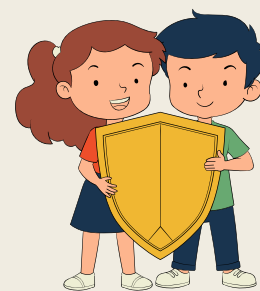




Finance, Innovation and Consulting for Human-Oriented Sustainable Solutions.

FICUS ETS
CHILD
PROTECTION
POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

Child protection is a key priority for FICUS ETS, an organization committed to ensuring the welfare and rights of young people. This document defines the principles, responsibilities, and procedures that the organization will adopt to ensure a safe and secure environment for minors. Our mission is to promote inclusive and protective activities that enhance the contribution and potential of children, while ensuring that their needs and rights are respected at all times.

FICUS ETS is firmly committed to upholding the rights of children, ensuring their safety and well-being in every setting in which we operate. Our organization recognizes the crucial importance of creating a protected environment for children, where they can develop and thrive without fear of violence or abuse. This commitment is not only a moral duty, but a legal and social responsibility that involves every aspect of our activities.

All FICUS ETS staff members, including external collaborators and volunteers, share this fundamental responsibility. Every person involved in our operations is required to prevent, report and respond to any cases of child abuse. Ongoing training and awareness of children's rights and the dynamics of abuse are an integral part of our approach. We want every member of our team to be equipped with the knowledge necessary to recognize warning signs and to intervene appropriately and timely.

The FICUS ETS Child Protection Policy serves as an essential framework. It establishes common values and principles, clearly outlining the steps to be taken to ensure the safety of children. This policy is the result of a careful review of international best practices and current regulations, and represents our commitment to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all children involved in our activities.

Our Policy is not limited to being a formal document, but is an active commitment that guides the daily behavior and decisions of all members of the organization. It includes detailed procedures for reporting suspicious behavior or risk situations, ensuring that reports are treated with the utmost seriousness and confidentiality. Every report is an opportunity to protect a child and improve our practices. In addition, FICUS ETS promotes a culture of accountability and openness, where each team member feels encouraged to share their concerns without fear of repercussions. This culture is supported by an ongoing monitoring and evaluation system, which allows us to adjust our strategies and procedures based on experiences in the field and feedback received.

We actively collaborate with relevant authorities and partner organizations to ensure that reports of abuse are handled appropriately and that children's rights are respected at all times. Our network of partnerships allows us to address vulnerable situations more effectively and ensure that children receive the support they need.



AIM AND PURPOSE

The main objective of our Child Protection Policy is to protect children from all forms of abuse in the course of our activities, as we believe that every child has the right to a safe and secure environment in which they can develop and grow without fear.

This Policy aims to provide an effective management strategy to prevent abuse and ensure the safety of children during our initiatives. We are committed to developing and implementing risk assessment procedures to identify and mitigate potential vulnerable situations. To this end, we will provide training courses for staff and volunteers to recognize and prevent all forms of abuse, ensuring that they are always informed and prepared to deal with such situations.

A crucial aspect of our policy is to protect FICUS ETS staff and partners from unfair practices and procedures. We will establish clear guidelines for the selection and monitoring of staff and volunteers, ensuring that all individuals involved have the necessary skills and integrity to operate in such a sensitive environment. We will also provide ongoing support and training regarding child protection regulations and best practices, reducing the risk of false allegations or misunderstandings and creating a safe and respectful work environment where staff can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

It is equally critical to offer clear guidance on how to proceed when child abuse is suspected. Therefore, we will create a simple and accessible reporting protocol for staff, volunteers, and the children themselves, ensuring that any suspected abuse is treated seriously and promptly. We will establish an abuse report response team of experienced professionals who can handle and investigate such cases appropriately and sensitively. We will also cooperate with local authorities and specialized child protection organizations to ensure that investigations are conducted competently and that victims receive the support they need.

Finally, we will engage in ongoing review of current practices, with regular assessments of procedures and policies to ensure that they are always effective and up-to-date. We will encourage feedback from staff, volunteers, children, and parents to identify areas for improvement and training opportunities. In conclusion, the FICUS ETS Child Protection Policy is critical to ensuring a safe and protective environment for children, recognizing that a commitment to preventing abuse and promoting child welfare is a shared responsibility of all of us.



TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Child Maltreatment and Abuse.

FICUS ETS ETS is based primarily on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, working alongside various policies of the International Society for Prevention against Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) network for the international dimension and Cismai (Coordinamento Italiano dei Servizi contro il Maltrattamento e l'Abuso all'Infanzia) for the national context. In relation to the classification of child abuse and maltreatment, FICUS ETS adopts the international and national definitions provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and ISPCAN, as well as the results of the Second National Survey on the Maltreatment of Children and Adolescents in Italy, carried out by Cismai and Terre des Hommes in 2021.

Child

The term "child" includes both boys and girls, as well as adolescents, so our general procedure is aimed at the protection of all children until they reach 18 years of age.

Child Abuse

"Abuse" is defined as any form of physical and/or psychological maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect or abandonment of a child, as well as their exploitation commercially or in other ways. Such actions may cause or have the potential to cause harm to a child's health, survival, and development by undermining the child's dignity and occurring in a context of responsibility, trust, or power.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is defined as any harm that can be caused (or has the potential to be caused) by an action or omission on the part of one who holds a role of responsibility, trust, or power over the child, such as a parent or equivalent figure.

Psychological abuse

Psychological abuse occurs when an appropriate environment is not provided to support the child's developmental need for an affective reference figure. Behaviors that can cause or have a significant possibility of causing harm to the child's psychological, mental, spiritual, moral or social development fall into this category. Such actions include restrictions on freedom of movement and disparaging, threatening, discriminatory or other forms of hostile communication.

Neglect

Neglect refers to the lack of support in the child's development in various areas, such as health, education, emotions, growth, nutrition, and safe living conditions, taking into account the available resources of the family or responsible persons. This neglect can cause harm to the child's mental, mental, spiritual, moral or social development and is also manifested in the lack of adequate supervision and protection of the child from violent situations.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves the child's involvement in sexual activities that he or she is unable to understand or for which he or she cannot give informed consent due to his or her developmental stage. This type of abuse takes the form of a sexual relationship between a child and an adult or another child who is in a position of responsibility, trust or power. Situations of sexual abuse can include, but are not limited to: induction or coercion of a child to engage in illegal sexual activities, exploitation of the child in prostitution or illicit sexual activities, and exploitation in pornographic activities.

Exploitation

The term "exploitation" refers to the commercial or other use of a child when the child is involved in activities that generate benefits for others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labor and child prostitution, both of which harm the child's psycho-physical, educational, spiritual, moral, and socio-emotional development.



REGULATORY REFERENCES

The child protection policy of FICUS ETS complies with the following regulations and reference documents:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: establishes fundamental rights for children and requires member states to ensure protection and support for children in all circumstances.
- National Child Protection Law: defines legal requirements for child protection, establishing procedures for reporting and handling cases of abuse.
- International guidelines: include World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations guidelines, which provide a global framework for child protection.

FICUS ETS policy is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, particularly its four fundamental principles: non-discrimination (Art. 2), best interests of the child (Art. 3), right to life, survival and development (Art. 6), and participation (Art. 12) Reference is also made to the optional protocols to the Convention.

In addition, this policy is based on the following documents:

- FICUS ETS Code of Ethics: outlines the mission and values of the organization.
- Keeping Children Safe: international standards for safeguarding children.
- Core Humanitarian Standards and Child Protection Minimum Standards.
- United Nations conventions and declarations regarding children's rights.
- European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights.
- Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention, April 25, 2007).
- Italian national legislation on the protection of children.

European data protection regulation (EU) 2016/679, known as "GDPR"



SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This policy applies to all members of FICUS ETS, including employees, volunteers, external collaborators and anyone who interacts with minors as part of organizational activities. It is essential that each actor involved recognizes the importance of child protection and adopts responsible and conscious behavior in their actions. The policy not only establishes rules and procedures, but also aims to promote a culture of responsibility and respect for children's rights.

The policy applies to all activities of the organization, including public events, educational programs, outreach initiatives, and any other form of interaction with children. This means that during events, classes, workshops, and other activities in which minors are involved, all participants must strictly follow the guidelines established by the policy.

In addition, FICUS ETS is committed to ensuring that all persons involved receive adequate training on child protection so that they can recognize risky situations and know how to act in case of suspected abuse or mistreatment. This training includes information on current regulations, reporting methods, and best practices for interacting with children in a safe and respectful manner.

It is essential that child protection is not seen as a bureaucratic obligation, but as a responsibility shared by all. FICUS ETS encourages all members to actively engage in creating a safe environment where children can feel protected and supported. Through a collaborative and proactive approach, the organization aims to ensure that the well-being of children is always at the center of its activities.



FICUS ETS COMMITMENT

FICUS ETS is committed to ensuring that all practices and policies are developed and implemented in accordance with the highest standards of child protection. This commitment translates into a number of concrete and strategic actions:

Preventive policies.

The organization implements preventive measures that aim to minimize the risk of abuse. These measures include creating clear procedures for interacting with children, identifying and analyzing potential risks within organizational activities, and adopting safe practices during public events. Through the implementation of prevention policies, FICUS ETS aims to create a protective environment in which minors can feel safe and supported at all times.

Support and resources

FICUS ETS recognizes the importance of providing adequate resources for training and awareness raising regarding child protection. This includes providing training for employees, volunteers, and external contractors so that they are well informed about current regulations, best practices, and procedures to follow when abuse is suspected. In addition, FICUS ETS provides informational materials and practical resources to raise awareness of child rights and issues related to maltreatment and abuse throughout the community.

Collaboration

FICUS ETS is committed to working in synergy with other organizations and relevant authorities to ensure a holistic approach to child protection. Collaboration with local authorities, government agencies, and industry associations enables the sharing of best practices, resources, and information, thereby improving the effectiveness of protection efforts. This integrated approach allows abuse and maltreatment issues to be addressed in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner.

FICUS ETS bases its child protection policy on certain fundamental principles and values that guide every action and decision:

- **Respect:** Every child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, without discrimination of any kind. This principle emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing individual differences and ensuring fair treatment for all.
- **Safety:** The organization is responsible for ensuring a safe environment in which children can freely participate in activities, without fear of abuse or exploitation. This involves creating physical and psychological spaces where minors can feel protected.
- **Accountability:** Every member of the organization has a duty to monitor and report any risky situations or suspicious behavior. This principle encourages an active and vigilant attitude in which everyone is called upon to contribute to the protection of minors.
- **Inclusiveness:** All policies and practices must be inclusive, ensuring the participation of all minors, regardless of their conditions. FICUS ETS is committed to creating accessible opportunities for every child, promoting diversity and the active participation of all.

Through these principles and actions, FICUS ETS aims to create an environment in which the well-being of children is prioritized, consolidating an environment of protection and support that fosters their development and growth.



GENERAL PROCEDURES

FICUS ETS is actively dedicated to child protection through a series of structured initiatives that aim to ensure a safe and protective environment. Activities are divided into four main areas: awareness, recruitment, training, and reporting and response:

Outreach

FICUS ETS promotes a culture of outreach that targets not only members of the organization, but also the broader community. Outreach initiatives are designed to educate and inform regarding children's rights and abuse prevention. These activities include interactive workshops, which provide hands-on learning opportunities, and information campaigns that use various channels, such as social media and public events, to reach a wide audience. The distribution of educational materials, such as pamphlets and guides, addresses key issues such as risk awareness, the importance of reporting abuse, and how to protect children. These actions are key to building a more aware community capable of recognizing and proactively addressing abuse situations.

Recruitment

FICUS ETS adopts a rigorous and transparent recruitment process, with the goal of ensuring the safety of children in all interactions. All applicants for employment, volunteer or collaborative positions must undergo thorough pre-employment background checks. These checks include checking references and conducting criminal background checks to ensure there is no history related to child abuse. Selection procedures not only assess professional skills, but also consider candidates' aptitude and sensitivity to child protection issues. Specific questions are also given space during interviews, which aim to assess candidates' understanding of and commitment to child rights protection. This approach ensures that only the most suitable and knowledgeable people can come into contact with children.

Training

FICUS ETS recognizes the importance of continuing education for all members of the organization. To this end, a comprehensive training program is offered, including various aspects related to child protection. Training sessions focus on recognizing indicators of abuse, providing participants with the tools to identify signs of exploitation or maltreatment. Clear instructions are provided on how and to whom to report suspected cases, ensuring that procedures are understood and followed by all. Intervention practices are another crucial aspect of the training; members of the organization are trained on how to intervene appropriately and safely in situations of suspected abuse, ensuring that any action is taken with respect for procedures and the dignity of the children involved. Training is periodically updated to reflect new legislation and best practices in the field of child protection.

Reporting and Response

FICUS ETS has developed clear and accessible procedures for reporting suspected abuse or exploitation, with the intent of ensuring that each report is treated seriously and promptly. Confidential reporting channels have been established that allow anonymous reporting, thereby protecting the identity of the whistleblower and encouraging open communication. Every report is promptly and impartially investigated by a team of experienced child protection professionals. This process is designed to ensure that all reports are handled quickly and fairly, minimizing the risk of further harm to the children involved. In addition, FICUS ETS is committed to providing appropriate support and resources to victims of abuse, ensuring that they receive the care and assistance they need. The needs of victims are always considered a priority, helping to create an environment where each individual feels safe and supported.

Through these four areas of focus, FICUS ETS is committed to ensuring the protection of children, creating an environment where their well-being is always at the center of its activities.

The President
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