

## 1. VISION, CORE VALUES, AND MISSION of OIKOS ETS

OIKOS operates to promote civil society participation in a dimension of global citizenship. Our commitment is based on the right of all peoples of the world to pursue their social and economic development independently. We believe that current development is based on peace, respect for human rights, and democracy, and therefore, we oppose any form of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia, promoting dialogue between different cultures and religions.

Regarding children's rights, we offer educational, recreational, cultural, and socialization services for children, adolescents, and young people to enhance their expressive and creative abilities, supporting both their artistic vocation and their entrepreneurial spirit. We also take actions to promote children's participation in decision-making processes, encouraging the development of critical skills, socialization, involvement in school, participation in the community, and family life.

The core values underlying our actions are solidarity, cooperation, sustainable development, active citizenship, interculturality, responsibility, and integrity. Our mission takes the form of local and international activities, carried out by the organization's four sectors:

1. International Cooperation
2. Intercultural Mediation in Reception and Social Inclusion processes
3. Education and Training
4. Events and Communication

We act on various fronts with the aim of raising public awareness of the value of diversity and coexistence among different cultures and on issues related to global citizenship, to encourage and promote processes of equity, economic and social inclusion, and respect for human rights.

## 2. UR ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND MINORS IN GENERAL

Children, adolescents, and minors in general, both Italian and foreign, are the target of many projects and initiatives organized by OIKOS, in Italy (Reception, Intercultural Mediation, education, and training) and abroad (International Cooperation). In particular, OIKOS carries out projects and initiatives for children, adolescents, and young people in the following areas of action:

- Social inclusion: social, educational, recreational, and cultural services;
- Formal and non-formal education;
- Health care and education;
- Economic inclusion: vocational training, guidance, and integration into the workforce.

In 2020, OIKOS opened two socio-educational communities for MSNA adolescents, where young people from different cultures and countries can find a caring environment, learn the language, become independent, express their creativity, spend their free time differently, find support and advice. Within the Communities, young people - Italians, migrants, and second generations - can engage in various types of artistic, educational, and recreational activities: dance, music and theater, crafts, artistic and cinematographic workshops, concerts, training, photography, school support, L2 courses (Italian language), and much more. Since 2005, OIKOS has been operating in schools of all levels, bringing workshops of all kinds to raise awareness among children and young people on issues that concern them.

### **3. PURPOSE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY**

The main purpose of this Policy is to prevent any condition that may lead to the commission of legally relevant acts against minors or cause harm, defining and disseminating the procedures that OIKOS adheres to in order to increase its ability to manage and reduce the risks of maltreatment or abuse in the implementation of its activities. OIKOS is aware that it is not possible to completely eliminate risks, but believes that it is nevertheless obligatory to do everything in its power to minimize them, preventing, reporting, responding to such problems, and promoting awareness among all

those who, in any capacity, collaborate with the Organization. In doing so, OIKOS's Policy conforms to the principles and values underlying the main International Treaties concerning the rights of children and adolescents (1948 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights; 1989 - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; 1996 - European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights; 2000 - Convention on the Fundamental Rights of the European Union) and the Constitutional Charter of the Italian Republic (in particular, Article 3). The Policy also takes into account the duties set out in the Good Practices for the treatment of minors in Europe and adopts the principle of full recognition of the subjectivity of the minor as a rights holder, which is the basis of the current national legislation. OIKOS firmly believes that every child and adolescent has the right to develop emotionally, intellectually, and physically, and that all children have the same rights to be protected against any form of violence, abuse, or neglect. Protection therefore refers to all minors considered individually, regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, presence of disabilities, ethnic background, socio-economic status, or religious faith. OIKOS also believes that the protection of minors is further enhanced by constant work aimed at enhancing, listening to, and welcoming their ideas and opinions. For this reason, it prefers a preventive and participatory approach to child and adolescent protection.

#### **4.COMMITMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION CRITERIA**

OIKOS is committed to promoting the safety and well-being of children and adolescents with whom collaborators and partners come into contact during the provision of educational and training activities and social assistance services aimed at them. In particular, it undertakes to protect them from any form of mistreatment, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, and violence, as well as to recognize the needs arising from special conditions of fragility. It also undertakes to remove any obstacles that minors may encounter in communicating their desires, needs, and requirements.

OIKOS aims to be a safe organization for children and adolescents at all stages of its work:

- Needs analysis
- Design
- Implementation/delivery of programs, projects, and individual activities
- Communication and awareness-raising activities
- Monitoring and evaluation activities.

To this end, it undertakes to train and inform all those who collaborate, in any capacity, with the Organization, with the aim of making them aware of the following aspects:

- The existence of risks of abuse and exploitation against children and adolescents
- Prevention methods
- Behaviors to be adopted and boundaries to be maintained when working with minors.

The ultimate goal is to ensure that the responsibility of collaborators and partners always and in any case promotes and safeguards the well-being of children and adolescents.

OIKOS staff members, its representatives, and personnel from Partner organizations must always demonstrate the highest standards of behavior towards children and adolescents, as indicated in this Policy. These standards apply both to the private and professional lives of staff and anyone else working in the organization.

Anyone collaborating, in any capacity, with the Organization has a responsibility to report to the specifically designated person, suspicions or evidence of the risk of mistreatment of children, according to the procedures to be adopted for their protection described in this document. OIKOS undertakes to ensure effective intervention in response to any report of abuse, supporting, protecting, and safeguarding the minor involved.

The recruitment and selection of staff, other collaborators, or volunteers must reflect the commitment of CIES Onlus to the protection of children and adolescents, ensuring that communications, checks, and procedures are adopted to exclude anyone who is not suitable to work with minors. Selected candidates are informed of the binding nature of this Policy, the related Code of Conduct procedure, and the fact that these apply both to their professional and private lives. To this end, in the recruitment phase, OIKOS evaluates:

- References
- Motivation to work on issues related to childhood and adolescence
- Attitude to respect the rights of children and adolescents
- Ability to understand material and emotional needs
- Knowledge of international debates on sensitive issues
- Some fundamental values (loyalty, reliability, non-discrimination, honesty...)

## 5. TO WHOM THE POLICY APPLIES

to members of the Board of Directors and volunteers;

to staff hired under any type of contract

to all those who come into direct contact with OIKOS projects and services (donors, journalists, testimonials...)

to the staff and representatives of Partner organizations and to any other individual, group, or organization that has formal/contractual relations with OIKOS and that implies direct contact with children, boys, or adolescents

## 6. DEFINITIONS

For the main definitions, OIKOS uses the terminology used by most International Agencies, the United Nations, and other organizations dealing with the protection of children and adolescents. For Child Abuse and mistreatment, we mean "all forms of Physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligence, or commercial exploitation or otherwise that result in real or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity within a relationship characterized by responsibility, trust, or power" (WHO, 2002). Abuse is therefore anything that prevents the harmonious growth of the child and adolescent, not respecting their needs and not protecting them physically and psychologically. It includes not only commissive behaviors, within which physical, sexual, or psychological abuse should be included, but also omissive behaviors, linked to the more or less pronounced inability of parents to provide adequate care at the material and emotional level for their child.

## 7. PROCEDURES

To guarantee the right of children and adolescents to protection, OIKOS chooses to adopt a simple and transparent procedure for reporting any suspicions of abuse. To this end, the Board of Directors (CD) appoints a Child Protection Officer (CPO) within the organization, both at the legal headquarters in Rome and in all the countries where it operates through International Cooperation projects, who is responsible for managing, in consultation with the members of the Board of Directors, any reports of abuse against children and adolescents. The CPO has the duty to report alleged abuse to the competent authorities, to local services, and to locally available specialized resources for the protection of children and adolescents. The reporting procedure ensures respect for the best interests of the child and is based on two fundamental values:

- **Confidentiality:** the name of the persons making the report, the subject of the report, and the identity of the accused person will not be made public unless the case goes to court and witnesses need to be heard.
- **Loyalty:** the accused person who is part of the staff, volunteers, and members of the Board of Directors of OIKOS will find support from the organization to the best of its ability, and, in accordance with the legal principle of the presumption of innocence, will be considered innocent until proven guilty.

**WHO CAN REPORT:** the report can be made by a child or adolescent, a parent, a family member, a staff member, a volunteer, a member of the Board of Directors, partners, all those who collaborate, in any capacity, with OIKOS. Anyone working within the Organization, or collaborating with it, in any capacity, has the obligation to report suspicions of abuse or exploitation, against minors whose alleged perpetrator is a staff member, whether they are specific reports or unconfirmed suspicions. The priority of every staff member who is notified of abuse is always and in any case the protection of the child. The OIKOS Procedure allows staff to report abuse even when the alleged perpetrator is external to the organization. All reports must be made immediately and

within 24 hours, unless it is impossible or impractical to do so in exceptional circumstances.

**WHAT TO REPORT:** any suspicion of behavior harmful to the rights of children and adolescents to protection, any concern about the safety of the child or adolescent, any violation of the OIKOS Code of Conduct

**HOW TO REPORT:** a report can be made via a written report or document, by phone, email, interview, letter, and any other valid means. The choice of the validity of any means has been made to ensure that children and adolescents are also able to make a report.

**WHO TO REPORT TO:** Reports must reach the Child Protection Officer (CPO), specifically appointed by OIKOS for each country in which it operates. OIKOS undertakes to evaluate annually, through a participatory approach, the application of the Policy.

## 8. CODE OF CONDUCT

### WHAT NOT TO DO

The staff of OIKOS, volunteers, staff of Partner organizations, and their representatives and all those who, in any capacity, collaborate with the Organization must never:

- hit, physically assault, or abuse a minor physically or psychologically;
- have attitudes towards minors that may negatively affect their harmonious development and socio-relational aspects;
- act with behaviors that are a negative example for minors;
- engage in sexual activities or have sexual intercourse with individuals under the age of 18, regardless of the definition of legal adulthood or the consent methods legally recognized in different countries. A mistaken belief about a minor's age is not to be considered an acceptable defense;
- have relationships with minors that may in any way be considered exploitative, abusive, or abusive;
- behave in ways that may be abusive or that may put minors at risk of exploitation, abuse, or mistreatment;
- use language, give suggestions, or give inappropriate, offensive, or abusive advice;
- behave inappropriately or provocatively sexually;

establish or maintain "continuous" contacts with minor beneficiaries using personal online communication tools (email, chat, social networks, etc.).

allow one or more minors with whom they work to sleep in their own home without supervision and prior authorization from their direct supervisor, except in exceptional circumstances;

sleep in the same room or bed with a minor they work with;

do things of a personal nature for minors that they can do on their own;

give money or goods or other benefits to a minor outside the parameters and purposes established by the project activities or without the knowledge of their supervisor;

tolerate or participate in behaviors of minors that are illegal or abusive or that endanger their safety;

act in a way that makes a minor ashamed, humiliated, diminished, or despised, or

perpetrate any other form of emotional abuse;

discriminate, treat differently, or favor some minors by excluding others.

This list is not exhaustive or exclusive. The basic principle is that actions or behaviors that may be inappropriate or potentially abusive towards minors should be avoided.

## WHAT TO DO

It is also important that the staff of OIKOS, volunteers, staff of Partner organizations, and their representatives, and all those who, in any capacity, collaborate with the Organization:

be vigilant in identifying situations that may pose risks to minors and know how to manage them;

report any concern, suspicion, or certainty about possible abuse or mistreatment towards a minor, as established in this Policy;

organize work and the workplace in such a way as to minimize risks;

always be visible to other adults, as much as possible, while working with minors;

ensure the dissemination and maintenance of a culture of openness that allows staff, volunteers, minors, and those who care for them to raise and discuss any type of topic and concern easily;

ensure that staff members develop a sense of responsibility regarding their work so that inappropriate actions and behaviors that may lead to abuse of minors do not go unnoticed or tolerated;

communicate to minors what kind of relationship they should expect to have with staff or representatives and encourage them to report any concerns;

value the skills and competencies of minors and discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and what is not, and what they can do in case of any problem arises;

maintain a high personal and professional profile;

respect the rights of minors and treat them fairly, honestly, and with dignity and respect;



encourage the participation of minors in order to develop their ability to self-protect.

*Udine, December 21, 2023*