



# Child Protection Policy

## of the Open Academy Step by Step

Hereby and through this Child Protection Policy, the Open Academy Step by Step, Croatia (here and after OASbS) ensures legal and professional guidelines for all employees, volunteers and associates who come in contact with children or youth due to their association to OASbS with the purpose of protecting children (any person under the age of 18) and youth from any form of physical or emotional violence, harm or abuse, neglect, maltreatment, exploitation or discrimination, always taking into consideration their best interest.

OASbS is a network of experts that empowers educators and child-care workers as well as other professionals, institutions, families and communities to ensure the well-being of every child, provide the best development opportunities and learning experiences, as well as to develop children's awareness of social justice. It was established in 2000 as an autonomous entity inheriting initial programmes developed within the "Step by Step" programme of the Open Society Institute. OASbS is a full and founding member of the International Step by Step Association, REYN network of support to young Roma children, member of the International Child Development Initiatives (Toy4Inclusion and PlayHub Programme) and other professional and policy networks working for quality and equality of services for all children and their families.

Our mission is to introduce, promote, advocate and support innovative and quality practices in education as well as other practices needed to ensure the well-being, development and learning of children and youth.

Our vision is a child-friendly society. The activities of the Open Academy Step by Step are aimed at creating a society in which institutions, families and communities do their best to ensure that every child can actively participate in the educational process and community, expresses themselves freely and creatively, develop critical thinking, independence, responsibility and care for others and the environment, in accordance with the values of social justice, their own interests, needs and potentials.

Besides training programmes and developing educational resources for professionals and institutions, we conduct research, monitoring, advocacy and other activities through three interrelated programs: 1. Quality Pedagogy, 2. Inclusion and 3. Social justice.

The applicable national and international laws protecting the rights and welfare of children and youth are as follows:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights
- Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography; Directive 2012/29 / EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards for the rights, support and protection of victims of crime
- Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Act on the Protection against Domestic Violence, Family Law, Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Act, Personal Data Protection Act, Rules of Procedure in cases of sexual violence, Protocol in case of Abuse and Neglect of Children, Rules of Procedure in Cases of Domestic Violence, Rules on the Procedure of Peer Violence among Children and Youths, Protocol on the Treatment of Unaccompanied children and any other relevant international or national provision protecting the rights of children and youth.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure guidelines for all who come in contact with children due to their association to OASbS, in order to ensure that children and youth are protected at all times from any form of harm, abuse or discrimination.

The values and principles of the Policy are as follows:

All activities involving children and youth are guided by their best interest, must be organized as to eliminate risks to children and youth and to always be aware of situation that may present a risk for children and youth.

All children and youth are treated with respect and dignity and without discrimination on any grounds such as gender, race, color, cultural background, ethnic origin, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, socioeconomic or parental status, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability or other grounds.

Violent methods of disciplining as well as any form of behavior or expression that degrade or humiliate children should never be tolerated.

The rights of children and youth are to be heard and to have their views taken into account, children and youth are to be encouraged to give feedback on their experiences, to share their opinions and concerns, including raising awareness about their rights.

All employees, volunteers and others who come in the contact with children are accountable for their safety, health and well-being, upholding principles and provisions of international and national standards, are to promote respect for the rights of children, are to respect their privacy and the confidentiality of all information (including attaining consent from legal representatives on taking and using of any recorded material), report any form of child abuse and ensure that any partner organizations, as well as other persons with whom they cooperate meet these standards, obligations and responsibilities.

Employees, volunteers and external associates shall never in any form abuse (physically, emotionally, sexually) a child and young persons, exploit or neglect the needs of children and youth, more precisely:

- hit or otherwise physically injure, condone or put in potential risk of physical injury
- humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise apply any form of emotional abuse
- conduct, induce, condone or put in risk of a sexual intercourse or equalized sexual deed with a child, including a third party and other forms of sexual exploitation, such as child prostitution and child pornography
- physically behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner
- develop relationships with children and youth that could in any way be offensive, harmful or exploitative
- use language expressions, make suggestions, or offer advice to children which are inappropriate, offensive or harmful

- tolerate and not report in any unlawful, dangerous or abusive acts or behavior against of children
- discriminate, treat differently or favor certain children
- participate in the behavior of children and youth which are considered illegal, unsafe or considered as abuse.

In order to ensure that the above mentioned rules are met, OASbS undertakes the following obligations:

1. Ensures that their employees and all other persons (volunteers, external associates, etc.) who come into contact with children are familiar with the contents of the Policy as well as other legal provisions governing the rights and protection of children.
2. The procedure for hiring and engaging in volunteer activities also includes checking the suitability for work with children and youth according to this Policy, part of which will be the checking of information from criminal records at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia related to child protection.
3. All employees, volunteers and external associates will receive instructions and information on where, how and to whom they can report the possibility of abuse and exploitation of children and youth.
4. OASbS is responsible for reporting any form of harmful acts against children and youth and for ensuring the safety of the child by passing relevant information to the appropriate authorities.

Reporting any forms of harmful acts against children or youth can be made in writing to:

Email address: [korakpokorak@korakpokorak.hr](mailto:korakpokorak@korakpokorak.hr)

Address: Ilica 73, Zagreb

Person responsible: Bojana Gotlin, director

Persons reporting should provide details of the facts on which the complaint is based, according to whom the violation of the child's rights was committed and against whom, with the date of filing and the name and surname of the person filing the application. The application can also be submitted anonymously. In certain cases, the identity of the victim can also be obscured, if enough information is available to report to the authorities unlawful acts or behavior.



Reports can be made orally to the telephone number 01 4854 935. An official note will be made on the oral application.

The person authorized to receive the report is obliged to immediately, and no later than within three working days, examine the allegations from the report, take all necessary measures to prevent further violations of the child's rights contacting the competent authorities directly:

the Police: by calling 192 or

the competent State Attorney's Office, by telephone or in writing.

All the employees as well as all other persons who work with children and youth on a basis of a contractual obligation or as volunteers and associates, are obliged to provide children and youth with information on where to seek help and advice related to abuse, harassment and peer violence.

Legal representative of the OASbS is in charge of the implementation, the monitoring of the implementation and the revising the Policy if necessary on an annual basis, including making sure all the external associated and others working with children and youth on the basis of their partnership with OASbS are informed and their work aligned with it.

In Zagreb,

13 June 2023

Director

Bojana Gotlin