

ACTIVE YOUTH ASSOCIATION

Child Protection Policy

April, 2023

Introduction

This policy is designed to protect all children and young people who participate in Active Youth activities. The policy defines children and young people as anyone under the age of 18 years and includes students participating in Active Youth projects' activities and initiatives.

Important term:

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

About Active Youth Association

Active Youth Association is a non-profit organization that is committed to empowering young people and underserved communities in Europe and beyond. Active Youth has gained extensive expertise in non-formal education and possesses a diverse knowledge base on various topics such as youth development opportunities, sustainability, inclusion and human rights, mental and physical health, and digital tools. Since its inception in 2014, Active Youth has remained steadfast in its mission to foster positive social change and promote cultural diversity by collaborating with other European NGOs and international organizations to host and support youth activities in several countries.

Active Youth Association recognizes the importance of safeguarding the welfare and well-being of children and young people in all its activities. It is committed to ensuring that all its programs and initiatives adhere to child protection policies and procedures. The staff believe that creating a safe and secure environment for young people is crucial to their development and future success. As such, Active Youth has put in place measures to ensure that all staff and volunteers are trained in child protection and adhere to strict codes of conduct.

Active Youth's commitment to child and young people under 18 protection underscores their unwavering dedication to the empowerment of young people and underserved communities. By creating safe spaces for young people to learn, grow and thrive, Active Youth Association believes that they can contribute positively to the future of the European continent and beyond

Aim of Child Protection Policy

The Child and Young People Under 18 Protection Policy of Active Youth Association is a set of guidelines, rules and standards that aim to ensure the safety of children who are involved in the activities of the organization. This policy emphasizes the importance of preventing child harm, safeguarding them and creating a culture within the organization that values the rights of children and fosters constant learning.

The policy defines the specific responsibilities of individuals within the organization to ensure the safety and protection of children. It also outlines appropriate measures to take in the event of suspected child harm or abuse or direct threat to a child's health and life.

Active Youth recognizes that implementing the Child and Young People Under 18 Protection Policy is not only a professional obligation but also a moral responsibility of all its employees and collaborators. Active Youth Association is

committed to creating a safe environment for children by providing education, prevention, and intervention activities to keep them protected.

Active Youth strives to create a culture within the organization that is centered on the rights of children and young people and their safety. By adhering to this policy and creating a safe and supportive environment for children and young people under 18, AY is fulfilling its mission of empowering young people and making positive contributions to society.

Policy coverage

This policy applies to all individuals involved with Active Youth Association, 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.

Active Youth Association 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.

General rules for interactions with children

Active Youth Association welcomes all children to participate in their activities, irrespective of their race, gender, nationality, religion or health status. However, before involving a child in any activity, the consent of their caregiver is mandatory. Active Youth Association's staff always interact with children with respect for their rights, dignity, and empowerment, especially emphasizing their right to be protected from harm and abuse. All activities that involve contact with children respect the child's right to privacy, and direct contact with children is only made with their consent and is tailored to their needs. Furthermore, all staff members of Active Youth Association:

- treat all children equally, regardless of their beliefs, appearance, or origin;
- show respect for the child's differences, experiences, beliefs, and perspectives;
- carefully listen to children and show respect for their statements and accounts;
- avoid using judgmental language or labels and communicate in a manner that is appropriate for the child's level of development;
- foster a culture of openness and mutual responsibility within the Association, encouraging discussions on different issues and topics related to child protection.

Rules for a safe relationship between staff and a child

Active Youth Association has strict rules in place to ensure a safe and appropriate relationship between its staff and the children taking part in their activities. In their interactions with children, Active Youth's paid and volunteer staff must avoid any behavior that could be considered embarrassing, humiliating, belittling, demeaning, or abusive, whether emotional, physical, or sexual in nature.

Employees and collaborators are prohibited from engaging in inappropriate physical contact with children that violates their dignity, except in cases associated with play, hygienic assistance, ensuring safety, or the need to soothe the child. They must not serve children alcohol, medications, or any psychoactive substances, condone or participate in illegal activities involving a child, establish sexual relations with children, or exhibit sexually provocative behavior.

Active Youth Association staff must not host children in their private homes, maintain private relationships with children outside the framework of work and support, accompany children during travel in the absence of a caregiver, sleep in the same room with children during summer camps or trips.

Any and all suspicions regarding the conduct of Active Youth Association staff are thoroughly investigated and clarified without delay. By adhering to these strict rules, Active Youth aims to create a safe and supportive environment for children and promote their well-being.

Child Safety Officer

As a further sign of our commitment Active Youth Association has a designated Child Safety Officer. The Child Safety Officer is supported in this role by the Manager of Active Youth Association.

The Child Safety Officer must:

- Have undergone at least one day's training on child abuse and creating a child safe organisation to fulfil this role.
- Attend further training as appropriate and take proactive steps to be kept informed of developments in the field of child abuse prevention.

Under the law an organisation could be held liable for negligence if abuse occurred and it had not taken the appropriate steps to prevent it. Areas in which this may be applicable are the selection and retention of paid or voluntary staff and procedures for the supervision of children and young people. For example, an organisation puts itself at risk if it hires a person that is recommended by a colleague without thoroughly checking the individual (eg. Working with Children Check, Police Check, reference checks and validating qualifications). If it turned out that the employee had a record of violence or child abuse, which could have been identified by undertaking a Working with Children Check and Police Check and then proceeded to abuse children in the organisation, then the organisation could be considered legally negligent in their selection process. This may involve the organisation being sued.

It is important for those managing Active Youth Association projects to be aware that they are now legally mandated to obtain a valid Working with Children Check for all staff paid or voluntary over 18 years of age:

- Confidentially document minor concerns about a child or young person that could build into an overall concerning picture. Make sure any records are kept strictly confidential and include date and signature.
- Report any concerns to police or Child Protection or support a fellow staff member/volunteer who is making a report.
- Ensure all those involved with Active Youth Association are aware of all policies and procedures.
- Monitor any concerning emails, messages or images on the Internet or via other technology that arise in the course of the Active Youth Association projects.
- Proactively promote a culture at Active Youth Association that is a welcoming, secure and supportive environment so children and young people will feel comfortable in expressing any difficulties or concerns they may have.
- Oversee the annual review and changes to the policies and procedures.
- Arrange training needed in relation to child protection or protective behaviours for staff, volunteers, children or young people involved with the Active Youth Association.
- Coordinate follow up that may be required after a report of abuse to the police or Child Protection.
- Liaise with the Manager of Active Youth Association who is responsible for handling any media enquires that arise.

Appointing a Child Safety Officer

For some smaller programs, the Child Safety Officer will simply be the Coordinator of the project. In that case, it is important to ensure that the responsibilities listed above are incorporated into the role.

Procedures for Child Safety Officer:

- Once notified of a concern the Child Safety Officer will then proceed to manage the case confidentially.
- Steps should be taken to immediately ensure the child or young person's emotional and physical safety. If appropriate the child or young person's parents or caregivers will be notified.

- If necessary, prior to formally reporting the incident, the Child Safety Officer may consult with the manager of Active Youth Association.
- When a decision is being made to report to the police, the Child Safety Officer, if feasible, will do so. Any notification must happen promptly and the child or young person's safety/welfare should be the top priority.
- The Child Safety Officer will keep confidential written documentation of any concerns raised including steps taken in follow up. All documentation should be dated and signed.
- Any support required by the child, young person, their family or staff of the Active Youth Association is to be arranged by the Child Safety Officer.
- If the alleged perpetrator of the abuse is a staff member (paid or voluntary) of Active Youth Association, the Child Safety Officer must initially remove this person from contact with the children and young people. This may include "standing down" the person until investigations are complete. Consultation with the Manager of the Active Youth Association needs to occur prior to the "standing down" or as soon as possible afterwards. Formal follow up in relation to a staff member being stood down is to be managed by the Manager of the Active Youth Association.
- Throughout the whole process the Child Safety Officer must keep the Manager of the Active Youth Association informed of any developments in the situation.

The Child Safety Officer must ensure their concerns about a child or young person's welfare are being acted upon, this may mean in some circumstances reporting again to police.

Reporting Procedures

Active Youth Association has the following guiding principles in relation to responding to concerns about a child or young person's safety and welfare:

- The right of the child /young person to be listened to, protected and supported
- The right of the child/young person and their families to have their concerns acted on
- The right of the alleged perpetrator to a fair process
- Everyone's right to privacy
- The responsibility of Active Youth Association to ensure all concerns are dealt with promptly and in a respectful manner.

Risk Management

Potential risks that might arise:

- peer bullying;
- injuries during physical activity involving activities;
- harm of equipment usage (e.g. VR glasses, sports equipment).

All projects and activities at the Active Youth Association are required to undergo regular child protection risk analysis. The risks are evaluated and strategies developed to minimise the likelihood of harm occurring.

Recruitment, Screening, Training and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

Active Youth Association is committed to ensuring all staff and volunteers undergo comprehensive screening to create a safe environment for the children and young people accessing its services.

Recruitment Procedures

- In all advertisements and material promoting positions, the organisation's commitment to child protection and screening mechanisms should be made clear
- Written position descriptions must be developed for all positions, which include key selection criteria and promote Active Youth Association commitment to child protection.
- Applicants should be encouraged to self-assess their suitability for the position and be provided with further information about the organisation and position.

Child and Young People participation and empowerment

Active Youth Association is committed to assisting children and young people to gain skills in self protective behaviours. As a part of the annual review of this policy Active Youth Association will informally consult with the children and young people using our projects for their feedback.

Internet Safety

Active Youth Association recognises that the internet, mobile phones and other forms of information technology can be used as an avenue for child abuse. At the same time information technology can have a wonderfully positive, informative and creative part to play in a child or young person's education.

Active Youth Association works to teach children and young people of safe and respectful ways to work with information technology. During their time at Active Youth Association activities all children and young people's use of information technology is monitored and conducted in an open space.

Any indication of inappropriate activity either against a child or young person or initiated by them, in any form of media must be reported to the Child Safety Officer immediately. It is the responsibility of all members of Active Youth Association including students, staff (paid or voluntary) or parents to report concerns in this area.

Drugs and Alcohol

Active Youth Association recognises that the use of alcohol and drugs by staff and volunteers can impact on:

- the safety and well-being of the children and young people accessing the projects
- the integrity and professionalism of the projects, and the degree to which staff and volunteers behave as appropriate role models

As such staff and volunteers should not attend the projects under the influence of alcohol or any recreational drugs. Individuals taking prescription drugs that may affect their ability to carry out their duties in a responsible and professional manner should discuss this with the Manager of Active Youth Association.

Active Youth Association acknowledges that the use, supply and possession of recreational drugs, and the use of alcohol for people under the age of 20 is against the law. Active Youth Association also recognises that the use of recreational drugs and and/or alcohol can have negative impacts on a young person's physical health, and their social and emotional wellbeing.

Code of Conduct

Active Youth Association seeks to clarify acceptable behaviour in order to enhance the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people accessing its projects, and to protect staff, volunteers and the organisation.

The code of conduct must be explained and discussed with all new staff and volunteers, who need to read and sign the code before commencing.

Complaint mechanism

All staff of the Active Youth Association are responsible for protecting children from abuse in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Lithuania. Any suspicion of child abuse must be taken seriously and investigated, whether it is reported by a child, caregiver, professional, or staff of the Active Youth Association. If a crime or a threat to a child's interests is suspected, employees of the Active Youth Association must immediately take legal action. A decision to intervene is made by a team consisting of the reporting employee, coordinator of the relevant program, and an expert in protecting children against abuse appointed by the coordinator. The decision to inform the Prosecutor's Office can only be authorized by the Active Youth Association's Management Board. Other forms of intervention must be

communicated to the Board. Additionally, Active Youth Association employees must offer help and support to the child and non-offending caregivers. If a child's health or life is in immediate danger, an employee who learns of the situation must intervene without delay by immediately informing the proper police unit by phone and fax about the direct threat or harm to the child's health and life. All activities undertaken during the intervention must be documented. If a child suffers serious harm or loses their life despite the Active Youth Association's support, the Management Board initiates the procedure of Serious Incident Analysis to ensure that all available support options were employed and draw conclusions for future operation.

The staff of Active Youth Association must act upon a concerning incident, if any, without a delay.

In case of an incident, Active Youth Association 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 of the Active Youth Association becomes effective upon its full publication and availability to all staff of the Association. An abridged version of the policy is posted on the Association's website www.activeyouth.lt.

The policies and procedures outlined in this document are to be formally reviewed at least every 2 years, to ensure that it remains effective and appropriate. Feedback on the policy will be sought from: staff and volunteers; children and young people attending; and from anyone else involved with the program.

The review will assess:

- whether all parts of this policy and related procedures are being successfully adhered to and whether any alterations are necessary
- any training needs for the coming years
- changes or updates in information and/or law related to Child Protection

Proposed changes will be presented to the Association's Board for approval, and the Board will consult with the Association's Departments Leaders before making a decision if the amendments are significant. Any revision to the Policy document must be communicated to all Association's staff.

Data protection

Active Youth Association ensures that all support provided to children and their families is documented and kept secure. The organization is committed to complying with data protection laws, including those governing sensitive data. This is achieved by obtaining written and informed consent from children's parents/legal guardians regarding the processing of their personal data, appointing a designated individual responsible for data protection, training employees, and securing both electronic and hard copy documentation.

Clear guidelines are in place to ensure that information is only released from documentation to third parties, such as courts or the Prosecutor's Office, as per legal requirements and interdisciplinary team protocols.

Furthermore, the Active Youth Association values the privacy of its clients and participants and does not release their information to the media. The organization also refrains from using children's images in its information and educational materials without prior consent from children's caregivers. By respecting the privacy of its clients and safeguarding their personal information, the Active Youth Association strives to create a safe and supportive environment for children and families.

Parents and caregivers of children participating in the activities of Active Youth Association have the right to receive information regarding the support provided to the child, unless such information may threaten the child's interests.

Staff of Active Youth Association who provide direct or indirect assistance or services to children are strictly prohibited from disclosing any client information obtained during their professional activities. Exceptions to this rule are clearly defined in both the law and internal procedures of Active Youth Association.

Legal and contact person:

Gediminas Kondrackis

Email address: info@activeyouth.lt

Mobile phone number: 0037064331871

Signature

