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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The **Child Protection Policy** is a document outlining the measures and practices an organisation or company adopts to ensure the safety and well-being of children. This policy delineates the safeguarding protocols in place to protect children from harm, defines the acceptable conduct when engaging directly with children, and specifies the appropriate responses in the event of an incident involving abuse or harm.

OpenEurope is committed to creating a safe environment for all children and firmly believes in the importance of protecting, defending, and promoting their rights, including their right to be free from all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation.

The central guiding principle that our organisation refers to is “Do no harm”, which reflects the organisation’s responsibility to minimize any inadvertent harm that may arise from its activities. This principle is integral to our operations, ensuring that every effort is made to safeguard the rights and well-being of children.

OpenEurope is steadfast in its commitment to providing a secure environment for all children, and ensures that its practices align with national and international frameworks, including:

- The Spanish Constitution
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted on November 20, 1989
- The Lanzarote Convention (2007) – Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
- The European Commission’s Europe 2020 Strategy
- The UN Declaration on the Promotion of Citizenship and Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance, and Non-Discrimination through Education (2015)
- Relevant UNESCO recommendations and other international legal instruments.

This policy applies to all children—whether direct or indirect participants in OpenEurope’s activities—and is designed to protect them from all forms of discrimination or abuse. OpenEurope is dedicated to ensuring that any partner organisations or collaborators adhere to the same principles of child protection.

Furthermore, OpenEurope will ensure that all stakeholders, including children and their families, are fully informed of and understand this policy, its aims, and its implementation procedures.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

As a non-profit organisation, OpenEurope is fully committed to empowering both youth and adults through active participation in European educational programs. The organisation directs its efforts towards fostering the development of critical skills such as communication, leadership, and employability. Additionally, OpenEurope supports non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and volunteering initiatives that are focused on addressing and resolving social challenges.

Core values that guide OpenEurope’s mission include:

- **Inclusion**
- **Interculturality**
- **Solidarity**
- **Innovation**
- **Sustainability**

These principles inform and guide the organisation’s efforts to enhance the self-esteem and abilities of young people, promote peaceful coexistence between different cultures, disseminate the culture of the nation, and facilitate communication between diverse cultural groups.

In line with its mission, OpenEurope is committed to improving global approaches towards the well-being of children, ensuring that every boy and girl is guaranteed the fundamental rights to a life of dignity, protection, development, play, and active participation. OpenEurope strives to create immediate and lasting changes in the lives of children by ensuring their rights are upheld and their welfare is prioritized.





In alignment with its mission, OpenEurope guarantees the implementation of conduct and practices that ensure the protection and safeguarding of children and young people. These measures are designed to prevent any actions or behaviours that could be deemed inappropriate, potentially abusive, or harmful to children and young people under its care.

OpenEurope is resolute in its commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for all children involved in its activities. The organisation acknowledges its duty to protect children from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect, exploitation, or any other form of harm. OpenEurope strives to create a climate of trust, mutual respect, and dignity in which children can thrive, learn, and grow in a healthy, inclusive, and child-friendly environment.

In accordance with the Spanish Child Protection Act, **Law N°35 of 2014**, OpenEurope reaffirms its adherence to the principles of respecting and guaranteeing the human rights of all children, without discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, race, class, gender, culture, language, legal status, birth order, or any physical or mental condition.

To uphold these principles, OpenEurope engages in transparent communication with parents and caregivers. The organisation ensures that all relevant parties are fully informed of its child protection policies and procedures through printed materials and training. Additionally, OpenEurope provides resources and encourages a collaborative partnership with families to ensure the well-being, safety, and protection of children.

This Child Protection Policy represents OpenEurope's ongoing commitment to fostering a secure, supportive, and nurturing environment for all children involved in educational, social, and cultural activities organised or supported by the organisation.

### 3. ACCOUNTABILITY

The implementation of child protection policies and procedures at OpenEurope is subject to ongoing monitoring. The organization regularly communicates progress, performance, and lessons learned to key stakeholders, including



teachers, families, children, local authorities, and social services, and includes this information in its annual reports.

### 3.1 Staff

The President of the organisation is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy and for monitoring compliance.

All staff employed by OpenEurope, as well as volunteers working with minors, must undergo a rigorous selection process. This includes the verification of professional references and the mandatory submission of a Negative Certificate from the Central Registry of Sex Offenders, in accordance with Organic Law 8/2021. This document certifies that the individual has no criminal convictions for sexual offences and is a legal requirement for any professional activity involving regular contact with minors in Spain.

No individual may begin any duties involving direct contact with minors without first submitting a valid and up-to-date certificate.

In addition, staff and volunteers receive regular training on child protection, which includes national and international legislation, identifying signs of abuse, response protocols, and the ongoing development of practical skills required to engage safely and appropriately with minors.

### 3.2 Third-party collaborators and external personnel

Any external professional, collaborator, or partner organisation involved in activities with children under the scope of OpenEurope's programmes must comply with the same legal requirements and safeguarding procedures as internal staff.

Specifically, individuals working directly with children must provide a valid Negative Certificate from the Central Registry of Sex Offenders prior to beginning any activity. Partner organisations are responsible for ensuring that their personnel meet this requirement and for communicating this obligation clearly during any subcontracting or cooperation process.



Failure to comply will result in immediate exclusion from any activity involving minors and may lead to termination of collaboration agreements.

#### 4. PROCEDURES

OpenEurope has established clear and transparent policies and procedures to protect minors. These guidelines cover supervision, interactions with children both online and offline, and reporting mechanisms.

OpenEurope fosters an open and supportive environment where minors feel comfortable to report any worries or discomfort.

Complaints regarding the current policy should be submitted in writing via email, directed to the individual responsible for overseeing the policy.

Employees within the Foundation are expected to approach every complaint concerning a child at risk with the utmost seriousness, professionalism, and responsibility. Any concerns or uncertainties related to the safety and well-being of children must be addressed promptly and with careful consideration.

The organisation actively cooperates with social services and child protection agencies to ensure a timely and effective response to any report.

Lessons derived from practical experience will inform the continuous reassessment of policies and necessary adjustments to child protection measures. Policies and practices aimed at promoting the psychological and emotional development of children shall be periodically reviewed.

A record of all certificates submitted by staff, volunteers, and collaborators will be securely stored by the organisation's designated safeguarding officer. These records will be reviewed annually to ensure continued compliance and renewed documentation where applicable.

#### 5. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The policy defines, therefore, the policies governing the behaviour and approaches adopted by OpenEurope staff members, trainees, volunteers, and collaborators in carrying out their assigned tasks. It defines and clarifies the principles that must inspire their professional ethics inside and outside the OpenEurope premise, the conduct to be adopted in the activities carried out





together with minors, the training courses, and the methods of involvement of partner organisations, in line with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

### a. Child:

A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989).

### b. Direct contact with children:

This refers to physical presence and interaction with children in the context of OpenEurope's activities. It may include meetings, conferences, or direct work with child volunteers. (N.B. these are examples).

### c. Indirect contact with children:

This includes scenarios where an individual or organization does not directly interact with children but has access to their information or provides support to organizations working directly with children.

### 6.1. Definitions of child abuse

According to the World Health Organisation, "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power'<sup>1</sup>.

A list of various type and exploitation practices are:

- d. Physical abuse and the potential physical abuse caused by another individual – a child or an adult might include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, strangling, or any other

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<sup>1</sup> The WHO definition of Child Abuse as defined by the Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention WHO – 1999  
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physical harm of a child, including the falsification of symptoms or worsening the health of the child.

- e. **Sexual abuse:** Includes forcing or coaxing a child to perform sexual acts, regardless of whether the child is aware of it or not. These acts could be physical - either penetrating or non-penetrating - contact. They could also be either involving children into watching or producing pornographic materials, or directing children towards inappropriate behavior.
- f. **Sexual exploitation of children:** A form of sexual abuse, which coaxes children to perform sexual acts for financial gain, gifts, food, shelter, attachment, social status, or anything the children or their families might need. This form of abuse might be related to child manipulation, befriending, gaining their trust, or supplying alcohol or drugs. Such forms of abusive relationship are based on a power discrepancy, in which the victim's opportunities are extremely limited. Sexual exploitation might be wrongly interpreted by both children and adults as a relationship, based on mutual consent.
- g. **Emotional abuse:** persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.
- h. **Commercial exploitation** means exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.
- i. **Violence** was defined by the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence as 'physical, psychological (psychosocial), and sexual violence to children through abuse, neglect or exploitation, as acts of commission or omission in direct or indirect forms, that endanger or harm the child's dignity, physical, psychological, or social status, or development.'
- j. **Neglect and negligent treatment:** allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent



failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions.

- k. Criminal exploitation – children being forced to participate in illegal activities such as forced begging, shoplifting and pickpocketing, cannabis cultivation, drug dealing. A child who is being abused may often experience more than one type of cruelty.



## Appendix – Required documentation for working with minors in Spain

All individuals working with children within OpenEurope's projects must provide the following documentation:

- A valid Negative Certificate from the Central Registry of Sex Offenders (issued by the Spanish Ministry of Justice). This certificate must be renewed annually.
- Valid identification document (passport, national ID, or NIE).
- Updated curriculum vitae including verifiable references.
- A signed declaration of truthfulness confirming that the information and documentation provided are accurate and up to date.

All documentation must be submitted and verified before any activity with minors can commence.



