

# SAFE SPACES – THE NEXT STEP FORWARD

## BACKGROUND

A Safe Space is defined as an environment where people can flourish, develop, have their voices heard, and feel protected from physical or mental harm, discrimination, exploitation and violence.

At the 18th World YMCA General Assembly a resolution on Safe Spaces was passed. At the 19<sup>th</sup> World Council a value statement on inclusion.

The World YMCA has in our vision further aimed to expand these spaces by 2030 to empower individuals to manage their physical, mental, and spiritual health. The initiative reinforces the YMCA's core mission to be open to all, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, religion, or sexual orientation. The World YMCA adopted a "Safe Space" approach, focusing on creating safe spaces for dialogue, creativity and empowerment.

The "Safe Space" directive is not just a policy but a core philosophy, intended to change how the YMCA operates to ensure that all individuals, especially young people, feel safe and supported.

In 2022 Vision 2030 was passed at the world council in Denmark. Pillar 1 – Community Wellbeing with three subgoals Internal YMCA transformation, Community empowerment and Global Advocacy.

*The YMCA Movement will review and develop relevant policies and practices so that its staff and volunteers at all levels work in a culture where individual, organisational and community wellbeing is a fundamental priority.*

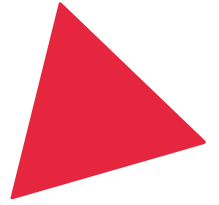
*By 2030 the YMCA strengthens and expands safe, inclusive spaces at all levels, empowering every person we serve to care for their physical, spiritual and mental health, and the broader wellbeing and resilience of their families and communities.*

*The YMCA effectively champions improved policies and practices for keeping children and young people safe from harm, abuse and neglect at local, national and global levels.*

The above are all examples of policies and visions that we all have accepted and agreed to work towards.

YMCA Europe has issued a statement "YMCA Europe welcomes all – Diversity, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination Statement" and worked to collect tools to work with Safe Spaces and there is a webpage "YMCA AS A SAFE SPACE: PROMOTION OF INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION".





YWCA-YMCA of Sweden continuously evaluates together with participants when they return from taking part in programs, projects and activities on a European and global level. The last years we have noticed that participants have reported not always feeling safe when participating. YWCA-YMCA of Sweden have reported back to YMCA Europe with examples of when participants have expressed not feeling safe.

World YMCA suggested the following Safeguarding Policy and Procedures:

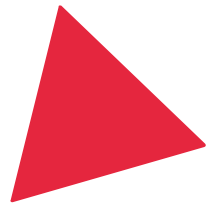
*World YMCA maintains strict safeguarding policies to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults, including:*

- **Screening and Training:** *Proper screening, background checks, and training for all staff and volunteers.*
- **Code of Conduct:** *Prohibiting abuse, harassment, and inappropriate behavior, including strict rules around photography and one-on-one interactions.*
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** *Clear protocols for reporting allegations of abuse to local authorities and internal supervisors.*

World YMCA has issued a statement also formulated a Safeguarding policy intended to protect the well-being and safety of anyone in our care, especially children, young persons or vulnerable adults.

YWCA-YMCA of Sweden realise that the YMCA movement for several years have worked on ensuring that we ensure basic human rights on inclusion such as age, gender, ability, culture, race, religion, or sexual orientation. We also realise that we need to take the next step to ensure the goals of pillar 1 – community wellbeing.





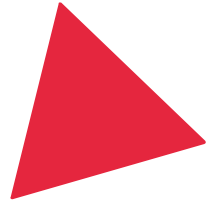
## PROPOSAL

YWCA-YMCA of Sweden suggest that we take the next step to investigate further how we as an organization can work to improve physical, spiritual and mental health and how to ensure the "Safe Space" directive in order to make it not just a policy but a core philosophy, intended to change how the YMCA operates to ensure that all individuals, especially young people, feel safe and supported.

Therefore, YWCA-YMCA of Sweden would like to commission YMCA Europe to agree to the following action points:

- Model a YMCA Europe Safeguarding policy from the existing World YMCA Safeguarding policy.
- Appoint a working group with the aim to formulate recommendations on how to ensure that YMCA Europe and its members continue to ensure Safe Spaces and take the next step in empowering all youth, including but not limited to the grounds of discrimination as well as the goals of pillar 1 – community wellbeing where all individuals, especially young people, feel safe and supported. This working group should represent our entire European movement, with regards to both differences in perspective and geography. The working group should report back at the next ordinary general assembly.
- Focus on the perspectives from pillar 1 to *care for their physical, spiritual and mental health*, where Mental Health is an important point of safety, support and social inclusion.
- Continuously investigate what creates a safe space for young people.
- Evaluate all programmes, projects and activities with regard to safe space.
- Create and update a checklist based on the Safeguarding policy to be used in all YMCA Europe programmes, projects and activities.





**MORE INFORMATION:**

<https://www.ymcaeurope.com/ymca-as-a-safe-space/>

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Zuo4K4E88UKgVcajWios45v0U2FT\\_Vbo](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Zuo4K4E88UKgVcajWios45v0U2FT_Vbo)

<https://www.ymca.int/what-we-do/vision-2030/community-wellbeing/>

<https://www.ymca.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Safeguarding-Policy.pdf>

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/152\\_u6qRCt3TxK14d-vLZfAzdsIVKaSQw/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/152_u6qRCt3TxK14d-vLZfAzdsIVKaSQw/view)

<https://www.ymca.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Practical-Guide-for-YMCAs.pdf>

**Note:**

YWCA-YMCA of Sweden is aware that the Constitution, Article 25 states that to have a motion considered at the General Assembly it must be sent at least 12 weeks prior to the commencement date of the General Assembly. We ask that the motion be considered by the general assembly 2026 and if not accepted for consideration at the general assembly 2026 that the motion instead be considered at the following general assembly.

