

**Establishment “Center Dardedze”  
Children's Rights Protection Policy**



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## Preamble

Center Dardedze is a non-governmental organization founded in 2001 that advocates for childhood free from abuse.

"Center Dardedze" team consists of social workers, psychologists, trainers and other professionals. We stand for a safe childhood - free from physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect.

We are convinced that violence against children is preventable - as long as we take preventive action. To prevent violence against children, we educate:

- **children and young people;**
- **parents;**
- **professionals**

If child abuse has taken place, we help to detect it and provide support:

- **psychological rehabilitation of a child;**
- **consultations for the child's family, specialists;**
- **psychological assessment.**

Latvian society still has a relatively high tolerance for violence - both in the attitude of adults towards children and among children themselves. In our opinion, everyone is responsible for the safety of children, from parents to passers-by, from teachers and doctors to ministers. We strive for a common public understanding of the risks and signs of violence, helping to create common algorithms for action and timely involvement to help children.

In order to change public attitudes, we regularly conduct researches and social campaigns, express our views in the media, as well as try to actively oppose violence at the political level.

**Center Dardedze vision:** Every child in Latvia is loved, protected, respected and cared for, living in a safe environment that is free from any kind of abuse.

**Center Dardedze mission:** To prevent any kind child sexual abuse and to provide help to children and their families who have experienced any kind of abuse.

## **We believe that child abuse IS preventable!**

### **Center Dardedze principles of action:**

- **Implementing the rights of the child - the basis for all decisions and actions**

We keep in mind the basic principles of children's rights in every one of our actions.

- **Ensure child participation**

We involve children in decision making affecting their lives.

- **Do not discriminate**

We treat all children equally and with respect.

- **Always keep focus on the best interests of the child**

We always ask ourselves whether the decision we make will benefit the child now and in the long term.

- **Take the strengths perspective of the child and his or her family**

Every child and family has their strengths - we see not only the shortcomings, but also the resources that can help and empower

- **Do no harm**

Any intervention, though well-intentioned, can cause harm, so before we act, we carefully consider, plan our actions, and then monitor the outcome.







## **The aim of Children's Rights Protection Policy.**

The foundation “Center Dardedze” (hereinafter - Dardedze) needs a Policy for the protection of the rights of the child (hereinafter - the Policy), because:

Dardedze is an organization that believes that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basic document for the protection of children's rights can be put into practice only if everyone implements its basic principles in everyday work and puts the best interests of the child first, as well as to effectively protect children from violence and institutions, and individuals must take an active part in the protection of children’s rights.

Dardedze not only helps others to understand and apply the principles of protection of children's rights, but also believes that it is the duty of every organization and professional to make sure that the actions taken are not harmful, safe and in the best interests of the child. Dardedze is also responsible for ensuring that no decisions are made on its premises or in activities organized by Dardedze that may harm the child. However, in cases where damage has occurred, there must be a clear scheme of action to deal with in such situations.

## Violence against children

World Health organisation defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation”.

**Physical abuse** — deliberate use of force in contact with the child threatening the child's health or life or deliberate exposure of the child to harmful factors, including tobacco smoke;

**Emotional abuse** — impairment of the child's self-esteem or psychological impact (by threatening him/her, swearing, humiliating him/her, abusing the child's relatives in his/her presence or otherwise impairing his/her emotional development);

**Parental neglect** — neglect of their duty of child care and supervision;

**Sexual abuse** — involvement of a child in sexual activities that the child does not understand or for which he is unable to give informed consent.

## Definitions

The following terms are used in the present Policy:

1. **Child** – any person under 18 years of age.
2. **Child abuse** – any kind of physical or emotional cruelty, sexual abuse, neglect or other forms of behaviour that endangers or may endanger the child's health, life, development or dignity<sup>1</sup>.
3. **Person working with children** – a person engaged on a contractual or a voluntary basis in any activities carried out or organized by Dardedze, during which direct contact and/or communication with the child/children is an integral part of the task to be performed.
4. This status is automatically granted to all persons who are Dardedze's founders, members of the Board, or who have entered into labour relations with Dardedze.
5. In other cases, when signing an agreement, Dardedze shall evaluate the scope of the task to be performed and may also grant this status to persons bound with Dardedze by another kind of legal relations (voluntary work, royalty agreement, agreement with a company, etc.).
6. **Person performing other duties in Dardedze** – a person engaged on a contractual or a voluntary basis in any activities carried out or organized by Dardedze, during which direct contact and/or communication with the child/children is possible, but is not an integral part of the task to be performed and is of random nature.
7. **Visitor** – a person attending Dardedze for a consultation, a tour, training, as well as a media representative, a researcher, a student, a person performing contractual or other obligations, etc., which do not comply with the provisions of section 3 or 4 herein.
8. **Person in charge of Policy implementation** – Dardedze's employee appointed by an instruction of the Dardedze's Board, a *trusted person* who primarily receives and registers complaints about breaches of this Policy and performs other duties related to implementation of the Policy on behalf of the Board.

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<sup>1</sup> Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, Section 1.



## **Persons who are subject to that Policy**

**The provisions of the General and Special Parts of the Policy are binding to:**

1. All full or part-time employees who have entered into employment agreements with Dardedze or an equivalent agreement according to the requirements of laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia;
2. Dardedze's founders, members of the Board and their authorized representatives;
3. Volunteers participating in implementation of Dardedze's programs and contacting with children during their work;
4. Any person who corresponds to the status of a **person working with children** according to the provisions of this Policy;

**The provisions of the General Part of the Policy are binding to:**

5. Any person who corresponds to the status of a **person performing other duties at Dardedze** according to the provisions of this Policy;
6. Visitors;

## **Conditions for staff and volunteer recruitment**

1. Dardedze is convinced that one of the guarantees for the child's safety in the organization is qualified, trained and responsible staff, therefore due attention should be paid to assessment of the staff/other involved persons' conformity.

**Applying the Policy to persons who are already Dardedze's staff, volunteers/persons working with children**

2. All current employees, volunteers/persons working with children are obliged to comply with the provisions of this Policy.
3. As a confirmation of the fact that they read this Policy and understood its provisions, the current employees shall sign a Statement (Appendix No. 2 to the Policy) which states, inter alia, that there are no events, causes or personality traits due to which the person would not be suitable to work with children and appropriate for future employment in Dardedze, and certifies that the person has no criminal record and no criminal proceedings have been initiated against him/her. The statement shall be kept in Dardedze's records together with the person's employment agreement/volunteer's or another agreement.
4. Pursuant to Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, Dardedze shall be entitled to require staff criminal record certificates from the Punishment Register.

**Application of the Policy for persons applying for a job/volunteer work in Dardedze or are planning to go into other contractual relationships and obtain the status of the person working with children.**

5. When recruiting these persons, Dardedze shall assess if the candidate is suitable for work with children, namely:
  - a. Dardedze shall request a certificate from the Punishment Register about the person's previous criminal record or initiated criminal proceedings;
  - b. The candidate shall be asked to fill in the Statement (Appendix No. 2 to the Policy) to certify that there are no events, causes or personality traits due to which the person would not be suitable to work with children and appropriate for future employment in Dardedze, and

certifies that the person has no criminal record and no criminal proceedings have been initiated against him/her.

- c. Dardedze is entitled to ask candidates to submit two recommendations from previous employers and/or educational institutions about the person's potential adequacy for the job and contact with children.
- d. After signing the employment/other agreement the person that was assigned the status of the person working with children is obliged to take part in the closest 4 (four)-day abuse training program organized by Dardedze.

### **Training and dissemination of the Policy principles**

- 1. Dardedze shall ensure that all current employees, volunteers and others persons working with children shall receive all information related to the content and application of the Policy on a regular basis.
- 2. The employees shall revise their knowledge of the Policy at least once a year at the general meeting of staff, shall listen to the Commission and the Report on the violations committed and shall jointly look for solutions to improve the Children protection system in the organization. The Dardedze's Board shall be in charge of the training organization.
- 3. Everyone is entitled to submit proposals to Dardedze's Board regarding amendments and corrections to the Policy. Once a year the Board shall decide on incorporation of amendments to the Policy, if they meet the child's interests.
- 4. Dardedze shall ensure that every Dardedze's visitor shall have access to the summary of the rules of the General Part of the Policy in a visible place.
- 5. Dardedze shall disseminate the idea of the Policy to the extent possible during workshops, conferences and training sessions organized by Dardedze and shall encourage its introduction in other organizations as well as shall provide information support to those who need it.





## **General part**

### **Rules of conduct in Dardedze's premises and territory**

1. Everyone must behave with courtesy and mutual respect in Dardedze's premises.
2. No one is insignificant at Dardedze - well-being of children and adults is equally significant.
3. Everyone is responsible for ensuring that Dardedze is a safe and pleasant place, especially for ensuring that children feel safe and welcome here.
4. Dardedze is the place to get support, but it is not a place for adults to disclose emotions in a way that is offensive to others, to shout, to use physical force or to behave in another inadequate way.
5. Positive discipline methods are used in Dardedze: praising good behavior; children's independence is promoted; if the child has become disobedient, the reasons are discussed, boundaries are agreed with the children, etc.
6. Everyone must immediately inform the Person responsible for Policy implementation about breach of the child's rights that occurred at Dardedze or breach of any provisions of this Policy, as well as in cases when possible breach of threat to the child's safety is only suspected.
7. A person who reported a potential violation voluntarily and in good faith should not be subjected to any penalty.

### **It is forbidden in Dardedze's premises and territory:**

1. To hit or otherwise physically affect a child or to be physically violent to a child;
2. Physically punish the child, emotionally humiliate or ignore it;
3. To use inadequate, inappropriate expressions which may be harmful to a child or other people;
4. To behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative way;
5. To smoke;
6. To be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other intoxicating substances or use them;
7. To take photographs and to film, to record without the consent of a person and in case children are photographed/filmed - without the consent of the child's parent/guardian and the child.

## **Special part**

### **Rules for persons working with children**

1. Always treat a child with proper respect, regardless of the child's gender, age, ethnic or social origin, language in which the child speaks, religion, capacity, sexual orientation, and other status;
2. Always behave friendly in the relations with a child and use the language the child understands which is suitable for his/her age;
3. In cases when due to specific character of the work an employee must work with the child alone, prior to such work the employee is obliged to explain to the child according to his/her age and perceptual capability the provisions of this Policy and the fact that the child has the right to report if he/she considers that his/her rights are not respected, or if the child does not feel safe. The same rules must be explained to the child's parent/guardian, if he/she has any;
4. Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these;
5. Plan and organize the work and the workplace so as to minimize risks;
6. As far as possible, be visible in working with children;
7. Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed;
8. Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between employees and volunteers so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged;
9. Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns;
10. Empower children - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem;

11. Always ask permission from children (or, in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before taking images (e.g. photographs, videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no. Ensure that any images or videos taken of children are respectful.
12. Report immediately, in accordance with the Policy section "Reporting Procedure", if there has been a breach of the provisions of this Policy, or possible harm to a child is suspected;
13. Cooperate responsibly, confidentially and fully to investigate and prevent any case of violation of children's rights;

**When working with children, it is forbidden:**

1. Develop physical/sexual relationships with children;
2. Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive;
3. Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse;
4. Have a child with whom they are working to stay overnight at the employee's/volunteer's home unsupervised;
5. Sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working;
6. Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves;
7. Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
8. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse;
9. Physically punish a child for disobedience or use other inappropriate methods of discipline that humiliates a child;

NB! This list is not exhaustive. The basic principle is that staff should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

## Reporting Procedure

1. Dardedze shall properly respond to any report or complaint about the alleged breach of the child's interests or threat to the child's safety.
2. All persons affected, especially children, should be aware of the possibilities and procedure of reporting and presentation of complaints.
3. Any Dardedze's employee, contractor and volunteer considered as an employee is obliged to adequately and effectively respond to the current or past breach of a child's interests or allegations that such a breach may have occurred, and which in any way may have violated the provisions of this Policy.
4. The primary objective of complaint presentation and investigation is to identify any possible breach or treat to the child's interests and to prevent it.
5. The persons engaged shall keep confidentiality in all activities related to complaint and report investigation; the information about a child may only be disclosed to the extent necessary for complaint investigation.
6. The Board of Dardedze shall be responsible for ensuring that the complaint investigation procedure stipulated herein is complied with in all cases.

### Complaints Commission

1. Complaints and reports shall be investigated by the **person in charge of Policy implementation**, but in complicated cases - by Complaints Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) consisting of at least three people. The regular complaint commission shall include:
  - a. one member of the Board,
  - b. social worker/or social teacher;



- c. lawyer/or psychologist.
- 2. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the composition of the commission may vary, and other professionals may be invited to join the commission at the discretion of the commission members. The top-priority criteria important for selection of members of the commission are work experience in Dardedze, personal experience and good reputation.
- 3. In cases when a complaint is presented about a member of the commissioner **the person in charge of Policy implementation**, this person shall not take part in the Commission, and at least two other specialists will be invited to participate in complaint investigation.

#### **Presentation of a complaint**

- 4. A person responsible for Policy implementation shall be appointed by an order of Dardedze's board – **Estere Glūdiņa**. The information about this person and ways to contact him/her to present a verbal or written complaint shall be available in the Dardedze's entrance hall clearly visible to the public.
- 5. A complaint about breach of this Policy or another breach of child's interests can be presented verbally, in writing or electronically:
  - a) to the person in charge of Policy implementation.
  - b) to the person who was carrying out the duties of office administrator when a complaint was presented or to any other Dardedze's employee or volunteer accessible to the person presenting a complaint;
  - c) By sending it by mail to Dardedze's office address at 3a Cieceres Street, Riga;
  - d) By sending it electronically to an e-mail address [info@centrsdardedze.lv](mailto:info@centrsdardedze.lv);
  - e) A complaint describing the gist of the possible breach/threat may be presented verbally to the office administrator or any other Dardedze's employee accessible to the person presenting a complaint.

- f) A complaint may be put in the box Complaints & Compliments available in the Dardedze's entrance hall clearly visible to the public. (The content of the box is checked daily by close of business)

### **Complaint investigation**

1. Every time when a complaint is presented, the person that received a complaint shall record its content in the complaint registration form which is attached hereto as Appendix No.1 and shall send it electronically to the **person in charge of Policy implementation** and to at least one member of the Board. If the content of a complaint requires immediate action (a child is not safe; there is currently a threat), the first obligation of any person receiving a complaint is to do his/her best to eliminate the direct threat.
2. Any registered complaints shall be handed over to the **person in charge of Policy implementation** without delay according to the procedure stipulated in Section 12; this person shall investigate the complaint by himself/herself or, in more complicated cases, shall present it to the Commission.
3. **The person in charge of Policy implementation** or the Commission shall investigate complaints in each individual case pursuant to the information received, and shall obtain the necessary evidence and information on their own initiative. The fact finding must be objective, *transparent*, if necessary; it may include an expertise(s) and require support of other professionals.
4. If the complaint investigation reveals the facts indicating the responsibility of Dardedze's employee/volunteer for breach of the rules of this Policy or impairment of a right with the signs of an administrative or criminal offence, such complaint shall be investigated by the Commission only.
5. If the Commission reveals during the investigation that the provisions of this Policy have been violated, the person responsible shall be liable to disciplinary action if such responsibility is applicable in accordance with Latvian law.

6. If as the result of the investigation the Commission finds the information about possible violation of the child's rights with the signs of an administrative or criminal offence, the Commission shall prepare a written report to law enforcement authorities – State Police, The State Inspector for Protection of Child's Rights
7. The Commission shall examine each case separately; disciplinary punishment shall be imposed in proportion to the gravity of the offence.
8. The breach of the rules of this Policy shall be considered as a breach of staff rules with the meaning of the Labor Law.
9. The decision on the outcome of the complaint investigation shall be made in writing and shall be notified to the appellant, if possible.
10. The decision made by **the person in charge of Policy implementation** may be contested by addressing the Commission. The decision of the Commission may be contested by addressing the Dardedze's Board.

### **Disciplinary punishments**

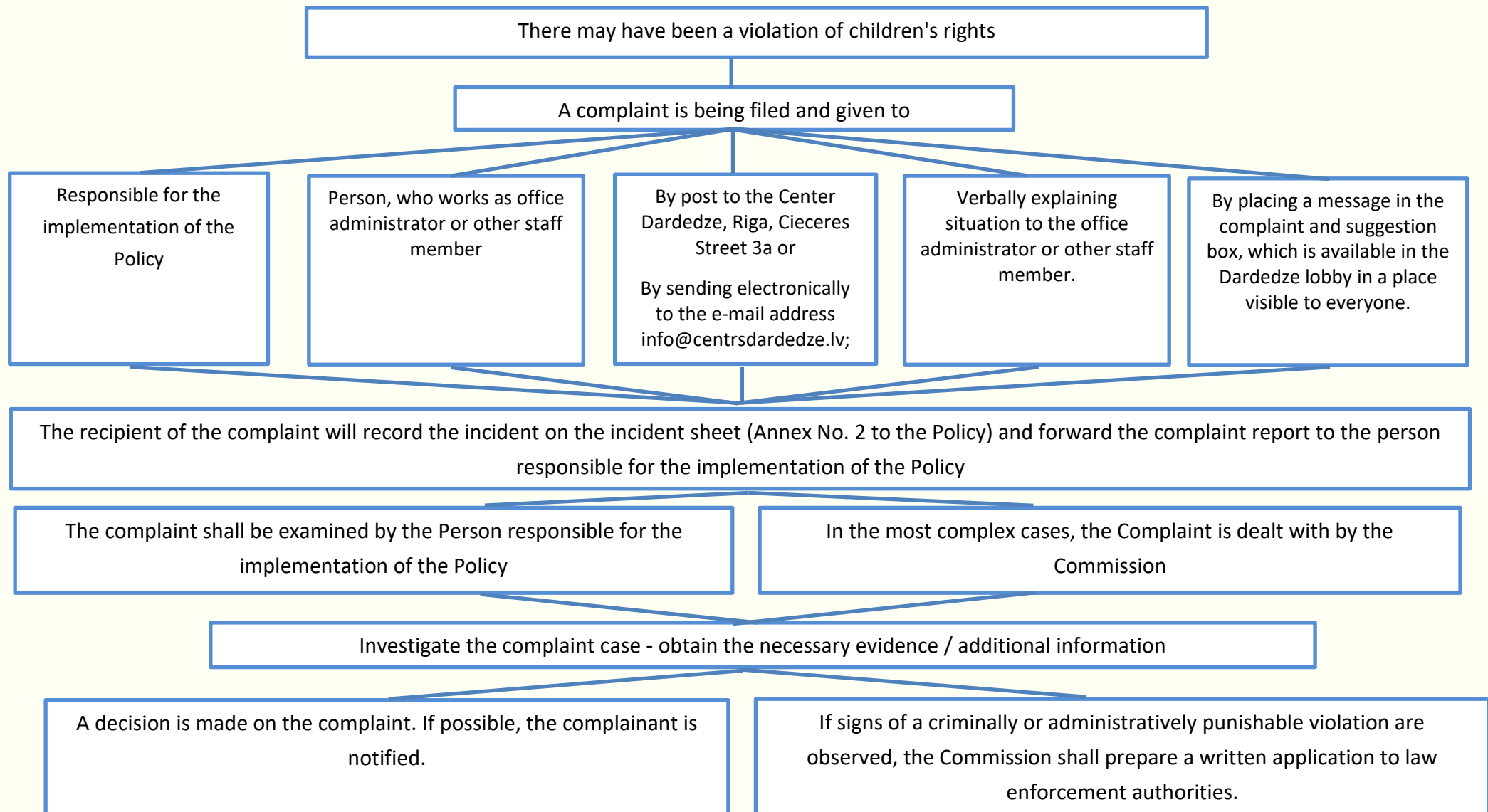
1. In accordance with the statutory procedure the Commission may enforce one of the following disciplinary punishments for the breach of the provisions of this Policy to the guilty person:
  - a. Admonition;
  - b. Reprimand;
  - c. Warning;
  - d. Salary reduction for the period up to 1 year withholding up to 20% of the monthly amount to be paid;
  - e. Dismissal from work.
2. A person may be suspended from qualified from his/her functions in Dardedze without pay during the period while the Commission investigates the complaint.

### **Other penalties**

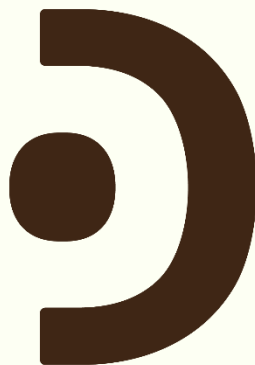
If a Visitor of the Center Dardedze or another person to whom a disciplinary punishment cannot be imposed breaches the rules of the General Part of this Policy, Dardedze reserves the right to expel the person from Dardedze's territory. In such cases the person is liable for any damage (including payment for a missed consultation/lessons) incurred by either action or omission of the person.



## Reporting scheme







**[www.centrsdardedze.lv](http://www.centrsdardedze.lv)**