

Job description

Role: COPE Head of Operations

October 2026



***NB: A collaborative approach underpins all staff activities**

Overview Head of Operations (80%)

About COPE

Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) is a pan-European network working with and for children affected by parental imprisonment. Our vision is that every child be guaranteed fair and non-discriminatory treatment, protection of their rights and equal opportunities, regardless of their gender, social, economic or cultural background or the legal status of their parents. Our mission is to prevent and respond to violations of the rights of children with imprisoned parents, from arrest through to reintegration after the end of a prison sentence, to ensure their individual needs are met, and their best interests are continuously assessed. We take a systems approach to improving the lives of children with imprisoned parents, namely ensure that the systems (welfare, social, justice, education, ...) children come into contact with are able to respect their rights and meet their needs, rather than expecting children to adapt to inadequate systems and supports. We foster the exchange of knowledge, develop good practice and strengthen understanding of the psychological, emotional and social needs of these children.

Our work is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child, and Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 concerning children with imprisoned parents.

Role

The Head of Operations translates COPE's strategic goals into clear operational objectives, working closely with the Executive Director, wider staff and Board to shape and implement COPE's financial and operational strategy.

- In coordination with the Finance & Administration Manager, this role helps oversee budgeting, expenditure tracking, financial reporting and audits, suggesting corrective measures if needed. Head of Operations ensures strong day-to-day monitoring, compliance and coordination of projects, including performance indicators.
- In partnership with the Executive Director, wider staff team and Board, the Head of Operations also drives fundraising efforts by identifying new funding opportunities and completing grant

applications (particularly EU Operating Grant Management). The role requires ongoing communication with the Board to strengthen and improve organisational effectiveness. The Head of Operations contributes to COPE's annual programmatic work plan, enabling core advocacy, capacity-building and network development-based initiatives.

Responsible to Executive Director

Salary:	Annual gross salary of €45,000 for 28 hours per week (full-time equivalent: €56,250), subject to final agreement with the successful candidate.
Hours:	28 hours per week, worked over 4 days (some flexibility). The anticipated working pattern is Monday to Thursday, with precise working days to be agreed with the successful candidate.
Location:	This post is based at the COPE office in Paris with scope for some remote working. Additionally, it will involve some amount of time in the field representing COPE at meetings, events and public speaking.
Probation:	A probationary period of 4 months will apply which may be extended.
Terms of employment	The employee's employment contract is governed by the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement for Social and Family Support Workers: social and socio-cultural centres, early childhood centres, and local social development associations (SNAEC SO) particularly regarding paid leave and notice periods.
Holidays:	In addition to the 11 French national public holidays, the employee will be entitled to 25 days annual paid leave in accordance with French law, plus 6.4 additional days according to a collective bargaining agreement, for a total of 31.4 days annual paid leave.
Employee benefits:	The employee will be covered by supplementary pension and insurance plans and be entitled to some additional medical expenses and meal vouchers.

NB: Applicants must hold the right to work in France. In exceptional circumstances we will consider those who can demonstrate that they will soon have a right to work.

Key responsibilities

The Head of Operations plays a critical role within COPE and is responsible for translating the organisation's strategic objectives into effective and sound operational, financial and administrative practices, in tandem with its annual programmatic work plan.

Strategic and operational management

- Translate COPE's strategic goals, as defined by the Board, into a clear and measurable operational plan, with identified objectives
- Professionalise COPE operations by developing, improving and implementing systems, processes and internal procedures
- Support organisational development and operational efficiency across all functions

Financial strategy and oversight

- Contribute to the development, implementation and periodic review of COPE's financial strategy in collaboration with the Executive Director, Finance & Administration Manager, Treasurer and Board
- Monitor organisational resource allocation to ensure programmatic priorities maximize COPE impact
- Support strategic budgeting and financial planning processes by providing analysis and contributing to budget development alongside the Finance & Administration Manager and Treasurer
- Review financial performance and risks, identify significant variances and recommend strategic corrective actions, where appropriate
- Support on the preparation of annual financial statements, external audits and statutory reporting in partnership with the Finance & Administration Manager and Treasurer
- Support the preparation and review of financial reports for the Board, funders and other key stakeholders

Fundraising and resource mobilisation

- Identify and pursue new funding opportunities aligned with COPE's mission and strategy, contribute to the development of fundraising strategies
- Spearhead fundraising initiatives, enhance fundraising tools and strengthen fundraising portfolio to scale donor relationships

- Prepare and submit funding proposals in partnership with the Executive Director and wider staff (including EU Operating Grant proposals)
- Monitor funding streams and ensure alignment between funded activities, budgets and contractual obligations
- Report writing on funds received

Compliance and legal alignment

- Alongside Finance & Administrative Manager, help ensure that internal processes, policies and procedures are aligned with legal and regulatory requirements, e.g., EU obligations, French labour law
- Flag compliance risks to the Executive Director and Board and propose mitigation measures where necessary

Project and performance monitoring, programmatic activities

- Support day-to-day monitoring of project implementation, funding status, activities and key performance indicators (particularly in line with EU Operating Grant management), help maintain alignment between operational delivery and funder requirements
- Help enable the effective delivery of COPE's programmatic work by coordinating operational, financial and monitoring processes across key initiatives. Potential delivery of programmatic work and development where occasionally needed — type of activity dependent on individual skillset (e.g., participating in advocacy initiatives, staff-member exchange visits; drafting reports).

Person Specification - Selection Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Education		
Relevant qualification, e.g. social work or community education		*
Previous Experience		
Experience of working with disadvantaged or vulnerable groups	*	
Experience of working with partner agencies	*	
Experience in management of paid or unpaid staff		*
Skills and Ability		
Fluent in English and French	*	
Ability to understand/empathise with the needs of families affected by imprisonment	*	
Experience of or ability to deliver training to diverse groups		*
Some knowledge of the criminal justice system		*
Strong writing and presentation skills	*	
Highly developed communication and contact skills	*	
Skills in information gathering, analysis and interpretation		*
Knowledge and experience of development work	*	
Commitment and ability to apply COPE's child safeguarding policies	*	
Ability to access support from external agencies	*	
Ability to work independently and as part of a team	*	
Ability to prioritise/manage workload in a pressurised environment	*	
Computer literate	*	
Understanding of organisations and financial management	*	
Understanding of EU-specific grant management processes (proposal drafting, reporting, compliance)	*	
Personal Qualities		
Natural leader with passion for children affected by parental imprisonment		*
Problem solver	*	
Understanding of and commitment to COPE's aims and COPE principles	*	
Willing to work flexibly and professionally to meet the needs of the organisation	*	
Willing and able to work occasional unsocial hours and to travel across Europe to participate actively in relevant meetings and events		*
Able to work under pressure and think innovatively about how best to use limited resources to come up with new ways to support children, young people	*	
Non-judgemental, approachable, reliable, calm and able to maintain confidentiality and personal boundaries	*	
Self-aware, regularly reflecting on your work and impact on target audiences		*
Willing to identify and undertake relevant training and commitment to personal development	*	
Open to learning from others and willing to share knowledge and best practice when and as appropriate	*	