

Regional Sport Initiative – Playing Together
Podgorica, Montenegro

Procedure for the Protection of Children in “Sport for All” (Principles and guidelines for implementation)

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General Assembly, Regional Sport Initiative – Playing Together

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I. Purpose, scope, legal basis and definitions

1. These principles and procedures, prepared by the REGSPO, aim to ensure the physical, emotional, social and psychological safety of children in Sport for All, support their healthy development in the sporting environment and protect them from all forms of abuse, neglect or risk. The document ensures child protection principles are implemented systematically, consistently and effectively in all REGSPO activities.
2. The purpose is to create a safe environment where children can develop their potential through sport, to prevent risks by timely identification, and to ensure all participants within the REGSPO system fully comply with child protection policy.
3. By promoting children's participation in sport, the REGSPO commits to protecting their rights, building a sporting culture based on equality and inclusion, and observing transparency and accountability.
4. These principles and procedures apply to all sports events, trainings, competitions, camps, educational programs, social events and related activities organized or supported by the REGSPO.
5. All staff, administrative personnel, coaches, referees, volunteers, support staff and any actors with direct or indirect contact with children under the REGSPO are subject to these principles and procedures.
6. Regular members, associate members, partner organizations and third parties participating in events are also responsible for enforcing these principles and procedures.
7. This document aims to protect all persons under 18 years (children) participating in Association activities, including digital aspects.

II. Legal basis

1. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
2. Council of Europe Lanzarote Convention on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse
3. IOC Safe Sport Principles
4. PCSOS (Protecting Children in Sport) certification system

III. Definitions

- a) Child: any person under 18 years of age.
- b) Child protection: institutional policies and practices ensuring protection from physical harm, emotional abuse, sexual and economic exploitation and neglect; and creating a safe, supportive and inclusive sporting environment.
- c) Abuse: any physical, emotional, sexual or economic act harming a child, including acts of omission (neglect).
- d) Neglect: deliberate or negligent failure to meet basic needs (health, education, safety, housing, nutrition).
- e) Physical abuse: intentional physical injury or threat of injury (hitting, pushing, burning, exposing to excessive physical exertion).
- f) Emotional abuse: behaviors undermining the child's emotional integrity (humiliation, threats, conditional affection, excessive pressure).
- g) Sexual abuse: using a child for sexual purposes, exposure to sexually explicit behavior, directing to sexual exploitation; can occur in person or online.
- h) Economic abuse: unethical use of a child's labor, talents, or resources for gain.
- i) Digital harassment: threats, insults, sexually explicit messages or privacy violations via digital means.

- j) Responsible Person for Child Protection: the person appointed by the REGSPO General Secretariat to implement policies, monitor breaches and take necessary actions.
- k) Child Protection Committee: body appointed by the General Secretariat responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating child protection policies.
- l) Risk analysis: systematic identification of potential risks and prevention measures.
- m) Complaints mechanism: system for safe, confidential and accessible reporting of abuse, neglect and harmful behaviors.
- n) Monitoring: planned/systematic evaluation activities ensuring effectiveness and adequacy of child protection policies.
- o) Coach: person providing sports training to children, responsible for safe physical, emotional and social environment.
- p) Supervision: authorized person directly responsible for child safety during Association events.
- q) Volunteer: person participating unpaid and must fully respect child protection policies.
- r) Support staff: technical, administrative or logistical staff with direct/indirect contact with children.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 General Secretariat responsibilities

1. The General Secretariat has ultimate responsibility for preparing, implementing, developing and monitoring child protection policy.
2. It ensures integration of child protection into all REGSPO structures and oversees full implementation.
3. The General Secretariat appoints and can dismiss Committee members and oversees Committee activities.
4. The General Secretariat appoints, authorizes and can dismiss the Responsible Person for Child Protection.
5. The General Secretariat provides necessary resources (budget, staff, educational materials) for child protection.
6. The General Secretariat reviews report of policy breaches and initiates disciplinary measures and fulfils legal reporting obligations.

4.2 Child Protection Committee duties

1. The Committee plans, implements, monitors and evaluates child protection activities.
2. It consists of at least three members appointed by the General Secretariat; at least one member must have training/experience in child protection.
3. The Committee elects a chair and secretary, the chair leads meetings and the secretary records decisions.
4. The Committee holds regular meetings at least once a year; it may convene more often as needed.
5. The Committee monitors implementation on the ground, coordinates reporting processes, evaluates risk analyses and proposes improvements.
6. The Committee may report directly to the General Secretariat with recommendations for administrative or disciplinary procedures in potential risk or violation cases.
7. The Committee prepares and updates training programs to strengthen child protection culture.

4.3 Duties, powers and responsibilities of the Responsible Person for Child Protection

1. The Responsible Person is appointed to ensure the physical, emotional and psychological safety of children during REGSPO activities.
2. They are responsible for effective application of policies on the ground and timely identification and prevention of risks.

3. They must conduct risk analyses, report risky areas/situations and prepare intervention plans.
4. They oversee children's safety before, during and after events and take preventive measures against possible rule violations.
5. In cases of suspected abuse, neglect or risk, the Responsible Person must immediately report the incident to the Child Protection Committee while maintaining confidentiality.
6. The Responsible Person regularly checks availability and functionality of reporting mechanisms (e.g., complaint boxes, online reporting).
7. They participate in the REGSPO's educational activities and carry out awareness-raising campaigns among relevant persons and institutions.
8. The Responsible Person performs their role independently during their mandate and reports directly to the Committee.

4.4 Duties of Coaches, Referees, Volunteers and Support Staff

1. Coaches: create safe, supportive and inclusive environment; adapt training to children's individual differences; avoid physical/psychological pressure; obtain child consent for necessary physical contact; prohibited private communication with children via personal channels; may use photos/videos only with written parental consent; must report any observed abuse to the Responsible Person or Committee; attend child protection trainings and hold a valid certificate.
2. Referees: ensure children's safety in competitions; intervene and report if they notice abuse; prohibited from insulting, humiliating or threatening language; apply age-appropriate rules; must attend child protection trainings.
3. Volunteers: must fully respect child protection policy; prioritize children's safety; prohibited private communication; must complete required child protection training and be certified; immediately report risks/neglect/abuse to Responsible Person or Committee.
4. Support staff: must respect child safety principles; avoid being alone with children; not seek inappropriate information or invade privacy; report any situation that endangers children immediately.

V. Training, complaints and monitoring mechanisms

5.1 Child protection training program

1. The REGSPO must develop and implement a comprehensive child protection training program covering all staff, coaches, referees, volunteers, support staff and other collaborators.
2. Training must be based on national and international standards and include practical guidance, simulations and case studies.
3. Program content must include:
 - o basic principles of the rights of the child
 - o recognizing and preventing all forms of abuse, neglect and discrimination
 - o reporting and response procedures
 - o communication with children and parents
 - o digital safety
4. Training is mandatory for everyone working with children in REGSPO activities.
5. All participants must complete training before engagement and periodically attend refresher training at least once every two years.
6. The REGSPO is responsible for issuing and recording certificates of completed training.
7. The Committee monitors training quality and proposes improvements.

5.2 Awareness-raising activities

1. The REGSPO shall regularly run campaigns and activities promoting awareness of child protection in sport.
2. Activities may include workshops, public forums, promotional videos, online campaigns and informational brochures.
3. Campaigns target young athletes; parents; coaches and referees; volunteers and the wider sports public.
4. The aim is to strengthen a culture of respect, empathy, equality and child safety.
5. The REGSPO may cooperate with state bodies, educational institutions and international organizations.

5.3 Follow-up trainings

1. Follow-up trainings are organized at least twice yearly for those who missed mandatory training or annual seminars without justification.
2. Follow-up trainings must match the original program content and participants must be re-certified afterward.
3. Persons who do not attend follow-up training are not allowed to participate in any REGSPO activity requiring child protection compliance.
4. Follow-up trainings are planned and supervised by the Child Protection Committee.

5.4 Continuing awareness activities

1. Continuous awareness-raising occurs via posters, brochures, digital campaigns, videos, seminars, workshops and local partnerships (e.g., schools, youth centers).
2. The Committee coordinates awareness activities.
3. All events must contain visible materials presenting children's rights and complaint/reporting channels (e.g., roll-up posters, labels for complaint boxes, information desks).
4. Materials must be accessible and adapted to language and comprehension levels of different age groups.

5.5 Maintaining training and awareness

1. Child protection training and awareness campaigns are continuous processes and an integral part of the REGSPO's annual activity plan.
2. Training content and awareness materials are updated at least annually and reviewed by the Committee in line with national/international developments.
3. The Committee prepares an annual report on implemented training and awareness activities and submits it to the General Secretariat.

VI. Sanctions and legal reporting obligations

6.1 Principles of the reporting mechanism

1. Any child, parent, coach, referee, volunteer or any person who notices, experiences or suspects abuse, neglect, discrimination or any violation of a child's rights has the right and duty to report it.
2. The reporting mechanism must be:
 - o accessible: easily available to all participants in sporting activities
 - o safe: ensures confidentiality and protection of the reporter
 - o effective: enables prompt and transparent action
 - o impartial: ensures fair treatment of all parties.
3. Reports may be submitted:
 - o in person
 - o by email
 - o by phone
 - o via an online form on the REGSPO's official website

4. Anonymous reports are allowed but must contain enough information to enable investigation.
5. All employees and those engaged by the REGSPO must know the reporting procedure and support those wishing to report.

6.2 Reporting and investigation procedure

1. The Responsible Person receives and records all reports regarding violations of children's rights.
2. Within 48 hours the Responsible Person evaluates whether immediate action is needed to protect child safety.
3. If a risk to the child's safety exists, the Responsible Person immediately notifies the Committee and, if necessary, state authorities (police, social work center).
4. The Responsible Person collects basic information but does not interview the child unless necessary.
5. The Committee analyses the report and decides whether to:
 - o initiate internal investigation
 - o forward the case to competent authorities
 - o dismiss the case if unfounded
6. The Committee must ensure the procedure does not cause further trauma to the child.
7. During the investigation, all parties have the right to fair treatment, respect for dignity and the right to present facts.
8. Investigation results shall be recorded and stored in the REGSPO's confidential archive for at least five years.

6.3 Complaints mechanism

1. Persons dissatisfied with the Committee's decision may appeal to the General Secretariat within 15 days of receiving the decision.
2. The appeal must be written and contain the appellant's details, reasons and relevant evidence or testimonies.
3. The General Secretariat forms an independent appeals panel of three members not involved in the original process.
4. The appeals body reviews the case within 30 days and issues a final decision.
5. The final decision must be reasoned and delivered in writing to all parties.
6. The REGSPO must implement measures arising from the appeals body's decision, including disciplinary measures or notifying authorities.

6.4 Evaluation of reports and complaints

1. Upon receiving a report, the Responsible Person performs an initial assessment to determine urgency and risk level.
2. In high-risk situations, the child is moved to a safe place, the suspected person is removed from the environment, and authorities are notified immediately.
3. For medium/low risk incidents, details are presented to the Committee, which prepares an appropriate action plan.
4. Where necessary, a multidisciplinary assessment can be initiated with psychologists, legal experts or other relevant professionals.
5. During assessment, opinions of the child and family are collected confidentially and considered in decision-making.

6.5 Disciplinary measures and legal notifications

1. If evaluation confirms violation of child protection rules:
 - o disciplinary measures (warning, temporary suspension, permanent dismissal) may be applied depending on severity
 - o cases that constitute criminal offences under the Criminal Law must be reported to judicial authorities.

2. Disciplinary proceedings follow existing disciplinary regulations and legal frameworks.
 3. All steps and documentation must be properly recorded and archived.
- 6.6 False or malicious reports
1. If a report is found to be malicious, disciplinary measures will be taken against the submitter under REGSPO rules.
 2. Persons who report in good faith will not face disciplinary action even if allegations cannot be substantiated.
- 6.7 Awareness and availability of the complaint mechanism
1. During all activities and events, the functioning of the complaints and reporting mechanism must be clearly and understandably explained to children, athletes, coaches, referees, parents and other stakeholders.
 2. Signage and roll-up banners indicating complaint channels are placed at event venues, in changing rooms, cafeterias and rest areas.
 3. Complaint boxes must be visible, easily accessible and mounted at a height enabling children to use them independently.
 4. The complaints mechanism is supported by written and visual materials adapted to language and comprehension levels of different age groups.
- 6.8 Monitoring and review activities
1. The REGSPO regularly monitors and reviews the implementation and effectiveness of child protection policies in the field.
 2. Monitoring and review are conducted by the Committee and the Responsible Person.
 3. Reviews may be planned (within annual inspection plans) or unplanned, as needed.
 4. Reviews are based on training records, complaint registries, risk analysis reports and on-site observations.
 5. Child protection policies are revised at least annually based on review findings and complaint mechanism data.
 6. Review results are used to improve the child protection system and adapt it to new circumstances.
 7. Following analyses, training content, complaint mechanisms, monitoring procedures or job descriptions are updated as needed.
 8. At year-end, the Committee prepares a general evaluation report and submits it to the General Secretariat.

VII. Sanctions and legal reporting

7.1 – Sanctions for non-compliance with child protection policies

1. All employees, volunteers, administrators, coaches, referees and support staff must fully comply with child protection policies and procedures.
2. Possible sanctions for those who intentionally or negligently fail in child protection duties include:
 - o verbal warning or written reprimand
 - o temporary suspension from duty
 - o referral to the Disciplinary Committee
 - o permanent removal from duty
 - o official notification to the Ministry of Sport and Youth/competent ministry
 - o recommendation for temporary or permanent disqualification from national/international sports organizations
3. Multiple sanctions may be applied depending on the nature of the breach.

7.2 – Breach of duty by the Committee or Responsible Person

1. If Committee members or the Responsible Person neglect duties, abuse authority or act contrary to child protection principles:
 - o a written warning is issued at first discovery
 - o for repeated or serious violations, the person is immediately dismissed by the General Secretariat
 2. Persons dismissed are barred from any role involving direct or indirect contact with children within the REGSPO for at least two years.
 3. Dismissal decisions and reasons are transparently shown in the annual child protection activity report.
- 7.3 – Disciplinary investigation and sanctions
1. The Disciplinary Committee initiates an investigation against any person found to have violated child protection rules.
 2. Confirmed violations may result in one or more sanctions:
 - o written reprimand
 - o suspension from REGSPO activities for a specified period (minimum two years)
 - o permanent ban from performing duties
 - o termination of relationship with the REGSPO in applicable cases.
 3. If the violation is a serious offence (e.g., physical or sexual abuse), the person must also be reported to judicial authorities.
- 7.4 – Criminal offences and legal reporting obligations
1. If actions constituting criminal offences are discovered or suspected (physical, sexual or emotional abuse):
 - o the situation must be immediately reported to law enforcement or the public prosecutor
 - o the child’s safety must be the priority and parents must be informed
 - o all evidence and information must be fully delivered to judicial authorities.
 2. Under domestic law, persons who fail to report criminal offences may also face legal sanctions.
 3. The REGSPO’s legal advisor supports and documents the reporting process.

VIII. Miscellaneous and final provisions

8.1 – Resolving ambiguities

1. The General Secretariat is authorized to resolve any ambiguities arising in the application of these principles and procedures.

8.2 – Entry into force

1. These principles and procedures adopted by the General Assembly enter into force on the day they are published on the REGSPO’s official website.

8.3 – Implementation

1. These principles and procedures are implemented by the General Secretary.

Date of adoption

February 2022

Approved by

Marina Tomović

General Secretary

