

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

PROTOCOL FOR THE YOUTH EXCHANGES OF THE
NETWORK FOR INCLUSION OF ASSOCIAZIONE JOINT

|FULL VERSION OF THE POLICY|



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Joint

Safeguarding policy

- Youth Exchange Protocol -

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Introduction

Joint international network, that represents Joint itself and the network's European partners, is working to create and ensure a safe learning environment for the participants of Youth Exchanges hosted by Joint or by other members of the international network, considering that we try to involve especially under 18 participants and/or young people who encounter high vulnerabilities¹. ***We aim at ensuring an environment that promotes diversity, tolerance and individual development, and that strives to reduce to minimum any risk of abuse, exploitation, discrimination or violence.***

Every young person taking part in our youth exchanges has the right to develop their full potential, they have the right to express their opinion and be listened to and they have the right to non-discrimination. We all have the responsibility to protect them from all forms of violence: abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and trafficking.

This protocol is for:

- All staff members of the host and sending organisations, partners in the youth exchange.
- Volunteers involved in the activities organised within the framework of the youth exchange.
- Facilitators, guests, speakers, journalists, local partners engaged in the activities of the youth exchange.
- Group leaders.

In some cases, some young people may be more vulnerable from this point of view due to various forms of discrimination and marginalisation related to their socio-economic status, gender, disability, ethnicity, social class or living conditions. That is why it is necessary for the staff members of the partner organisations and for the group leaders involved in the Youth Exchanges carried by our network, to understand safeguarding rules and their own role and responsibilities in terms of child and youth protection.

This protocol aims to:

- provide common definitions of violence, abuse, harm and discrimination against participants of youth exchanges organised by Joint network;
- prevent risks of violence, abuse, harm, discrimination addressed to children and young people, by making the managers and the group leaders aware of this protocol and in this way able to convey its message to the other people involved and in particular to convey it to the participants. In this way, the participants are more aware of their rights and are empowered to have an active role in safeguarding;
- encourage open and honest discussions about abuse, violence, discrimination and harm within the framework of our projects (pre-departure meetings, meetings with families and guardians, during the project activities, during reflection groups, during leaders' meetings, in the follow-up meetings, etc.);
- ensure correct, secure and transparent reporting paths that guarantee the right of partners (children, families/guardians and staff) to be heard.

¹ HVYP = Highly Vulnerable Young People. A highly vulnerable young person is a person that is living in a situation of vulnerability and who is facing an overlapping of potential exclusion factors, of which at least one is a long-term or permanent condition. Their involvement in mobility activities implies a need for a long term structural support system to be put in place by all partners in the project and promoted by National Agencies and European stakeholders.

Moreover, Joint network takes responsibility for advocating and raising awareness about the need for safeguarding procedures in all Erasmus+ Youth Exchange activities, focusing on the importance of such instruments when engaging minors and vulnerable young people.

Definitions

We recognize that abuse, violence and discrimination against young people occurs in all countries and societies in the world. Trying to define this situation as a worldwide phenomenon is still quite difficult due to the religious, social, political, legislative diversity and economic differences that children and young people experience. JOINT respects all cultures and religions and based on an intercultural and interdisciplinary approach we have created a unifying framework. In order to prevent and respond to situations of violence against children and young people it is crucial that our organisation reaches a common understanding of what abuse is and the circumstances under which safeguarding protocols and procedures apply.

In the table below we have included some criteria that can guide the evaluation of a situation that might constitute a concern or a suspicion of abuse, within the framework of a youth exchange:

Appropriate behaviour	Concerning behaviour	Abusive behaviour
Socially acceptable. Developmentally acceptable. Clearly consensual. Shared decision by those involved: no use of power in decision making. In line with the role (participant, group leader, facilitator, team member, etc.). Respectful intentions. Positive or neutral impact.	Socially unacceptable (might be culturally acceptable or acceptable in the peer groups, but still harming). Consent is given, but under power or peer pressure. Clear imbalance of power. Driven by anger, revenge, hate, prejudice. Impact: harm, pain, distress, strong discomfort. <i>Could also include self-harm.</i>	Use of coercion or force. No clear consent. Abuse of power. Can involve physical or sexual violence. Violates human rights. Sometimes it is clearly illegal. Impact: harm, pain, strong distress, traumatic experience. <i>Concerning behaviour can become abusive if it is repeated.</i>

Forms of violence: means any voluntary action by a person who is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or authority towards children and young people, which endangers their life, their physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social wellbeing, their physical integrity or mental health, and it is classified as physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and/or economic abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE involves hitting, beating, pushing, punching, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE can be verbal and non-verbal humiliation, intimidation, threats, terrorising, restrictions on freedom of action, denigration, unfair accusations, discrimination, ridicule and other hostile or rejecting attitudes towards the child or young person.

If the emotional abuse is repetitive and continuous, it leads to affecting their personality structure, cognitive development, adaptation ability, perceptions. In this case emotional violence becomes psychological abuse, which has more serious consequences than emotional abuse.

SEXUAL ABUSE represents the engagement in any form of sexual behaviours that are:

- non consensual
- below the sexual consent age, according to the national legislation of the sending country of the participants. If the law of the countries have different consent age, the highest one will be taken into consideration.

This category can include:

- sexual molestation, exposing the child or young person to insults or language with a sexual connotation, as well as touching erogenous areas with the hand or by kissing.
- situations that lead to the satisfaction of the sexual needs of an adult or, or of another child/teenager who is in a position of power or in a relationship of trust with the victim;
- attracting or forcing the child/young person to commit obscene actions;
- exposing the child/young person to obscene material or providing them such materials;
- not respecting the child/young person consent for being touched or engaged in intimate age appropriate behaviour;
- sexism or sexist actions;
- sexual harassment: remarks with a sexual connotation, such as recounting sexual episodes, naughty comments, remarks with a sexual connotation, for example, about clothing, and appearance and calling a person sexualized nicknames, as well as "jokes" or sexual mockery.

ONLINE HARASSMENT for example, using phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social media networks to harass, criticise, threaten, intimidate, mock and ridicule someone. It includes "sexting" online, for example when a person shares sexually explicit, nude or semi-nude images or videos of themselves or with other people or sends sexually explicit messages.

It is important to recognize that a young person may be affected by multiple forms of violence at the same time.

NEGLECT in the situation of residential child and youth mobilities, children could be at risk of neglect if the host, accommodation, food conditions provided for them during the project are not suitable or age appropriate, are endangering their physical stability or their health. For example, the accommodation provided to them is not safe or healthy, the food is not enough or not appropriate, there is not appropriate access to hygiene facilities, physical activities involve high risk of accidents and there is no protection or intervention mechanism offered, children do not have access to medical care when needed, etc.

Roles and responsibilities

The **CAREGIVER** is the person appointed by the host organisation to care for the wellbeing of the participants in all moments (formal, non-formal and informal) of the youth exchange. The caregiver is not the group leader or group facilitator and ideally should not be the project coordinator of the Youth Exchange. Ideally, they might have some administrative or educational roles, but this will not be their main role during the project. The profile of the caregiver might be different according to the project activities and to the profile of the group. The competences that the caregiver should have are:

- a good understanding of child and youth emotional development
- a detailed knowledge of the Safeguarding protocols of the organisation
- good skills in understanding group dynamics in non-formal and informal contexts
- understanding of trauma informed care and trauma informed education
- good knowledge of youth exchange goals and characteristics.

The main roles of the caregiver in a youth exchange are:

- caring for the physical safety and basic needs of the participants (food, accommodation, safety protocols, safe travel, safe spaces, etc.);
- advising facilitators and group leaders on creating safe educational spaces and trauma informed activities;
- participating in leaders' meetings with a focus on monitoring the safety and the safeguarding of all participants;
- evaluating suspicions of concerning or inappropriate behaviours and facilitating the decision about the response and actions to be taken;
- being the contact person with the designated safeguarding person for the project for the host Organisation and, if needed, Sending Organisations;
- reporting (in writing) the safeguarding incidents that were reported, evaluated and responded to;
- respecting the Code of conduct and the safeguarding protocol for staff members, collaborators, volunteers and group leaders.

GROUP LEADERS are the responsible adults that accompany the group of participants and ensure they develop in a safe way during the entire process (preparation, mobility, follow-up). The minimum profile of the group leaders should include:

- when working with minors, at least one of the leaders of the group should be older than 21;
- at least intermediate language level both in the language of the participants of their group and in the official language of the project;
- a detailed knowledge of the Safeguarding protocols of the organisation;
- basic understanding of group dynamics in non-formal and informal contexts;
- basic understanding of trauma informed care and trauma informed education;
- good knowledge of youth exchange goals and characteristics;
- basic understanding of child and youth emotional development.

The main role of the group leaders:

- actively participating in the preparation process and, if applicable, participate in the Preparatory Visit;
- facilitate conversations about safeguarding protocols with participants and their families/guardians (if applicable) during the preparation;
- ensuring safe travel for participants;
- accompanying participants in their learning process and leading reflection groups during the youth exchange;
- participating in the leaders' meetings during the youth exchange;
- evaluating, together with the caregiver, concerning behaviours and/or suspicion of abuse, violence or discrimination;
- taking an active role in deciding the response to any safeguarding incident regarding the participants of their national group;
- contact person for the sending organisation and families/guardians of participants in case of safeguarding incidents;
- actively participating in the follow up evaluation and dissemination process;
- respecting the Code of conduct and the safeguarding protocol for staff members, collaborators, volunteers and group leaders.

The **HOST ORGANISATION** has the following responsibilities for safeguarding:

- when selecting group leaders accompanying minors, making sure that, if you didn't work together already in the past, they have at least two references (from former collaborators, employers etc), mainly regarding behavioural integrity;
- ensuring training and addressing the topic of safeguarding with staff members and group leaders;
- appointing one staff member as a safeguarding responsible for each youth exchange, higher in hierarchy than the caregiver;
- appointing a caregiver role for each youth exchange;
- ensuring that the staff members understand the national/local legislation regarding safeguarding and that they have the needed resources (partners, contact details of institutions, protocols, etc.) to respond to safeguarding incidents.

The **SENDING ORGANISATION** has the following responsibilities for safeguarding:

- when selecting group leaders, making sure that they have at least two references, mainly regarding behavioural integrity;
- ensuring training and addressing the topic of safeguarding with group leaders;
- monitoring group leaders' activities regarding safeguarding protocols;
- appointing one staff member as a safeguarding responsible for youth exchanges;
- contribute to the management of safeguarding incident when involved by the caregiver and/or the group leader.

Steps in addressing suspicion of inappropriate behaviour

1. REPORTING AND/OR SUSPICION OF VIOLENCE, ABUSE, DISCRIMINATION

The safety of children and young people in youth exchanges is the responsibility of everyone. In the case of any suspicion of concerning or abusive behaviour, all young people and adults are encouraged to report it. Young people aged over 18 and all adults are obliged to report any suspicion of concerning or abusive behaviour.

In the situation of suspicion, the reporting mechanisms are:

- reporting to one of the group leaders
- reporting to the caregiver
- reporting anonymously through a google form link that will be provided to all participants, group leaders and staff members

What to do when an incident is reported:

- ensure the person about their rights to confidentiality and the boundaries of confidentiality;
- do not start investigating on your own, do not question the sincerity of the testimonial;
- ask non-intrusive questions about facts, in order to have as many details as possible;
- listen actively and respectfully;
- inform the person about the next steps to be taken.

All incidents reported are to be discussed with the caregiver designated for the youth exchange. It is important that NO other adult involved in the project initiates any investigation or response on their own.

2. EVALUATION OF THE TYPE OF BEHAVIOUR

Once the caregiver receives a report of a safeguarding incident, their main role is to evaluate (together with the group leader or not, depending on the situation), if the incident is a concerning behaviour or an abusive behaviour. In order to evaluate, they will take into consideration the definitions provided in this protocol.

3. TYPES OF INTERVENTION

If the caregiver decides:

- **concerning behaviour:** the incident is then discussed in the group leaders' meeting and re-evaluated with them. The host team and the leaders', with the facilitation of the caregiver, decide together on the actions to be taken in order to stop or reduce to minimum the impact of the incident. Some example of actions that can be taken, but not only: separate the victim from the instigator, one to one discussions, mediation between victim and instigator, changing the setup of the project to make it safer, address a certain topic in plenary (making sure the victim or the instigator are not pointed out by this action), rediscuss safety rules and group agreements, ...

- **abusive behaviour:** when the caregiver evaluates an incident as abusive and/or illegal, the next steps to be taken are to inform the appointed safeguarding person from each of the Host and Sending Organisations and report the incident with as many details as they have. It is now the responsibility of the SO and HO to decide together on the next steps to be taken, in cooperation with the staff members of the HO and with the caregiver, according to national legislations and internal protocols.

It is important that this step is taken with the agreement of the victim and, where actions need to be taken even if the victim wants to keep confidentiality, the caregiver and/or group leader need to clearly inform the young person about the boundaries of confidentiality and the legal requirements. All steps need to be communicated to the victim and actions should be taken with precaution and avoiding, as much as possible, retraumatizing the victim.

MINOR ON MINOR PEER VIOLENCE

Suspicious or concerns about violence by a minor against another peer should be dealt with in a special way.

Any such approach requires:

- recognizing the fact that a minor who has been violent with another peer differs significantly from adults who have committed such acts;
- to take into account that in all the decisions taken, the main concern is the best interest of the minor, both for the victim and for the one who commits the abuse.

4. DOCUMENTING

For a clear monitoring of safeguarding incidents, the caregiver will document the incidents in a written report. The report is an internal document and it is not to be shared with the partners, except when legally required to do so.

Boundaries of confidentiality:

Confidentiality means that group leaders, caregivers or any other staff member that has information about a safeguarding incident, cannot pass on the information without the clear consent of the child or young person. They can talk about the incident anonymously or not, but only with the consent of the person.

The boundaries of confidentiality are:

- if the situation strongly endangers the physical and/or psychological health of the person (over 18 year old).
- if the safeguarding incident is an abusive situation that involves a minor.

In any case, reporting further must be done with respecting the dignity of the person(s) and avoiding retraumatizing. All steps need to be clearly communicated to the person(s) concerned.

5. THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Protecting the child's or the young person's right to privacy refers to personal data about them, including photos, texts, films, etc., which are produced for communication and visibility purposes. Any information about the person's past, state of health, identity, social or economical status and any other sensitive information must be carefully stored. This information must be treated confidentially and with discretion, including by those who have access to it for the fulfilment of work responsibilities.

All staff members, group leaders and external partners involved in the dissemination of information about our projects and in the creation and distribution of communication materials, act in accordance with the following guiding principles:

- when communication materials are produced in which a child or a young person appears, permission is requested in this regard from both the young person and their legal representative (if they are minors);
- we use their names with care, especially when it comes to sensitive information about them (eg: family history, health status, disabilities, identity, social status, etc.);
- we only use the image of the child or the young person while engaged in activities and not images produced and/or recorded during free time or private moments, in order to avoid the exposure of the person in situation that might show them in a vulnerable position.