



Mentor+ Project Child Protection Policy

Mentor+ is focused on designing an intervention of non-formal education, offering the mentoring methodology to engage, connect and empower young people in conflict with the law. The main idea is to use law abiding adults to support juveniles in the process of developing positive attitudes and behaviours.

MENTOR+ CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Mentor+ Project was conceptualized to design an intervention of non-formal education, offering the mentoring methodology to engage, connect and empower young people in conflict with the law. More specifically, the project creates a mentoring model that employs law-abiding role model adults to support juveniles in conflict with the law in the process of developing positive attitudes and behaviours. The project also offers a mentor's handbook to support the overall mentoring process, and a mobile application to facilitate overall coordinator - mentor - mentee communication. Overall, the program supports young people to overcome 'tempting stops' in a way that reduces their negative impact on their individual development (e.g. substance use, gang affiliations, theft, school drop out, etc.). Mentor+ program promotes self-awareness, self-efficacy, resilience, empathy alongside helping development of effective, positive decision-making processes, that according to some authors are key-aspects for youth development. It refers to a series of activities that are designed to address risk factors that have a high potential to cause a person to commit crime.

Mentor+ Child Protection Policy was created to facilitate seamless execution of the project and help sustain the gains, exceeding geographical and temporal boundaries of the project and the partnership. It starts with key definitions to garner common understanding and then meticulously broaches safeguarding measures, administration, management, dissemination issues. The policy ends with a case study to put the learned material to test. There are differentiations in legal framework across six countries that the project is put into execution, namely Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Romania. It goes without saying that there will be minute details in execution. Yet, the policy in your hand has been prepared to reflect commonalities and those differing details have not been added here.

2. REACHING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

2.1. Who is a Child?

As described in Article 1 of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1989), we consider anyone under the age of 18 a child. This means they have some specific rights alongside those enjoyed by other members of the society as they are in the process of development.

Adults must respect their maturity and capacity to negotiate situations which vary depending on the phase of growth. They should be provided with a safe and protective environment in which they receive the care needed to develop physically, cognitively, and emotionally. Neglecting these needs is understood as a form of violence against children.

2.2. What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is considered to be any form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse and includes exploitation of children, commercial or otherwise. Abandonment and neglect of a child which results in actual or potential damage against a child can also be considered an abuse. Abuse may be deliberate, or a result of a lack of preventative action and protection. Below are several definitions that will clarify what constitutes an abuse.

Negligence is carelessness or neglect by a responsible adult, individual, institution, carer or guardian. Neglect may involve an absence or lack of care negatively affecting a child's education, emotional development, nutrition, housing and access to safe living conditions. A lack of adequate supervision and protection from any kind of harm is also considered neglect.

Physical abuse occurs when physical harm, real or potential occurs against a child while under the care of parents, responsible individuals or institutions.

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity between a child and a person at a more advanced stage of psychosexual development. This also includes forcing or prompting a child to participate in sexual activities without physical contact (not necessarily including penetration). Sexual abuse also consists of depicting children in pornographic material, whether children have been used in the production of pornographic material or material has been altered for inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Emotional abuse is emotional treatment that negatively affects children in relation to their perception of themselves and in their development. Abusive emotional behaviours include disregard, ridicule, threats, discrimination, bribery, degradation and any other hostile treatment towards a child.

2.3. What is Child Safeguarding?

“Child safeguarding is the responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities.” (DG Justice and Consumers)

2.4. Child Protection Policy

Mentor+ Partnership and those following its methodology strongly condemn all forms of child abuse and exploitation of children. In order to protect our children in all our activities, and to guarantee their respect and physical and emotional protection, the Child Protection Policy sets out rules and procedures for programs involving children. The policy should be followed by all employees and staff regardless of whether they are working on a full-time, part-time or temporary basis. This includes staff, consultants, researchers, volunteers, interns, directors, counsellors and management. The procedures outlined here should be followed at all times.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND SAFEGUARDING MEASURES TO PROTECT CHILDREN

3.1. Legal Framework

The main international legal framework that the Mentor+ Partnership is committed to follow is the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). This important document has trickled down to [The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee](#) at the EU level to ascertain better protection all children, fulfilment of their rights and their placement at the centre of EU policy making.

Mentor+ also supports the Global Initiative to End All Forms of Physical Punishment against Girls and Boys launched in 2001 as part of the Geneva Human Rights Commission. The initiative is an alliance of multilateral organizations of NGOs, individuals and other stakeholders working to defend human rights and the rights of children. Mentor+ Partners believe that ending humiliating punishment is fundamental to the realisation of children's rights, respect, human dignity, physical integrity and equal protection before the law.

3.1.1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child binds ratifying states to consider all people under the age of 18 as children and therefore as a social actors and bearer of specific rights.

The Convention includes as basic rights, the right to life, survival and development and as protection rights, protection from economic and sexual exploitation, protection from violence and war, and fundamental civil rights and freedoms as the right to citizenship and freedom of expression and the right to civil participation. So, the children's rights can be shortly summarized as below:

- Children have the right to food and health care.
- Children have the right to education.
- Children are entitled to social benefits.
- Children should not be abused or neglected.
- Children should not be exploited.
- Children have the right to be heard.
- Each child may say what he or she thinks.

The Convention is innovative in that it calls for the rights of children to participate, and provides children with civil, social and cultural rights and promotes their active participation in decision making processes, in relation to different phases of development. Alongside this, it also forwards the notion of the best interests of children and adolescents, guaranteeing the child full development, access to civic education and

prevention of abuses of power by those responsible for the child. Based on this, increased status and maximised legal protection of the child is sought to guide and advise children to exercise their rights fully. In such cases, children aged 12 or older can help decide on the help that is organized for them. Participation is mainly related to communication, assistance, inspection of the file, the right to a copy, etc. Respect for well-being and opinion is central to this.

Member States, of which all Partners' home countries are party, shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from any form of harm or physical or mental abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, when under parental custody or care of alternative responsible guardian(s) or institution(s). All States should establish appropriate structures for the control and implementation of such measures, carrying out a decentralized system that involves local institutions and civil society.

3.2. Measures / Rules on How to Behave When Working with Children

The aim of the measures presented here is to prevent the occurrence of risks and to guarantee the safety of all those children participating in Mentor+ implementation and beyond.

3.2.1. Management

Ensuring the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, Mentor+ Partnership is committed to:

- a. Ensuring that all employees and volunteers taking part in Mentor+ implementation, whether engaged in activities directly involving children or not, will sign a document confirming accordance with Mentor+ Child Protection Policy.
- b. Providing mentors and coordinators, the resources and training to effectively use the Child Protection Policy. This is in order that all coordinators and mentors can, besides understanding the Child Protection Policy, its importance, know-how and in which contexts it is to be used, which actors make up this protection network in a given location and what their specific roles are in relation to it. The training must also stress the conception of children and adolescents as rights bearing subjects, whose voices, desires and wishes must be respected.
- c. Preserving the image of children participating in the Mentor+ program, including ensuring that coordinators, mentors, employees and partner organizations know how to not violate children's rights in relation to images, with special attention paid to not displaying children's images without the consent of the children and their legal guardians.
- d. Children under the supervision of the juvenile court may not be 'pictured' in such a way that a link can be made with the assistance. Not even with the consent of the parent or legal guardian.
- e. Guiding visitors, journalists, partners, funders and other program and Mentor+

stakeholders involved cannot publish photographs or videos of children or adolescents in any medium of communication or organizational material without prior authority to do so from the Partnership.

- f. Ensuring confidentiality on the child and family`s personal information.
- g. Ensuring confidentiality on the child and family`s personal information displayed by the CJS professionals/ Civil Society Organisations.
- h. Including in work plans a focus on activities for children that seek to increase child participation and spaces where their opinions are listened to, and their agency promoted.

3.2.2. Research and evaluation

In conducting research and evaluation activities all involved must ensure the privacy and protection of identity of all participating children. Additionally, a safe space should be provided for conducting interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and other research tools. In research activities and the monitoring and evaluation of activities, Mentor+ Partners should endeavour to adapt research, monitoring and evaluation instruments in accordance with the age of children being interviewed.

Aiming to ensure the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, the research and evaluation team must:

- a. Ensure that, researchers while involved with Mentor+ read and agree to the Child Protection Policy including signing a document indicating that they have done so.
- b. Establish at the end of researchers assigned work with Mentor+ that confidentiality on personal information and participating children`s identity must be preserved including clarifying what accountability measures are in place should there be a misuse of information.
- c. Clarify the researchers` accountability on the confidentiality of the information obtained from children during the research.
- d. Inform partners involved in Mentor+ programs and legal guardians of children about the objectives and content of research.
- e. Provide information and clarifications to those responsible for the child`s welfare of the possible risks associated with the research and that the child may choose to stop participating in the research at any time if they so wish.
- f. Gain permission from those responsible for the child to participate in the research by signing a letter of consent.
- g. Provide information and recommendations on research that are accessible to the participating child`s legal guardian(s).
- h. Guarantee that participating children are consulted about their interest in participating in the research and guarantee that they understand the whole process.
- i. Verify that all the spaces used to conduct research activities are safe and protect the confidentiality of information.

3.2.3. Program areas

The education activities developed by Mentor+ Partners should create a safe space based on dialogue and respect for both participating girls and boys reflections. All involved in the

design and implementation of the project should be committed to creating spaces that guarantee the confidence, safety, and respect for differences and allow children and adolescents to feel able to express their ideas and opinions.

Aiming to ensure the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, the program team is committed to:

- a. Creating a system of reporting and forwarding cases of violence against children including training staff on this process.
- b. Guarantee the non-disclosure of information shared in group`s education workshops and in other project spaces.
- c. Preserve the identity of participants in reports and other documents produced from the project.
- d. Guarantee the revision of material and reports by the project coordinators before their dissemination to a wider audience.
- e. Guarantee the right of the child to not participate in the activity, and make clear that they are free to leave at any time if they do not feel comfortable or wish to continue, and this is to be done in accordance with the procedures and policy outlined in this document.
- f. Evaluate the safety conditions of the space in which the activities will be implemented in order to decide on a monitoring system of these conditions.
- g. Discuss with the partner organizations the terms of the Child Protection Policy and create protocols for the signing and following of this policy by partner organisations, staff and other involved parties.
- h. Be available to parents and legal guardians in order to present the Mentor+ program, clarify any doubts on the project, respond to questions and request their participation in the development of activities.
- i. Obtain authorization to use images, voice and video recordings of the child and their families whilst involved in project activities. The authorization form must clarify the objectives, means of dissemination and inform responsible guardians that this authorization can be withdrawn at any time. The program or project staff should explain to legal guardians about the terms of authorization, clarifying that no image will expose the child to embarrassing situations or violate their dignity in any way.
- j. In cases of suspected abuse or violence of any form, refer the child to the appropriate service. The cases should be reported to the project coordinator and the Child Protection Committee, which will decide on the appropriate action.

3.2.4. Communication

EASI will be responsible for mediation between press and the families of participating children. Prior to divulging any information or contact details of program participants or the projects developed by the Mentor+ Project for the media, the communication team should discuss with the project partners. Local partners should be responsible for informing legal guardians, explaining the risks and obtaining their authorization to share information and images. Only after the first contact made by a staff member, can the organisation disclose

data to the media and this may not be in any form that may depict the child in a humiliating way or way that may conflict with their rights.

Aiming to ensure the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, the communication team is committed to:

- a. Gaining the authorization of parents or legal guardians to use any images, voice or video recordings of the child and their family.
- b. Using images and children`s testimonies on the website, newsletter or other institutional materials only with the authorization of the parents or legal guardians.
- c. Guaranteeing that children`s testimonies in materials and reports only include the name, surname and age of the child if authorized by the parents or legal guardians.
- d. Ensuring that the publication of photography and recordings of children on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, by staff is forbidden and only Mentor+`s communication team is allowed to disseminate images and testimonies from project participants.

3.3. Mentor+ Child Protection Committee (MCPC)

Mentor+ Child Protection Committee is comprised of two permanent members. The Coordinator and the Lead of PR1. Cases and adaptations to the policy at the partnership level will be handled by these two.

At the partners` level, each of the Mentor+ members have their institutional child protection policies and structures. During implementation of the project, all emerging cases will be primarily raised to the inherent Child Protection Committee (CPC) of Partners. A case in this context refers to a complaint, incident, violation, serious event or conduct not in accordance with this CPP. For example, a case arising in Belgium will automatically be addressed to the CPC of De Touter while a similar case in Italy will be raised to CPC of San Guisepe. All cases and violations of children`s rights whether observed or reported should be addressed by the Partners` Child Protection Committees and handled in-line with the procedures outlined in their own Child Protection Policies. As a parallel track, the cases should be reported to MCPC to provide awareness, make adjustments to the policy, collectivize solution finding, and report lessons-learned. This should be made clear and central to the strategy, training, monitoring and dissemination of the Child Protection Policy. All staff that will take part in the project should be trained in the Child Protection Policy and the application of the policy should be monitored.

Under the guidance of the Committee, Project Coordinators and other staff, will ensure that the Child Protection Policy is implemented fully and efficiently. Project Coordinators will be responsible for implementing procedures and for anticipating any concerns that may rise

relating to child protection throughout the program or action. The Project Coordinator is the main reference for project staff and the point of contact in case of any concerns around child protection.

3.4. How to Report If Any Issues Arise

All cases relating to the violation of children`s rights during project implementation have to be reported primarily to the Child Protection Committee of the Partners who will respond to each case.

In the case that a collaborator or partner receives a report of violence or suspects violence of any form against the rights of the child, the case should be reported to the coordinators of the project who then report to the Child Protection Committee of the local partner. As a parallel track, the cases should be reported to MCPC to provide awareness, make adjustments to the policy, collectivize solution finding, and report lessons-learned.

If the case of violation of rights is difficult to solve or requires immediate action to protect the child, the staff member should meet with the Child Protection Committee to discuss the appropriate measures to be taken.

There are scenarios in which cases of rights violations can be detected by those working with Mentor+ Partners, for example: if the child reports directly to the collaborator; the project collaborator detects signs and suspects that a violation is taking place; staff members detects a violation by a community member or a member of the project.

All of the cases should be reported to the Child Protection Committee who should try to understand what the violation is. Whenever there is suspicion of any form of violence or abuse, the staff member should report this immediately to the Child Protection Committee before undertaking any procedures with the child. The committee shall decide with the project team the best way to approach the child and make the necessary referrals.

In the case that a child below 12 reports directly to the staff member, it is important to clarify with the child that the staff member will have to pass on this report. Actually, it is important that this reporting rule is explained at the very beginning of the program. If informed well, (s)he does not feel betrayed when the information is discussed with program staff and the committee. On the other hand, children at the age of 12 and above has the right to talk privately with program staff.

In the case that violence or abuse is directly observed against children the staff member may

intervene and inform the child of their right to report this to the police or other national authorities, if doing so does not increase risks to the child. If any form of risk is suspected, the collaborator can call the police anonymously to avoid or minimize harm.

In the case of observing non-compliance with the rules of the Child Protection Policy the collaborator can report the event by phone or by email directly to the project coordinator or the Child Protection Committee, and straight to the committee in the case that the event involves the project coordinator. Once having investigated the report, the committee will report and decide on the measures to be taken and depending on the severity of the act, whether this should be reported to public authorities.

4. ADMINISTRATION

Mentor+ Partners highly esteem the principle that children and young people can benefit immeasurably from supportive relationships with adults who can guide and help them. To make this principle work seamlessly, the partnership considers the code of conduct outlined herebelow extremely important. Those should be digested with the fact that especially the mentors' behaviour may be open to scrutiny and that they are expected to be models of best practice in relation to working with children and young people and not engage in any of the following behaviours:

- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination against any child (even in subtle ways such as drawing attention to personal or physical differences).
- Belittling or shaming a child who is struggling or who finds the work difficult.
- Hitting, smacking, or causing physical harm to a child as an outlet for frustration or as a means of discipline.
- Interacting with children in an inappropriate way, singling them out for praise or attention or trying to humiliate them or make them feel uncomfortable.
- Entering an intimate or sexual relationship with a child or using sexual language around them including suggestive comments or conversations.
- Entering a relationship with a mentee outside of the project.
- Engaging one-to-one with the mentees on social media, such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram or another social media service, messaging service or game. Accepting friend invitations or sharing personal numbers with any of the children in the project.
- Taking pictures of the children or sharing photos of yourself.
- Giving gifts, privileges, or rewards to a child to build a special relationship with them.
- Undertaking mentoring duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

All employees have to ensure the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and:

- a. Use of social networking groups only in order to facilitate communication between employees¹ and participants of the programs and projects and only with those with and over the age of twelve years of age. It is not allowed with children under this age. For this, Mentor+ App will facilitate communication between employees and participants and only those professionals working with Mentor+ and who have signed the Child Protection Policy declaration are permitted to create an account on the app.
- b. Use communication solely with those participating in the project and at all times only as a group. All exchanges in communication must be public to the group. **No private messaging between participants and employees can take place on social media, including WhatsApp.**
- c. Do not add any child as a "friend" on social media networks by an employee. For

¹ All employees and staff are considered as those working in the organisation whether full-time, part-time or temporarily and including staff, consultants, researchers, volunteers, interns, directors and executive board members.

those in the community this should only happen if they have some link with the child over the age of thirteen prior to the project.

- d. Do not establish any contact with children via email, telephone, social media networks outside the scope of the project or program.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The monitoring and evaluation of the Child Protection Policy, and its implementation will be the responsibility of the members of the Mentor+ Child Protection Committee. Committee members will meet periodically to evaluate all ongoing procedures for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Child Protection Policy.

6. DISSEMINATION OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Child Protection Committee is responsible for the dissemination of the Child Protection Policy and of what the benefits are to the partnership of having this policy in place. The task of implementing the Child Protection Policy is a collective effort of all those engaged in Mentor+.

7. A CASE STUDY

Based on the points outlined above following case study have been taken from the EC's Newsroom to stimulate critical thinking and unify vision on code of conduct, marking No-Gos in red:

Organisation *Play with children* organises weekly art workshops for children. It employs professional art teachers and students as trainees/volunteers. It has a blog where it posts photographs of art work with photographs of their authors. One time, a parent of a 12 year old boy was late. His teacher offered to bring the boy home. They had a nice chat in the car, the boy showed the teacher more of his work, and since then **they have been in touch outside the workshop hours on whatsapp. The teacher also posted some of the boy's work done at home, including portraits of his younger siblings.** Can you tell the 3 wrong behaviours in this story?

- a. The teacher cannot chat with the child on Whatsapp.
- b. The teacher cannot post the boy's works without permission of the latter's legal guardian's permission.
- c. The teacher cannot post the portraits at home depicting the child and or his/her younger siblings.

PROJECT PARTNERS



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