

Project title: *“Supporting the Western Balkan's Collective Leadership on Reconciliation: Building Capacity and Momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)”, supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund*

Background:

RYCO is an intergovernmental organisation that stewards and promotes regional, cross-border and intercultural cooperation within and among its six Western Balkan Contracting Parties. The Agreement on Establishment of RYCO was signed by the WB 6 Prime Ministers at the WB Summit held in Paris, on 4 July 2016, within the Berlin Process. RYCO's unique governance system brings together government and civil society representatives to ensure young people are represented at all levels within the organisation. Its Local Branch Offices ensure RYCO is represented in all the six Contracting Parties, while its Head Office is the organisational hub situated in Tirana.

Programme Mission:

RYCO's programme focuses on creating opportunities for young people to engage in activities that build mutual understanding and reconciliation in the civic, social, educational, cultural and sports domains. RYCO initiates and participates in policy making and advocates for reform. It supports the development of a political and social environment that empowers and facilitates youth exchange. In pursuing its mission, RYCO will demonstrate its commitment to human rights, human dignity and the building of peace based on mutual respect and trust.

RYCO's programming is boosting the competencies of young people, civil society and schools in the region. RYCO is funding initiatives that connect schools and civil society organisations in the region. It invigorates and enhances constructive dialogue. It enables and stimulates intercultural learning and builds mutual understanding. These non-formal education investments are strengthening the competences of young people and encouraging their active citizenship. RYCO supports civil society organisations, schools, and other partners to provide youth from the region with training and cooperation opportunities. The organisation is working closely with partners to assist them in building effective and enduring relations of confidence and cooperation between governments and civil society, and to encourage and foster their capacity to support youth exchange investments.

RYCO is implementing the project “Supporting the Western Balkan's Collective Leadership on Reconciliation: Building Capacity and Momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)” with UNDP Albania, UNICEF Albania and UNFPA Albania. The project is financed by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. The project aims to enhance social cohesion and reconciliation among youth across the Western Balkans – as measured by an increasing embrace of diversity, more tolerant attitudes and reduced prejudice and discrimination through providing support to RYCO, as a mechanism, which is endorsed by governments and citizens alike. The project will support RYCO to work in partnership with civil society, education systems and schools, grass roots, youth institutions and youth in general for the consolidation of RYCO as a regionally owned mechanism with the capacity to promote reconciliation, mobility, diversity, democratic values, participation, active citizenship and intercultural learning.