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SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Protection and safety of participants in AYI activities

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1. About this policy

This policy sets out the commitment of Asociația Young Initiative (AYI) to the protection and safety of all persons involved in our activities. The policy applies to all AYI activities, whether they are organised in person or online.

The policy was created to be a practical document that anyone who is part of the AYI team or takes part in our activities can easily understand and apply.

What does safeguarding mean?

> *Safeguarding = all the measures we take to prevent and respond to any form of abuse, neglect, harassment or inappropriate behaviour within our activities. The aim is for every participant to feel safe — physically, emotionally and mentally.*

Who does it apply to?

This policy applies to all persons involved in AYI activities:

- Participants (young people, adults, minors)
- AYI employees, collaborators and volunteers
- Trainers, facilitators and group leaders
- Partners and representatives of partner organisations
- Teachers and educators from the institutions we work with
- Associate members of AYI
- Members of the AYI Board of Directors

Where does it apply?

The policy covers all contexts in which AYI activities take place:

- In-person activities (including in rented venues: hotels, conference centres, libraries, schools, etc.)
- Online activities (webinars, sessions on Zoom/Google Meet/etc., online communities)
- Erasmus+ mobilities (youth exchanges, training courses)
- Camps
- Local and national events
- Digital communication related to activities (WhatsApp groups, email, social media)

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2. Our principles

All AYI safeguarding actions are based on the following principles:

- **Safety first:** The safety of participants takes precedence over any other considerations.
- **Zero tolerance:** We do not accept any form of abuse, harassment or discrimination.
- **Collective responsibility:** Protecting participants is the responsibility of everyone involved, not just of a single person.
- **Confidentiality:** All reports are handled with the utmost confidentiality and with respect for the persons involved.
- **Prompt action:** Any reported incident will be investigated and dealt with quickly.
- **Inclusion:** We create a safe environment for everyone, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion, disability or any other criterion.
- **Dignity and respect:** Every person has the right to dignity and respect.

3. What risks this policy covers

The policy covers, without being limited to, the following types of risk:

- **Physical abuse:** any form of physical violence, corporal punishment or unwanted physical contact.
- **Emotional/psychological abuse:** intimidation, humiliation, threats, manipulation, deliberate isolation or any behaviour that affects a person's emotional state.
- **Sexual abuse:** any form of unwanted sexual contact, comments of a sexual nature, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation.
- **Neglect:** failure to fulfil care and supervision responsibilities, especially towards minors.
- **Bullying and cyberbullying:** intimidating, excluding or aggressive behaviour, including online.
- **Discrimination and hate speech:** any form of discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability or any other criterion.
- **Alcohol and substance use:** alcohol consumption by minors, or the use of prohibited substances by any participant, within AYI activities.

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4. Roles and responsibilities

Safeguarding Officer

The role of Safeguarding Officer falls by default to the trainer, facilitator, volunteer or youth worker who organises/delivers the activity. In other words, anyone who organises an AYI activity automatically also has Safeguarding Officer responsibilities. If needed, another member of the team may also be designated for this role, especially for complex activities. The Officer has the following responsibilities:

- Is the main point of contact for any issue related to safety and protection
- Receives and handles incident reports
- Ensures that all participants and the team are aware of this policy at the start of the activity
- Takes immediate action in the event of an incident and escalates it, where necessary, to AYI leadership or to the authorities
- Completes the incident reporting form

At the start of each activity, the person acting as Safeguarding Officer will introduce themselves to participants in this capacity, will outline the responsibilities they have and will be available throughout the activity.

All AYI team members

Every member of the AYI team (employees, volunteers, associate members, trainers, facilitators, collaborators, etc.) is responsible for:

- Knowing and complying with this policy
- Immediately reporting any situation that raises concerns
- Setting a personal example of respectful behaviour
- **Never remaining alone with a minor (the two-adult rule). If this is not possible, for example if a situation needs to be discussed with a minor, the open-door rule applies and a visible and easily accessible space will be chosen, never an enclosed one.**

Partners and educational institutions

When AYI works with pupils through schools or other educational institutions, the teachers and educators involved have a complementary role. They remain responsible for their pupils throughout the activity, and the collaboration takes place on the basis of the existing partnership agreements. Teachers/educators will be informed about this policy and will sign the Code of Conduct (Annex 1) where applicable.

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5. Specific safety rules

5.1 General rules (all activities)

- Each activity begins with an introduction of the Safeguarding Officer and of the safety rules (except for short activities);
- All participants will receive and sign the Code of Conduct (Annex 1) for activities where this is relevant (for example, in-person activities lasting more than 2 hours, online activities taking place over several days, etc.). In certain cases, the Code of Conduct will accompany other collaboration documents.
- For all in-person activities, a needs assessment form is completed before the activity, which includes medical information, allergies, phobias and other special needs;
- Alcohol consumption is prohibited for minors; for adults, consumption is discouraged and not permitted at all during working sessions. In addition, AYI's activity leads will not drink alcohol, even during meals organised by AYI.
- The use of substances prohibited by law is not permitted in any context;
- Gifts or favouritism are neither offered to nor accepted from a minor;

5.2 In-person activities

As AYI does not own any premises, all in-person activities take place in rented venues (hotels, libraries, conference centres, schools, etc.), where their existing rules will be respected. We apply the following additional rules:

- Venues are checked in advance to ensure that they meet safety and accessibility standards;
- **An adult may not enter a bathroom used by a minor (the bathroom access rule);**
- Where there is, or can be, a clear separation between the toilets used by adults and those intended for minors, adults will not use the toilets intended for minors, and minors will not be allowed into the toilets intended for adults;
- Any movement outside the venue takes place in groups of at least 2 people; minors are always accompanied by an adult, but never one adult alone with one minor;
- Physical contact between an adult and a minor will be avoided, as will any form of physical contact between adults that may be embarrassing or degrading or may cause shame (including during activities, getting-to-know-you games, etc.);

5.3 Erasmus+ mobilities and camps

In addition to the general rules, the following also apply to European mobilities (youth exchanges, training courses) and camps:

- Safeguarding briefing for all team members before the mobility;
- Cultural awareness and inclusion briefing for the team;

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- Room arrangements are appropriate to the age and gender of the participants. Adults will not be placed in rooms with a minor. For minors who require an accompanying person, appropriate solutions may be identified on a case-by-case basis.
- Adults are not allowed to enter minors' rooms alone, except in well-justified emergencies (e.g. fire, medical emergency, etc.). In general, entering minors' rooms is not permitted in any non-emergency situation, even if there are several adults;
- Each participant will be asked to have travel and medical insurance;
- A specific check of the accommodation (including from a safeguarding perspective);
- Clear rules on free time and outings (including quiet hours/night-time), where applicable;
- A first aid kit is available throughout the activity;
- Medication is not given to participants except on the recommendation of the emergency services or at the participant's request, with the agreement of the group representative, and only when a pharmacy cannot be reached within 60 minutes;
- At least one person present has first aid training;

5.4 Online activities

- Online sessions are held on secure platforms (Google Meet, Zoom) with protected links;
- Recording sessions is not permitted without the explicit consent of all participants;
- Inappropriate behaviour online is treated just as seriously as offline;
- Communication with minors takes place exclusively through official channels, never through inappropriate private channels;
- There will be no personal communication with minors on digital channels beyond what is necessary for the activities (personal contact between an adult and a minor outside the activity);

6. Photographs, filming and social media

AYI pays particular attention to how images of participants, especially of minors, are used.

Rules on photography and filming

- At the start of each activity, explicit consent for photography/filming is requested (for minors, consent will be given by the parent/legal guardian);
- The wishes of participants who do not want to be photographed will be respected; a visual means of identification will be found that does not create stigma;
- Photographs will not capture participants in vulnerable, intimate or unflattering situations;
- Photographs will not be taken in bedrooms, bathrooms or other private spaces;

Rules on social media

- The full names of minors are not published alongside photographs on public channels;

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- Participants are encouraged to share their experience, but are instructed not to post photographs of other participants without their agreement;
- The communication kit for participants will include guidelines on responsible posting on social media;

7. How to report an incident

If you see something that doesn't seem right to you, report it. You don't have to be sure that it is abuse — having a concern is enough. It is better to report it and for it to turn out to be nothing than not to report it and for someone to be in danger.

Reporting channels

1. Reporting directly to the Safeguarding Officer: You can speak directly to the Safeguarding Officer (the trainer/youth worker organising the activity or the designated person). They will introduce themselves in this capacity at the start of each activity.

2. Anonymous online form: AYI will provide an anonymous online form (Google Forms or similar), accessible throughout the activity. The link will be shared at the start and displayed prominently.

What happens after a report?

- The Safeguarding Officer acknowledges receipt of the report within a maximum of 24 hours
- The situation is assessed and immediate action is taken if necessary (protecting the person affected)
- The incident is documented in the internal reporting form
- The parent / legal guardian and AYI leadership (the Executive Director or the Board of Directors) are informed
- If it involves a criminal offence or immediate danger, the competent authorities are contacted (the police, child protection services)
- The person who made the report is informed of the next steps, with confidentiality respected

Important: No person will be penalised or discriminated against for making a report in good faith.

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8. Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the AYI Board of Directors. The review will take into account the lessons learned from the activities carried out, feedback from the team and participants, and any changes in legislation or good practice.

The policy will also be reviewed after any major incident or on the recommendation of the Safeguarding Officer.

This is AYI's first safeguarding policy (version 1.0). We are committed to improving it continuously on the basis of practical experience.

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CODE OF CONDUCT

By signing this document, I confirm that I have read and agree with the AYI Safeguarding Policy and I undertake to comply with the following rules during AYI activities:

1. I will treat all participants with respect and dignity, regardless of age, gender, origin, religion, sexual orientation or any other criterion.
2. I will respect the opinions of others and I will not use offensive, discriminatory or sexual language.
3. I will not engage in intimidating behaviour, harassment or bullying (including online).
4. I will respect the physical boundaries of others — I will not engage in unwanted physical contact.
5. I will not use substances prohibited by law. If I am a minor, I will not drink alcohol. If I am an adult, I will drink alcohol in moderation and never during working sessions.
6. I will not remain alone with a minor in an enclosed space.
7. I will not leave the activity premises together with a minor.
8. I will not enter a toilet used by a minor (for adults).
9. I will respect the rules on photography: I will not photograph or film other participants without their agreement and I will not share images on social media without consent.
10. I will report to the organiser any situation that I believe endangers the safety or wellbeing of any person.
11. I will respect the rules of the venue (quiet hours, access to different areas) and the instructions of the organising team.
12. I understand that failure to comply with this Code may lead to my exclusion from the activity.

Full name: _____	Date: _____
Signature: _____	Activity (optional): _____

For minors, the signature of the parent/legal guardian is also required:

Parent/guardian name: _____	Parent/guardian signature: _____