



SOFIJA

UDRUGA ZA ZAŠTITU I PROMICANJE
LJUDSKIH PRAVA

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Association for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights “SOFIJA”

Child Protection Policy

1. Policy Statement

Association for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights “SOFIJA” (hereafter “SOFIJA”) is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare, safety, and rights of all children with whom we come into contact. We have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child abuse and exploitation, and we expect the same commitment from all staff, volunteers, partners, and associates. The welfare of the child is always our paramount consideration.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, trustees, and anyone working on behalf of SOFIJA, in all settings and activities, both in-person and online. It also applies to partner organizations, suppliers, and any third parties who may come into contact with children through our work.

3. Legal and Policy Framework

SOFIJA’s child protection policy is informed by:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- The Children Act 1989 and subsequent amendments, including the ‘Paramountcy Principle’ (the child’s welfare is the paramount consideration)
- Relevant local and national child protection legislation
- European Commission guidelines, including those for the Daphne Programme
- International and local best practices, including “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018” and codes of practice such as “Safe from Harm”.

4. Child Protection Principles

- Zero tolerance for child abuse in any form.
- The best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all actions and decisions.
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse, regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability, religion, sexual orientation, or background.
- Children have the right to participate in decisions affecting them and to be heard.
- Child protection is integrated into all aspects of SOFIJA’s strategy, structures, and work practices⁶.

5. Definitions of Abuse

SOFIJA recognizes the following forms of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** Non-accidental physical injury or harm.
- **Sexual abuse:** Involvement of a child in sexual activity, including exploitation and grooming.

- **Emotional abuse:** Persistent emotional ill-treatment or rejection.
- **Neglect:** Persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs.
- **Exploitation:** Use of a child for labor, sexual, or other exploitative purposes.
- **Online abuse:** Abuse or exploitation via digital means, including cyberbullying and grooming.

6. Prevention Measures

SOFIJA commits to:

- Safe recruitment procedures, including background checks and vetting for all staff and volunteers.
- Mandatory induction and regular training in child protection for all staff and volunteers.
- Clear codes of conduct outlining expected behavior and boundaries.
- Risk assessments for all activities involving children.
- Empowering and educating children about their rights, personal safety, and how to report concerns.
- Ensuring all children can participate in our programs regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, or religion.

7. Responsibilities

- **Designated Child Protection Officer (CPO):** SOFIJA appoints a trained CPO responsible for leading on safeguarding matters, receiving and responding to concerns, and ensuring policy implementation.
- **All staff and volunteers:** Must understand and comply with this policy, report concerns, and participate in training.
- **Partners and third parties:** Must adopt and enforce equivalent child protection standards and cooperate fully with SOFIJA in safeguarding matters.

8. Reporting and Responding to Concerns

- All concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of abuse must be reported immediately to the CPO or a designated deputy.
- Reports will be handled confidentially and in line with data protection laws.
- SOFIJA will act promptly to protect the child, including making referrals to appropriate authorities and support services as required by law.
- Whistleblowing procedures are in place to ensure staff and volunteers can report concerns safely and without fear of reprisal.
- The child's best interests and safety are always the first priority.

9. Supporting Children and Families

- SOFIJA will provide or refer children and families to appropriate support services.
- We will ensure children are empowered to participate in safeguarding processes and that their voices are heard.
- We recognize and respond to the broader social and economic contexts that may impact families, including poverty and marginalization⁸.

10. Use of Information, Images, and Media

- SOFIJA will never use manipulated, sensationalized, or discriminatory images or language.
- We do not publish children's full names, addresses, or other identifying information without explicit, informed consent from the child and their guardian.

- Health or sensitive information will only be published with written consent⁶.

11. Monitoring, Review, and Accountability

- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, or best practice.
- SOFIJA will monitor compliance through regular audits, feedback from children and families, and consultation with stakeholders.
- Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment or partnership.

12. Contact Information

For more information or to report a concern, contact the SOFIJA Child Protection Officer at info@sofija.hr

This policy has been reviewed and approved by:

Sanja Siročić (signed)

President of the NGO SOFIJA

