



ACTION for the
CIVIL SOCIETY
IMPACT THAT ECHOES



Child Protection Policy

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Action for the Civil Society

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Introduction

Action for the Civil Society is committed to creating a nurturing and protective environment for children and young people participating in its programs. This policy reflects the organization's unwavering dedication to safeguarding the rights and well-being of all individuals under the age of 18. The framework serves as a guiding document for establishing a safe, inclusive, and supportive atmosphere across all organizational activities. It outlines the principles, practices, and protocols that will enable all staff, volunteers, and collaborators to ensure the highest standards of care and responsibility in their interactions with children and young people.

Important term: Child is any person younger than 18-years-of-age.

Important note: Action for the Civil Society's, Child Protection Policy applies from 18/12/2024 (18th of December 2024).

About Action for the Civil Society

Action for the Civil Society, a non-governmental organization based in Athens, Greece, is dedicated to empowering youth and supporting underserved communities. With expertise in non-formal education, the organization addresses critical topics such as youth development, sustainability, inclusion, human rights, mental and physical health, and the responsible use of digital tools. Since its inception, the organization has worked to foster positive social change and cultural understanding by collaborating with NGOs and international institutions.

Action for the Civil Society prioritizes the welfare of children and young people in all its initiatives. The organization ensures that all activities adhere to child protection standards, with staff and volunteers trained to uphold strict codes of conduct. By creating safe spaces for young people to thrive, Action for the Civil Society contributes meaningfully to the future of Greece and beyond.

Aim of Child Protection Policy

The primary aim of the Child Protection Policy is to safeguard the well-being, safety, and dignity of all children and young people engaged in the activities of Action for the Civil Society. The organization recognizes its moral and legal responsibility to protect children from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This policy ensures that appropriate measures are in place to prevent any form of mistreatment while fostering an environment that promotes children's rights, safety, and healthy development. By prioritizing child protection, the organization demonstrates its unwavering commitment to creating a nurturing, inclusive, and secure space where every child can thrive without fear.

Another key aim of the policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for identifying, reporting, and addressing any concerns related to child safety. It outlines the roles and

responsibilities of all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge and tools to act promptly and effectively. Through structured procedures, the policy reinforces accountability at all levels, ensuring that no issue goes unnoticed or unresolved. Additionally, it empowers staff and volunteers to take proactive steps in recognizing signs of harm and responding in a manner that prioritizes the safety and welfare of the child.

The policy also aims to foster a culture of respect and understanding, where children's voices are heard, valued, and acted upon. By encouraging active participation and feedback, children become partners in their own protection, allowing them to build confidence, self-awareness, and self-advocacy skills. Action for the Civil Society actively works to educate children on their rights, equipping them with the knowledge to recognize inappropriate behavior and seek help when needed. This approach empowers young people to engage confidently and safely in all activities.

Lastly, the Child Protection Policy seeks to ensure that the organization's practices align with national and international child protection standards. By conducting regular reviews, providing ongoing training, and continuously improving processes, Action for the Civil Society remains proactive in adapting to new challenges and best practices. Through this commitment, the organization contributes to a broader culture of child safety, setting an example for others and reinforcing its mission to create lasting, positive impacts on the lives of children and young people.

Policy coverage

The Child Protection Policy applies comprehensively to all activities, programs, and initiatives organized or facilitated by Action for the Civil Society (AFCS). This includes, but is not limited to, workshops, training sessions, educational programs, community events, recreational activities, and digital or virtual engagements. AFCS acknowledges that children and young people may face risks in various environments and activities, and therefore, this policy provides clear guidelines to ensure their safety and well-being across all settings. Whether activities occur on-site, off-site, or online, the organization remains fully committed to upholding the highest child protection standards.

The policy is binding for all individuals and groups directly or indirectly involved in AFCS activities. This includes full-time and part-time employees, volunteers, interns, consultants, and external collaborators who contribute to the organization's programs. It also extends to participants, visitors, guardians, and partners who engage with the organization. By ensuring that everyone involved understands their responsibilities and obligations under this policy, AFCS creates a unified and consistent approach to child safety.

The scope of coverage includes specific measures that address interactions, behaviors, and responsibilities during various activities. For instance, child protection protocols are strictly enforced in physical spaces where AFCS conducts its work, such as:

- **Workshops and training programs:** Ensuring safe learning environments where children can participate actively and without fear of harm.
- **Recreational and outdoor activities:** Implementing safety procedures to prevent accidents, injuries, or inappropriate behavior.

- **Community and outreach events:** Maintaining respectful interactions and supervision to safeguard children during group activities.
- **Virtual engagements and online platforms:** Monitoring digital interactions to prevent cyberbullying, exploitation, or inappropriate communications.

Additionally, the policy covers all AFCS-led partnerships, collaborations, and external events where children are involved. The organization works closely with partners to ensure that shared values and standards for child protection are upheld consistently. By implementing this approach, AFCS ensures that safeguarding measures remain effective across every program and activity, creating a culture of safety, accountability, and mutual trust.

By covering such a broad spectrum of activities and stakeholders, this policy ensures that children and young people are protected from harm in every setting where AFCS operates. It sets clear expectations for everyone involved, reinforcing the organization commitment to providing a safe, inclusive, and empowering environment for all participants.

This policy applies to all individuals involved with Action for the Civil Society, including:

- **paid and volunteer staff** (further referred to as “staff”)
- **children and young people participating in the projects**
- **visitors including parents and family members, projects’ partners, etc.**

Action for the Civil Society expects that all those involved with the activities will follow the policies and procedures outlined in this document. If breaches of these policies and procedures occur they will be dealt by our Child Safety Officer.

Rules for interacting with children

All staff and volunteers are required to uphold the values of fairness, respect, and professionalism when interacting with children. A core principle of this policy is treating every child equally, regardless of their background, gender, abilities, or personal circumstances. Staff must actively work to create an environment where children feel acknowledged, listened to, and valued as unique individuals.

Effective interaction is built on active listening. Staff should give children their full attention, respond empathetically, and encourage open communication, allowing children to express their ideas, experiences, and feelings without fear of judgment. Open dialogue helps staff to better understand and address the specific needs, concerns, and perspectives of the children under their care.

Communication must always be clear, thoughtful, and age-appropriate. This means adapting vocabulary, tone, and delivery to match the developmental level of each child while ensuring that complex, sensitive, or difficult topics are addressed with compassion and care. Staff are expected to use communication as a tool to build trust, understanding, and a sense of security.

Language or behaviors that are harmful, dismissive, or discriminatory are strictly prohibited. Staff must

avoid shouting, using inappropriate language, making negative assumptions, or perpetuating stereotypes. Instead, interactions should be centered on positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, and a kind, patient approach that builds children’s confidence and trust.

To maintain a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment, the following practices are emphasized:

- **Building trust and rapport** by taking time to connect with children, showing genuine interest in their thoughts, activities, and contributions.
- **Encouraging active participation** by providing children with opportunities to engage fully in programs, express their ideas, and contribute to decision-making processes.
- **Responding to concerns with empathy** by listening carefully to any worries children may share and addressing them promptly and thoughtfully.
- **Modeling respectful behavior** by acting as positive role models and demonstrating fairness, kindness, and professionalism in all interactions.
- **Promoting inclusivity** by celebrating diversity and fostering an environment where every child feels welcomed, accepted, and valued as part of the group.

Rules for a safe relationship between staff and a child

To ensure the safety and well-being of all children participating in Action for the Civil Society's programs, clear boundaries are established to govern relationships between staff, volunteers, and children. These rules aim to prevent any behavior or situation that could jeopardize trust, safety, or professionalism.

Staff and volunteers are required to maintain appropriate physical, emotional, and social boundaries with children. Physical contact must be limited to situations where it is absolutely necessary, such as ensuring safety, providing health or hygiene assistance, or offering comfort in an appropriate and respectful manner. Staff should always be mindful of the child’s personal space and avoid actions that may be misinterpreted.

It is strictly prohibited for staff or volunteers to form private, personal, or unsupervised relationships with children outside of organizational activities. Hosting children in private homes, arranging unsanctioned meetings, or engaging in one-on-one communication, such as private messaging, without the involvement of caregivers or supervisors, is not allowed. These restrictions are in place to ensure transparency, prevent conflicts of interest, and avoid any inappropriate or harmful situations.

Staff and volunteers must never engage in behaviors that could be considered harmful, abusive, or exploitative. This includes actions such as raising one’s voice, using derogatory language, humiliating a child, or engaging in emotionally manipulative or intimidating conduct. Under no circumstances should staff provide alcohol, drugs, or other substances to children or condone illegal or unsafe behavior.

Additionally, staff must avoid situations where they could be alone with a child in private spaces. Whenever possible, interactions should occur in open, visible, and supervised environments. During overnight trips, staff are not permitted to sleep in the same room as children, and separate

accommodations must always be arranged to ensure safety and comfort.

Any concerns or suspicions of inappropriate relationships or boundary violations must be reported immediately to the designated Child Safety Officer (CSO). This ensures that any issue is addressed swiftly, transparently, and in a manner that prioritizes the child's safety and well-being.

By following these rules, staff and volunteers create a professional, supportive, and respectful environment that prioritizes the safety of children and upholds the integrity of Action for the Civil Society's programs. Clear boundaries ensure that trust remains intact and children are safeguarded at all times.

Child Safety Officer

As part of its unwavering commitment to child protection, Action for the Civil Society has appointed a designated Child Safety Officer (CSO) to oversee and implement child safeguarding measures. The CSO plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety, welfare, and rights of all children participating in the organization's activities. In fulfilling this responsibility, the CSO works closely with the leadership team to ensure a consistent and robust approach to child protection.

The Child Safety Officer must meet specific qualifications to effectively carry out their role. This includes completing dedicated training on child abuse prevention and creating a child-safe organization. The CSO is also expected to pursue ongoing professional development by attending further training sessions, workshops, or seminars to stay informed of emerging trends, legislation, and best practices in child protection.

Organizations, including Action for the Civil Society, are legally and morally responsible for taking appropriate steps to prevent child abuse or neglect. Failure to implement these safeguards, such as thorough screening and supervision of staff and volunteers, may expose the organization to legal liability. For example, if the organization hires an individual without conducting essential checks, such as a Police Clearance or verification of qualifications, and that individual is later found to have a history of abuse, the organization could be held negligent. To mitigate such risks, Action for the Civil Society mandates all staff and volunteers over 18 years of age to provide valid background checks before assuming their roles.

The Child Safety Officer's responsibilities include:

- **Maintaining confidential records:** The CSO is responsible for documenting any minor concerns about a child that may indicate a broader issue over time. All records must be securely stored and include dates, signatures, and detailed observations.
- **Reporting concerns:** The CSO must ensure that any suspicions, incidents, or disclosures of abuse are reported immediately to the appropriate authorities, such as the police or child protection services. They also provide support to staff or volunteers making reports.
- **Raising awareness:** Ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and participants are fully aware of the organization's child protection policies, procedures, and expected behaviors. The CSO works to embed a culture of safety, accountability, and transparency across the organization.
- **Monitoring technology use:** The CSO is tasked with observing and addressing any

inappropriate communication, emails, messages, or online images involving children that may arise during the organization's programs.

- **Promoting a safe culture:** The CSO works proactively to create an environment where children feel secure, welcome, and encouraged to voice any concerns or challenges without fear of judgment. This includes fostering trust between staff and participants.
- **Policy oversight and updates:** The CSO coordinates annual reviews of the child protection policies and ensures that any necessary changes or improvements are implemented in consultation with leadership.
- **Organizing training:** The CSO arranges ongoing training on child protection topics for staff, volunteers, and participants to enhance awareness of protective behaviors, appropriate conduct, and reporting procedures.
- **Coordinating follow-up:** In cases where incidents or reports are made, the CSO is responsible for overseeing follow-up actions, ensuring that children receive the necessary support and that any issues are addressed thoroughly and effectively.
- **Managing media inquiries:** The CSO works alongside the organization's leadership to handle media requests related to child protection matters, ensuring that confidentiality and professionalism are maintained.

Appointing a Child Safety Officer

For smaller programs or projects, the role of the Child Safety Officer (CSO) may be combined with the Project Coordinator's responsibilities. In such cases, it is critical that the individual appointed is fully aware of and capable of fulfilling all duties associated with the CSO role.

When appointing a Child Safety Officer, the following considerations and steps must be taken:

- The individual must possess a strong understanding of child protection principles, including the ability to recognize signs of harm and abuse.
- They must have completed, or commit to completing, formal training on child abuse prevention, reporting mechanisms, and creating child-safe environments.
- The organization must assess the candidate's suitability for the role through background checks, including police clearances, references, and validation of relevant qualifications.
- Clear expectations and responsibilities for the role must be communicated to the appointed CSO, ensuring they are well-prepared to act as the key point of contact for child safety matters.
- The organization must provide ongoing training and resources to ensure the CSO remains informed about current developments, laws, and best practices in child protection.

Reporting Procedures

Action for the Civil Society follows a set of guiding principles to ensure that all concerns regarding a child's safety and well-being are handled effectively and responsibly. These principles emphasize the right of every child to be listened to, protected, and supported without hesitation. Similarly, families

have the right to have their concerns taken seriously and acted upon promptly. Any allegations made against an individual will be handled through a fair and transparent process, ensuring that the rights of the alleged perpetrator are also respected. The organization is committed to maintaining confidentiality for all parties involved, upholding everyone's right to privacy throughout the reporting and investigation process. Above all, AFCS ensures that all concerns are addressed promptly, respectfully, and in a manner that prioritizes the child's safety.

Risk Management

AFCS recognizes that risks can arise in various forms during its projects and activities. These risks include, but are not limited to, peer bullying, injuries resulting from physical activities, and misuse of equipment such as sports tools or technology (e.g., VR glasses). To minimize potential harm, all projects undergo thorough risk analysis before implementation. Risks are identified, assessed, and strategies are put in place to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring. Regular reviews and updates ensure that risk management measures remain effective and relevant.

Recruitment, Screening, Training and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

Action for the Civil Society is dedicated to creating a safe environment for children by ensuring that all staff and volunteers undergo a rigorous recruitment and screening process. Job advertisements clearly highlight the organization's commitment to child protection and the importance of screening mechanisms. For each role, detailed position descriptions are developed, including key selection criteria that emphasize the need for strong ethical standards and child protection awareness.

Candidates are encouraged to evaluate their suitability for the position, and comprehensive information about the organization and the role is provided. Once selected, all staff and volunteers must undergo background checks, including police clearance and reference verification. Furthermore, AFCS ensures that staff receive ongoing training and supervision to maintain high standards of professionalism, child protection, and ethical conduct.

Child and Young People participation and empowerment

Action for the Civil Society strongly believes in empowering children and young people by equipping them with the skills to protect themselves and express their views confidently. The organization encourages the active participation of children in all projects and activities, enabling them to contribute feedback, ideas, and concerns. Informal consultations with young participants are conducted regularly as part of the policy's annual review process to ensure the policy remains relevant and effective.

Internet Safety

Action for the Civil Society acknowledges both the benefits and risks associated with the use of technology, mobile phones, and the internet. While digital tools can enhance learning and creativity, they can also be misused as avenues for abuse, exploitation, or harmful behavior. To address these risks, AFCS educates children and young people on safe and respectful ways to use technology.

During organizational activities, all digital usage is closely monitored and conducted in open, supervised spaces to ensure transparency and safety. Any indication of inappropriate activity, whether directed at or initiated by a child, must be reported immediately to the designated Child Safety Officer. Staff, volunteers, and parents all share the responsibility of identifying and reporting any concerns related to online safety.

Drugs and Alcohol

Action for the Civil Society is committed to maintaining a safe, professional, and supportive environment for all participants. Staff and volunteers are strictly prohibited from attending programs or activities under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs. Individuals who are prescribed medication that may affect their performance are required to inform management to ensure responsibilities are managed appropriately.

The organization recognizes that the use, possession, or distribution of recreational drugs, as well as the consumption of alcohol by minors, is illegal and strictly unacceptable. AFCS also acknowledges the detrimental impact that substance abuse can have on a young person's physical health, emotional well-being, and social development. By enforcing this policy, the organization ensures the safety, integrity, and professionalism of all its activities.

Code of Conduct

To promote a safe and supportive environment, Action for the Civil Society maintains a clear Code of Conduct that defines acceptable behavior for staff, volunteers, and participants. This Code serves as a safeguard for children and young people while protecting the integrity of the organization. New staff and volunteers are required to read, discuss, and sign the Code of Conduct before assuming their roles.

Complaint mechanism

All staff, volunteers, and participants of Action for the Civil Society are responsible for identifying and reporting any suspicion of abuse or harm to children in accordance with legal requirements. Concerns or allegations—whether raised by a child, parent, professional, or staff member—must be taken seriously and acted upon immediately.

When a concern arises, a team consisting of the reporting individual, project coordinator, and a child protection expert appointed by the organization will determine the appropriate course of action. If a

crime or immediate threat to the child's well-being is suspected, AFCS is legally obligated to report the incident to the relevant authorities, such as police or child protection services.

In cases of emergencies where a child's health or life is in danger, staff are required to act without delay by notifying authorities immediately. All actions and interventions must be documented accurately, including the time of the report, details of the concern, actions taken, and follow-up measures.

If a serious incident occurs, such as harm or loss of life, the organization initiates a detailed analysis to review the case, ensure all available resources were used, and identify areas for improvement to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

To summarize in cases of emergencies or serious incidents, the staff of AFCS must keep an accurate record of:

- the date and time of the incident/disclosure
- the date and time of the report
- the name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details
- the name and role of the person making the report (if this is different to the above) and their contact details
- the names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses
- the name, age and any other relevant information about the child who is the subject of the concern (including information about their parents or carers and any siblings) what was said or done and by whom
- any action taken to look into the matter
- any further action taken (such as a referral being made)
- the reasons why the organisation decided not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency (if relevant).

Policy implementation, review and monitoring

The Child Protection Policy is effective upon its publication and availability to all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders. To ensure its ongoing relevance, the policy is formally reviewed at least every two years. Feedback is actively sought from staff, volunteers, participants, and other relevant stakeholders to identify areas for improvement.

The review process evaluates the effectiveness of policy implementation, identifies training needs, and considers changes in child protection laws or best practices. Any proposed revisions are presented to the organization's leadership for approval. Once approved, updates are communicated to all staff to ensure compliance and understanding.

Data protection

Action for the Civil Society is committed to safeguarding the personal and sensitive data of children and families participating in its programs. All records, including documentation of support, incidents, or reports, are kept securely in compliance with data protection laws. Written and informed consent is obtained from legal guardians before processing any personal data or using images of children for educational or promotional materials.

AFCS ensures that sensitive information is only shared with third parties, such as courts or law enforcement agencies, when legally required and under strict protocols. The organization does not release participant information to media outlets and prioritizes the privacy of children and families to maintain trust and confidentiality.

Staff and volunteers are strictly prohibited from disclosing any confidential information obtained through their roles unless defined by law or organizational procedures. Through these measures, Action for the Civil Society creates a secure and respectful environment for all participants.

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