

# “Inventing the Future”

## Strategic Plan 2010-2013



# *Inventing the Future*

Strategic Plan 2010-2013

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## ***Introduction***

It is our pleasure to share with you YMCA Bitola's first Strategic Plan built for the period 2010-2013. We named this plan "Inventing the Future" because for first time since our formation we are strongly committed to the future. Until now we were reflecting only on the past, summarizing it in quarterly newsletters and in annual reports. Now, for first time we are looking into the future and designing YMCA Bitola activities according the needs of our community where we belong.

After eight years in existence, we have reached a crossroads where we want to evaluate and reassess the direction that YMCA Bitola is going in. We have been building our organization and now we are in the moment where we want to decide how to best grow as individuals and as an organization. To that end, we developed this strategic plan.


The desired goal of this strategic planning process is to bring additional value to the organization by reviewing the programs and services that we provide, adapting them to local needs, making them more inclusive and visible and thereby see our results and vision happening at a higher level.

Through the strategic planning process, we clarified our goals but we recognize that there is not only one way to achieve them. This plan outlines what we see as the best way to implement our goals and the strategies we will use in the period to come to work on making our vision a reality.

We worked on building this plan for several months involving and consulting many people for the good of YMCA Bitola and our future work.

Thanks to everyone that supported us!

We invite all of you to join us in the coming period in setting a strong foundation and let's invent the future together!



Viktor Iliev  
/President of YMCA Bitola

## ***Strategic Planning Process***

We decided to start working on a strategic plan in order to clarify and sort out many critical issues of our organization. One issue to address was to clearly define why YMCA Bitola exists, what we do and why we do it, what guidelines we follow, and what are our goals as an organization and how we can accomplish them.

In April 2010 we decided to begin the strategic planning process. For that purpose we have involved Katie Kalinowski, US Peace Corps volunteer, who supported us in the process for which we express our gratitude here. We started by identifying the steps to develop a plan and made a map of activities to be taken to reach the final stage. We formed a strategic planning committee within YMCA Bitola that started working on developing the plan.

The committee prepared and completed an online survey of members and partners of YMCA Bitola to discern their perceptions about the organization, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Afterwards we reflected on the responses and analyzed the results, taking them into thoughtful consideration as we developed this strategic plan.

We have reviewed the basis of YMCA Bitola's identity, reviewing the vision, mission, motto and the values of the organization. We have made some changes to our identity statement in order better position ourselves and thereby answer the needs of the local community.

Next we took into consideration external and internal factors that we identified which may influence our future development as organization.

The major work of the strategic plan is to set our future goals, objectives and strategies. We have invested all our creative potential in order to find ways how we can further develop and achieve our goals. We structured this section to maximize clarity about our plans.

The next phase was working on the draft version and finalizing it to reach the stage of having our first strategic plan.

Finishing the strategic plan does not mean finishing the process. This strategic plan will be revisited annually to evaluate our progress and make modifications as needed. We also made an annual action plan of activities to help us stay on track with implementing the strategic plan.

***"If you don't know where you are going, you are sure to end up somewhere else".***

***Mark Twain***

## ***About YMCA Bitola***

YMCA Bitola is a non-profit, apolitical, nongovernmental, nonreligious and inclusive youth association which aims to provide opportunities for local youth and to actively work with them in our community. YMCA Bitola is part of the YMCA family spread throughout more than 130 countries worldwide. YMCA Bitola was established in May 2002 but became more active beginning in 2004.

### ***Structure***

The Assembly is the highest body within YMCA Bitola and consists of all the organization's active members. The Assembly holds a regular annual session and emergency sessions as needed. The Executive Board is chosen by the Assembly and is comprised of a President, who is the legal representative of the organization and at least two members from YMCA Bitola. The Executive Board oversees all the organization's programs. The current Executive Board is comprised of:

#### ***VIKTOR ILIEV - President***

Mr. Iliev started as a local coordinator of the YMCA Skopje branch in Bitola, then he took over the position of Secretary and since 2006 is President of the organization. He coordinates the Y-Trainings and the Healthy Lifestyle Program. He has a university degree in International Economics.

#### ***BLAGOJCHE KOLICHOSKI***

Mr. Kolichoski joined YMCA Bitola through the summer camp activities in 2002. He became a volunteer in several programs and in 2005 took over the responsibility of the Arts & Culture Program. Since 2007, he has been the camps coordinator, IT Manager, and Secretary of the organization. He has a university degree in Applied Computer Science.

#### ***JOVCE KRSTESKI***

After working with several organizations, Mr. Krsteski joined YMCA Bitola in 2006. He has worked with nearly all of YMCA Bitola's programs and since 2008 he has been responsible for the Arts & Culture Programs. He has a university degree in Psychology.

#### ***KATIE KALINOWSKI***

Ms. Kalinowski is a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer and has worked with YMCA Bitola since 2010. She has a bachelor's degree in natural resources from the University of Nebraska and a master's degree in economics from North Carolina State University.

#### ***MAJA JONCESKA***

Ms. Jonceska joined YMCA Bitola in 2009 through participation in the camps program and a few trainings during that period. Since then, she is part of all bigger events happening at YMCA Bitola. At the moment she is a student at the faculty of Economics.

### *KONSTANTIN PETROVSKI*

Konstantin has worked in many local and national media, including the position of editor in chief of weekly magazine "EGO" from Bitola. He is active in the NGO sector for more than ten years, mostly on the duties connected with producing of videos, PR and editing writing for magazines published by NGO sector. He is the author of two books "Filter Yugoslavia" and the book of travel writings "On the road, asking for direction". He has bachelor's degree on Journalism.

### *EMILIJA JOSIFOVSKA*

Ms. Josifovska is enthusiastic member of YMCA Bitola that joined in the summer 2010. She studies at the Economics Faculty in Prilep at the International Economics and Business department.

## **Programs**

YMCA Bitola offers programs and projects focused on youth. The organization works with several permanent programs, not just on project-by-project basis like many groups. We cooperate and partner with other NGOs, the local municipality, the centre of culture, and other institutions.

Focus Areas:

### ✓ **Culture & Art**

- *Y-Movie* - making all kinds of videos and movies including documenting activities of YMCA Bitola, recording youth camps, and making self expressive or promo videos
- *Y-Comics* - creating paintings and illustrations, including documenting YMCA Bitola activities, artistic trainings, and illustrations for YMCA Bitola's Y-Comics fanzine or our newsletter Notify
- *Acid Triple Fire Art Performance* - street and stage performances juggling fire and other elements.

✓ **Y-Training** - social and educational activities, primarily through trainings and workshops. The topics are: personal development, youth empowerment, and concrete leadership skills like communication, presentations, public speech, project applications writing, working in teams, leadership, etc.

✓ **Healthy Lifestyle** - organizing activities to promote and practice the healthy lifestyle like hiking, table tennis tournaments, etc.

✓ **Civic Community** - promoting volunteerism, youth activism, human rights, etc.

### ***Staffing/Membership/Target Group***

YMCA Bitola is run by staff on volunteer basis with 3-4 staff members according the needs of the organization. Members of YMCA Bitola are young people from 17 to 35 years old and the organization currently has 32 members. Our activities are open to all our members to participate, as well as opportunities to take on leadership roles. We see youth as our main target group, human resource, and driving force for community development.

In 2009 YMCA Bitola served about 250 direct and 3.500 indirect beneficiaries, all young people. Since its establishment as an organization, YMCA Bitola has served the local community by providing opportunities for development of the young people through programs and projects accomplished on a local and international level. In 8 years of existence, we have directly targeted around 1.700 young people and around 25.000 indirectly.

### ***Office***

YMCA Bitola's office is located in the center of Bitola. We also hold programs in other locations with the cooperation of local partners like the city municipality, the Center for Culture, the American Corner in Bitola, schools and local NGOs.

### ***Partners***

Major partners that we have cooperated with and been supported by in the past are: YMCA Europe, YMCA Macedonia, HorYzon (Switzerland), YMCA Michianna (USA), YMCA Southwest London (England), International Synergy Group, Centre of Culture in Bitola, Municipality of Bitola, Forum of NGOs of Bitola and the American Corner Macedonia in Bitola.

## **YMCA Bitola's Identity**

Building the strategic plan was an excellent opportunity to review our organization's vision, mission, motto, and values. Through that process we re-examined the basis of YMCA Bitola's identity. We have made some changes to our identity statement in order better position ourselves to answer the needs of the local community where we belong. We have stated our vision, simplified and enriched the mission, updated the motto, and defined our values in order to positively answer the current needs of our community and YMCA Bitola's new strategic directions. In this part, first we state our VISION, MISSION, MOTTO and VALUES. For additional information on how we see our identity, there is an appendix at the end of this document. There we describe our PHILOSOPHY and PURPOSE - WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO, and the PRACTICAL ASPECTS of these concepts.

### **VISION**

***YMCA Bitola is a respected local organization that provides opportunities which empower young people to meet the ever-changing future with greater courage, wisdom and love.***

### **MISSION**

***YMCA Bitola works with young people on their personal development of body, mind and spirit by providing opportunities that nurture their responsibility, stimulate their creativity and celebrate the diversity of all God's creations.***

### **MOTTO**

***Empowering youth!***

### **VALUES**

***Courage - Responsibility - Respect - Creativity - Care***

COURAGE	Inspiring people to take initiative and get things done no matter what.
RESPONSIBILITY	Taking action based on proper judgment.
RESPECT	Learning from other people and honoring the Christian ideals.
CREATIVITY	Making something meaningful, even when starting from nothing.
CARE	Being in contact with and valuing life.

## ***External Analysis***

The external environment in which YMCA Bitola operates sets the backdrop to our thinking about what we can accomplish over the next three years. Aspects of the environment influencing our work are summarized below.

### ***The political environment***

Macedonia is a candidate for accession to the European Union (EU), which has positive and negative implications. In the last decade the EU has invested in Macedonia, including in NGOs, to help the country increase its capacity in its progress towards EU membership. As a result, many NGOs are heavily dependent on external funding support for their operations. However, smaller amounts of funds are now being distributed as donors fund priorities in other countries and because the world economy worsened, reducing the amount of money given out worldwide. As a result, there is greater competition amongst NGOs for what external and internal resources are available.

Political affiliations play a significant role in how society operates in Macedonia. Lack of proper political connections can prevent receiving grants, obtaining permits, getting job assignments, and much more. An NGO operating in this environment may have difficulty making progress without proper political connections.

The government policies applicable to NGOs in Macedonia are also fluctuating and evolving. This uncertainty about the regulatory framework makes NGO planning difficult. Also, there are some existing policies that greatly limit NGOs, such as the guidelines on collecting funds for activities. While reforms are being sought, it is unknown if and when they will be put into practice.

### ***The economy***

Fundraising by organizations, for organizations is not an established practice in Macedonia. More and more NGOs are beginning to attempt fundraising activities, but they must overcome public distrust of how funds will be utilized and operate under restrictive policies governing fundraising and donations.

Unemployment in Macedonia is quite high, around 33,5 %<sup>1</sup>. While this would suggest a large pool of potential volunteers, it also means that volunteers who eventually find work are quick to abandon volunteer roles. Also, such unemployment reduces the money that companies and individuals donate to NGOs.

### ***Socio-cultural factors***

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<sup>1</sup> State Statistical Office - [http://www.stat.gov.mk/english/glavna\\_eng.asp](http://www.stat.gov.mk/english/glavna_eng.asp)

Volunteerism is a developing concept in Macedonia and it is taking time to establish its value. Recently certificates were developed to help volunteers document their work, in the hopes that such service is recognized by potential employers as job experience, which is not always the case at this time.

There is considerable distrust of NGOs amongst the public in Macedonia because of funds mismanagement, failure to deliver promised results, forming organizations solely to serve the political parties during elections, etc. Therefore, NGOs must invest considerable effort in explaining what they do and building trust.

### ***Technology***

Technologies like the Internet and Facebook are making it easier for organizations to publicize their activities and share news. In recent years there has been a positive trend in terms of visibility with organizations developing their own web pages and publishing their events online.

Use of these tools is only expected to increase moving forward.

### ***NGO sector***

In Macedonia there are approximately 9.000<sup>2</sup> registered NGOs and in Bitola there are approximately 300<sup>3</sup>, but only about 30 of them are active. Also, there are several youth groups working at the national level. In Bitola there are 5 other youth organizations that also work with the same target group as YMCA Bitola; however, Bitola is fortunate to be a university town with a large student population to draw from and the YMCA's programs are distinct from those offered by other local associations.

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<sup>2</sup> Macedonian Center for International Cooperation - "Financing the NGOs by the state agencies"

<sup>3</sup> YMCA Bitola's estimation

## ***Internal Analysis***

The following is our internal analysis based on the survey that we distributed to YMCA Bitola members and partners. We reflected on the responses and analyzed the results, taking them into thoughtful consideration as we set the basis for development of this strategic plan.

Based on the survey that we completed we have identified fields where we excel and where we can improve.

On a program level, we are recognized for our great movies, videos, and comics. The training opportunities we offer are considered unique and valuable, one of our strongest assets. People appreciate our transparency in advertising training opportunities and sharing news through our *Notify* newsletter. On a management level, solid communication with partners and networking, particularly internationally, are some of our strengths. We have strong and reliable leadership, enthusiastic and talented members, and we have good reputation for keeping the promises that we make.

Areas noted in the survey where we have to work in order to improve include: increasing participation in activities and developing youth program leaders. On a management level, some of the biggest limitations are: not having full-time staff, our small office/program space, and lack of a training system for developing and nurturing youth leaders. Low visibility in the local community and media, not enough local involvement/local partners, and no long-term financial supporters/projects are other challenges to overcome. Through our strategic planning, we analyzed these challenges and thought of strategies to transform them from obstacles to driving forces for the development of YMCA Bitola.

There are many opportunities for future development of YMCA Bitola that we considered, including: Increasing the involvement of volunteers, organizing bigger and longer trainings, organizing workshops and educational activities locally, broadening offerings to other age groups, organizing exhibits, organizing sporting events, growing the healthy lifestyle program, starting education on peace, making longer movies, and bigger comics. We also considered deeper engagement in developing local youth policy and issues, charging program fees, diversifying financial resources, recruiting new members and involving more youth leaders skilled in certain areas that will provide programs and trainings, developing organization policies and procedures, increasing local visibility, strengthening partnerships with the local government, NGOs, local businesses, foundations, and with other regional and international YMCA's.

There are, however, some threats that might hinder future successes. Lack of interest by new youth leaders to get involved, matching the office/program space with organizational needs, and financial stability appear to be the biggest challenges. Still, these obstacles are not unique solely to YMCA, but also apply to other youth organizations.

## Goals, objectives, strategies

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<b>People</b>		
1. Attract and motivate more people to become part of YMCA Bitola or its specific programs	1.1. By the end of 2011, increase the members, volunteers and beneficiaries each by 40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organize 2 local events monthly</li> <li>- Use web site and newsletter for informing about future events and possibilities</li> <li>- Distribute promotional materials at all events</li> <li>- Appear in the local media 6 times annually</li> <li>- Organize regular annual assemblies at each year's end</li> <li>- Recognize members who participate in 3+ activities annually</li> <li>- By March 2011, get involved in the ICCP program and offer it to our young people to participate</li> <li>- By November 2010, offer EVS to our young people to volunteer abroad</li> <li>- Publish monthly calendar of activities</li> <li>- Promote events and organize activities in high schools and universities</li> <li>- Have regular open hours on a daily basis</li> </ul>
	1.2. By the end of 2011, have 2 regular part-time staff and by the end of 2012, have 1 full-time staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Achieve Finances Goal to fund staff</li> <li>- Give greater responsibilities to youth leaders</li> <li>- Involve 2 EVS volunteers</li> </ul>
2. Increase the organization's human resource capacity	2.1. By April 2011, design and start implementing internal training system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design manual with 9 learning modules</li> <li>- Involve 2 Peace Corps volunteers annually to help develop the training system</li> <li>- Organize 1 training monthly</li> </ul>
	2.2. Give greater responsibility to youth leaders by supporting 3 new youth leaders and 1 new youth trainer annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Send youth leaders and trainers to participate in trainings in the country and abroad</li> <li>- By 2011, organize 1 international training and by 2012 organize 2 annually</li> <li>- Actively involve youth leaders and starting trainers at the local trainings</li> </ul>
	2.3. By January 2011, strengthen the Executive Board by increasing it from 3 to 7 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Revise and update the Constitution to clarify roles in the organization</li> <li>- Elect and revise the Executive Board members every year at the annual assembly</li> </ul>

## Goals, objectives, strategies

Goals	Objectives	Strategies
<b>Programs</b>		
1. Provide diverse and relevant programs that promote personal development	1.1. Have at least 80% of members indicating that YMCA Bitola's programs enhanced their personal development and met their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At the end of each year, complete a survey about the program relevance and to identify potential new program needs</li> <li>- Design simple feedback and statistical forms for evaluating programs</li> <li>- Create a program development focus groups as needed to develop or improve programs</li> </ul>
	1.2. By the end of 2013, sustain the Arts & Culture, Trainings, and Healthy Lifestyle programs and enrich each of them with one more subprogram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Y-Movie make 7 videos and trainings in 2011 and make 14 videos and trainings in 2012 and 2013 each</li> <li>- Y-Movie involves 2 EVS volunteers annually</li> <li>- Y-Comics make 5 events (comics, exhibition, training) annually and by 2012 complete 1 mural</li> <li>- Y-Comics develop youth comics fanzine</li> <li>- Acid Triple do 4 fire street performances annually, plus 1 charity fundraising performance</li> <li>- Y-Training complete all activities described in People's Objectives 2.1 and 2.2</li> <li>- Healthy Lifestyle program organize 7 events (tournament, hiking, biking, campaign)</li> <li>- Improve Notify</li> </ul>
	1.3. By March 2011, design and establish a monitoring system for each program to evaluate each program's successes and shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By March 2011, each program develop leadership structure</li> <li>- By March 2011, each program submit program description</li> <li>- By March 2011, each program submit annual plan</li> <li>- By December 2011, each program submit evaluation report</li> <li>- Each program has coordination meeting at least once a month</li> <li>- Conduct 1 focus group annually for each program</li> </ul>

## Goals, objectives, strategies

Goals	Objectives	Strategies
<b>Processes</b>		
1. Increase networking internationally, nationally, and locally	1.1. By the end of 2012, establish 2 new international partnerships, 1 on national level, 7 with local institutions and NGOs and 1 with local businesses sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each year, participate in two bigger international events</li> <li>- Participate in the YMCA Europe General Assembly 2011</li> <li>- Organize 1 common activity annually with every partner organization/institution</li> <li>- Share the YMCA Bitola's informational materials with partners on regular basis</li> <li>- Apply for membership in SEGA (Macedonian biggest coalition of youth NGOs)</li> <li>- Participate in 3+ local civic community events/initiatives annually</li> <li>- Invite local institutions to our relevant activities</li> <li>- Promote social philanthropy on a local level</li> </ul>
<b>Culture</b>		
1. Raise awareness and encourage the practice of our core values	1.1. 90% of members can correctly identify the vision, mission, values and motto of the organization and indicate that they practice the values in their daily life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By November 2010 prepare manual on YMCA Bitola identity</li> <li>- Organize movie nights with discussions based on core values</li> <li>- Incorporate messages about our core values into our products and informational materials</li> <li>- Prepare different types of promotional materials for each program</li> <li>- Annual members survey</li> <li>- Install "About YMCA Bitola" messages in all the promotion materials, Notify, Annual Report, web site, products (videos, movies, comics) etc.</li> <li>- Organization's leaders practice the organization's values themselves and thereby be an example to follow</li> </ul>

## Goals, objectives, strategies

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<b>Finances</b>		
1. Improve the organization's long term financial situation	1.1. By the end of 2012, increase the operating budget by 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apply for 5 projects annually</li> <li>- By the end of 2012 have 1 partner from the business sector</li> <li>- Increase the membership fee for 100% and set it on annual level</li> <li>- Create ability to make donations through our web site</li> <li>- Look for opportunities for donations from international partners</li> </ul>
	1.2. By the end of 2012, increase the self-sustainability of the programs from 20% to 30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish and clarify program fees</li> <li>- Sell our products and promotional items at bigger events more persistently</li> <li>- Involve more people in product development</li> </ul>
	1.3. Diversify the funds by finding 1 new donor every year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Send information brochures to 10 potential donors every year</li> <li>- Set up 5 meetings with potential donors every year</li> </ul>
<b>Facility</b>		
1. Secure office/program space that will be available for longer term and meet our programming needs	1.1. By 2011, obtain funds for paying rent for the next 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure space with room for growth</li> <li>- Look for opportunities for long term usage of space with the local government</li> </ul>
	1.2. Find 2 other alternative spaces of local partners that we can use for free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Run common activities with other institutions or organizations</li> <li>- Provide free services or products</li> </ul>
<b>Technology</b>		
1. Keep office/program equipment up-to-date and operating well	1.1. Invest at least 5% from the total budget for equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appointing a technology responsible volunteer</li> <li>- Update the office computers and software, cameras, reserve parts</li> <li>- Utilize all opportunities to replace old equipment with new one</li> </ul>
	1.2. Receive non-financial donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Look into possibilities for non-financial (material, equipment etc.) donations with our international partners</li> </ul>
2. Enable and accelerate processes of electronic communication with our members and partners	2.1. Increase use of electronic communication with members and partners 30% by December 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Update the YMCA Bitola website once a week</li> <li>- E-mail members twice per month</li> <li>- Double number of postings on Facebook (compared with 2010)</li> <li>- Increase using Facebook and Skype for member to member communication</li> <li>- Establish training on basic computer skills and programs</li> </ul>

## **Summary**

YMCA Bitola has helped local youth to become better leaders, more responsible citizens, develop their creative potential, live healthier lives, and yet we want to do even more to improve the Bitola community and its citizens. To this end, we wrote this strategic plan to help us think critically about what we can accomplish and how to do it.

In this part we summarize all that was said above by reiterating our goals for the period 2010-2013 that truly represent the whole strategic direction of our organization.

- 1. Attract and motivate more people to become part of YMCA Bitola or its specific programs*
- 2. Increase the organization's human resource capacity*
- 3. Provide diverse and relevant programs that promote personal development*
- 4. Increase networking internationally, nationally, and locally*
- 5. Raise awareness and encourage the practice of our core values*
- 6. Improve the organization's long term financial situation*
- 7. Secure office/program space that will be available for longer term and meet our programming needs*
- 8. Keep office/program equipment up-to-date and operating well*
- 9. Enable and accelerate processes of electronic communication with our members and partners*

The Strategic Plan is living a document and will be monitored, evaluated, and updated yearly at the annual assembly of YMCA Bitola. We will also create annual action plans derived from this Strategic Plan, which will keep us "on track".

By achieving the goals we have set forward in this strategic plan, Bitola's youth and the community they live in will be even stronger. We look forward to being a part of this action through implementing our plan.



**FAST FORWARD**  
INVENTING THE FUTURE

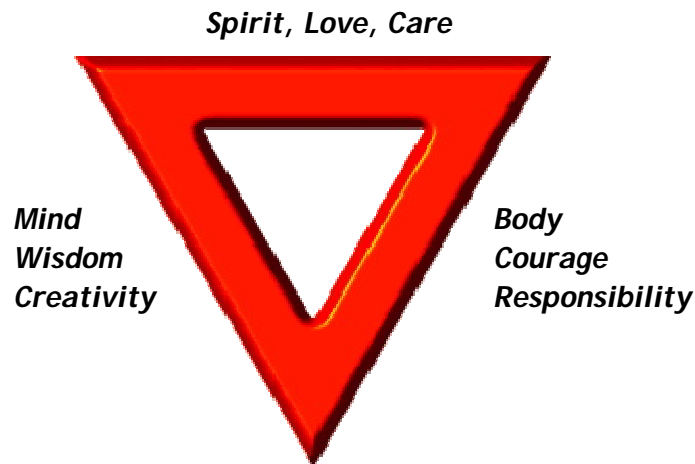
## Official information

<b>Established:</b>	May 2002
<b>Full legal name:</b>	Youth Association YMCA Bitola
<b>Acronym:</b>	YMCA Bitola
<b>Target group:</b>	We welcome all people with a focus on youth
<b>Fields of activity:</b>	Culture and art, social and educational activities, healthy lifestyle, civic community, human rights, etc.
<b>Types of activities:</b>	Trainings, seminars, workshops, camps, festivals, international study visits
<b>Levels of engagement:</b>	Locally and internationally
<b>Board members:</b>	Viktor Iliev, Jovce Krsteski, Blagojce Kolicoski, Maja Jonceska, Emilija Josifovska, Katie Kalinowski, Konstantin Petrovski
<b>Official address:</b>	Vasko Karangelevski REMO 1/3/42
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<b>Contact person:</b>	Viktor Iliev

YMCA Bitola and YMCA Macedonia are part of the YMCA family spread throughout 125 countries worldwide with over 45.000.000 members worldwide.

## **APPENDIX**

### *YMCA Bitola Identity Manual*



The YMCA's triangle symbol represents human nature, what man consists of: body, mind and spirit. Aspects included in our vision, mission, and values presented here correspond with these themes.

What YMCA does is connected with human life, and YMCA Bitola is following a noble path that all YMCAs walk. However, as other YMCAs have different circumstances in which they exist and work, YMCA Bitola has likewise responded to its surroundings and identified which values form the essence of our work. In the explanations that follow we explain our values and our concepts about what man is and should be, having in mind the YMCA triangle.

The values that YMCA Bitola focuses on are: COURAGE, RESPONSIBILITY, RESPECT, CREATIVITY and CARE. These values relate to the present situation in the Bitola community, but are also intended to promote positive change in the community.

The three aspects of the YMCA triangle correspond to three qualities of a human being: namely the ethical, logical, and the aesthetic. Interconnected they form the basis of human nature.

- The ethical is the moral impulse in a person, that which drives a man to engage in certain actions (good or bad)
- The logical is reasoning, but also is the wisdom a person uses to get through life
- The aesthetics relate to liking or not liking something, taking into account human emotions.

These philosophical concepts mentioned here are only for the purpose of clarifying that the values we focus on fall within the patterns of basic human nature.

The first three values: COURAGE, RESPONSIBILITY and RESPECT - are clearly rooted in taking action.

COURAGE is an aspect of how man's will is conveyed in life, thus making it an action based value, meaning: it takes doing some action in order to administer your will. Insistence on doing the right thing, even in the face of certain defeat and without promise of reward or salvation, is the highest form of courage. However, the essence of courage is usually understood as a quality of spirit that enables you to face pain (physical or emotional) or danger without showing fear. This is important to stress especially when undertaking challenges with uncertain results.

RESPONSIBILITY ("response ability") happens when a person behaves in a manner of caring for himself and equally for others. Starting from the word itself, responsibility means "to be able to respond". This implies a certain set of qualities or beliefs in a person, in order to be able to respond in any given situation adequately, meaning our "response ability" is seen in every action that we make. This explains deeper the "Say what you do and do what you say" aspect of responsibility which relates to both personal and organizational integrity.

RESPECT is more emotional, showing sensitivity for others. This value is important to stress in an organization like YMCA Bitola where volunteerism and working in NGOs are generally regarded as a new concepts that are not always respected. Respect is one of the most important Christian values that we honor and promote. Showing respect is a powerful way of getting others to be respectful. "Do to others what you want them to do to you" (Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31).

COURAGE, RESPONSIBILITY and RESPECT are important as we promote the concept of people taking initiative and getting activities started. The idea is to connect these three aspects in one - INITIATIVE, linking it with the BODY aspect of the triangle. At the root of that is ACTION, which implies movement. Now, this is not to be considered lightly - taking proper care of the body is an important aspect of good health, but is only the one side of it, the physical. The psychological side is also to be considered. Initiative is important to cultivate, especially where new approaches and concepts are being developed, which is the situation in the community where YMCA Bitola operates.

CREATIVITY is more connected with the MIND aspect of the triangle, stressing the importance of being imaginative in all aspects of life. Sustaining creativity means not falling into rigid patterns of behavior, but being open to change and seeking out the best solutions to challenges.

CARE is connected with the SPIRIT aspect, meaning to nurture something or even more, to cherish it and show good will to everybody that you are in contact with life. Through its activities YMCA Bitola strives to demonstrate such care and promote caring attitudes towards all people. This concept also relates to the love principles that are part of the basis of Christian beliefs.

THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS of this philosophy can be seen in many of the programs that YMCAs does. YMCA Bitola, in line with its current design and status in the local community, conducts the following programs and activities:

- ✓ Y-Training: non-formal education through seminars, trainings, camps, festivals.
- ✓ Healthy Lifestyle: organizing activities to promote and practice healthy lifestyles, like hiking, table tennis tournaments, campaigns etc.
- ✓ Art & Culture with its subprograms: Y-Movie, Y-Comics and Acid Triple.

Y-Training provides non-formal educational opportunities to learn something new, to improve in something, and/or to gain new insights. These trainings aim personal development, using “learning by doing” method to increase self-knowledge. The festivals and camps provide opportunities to experience other cultures and gain new understandings. These events promote development of all aspects of an individual’s being, not only the intellectual part. Creativity takes special place here, promoting the breaking of traditional patterns of behavior that sometimes undermine our good intentions.

Healthy Lifestyle is not just promoting, but also practicing, the healthy way of living mainly through developing habits of playing sports. Since we are privileged to live close to Pelister National Park, we do hiking and consider it as one of the best ways of keeping good health condition and staying fit.

Art & Culture also relates to developing creativity, but in a different way than the personal development programs. This program deals more with the aesthetical aspects of creativity, providing chances for self expression in an artistic way. This program also provides an opportunity to document events of importance. This program can also address the local community issues through its grassroots approach or be purely an artistic form.

Finally, we note the importance of cultivating Christian principles in whatever we do. Through showing care and stimulating more spiritual ways of addressing life’s difficulties, YMCA Bitola is continually making efforts to animate a deeper and more spiritual approach to life, such as with the spiritual oriented articles in our newsletter “NotifY”.