

Safeguarding Framework

January 2025





Introduction

The EU Children's Participation Platform (hereafter called the Platform) is an opportunity created by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (hereafter called DG JUST) for children and organisations supporting children to engage meaningfully, inclusively and safely in conversations with decision-makers shaping EU policies.

Led by a dedicated Secretariat Team consisting of representatives of ICF S.A., Risk & Policy Analysts, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages and DG JUST, and working under the scientific guidance and advice of Professor Laura Lundy and Professor Cath Larkins, the Platform aims to be a safe space for children to exercise their right to be heard at EU level. Children will have the opportunity to contribute their views to shape specific policy and legislative initiatives proposed by the Commission, to be involved in research activities on topics related to child participation, to co-produce child-friendly documents, and to learn from each other through workshops, webinars, and study visits.

In line with the UN General Comment 12 on Child participation, the Platform perceives child participation *"as a rolling process, (...) which does not stop with children's view being expressed and then passed on to the right audience. It involves adults and children co-producing influence and change at every level"*.¹ Furthermore, General Comment 12 identifies nine requirements for safe, ethical and impactful participation, according to which, participation should be:

- Transparent and informative,
- Voluntary,
- Respectful,
- Relevant,
- Child-friendly environments and working methods,
- Inclusive,
- Supported by training,
- Safe and sensitive to risks, and
- Accountable.

Children's participation can expose children to various risks. Often children who speak about challenges they face and how they engage in addressing them can face humiliation, and bullying from peers and adults, and can be exposed to violence in their communities, at home, or at school. When involved in conversations about children affected by exploitation, neglect, or abuse, children who have been victims of violence can experience secondary trauma.

This Safeguarding Framework ensures that all children participating in the Platform's activities feel safe and protected at all times, in every situation. It establishes a strong safeguarding culture across the Platform, making child safety a top priority.

¹ <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/advanceversions/crc-c-gc-12.pdf>



1. Background

The safety of all children and adults involved in the Platform's activities is a top priority. Every organisation in the Secretariat Team, as well as those joining the Platform as members, must have its own child safeguarding policy. In addition, all organisations are required to follow the Platform's Safeguarding Framework and uphold EU values.

The organisations within the Secretariat Team already have strong, comprehensive safeguarding policies in place. These policies apply at all levels, across both national and international operations, ensuring a consistent approach to child protection.

2. Purpose

This Safeguarding Framework describes:

1. guiding safeguarding principles and standards,
2. responsibilities assumed by the Platform's Advisory Board, Secretariat Team staff and national representatives of the member organisations. national representatives of the member organisations and
3. recommended paths for preventing, reporting and response to situations of children being harmed in the context of the Platform.

The Safeguarding Framework builds upon the safeguarding policies and practices developed so far by the organisations within the Platform's Secretariat Team. Together with the member organisations' safeguarding policies, the Safeguarding Framework creates a net of values, relationships and procedures that seek to ensure that children and adults are safe at any time, in any activity, while engaging in their communities and country contexts, as well as when exchanging and participating in international meetings.

This Safeguarding Framework calls on everyone to make all efforts to guarantee that:

- **All children involved are protected and can express their views without fearing any risks** and forms of violence, coming from the adults and children they interact with in the Platform's activities, from peers or from other stakeholders in their communities;
- **All staff members, volunteers, consultants, representatives and other employees of the organisations members of the Platform are protected against any safeguarding risks**, and receive the necessary training and support to be able to protect children against any risks and forms of violence;
- **All organisations involved as members of the Platform can preserve and further develop a safeguarding culture** and a reputation of safe organisations;
- **All partners and supporters of the Platform are reassured of the high safeguarding standards** respected and promoted by the Platform and can inspire themselves in strengthening their safeguarding policy and practice.

While every organisation has its safeguarding policies and procedures, there are common principles and standards promoted by the Platform, and these are described in the further chapters of this Safeguarding Framework.

3. Applicable audience



Safeguarding is the responsibility of each individual, child, and adult who is engaged in the Platform's activities to make sure that they respect the following guidelines. As such, the Safeguarding Framework applies to:

- All members of staff within the Secretariat Team;
- Members of the Advisory Board;
- All staff of organisations joining as Platform members who are involved in the Platform's activities at national and EU level;
- All those involved at national and international level as consultants, trainers and/or facilitators;
- All those adults working directly with children in national activities of the Platform, them being staff members of the Secretariat organisations, of member organisations, representatives of the child participation mechanisms, consultants or and/or facilitators, teachers and other social professions, children's parents/legal guardians;
- All those adults who participate in international and national meetings or events organised by the Platform, being them politicians, journalists, representatives of companies or media, legal guardians accompanying children etc.

All adults mentioned above are informed about the Safeguarding Framework and shall sign a commitment (as part of the Platform's [Code of Behaviour](#)) to adhere to the principles and implementation measures of the Framework.

To ensure that the Platform's safeguarding principles are known, understood and applied by children taking part in the Platform's activities, a [child-friendly version of the Safeguarding framework](#) has been developed together with the Children's Panel².

Failure to follow this Safeguarding Framework will be handled in line with the reporting and response procedures set out by the Platform's Secretariat and member organisations. Any breach of safeguarding rules will result in immediate action, which may include disciplinary measures, reporting to law enforcement, or notifying child protection authorities, as required by law. The relevant organisation will take appropriate steps, up to and including termination of employment or ending the individual's involvement with the Platform. In serious cases, the Platform will cut all ties with the individual or organisation involved to ensure safeguarding standards are fully enforced and that the well-being of all children remains protected.

4. Statement of Commitment

- The Platform is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where all child participants can express their views freely and take part without fear of harm.
- The Platform upholds the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)³ and places children's safety and well-being at the core of all its activities.
- Recognising that children are vulnerable, the Platform ensures that online participation never compromises their rights or exposes them to harm. It incorporates strict safeguards, including

² Children's Panel - The Children's Panel is a group of up to 20 children from 14 EU Member States who help shape the activities of the EU Children's Participation Platform. They provide advice, co-create child-friendly documents, and validate plans to ensure that children's voices are heard in decisions that affect them. The Panel plays an active role in organising and delivering Platform activities.

³ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)



age-appropriate content, privacy protections, and secure communication channels to proactively address risks.

- The Platform guarantees meaningful, inclusive, and safe child participation. Every activity is designed with risk prevention and mitigation in mind to create a secure space for all children and adults involved.
- The Platform has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment, racism, discrimination, bullying, sexual exploitation, abuse, and any violation of a child's rights—including the right to privacy.
- All individuals working on the Platform must respect, listen to, and protect children from harm. If any safeguarding concerns arise, they must respond appropriately following the Platform's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- The Platform's Secretariat Team will investigate and respond to any safeguarding concerns or allegations **within five working days**, taking necessary disciplinary action.

5. Child safeguarding: definitions, standards, and principles

The Platform aligns with the definition of **a child** provided in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, where '*a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.*'⁴ All children have an equal right to protection regardless of any personal characteristic, including their age, gender, ability, culture, racial origin, religious belief, and sexual identity.

6. Safeguarding definition and related concepts

The Platform follows to the *Keeping Children Safe*⁵ definition of **child safeguarding** as, *the responsibility organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children. This ensures they do not expose children to risk of harm and abuse and any concerns about children's safety are reported to the appropriate authorities.* "

The Platform uses the term '**safeguarding**' to describe all its concrete preventive and responsive measures aiming to ensure that children and adults are safe from any harm. The Platform uses the following international definitions for related concepts:

- **Harassment:** unwanted conduct related to relevant protected characteristics, which are sex, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age.
- **Racism:** a conduct or words or practices which disadvantage or advantage people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form, it is as damaging as in its overt form.
- **Discrimination:** unfair or prejudicial treatment on the grounds of protected characteristics, such as ethnicity, age, sex, or disability.
- **Bullying:** offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and/or an abuse or misuse of power that is meant to undermine, humiliate, or injure a child.
- **Child Abuse:** anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into

⁴ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - [Convention on the Rights of the Child text](#) | UNICEF

⁵ For more resources, guidance and tools visit their webpage here: <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global>



adulthood. The main categories of abuse, as defined by Save the Children⁶ (Platform delivery partner), are the following: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation and child labour.

- **Physical abuse** is the non-accidental use of physical force that deliberately or inadvertently causes a risk of/or actual injury to a child. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing non-accidental physical harm to a child. Physical harm can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness or temporary or permanent injury or disability of a child.
- **Emotional abuse** involves doing harm to a child's emotional, intellectual, mental, or psychological development. This may occur as an isolated event or on an ongoing basis. Emotional abuse includes but is not limited to any humiliating or degrading treatment (e.g. bad name calling, threats, yelling/screaming/cursing, teasing, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming etc.), failure to meet a child's emotional needs, and rejecting, ignoring, terrorising, isolating or confining a child.
- **Neglect** includes but is not limited to failing to provide adequate food, sufficient or seasonally appropriate clothing and /or shelter, failing to ensure adequate supervision; failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment or providing inappropriate medical treatment (e.g. administering medication when not authorized); or failing to provide a safe physical environment (e.g. exposure to violence, unsafe programming location, unsafe sleeping practices, releasing a child to an unauthorised adult, access to weapons or harmful objects, failing to child-proof a space that children will occupy, etc.).
- **Child exploitation** is an umbrella term used to describe the abuse of children who are forced, tricked, coerced, or trafficked into exploitative activities. Child exploitation includes modern slavery and trafficking of children and children forced or recruited into armed conflict. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child (i.e under the age of 18) into sexual activity; in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual.
- **Child Labour** is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It is work that: is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; 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.
- **Sexual exploitation:** all forms of sexual violence and coercion, sexual solicitation, manipulation, or trickery including incest, early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in or exposure to indecent images/video (aka pornography), sexual slavery/trafficking, and statutory rape. Sexual abuse may include but is not limited to indecent touching or exposure, explicit sexual language towards or about a child and grooming. Further explanation of the term can be seen below, under types of abuse.
- **Sexual abuse:** the involvement of a child in sexual activities, whether the child is aware of what is happening, or not. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via

⁶ Save the Children Safeguarding Policy: [safeguarding_policy.pdf \(savethechildren.org.uk\)](https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/safeguarding_policy.pdf)



the Internet). Adult males do not solely perpetrate sexual abuse. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

- **Invasion of privacy:** the intrusion upon the personal life of another person without just cause. It may be caused by sharing personal information about a child's life or history, producing or publishing photos or videos about them, or revealing their identity without consent, authorisation or need to know.

The Platform differentiates between **direct contact with children**, when adults are in the presence of children offline or online, for occasional or regular, short or long-term activities (e.g. online meetings, events, peer-exchanges) and **indirect contact with children**, when an adult has access to information on children in the context of the Platform's activities, such as children's names, protected characteristics, address, information of projects and activities where the child is involved, photographs, statements of stories of the child.

The Platform recognises that child-to-child abuse requires a different response than adult-to-child abuse. Any allegations or concerns involving abuse by a child towards another child must be handled sensitively while still being addressed through the safeguarding policies of the organisation(s) representing the children involved.

Supporting children who have committed abuse requires an effective approach that ensures the protection of those affected while also helping the child responsible to understand and change their behaviour. Such an approach must:

1. Recognise that a child who has abused another child is not the same as an adult offender, as they may not fully understand why they acted in that way or the consequences of their actions.
2. Ensure that the best interests of the child remain the primary consideration in all decisions—both for the victim and the child responsible for the harm⁷.

7. Safeguarding standards and principles

The Platform aligns to the *Keeping Children Safe*' safeguarding standards and principles⁸ and requests organisations of the Secretariat Team as well as member organisations to provide consistent proofs that they are following these standards as well:

- **Standard 1:** The Platform has a **safeguarding framework** that describes its commitment to prevent and respond appropriately to any form of harm to children. The Platform requests all its members to provide the safeguarding policies of their organisations.
- **Standard 2:** The Platform places **clear safeguarding responsibilities and expectations on its staff, representatives, and national representatives of the member organisations** and supports them to understand and act in line with these. The Platform requests all its members to nominate a safeguarding contact person, who can be contacted directly in case of any safeguarding incidents and/or allegations.
- **Standard 3:** The Platform creates a child-safe environment by implementing **child safeguarding procedures** that are applied across all its activities. The Platform requests all its partners to

⁷ https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/4e73783b-610a-473b-b40c-d7e7e6f14797/Child_protection_policy_English_version_2017.pdf

⁸ <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/KCS-CS-Standards-ENG-200218.pdf>



prove that they apply safeguarding procedures whenever they organise child participation activities with children.

- **Standard 4:** The Platform regularly reviews the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of its safeguarding procedures and its leadership **assumes accountability** for considering lessons learned. The Platform expects its member organisations to inform the Secretariat as soon as child safeguarding allegations and/or incidents have happened in their activities related to the Platform and present their intervention plan.

In fulfilling the above-mentioned standards, and in all its efforts to secure a safe environment for all children and adults involved, the Platform applies the following principles, developed, and promoted by *Keeping Children Safe*:

- All children have equal rights to protection from harm.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- Organisations have a duty of care to children with whom they work, are in contact with, or who are affected by their work and operations.
- If organisations work with partners, they have a responsibility to help partners meet the minimum requirements on protection.
- All actions on child safeguarding are taken in the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

8. Safeguarding roles and responsibilities

Effective safeguarding relies on clearly defined roles and responsibilities for members of the Secretariat Team, staff, and national representatives of member organisations. Every staff member has a role to play in ensuring the Platform remains a safe and protective environment and achieving this requires effort and collaboration from all involved.

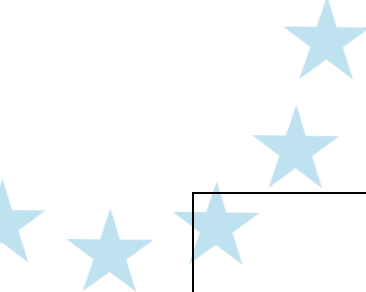
The Platform assigns specific safeguarding responsibilities to members of the Secretariat Team and staff from partner organisations coordinating activities at national and local levels. These responsibilities are outlined in the table below.

Role	Responsibilities
Advisory Board (International level)	
Provide strategic direction, guidance and oversight to create a safe environment for the work of the Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Approve the Safeguarding Framework;- Oversee the implementation of the Safeguarding Framework- Request and discuss the periodic safeguarding reports and review the Safeguarding Framework along with recommendations and lessons learned in the reports;- Behave in a manner that supports and promotes a safeguarding culture across the Platform.
Child Protection Officers (International level⁹)	
Coordinate safeguarding in all child participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- With the support of the relevant activity lead, develop and review child safeguarding risk assessment for direct activities

⁹ Two Child Participation Officers are appointed by SOS Children's Villages and Save the Children (one per organisation)

activities at international level	<p>with children, and monitor the implementation of the measures of mitigation;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Record and keep track of the child safeguarding incident register; - Help address concerns and queries sent to the child safeguarding email address; - Receive safeguarding complaints via email from the cppsafe-guarding@icf.com managed by the Platform Secretariat or directly from the Child Empowerment Officers, and members of the Platform (including children) and propose resolution measures where required (after 31.10.2026, please use the following email: EU-CHILDPARTICIPATION@ec.europa.eu); - With support from the Secretariat Team, refer safeguarding concerns to the member organisations' safeguarding focal person and oversee the response to safeguarding incidents; - With support from the Secretariat Team, develop and review the annual safeguarding report for the European Commission and the Advisory Board; - Raise awareness about the safeguarding framework among the Platform's members; - Coordinate with the Secretariat Team the necessary safeguarding procedures in all international activities involving children; <p>Ensure that reporting and responding mechanisms are known by all Child Empowerment Officers;</p>
Child Empowerment Officers (CEO) (National level¹⁰)	
Coordinate safeguarding for all child participation activities at national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate the safeguarding measures' implementation in national-level consultations; - Review (and support as needed) the child safeguarding risk assessments relevant to the consultations carried out by the Child; - Advise, if needed, on risk assessments relevant to other national-level activities carried out by the Child Protection Officer; - Secure consent for informed and voluntary participation from all children (assent) and their parents/legal guardian for consultations; - Coordinate safeguarding reporting and responding mechanisms at national level, if a concern is raised as part of consultation; - If an issue arises in the national context (with a child / child participation mechanism), Child Empowerment Officers will be kept up to date on developments and will be consulted, if needed, about the local organisation / national law that applies to the case/concern;

¹⁰ 14 Child Engagement Officers are appointed in Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Spain, Romania, Denmark, Portugal, Germany, Lithuania, Croatia, France, Latvia, Hungary, Bulgaria (one in each country).



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform the Child Protection Officers about any safeguarding incident or suspicion; - Ensure that reporting and responding mechanisms are known by children and all adults participating in the national-level consultations carried out by Child Empowerment Officers; - Promote a safeguarding culture in all child participation activities they organise.
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9. Safeguarding Measures

Building on the guiding principles and standards outlined above, this Safeguarding Framework will be implemented through five key safeguarding measures. These measures are designed to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all children involved in the Platform:

- Raising awareness about safeguarding responsibilities;
- Mitigate children's exposure to safeguarding risks;
- Reporting mechanisms for safeguarding concerns and incidents;
- Responding mechanisms to any alleged safeguarding incidents;
- Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability in implementing the safeguarding framework.

10. Raising awareness about safeguarding responsibilities

To keep children safe, everyone involved in the Platform needs to understand their safeguarding responsibilities. When staff, partners, and children know how to identify, report, and prevent risks, they can help create a safe and supportive environment for all.

The Platform shares information so that everyone engaging with children knows how to identify, prevent, and respond to safeguarding concerns by providing:

- Safeguarding information tailored for different groups, including:
 - o Children participating in the Platform's activities.
 - o Accompanying adults (such as parents, guardians, or chaperones).
 - o Organisation representatives supporting children's participation.
 - o Contractors and suppliers involved in event logistics and delivery.
- Dissemination of the Safeguarding Framework, including a child-friendly version to make it accessible to all.
- Activity-specific safeguarding materials, ensuring children understand their rights and how to stay safe in each event.
- Dedicated safeguarding briefings before every child participation activity, ensuring that all children and adults involved are aware of safeguarding procedures and reporting mechanisms.

The Child Protection Officers and the Secretariat Team continuously assess the safeguarding awareness needs among members and partners at national and EU level via Child Empowerment Officers, and other members of the Secretariat (as relevant).



The Secretariat Team and Child Protection Officers (CPOs) continuously assess safeguarding awareness across the Platform. They work with Child Empowerment Officers (CEOs) and other key team members to identify gaps, and strengthen safeguarding knowledge at both national and EU levels.

11. Creating a Culture of Safeguarding

The Secretariat Team are committed to making safeguarding a core part of everything the Platform does. This includes:

- Encouraging open, respectful conversations about safety.
- Ensuring children feel comfortable speaking up about concerns.
- Embedding safeguarding as a shared responsibility across all stakeholders.

By making safeguarding awareness a priority, the Platform ensures that all participants- children, staff, partners, and external contributors- are equipped to help keep children safe.

12. Reducing Safeguarding Risks for Children

Keeping children safe isn't just about responding to risks- it's about preventing them. The Platform takes a proactive approach, ensuring that every activity is designed with safety in mind.

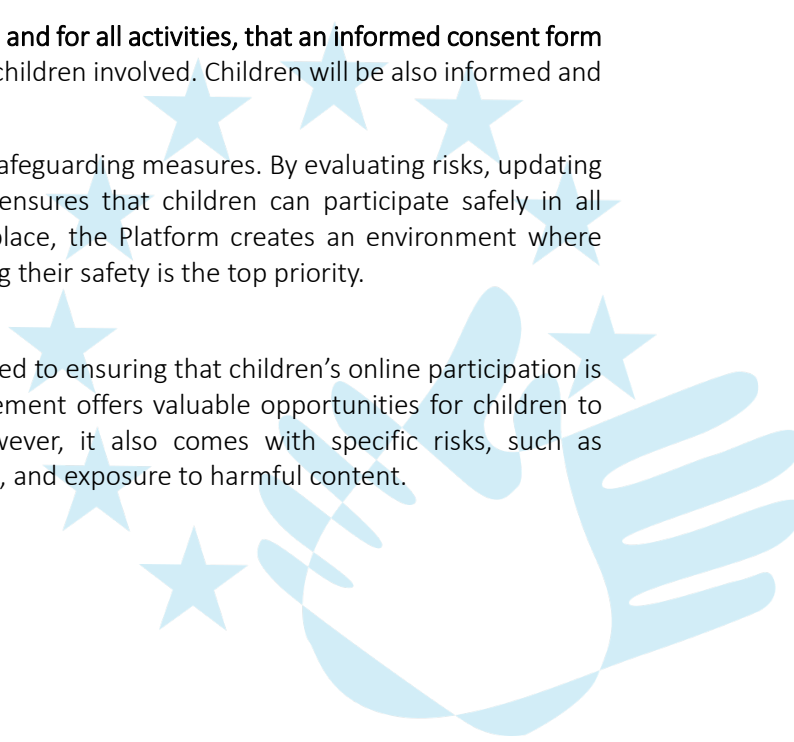
The Platform commits to 'think safeguarding' at all times and across all its activities. Safeguarding is seen equally as a pre-requisite as well as an outcome of child participation on the Platform. The following preventive measures are in place to create a safe environment, where children and adults can engage without being exposed to at any risks:

- **Embed safeguarding preventive measures in the overall action plan of the Platform**, including the design of specific safeguarding indicators for monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment;
- **Conduct initial safeguarding risk assessment and due diligence** (including a safeguarding self-assessment) and review them regularly; Whenever planning larger events involving children in-person or online, a dedicated risk assessment will be conducted for the specific activity;
- **Asses the training needs and, if necessary, provide safeguarding trainings for adults** working directly with children in child participation activities;
- **Prove at any time, and in any circumstances and for all activities, that an informed consent form signed by legal guardians** are signed for all children involved. Children will be also informed and will sign a consent form as well.

The Secretariat regularly reviews and strengthens safeguarding measures. By evaluating risks, updating protocols, and reinforcing training, the Platform ensures that children can participate safely in all activities. With strong preventative measures in place, the Platform creates an environment where children and adults can engage confidently, knowing their safety is the top priority.

13. Creating a safe digital environment

The EU Children's Participation Platform is committed to ensuring that children's online participation is safe, inclusive, and free from harm. Digital engagement offers valuable opportunities for children to express their views, collaborate, and learn. However, it also comes with specific risks, such as cyberbullying, online exploitation, privacy breaches, and exposure to harmful content.





To address these risks, the Platform ensures that all online activities comply with the highest child safeguarding standards. This includes aligning with EU policies and initiatives such as the Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) strategy¹¹, the EU Digital Services Act¹², and GDPR protections for children's data¹³.

By adhering to these frameworks, the Platform ensures that online participation is safe, transparent, and empowering for all children. Through secure platforms, strong moderation, clear reporting procedures, and ongoing training, the Platform creates a digital space where children can engage freely and without fear of harm.

14. Reporting mechanisms for safeguarding concerns and incidents

Everyone participating on the Platform has a duty and responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns or incidents, they have heard about, have witnessed, or have been directly affected themselves.

The Platform Secretariat acknowledges that every organisation member of the Platform has its own reporting mechanisms, as well as an obligation to make them available, safe, and transparent to all children and adults they work with. Nevertheless, to support fast, safe, and administratively uncomplicated reporting procedures, the Platform have established a **reporting procedure**, which is available and shall be used by all adults and children involved in the Platform's activities. The reporting procedure describes:

- **The available reporting mechanisms**, where children and adults can report directly, face-to-face or through an email or call to staff members, volunteers, or anonymously to a dedicated email address cppsafeguarding@icf.com (after 31.10.2026, please use the following email: EU-CHILD-PARTICIPATION@ec.europa.eu).
- The reporting channels are easy to be identified and to be used, also by children and adults with different impairments.
- **The process which starts within 5 working days upon receipt of the report**, clearly specifying how the identity and anonymity of children and adults involved, including witnesses, will be protected.
- **The staff members with safeguarding responsibilities at European and national levels** and how they will cooperate to address the reported concern or incident. For every group of children involved in the activities of the Platform, one or more persons of trust are appointed, and their contact details are always available for children and adults.

The Secretariat expects to be informed **within 24 hours** about any safeguarding concerns and incidents, happening at national and European levels, internal and external, whereby:

- **Internal concerns and incidents** refer to behaviours of the Platform Secretariat, Platform's member organisations or representatives, or a situation that arose during a Platform activity (online or offline), and
- **External concerns and incidents** refer to a concern or disclosed information that relates to relevant persons under the Platform (children), but the concern itself is not related to the scope of work of the Platform; in these cases, Child Protection Officers, with the support of the Secretariat Team will further refer the incident to the organisation which has a protection responsibility towards those affected by the incident.

¹¹ [A European strategy for a better internet for kids \(BIK+\) | Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

¹² [The EU's Digital Services Act](#)

¹³ [Art. 8 GDPR – Conditions applicable to child's consent in relation to information society services - General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#)



If an incident is to require reporting to local law enforcement or child protection authorities, the member organisation responsible must handle the report in line with its safeguarding policy and the legal requirements of the country where the incident occurred.

In all safeguarding cases, confidentiality is essential. While all staff, national representatives of member organisations, and children must provide any relevant information if contacted by an investigator, their privacy and protection will always be ensured. This approach guarantees that safeguarding concerns are handled responsibly, while maintaining the trust and safety of everyone involved.

15. Responding mechanisms to any alleged safeguarding incident

If concerns or incidents are reported, every organisation associated with the children and adults involved have the duty to immediately initiate the necessary and legally requested response procedures.

Every concern and incident reported is given equal important and is assessed thoroughly with due weight. Each case is assessed independently, and solution proposed, always with child protection as a priority.

Secretariat organisations as well as Platform member organisations have comprehensive mechanisms of responding to safeguarding incidents and concerns. The Platform calls each organisation to apply these mechanisms to their best possible competence, always in the best interests of all those involved, especially in the best interest of children, and to regularly update the Secretariat about the progress in responding to an allegation and how lessons learned have been applied.

Considering the safeguarding principles outlined in Section 7, which the Platform respects in any circumstances, in addition to the organisations' responding paths and procedures, the Platform calls for the following minimum requirements to be observed in every step of the response process:

- Treat all concerns and incidents with equal importance and initiate reporting mechanisms in the shortest possible time, within 24 hours, ideally immediately;
- Secure the protection, medical and/or therapeutic needs of the children involved;
- Assess rapidly if the factors which have created a favourable context for the incident are still in place and act upon them immediately;
- Inform children and adult involved about all phases of the response process and up-date them about the progress;
- Respect confidentiality along the entire process, as well as the rights of victims to refrain from disclosing information to the investigator;
- Conduct professional initial investigations and support law enforcement institutions to conduct their investigations if this is necessary. The Secretariat encourage its partner organisations as well as member organisations to involve professional, trained safeguarding investigators;
- Communicate appropriately, respectfully and timely about the progress of the response procedure, within the organisation, with the Child Protection Officers and Secretariat Team and, if necessary, with external stakeholders;
- Decide subsequent action such as recommendations for safeguarding improvements to the Platform's organisational practice and procedures.

Independently from the members organisation's mechanisms, the Secretariat will conduct an initial assessment for every concern or incident reported, aiming to gain clarity on:

- any possible immediate risk for the safety of the child and/or the person who reported the incident, and does the Secretariat need to take special protective measures;

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- what is the nature of the safeguarding concern: internal or external;
 - which is the responsible organisation who will have the responsibility to respond to the concern or incident;
 - does the situation require the Secretariat to report the incident to the local law enforcement and/or child protection authorities;
 - is there any conflict of interest, such as it could be in a situation when allegations are against staff of the Platform.

The Secretariat, through Child Protection Officers, will keep a register of all reported safeguarding concerns and their resolutions.

If concerns and incidents request two or more member organisations and partner associations to apply response mechanisms, the Platform's Secretariat will support, as much as needed and legally possible the response processes, aiming for solutions which are in the best interests of children.

If a child safeguarding incident becomes known to the public, and journalists are asking for information, the Secretariat will communicate in an informed and careful manner, avoiding any sensitive information disclosure, so no additional harm to children, adults and their organisations shall be caused. A dedicated staff member is the only person communicating about with the media.

16. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability in implementing the safeguarding framework

Safeguarding is an ongoing commitment that requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation. The Platform ensures that its safeguarding provisions and goals remain effective and fit for purpose by regularly reviewing progress, learning from experience, and making necessary adjustments. The Secretariat Team carries out the following monitoring, evaluation, and accountability measures:

- Regularly tracking the implementation of the Safeguarding Framework.
- Submitting an annual safeguarding report, detailing preventative actions, reporting and response measures, and overall progress in building a strong safeguarding culture across the Platform.
- Documenting safeguarding practices, tools, and mechanisms to identify promising practices and share them with member organisations and external partners.
- To ensure accountability, all recommendations for improvement are integrated into the Safeguarding Framework, and a comprehensive review of the framework is conducted every two years.

17. Conclusions

This Safeguarding Framework sets out the minimum safeguarding standards for the Platform, drawing on the latest international best practices and research. While these standards establish a baseline for safeguarding, organisations with more advanced safeguarding policies and practices are encouraged to continue strengthening their efforts. The Secretariat Team welcomes feedback and invites organisations to share recommendations for improving the framework.

The Safeguarding Framework is a living document, designed to evolve and adapt as member organisations develop new approaches, best practices, and innovative ways of engaging with children. It aims not only to protect children and adults from harm but also to foster a safe, creative, and empowering environment for meaningful child participation.

Finally, this framework supports the broader efforts of the European Commission and its partners to promote respect for diversity, equal opportunities, and a violence-free environment. It reinforces the



commitment to building an inclusive society, where children and adults can engage with each other safely, respectfully, and with mutual trust.

Version Control Table

Version	Author(s)	Date	Changes
0.1	Secretariat Team, with final validation from the Platform's Safeguarding Officer	06/07/2023	The final version of the Platform's Safeguarding Framework
0.2	Secretariat Team, with final validation from the Platform's Child Participation Officers	7/12/2023	Reallocating responsibilities from the Safeguarding Officer to the Platform's Child Protection Officers
0.3	Secretariat Team, with final validation from the Platform's Child Participation Officers	7/02/2025	A full revision of the Safeguarding Framework, with a new section added on digital environments.

