



# Child Protection Policy - Werkplaats Immaterieel Erfgoed

## 1. Organisation Background

### 1.1. Who We Are

Workshop Intangible Heritage (*Werkplaats Immaterieel Erfgoed* - WIE) operates as [lead organisation for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage \(ICH\) in Flanders](#) involving a wide ICH network with many stakeholders. Together with the Flemish government WIE co-manages the participatory website [immaterieelerfgoed.be](#) for ICH in Flanders. Furthermore, we take a strongly collaborative approach with a variety of partnerships, both in Flanders and in global networks. For instance, from the early days, WIE has actively been developing the work of the ICH NGO Forum. As an expertise centre focussed on participatory safeguarding of ICH since its launch in 2003, WIE has elaborated a series of participatory methodologies over the years and has contributed to a range of pilot projects and joint initiatives. We were lead partner for the [ICH and Museums Project \(IMP\)](#) in Europe (2017-2020), co-chairing the ICH NGO Forum Working Group Research and the [web dossier on ICH and sustainable tourism](#), co-organiser for [Wiki Loves Living Heritage](#) (2023), project partner for the international [Living Heritage Journeys](#) (2024-2027) project, and many more. WIE was also an advisory member in the Evaluation Body of [the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) (2019-2023).

### 1.2. Mission

WIE is a pacesetter for safeguarding living heritage in Flanders. We highlight and foster its diversity in today's society. We are a hub for the many stakeholders who want to ensure the future of this heritage: heritage communities, policy makers, the heritage sector and the growing range of people and organisations from various backgrounds and sectors. We work in Flanders and Brussels and network internationally.

### 1.3. Vision

WIE views living heritage as practical wisdom that has grown throughout generations of people and forms an inspiring, valuable resource in moving towards sustainable futures. We foster awareness, dialogue, learning together and celebrating cultural diversity.

## 2. Child Protection Policy

### 2.1. General Statement

As our organisation's focus is on the fostering of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage for future generations, WIE aims to build a fairer world in which all children can thrive in their communities, in line with the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC). Intangible cultural heritage practices should enrich the lives of young people and not harm children in the context of the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and skills as part of safeguarding efforts.

WIE is committed to respecting and enforcing the right of children to be protected from all forms of harm or abuse (CRC, Art. 19). We have a responsibility to promote the mental and physical wellbeing of all children, to keep them safe and to organise our activities in a way that protects them, as the best interest of children is a primary consideration for us (CRC, Art. 3). We consider working in partnership with children, their parents, carers/legal guardians and other agencies essential in promoting children's wellbeing. All children have the same rights to protection from abuse and exploitation, to life, survival and development (CRC, Art. 6), to realise their potential (CRC, Art. 27), and to express their views freely, which will be considered in accordance with their age and maturity (CRC, Art. 12 and 13).

In line with the CRC Art. 2, WIE is committed to preventing harm to all children participating in and impacted by our activities, regardless of their ability, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexuality and culture. We also recognise that some children may have additional vulnerabilities because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues. Additional safeguards may be required to protect these children.

Our Child Protection Policy (CPP) aligns with the [Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) complimentary to the UNESCO 2003 Convention. In particular, child protection is a natural extension of the following ethical principles:

- Principle 4, "All interactions with the communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals who create, safeguard, maintain and transmit intangible cultural heritage should be characterised by **transparent** collaboration, dialogue, negotiation and consultation, and contingent upon their **free, prior, sustained and informed consent.**"
- Principle 7, "The communities, groups and individuals who create intangible cultural heritage should **benefit from the protection** of the moral and material interests resulting from such heritage, and particularly from its use, research, documentation, promotion or adaptation by members of the communities or others."
- Principle 11, "**Cultural diversity** and the identities of communities, groups and individuals should be fully respected. In the respect of values recognised by communities, groups and individuals and sensitivity to cultural norms, specific attention to **gender** equality, **youth** involvement and **respect for ethnic identities** should be included in the design and implementation of safeguarding measures."

## 2.2. Aim of the Policy

This policy statement:

- helps our staff and associates to fulfill their responsibility to protect children (in direct or indirect contact with WIE, including children of adults who use our services) from all forms of harm or abuse by adopting appropriate behaviour and reporting questionable behaviour;
- provides our staff and associates, as well as children and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

## 2.3. Who is affected?

The policies and procedures in this statement apply to all our staff and associates at all times, regardless of whether they work on a full-time, part-time or temporary basis. This includes employees, consultants, researchers, volunteers, interns, directors, management and visitors. The CPP also applies to projects and programmes of partner organisations, their supporters, donors, partner organisations, associated media and other parties involved.

## 2.4. Definitions

- **A child** is any person under the age of 18 years old (CRC, Art. 1).
- **Child abuse** is any form of physical or emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, commercial or other exploitation of a child. It includes any act or failure to act, whether intentional or unintentional, by an individual, an institution or as a result of a process, which results in actual or potential harm to a child's wellbeing and dignity or which impairs the child's prospects for safe and healthy development into adulthood. For a more detailed description of what constitutes abuse, we refer to [The International Child Safeguarding Standards](#), published by Keeping Children Safe or [6. Annex](#).
- **Child protection** is the entirety of preventive and reactive responsibilities and measures taken by WIE to protect children from harm as a result of their association with WIE, their contact with WIE staff and associates, and/or their participation in WIE activities.

## 2.5. Protection and Prevention Measures

### 2.5.1. Management

Our coordinators will:

- ensure that WIE representatives are aware of our commitment to the prevention of child abuse and exploitation;
- enforce and implement the measures included in this policy statement;
- ensure the development of standard operating procedures for the proper implementation of the policy;
- ensure that all staff and associates who are in direct or indirect contact with children through the organisation, are provided with and have signed and returned a copy of the CPP;

- regularly provide staff with adequate training on interacting with children during our activities, on how to protect them from harm, and on how to respond in situations of harm or abuse.

### 2.5.2. Research and Evaluation

- The privacy and protection of the identity of all participating children must be ensured by all involved and at all times during research and evaluation activities.
- A safe space must be provided for conducting interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and other research activities.
- In all research, monitoring, and evaluation activities, WIE should adapt tools and methodologies in accordance with the age of the children involved.
- No child shall participate in research or evaluation activities without their informed consent, or that of their legal guardian.

### 2.5.3. Educational Activities

- WIE's educational activities create safe, inclusive spaces grounded in dialogue, respect, and acceptance of differences, where children feel confident to express their thoughts and opinions. Staff ensure children's participation is inclusive and free from discrimination, with extra effort to involve those in vulnerable situations.
- Children's participation must always be voluntary and is possible only when the children involved agree to it and are clearly informed in advance. The children, as well as their parents or guardians, give informed consent prior to participation. To this end, they sign a consent form. They can always, without any adverse consequence, withdraw their consent. If necessary, a prior meeting is organised with children to inform them about the set-up of and their role in an activity. Parents and carers will be informed about the activities and invited to ask questions and participate when relevant.
- Children have the right to decline or withdraw from any activity at any time, without pressure. This must be clearly communicated and respected.
- Staff safeguard children's right to participate in relevant activities and are committed to meaningful, well-prepared involvement.
- Staff adapt their communication to the child's age, abilities, and developmental level.
- Information shared by children during educational activities will remain confidential and will not be disclosed without consent, in line with the procedures in this policy.
- Staff assess the safety of physical spaces before activities and ensure that methods and environments are suited to children's abilities, including their individual and special needs.
- Staff ensure that children understand acceptable behaviour, their right to be protected from abuse, and how to report unacceptable behaviour. A child-friendly version of the CPP helps children understand these rights and policies.

### 2.5.4. Communication

- Our communication team is responsible for informing parents and legal guardians, explaining potential risks, and obtaining written authorisation before sharing any images or information about children. No child-related content may be disclosed until a staff member has made the initial contact with the family and consent has been obtained.

- Children's right to privacy is guaranteed. Staff are bound by the duty of discretion, and also inform the children involved always about what this entails.
- Data on children will be anonymised unless they have given informed consent not to do so. Personal details that could lead to the identification or location of a child—including full names, school, or address—must never be disclosed. Only first names may be used publicly, and names may be changed if required for child protection purposes.
- Any photographs or personal information must be stored securely (including digital files), with access restricted to staff who need the material for their work.
- Images or content shared publicly must never depict a child in a way that is inappropriate or violates their rights. The recorded images should focus on activities and preferably feature groups of children rather than individuals.
- Staff will not take photographs or video recordings of children or ask for personal contact details of children if this is not required for WIE's activities.
- Staff shall protect children from inappropriate and harmful information in whatever form (spoken, written or visual). Staff shall not share shocking or offensive stories or images and shall not use any offensive or objectionable language.
- Any complaints or concerns about (the use of) images or other data on children must be treated and reported as any other child protection concern.

## 2.6. Case Management

### 2.6.1. ACT-Principle

WIE follows the ACT-principle (Plan International and [The International Child Safeguarding Standards](#)) regarding child protection.

- **A**ct on your concerns. If in doubt, speak out!
- **C**hild-centred. The protection of children is the most important consideration.
- **T**ime counts. Ensure timely, effective, confidential and appropriate responses to child protection issues.

WIE is alert to signs of transgressive behaviour, whether it is from staff, associates, or children. We will act on all concerns or allegations in a confidential manner, following our standard procedures and prioritising the best interest of the child, regardless of the nature of the referral, who is involved or the referrer. Appropriate measures will be taken to protect the child from further harm during and after the incident or allegation.

### 2.6.2. Child Protection Persons and Committee

At each level of the organisation, a [staff member or coordinator](#) is assigned responsibility for safeguarding children's rights. These designated child protection persons are the primary contacts for reporting any concerns, incidents, or allegations of harm or abuse involving children.

Designated child protection persons:

- Celine Verhaest at the staff-level,
- Jorijn Neyrinck and Evdokia Tsakiridis at the coordination-level,
- or, if the allegation concerns them all, the allegation must be passed on to one of the external organisations mentioned below.

These designated child protection persons form the child protection committee. All cases and breaches of children's rights, whether observed or reported, should be addressed by this committee. Its role is to provide support, take appropriate action, and ensure the child and their legal guardians are referred to relevant support services. All follow-up will be carried out in line with this policy.

### 2.6.3. Procedures

Whenever there is suspicion of any form of violence or abuse, the concern must be reported immediately to a designated child protection person, who will inform the child protection committee before undertaking any procedures with the child. The committee is responsible for deciding the most appropriate way to approach the child and for making the necessary referrals. If a child reports abuse directly to a staff member or child protection person, it must be clearly and sensitively explained to the child that the report must be shared with the committee, unless the complaint concerns a member of the committee. Procedures must be explained in a child-friendly and supportive manner. Where appropriate, support from the Trust Centre on Child Abuse (or relevant local authority) should be sought to guide these conversations and ensure the child is properly supported. WIE is responsible for informing the child's family or guardian about the incident and the support provided.

Filing a complaint or making an allegation must be made as accessible as possible. Children and other stakeholders must be able to contact a designated child protection person at any time. If deemed useful (e.g. during activities), complaint boxes can be placed where children and others feel safe and comfortable using them. These allow for complaints to be submitted anonymously and in confidence.

WIE will immediately suspend any staff member or associate alleged to have breached the CPP, pending the outcome of the investigation, and reserves the right to take disciplinary action against anyone found responsible. Acts of a criminal nature will be referred to the police and/or the Trust Centre on Child Abuse and may result in a criminal investigation and prosecution.

If a WIE partner commits an act of a criminal nature in connection with WIE organised activities, this will be reported to the police. In cases where the concern is external - meaning the suspected abuse occurred outside WIE's direct activities - we will assess whether WIE's operations contributed to the risk and then decide whether this needs reporting to local or national authorities. The same procedure as for internal concerns will apply.

If a staff member directly observes violence or abuse against a child, they may intervene, provided it does not place the child at greater risk. The staff member should inform the child

of their right to report the incident to the police or to the Trust Centre on Child Abuse. If there is any concern that reporting might increase the risk to the child, the staff member may contact the police anonymously to help protect the child while minimising potential harm.

Staff and associates will respect these procedures and report internal misconduct to one of the designated staff members responsible for the implementation of this CPP.

#### 2.6.4. External Agencies

The designated child protection committee is encouraged to seek guidance from relevant external agencies, ensuring that any action taken is in the best interests of the child concerned.

Some useful contacts include:

- 1712 and [www.1712.be](http://www.1712.be) - help line on violence, abuse and child abuse, where counsellors give advice on further actions to take;
- [Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling](#) (Trust Centre on Child Abuse)- in case of general child abuse or neglect;
- [Zorgcentra na Seksueel Geweld](#) - in case of sexual abuse;
- 101 - police;
- 112 - acute emergency situations;
- [Slachtofferzorg- Kindermisbruik](#) - official website of the Flemish government on child abuse with contact details of relevant organisations

#### 2.6.5. Safeguarding Report

A safeguarding report must be completed by the child protection committee whenever an allegation is made or a concern is raised. This report is essential for documenting the details and guiding further investigation and response. It must be kept secure and confidential, and only accessible to authorised personnel involved in the safeguarding process.

The report should include, as far as practical:

- Name of child
- Age and date of birth (if known)
- Home Address (if known)
- Name(s) and address(es) of parent(s) or legal guardian
- Telephone numbers and e-mail addresses (if available)
- Description of allegations, concerns, incidents and their impact
- Name and e-mail address of the designated child protection person writing the report

The following questions can be used as a guideline for completing the safeguarding report:

- What happened? Describe the incident or concern in detail.
- When and where did it happen? Include the date, time, and location.



- Who was involved? List the names and roles of all individuals concerned, including the child(ren), alleged perpetrator(s), and any witnesses.
- How was the incident discovered or reported? Indicate whether it was witnessed, disclosed by the child, or reported by someone else.
- What immediate actions were taken? Describe steps taken to ensure the child's safety and any other measures implemented.
- Has the parent or guardian been informed? If so, by whom and how?
- Who has been notified within the organisation (child protection person)?
- Are any external agencies involved or contacted (e.g. child protection services, medical services, police)?

#### 2.6.6. Risk Assessment and Mitigation

As a result of a risk assessment exercise, we have determined that activities of WIE primarily impact/involve children in the following instances:

##### **Direct contact with children**

- WIE organises events (e.g. open days, networking days) that feature educational activities or workshops related to intangible cultural heritage practices. These events can attract children, who are typically accompanied by their family or carers.

##### **Indirect contact with children**

- Collaborations with partner organisations that work with children in educational, cultural, or leisure contexts.
- Production and public dissemination of audiovisual materials featuring children, including through social media and other communication channels.
- Support provided to certain ICH practices that may directly involve or impact children.
- Development of educational tools and materials specifically aimed at children.
- Development of policy recommendations that may influence or affect children's rights.

We have identified a number of potential risks associated with these activities. A risk level has been assigned based on two key factors: the likelihood of the risk occurring and the potential impact on the child involved (following the risk significance levels as defined in the Keeping Children Safe guidelines). For each **identified risk**, we have outlined appropriate **mitigation measures**.

#### 1. **Bullying between children participating in our activities** (including cyberbullying) Medium (likely to occur, moderate impact)

##### Mitigation measures:

- Implementation of an anti-bullying policy.
- Children are encouraged to talk to any adult if they or someone else feels uncomfortable.
- Staff, associates and children must report any suspected bullying to a designated child protection person.
- All reports will be taken seriously and handled discreetly.
- After a first incident, a private discussion and reminder of the policy follows. In case of a second incident, a parent or legal guardian will be contacted and may be asked to



attend a discussion. If further incidents occur, the bullying child may be asked to leave or not to attend further activities, depending on severity.

## 2. **Sexual/physical abuse**

Medium (unlikely to occur, very significant impact)

Mitigation measures:

- Our activities involving children will always be guided by a minimum of two adults, to increase the level of social control during the activities.
- Our recruitment procedures include a background check. A transcript of the criminal record of potential new staff members who will be working with children is required.

## 3. **Violation of privacy**

Medium (likely to occur, low impact)

Mitigation measures: see [2.5.4. Communication](#).

## 4. **Exploitation for commercial purposes**

Low (unlikely to occur, low impact)

Mitigation measures:

- We do not assign children tasks or responsibilities that could be considered labour, particularly those that are physically or emotionally harmful, age-inappropriate, or interfere with their education.
- Children's participation in any activity, including creative or promotional tasks, must be entirely voluntary and with the informed consent of both the child and their parent or legal guardian.
- Children will not receive money, gifts, or other compensation for appearing in media or materials - only age-appropriate tokens of appreciation where appropriate.
- Measures related to consent of the spreading of images of children, as expressed in [2.5.4. Communication](#), are also relevant in regards to child exploitation.

### 3. Recruitment Policies

Child protection measures are embedded in our recruitment processes to ensure that all WIE representatives do not pose a risk.

- Recruiters are trained in safe recruitment practices.
- Job advertisements state our commitment to child protection.
- Job interviews include questions about child protection.
- Two references are obtained for all positions.
- Criminal record and background checks are carried out on all staff and associates.
- All short-term consultants and contractors are subject to appropriate background checks if their work involves contact with children, members of the public, or access to personal data.
- All staff and associates who are in direct or indirect contact with children through the organisation, are provided with and have signed and returned a copy of the CPP.

### 4. Monitoring and Evaluation of Child Protection Policy

The monitoring and implementation of the CPP is the responsibility of the members of the child protection committee. The policy will be reviewed and evaluated by the committee and at least two other staff members every four years, unless earlier revision is required due to specific incidents. It will also be updated in line with changes in national and international child protection regulations.

Special attention will be given to updating the risk assessment and mitigation measures during the CPP evaluations. As policy plans and projects within the organisation evolve over time, it is important to regularly review the areas in which our work involves or impacts children and to reassess the risks to children associated with each activity.

### 5. Dissemination of Child Protection Policy

This CPP will be publicly available on our website. It will be shared with staff, associates, and parents or legal guardians/carers of children who are involved in our activities or services. A child-friendly version will also be created to inform participating children of their rights and who they can turn to if they feel unsafe.

The CPP is revisited yearly during a team meeting to remind staff of its key principles and importance, and new staff receive additional training on the policy and its implementation.

## 6. Annex: Definitions of Abuse

Source: [The International Child Safeguarding Standards](#), published by Keeping Children Safe.

**Physical abuse:** Actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. It may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning and burning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

**Sexual abuse:** Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

**Emotional abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

**Child sexual exploitation:** A form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending children, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim's options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual. Child sexual exploitation manifests in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods. It may also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

**Neglect and negligent treatment:** Allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.

**Commercial exploitation:** Exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.