

POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

(Child Protection Policy)

(Youth for Exchange and Understanding)

Introduction:

1. Youth for Exchange and Understanding International Belgium (YEU), through its Policy for the Protection of Childhood and Adolescence, wishes to express its position regarding the protection of all children and adolescents with which it comes into contact during its activities and projects.
2. This policy is based on practices that already exist within YEU and is an offshoot of its current Child Protection Policy, translated and adapted to the Italian regulatory, social and cultural context.
3. All that is not regulated in this document should be referred to the international policy.

All the provisions of this Policy are binding for:

1. YEU members, employees, trainees and volunteers, (as a result of the association and employment relationship and the obligations that this entails);
2. those who for various reasons have entered contractual relations with YEU based on a specific cultural clause (i.e.: Base members, project partner organisations, suppliers);
3. and anyone coming into contact with YEU projects involving minors (i.e. supporters visiting Child Sponsorship programmes, journalists attending projects etc) as a result of the appropriate information and awareness tools provided.

The Policy refers to the YEU activities and projects *that directly or indirectly involve minors* both in Belgium and abroad, and specifically:

- territorially based programmes and projects implemented directly or through partnerships;
- marketing and campaigning activities (for the use of image, stories and videos featuring children to promote our work for marketing campaigning purposes);
- visits to local project sites by staff, supporters, journalists or other subjects.

General principles:

YEU is committed to protecting and ensuring the well-being of children and adolescents in accordance with legally binding obligations set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the Charter) as well as YEU's already existing Child Protection Policy.

In brief, YEU considers absolute priorities:

- the interests and the safety of minors, as referred to in Article 2 of the UNCRC;
- equality and absence of discrimination, as referred to in Article 2 of the UNCRC;
- freedom of expression, as referred to in Article 12 of the UNCRC;
- respect for the opinions of minors on issues that concern them, as referred to in Article 12 of the UNCRC and Article 24 of the Charter; and

- the active participation of minors.

YEU does not tolerate any form of mistreatment, abuse or exploitation of children. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that YEU acts effectively to prevent and manage the abuse or exploitation of minors by any subject that has relations with YEU both at the international and national level. The policy concerns all activities that directly or indirectly involve minors.

The work carried out by YEU with minors guarantees the active participation of children in the implementation of projects developed while respecting the right to education (as per Article 28 of the UNCRC) and the right to rest and leisure (as per Article 31 of the UNCRC), and the sharing of the project's values and goals, without any discrimination whatsoever.

Roles and responsibilities:

Staff training and safeguarding the Child Protection Policy:

YEU is committed to educating staff and others on the Child Protection Policy. YEU will promote child safe practices which keep children safe in the organisation and in their own community, and provide information about child protection to the children and communities in which we work. This information will include reporting child abuse if they have concerns about a YEU staff members.

As part of its child protection training, YEU will:

- provide comprehensive written documents on YEU's Child Protection Policy to all new staff/partners;
- incorporate extensive information on the company's Child Protection Policy in the briefing procedures for new staff;
- provide child protection training for staff assigned in projects where they will work directly with children.

Staff responsibilities:

The responsibilities allocated to roles internal to YEU and to its project Partners and the YEU Bases are detailed below:

In many activities YEU staff (including head office staff) and its partners, interact with communities which include children that are at risk of being vulnerable and excluded.

This implies the possibility of becoming privy to sensitive data and information concerning minors, which at a later stage may be requested as elements of proof within activities concerning the protection of minors or investigative operations conducted by authorities.

Members of YEU staff (head office and bases) as well as project partners may learn about events that relate to the violation of rights, either currently or in the past, that concern a minor, or mistreatments, abuses or physical or mental violence involving minors.

In these instances, or if they find themselves in situations in which the context may lead to the suspicion of such conducts:

- The observations and concerns must be immediately reported back to one's internal contact person within YEU or to the YEU Line Manager and/or Compliance Manager who shall in turn report to the Secretary General.
- It is possible that one is required to write a detailed note on the circumstances or event that led to the knowledge or suspicion. This documentation, to be filed among YEU project documents, may be used as an element in order to protect a minor.
- If considered advisable, it is possible that the witnesses may be asked to report the event to the competent public authorities, in coordination with the Internal Contact Person or Project Manager (or one's own Line Manager) with the support of the competent internal management figures.
- All known information that is contrary to this Policy must be reported without delay to the internal contact person or to the Line Manager or the Compliance Manager.

Project Coordinator and Line Manager:

The project's internal contact person and staff line manager are required to:

- Guarantee the appropriate circulation and knowledge of this policy, assessing and promoting the necessary information to staff, partners and YEU Bases with the possible support of competent internal management figures.
- Ensure that the staff, the partners and the members of the YEU Bases are aware of how they should report suspect cases and are aware of their responsibilities on this front.
- Report to the competent authorities any facts that arouse suspicion or concern regarding possible violations of the rights of children, with the support of the internal legal department.
- Ensure that parents/legal guardians are informed in advance about the participation of children in activities organised by YEU for which the consent of both children and parents/legal guardians is required.
- Ensure, via the staff or the partners, that the consent of both children and parents/legal guardians regarding the participation of children in activities involving the collection of photographic or film images are obtained, and provide all the necessary information to enable them to understand the purpose of the activity and of the images and the footage collected.
- Programme and organise the activities and the environment so as to promote the health, welfare and psycho-physical development of minors.
- Act, as far as possible and in contexts where it is advisable, in such a way as to promote the reduction of environmental and social conditions that may involve risks.
- Promote as far as possible the involvement of the communities where minors reside, in order to enhance the understanding and participation of adults who can act as reference within projects involving minors.
- Reject all improper conduct by staff or partners, and ensure that any violation of the Policy is duly confronted by setting in motion the actions mentioned herein.

Secretary-General:

- Through the competent functions, the Secretary-General shall disseminate, raise awareness and train personnel on the issues concerning the protection of children including through the circulation of this document which is an integral part of the Association's Internal Regulations. In addition, he/she shall guarantee that all contractual relationships with subjects who work with children, with YEU or on behalf of YEU, are complete with an explicit reference to this policy. The

Secretary-General shall guarantee that the functions responsible for promoting our field work in Belgium and abroad formally inform the subjects involved (i.e.: journalists and supporters) of the need to comply with this policy. The Line Managers and Compliance Managers must oversee the correct application of this policy and report to the Secretary-General.

- Lastly, the Secretary-General shall ensure the application of the policy as well as provide reports to competent authorities in the event of abuse or exploitation of minors. The violation of this policy entails the application of appropriate disciplinary actions.

The Heads of Human Resources, Legal Affairs, Media Relations and Supporter relations:

- Human Resources: ensure that the staff directly involved in activities that involve the participation of minors heed and sign the Childhood and adolescence protection Policy acceptance document.
- Legal affairs: for all relations of a contractual nature, a draft Policy acceptance document (or a suitable contractual clause) shall be signed, establishing that in the event that the Policy is violated, YEU reserves the right to terminate the relative agreement and obtain reimbursement of damages, if relevant. The Project Manager / Project Contact person shall file the statement among the project documents.
- Media and Supporter relations: external staff (such as journalists, photographers, film crews and other subjects) involved in YEU activities must sign their commitment to adhere to the Child Protection Policy in place prior to being in contact with children. Furthermore, they shall not spend time alone with children without the supervision of at least one member of staff and a person with whom children are familiar with.

Concerning interviewing children, a series of measures shall be respected at all times:

- Only specialised staff shall be allowed to conduct interviews (or at the very least be present) to ensure that the children's rights are respected.
- In the event that an interview should be recorded or an additional person is present to take notes, children must give their verbal permission to do so (after having been given a clear explanation). Furthermore, written consent of the children as well as their parents/legal guardians regarding the above must be obtained prior to the interview.
- Children must be in the company of someone they are familiar with for support (and hold the right to choose who this person is).
- The children's understanding of consent (which can be withdrawn at any point) must be reviewed and clarified before the start of the interview.
- Children reserve the right not to answer any questions or end the interview.
- The gender of the interviewer shall be considered in order to take into account the needs of the children being interviewed.
- The nature of the topics discussed must also take into consideration the gender of the children being interviewed.

NOTE: YEU PARTNERS and STAFF must never act independently if they come to know about or suspect instances of abuse or exploitation. The protection of minors is a responsibility of the state and society. The decisions are taken collectively within the Association or by those who have the power to take specific decisions.

General guidelines regarding activities involving minors:

Safeguarding the implementation of the Child Protection Policy:

In order to safeguard the guidelines laid out above, YEU undertakes to raise the awareness of all those with whom it is in collaboration and to ensure their understanding of the principles and provisions of this policy, as well as of the whistleblowing and monitoring procedures in place. Awareness-raising will notably include:

Information for the above-mentioned persons on:

- The UNCRC (1989) and its optional protocols which constitute the frame of reference of our child protection policy.
- YEU's guidelines on the use of social networks by its employees which notably specify that prior consent must be obtained from children and their families for the use of any images and that this use must respect the dignity of the children concerned.

During the implementation of YEU's activities, evaluations of the risks covered by this policy will be conducted as required. A risk mitigation strategy including safeguarding measures has been developed and integrated into the implementation of activities involving or having an impact on children so that the risk for children is minimised and the commitment to "Do No Harm" is respected. YEU undertakes to include these safeguarding measures in its communication with its partners.

Generally speaking, it is inappropriate to:

- Leave children alone with one member of staff. Children must always be with a person they are familiar with, such as a parent/legal guardian, or with at least 2 members of staff, if prior parental consent has been given. Should this not be possible, activities must be postponed.
- Exploit children for economic purposes, or have them perform any type of work that might interfere with the children's education, or mental and physical wellbeing, as stated in Article 32 of the UNCRC.

Anyone working with children *must never*:

- Hit or in any way physically or psychologically mistreat children.
- Act in ways that may be considered, according to the law or local culture as well as according to the principles recalled in this Policy, as insulting or in violation of the same.
- Put a minor at risk of abuse or exploitation, or be privy to such actions and not act to prevent, stop or limit the risk and protect the minor.
- Exploit one's position in relation to the child by favouring economic exploitation.

With reference to this Policy and local customs and traditions, by way of example other actions or conduct are described that are considered inappropriate or offensive:

- Using language or making suggestions or providing advice that may appear disrespectful or insulting.
- Behave in a sexually ambiguous manner towards children.
- Allow or participate in unlawful or unsafe conduct for children.
- Act in ways that children may feel embarrassed, humiliated or degraded or otherwise promote/not obstruct others from acting in such a way.

- Discriminate or nurture certain children to the exclusion of others.

Consequences linked to violations of the Childhood Protection Policy:

Conduct in violation of the law or of this policy that concerns minors - such as, by way of example:

- Inducing or forcing a minor to engage in any form of sexual activity.
- Any form of commercial exploitation of children including child labour or trafficking.
- The use of photos of children for pornographic or improper purposes.
- Subjecting any child to mistreatment or cruel, humiliating or degrading actions.
- Subjecting a minor or minors to physical, verbal or psychological mistreatments shall be reported to the authorities of the legally competent countries.

So as to ensure the best interest of minors, any member of YEU staff that violates the above principles or directly or indirectly participates in similar conducts or actions or that may be ascribable to those described above shall be immediately dismissed. Every contractual relationship will be terminated and the names of suppliers, project partners and supporters shall be removed from the database.

Monitoring and evaluation:

This Child Protection Policy shall be monitored permanently (reviewed at least every 3 years) and revised in the light of differing needs, changes in legislation and guidance and experience and/or structured changes within YEU. All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints shall be recorded and monitored.

The Project Manager is responsible for information on policy and practice, as well as for monitoring all matters relating to abuse within the YEU network and for reporting them to the relevant authorities.

APPENDIX

Forms of abuse and exploitation of children:

Any physical, emotional or sexual damage committed on a child is considered a form of child abuse or exploitation. One must bear in mind that the culture of the local community is crucial when attempting to understand these forms, and how to act to avoid them and the risk that the staff and YEU programmes are side-lined by the local community.

With reference to the sources indicated at the beginning (specifically the Child Protection Policy of YEU International) we provide four main categories of abuse and exploitation below which are important to be aware of:

Emotional

This is a form of persistent and psychological mistreatment that has a serious impact on the behaviour and development of the child. It implies a negation of normal respect and may take the shape of personal criticism, humiliations or persistent discrimination without any positive interest or concern. Purely by way of example this can happen in situations in which children are subject to a level of persistent discrimination owing to the fact that they are not accompanied, the selective handing out of gifts, selective recruitment (as in the case of selections for the purpose of fund collection), with reference to different economic/social status, gender, religion, ethnic origin, bullying and other forms of prevarication.

Physical

This category may include any direct act causing physical harm to the child and/or youngster that is not the result of an accident. It may include tasks or jobs that are clearly beyond the child's capacity to fulfil them safely.

Sexual

This category includes all forms of sexual acts performed on the child by another person and includes sexual abuse and molestation. The identification of this kind of abuse can be very complex when it takes place with older minors (adolescents). The main issue here is exploitation, which we consider to be taking place if an adult (or in any case a minor against other minors) has acted using the power of authority, influence, age or position or the use of physical force or emotional manipulation against a minor. This may also include the exposure of the failure to prevent exposure of children to all forms of pornography or sexual acts.

Negligence

This is connected to the persistent failure to prevent the child being exposed to danger or extreme shortcomings in addressing important aspects of physical or medical care which may severely compromise the child's health or development. This can take place when an operator is not capable of appropriately supervising a child's safety and/or exposes a child to extreme conditions or an avoidable risk of catching diseases or suffering serious injury. In this sense one must take into consideration local legislation governing child labour.

GLOSSARY

- **Minor:** any person under the age of 18 (age bracket that includes the early infancy, childhood, preadolescence and adolescence). In these documents the terms “minor”, “childhood”, “children” etc., will be used to the same effect.
- **Abuse and mistreatment** of a minor: any act that **physically or psychologically harms** a minor, that directly or indirectly causes damage or impedes the healthy and safe development towards adulthood. With reference to the categories established by the World Health Organization, the main forms of “abuse” are referred to as physical violence, emotional violence, negligence and negligent treatment, abuse or sexual exploitation.
- **Sexual exploitation** of a minor: **any exploitation**, whether actual or attempted, **of a condition of vulnerability, of a power or trust differential** relative to a minor for sexual purposes. YEU also considers **abuse** any sexual activity with a minor who is under the legal age of consent in the country in which he or she is living, regardless of supposed consent; as well as consensual sexual activities with a minor with an age above that of valid legal consent in the country in which it takes place, but below the age of 18 (even if it is not considered a crime locally), it will in any case be treated as a violation by this Policy.
- **Project coordinator:**
- **Project manager:**
- **Line manager:**

- **Project Partner:** every organisational subject (in Belgium or abroad) that supports the realisation of YEU's projects with its own resources and/or staff, and with which YEU signs an agreement (i.e. a MOU).
- **Project contact person:** otherwise also referred to as **Internal contact person**, is the person who acts as the operations coordinator of the action or project manager, directly employed by YEU or its project partners.

Staff: every person connected to YEU via a labour, collaboration or volunteer contract.

SIGNATURE