



EU Children's Participation Platform

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Guide

February 2025

Introduction: A Safe, Inclusive, and Respectful Environment

The EU Children's Participation Platform (hereafter, the Platform) is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all individuals engaging in its activities. Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

The Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Guide outlines the Platform's zero-tolerance approach to any form of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment. It applies to all adults working on or engaging with the Platform.

The Platform is dedicated to preventing, identifying, and responding to all forms of SEA. Any concerns or suspicions must be reported immediately, and all reports will be handled with confidentiality, urgency, and care. If misconduct is identified, appropriate disciplinary actions will be taken, including potential termination of involvement or reporting to relevant legal authorities.

Retaliation against anyone who raises a concern or contributes to an investigation is strictly prohibited. Any form of victimisation, intimidation, or retaliation will be treated as a serious breach of the [Safeguarding Framework](#), [Code of Conduct](#), and [Code of Behaviour](#), leading to disciplinary action or removal from the Platform.

Context on Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are serious violations of trust and power that can cause lasting harm. While all safeguarding risks are addressed within the Platform's broader Safeguarding Framework, it is important to distinguish how different types of misconduct are handled:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse involving adults (including staff, Platform members, partners, or representatives) are addressed through this Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Guide. This includes SEA that occurs in workplace settings, online interactions, or Platform-related activities.
 - Sexual exploitation and abuse involving children are addressed through the Safeguarding Framework. Any concerns related to child protection - including grooming, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation of children - must follow the Safeguarding Framework's reporting and response procedures.

This distinction ensures that concerns are addressed through the most appropriate policies and response mechanisms. Regardless of whether a concern involves a child or an adult, all individuals engaging with the Platform must uphold the same high standards of behaviour to maintain a culture of respect, inclusion, and safety.

- For concerns involving children - Refer to the [Safeguarding Framework](#).

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- For concerns involving SEA between adults - Refer to this Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Guide
 - For concerns related to harassment, intimidation and bullying - Refer to the Anti-Harassment, Anti-Intimidation, and Anti-Bullying Guide.

Definitions

For this document, we used the UN Secretary General's Bulletin on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2003)¹. It defines sexual exploitation and abuse as:

- **Sexual exploitation:** "Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes including but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another".
 - It is important to emphasise that sexual exploitation refers to all forms of sexual violence, including 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:** "The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions".

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate international legal norms and standards. They also constitute acts of serious misconduct, creating grounds for disciplinary measures, including removal from the Platform or dismissal. They may also be treated as criminal acts.

We are committed to ensuring our approach is consistent with the national and international disclosure obligations. We shall comply with all applicable laws, statutes, regulations and codes from time to time in force, including:

- All relevant international and EU laws related to protection from sexual abuse, violence and harm, and those outlining measures for reporting known or alleged cases of abuse.
- Applicable laws in the countries where the Platform operates; and
- UN Secretary General's Bulletin: Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Where the guidance in this policy conflicts with any applicable laws or regulations, the higher standard must be always observed.²

Preventing and Addressing Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

The Platform is committed to preventing and addressing all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). To ensure a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment, the Platform follows four key safeguarding principles: Awareness, Prevention, Reporting, and Responding.

Awareness

Everyone involved in the Platform—including staff, partners, member organisations, and suppliers—must understand their responsibilities in creating a safe space for children and adults.

- The [Code of Conduct](#) sets out professional and ethical expectations for all individuals engaging with the Platform.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/operations/405ac6614/secretary-generals-bulletin-special-measures-protection-sexual-exploitation.html>

² [Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse | UNHCR](#)

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- The [Code of Behaviour](#) provides clear guidance on safe and respectful interactions with children.
 - The [Safeguarding Framework](#) outlines reporting and response mechanisms to ensure everyone knows how to act if a concern arises.
 - Everyone engaging with the Platform receives safeguarding information and briefings to ensure they understand expected behaviours and how to report concerns.

Prevention

The Platform actively integrates safeguarding into all activities, whether online or in-person. Measures include:

- Clear expectations of behaviour, as set out in the Code of Conduct, Code of Behaviour and activity-specific guidelines.
- Risk assessments for all activities, with additional safeguards for in-person events.
- Guidance for accompanying adults, explaining their role in supporting and protecting children.
- Online safety measures, in line with the [Better Internet for Kids \(BIK+\) strategy](#) and [GDPR protections for children's data](#).

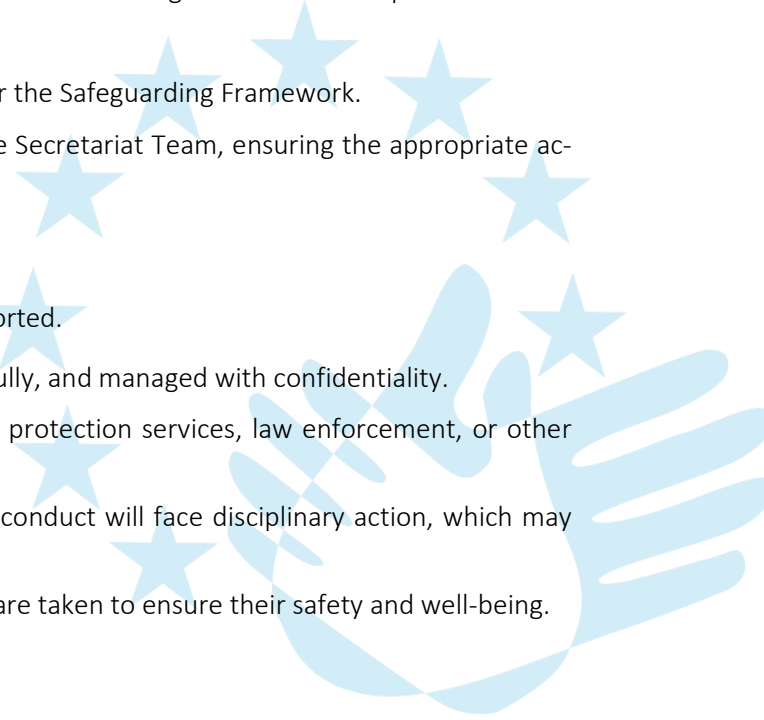
Reporting

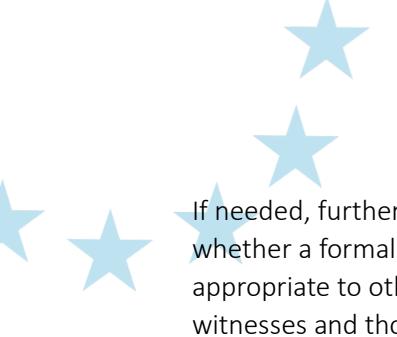
It is essential that anyone who witnesses, experiences, or suspects SEA reports their concerns immediately.

- How to report a concern:
 - Speak to a Child Protection Officer (CPO) or Child Empowerment Officer (CEO).
 - Email cppsafeguarding@icf.com (after 31 October 2026, please use the following email address: EU-CHILDPARTICIPATION@ec.europa.eu)
 - Submit a Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form to a designated Platform representative or via email.
- Concerns involving children are handled under the Safeguarding Framework.
- Concerns involving adults are managed by the Secretariat Team, ensuring the appropriate action is taken.

Responding

The Platform acts immediately when a concern is reported.

- All reports are taken seriously, assessed carefully, and managed with confidentiality.
 - Where necessary, cases are referred to child protection services, law enforcement, or other appropriate authorities.
 - Individuals who engage in SEA or related misconduct will face disciplinary action, which may include removal from the Platform.
 - Victims are supported, and follow-up actions are taken to ensure their safety and well-being.
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If needed, further and tailored support will be offered to survivors/complainants regardless of whether a formal response is carried out (namely, an investigation). Support will also be offered as appropriate to others involved in response, recognising the impact this can have, for example on witnesses and those accused of carrying out inappropriate or harmful behaviours.

A Shared Responsibility

- Everyone engaging with the Platform must report any concerns.
- Failure to report a concern is a breach of the PSEA Guide, the Code of Conduct, and the Code of Behaviour.
- The Platform expects all individuals to contribute to a culture where sexual exploitation and abuse are never tolerated.

