fifty-fifty
Social Innovation
& Cohesion Institute

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

SOCIAL INNOVATION AND COHESION INSTITUTE

JANUARY 2025

INTRODUCTION

Fifty-Fifty (Social Innovation and Cohesion Institute) is a civil society organization based in Greece that focuses on empowering individuals, communities, and institutions through education, social inclusion initiatives, and lifelong learning programs. Fifty-Fifty's mission is to develop innovative practices for social change, promote equal learning opportunities, advance human rights, and foster the active participation of young people and adults in society.

While Fifty-Fifty's projects primarily serve youth and adults and do not directly target children, the organization can possibly collaborate with schools, youth groups, and community organizations where minors could be present.

Fifty-Fifty is firmly committed to the safety and well-being of all children. We recognize that even though our core work is not focused on children, we have a responsibility to safeguard any children with whom our staff, volunteers, or activities might come into contact. This Child Protection Policy is a proactive measure to ensure that if any interaction with children occurs in the course of our work, it is safe, positive, and in line with our values and legal obligations.

The policy applies to all members of the organization – including employees, board members, consultants, volunteers, and partners – and establishes clear guidelines to prevent harm, protect children's rights, and respond to any child protection concerns. In keeping with Fifty-Fifty's broader mission of promoting human rights and social cohesion, we consider the protection of children a fundamental ethical duty and an integral part of our organizational culture.

Daniel Gallego
Product Manager

Reese Miller
Project Manager

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Fifty-Fifty's Child Protection Policy is grounded in Greek legislation and international standards for child protection. Greece is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was ratified into Greek law by Law 2101/1992. Under Article 28 of the Greek Constitution, ratified international conventions like the UNCRC are part of domestic law and take precedence over conflicting national provisions.

In accordance with the UNCRC, Fifty-Fifty upholds the convention's core principles: non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and the child's right to be heard. These principles guide our approach whenever children's welfare is concerned.

National Child Protection Laws: In Greece, any act that harms or endangers a child is a criminal offense subject to severe penalties. This policy is aligned with key Greek laws that protect children, including but not limited to:

- Greek Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure: These codify offenses such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and neglect of children as serious crimes, and outline the judicial process for addressing them. They also establish obligations for reporting crimes (Article 27(2) and 40(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure mandate that public officials and citizens report certain serious crimes to authorities).

.

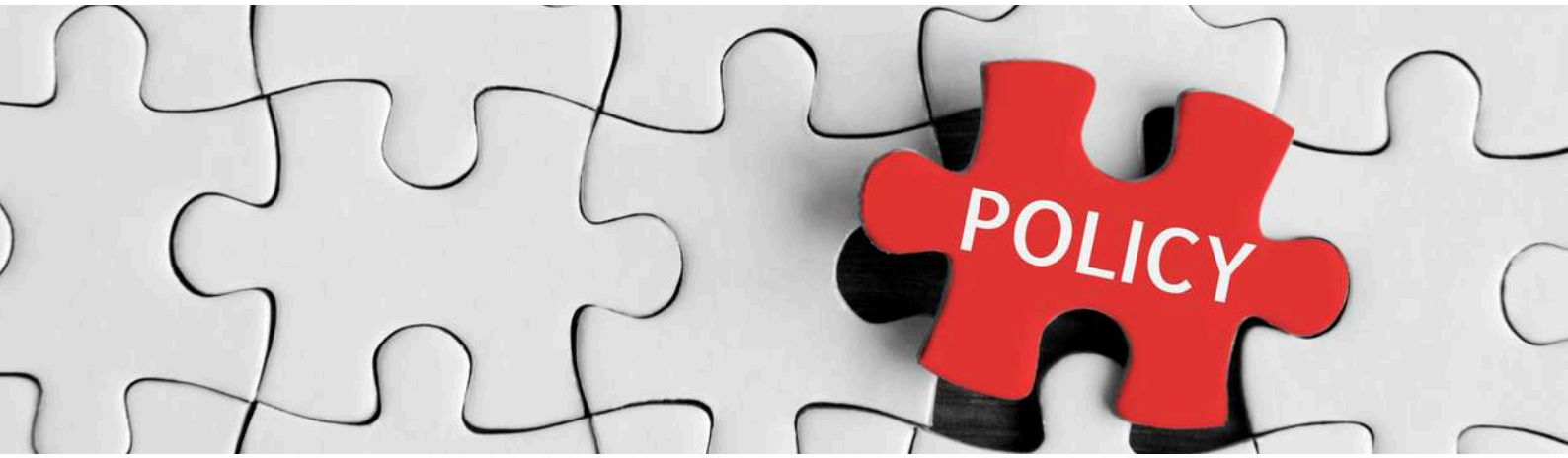
- Law 3500/2006 on Combating Domestic Violence: This law specifically addresses domestic violence, including child abuse within the family, and provides protections and remedies for victims. It makes clear that violence against children in any setting, including the home, is illegal and unacceptable.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Law 3625/2007 (Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography): This law strengthens Greek legislation against the sexual exploitation of minors in line with international standards.

- Law 3727/2008 (Ratification of the Lanzarote Convention): By this law Greece ratified the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention, enhancing measures to prevent and combat all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

- Law 4351/2018 (Ratification of the Istanbul Convention): This law implements the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence It recognizes that children are victims when exposed to domestic violence and reinforces child protection in those contexts. Fifty-Fifty is committed to complying with all above laws and any other relevant child welfare regulations. We maintain a zero-tolerance stance on child abuse in line with Greek law and international human rights standards. All children, without distinction of any kind, are entitled to protection and care, and their best interests shall be a primary consideration in any situation involving our organization. Furthermore, this policy is informed by guidance from Greek authorities and child protection agencies. For example, the National "Protocol for the Investigation, Diagnosis and Management of Child Abuse and Neglect" (Institute of Child Health, 2015) provides detailed procedures for handling suspected child abuse cases in Greece, and we strive to act in accordance with such national guidelines. We also note that Greece's child protection system includes specialized agencies and helplines – such as the Police "100" hotline for reporting abuse and the National Centre for Social Solidarity's helpline (1107) for child protection emergencies – and we will engage these authorities as needed. In summary, Fifty-Fifty's policy operates within the framework of Greek law and global child rights conventions to ensure that any child interacting with our organization is safeguarded.



PREVENTATIVE MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN

Fifty-Fifty takes a preventative, proactive approach to child safeguarding. Although direct contact with children is not a regular part of our activities, we implement robust measures to minimize any risk to children and to ensure a safe environment. These preventative measures cover our recruitment and personnel practices, expected behavior standards, training, and how we work with partners or in communities. All staff and associates are required to follow these measures consistently.

SAFE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

We recognize that child protection starts with making sure the right people are part of our team. Fifty-Fifty follows safe recruitment practices to prevent individuals who might pose a risk to children from joining or representing the organization. Key steps in our recruitment and vetting process include:

- Clear Position Descriptions: Every job or volunteer role is clearly described. If a position might involve interaction with children (for example, running a workshop at a school or a youth event), this requirement is stated explicitly in the role description so that candidates are aware of the safeguarding expectations.

- Interview and Screening: Candidates undergo a thorough screening. During interviews, we include questions about the candidate's experience and attitudes regarding working with vulnerable groups, including children, to gauge their suitability and awareness of child protection responsibilities. We also verify professional references for all candidates, with specific questions about the individual's conduct and any concerns in previous roles.

SAFE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

- Background and Criminal Record Checks: For any role that involves direct contact with children or access to sensitive information about children, Fifty-Fifty will request official proof of a clear criminal record (police background check) as permitted by Greek law. This includes both employees and long-term volunteers. Employment or engagement will only be confirmed upon receiving satisfactory background check results. In addition, proof of identity and qualifications is required to confirm a candidate's background and credentials.

- Contractual Safeguarding Clause: All employment contracts and volunteer agreements include a clause requiring compliance with Fifty-Fifty's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct. By signing, individuals acknowledge their duty to uphold the policy's standards and understand that any violation could result in disciplinary action or termination. This ensures that safeguarding commitments are formalized from the start of one's engagement with Fifty-Fifty.

Through these recruitment measures, we aim to hire and retain only those individuals who demonstrate integrity, respect, and a clear commitment to child safety. If an applicant is found to have been involved in any form of child abuse or unethical behavior toward children in the past, they will not be hired. Similarly, current staff or volunteers who are found to pose a risk to children will be removed from positions of trust immediately. These steps align with our organization's zero-tolerance policy on child abuse and ensure that everyone in Fifty-Fifty's team is suitable to uphold our safeguarding values.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

All Fifty-Fifty personnel, including staff, volunteers, board members, and contractors, must adhere to the highest standards of conduct, especially in scenarios where they might interact with children. We have established a Child Protection Code of Conduct that provides clear guidelines on expected behavior. The purpose of these guidelines is to protect children from harm and to protect our personnel from false allegations by promoting safe and transparent interactions.

Key points of the Code of Conduct include:

- Zero Tolerance for Abuse: Under no circumstances may a representative of Fifty-Fifty engage in any form of child abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violation of a child's rights. This includes physical or verbal abuse, inappropriate touching, sexual relations with anyone under 18, or any behavior that humiliates, degrades, or betrays a child's trust. Such actions are both illegal and strictly forbidden by this policy.

- Appropriate Interactions: When interacting with children (for example, during a joint event with a school or if a child is present at a workshop), staff and volunteers should always behave in a respectful, open, and observable manner. One-on-one interactions with a child should be avoided unless necessary and, when unavoidable, should take place in a public or clearly visible setting (e.g. an open room or with another adult present). Personnel should never be alone behind closed doors with a child out of sight of others.

- Physical Contact and Communication: Any physical contact with a child should be minimal and only if appropriate (for instance, a handshake or high-five if initiated by the child). Adults must never hit or discipline a child physically. They should refrain from any sexual or overly personal comments towards children. Communication (both in person and digital) must be child-friendly, respectful, and never exploitative or sexually suggestive.

SAFE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

- Digital Safety and Media: Staff and volunteers should not take photographs or videos of children during Fifty-Fifty activities unless they have obtained consent from the child's parent or guardian (and assent from the child when age-appropriate). Even with consent, images should depict children in a dignified and appropriate manner. No personal data or images of children should be published or shared outside the organization without prior permission. Social media interactions between Fifty-Fifty representatives and children are discouraged; any necessary communication for project purposes should be conducted via parents or guardians or through official channels with transparency.

- Professional Boundaries: Personnel are expected to maintain professional boundaries at all times. They should not socialize with children met through work in settings outside the program context (e.g., meeting a child alone outside of an organized activity) without parental permission and managerial approval. Giving personal gifts to specific children or showing favoritism is to be avoided, as it can be misinterpreted. Additionally, no staff or volunteer should ever provide alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or any inappropriate material to minors.

- Reporting Duty: If any staff or volunteer observes another colleague behaving in a way that contravenes this Code of Conduct or otherwise seems to put a child at risk, they must report it (as detailed in the Reporting section below). Silence or inaction in the face of potential misconduct is not acceptable, as per our collective responsibility to protect children.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

All Fifty-Fifty personnel, including staff, volunteers, board members, and contractors, must adhere to the highest standards of conduct, especially in scenarios where they might interact with children. We have established a Child Protection Code of Conduct that provides clear guidelines on expected behavior. The purpose of these guidelines is to protect children from harm and to protect our personnel from false allegations by promoting safe and transparent interactions.

Key points of the Code of Conduct include:

- Zero Tolerance for Abuse: Under no circumstances may a representative of Fifty-Fifty engage in any form of child abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violation of a child's rights. This includes physical or verbal abuse, inappropriate touching, sexual relations with anyone under 18, or any behavior that humiliates, degrades, or betrays a child's trust. Such actions are both illegal and strictly forbidden by this policy.

- Appropriate Interactions: When interacting with children (for example, during a joint event with a school or if a child is present at a workshop), staff and volunteers should always behave in a respectful, open, and observable manner. One-on-one interactions with a child should be avoided unless necessary and, when unavoidable, should take place in a public or clearly visible setting (e.g. an open room or with another adult present). Personnel should never be alone behind closed doors with a child out of sight of others.

- Physical Contact and Communication: Any physical contact with a child should be minimal and only if appropriate (for instance, a handshake or high-five if initiated by the child). Adults must never hit or discipline a child physically. They should refrain from any sexual or overly personal comments towards children. Communication (both in person and digital) must be child-friendly, respectful, and never exploitative or sexually suggestive.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Given that Fifty-Fifty does not routinely work with children, it would be easy to assume that child protection risks are minimal. However, the organization recognizes that risks can emerge unexpectedly – for instance, through new projects, partnerships, or events where children are present. Therefore, Fifty-Fifty implements a risk assessment process to identify and mitigate potential child protection risks whenever our work might intersect with children. This forward-looking approach ensures we are never complacent and that safeguarding is considered at the planning stage of relevant activities.

For each project, program, or significant activity, we ask: “Could children (persons under 18) come into contact with this initiative, directly or indirectly?” If the answer is yes – whether children are the intended participants or just potential incidental participants (e.g., family members at a community event) – we proceed with a child protection risk assessment.

Some scenarios that trigger a risk assessment include:

- Projects involving schools or educational institutions (since school students may be minors).
- Events open to the general public or community, where children may attend with parents (such as community fairs, open workshops, etc.).
- Initiatives targeting youth (even if defined as 15-24 or 18-30, we check if any minors might be included among “youth”).
- Collaboration with youth organizations or clubs, where membership might include minors.
- Activities in public spaces (like a campaign or exhibition in a park) where children might be present or participate.
- Use of media, communications, or research that might involve collecting stories, images, or data from individuals under 18.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

- Safeguarding Plans for Activities: For any project involving children, we create a short safeguarding plan or protocol. This plan outlines the measures we will take (many of which mirror the preventative measures in this policy) in the context of that activity. For example, if we are organizing a workshop series at a high school, the plan would state that at least two staff/volunteers will be present at all times, that a teacher from the school must also be in the room, that we will not have unsupervised access to students, and that parents will be informed about the workshop content. It might also include emergency contact numbers and a procedure if a student discloses something concerning. All team members involved in the project are briefed on this plan beforehand so everyone knows their role in keeping children safe.

- Cultural and Contextual Sensitivity: When working in different communities or with diverse groups, we remain sensitive to cultural norms while upholding child protection. If we identify practices that might be harmful to children (for example, tolerance of corporal punishment in some settings), we plan how to address this – perhaps by setting clear rules that during our activity, no physical discipline is allowed, and by communicating this diplomatically to partners. We also prepare our staff to handle possible disclosures: for instance, if in a workshop a child hints at abuse at home (which could happen in a discussion on human rights), staff should know how to respond supportively and report it. Potential risks such as disclosure of abuse, or clashes with local customs, are discussed in advance and strategies are devised (like having referral information on hand, or involving community leaders to endorse our child protection stance).

- Continuous Monitoring During Activities: Risk management doesn't end at planning – during the execution of a project, the responsible staff remain vigilant. They monitor the environment and dynamics. If they observe new risks (e.g., an unknown adult hanging around the event venue, or a piece of equipment that broke and became dangerous), they take immediate corrective action. Team debriefings are encouraged, especially in multi-day activities, to review any incidents or near-misses and adjust plans accordingly.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING OF THE POLICY: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Fifty-Fifty's leadership and governance structures are fully committed to enforcing this Child Protection Policy and ensuring it remains effective over time. Accountability for child safeguarding lies at all levels of the organization, from the Board of Directors to every individual staff member, but specific roles carry additional responsibilities for monitoring and compliance.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Management and Child Protection Focal Point: The Executive Director of Fifty-Fifty holds ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this policy on a day-to-day basis. The Director (or a senior staff member delegated as the Child Protection Focal Point) will oversee that all procedures outlined are being followed. This includes verifying that new staff have undergone proper vetting, training sessions are conducted, and reports of concerns are handled appropriately. The Child Protection Focal Point, if appointed, serves as the go-to person for any safeguarding issues and coordinates the organization's response to incidents. They maintain an internal log of child protection matters (concerns raised, actions taken, outcomes) while preserving confidentiality. They also act as an advisor to the team on child protection questions and liaise with external agencies when required.

- Staff and Volunteers: Every staff member and volunteer is accountable for their own compliance with the Child Protection Policy. This means adhering to the Code of Conduct at all times, completing required trainings, and fulfilling their duty to report concerns. Team members are expected to self-monitor and also look out for each other – creating a checks-and-balances system where anyone can call out unsafe practices. If a staff member is unsure about something (for example, whether a certain action is appropriate), it is their responsibility to seek guidance from a supervisor or the Focal Point. Accountability at the individual level is reinforced by having each person sign a statement of commitment to this policy; this personal commitment underlines that safeguarding is not optional, but an intrinsic part of everyone's role.

- Board of Directors: The Board provides oversight to ensure that Fifty-Fifty as an organization is meeting its child protection obligations. The Board will review and formally approve this Child Protection Policy and any subsequent revisions. They may receive periodic reports from management about child protection (for instance, an annual safeguarding report summarizing training completed, any incidents, and actions taken). The Board is responsible for fostering a governance culture that prioritizes child safety, which includes allocating resources (time, budget) for effective policy implementation. In the event of a serious incident, at least one Board member may be involved in decision-making (such as handling cases involving senior staff, or making public statements if necessary). Ultimately, the Board ensures that there is organizational accountability at the highest level and that the policy is more than just words on paper.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Child Protection Focal Point and management continually monitor compliance through routine activities. For example, they might use checklists to ensure all staff files contain signed Codes of Conduct and record of training. During project implementation, project managers report on how safeguarding measures are being applied (e.g., confirming that consent forms were collected, or that required supervision ratios were met). Any minor issues or deviations observed are corrected immediately. Additionally, feedback is solicited from staff and volunteers about the policy's practicality – if something is not working or is unclear, we want to know and address it.

If any child protection incident or near miss occurs, it triggers an immediate review of what went wrong or what could have been handled better. The Focal Point documents the incident, and after the urgent response is over, examines whether policy or procedural changes are needed. For instance, if an incident revealed that a particular risk was not anticipated, we update our risk assessment procedures accordingly. Lessons learned are shared (without sensitive details) with relevant personnel so that the organization as a whole can improve.

At minimum, this Child Protection Policy will undergo a formal review every two years. The review process will involve examining any changes in Greek legislation or international standards that should be incorporated, assessing the accumulation of internal experience (e.g., were there any reports or difficulties in applying the policy), and gathering input from staff (and possibly partners or beneficiaries) on the policy's effectiveness. If needed, revisions will be drafted to strengthen or clarify the policy. Any updates or changes must be approved by the Board of Directors and then communicated to all stakeholders. In case of significant legal changes in Greece regarding child protection (for example, a new law or amendment), the policy will be reviewed as soon as possible to ensure continued compliance.

Part of accountability is maintaining thorough records. We keep records of staff training dates, attendance, and materials used. We document that each staff member has received the policy. We maintain secure logs of any child protection reports and how they were resolved. These records not only help in monitoring progress but also provide evidence of our due diligence, which can be important for accountability to stakeholders and authorities.

CONCLUSION

Fifty-Fifty's Child Protection Policy serves as a comprehensive framework to ensure that the rights, dignity, and safety of children are respected and protected in all aspects of our work. Even as an NGO whose primary focus is not children, we acknowledge that safeguarding is everyone's business and that proactive measures are essential. This policy will be widely disseminated within the organization and to relevant partners. All staff and stakeholders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with its contents and to integrate these principles into their daily activities and decision-making.

This document will be reviewed and updated as needed to remain aligned with Greek legislation and international best practices on child protection. By rigorously implementing this policy, Fifty-Fifty commits to creating a safe environment for all, preventing harm to children, and acting swiftly and responsibly should any concern arise. Through our continued vigilance and dedication, we contribute to the broader efforts in Greece and globally to uphold children's rights and ensure that every child is protected from abuse and exploitation

Policy approved by the Board of Directors of Fifty-Fifty and effective immediately. All queries regarding this policy should be directed to the Child Protection Focal Point or Executive Director.

fifty-fifty
Social Innovation
& Cohesion Institute

26, POSEIDONOS STR., GR-54250,
THESSALONIKI, GREECE

+30 2310 433 434

+30 2310 433 435

WWW.FIFTY-FIFTY.GR