

Child safeguarding policy of the Finnish organisations involved in the CP4Europe Project

Introduction

This document describes the Child Safeguarding Policy of the Finnish organisations involved in the project called *CP4Europe – Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe*, co-funded by the European Commission (*Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme*, REC-AG-2020) and the Council of Europe. The project will be implemented from 1 April 2021 until 31 March 2023.

The aim of this document is to describe the key principles of child safeguarding policy. It outlines a number of measures to make sure that

- 1) all activities within the project are carried out in a manner that helps strengthen children's rights and wellbeing;
- 2) staff and operations within the project recognize the importance of children's rights;
- 3) staff and operations within the project do not cause any harm to children or expose them in any way to the risk of harm and abuse; and that
- 4) any concerns the above-mentioned organisations have about children's safety are reported to the appropriate authorities.

Definitions and scope of application

The term "child" refers to anyone below the age of 18 years.

The organisations involved in the CP4Europe Project in Finland, and therefore committed to this policy, are the Finnish Ministry of Justice (Department for Democracy and Public Law), the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Department for Communities and Functional Capacity, Children and Young People Unit), the Prime Minister's Office (Government Strategy Department) and the Finnish Ombudsman for Children.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) maintains and develops legal order and legal protection, reinforces the structures of democracy, and safeguards citizens' fundamental rights. The Ministry is responsible for drafting the key legislation maintaining legal order and for ensuring the proper functioning of the judicial system. Judicial powers are exercised by the independent courts. The Ministry coordinates the National Democracy Programme 2025 which aims at, i.a., promoting participation of all children and young people.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (MSAH) promotes the good health and functional capacity of people, healthy environments for life and work and gender equality, and secures sufficient health and social services and a fair standard of living at the various stages of people's lives. The Ministry is responsible for the planning, guidance and implementation of health and social policy in Finland.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Government's political programme. The Prime Minister's Office also assists the Prime Minister in the general management of Government functions, coordinate Finland's EU policy and the State's ownership policy, and steers state-owned companies under the Prime Minister's Office.

The PMO is responsible for preparing the first National Child Strategy in Finland. The strategy was prepared in cross-governmental and parliamentary collaboration, coordinated in MSAH, and it was published on 23

February 2021. The implementation of the strategy will draw on the insights developed in the project at hand.

The Ombudsman for Children is an autonomous and independent authority that promotes the realisation of the rights and best interest of children. The Ombudsman ensures that the position and rights of children are taken into account in legislation and decision-making. The Ombudsman promotes the realisation of the rights and best interest of children on a general societal level and the Ombudsman can raise issues that are important with regard to children's rights that would be otherwise left unnoticed in social discussion and decision-making.

None of these organisations resolve or investigate matters related to individual children or families, nor do they provide detailed legal advice. However, children do come into contact with the staff of the Ministries and the Ombudsman through project activities, such as online panels and development and testing of the Young Advisors model and consultation methods for children with special needs. Children might also participate in events organized by the project, for example as experts of experience.

The responsibility to protect children applies, in accordance with this policy, to staff members, partners, experts or any other individual acting on behalf of the organisations involved in the project. Any person involved in activities related to the project must follow the principles of this policy. This policy applies to all staff – full-time, part-time or engaged on short-term contracts.

Measures to safeguard children

Any person involved in activities related to the project must behave appropriately towards children and must not abuse the power that comes with being an authority or a person in a position of trust.

When making decisions or implementing activities involving children within the project, the key principle is always to consider the best interest of the child. Any form of misconduct, malpractice or harm generated to children by poor design or management is not tolerated in the project. Children are to be protected and safeguarded to the maximum possible extent from actions that place them at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, discrimination, injury and any other harm, such as breach of privacy. Any illegal, unsafe or abusive conduct towards children is prohibited. This includes all types of physically, sexually or emotionally (i.e. shaming, humiliating, belittling, discriminating or excluding) abusive behavior.

All data collected from and about children taking part in any project activity is protected appropriately. Appropriate safety and consent measures are applied whenever taking photos or audio or audio-visual recordings or otherwise depicting children. In context of interviewing and reporting, both confidentiality and children's right to have their views taken into account and to be heard must be considered. National legislation is applied when it comes to criminal record background checking for any position.

Reporting mechanisms

In case any concerns of inappropriate or abusive behavior towards children arise in context of the operations of the project, the organisations involved in the project commit to reporting such behavior to relevant agencies and authorities. In the event of behavior incompatible with this policy by the staff, the organisations involved in the project will take administrative and/or legal measures against the given staff member(s). The organisations involved in the project commit to regularly informing all staff members about this policy, including reporting mechanisms and appropriate behavior.



Implementation of the policy

A document setting out concrete measures and guidelines for the protection of children (in Finnish: *Lasten suojelemista koskevat toimenpiteet Lasten ja nuorten ääni Euroopassa (CP4Europe) -hankkeessa*) is annexed to this policy. The organisations involved in the project commit to regularly reviewing these measures and guidelines throughout the project in order to help strengthen children's rights and wellbeing in all project activities. The measures and guidelines will be further developed together with children, respecting their participation rights and agency, and the undersigned organisations will consider them as part of this policy in accordance with the principles outlined above.

Signatures

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