

Child Protection Policy of the University of Patras

1. Purpose

The present Policy aims to ensure the protection of all children who participate in, come into contact with, or are affected by the activities of the University of Patras, whether within the framework of research projects, educational programs, visits, events, or any other form of engagement. The University of Patras is committed to fostering a safe and supportive environment for children, acknowledging their right to live in secure conditions, and upholding a zero-tolerance stance toward neglect, violence, abuse, or exploitation.

This Policy has been developed in alignment with the guidelines set forth by UNICEF and is implemented within the strategic collaboration between the University of Patras and the UNICEF Office in Greece, through the Child Rights Centre operating at the University.

The Policy is grounded in the four General Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- a) Non-Discrimination
- b) Participation
- c) Development
- d) The Best Interests of the Child

2. Definitions and Scope

For the purposes of this Policy:

“Child” refers to any individual under the age of 18, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, regardless of whether national laws recognize legal adulthood at an earlier age.

“Child abuse” encompasses all forms of violence against individuals under the age of 18.

This Policy applies to all members of the university community, including faculty members, Special Teaching Staff, Laboratory Teaching Staff, Special Technical Laboratory Staff, administrative personnel, undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers, and all individuals engaged in any form of contractual or non-permanent relationship with the University of Patras.

This includes, but is not limited to external collaborators, volunteers, contractors, and visitors who participate in or interact with children within the context of university programs, research activities, visits, initiatives, events involving or affecting children.

3. Guiding Principles

Best Interests of the Child: Every decision and action must prioritize the welfare and safety of the child.

Non-Discrimination: All children are entitled to protection regardless of gender, race, religion, origin, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.

Duty of Care: The University holds both an ethical and legal obligation to prevent, identify, and respond to instances of abuse or harm.

4. Preventive Measures of Consent and Participation

Prior to the participation of children in any activity, the University of Patras is committed to ensuring that the following safeguards are in place for every event or initiative:

Informed Consent: Participants and their families should be adequately informed about the purpose and content of the activity, enabling them to make an informed decision regarding their participation. Additional information shall be provided in cases where the participant experiences anxiety or discomfort during the process.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is entirely voluntary, and individuals may withdraw at any time without the need to provide justification.

Do No Harm: All forms of harm—physical or psychological—such as stress, pain, diminished self-esteem, or violations of privacy, must be strictly avoided.

Data Protection and Privacy: All projects and research activities involving children shall fully comply with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation -GDPR) concerning the collection and processing of personal data, as well as with the regulations of the Research Ethics and Deontology Committee of the University of Patras.

5. Reporting and Response Procedures

Incident Reporting Mechanisms: All reports are handled promptly, confidentially, and with respect toward the individuals involved, in cooperation with the competent authorities where required.

Child Protection Coordinator: A designated individual within the University, specialized in child rights, complaint management, and staff guidance, shall be responsible for receiving and processing reports of incidents.

6. Staff Training and Awareness

Staff Training: Members of the academic community who interact with children shall receive training on child protection and ethics, provided through relevant structures of the University of Patras (Student Support Unit, Teaching and Learning Support Centre, and the Child Rights Centre).

Informational Material: Educational materials are made available, offering guidelines for the prevention, identification, and management of child protection incidents.

7. Monitoring and Review

The Child Protection Policy is subject to periodic review and should be amended as necessary in response to legal or operational developments.