

INSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDING POLICY
in ARHIEPISCOPIA ROMANO-CATOLICĂ DE BUCUREȘTI

REGULATION ON THE PROTECTION OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE PERSONS
IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BUCHAREST

Preamble

By virtue of its pastoral mission and its moral and legal responsibility to safeguard the dignity of every person—especially children, young people, and vulnerable persons—the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest adopts this Regulation, the Guidelines on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest.

This Regulation unifies canonical norms, Romanian state legislation, and the recommendations of the Romanian Bishops' Conference into a clear institutional framework applicable at all levels of organization.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest follows the measures established by the Church and the guidance of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church regarding the protection of minors and vulnerable persons against abuse. In addition, it is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that respects human dignity, promotes the fundamental values of the traditional family, and prevents the abuse and exploitation of any person who comes into contact with Church workers—priests, consecrated persons, or lay people involved in Church activities.

The protection of minors and vulnerable persons is an integral part of the mission of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest and obliges all subordinate institutions (parishes, associations, religious houses, institutions, and schools) to strictly respect the norms established by the Church.

The Archdiocese's approach is based on the words of Pope Francis in the motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi*, where he states:

"Each person has a unique value, being created in the image and likeness of God, and the effective protection of minors, as well as the commitment to ensure their human and spiritual development in accordance with human dignity, are an integral part of the Gospel message that the Church and all its members are called to proclaim to the world."

Chapter 1

PURPOSE OF THE REGULATION AND PRINCIPLES

Art. 1 – Purpose

1.1. Purpose of the Regulation

This Regulation establishes the normative framework and concrete measures for preventing, identifying, reporting, and managing situations of sexual violence, in order to protect the dignity and the physical, psychological, and spiritual integrity of all persons under the care, authority, or in contact with the structures and activities of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest.

Its main objectives are:

- Preventing any form of sexual abuse, exploitation, or harassment;
- Promoting a safe, dignified, and respectful environment in all pastoral, educational, charitable, and administrative settings;
- Ensuring a prompt, fair response in accordance with canonical and civil norms in the event of reported incidents;
- Strengthening trust between the Archdiocese, clergy, employees, volunteers, beneficiaries, and the wider community.

This Regulation applies to all clergy, consecrated persons, employees, collaborators, and volunteers involved in activities organized or supported by the Archdiocese, regardless of their status or position.

1.2. Fundamental principles

The application of this Regulation is based on the following principles:

- **Human dignity** – Every person is created in the image and likeness of God and has the inviolable right to respect, integrity, and protection from any form of abuse.
- **Zero tolerance for sexual violence** – Any abusive behaviour, regardless of severity or context, is unacceptable and entails disciplinary measures and, where appropriate, referral to the competent authorities.
- **Active prevention** – Education, continuous training, and awareness of risks form the foundation of prevention. All those involved in the Church's mission have the responsibility to contribute to creating a safe environment.
- **Priority protection of victims** – In any reported situation, the interest and safety of the affected person take precedence over any administrative or institutional consideration.
- **Confidentiality and discretion** – Information related to cases of sexual violence is handled with the utmost confidentiality, respecting the rights of all parties involved and the law in force.
- **Cooperation with authorities** – The Archdiocese collaborates openly and transparently with state authorities, in the spirit of law and justice, without obstructing legal proceedings.

- **Accountability and transparency** – Persons with pastoral, administrative, or educational responsibilities are accountable for their actions and decisions before God, the Church, and society.
- **Spiritual and psychological support** – Victims and their families receive, as far as possible, spiritual support, psychological counselling, and social assistance for healing and reintegration.

Chapter 2 CANONICAL AND LEGAL BASIS

2.1. Canonical foundation

This Regulation is based on the norms of universal and particular canon law, as well as on the regulations of the Magisterium of the Church and the instructions issued by the Holy See regarding the protection of minors and vulnerable persons.

The main canonical basis includes:

- **Code of Canon Law (CIC, 1983)** – especially the following canons:
 - can. 384: the bishop's responsibility to oversee the clergy, including moral conduct;
 - can. 1717–1719: procedures for the preliminary investigation in cases of delicts;
 - can. 1395 §2 and §3: penalties against clergy guilty of delicts against the sixth commandment with minors or vulnerable persons;
 - can. 1720–1728: canonical penal procedure.
- ***Motu Proprio Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*** (2001, revised 2010 and 2021) – establishes the competence of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by clerics.
- ***Motu Proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi*** (2019, renewed 2023) – regulates the obligation to report, the protection of whistleblowers, and the establishment of structures for receiving reports.
- Regulation of the **Romanian Bishops' Conference** on the protection of minors and procedures in cases of abuse: *Guide for handling cases of sexual abuse committed by clerics against minors* (2019).
- **Principles of pastoral ethics** – which require moral integrity, respect for human dignity, and avoidance of any situation that may endanger the physical, psychological, or spiritual safety of the faithful.

2.2. National legal foundation

This Regulation applies in accordance with the legislation of Romania, in particular:

- **Constitution of Romania** – art. 22 on the right to life and physical and mental integrity; art. 26 on private, family, and intimate life; art. 29 on freedom of conscience and the autonomy of religious denominations.
- **Criminal Code of Romania** – provisions regarding sexual offences (art. 218–224), including those against minors and vulnerable persons.

- **Code of Criminal Procedure** – provisions on notifying criminal investigation bodies and protecting victims.
- **Law no. 272/2004** on the protection and promotion of the rights of the child – the obligation of institutions to prevent and report any form of abuse against minors.
- **Law on Religious Denominations no. 489/2006** – on religious freedom and the general regime of denominations, especially the articles concerning the organizational and disciplinary autonomy of recognized denominations.
- Labour legislation and victim protection laws – including **Law no. 217/2003** on preventing and combating domestic violence and other related normative acts.

2.3. Interaction between canonical norms and civil legislation

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest exercises its mission respecting the autonomy of the Church, according to Canon Law, but fully recognizes and respects the legislation of the Romanian state.

Where there are indications of a criminal offence, canonical procedures run in parallel with civil legal procedures, without obstructing or delaying the work of judicial bodies.

Canonical norms regulate the spiritual and disciplinary dimension, while civil norms ensure legal protection in the social and criminal sphere; both systems complement each other in the common goal of protecting the person and promoting the common good.

Chapter 3 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Regulation, the terms and expressions below have the following meanings:

- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual act committed against a person without their consent, or against a minor or a vulnerable person, even with their consent when that consent is not legally or morally valid. Includes physical contact, sexually suggestive behaviour, exploitation through pornographic materials, or other similar forms, committed directly or via electronic means.
- **Minor** – any person under the age of 18, regardless of gender, civil status, or level of maturity.
- **Vulnerable person** – any person in a state of physical or mental infirmity, or of deprivation of liberty, temporary or permanent, which prevents them from defending themselves or expressing valid consent.
- **Sexual violence** – any sexual act forced or imposed through physical or psychological coercion, abuse of authority, or manipulation, as well as any sexually motivated behaviour that causes degradation, humiliation, or intimidation of the victim.
- **Sexual harassment** – any verbal, non-verbal, or physical behaviour of a sexual nature, unwanted and offensive, intended or having the effect of affecting a person's dignity, or creating a hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.
- **Sexual exploitation** – the use of a person, especially a minor or a vulnerable person, for the purpose of obtaining material, financial, or other benefits, by involving them in sexual activities.

- **Grooming** – any action by which a person gains the trust of a minor or a vulnerable person, through direct contact or electronic means, with the aim of committing sexual abuse or exploitation.
- **Cleric** – any person who has validly received diaconal, priestly, or episcopal ordination, according to the norms of the Catholic Church.
- **Consecrated person** – a member of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life, who has made public vows recognized by the Church.
- **Employee** – any person employed under an individual labour contract or another legal form of employment within the Archdiocese, its parishes, or affiliated educational or charitable institutions.
- **Volunteer** – any person carrying out activities on behalf of or for the benefit of the Archdiocese without receiving remuneration, but under its coordination.
- **Victim** – the person who has suffered abuse, exploitation, sexual violence, or harassment, regardless of whether or not they have reported the incident to the authorities.
- **Report/Complaint** – the official communication, verbal or written, addressed to the Archdiocese or competent authorities, indicating the suspicion or commission of a sexual offence.
- **Canonical procedure** – the set of norms and stages established by the Code of Canon Law for the investigation and punishment of delicts committed by clerics or other persons under the Church's jurisdiction.
- **Civil/Criminal procedure** – the set of norms established by Romanian legislation for the investigation and punishment of acts constituting offences or contraventions.

Chapter 4

PREVENTION AND TRAINING

4.1. Prevention measures

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest implements the following prevention measures to reduce the risk of sexual violence and abuse of minors and vulnerable persons:

- Verification of the moral integrity and legal record of all persons (clergy, consecrated persons, employees, volunteers) who will work or come into direct contact with minors or vulnerable persons;
- Clear definition of roles, responsibilities, and limits of authority for each position involving contact with minors or vulnerable persons;
- Avoiding situations where a minor or vulnerable person is alone with a single adult, except where strictly necessary and under conditions of visibility and safety;
- Arranging pastoral, educational, or counselling spaces so as to allow visual access from outside or the presence of a third person;
- Encouraging open communication and an environment in which minors feel safe to express their concerns;
- Limiting physical contact to what is appropriate and culturally acceptable, avoiding any form of contact that could be misunderstood or have sexual connotations;

- Implementing specific codes of conduct for clergy, employees, and volunteers, with provisions regarding respect for personal boundaries and prohibition of inappropriate behaviour;
- Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of prevention policies and updating them according to new legal or pastoral requirements.

4.2. Training and awareness

The Archdiocese organizes and supports periodic training programs on:

- Recognizing signs of abuse, neglect, or exploitation;
- Understanding and applying legal and canonical procedures in cases of abuse;
- Educating clergy, employees, volunteers, minors, and parents about safe conduct and the protection of personal boundaries;
- Promoting a pastoral culture of openness, respect, and responsibility;
- Preventing online grooming, sexting, and other cyber-risks to which minors are exposed.

Training is mandatory for all persons with responsibilities involving contact with minors or vulnerable persons and is renewed at least every three years.

Chapter 5

REPORTING AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES

5.1. Obligation to report

Any person—cleric, consecrated, employee, volunteer, or lay faithful—who becomes aware or has reasonable suspicion of sexual abuse, exploitation, or harassment of a minor or vulnerable person in the Archdiocese must report the case immediately.

Failure to report constitutes a serious violation of this Regulation and may result in disciplinary or canonical sanctions.

5.2. Reporting channels

Reports can be made:

- Directly to the diocesan person responsible for receiving complaints regarding abuse (*referent for the protection of minors*);
- To the parish priest, superior of the religious house, or head of the institution;
- Directly to the Archbishop or his delegate;
- To the competent state authorities (police, prosecutor's office, child protection services).

Anonymous reports are taken into consideration if they contain sufficient information to allow the verification of the facts.

5.3. Content of the report

As far as possible, the report should include:

- Name and contact details of the reporter (unless anonymous);
- Identification of the victim and, if possible, the alleged aggressor;
- Description of the incident(s), with approximate dates and locations;
- Any available evidence or witnesses.

5.4. Protection of the reporter

No one making a report in good faith will be subject to retaliation, discrimination, or disciplinary action. The Archdiocese guarantees the confidentiality of the reporter's identity, within the limits of the law.

5.5. Immediate response

Upon receiving a report, the responsible person will:

- Ensure that the victim is in a safe environment;
- Provide immediate access to medical, psychological, or spiritual assistance if necessary;
- Notify the Archbishop and, where applicable, the competent state authorities;
- Initiate the preliminary canonical investigation according to can. 1717 CIC.

Chapter 6

CANONICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

6.1. Preliminary investigation

When the accused is a cleric or consecrated person, the Archbishop or his delegate will immediately open a preliminary investigation, in accordance with can. 1717 CIC, to verify the plausibility of the accusation.

If the accusation concerns a possible *delictum gravior* (serious crime) as defined by *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*, the case will be forwarded to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

6.2. Precautionary measures

During the investigation, precautionary measures may be imposed, including:

- Temporary removal from ministry or office;
- Prohibition from contact with minors or vulnerable persons;
- Limitation of public appearances or pastoral activities.

These measures are not sanctions but protective actions for both the alleged victim and the accused.

6.3. Disciplinary measures

If the act is confirmed, canonical penalties may include:

- Admonition or rebuke;
- Removal from office or ministry;
- Prohibition from exercising any pastoral function;
- Dismissal from the clerical state, in the most serious cases.

For employees or volunteers, the measures may include termination of the employment or collaboration contract, prohibition from participating in Church activities, and referral to civil authorities.

6.4. Collaboration with civil authorities

The Archdiocese fully cooperates with the police, the prosecutor's office, and other competent institutions, providing the necessary data and documents, within the limits of the law.

Chapter 7 MONITORING AND REVIEW

7.1. Objective of Monitoring

The purpose of monitoring is to ensure the continuous evaluation of the effective application of the provisions of this Regulation, to identify strengths and areas requiring improvement, and to ensure an appropriate response to any deficiencies.

7.2. Responsibilities for Monitoring

The Commission for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons is responsible for overseeing the implementation of preventive measures and reporting and response procedures.

The Protection Officer prepares periodic activity reports and submits them for the Commission's review.

Local coordinators provide feedback and data regarding the application of the Regulation in parishes and institutions under their authority.

7.3. Indicators and Methods of Monitoring

Monitoring shall be carried out through:

- collection and analysis of reports regarding complaints and measures taken;

- of participation in training and awareness programs;
- surveys and consultations with members of the ecclesial community;
- internal audits on compliance with procedures and protection standards.

7.4. Review of the Regulation

The Regulation shall be reviewed at least once every two years or whenever legislative, canonical, or Church authority recommendations require changes.

Proposals for amendment may be submitted by the Protection Commission, the Protection Officer, members of the community, or civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

The review shall be approved by the Archbishop of Bucharest after consultation with the competent bodies of the Archdiocese.

7.5. Reporting of Results

The results of the monitoring and review process shall be presented annually to the Archbishop and, where appropriate, communicated to the ecclesial community and the competent authorities.

The annual report shall include recommendations for the continuous improvement of policies and practices for protection against sexual violence.

7.6. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest reaffirms its firm commitment to the protection of vulnerable persons and to ensuring a safe environment based on respect, responsibility, and transparency, through a continuous process of learning and adaptation of policies and procedures.

FINAL PROVISIONS

1. Entry into Force

This Regulation shall enter into force as of the date of its approval by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bucharest and shall be communicated to all institutions, parishes, and persons involved in the life of the Archdiocese.

2. Obligation of Compliance

All clergy members, consecrated persons, employees, collaborators, and volunteers of the Archdiocese are obliged to know, comply with, and apply the provisions of this Regulation in all activities carried out within the ecclesial community.

3. Updating and Amending the Regulation

Any amendment or addition to this Regulation shall be made in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 7 – Monitoring and Review, and shall be subject to the approval of the Archbishop.

4. Compatibility with Other Norms

This Regulation applies in addition to the national legislation in force concerning the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, as well as the norms of canon law. In the event of discrepancies, the provisions offering the highest level of protection shall prevail.

5. Communication and Transparency

The Archdiocese undertakes to ensure transparent and accessible communication regarding the rights and responsibilities set out in the Regulation, through specific means: posting of the Regulation, information sessions, publications, and other suitable channels.

6. Transitional Provisions

Until the complete establishment of the structures provided for in this Regulation, the tasks and responsibilities related to the prevention and management of cases of sexual violence shall be assumed by persons temporarily designated by the Archbishop.

7. Responsibility for Implementation

The Archbishop of Bucharest bears the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this Regulation and shall designate the persons and competent structures for coordinating and monitoring its observance.

8. Final Provisions

This Regulation expresses the firm commitment of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest to protect the dignity and integrity of vulnerable persons and to promote a culture of responsibility, respect, and transparency in all its activities.

București, 15 mars 2025

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