



ANNUAL REPORT

Regional Youth Cooperation Office

Tirana, 2020

RYCO's 2019 *in brief*



Third Open
Call Launched



100 applications
(3rd Open Call)



311 partners
(3rd Open Call)



64 projects
granted (2nd and
3rd Open Call)



1.330.898,48€
awarded



187 partners
implementing
projects



4 regional
projects launched



Over 350 meetings
on local level



Over 270.000
website visits

A better region starts with youth



Over 4.000 young
participants

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, RYCO opened one call (RYCO 3rd call) and received **100 applications** from **311 applicants** (youth organizations and high schools) from all six contracting parties. During the year RYCO contracted in total **64 projects** (44 projects from 2nd call and 20 projects from 3rd call) developed by **187 partners** (youth organizations and schools) in total grant amount of € **1.330.898,48**.

In 2019, RYCO also started several important strategic partnerships through the following projects:

- “Supporting the Western Balkan's collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) in cooperation with UN agencies;
- “Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the WB6”, supported by European Commission;
- “The ROUTE WB6”, financed by Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- “WB6 Lab”, co-financed by French Agency for Development;
- Support for RYCO from the Polish Government.

Besides those projects, RYCO continued to have also partnerships and cooperation in organization of different regional activities and small-scale projects, such as with OSCE mission in Podgorica, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, World Vision Albanian and Kosovo* etc.

In summer 2019, in the frame of the official bilateral visit of French President Macron to Serbia, RYCO organized event with young people from all WB6 and provided them with opportunity to exchange with two presidents about the challenges, expectations and needs of the young people in this region. Result of this event and later talks with two presidents was the one-off donation of Serbian Government to RYCO's budget, with amount of more than 420.000 euro.

Moreover, 2019 has been very dynamic with a massive recruitment of RYCO staff. During the reporting period RYCO has published and completed recruitment process of 22 positions (core and project staff). Around 70% of the total number of 472 applicants for the vacancies belongs to the age range of 20-35 years old, meaning most of the applicants were young and with good work experience.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

2. INFORMATION ON BUDGET SPENDING

Financial Information from January-December 2019

Total governmental contributions until December 2019 are in the amount of **999,900 EUR**.

Table 1. Governmental Contributions during 2019

No.	Date	Description	Amount in EUR
1	06.02.2019	Albania's contribution for 2019	173,000
2	15.03.2019	Serbia's contribution for 2019	389,000
3	27.03.2019	Bosnia and Herzegovina's contribution for 2019	154,000
4	12.04.2019	Montenegro's contribution for 2019	44,000
5	02.05.2019	Kosovo's contribution for 2019	101,900
6	23.05.2019	North Macedonia's contribution for 2019	138,000
Total			999,900

Total other direct contributions until December 2019 are in the amount of **623,407 EUR**.

Table 2. Other Direct Contributions during 2019

No.	Description	Amount in EUR
1	Serbia's government donation	423,429
2	Polish Ministry of Foreign Affair	180,000
3	PeaceNexus Foundation	11,930
4	French Embassy in Montenegro	6,000
5	French Embassy in Bosnia and Hercegovina	1,000
6	VAT reimbursement	372
7	Other donations	677
Total		623,407

Total of donor funds received until December 2019 are in the amount of **579,350 EUR**.

Table 3. Donor Funds Received during 2019

No.	Description	Amount in EUR
1	German Project	349,890
2	NMFA Route WB6 PROJECT - Second instalment	136,489
3	UN Project - First instalment	85,195
4	GIZ Project	7,777
Total		579,350

Total operational expenses of RYCO budget until December 2019 were in the amount of **258,127.62 EUR**.

In the following table, you may find the actual % spent on the operational budget and activity budget compared with the planned budget.

Budgeted Operational Costs	€ 294,995.00	Budgeted Activity Costs	€ 424,460.00
Subtotal Operational Costs	€ 258,127.62	Subtotal Activity Costs	€ 225,717.58
% Used Operational Costs	88%	% Used Activity Costs	53%
Contingency Costs 5%	€ 15,000.00	Sub-granting Funds	€ 1,000,000
Subtotal Contingency Costs	€ 20,463.07	Subtotal Sub-granting Funds	€ 543,675.56
% Used Contingency Costs	136%	% Used Subgranting Funds	54%

As following you may find the actual amount spent from the operational budget until December 2019 for each budget line, and the % to the total amount spent.

**Table 4. Operational Costs
(January – December 2019)**

No.	Operational Costs	Actual costs	% to Total expenditures
1	Wages	€ 177,136.36	68.62%
2	Housing for international staff	€ 8,400.00	3.25%
3	Travel and health insurance	€ 2,153.80	0.83%
4	Employer Tax Difference - New Budget tracking	€ 2,244.94	0.87%
5	Communication costs	€ 5,973.02	2.31%
6	Office supplies	€ 1,619.41	0.63%
7	Representation and hospitality in the Head Office (meetings, refreshment etc.)	€ 3,892.55	1.51%
8	Travel costs	€ 7,901.22	3.06%
9	Per diems / daily allowances	€ 16,657.08	6.45%
10	Taxi costs	€ 609.32	0.24%
11	Governing Board meeting costs	€ 6,804.92	2.64%
12	Vehicle insurance and maintenance	€ 1,939.45	0.75%
13	Bank fees	€ 4,800.94	1.86%
14	Other services (official translations, notarial, IT maintenance, etc.)	€ 844.71	0.33%
15	External consultancy and temporary technical support	€ 8,575.17	3.32%
16	Office cleaning services	€ 2,665.22	1.03%
17	Staff retreat, team building and training	€ 3,779.79	1.46%
18	Office equipment	€ 2,129.72	0.83%
Total Operational Costs		€ 258,127.62	100%

Highest rate of actual operational costs is represented from staff wages costs with **68.62%**, following by Per diems/daily allowances with **6.45%**, External consultancy and temporary technical support with **3.32%**, Housing for international staff **3.25%**, Travel costs with **3.06%** of the total spent.

Total expenses for January-December 2019 from Activity budget were in the amount of **225,717.58 EUR**.

**Table 5. Activity Costs
(January-December 2019)**

No.	Activity Costs	Actual Costs	Percentage to total expenditures
1	Wages	€ 89,800.00	39.78%
2	Housing for international staff	€ 6,700.00	2.97%
3	Travel and health insurance	€ 2,890.00	1.28%
4	Employer Tax Difference - New Budget tracking	€ 1,754.56	0.78%
5	Communication costs	€ 1,183.01	0.52%
6	Office supplies	€ 363.87	0.16%
7	Representation and hospitality in the Head Office (meetings, refreshment, etc.)	€ 1,447.37	0.64%
8	Travel costs	€ 2,081.82	0.92%
9	Per diems / daily allowances	€ 4,946.00	2.19%
10	Bank fees	€ 2,428.46	1.08%
11	Other services (official translations, notarial, IT maintenance, etc.)	€ 311.60	0.14%
12	Taxi costs	€ 236.31	0.10%
13	Communication costs LBO	€ 872.54	0.39%
14	Office supplies LBO	€ 2,533.11	1.12%
15	Representation and hospitality in the Head Office (meetings, refreshment, etc.) LBO	€ 3,815.34	1.69%
16	Travel costs LBO	€ 3,899.73	1.73%
17	Per diems / daily allowances LBO	€ 8,426.44	3.73%
18	Bank fees LBO	€ 2,004.71	0.89%
19	Other services (official translations, notarial, IT maintenance, etc.) LBO	€ 893.76	0.40%
20	Office cleaning services LBO	€ 2,565.60	1.14%
21	Staff retreat, team building and training LBO	€ 948.48	0.42%
22	External assessors	€ 15,167.35	6.72%
23	Training for external assessors	€ 2,260.01	1.00%
24	Monitoring visits costs	€ 55.59	0.02%
25	Expenditure verification	€ 3,000.00	1.33%
26	Participation and presentation on the relevant regional and international events	€ 3,477.74	1.54%
27	Web design and maintenance	€ 1,849.64	0.82%
28	Visibility costs, advocacy actions/campaigns, promo materials	€ 3,816.51	1.69%
29	Advisory Board meetings	€ 2,713.59	1.20%
30	Joint programs/activities with partner organizations	€ 28,608.41	12.67%
31	Board development - Advocacy role of the youth representatives in the Governing Board	€ 2,229.00	0.99%
32	LBO program activities costs (capacity building trainings, promo activities & campaigns)	€ 22,437.03	9.94%
Total Activity Costs		€ 225,717.58	100%

Sub-granting:

Funds available for sub-granting **1,000,000.00 EUR**

Payment of second instalment open call 2017 **92,579.64 EUR**

Payment of first instalment open call 2018 **451,095.92 EUR**

During 2019, RYCO has started the implementation of the projects:

- EC Project - Enhancing youth cooperation and youth exchange in the Western Balkan 6, financed by the European Union, represented by European Commission
- NMFA Project, Route WB6, financed by Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- UN Project - Supporting the Western Balkan's collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO),
- GIZ Project – ORF Promotion of EU Integration; and
- German Project – School to school youth cooperation in WB6, financed by the Federal Republic of Germany.

**Table 6. Project Expenditures
(January – December 2019)**

No.	Project Expenditures	Budgeted amount	Actual costs	% of Realization
1	EC Project	€ 81,823.00	€ 34,925.00	42.68%
2	NMFA Route WB6	€ 274,753.21	€ 111,769.84	40.68%
3	UN PBF	€ 84,779.84	€ 68,437.52	80.72%
4	GIZ	€ 40,682.00	€ 6,208.11	15.26%
5	German Fund	€ 349,990.00	€ 38,765.70	11.08%
Total Activity Costs		€ 832,028.06	€ 260,106.17	31.26%

3. COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP

In 2019, RYCO has started several important strategic partnerships through the following projects:

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- “WB6 Lab”, co-financed by French Agency for Development;
- Support for RYCO from the Polish Fund.

RYCO continued cooperation and partnerships in organization of different regional activities and small-scale projects, more concretely:

- With OSCE Mission (Youth Rights Talks Regional in Novi Sad, December, regional capacity building training in Podgorica, September, #YouthTrail2019: Promoting OSCE Values among Youth in Tirana, May 2019);
- The second “Western Balkans Meet Japan - A Bridge into the Future” in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, a nine-day youth exchange program inviting 15 young people from across the Western Balkans;
- RYCO and Transfer e.V organised an experts’ symposium entitled “Access and Barriers to Participation in Learning Mobility Projects - International Youth Work in Germany and the Western Balkan Six” in Shëngjin, Albania in October 2019;
- World Vision in collaboration with RYCO organised a regional youth festival in Tirana in September 2019;
- Four events were organised in cooperation with the Franco-German Youth Office (OFAJ) and Crossborder Factory (conference “Strengthening Regional Parliamentary Cooperation in Support for RYCO and Parliaments’ Engagement in the Berlin Process and Beyond” in Berlin; Experts working meeting "Constructively Dealing with the Past within RYCO-youth exchange" in Sarajevo, 24 young LGBTIQ+ activists from Germany, France and the Western Balkans participated in trainings and workshops focused on leadership, self-management, activism and communication in Berlin, Memory Lab 9th annual study trip "Unbunkering the past: How is Albania dealing with its (communist) history?");
- Deutsche Welle’s Balkan Booster project, which connects 21 young journalists from the Western Balkans and the surrounding EU Member States for creation of stories on environmental topics in the Balkans;
- RYCO the official partner of “Dealing with the Past” project within the Sarajevo Film Festival (Sarajevo, August) and co-organizer of WB6 volunteers exchange at European Youth Olympics Festival (Sarajevo, February).

RYCO Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General took part in numerous activities on the regional and European level 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: active participation in the Poznan Summit and preparation meetings organized around it (April and July 2019); Conference on Youth organized by the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (May 2019); Meeting between Youth and the Presidents of the French Republic and Serbia (July 2019); Nairobi Summit ICPD25 (November 2019); Western Balkans' Digital Summit Steering Committee meeting in Belgrade (February 2019); Meeting with Representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Western Balkans 6 (February and October 2019); Regional Conference on Population Dynamics, Human Capital and Sustainable Development in Southeast Europe organized by UNFPA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (October 2019); Regional Youth Leadership Forum in Novi Sad, Serbia that gathered several high-level official from the region (November 2019).

On the other hand, the other events include but are not limited to the following: European Youth Olympic Festival, Regional Thematic Network Forum and Annual Conference, Strengthening Regional Parliamentary Cooperation in Support for RYCO and Parliaments' Engagement in the Berlin Process and Beyond, Advancing Youth Political Participation through Regional Cooperation of National Youth Councils, Sarajevo Film Festival, Tirana Connectivity Forum, Youth Policy in Western Balkans and Turkey: Challenges and Perspectives.

4. PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

4.1 Strategy Development

Within RYCO Strategy 2019-2021 - the first strategic priority ***“Deliver high quality, high impact programmes”***, 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 Western Balkans Six (WB6) youth, CSOs and schools have been published and implemented. The Regional Volunteer Service and regional youth volunteer mobility and exchange program model for WB6 has started to be developed, and the support of regional programs for development of youth social entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership got its first activities in 2019.

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 effort to intensify efforts towards strengthening capacities of youth and grassroots organizations to access and use RYCO’s resources to engage in peacebuilding and social cohesion activities in the WB6. Finally, under this strategic priority, the increase of positive media coverage on values of intercultural exchange and other RYCO promoted values started to happen.

Within the third strategic priority ***“Invest in Competence: Strengthen RYCO institutionally and organisationally”***, the improvement of RYCO’s governance system according to international good practice standards is foreseen, and a number of actions for strengthening RYCO’s Secretariat effectiveness and programming quality has been realized and new management structure (so called 2.0 version of RYCO has started in the end of 2019).

Moreover, a comprehensive system for monitoring and evaluation of implementation, outcomes and context of RYCO’s work started to be introduced in the second part of 2019. Concrete plan of set of actions have been developed during 2019 (with implementation in 2020) focused on building RYCO’s capacity to gather, interpret and manage data, improving the quality of the process of implementation of RYCO open calls, as well as ensuring sustainability of funds for RYCO’s functioning.

Finally, additional efforts have been invested in establishing a comprehensive office management and financial control system, in the same time improving communication and visibility of RYCO’s activities.

4.2 Open Call and Project Implementation

In 2019, RYCO opened one call (RYCO 3rd Call) and received **100 applications** from **311 applicants** (youth organizations and high schools) from all six contracting parties. During the year RYCO contracted in total **64 projects** (44 projects from 2nd Call and 20 projects from 3rd Call) developed by **187 partners** (youth organizations and schools) in total grant amount of € **1.330.898,48**.

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**“Supporting the Western Balkan's collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)”
(2nd Open Call)**

The project officially started with implementation on 20 September 2019, upon signing of Project Cooperation Agreement with UNDP Albania (the lead UN agency on the project). Certain delays in implementation occurred as a consequence of the delay in the start of the project implementation, which took place due to the addition of new project component (Output 4, in June 2019), then Micro Assessment of RYCO (August 2019) and negotiations on 2nd Open Call disbursement modalities which impacted further delay. By the time the project agreement was signed, the majority of project staff (10/11) was recruited and 2nd Open Call (co-funded under this project) grantees have been selected.

The project holds immense relevance for RYCO’s strategic development, in terms of institutional capacity building, program and grant scheme consolidation. In 2019, RYCO has provided inputs for necessary institutional capacity building (risk management, HR scheme, M&E framework, grant monitoring), as well as for key program outputs (mapping document on peacebuilding educational practices in WB6, teacher and y-peer manuals on peacebuilding education, fundraising guide for teachers) all aiming to fill the knowledge and resource gaps of RYCO’s core target groups.

Under this project the **2nd Open Call** has been implemented. The grantees have been contracted in November 2019 but the implementation started in December 2019. Out of **44 projects**, supported under 2nd Open Call, 41 are implemented and monitored under this project, while other three are RYCO only funded, due to the delay in signing the PCA agreement.

From 20 September to 31 December 2019, the project went through the following key activities and processes:

- Onboarding of project staff;
- Re-launch of Open Call for the position of M&E Coordinator (the position remain unfulfilled after two open calls);
- IT and furniture procurement under UNPBF process;
- 2nd Open Call contract and guidelines revised and approved by the donor;
- 2nd Open Call contracting and funds disbursement;
- Micro Assessment Action Plan approved and capacity building needs to be addressed through UNPBF funded project assessed and shared with donor;
- Communications and Visibility project package drafted;
- M&E framework of RYCO drafted with support of IC UNDP;
- Review of three key documents for teachers and schools of WB6 (Mapping of best practices in the region with regard to school-based peace building initiatives, Teacher Toolkit Fundraising Guide and Fundraising Manual);
- Review of study visit concept note and agenda;
- Review of y-peer manual outline;
- Draft version of Management Guide for Grants written;

- On the spot check methodology drafted for open call project implementation;
- Participation in Inception workshop for regional study on youth perceptions.

The 3rd Open Call

The Third RYCO Open Call for Project Proposals supported by the **German Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and entirely focused on supporting and empowering secondary schools to implement activities was launched in August 2019. The overall envelope for this Call for Project Proposals was in the amount of **360,000 Eur**. Info sessions as well as mentoring sessions delivered by trainers were conducted in all Contracting Parties throughout September 2019.

For the first time RYCO tested an online platform for the management of grants, which gave the opportunity to the applicants to apply online. The Call closed in October 2019 with **100 applications** received, with **211 partners** from schools or CSOs and a total number of **311 entities** (secondary schools and CSOs) involved as applicant or partner. The number of secondary schools applying dramatically increased compared to the First and Second Open Call, as this Call was dedicated to secondary schools and schools and/or CSOs applying on behalf of schools had to have at least one secondary school from a different Contracting Party as a partner. Moreover, a significant number of vocational schools applied.

This Call also included several capacity building trainings and specific information and mentoring sessions. In the end RYCO contracted **20 projects** with **47 partners**.

“Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the WB6”

The project is a three-year initiative, officially started in March 2019 and supported by **European Commission** with objectives to increase levels of youth participation in informing priorities of RYCO work, to increase awareness of young people about opportunities for youth cooperation across the region and to strenght capacities of the CSOs in the Western Balkans for implementation of regional youth projects.

The core implementation team of the project was hired in September 2019, consisting of the Project Coordinator, Finance and Accounting Officer and Project Assistant and six Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants working in 6 LBOs. After the hiring of the entire project team, two tailor-made onboarding trainings were designed and implemented through this project.

In order to develop and strengthen the capacities of the project team in financial management, monitoring, and administration, a three-day training was organized and successfully delivered in Tirana, on 28-30 October 2019. During the three-day training led by an external expert in EU finance, procurement and auditing, the project team had an opportunity to learn about grant contracts, procurement, PRAG, principles of financial monitoring and reporting, based on real life case studies, involving on-the-spot checks.

The second onboarding training was focused on youth participation, in particular on the development of a regional online survey and the methodology for consultation meetings to be organized with WB6 young people, within the project's Work Package 1 - Increased level of youth participation in informing priorities of RYCO work. The first part of the meeting was held in Tirana (25 November 2019), and the second one in Podgorica (27 November 2019), due to the earthquake that hit Tirana on 26 November 2019.

A draft of the survey and an extensive consultation meetings methodology have been produced as outputs of the training with objective to support of the organization of meetings with young people in

early 2020. Finally, the first Project Steering Committee Meeting was held in Podgorica, on 8 November 2019.

“Route WB6”

The ROUTE WB6 project, financed by **Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** with a total budget of **927,000 Euro**, is implemented by a consortium led by Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

It is a three-year initiative, officially started in January 2019 with objectives to strengthen capacities of the National Volunteer Services to advocate for volunteering policy at regional and national levels in order to make enabling environment for development of volunteering as the effective tool that contributes to reconciliation and mobility of youth in WB6 region; to establish regional volunteer infrastructure and youth cross-border volunteer exchange programs and to support CSOs and youth from the WB region to participate in the ROUTE WB6 program in order to facilitate intercultural dialogue, mobility and cross-border cooperation of youth from the region.

During the reporting period, Partnership Agreements have been signed with the six organizations from WB6 (Beyond Barriers, South East European Youth Network, Lens, Youth Cultural Center Bitola, Association for Democratic Prosperity Zid, Young Researchers of Serbia and Youth Communication Center Banja Luka). The project staff (one Project Coordinator and one Financial and Administrative Officer) were recruited and effective in the office since September 2019.

During the reporting period a regional Ethical Codex is developed through the inclusive and participative process, (two partners meeting organized respectively in Tirana 05/2019 and Podgorica 12/2019). Three consultative meetings on volunteering policy are organized from September - December 2019, with stakeholders from civil society and public institutions in Kosovo.

An expert was engaged to draft the Regional Policy on Volunteering, the document will be used as a tool to promote volunteering reform by National Volunteer Services in WB6. Two In-house training seminars on volunteering infrastructure, volunteer management, and development of the sustainable volunteer services at local level took place in Kosovo. Another expert was hired to design an innovative format of cross-border volunteer exchange programs, which will be youth-friendly and/or to target some non-represented groups of youth.

“WB6 Lab”

The WB6 Lab project is a three-year project that started on the 1st of October 2019 and is being implemented across the Western Balkans 6 by RYCO in the partnership with GROUPE SOS Pulse from France, South East European Youth Network, the Franco-German Youth Office and the Institut Français. Co-financed by the **French Agency for Development (AFD)** and RYCO with a total budget of **999,496 Euro**, the project is set to foster reconciliation of the Western Balkan youth through the promotion and the strengthening of social entrepreneurship in the region.

A Project Coordinator for GROUPE SOS Pulse has been working in Belgrade since October 2019 from the RYCO Local Branch Office in Serbia and in close collaboration with RYCO Head Office. A first Project Steering Committee was organized in November 2019 in Tirana, which kicked off the first activities. RYCO signed the Partnership Agreement on December 31st with GROUPE SOS Pulse.

The communication strategy and creation of the project’s brand are being developed by SOS Pulse and RYCO Communication and Visibility Officer. Until the end of 2019 the project prepared action

plan for 2020 including calls for selection of local structures for social entrepreneurship, regional study including necessary recruiting of project coordinator in RYCO Head Office.

4.3 Local Branch Office Activities

Local Branch Offices (LBO)

Local Branch Offices play a crucial role in dissemination and promotion of RYCO values and activities. LBOs serve as the first contact point in supporting possible applicants during the open call with information, capacity building activities and mentoring. In addition, LBOs play an important role as focal points in communication with grantees (preparation of the contracts, mentorship, monitoring, reporting). They are also first address for local and international organizations/institutions interested in cooperation with RYCO and for local media as well.

With the type of activities to which LBO are directly participating in, or supporting, RYCO is 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, LBOs took part in more than **350 meetings and events**, organized with the most relevant stakeholders in their respective CP and the region.

In 2019, all LBOs have increased capacities with hiring through projects at least one assistant to support mentioned activities. They are also taking part in general program development of RYCO on regular basis (RYCO Staff retreat and planning in Albania (April 2019) and in Montenegro (October 2019); LBOs and PO working meeting in Montenegro (June 2019); Onboarding training on financial management and reporting, Albania (October 2019) and helping in finding adequate local participants for different international projects.

Local Branch Office in Albania

- Support (programmatic guidance, monitoring visits, and clearance of narrative reports) of **5** projects, leaded by Albanian organizations, and **11** partner organizations and high schools from Albania, funded under RYCO first open call. More than **150** young people exchanged from Albania under First Open Call.
- Organization of **4** Info sessions related to the third open call were organized in 4 different cities (**79** participants attended the info sessions) and 8 organizations/high schools were supported with mentoring during the application phase.
- In the Second Open Call, out of 278 applicants, **15.83%** (44 applicants, CSO's and secondary schools) were from Albania and in the third open call, out of 100 applicants **26%** (26 high schools) were from Albania.
- Continues work in supporting **10** grantees and **20** partners from Albania, who signed contracts in the Second and Third Calls in 2019, with programmatic and financial guidance (35 projects app. 700 youth only from Albania).
- LBO had regular communication with Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in Albania.
- LBO had more than **80** meetings with different stakeholders, including ambassadors and receptions of the different embassies and international organizations operating in Albania.
- LBO has been part of consultations for Law on Youth, member of working group for Application of Tirana as European Youth Capital 2022 (winning the prestigious title later) and took part in various panel discussions and projects organized by relevant actors in the youth field in Albania (e.g. CoE, Institute for Romani Culture in Albania, National Youth Congress, Partners Albania for Change and Development, Redebate project, implemented by Liburnetik

organization, Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), European Youth Parliament, AIESEC, EU Village, Youth Organizations Fair for the Youth Day of Albania etc.).

- LBO Albania in cooperation with National Youth Congress conducted 6 local activities, in 6 different cities of Albania to discuss with young people on civic engagement and to share the values and programs of RYCO to young people coming from different communities.
- On regional level, LBO took part in the Regional exchange between RYCO and MFAs from the region, supported by GIZ, Regional Symposium on Access of Young People to Mobility, organized in Albania, focused on the barriers and obstacles young people are facing in participating in learning mobility projects. On a European level, HLBO in Albania took part in the Western Balkans Youth Conference organized by the Romanian presidency of the European Council in Bucharest (May 2019).
- RYCO through its LBO together with OSCE Presence in Albania and the Municipality of Tirana (May 2019) organized the third edition of Youth Trail, an event gathering more than 30 young people from all over the region to Tirana, to discuss on intercultural learning and dialogue, reconciliation, gender issues, human rights etc.
- On the framework of the MoU signed by RYCO and World Vision Albania and Kosovo, RYCO co-organized with WV, the Youth Festival: Solution for Youth (September), with participants from Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina discussing on youth participation, social justice and youth entrepreneurship.
- In cooperation with the Franco-German Youth Office and Crossborder Factory, RYCO is supporting a regional exchange for young members of the LGBTI community. The second leg of the exchange was organized in Tirana (November 2019) where HLBO in Albania presented RYCO. Some of the participants and LBO also took part in some of the sessions of the annual conference of LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, organized for the first time in Tirana.
- LBO supported organization of RYCO's regional event in Tirana (December 2019), gathering the 20 winning grantees from the region, under RYCO third Open Call.
- The new Local Branch Office Program Assistant Ms. Flutura Brakaj joined the LBO team in September.

Local Branch Office in Bosnia-Herzegovina

- Support of **6** funded projects from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on the First Open Call with 13 partner organizations and high schools from BiH and other Contracting parties.
- Organization of **11** info sessions related to the Second Open Call were organized in Banja Luka, Brčko, Istočno Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Travnik, Trebinje, Velika Kladuša, Zenica, Zvornik and Široki Brijeg with total of **190** participants.
- In the Second Open Call, out of 278 applicants, **16.19%** (45 applicants, CSO's and secondary schools) were from Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the Third Open Call, out of 100 applicants **15%** (15 high schools were from BiH).
- Continues work with **10** grantees and **26** partners from BiH and other Contracting parties who were funded on the Second and Third call in 2019.
- Organization of one capacity building training on project management for representatives of CSOs from BH (December, 2019, **23** participants).
- LBO had regular communication with Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH and was regularly invited on all meetings in regards to youth issues in BiH.
- In the scope of international cooperation HLBO took part in different international events: Regional exchange between RYCO and MFAs from the region, supported by GIZ, Regional UN - RYCO Peace-Building meeting in Podgorica, The World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth "Lisboa +21", Western Balkans Youth Conference organized by the Romanian presidency of the European Council in Bucharest (May), as well as presenting RYCO as an intergovernmental mechanism on 3rd Intercontinental Youth Forum at the

African Union in Addis Ababa, Regional Conference on Population Dynamics, Human Capital and Sustainable Development in South-East Europe in Sarajevo (October 2019) and ICPD25 Global Summit held in Nairobi, Kenya (November 2019) etc.

- As Kosovo was chairing the RYCO GB in 2019, the first bilateral meeting of GB members of Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina including LBOs was conducted in March 2019.
- UNFPA BiH invited LBO BiH to participate at the Expert group meeting in Formative assessment of UNFPA peace building practices in selected Arab, Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries and on developing Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda.
- GIZ invited RYCO to participate at the iDOVE Training of trainers in Sarajevo (May 2019), as an opportunity to gain skills to empower youth to play an active role in the prevention of violent extremism and building cohesive societies. HLBO BiH successfully completed the training and is capacitated to conduct trainings in regards to this topic.
- LBO managed to organize and bring 16 young people from WB6 to EYOF (European Youth Olympic Festival) which was organized by Sarajevo and East Sarajevo (February) in partnership with Social Innovation Incubator MUNJA and French Embassy in BiH.
- As the official partner of Dealing with the Past project within 25th Sarajevo Film Festival (SFF), RYCO gathered and did a follow up activity with young people from the WB6 (Sarajevo, August 2019). To continue cooperation it is expected that RYCO signs Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SFF in 2020.
- LBO had more than **70** meetings with different stakeholders, including ambassadors and receptions of the different embassies and international organizations operating in BiH.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the Institute for Youth development KULT.
- The new project assistant Mr. Ali Mahmutćehajić joined the LBO in September 2019.

Local Branch Office in Kosovo

- Support (mentorship, monitoring visits, evaluation and finalizing narrative and financial reports) of **4** local projects funded in the First Open Call with **10** partner organizations from Kosovo.
- Organization of **4** Info sessions related to the Third Open Call were organized in Prishtina, Mitrovica, Gjakova and Prizren (**37** participants) and support with mentors for interested organizations/schools.
- In the Second Open Call, out of 278 applicants, **14.39%** (40 applicants, CSO's and secondary schools) were from Kosovo and in the Third Open Call, out of 100 applicants **7%** (7 high schools were from Kosovo).
- Continues work with 6 grantees and 16 partners from Kosovo who signed contracts in the Second and Third Calls in 2019.
- Organization of one capacity building training on project management for representatives of 13 secondary schools with **26** participants (November 2019).
- LBO had regular meetings with different stakeholders, including ambassadors and receptions of the different embassies and international organizations operating in Kosovo.
- In close coordination with RYCO HQ, Governing Board members from Kosovo and other strategic partners prepared a calendar of activities which aimed to highlight 2019 as the year where Kosovo got the chairmanship. Unfortunately, majority of activities were not conducted due to the failure of the first GB meeting followed by a four month pending period in decision making.
- LBO in Kosovo, in collaboration with Chair of the Governing Board and RYCO Headquarters took part in the preparations of the GB meeting in Kosovo. The first attempt to held the GB meeting in March 2019 failed due to the lack of quorum. However, the successful organization of the 9th GB meeting took place in early June 2019 in Prishtina.

- LBO combined efforts with Franco-German Youth Office to organize the discussion “Strengthening the Path for Reconciliation and Regional Cooperation – Debate about European future of young Kosovars in Prishtina (February). This was the first event under Kosovo chairmanship on RYCO GB which gathered more than 100 representatives of youth NGOs from Kosovo.
- The first bilateral meeting of GB members of Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina including LBOs was conducted in March.
- LBO was actively involved in preparation of the third Advisory Board meeting which took place in Prishtina in March 2019.
- LBO contributed in the organization of the international conference “Strengthening Parliaments and Regional Parliamentary Exchanges in the Western Balkans”. The event was organized by Aspen Institute in cooperation with OFAJ and took place in Berlin (May 2019). It was engaged in this event in terms of coordination of the participation of the chairman of RYCO GB for 2019 as well as in the preparation of the report which later on was shared with RYCO HQ.
- LBO Kosovo has received a new and more adequate working premise from the Government of Kosovo, which now fully meet the conditions for effective work.
- The new project assistant Ramadan Sokoli joined the LBO in September 2019m and due to maternity leave new Head of LBO Besarta Halimi was selected (late November 2019).

Local Branch Office in Montenegro

- Support (mentorship, monitoring visits, evaluation and finalizing narrative and financial reports) of **3 local projects** funded in the previous first open call with **12** partner organizations from Montenegro.
- Organization of **6** Info sessions related to the Second Open Call were organized in Rozaje, Bijelo Polje, Podgorica, Tivat and Bar and **6** info sessions related to the Third Open Call (more than 200 participants) and support with mentors for interested organizations/schools.
- In the Second Open Call, out of 278 applicants, **5.04%** (14 applicants, CSO’s and secondary schools) were from Montenegro and in the Third Open Call, out of 100 applicants **6%** (6 schools were from MNE).
- Continues work in 2019 with **new 4 grantees** and **20 partners** from Montenegro who signed contracts in the Second and Third Call in 2019 (20 projects app. **800 youth** only from Montenegro).
- Organization of two national capacity building trainings on project cycle management and intercultural dialogue and learning for potential beneficiaries. First CB Training for potential beneficiaries has been organized for representatives of High Schools from Montenegro, as potential beneficiaries of the Third Open Call (October 2019, 20 participants). Second CB Training for potential beneficiaries has been organized for representatives of CSOs from Montenegro with 25 participants (November 2019).
- Communication and cooperation with the Ministry of Sports and Youth was at an exceptional level, and a large number of activities were implemented in partnership and cooperation with this ministry, which in particular contributed to increasing the visibility of the local office in Montenegro.
- LBO signed MoUs with the Ministry of Education in Montenegro and Employment Agency of Montenegro.
- LBO continued successful cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Montenegro supporting LBO Montenegro towards organization of regional and national activities.
- The German and French Embassies in Montenegro continued to be a strong partner of the local office (e.g. regional project with young jazz musicians from the region called “Balkan Academy of Music” was implemented by this LBO, Goethe Institute, French Cultural Center, German and The French Embassy and with the support of the Champs Elysees Fund).

- LBO with the support and in cooperation with partners organized following activities: Intercultural Youth Camp in Gusinje (with the support of the French Embassy, June 2019), Regional CB Training for the grantees of the Second Open Call (supported by OSCE Mission, September 2019), Regional RYCO Team meeting and Onboarding meeting- in cooperation and with the support of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro (October 2019), Regional Youth Cultural event - Balkan Academy of Music- in cooperation and with the support of Goethe Institute, French Cultural Institute, French Embassy and German Embassy in Montenegro (October 2019), Regional RYCO-6 MFAs working meeting “Registration of LBOs” (October 2019), Intercultural Competences in Sport (with the support of French Embassy, November 2019)
- LBO had more than **50** meetings with different stakeholders, including ambassadors and receptions of the different embassies and international organizations operating in MNE.
- Local Office has received new, larger and more adequate working premises from the Government of Montenegro, which now fully meet the necessary conditions for effective work.
- During 2019, the LBO Montenegro was able to open its own non-resident bank account, which to the great extent facilitated the implementation of a number of activities at the local level, but also reduced the costs incurred by RYCO - related to cash transactions.
- The new project assistant Ms. Bojana Lalatović joined the LBO in September and through established cooperation with UNICEF in Montenegro, LBO managed to hire another assistant, Ms. Irena Marunović, in December 2019 for one year.

Local Branch Office in North Macedonia

- Support (mentorship, monitoring visits, evaluation and finalizing narrative and financial reports) of **4 local projects** funded in the previous first open call with **14** partner organizations from North Macedonia.
- Organization of **5** info sessions related to the Second Open Call were organized in Tetovo, Skopje, Bitola, Shtip and Popova Shapka (**107** participants) and support with mentors for interested organizations/schools.
- In the Second Open Call, out of 278 applicants, **20%** (55 applicants, CSO's and secondary schools) were from North Macedonia and in the Third open call, out of 100 applicants **14%** (14 schools were from North Macedonia).
- Continues work with **10 grantees** and **25 partners** from North Macedonia who signed contracts in the Second and Third Calls in 2019 (35 projects app. **700 youth** only from North Macedonia).
- Organization of two four-day capacity building trainings on project management for representatives of CSOs and secondary schools with 52 participants (August and September 2019) and one-day workshop on financial management for grantees and partner organizations in Skopje (December 2019).
- LBO initiated establishment of “RYCO coordination group” with representatives of Government of North Macedonia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Agency for Youth and Sports, OSCE. The aim of this coordinative group is to help coordinating all activities that are related to the Chairmanship of North Macedonia of the Board of RYCO and activities related to Western Balkans Summit 2020. LBO took part in working groups on “National Strategy for One Society and for Drafting Law on Youth Law on Voluntary Work and Engagement”. Compiling MoU with the Ministry of Education and Science. The MoU is to be signed during 2020.
- Participation in more than 30 events organized by local and 3 large international conferences (e.g. “WEB Youth Conference” in Romania and “Conference e-Society: Open Institutions and Accountability” in Skopje).

- Help in the organization of event with six Youth Representatives in GB who gathered in Skopje (September 2019) to discuss and improve Co-management system RYCO GB.
- LBO had more than **100** meetings with different stakeholders, including ambassadors and attended 10 receptions of the different embassies and international organizations operating in NM.
- With help of the Agency for Youth and Sports (AYS) LBO North Macedonia got new office premises that are more convenient for work. The new project assistant Ms. Elena Mishevskaja joined the LBO in September 2019.

Local Branch Office in Serbia

- Support (mentorship, monitoring visits, evaluation and finalizing narrative and financial reports) of **11** local projects funded in the previous first open call with **14** partner organizations from Serbia.
- Organization of **6** info sessions related to the Second Open Call were organized in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Kragujevac, Novi Pazar, Zajecar and Nis (**107** participants) and support with mentors for interested organizations/schools.
- In the Second Open Call, out of 278 applicants, **28.42%** (79 applicants, CSO's and secondary schools) were from Serbia and in the Third open call, out of 100 applicants **32%** (32 schools) were from Serbia).
- Continues work with **16** grantees and **25** partners from Serbia who signed contracts in the second and third call in 2019 (32 projects).
- Organization of two capacity building trainings on project management for representatives of CSOs and secondary schools with **42** participants (September and October 2019).
- Participation in more than 20 events and conference (e.g. 4TH Regional Youth Leadership Forum 2019 Novi Sad, Youth policy in Western Balkans and Turkey: Challenges and Perspectives, organized by Divac Foundation, Belgrade).
- In 2019, a new youth representative was selected in the RYCO Governing Board. In order to successfully get to know LBO Serbia had organized a meeting for youth representative and the pillars of youth policy.
- LBO Serbia was involved in the organization of meeting of Presidents Macrone and Vučić with young people from the Western Balkans (July 2019), representing organizations supported in the First Open Call.
- Successful cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Serbia continued in 2019. LBO jointly with OSCE and OPENS (European Youth Capital Novi Sad 2019) organized the Youth Rights Talks Regional with 80 young people from WB6 (Novi Sad, December 2019) with objective to share their ideas and experiences on maintaining peace and creating a better and more inclusive region.
- In order to improve cooperation, negotiations have started for the signing of a memorandum of the cooperation with the Coordination Body for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja and Divac Foundation. Also during 2019, LBO had concrete cooperation with other partners in regional RYCO projects, primarily UNFPA and Young Researchers of Serbia.
- LBO had more than **20** meetings with different stakeholders, including ambassadors and receptions of the different embassies and international organizations operating in Serbia.
- With the support of GIZ and in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, LBO Serbia has started using a renovated and equipped office during 2019.
- Due to maternity leave there was new Head of LBO selected Ivana Antonijević in March 2019. The new project assistant Bojana Zimonjić joined the LBO in September 2019.

4.4 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 2019 to 31 December 2019, RYCO got over 270.000 page views out of which over 212.000 were the unique ones. The average time spent on a page by a single user is over 1.5 minutes, meaning that the audience following the website is interested in and focused on the content provided by RYCO. During the year, almost 79% of the website’s visitors were new ones. This fact speaks about growing and broadening of the RYCO’s audience.

Facebook – The official RYCO’s Facebook page was recognized as a verified authentic page by Facebook. At the moment of drafting this report, RYCO’s community on this social media counted over 12.500 people. 73% of the community are people aged between 18 and 34. This fact tells of a proper interest of young people for the organization’s work.

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 over 2000. During 2019, RYCO’s tweets earned over 440.000 impressions, a number that was growing throughout the year – in January 2019 there were around 28.000 tweet impressions, while in December of the same year this number almost doubled, reaching over 52.000 impressions.

Instagram – The organization was proactive on Instagram, too. With over 2.300 followers, this communication channel gathers mostly young people interested in our work – 77% of the followers are people aged between 15 and 34.

Newsletter – RYCO’s newsletter is being delivered to almost 4000 email addresses across the region and Europe. Through this communication channel, the organization is providing a monthly overview of its activities and news. Gathering a range of target groups (young people, beneficiaries, public institutions and partners), the newsletter has an average open rate of almost 40% which should be considered high bearing in mind that the average open rate for such communication channel is around 20% on the global level.

5. OPERATIONS

5.1 RYCO Human Resources

5.1.1 Recruitment Process

Human resources are considered a crucial element in developing a successful organization, as well as in improving organizational activities, employee's productivity and administration. One of the primary category of the HR field is the recruitment and screening process.

Having in mind the collected information on the project timelines, deadlines, resources, services and expectations, through the support of the donors, this process was outsourced to a relevant recruitment company based in Tirana, Albania, with primary areas of expertise in the main HR fields categories, present in the regional market since 2005. The process was coordinated from the Head Office, with the administration and contracting officer in charge.

The completion of the evaluation matrixes of each position was jointly agreed, as well as the process for scoring and the weighting of requirements. The preparation of the outline for a structured-competency based interviews for each position was an important phase in which RYCO was fully included, after which the consolidation of the evaluation matrix through a piloting phase has followed.

On 17.05.2019, RYCO published 17 project staff positions, related to the donors' projects respectively as it follows:

Project "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.

1. Project Leader
2. Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator
3. Program Assistant
4. Communication Assistant
5. Finance and Administration Assistant
6. Local Branch Office Program Assistant (Albania)
7. Local Branch Office Program Assistant (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
8. Local Branch Office Program Assistant (Kosovo)
9. Local Branch Office Program Assistant (North Macedonia)
10. Local Branch Office Program Assistant (Montenegro)
11. Local Branch Office Program Assistant (Serbia), 1st position
12. Local Branch Office Program Assistant (Serbia), 2nd position

Project "Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the Western Balkans 6" supported by the European Union (EU):

13. Project Coordinator
14. Finance and Accounting Officer
15. Project Assistant

Project “ROUTE WB6”, supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD):

16. Project coordinator
17. Finance and administration assistant

The above mentioned positions were published on the official RYCO web page, available to the following link: <https://www.rycowb.org/?p=6158>. Their respective advertisement was opened until 09.06.2019.

The Communication and Visibility Officer project staff position under the project “ROUTE WB6”, supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), was published in a so called second wave, with the 4 RYCO core staff positions, on 20.08.2019, available on the following link: <https://www.rycowb.org/?p=6377> and was opened until 20.09.2019.

The following ***RYCO core staff positions were advertised on 20.08.2019***, available on the following link: <https://www.rycowb.org/?p=6377> were opened until 20.09.2019:

- Accountant
- Office Assistant
- Director of Program and,
- Director of Operations

The screening process was conducted by outsourced Albanian company and monitored closely by RYCO Head Office employee in charge, quantity and quality wise, in order to ensure a unified and adequate process for all positions and candidates.

The recruitment process of above mentioned positions has been completed in December 2019. Around 70% of the total number of 472 applicants for the vacancies belong to the age range of 20-35 years old, meaning most of the applicants were young and with good work experience.

The major number of applicants, around 45%, were Albanian citizens. The main reason for the high number of applications from Albania it is mainly because most of the positions are based in the Head Office in Tirana. Among the rest of the Western Balkan 6, Bosnia and Herzegovina generated the highest percentage of applicants, meanwhile Montenegro generated the lowest number of applicants.

(The detailed recruitment report, including final results from 2020, will be shared with GB as soon as recruitment process is over)