YMCA **Spain**

Spain shares land borders with France, Morocco, the British colony of Gibraltar, Portugal and Andorra; and with Portugal and Andorra, makes up the Iberian Peninsula. The second-largest country in Western Europe (after France), Spain is a constitutional monarchy organized as a parliamentary democracy and has been a member of the European Union since 1986.

Since 2000, Spain has experienced high population growth as a result of immigration. In 2005, a regularization program increased the legal immigrant population by 700,000 people and in 2007, Spain's population officially reached 45 million people, more than 11% of whom are foreign-born residents.

The YMCA of Spain

The YMCA of Spain was founded 27 years ago and has become known as one of the leading social service organizations in the country. Its clear mission and multi-dimensional programs for youth and children have provided the YMCA with the confidence and support of individuals, families and institutions across seven different regions in Spain.

There are a total of 14 YMCAs across Spain that focus their activities in four areas: social action, leadership development, education in values and international cooperation. In part due to immigration, social exclusion has become an important issue in the country, especially affecting the newcomers arriving into Spain from Northern Africa and Latin and South America. In response to this issue and in cooperation with regional and national governments, the YMCA has developed multicultural programs for these populations. An important example is the Seminar for Education on Peace where youth engage annually in discussions and seminars on issues of migration, cultural understanding and peace building. Other Y programs include environmental education and assistance to persons with physical and mental disabilities.

In recent years, international programs have been strengthened through partnerships with different national YMCAs. More than twenty Ys across the U.S. host young participants from Spain in their summer camps through programs based on leadership training, recreation and outdoor education.

The YMCA of Spain moves forward with the development of projects based on cross-cultural understanding and improving the quality of life of our mutual societies. ▼

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