



Child Protection Policy of Somos Europa

Approved by the Board of the Organization on 10 February 2024

1. Introduction

The protection of children and adolescents is a fundamental responsibility of our society and, in particular, of the organisations that work directly or indirectly with them. At 'Somos Europa', we recognise this responsibility as a priority for our daily work and mission. This child protection policy is an explicit commitment to the rights and well-being of the children and young people with whom we interact through our activities, programmes and services.

Somos Europa's commitment to child protection is inspired by the universal principles of human rights, as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international treaties and conventions. This policy seeks to be a reflection of those principles, adapted to the specific context of our operations and the needs of the children and adolescents we serve.

2. Regulatory Framework

The normative framework that underpins our child protection policy includes a wide range of international, national and local laws and regulations. This framework sets the minimum standards for the protection of children and adolescents, providing the legal and ethical basis for our actions and decisions.

Among the most significant international instruments are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), associated optional protocols and guidelines of the United Nations and other international organisations dedicated to the protection of children's rights. Somos Europa is committed to complying with these international standards, as well as with national and local laws in the countries where we operate, ensuring that our policies and practices reflect the highest levels of commitment to child protection.

3. Child Protection Policy Standards in Somos Europe

Somos Europa is aware of the need to maintain proper child protection in all the actions carried out by the organisation. For this reason, the organisation has decided to follow the "Keeping Children Safe" standards, which have been considered the best and which cover the international spectrum in this matter. All this policy has been generated based on these criteria, enabling Somos Europa to work and demonstrate its firm commitment to the care of children.

Standard 1: Policy

The child protection policy is one of the foundations on which all our work at Somos Europa is built. This policy sets out our unequivocal commitment to the safety and well-being of children and adolescents in all our operations and activities. The policy is a living document that reflects international best practice, adapted to our specific context and the needs of the children we work with.

Implementation:

- Participatory Development: The policy is developed and reviewed with the active participation of staff at all levels, volunteers, children, and, where possible, their families and communities.
- Training and Dissemination: We ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the policy through regular training programmes. In addition, access to the policy is facilitated through our website and communication materials.
- Ongoing Review: The policy is reviewed annually to incorporate lessons learned, changes in the legal environment and emerging best practices.

Standard 2: Personnel

Staff and volunteers are at the heart of our organisation, and their commitment and conduct are key to the effective implementation of our child protection policy. This standard focuses on ensuring that we have rigorous selection, training and appraisal processes in place for all staff and volunteers.

Implementation:

- Rigorous screening: Screening processes that include background checks, reference checks and interviews with a focus on child protection.
- Mandatory Training and Education: Comprehensive child protection training for all staff and volunteers, with regular updates.
- Evaluation and Monitoring: Regular performance appraisals with a focus on adherence to child protection principles.

Standard 3: Procedures

Procedures are the concrete actions and steps to take to implement our child protection policy. These procedures range from how to report a concern to how to respond to an allegation of abuse or neglect.

Implementation:

- Clear Reporting Procedures: Accessible and safe mechanisms for staff, volunteers, children and anyone else to report concerns or incidents.
- Response and Case Management: A detailed protocol outlining how complaints and concerns should be handled, ensuring a rapid and appropriate response.
- Recording and Documentation: Maintaining accurate and confidential records of all concerns, complaints and investigations.

Standard 4: Accountability

Accountability ensures that we are transparent in our management of child protection and that we take responsibility for our actions and decisions. This standard focuses on establishing clear accountability mechanisms at all levels of the organisation.

Implementation:

- Monitoring Mechanisms: Establishment of monitoring and internal audit systems to assess the effective implementation of the child protection policy.
- Reporting and Assessment: Regular reporting on child protection to management and governing bodies, including recommendations for improvement.
- Feedback and Continuous Improvement: Fostering an environment where staff, volunteers and beneficiaries can provide feedback on child protection practices, using it as a basis for continuous improvement.

4. Guiding Principles

Child protection within Somos Europa is guided by universal principles, which are fundamental to ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for the development of every child and adolescent with whom we interact. These principles not only reflect our ethical commitment, but also guide our actions and decisions at all levels of the organisation.

4.1 Best interests of the child

The best interests of the child is a primary consideration in all actions and decisions affecting the child. It means that the child's health, safety, well-being, development and voice are paramount.

Practical Application:

- In decision-making: Any decision, whether strategic or day-to-day, related to children must consider how it will impact on their well-being and development.
- In conflict situations: When conflicts of interest arise, the needs and rights of children are prioritised over the interests of adults or the organisation.

Example: When planning activities, "Somos Europa" ensures that venues are safe and accessible for children, and that activities are designed to be inclusive and foster children's positive development.

4.2 Non-Discrimination

All children have the same right to protection, regardless of their origin, gender, ability, socio-economic status or any other characteristic.

Practical Application:

- Inclusive policies: Implement policies and practices that promote equality and prevent discrimination.
- Accessibility: Ensure that all programmes and services are accessible to all children, adapting as necessary to meet diverse needs.

Example: "Somos Europa" regularly reviews its programmes to ensure that there are no barriers to participation for any child, adapting materials and methods as necessary.

4.3 Child Participation

Children have the right to be heard and to participate in decisions that affect them, in accordance with their age and maturity.

Practical Application:

- Participation mechanisms: Create and maintain channels through which children can express their views and contribute to decisions that affect them.
- Staff training: Train staff on how to facilitate and respect children's participation effectively and safely.

Example: "Somos Europa" organises focus groups with children to get their feedback on the activities offered, ensuring that their voice is part of the planning and evaluation process.

4.4 Prevention of Harm

Proactive measures must be taken to prevent all forms of harm to children, including abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

Practical Application:

- Risk assessments: Conduct regular risk assessments of all activities and environments to identify and mitigate potential hazards to children.
- Prevention training: Train all staff and volunteers to identify and prevent risks to children's safety.

Example: Before launching a new programme, "Somos Europa" will carry out a detailed risk assessment and develop an action plan to mitigate any identified risks.

4.5 Response and Remediation

In the event of any damage occurring, the organisation must have clear and effective procedures in place to respond appropriately and provide the necessary support to repair the damage.

Practical Application:

- Response procedures: Establish clear procedures for the reporting and management of concerns or incidents, including specific steps for the protection and support of affected children.
- Response training: Train all staff and volunteers on how to respond effectively and sensitively to situations of harm or risk to children.
- Example: "Somos Europa" has in place a rapid response protocol that is activated in case of a report of abuse or neglect, ensuring that the child receives immediate support and that appropriate measures are taken to investigate and address the situation.
- Cross-cutting Application of the Principles: These guiding principles do not operate in isolation but are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The application of these principles should be cross-cutting, affecting all areas of the organisation and its activities. Every decision taken, from the planning of an event to the development of new programmes, must be examined through the prism of these guiding principles to ensure that the protection and well-being of children is always the priority.
- Training and Awareness Raising: It is essential that all staff, including workers, volunteers and anyone associated with Somos Europa, receive regular training on these principles and how to apply them in their daily work. Awareness and thorough understanding of these principles are essential to create an organisational culture that prioritises child protection at all levels.
- Involvement of Children and Communities: In addition, Somos Europa is committed to actively involving children, their families and communities in the

development, implementation and review of child protection principles and practices. This not only helps to ensure that our policies and practices are relevant and effective, but also empowers children and gives them an active voice in their own protection.

- **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:** Finally, these guiding principles require a commitment to evaluation and continuous improvement. "Somos Europa is committed to regularly reviewing its child protection policy and related procedures to reflect current best practice, changes in the legal and regulatory environment, and the feedback and experiences of children and stakeholders. This continuous improvement approach ensures that our organisation remains at the forefront of child protection and adaptable to emerging challenges.

5. Prevention

Prevention is the cornerstone of our child protection policy at "Somos Europa". We recognise that preventing harm to children and adolescents is fundamental to their well-being and development. This section details the strategies and measures we implement to prevent all forms of harm, including abuse, exploitation and neglect.

5.1 Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

The Code of Conduct is a clear set of standards and expectations for the behaviour of our staff and volunteers towards children and adolescents. It sets appropriate boundaries for interactions and clearly defines what behaviour is unacceptable. This code serves as a practical guide to ensure that all adults in our organisation act in a way that promotes the safety and well-being of children.

Example of Application:

- Restrictions on taking photographs of children without the explicit consent of children and their parents or guardians.

5.2 Strategies to Identify and Mitigate Risks

Development: Identifying and mitigating risks involves a continuous process of assessment in all activities, programmes and settings where children and adolescents are present. This includes physical and emotional risk analysis, as well as the implementation of measures to reduce these risks.

Example of Application:

- Risk assessments prior to the implementation of any new programme or activity.
- Adaptations in infrastructure to ensure safe physical environments for children.

5.3 Detailed Selection and Training Processes

The selection and training of staff and volunteers are critical processes to ensure that those working with children and adolescents are adequately prepared and committed to child protection. This includes background checks, reference checks and comprehensive child protection training.

Example of Application:

- Implementation of a screening procedure that includes criminal background checks for all new employees and volunteers.
- Mandatory child protection training programmes for all staff and volunteers.

5.4 Community Involvement and Education

Child protection is a shared responsibility. That is why we actively involve communities and families in our prevention strategies, providing education on children's rights and how to protect them.

Example of Application:

- Child protection awareness workshops for parents and caregivers.
- Educational programmes in schools that promote awareness of children's rights among children and adolescents themselves.

5.5 Ongoing Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Prevention Strategies

An essential part of our prevention strategy is the continuous evaluation of its effectiveness. This allows us to adjust and improve our practices based on feedback, changes in the operational context and developments in the field of child protection.

Example of Application:

- Periodic reviews of child protection policies and procedures.
- Surveys and feedback forums with staff, volunteers, children, adolescents and their families to gather their experiences and suggestions for improvement.

6. Action Procedures

The effective implementation of clear and accessible procedures for reporting and managing concerns or incidents is essential to protect children and young people within Somos Europa. These procedures ensure a coordinated, effective and empathetic response to any situation of risk, abuse or violence against children.

6.1 Procedures for Reporting Concerns or Incidents

"Somos Europa" establishes safe and confidential channels for staff, volunteers, children, adolescents and their families to report any concerns or incidents of abuse or maltreatment. These channels are designed to be accessible and to protect the identity and privacy of the reporter.

Example of Application:

- Creation of a dedicated email address for reporting.
- Regular training for staff and volunteers on how to recognise signs of abuse and how to proceed with a report.

6.2 Risk Management and Incident Response

Once a concern or incident is reported, "Somos Europa" activates an immediate response protocol. This protocol includes the initial risk assessment, the immediate protection of the child or adolescent concerned and the assignment of a response team to manage the case.

Example of Application:

- Implementation of an internal child protection committee to assess and respond to reports.
- Coordination with local child protection services to provide additional support and follow-up.

6.3 Research and Monitoring Protocols

In cases of reported abuse or mistreatment, "Somos Europa" follows clear and fair investigation protocols, in line with local laws and human rights principles. The aim is to clarify the facts, take the necessary corrective measures and ensure the continued well-being of the child or adolescent.

Example of Application:

- Conducting confidential investigations that respect the privacy and dignity of all those involved.
- Follow-up of cases until resolution, including the provision of psychological and legal support to victims.

6.4 Training and Awareness Raising on Operating Procedures

To ensure the effectiveness of these procedures, "Somos Europa" provides continuous training to staff and volunteers on how to act upon the detection of a possible situation of risk, abuse or violence against children and adolescents.

Example of Application:

- Annual training sessions and online resources to update staff and volunteers on best practices in child protection.
- Interactive workshops for children and adolescents on their rights and how they can seek help.

6.5 Commitment to Continuous Improvement

"Somos Europa is committed to constantly reviewing and improving its procedures to adapt to new evidence, changes in legislation and feedback from the community. This ensures that our response to situations of risk or abuse is always of the highest standard.

Example of Application:

- Annual evaluations of performance procedures to identify areas for improvement.
- Incorporation of suggestions from children, adolescents, families and staff to strengthen procedures.

7. Accountability and Review

Accountability and review are essential components of our child protection policy at Somos Europa. These principles ensure that we maintain a high level of transparency, accountability and continuous improvement in all our child protection practices.

7.1 Accountability Mechanisms

We establish clear and accessible mechanisms to ensure that everyone within the organisation, as well as our stakeholders, is accountable for adhering to our child protection policies. This includes the implementation of open communication channels, reporting and monitoring systems, and the assignment of specific oversight roles.

Example of Application:

- Establishment of a child protection committee with representatives from all levels of the organisation.
- Implementation of an anonymous reporting system so that staff, volunteers, children, adolescents and their families can report concerns or policy violations without fear of retaliation.

7.2 Review and Continuous Improvement Processes

Our child protection policy is a living document that requires regular review and updating to reflect best practice, legal changes and learning from our experiences. This review process involves internal and external evaluations, stakeholder feedback and the integration of new perspectives and knowledge in the field of child protection.

Example of Application:

- Annual review of the child protection policy and associated procedures.
- Regular consultations with child protection experts, frontline staff and families to gather suggestions for improvement.

7.3 Indicators of Success and Impact Evaluation

To measure the effectiveness of our child protection policy, we establish clear indicators of success and methods of impact assessment. These indicators help us understand how our policies and practices affect the safety and well-being of the children and young people we serve.

Example of Application:



- Development of indicators based on the reduction of incidents of abuse and neglect within the organisation.
- Satisfaction and well-being surveys targeting children, adolescents and their families to measure their perception of safety and security.

Accountability and review are fundamental pillars underpinning our dedication to child protection. At Somos Europa, we are committed to maintaining a culture of transparency, accountability and continuous improvement. We recognise that effective child protection requires constant effort and a willingness to adapt and learn. Through these mechanisms, we ensure that our policies and practices not only meet current standards, but also set new benchmarks in child protection.

8. Implementation of this policy

All persons working or volunteering within the organisation shall be informed of this policy, as well as the protocols and other documentation developed on the basis of this policy. Likewise, all persons must abide by all measures and rules to guarantee the protection of children who take part in any of the organisation's activities.

9. Details of the legal representative

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