



European Association  
**WORLD-OUR HOME**

**EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION  
“WORLD-OUR HOME”**

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Rezekne, Latvia  
2023

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## Background

Child abuse is a global phenomenon. It occurs in all countries and in all societies. It involves the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children and adolescents. It is almost always preventable. Children and adolescents can be potentially subjected to exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect in families, communities, institutions, organisations, private places, public places by various circumstances by variety of people, including delegates, support staff, and ancillary personnel people associated with the conference. In order to address and protect children and adolescents from potential abuse and exploitation during their involvement with European Association “World-Our Home” this Child Protection Policy has been developed.

## Introduction

European Association “World-Our Home” recognizes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe that child protection is crucial to ensuring that children under the age of 18 have the rights, information and space in which they can express their views and communicate effectively with other children and adults. Children can only become empowered agents of change to improve their lives and that of their families and communities if they are safeguarded from abuse, discrimination and harm of any kind, be it physical, sexual, emotional or neglect.

European Association "World-Our Home" is fully committed to ensuring the well-being of all children participating in the organization's activities. It recognizes the responsibility to promote safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation. For the purposes of this policy and related procedures, a child is considered to be a person under 18 years of age.

Staff and volunteers work together to embrace difference and diversity and respect the rights of children and young people.

The European Association “World-Our Home” values young people and children as being a vital part of the organisation and desires to see them grow, mature and be challenged in a healthy and safe environment.

## Protection principles

This document outlines European Association’s “World-Our Home” commitment to protecting children.

These guidelines are based on the following principles:

- The welfare of children is the primary concern.

- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socioeconomic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from all forms of harm and abuse.
- Child protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Children have the right to express views on all matters which affect them, should they wish to do so.
- Organisations shall work in partnership together with children and parents/carers to promote the welfare, health and development of children.

### **Purposes:**

The purpose of children's and youth activities of the European Association "World-Our Home" is to offer the children a safe and welcoming environment with fun, non-formal education activities where the children can grow and learn. Whether this be through activities or through other independent groups working in partnership with European Association "World-Our Home".

### **Aims:**

- To provide activities for children and young people to help them develop from childhood into adulthood and to provide support for them.
- To enable the children to express themselves.
- To assist the children in integrating into the community.
- To help children/young people appreciate the diversity of their cultures.

### **EA "World-Our Home" core child protection values:**

#### **• Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

This Child Protection Policy deals with the protection of children and adolescents as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN CRC should be taken holistically, providing a comprehensive framework for the protection, provision and participation of all children. All children and adolescents involved in EA "World-Our Home" activities, projects and programmes have the right to have their health, safety and well-being, and their best interests considered as top priority; To have their development promoted and safeguarded so that they can achieve their full potential; To be valued, respected and understood within the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity; To be listened to and to have their views given careful consideration, and to be encouraged and helped to participate in decisions which affect them, including in child protection decisions.

#### **• Non-negotiable duty**

EA "World-Our Home" believes that NGOs working for children's rights have an absolute duty to protect children from abuse, mistreatment, and exploitation from within organisations intended for their benefit. This duty is imperative and non-negotiable. Without adequate standards and

mechanisms for protection in place, an organisation is not only failing in its primary duty of care, but may also be negligently or recklessly fostering an environment of abuse.

### • **Open environment**

EA “World-Our Home” believes that without proper and explicit procedures in place, NGOs are extremely vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse. Furthermore, organisations with weak communication structures run the risk of being infiltrated by persons, such as pedophiles, who seek to abuse children without being brought into the open. EA “World-Our Home” therefore believes in:

- Creating an environment where issues of child protection are discussed openly and are understood between children and adults;
- Promoting open lines of communication both internally and externally within and between member organisations to improve awareness and implementation of child protection policies and practices;
- Creating a framework to deal openly, consistently and fairly with allegations concerning both direct and indirect abuse.

### • **Children’s Participation**

EA “World-Our Home” works with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. EA “World-Our Home” believes that children’s participation promotes children’s protection. The obligation to respect the right of children to be heard is equal to the obligation to protect. Effective and sustainable protection for children can only be achieved through listening to children. EA “World-Our Home” aims to create spaces where children feel able and willing to speak about abuse, free from abusers and which empowers them to become actors in their own protection without further discrimination or shame. EA “World-Our Home” aims to empower children by making them aware about their rights and creating a safe environment in which they can exercise their rights. EA “World-Our Home” aims to implement children’s participation based on the nine requirements for meaningful, safe and inclusive children’s participation:

1. Participation is transparent and informative
2. Participation is voluntary
3. Participation is respectful
4. Participation is relevant
5. Participation is child-friendly
6. Participation is inclusive
7. Participation is supported by training
8. Participation is safe and sensitive to risk
9. Participation is accountable

## **European Association “World-Our Home” activities with children and young people:**

1. Each child and young person should be formally registered when they participate in EA “World-Our Home” activities, projects and programmes. The information includes an information/consent form which their parent/guardian must complete. These forms have vital information about health and emergency contacts and should be kept securely and brought to each session.
2. Attendance register: a register should be kept for each session.

### **Child Protection Representative**

European Association “World-Our Home” has appointed a child protection representative, who is EA “World-Our Home” project coordinator Dace Dekšne. If any worker has any child safety concerns, they should discuss them with her. She will take on the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the policy is being put into practice;
- Being the first point of contact for child protection issues;
- Keeping a record of any concerns expressed about child protection issues;
- Bringing any child protection concerns to the notice of the Management Committee and contacting the Local Authority if appropriate;
- Ensuring that paid staff and volunteers are given appropriate supervision;
- Ensuring that everyone involved with the organisation is aware of the identity of the Child Protection Representative.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is meeting its aims.

## **Trips/Outings**

1. When organising a trip/outing make sure a trip/outing slip is completed. This includes details about the trip and a section for parents to give their consent. These slips must be returned before the event takes place and must be brought on the trip with the completed group information/consent forms. (If a group information/consent form has not already been completed for a child or young person, then it will need to be completed).
2. Ensure that there is adequate insurance for the work and activities.

## **Personal/Personnel Safety**

- A group of children or young people under sixteen should not be left unattended at any time.
- Avoid being alone with an individual child or young person for a long time. If there is a need to be alone with a child or young person (e.g. first aid or he/she is distressed) make sure that another worker knows where you are and why.
- At no time should a volunteer or worker from any external organisation arrange to meet a young person away from the activity without someone else being there.
- As such meetings should be planned and have the approval of a member of the organisation (this must be someone other than the organiser themselves).
- Teenage assistants should always be supervised.

## **Child Safety**

1. Make sure that the area you are using for activities is fit for the purpose, e.g. remove furniture, which could cause injury in energetic games.
2. Make sure that all workers and assistants know
  - Where the emergency phone is and how to operate it
  - Where the first aid kit is
  - Who is responsible for First Aid and how to record accidents or injuries in the incident book
  - What to do in the event of a fire or other emergency
3. Once a year there should be a fire practice.
4. Do not let children go home without an adult unless the parent has specifically said they may do so. Never let a child go with another adult unless the parent has informed you that this will happen.
5. If private cars are used for an outing, the drivers must be approved by the organisation, be properly insured, have rested before driving, and should have clean licenses. There should always be at least one other responsible person (16 or over) in each vehicle. All vehicles should be fitted with full seat belts, not just lap belts. Full seat belts should always be used.

Under normal circumstances, workers should only give a lift home to a young person from group activities if the parents of the young person have specifically asked for them to do so. (If workers are asked to give a young person or child a lift home, they are not obliged to do so, it is left to their discretion).

In the case of trips or outings, it should be made clear if workers' cars will be used and where the children or young people will be returned to.

## **New Workers**

Workers and assistants are by far the most valuable resource the group has for working with young people. When recruiting and selecting paid workers and volunteers the following steps will be taken:

- Completion of an application form;
- An interview by three people from the organisation, who will take the final decision;
- Identifying reasons for gaps in employment, and other inconsistencies in the application;
- Checking of the applicants' identity (passport, driving license, etc);

- Taking up references prior to the person starting work;
- Ensuring criminal record checks have been carried out through relevant local agencies approved by the Criminal Records Bureau;
- Taking appropriate advice before employing someone with a criminal record;
- Allowing no unaccompanied access to children until all of the above have been completed;
- A probationary period of 3 months for new paid workers and volunteers;
- On-going supervision of paid workers and volunteers;
- Ensuring good practice is followed in working with children and young people by providing appropriate training and guidance.

## **Training**

It is a great benefit if workers undertake regular training for this type of work. The management board should keep workers informed of relevant courses.

## **What is child protection?**

**Child protection is the response to the different ways in which a young person's or child's physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health are damaged by the actions of another person.**

## **What is child abuse and exploitation?**

According to the World Health Organisation, "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power'.

Our understanding of child abuse and exploitation includes, but it not limited to:

- **Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child who they are looking after. This is commonly described using terms such as 'fictitious illness by proxy' or 'Munchausen's syndrome by proxy'.
- **Emotional abuse** is defined as the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed in children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.



- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g., rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **Neglect** is defined as the persistent failure to meet the child's basic physical and/ or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's physical or cognitive development.
- **Bullying** may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).
- **Sexual abuse of children** can also be defined as contacts or interactions between a child and an older or more knowledgeable child or adult (a stranger, sibling or person in a position of authority, such as a parent or caretaker) when the child is being used as an object of gratification for an older child's or adult's sexual needs. These contacts or interactions are carried out against the child using force, trickery, bribes, threats or pressure. Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional.
- **Commercial sexual exploitation of children** comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery.
- **Child pornography** means any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes. This can include photographs, negatives, slides, magazines, books, drawings, movies, videotapes and computer disks or files. Generally speaking there are two categories of pornography: soft-core which is not sexually explicit but involves naked and seductive images of children and hard core which relates to images of children engaged in sexual activity and use of children in the production of pornography is sexual exploitation.
  - **Violence** was defined by the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence as 'physical, psychological (psychosocial), and sexual violence to children through abuse, neglect or exploitation, as acts of commission or omission in direct or indirect forms, that endanger or harm the child's dignity, physical, psychological, or social status, or development.'
  - **Commercial exploitation** means exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

A child who is being abused may experience more than one type of cruelty. Discrimination, harassment, and bullying are also abusive and can harm a child, physically and emotionally.

The need for a child protection policy 'All organisations and professionals working or in

contact with children are obliged to ensure their operations are ‘child safe’ and therefore need to have a Child Protection Policy’.

EA “World-Our Home” needs a child protection policy because:

- Organisation staff are protected: All children have a right to freedom from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation, based on the UNCRC. It is therefore the responsibility of EA “World-Our Home” to ensure that all its activities, policies, projects and programmes are ‘child safe’. This means that staff do not represent a risk to children and that programmes, policies and practices can be designed and developed in ways that promote the protection of children.
- Children are protected: Some children are in particular vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and ill-treatment at the hands of carers, project workers, and those with access to their personal information. Many children growing up in vulnerable circumstances have already experienced ruptured relationships of trust or abuse of an adult-child relationship in the form of physical, psychological or sexual abuse.
- The organisation and its reputation is protected: Organisations working with vulnerable children have been, are and will continue to be vulnerable to abuse until the issues are brought into the open. Organisations without protection policies, guidelines and systems are more vulnerable to false or malicious accusations of abuse.
- Without a proper child protection policy and child protection standards in place, allegations of abuse, whether founded or unfounded, can destroy an organisation’s reputation. This will have serious implications for fundraising as well as damaging the reputation of the children’s rights NGO sector as a whole.

You can see the table of recognition of signs of abuse in the Annex 1.

### **Visits by Photographers, Films Crews, Journalists and Others**

Special care must be taken when organizing visits for external photographers, filming crews, journalists or visitors within the scope of EA “World-Our Home” projects, activities and publications:

- Journalists, photographers/film crews must be fully briefed about EA “World-Our Home”’s child protection policy before they meet the children, who will be interviewed, photographed or filmed. They sign their commitment to adhere to this policy.
- Make sure that photographers and filmmakers are not allowed to spend time with or have access to children without supervision. They have to be accompanied by EA “World-Our Home” staff at all times.
- Children, parents and guardians must be informed about how the film, photograph or story will be used and consent for this obtained. This is distinct to the consent they have given for use of materials by EA “World-Our Home” or the national/local organisation they are involved in.
- Copies of images, film and story should be sent to the (member) organisation to be passed on to the children.

→ In order to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the children, EA “World-Our Home” must be notified as to how the photographer or film maker intends to use the images or stories. EA “World-Our Home” reserves the right to refuse use if it is felt that, in doing so we are not acting in accordance with our child protection policy and our media and communication principles.

→ If an image or any material is to be used by another organisation, it must be credited to EA “World-Our Home” /Photographer’s Name © with an appropriate caption.

### **What you should do**

1. Listen to the child/young person
2. Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone
3. Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone
4. Take whatever is said to you seriously and help the child/young person to trust his/her own feelings. Take notes of exactly what is said to you avoiding assumptions and conjecture.
5. It is not the role of the worker to investigate any allegations (this would contaminate evidence if a situation went to court). Any disclosure by a child/young person must be reported to the named child protection officer.
6. Speak immediately to the Local Authority for further advice and guidance.

### **What you should *not* do**

1. Engage in any form of sexual activity with children.
2. Avoid any action or behavior that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, never behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner.
3. Never have a child stay overnight in the adult’s room or sleep in the same bed (unless prior consent is provided by both the child and his/her parent/guardian).
4. Do not perform activities for children that they can do themselves, including dressing, bathing and grooming.
5. Do not discriminate, shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children. This includes anything that may be considered emotional abuse (e.g. use language that will mentally or emotionally abuse a child or tell a story/show pictures that will mentally or

- emotionally abuse a child).
6. Do not hit or otherwise physically assault participants.
  7. Do not act in any way that may be abusive or place others at risk of abuse.
  8. Do not condone violations of this code by others – staff, interns, consultants, etc.
  9. Do not be alone with a child in any circumstances that might be questioned by others
  10. Do not allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.
  11. Do not kiss, hug, fondle, rub, or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way (e.g. do not initiate physical contact, such as holding hands, unless initiated by the child)
  12. Do not suggest inappropriate behavior or relations of any kind or encourage any crushes by a child.
  13. Do not take photos, film or request personal information if not required for EA “World-Our Home” activities.
  14. Do not use inappropriately contact details (including social media accounts) from children out of EA “World-Our Home” programmes.

### **Things to say or do:**

- ‘What you are telling me is very important’
- This is not your fault’
- ‘I am sorry that this has happened/is happening’
- ‘You were right to tell someone’
- What you are telling me should not be happening to you and I will find out the best way to help you’
- Make notes soon after the event. Try to write down exactly what the young person or child said. Avoid assumptions or conjecture.

### **Things *not* to say or do:**

- Do not ask leading questions – Why? How? What?
- Do not say ‘Are you sure?’
- Do not show your own emotions e.g. shock/disbelief
- Do not make false promises

### **How to Make a Report**

All staff and volunteers in EA “World-Our Home” must follow the procedures when they have a concern that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused, harmed or neglected.

- When a staff member or volunteer has a child protection or welfare concern they will speak to the responsible person for child protection in the organisation without delay.
- If the responsible person is unsure if a child protection concern meets the reasonable grounds for concern or responsible person detects the violation, she will contact

Rezekne Social Department for advice and guidance using the informal consultation process or report to Latvian State Inspectorate for Protection of Children`s Rights of Republic of Latvia or call to free hot-line 116111.

- Under no circumstances will a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk pending intervention from EA “World-Our Home”.

### **How to Handle a Report of Abuse by a Child / Young Person**

In the event of a child / young person disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that this is dealt with sensitively and professionally by the employee / volunteer involved. In such circumstances, the employee / volunteer will:

- React calmly;
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously;
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you;
- Do NOT promise to keep anything secret;
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions, this is not an interview, but rather receiving a disclosure from a child;
- Check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood;
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser;
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Sign and date the record;
- Ensure that the child/young person understands the procedures which will follow;
- Pass the information to the responsible person do not attempt to deal with the problem alone;
- Treat the information confidentially.

This policy was adopted by the European Association “World-Our Home” on 01.03.2023.

Signed on behalf of the Management Committee by:

Signature and stamp:

Name in Capitals: NATALIJA COVVO



## ANNEX 1: Recognizing Signs of Abuse

Recognizing indications of potential abuse is complex, and there is no simple checklist which allows easy recognition. There are potential warning signs that you can be alert to, but they should be assessed with care. It should not be automatically assumed that abuse is occurring. Equally, however, it is important not to dismiss your concerns or ignore any signs of abuse – these should be discussed with the organisation as soon as possible to help to decide the most appropriate course of action.

<p><b>Possible signs of physical abuse:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts</li> <li>• Improbable excuses given to explain injuries</li> <li>• Refusal to discuss injuries</li> <li>• Withdrawal from physical contact</li> <li>• Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather</li> <li>• Unwillingness to participate in physical activities that may involve undressing, e.g. sports</li> <li>• Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted</li> <li>• Showing wariness or distrust of adults</li> <li>• Self-destructive tendencies</li> <li>• Being aggressive towards others</li> <li>• Being very passive and compliant</li> <li>• Chronic running away</li> </ul>	<p><b>Possible signs of neglect:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent hunger</li> <li>• Taking scraps of food from bins or plates, or stealing food</li> <li>• Poor personal hygiene</li> <li>• Constant tiredness</li> <li>• Inappropriate clothing, e.g. summer clothes in winter</li> <li>• Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school</li> <li>• Untreated medical problems</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Poor social relationships</li> <li>• Compulsive stealing</li> <li>• Drug or alcohol abuse</li> </ul>
<p><b>Possible signs of emotional abuse:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical, cognitive or emotional development is delayed</li> <li>• Highly anxious</li> <li>• Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder</li> </ul>	<p><b>Possible signs of sexual abuse:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate sexualised behaviour or highly sexualised language</li> <li>• Bed wetting or soiling</li> <li>• Anal or genital soreness</li> <li>• Sleep problems</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of new situations</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Inappropriate emotional responses to situations</li> <li>• Extreme passivity or aggression</li> <li>• Drug or alcohol abuse</li> <li>• Chronic running away</li> <li>• Compulsive stealing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of being with adults</li> <li>• Promiscuity</li> <li>• Extreme risk taking in adolescents</li> </ul>
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**Possible signs of concern regarding adult behaviour:**

- A person in whose presence the behavior of a child significantly changes such as becoming withdrawn, fearful, distressed or agitated
- Asking a child to lie or keep secrets
- Breaches of the organisation's Code of Conduct/behaviour protocols
- Initiating private contact with a child, in person or by e-mail or phone