



Implemented by



Project Title: Western Balkans School Exchange Scheme

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 the Establishment of RYCO was signed by the six Western Balkans Prime Ministers at the Berlin Process Summit held in Paris, on 4 July 2016.

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.

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.

To achieve its strategic objectives, RYCO enters into multi-donor partnership jointly co-financed by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

The project contributes to the overall objective of increasing skills and knowledge of young people in the Western Balkans by enhancing education systems and promoting cooperation in the region through the specific objective of strengthening capacities of RYCO and establishing a regional school exchange scheme.

These objectives will be achieved through the following three intervention areas:

1. Improving the institutional and organisational capacities of RYCO to manage regional cooperation projects.
2. Improving the capacity of schools and other formal education structures to actively participate and develop quality projects
3. Designing and implementing RYCO's regional School Exchange Scheme

Through these three interlinked intervention fields, the project supports the development of a political and social environment that empowers and facilitates youth exchange and enables youth to take leading role in processes of intercultural dialogue and reconciliation in the Western Balkans.

Being exposed to different narratives and education systems, young people will develop critical thinking and intercultural skills, such as interaction across different cultures and appreciation of "others", which are in many cases not transmitted through the regular education systems in the region. Participation of youth in such processes will ultimately lead to the advancement of social capital among young people by strengthening the competences of young people and those who work with them. This will contribute in increasing the positive attitudes towards other ethnic groups in the region.

The project also relates to the sixth EU-Western Balkans Flagship Initiative aiming to support the education, culture, sport and potential of young people as a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.