

CATALACTICA ASSOCIATION

CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Bucharest
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<i>Author(s)</i>	Catalactica Association
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<i>Associated policies</i>	Data Protection Policy Data Management Policy

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1. Catalactica Association — presentation

Catalactica Association is an independent research, analysis and expertise organisation working in the fields of economics, public policy and the social sciences. The Association conducts both fundamental and applied research, organises public debates, conferences and training programmes, and contributes to improving the quality of public policies and to strengthening the academic and civic culture in Romania.

The members and collaborators of Catalactica Association act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity, research ethics and responsibility towards the community, including with respect to children and young people they may encounter in the context of the Association's activities.

2. Purpose and scope of this policy

The purpose of the **Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (CPP)** is to establish guidelines for Catalactica Association's interventions, ensuring the safeguarding and promotion of the wellbeing of children encountered — whether directly or indirectly — by its members, collaborators and volunteers. Its primary objective is to prevent harm to children through the implementation of institutional activities, thereby promoting their safeguarding and welfare.

The Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (CPP) of Catalactica Association aims:

- **to protect** children and young people who interact with Catalactica Association through its members, collaborators and volunteers from harm — including the children of adults who use the Association's services;
- **to provide** members, collaborators and volunteers, as well as children, young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide the Association's approach to child protection.

The Policy delineates measures aimed at ensuring:

- **Prevention:** All reasonable steps are taken across the Association's interventions to prevent harm, abuse and exploitation.
- **Protection:** All safeguarding concerns are treated seriously, prompting a robust response that prioritises the safety and well-being of children at risk.

Catalactica Association is firmly convinced that:

- Children and young people should never be exposed to any form of abuse.
- We have a duty to promote the well-being of all children and young people, to keep them safe, and to carry out our duties in a way that protects them.

3. Legal framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with international, European and Romanian legislation, policies and guidelines aimed at protecting children, including:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 44/25 on 20 November 1989, which entered into force on 2 September 1990;

- The European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (ETS 160/1996);
- Romanian Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights, as subsequently amended;
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of personal data (GDPR).

4. Supporting documents

This policy statement should be read alongside Catalactica Association's organisational policies, procedures, guidance and related documents, including but not limited to:

- Role description for the designated safeguarding officer.
- Data protection and data management policy.
- Procedure for dealing with disclosures and concerns about a child or young person.
- Procedure for managing allegations against members, collaborators and volunteers.
- Recording of referrals and information sharing.
- Code of Ethics and Conduct of Catalactica Association.
- Photography and image-sharing guidance for children and young people.
- Safe recruitment procedures.
- Training, supervision and support procedures for members, collaborators and volunteers.

5. Main concepts used

Child is any person younger than 18 years of age.

Child Safeguarding represents "the responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children's safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities." (Keeping Children Safe Coalition)

Harm is the ill-treatment or impairment of the health or development of a child. It covers actual or potential harm, harm posed by others, and self-harm caused by the child. Harm may occur through repeated incidents or a single event, and may be current, historical or potential future harm.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. There are four main categories:

Physical abuse — hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Emotional abuse — persistent emotional maltreatment causing severe and adverse effects on a child's emotional development, including conveying worthlessness, silencing, cyberbullying, or exposure to domestic violence.

Sexual abuse — forcing or enticing children to participate in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware, including online abuse and grooming.

Neglect — persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment to health or development.

Other categories of abuse covered by this policy include:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child criminal exploitation
- Domestic abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Modern slavery
- Online abuse and radicalisation
- Self-harm (suicidal behaviour or ideation, substance misuse, eating disorders)

6. Principles

Catalactica Association declares the following principles as the foundation of this policy:

- Children must be protected from harm at all times.
- Working in partnership with parents and children is essential for child protection.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to.
- All children, regardless of age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to participate in the Association's activities in a safe environment.
- Catalactica Association will take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment.
- Those in positions of responsibility within the Association will prioritise the interests of children and young people.
- All members, collaborators and volunteers who work with children will be recruited based on their suitability and will receive appropriate training on child protection procedures.

By adopting this policy, Catalactica Association:

- Recognises the right of every child to stay safe.
- Commits to responding appropriately to any safeguarding concerns.
- Establishes clear procedures for all members, collaborators and volunteers.
- Promotes best practice and ensures a safe framework for activities involving children.
- Recognises that some children may be more vulnerable and that additional measures are required in such cases.

7. Roles and responsibilities

This Child Protection Policy applies to all **members, collaborators, associated researchers and volunteers** of Catalactica Association. All such persons must sign this policy and adhere to the procedures described herein.

All those involved are expected to:

- Comply with mandatory procedures.
- Promote best practice and contribute to safeguarding discussions.
- Ensure the voices of children, young people and their families are heard and taken into account.
- Respect professional boundaries and the Code of Conduct of Catalactica Association.

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- Ensuring all members and collaborators are fully aware of this policy.
- Enabling access to training on identifying and responding to abuse.
- Ensuring reporting systems are known and adhered to.
- Ensuring the best interests of children are an absolute priority in the Association's activities.

The designated safeguarding officer is responsible for:

- Keeping up to date with relevant safeguarding legislation and practice.
- Taking overall responsibility for safeguarding practice within Catalactica Association.
- Ensuring the Board of Directors is informed of policy changes and safeguarding concerns.
- Reporting safeguarding concerns to external competent authorities.
- Advising members and collaborators on child protection matters.
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy.

Project and activity coordinators are responsible for:

- Deciding whether to report a safeguarding concern to the local authority.
- Ensuring all team members involved are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Providing appropriate guidance to team members on child protection.

8. Safe recruitment procedures and vetting requirements

Catalactica Association is committed to recruiting and selecting members, collaborators and volunteers who work with children in conditions of full safety. This involves:

- Obtaining a criminal record certificate (confirming no convictions for offences against minors).
- Obtaining a behavioural integrity certificate (confirming absence from the national sex offenders register).
- Checking professional references.
- An interview to assess suitability for working with children.
- Signing this policy and the Code of Conduct before commencing any activity.

9. Procedures

Catalactica Association will ensure the safety of children and young people by:

- Listening to, respecting and taking into account the views of children, in line with their age and maturity.
- Appointing a designated safeguarding officer for children and young people.
- Implementing best practice through policies, procedures and a code of conduct applicable to all members, collaborators and volunteers.
- Developing protocols for assessing and managing potential risks to children involved in research activities.
- Providing adequate supervision, support and training to all those involved in activities with children.
- Carrying out mandatory checks at recruitment, including criminal records and behavioural integrity certificates.
- Recording, storing and using information professionally and securely, in compliance with GDPR.
- Informing children, young people and their families about the safeguarding policy and how to seek help, including the children's helpline: 116 111.
- Obtaining informed consent from parents or guardians before involving children in any research activity.
- Maintaining an anti-bullying environment in all Association activities.
- Complying with health and safety legislation in all activities.

10. Code of Conduct for people working with children

All members, collaborators and volunteers of Catalactica Association who work with or come into contact with children are required to comply with this code of conduct.

It is mandatory to:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Listen to children and respect their views.
- Ensure no child is ever left alone with an unauthorised adult.
- Report any concern about the safety of a child to the designated safeguarding officer.
- Maintain confidentiality of information about children, except where reporting is required.
- Act as a positive role model for children and young people.
- Be vigilant about how actions may be misinterpreted by children.

It is prohibited to:

- Use abusive language or respond aggressively to children's inappropriate behaviour.
- Behave disrespectfully towards children or anyone else.
- Work under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- View, publish, produce or distribute pornographic material involving children.
- Humiliate, belittle or demean children, or engage in any behaviour showing signs of abuse.

- Make inappropriate physical contact with children that violates their dignity.
- Give children alcohol, medication or psychoactive substances.
- Tolerate or participate in illegal activities involving children.
- Engage in sexual relations with anyone under 18 years of age.
- Photograph or film children without written consent from parents or guardians.
- Use information or images of children without written permission from parents or guardians.
- Give money directly to children, especially those in vulnerable situations.

All members, collaborators and volunteers will sign a written declaration confirming they have read, understood and agreed to comply with this code. Failure to comply may result in termination of collaboration with Catalactica Association or further disciplinary or legal proceedings.

11. Action plan in case of emergency

Immediate action to ensure safety

If a child is in immediate danger, the police must be contacted immediately, as only the police have the authority to take urgent protective action, including through a protection order. Any emergency must also be reported to the designated safeguarding officer of Catalactica Association.

Recognition of abuse or neglect

Members and collaborators must be alert to signs of abuse or neglect and must act immediately upon observing:

- Signs of physical abuse (unexplained bruising, injuries, withdrawn or frightened behaviour).
- Signs of emotional abuse (extremely low self-esteem, anxiety, regressive behaviour).
- Signs of sexual abuse (age-inappropriate sexualised behaviour, fear of certain adults).
- Signs of neglect (inadequate clothing, poor hygiene, hunger, extreme fatigue).

In the event of identified abuse, the Child Protection Department of the local Public Social Assistance Service or the County General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection must be notified.

What to do if children talk to you about abuse or neglect

- Listen carefully. Do NOT ask direct questions.
- Give the child time and attention; allow them to tell their story spontaneously.
- Record accurately: the time, place, persons present, the child's own words.
- Explain that you cannot promise complete confidentiality.
- Reassure the child that they did the right thing and that you will seek help.
- Do NOT ask the child to repeat their account to anyone else.

Consulting about your concern

Discuss any concern about a child with the designated safeguarding officer of Catalactica Association. Consult externally with the local Public Social Assistance Service if:

- you remain unsure, after internal consultation, whether there are grounds for concern;
- there is internal disagreement about the situation;
- you cannot promptly reach the designated safeguarding officer;
- the concern involves a member of Catalactica Association.

Making a referral

A referral involves providing information to the Public Social Assistance Service or the Police, prompting an investigation by the competent agency. Parents or carers should be informed of any referral made, except where doing so would endanger the child.

Confidentiality

All records relating to a referral must be kept confidential and stored securely. Information about child protection concerns must be shared strictly on a "need to know" basis. The primary concern is always the protection of the child, and failure to comply with this policy will be addressed promptly.

Steps to be taken by a member who knows about or suspects child abuse

- Immediately notify the designated safeguarding officer of Catalactica Association.
- Complete a detailed report (date, time, persons involved, factual account).
- Do not attempt to address the situation alone under any circumstances.
- Do not leave the child in a dangerous situation while waiting for intervention.

Steps to be taken by the designated safeguarding officer

- Assess whether there are reasonable grounds to report the case to the Public Social Assistance Service.
- Consult informally with the Public Social Assistance Service if in doubt.
- Make a formal referral if the situation so requires.
- Inform the Board of Directors of Catalactica Association.
- Ensure support and advice are provided to the member who raised the concern.

12. Monitoring and accountability

The designated safeguarding officer, together with the Board of Directors of Catalactica Association, has the following monitoring responsibilities:

- Ensuring proper implementation of and access to this policy for all persons involved.
- Annual monitoring and review of the implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring access to adequate training for all members, collaborators and volunteers.

- Allocating sufficient resources for effective implementation of the policy.
- Responding promptly to concerns raised by members, collaborators or beneficiaries.
- Maintaining links with local agencies and competent authorities.

The policy's main monitoring aspects include:

- The safe recruitment process.
- Training and support of members, collaborators and volunteers.
- Compliance of the policy with the current legal framework.
- Evaluation of the safeguarding reporting process.
- Inclusion of members' and beneficiaries' views in the review process.

Contact details

Designated Safeguarding Officer	_____
Phone	_____
Email	_____
Children's helpline	116 111
Local Public Social Assistance Service	_____
County DGASPC	_____
Emergency services	112

We commit to reviewing this policy and associated best practice annually.
 This policy was last reviewed on: _____

President, Catalactica Association

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Catalactica Association