



Child Protection Policy

European Youth Forum

Adopted 30 March 2023

1. Policy Statement

The European Youth Forum promotes a culture based on respect, dignity and equality, to ensure access and participation, reflecting the basic right of everyone to be heard.

For these reasons the European Youth Forum is committed to remove from its structure all the obstacles that may jeopardise full participation and may harm or infringe the respect and dignity that is due to every person, with particular reference to discrimination, sexual or emotional harassment, humiliation, prejudice, segregation, stereotype or violence.

We recognise that children and young adults do not always feel safe in places they should. Girls, young women, non-binary persons, LGBTQIA+ persons, young persons with disabilities and young people from minority or marginalised backgrounds are often disproportionately exposed to harassment, abuse and other forms of violence or harm. The European Youth Forum and the activities it organises must always offer an opportunity for meaningful participation in a safe environment.

Offering safe spaces is fundamental for the success of the European Youth Forum and all its activities, and we acknowledge the importance of a strong Child Protection Policy in achieving this. We are committed to safeguarding the children and young people we work with and taking all reasonable steps to reduce risks and ensure safe participation in our work.

2. Aims and Objectives

The European Youth Forum is a non-profit organisation whose purpose is defined in its statutes and includes to be the voice of young people in Europe, representing National Youth Councils and international youth organisations from across Europe; to promote and defend the rights and interests of young people in Europe and to increase the participation of young people and youth organisations in society.

The organisation's activities include direct contact predominately with member organisations, representatives of youth organisations, and representatives of national governments as well as European or international institutions. While the European Youth Forum's target group are young people of all ages, the majority of people we come in contact with during these activities are over 18 years old.

Risks associated with child protection always exist, however. Children are never excluded from representing our member organisations in statutory meetings or in other events.

Children could also attend events which the Youth Forum organises for wider audience participation, be it trainings (both online or offline), demonstrations and festivals. Finally, we may come in contact with children when they interact with us via social media. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the European Youth Forum to prevent child abuse and safeguarding concerns by the event organisers, staff and volunteers, and by other participants.

This Child Protection Policy guides the organisers of any activity that involves children and includes a set of principles to be applied. Since the European Youth Forum's work is international by nature, the European Youth Forum further commits to always refer to national legislation and apply any relevant requirements. This policy builds on the [Code of Conduct of the European Youth Forum](#) (2014) available on our website and applies to all individuals who participate in European Youth Forum activities. Specific changes were made to ensure that the Code of Conduct meets the needs of children, and they are included in this policy.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Include safeguards when implementing activities for or involving children to promote full respect of their rights and pursuit of their best interest;
- Prevent and minimise the risk of harm that may be caused to children as a result of actions or neglect;
- Ensure good practice when using the media, including social media;
- Clarify procedures for handling incidents in case they occur.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Protect children who attend European Youth Forum's activities from harm;
- Provide staff, volunteers and children with the overarching principles that offer guidance during events where children participate.

3. Definitions

Child: A child means any person below the age of eighteen years.

Child safeguarding: Child safeguarding means to take appropriate measures to ensure that staff, experts, contracted third parties, operations, projects and programmes do no harm to children and promote their best interest. This means that children are not exposed to the risk of harm and abuse and that any concerns about children's safety are reported to the appropriate authorities. Child safeguarding includes both preventive actions to minimise the risks of harm occurring, and responsive actions to ensure that incidents which may happen are appropriately handled.

Child abuse: For the purposes of this policy, child abuse consists of anything which individuals, organisations or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospects of safe and healthy development. Child abuse can be physical, sexual and/or emotional in nature.

Safeguarding concerns: For the purpose of this policy, these are a feeling or worry that a person may be at risk of harm or may have been harmed. They may refer to a singular act of harm and abuse or multiple instances. A person may report such safeguarding

concerns because they experienced or they fear being harmed themselves, or as bystanders who become aware of others being at risk of, or experiencing harm.

4. Principles

This policy is to be upheld and guided by the following principles:

Protection: All children and young people are entitled to protection from any form of harm and abuse.

Responsibility: Safeguarding is an organisational and individual responsibility. We are all responsible for creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive culture and will proactively listen to, learn from and act on any safeguarding concerns raised.

Youth-centred and youth-led: We strive for all decisions and actions that relate to this policy to be led by the voices and interests of children and young people, respecting their ownership over their opinions and own bodies as well as the processes designed to protect them.

Do no harm: We commit to always carefully consider, minimise and manage any risks, as to prevent any negative impact caused by our work.

Duty of care: We commit to always act with care and kindness, ensure we can safely carry out our work and never do anything, or neglect to do something that may harm others.

Non-discrimination: The rights of the child apply to all children without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or their parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other status.

Best interests of the child: In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

5. Guidelines for Conduct

The organisers of activities involving or concerning children must always have full regard to the principles outlined in this policy and commit to embody them in all aspects of their behaviour; as well as informing other participants of these guidelines and ensure to the best of their ability that they follow them:

- Comply with all relevant laws concerning the protection of children in the country where the activity takes place;
- Inform children of their rights in a way they can understand, including by identifying the person, authority or service where to seek advice/complain in case of a problem;
- Maintain the 'two-adult' rule: never work alone with a child. This includes online interactions;
- Refrain from contacting participants on social media. When communication is absolutely necessary for the delivery of the activity, group settings are to be preferred; never one-on-one communication with children;
- Only use organisational email (xxx@youthforum.org) to communicate with children; never personal emails;
- Maintain content and tone of conversation that are age-appropriate and strictly related to European Youth Forum activities; and therefore must not

- contain any references to personal information;
- Maintain and respect appropriate boundaries in all forms of communication.

6. Participation of Children in Events

When inviting children to participate in an event, they must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their right to express their views freely and to have their views given due weight. They must be informed on how this participation will take place, its scope, purpose and potential impact. Children must never be coerced into expressing views against their wishes and they must be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.

In particular,

- Event organisers must seek parental consent in writing when a child is to attend a European Youth Forum activity. A sample of a parental consent form can be found attached to this policy;
- Children must not be accommodated alone in a room of adults. They should share the room with other children, with their accompanying parent/guardian or be accommodated in a private room;
- All participants must have access to information relating to safeguarding. Children in particular should have accessible versions, considering format and language used and removing unnecessary jargon;
- When the time and format allows, proactively build in opportunities to listen to children ideas for how to identify risks and improve participation, while noting the different needs of individuals or groups with specific needs, characteristics or backgrounds. Remember that children may experience the same environment in different ways.

Service and/or third party contracts for events in which children participate must include terms of reference that clearly define the obligations of the contractor with regard to safeguarding of children in the performance of the contract.

7. Media and Social Media

When developing and using photos or videos featuring children involved in activities, the following principles must be respected:

- **Informed consent:** Permission must always be sought from the children themselves and the child's guardian before taking images. To the greatest extent possible, the organisation must acquire informed consent of the child and the child's guardian, before using any photo or video for publicity, fundraising, awareness raising, or any other purpose. The purpose must be made clear to the consent giver.
- **Privacy:** Personal and physical information that could be used to identify the location of a child within a country and cause them to be put at risk must not be used in any form of communication for general or public purposes.
- **Security and data protection:** Information about children's lives and images of children (including information stored on a computer) must be kept in secure files. Access to these must be limited to those who need to use them during the course of their work.
- **Portrayal:** Images of children must portray the children only in a dignified and

respectful way. The image may not shame or embarrass a child and should be presented in context.

Different countries may have specific laws or cultural norms, which must be understood and adhered to as appropriate.

When seeking the consent of a child for a photograph or a recording, ensure children understand:

- How their images, audio recordings or video content will be used;
- The platforms they may be displayed on;
- How long their images, audio recordings or video content will be stored for;
- Their consent can be withdrawn at any time, and that the European Youth Forum will delete all content from our systems, comms channels and not use it again;
- That once images are in the public domain, we do not have authority to remove from external sites;
- That providing images is not a condition of their involvement in the European Youth Forum's activities or programmes.

Never interview or photograph a child individually without the parent/guardian giving their explicit consent.

8. Reporting and Procedures

For each event, it is mandatory to have in place a confidential reporting mechanism for safeguarding concerns, as follows:

- In events organised by the European Youth Forum, the facilitator, co-chairs or trainer is the point of contact (PoC), who has the responsibility to provide general information about this policy and to follow its procedures.
- Any complaint or safeguarding concern can be addressed to the PoC and/or be addressed (anonymously or not) via an online form available at <https://www.youthforum.org/code-of-conduct>;
- The first response to all complaints must take place as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after they were brought to the attention of the PoC or submitted via the online form.
- The PoC, the staff monitoring the online form and any other person involved in organising the event where children attend are obliged to report any concerns to the European Youth Forum's Secretary General and the Person of Trust in the Secretariat, who is a trained staff member (unless a complaint was submitted against them, in which case the President of the Youth Forum shall be informed).
- The Person of Trust, who is trained by a health service provider to address safeguarding concerns, shall investigate the complaint while adopting a survivor-centred approach and upholding the principles laid down in this policy. Any serious allegations must be reported to the competent authorities, if the Person of Trust believes deemed it safe and in the best interest of the child; when it is requested by the child concerned or the guardian/parent; or when it is required by law.
- The PoC may decide to remove from the event any person against whom an allegation has been made. If the complaint is submitted against a staff member or volunteer of the European Youth Forum, the Secretary General and the President of the European Youth Forum will decide whether to suspend the alleged perpetrator during the investigation period, and will take any necessary measures upon final conclusion of the investigation, including termination.

- Overall, staff and/or the PoC must always include the children in conversation and should try to seek consent before including the parents/guardians in any conversation on safeguarding concerns. Should this not be the case, staff and/or the PoC should clearly inform the child before sharing any information with their legal guardians/parents.
- The child and/or their parents/guardians should be kept informed of any decision taken by the European Youth Forum, including the possibility of appealing against such decision.
- All complaints, including subsequent procedures and outcomes, must be securely stored on a safeguarding register.

9. Staff Recruitment and Trainings

- Staff recruitment processes minimise the risk of engaging anyone unsuitable to work with children, these include:
 1. **Previous employer references** from all work places in the two years prior to the recruitment, confirming the suitability for the new hire to work for a youth focused organisation and detailing whether or not there has been any safeguarding complaints made against the new hire.

In addition, all staff roles will be risk assessed to understand the level of contact with children and young people. For roles in which risk is identified, advanced vetting will be carried out for all new hires, requiring:

2. **A Criminal Record Extract.**
 - a. For people living in Belgium, the required form is Extrait de casier judiciaire Modèle 596-2.
 - b. New hires who do not live in Belgium will be required to provide a national equivalent.
 - c. In countries where it is not legally possible to issue a criminal record extract upon employer demand, new hires will be required to submit a declaration detailing their criminal record or absence thereof, as well as the reasons for which an official record cannot be submitted. An additional verbal reference with a previous employer must also be carried out.
- All contracts for staff, approved trainers and experts must include a requirement to comply with the European Youth Forum safeguarding policies, and training on this policy will be included in the onboarding processes for new hires. Refresher trainings will be provided annually.

This policy will be reviewed as needed, and not less than once every five years.


 Milosh Ristovski
 Secretary General

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PARENTAL CONSENT

[YELLOW to be filled by the organisers]

I, Mr/Mrs/Ms

Of (address)

parent/legal guardian of

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

Parent/Guardian agrees to the following terms and conditions:

1) By Parent/Guardian's consent to the child's participation in the European Youth Forum's event, Parent/Guardian accepts and assumes full responsibility for the behaviour of the participant during the European Youth Forum's event;

2) Parent/Guardian and Parent/Guardian's personal representatives, assigns, successors, heirs or administrators hereby release, waive, discharge and hold harmless the European Youth Forum, its Board, employees from any and all claims, demands, losses, costs, liabilities or damages whatsoever arising out of or related to the participant's behaviour, actions, participation or involvement in the European Youth Forum event and related activities;

3) Parent/Guardian understands that the European Youth Forum is relying on Parent/Guardian's agreement to all the terms and conditions herein in order to permit the under-aged person to attend the European Youth Forum Event; In any case of contradiction with national or European laws, the law will be applied.

4) Parent/Guardian understands that the participant is not covered by a specific insurance during the participation to the event and acknowledges that it is private responsibility to stipulate an insurance in case they deem it necessary;

5) **Please choose one of the following:**

Parent/Guardian **authorises** the European Youth Forum to take photos of the child during the event and is aware such photos may be used for reporting and publication purposes (including on social media).

OR

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

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

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

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

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian:

Date:

Contact telephone number and email: