

2026 Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships Frankfurt



Safeguarding Labs Report

On 13 August 2026, during the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships in Frankfurt, the German Gymnastics Federation (DTB), as host federation and Local Organising Committee (LOC), World Gymnastics (WGYM), and the Gymnastics Ethics Foundation (GEF) held Safeguarding Labs for National Federation representatives.

The Labs brought together international strategy, national prevention work, event delivery and independent accountability. They offered a practical space to share ideas, see safeguarding measures in action and consider how safeguarding can be strengthened across gymnastics.

DTB: prevention in practice and at events

DTB presented its work on body confidence and self-esteem in coach education. In gymnastics, athletes may face pressure linked to body visibility, aesthetic evaluation, performance expectations, social comparison and physical changes during puberty. The session highlighted that body confidence is not only a well-being issue: the messages athletes receive about their bodies also affect whether they feel respected, valued and safe.

DTB's Body Confident Sport programme, developed with the Dove Self-Esteem Project, combines theory with practical exercises for coaches. It focuses on body talk in sport, athletes' experience of their bodies and listening to their bodies. The programme is included in basic and continuing coach education, helping coaches use respectful language and build confidence in everyday training.



As LOC, DTB also shared its event safeguarding approach. Preparatory measures included appropriate vetting, Safe Sport training and briefings for volunteers, LOC personnel and other event-facing groups. LOC Code of Conduct set expectations on respectful behaviour, equality, boundaries, consent, image use and the protection of children and young people.

At the venue, safeguarding was made visible through information and contact details, an identifiable Awareness Team, Safer Spaces for athletes and visitors, and the Diversity and Safe Sport Lounge. These measures helped participants access information, seek support and raise concerns.

WGYM: direction and implementation support

WGYM presented its Safeguarding Strategy 2028, which aims to move from framework provision to sustained implementation across more than 165 Member Federations. The strategy is built around four pillars: Governance and Regulatory; Prevention and Education; Safeguarding Network; and Strategic Communications.

WGYM will provide clearer standards, practical tools, role-based learning and a connected safeguarding network. NFs were encouraged to take practical steps in their own context: review policies and response processes; deliver learning for a priority group; nominate a safeguarding contact and assess national capacity; and ensure that athlete- and child-friendly information on rights, support and reporting is available.

The objective is to move from “safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility” to each person understanding what they can notice, support and improve.

GEF: independent reporting and accountability

GEF presented its independent role in addressing alleged breaches of WGYM rules, including harassment, abuse and other ethical concerns. It provides a confidential and impartial route for reporting, investigation and disciplinary proceedings.

NFs normally have primary responsibility for matters in their own area. GEF may intervene where an NF has not handled a case appropriately, lacks sufficient procedures or resources, or where WGYM refers a matter. It does not generally handle scoring, selection or internal NF governance disputes.

GEF explained its reporting options and the safeguards available to people who speak up, including confidentiality, protection from retaliation and support throughout the process. It also presented key changes under the new Code of Discipline, entering into force on 1 September 2026: provisional suspensions to reduce immediate risk, a duty for NFs to report safeguarding decisions, possible worldwide recognition of NF sanctions, and stronger protection for victims and vulnerable witnesses.

Working together

The Safeguarding Labs showed that safeguarding is a shared responsibility with distinct and complementary roles. WGYM provides common direction, standards and support. NFs turn these into national policy and practice. DTB, as host and LOC, translated safeguarding into practical event measures. GEF provides independent reporting and accountability within its jurisdiction.

These exchanges matter because they link policy with daily practice, support peer learning and build trust. NFs are encouraged to identify one practical safeguarding priority after the Labs and stay connected through the WGYM safeguarding network.

Sincere thanks to DTB for hosting the Safeguarding Labs and sharing its work, and to everyone involved for their contributions. Special thanks go to the NF representatives who joined despite a busy competition schedule. Their engagement showed a shared commitment to safe, respectful and inclusive gymnastics worldwide.