



**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
ATHENS INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL**

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Introduction

Since 2018, the Athens International Children's Film Festival Festival, through its initiatives and activities, has been in continuous dialogue with children, adolescents, their families, and the educational community, serving as a constant reference point in matters of film education, culture, and inclusion.

At a time when society urgently demands answers to issues such as the rise in juvenile delinquency, diversity, human rights, inclusion, and democracy, children's and youth cinema provides educators and parents with essential tools for an open and meaningful dialogue, free of prejudice.

Through educational screenings across Greece, the "Inclusion in Action" program in special and general education schools, parent workshops, teacher training seminars, and the Accessible Digital Screening Room (operating year-round with free, accessible film content), the Festival cultivates visual literacy by offering skills in critical thinking, reading, and understanding of the audiovisual medium — all essential in today's era of constant digital exposure.

All actions of the Festival are designed and implemented in collaboration with primary and secondary school educators, academics, and child psychologists, with particular attention given to vulnerable population groups.

The Festival's main activities throughout the year include:

- Organization of the annual Athens International Children's and Youth Film Festival every November in Athens, Piraeus, and other cities in Greece.
- Accessible Digital Screening Platform offering free access to films made available to people on the autism spectrum and to those with hearing or visual impairments, through tools such as audio description, Greek Sign Language interpretation, and social stories.
- School Screenings and Educational Workshops, held in-person and online across Greece, featuring curated programs approved by educators and child psychologists.
- Educational Program "Inclusion in Action", an initiative encouraging people with disabilities to actively participate in the cultural process, in collaboration with faculty from the University of Athens (Department of Education) and accessibility consultants.

- Establishment of an educational field trip to Athens for primary and secondary school students from remote areas of Greece, accompanied by teachers and parents.
- Support and development of the production of audiovisual content for children and youth through initiatives addressed to professionals in the field.

Every November, during the annual Athens International Children's and Youth Film Festival, a rich program of films from around the world is presented, familiarizing young audiences with contemporary cinema. These films aim to entertain while also fostering dialogue on issues relevant to children, teenagers, parents, and educators — such as digital life and its challenges, bullying, racism, domestic violence, and gender stereotypes.

Purpose and Scope

The **Child Protection Policy** of the *Athens International Children's Film Festival* aims to ensure the well-being, safety, and rights of all children participating in its activities.

The Festival recognizes that the protection of children is of utmost importance and is committed to operating in a way that protects children from all forms of harm, exploitation, abuse, and neglect, while supporting their development and participation in educational and recreational activities.

This Policy provides clear guidance for staff, partners, volunteers, and anyone associated with the organization, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all children.

By establishing this Child Protection Policy and its related procedures, the Athens International Children's Film Festival Festival:

- Recognizes every individual's right to safety.
- Ensures that the Festival assumes its responsibilities regarding the protection of children and young people, and that it responds appropriately to any relevant concerns or incidents.
- Defines a framework of principles and procedures to support staff, partners, and volunteers in their areas of work, clarifying the Festival's expectations so that all

adult actions related to its activities remain transparent and promote the well-being of children and young people.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that procedures are in place to safeguard children's well-being and to promote the prompt reporting of any concerns about their welfare to the appropriate authorities.

Furthermore, the policy promotes best practices, ensuring that children and young people under the Festival's care receive proper protection and that staff and volunteers are able to respond consciously and confidently to child protection issues

Child Protection Principles

The best interests of the child come first:

All decisions and actions concerning children must prioritize their best interests.

Zero tolerance for abuse:

The organization will not tolerate any form of child abuse or exploitation, by anyone and under any circumstances.

Shared responsibility:

All staff members, volunteers, and partners have a duty to protect children and to act responsibly whenever suspicions or incidents of abuse arise.

Child participation:

Children are encouraged to express their views, participate in decisions that concern them, and feel safe in reporting any concerns.

Confidentiality and respect:

All information related to child protection incidents must be handled with absolute confidentiality and respect for the child and their family

Definitions

Child:

For the purposes of this policy, a *child* is defined as any person under the age of

eighteen (18), in accordance with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Beneficiary Child:

Refers to children who benefit from or come into contact with programs implemented or funded by the organization.

Child Abuse and Exploitation:

For the purposes of this policy, the terms *child abuse* and *child exploitation* refer to any form of physical and/or emotional mistreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent behavior, as well as labor or other types of exploitation that cause, or are likely to cause, actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity within a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

Harm:

Refers to any physical or psychological injury or damage to a child's health, survival, development, or dignity.

Physical Abuse:

Defined as the use of physical force against a child that results in—or has a high likelihood of resulting in—harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity.

Psychological/Emotional Abuse:

Includes practices such as restricting a child's movement, humiliating them, using accusations, threats, or intimidation, discriminating against them, ridiculing them, or other non-physical forms of rejection or hostile treatment.

Sexual Abuse:

Defined as involving a child in sexual activity that they do not fully understand, cannot consent to, are not developmentally prepared for, or that violates the law.

Children may be sexually abused by adults or by other children who, due to age or developmental stage, are in a position of responsibility, trust, or power over the victim.

Neglect:

Neglect of a child may consist of repeated behavior or a single act or omission that results in, or is likely to result in, serious physical or psychological harm, or a substantial risk of loss of life. Neglect may include failure to provide adequate nutrition, clothing, housing, supervision, and medical care, or failure to take reasonable measures to protect a child from abuse or exploitation by others.

Commercial Exploitation:

Refers to the exploitation of a child through labor or other activities for the benefit of

others, compromising the child's physical or mental health, education, and moral or socio-emotional development.

Direct Contact with Children:

Physical interaction and face-to-face communication with children. The duration of contact does not affect this definition.

Indirect Contact with Children:

Access to information or personal data concerning children, such as case studies, names, addresses, photographs, family background, religious habits, or beliefs.

Staff:

Refers to all employees of the Athens International Children's Film Festival Festival.

Partners:

Refers to all associates, board members, volunteers, researchers, and interns who are active within the Festival.

Working with Children:

Refers to holding a position that involves regular contact with children, either as part of one's duties or due to the nature of the work, which brings the individual into frequent contact with children.

Commitments & Obligations

In accordance with Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the organization recognizes the right of all children to be protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation. Furthermore, in accordance with Article 3, all actions taken for the protection of children must be guided by the best interests of the child, which shall be of primary consideration.

The organization also recognizes its responsibility to ensure that its activities, its employees, and all those working with or on behalf of it do not harm children in any way. It is committed to ensuring that its organizational policies, protocols, procedures, and actions reflect its dedication to fulfilling this responsibility.

The rights, wishes, and feelings of children, young people, and their families must be respected and taken into account at all times.

All actions taken by the Festival are governed by the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The well-being of children, young people, and their families shall always be of the highest importance, and its promotion shall remain a central concern.

The organization has a zero-tolerance policy toward any form of child abuse or exploitation.

Threatening, discriminatory, disrespectful, or harassing behavior may include—but is not limited to—physical or verbal humiliation, mistreatment, abuse, sexual assault, unwanted sexual advances or approaches, stalking, or bullying.

Employees, visitors, and implementing partners of the organization are strictly prohibited from engaging in any form of child abuse or exploitation.

The organization is committed to ensuring that all staff members are suitable to work with children and are informed of their responsibility to adhere to and follow the organization's Child Protection Policy.

Interviews with candidates for educational positions or any other roles involving direct contact with children must include appropriate child protection-related questions.

Job listings, job descriptions, announcements, employee handbooks, employment policies, orientation materials, contracts, and agreements for both new and returning employees must include reference to the obligation to comply with the organization's standards of professional conduct and incorporate the organization's Child Protection Policy.

Code of Conduct

The overall behavior of staff members, both during and outside working hours, must align with the philosophy and values of the Festival.

Responsibilities regarding child protection are shared among all individuals, regardless of position or authority.

- i. Staff members must take all necessary measures to avoid situations that could lead to accusations of inappropriate behavior, whether during or outside working hours.
- ii. The Festival engages volunteers in programs and activities involving child beneficiaries, always ensuring that proper guidance and supervision are provided by an experienced staff member.

iii. Any form of private communication or in-person meeting with beneficiary children outside the framework of assigned work duties is strictly prohibited.

All meetings with children must take place within the organization's activity venues, and communication must occur during working hours.

It should be noted that, due to the nature of certain programs, staff members may be required to meet or communicate with children outside regular hours and locations (e.g., during educational or recreational excursions). In such cases, these interactions are considered part of official work.

iv. Staff members assigned to positions involving direct contact with children must receive appropriate training on child protection. Proper and age-appropriate language must always be used, while the use of inappropriate or offensive language is strictly forbidden.

v. Inappropriate physical contact or any gesture that undermines a child's dignity is strictly prohibited. Staff members must remain culturally sensitive to physical contact norms (e.g., due to religious beliefs). In cases where physical comfort, such as a hug, is deemed necessary (e.g., to console a child), it must take place in the presence of other adults and only with the child's consent.

vi. Staff members are obliged to:

- Not engage in any form of physical or emotional violence, nor use punishment that humiliates or degrades children.
- Avoid creating or encouraging discriminatory or preferential relationships that exclude other children.
- Not produce, possess, or distribute child pornography.
- Respect the rights, dignity, privacy, physical integrity, and freedom of expression of all children.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding personal data or cases concerning children.
- Promote equality and respect regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural, or social background.

- Immediately report any suspected or confirmed cases of abuse or neglect to the competent authorities.
- Ensure that children have access to education and equal opportunities.
- Consider children's opinions and participation in decisions affecting them.
- Encourage open dialogue and self-expression among children.
- Avoid any form of touch, caress, or physical contact that the child considers inappropriate based on gender, culture, or beliefs.
- Refuse collaboration with private entities that do not respect children's rights.
- Never display children's faces or use their images/information without written consent from parents/guardians and the children themselves. Any such material must ensure the anonymity, safety, and dignity of the children.
- Not provide money directly to children or encourage others to do so, particularly in the case of vulnerable groups.

Media and Communication

The Child Protection Policy applies to all communication and media-related activities of the Festival and to the creation and dissemination of its communication materials.

i. All staff members, partners, volunteers, and interns must ensure that children's safety is not compromised in any way by the sharing or publication of images, videos, or related content.

ii. Children's right to privacy must be respected at all times.

Before taking any image or video, explicit verbal consent from the child must be obtained. No image, video, or related content shall be published or shared unless the parent or legal guardian has provided prior written consent. The purpose and intended use of the content must be clearly explained to both the guardian and the child (to the extent appropriate for their age and maturity) in a language they can understand. Children have the right to refuse participation, even if their parent or guardian has given consent.

iii. All media content must respect the dignity of children.

Under no circumstances shall any material be approved for publication if it depicts children without appropriate clothing, in inappropriate poses, or in actual situations of danger, pain, or distress — even if the content is a repost or reprint from another source or media outlet. If the publication of such content is deemed necessary for humanitarian or advocacy purposes, the child's image must be modified (e.g., through pixelation) to ensure anonymity.

iv. The Communications Department must ensure that all media professionals referencing the Festival's work are aware of, agree to, and comply with the organization's Child Protection Policy. In cases of non-compliance, the Festival reserves the right to take all necessary actions. The protection of children's rights, as well as the preservation of the Festival's integrity and reputation, remain of primary importance.

v. When external parties (e.g., journalists, photographers, or media producers) involve child beneficiaries in content creation as part of an Festival program, they must — in addition to obtaining parental/guardian consent — be accompanied by an Festival staff member who will ensure adherence to the required procedures.

If media content is created independently (e.g., a journalist contacts a beneficiary directly), the responsibility for child protection rests solely with the parent or legal guardian.

vi. The Festival reserves the right to request that staff, partners, volunteers, and interns remove any content that violates the Child Protection Policy or places children at risk. In cases of serious or repeated violations, the Festival may terminate collaboration with the individual involved.

vii. Staff, partners, volunteers, and interns are encouraged to share content published on the Festival's official website or social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Vimeo). This ensures that only officially approved content is distributed through personal channels.

The organization is committed to ensuring that all depictions of children — whether through words or images — fully protect their identity, dignity, and rights.

The following standards must guide all communications and publications related to children:

- All depictions must respect children's privacy and present them with dignity and respect.

- Care must be taken to ensure that no image or story places a child at risk or makes them vulnerable to abuse.
- The Communications Department must ensure that all personnel involved in capturing images or videos follow these guidelines, and that clear instructions are provided to journalists, photographers, and visitors involved in the Festival's programs when relevant.

Procedures and Implementation

The Festival takes every violation of the Child Protection Policy very seriously, as well as any violation of children's rights in general.

All concerns and reports — regardless of their source — are treated with the utmost seriousness.

Anyone raising a concern or reporting an incident will be treated with respect and discretion.

Reports related to child protection are handled as top priority, given the sensitive nature of such cases and the inherent vulnerability of children.

The organization is committed to ensuring that all complaints regarding violations of the Child Protection Policy are reported, investigated, and addressed promptly, fairly, transparently, and consistently.

The implementation of the Child Protection Policy takes place through specific procedures that guarantee prevention, identification, and response to incidents of abuse or neglect.

Prevention

All employees, volunteers, and partners of the organization are subject to criminal background checks and verification for offenses against minors.

Regular training and education are provided on child protection and the identification of signs of abuse.

Safe environments are created for children, with clear behavioral rules, adequate supervision, and measures to minimize risk.

Recognition and Reporting

Any person who observes or suspects that a child is a victim of abuse or is at risk has an obligation to report it immediately to the Child Protection Officer of the organization.

Reports must be made promptly and recorded clearly, without criticism or speculation.

The organization ensures support and protection for the child throughout the entire process of investigation.

Failure to comply with the obligations outlined in this Child Protection Policy or Code of Conduct constitutes a disciplinary offense and is subject to review by the Festival's management.

The organization may impose measures such as a verbal or written warning, a compliance directive, or termination of employment.

The Festival ensures that all staff members, volunteers, and partners are aware of the procedure for reporting incidents related to the violation of children's rights or suspected abuse.

Reports are made directly to the Festival's designated Child Protection Officers, who are trained to assess, record, and handle cases appropriately — in cooperation with the competent authorities when required.

The monitoring procedure includes maintaining a secure and controlled record of all reports, aiming to continuously improve protective measures and prevent future incidents.

Reporting Incidents of Child Abuse

i. Reports may originate from any of the following sources:

staff members, volunteers, external partners, family or community members, or the children themselves. Concerns may be expressed verbally to the designated reporting officers, in writing (for example, via email or the organization's social media platforms), and/or through the official address info@athicff.com.

ii. All potential, actual, or suspected violations of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) must be reported as soon as possible.

In cases of imminent danger to a child's safety that come to the attention of a staff member, intern, or volunteer of the Festival, the report must be submitted immediately

to the designated responsible person (see below), either verbally or by phone, so that appropriate measures can be taken.

A written report of the violation must follow after the danger has been addressed.

iii. Failure to report a confirmed or even reasonable suspicion of a violation of the CPP may constitute neglect, which itself is a form of child abuse.

Consequently, this may represent a breach of professional codes of conduct and could be subject to legal prosecution under Greek law.

In any case, if the failure to report involves a staff member, intern, or volunteer of the Festival, the organization reserves the right to terminate cooperation with the individual concerned.

Confidentiality – Data Protection

The protection of children's privacy constitutes a cornerstone of the Festival's Child Protection Policy.

All personal data collected — whether concerning children or their family members — are handled with strict confidentiality, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the organization's internal data protection policies.

Access to sensitive information is restricted exclusively to authorized personnel, and the sharing of such information is strictly prohibited without a proper legal basis or written consent, unless the child's safety is at risk.

Sanctions – Consequences

1. Violation of this Child Protection Policy may result in a formal complaint and termination of collaboration with the Festival.

2. In cases of intentional concealment, falsification, or alteration of information related to a submitted complaint, a disciplinary investigation shall be initiated (for staff members), or the termination of contract shall be enforced (for external collaborators), depending on the nature of the act.

Contact Details

The Festival provides all necessary information materials to ensure that individuals can easily find details on how to report an incident.

Anyone wishing to report a concern may contact the Festival's designated Child Protection Officers, who will receive the report with complete confidentiality and respect for the individual's experience.

Trusted Contact Persons:

Sophia Thalassinou

Department of Educational Programs

Athens International Children's Film Festival, sophia@athicff.com, 6980560557

Katia Papaspiliopoulou

Director of Educational Programs

Athens International Children's Film Festival, education@athicff.com, 6932929611

Calliope Charalambous

Director

Athens International Children's Film Festival, info@athicff.com, 6944683770

The Festival's staff is trained and qualified to manage any related incident.

With full protection of the anonymity of the person reporting, the designated officers — after recording the incident and thoroughly informing the reporter — will immediately initiate the incident management process to ensure the safety of the individual/child as well as the safety of the wider community.

Statement of Acceptance of the Child Protection Policy

I hereby declare that I have received and carefully read the Child Protection Policy of the Athens International Children's Film Festival Festival.

Furthermore, I declare that I have read and agree with all the terms contained in this document, and I hereby commit to complying with these terms throughout the duration of my collaboration with the Festival.

I have read the entire document and I accept its contents.

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(Full Name)

.....

(Signature)