



Фондация за
гостъп до права

Foundation for
Access to Rights

Child Protection Policy

I. Introduction

a) *About the organisation*

The Foundation for Access to Rights – FAR, is a non-governmental organisation registered in the public benefit in Bulgaria, which believes that the rights and the best interest of children, regardless of their race, religion or nationality, shall be a primary consideration in its work. FAR's activities involving children are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the relevant national legislation in Bulgaria.

FAR's *mission* is to guarantee practical access to rights and effective protection against arbitrary deprivation of rights.

FAR STANDS FOR:

- Establishment of effective mechanisms to guarantee access to rights in practice and effective protection against arbitrary deprivation of rights.
- Increasing the institutional and public awareness, sensitivity and commitment to the need to address systemic problems in access to basic human rights in Bulgaria.
- Development of a favourable legislative environment in line with European and International standards for the protection of human rights and the establishment of best practices on access to rights.

FAR has a duty through its staff, trustees and volunteers to protect from abuse, and the risk of abuse, children and young people with whom they come into contact.



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FAR works directly both with unaccompanied children or young people under 18 years old and with children, accompanied by parent(s) or other persons responsible for them by law or custom. Through its lawyers, FAR provides legal assistance to vulnerable persons with financial difficulties in situations revealing systemic problems in access to rights where solution of these problems would lead to enhanced social justice. Secondly, FAR carries out independent research on access to rights by children and spreads knowledge through trainings, seminars and lectures on access to rights and by organising and supporting civic initiatives for compliance with fundamental human rights and for support for needy persons.

b) FAR's commitment in relation to the rights of the child

In its daily work FAR undertakes to mainstream children's needs and endeavours to guarantee a cross-departmental commitment, towards the achievement of the objectives and principles set out in the Policy. The main principles are:

- The best interest of the child
- Provision of effective access to rights
- Protection of children from any harm and prevention of rights breaches
- Child participation in all matters concerning them
- Non-discrimination of children
- Commitment to keep the unity of families whenever possible
- Accountability

c) Definitions (according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child):

- a "child" means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
- "violence" refers to all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.
- "child protection measures" include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral,



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investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

II. About this policy

The Foundation for Access to Rights carries out activities aimed at improving the access to rights of vulnerable children and young people (refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking children) and protecting them against arbitrary deprivation of rights.

The *aim* of this Child Protection Policy is to ensure that in all activities of FAR related to children and young people the best interest of the child is the leading principle.

The *objectives* of this policy are to guarantee that:

- all Board members, employees and volunteers of the organization have an ethical behaviour towards children and follow a “zero tolerance towards violence” policy;
- all children the foundation works with are protected from any form of discrimination and informed about their rights in a child friendly manner;
- all projects and programs of the foundation are in line with the international and national child protection mechanisms and take into consideration all possible risks of direct or indirect harm to the children the foundation works with.

III. Child protection measures

a. Risk assessment and planning

FAR is committed to plan, design and deliver projects and programmes that are safe for children. When planning new projects, needs assessments are conducted as well as risk assessments in order to identify possible risks to children (both direct and indirect). As a next step, risk mitigation activities are put in place in order to have a final decision about the setting up of the new project/program. In case a risk is too high and cannot be reduced, then



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any project or activity will not be further implemented. The decision is then taken accordingly by the management of the organization.

b. Accountability

On an annual basis a self-assessment of the Child Protection Policy measures implementation is conducted at the level of each project following a given template, in line with the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#). As a result, a plan of actions is elaborated to address any gaps identified in the implementation of the policy. The process for conducting the self-assessment and elaboration of the plan will be conducted by the Management Board of the organization. The plan is approved by the Chairperson of FAR.

The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every three to five years or when changes at the level of the national legal frameworks influence the provisions of the policy and the reviewed version is approved by the Management Board.

c. Measures related to human resources

The Child Protection Policy of FAR relates to all Board members, staff members (including short-term or part-time experts) and volunteers of the organization, confining them to refrain from any activity that might pose direct or indirect danger to children's health and wellbeing. Starting with the recruitment phase and throughout the whole period of working at FAR all employees and volunteers agree to follow a "zero tolerance towards violence against children" policy.

Upon employment, all candidates must present their Conviction Status Certificate in accordance with the legal provisions applicable to this field of activity.

The staff and volunteers of FAR are not responsible for diagnosing abuse, but do have a responsibility to be aware of the risks and respond accordingly. Central to this responsibility is an understanding of confidentiality and disclosure, so all staff and volunteers should be familiar with the



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confidentiality policy under the Law on Protection of Personal Data and the Law on Child Protection.

FAR respects the right to confidentiality, although the organization is committed to refer any concerns about a child's physical, mental health and wellbeing to the relevant authorities in Bulgaria. This will always be undertaken in accordance with the confidentiality policy of FAR.

All Board members, staff and volunteers receive a copy of this child protection policy upon signing their employment contracts and sign a Statement of commitment to the Child Protection Policy of FAR.

All staff members of FAR are obliged to:

- Limit all situations that might pose any risk or harm to the children they work with;
- Follow the best interest of the child as a guiding principle in all situations;
- Refer any case (or potential case) of violence or harm against a child to the relevant child protection authorities in Bulgaria following the necessary procedures;
- Inform children about their rights, especially the right to be safe from abuse in a child-friendly manner;
- Respect the unity of the family;
- Respect all children, treat them equally and avert from any form of discrimination, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, health situation or disability;
- Promote child participation in any matter concerning the child;
- Respect the confidentiality of the child;
- Receive consent from the parent/ guardian regarding taking photos or videos of the child or involving the child in any activity of the organization.

As far as it is in the best interest of the child, FAR cooperates with all national and international stakeholders in order to guarantee the protection of children.

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