

Contracting Authority:



Regional Youth Cooperation Office

**Call for Project Proposals 2020**

***“A Better Region Starts with Youth”***

**General Information on the Call for Project Proposals**



This project is co-funded  
by the European Union

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an intergovernmental organisation that stewards and promotes regional, cross-border and intercultural cooperation within and among its six Western Balkan Contracting Parties – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. 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.

Young people are creating a culture of mobility, intercultural exchange and reconciliation. They are active contributors to democratic development, social and economic prosperity, and European integration in an increasingly open Western Balkan region. Contracting Parties in the Western Balkans are providing proactive support to youth exchange and youth engagement within the Contracting Parties, and across the region.

Under the present Call for Proposals, **RYCO intends to support and empower partnerships between civil society organizations, secondary schools and other actors in implementing activities in the areas of regional youth cooperation, mobility and exchange; and enabling environment for regional youth cooperation.**

With the project Enhancing youth cooperation and youth exchange in the Western Balkans 6, the EU aims to support RYCO in its efforts to promote and achieve opportunities for young people to engage in regional activities that build mutual understanding and reconciliation in the civic, social, educational, cultural and sports sectors. The focus of the project directly responds to the need to intensify regional cooperation, as highlighted in the Berlin Process.

Young people in the Western Balkans live with the pressures and influences of a social and political narrative that is distorted by prejudice, denial, revisionism and nationalism. Inherited, negative narratives form the basis for young people's future life choices about career, residence, friendships and even the possibility of dialogue with other people; thus compounding negative narratives about 'the other'. In this volatile context, there is a notable lack of opportunity for young people to move within the region for volunteering, formal and non-formal education and training, or simply to meet and share experiences of being peaceably together. This lack of opportunity is also compounded by legal obstacles.

The **general objective** of this call for proposals is to support the civil society in the Western Balkans to foster reconciliation and regional youth cooperation during COVID-19 pandemic by providing young people with opportunities that create space for dialogue, mutual learning and increased understanding across communities and RYCO Contracting Parties, as well as contribute to increasing capacities of CSOs in offering meaningful opportunities to young people in a changed reality caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In doing so, this Call directly relates to two Strategic Objectives as set out in RYCO's 2019-2021 Strategic plan: (a) Delivering programmes: regional cooperation, mobility and exchange; and (b) Building demand: an enabling social and political environment. RYCO is committed to empowering young people and supporting stakeholders who have access and impact on them to be active contributors to reconciliation, democratic development, social and economic prosperity in the Western Balkans.

RYCO is aware that it is crucial to maintain youth cooperation and reconciliation momentum even in times of crises. In response to this, the applicants under the present call are invited to think of innovative projects that offer solutions in a rapidly changing world able to make best use of or adapt to new technologies in order to support youth participation and cooperation while not compromising the physical contact of young people unless there is a concern for their safety.

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\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

RYCO is established upon a belief that when young people are provided with an opportunity to learn, grow, and express their own voices, they and their whole communities benefit over the long term. Thus, this call is specifically designed to provide decisive support to actors that are able to contribute to this vision, whether they wish to engage in such action for the first time or are in a need for assistance to continue or expand their already existing work in this regard.

All projects funded under this call for proposals must promote and contribute to values upon which RYCO was established and the vision of societies where young people are creating a culture of mobility, reconciliation and intercultural exchange. All project organizers have to ensure that their activities do not foster further divisions among youth, and instead contribute to mutual understanding, peace and social cohesion. Every young person participating in the projects supported by RYCO must be free to express her/himself without fear of punishment or retribution for their beliefs. Finally, every young person must also be protected from violence, bullying or belittlement, especially on the basis of their identities, origin, social standing or abilities.

### **Specific Objectives**

This call has three specific objectives and applicants are required to identify which specific objective they are applying to. Applicants should choose the one they see as closest to the particular focus of their project. Most projects will likely contribute to more than one specific objective. Applicants are encouraged to consider how they can incorporate elements of contributions to all specific objectives through their project design, besides the one for which they are applying.

RYCO encourages applicants to engage young people beyond the role of participants but to include them in all stages of the project, including the project design. The approach is understood to have potential to best answer to the needs of youth as they see it.

*[Please note that in the course of the assessment and selection processes, we reserve the right to categorize your project under a specific objective other than the one you stated in your application, should we find it more closely related to your project design. This, however, will not impact our assessment in terms of decreasing the potential of your proposal for success in this call.]*

The Specific Objectives under this call are presented below:

#### ***Specific Objective 1: Reconciliation, Intercultural dialogue and learning***

RYCO believes that building true and enduring reconciliation involves a process that brings together individuals, groups and societies burdened by past or present conflicts and negative representations and perceptions of ‘the other’. Through shared experience, cooperation and ongoing exchange, new pathways can be built to reconcile people who would otherwise remain trapped in the past.

Through projects implemented under this specific objective, we are looking to support initiatives where young people address their differences concerning the region’s past and challenge inherited narratives through guided processes in a safe environment; and where they engage in intercultural learning and dialogue with their peers from diverse communities within their Contracting Parties and across the Western Balkan region.

RYCO will particularly value projects that go beyond a simple encounter and instead build space for meaningful engagement of diverse groups of youth that would otherwise have no chance to meet. These projects should provide youth with opportunities to learn about each others’ communities and their perspectives through a respectful dialogue, thus allowing them to tackle prejudice and stereotypes, while contributing to increasing mutual understanding.

RYCO is furthermore interested in supporting innovative actions that recognize that youth increasingly engage in online activities and have the potential to make the best use of digital tools, both in times of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

### ***Specific Objective 2: Influencing and Advocacy actions***

This specific objective aims to make the legislative and political environment increasingly supportive of reconciliation and intercultural learning, and of the implementation of youth mobility and exchange both within and among Contracting Parties in the Western Balkan region. At the same time, the legislative and political environment still did not undergo any reforms or initiatives to better adapt to the times of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure continuity of work on the above mentioned issues.

This environment can be improved through influencing and advocacy actions related to recognized specific needs and/or issues. Such actions may target or involve both the stakeholders able to enable a desired change (politicians, policy makers, municipal officials, religious leaders, media, community leaders, or others) and those with more direct interest in reaching and/or advocating for a change (youth activists, youth workers, young people, teachers, academia, or others).

The supported projects under this specific objective should lead to a change in discourse or attitudes, and at least initiate the dialogue on a RYCO related topic. The project may aim for advocacy or introducing change at any level, from the community to the regional level. RYCO is aware that such changes take time; therefore, the actions within the projects supported can represent a phase in a longer process that the contractor is engaged in, and not necessarily limited to the project life span.

The types of change RYCO is interested to support include, but are not limited to: making reconciliation and intercultural learning related topics part of the decision-makers' agenda, advancing the networking of key stakeholders that work on the topic, proposing recommendations for responding to identified challenges (including those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic) or for more youth-oriented policies, identifying the best practices that can be promoted in new contexts/locations across the region, as well as introducing a policy change.

RYCO is particularly interested in supporting projects that are proposing advocacy and influencing solutions on the legislative and political response to the COVID-19 pandemic related to the issues that concern youth.

### ***Specific Objective 3: Strengthening Capacities of CSO's***

RYCO believes that no person or organisation can bring meaningful social change alone or instantly. This is why we see great value in investing in individuals, organisations and institutions that empower youth and support them to become contributors in making their societies more peaceful, open and prosperous.

Through projects relating to this specific objective, RYCO wishes to support organisations in becoming better equipped to play key roles in accompanying and guiding young people in the processes of intercultural dialogue and learning. These projects should enhance their capacities to engage in a more meaningful participation in reconciliation and social, political, cultural, educational and economic processes in and beyond their communities. The projects can also enhance CSOs' capacities to engage on stated matters by being able to mitigate and adapt to the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RYCO is looking to support CSOs, their partners, youth workers and youth as beneficiaries to conduct activities that foster their learning and strengthen their capacities to be better suited to serve young people in achieving the aforementioned objectives. Under this specific objective, projects should clearly demonstrate which capacities of actors they want to strengthen, as well as how this will be approached.

The types of capacity building actions RYCO is interested to support can differ. They may include but are not limited to: gatherings to share specific knowledge; developing curricula on RYCO

relevant topics that is relevant across communities and borders and can be accessed as such; trainings for youth workers and youth on RYCO relevant topics; strengthening capacities for e-learning, developing e-learning curricula (courses, webinars, etc.), promoting non-formal learning and learning in settings alternative/supplementary to formal school settings.

RYCO will support projects built upon a partnership, with at least one partner from WB6 (please check the Guidelines). At least one project per Contracting Party will be supported by RYCO through this Call for Project Proposals.

The overall financial envelope for this call is EUR 330,000.

**THE FULL GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS AND RELATED DOCUMENTS, AS WELL AS THE SCHEDULE OF THE INFO SESSIONS ARE PUBLISHED ON THE RYCO WEBSITE, UNDER OPEN CALLS:**

[www.rycowb.org](http://www.rycowb.org)

Indicative timetable of the Call

| <b>Activity</b>                                       | <b>Deadline</b>               | <b>Time</b>  |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Launching of the Call for Project Proposals           | 31 August 2020                | 13.00        |
| Deadline for requesting any clarifications from RYCO  | 5 October 2020                | 23.59        |
| <b>Deadline for submission of the applications</b>    | <b>12 October 2020</b>        | <b>23.59</b> |
| Preliminary List published on the RYCO website        | by beginning of December 2020 |              |
| Contracting, Final List published on the RYCO website | by the end of December 2020   |              |

This indicative timetable may be updated by RYCO during the procedure, in which case the updated timetable will be posted on the RYCO website: [www.rycowb.org](http://www.rycowb.org).