



GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper)

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Publication date	Change
1.0	19 October 2026	Current version

INTRODUCTION

The Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper) is committed to taking all necessary measures to protect the safety and well-being of children who are on its premises and participate in programmes and activities carried out by employees, interns, volunteers, associates and external collaborators (hereinafter collectively referred to as “staff”).

In their work, ZRS Koper staff promote measures supporting children’s participation in political and democratic life, their economic and social inclusion, the exercise of their rights to health and education, equal opportunities for all children, the prevention of violence against children, and their protection from violence. In doing so, ZRS Koper is guided by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, and other relevant international and national instruments concerning human rights and children’s rights. Accordingly, all adults involved in ZRS Koper activities are expected to fully embrace and apply the principles set out in these instruments.

ZRS Koper staff act in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child, safeguarding children’s safety, interests and well-being. In doing so, they are bound by the highest ethical standards and by the relevant international, EU and national legislation.

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, this document defines a child as any person under the age of eighteen.

I: GUIDELINES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

ZRS Koper activities involving children

- workshops, consultations, lectures, seminars and other events;
- competitions with prizes and games;
- research (e.g. online surveys, focus groups, interviews, evaluations, consultations, etc.);
- participation in events intended for children;
- participation in the preparation and production of multimedia and promotional materials (including photographs, videos, written materials, online posts, etc.);
- summer schools and camps;
- cultural and artistic programmes;
- experimental and practical activities (experiments, laboratory exercises or simulations conducted in a safe and supervised environment), and other activities.

Guidelines, recommendations and good practices for working with children

- Children must be treated in a manner that respects their rights, integrity and dignity. They must be protected from abuse, mistreatment, harm to their health and development, and all forms of violence, and their best interests must be upheld. All reasonable measures must be taken to manage

known and foreseeable risks and to ensure that organisational procedures do not cause them harm, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

- Children must be treated equally, regardless of sex, nationality or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, physical or mental health, sexual orientation or gender identity, family circumstances, or socio-economic and cultural background.
- ZRS Koper staff are expected to understand their responsibilities for child protection. All partners conducting activities involving or intended for children must be familiarised with this document, made aware of its provisions and encouraged to take responsibility for preventing mistreatment of children.
- When children are to be actively involved in activities, they must always be approached through teachers/educators, coaches, or parents/legal guardians, and not directly.
- When an activity is explained to a child and their parents/legal guardians, neither the child nor the parents/legal guardians may be manipulated or have information withheld about the nature of the child's participation or its possible consequences.
- Teachers/educators, coaches, parents/legal guardians and the children themselves must be informed of all procedures relating to the implementation of activities involving children.
- Children's participation in any activity must be voluntary and may be discontinued at any time.
- Where necessary, staff members responsible for activities involving direct contact with children must receive training on child protection and adults working with children.
- For all activities involving children, communication channels and procedures for raising any concerns must be clearly defined.
- ZRS Koper staff contribute to creating a positive environment in which children are respected, encouraged to participate in discussions, supported in developing their potential and afforded respect for their rights.
- Any abuse of or violence against children must be reported immediately to the competent child protection authority.

Prohibited conduct towards children

- physical violence (any form of corporal punishment, hitting, rough handling, deliberately inflicting pain or any other form of physical coercion);
- psychological violence and neglect (intimidation, threats, unjustified exclusion of a child from activities, deliberate disregard or neglect of a child's needs, including emotional needs);
- verbal violence (speech or gestures that are insulting, humiliating, derogatory, otherwise aggressive, indecent, violent, shaming or emotionally abusive towards a child);
- sexual violence (any form of physical contact of a sexual nature, exposing children to sexual content, and any form of intrusive or humiliating communication of a sexual nature);
- exploitation and manipulation (using children for personal or professional gain without their consent and without the knowledge of their parents/legal guardians, or encouraging them to engage in conduct that may cause harm or distress);
- unequal or discriminatory treatment of children;
- violations of privacy and personal data protection (sharing children's personal data without an appropriate legal basis or the consent of the children or their parents/legal guardians);

- failure to comply with safety protocols (neglecting the duty to provide a safe environment for children or exercising insufficient care in activities in a way that could lead to injury or endanger their health);
- concealment of a current or previous criminal conviction, charge or suspicion relating to offences involving child abuse;
- working with children while under the influence of any psychoactive substances (legal and/or illegal), or consuming such substances in the presence of a child;
- failure to report suspected abuse or endangerment of a child to the competent authorities.

Involving children in activities on the basis of informed consent

Before involving children in research or other activities, including audio/video recording and photography, ZRS Koper obtains the fully voluntary and informed consent of parents/legal guardians and, wherever possible, the assent of the children themselves. If a child refuses to participate, their wishes must be respected, even if they differ from those of their parents/legal guardians. Any public release of audiovisual material must also respect the child's dignity and integrity.

Before deciding whether to participate in activities, parents/legal guardians and children must receive all the information necessary to make an informed decision (an information sheet and, where necessary, an additional oral explanation). Consent forms must be signed in writing or electronically and subsequently retained in the ZRS Koper archives in accordance with personal data protection legislation.

Protection of the personal data of children participating in activities

In their work, ZRS Koper staff are required to protect personal data in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Slovenia and to comply with the ZRS Koper Code of Ethics.

Personal data may be processed only within the scope of authorised duties and exclusively for the purpose for which research participants and participants in other activities have given consent. Using personal data for private or other unauthorised purposes is prohibited. Electronic data are stored on secure servers, accessible only to authorised persons and solely for the purpose for which access and processing have been authorised. Data in paper form are stored in secure locations accessible only to authorised persons. Data are retained for up to five years and then destroyed or deleted.

When publishing research results, ZRS Koper staff must ensure that the publication of aggregated or anonymised data does not directly or indirectly breach the confidentiality and anonymity guaranteed to participants.

Recruitment of persons working with children

ZRS Koper conducts recruitment and engagement procedures for personnel whose work will actively involve children by checking references and criminal records in accordance with national legislation (Criminal Procedure Act, Article 143a).

II: DUTY TO REPORT

ZRS Koper staff have a statutory duty to report, which means that they are obliged to report any violence to the police or public prosecutor's office where it constitutes a criminal offence prosecuted ex officio and punishable by imprisonment for more than three years.

Where the victim of a criminal offence is a child, the act of violence must be reported to the competent social work centre, the police or the public prosecutor. This duty takes precedence over agreements on confidentiality and anonymity.

Reporting procedure

If a child discloses abuse, ZRS Koper staff must:

- respond calmly;
- take what the child says seriously;
- explain to the child that speaking up was the right thing to do and reassure them that they are not responsible for what happened;
- avoid suggesting answers to questions about what happened; the best way to do this is to ask open-ended and neutral questions;
- not promise the child confidentiality;
- explain to the child, in an age-appropriate and understandable way, what procedures will follow;
- make a complete written record of the child's account as soon as possible and forward the information to the responsible persons and/or services.

Further action is determined by the urgency and seriousness of the situation. Where there are serious concerns about a child's safety, immediate action is required. This will normally involve promptly informing the competent authorities (the police and/or a social work centre).

If a ZRS Koper staff member is involved in an activity taking place at a school, sports club or another organisation, they must inform a representative of that organisation (e.g. a teacher or coach), who will act in accordance with the organisation's procedures. The staff member must also inform their supervisor at ZRS Koper.

III: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All ZRS Koper staff, project partners and other persons participating in activities involving work with children must be familiarised with this document.

This document sets the standard for all persons involved in ZRS Koper activities that include children.

The ZRS Koper Ethics Committee reviews this document at least once a year and amends or supplements it as necessary.



Prof. Dr. Rado Pišot, Director

The stamp is circular with the text 'ZRS Koper' in the center. Around the center, it says 'Znanstveno raziskovalno središče Koper' and 'Science and Research Centre Koper'. There is a signature over the stamp.