

Child Protection Policy

International debate education association

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The International debate education association (IDEA) is a nongovernmental organization connecting a network of over 20 NGOs across EU. Most IDEA program participants are children and young people aged 12 to 22.

The work of volunteers¹ and staff of the International Debate Education Association is considered to be youth work, is mostly based in the Netherlands but it reaches EU-wide.

The range of age groups making up the base of IDEA's program participants includes minors, or children. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child², a child is any person under 18 years of age. Youth work with minors, in particular, has to be considered and conducted in line with existing national and European legislation and strategies, such as the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child³.

¹ The term *volunteer* in the context of IDEA encompasses any person working with young people, including but not limited to debate adjudicators, coaches, trainers, youth club leaders, and activity convenors.

² UNCRC: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

³ The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/ds0821040enn_002.pdf

Work with young people and children follows the existing legal framework and positive EU guidelines, of which we emphasize *the National Youth Programs of the countries we work in and* includes the following:

- **NON-FORMAL EDUCATION**⁴: refers to all educational workshops or activities that use non-formal education methods. These are trainings and workshops that use participatory methodology. It is important to point out that non-formal education is flexible according to its methods and organization.
- **OPEN WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**: refers to the way of designing activities in which young people are provided with space and given the freedom to design and influence the implementation of activities in which they participate
- **PEER EDUCATION**: refers to activities involving people of the same or similar age with certain competencies and pass them on to less experienced members (eg assistance of continuing debaters in preparing beginner debates for competitions)
- **SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE**: refers to the inclusion of young people in activities not provided through formal education (primary schools, secondary schools, colleges), debate society refers to competitions, workshops, participation in public debates, round tables, and the like⁵.

⁴ For more information on *non-formal education*, see, for example: <https://yeu-international.org/non-formal-education/>

⁵ An EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering, 2009.

KEY DOCUMENTS

In terms of meeting key child protection standards, there are several documents and regulations describing the responsibilities and conduct required of International debate education association staff, volunteers, and/or any external staff coming in contact with any IDEA programme participants, especially minors:

Code of Ethics (current version in effect since 2020)

The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to raise awareness of members of the Association on the observance of ethical principles and strengthen ethical behavior in practice. The document encompasses key guidelines for staff, volunteers, and any external staff, ethical standards, and disciplinary measures that come into action in cases of breach of the Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics applies to all IDEA staff and volunteers who are, by default, obliged by it.

Handbook: Working with children and young people in International debate education association (most recent version available at idebate.net)

The purpose of the Handbook is to inform IDEA staff and volunteers about the relevant national and European legal and regulatory frameworks pertaining to youth work and, in particular, working with minors, to support them in conducting positive youth work practices, help them recognize and anticipate risks associated with working with young people, and support them in resolving any issues in their youth work.

Code of Conduct (current version in effect since October 2020)

The IDEA Code of Conduct is a binding document outlining the specific risks and expected behaviour for staff, volunteers, or any external staff coming into contact with IDEA programme participants and minors in particular. The Code applies to all personnel coming into contact with IDEA participants, regardless of whether they are members of the Association. The Code is signed by all personnel coming into contact with IDEA participants through any type of activity organised by IDEA, including but not limited to regular debate sessions in youth clubs, debate tournaments, project-specific events, public debates, focus groups, deliberation sessions, and workshops. The Code requires signees to self-declare a lack of criminal record and enclose a certificate of non-conviction issued by the relevant authority.

Volunteer contracts

All IDEA volunteers are required to sign a bilateral (between IDEA and the volunteer) contract regulating their status, rights, and responsibilities as a IDEA volunteer. The contract includes compliance with the relevant legal framework in working with young people and especially minors, as well as compliance with IDEA documents regulating youth work in the organization, including the Code of Ethics and all other relevant rules and regulations described by other documents on volunteering.

Data protection and photo/video permission form

In the event of any data collection from any program participant, IDEA distributes a Data protection and photo/video permission form in line with General Data Protection Regulation. The form must be co-signed by a parent or guardian for underage program participants.

Privacy Policy

The Data protection and photo/video permission form is based on the IDEA Privacy Policy regulating the data processing practices in IDEA in detail and in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation.

All IDEA staff and volunteers must participate in “Ethics in youth work” training at least once in their first year of engagement with IDEA and once every 3 years afterwards, where they are introduced to the organization’s standards of conduct when working with children and young people. All documents listed above are subject to yearly review by the IDEA’s General Assembly of all network members. In accordance with IDEA Statute, the General Assembly must convene at least once a year.

Changes to the listed documents can be suggested by the IDEA Board of Directors or by individual members of the organization.

COMPLAINTS MECHANISMS AND DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

There are several different ways in which programme participants, IDEA staff and volunteers, or other concerned parties can register a concern or complaint with IDEA. As stated in publicly available Code of Ethics and Handbook on working with young people in IDEA, as well as on the IDEA website, complaints can be reported to the IDEA Board of Directors, or any other organizational bodies in cases of specific concerns - the Supervisory Board, Elementary school programme committee, Secondary-level school programme committee, Committee for methodology and Motions committee. The IDEA website also features a permanently available Complaints form.

In addition to outlining the personal responsibilities and conduct requirements for staff members and volunteers, the Code of Ethics and Handbook on working with young people in International debate education association emphasize the superiority of young peoples' safety and well-being over other otherwise important principles, such as collegiality or confidentiality. In that sense, persons working with young people and especially minors in IDEA are made aware of their obligation to report any sort of inappropriate conduct or safety concern they are aware of, regardless of their relationship to the person or persons who might be acting contrary to IDEA standards of behaviour.

Disciplinary measures in place in situations where there are indications of a breach of ethical and professional standards required from IDEA staff and volunteers are described in the IDEA Code of Ethics:

Behavior of a member of the Association that is not in accordance with the principles and rules prescribed by the Code of Ethics of the Association should be reported to the Board of Directors of the Association.

If the Board of Directors estimates that the complaint should be acted upon, a body will be formed which must issue a proposal for disciplinary measures or reject the application within 30 days.

The composition of the decision-making body will not be defined in advance, except by instructions that it must include representatives of both sexes, persons of appropriate qualifications to decide on the application, at least two debate club leaders, and one member of the Board of Directors. The work of the body is confidential.

On the basis of the recommendation and in accordance with the gravity of the misdemeanor, the Board of Directors will impose a disciplinary measure on the member. The Board of Directors may impose the following disciplinary measures on the members of the Association:

1. written warning;

2. temporary denial of assistance and services of the Association;
3. temporary or permanent ban on access to certain activities of the Association;
4. temporary or permanent exclusion from the Association.

STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document compiles existing documents and regulations in effect at International debate education association and was adopted by the Board of directors in December 2021. The document is subject to further review and updates in accordance with any future updates to the IDEA Code of Ethics, Handbook on working with children and young people in IDEA, Code of Conduct, Volunteer contracts, Data protection and photo/video permission form, and Privacy Policy.

On behalf of the International debate education association on December 11th, 2021,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bojan".

Bojan Marjanović,

Executive Director of IDEA

This policy is published on <https://idebate.net/who-we-are/transparency>