

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

2022

POLICY GUIDELINES, PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

ON CHILD PROTECTION AT CESIE

Version: 1

Date: January 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

CESIE affirms its belief in the rights of all children, including the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, and to develop to their full potential, be healthy and happy, as set out in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and in the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention, 2007).

Children with whom CESIE staff, volunteers, interns, external collaborators and associates come in contact will be assured the rights expressed in the UNCRC. Through its work, CESIE aligns with the “EU Strategy for the rights of the child” and promotes action to support children’s participation in political and democratic life, their economic and social inclusion, their right to health and to education, providing equal opportunities to all children, to prevent violence against children and to protect them from violence, to promote a justice system that responds to the needs of children, to promote a safe digital experience for all children, and to support children globally.

CESIE takes the prevention of child abuse very seriously. CESIE understands that child abuse and inappropriate contact of children is a pervasive problem throughout the world that must be managed in proactive manner. Therefore, the writing of this manual and guidelines shows the commitment to taking proactive steps to protect children in CESIE programs and facilities.

CESIE is committed to making decisions and taking actions that are guided by the principle of the “best interest of the child”.

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2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of the present policy, the following definitions apply:

- **Best Interest of the Child (BIC)**

It is a threefold concept: a right, a principle and a rule of procedure based on an assessment of all elements of a child's or children's interests in a specific situation both in the public and private sphere which must be determined on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration their personal context, situation and need. Accordingly, the concept of the child's best interests is flexible and adaptable. The concept of the child's best interests is aimed at ensuring both the full and effective enjoyment of all the rights recognized in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the holistic development of the child. The full application of the concept of the child's best interests requires the development of a rights-based approach, engaging all actors, to secure the holistic physical, psychological, moral and spiritual integrity of the child and promote his or her human dignity.¹

- **Child**

Every human being below the age of eighteen years old.²

- **Child Protection**

The prevention and response to violence, exploitation and abuse of children in all contexts.³

- **Child participation**

Child participation means that children, any person under the age of 18 years, individually or in groups, have the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. In order to be able to participate meaningfully and genuinely, children and young people should be provided with all relevant information and offered adequate support for self-advocacy appropriate to their age and

¹ As defined by the Committee on the Rights of the Children, General comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1)* - Available at: https://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/crc/docs/GC/CRC_C_GC_14_ENG.pdf

² As defined by the UN - Convention of the Rights of the Child. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

³ As defined by UNICEF. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/overview/>

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circumstances.⁴

- **Staff members**

Refers to paid staff, volunteers, interns and associates.

CESIE takes all measures to protect the child from all forms of child maltreatment and inappropriate behaviours. **Child maltreatment** is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power⁵ both in presence or through information technology.

Specifically, CESIE defines it but is not limited to the following:

- **Physical child abuse**

Physical abuse is an injury deliberately inflicted upon a child by any person, including adults. Physical abuse includes fractured or broken bones, burns, severe and/or frequent bruises, and any other intentionally inflicted physical harm.⁶

- **Child emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse happens when a child is repeatedly made to feel worthless, unloved, alone or scared. For instance: continually ignoring or rejecting a child, physically or socially isolating a child, forcing a child to do things by scaring them, constantly criticizing, humiliating or blaming a child, constantly swearing, yelling or screaming at a child, bullying, teasing, insulting or belittling a child, having unrealistic expectations or unreasonable demands of a child, not allowing a child to explore, express themselves, learn or make friends, treating a child badly because of things they can't change.⁷

⁴ As defined by the Council of Europe - Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18. Available at:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805cb0ca

⁵ As defined by WHO - Violence Against Children, Child Maltreatment. Available at: https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-children#tab=tab_2

⁶ As defined by Kids Matters - Physical Abuse. Available at: <https://kidsmatterinc.org/child-safety/types-of-child-abuse/physical-abuse/>

⁷ As defined by Kids HelpLine - Understanding Child Emotional Abuse. Available at: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/understanding-child-emotional-abuse>

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- **Child Sexual Abuse**

Is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.⁸

- **Child pornography**

Any material that visually depicts a child engaged in real or simulated sexually explicit conduct or any depiction of a child's sexual organs for primarily sexual purposes.⁹

- **Bullying**

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.¹⁰

- **Neglect or negligent treatment**

The failure to meet children's physical and psychological needs, protect them from danger, or obtain medical, birth registration or other services when those responsible for children's care have the means, knowledge and access to services to do so.¹¹

- **Child Exploitation**

Child exploitation includes child domestic work, child soldiers, the recruitment and involvement of children in armed conflict, sexual exploitation and pornography, the use of children for criminal activities including the sale and distribution of narcotics and the involvement of children in harmful or hazardous work.¹²

⁸ As defined by WHO - Child Sexual Abuse. Available at:

https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/resources/publications/en/guidelines_chap7.pdf

⁹ As defined by Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680084822>

¹⁰ As defined by the European Council. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/bullying>

¹¹ As defined by UNICEF. Available at: https://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/general_comments/CRC.C.GC.13_en.doc.html

¹² As defined by Terres des Hommes. Available at: <https://www.terredeshommes.org/causes/child-exploitation/>

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3. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Child Protection Policy document outlines policies regulating the behaviour and approaches taken by staff members of CESIE within the undertaking of their professional roles.

The policy sets out the basic principles on which it is based, and specifically addresses the following aspects of the professional life of all staff members working at CESIE, within and outside its premises: screening and hiring; conduct when working in contact with children; training, and working with other Partners.



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4. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

CESIE is committed to the following values and principles, which should be respected and promoted by all its staff members:

- ✓ CESIE values and treats every person without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the age, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, language, gender identity or sexual orientation, property, disability, birth or other status.
- ✓ CESIE recognises the right of every child to be protected from harm and abuse stemming from inappropriate behaviours as defined in Section 2 of the present policy. The Organisation takes all necessary action to prevent any harm from being done against children, and to report abuse against children on the above.
- ✓ The best interest of the child always comes first in the undertaking of our Organisation's activities.
- ✓ CESIE promotes the right of children to be heard, participate and share their views, and supports this approach in its activities.
- ✓ CESIE wishes to provide all necessary guidance to its staff members who work in close contact with children.

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5. SCREENING AND HIRING PRACTICES

CESIE establishes and sustains proper hiring and volunteer, internship selection practices, including completed applications, reference checks, Criminal Background Checks, Social Security checks and documented personnel files, and includes specific reference to Child Protection in its Code of Conduct.

Applications

- All prospective staff members will complete an application form to work or volunteer or intern that includes questions regarding past work history, volunteer experience, and education.
- All Application forms will include a statement that CESIE has a zero-tolerance standard for abuse and inappropriate behaviour by staff members.
- All staff members who may be involved in working with children and young people, or who are deemed likely to come in contact with children in the fulfilment of their duties, will be requested to provide a certificate of their national criminal record, according to national legislation (Decreto Del Presidente Della Repubblica 14 novembre 2002, n. 313 – specifically art. 25 bis).

Reference checks

CESIE reserves the right to apply the following reference check procedures to any candidate applying for a post:

- Contacting references indicated by prospective staff members, including close family members to the applicant.
- Contacting previous employers/agencies to check if the prospective staff member is eligible for rehire, as well as to ask about the ability of the applicant to work with children.
- Verbally verifying written references via telephone or other means of contact.
- Researching a candidate online and checking for red flags for working with children (i.e. Google Search, any national sexual predator websites, and social networking sites).

Interviews

- Prospective staff members should be interviewed by at least two separate staff members. A 'Realistic Job Preview' or 'Working Interview' meets this requirement; it is important that the

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candidate is assessed by more than one staff member.

- All interviews will be documented on an association -approved interview form that ensures the consistency of the questions asked. CESIE interview evaluation forms may be used during the interview process.



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6. PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT WHEN COMING IN CONTACT/WORKING WITH CHILDREN

The following principles apply when coming in contact or working with children conduct-wise:

- I. Prior to performing any work duties, staff members will sign and date a copy of the Code of Conduct of the Organisation, to which the Child Protection Policy is annexed. When changes or updates be made staff members will be informed.
- II. The Code of Conduct will be maintained in the personnel file and is annexed to their employment contract.
- III. The Rights and Justice Unit at CESIE will review the Child Protection Policy periodically (minimum once per year), and share it with the Human Resources, all Department Coordinators and all Unit Coordinators, who will in turn share it with all staff members. The Code of Conduct is developed by the Human Resources staff in cooperation with the Rights and Justice Unit, and will be available electronically and in its printed version. Staff, interns and volunteers will receive a copy and be requested to sign it.
- IV. All external collaborators and associates will be provided the Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct and will be requested to sign it if they work or may come in contact with children and young people of less than 18 years of age.
- V. The Code of Conduct includes the procedures for data collection and treatment of data about children and young people. Data privacy and protection issues shall comply with relevant EU rules (especially the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. If personal data about children and young people needs to be collected, written informed consent will be sought from their parents/legal guardians. The data will be collected and used only for the specific purposes for which they are provided. Staff working with children and needing to collect personal data about children or young people shall refer to the Data Protection Policy of CESIE and to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. CESIE does not share the personal data provided with any other entity.
- VI. Staff who may come in contact with personal data of research participants is required to sign a declaration of confidentiality before engaging in research. The declaration of confidentiality is specific to each case/project.

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- VII.** All publications must comply with the Child Protection Policy, before being publicized or shared.
- VIII.** Disclosure of information that identifies children who come in contact with our staff members and anyone having a role within CESIE, is restricted by the terms of international, European and Italian regulations and legislation. Written informed consent of the parents/legal guardians shall be sought. In accordance with article 3 of the UNCRC, the best interests of the child will be the fundamental principle applied in all cases. This includes disclosing any type of information (including images) regarding the children we come in contact with, on any media, including printed, online or other.
- IX.** Data, including images, of children and young people are only collected if strictly necessary and foreseen as specific activity of the Organisation or of a project that the Organisation implements. Their use is therefore only limited to the duration of the project, the specific purpose for which they were provided and collected. Specific permission of the child's legal guardians as well as the approval of the child will be sought by the staff of the Organisation implementing the activity, according to law requirements. Acquired images and data are stored on the local server of CESIE and are accessible only by the staff who have the specific credentials and who have subscribed to the Code of Conduct. The data in the local server is protected by password and cyber-protected by any kind of external access.
- X.** The rules and expectations will be shared with each new staff member and will be regularly reinforced with existing ones. This will be done in new employee training, children's rights training, and the use of a comprehensive Code of Conduct.

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7. REPORTING PROCEDURES

- All staff members and external collaborators have the obligation to report any child abuse concerns they may have or suspect. Staff members will be instructed to report anything they notice regarding a gap between protocols and practices. Staff members working with or coming in contact with children will be also instructed, through training, on the procedures to apply in case they suspect or have knowledge of a situation of child abuse.
- Reporting of suspected breach of the Code of Conduct, and specifically of the Child Protection Policy, follows a standard procedure, which includes a reporting form (annexed to the Code of Conduct and reported here under the Annex section). Reports in confidentiality will be treated by the Child Protection Policy Officer at CESIE who will evaluate the case and report further to the Human Resources. Child Protection Officer at CESIE to this date:
 - Ms. Cloé Saint-Nom, cloe.saintnom@cesie.org
- Any member of staff found in breach of the Code of Conduct, or of the Child Protection Policy on which the code draws, will be evaluated based on case-by-case basis. Disciplinary action will be undertaken, including and up to termination of employment/cessation of the professional engagement with CESIE and referral to authorities (depending on the case).
- Should a severe breach be found, the following external referrals should be taken into account for reporting:
 - Local Authorities: Polizia (<https://www.poliziadistato.it/>); Carabinieri (<https://www.carabinieri.it/contatti>)
 - Social Services for Minors – Sicily:
https://pti.regione.sicilia.it/portal/page/portal/PIR_PORTALE/PIR_LaStrutturaRegionale/PIR_Presidenza della Regione/PIR_UffGarantedetenuti/PIR_Areetematiche/PIR_Linkutili/PIR_LaGiustiziaMinoriInSicilia/INDIRIZZI_SERVIZI_DEL%20DIPARTIMENTO%20DELLA%20GIUSTIZIA%20MINOR.pdf
 - Blue Line (1.96.96)

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8. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TRAINING

- A. All staff members (at minimum, all staff members/volunteers/interns working directly with children and youth) will participate in a comprehensive initial children's rights and child abuse prevention training and in further training throughout their employment period, that includes information on the Rights of the Children (UNCRC, Lanzarote Convention, National regulation), Communicating with Children, Children participation and best interest of the child, Sexual abuse, Prevention, Early Identification, Responding, Documenting, and Reporting. The training programmes are inspired by existing resources and are developed by building on the programmes already developed through our relevant projects.
- B. External collaborators and associates who may come in contact with children and young people in the fulfilment of their tasks as assigned by CESIE will participate in the same child abuse prevention training.

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9. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND AGENCIES

- A.** The selection of partners should take into account the child protection history of the Partner Organisation.
- B.** CESIE reserves the right to conduct a reference check on the Partner's previous history related to child protection and its policies towards children.
- C.** CESIE will not tolerate any inappropriate communication towards children.
- D.** A clear statement related to child protection and the zero-tolerance policy of CESIE in relation to child abuse and inappropriate behaviour shall be included in the form for organisations wishing to become partners of CESIE's on CESIE website.
- E.** CESIE must take a serious action towards any partner convicted for child abuse during the implementation of its projects/programs.

Palermo, 12/01/2022



Vito La Fata

President

CESIE

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ANNEX

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Report of inappropriate behaviors in accordance with CESIE's Child Protection Policy

Information on the reporting subject ¹³:

Name: _____

Surname: _____

Position within the organization:

Staff Intern Volunteer Collaborator

**** The identity of the reporting subject will not be made public and will be treated only for the purposes of a possible legal action***

Information on the alleged inappropriate behavior reported

Type of the alleged breach:

- Physical child abuse
- Child emotional abuse
- Child sexual abuse
- Bullying
- Neglect or negligent treatment
- Child exploitation
- Other type of child mistreatment or inappropriate behaviour

¹³ The reporting subject's data will be treated according to EU Regulation 2016/679 (The EU General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR), and for the exclusive purpose of this reporting. CSC's legal representative will be responsible for the treatment of this data. The reporting subject can refer to him in order to exercise their rights in conformity with Italian and European law.

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Context of the alleged breach:

Date: _____

Place: _____

Circumstance (training, event, etc.): _____

Description of the alleged inappropriate behavior

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- Have you observed this behavior personally?

Yes No

If not, how did you come to know about it?

.....

- How would you judge the gravity of the behavior you described?

Low Medium High I don't know

- To your knowledge, is this behavior reiterated?

.....

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Information on the alleged author of the breach:

Name:

Surname:

Position within the organization:

Staff Intern Volunteer Collaborator

Declaration

By submitting this report, the reporting subject declares that:

1. He/she is aware that, should the report give rise to legal action on behalf of CESIE, it may be used as an official statement;
2. He/she is in good faith and that all the information provided above is correct and truthful;
3. He/she is aware that purposely providing false accusations against someone is a breach punishable by Italian law.

The reporting subject
(Read and approved)

Date

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