

## Child Protection Policy

### Foreword

Child maltreatment, a widespread global dilemma, encompasses physical, sexual, and emotional mistreatment as well as neglect of children and adolescents across all societies and nations. This phenomenon, largely avoidable, exposes children to exploitation, violence, and neglect in diverse settings such as families, communities, institutions, and public places. To safeguard children and adolescents from potential harm during their involvement with De Amicitia, a comprehensive Child Protection Policy has been devised.

Safeguarding children and fostering their mental and physical well-being, even in digital environments, remains central to our mission. That's why we strongly assert that consistent implementation of this Policy is the most effective approach to guaranteeing that all children receive the requisite protection they deserve.

#### **1) Introduction**

De Amicitia is an organization comprising individuals collaborating throughout Europe to champion the rights and welfare of children and youth.

De Amicitia envisions a society where children and young people thrive, enjoying happiness, good health, confidence, and individual respect.

Our mission is to advance children's rights and welfare in policy and implementation through advocacy, exchanging membership knowledge, and conducting research.

We extend our gratitude to the following organizations for their contributions to our Child Protection Policies: – Terre des Hommes - child relief (Switzerland); Eurochild - Child Protection Policy. The Keeping Children Safe Coalition has provided guidance for De Amicitia's developing child protection standards and how to implement these.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/666497/en>

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## 1) Principles & Beliefs of De Amicitia's Policy

The objective of the policy and procedures is to establish guidelines for De Amicitia organizational practices to ensure the protection and well-being promotion of the children we encounter, whether directly or indirectly. It also aims to ensure that our actions, during the implementation of programs or institutional activities, do not result in any harm to children.

We include here some of the principles and beliefs on which we based De Amicitia's Child Protection Policy:

- Every child is entitled to equitable protection of their rights and the advancement of their well-being and involvement.
- Actions related to child safeguarding must prioritize the best interests of children, ensuring respect for their rights and preventing harm in all programs and activities.
- All reports of child safety concerns must be treated seriously, with appropriate measures taken to protect the child and address allegations, including involvement of law enforcement and potential disciplinary actions.
- Confidentiality is upheld in child protection matters, with personal details disclosed only when indispensable for the child's safety or legal requirements.
- Adherence to international and national laws and policies governs our protection practices.
- Advocacy and education efforts underscore the importance of protecting children, utilizing policy and procedures to communicate values and solicit feedback.

## 2) Definitions

### *Child/Children*

Denotes individuals below the age of 18, regardless of the legal age of majority in their jurisdiction or their current country of residence.

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## *Neglect*

Continuous failure of a child's fundamental physical and/or psychological requirements, which is likely to lead to significant impairment in the child's physical or cognitive growth.

## *Bullying*

Refers to deliberate acts of harm, often repeated over time, making it difficult for the targeted individuals to defend themselves. It manifests in multiple forms, including physical (like hitting or theft), verbal (such as making derogatory remarks or threats), and emotional (such as isolating individuals from social circles).

## *Physical abuse*

This could entail striking, shaking, hurling, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or inflicting other forms of physical injury upon a child. Additionally, physical harm may occur when a parent or caregiver fabricates or intentionally induces illness in a child under their care.

## *Emotional abuse*

Continuous emotional maltreatment of a child, leading to significant and enduring impacts on their emotional growth. This form of abuse may include communicating to children that they are unimportant, unloved, inadequate, or valued solely for meeting someone else's needs. It can also entail imposing inappropriate expectations based on age or development, or consistently subjecting children to fear or perceived danger. Emotional abuse is inherent in all forms of child mistreatment, even if it occurs independently.

## *Sexual abuse*

This involves coercing or enticing a child into sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware or consents. Activities may include physical contact (such as rape) or non-contact actions like exposure to pornographic materials or encouraging inappropriate sexual behavior.

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## *Commercial exploitation*

Entails using a child in labor or other endeavors for the advantage of others, resulting in harm to the child's physical or mental well-being, education, morals, or socio-emotional growth. This encompasses various forms of exploitation, including but not limited to, child labor.

### **3) Programme Design & Implementation**

#### a. Support & Wellness Promotion

De Amicitia is very committed to foster an atmosphere conducive to open discussions and mutual understanding of child protection issues among children and adults; promoting transparent communication channels both internally and externally among member organizations to enhance awareness and adherence to child protection policies and practices; establishing a structured framework for addressing allegations of both direct and indirect abuse in a transparent, consistent, and equitable manner.

Emphasis should also be placed on devising strategies to educate children about the policy and empower them to contribute to their own safety.

#### b. Training

Staff and permanent volunteers should be afforded regular opportunities to stay informed about protecting children. This may be achieved through formal means like training sessions or supervision, as well as informal methods such as discussions during team meetings.

#### c. Safer Recruitment

Enhanced recruitment protocols function as a safety mechanism, collectively offering reassurance that thorough efforts have been undertaken to identify potential risks during the recruitment process. No single verification is deemed adequate.

All recruitment methodologies must stem from a comprehensive evaluation of each position or volunteer role and the extent of interaction with children. These refined recruitment procedures encompass pre-selection, selection, and post-selection measures to maximize safeguarding measures.

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Documentation pertaining to enhanced recruitment practices, including references, etc., must be maintained within Human Resource records. This data must be retained and disposed of in compliance with relevant data protection regulations.

De Amicitia will promptly suspend any individual—be it an employee, volunteer, intern, board member, consultant, or adviser—accused of breaching the Child Protection Policy, pending the investigation's conclusion. De Amicitia retains the authority to enforce disciplinary measures against any individual found culpable in an investigation, potentially including the reporting of the incident to law enforcement

#### d. Parental Authorization

Prior to initiating activities, written consent from parents and children is required. with a ParentalAuthorization. This form can also be applicable for guardians, particularly in cases where children reside in institutional settings. In instances where parents or children are unable to read, a staff member or permanent volunteer may sign on their behalf in their presence, provided that the contents of the form have been thoroughly discussed.

## 4) Media & Communication

### a. Protection of Personal Data

Any dissemination of information identifying minors associated with our De Amicitia or its activities should be restricted to what is essential, such as reporting to funding entities on conducted activities. The data collected should be confined to what is absolutely essential for the successful execution of the particular activity or project. Consequently, their utilization should be restricted to the duration and objectives of the specific activity.

### b. Commitment to Online Safety

We must provide clear guidance to staff and standing volunteers on the proper use of technology, including internet, mobile phones, and social media. If offensive material like child pornography is found or downloaded accidentally and reported to law enforcement, the

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materials with the report. Transmitting images is an international crime. Guidance should be sought from law enforcement on how to transfer images correctly.

c. Photographs, video and other images

Before capturing any visual media or requesting personal information from children for use in De Amicitia materials, it is imperative to obtain informed consent. This involves informing children of De Amicitia's intended use of the information or imagery/film and reassuring them that they are not obligated to agree to its use. Furthermore, they should be assured that any identifying details, such as locations, will be altered to safeguard their privacy. Children must also be asked if they consent to the sharing of their first name alongside the information or imagery/film.

## 5) Monitoring & Review

Every individual linked to De Amicitia bears the responsibility of ensuring the implementation of the Child Protection Policy as delineated within this document, as well as any adjustments made to accommodate local circumstances. This policy will undergo periodic review, occurring no more frequently than every five years. These assessments will incorporate input from staff operating internationally, and whenever feasible, insights from children, their families, and other pertinent local stakeholders will also be considered.

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