

**E.K.Po.S.P.O. NOSTOS**

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Version 1.3 (Approved by the BoD on 16/11/2021)

*Policy must be signed by all employees upon recruitment*





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## **ΕΚΠΟΣΠΟ NOSTOS' CHILD PROTECTION POLICY - PREAMBLE**

This document summarizes the child protection policy adopted and practiced by NOSTOS from 1995 until today. It derives from the decisions of the NOSTOS Board, the rationale on which they were based and the actions developed to implement these decisions, thus reflecting the choices that constitute NOSTOS' policy in the field of child protection in Greece.

### **SOURCES**

- the legislation on child protection in Greece
- the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international or regional conventions or international texts by which Greece is bound,
- the statutory objectives concerning the fight against social exclusion, poverty and inequalities
- the decisions of the Board of Directors of Nostos on programmes and actions concerning child protection
- the literature and the movement of ideas as systematically monitored by the NOSTOS staff and scientific team.

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## 1. AIMS - OBJECTIVES OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY ADOPTED BY NOSTOS

The main statutory purpose of NOSTOS is to contribute to the fight against social exclusion. The methodological approach we have adopted to achieve this purpose includes

- a) the constant vigilance of the staff of Nostos to identify the most pressing social problems
- b) the investigation of their causes with sociological tools and highlighting aspects or associations with social exclusion, as the term is formed in the field of sociology
- c) the search for solutions - policy proposals that could be the antidote to the problem
- d) the proposal to the Board of Directors of NOSTOS on the priorities and the possibility of seeking funding to pilot the proposed solution, usually in the framework of a corresponding programme
- (e) the implementation of the proposed solution in the context of funded programmes involving monitoring and evaluation procedures
- (f) the evaluation of the implementation; and
- g) the promotion of the proposed solution, if it has been positively evaluated, in order to be more widely implemented and adopted by the respective governmental agencies.

From a theoretical point of view, the use of the term 'social exclusion' as a tool for highlighting problems leads to the application - proposal of policies related to its opposite, i.e. social inclusion. According to this theory, social exclusion is a multilevel phenomenon in which many different factors are involved, but which together lead to the marginalisation of the individual and the deprivation of his or her rights.

For this reason, the services of NOSTOS focus over time on facilitating and supporting the social integration of people-members of social groups who, for whatever reason, face obstacles in their effort to function as equal members of society, as a result of social causes such as inequalities and discrimination. Sociological research and theory accept that these phenomena affect childhood in its various phases and in a particular way, whether the child is conceived as a member of a family or as an individual entity. This particular way has to do with the reproduction of social exclusion and inequalities because and to the extent that barriers or causes are passed down from generation to generation or are related to 'inherited' characteristics such as, for example, the family's educational/cultural capital, gender or origin, and regulate social status, social mobility or even access to rights because they are reproduced. Furthermore, the legal boundary between minority and adulthood determines the protection of minority, also required by law, but also the rights attributed to adult members of society.



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Based on the above, the main purpose of the policies designed and implemented by NOSTOS for the protection of children is to contribute to reducing or even combating the factors that prevent equal access to opportunities and rights for all children.

Through these policies, the services designed and implemented by NOSTOS are expected to highlight ways and mechanisms that prevent or reduce the mechanisms of social reproduction and thus contribute to the reduction of inequalities.

## **2. GROUP - TARGET**

The services of NOSTOS and the applications it has implemented from time to time refer, as a consequence of its statutory purpose to combat social exclusion, to the field of social inclusion, access to rights and equal opportunities for children and young people who for various reasons (origin, family, language, place of residence, etc.) belong to "vulnerable" social groups.

Accordingly, the policies, practices, methods and services developed by NOSTOS may involve:

- Children and young people from migrant or refugee families
- Children and young people of "second generation" immigrants or refugees
- Children and young people who drop out of (compulsory) schooling for reasons related to their family background and/or the cultural/educational capital of their parents
- Young people with no educational qualifications and access to work or training (NEETs)
- Children and young people who face difficulties in gaining equal access to education, training and employment opportunities because of discrimination or because of their origin or family background
- Unaccompanied children and adolescents.

## **3. PRINCIPLES AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The principle of non-discrimination, the principle of protection of human life and the principle of the development of the child are fundamental to the policies and programmes that NOSTOS implements for childhood.

All actions and services of NOSTOS consistently seek to facilitate the equal social integration of minors and indirectly combat social and cultural inequalities.

In this context, the methodological principles that NOSTOS uses, explores and extends in its child protection programmes and actions come from

- the Counseling Methodology and Approach
- the Critical Pedagogical Theory



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- the approach of P.Freire and his followers to emancipatory pedagogy and the Project Method
- theoretical approaches to educating young citizens
- the intercultural approach.

#### 4. CONTENT OF ACTIONS

The actions that NOSTOS has developed to date, implementing and developing the policies it has chosen in the field of Child Protection, fall into the following main categories:

##### I. Production of innovative support services and corresponding educational material.

NOSTOS implements programmes and actions of an educational nature, drawing on the experience gained by the organisation since 1995, when it first designed and implemented supportive actions to facilitate the school and social integration of children of Pontian "returnees" from the former USSR and, generally, children of families with a history of migration, with funding from EKT.

Since then, various activities of an educational-cultural nature have been implemented (see [www.nostos.org.gr](http://www.nostos.org.gr)) in local Pontian associations and schools, with the participation of teachers and educators, which have led to the formulation of corresponding educational material and lesson plans, projects etc., concerning museums and cultural sites in Athens, supportive actions inside and outside the classroom, accompanying services with the participation of parents in training programmes etc.

##### The design of the educational material

- is based on the notion that cultural integration is a component of social integration and therefore the main aim is to familiarize children with the social and cultural environment of the area in which they live, i.e. the city. At the same time, the aim is to equip children with skills and cultivate abilities which, at least at a first level, facilitate the reception of culture, but at the same time lead to the formation of an autonomous personality and the development of critical thinking.
- is mainly inspired by P.Bourdieu's theoretical elaborations on ethos and osmosis (1). It also takes into account B. Bernstein's critique of compensatory education (2) and his theoretical elaborations on 'visible and invisible pedagogy' (3). At the same time, at the design stage, models of intercultural and/or multicultural education (4) were explored, particularly with regard to the acceptance (5) of children's cultural capital on the basis of the equality of cultures, as well as the 'legitimation of difference' in relation to interaction and communication (6) within a multicultural group such as the classroom or local community.



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The aforementioned theoretical elaborations offer a -ambitious- framework of synthesis within which models and practices are sought that may contribute to the equalization of (educational) opportunities (7). In particular, the design we apply attempts to explore the possibilities a) to support osmosis "artificially", i.e. by design, b) to integrate in the educational material the research findings concerning the social functions of language, especially in the context of school education (8), in combination with a specific model of the social functions of language.

"These (the theatre, the cinema, the museum, etc., etc.) are not for us....."

The aforementioned framework of principles and objectives presupposes the recognition as objective of the lack of knowledge and experience of the environment of the specific city, mainly Athens. This lack is acknowledged to be due to the children's migration experience and, above all, to the effects of relocation related to social exclusion (10). The problem is therefore not simply that children coming from other countries do not know Athens, but mainly that they do not yet know how to learn it and probably, given the conditions of social exclusion they experience, they will never learn it: the sense of belonging is considered, for the NOSTOS framework of principles, both a cause and an outcome of skills that allow deciphering/"reading" the urban environment and integration within it.

The activities that NOSTOS designs and implements are based on the assumption that the "conquest" of space contributes to the enrichment of educational capital, thus it is likely to ultimately facilitate the processes of school and wider social integration of children who come from a different cultural group than the dominant one. The conquest of space here does not simply mean acquaintance with the city and its particular characteristics, but in particular a) the cultivation of skills related to the search for and use of information within the system that (is considered to be) the city and b) the acquisition of experience through the involvement of children in the activities that take place in Athens - the experiential approach to the functions of the city. To the extent that these skills are developed and the corresponding experiences are enriched, and to the extent that this occurs within a context of parity and 'legitimacy', it is presumed that these activities will have the indirect effect of stimulating self-confidence and fostering critical thinking.

The Project method is usually chosen for the implementation of activities because we believe that the principles behind it best serve the objectives pursued (11). As it is well known, according to this method, which is based on the principles of experiential-communicative teaching, children are divided into groups that carry out a project in stages. In trying to complete the task, the pupils work creatively and productively under the guidance of the teacher, whose main task is to inspire and guide the children (11).

In this context, lesson plans and "scenarios" of educational games have been created, i.e. staged game situations through which the participating children are invited to explore and "decipher" museum or archaeological sites, collect and synthesize information by taking specific routes in the city, etc.

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4. For a brief presentation of the relevant views in the Greek literature see in particular MARKOU G., Introduction to intercultural education, Athens 1997, as well as ZONIΟΥ-SIDERI A. and CHARAMIS P. (et al.), Multicultural Education, Ellinika Grammata, Athens 1997.
5. For the conceptualization of the term in the Greek reality see especially Damanakis M. The education of returning and foreign students in Greece, Gutenberg, Athens 1997
6. see. ANDROUSSOU A. "Intercultural dimension in educational practice" in the volume "The colourful school", Schedia, Nisos publications, Athens 1996
7. For a brief presentation of the relevant theories see especially Frangoudakis A., Sociology of Education, Papazisis, Athens 1985. On the process of selection in the Greek school see in particular POLYDORIDI-KONTOGIANNOPOULOU G., Sociological analysis of Greek education, Gutenberg, Athens 1995.
8. See in particular CAZDEN C.-JOHN V.-JOHN V.-HYMES D. (ed), Functions of Language in the Classroom, Waveland Press, Il.1985 [1972]
9. See SLEETER C.-GRANT C., Making Choices for Multicultural Education. Five approaches to Race, Class and Gender, Merll Publishing Company, Ohio 1988.
10. The term is defined here as a situation and a process related to the deprivation of privileges and rights that causes consequences, some of which burden the individual to such an extent that they render him/her powerless to react).
11. For a brief description of the method see in particular CHRYSAFIDIS K., Experiential-Communicative Teaching. The introduction of the Project Method in school, Gutenberg, Athens 1998. For the application of the Project in the context of intercultural education, see ANDROUSSOU
12. See. CHRYSAFIDIS K. etc.,
13. See. CHRYSAFIDIS K. etc., i
14. The map of the National Garden, ICOM-Hellenic Department. and Committee for Gardens and Tree Walls.
15. "Geography" by Marios Tokas and Fontas Ladis.





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## II. Framework for the protection of unaccompanied minors

Fundamental to the policies and programmes implemented by NOSTOS for childhood are the principle of non-discrimination, the principle of protection of human life and the development of the child, the principle of non-harm, the principle of family unity, the principle of confidentiality and the principle of collecting information only to the extent necessary for the protection of the minor. Particular emphasis is placed on investigating the needs and ensuring the best interests of the child, while engaging in the relevant scientific dialogue to better determine the best interests of the child.

In this context and in response to the need that we identified already in 2012-13, when the issue of unaccompanied minors who came to Greece from third countries and were in the country without protection, began to become apparent, we designed and implemented actions (funding EEA Grants 2013-2017, UNHCR 2017-18, AMIF-Ministry of Immigration 2019 etc..) concerning the particular group.

The central purpose of these actions is developed on two levels, firstly to facilitate the initial-first period of stay of unaccompanied minors asylum seekers and refugees in our country, through systemic intervention that acts in two main directions, the coverage of their primary needs and their psycho-social, social and educational support. Second, to support their social integration in the Greek/European reality in combination with personal development and self-cultivation.

The actions designed and developed to achieve the above objectives include:

- a) the organisation and operation of Accommodation Facilities for Unaccompanied Children
- b) the provision of supportive-educational services to the minor person within the framework of the Facilities;
- (c) providing information and raising awareness in the local community and wider society.

The operation of a shelter for unaccompanied minors within the framework of the policies implemented by NOSTOS aims and supports the equal social integration of the hosted minors in the European environment and indirectly the fight against social and cultural inequalities. For these reasons, the implementation of services follows the general principles of Social Work as they have been shaped today in the Greek and wider European context in combination with the pedagogical framework of the Critical School and P.Freire, of citizenship education and intercultural education. From the perspective of the host child, the approach we adopt combines the gradual restoration of the disturbed security levels of the host children with the simultaneous support to empower them and enable them to integrate equally into the social environment.

The central choice of NOSTOS as regards the protection of unaccompanied minors is the emphasis on the protection and support especially of adolescents, with a view to social integration. For these reasons the operation of a Shelter Facility





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-combines features of self-governance with compliance with the conditions and standards of "supported living" for adolescents, while ensuring the learning of basic life skills that are taken for granted in the Western world, and are useful in every situation. In this context, the operation of the Facility combines accommodation-housing and meeting primary needs with the provision of a package of multi-faceted support services aimed at overcoming the immediate problems of the hosted minors and preparing them for the immediate future.

- ensures an environment of security and stability for the host persons, as well as a "neutral" space free of religious, political, ideological or other discriminatory attitudes and symbols, with a firm commitment to human rights and practical support for them.

Based on the analysis of the needs of the target group and the current situation, the approach we adopt for the implementation of policies for the accommodation and support of unaccompanied adolescents from third countries is defined by the following options:

i. Since the group of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece is characterized by the multiple burdens that its members suffer, the project design draws from the theoretical field of addressing social exclusion and supporting social inclusion, understood here as the opposite of exclusion. According to this theory, social exclusion is a multi-level phenomenon in which many different factors are involved, but which together lead to the marginalisation of the individual and the deprivation of his or her rights. In response to the need to remove the conditions of social exclusion associated with refugee status, the provision of the services of the Facility

- is inspired by the principles and methodology of Counseling intervention, which has at its core the empowerment and encouragement of the individual. Its application is adapted to the age group of adolescents on their way to adulthood and aims to function in a supportive and orienting way so that the individual is prepared to live autonomously, making use of the transitional period constituted by his/her stay in the programme, in the direction of personal development and equal opportunities.
- is specialised both in terms of the target group and the specific needs of each teenager hosted. In this context, our aim is to safeguard the health, livelihood and fundamental rights of children and at the same time to create the opportunity for all hosted individuals to develop their personalities and become complete overcoming the difficulties they face today. The personalization of services results from the combination of the following aspects of the project implementation:

The Counseling approach that we adopt, with the corresponding adaptations in terms of minors that are mainly drawn from intercultural and emancipatory pedagogy, is organised in stages that start from the first moment of the reception of the hosted person in the Facility. The central element of this intervention is the combination of the needs diagnosis with the "individual action plan" (alternatively, the abbreviation IAP is used below in this document). This is a process that allows the identification (and implicitly the recognition on the part of the individual) of needs with possible or feasible solutions and the corresponding decisions to be taken, and thus the individualised definition of a course and objectives. This process takes place in the context of the counseling relationship between counselor/social worker or psychologist, and marks the person's supported (always within the context of the counseling relationship)



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effort to prioritize his or her problems and try to solve them. In the case of unaccompanied children, this process also provides a framework for the child's will and wishes to be expressed and the conditions for his or her opinion to be respected.

It is noted that the "individual action plan" is for the adult or minor person an initial statement of his/her goals, while for the Service it is a tool that enables the individualized provision of services and the monitoring-evaluation of their implementation. For example, the 'individual action plan' of a 17-year-old boy awaiting the decision on his asylum application also includes his personalised educational programme, i.e. the objectives he has set in the context of counseling and guidance. These same indicators constitute, from the point of view of the competent "reference person"/adviser of the minor, the indicators upon which the counseling intervention is carried out.

ii. Since the individuals who constitute the target group carry multiple identities (refugee status, age, gender, culture-religion) but also a traumatic biography, the intervention to the individual should respond to the totality of his/her needs. Based on this rationale, NOSTOS attempts to create an integrated approach with a systemic character, addressing all areas of the host person's life simultaneously, always focusing on the combination of refugee status and age. Our design therefore includes a set of actions that work in a complementary manner and combine with each other in the direction of the integrated "integration" of the person, i.e. overcoming his/her current difficulties, treatment and rehabilitation of the self, empowerment to make choices and chart the future, and ensuring the conditions leading to education, training and work.

iii. As a matter of principle, the rehabilitation and empowerment of beneficiaries is a strategic objective and permeates all services provided. Moreover, because the accommodation in "closed structures" of care often leads, as our experience shows and as confirmed by the international literature, the hosted juvenile person to passivity and lack of any initiative, but also to the expression of resistance to the "system" represented by the Facility, the approach adopted for the operation of the Facility is expressed in the central objective of its operation, namely the preparation and support of juveniles to become "self-reliant, self-sufficient and participatory members of society".

Supporting the direction of the final emancipation of the guests, during the implementation of the accommodation-support actions for unaccompanied adolescents, we have adopted the following measures:

-The Counseling process (see above reference) aims to prepare and support the individual so that, depending on his/her age, he/she can make choices and decisions, exercising his/her rights

-The organisation of the operation of the Facility is governed by the notion that the people who will be accommodated do not just need "a shelter and a plate of food" but also respect for equality, which in this case can act "therapeutically", i.e. in the direction of empowerment of the



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individual. For this reason, the Facility is governed by the principles of (supported) self-governance combined with the observance of the necessary terms and conditions of formal operation. The key element that expresses these choices is the "contractualisation" of the accommodation so that the conditions are clear and the rights and obligations concern and bind both parties.

In the context of the intended combination of the self-governing characteristics of the structure with the formal conditions for its operation and the observance of legality, the following are also envisaged:

- a) the conclusion of a "contract" between the Facility and the hosted person, after direct information, support and more comprehensive preparation of the referred adolescents for the rights and obligations of their accommodation in the Facility. Indirectly, the activation and encouragement of the individual is sought through them. It goes without saying that the method is adapted appropriately according to the age
- b) the organisation of meetings on a regular basis for the organisation of daily life and decision making, the formation of a programme for self-management of daily life in terms of practical issues and taking responsibility.

It is noted that the Structure makes use of the parameters and tools that ensure its smoothness and functionality (rational distribution of shifts on a 24-hour basis, accountability, reception service, etc.). At the same time, the psycho-social and educational interventions of the staff (counseling, distribution of roles and responsibilities, strengthening of initiative) are expected to gradually lead the beneficiaries to the acquisition of autonomy.

iv. In conjunction with the above, the Facility incorporates in its services the organized pedagogical intervention, with the main objective of exploiting the synergies and positive interactions created in the pedagogical framework due to the development of group dynamics, the enhancement of learning and the development of skills.

v. In the context of the implementation of the Counselling methodology and based on the previous relevant experience of NOSTOS, the practice of an individual counsellor/reference person is applied for each accommodated child.

## 2. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROCEDURE

From 1/10/2021 onwards, the implementing bodies of the programme undertake the delivery of the financial assistance to the beneficiaries of the programme. Beneficiaries receive a one-off financial assistance of 50€ upon reception in a programme apartment, and also receive 75€ per fortnight. All information on the details of the payment, monitoring and evaluation of the use of the financial assistance is provided in a language that the beneficiary understands, and a form with the relevant information is included in the welcome folder given to each guest.



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For the delivery of the financial assistance, the Financial Assistance Control Guide of the ΕΥΣΥΔ ΜΕΥ (ref. 3555/12-11-2021) is taken into account.

- The financial assistance shall be delivered to the beneficiaries by a three-member Committee with a Chairman and two members or by the alternate members of the Committee, as provided for in the Board Decision for the establishment of the Committee and the payment of the financial assistance to the beneficiaries. None of the members of the Committee shall be included among the staff supporting the operation of the Semi-Autonomous Accommodation Units for Unaccompanied Minors in the specialties of coordinator, social worker, carer, interpreter, lawyer, pedagogue, psychologist.
- At the end of each month, the coordinator of the Unit delivers a list to the Committee which includes the beneficiaries living in apartments, the beneficiaries who are to be placed in the coming month in a apartment, as well as the beneficiaries who are scheduled to leave in the coming month. The Committee receives the information from the coordinator, meets and draws up a list of beneficiaries with the amounts to be paid per each, based on the number of residents (and new admissions, withdrawals) planned to take place. The aforementioned list is attached to the minutes of the Committee as an annex. The Chairman and members of the Committee shall sign the minutes and send them to the Financial Administrator/Carrier for approval. The list or any other document produced for the payment of the financial assistance shall not mention the names of the beneficiaries. They shall indicate for each beneficiary the Beneficiary's Asylum Card Number or, in the absence thereof, the record number of the Placement Decision of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors.
- The Financial Manager, in cooperation with the Relevant Committee and the Project Manager, approves and signs - as the final signatory - the Record, which marks the start of the procedure for the payment of the financial assistance to the beneficiaries. The approval of the minutes shall be communicated to the Commission without delay. The Commission's minutes, with the approval of the Financial Administrator, shall be submitted to each Bulletin for Judicial Publications.
- The Financial Manager shall make the monthly withdrawal of funds from the special bank account of the programme, as summarised in the minutes of the Commission.
- On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> calendar day of each month (or the next business day in the case of holidays or non-working days) and with a three (3) day variance, as well as on the day of the beneficiary's new admission to the apartments, the Commission shall pay the amount due for the reference month to each beneficiary. In case of impossibility for reasons of force majeure to pay the monthly allowance, it will be paid to the beneficiary on the nearest possible day. Adequate documentation of the reasons of force majeure will be declared and submitted to the Special Management Service in a separate Record of the relevant Committee, to which relevant documentary material will be attached.
- Each beneficiary signs a form confirming the date and the exact amount paid.



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- Upon completion of the payment of the grant, the Commission shall sign the relevant form and notify the Financial Manager and the legal representative of the body in order to take note of and certify the completion of the procedure.
- In case of non-payment of the total amount for all beneficiaries, the Financial Manager must deposit the corresponding amount in the special bank account.