



Call for Project Proposals 2025

RYCOnnecting You(th)



Guidelines for Grant Applicants

Regional Youth Cooperation Office

December 2025

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1. CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS – RYConnecting YOU(th)

1.1. Background Information

About RYCO?

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an independently functioning intergovernmental organization founded in 2016 by the Western Balkans 6 participants (WB6: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia), aiming to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation in the region through youth exchange programs. RYCO stewards and promotes regional, cross-cultural and intercultural cooperation within and among its six Western Balkans Contracting Parties (CPs). RYCO's unique governance system brings together governments and civil society to ensure young people are presented at all levels within the organization. It's local branch offices (LBOs) ensure RYCO is represented in all six Contracting Parties, while it's headquarter is based in Tirana.

RYCO's Vision

Young people are creating a culture of mobility, intercultural exchange and reconciliation. They actively contribute to democratic development, social and economic prosperity, and European integration in an increasingly open WB6. Contracting Parties in the WB6 are providing proactive support to youth exchange and youth engagement within the Contracting Parties and across the region.

RYCO's Mission

To support the regional exchange of youth and their sharing of ideas as a ground for future cooperation prospects in our region, based on the values of co-existence, tolerance, and respect for human rights and diversity, as well as commitment to inclusion and security.

To step up regional cooperation among youth and youth-dedicated institutions and ensure implementation of joint programs for young people, focusing on democratic governance, sustainable economic development, education and innovation.

To coordinate youth cooperation in the Western Balkans 6.

RYCO's overall program

The Western Balkans continue to face complex social, political, and historical challenges that directly affect young people's opportunities, mobility, and participation in regional cooperation. Persistent legacies of conflict, unresolved political relations, polarized public narratives, and limited trust between communities continue to shape young people's perceptions of one another and influence their life choices, including education, employment, mobility, and civic engagement.

* 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

While international youth exchange opportunities have existed for years, young people from the Western Balkans have had comparatively fewer structured and sustainable opportunities to engage meaningfully with their peers within the region. As a result, regional cooperation, dialogue, and reconciliation among young people remain insufficiently institutionalized and unevenly accessible. These challenges are further compounded by legal, administrative, and socio-economic barriers that continue to limit intra-regional mobility, volunteering, and participation in both formal and non-formal learning processes.

At the same time, young people in the region are increasingly exposed to distorted narratives characterized by prejudice, denial and historical revisionism. These narratives, often inherited and reinforced through social, political, and media environments, undermine trust, deepen divisions, and restrict young people's willingness and ability to engage constructively with peers from different communities and Contracting Parties.

In this context, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office plays a unique role as an intergovernmental organization mandated by the 6 Contracting Parties from the Western Balkans to promote reconciliation, trust-building, and regional cooperation among young people. Through its programs, RYCO creates structured, inclusive, and safe spaces for youth engagement across civic, social, educational, cultural, and sports domains, while ensuring that opportunities are accessible to diverse groups of young people, including those with fewer opportunities.

Beyond program implementation, RYCO actively contributes to policy dialogue and advocacy at regional and European levels, working to improve the institutional, legal, and political conditions that enable youth mobility, cooperation, and participation. In line with its Strategic Plan 2025–2027, RYCO's work is grounded in human rights, human dignity, and democratic values, and seeks to strengthen young people's agency in building peaceful, resilient, and cooperative societies across the Western Balkans.

1.2. General Objective and Scope of the Call

1.2.1. General Objective

The 7th RYCOConnecting Youth Open Call aims to strengthen youth-led reconciliation, intercultural learning, and regional cooperation across the Western Balkans by supporting high-quality, impact-oriented initiatives implemented by civil society organizations. The Call supports both emerging and experienced actors who contribute to fostering dialogue, trust, and cooperation among young people, and seeks to expand opportunities for youth engagement within the region through structured, inclusive, and sustainable initiatives.

The 7th RYCOConnecting Youth Open Call is a key implementation instrument of RYCO's Strategic Plan 2025–2027, translating the Strategy's vision and strategic pathways into concrete, youth-led action across the Western Balkans. Through this Call, RYCO supports initiatives that:

- promote regional youth exchange, intercultural learning, dialogue, and

peacebuilding;

- strengthen cooperation and partnerships among civil society organizations and relevant stakeholders active in youth, education, culture, and related fields;
- contribute to sustainable forms of regional youth cooperation that extend beyond individual project cycles.

The Call expands opportunities for young people to engage in regional exchanges, intercultural learning, dialogue, and peacebuilding. By fostering reconciliation, trust-building, and youth participation, it supports young people in developing competencies to actively contribute to peaceful, inclusive, and democratic societies. By strengthening civil society organizations and promoting regional and cross-sectoral partnerships, the Call contributes to creating enabling environments for youth cooperation. It reinforces collaboration between youth organizations, educational and cultural institutions, and other relevant stakeholders shaping youth participation and regional cooperation.

The call is designed to place a strong emphasis on sustainability, support the strengthening of existing formal and non-formal regional youth networks and the creation of new cooperation structures. This contributes to durable platforms, mechanisms, and partnerships that extend beyond individual project cycles and support long-term regional youth cooperation.

All projects funded under this call for proposals must promote and uphold the values upon which RYCO was established and align with the vision of societies where young people foster a culture of mobility, reconciliation, and intercultural exchange. Project organizers must ensure that their activities do not create further divisions among youth, but instead contribute to mutual understanding, peace, and social cohesion. Every young person participating in RYCO supported projects must be free to express themselves without fear of punishment or retribution for their beliefs. Additionally, every young person must be protected from violence, bullying, or belittlement, especially based on their identities, origin, social standing, or abilities.

For more information on the safety and protection standards in RYCO's projects, check section 2.7.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives and LOTs of the Call

This Call for Proposals is structured around two LOTs, each addressing distinct but complementary objectives contributing to RYCO's mandate of promoting reconciliation, intercultural learning, and sustainable regional youth cooperation in the Western Balkans.

Applicants are required to apply under one LOT only, based on the primary focus and intended outcomes of their project. While projects may contribute to multiple areas of RYCO's work, proposals should clearly demonstrate coherence with the selected LOT and its specific objectives.

Across all LOTs, applicants are strongly encouraged to ensure meaningful youth participation, including the active involvement of young people in the design, implementation, and reflection phases of the project, in line with RYCO's commitment to

youth-led and youth-centered approaches.

[During the assessment process, RYCO may review the alignment between the proposed activities and the selected LOT. Where appropriate, RYCO may clarify or adjust the classification of a proposal to ensure coherence with the Call's objectives. Such clarification will not negatively affect the assessment or scoring of the proposal].

LOT 1: Youth for Reconciliation, Dialogue, and Peacebuilding

LOT 1 supports regional youth initiatives that foster reconciliation, intercultural dialogue, and peacebuilding through meaningful and sustained engagement of young people across the Western Balkans. This LOT is designed to support direct, people-to-people regional engagement among young people, focusing on reconciliation, dialogue, and peacebuilding, and responding to the continued need for safe, inclusive, and meaningful spaces where young people from different backgrounds can interact, address sensitive issues, and build trust across communities.

Achieving genuine and lasting reconciliation is understood as a process that brings together individuals, groups, and societies affected by past or present conflicts and negative perceptions of “the other.” Through shared experiences, cooperation, and continuous exchange, LOT 1 aims to support initiatives that encourage young people to address and navigate differences related to the region’s historical conflicts and inherited narratives. Projects under this LOT should facilitate guided processes in safe and supportive environments, allowing young people to challenge and reframe inherited narratives and engage in meaningful intercultural learning and dialogue.

Projects should create spaces that enable young people from diverse communities, both within their Contracting Parties and across the Western Balkans, to engage with one another in constructive and respectful ways, fostering mutual understanding, dialogue, and trust.

LOT 1 is designed to support projects that:

- create spaces for youth to meet, interact, and reflect across communities affected by a divisive narratives;
- address sensitive and complex topics, including dealing with the past, through constructive, creative, and participatory approaches;
- strengthen young people’s capacities to act as agents of reconciliation and social cohesion.

LOT 1 Sub-Areas of Focus:

a. Reconciliation and Dealing with the Past

- youth-led initiatives that address contested narratives, historical memory, and the legacy of conflict through dialogue-based, educational, or creative approaches;
- activities supporting young people in exploring how dealing with the past relates to present-day challenges, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence in their communities;
- initiatives that promote respectful dialogue on sensitive topics in a safe and

inclusive environment, with appropriate attention to facilitation and safeguarding.

b. Intercultural Dialogue and Learning

- regional youth exchanges and cooperation activities that promote understanding of cultural, social, and identity-based diversity across the Western Balkans;
- activities encouraging interaction and collaboration among youth from different ethnic, linguistic, or social backgrounds;
- approaches that intentionally integrate reflection and learning components, allowing participants to process experiences and translate intercultural learning into action.

c. Youth-Led Peacebuilding and Civic Engagement

- initiatives that empower young people to actively contribute to peacebuilding, social cohesion, and democratic participation at local and regional level;
- youth-led actions that promote dialogue, non-violent communication, and constructive engagement within and across communities;
- activities strengthening young people's capacities to engage in civic life, advocate for positive change, and take responsibility as community actors.

[Applicants are encouraged to apply under the sub-area of reconciliation and dealing with the past. Applications addressing this sub-area and its related thematic dimensions will be given higher priority during the evaluation process, including in relation to financial allocation. This emphasis reflects our commitment to supporting initiatives that directly contribute to fostering peace and reconciliation in the region. By prioritizing projects within this thematic area, we aim to address critical issues and support efforts that are essential for building lasting peace and understanding among communities]

Inclusive Participation and Outreach

Inclusive participation and outreach are considered a cross-cutting measure under this LOT. To that effect, applicants are encouraged to integrate inclusive participation and outreach measures across all thematic sub-areas of this LOT, with particular attention to young people from rural areas, marginalized communities, and underrepresented groups, and to address barriers that limit participation in regional cooperation activities. Projects may include but are not limited to:

- initiatives ensuring meaningful participation of young people from rural areas, marginalized communities, or underrepresented groups in regional cooperation activities;
- targeted outreach approaches that address barriers to participation, including geographic, socio-economic, cultural, or structural obstacles;
- actions that promote equitable participation and representation of diverse youth voices within regional exchanges and dialogue processes.

Key characteristics of supported Projects

Meaningful Engagement: Projects should create meaningful and lasting interaction among young people, encouraging open dialogue, collaboration, and mutual understanding across differences.

Learning and Intercultural Exchange: Initiatives should offer structured opportunities for young people to learn about each other's communities, cultures, and perspectives through exchanges and joint activities.

Effective Use of Digital Tools: Projects are encouraged to use digital platforms creatively to support dialogue, learning, and wider youth engagement.

Design implications:

- Proposals should prioritize the quality of interaction, dialogue, and learning processes over the number of planned activities.
- Projects should be focused and realistic given the 4 to 6 months implementation period, while still generating meaningful change.

LOT 2: Supportive and Innovative Environment for formal and non-formal Regional Youth Structures

LOT 2 supports initiatives that strengthen the regional youth cooperation ecosystem by reinforcing existing formal and non-formal regional youth networks and cooperation structures, as well as by supporting the creation of new regional youth networks, platforms, or partnership models responding to emerging youth needs across the Western Balkans. This LOT is designed to strengthen the enabling environment for regional youth cooperation by supporting sustainable structures, mechanisms, and partnerships that extend beyond individual project cycles.

In line with RYCO's Strategic Plan 2025–2027, LOT 2 recognizes that sustainable regional youth cooperation requires more than stand-alone projects. It requires coordinated structures, platforms, and mechanisms that enable cooperation to continue, evolve, and scale over time. Through this LOT, RYCO aims to support initiatives that enhance coordination, governance, sustainability, and collective action within the regional youth cooperation ecosystem.

LOT 2 is designed to support projects that:

- strengthen the organizational, governance, or coordination capacities of formal and non formal existing regional youth networks and cooperation structures;
- establish new regional youth cooperation formats responding to unmet or emerging youth needs;
- contribute to sustainable mechanisms for cooperation, representation, and collective action among youth actors across the Western Balkans.

LOT 2 Sub-Areas of Focus

a. Strengthening Existing formal and non-formal Regional Youth Networks

- consolidation, expansion, or professionalization of formal and non-formal existing regional youth networks and cooperation structures operating across the WB6;
- initiatives aimed at improving internal coordination, communication, and

membership engagement within formal and non-formal established regional networks;

- development or refinement of governance arrangements, strategic planning processes, or joint action frameworks for existing regional structures;
- activities supporting the long-term sustainability and relevance of existing formal and non-formal networks within the regional youth cooperation ecosystem.

b. Creation of New Regional formal and non-formal Youth Cooperation Structures

- establishment of new thematic or cross-sectoral regional youth networks responding to unmet or emerging youth needs and priorities;
- pilot initiatives testing new models of regional youth cooperation that can be further developed or scaled beyond the grant period;
- activities supporting the initial coordination, membership-building, and positioning of newly created formal and non-formal regional youth structures.

c. Strengthen cooperation, representation, and collective advocacy

- establishment or consolidation of formal and non-formal regional youth networks representing marginalized or underrepresented groups, enabling coordinated action and peer support across the WB6;
- development of coordination and governance mechanisms that ensure meaningful representation of target groups in decision-making processes within regional youth structures;
- facilitation of collective advocacy initiatives that amplify youth voices on issues related to inclusion, equality, reconciliation, and youth participation at regional level;
- joint visibility, outreach, and communication actions that increase the recognition of marginalized youth perspectives in regional cooperation and policy-relevant discussions.

Key Characteristics of Supported Projects

Sustainability and Governance: Projects should demonstrate clear consideration of sustainability beyond the project period, including appropriate coordination, and long-term relevance of the supported structure or network.

Regional Added Value: Initiatives should clearly demonstrate the benefits of regional cooperation, including collaboration across multiple Contracting Parties and contribution to the broader regional youth cooperation ecosystem.

Innovation and Learning: Projects are encouraged to test, refine, or strengthen innovative approaches to regional youth cooperation, while integrating learning and reflection to inform future development.

Design Implications

- Both existing and newly established regional youth networks are welcomed,

- provided they demonstrate clear regional added value;
- Both formal and non-formal networks are eligible, provided they demonstrate a clear organizational structure, defined roles and responsibilities among partners, and the capacity to effectively implement and manage the proposed action;
- Projects must clearly articulate whether they aim to strengthen an existing structure or establish a new one, and provide a clear rationale for this choice;
- Projects must clearly state whether they are implemented through a formal or non-formal structure and justify this choice in relation to the project's scope, partnership composition, and long-term sustainability.
- Sustainability, governance, innovation, and learning are central considerations within the 4 to 6 months implementation period, and proposals should remain focused and realistic while aiming to generate meaningful impact.

[RYCO is committed to fostering inclusion and diversity through all of its work. This means ensuring that individuals and groups with different backgrounds and capabilities are culturally and socially accepted, welcomed, valued, and enabled to participate equally. When organizing youth activities, it is of utmost importance for RYCO to ensure that every person has equal opportunity as a prerequisite, regardless of their origin, age, race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, educational level, socioeconomic status, or capabilities.]

1.3. Duration and Key parameters of the call

Projects supported under the 7th RYCOConnecting Youth Open Call are expected to be regional in scope and designed in line with RYCO's mandate to promote youth cooperation, reconciliation, and sustainable regional engagement across the Western Balkans.

All projects funded under this Call must:

- have a minimum duration of four (4) months and a maximum duration of six (6) months;
- involve partners from at least two RYCO Contracting Parties (WB6), demonstrating clear regional added value;
- be implemented by civil society organizations in line with the selected LOT and its specific objectives.

Applicants are required to submit proposals under one LOT only, based on the primary focus and intended outcomes of the proposed project. While projects may contribute to multiple thematic or cross-cutting areas of RYCO's work, proposals must clearly demonstrate coherence with the selected LOT.

Projects should be designed to be focused, realistic, and proportionate to the implementation period, while aiming to achieve meaningful results and contribute to sustainable forms of regional youth cooperation beyond the duration of the grant.

Grantees will be required to participate in RYCO-organized capacity-building, coordination, or learning activities related to the implementation of the Call.

1.4. Financial Allocation Provided by RYCO

The overall financial envelope available for this Call for Proposals is EUR 300,000. RYCO reserves the right not to award all available funds, depending on the quality of proposals received and the outcome of the evaluation and selection process.

Size of Grants

Any grant requested under this Call for Proposals must fall within the following range:

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 20,000
- Maximum grant amount: EUR 30,000

The final grant amount awarded to each selected project will be determined based on the approved project budget, the quality and scope of the proposed activities, and the overall financial envelope available under the Call.

Applicants are encouraged to design realistic and cost-effective budgets that are proportionate to the proposed activities, duration, and expected results of the project.

Indicative Number of Grants

RYCO foresees funding up to 15 projects under this Call. The final number of grants awarded may vary depending on the requested grant amounts, the quality of applications received, and the need to ensure a balanced and coherent portfolio of supported projects.

Allocation Across LOTs and Geographic Balance

Funding under this Call will be allocated across LOT 1 and LOT 2 based on the quality and relevance of proposals, their alignment with the objectives of the respective LOTs, and overall portfolio considerations.

In allocating funds, RYCO will seek to ensure a diverse and balanced portfolio of projects, taking into account:

- representation across both LOTs;
- geographic coverage across the Western Balkans 6;
- complementarity between supported initiatives.

RYCO aims to ensure balanced regional representation, subject to the fulfilment of minimum quality requirements. For the purpose of determining geographic balance, the Contracting Party of registration of the Lead Applicant will be taken into consideration.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

This section sets out the rules governing the submission, selection, and implementation of projects financed under this Call for Proposals. These Guidelines are available on the RYCO website: www.rycowb.org

2.1. Eligibility criteria

There are three sets of eligibility criteria in this call, relating to:

The actors:

- the Lead Applicant (section 2.2.1);
- the Partner(s) (section 2.2.2);

The activities:

- activities for which a grant may be awarded (sections 2.3–2.6);

The costs:

- types of costs that may be considered eligible for funding (sections 2.9–2.11).

2.2. Eligibility of Actors

2.2.1 Lead Applicant

To be eligible for a grant, the **Lead Applicant** must:

- a) be a legal entity; and
- b) be a non-profit civil society organization (CSO) established in one of the six Western Balkans Contracting Parties at least one year prior to the launch of this Call for Proposals.

The Lead Applicant must not be in a situation of bankruptcy, insolvency, winding-up, suspension of activities, or any analogous situation arising from local legislation. The Lead Applicant must be in compliance with obligations relating to the payment of taxes and social security contributions under the law of the Contracting Party in which it is established.

Organizations that employ, are represented by, or are overseen by members of RYCO's statutory bodies (i.e. the Governing Board or Advisory Board) are not eligible to apply. Such cases constitute a conflict of interest and will result in rejection of the application.

Grants to individuals are not eligible under this Call.

The Lead Applicant must apply together with at least one partner from another Contracting Party in the Western Balkan.

If awarded a grant, the Lead Applicant becomes the Beneficiary and assumes full responsibility for the implementation of the project. The Lead Applicant represents and acts on behalf of all partners and coordinates the overall design, implementation, and reporting of the project.

Number of Applications

- Lead Applicant may submit only one (1) application under this Call.
- Lead Applicant may participate as a partner in only one (1) additional application.

An organization may therefore appear in a maximum of two (2) applications, one as Lead Applicant and one as partner. If an organization appears in more applications than permitted, all applications involving that organization will be automatically rejected.

Alongside the Application Form, the Lead Applicant must submit a Declaration by the Applicant, completed, signed, and stamped, as defined in the List of Supporting Documents.

2.2.2 Partner(s) and collaborators

Each Lead Applicant must apply with **at least one partner registered in a different Western Balkans Contracting Party than that of the Lead Applicant.**

Eligible Partners

Eligible partners must:

- be non-profit civil society organizations;
- be established as legal entities at least one year prior to the launch of this Call;
- be registered in one of the WB6 Contracting Parties.

Partners are expected to actively participate in all phases of the project, including design, implementation, and follow-up. Costs incurred by partners are eligible under the same conditions as those incurred by the Lead Applicant.

The Lead Applicant must submit Declarations by the Partners, completed, signed, and stamped, together with the Application Form.

A project may include:

- a minimum of one (1) partner; and
- a maximum of five (5) partners.

Having partners from more than one additional Contracting Party will be considered an advantage.

Collaborators

Collaborators may support the project through expertise, outreach, or resources but do not receive grant funding and are not required to submit declarations. Eligible collaborators include:

- cultural institutions (public or private);

- sports associations and organizations;
- educational institutions (public or private);
- informal youth groups with a proven track record of working with young people.

The Lead Applicant is not required to submit Declarations by the Collaborators.

RYCO does not provide direct support to the applicants for the creation of partnerships but provides information on platforms that serve the purpose of facilitating partnerships. During the promotion of this call for applications, RYCO will also provide prospective applicants with local and regional info sessions which can serve as platforms for facilitating partnerships.

2.3. Eligible Activities

A project consists of a coherent set of activities contributing to the General Objective and the LOT specific objectives of the Call.

Projects must:

- fall under one LOT only;
- be designed and implemented in partnership;
- comply with the provisions of sections 2.3–2.6 of these Guidelines.

2.4. Duration

Projects must have a duration of:

- minimum: 4 months
- maximum: 6 months.

2.5. Location(s)

All the project activities financed by RYCO must take place in one or more of the Western Balkans 6 Contracting Parties (WB6): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

2.6. Target groups

The eligible target group under this Call consists of young people aged 14–30 from the WB6.

Applications must indicate:

- the number of direct participants;
- the number of indirect participants
- gender-disaggregated data (where possible);
- measures ensuring inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

The application form should indicate the exact number of targeted participants in the project, classified by gender (where possible). It should describe how the actors plan to include youth from the most excluded groups such as:

- Persons with physical disabilities
- Persons with developmental challenges
- Gender minority
- Ethnic minority
- Religious minority
- Roma
- LGBTQI+
- Living in poverty
- Living in remote area with limited or no access to social structures, youth services
- Living in remote area without internet connections
- Youth not in employment, education and training
- Youth without parental care
- Youth exposed to conflict, violence and/or bullying
- Youth involved in conflict with the law
- Youth discriminated on basis of ethnicity

Significant involvement of the most excluded and vulnerable youth groups, particularly supporting their social inclusion and participation in decision-making, will be considered an advantage, especially the involvement of youth who did not have any opportunity to travel and participate in any similar projects. Projects must ensure gender balance in the selection of participants (at least 40% of the less-represented sex).

Meaningful youth participation throughout project design, implementation, and reflection is strongly encouraged and will be positively assessed.

RYCO pays particular attention to the scope of direct beneficiary outreach and will assess proposals based on the extent to which the number of young participants is appropriate and proportionate to the project's objectives and design.

2.7. Types of Activities

The activities proposed under this Call for Proposals must be planned and implemented in partnership, as described in section 2.2.2 of these Guidelines, and must contribute directly to the General Objective and the specific objectives of the selected LOT.

Each project **must include at least one regional intercultural youth exchange**, with a minimum duration of five (5) days, including travel days.

The topics and activities eligible for funding under this Call for Proposals are indicative and non-exhaustive and are presented below to support applicants in designing relevant and coherent projects.

LOT 1 – Youth for Reconciliation, Dialogue, and Peacebuilding

a. Reconciliation and Dealing with the Past

Sample activities may include:

- Activities that support youth dialogues bringing together young people from communities that do not typically interact, to discuss contested narratives and shared histories, facilitated by trained moderators.
- Creative labs (theatre, storytelling, podcasts, exhibitions, short films) where youth reflect on the legacy of conflict and its impact on today's communities.
- Community-based workshops linking historical reflection with present-day issues such as trust, coexistence, and social cohesion.
- Safe-space discussions on sensitive topics, supported by safeguarding measures and psychosocial support when needed.

b. Intercultural Dialogue and Learning

Sample activities may include:

- Regional youth exchanges involving participants from at least two WB6 Contracting Parties.
- Joint learning camps or intercultural weekends combining experiential learning, teamwork, and reflection sessions.
- Peer-to-peer learning activities where youth share traditions, identities, and local realities through interactive formats.
- Reflection sessions (journals, group debriefs, digital storytelling) to translate intercultural experiences into learning outcomes and follow-up actions.

c. Youth-Led Peacebuilding and Civic Engagement

Sample activities may include:

- Youth-designed local peace actions (dialogue events, campaigns, community initiatives) responding to local tensions or divisions.
- Training workshops on non-violent communication, mediation, and civic participation, followed by practical application.
- Youth forums or town-hall style meetings connecting young people with local decision-makers on peace and participation issues.
- Micro-initiatives led by youth groups addressing social cohesion in their communities.

LOT 2 – Supportive and Innovative Environment for formal and non-formal Regional Youth Structures

a. Strengthening Existing formal and non-formal Regional Youth Networks

Sample activities may include:

- Strategic planning retreats for existing regional youth networks to define priorities, governance, and joint actions;
- Development of coordination tools (membership systems, internal communication

platforms, shared calendars).

- Capacity-building for network leadership on sustainability, fundraising, and advocacy.
- Review and improvement of governance structures, statutes, or operating procedures for existing formal youth structures

b. Creation of New formal and non-formal Regional Youth Cooperation Structures

Sample activities may include:

- Establishment of new thematic regional youth networks (establishment of regional youth structure dedicated to youth with hearing or visual impairments, establishment of regional youth structures for high school unions, establishment of regional youth structure for youth belonging to disadvantaged minority groups).
- Formalization of informal regional initiatives through agreements, governance models, and action plans.
- Pilot cooperation models testing new ways of regional collaboration (hybrid formats, digital platforms, cross-sector partnerships).
- Initial membership mapping, outreach, and positioning of new regional structures.

c. Strengthening Cooperation, Representation and Collective Advocacy

Sample activities may include:

- Formation or strengthening of regional networks representing marginalized or underrepresented youth groups.
- Development of inclusive governance mechanisms ensuring meaningful representation in decision-making.
- Joint advocacy campaigns or policy dialogues amplifying youth voices on reconciliation, inclusion, and participation.
- Coordinated regional communication actions increasing visibility of marginalized youth perspectives.

Applicants are encouraged to ensure that project activities reflect RYCO's core thematic priorities, including reconciliation, intercultural dialogue, youth participation, and inclusion. These themes may be addressed throughout the project activities and do not need to be organized as separate or standalone sessions.

2.8. Visibility

Applicants are required to ensure appropriate visibility and communication of the project activities and results. As part of the Application Form, applicants must submit a communication and visibility plan outlining the proposed communication objectives, target audiences, channels, and key messages.

If selected for funding, beneficiaries will be required to:

- visibly acknowledge RYCO's financial support in all communication and visibility materials;

- comply with RYCO Visibility and Communication Guidelines, which will be provided to successful applicants;
- coordinate communication activities with RYCO to ensure consistency in messaging, branding, and public representation.

Beneficiaries and partners are encouraged to cooperate closely with the RYCO Communication Team when developing communication materials. Draft materials (including visual content, publications, online content, and promotional materials) should be shared with the RYCO Communication Team for review and feedback prior to publication, in accordance with the Visibility and Communication Guidelines.

RYCO reserves the right to use, free of charge and without time limitation, all materials produced within supported projects for institutional communication, visibility, and promotional purposes, with due respect for applicable data protection and safeguarding standards.

2.9. Safety and Protection

If supported, the applicants and partners will have to align their activities with the RYCO Safety and Protection Guidelines. RYCO is committed to ensuring the safety, dignity, and well-being of all young people involved in projects supported under this Call for Proposals. All applicants and partners must design and implement their activities in line with RYCO's Safety and Protection Guidelines, which will be provided to successful applicants.

Projects must be implemented in a manner that prevents harm, promotes respectful interaction, and ensures that all participants especially minors and young people from vulnerable or marginalized backgrounds are protected from abuse, exploitation, discrimination, violence, bullying, or any form of inappropriate behavior.

Applicants are required to:

- assess potential risks related to project activities and participant engagement;
- put in place appropriate safeguarding and protection measures, proportionate to the nature of the activities and target groups;
- ensure that staff, volunteers, facilitators, and partners involved in project implementation are aware of and adhere to RYCO's safety and protection standards;
- establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to any safety or protection concerns that may arise during project implementation.

RYCO applies a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of abuse, harassment, exploitation, discrimination, or violence. RYCO stands firmly against such violations and empowers its employees, associates, and partners to prevent them, speak up against them, and when noticed, immediately report them to the respective authority. Any breach of safety and protection standards may result in immediate corrective measures, suspension of activities, or termination of the grant agreement, in line with contractual provisions.

By submitting an application under this Call, applicants confirm their commitment to upholding RYCO's safety and protection principles and to creating safe, inclusive, and

respectful environments for all young people involved in project activities.

2.10. Eligibility of Costs

Only eligible costs can be covered by the grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for eligible costs.

Contributions by the applicants:

- a) Lead Applicants with an annual budget of less than EUR 50,000:
 - RYCO may cover up to 95% of the total eligible project costs.
- b) Lead Applicants with an annual budget between EUR 50,000 and EUR 300,000:
 - RYCO may cover up to 85% of the total eligible project costs.
- c) Lead Applicants with an annual budget of more than EUR 300,000:
 - RYCO may cover up to 75% of the total eligible project costs.

The remaining costs must be covered by the Lead Applicant and/or partners through their own resources or other eligible funding sources.

2.10.1. Eligible Direct and Indirect Costs

2.10.1.1. Eligible Direct Costs

Eligible direct costs are costs that occurs during the implementation of the project and are directly related to it and are necessary for carrying out the approved activities. These may include, but are not limited to:

a) Staff costs

Costs of staff assigned to the project, corresponding to actual gross salaries, including social security charges and excluding performance-based bonuses. Salaries must not exceed those normally borne by the Beneficiary and/or partners. RYCO may request supporting documents such as contracts, payslips, timesheets, and calculation methods during reporting.

b) Travel and subsistence costs

Travel and subsistence costs for staff and other participants involved in the project, in line with the Beneficiary's and partners' internal rules and applicable as per local legislation. Private vehicle use must follow the rates defined in the budget instructions.

c) Equipment and supplies

Rental costs for equipment (new or used) and supplies necessary for project implementation, provided they are rented or depreciated in accordance with applicable legislation and usual accounting practices.

d) Consumables

Costs of consumable items directly linked to project activities.

e) Services and external expertise

Costs of services, supplies, and contracts awarded for the purposes of the project, including fees for external experts, trainers, facilitators, translators, interpreters, designers, and similar services.

f) Project-related operational costs

Costs deriving directly from RYCO contractual requirements, including visibility and communication, monitoring and evaluation, translation, reproduction, insurance, and other necessary operational costs.

g) Taxes, duties, and bank fees

Taxes, duties, and charges, as well as bank fees, provided they are unavoidable and directly linked to project implementation.

2.10.1.2. Eligible indirect costs

The Indirect costs are costs incurred during the implementation of the project that cannot be directly attributed to a specific activity but are necessary for project delivery. These may include, but are not limited to, stationery, telephone, internet, courier services, and financial service charges.

Indirect costs:

- may be covered by a flat rate;
- must not exceed 7% of the total eligible direct costs;
- must not include costs already allocated under another budget heading.

The Lead Applicant may be requested to justify the proposed indirect cost percentage prior to contract signature. Once approved, no supporting documents are required for indirect costs during reporting. RYCO reserves the right to request clarifications during the final financial review.

RYCO reserves the right to request clarifications regarding the final report, including any costs related to indirect expenses.

2.10.2. Ineligible Costs

The following costs are not eligible for funding by RYCO:

- customs and import duties, or any other related charges;
- purchases of land, any means of transport, or buildings;
- fines, financial penalties, and expenses of litigation;
- contributions in kind;
- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;

- currency exchange losses;
- any leasing costs;
- depreciation costs;
- credit to third parties;
- performance-based bonus staff costs.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

3.1. Application Process

Before submitting an application, applicants are required to:

- complete the Application Form;
- complete the Budget Form in EUR;
- complete, sign, stamp, scan, and upload the Declarations by the Applicant and the Partner(s) using the templates provided by RYCO.

Applications must be submitted in English.

Handwritten form submissions will not be accepted.

Any error related to the checklist of the Application Form or any major inconsistency in the application (e.g. inconsistencies between budget worksheets) may result in rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested where the information provided is unclear and prevents RYCO from conducting an objective assessment of the proposal.

Only the documents explicitly listed in these Guidelines will be taken into consideration during the evaluation process. Additional documents must not be submitted.

3.2. Supportive Documents

The Lead Applicant must submit the following supporting documents on behalf of the consortium:

- a copy of the valid legal entity registration document;
- a copy of the valid legal entity registration document for it's Partner(s)
- a copy of the statute or other official document confirming the organization's mandate;
- a copy of the statute or other official document confirming the organization's mandate for it's Partner(s)
- Declarations by the Applicant, completed, signed, stamped, scanned, and uploaded using the RYCO template;
- Declarations by the Partner(s), completed, signed, stamped, scanned, and uploaded using the RYCO template;
- a copy of the balance sheet and income statement for the last completed financial year, certified by a chartered accountant or authorized institution, or an equivalent document;
- a certificate from the relevant tax authority confirming that the Lead Applicant has fulfilled all tax obligations in accordance with local legislation.

RYCO reserves the right to request original documents at any stage of the selection or contracting process.

Please note that both the Lead Applicant and Partner(s) must have been legally established at least one year prior to the launch of this Call.

Applicants shortlisted for funding will be requested to submit:

- Administrative Identification Form (Word format);
- Financial Identification Form (bank account details).

3.3. Where and How to Send Applications

Applications must be submitted exclusively via the online application platform, accessible through the official RYCO website: www.rycowb.org

Upon registration on the platform, applicants will be able to:

- access and complete the Application Form;
- upload the required annexes and supporting documents in PDF format;
- upload the Activity Timeline, where applicable.

Applications submitted by any other means (e.g. email, fax, post, or physical delivery) or to any other address will not be accepted.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their application is complete by checking the checklist included in the Application Form. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

3.4. Deadline for Submission of Applications

The deadline for submission of applications is: 13 February 2026.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. The online platform will automatically close after the deadline.

3.5. Further Information About Application Process

Information sessions related to this Call for Proposals will be organized in each of RYCO's Contracting Parties prior to the application deadline. Dates and details will be published on the RYCO website: www.rycowb.org

Before contacting RYCO, applicants are strongly encouraged to consult the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) available on the website.

Requests for clarification may be submitted only by email to: grants@rycowb.org

Questions must be submitted no later than three (3) days before the application deadline.

The subject line of the email must read:

“RYCO CfP– Request for Clarification”

Questions must relate strictly to the interpretation of the Guidelines and not to individual project ideas. RYCO will not respond to questions submitted after the deadline for clarifications, nor to questions submitted by phone or post.

All relevant updates and notifications related to the evaluation process will be published on the RYCO website. Applicants are therefore advised to regularly consult the website to remain informed throughout the procedure.

Before contacting RYCO, applicants should read in detail the available FAQs.

During the evaluation procedure, all important notices for applicants will be posted on the RYCO website. It is therefore recommended to visit the website regularly, to stay informed about the grant evaluation process.

4. EVALUATION OF THE SELECTED APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by RYCO with the support of external independent assessors. All applications will be assessed in accordance with the procedures and criteria described below.

If, at any stage of the evaluation process, it is established that an application does not meet the administrative or eligibility requirements, the application will be rejected on that basis alone and will not proceed to further assessment stages.

4.1. Evaluations of the Applications

Evaluation of the project proposals will be conducted in three consecutive steps:

Step 1: Opening, Administrative and Eligibility Check:

Applications will first be subject to an administrative and eligibility check to verify:

- compliance with the formal requirements set out in these Guidelines;
- completeness of the application and supporting documents, as listed in the Application Form checklist;
- eligibility of the Lead Applicant, partner(s), activities, and costs in accordance with Sections 2.1–2.6 and 2.9–2.11 of these Guidelines.

Applications that fail to meet the administrative requirements, do not satisfy the eligibility criteria, or do not include all required supporting documents will not be considered for further evaluation.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of this step via official email communication.

Step 2: Assessment and Selection Process:

All applications that pass Step 1 will be evaluated by independent external experts based on the quality criteria and scoring grid outlined below.

Quality Assessment of Project Idea	
CRITERIA	POINTS
<p>Relevance of the project</p> <p>Assessors will evaluate the extent to which the project proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of the challenges, needs, and realities faced by young people in the proposed context. In particular, assessors will examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relevance of the project to the general objective of the Call and the specific LOT objectives selected by the applicant. • The degree to which the project responds to peacebuilding, reconciliation, intercultural dialogue, youth participation, or regional cooperation challenges. • The potential of the project to be inclusive, especially regarding diverse youth backgrounds and fewer-opportunity groups. • The likelihood that the project will generate meaningful and transformative effects for participants and their communities. 	30
<p>Quality and suitability of methodology</p> <p>Assessors will evaluate whether the proposed methodology is coherent, realistic, and appropriate for achieving the stated objectives within the proposed timeframe.</p> <p>Special attention will be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The clarity and feasibility of the activity design, sequencing, and timeline. • The quality and depth of interaction among participants, particularly in terms of dialogue, cooperation, and learning. • The extent to which learning, reflection, and participation are intentionally integrated into the project design. • The potential of the proposed activities to produce visible results and inspire replication or follow-up actions beyond the project duration. 	30
<p>Relevance and potential of the project partnership</p> <p>Assessors will examine the composition and quality of the project partnership and its capacity to effectively deliver the proposed intervention.</p> <p>This includes assessing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complementarity of partners' roles, expertise, and experience in relation to project objectives. • The extent to which all partners are meaningfully involved in design, implementation, and learning processes. • The diversity and intercultural nature of the partnership, including cross-community cooperation. • For LOT 2 the potential of the partnership to strengthen or create sustainable regional cooperation structures. 	25

Project management capacity and learning Assessors will evaluate the applicant's capacity to manage the project effectively and ensure responsible use of resources. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost-effectiveness and clarity of the proposed budget in relation to planned activities. • The applicant's and partners' capacity to manage risks and adapt to challenges during implementation. • The adequacy of monitoring, evaluation, and learning measures to track progress and results. • The potential for the project to contribute to longer-term learning, sustainability, or development, particularly relevant for LOT 2. 	15
TOTAL	100

The assessment results lead to the establishment of a shortlist (top-scored projects per Contracting Party).

Step 3: Assessment based on strategic criteria of RYCO

As a final step of the assessment process, RYCO's Selection Committee reviews the shortlist in line with the strategic criteria outlined below.

Strategic criteria of RYCO's Selection Committee	
CRITERIA	POINTS
Likelihood of positive impact and multiplier effects Projects will be assessed based on their potential to create meaningful and lasting impact on the target groups. Special attention will be given to initiatives that demonstrate sustainability, inspire follow-up actions, or generate learning and effects beyond the direct project participants.	25
Strategic relevance of the project for RYCO's portfolio Projects will be evaluated on how well they align with RYCO's Strategic Plan 2025–2027 and contribute to a diverse and balanced project portfolio. Priority will be given to initiatives that bring added value through innovative approaches, thematic relevance, and inclusive engagement.	25
TOTAL	50

Submission of the supporting documents

The applicants must submit list of supporting document during application process as listed in the "List of supporting documents". The applicants who fail to submit the

documents as requested will not be considered for further assessment by RYCO.

If at any point in the selection process, RYCO notices that the applicant doesn't fulfill the eligibility criteria as set by this Call for Projects, the application will be rejected.

4.2. Program and budget negotiations

Applicants whose proposals are included on the preliminary selection list will be invited to enter a program and budget clarification and negotiation phase prior to contracting.

During this phase, RYCO will provide written feedback on the proposed project activities and budget. Applicants are expected to revise and refine their proposals in line with this feedback before the grant agreement is finalized.

Program-related feedback will focus on:

- strengthening the coherence and clarity of the proposed activities;
- enhancing the quality and impact of exchanges and learning processes;
- ensuring alignment with the objectives of the selected LOT and the overall objectives of the Call;
- identifying opportunities to maximize the project's contribution to reconciliation, dialogue, and regional youth cooperation.

Budget-related feedback will focus on:

- ensuring consistency between the proposed activities and the budget;
- correcting any arithmetical or technical errors;
- improving cost-efficiency and proportionality of budget lines in relation to planned activities and expected results;
- ensuring compliance with the eligibility rules for costs.

In line with RYCO's commitment to broad and meaningful youth engagement, particular attention will be given to the number of direct youth beneficiaries. Where feasible and appropriate, RYCO may propose adjustments aimed at increasing the number of young participants, provided that such changes do not compromise the quality, safety, or coherence of the proposed activities.

Successful completion of the program and budget negotiation phase is a prerequisite for the signing of the grant agreement. Failure to adequately address the requested revisions may result in the withdrawal of the funding offer.

4.3. Notification of RYCO's Decision

Following the completion of the program and budget negotiation phase, RYCO will notify all applicants in writing of the final outcome of the evaluation process.

Selected applicants will receive information on the next steps, including the signing of the Grant Agreement and the modalities of the financial transfer to the indicated bank account. Unsuccessful applicants will also be informed accordingly.

The final list of approved proposals will be published on RYCO's official website after the Grant Agreements with the selected applicants have been successfully concluded.

5. **INDICATIVE TIMETABLE**

Activity	Date	Time
Launching the Call for Project Proposals	31 December 2025	
Deadline for requesting any clarifications from RYCO	10 February 2026	23.59
Deadline for submission of the applications	13 February 2026	23.59
Administrative and Eligibility Check	16 – 21 February 2026	
Assessment and Selection Process	23 February – 14 March 2026	
Preliminary List published on the RYCO website	6 April 2026	
Budget Clearance and Contracting	24 April 2026	
Final List published on the RYCO website	26 April 2026	

All times are in the Central European Time zone. This indicative timetable may be updated by RYCO during the procedure, in which case the updated timetable will be posted on the RYCO website.

6. **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

Following the decision to award a grant, selected applicants will be offered a Grant Contract. By submitting the Application Form, the Lead Applicant confirms that, if awarded a grant, it agrees to accept the contractual conditions set out by RYCO.

Prior to the signing of the Grant Contract, selected applicants will be required to submit the following documents within the deadline communicated by RYCO:

- Financial Identification Form
- Legal Entity Form

Failure to submit these documents within the prescribed timeframe may result in the withdrawal of the grant offer.

The number of grant instalments, payment schedule, and specific contractual conditions will be defined during the contracting phase.

RYCO reserves the right to update the indicative timeline of the Call if the decision-making or contracting process requires additional time. All updates will be communicated on the RYCO website and official correspondence.

Depending on the quality of proposals received and portfolio considerations, RYCO reserves the right to award fewer projects than initially foreseen under each LOT and/or to reallocate available funds between LOTs.

6.1. Complaints Procedure

All applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of Step 1 (Administrative and Eligibility Check).

Applicants who have not successfully passed Step 1 may file a complaint within five calendar days from the date of receipt of the written notification.

Complaints must:

- be submitted only by the Lead Applicant (not partners or collaborators);
- be submitted in writing to: grants@rycowb.org;
- be written in English;
- be addressed to the Complaints Committee;
- be signed and stamped (where applicable) by the legal representative of the Lead Applicant;
- clearly describe the alleged procedural irregularity and reference the relevant provisions of the Guidelines for Applicants.

Complaints that do not meet these requirements will not be considered.

The Complaints Committee will assess whether the complaint is confirmed in line of these Guidelines and applicable legislation. Applicants will receive a written response within five calendar days of receipt of the complaint.

The decision of the Complaints Committee is final.

6.2. Reporting

During the project implementation, the grantee is expected to regularly report on the project progress to RYCO as outlined in the Grant Contract.

The grantee will be required to submit a final narrative and financial report, no later than 30 days after the official project completion, using RYCO templates annexed to the Grant Contract. For means of monitoring and coaching RYCO may request an interim financial and narrative report.

6.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are integral components of project implementation.

Specifically, grantees are required to:

- conduct internal monitoring and evaluation activities as outlined in the approved Application Form;
- participate in RYCO's monitoring and evaluation processes, as specified in the Grant Contract;
- provide RYCO, upon request, with all documentation related to project implementation.

RYCO will assess project implementation, follow-up actions, dissemination of results, and sustainability measures.

Grantees must document all visibility and communication activities, including media coverage, campaigns, publications, and digital outputs, and share these materials with RYCO on a regular basis.

Participation in project activities must be documented through participant and staff lists.

Participant and staff lists must include a disclaimer confirming consent for data use by RYCO and the donor, in line with data protection requirements.

Grantees may also be invited to contribute to research, evaluations, or learning processes conducted by RYCO or its partners. Standardized evaluation forms provided by RYCO must be used for all activities.

6.4. Sustainability

RYCO aims to support projects that generate lasting impact beyond the grant period and extend benefits beyond direct beneficiaries.

Applicants are expected to consider sustainability throughout project design and implementation and to outline realistic strategies for sustaining project results, partnerships, learning outcomes, or cooperation mechanisms in the relevant sections of the Application Form.

Sustainability may include, but is not limited to:

- continuation of cooperation between partners;
- integration of project results into ongoing organizational work;
- follow-up actions or scaling of activities;
- contribution to longer-term regional youth cooperation structures or processes.

For projects funded under LOT 2: Supportive and Innovative Environment for Regional Youth Structures, sustainability is a central consideration and should be addressed explicitly. In this context, applicants are expected to demonstrate how the supported initiative will contribute to the continuity, relevance, and functionality of regional youth cooperation structures beyond the six-month implementation period.

This may include, for example:

- clear governance or coordination arrangements for newly created or strengthened networks;

- mechanisms for ongoing communication, coordination, and decision-making among members;
- strategies for maintaining member engagement and regional cooperation activities after project completion;
- identification of potential future funding sources, partnerships, or institutional support;
- plans for learning, adaptation, and further development of the supported structure or network.

While RYCO does not expect newly established networks to be fully institutionalized within the project period, proposals under LOT 2 should demonstrate credible pathways toward sustainability, proportional to the scope, maturity, and objectives of the initiative.

7. LIST OF DOCUMENTS

All documents listed below are available on the RYCO website and must be submitted in accordance with the instructions set out in these Guidelines.

7.1. Documents to Be Completed and Submitted

Only PDF files may be uploaded to the online application platform. Files submitted in other formats will not be accepted by the system, and the application will be considered incomplete.

Applicants must submit the following documents as part of their application:

- a) Activity Methodology and Timeline (Excel format);
- b) List of Supporting Documents, including all required declarations and attachments (PDF format), as specified in the List of Supporting Documents.

Failure to submit all required documents in the correct format by the deadline will result in rejection of the application.

Documents Required at a Later Stage (Only for Selected Applicants)

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be requested to submit the following documents prior to contract signature:

- Financial Identification Form;
- Legal Entity Form.

These documents will be requested by RYCO during the contracting phase and must not be submitted at the application stage.

7.2. Documents for Information

- Informative Grant Application Form
- General Information on Call for Proposals
- Guidelines for Grant Applicants

8. FINAL PROVISIONS

RYCO reserves the right to amend, suspend, or cancel this Call for Proposals at any time, in whole or in part, in accordance with its internal rules and procedures. Any such changes will be communicated in a timely manner through RYCO's official website.

RYCO shall not be liable for any costs incurred by applicants in the preparation or submission of applications under this Call.

Submission of an application under this Call for Proposals implies acceptance of the rules and conditions set out in these Guidelines.