



**A BETTER
REGION
STARTS
WITH
YOUth**

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

31 March 2021

A better region starts with YOUTH

Foreword

Dear Reader,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the support you gave to RYCO and its activities during a challenging and unpredictable 2020. Even though the year behind us was such, RYCO entered it with highly ambitious plans and actions. In this period, RYCO conducted major organizational development activities by creating two departments and enlarging its team, which counts 49 employees now.

At the same time, RYCO did not give up on implementing youth exchanges and fostering the spirit of regional cooperation and reconciliation during these difficult times. Together with our partners and grantees, we managed to promptly shift to the digitalization of our activities and make it possible to keep working online. More than 60 projects managed to continue bringing the region's youth closer together. At the same time, RYCO Secretariat opened its fourth Open Call for Project Proposals to support 12 new regional projects in 2021.

The challenging year finished with a particular publication co-produced with the University of Vienna and the Sigmund Freud University Vienna with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH ORF Promotion of EU-Integration on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). This endeavor speaks about the impact of youth mobility in the Western Balkans and RYCO's contribution to reconciliation across the region.

On the other hand, our one-month campaign on the importance of RYCO's mission and work successfully brought more than 400 stakeholders and over 60 media professionals. Within the campaign entitled "A Better Region Starts with Youth," supported by the German Federal Government, we managed to reach 3.000.000 people on social media.

As this is one of my last letters to you as the RYCO Secretary General, I would like to underline that the year behind us was used for the final consolidation and creation of a sustainable structure. RYCO can serve as a valuable tool for youth to stay in the region, see the region as a space of opportunities, and be empowered to participate in its development.

2021 will be a year of new growth for RYCO. We have already started developing new partnerships that will allow even more young people from the region to experience incredible opportunities and benefits of the regional youth exchange. This year, RYCO will get new leadership and develop a new three-year strategy to prove that this pioneering work has a reason and purpose. RYCO profoundly believes that our governments should be proud of the job done. They should use its results to get our young generations connected and foster it as a critical social capital.

I am convinced that the new beginnings for RYCO will be marked by a joint wish to make a genuine change in the region. We cannot achieve it without you, our supporters. That is why I invite you to look at the work done and get inspired to make this change together with us.

I also wish the new RYCO's leadership to successfully bring the youth of the region closer together and inspire people to keep building sustainable cooperation across the field.

Yours sincerely,



Đuro Blanuša
RYCO Secretary General

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List of abbreviations

AB	Advisory Board
AFD	Agence française de développement (French Development Agency)
BMZ	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
CB	Capacity Building
CfP	Call for Proposals
CP	Contracting Party
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FAO	Finance and Administration Officer
Forum ZfD	Forum Civil Peace Service
GB	Governing Board
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation)
HR	Human Resources
HO	Head Office
HS	High School
ICLD	Intercultural Learning and Dialogue
LBO	Local Branch Office
HLBO	Head of Local Branch Office
LBOPA	Local Branch Office Program Assistant
MCYS	Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NVS	National Volunteer Services
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OC	Open Call
OFAJ	L'Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse (Franco-German Youth Office)
ORF	Open Regional Funds

OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSFA	Open Society Foundation for Albania
PN	PeaceNexus Foundation
RARM	Risk Assessment and Risk Management
REL	Research, Evaluation and Learning
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RISE	Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurs
RYCO	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
SFF	Sarajevo Film Festival
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SP	Strategic Plan
UN	United Nations
UNPBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WB	Western Balkans
WB6	Western Balkans six
YIHR	Youth Initiative for Human Rights
YR	Youth Representative

Executive Summary

The year 2020 marked the fourth year of the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) as an independently functioning institutional mechanism, founded by the Western Balkans six Contracting Parties: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia to work in enhancing regional youth cooperation and reconciliation throughout the region. This annual report aims to provide information on RYCO's work and its results for 2020.

The report is divided into four main sections.

First, it provides RYCO a context on the *implementation of RYCO's Strategic Plan 2019-2021* and the efforts put towards achievement of the SP in 2020. Second, it provides *RYCO's results towards programme mission*, including grant-making, regional projects, the work of the LBOs, monitoring and evaluation, communications, as well as RYCO's partnerships. Third, it provides *RYCO's results towards institutional mission* and as such it outlines main achievements of RYCO towards organizational developments during 2020. The last part shortly brings *RYCO highlights of the next steps for 2021*.

During 2020, RYCO continued to work towards achievement of the strategic objectives, through a good coordination between all the offices, Head Office (HO) in Tirana and the Local Branch Offices (LBOs) in the region and our partners, thus promoting reconciliation and cooperation among young people in the WB6, as well as creating an enabling environment for the spirit of reconciliation and strengthening RYCO institutionally and organizationally. Over 11,000 young people benefited from RYCO's work in 2020. In addition, capacities of around 1,000 voluntary and professional workers working with young people were strengthened and additional resources were provided to enable them to work in peacebuilding and social cohesion with young people.

Despite the COVID-19 challenges, which directly affected RYCO's work, particularly with youth exchanges, physical meetings and many other activities, RYCO managed to close another successful year and maintained many strategic partnerships. Namely, RYCO continued implementation of the projects funded during previous years within the second and the third open calls for proposals (CfP 2018 and CfP 2019), monitoring thus the work of 64 grantees (youth organizations and high schools) throughout the region, which only during 2020 engaged around 6,500 young people. Despite this, RYCO opened a new Open Call for Project Proposals as RYCO's investment in regional youth cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic with special focus on digital/online cooperation projects. The fourth Open Call received 130 applications and the preliminary list of 12 best evaluated projects created by 39 partners (12 lead applicants and 27 partners) was published in December with a total financial support of 330,000 EUR.

In 2020, RYCO continued several important strategic partnerships through the following projects:

- ❑ "Supporting the Western Balkan's collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the RYCO" in cooperation with United Nations agencies.
- ❑ "Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the WB6", supported by the European Commission (EC).
- ❑ "The ROUTE WB6" for Regional Crossborder Volunteering exchange program, financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ❑ "Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurs (RISE)", co-financed by the French Agency for Development.
- ❑ Advocacy and Promotional Campaign "A Better Region Starts with You(th)" supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ❑ Projects of support for RYCO organizational development (such as cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the PeaceNexus Foundation (PN)).
- ❑ The end of the year marked the beginning of the strategic three-year partnership for regional school exchanges with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) supported by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with 5,500,000 EUR.

Besides these projects, RYCO continued to have partnerships and cooperation in organization of different regional activities and small-scale projects, such as with the OSCE missions in the WB6 region, the

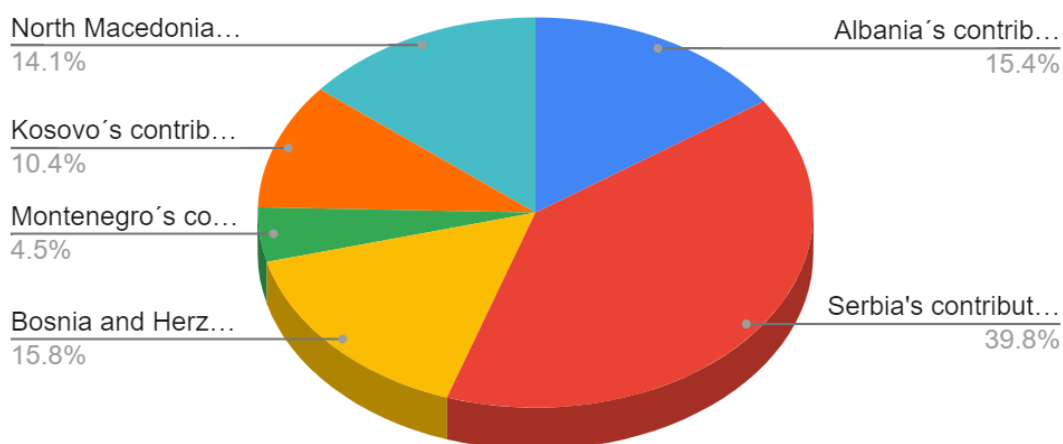
¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Cooperation and Development Institute Tirana (CDI), the Franco-German Youth Office (OFAJ), the University of Vienna, the Sigmund Freud University Vienna, GIZ, etc.

Moreover, 2020 continued to be very dynamic as recruitment of RYCO staff continued with 22 recruitment campaigns conducted. Around 78% of the total number of 474 applicants for the vacancies published during 2020 belongs to the age range of 22-35 years old, meaning most of the applicants were young and with good working experience. The major number of applicants, around 65%, had the Albanian origin. The main reason for the high number of applications from Albania is mainly because most of the positions are based in the Head Office in Tirana. Among the rest of the Western Balkan 6, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina generated the highest percentage of applicants, meanwhile Montenegro generated the lowest number of applicants. By the end of 2020, RYCO staff increased and reached a total number of 49 (core and project) staff.

Direct budgetary support to RYCO received during 2020 was **1,621,217.39 EUR** coming from eleven different sources of funding, a total amount of *977,000.00 EUR contributions from the six Contracting Parties' governments* and *644,217.39 EUR contributions from five donors* such as GIZ, UN, UNPFA, SIDA, GMFA.

CP6 Governmental Contributions to RYCO in 2020



RYCO's results 2020 in numbers



2 open calls under implementation



64 grantee projects



1 Open Call launched



12 preliminary best evaluated projects



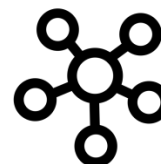
6 online info sessions



129 applications



An overall envelope for three calls
1,678,261.01 EUR



5 regional projects



178 Media Appearances



+230.000 website visits



2 GB meetings



1 AB meeting



49 colleagues



+200 meetings in local level



+150 activities



+14 000 young participants reached



Countless hours in Zoom meetings



6 Local incubators within the regional incubator for social entrepreneurs



5 publications



22 recruitment campaigns



474 applications

1. Strategy implementation

RYCO's strategic direction has been determined in the Strategic Plan 2019-2021², which outlines RYCO's vision, mission and objectives, organisational values, development strategy and internal institutional development plans. With the aim of achieving key strategic and specific objectives, during 2020, RYCO developed the Action Plan 2020, in which a variety of programming instruments and approaches were foreseen, including grant-making, advocacy and awareness-raising actions, communications and promotion, regional youth surveys, dealing with the past activities, capacity building and training sessions, research and learning, and partnership leverage that contribute to empowering youth and developing a political and social environment that facilitates youth exchange.



Within the RYCO Strategy 2019-2021, the first strategic priority

“Deliver high quality, high impact programs: Regional cooperation, mobility and exchange”, an increase and diversification of funding opportunities for regional youth cooperation projects has been achieved, and open calls for proposals that are responding to identified needs of WB6 youth, CSOs and high schools have been published and implemented. The Regional Volunteer Service and regional youth volunteer mobility and exchange program model for WB6 entered a new phase with two prototypes developed during 2020. RYCO continued to support regional programs for development of youth social entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership, too.

As for the second strategic priority **“Build Demand: Create and promote an enabling environment”**, a number of promotional and awareness raising activities that contribute to increasing WB6 youth awareness on opportunities to engage in activities that build mutual understanding and reconciliation in the civic, social, educational, cultural and sports domains have been conducted. In addition, RYCO put an effort to intensify activities towards strengthening capacities of youth and grassroots organizations as well as high schools to access and use RYCO's resources³ to engage in peacebuilding and social cohesion activities in the WB6. Under this strategic priority, the number of journalists and media stakeholders informed on RYCO priorities and positive media coverage on values of intercultural exchange and other RYCO promoted values increased through a PR Campaign, six VIP national events and six media briefings that gathered 75 speakers, 400 participants and 54 media representatives throughout the region. The PR Campaign informed media representatives on RYCO's existence, mission, vision and programs, as well as accomplished results and plans for the future. The regional PR campaign focused on ensuring publicity in the key media, as well as establishing direct contact with media representatives, resulting in 71 media coverage throughout the region.

Within the third strategic priority **“Invest in Competence: Strengthen RYCO institutionally and organisationally”**, a number of actions for strengthening RYCO's Secretariat effectiveness and programming quality have been realized. RYCO's small grant facility was strengthened by introducing new rules and procedures and with additional grant monitoring resources. The quality of the implementation process of Open Calls was improved, as well as the communication and visibility of RYCO's activities. RYCO has also created its Monitoring and Evaluation system, a comprehensive draft of Human Resources policy, Risk Assessment and Management Guidelines, conducted IT assessment and introduced Health and Safety and Security practices. An internal comprehensive office management and financial control system is in place, regular audits have been conducted. Diversity of RYCO funds was increased. RYCO's governance system was also improved. During 2020, RYCO held two GB meetings, and none of the meetings was cancelled due to the lack of the quorum.

²RYCO Strategic Plan 2019-2021: <https://www.rycowb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RYCO-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

³ Please find the list of publications and available links as Annex I at the end of this document.

2. RYCO's results: Programme Mission

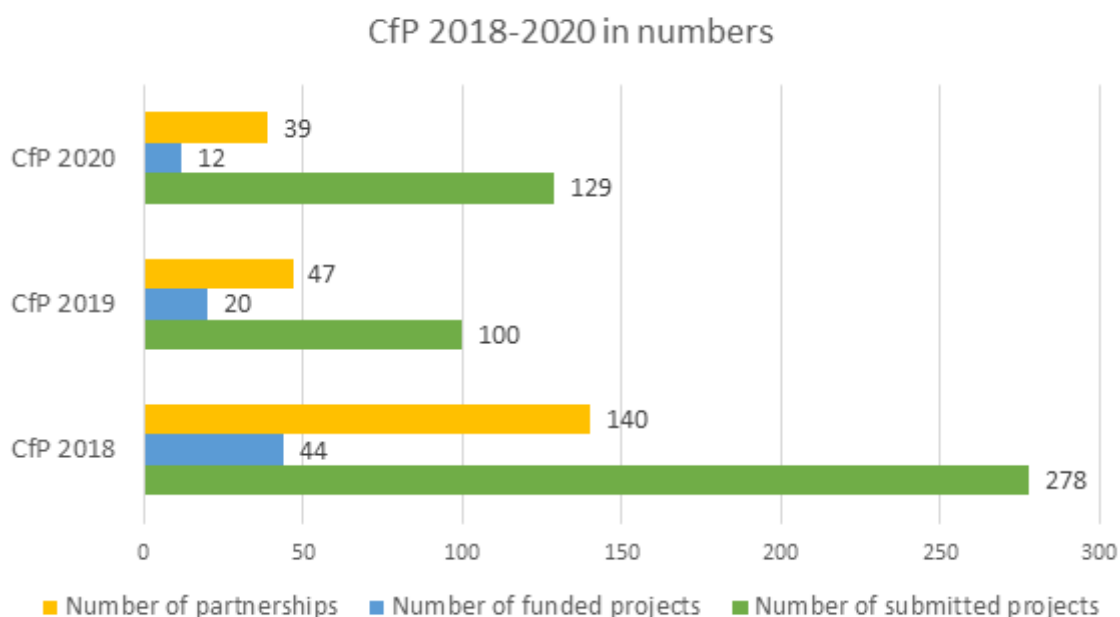
2.1 Grant-making

During 2020, RYCO started its steps towards the establishment of the **grants unit**. Moreover, RYCO managed different phases of three Open Calls. It continued implementation of projects funded from previous years, under the second and third Open Calls (CfP2018 and CfP2019), thus monitoring the work of 64 grantees (youth organizations and high schools) throughout the region with a total amount of **1,360,000 EUR**. At the same time, RYCO committed to launch the 4th Open Call for Project Proposals as RYCO's investment in regional youth cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic with a special focus on digital/online cooperation projects.

The **Second RYCO Open Call for Project Proposals (CfP 2018)** supported by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) aiming to contribute to the process of reconciliation in the WB by increasing youth mobility and intercultural dialogue, as well as creating an enabling environment for regional youth cooperation, started implementation of the activities in December 2019 until December 2020 with an envelope of **1,000,000 EUR**. RYCO's management of this call was affected as the implementation started at the same time as RYCO started creating all the procedures and templates in order to manage grantees under newly introduced rules (spot check methodology, interim report review, etc.). The second OC was a testing ground for new rules both internally in management and for the grantees. Around **6,400 young people** were reached through this call.

46.50% of young people who filled out activity evaluation questionnaires (239/514) after participating in the activities organized by the grantees of the 2nd OC self-reported to have attended such activities for the **first time**. Meanwhile, **34.44%** of young respondents (177/514) self-reported to belong to any of **marginalized groups**.

The **Third RYCO Open Call for Project Proposals (CfP 2019)** supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (GMFA), entirely focused on supporting and empowering secondary schools, started implementation of the activities on 1 January 2020 and it is ongoing. The overall envelope for this CfP was in the amount of **360,000 EUR**. The Call supported 20 projects. Despite the call being dedicated to high schools, CSOs were allowed to apply on behalf of schools that had at least one high school from a different CP as a partner, given that not all CPs have a legal framework that allows schools to apply and implement grants themselves. Moreover, a significant number of vocational schools applied. Building on the challenges faced in the previous calls, the grantees of this call were supported by RYCO through a digital tools workshop and meetings with FAOs to support them during the implementation.



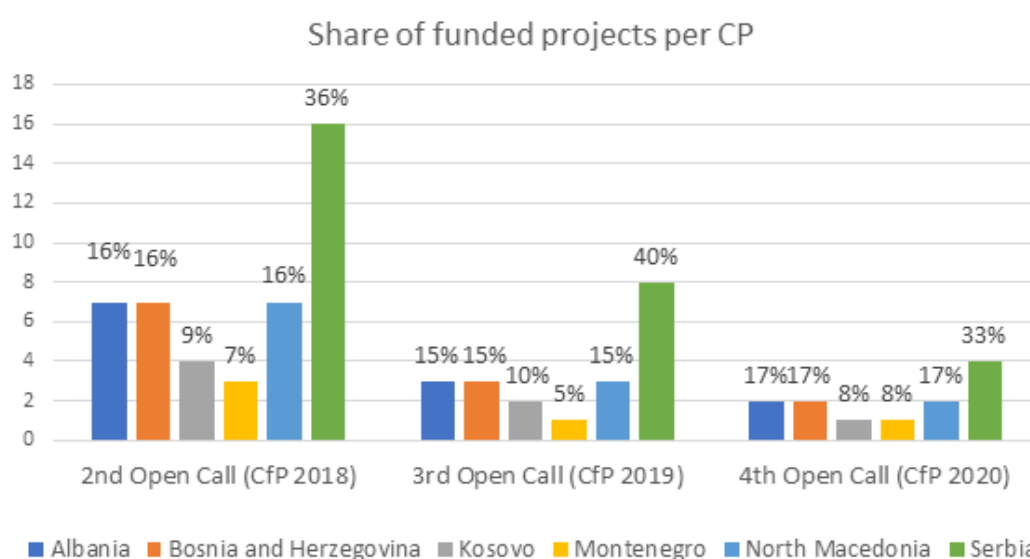
**In the case of CfP 2020, the numbers rely in the Preliminary List of Best Evaluated Project Proposals*

RYCO Communications throughout 2020 kept in direct touch with more than 60 grantees from the second and third OC in order to secure proper implementation of the organization's visibility guidelines for grantees. Moreover, the team was actively promoting the grantees and their activities through a series of news items promoted on RYCO's website and social media.

The **Fourth RYCO Open Call for Project Proposals (CfP 2020)** supported by the European Union (EU) was launched in August 2020 aiming to support the civil society in the region to foster reconciliation and regional youth cooperation during and post the COVID-19 crisis by providing young people with opportunities that create space for dialogue, mutual learning and increased understanding across communities and RYCO CPs. By the end of the year, the fourth OC attracted around 30,000 pageviews on the RYCO website. Only on Facebook, the call related posts reached over 100,000 people. The call was promoted in six online info sessions organized by RYCO LBOs and as a result **129 applications** were received. The **preliminary list of 12 best evaluated projects** created by 39 partners (12 lead applicants and 27 partners) was published in December and it is going to be supported with a total amount of **318,261.01 EUR**.

Unlike the second OC, for the third and fourth OCs, RYCO utilized the online platform for applications.

All the three calls together bring an envelope of **1,678,261.01 EUR** invested in youth exchanges.



**In the case of CfP, 2020 the numbers rely in the Preliminary List of Best Evaluated Project Proposals*

Successfully overcame challenges within Open Calls during 2020

Project implementation under **second** and **third Open Calls** was further **affected by the COVID-19 pandemic** and its implications, as projects had to revise and continue implementation during 2020, despite having lost time during the postponement of youth mobility activities (11 March - 30 April 2020) and suspension of projects (1 May - 30 June 2020). The process of contract amendment was very challenging and took a lot of time to be finished. RYCO provided guidance for the project revision, as well as an SOS package aimed at supporting grantees to implement activities in the new online reality. Out of 44 projects, 5 projects were cancelled during the implementation, 1 from Kosovo, 2 from North Macedonia and 2 from Serbia. In order to fit the COVID-19 reality, the **fourth OC** was **re-designed** to accommodate the current challenges, limitations and the uncertainties in implementing the projects in general.

Negotiations with GIZ happened in 2020 in order to enable RYCO to divide the Calls for Proposals based on the target group (CSOs and schools), by designing a specific Call for proposals that is suitable for schools. The design and launch of the call will happen in 2021.

2.2 RYCO donor funded projects

In order to achieve its strategic results, RYCO was implementing regional projects across the region. Despite the COVID-19 challenges, the project results were successfully achieved. The projects promoted regional

youth cooperation and created an enabling environment to strengthen the regional cooperation, through different resources such as manuals, toolkits, volunteer programs, Open Call for Project Proposals, capacity building program in social entrepreneurship and media coverage.

Through these projects **hundreds of exchanges** were enabled throughout the region and around **6.500 young people** were reached.

Through these projects, RYCO's internal capacities were also strengthened and critical milestones both in terms of organizational and programmatic development were achieved. RYCO HO and LBOs in collaboration with the project partners achieved to maintain good synergies in the successful implementation of all project activities.

Project Teams worked closely with RYCO Communications in order to secure proper implementation of the organization's visibility guidelines and to promote activities of the projects through a series of news items promoted on RYCO's website and social media.

“Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the WB6”



The goal of the project is to respond to the need to contribute to the process of reconciliation in the WB6 region by enhancing youth mobility, cooperation and activism.

Timeframe: The project activities started in March 2019 and will end in December 2021 (34 months).

Donor and partners: European Union - represented by European Commission, direct contact point Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

Overall budget: 795,689 EUR

Key project achievements: RYCO's fourth Open Call was designed based on a series of consultative meetings with young people, RYCO's workshop and it was launched, concluding the year with a preliminary list of the projects to be funded:

- Largest consultative process engaging young people to hear from them about types of projects and approaches to intercultural learning they would favor in the RYCO calls for project proposals. This was done through a regional youth survey of 1038 young persons from throughout the CP's and 12 consultative meetings in Banja Luka, Bijelo Polje, Brcko, Novi Pazar, Pancevo, Podgorica, Pristina, Rahovec/Orahovac, Shkodra, Shtip, Tetovo and Tirana with the participation of 308 young people.
- Drafting and revising (spring - summer 2020) of the documents package relating to RYCO's fourth Open Call. Considering the COVID-19 circumstances, the entire package was amended and updated with a new strategic outlook on how to overcome risks caused by the pandemic. The Call was aligned with RYCO's M&E purposes too. The launching of RYCO's fourth Open Call in August included: six online info sessions in local languages of the CP's with the overall participation of almost 200 CSO representatives and an online campaign, including the production of a video that promoted that Call.
- In the period October - December, the 129 applications were assessed, followed with the Open Call Analysis and a Preliminary List of 12 Best Evaluated Project Proposals that was shared with the RYCO GB in early December.
- External capacity building consultancy in grant-making with the aim to further strengthen internal capacities in grant-making, especially in terms of better targeting and responding to the specific needs of small CSOs and schools in the region.

“ROUTE WB6”



The goal of the project is to promote cross-border long-term and short-term volunteering as a tool that contributes to the reduction of social and ethnic distance among young people in the region, as well as to strengthen their prosocial and European values that will lead to reconciliation, stability and prosperity of the WB6 region.



Timeframe: The project activities started on 1 January 2019 and will end on 31 December 2021.

Donor and partners: The project is implemented across the WB6 6 by a consortium led by RYCO in collaboration with Beyond Barriers Association, South East European Youth Network, Institute for Youth Development KULT, Lens, Youth Cultural Center Bitola, Association for Democratic Prosperity Zid and Young Researchers of Serbia. The project is supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Overall budget: 9,459,173 NOK around 899,118.19 EUR⁴.

Key project achievements: The focus in 2020 was on the creation of the ROUTE WB6 Regional Crossborder Volunteering Program by using the design thinking methodology. The overall goal of the three program design workshops was to support the participants to fully engage in collaborative designing of the program as below:

- The first workshop was hosted in Belgrade in February by the project partner the Young Researchers of Serbia and resulted in developing two volunteer profiles and the discussions aimed at a better understanding of young people's needs and interests. The second workshop was hosted by MKC Bitola, North Macedonia. The creative development of the program entered the new phase by creating program prototypes for two identified profiles of young people whom the program will address. The third workshop took place online in July and its main objective was to further work on creating the user journey of a volunteer. The first draft of the ROUTE WB6 Regional Crossborder Volunteering program was a main subject of the consolidation workshop with the objective of discussing and fine tuning three prototypes of the Program and working on establishing the Regional Volunteer Service. All the workshops included more than 40 participants, young people, the youth workers as well as RYCO and project partners' representatives.
- The new visual identity of the project was created and a small campaign was launched on the International Volunteer Day, to raise awareness on the project and to announce the launching of the Program in 2021. A [promotional video](#) was created, media appearances and interviews were held and press releases in local languages were sent to the media region wide.
- In December 2020, the first regional web platform on volunteering routewb6.org was launched in order to serve as the resource center for volunteering in the region.
- Regional policy brief, Regional Code of Ethics and Manifesto on volunteering were produced during 2020 and the circumstances of the pandemic were used to fine-tune the documents, taking into account the challenges that the volunteerism in the region was facing with the pandemic outbreak.

"I believe RouteWB6 has the potential to make the difference in the lives of young people, while they are contributing to making a difference for communities and the region altogether."

– Ajša Hadžibegović, Program Design Expert.

⁴ Exchange rate of February 2021

“Supporting the Western Balkan's collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the RYCO” in partnership with UNPBF



The goal of the project is to foster social cohesion and reconciliation, enhance attitudes of tolerance and reduce prejudice and discrimination among youth in the WB, through supporting RYCO in building its institutional capacity and partnerships with civil society, education institutions (schools), grassroots youth organizations and youth in general.



Timeframe: The project was signed between donors (UNPBF - UNDP in November 2018), and between RYCO-UNDP in September 2019. Project ends in May 2021.

Donors and partners: The project is supported by the funds of UNPBF and is being implemented by RYCO in partnership with United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Overall budget: 2,999,745 USD, RYCO budget within the project is 969,600 USD (UNDP - 876,600 USD & UNFPA 93,000 USD).

Key project achievements: Through this project RYCO has developed two important methodologies with accompanying toolkits and manuals, which will be used for further design of RYCO programmatic activities and future RYCO grant beneficiaries, whether they are done by educators or using the peer education approach. With the CfP 2018 which was co-funded by UNPBF, RYCO was able to extend its reach beyond mainstream youth space and award projects which engage different and diverse youth groups (including youth with fewer opportunities). Internally, RYCO's small grant facility was strengthened by introducing new rules and procedures and with additional grant monitoring resources. Lastly, RYCO has created its M&E system, a comprehensive HR policy, Risk Assessment and Management Guidelines, conducted IT assessment and introduced Health and Safety and Security practices. The most notable results for RYCO are listed below:

- Capacities of schools to access and use RYCO's resources to organize/undertake intercultural dialogue in the WB6 are strengthened through two main resources: A Mapping of Educational Initiatives for Intercultural Dialogue, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation among Young People in the WB6, shared across the WB and Teachers Toolkit: Intercultural Dialogue, Peacebuilding, Constructive Remembrance and Reconciliation which contains what will become the RYCO's methodology in these topics. The Toolkit has been tested with a group of more than 20 high school teachers, through a two-part Teachers training "Intercultural Dialogue, Peacebuilding, Constructive Remembrance and Reconciliation", who became RYCO's excellence pool of teachers.
- Capacities of youth groups and grassroots organizations to access and use RYCO's resources to engage in peacebuilding and social cohesion activities in the WB6 are strengthened through a manual for trainers in WB: Youth peer education for peacebuilding and conflict transformation developed using the Training of trainers approach, reaching thus around 200 young people with a focus on hard to reach/marginalized/vulnerable youth. Two-part Training of Trainers was designed and implemented based on the Y-peer manual, and gathered 21 young people from the WB6 with a specific focus on hard to reach youth, enhancing their capacities in peacebuilding, and creating a pool of trainers in using ypeer approach to peacebuilding education. In total, 15 local workshops in ypeer peacebuilding were implemented by the young trainers of ypeer education, which took place across WB6 and brought together approximately 200 participants.
- RYCOs institutional capacities to enhance sustainable regional cooperation, peacebuilding and reconciliation amongst youth, through the small projects and grants facility were strengthened, re-designing the upcoming Calls for Proposals with decreased time for reviewing and approving proposals, grants' monitoring visits using a spot check methodology and other fin-admin monitoring instruments (designated bank accounts, interim reporting).

- More than 150 regional activities were supported jointly with UNPBF, through 41 projects, reaching around 6400 young people and hundreds of those working with youth interacting together throughout the region.
- RYCO developed its M&E framework, which enables RYCO to evaluate the success of its first Strategic Plan 2019-2021 and enables evidence based development of the next SP
- In addition, RYCO has developed its HR policy with accompanying templates and procedures, it has conducted a 360 degrees risk assessment and developed Risk assessment and management guidelines, furthermore RYCO has conducted IT assessment and introduced Health and Safety and Security practices.
- A youth co-design team composed of 24 young people from WB6 was functional. The objective of this team is to enhance dialogue with decision-makers and to strengthen their capacities to become actors for change, to participate in youth consultations and support the process of design of the research. As well as to identify common priorities for peace, reconciliation and security. Through their work, opportunities for youth from diverse backgrounds to identify common peace and security priorities and enter into constructive dialogue with their peers will be created. Furthermore, quantitative data on the perceptions of young people in the Western Balkans about peace and security in their communities and societies, collected in 2020, to be finalised in 2021, will help us better understand the experiences and priorities of youth in the region and support better and more youth-focused policy and programming.

"This training helped me realize that peace does not just mean the absence of conflict, but it requires justice and harmonious relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. Empowered, I will strive to motivate others to join this effort and stand up for peace and reconciliation."

– Velimir Milošev, Youth co-design team, ypeer trainer in peacebuilding.

Advocacy and Promotional Campaign "Better Region Starts with You(th)"



The goal of the project was to increase understanding of young people in WB6 on importance of regional youth cooperation, youth mobility and intercultural learning and on different opportunities for young people to engage in activities that build mutual understanding and reconciliation in the civic, social, educational, cultural and sports domains; to foster environment in WB6 and their stakeholders for supporting regional youth cooperation, youth mobility, intercultural learning and RYCO's work in the future.



Timeframe: Agreement signed on 27 August 2020. Contract signed with PC 24 September – 31 December 2020.

Donor and partners: The Federal Republic of Germany, represented by the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Overall budget: 288.900 EUR

Key project achievements: The project empowered RYCO's advocacy and outreach efforts and increased the influence towards key stakeholders and public, but at the same time, made significant preparation in order to offer young people new digital useful tools for promoting different opportunities for them and their cooperation in WB6 through:

- 12 Online Youth Consultations on "A Better Region Starts with Youth" info platform which engaged 130 participants and 6 facilitators from all CPs.
- Online survey with 1.334 young people about online habits and preferences of youth with purpose of gathering inputs for designing info platform.
- Establishment of RYCO Training Program for students of journalism from WB6 with 6 university teachers as mentors and their 18 students who produced 67 articles, stories and videos for the future RYCO digital youth platform.

- Concept development of future web platform by RYCO team based on inputs from online consultations and survey and preparation for designing the future youth-friendly web platform.
- Six VIP national events in capitals and media briefings was done through 6 kick off events in a hybrid format, with the audience present online and majority of the speakers present in the studio gathering thus 75 speakers who shared their stories to 400 participants in the region, including 6 Media Briefing Events with 54 media representatives in total and [RYCO journey video](#).
- “A Better Region Starts with Youth” Campaign promoting RYCO and its mission, which included digital marketing, with an estimated total reach of 3.397.319 people, a survey based giveaway with 382 young applicants and 321 winners. The campaign also produced 2 [video spots](#) with influencers and young leaders. 1273 “A Better Region Starts with Youth” Promo packages were also produced and delivered to RYCO’s local and international partners, young people and other collaborators.
- In addition, RYCO communications team actively participated in the implementation of the “A Better Region Starts with YOUTH” promo campaign.

“I really connected with people I never thought I had a chance to connect to. It has really been the best experience I have had in my entire life.”

– Kiara from Albania, participant of the program for students of Journalism.

“Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurs (RISE)”



The goal of the project is to address a specific and crucial need in the region: opening new spaces of reconciliation for the youth of the WB through social entrepreneurship. The project aims to enrich and strengthen the capacity of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in the WB and raise awareness of social entrepreneurship to generate a dynamic community of young social entrepreneurs.



Timeframe: The duration of the project is 36 months starting from 1 October 2019.

Donors and partners: The donors are French Development Agency and RYCO. The partners: GROUPE SOS Pulse, SEEYN, the Franco-German Youth Office and the Institut Français.

Overall budget: 999.000 EUR

Key project achievements: In 2020, RISE focused on cooperation, ideas exchange, and peer-learning. Social entrepreneurship was considered a great tool to empower the change-makers and bring them to action. RISE created a regional network of Risers, young social entrepreneurs, and it is supporting them in making their ideas a reality as below:

- A [regional study of social entrepreneurship](#) was developed and published, encompassing relevant data on the state of play of social and youth entrepreneurship in the region and guidelines for social entrepreneurship ecosystem, CSOs and policy-makers describing the needs and competencies for youth social entrepreneurship and recommendations for action based on lessons learnt from the study.

- [Six local structures](#) (local incubators) were selected and trained on Social entrepreneurship and Intercultural Learning through a tailored six-month capacity building program to help them support the development of entrepreneurial projects by young people in the WB region. The program also included training on design thinking and coaching. The selected local structures are: ARNO (Skopje), Balkan Green Foundation (Pristina), Nesto Vise (Sarajevo), Smart Kolektiv (Belgrade) Tehnopolis (Niksic), Yunus Social Business Balkans (Tirana).

- The first RISE open call for young people to submit their ideas to develop innovative solutions to the problems faced by their communities was launched in August 2020 and gathered applications from young entrepreneurs from the six CPs, in teams of at least 3 people. 46 teams (137 young people) were chosen to articulate their initiatives during the “ideation phase”. The 46 selected teams started their RISE journey in October 2020, and have been following a series of trainings in Social Business Canvas, Value Proposition or

Market study, Intercultural Training, leadership, youth challenges, contribution of youth to society. The Local Incubators are supporting them in the concretization and formalization of their projects.

➤ An identity brand was also created around the project and promoted at the regional level. A dedicated website was created, and workshops and awareness raising events were organized in collaboration with universities, municipalities and youth centers, gathering 187 young entrepreneurs.

“Someone said that “cooking is about creating something delicious for someone else,” just like social enterprises exist for doing well for society. For us SE is like cooking: it takes creativity, fun and desire to make people feel good.”

– Irina Janevska, President of ARNO.

2.3 Local Branch Offices (LBOs)

In the following section you will find information on the role of RYCO's Local Branch Offices (LBOs) and their contribution in overall processes RYCO engages.

The LBOs play a crucial role in **dissemination** and **promotion of RYCO values and activities**. They serve as the first contact point in supporting possible applicants during the open call with information, capacity building activities and mentoring. Moreover, the LBOs play an important role as **focal points in communication** with grantees (preparation of the contracts, mentorship, monitoring, reporting) and in implementation of RYCO's regional projects activities. During 2020, they provided support to **64 grantees** under RYCO's second and third Open Calls. They are also the first address for local and international actors interested in cooperation with RYCO and for local media as well. They promoted RYCO's mission and values in around **80 media appearances**, covering their local activities or other activities organized through RYCO's regional projects. With the type of local and regional activities to which LBOs are directly participating in, or supporting, RYCO is an active participant in all larger national and regional processes that tackle youth issues.

Major focus of the LBOs in promoting RYCO brings as a result the presence and integration of RYCO within national institutions strategies as well as processes in the contracting parties related to youth. For this purpose, the LBOs took part in **more than 200 meetings and events**, organized with the most relevant stakeholders in their respective CPs and in the region. Most of these activities were also covered through a series of news items promoted on RYCO's website and social media. In 2020, the LBOs increased capacities through participation in various training and workshops organized/supported by RYCO. They are also taking part in general **program** and **operational developments** of RYCO on a regular basis (Annual planning); support in the development of the M&E system, HR policy, RARM guidelines and other planning processes (projects) and helping in finding adequate local participants for different international projects.

Despite all of these, challenges have been faced due to registration status of the LBOs, therefore RYCO entered in the first phase of the **registration of the LBOs** in the six CPs with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

LBOs support to RYCO's Open Calls in 2020	LBO ALB	LBO BiH	LBO KOS	LBO MNE	LBO NMK	LBO SRB
Total number of grantees supported (programmatic guidance, monitoring visits and clearance of narrative reports) by LBO under RYCO's 2nd and 3rd Open Calls	10 (16%)	10 (16%)	6 (9%)	4 (6%)	10 (16%)	24 (37%)
Number of partner organizations and high schools funded under RYCO's 2nd and 3rd Open Calls	21	25	5	19	22	24
Number of young people exchanged under RYCO's 2nd Open Call	396	505	301	994	183	1492
Number of young people exchanged under RYCO's 3rd Open Call	79	77	162	150	n/a	n/a
Number of info sessions organized under RYCO's 4th Open Call	1	1	1	1	1	1
Number of participants that attended info sessions	35	24	21	17	78	32
Number and share of applicants from the respective CP that applied under RYCO's 4th Open Call	30 (23%)	23 (18%)	13 (10%)	16 (12%)	23 (18%)	25 (19%)
Number of grantees and partners from the respective CP, LBO worked in supporting with programmatic and financial guidance	8	9	3	4	8	19

Local Branch Office in Albania



LBO had regular communication with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in Albania, the Civil Society Representatives and the GB members. It organized **5** meetings with the GB members.

LBO had **13** meetings with different stakeholders, including strategic local and international partners operating in Albania such as: the OSCE Mission in Albania, OSFA, Liburnetik, National Youth Congress, Municipality of Tirana, National Agency for Youth, the Epoka University, etc.

LBO Albania organized **4** local activities. More than **100** young people were reached from LBO activities.

LBO Albania participated and presented RYCO at various events organized by other local and international organizations such as National Youth Congress, Liburnetik, Science and Innovation for Development, Aspen Institute, etc.

LBO Albania promoted RYCO vision and mission through **3** TV media appearances and **5** written articles.

Despite the spread of pandemic, LBO Albania managed to adapt its work in the virtual space by providing support to the Head Office; keeping its active role as influencing actor in the youth sector in Albania and contributing to an enabling environment for regional cooperation.

"I am afraid to try, to challenge myself if no one around encourages me to do so."

– young participant from Albania.

Local Branch Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina



LBO had regular communication with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the GB government representatives. It organized **5 meetings** since the new representative of government in the GB, Mr Davor Bošnjak was introduced. Meanwhile the BiH youth representative is still not selected.

LBO had more than **25 meetings** with different stakeholders, including strategic local and international partners operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina such as: OSCE Mission to BiH, UNFPA BiH, EU Delegation to BiH, Forum ZfD, Catholic Relief Service - CRS and Sarajevo Film Festival team (SFF), youth councils (Youth Council of Federation of BiH, Youth Council of Republika Srpska and Youth Council of Brčko Distrikt).

LBO BiH organized **6 local activities**. More than **100 young people** were reached through the LBO activities.

LBO organized an online SFF Program Dealing with the past for more than 20 young people from BiH in August and an online Digital Talks about RYCO in cooperation with RESOLVE Network in October.

LBO BiH participated and presented RYCO at various events organized by other local and international organizations such as: Perpetuum mobile, Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska, Youth Council of FBiH, Youth Council of Republika Srpska and Youth Council Brčko Distrikt, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, RCC, Delegation of EU in BiH.

LBO BiH promoted RYCO vision and mission through **3** TV media appearances and **8** written articles.

In 2020, LBO BiH decided to enter into a more strategic partnership with three youth councils in BiH (Youth Council of Federation of BiH, Youth Council of Republika Srpska and Youth Council of Brčko Distrikt) and RAI - Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative. It was agreed and decided to sign the MoU. The MoU with three councils was approved by the GB in December and signed in February 2021. Meanwhile a MoU with RAI started to be drafted, too.

Covid-19 pandemic effects and lack of the new YR of BiH in the GB and general political atmosphere made the LBO BiH to reassure what are the best ways and approaches on the local level.

Local Branch Office in Kosovo



The LBO had regular communication with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and GB members. It organized **4 meetings** with GB members from Kosovo. In 2020, Kosovo had a new Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports and the new youth representative of Kosovo in RYCO GB was selected. The LBO introduced both GB members with RYCO current development and met with them to coordinate RYCO work at local level.

LBO Kosovo had **17 meetings** with different stakeholders, including strategic local and international partners such as: the Embassy of Germany, the Embassy of France, British Embassy, the EU Office in Kosovo, the OSCE Mission to Kosovo, UNICEF Office in Kosovo, UN development Coordinator office, UN agencies in Kosovo, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung office in Kosovo.

LBO Kosovo organized **5 local activities**. More than **100 young people** were reached through the LBO activities.

➤ The LBO organized a CB Training with 13 representatives of CSOs on the topics of Intercultural Learning and Dialogue, Digital Youth Work and Project Cycle Management with the support of the OSCE Mission to Kosovo.

LBO Kosovo participated and presented RYCO at various events organized by other local and international organizations.

□ LBO Kosovo promoted RYCO vision and mission through **8 media appearances**.

LBO Kosovo invested a lot of energy in 2020 to keep RYCO as a trusted partner on regional youth cooperation topics in Kosovo.

Local Branch Office in Montenegro



The LBO had regular communication with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Sport and Youth and with the GB members from Montenegro.

The LBO organized over **25 meetings** and activities with different stakeholders, including strategic local and international partners operating in Montenegro such as: the Ministry of Sports and Youth as well as the Ministry of Education, the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, the French Embassy in Montenegro, the German Embassy in Montenegro, GIZ in Montenegro, UNICEF Montenegro, the Employment Service of Montenegro, the EU delegation to Montenegro, etc.

LBO Montenegro organized **13 local activities** in different cities and parts of Montenegro. Around **100 young people** were reached from local activities.

The LBO organized a CB training for potential beneficiaries in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Montenegro and Intercultural Youth Hubs in cooperation with the French Embassy and an Intercultural Youth Camp for Young Athlete Professionals.

➤ LBO Montenegro participated and presented RYCO at various events organized by other local and international organizations. **Two high level meetings** were organized, with the President of the Parliament of Montenegro and with the Vice Prime Minister of Montenegro in December.

➤ LBO Montenegro promoted RYCO vision and mission through 7 TV media appearances and **21 articles on the web**.

➤ LBO Montenegro initiated cooperation and signing of the MoU with the Youth Umbrella Organization in Montenegro - Youth Network. The MoU will be signed in early 2021.

➤ LBO Montenegro fundraised funds for Local activities, which have contributed to the program portfolio in Montenegro but also overall financial contribution to RYCO budget. It has also managed to provide additional support in visibility and promo materials by the OSCE Mission to Montenegro.

One of the young participants in Montenegro stated: *"I have learned that I am much more capable and resilient than I thought before, that I can approach and communicate with different people, even with those that have an introvert nature as I do".*

Local Branch Office in North Macedonia



- The LBO had regular communication with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the cabinet of the PM and with GB members. It organized **3 GB meetings** from which one was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- LBO had **75 meetings** with different stakeholders, including strategic local and international partners operating in North Macedonia such as: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and AYS, the OSCE Mission in North Macedonia, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor, the Cabinet of the PM, etc.
- LBO North Macedonia organized **15 local events**. Around **200 young people** were reached from local activities.
- The LBO organized an orientation workshop for the Peacecorps volunteer; an online workshop on financial management for grantees and 4 CBTs in cooperation with the Peacecorps office in which 272 participants actively participated and got knowledge on project management design. The LBO was a partner of the "Regional youth cooperation and Berlin process" public debate organized by the MFA.
- LBO North Macedonia attended **29 events** organized by the partner organizations that RYCO is cooperating with at local and regional levels. The LBO had 26 high level meetings and receptions with other NGOs and embassies and was part of 53 high level meetings with public officials and coordination meetings at the government (President, Vice Prime Ministers, other Ministers, institutions as well as universities).
- LBO North Macedonia promoted RYCO vision and mission through **10 media outlets**.
- LBO North Macedonia contributed with a regional perspective in **7 initiatives** lead by the public authorities such as: RYCO Coordination Group, National Strategy for One Society, Law on Youth, Youth Participation, and Youth Policy, Law on Youth and Student Standards, MoU with the MoES, Working group of Youth Network for preventing Brain drain, Working group for strategy for Volunteerism.

Local Branch Office in Serbia



- The LBO had regular communication with the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the GB members from Serbia.
- LBO Serbia had **12 meetings** with different stakeholders, including strategic local and international partners operating in Serbia such as: the Parliament of Serbia, UNFPA, UNICEF, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the OSCE Mission to Serbia, French Embassy, German Embassy, National Youth Council of Serbia, Smart Kolektiv, Young Researchers of Serbia etc.
- The LBO organized **8 local activities**. More than **100 young people** were reached through LBO activities.
- In September, LBO Serbia organized a CB training for 21 representatives of CSOs from Serbia and an online panel discussion "Youth exchanges - more than fun and traveling".
- LBO Serbia participated and presented RYCO at various events organized by other local and international organizations such as: the OSCE Mission to Serbia, SEEYN, National Youth Council of Serbia, National Association of Practitioners of Youth Work, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Studenica Foundation, Belgrade Open School, SEE Drug Policy Network, Western Balkans European Social Survey Regional Network etc. LBO PA was a member of the official delegation of Serbia at the 3rd European Youth Work Convention.
- LBO Serbia promoted RYCO mission in **2 media appearances** on national TVs and **10 articles/videos**.
- The strategic partnership with the National Youth Council of Serbia - KOMS, the highest representative body of youth in Serbia was approved by the GB in December 2020.
- Publication of *"Beginners' Manual for Project Writing"* in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia.
- LBO Serbia organized other local activities and maintained good relationships with the partners.

"Meeting other cultures for me earlier would mean a challenge, but now I crave a lot for similar projects and activities. Thanks to this experience, I am convinced that every cultural exchange contributes to the creation of constructive dialogue without prejudices."
– Marko Gajic, Serbia.

2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation/REL

Within 2020, RYCO worked in **introducing the M&E system** and **establishing the M&E Unit**. The attempts to build RYCO's M&E system during 2020 include the following activities:

➤ RYCO developed its **first M&E framework** which aims among others to assess the progress made towards the achievement of RYCO strategic results for the Strategic Plan 2019-2021 and to monitor the quality of processes in which RYCO engages. The monitoring of the progress is a learning process that enables a better insight into the context where changes are supposed to be introduced and program adjusted, a process which will help in providing inputs for development of the next SP 2022-2024. The M&E framework was developed as a result of consultative processes with RYCO staff, leadership, M&E expert and fruitful collaboration with the PeaceNexus Foundation.

➤ Creation, testing and utilization of various **Data Collection Tools** at the overall organizational level.

➤ Creation of **M&E supporting documents** such as: the M&E Framework Methodological Guide, Results Indicators Glossary, M&E framework definitions and limitations, Data Collection Process.

➤ **Strengthening M&E capacities** of RYCO staff and enhancing an M&E culture throughout the organization. Several meetings were held to explain different M&E processes.

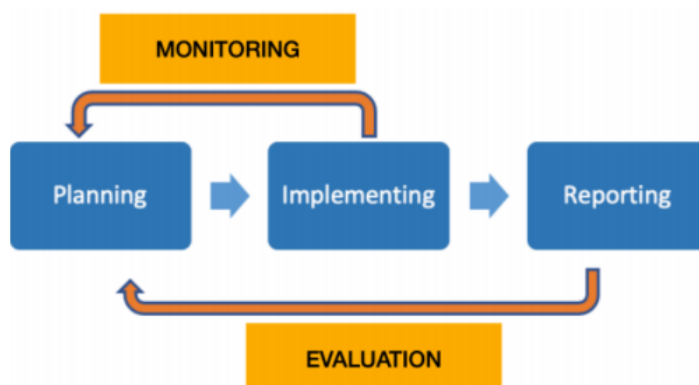
77.55% of RYCO staff was trained on data collection tools. An anonymous survey was delivered to trained staff and **85.71%** of them self-reported satisfaction with their knowledge and ability to apply the M&E data collection tools they are required to apply in their work. **100%** of them self-reported that M&E is important for RYCO.

➤ Alignment of three RYCO donor funded projects, the fourth Open Call package of documents, reporting templates and other design and planning processes with the M&E purposes.

➤ It started **data collection** and **analysis** for 2018-2020.

➤ Baseline and SP results data were aggregated and integrated in the M&E framework. **75%** of baseline data is integrated into the M&E framework.

➤ Recruiting the M&E Coordinator.



Main challenges of working with M&E in RYCO during 2020 were the delays in recruitment of M&E Coordinator and lack of staff resources in charge of M&E, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic implications, which affected directly data collection, particularly coming from activity monitoring. However, RYCO successfully managed to shift online the process of data collection utilizing online data collection tools. Another challenge was the retrospective data collection for the baseline as the M&E framework was introduced only in the second year of the three year SP and data was not collected before. With the commitment of RYCO staff to collect data and provide ad hoc input when needed, this challenge was successfully mitigated.

Development of the M&E Unit will enhance strategic development and growth of RYCO and will be the **basis for establishment of RYCO's Research, Evaluation and Learning Unit**, aiming at strengthening RYCO's capacity to gather, manage and interpret data.

2.5 Communications

RYCO was proactively engaged in communicating its activities through a number of communication channels. Majority of promotion and visibility activities, besides the public events organized by RYCO and/or its partners, were carried out via website, social media and newsletter items. In 2019, RYCO witnessed a continuous growth in terms of numbers of people who are following/receiving the above-mentioned content.

- **Website** – The organization's website is the key communication channel. In the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020, RYCO got **over 230.000 pageviews** out of which over 190.000 were the unique ones. The average time spent on a page by a single user is 1 minute and 41 seconds, meaning that the audience following the website is interested in and focused on the content provided by RYCO. During the year, almost

80% of the website's visitors were new ones. This fact speaks about the growing and broadening of the RYCO's audience. During 2020, 73% of pageviews were from WB6.

- **Facebook** – This social media counted around **14.500** people in 2020. 70.57% of the community are people aged between 13 and 34. This indicates a proper interest of young people for the organization's work. 85% of the followers are from WB6.

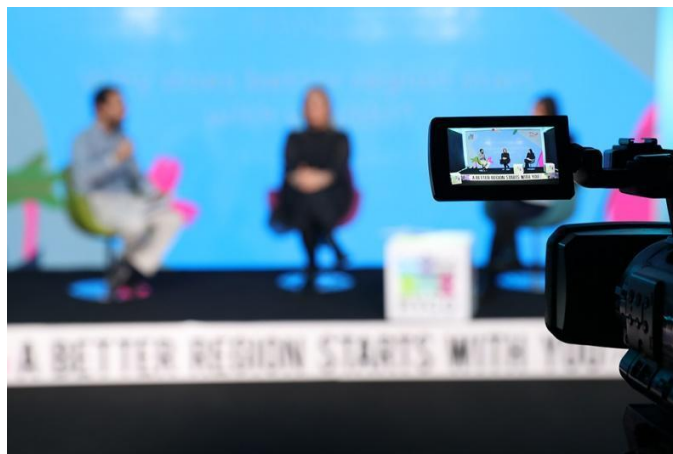
- **Twitter** – As a social media channel focused on political discussions and news, Twitter remains mainly a place for direct contact with stakeholders. The current count of followers of RYCO on Twitter is around 2600. During 2020, RYCO's tweets earned **over 497,000** impressions, a number that was growing throughout the year.

- **Instagram** – The organization was proactive on this social network, too. With **over 3.900 followers**, this communication channel gathers mostly young people interested in our work – 79.1% of the followers are people aged between 13 and 34.

- **LinkedIn**: 2,065 followers

- **Newsletter** – During 2020, fourteen newsletters were sent out to more than 4,000 email addresses with an average open rate of over 20% and average click rate of 2,6%. These data are in line with the average open and click rates of the non-profit sector performance world-wide.

- Substantial activities regarding promotion of RYCO's work were conducted through "A Better Region Starts with Youth" project supported by the German Federal Government. The project's activities brought more than 400 stakeholders and over 60 media professionals while the reach on social media was around 3.000.000 people.



The Communications throughout 2020 took part also in visibility and promo activities for all RYCO regional projects and local events organized by LBOs (more you can find in the projects' section of the report).

2.6 Cooperation and Partnership

In 2020 RYCO continued several important strategic partnerships through the following projects:

- ❑ "Supporting the Western Balkan's collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the RYCO" in cooperation with United Nations agencies.

- ❑ "Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the WB6", supported by the European Commission.

- ❑ "The ROUTE WB6" for Regional Crossborder Volunteering exchange program, financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- ❑ "Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurs (RISE)", co-financed by the French Agency for Development.

- ❑ Advocacy and Promotional Campaign "Better Region Starts with You(th)" supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- ❑ Projects for Support for RYCO organizational development (cooperation with Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SIDA project and PeaceNexus Foundation).

- ❑ The end of the year marked the beginning of the strategic three-year partnership for regional school exchanges with GIZ supported by EC and BMZ with 5,5 million EUR.



RYCO continued its cooperation and partnerships in the organization of different regional activities and small-scale projects:

- ❑ In the period from January until October RYCO supported seven events organized on the framework of the "Berlin Process: Youth connectivity" project implemented by the Cooperation and Development Institute in cooperation with National Youth Congress of Albania, Kosovar Youth Council, High School Students Union of Montenegro, National Youth Council of Serbia, National Youth Council of Macedonia, Bosnia and

Herzegovina Association for UN, which reached more than 4000 young participants through direct participation and through open events.

□ Re-boot Europe Conference organized in July 2020, by the Franco-German Youth Office, in cooperation with RYCO and partner organizations from France, Germany and the Western Balkans (Crossborder factory, YIHR, Peuple et Culture, Une Terre Culturelle, Pangera e.V, Pulse of Europe Toulouse) gathered 100 young people.

□ "One way ticket - Young people and migration from the WB - possibilities and opportunities to shape the process" program implemented in cooperation with Crossborder Factory aiming to tackle the topic of youth migration from the perspective of young people. The first phase of the program was organized in cooperation with the South East Europe Association and the Aspen Institute with the support of the German Foreign Office under the official program of the German EU Council Presidency. The second phase of the program will continue in 2021.

□ Cooperation with the University of Vienna, the Sigmund Freud University Vienna and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) brought [RYCO Publication](#), a publication that documents RYCO's activities since its beginnings. The [promo event](#) was live streamed on RYCO's Facebook page.

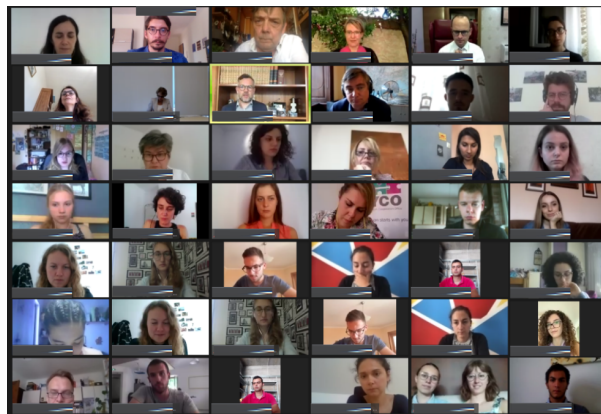
□ In cooperation with the OSCE Missions in respective CPs, various support was provided to LBOs such as: production and publishing of the "Beginners' Manual for Project Writing" in Serbia; Online Capacity Building Training in Kosovo for CSOs in the topics of ICLD, Digital Youth Work and Project Cycle Management and CBT for potential grantees in Montenegro, support to LBO North Macedonia with regard to the RYCO Coordination Group aiming to synchronize all activities that are related to the Chairmanship of North Macedonia over the RYCO Governing Board and the 2020 WB summit. LBO Albania and BiH had strategic meetings with the respective OSCE Missions, too.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic challenges, RYCO Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General represented RYCO in numerous activities on the regional and European levels organized by RYCO's partners where they actively advocated for the work of RYCO but also for the interest of young people from across the region.

From around 20 events, the following should be considered highly important from a political point of view: WB Digital Summit 2020 3rd Steering Committee Meeting (January), CSO Forum: Direct Dialogue as a Tool for Regional Stability (February), WB Civil Society Summit (February), South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECPP) Seminar for Junior Diplomats (February), Rethinking European Political Culture (March), "Post Covid-19 European Power" Webinar (May), BALKAN HUB Meeting (June), "Gala without Guests – What Does the Start of EU Accession Talks Mean for Albania and North Macedonia?" discussion (June), European Forum Alpbach (September), active participation in the Sofia Summit (December).

Moreover, even though the pandemic suspended all physical exchanges, RYCO has maintained its partnership with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will resume its activities in 2021 with a new group of young people from the Western Balkans traveling to Japan in the spring.

On the other hand, cooperation and participation in the other important events include but are not limited to the following: "European integration of the WB: Making a realistic perspective out of a shifting target" Conference (January), "Opening Doors for Roma Youth" conference (February), Youth in the Balkans: Their Cultures of Communication and Non-Communication, and their Notions of Reconciliation workshop (February), Celebration



of the 20th anniversary of FGYO's South Eastern Europe Initiative and 4th Anniversary of RYCO (March), "The End of Europe as we knew it" (April), "Political Developments in Serbia and Their Implications" (May), "Education beyond Reconciliation: Re-thinking the Ethnic Paradigm in South-Eastern Europe" Webinar (June), "Causes, Effects, and Policy Approaches – Addressing Emigration from the Western Balkans" workshop (June), V4 presidency handover ceremony (June), Re-boot Europe! conference (July), E-roundtable_EU and Youth Invitation (July), Impact of COVID-19 in youth participation and involvement in policy making (July), "WB in the EU - Growing together or moving apart?" conference (september), 6th Tirana Connectivity Forum (October), "Young People, Migration, and the Demographic Challenge in the Western Balkans" (October)

3. RYCO's results: Institutional Mission

3.1 Organizational development

One of the core objectives of RYCO is to become a stable, sustainable, efficient and accountable organisation with structures and systems in place in order to develop and implement high impact and high scale projects for young people in the Western Balkans. In order to reach this objective, RYCO is undergoing a phase of solid organisational development that included the following intensive processes over the course of 2020:

- ❑ RYCO's structure is organised into two departments, **Programs and Operations**, which have been fully functional since the beginning of 2020. New positions in the Department of Operations include a Senior Procurement Officer, Senior HR Officer and Senior Legal Officer.
- ❑ From having one sole grant officer, RYCO is in the process of shifting to a future **Grant Making Unit**. This is part of the process of developing new grant making concepts and guidelines, together with the engagement of external experts with the support of the European Union.
- ❑ The development of the **human resources** policy takes place alongside the development of a set of internal procedures, which are supported by the UNPBF and the PN Foundation.
- ❑ A **risk assessment and risk management guidelines** created with the support of the UNPBF.
- ❑ Led by the Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, the **first Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** is being developed as the nucleus of the future RYCO Research, Evaluation and Learning Unit, with the support of the UNPBF and the PN Foundation.
- ❑ The concept for the **first IT platform** is being established as part of the internal system for project and financial management, with the support of the UNPBF. The plan is that it will be fully developed in 2021.
- ❑ The development of the **first communication strategy** with the support provided by the UNPBF.
- ❑ Health and **Safety and Security** practices were introduced.
- ❑ Further development of CB and mentorship as crosscutting activities within the RYCO program is continuously underway and is seen as an important process for meeting the organisation's objectives.
- ❑ Last but not the least, the first phase of the **registration of the RYCO LBOs** in the 6 CPs is being undertaken as part of the process of legal analysis, with the support of the SIDA.

4. RYCO's Next Steps: Highlights of 2021

- ❑ Implementation of regional projects (continuation and closure of current projects, entering in new partnerships such as with the GIZ)
- ❑ Regional school exchange
- ❑ Volunteering scheme
- ❑ Institutional and organizational growth
- ❑ New guidelines for grant making unit
- ❑ New HR policy and Management by Objectives
- ❑ IT platforms
- ❑ Registration of LBOs
- ❑ Development of Communication Strategy
- ❑ Establishment of REL Unit
- ❑ Change of the leadership
- ❑ Publication of "Shared Future" Study
- ❑ Evaluation of Strategic Plan 2019-2021
- ❑ Development of the new SP 2022-2024, etc.



RYCO Partners and Supporters



ANNEXES - Further information

ANNEX I

Publications:

- [RYCO Publication: A Better Region Starts with YOUth](#)
- A Mapping of Educational Initiatives for Intercultural Dialogue, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation among Young People in the WB6
- Teachers Toolkit: Intercultural Dialogue, Peacebuilding, Constructive Remembrance and Reconciliation
- A manual for trainers in Western Balkans: Youth peer education for peacebuilding and conflict transformation
- [Regional study of social entrepreneurship](#)
- [Beginner's Manual for Project Proposal Writing](#)
- Regional Volunteers Code of Ethics
- Draft-Regional policy brief
- Draft-Manifesto

Videos:

- [RYCO journey video](#)
- 2 video spots with influencers and young leaders (with music jingle), [version 1](#), [version 2](#) and [6 videos -one per each CP](#).