



ROMANIAN  
YOUTH  
MOVEMENT  
FOR DEMOCRACY

# Child Protection Policy



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## About RYMD

Romanian Youth Movement for Democracy (RYMD) is an NGO founded in 2010 that aims to transform our communities through the active involvement of young people and the promotion of democratic values. The organization is based in the city of Bacau and its activities have been implemented at county, national and international level. The main goal of the organisation is to strengthen civic engagement among young people, highlighting their importance in decision-making processes at local, national and international level. We believe that every community should offer young people the opportunity to live in safety, as well as multiple opportunities for personal and professional development. We aim to help young people understand the mechanisms of the democratic system, develop civic spirit and turn young people into active citizens.

RYMD actions aim to create sustainable, adolescent and youth-friendly communities through their direct participation in shaping public policies that affect them. Through its initiatives, RYMD promotes civic participation, European and democratic values, integrates young people in decision-making processes and advocates for their human rights to be reflected in public policies, including at local level. RYMD prioritises participation among young people from diverse backgrounds and cultures (young people with disabilities, from different ethnicities, from rural areas, from disadvantaged communities). Our priorities include providing development and training opportunities for young people and adults, supporting transparency in decision-making and public spending, sharing expertise with other organisations, organising advocacy campaigns, media education programmes and community development events.

RYMD has developed over the past 14 years a strong expertise in providing workshops and training sessions focused on civic participation, community facilitation and participation in democracy for young people, NGO professionals, school teachers, local government and other adults. Through innovative and interactive training methodologies, RYMD equips young people with the tools and confidence they need to become active citizens, leaders, and change-makers. Key features of RYMD's training programs include a range of leadership development programs designed to cultivate the leadership potential of young people, focused on building essential leadership skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. RYMD provides training in civic education and advocacy field through comprehensive civic education initiatives aimed at enhancing young people's understanding of democratic principles, human rights, and civic responsibilities. Through workshops and seminars, participants learn about the importance of active citizenship, political participation, and social advocacy,

empowering them to engage meaningfully in democratic processes and effect positive change in their communities. Another training component is in the field of media education, where RYMD has developed, together with partners from Greece and Ireland, a guide of non-formal education methods in working with young people.

In addition to its youth-focused training programs, RYMD offers capacity-building support to local NGOs in Bacau County, especially on communication, fundraising, volunteers management and grant writing.

The association has a team of 6 members bringing diverse and complementary expertise from fields such as political science, public policy development, international relations, arts and theatre or photography. In 2023, RYMD set up the Civic Influencers advisory group, composed of 8 young people aged 16 to 27, including young people with disabilities, Roma and rural youth. This advisory group is tasked with identifying the needs of young people in Bacau County and campaigning at local, county and national level to address them. Key themes include youth participation in decision-making, community development, sustainability and adapting local communities to meet the needs of young people. In addition, the group aims to ensure inclusion and representation of marginalized voices in advocacy efforts.

RYMD is a founding member of the Pact for Intergritute between NGOs and Social Partners - ECOSOC, signed in November 2013 and initiated by Transparency International Romania.

RYMD is an initiator of the Coalition for Bacau, an informal group that brings together 11 NGOs from Bacau county and a founding member of the CERT network.

In 2016, RYMD received the "Administration in the light of day" award offered at the Public Participation Awards Gala organized by CeRe - Resource Center for Public Participation, for its sustained efforts in promoting citizen consultation, transparency in the work of public institutions in Bacău and youth involvement in the community. RYMD was also awarded third place in the 2016 Civil Society Gala in the category "Civic Involvement."

RYMD implements projects and initiatives under four priority programmes: 1/Participation of children and youth; 2/Education for democracy; 3/Cities and communities fit for children and youth; 4/Capacity building of local NGOs. We work in both urban and rural areas due to the local profile and context. In our view, young people should be involved in decision-making and local policies should be planned with their needs in mind, and the localities should respond to the needs of young families by providing access to quality social, educational and health services, as well as a clean environment and safe public spaces. The association works mainly in Bacău county, with the target group being young people aged 13 to 35m without excluding the other adults and childre.

RYMD has developed over the years several successful projects in the field of civic participation and youth engagement, such as „Active Citizens for Bacau” (funded by EEA Grants), „EYE - Education-Youth-Engagement” and „Get it right” (both funded by Erasmus +) or „TACT - Active Youth for the Community” (funded by Active Citizens Fund). RYMD is currently working with young people from vulnerable communities in the framework of the Education for Democracy programme, composed of training modules based on non-formal education methodology so they could explore the concept and values of democracy innovatively, tackling it from local, national, and European perspectives. One of the

association's current projects is Clubul din Internat( the Boarding School Club) through which, using participatory methods, two learning and leisure spaces have been created for young people from rural areas who come to learn in the city of Bacau. By offering an alternative to spending time and organising training activities, the project addresses various issues such as reducing school drop-out, employability and personal and professional development of young people from vulnerable backgrounds. Within the Capacity building of local NGOs component, RYMD is currently implementing the „NGO Bacău - Zoom In/ Zoom Out project” (funded by EEA Grants), through which we offer support to organizations in Bacău county through training sessions and promotion, including through the development of a platform of organizations in the county, ongbacau.ro.

## **Principles of child protection policy**

The Romanian Youth Movement for Democracy respects young people and children as the main target group of its projects and aims to support them in their personal and professional development and to provide them with a suitable space for development and learning in a healthy and safe environment.

Child protection is a primary responsibility that the RYMD Association must ensure. To this end the governing body of RYMD establishes the necessary rules and procedures to ensure that staff, activities and programmes do not harm the young people and children beneficiaries. It also ensures that there are adequate means of enforcement and control, that these rules are well known, and that any concerns the organisation has for the safety of children in the communities in which they work are reported to the appropriate authorities.

The principles that RYMD follows in all work with young people and children are:

- Physical and mental safety
- Respect for the autonomy of young people and children
- Prevalence of the relationship between young people and children and their parents
- Participation
- Legality
- Equality
- Prevention of conflict situations
- Confidentiality

The activities carried out by the RYMD Association with young people and children are:

- Civic education activities, education for democracy for children and young people
- Consultations between children, young people and decision makers
- Public debates between children, young people and representatives of public authorities on topics of interest to children
- Education to prevent violent behaviour and develop communication skills
- National and international exchanges of experience
- Community initiative groups

The activities of the Association are organised as programmes and projects. Within each project a person is appointed to be responsible for the implementation of the youth and child protection policy. The name of the person responsible for child protection for each project will be included in the job descriptions of the employees and in the consents signed by the participants in the activities and a copy of this child protection policy will be kept by the project manager and will be available for consultation at any time. The person responsible for monitoring the application of this policy is the President of the organisation.

This policy is aligned with:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989
- Policy Guide on National Strategies for the Protection of Children against Violence, Council of Europe, 2005
- Charter of Fundamental Rights, European Union, 2010
- European Commission Communication of 4 July 2006 (COM(2006)367 final): Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child
- Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union and the Committee of the Regions of 15 February 2011 (COM(2011)60 final): An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child
- Council Conclusions of 17 December 2014 (17016/14) on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child
- Council conclusions on the implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2016
- Act No 272 of 2004 on the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, republished
- Law 252 of 2010 on the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, adopted in Lanzarote on 25 October 2007 and signed by Romania in Lanzarote on 25 October 2007
- Law 217 of 2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence republished
- Law 202 of 2002 on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men

The policy will be guided and based on the respect of the following procedures:

- European Union, Ten principles for integrated child protection systems 2015
- Ensuring Child Safety, Standards for Child Safety, 2014
- The International Child Safeguarding Standards, Keeping Children Safe

Also, in view of the emergency and alert states as a result of the pandemic from 2020 - 2021 this policy will be periodically aligned with the provisions that will regulate activities and health safety whenever appropriate.

## **Purposes. Prevention and response**

Violence against children occurs in all countries and in all societies and can take the form of emotional violence as excessive authority, psychological violence as a strategy to manipulate information against the

child, physical violence, sexual violence or neglect. Violence against children and young people is always preventable. This child protection policy aims to keep children safe during their involvement in RYMD Association projects and activities and to support their participation, in line with the international frameworks and legislation mentioned above and the aims and objectives of projects and programmes. This policy also describes the procedure and guidelines for prompt and appropriate action to be taken by adults in the event of any incident or concern.

The objectives of this policy are:

- to provide RYMD Association staff, collaborators and volunteers with a set of rules and best practices to ensure that the projects, programmes and operations involved, staff and partners do not put children at risk
- enable project and/or programme partners to respond appropriately when problems and incidents arise
- minimise the damage that the organisation and/or partners may inadvertently do as a result of their organisational activities

Scope - responsibilities

This policy covers all activities specific to RYMD projects and applies to the working lives of all persons covered by this document, including:

- RYMD Board of Directors
- Executive team, including project managers, assistants and volunteers
- External partners and consultants collaborating on project activities
- All adults involved in project and/or programme activities i.e. experts, teachers and members of other categories
- All adults accompanying children participating in project activities
- All adults participating in project activities as beneficiaries
- All children participating in project activities

This is not a complete list, they are only examples. The principle governing the implementation of planned actions is that all adults involved in project and/or programme activities should avoid actions, behaviours or suspicions that are seen as inappropriate or potentially abusive practices and support the active and meaningful participation of children. All children involved in activities must be aware that in all actions of the RYMD Association any form of violence is prohibited in all forms respecting the reality that violence against minors is illegal and that there is a prevention strategy.

The locations where this policy applies are the locations where the RYMD Association carries out its activities, namely:

- At the headquarters
- In schools or colleges
- In public places where activities are carried out
- In places of accommodation, meals and group time, where appropriate

- Other premises
- In the online environment

This policy must be a commitment for all persons involved in RYMD Association activities during the whole period of their activities in the mentioned locations. Staff, partners and consultants will be able to be identified as project workers at any time during the implementation period and as workers for the given period through employment, civil or volunteer contracts after their completion.

## Context

The RYMD Association aligns its activities and procedures to the following definitions:

A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>.

According to Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children should be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. These may include:

- Physical violence: physical harm including physical harm that may be considered minor in certain contexts, for example: pushing, shoving, squeezing of body parts, forcing the child to remain in an uncomfortable position for long periods of time, committed against the child by an adult or another child, including all forms of corporal punishment and bullying.
- Emotional abuse: the infliction of emotional distress by an adult that impacts on a child's emotional development, such as: taunting, including through inappropriate nicknames and names, constant criticism, belittling, humiliation and group isolation.
- Neglect or negligent treatment: failure to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, failure to protect the child from danger or to obtain medically and other urgently needed services in specific situations, which could result in impairment of the child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development.
- Sexual abuse: the act of persuading, seducing, coercing a child - who, under the law, lacks the capacity to consent - to participate in sexual activities. Sexual abuse is any sexual activity initiated by an adult or a minor 3 years older than the child victim with a person under the age of 18. It can also include involving children in seeking or producing sexual images, viewing sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Sexual exploitation: a form of sexual abuse that involves involving children in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, status or anything else they or their family need.



- Commercial exploitation: the exploitation of a child in the workplace or the exploitation of products made by that child, which results in the deterioration of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development.

Abuse and violence against children and adolescents occurs globally and in all settings, including online. Accidents and incidents affecting children usually occur suddenly and unexpectedly. These are events that cause disruption to normal human functions and pose a significant danger or risk to children's lives.

According to Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children have the right to be protected from any information that they do not need to know and for which they may not have the knowledge and maturity to cope. This is especially true if the information relates to sexual matters and matters related to any form of violence. All adults participating in any of the RYMD Association's activities have a duty to ensure that no child is harmed as a result of information in presentations and discussions, whether in spoken, written or visual form, or in any other form of communication.

This always means taking into account the age of the children involved and their estimated abilities to cope with the sources of emotion. Thus in activities:

- No shocking/offensive news or case studies with these characteristics.
- No shocking images or shocking audio news
- No personal emotional testimony about abuse and exploitation
- No role-play or drama showing rape or other sexual or violent acts
- There is sensitivity to other cultures
- No 'bad' (inappropriate/aggressive) language directed at children, either used in the presence of children

In addition, the RYMD Association acknowledges that:

- The well-being of the child is of paramount importance;
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, and other elements of their identity are entitled to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- Some children are more vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, degree of dependency, communication needs or other problems;
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers, teachers, counsellors and other school staff are essential in promoting young people's well-being;
- Everyone has a responsibility to protect children.

All adults must be alert to such situations and are responsible for safeguarding all children who participate in RYMD activities. Facilitators, in particular, should be prepared to stop inappropriate discussions or presentations and remind participants that:



- Child protection is mandatory
- Activities must remain within professional boundaries
- Taking breaks is mandatory according to the programme and professional methodologies

Anyone (child or adult) who feels uncomfortable or needs a break from a presentation or discussion may leave or choose not to participate in the activities.

## **Responsibilities**

### *Child protection officers*

The President of the RYMD Association will be responsible for the correct implementation of these policies. The manager of each activity carried out is responsible for following the policies in each activity. They will be appointed by the President of the Association with the approval of the Board of Directors. They will have the responsibilities: to talk about child protection issues within each project and/or programme and their activities and exchange trips of pupils to other countries when appropriate, coordinate the supervision of children in workshops, rehearsals, capacity building activities, organise and supervise performances, etc. The activity manager will be the responsible person available to the children in the running of the activities. At the beginning of the activities, children will be informed who the activity managers are and what their duties are in terms of child protection.

Parents, teachers, counsellors and school staff will be responsible for the safety and protection of the children outside of the activities run by RYMD Association within the projects and/or programmes. Persons in the above positions have the overall responsibility and management for the promotion, awareness and implementation of child protection policy during activities carried out by the RYMD Association to ensure:

- Policy monitoring and reporting on any developments to RYMD staff and other relevant adults.
- Ensuring that all those involved in the project are aware of the identity of those responsible for the RYMD Association's Child Protection Policy
- Ensuring alignment and complementarity between this Child Protection Policy and the policies and practices in place in partner organisations. Partners will receive a copy of this policy and will be invited to share their policies as well as their views, experiences and proposals in order to build a clear partnership and agree on the commitment to keep children safe
- Develop and coordinate child protection training / briefings / resources as required
- Maintain good practice and legal requirements, Annual policy review
- Provide a source of support and information for prevention and problem solving for all adults covered by this policy
- When a concern or incident arises, facilitate decision making and liaison with relevant stakeholders
- Keeping records of any concerns raised about child protection issues

- All visitors / parents / teachers / experts / consultants in their area of responsibility, who are in contact with children through the organization, are informed and have signed and returned a copy of the regulation of interaction with children drawn up on the basis of the child protection policy the child.
- Visitors must be advised that they must comply with the policy in all contact and communication with children during activities

*During the exchange of experience/ travel:*

1. A trip diary is made. It includes travel details and a section for parents to give their consent. These must be returned before the event takes place and must be brought on the trip with the completed group information / consent form. (If a group information / consent form has not already been completed for a child or young person then this will need to be completed)
2. Adequate insurance for work and activities is concluded.

*Individual / Staff Safety*

- A group of children or young people under the age of 16 must not be left unattended at any time.
- Any member of staff should avoid being alone with a child or young person for any length of time. If there is a need to be alone with a child or young person (for example first aid or the child is in distress), any adult should ensure that another worker knows where they are and why.

*Selection and employment of RYMD staff and collaborators who will interact with children*

Recruited staff, experts and consultants will receive a statement of their role responsibilities to meet the requirements of this Child Protection Policy and interviews will include a child protection discussion that will clearly explain the provisions of the document. Child protection, their personal knowledge and experience of the subject and their attitude in specific situations will be discussed with potential staff, experts and consultants during interviews.

The selected personnel will be required to present their criminal record in order to be employed or to provide services. RYMD, during the recruitment process, will request the necessary documentation to confirm the identity of the referrers and specifically verify the relevant qualifications required to undertake the activities with children. In addition, effective management of staff and external experts is ensured through monthly evaluation sessions. The safe physical environment for children, young people, staff and external experts, staff of the partner school is ensured by applying health and safety measures according to national legislation. It is made clear to staff and external experts that abuse or harm to children will not be tolerated and that it is the responsibility of all adults involved to keep children safe on and off the premises.

Particular attention is paid to ensuring preventive measures and control to protect children if the activities or events take place in unfamiliar places and outside the family, by ensuring supervision at all exits and periodic control during the event and by assigning an adult who meets the mentioned conditions ten children each. The responsibility for these measures rests with the RYMD Association and the partner pre-university education units.

The President of RYMD is responsible for monitoring the application of child protection policies and has the right to carry out checks on the activities carried out and compliance with the provisions of this policy.

## **Code of conduct**

Specific guidelines for staff behavior are included in this child protection policy.

All adults within the scope of this policy and children involved in the activities of the projects and / or programs of the RYMD Association are bound and must comply with the following code of conduct. The code of conduct provides for the actions that the staff, in contact with children:

- ) Should do them to empower and protect children
- ) Should refrain from doing
- ) Must avoid them

Adherence to this Code of Conduct will protect children from abuse and adults from allegations of misconduct or even abuse.

- Respect the privacy of all children and adolescents and their personal information
- Provide child-friendly language and communicate clearly
- Respect children's views and give them equal opportunities to express their views without discrimination
- Ensure all activities are conducted in tobacco, drug and alcohol free areas. Do not allow children who have consumed these substances to participate in the activity.
- Make sure you follow the rules of the institution where the activity is carried out – school, museum, headquarters, seminar or conference rooms, public buildings, play areas
- Dress appropriately and respectfully
- During the activities, in their preparation and after their conclusion as long as you interact with the children do not allow the use of any form of violence
- Handle any violent incidents between children according to the procedures learned in the activity preparation
- Do not use an abusive style of authority, do not raise your voice, do not use threats, irony, do not exchange adversarial lines with children to get them to shut up
- Physical interaction with children is allowed only to explain theater exercises that are regulated from this point of view. Unpleasant touching is not allowed. Children have the

right to refuse to participate in exercises in which the touch seems uncomfortable to them. Do not allow and/or encourage children to hug you.

- Do not allow children to engage in illegal or abusive behavior or participate in child behavior that is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Do not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, demean or degrade children and/or adolescents or in ways that constitute a form of emotional abuse
- Do not discriminate, show differential or favorable treatment towards certain children to the exclusion of others
- Do not expose children and adolescents to pornographic material in electronic or any other form. Refuse any proposal from children to view such material in a group, regardless of the explanation of their proposal.

Children and parents involved in the project's activities will be invited to share their thoughts regarding violence against children and child abuse and possible ways to avoid it.

### **Working with parents and associated organisations**

Project and/or program partners, schools and other associated organizations will agree to support each other to achieve child protection compliance and competence. They will provide, within this framework, resources and support. The provisions will be included in the collaboration protocols.

- Measures are taken for children at risk
- Work is not unnecessarily duplicated
- The child is not subjected to unnecessary questioning
- Events or activities organized individually by or together with partners are clearly identified with respect to child protection jurisdiction and responsibility

In particular, in relation to associated schools, RYMD will ensure that:

- partner schools have their own effective child protection policies;
- there are effective complaint and warning actions in collaboration with partner schools and teachers, which will be explained in the written agreement.

### *Training*

All RYMD Association staff, experts and consultants will receive training in child protection and safeguarding in accordance with this policy.

## **Procedures**

### *Actions in case of suspicion*

Adults subject to this policy must report any suspected abuse to the Activities Manager who will notify the RYMD President who will ensure full implementation of this procedure. The only exception is if the president is suspected of abuse. In this case, the responsibility for the solution rests with the RYMD vice-president.

If an adult within the scope of this procedure is dissatisfied with the proposed course of action, he can request to discuss the case in the Board of Directors with the support of one of the members of the association. Concerns will be raised in good faith and will not result in retaliation, punishment or other harm to the person raising the concern.

All assessment sessions, discussion of any reported cases and resolutions in those cases will be recorded in minutes in the form of electronic files. All child protection records are handled and held securely by RYMD.

Confidentiality is extremely important to both the child and the alleged perpetrator during and after any actions taken in this procedure. Indiscretion or negligence can have harmful consequences for any potential legal action taken against a person, for the child's dignity and self-respect, or for the alleged perpetrator if he or she is later found not to be guilty. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure the security of knowledge, information and records. Case details should only be provided on a "need to know" basis.

### *Reporting procedure*

For any incident or suspicion, a report is made and the activity manager, RYMD project manager is notified. If the situation occurs during or is related to an activity, or the suspicion relates to RYMD activities or employees, it will be resolved by RYMD, going as far as, if necessary, notifying the authorities. If the situation is external to the activities, the case will be discussed with the management of the organization, who will decide the next course of action.