



REGIONAL YOUTH COOPERATION OFFICE - RYCO

LOCAL BRANCH OFFICE - NORTH MACEDONIA

WHO WE ARE

Established by the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia (called Contracting Parties or WB6 Governments), in July 2016 within the Berlin Process, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is the intergovernmental organization fostering peace, reconciliation, and cooperation among youth in the Western Balkan 6 (WB6), through youth exchanges.

WHERE DO WE OPERATE

The RYCO Local Branch Office (LBO) in North Macedonia is located in Skopje and implements activities across the whole contracting party. Our goal is to support youth, civil society organizations (CSOs), high schools, and universities by promoting meaningful youth engagement, participation, and collaboration. We work to strengthen local youth initiatives in line with RYCO's core values, strategies, and principles while providing exchange opportunities for young people.

OUR ENGAGEMENT

The LBO in North Macedonia connects local youth with the wider Western Balkans, supporting RYCO's strategic goals and values. Established in 2017, it gained official status as an international governmental entity in 2023, recognized by North Macedonia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Open Calls: Through open calls, we supported *14* Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) by awarding grants for projects that promote collaboration among regional civil society and youth and *2* CSOs within RYCOgnizing YPS grant scheme. Additionally, LBO North Macedonia has partnered on initiatives launched by other RYCO Contracting Parties, facilitating the exchange of many young people from North Macedonia and across the Western Balkans 6 (WB6).

Superschools: Throughout four program cycles, *63 high schools* in North Macedonia were supported, participating in *126 regional exchanges* for students and teachers.

The Western Balkans Youth Cultural Fund: Through these open calls, we support *9 CSOs*, *8 cultural practitioners*, and *3 "Peace Champions"* from North Macedonia to implement cultural initiatives.

Hajde: LBO North Macedonia supported the "Hajde" program by organizing local events and meetings, as well as providing equipment to *20 young journalists* from two faculties. They produced *20 youth-focused stories* and created *10 podcasts* on youth participation and regional cooperation.

Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurship (RISE): LBO North Macedonia's RISE program has helped young entrepreneurs develop and fund social business ideas, supporting *118 individuals* and *40 teams* in *10 cities* during its first two cycles. The program also hosted the second RISE Regional Forum in Skopje, gathering over *150 social entrepreneurs* to share their success stories.

Western Balkans Meet Japan (MIRAI): Our collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan allows youth from the Western Balkans, including North Macedonia, to travel to Japan each year for a unique intercultural experience.

OUR INITIATIVES

The Local Branch Office in North Macedonia has launched several initiatives to promote RYCO values, approaches, and regional cooperation.

Regional Summer Camp: Over *100 young people* have come together to be empowered as peer educators in RYCO's key focus areas. The first camp took place in Mavrovo in partnership with the GIZ Sport for Development Program and the Forum ZFD Foundation, bringing together *55 participants* in line with recommendations from the conference. The initiative continued in 2024 with a second camp in Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which engaged more than *50 young people*.

**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.*

63

HIGH
SCHOOLS

126

REGIONAL
EXCHANGES

135

CSOs

20

YOUNG
JOURNALISTS

150

SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURS

1000+

YOUNG PEOPLE



Mentorship Training included mentorship on RYCO's key themes, while collaborations with Friedrich Ebert and Konrad Adenauer Foundations led to training for youth political wings, resulting in a joint declaration. Additionally, a CSO training focused on Youth, Peace, and Security and youth participation.

Capacity Building our collaboration with the OSCE Mission in Skopje has been enhanced by organizing seven training courses that benefited over *130 representatives* from civil society organizations and high schools, focusing on project cycle management and intercultural learning.

Youth Talks, an initiative by RYCO LBOs, aims to create a safe space for discussions among young people on various topics, such as the Berlin Process and the Youth Peace and Security Agenda.

Regional Student Station - Following last year's success, the Local Branch Office of North Macedonia collaborated again with the Youth Educational Forum and the University Student Assembly of UKIM to support the Student Station initiative, enhancing student opportunities. This year, the initiative expanded regionally, offering training for student body representatives from the Western Balkans, focusing on advocacy, cooperation, and networking. The annual student fair at the Law Faculty in Skopje also featured discussions on priorities and challenges facing students. Celebrating International Student Day, the event highlighted regional cooperation and the development of student leadership.

"Scoring Development: Regional Cooperation and Youth Empowerment through Sport," a two-day regional conference held in Skopje by LBO and GIZ, focused on enhancing youth and sports cooperation in the WB6. With over *70 participants*, it featured panels on youth empowerment and regional strategies, promoting sports as a tool for development, peace, and stability through youth-centered policies.

OUR OFFICE

The Local Branch Office, established in 2017 as part of RYCO, became officially registered as an international governmental entity in 2023, verified by North Macedonia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

OUR TEAM

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