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Child Protection Policy

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Introduction

We are a small architecture office, with an interest in the public realm, with a maximum of 4 employees.

As part of our work and research we occasionally organize workshops that aim at improving the spaces they normally use. Thus, we encounter people under the age of 18 but usually older than 13. We sometimes encounter participants that come from vulnerable social groups, minority groups, or are atypical in their mobility needs. Our workshops usually involve some kind of construction activity, where participants handle tools and construction materials such as wood beams or other.

We recognize the importance and obligation of protecting children and commit to ensuring a safe environment for all minors participating in our design workshops.

We also recognize that all children have specific rights that must be respected and protected. Most of our workshops are, inevitably, about offering teens tools of empowerment, about spatial justice and rights of children, teens, young adults. These rights are recognized and guaranteed at the international level through various conventions and laws, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to which Romania is a party.

The above-mentioned legislation and its principles are not well known amongst professionals, thus we also undertake the responsibility of communicating the principles outside our office, whenever we find it appropriate or useful.

Policy

Children's Rights and Legal Reference Frameworks

Our child protection policy adheres to the UNCRC, emphasizing rights to protection, expression, and participation in decisions. Additionally, Romanian Law no. 272/2004 and other relevant international conventions form our legal framework, focusing on sections pertinent to our activity type and organization.

Extended Principles

We uphold the child's best interest, enforce non-discrimination, and support child participation appropriate to their age and maturity. Protection against abuse, including prohibition of violence or harsh treatment, is paramount. Employees are tasked with intervening and reporting any inappropriate behavior towards children, prioritizing their safety in emergencies.

Specific to our field of work are safety rules regarding construction work. Thus, we undertake that all activity will be adjusted depending on the age of the participants, to not induce harm, offer possibilities for children to harm themselves, by lifting weights or heavy objects. Priority will always be given to the well-being of children, their enjoyment, and their best interest.

Dedicated to organizing educational workshops in architecture and urbanism, we ensure activities are age-appropriate and prioritize safety, including:

- Appropriate handling of tools and materials.
- Strict prohibition of high-power cutting tools and hazardous chemicals.
- Ensuring activities do not involve unsafe spaces or require working at height. Spaces entered by participants will be assessed for safety, including seismic risk and potential fall hazards.

Furthermore, the work that children perform should generally be useful for their community as this is a fundamental principle for good design or construction. However, their contribution should never lead to actual child labor, as defined by the International Labor Organization, namely works that:

- is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or
- interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

People

Training and Education

Employees, volunteers, and collaborators receive training on child protection principles and procedures, enriched with international case studies.

New employees receive a work contract that also includes our „child friendly policy” and they are informed of its existence.

Given our occasional work with minors, training is scheduled at the start of each relevant activity, workshop, or project. Training will include a discussion on the rights of children with specific interest in the actual group that will be involved in the project and a revision of all the safety measures that should always be in place.

A handout with both the rights of children and safety rules will be given out to all participants and will be posted in the workshop space (depending on the situation).

The office manager will be mainly responsible for implementing the policy but when it comes to the actual implementation all members will share the responsibility, since our organization is not so large or divided in specific organizational roles.

Background Checks

We conduct background checks on newly hired personnel to ensure their suitability for working with children.

Procedures

Safety and Response Procedures

We will establish clear procedures for reporting and managing child safety concerns or incidents, ensuring swift, efficient resolution.

Each workshop or activity will be preceded by a specific evaluation related to the rights of the participants and the safety of environment where the workshop is held (e.g. sometimes we access old buildings). To conduct this evaluation two separate charts will be developed, regarding expected misbehavior of adults involved in the project, towards children (e.g. sometimes participants undertake surveys where they must interact with passersby, some of them may react violently to their questions) or safety hazards regarding the actual environment of the workshop (e.g. old building, outdoor, forest etc.)

Accountability

We are committed to respecting and promoting children's rights, ensuring a safe, encouraging environment for their development. This policy reflects our collective responsibility to protect children and foster a safer, inclusive community.

Following each activity or workshop, a report will be created in which relevant situations will be described and analyzed. In the case of an unexpected situation where the rights of the children are undermined or an unforeseen hazard results in an accident, we will analyze the situation and revise our policy accordingly.

An annual review of the child protection policy will integrate legislative changes, best practices, or insights from past experiences. Feedback from children, parents, and our staff will inform continuous improvement.

Conclusion

This policy embodies our dedication to creating a nurturing environment where children can engage in creative and educational activities without risk. Our commitment to maintaining high standards and collaborating with families and the community aims to promote children's well-being and development.

Administrator

Alexandru Belenyi

25.01.2024

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to be 'Alexandru Belenyi', is written over the printed name and date.

Bibliography

Relevant Laws (Romania)

- Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights: This law establishes the legal framework for child protection in Romania, ensuring their rights in accordance with internationally recognized principles.
- The Romanian Labor Code: Legislation regulating child labor, including the minimum age for employment and specific conditions under which children can work, ensuring their protection against exploitation and hazardous work.
- Law no. 272/2004 on the protection of individuals regarding the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data: This law includes provisions for the protection of children's personal data, especially in the digital context.
- The National Education Law no. 1/2011: Includes provisions related to children's right to education and their protection in the educational environment.

Relevant International Conventions and Documents

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - Adopted on November 20, 1989, it is the most comprehensive international treaty on children's rights, recognizing a wide range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights for children.
- The Declaration of the Rights of the Child - Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1959, the declaration sets forth ten principles for the protection of children's rights.
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination - This international convention includes provisions that protect children against discrimination based on race or ethnicity.
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Includes specific provisions for the protection and promotion of the rights of children with disabilities.
- The ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and the ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - These documents establish international standards for the protection of children against labor exploitation, including the minimum age for employment and the prohibition of dangerous forms of work for children. This bibliography provides a solid starting point for understanding the legal framework and international commitments governing the protection of children's rights. It's important that any child protection policy is in accordance with these documents and is regularly updated to reflect any changes in legislation or international standards.

