



EPLO
European Public Law
Organization

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Child Protection Policy

Date: 04 September 2023

The EPLO is committed to provide and maintain a caring learning environment which promotes its core values, and prevents and addresses child abuse and exploitation.

The EPLO strongly condemns all forms of child abuse and exploitation and always respond to any case of proven, alleged or attempted abuse within its field of function and influence according to its nature.

Efforts ensure that mechanisms are in place to raise awareness, aid prevention, encourage reporting and ease response. They range from human resource development actions such as training and counselling to legal actions where needed.

EPLO Child Protection Policy is based on:

1. our vision, mission and values
2. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
3. Experience and input of stakeholders from various partnerships as great value is placed upon their views
4. The guidelines of the [Hellenic Data Protection Authority](#) as far as it concerns child protection
5. The International Child Safeguarding Standards of Keeping Children Safe.

EPLO works in accordance with the UNCRC: The best interest of the child is our primary consideration. Every child has the right to develop to his or her full potential, to quality education, participation and non-discrimination. Everybody has the responsibility to protect children from all forms of abuse, abandonment, exploitation, violence and discrimination.

The key parts of EPLO Child Protection Policy include:

1. Awareness: Raise awareness of child abuse and its risks
2. Prevention: Provide guidance on how to safeguard children from abuse
3. Reporting: Set up and adhere to a clear and simple reporting procedure
4. Responding: Ensure clear action is taken when child abuse is suspected or reported

This policy document is binding for all employees of EPLO. Based on this policy paper, each co-worker and partner shall define clear reporting and responding structures, as well as consistent crisis management plans to bring child protection to life in its field and region.

Every child is potentially at risk of abuse and exploitation. Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, due to various forms of discrimination and marginalization relating to their socio-economic status, gender, disability, ethnicity, caste, or living situation.

Therefore, it is crucial that every person connected with EPLO understands what constitutes child abuse, as well as his or her own role and responsibilities in protecting children.

Any definition of child abuse first requires a definition of the child. According to the UNCRC a child is “every human being below the age of 18 years unless national law recognizes the age of majority earlier”.

EPLO recognizes that child abuse and exploitation take place in all countries and societies around the world. Trying to define it as a world phenomenon is still difficult because of the vast cultural, religious, social, political, legal and economic differences that children experience.

EPLO respects all cultures and religions; within a broad intercultural and interdisciplinary approach we have attempted to create a unified frame. In order to prevent and respond to child abuse, it is crucial that we as an organization reach a common understanding as to what child abuse is and in which circumstances our policies and procedures apply.

Furthermore, EPLO is committed to broader awareness-raising, prevention and advocacy work within communities and national authorities to promote the protection of children’s rights.

The UNCRC provides an international framework outlining children’s rights to protection from abuse and neglect (article 19), discrimination (article 2) and different forms of exploitation (articles 32-36); special consideration is given to children deprived of parental care (article 20), refugee children (article 22), children at risk of developing a drug habit (article 33), children who are deprived of their liberty (article 37, 40), children in situations of armed conflict (article 38, 40).

EPLO further recognizes the importance of children’s participation, empowering girls and boys to speak up against all forms of abuse, acting as agents of self-protection and the protection of their peers.

Goals of the Child Protection Policy

This policy aims at:

- preventing cases of child abuse and reducing the number of incidents (child-to-child, adult-to-child) in audience of EPLO influence,

- making children aware of their rights and their active role in child protection,
- informing children, co-workers, board members, family, school and community members, volunteers and partners (sponsors, donors, journalists, governmental authorities, etc.) about the child protection policy and related procedures (awareness, prevention, reporting, responding)
- encouraging co-workers directly involved with children to apply the skills needed to contribute to each child's development and protection,
- ensuring that all co-workers have the working conditions needed to contribute to each child's development and protection,
- fostering open and honest discussions on child abuse in national meetings and workshops in all programmes and facilities amongst all stakeholders (children, young adults and their families, child and youth care co-workers, management staff, board members, PR and fundraising staff, teachers, maintenance and security staff, etc.)
- putting in place fair, secure and transparent reporting channels in all types of programmes that guarantee the right of stakeholders (children, parents, staff) to be heard,
- forming an active network of protection so that all children and adults in our sphere of influence are safe and protected. Within and across all co-workers and partners, we strive together for the protection of children.

EPLO Child Protection Code of Conduct

EPLO 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. EPLO 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. EPLO aims for everyone, children and adults, to participate in a safe and happy way in its work and activities.

DO:

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 EPLO Legal Officer. 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. 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. 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.

DON'T: 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 take photos, film or request personal information if not required for EPLO activities. Do not use inappropriately contact details (including social media accounts) from children out of EPLO programmes. Report any suspicious observations or alleged abuse as well as any circumstances or situations, which may be subject to misinterpretation to the EPLO Legal Officer.

The Child Protection Policy will be revised annually by the EPLO Legal Officer and updated accordingly.

All new employees of EPLO will be required to read and acknowledge the most up-to-date Child Protection Policy as a requirement of their employment. Yearly, a briefing for all employees on the Child Protection Policy will be required for all employees of EPLO, carried out by the Legal Officer. The EPLO Legal Officer is responsible for keeping up-to-date with current developments and legislation regarding child and youth protection.

The EPLO Legal Officer will report any incidents to EPLO Board of Directors in writing (no form necessary) immediately and with the highest priority upon gaining knowledge of the incident.

Complaints and accountability

All complaints regarding these guidelines or towards their non-compliance, as laid out within EPLO Child Protection Policy, should be addressed to the Legal Officer (kstamatekou@eplo.int) and will be responded to immediately and with the highest priority.

