



# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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## 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 Eurochild this Child Protection Policy has been developed.

### 1. Introduction

Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to promote the rights and well-being of children and young people.

Eurochild's **vision** is of a society where children and young people grow up happy, healthy and confident and respected as individuals in their own right.

Eurochild's **mission** is to promote the rights and well-being of children in policy and practice through advocacy, membership exchange and research.

Eurochild's work is underpinned by 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.

We would like to acknowledge the following organisations as we have drawn material from their Child Protection Policies: CATS – Children as Actors for Transforming Society and Child to Child. The Keeping Children Safe Coalition has provided guidance for Eurochild's developing child protection standards and how to implement these.

#### 1.1 Eurochild's core child protection principles and 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 Eurochild 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**

Eurochild 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**

Eurochild 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 paedophiles, who seek to abuse children without being brought into the open. Eurochild 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**

Eurochild works with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. Eurochild believes that children’s participation promotes children’s participation and children’s protection promotes children’s participation. *“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”*<sup>1</sup>. Eurochild 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. Eurochild aims to empower children by making them aware about their rights and creating a safe environment in which they can exercise their rights.

Eurochild 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

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<sup>1</sup> Quote by Gerison Lansdown, Co-chair of the Eurochild Participation Reference Group.

- **Implementation and accountability**

This Child Protection Policy is developed to ensure the highest standards of professional behaviour and personal practice to ensure no harm occurs in any situation to children and adolescents during their involvement in Eurochild activities, projects and programmes. It therefore includes measures regarding recruitment procedures, review of management structures, creation of space for children to speak out, staff training, and development of transparent protocols. The included standards are a tool servicing the promotion of the welfare of children in Eurochild activities, projects and programmes.

The Child Protection Policy is supported by clear guidelines on how it needs to be implemented by organisations participating and supporting children in Eurochild activities, projects and programmes.

Special procedures and checklists are part of the Child Protection Policy, including reporting procedures and actions following behaviour, which is not in compliance with the child protection standards.

**These principles underpin all of the following standards set out in this document.**

## **1.2 Definitions**

- **Child**

A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

- **Child Protection**

Child protection is a broad term to describe philosophies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies to Eurochild's duty to make sure that its staff, operations and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children's safety within the activities and programmes in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities.

- **Direct contact with children**

Being in the physical presence of a child/children in the context of Eurochild's work, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long-term. This could involve attending meetings and conferences at which children are present or working with child volunteers in the Eurochild office (N.B. these are examples).

- **Indirect contact with children**

- 1) Having access to information on children in the context of Eurochild's work, such as children's names, locations (addresses of individuals or projects), photographs and case studies.
- 2) Providing funding for organisations that work 'directly' with children. Although indirectly, this nonetheless has an impact on children, and therefore confers upon the donor organisation responsibility of child protection issues. (N.B. this list of examples is not exhaustive).

- **Member**

For the purpose of this policy, a member is a full or associate member organisation or an individual member of Eurochild.

- **Policy**

'A statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organisation is taking its duty and responsibility of care seriously.'<sup>2</sup>

### 1.3 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'.<sup>3</sup>

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

- **Physical abuse**<sup>4</sup> 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**<sup>5</sup> 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**<sup>6</sup> 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Setting the Standard: A common approach to Child Protection for international NGOs, Standard 1 (Policy).

<sup>3</sup> The WHO definition of Child Abuse as defined by the Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention WHO – 1999

<sup>4</sup> Source: Child protection fact sheet: The definitions and signs of child abuse. NSPCC, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Child protection fact sheet: The definitions and signs of child abuse. NSPCC, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Child protection fact sheet: The definitions and signs of child abuse. NSPCC, 2009.

- **Neglect**<sup>7</sup> 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**<sup>8</sup> 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**<sup>9</sup> 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**<sup>10</sup> 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**<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>
- **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.'<sup>13</sup>
- **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.

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<sup>7</sup> Source: Child protection fact sheet: The definitions and signs of child abuse. NSPCC, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Child protection fact sheet: The definitions and signs of child abuse. NSPCC, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Definitions of Child Sexual Exploitation and Related Terms. NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Questions and Answers about the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. ECPAT International, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. United Nations, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Child Protection Policies and Procedures. ECPAT International Secretariat, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Source: The UN Secretary General's Study on Violence, 2005.

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.

## 2. 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'<sup>14</sup>.*

Eurochild 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 Eurochild 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.

## 3. The scope of a child protection policy

Eurochild's child protection policy applies to:

- ❖ All staff; Management Board members; interns and volunteers
- ❖ All those acting on behalf of Eurochild, such as members, consultants or trainers
- ❖ All those adults accompanying children to events and activities organised by Eurochild
- ❖ All those who participate in Eurochild events and meetings involving children, including journalists, sponsors, donors, policy makers, etc.

All the individuals cited above will be expected to read Eurochild's Child Protection Policy and sign a commitment to adhere to its principles and procedures (see page 21)

*A child-friendly version will be developed in cooperation with children.*

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<sup>14</sup> Source: Keeping Children Safe: 'Child Safeguarding Standards and how to implement them'



### **3.1 Awareness**

For effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy, it needs to be understood accurately by all those that the policy applies to. Eurochild will ensure that all its staff, interns, volunteers, consultants, etc. are informed about this policy and act in accordance with all its provisions, and do no harm to children who may come into their contact within or outside their work.

The Child Protection Policy will be sent to all responsible adults after they have joined Eurochild.

The Senior Policy and Advocacy Coordinator on Child Rights and Child Participation will ensure that a copy of the Policy will be sent to all organisations that will organize meetings on behalf of Eurochild or will travel with children to events organized by Eurochild. These organisations will be asked to brief their staff working and traveling with the children to Eurochild events about this Policy, as well as to inform parents, carers and children on their right to be protected and the reporting mechanisms available. They will be asked to complete a local child protection mapping template.

### **3.2 Eurochild's child protection policy with respect to members and external partners**

Eurochild's Child Protection Policy should apply to all Eurochild member organisations and to external partners when they cooperate and participate with children in Eurochild events.

As of the 2017 General Assembly, new applicants for Eurochild membership will be asked to demonstrate the existence of their own child protection policy, which meets, or goes beyond, that of Eurochild. If no child protection policy is in place, they will be asked to sign up to Eurochild's child protection policy and demonstrate their commitment to develop their own child protection policies and procedures, which reflect the local context and legal framework.

Existing members will also be asked to send the Eurochild secretariat their own child protection policy and/or sign up to Eurochild's child protection policy.

In the event of persistent poor or one extreme practice or abuse within a particular member organisation, Eurochild may decide to terminate membership of this organisation. However, we will always aim to work alongside members to improve practice and address concerns in an open and constructive manner before considering a termination of membership.

Any external partner which cooperates with Eurochild in the organisation of events involving children will be asked to provide evidence of their own child protection policy, or to sign up to that of Eurochild.

### **3.3 Risk Assessments and Safe Programme Design**

Eurochild is committed to designing and delivering programmes that are safe for children. Risk assessments are therefore conducted when designing our projects and activities and safety strategies developed accordingly.

Risk mitigation strategies will be developed, which minimize the risks to children and will be incorporated into the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes, operations and activities which involve or impact upon children.

## 4. Eurochild's Child Protection Policy

This Policy is developed to ensure the highest standards of professional behavior and personal practice to ensure no harm occurs in any situation to children during their involvement in any Eurochild activities or projects.

### 4.1 Staff and Personnel

As a condition for working with Eurochild, all staff; Management Board members; interns and volunteers and all those acting on behalf of Eurochild, such as members, consultants or trainers are required to undergo the following:

1. Both acceptance and commitment to our Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct for working with children by signing a commitment to adhere to the Child Protection Policy principles and procedures.

This includes in the **recruitment and appointment process**:

- Staff, volunteers, interns and consultants are recruited to clear job or role descriptions that include a statement on the position or role's responsibilities to meet the requirements of Eurochild's child protection policy.
- All recruitment interviews should include a discussion on child safeguarding and protection, the candidate's understanding of this and Eurochild's commitment.
- Adherence to Eurochild's Child Protection Policy are part of Eurochild employment contracts and service agreements.

2. Signing a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including spent convictions. Eurochild job application forms include a question asking for consent to gain information on a person's past convictions/pending disciplinary proceedings.

For those working directly with children, are added:

3. Satisfactory clearance through a police check conducted by the responsible authorities of the country of origin/birth. For Eurochild staff in Belgium an extract from the criminal record listing your convictions should be requested from the municipality or the local police of the municipality where they are registered. Model 2 is specifically designed for staff working with children and young people. The extract needs to provide clearance for having no convictions for working with children.
4. Providing the name and contact information of two character references they have known for no less than two years, excluding family members, who have knowledge of the candidate's experience and suitability to work children. The identity of the referees will be verified.
5. Eurochild staff is empowered to call out behaviours of members, which are not in compliance with Eurochild's child protection policy.

## **4.2 Training and Education**

Education and training are essential to implement the Child Protection Policy. This includes:

1. At the beginning of the induction period (within 3 weeks of taking up the position) of staff/volunteers/interns/MB members they will receive an introduction to Eurochild's Child Protection Policy and procedures from the Child Protection Focal person. This will include training on behavior guidelines for those in direct contact with children, and guidance on the acceptable and unacceptable sharing of information on children. Training will also allow staff to be able to identify sources of support for children and their families.
2. Child Safeguarding Training will be given to all staff, volunteers and interns, appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

## **4.3 Behaviour protocols**

Any staff, employee, volunteer, intern, management board member, consultant or adviser who has direct contact with children in his/her work will be fully informed of Eurochild's Code of Conduct (attached).

## **4.4 Management**

A Child Protection Focal person (CPF) will be appointed who will be responsible for:

- Promoting awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy throughout the organisation.
- Monitoring implementation of the Policy and reporting on developments at Team meetings and for the Management Board.
- The development of child protection training resources are required.
- Maintaining knowledge of best practices and statutory requirements.
- Acting as a source of support and information for staff on safeguarding issues.

The name and contact details of the CPF will clearly be displayed in the Eurochild office and new staff will be made aware of the role.

The disclosure of personal information about children, including legal cases, will be limited to those employees, interns, volunteers, MB members who need to know. The Management Board will have the overall responsibility to oversee and ensure the Policy's implementation.

Specific procedures and checklists are part of the Child Protection Policy and are referred to in chapters 6 and 7, which are dealing with the implementation strategy for the Child Protection Policy, including reporting procedures and monitoring and evaluation processes. Safeguarding will be included within the development of projects by Eurochild.

## **5. Eurochild's Child Protection Code of Conduct**

Eurochild is committed to protecting children from abuse and exploitation. It will take all necessary actions to prevent and/or respond to children in such situations. Eurochild will respond to all reports of actual or alleged abuses based on its Child Protection Policy, irrespective of the nature of the referral, who the allegations are about or who the referrer is or where she/he is from.

This Code of Conduct includes guidance on ethical and proper standards of behavior of adults towards children, and also of children towards other children. It has been developed with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration and should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense. Eurochild aims for everyone, children and adults, to participate in a safe and happy way in Eurochild's work and activities.

- Be aware what constitutes child abuse and exploitation (included in the Child Protection Policy) and understand its provisions.
- Know signs of abuse and reporting any suspicious observations immediately to the Child Protection Focal Person.
- Ensure that you know who the Child Protection Focal Person at Eurochild is.
- Respect lines of authority and reporting procedures.
- Respect the basic rights of others by facing fairly, honestly, and tactfully, and by treating people with dignity and respect.
- Treat all children equally: be inclusive and involve all children without discrimination.
- Work actively to ensure the highest levels of respect towards each other.
- Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct both personally and in others.
- Protect the health, safety and well-being of yourself and others.
- Be aware of high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children and possibilities of discrimination against minors)
- Be aware of potential for peer abuse (e.g. bullying of children)
- Be concerned about the way in which your language, actions, and relationships with children could be perceived.
- Develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children from peer and adult abuse.
- Provide an enabling environment for children's personal, physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development.
- Encourage and respect children's voices and views.
- Limit access to and/or not expose children to any inappropriate electronic material.
- At all times respect the confidentiality of children's personal information.
- Obtain written consent from the child and parent/carer when photographing, filming or requesting personal information for activities (*see section 7*).
- Ensure that there is a minimum of two staff members present in meetings with children (to allow one to go out to deal with any immediate needs of children).
- Ensure that when children with disabilities participate that all buildings are fully accessible for them.
- Precise information on specific equipment used by the disabled child needs to be obtained prior to the event to ensure its accessibility to all buildings and meeting spaces.
- Accompanying adults should not be younger than 21 years old, unless in exceptional circumstances and agreed in advance.
- When participants are invited to stay overnight, room sharing arrangements are agreed in advance and with consent of the parents/guardians and children.

## DON'T:

- Engage in any form of sexual activity with children.
- 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.
- 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).
- Do not perform activities for children that they can do themselves, including dressing, bathing and grooming.
- 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).
- Do not hit or otherwise physically assault participants.
- Do not act in any way that may be abusive or place others at risk of abuse.
- Do not condone violations of this code by others – staff, interns, consultants, etc.
- Do not be alone with a child in any circumstances that might be questioned by others
- Do not allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.
- 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)
- Do not suggest inappropriate behavior or relations of any kind or encourage any crushes by a child.
- Do not take photos, film or request personal information if not required for Eurochild's activities.
- Do not use inappropriately contact details (including social media accounts) from children out of Eurochild's programmes.

Report any suspicious observations or alleged abuse as well as any circumstances or situations, which may be subject to misinterpretation to the Child Protection Focal Person.

Sections 6.1 and 6.2 describe the consequences for breaching the code of conduct or the child protection policy.

### 6.1 Implementation strategy: Reporting Procedures

All staff, volunteers and interns should be alert to signs that may suggest a child is in need of help (see annex 1). Deciding whether to report can be a very difficult responsibility. The reporting procedure is made widely available to ensure that everyone is clear what steps to take regarding the safety of children and other witnesses.

All witnessed, suspected or alleged violations of Eurochild's Child Protection Policy will be immediately reported to the Child Protection Focal Person (CPF) – using the safeguarding reporting form (annex 2). The **guiding principle** here is that the safety of the child is always the most important consideration. These records will be stored securely with access limited to the CPF or the Secretary-General; a report must be made to the nominated Management Board member. The MB has nominated its board member Sean O'Neill on 22 October 2019.

At meetings and activities where children are directly involved, children will be informed about Eurochild’s safeguarding policy, code of conduct, the existence of the child protection focal person and complaints mechanism in a child-friendly manner.

The first stage is to decide whether the concerns are internal to the organisation or relate to an external situation.

*When a child protection/safeguarding concern is brought to your attention – ACT*

*Act on your concerns. If in doubt, speak out.*

*Child-centred. The protection of children is the most important consideration.*

*Time counts. Ensure timely, effective, confidential and appropriate responses to child safeguarding issues.<sup>15</sup>*

**If the concern is internal** – regarding the behavior of staff, volunteers, interns, MB member or members, you have to consider whether you need to report to the local/national authorities. If not, the internal safeguarding procedure needs to be applied. If yes, you have to report to the designated authorities and follow-up on action taken by the authorities and decide on further response, record case and action taken.

**If the concern is external** - meaning that there is concern regarding abuse outside the organisation, you have to consider whether the concern is due to the way the organisation is delivering business and then decide whether this needs reporting to local or national authorities. After this the same procedure as for internal concerns is applied.

The CPF will act on the concerns or allegations in a confidential manner in accordance with the standardized process developed by Eurochild in the best interests of the child, irrespective of the nature of the referral, who the allegations are about or who the referrer is or where she/he is from. The CPF will take appropriate action to protect the child/children in question from further harm and during and following an incident or allegation. An assessment of the specific kind of support and assistance that is needed by the child(ren) affected by the incident will be immediately be offered. This may also involve arranging a medical assessment. The relevant contact details for child protection services, local services department, policy, emergency medial help and help lines will also be readily available and easily accessible (see annex 4 with [key contacts information](#)). The CPF will be responsible to contact the child’s family (or guardian) and inform them of the incident and assistance provided. A safeguarding [report](#) (annex 2) must be compiled to document details of the incident. The “best interests of the child” must be considered throughout the process.

An assessment of the specific kind of support and assistance that is needed by the children affected by the incident will be offered.

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<sup>15</sup> Source: Plan International, Child Protection Policy *Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Issues in Plan*

## **6.2 Implementation strategy: The internal safeguarding procedure**

Eurochild will immediately suspend any employee, volunteer, intern, board member, consultant, adviser who is alleged to have violated the Child Protection Policy, pending the outcome of the investigation. Eurochild reserves the right to take any disciplinary action against any of the above who have been proven guilty in an investigation, which may include reporting the incident to the police.

The investigation completed by the Secretary General will be submitted to the Nominated Management Board member who will come to a decision about action to be taken. Decisions from any investigation will be confirmed in writing to the individual concerned.

Acts of a criminal nature will be referred to the police and/or Children's Welfare Services in Belgium and may result in a criminal investigation and conviction.

When investigating concerns or complaints, the process should be always be fair and, where complaints are upheld, the individual will have the right to appeal the decision. In such instances, the individual must write to the President of Eurochild within one week of receiving written confirmation of the complaint outcome, explaining the grounds for appeal. The President of Eurochild will consider the appeal, which will include re-examining the evidence and reports and may include talking directly to staff and others involved. Eurochild's President will come to a final decision, which will be confirmed in writing. The decision from the appeals process is final.

In cases where staff from Eurochild members or accompanying adults with children are alleged to have violated Eurochild's Child Protection Policy in meetings and activities organised by Eurochild, this needs to be reported to the Eurochild CPF. The Eurochild CPF will investigate the complaint(s) or concerns confidentially and discreetly and report this to the Secretary General. Where possible Eurochild's CPF together with Eurochild's Secretary General will discuss the concerns with the responsible person and/or his/her organisation in order to change the behavior or acts of the concerned person/organisation. In case the person or organisation is not able or willing to change its behavior according to the standards of Eurochild's Child Protection Policy, the Secretary General will report this to the MB, which may decide to suspend further cooperation with this member organisation when directly involving children or suspend membership. The member organisation has the right to appeal to the MB's decision. In such instances, the organisation must write to the President of Eurochild within a week of receiving the written confirmation of the complaint outcome, explaining the grounds of appeal. The President of Eurochild will consider the appeal, which will include re-examining the evidence and reports and may include talking directly to staff and others involved. Eurochild's President will come to a final decision, which will be confirmed in writing. The decision from the appeals process is final.

In cases of acts of a criminal nature committed by Eurochild member organisations in relation to activities organised by Eurochild this will be referred to the police.

## **7. Communication and Media Guidelines**

The chapter of the Child Protection Policy sets out the principles Eurochild employs when communicating externally about our work and the work of our members. It contains general principles for ensuring children are kept safe at all times, as well as specific guidelines which must be followed by Eurochild staff as well as photographers, film crews and journalists visiting

Eurochild events and activities. Different countries may have specific laws, protocols or cultural norms, which should be understood and adhered to as appropriate. All child protection measures in the Child Protection Policy are equally applicable in media and communication activities by Eurochild, including the use of social media.

In order to make sure that all children are protected in all situations it is important to obtain written consent of the parent/carer or legal guardian of children that clearly states if they agree that photos or statements of children can be publicly used or not. (*Annex 3 includes a specific media consent form*).

## 7.1. Principles

The rights and dignity of the child must be respected at all times and the best interests of the child maintained as the paramount concern of our communications. Eurochild will never use discriminatory or degrading language. This section is providing guidelines on the use of images, films and stories of children for media and communication purposes to ensure data protection and to protect children themselves. Abusers have sometimes targeted children whose pictures they have seen in media and communication material.

In Eurochild communications about children, the following principles will apply:

**Dignity:** The child's dignity must be preserved at all times. Languages must not degrade, victimize or shame the child. In images, children should always be dressed appropriately and should never be depicted in any poses that could be interpreted as sexually provocative.

**Accuracy:** The portrayal of children must not be manipulated or sensationalized in any way. Images and stories should provide a balanced depiction of the child's life and circumstances, balancing negatives with empowering images or showing the progress that children are making. Communications should avoid making generalisations, which do not accurately reflect the nature of the situation and pictures should not be taken and used out of context.

**Privacy:** Any information that could be used to identify a child or put them at risk will not be used. Eurochild will ensure that:

- Only use first names of children: be careful not to reveal details about the place where they live, their school and other information that would lead to their place of residence. If needed for child safeguarding, the names of children will be changed.
- Information about a child/children's life and photographs of children (including information stored on the computer) will be kept in secure files. Access to these should be limited to those that need to use them during the course of their work.
- The recorded images should focus on an activity and, where possible, feature groups of children rather than individuals.
  
- Eurochild is committed to represent a broad range of children – boys and girls, of various ages, abilities and ethnic groups in its publications, videos. Eurochild will ensure diversity of children to be presented in its communication material, reflecting the countries in which Eurochild works.

**Complaints procedure:** Any complaints or concerns about inappropriate or intrusive images should be reported and recorded like any other child protection concern (*see chapter 6*).



## 7.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent must always be sought before taking any photos, videos, or requesting personal information about children's lives that may then be used in Eurochild materials. Informed consent means that children are told how Eurochild may use the information or image/film and that they are under no obligation to agree to its use. They should also be reassured that locations and other identifying information that might to the location of residence of children will be changed. They will need to be asked whether they give consent that their first name is shared with the information or image/film.

Consent must be obtained by completing and signing the media consent form (included in the consent forms in annex 3). Consent is also required from the child's parent/carer or guardian, who must countersign the form or, where this is not possible, from the organisation working with them. The organisations working with the children should lead on asking for consent of children and families, as they may feel more comfortable to refuse consent when asked by someone they already know and trust.

The media consent forms and other consent forms will be kept on the child's file by Eurochild.

Obtaining prior written consent, does not mean that there is no requirement to obtain verbal consent at the time of taking photographs/video/interviews.

## 7.3 Interviewing Children

Interviewing children requires skills and certain basic principles should be followed to ensure their dignity and their rights are respected.

- **Informed Consent:** In relation to interviews, informed consent includes explaining what subjects are likely to be covered in the interview and clarifying the child's right to withdraw their consent at any point. The interviewer should review the child's understanding of consent at the start of the interview.
- **Provision of support:** There should be someone else present during the interview, who the child is familiar with. Wherever possible, the child should be given a choice regarding who supports him/her during the interview.
- **Respecting the right to say No:** Be clear before you start the interview that the child only has to talk if they are comfortable doing so, and they can stop and withdraw their consent at any point.
- **Gender:** Consider the different needs of boys and girls and whether they would be more comfortable to talk to a man or a woman. Gender must be considered when deciding what topics may be discussed.
- **Respecting the right to information:** If you are going to take notes, or record the interview in another way, you must explain this to the child and verbally ask their permission to do so.

## 7.4 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 Eurochild projects, activities and publications:

- Journalists, photographers/film crews must be fully briefed about Eurochild'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 Eurochild 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 Eurochild 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, Eurochild must be notified as to how the photographer or film maker intends to use the images or stories. Eurochild 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 Eurochild/Photographer's Name © with an appropriate caption.

## **8. Accountability: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Child Protection Policy**

The aim of monitoring and evaluating the Child Protection Policy is to learn from practical case experiences, which will contribute to inform policy reviews and changes to the Child Protection Policy.

Eurochild will regularly monitor the implementation of its Child Protection Policy and procedures. Progress, performance and lessons learned are reported by the Child Protection Focal Person to the Management Board annually and included in Eurochild's annual reports. Monitoring and evaluation will be done by checking whether the standards from the Child Protection Policy are implemented and whether safeguards are working. This will be done by carrying out a survey among Eurochild staff, interns and volunteers on how the standards from the Child Protection Policy are being met, how effective they are and what needs improving.

Next to the overall monitoring and evaluation of the Child Protection Policy, reactive monitoring will take place, after incidences have occurred, which will contribute to a learning process for Eurochild and if necessary changes to the Child Protection Policy or reporting procedures.

Every year an internal review of the policy will be carried out and its results will be approved by the Management Board. In addition, an external evaluator will review the policy and practices. This will be done by Keeping Children Safe, of which Eurochild has become associate member. Eurochild aims to receive the Keeping Children Safe certification. This includes a Safeguarding Children Self-Audit, resulting in a base line assessment of Eurochild's child protection and safeguarding measures.

The second stage in this certification process provides external verification that the child safeguarding measures that have been examined in Eurochild are effective.

## 9. Statement of Commitment to Eurochild Child Protection Policy

I, Ina Van Looy, have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Protection Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing and promoting the child protection policies, procedures and practices contained within this document while working or associated with Eurochild.

I further understand that adherence to Eurochild's Child Protection Policy will involve the following: undergoing a check for criminal convictions related to working with children; signing a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent'; declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against me with respect to child protection issues; and providing two character references.

Ina Van Looy (Name)  
CEC's CLT director (Job title/role)  
Ina Van Looy (Signature)  
5.6.24 (Date)