

## CHILDHOOD PROTECTION POLICY

### *I. Introduction*

The Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra (Centro de Estudos Sociais - CES) is a scientific institution dedicated to research and advanced training in social sciences and humanities, using an inter and transdisciplinary approach.

CES was founded in 1978, and has since been carrying out research for and with an inclusive, innovative and reflexive society, promoting critical approaches to some of the most relevant challenges of contemporary societies. Its mission is to continue to attract generations of researchers and students of exceptional talent in the field of social sciences.

Its scientific strategy is to democratize knowledge, revitalize human rights and contribute to science being a public benefit. We fulfil this mission by continually reshaping our research fields in response to the needs of society. Our work covers a wide range of scientific and extension activities, both at a national and at an international level, mainly focussing on the North-South and South-North dialogue, contributing to the development, dissemination and application of cutting-edge science, as well as advanced training and research of excellence.

The research and extension activities developed at CES can sometimes involve children as participants. Recognizing that children protection is of greatest importance and is the duty of all social institutions, CES adopts a Childhood Protection Policy (Política de Proteção para a Infância - PPI) with the goal of guaranteeing the rights and freedom of all children that participate in the activities developed by this Centre.

### *II. Childhood Protection Policy*

CES considers that it is a fundamental duty to ensure the protection of all children with whom it interacts, namely protection from abuse. This goal is met by adhering to the national law regarding child protection and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989. According to the above-mentioned convention (CRC of 1989), a child is considered to be any human being under 18 years of age.

This policy is binding to all staff at CES, that is, to all of those working for the organization, either full or part-time, paid or unpaid. It is therefore applicable to employees, researchers, PhD students, volunteers, trainees and service providers, as well as any person working in CES' name.

## **II.1 Right to information and participation**

CES undertakes to:

- Value, respect and listen to children;
- Ensure that the children participating in research and extension activities are informed and understand the goals of the activity, and that they are consulted on their particular interest on it;
- Protect the right of children to refuse participation in the proposed activities;
- Obtain the informed consent of the children's legal tutors for the participation in these research activities, making sure they are informed in a clear and accessible language on the research goals, the methodology for treatment of data collected, the results and potential risks associated to the participation;
- Inform the children and legal tutors of the possibility of withdrawing from the research at any moment and without consequence;
- Develop dedicated activities to encourage the children's participation and to guarantee their right to be heard and involved in decision making processes;
- Ensure that interviews, focal groups, surveys and other methodological research tools are carried out in safe environments, suitable to building a relation of trust between researchers and children;
- Adapt the research and extension activities to the age of the participating children, ensuring that the information is communicated in a simple and clear language;
- Ensure the inclusion and non-discrimination of all children, regardless of gender, race, nationality or any physical, sensory or cognitive impairment.

## **II. 2 Right to anonymity, confidentiality and image protection**

CES undertakes to:

- Ensure the privacy and identity protection of the children and their legal tutors during and after termination of the research, maintaining anonymity of the written material resulting from research (ex. reports, articles, books, website or blog entries...);
- Ensure the confidentiality of the data collected in interviews, focal groups, surveys or other research methods;

- Obtain informed consent of the children's legal tutors in cases where it is possible that the children's images will be collected (photos or video). The information given must be clear with regards to the intent of image collection, dissemination forms and the possibility of removing consent for the use of images at any moment and with no negative consequence for the children and their families;
- Hold accountable the researchers responsible for the research/extension activities/content editing of all audio-visual material arising from the activities developed, in order to protect the image of the participating children;
- Prevent publicising images or other audio-visual material exposing the children or the legal tutors in vulnerable situations or situations that affect their dignity in any way.
- Provide clear guidance to visitors, journalists, partners, financing bodies or other entities involved in CES' activities, to prevent them from publishing in other contexts photographic images or videos of children collected within the scope of the research without prior consent from CES' governing bodies.

### **II.3 Right to protection in situations of abuse**

CES undertakes to:

- Share information on issues that raise concerns with the relevant agencies;
- Report to the relevant agencies any case of suspicion of any type of abuse or violence over the children involved in the research/extension activities.

### **II.4 Application of the Childhood Protection Policy**

The governing and scientific bodies at CES (Director, Executive Board, Scientific Council and Ethics Commission) are responsible for implementing and monitoring the CPP.

This policy will take into consideration whenever necessary possible alterations to the legal and regulatory framework, in order to ensure the adoption of best practices.