YouNet APS

Child Protection Policy

Bologna, Italy
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1. Our mission and activities

YouNet APS promotes, supports and takes care of the organization at local or international level of: volunteering projects and non-formal education; youth activities (e.g. tandem and language activities; awareness-raising activities in schools...); socio-educational, cultural, environmental, sports and entertainment activities. YouNet leads education training and information activities on the European dimension, anti-racism, active citizenship, and sustainable lifestyles in collaboration with professionals and high schools. YouNet has wide experience in volunteering, non-formal education, and mobility learning. Through this long experience and collaboration with organizations from all over the world, YouNet has had the opportunity to increase its experience and further improve the standards of support for volunteers in receiving and sending to give them the means to take full advantage of this experience.

In its activities, YouNet APS wants to create a safe space for children and young people, where they are protected, respected and where they can express their ideas and opinions and can grow from the personal, emotional and social point of view.

2. Aim of the Policy and guiding principles

The aim of the Policy is to protect children and young people regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation taking part in the activities and initiatives promoted by YouNet APS from any form of harm, exploitation, neglect or violence. Moreover, the Policy provides staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families with principles and regulations that guide our approach to children and young people's protection.

The Policy defines procedures to enhance the capacity of reducing risks connected to young people and children in the implementation of the activities, with the intention to mitigate and reduce as much as possible these risks. We know that total eradication of these risks is not possible, but we are committing to reduce them with our best effort, by preventing, raising awareness, communicating, and signaling.

The commitment involves all the phases of our work:

- project design
- networking and creation of partnerships
- implementation of activities
- monitoring and evaluation
- communication and dissemination

At every stage, the Association commits to protect children and young people from any form of neglect, abuse, or discrimination of any kind, and to listen to and recognize their needs, removing any obstacles to their possibility of expressing their necessities and fears.

YouNet APS shares the Child Safeguarding Standards, as the basis of the Policy:
- All children have equal rights to protection from harm.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- Organizations have a duty of care to children with whom they work, are in contact with, or who are affected by their work and operations.
- All actions on child safeguarding are taken in the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

In developing this Policy, YouNet APS refers to the principles embedded in the main International Treaties concerning childhood and fundamental rights:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially art.2 on the prohibition of discrimination of any kind, art. 28-29 on education, art. 31 on leisure and recreational activities;
- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights
- the Italian Constitution.

3. Definitions and terms

Child: As defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a "child" refers to every human being below the age of 18 years, unless the applicable law recognizes an earlier age of majority.

Child Protection: Child protection refers to the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children. It encompasses measures taken to ensure the safety, well-being, and rights of children, and includes both preventive and reactive actions.

Child Abuse: Child abuse refers to any act, conduct, or omission that causes harm to a child's physical, emotional, or psychological well-being. It can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse refers to any deliberate act of physical harm or injury inflicted upon a child or vulnerable individual. It involves the use of physical force that may result in pain, injury, impairment, or distress. Physical abuse can manifest in various forms, including hitting, punching, kicking, burning, shaking, or any other action that causes physical harm.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse involves any form of sexual activity or behavior imposed on a child or vulnerable individual without their consent or understanding. It includes a wide range of actions, such as sexual assault, molestation, rape, incest, exposure to explicit material, or any other sexually exploitative conduct. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse refers to a pattern of behavior that aims to undermine, manipulate, control, or belittle a child or vulnerable individual's emotional well-being and sense of self-worth. It involves the use of verbal or non-verbal methods to inflict emotional distress, such as constant criticism, humiliation, insults, threats, intimidation, or isolation.

Child Neglect: Child neglect refers to the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing, education, and medical care. It involves a pattern of inattention or disregard for the child's well-being, which can result in physical, emotional, or developmental harm.

Child Exploitation: Child exploitation involves the use, abuse, or exploitation of a child for personal or commercial purposes. It includes child labor, child trafficking, child sexual exploitation, child marriage, and any other forms of harmful or exploitative practices.

Bullying: A repeated and intentional aggressive behavior, involving an imbalance of power, where an individual or a group of individuals target another person or persons with the intent to cause harm, distress, or fear. It includes various forms, such as physical, verbal, relational, or cyberbullying.

4. Unacceptable behaviors when working with children

- violent behavior, communication or approach towards children;
- unwanted physical contact or sexually-oriented contact toward children;
- conduct a sexual relationship with a child or young person or indulge in any form of sexual contact with a child or young person. Any such behavior between an adult member of staff or volunteer and a child or young person using the services of the organization represents a serious breach of trust on the part of the staff member or volunteer and is not acceptable under any circumstances;
- develop inappropriate relationships, such as contact with children and young people that is not a part of the work of the organization or agreed with the manager or leader;
- let children and young people have your personal contact details (mobile number or address);
- non-pertinent requests to children such as personal objects, pictures;
- threats of physical harm or actual physical harm;

- threats, verbal abuse, shouting, obscene or derogatory remarks and rudeness;
- racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist comments, or other harassment based on personal characteristics;
- treating children unfairly based on their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, or any other protected characteristic;
- repeatedly demanding disciplinary action be taken against children;
- engaging in behaviors that undermine a child's self-worth, manipulate their emotions, or intentionally cause psychological distress;
- failing to provide appropriate care, supervision, and support for children's basic needs, including food, shelter, and medical attention;
- violating a child's privacy rights, such as intruding on their personal space, accessing their personal belongings without permission, or sharing their private information without consent;
- recording meetings or telephone conversations without the consent of the parents of the children;
- behavior or language (verbal or written) that may cause children to feel offended, afraid, threatened or abused;
- insulting or degrading language;
- personal grudges toward certain children;
- making serious allegations against children without any evidence;
- hitting, isolating, humiliating, belittling, depriving children of food or drink, negative labeling, blaming and shaming;
- patronize or treat children and young people as if they are silly;
- allow allegations to go unreported;
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and young people;
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive;
- make inappropriate promises to children and young people, particularly in relation to confidentiality;
- either exaggerate or trivialize child abuse issues;
- rely on your reputation or that of the organization to protect you.

5. Staff members

This Policy is strictly binding on anyone working on behalf of YouNet APS, including the board, paid staff, interns, volunteers. They are informed on the principles concerning abuse and neglect and the risks connected, on prevention and on the guidelines and behaviors to adopt while working with children and young people.

Moreover, the Policy will be shared with:

- Children, parents of children and young people, so that they can be aware of their rights, and they will be encouraged to protect themselves and their peers.
- Working partners, with whom the Policy will be shared. It is required to respect and follow all the principles and guidelines and to collaborate in their enforcement.
- Stakeholders, to extend the commitment to protect the rights of the children to a maximum extent.

Employees will have planned continuous training on safeguarding policies and on child protection. Everybody involved in the organization and its work must be aware of the Policy and its content. The Policy is published on the website of the organization (www.you-net.eu), so to be accessible and available for consultation.

6. Child Protection Officer

YouNet APS is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of children, which is why a dedicated Child Protection Officer has been appointed to oversee the implementation and enforcement of child protection policies and procedures. The Child Protection Officer of YouNet APS is Paulina Walacik - president of the organization. The responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer in YouNet are as follows:

- Overseeing the development, implementation, and reviewing of comprehensive child protection policies and procedures.
- Conducting training sessions and workshops to raise awareness among staff members and volunteers about child protection principles and best practices.
- Assessing potential risks and vulnerabilities within the organization's activities, programs, and environments, and developing risk mitigation strategies.
- Establishing and managing a confidential reporting mechanism for child protection concerns or incidents, ensuring appropriate documentation, investigation, and response.
- Providing support, guidance, and counseling to staff members, volunteers, and caregivers regarding child protection concerns and policy implementation.
- Maintaining accurate and securing documentation of child protection-related information, adhering to confidentiality and data protection regulations.

The Child Protection Officer ensures that the staff members, interns and volunteers are aware of the standards, rules and procedures, and act as a go-to person for any concerns on child safeguarding.

To ensure the policy aligns with its objectives, an annual review will be conducted.

7. Preventive measures

General measures

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- valuing, listening to, and respecting them;
- preventing and responding to bullying in its different forms: verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, cyberbullying, discrimination and exclusion;
- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise;
- making sure all activities and events involving children and young adults are run safely;
- introducing adults to child ratios for supervising children effectively;
- keeping children safe online, especially providing information on how to use social media and the risks associated, eventually introducing parental control on IT tools used;
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance;
- adopting child protection and safeguarding best practices through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers;
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behavior codes confidently and competently;
- making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern;
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place;
- building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

When collaborating with partners

The choice of the partners will take into consideration the sharing of common values and commitments regarding children and young people's rights, together with the adoption of their own Child Protection Policy, experience and knowledge of their needs in the design and implementation of activities.

The Policy will be shared, and the partnership will discuss how to best respect the principles and guidelines of the Policies and the International Treaties on the local level and according to the context while structuring and delivering actions and initiatives.

When hiring new staff members

YouNet ensures the implementation of codes of conduct for all staff and volunteers.
The selected staff has to be aligned with YouNet's principles and efforts in protecting and respecting children and young people. The staff must be fully aware of the definition of abuse, negligence and discrimination, in order to avoid any possible unintentional harm. Staff will be informed on appropriate and inappropriate behaviors when working with children and young people.
It is possible to prevent or reduce risks starting from the selection of staff members and volunteers, addressing: their attention and care of the needs of children and young people during the activities implemented, both the expressed and hidden necessities; their respect for the rights of the child; their guiding values such as honesty and non-discrimination; their references. Recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers will be carried out safely, ensuring that all necessary checks are made.

Our organization is committed to ensuring a thorough and comprehensive recruitment process for all categories of staff, including trainees, volunteers, and employees. The recruitment process is designed to ensure the safety and well-being of our community members and to maintain a secure environment for everyone involved. The process includes the following steps:

1. Application: Interested individuals are required to submit an application form, providing relevant personal and professional information, along with their consent for background checks.

2. Preliminary Screening: The submitted applications are reviewed by our recruitment team, who assess the qualifications and suitability of each candidate. This screening helps in shortlisting candidates for further evaluation.

3. Interview: Shortlisted candidates are invited to fulfill and submit the pre-interview questionnaire. Candidates selected on base of the questionnaire are invited for an interview, which is made over phone in the first stage and then in person or via video conference in the final stage. During the interview, we assess the candidate's skills, experience, and alignment with our organization's values and mission.

4. Background Checks: As part of our commitment to ensuring a safe environment, all candidates are subject to background checks, which include vetting and criminal record certificates. These checks are

conducted for all countries where the candidate has previously worked or resided. The purpose of these checks is to identify any past criminal activity or concerns that could pose a risk to the organization or its community.

5. Reference Checks: We also conduct reference checks by contacting the candidate's provided references, including previous employers or supervisors, to gain insights into their work ethic, performance, and professional conduct.

6. Decision and Offer: Based on the outcome of the interview, background checks, and reference checks, a final decision is made regarding the candidate's suitability for the position. If the candidate is selected, an offer of employment or engagement is extended, outlining the terms and conditions of the role.

It is important to note that the recruitment process described above applies to all categories of staff, including trainees, volunteers, and employees, in order to maintain consistency and ensure the safety of our community. We are committed to upholding ethical practices and safeguarding the welfare of all individuals involved in our organization.

When implementing activities

All the activities addressing children and young people will be led fully respecting the rights that inform this Policy, without any form of discrimination, harm, violence or negligence.
The methods used are mainly non-formal, suitable to allow the involvement of all the participants, and special attention will be dedicated to the needs of children and young people with fewer opportunities, in order to guarantee the same learning opportunities for everybody.

When communicating and disseminating about projects and activities

When communicating internally or externally to the Association, for any purpose (dissemination of a project, recruitment and selection of volunteers, promotion of future events and initiatives, …), the action must respect the rights and dignity of children and young people.
In case of publication of images, videos or stories, parental or tutor consent (see Annexes) is needed and requested. All the material, photos, videos or any other proof of the implementation of activities is collected just if necessary and it will be used limited to the duration and aims of the specific activity. The material is accessible only to members of the organization.

8. Raising a concern and whistleblowing

Everyone working or volunteering at YouNet will be able to raise a concern about safety and well-being through specific report templates (see Annexes) to be submitted to the person in charge. Internal whistleblowing is protected, and the whistleblower is guaranteed privacy and discretion.

YouNet APS ensures the correct management of allegations made against staff or volunteers or against a child or young person.

9. Accountability

In order to monitor the implementation of child protection policies, measures are integrated into the systems already in place for risk assessment, monitoring and reporting. Performance and progress are regularly reported to the Board, including issues and cases arising.

Lessons and practical experience inform the periodic review of the Policy and procedures, which are assessed every year.

Self-audit tools and internal audits are necessary to regularly assess procedures and policies, which must be reported alongside other areas of the business.

10. Confidentiality

YouNet ensures recording, storing and using information concerning child protection and reporting professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance. Information will only be shared with people concerned, both internally and externally to the organization.

11. Protection systems outside the organization

The following are the phone numbers and referrals and of protection systems present in Italy and that can be addressed outside the organization:

- Police and Carabinieri: 112
- Emergenza infanzia: 114
- Telefono azzurro: 1 96 96, available also online at https://azzurro.it/
- Social services of the city of Bologna: 051 219 7878, email: sportellosocialebologna@comune.bologna.it

12. Contact Details

For any inquiries, assistance, further information or support regarding child protection matters, the Child Protection Officer is available under the following contact details:

Paulina Andzelika Walacik

info@you-net.eu

3336846684

YouNet APS
Via Emilia Ponente 129
40133 – Bologna
CF: 91322800375

Paulina Walacik-

Presidente di YouNet APS

Bologna, 03.04.2023

Annex - Reporting child abuse form

The child safe standards require organizations that provide services for children to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse. This template must be provided to a child or their family if they disclose an allegation of abuse or safety concern in your organization. Staff can also use this resource to record disclosures. All incident reports must be stored securely.

Incident details

Date of incident:

Time of incident:

Location of incident:

Name(s) of child/children involved:

Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:

Please categorize the incident

- Physical violence
- Sexual offense
- Serious emotional or psychological abuse
- Serious neglect

Please describe the incident

When did it take place?

Who was involved?

What did you see?

Other information:

Office use

Date incident report received:

Staff member managing incident:

Follow-up date: Incident ref. number:

Has the incident been reported?

- Police
- Another third party (please specify:_____)

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?