1. **Non-discrimination:** This emphasises inclusivity and ensures that all children and families, regardless of their backgrounds, are treated with respect and dignity.
2. **Best interests and well-being of all children and young people:** This is a fundamental principle in child protection and welfare, prioritising the safety and well-being of children in all actions and decisions.
Children's participation: Encouraging children's involvement in decision-making processes with an impact on their daily life empowers them and aligns with principles of child rights advocacy.
3. **Duty of care:** demonstrating a commitment to safety, this principle ensures that actions undertaken do not harm others, which is essential in any organisation working with children.
4. **Openness and transparency:** Transparency fosters trust and accountability, particularly vital in organisations dealing with sensitive issues such as child welfare.

II. DEFINITIONS

Child: In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as an individual under the age of 18 years.

Child safeguarding: Child safeguarding entails implementing appropriate measures to ensure that staff, experts, contracted third parties, operations, projects and programmes prioritise the well-being of children and refrain from causing harm. This involves preventing children from being exposed to risks of harm and abuse and promptly reporting any concerns about children's safety to the appropriate authorities. Child safeguarding encompasses both preventive measures to minimise the occurrence of harm and responsive actions to effectively address any incidents that may occur.

Safeguarding concerns, as outlined in this policy, encompass the perception or suspicion that an individual may be at risk of harm or has already experienced harm. These concerns may refer to a single instance of harm and abuse or they may involve multiple occurrences. Reports of safeguarding concerns may originate from individuals who have either directly experienced harm or fear harm themselves or from bystanders who have become aware of others being at risk of or experiencing harm.

Neglect refers to any act of omission or failure to provide, whether deliberate or otherwise, that compromises a child's health, security and development. This includes a consideration of the context, available resources and circumstances. Neglect manifests as a persistent inability to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, resulting in a heightened risk of serious physical and cognitive impairment.

Child abuse or maltreatment: Any deliberate or unintentional action or failure to act by an individual, institution or society as a whole, along with any resulting effects, that violate children's rights and hinder their well-being. There are four primary forms of abuse:

- Physical violence against a child involves situations where the child is physically harmed or is at risk of such harm. This abuse may result from actions or inactions by a parent, carer, trusted individual or other people holding power over the child. Physical violence against children can be isolated incidents or recurring occurrences.
- Emotional violence against a child refers to prolonged, non-physical, harmful interactions between a child and a carer, encompassing both actions and inactions. This includes emotional neglect, hostility, blame, denigration, inconsistent interaction and failure to recognise the child's individuality and emotional boundaries.
- Child sexual abuse involves engaging children in sexual activities they are unable to comprehend or provide informed consent to or activities that violate legal and social norms. This includes sexual interactions between a child and an adult or between two children, where there is a power imbalance or relationship of care, dependence or authority.
- Child neglect involves chronic or occasional failure to meet the child's basic physical and emotional needs or to respect their rights, resulting in compromised health and/or development. Neglect typically occurs within the caregiver-child relationship.

For further definitions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ shall serve as a point of reference.

¹ Available on: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

III. CHILD PROTECTION RULES AND PROCEDURES

1. Participation of Children in Events

When extending invitations to children for event participation, it is imperative to provide them with comprehensive, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information regarding their right to freely express their views and have them duly considered. They should be briefed on the nature, scope, purpose and potential impact of their involvement, ensuring transparency throughout. Children must never be coerced into expressing views against their will and should be informed of their option to disengage at any point.

In particular,

- Event organisers are required to obtain written parental consent for a child's attendance at any Eurocarers activity, with a sample parental consent form provided in Appendix 3 of this policy;
- Children must not be accommodated alone in a room of adults. They should share the room with other children, with their accompanying parent/guardian or be accommodated in a private room;
- All participants must have access to safeguarding-related information, with children provided accessible versions tailored to their comprehension level and language preference, devoid of unnecessary jargon;
- Whenever feasible, event planning should incorporate proactive measures to solicit children's input on risk identification and participation enhancement, taking into account the diverse needs of individuals or groups with specific backgrounds or characteristics. It is crucial to recognise that children may perceive the same environment differently.

Service and/or third-party contracts for events involving children must include terms of reference clearly outlining the contractor's obligations regarding child safeguarding during contract performance.

2. Rules and guidelines for behaviour towards children

THE RULES AND GUIDELINES GOVERNING INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN ARE ESTABLISHED AND ADHERED TO BY THE STAFF WITH THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure the rights and safety of children when collaborating with organisation employees;
- Cultivate an atmosphere of support, collaboration and creativity in activities involving children;
- Foster and enhance professionalism among staff members working with children, emphasising respect for children's rights and their involvement in decisions and activities concerning them.

IT IS DEEMED ESSENTIAL THAT EUROCARERS EMPLOYEES ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN:

- Remain vigilant regarding potential immediate threats to children's well-being;
- Strategically plan and organise work environments to mitigate potential risks;
- Foster a culture of openness, facilitating the free expression and discussion of any concerns or problems;
- Foster a sense of responsibility among employees to promptly rectify any harmful or potentially risky practices or behaviours;
- Encourage children and young people to voice their opinions on matters affecting them.

EUROCARERS EMPLOYEES ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED FROM:

- Engaging in physical abuse or any form of violence against children;
- Initiating or engaging in sexual relationships with children;
- Exploiting children in any manner;
- Engaging in actions that could jeopardise children's safety;
- Encouraging or participating in illegal or risky behaviour by children;
- Discriminating against any child or exhibiting selective behaviour in any process;
- Using inappropriate or offensive language, suggestions or advice towards children;
- Demonstrating physically or sexually provocative behaviour in the presence of children;
- Photographing or filming children and young people without their explicit consent;
- Sharing a room or bed with a child they are working with;
- Hosting a child or children they work with in their own home.

Risk assessment/risk mitigation

The organisation conducts comprehensive risk assessments of all its operations, programmes, projects and activities involving children. Subsequently, risk mitigation strategies are devised and integrated into the planning, execution and evaluation of programmes and activities impacting or involving children.

3. Rules for filming and publishing photo and video materials

GUIDELINES FOR RECORDING PHOTOGRAPHIC AND VISUAL MATERIAL:

- Children should be appropriately dressed, considering local cultural norms regarding decency. If local customs imply a less clothed appearance for children, photos should be carefully selected;
- Recorded images should portray children engaged in activities and preferably depict groups rather than individuals;
- Photographers and cameramen must be supervised and not left alone with children;
- Complaints or reports concerning indecent images, including those obtained without children's knowledge, should be reported and documented like all other instances of child abuse.

GUIDELINES FOR PUBLISHING IMAGES AND PERSONAL STORIES/CASE STUDIES:

- Prior permission must always be obtained from the child's parents, guardians or custodians. The purpose, method and intended publication venue of the photographic or video material should be clearly communicated, along with the rules governing the entire process (refer to Appendix 3);
- Before using a photo, consent must be obtained from the child depicted in it (refer to Appendix 3);
- Following consent from children, young people and their responsible adults to be featured in photographic or video materials:
 - In cases of sharing personal stories or practice examples, children's names should be altered to preserve their confidentiality;

- For children or young people with prolonged involvement in the organisation's activities, only their first names may be disclosed in publications and materials, provided this does not exacerbate existing issues they may face.

IT IS ADVISABLE TO CAPTURE IMAGES DEPICTING A DIVERSE RANGE OF CHILDREN, INCLUDING BOYS AND GIRLS, SPANNING VARIOUS AGE GROUPS AND ETHNICITIES, WITH OR WITHOUT DISABILITIES.

4. Rules and guidelines for managing information and mediated communication

GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTION, USE AND STORAGE OF CHILD SAFETY INFORMATION:

- The Child Protection Policy must be readily accessible to all stakeholders, both in physical spaces where children are present or will be and on the organisation's website;
- Efforts are made to present all aspects of the protection policy and procedures in a child-friendly manner, ensuring full understanding through appropriate volume and means of communication;
- Personal and contact information of children is only collected in connection with specific upcoming activities and under conditions explicitly agreed upon by responsible adults;
- Declarations of parental consent for children's participation in activities and any sensitive information collected are kept confidential in both physical and electronic formats;
- Access to children's contact information is restricted to the minimum number of employees necessary for the activity.

While information and communication technologies offer numerous advantages, they also pose risks to children, including inappropriate access to personal data, unwanted contact with malicious adults, exposure to offensive content, online bullying and vulnerability to sexual abuse.

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES:

- All mediated communication between organisation employees and children is conducted with maximum openness, clarity, transparency and an appropriate tone;
- Communications between staff and children must refrain from containing abusive or harmful language;
- Details of upcoming activities with children should only be disseminated to those directly involved;
- When publishing articles or materials reflecting completed activities involving children, a risk assessment for child abuse should be conducted if children from vulnerable situations participated. Children's names should be changed to maintain confidentiality.
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5. Staff Recruitment and Trainings

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY VERIFICATION

- References from previous employers covering the two-year period preceding recruitment will be obtained. These references will assess the suitability of the candidate for employment in a youth-focused organisation and disclose any safeguarding complaints filed against them.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- All staff positions will undergo a comprehensive risk assessment to determine their level of interaction with children and young people. Roles identified as high risk will undergo advanced vetting procedures for all new hires.

ADVANCED VETTING PROTOCOL

Advanced vetting for high-risk roles will include obtaining a Criminal Record Extract:

- For individuals residing in Belgium, the required document is the Extrait de casier judiciaire Modèle 596-2.
- Individuals residing outside Belgium must provide a national equivalent.
- In jurisdictions where a formal criminal record extract cannot be obtained upon employer request, new hires will be required to furnish a declaration detailing their criminal record status or lack thereof. Additionally, a verbal reference with a former employer must be secured.

CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

All employment contracts for staff, approved trainers and experts must include a clause mandating compliance with Eurocarers safeguarding policies.

Training on this policy will be integrated into the onboarding process for new hires, with annual refresher training provided thereafter.

6. Reporting and Procedures

FOR EVERY EVENT, IT IS IMPERATIVE TO ESTABLISH A CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING MECHANISM FOR SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS, OUTLINED AS FOLLOWS:

- In events organised by the Eurocarers, the facilitator, co-chairs or trainer will be the designated point of contact (PoC), with responsibility for providing general information about the safeguarding policy and adhering to its procedures.
- Any complaint or safeguarding concern may be directed to the PoC and/or submitted (anonymously or otherwise) via an online form accessible at Misconduct Report Form
- Immediate response to all complaints must occur as expeditiously as possible, no later than 24 hours after they are brought to the attention of the PoC or submitted online.
- The PoC, staff monitoring the online form and any other event organisers where children are present are obligated to report any concerns to the Director of Eurocarers at the Secretariat (unless the complaint is filed against them, in which case the President of the Eurocarers Board of Directors should be notified).
- The PoC will investigate complaints while prioritising a survivor-centred approach and adhering to the principles outlined in the policy. Any serious allegations must be reported to competent authorities if deemed safe and in the child's best interest; upon request by the child or guardian/parent; or as required by law.
- The PoC retains the authority to remove any individual against whom an allegation has been made from the event. If a complaint is filed against a Eurocarers staff member or volunteer, the Director of

Eurocarers will decide whether to suspend the accused individual during the investigation and take appropriate measures upon conclusion, including termination.

- In all instances, staff and/or the PoC must involve the children in conversations and seek consent before involving parents/guardians in discussions on safeguarding concerns. If consent is not obtained, staff and/or the PoC should inform the child clearly before sharing any information with their legal guardians/parents.
- The child and/or their parents/guardians must be kept informed of any decisions made by Eurocarers, including the option to appeal such decisions.
- All complaints, subsequent procedures and outcomes must be securely documented and stored in a safeguarding register.

IV. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The aim of monitoring and evaluating the Child Protection Policy is to draw insights from practical case experiences, thereby informing reviews and potential revisions to the policy itself.

Eurocarers will routinely monitor the implementation of its Child Protection Policy and associated procedures. This monitoring and evaluation process will involve assessing the adherence to the standards outlined in the policy and evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding measures. To achieve this, surveys will be conducted among Eurocarers staff, interns and volunteers to gauge compliance with the policy's standards, assess their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

In addition to ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts, reactive monitoring will be conducted in response to incidents, facilitating a learning process for Eurocarers. If necessary, findings from reactive monitoring may prompt revisions to the Child Protection Policy or adjustments to reporting procedures.

Recognising abuse is not easy, since children react in different ways and many of the signs are very subtle and can mean different things (e.g. if a child says it has a headache it can mean that there is something it wants to tell you).

Below is a list with possible signs of the different types of child abuse to help identify abuse:

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Improbable excuses given to the injuries
- Injuries which have not received medical treatment
- Injuries which occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Repeated urinary infections and unexplained tummy pains
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home or parents being contacted
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Being aggressive towards others
- Being very passive and compliant
- Chronic running away

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF NEGLECT

- Frequent hunger
- Failure to grow
- Stealing or gorging food
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Inappropriate clothes
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance of school
- Untreated medical problems
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Drug or alcohol abuse

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

- Physical, cognitive or emotional development is delayed
- Highly anxious
- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Fear of new situations
- Low self-esteem
- Inappropriate emotional responses to situations
- Extreme passivity or aggression
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Chronic running away

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:

- Age-inappropriate sexualised behaviour or highly sexualised language
- Bed wetting or soiling
- Anal or genital soreness
- Sleep problems
- Fear of being with adults
- Promiscuity
- Extreme risk taking in adolescents

I, the undersigned,

Declare I have received, read and understood the Terre des hommes' Child Safeguarding Policy and I commit to know and agree to work in accordance with it.

I understand that any failure to uphold the Child Protection Policy may result in the termination of my engagement with Eurocarers or further disciplinary or judicial proceedings as mentioned above.

Furthermore, I declare that I have no criminal records regarding an offence towards a child (which I have not previously declared) and nor do I know of any reason why anyone would deem me unsuitable to work with children.

Eurocarers shall reserve the right to inform other institutions which may apply for professional references of the termination of contract for serious violation of the principles of the protection of children within the legislative framework applicable to the protection of information.

Date at

Signature

PARENTAL CONSENT

[text in red colour to be filled by the organisers]

I, the undersigned,

Of (address)

parent/legal guardian of

authorise my child to participate in the Eurocarers' event [NAME OF The EVENT] to be held from DD/MM/YYYY to DD/MM/YYYY in CITY, COUNTRY.

Parent/Guardian agrees to the following terms and conditions:

- 1) By Parent/Guardian's consent to the child's participation in Eurocarers' event, Parent/Guardian accepts and assumes full responsibility for the behaviour of the participant during the Eurocarers' event;
- 2) Parent/Guardian and Parent/Guardian's personal representatives, assigns, successors, heirs or administrators hereby release, waive, discharge and hold harmless Eurocarers, its Board, employees from any and all claims, demands, losses, costs, liabilities or damages whatsoever arising out of or related to the participant's behaviour, actions, participation or involvement in the Eurocarers' event and related activities;
- 3) Parent/Guardian understands that Eurocarers is relying on Parent/Guardian's agreement to all the terms and conditions herein in order to permit the under-aged person to attend the Eurocarers' Event; In any case of contradiction with national or European laws, the national law will be applied.
- 4) Parent/Guardian understands that the participant is not covered by a specific insurance during the participation to the event and acknowledges that it is private responsibility to stipulate an insurance in case they deem it necessary;
- 5) Please choose one of the following:
 - Parent/Guardian **authorises** Eurocarers to take photos of the child during the event and is aware such photos may be used for reporting and publication purposes (including on social media).

OR

Parent/Guardian **does not authorise** Eurocarers to take photos of the child during the event. The Parent/Guardian is aware that photographs and/or recordings will be taken during the event, but if this option is chosen, Eurocarers will do its best to ensure that photos and/or recordings are not taken in which the participant is clearly visible.

6) Parent/Guardian has carefully read and reviewed this Parental Consent and fully understands and freely and voluntarily consents to all the terms and conditions herein.

I authorise processing and use of my data for the cases of emergency.

I confirm that I have the legal custody and responsibility to sign this parental consent and release the European Youth Forum from any responsibility connected to falsification of this document.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian:

Date at

Contact telephone number and email: