

**Report of the first meeting of the Working Group for
the establishment of the Regional Youth Coopera-
tion Office of the Western Balkans (RYCO)**
Berlin, 23-27 November 2015

1. Participants of the Working Group:

Ina Avllaj, Đuro Blanuša, Marija Bulat, Krenare Gashi, Adnan Husić, Vedat Jashari, Edin Koljenović, Branka Malešević, Dafina Peci, Faton Položani, Rejan Igor Roić, Zorica Stamenkovska, Krsto Vukadinović.

FGYO-moderation-team: Bujar Luma, Frank Morawietz, Nicolas Moll. Technical support: Flavia Roehrs

For the institutional affiliations and functions of each person see Annex 1

2. Context:

On the basis of the "Joint Declaration on the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans", signed during the Western Balkans Summit in Vienna, the 27.8.2015, by the Prime Ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, a Working Group has been constituted with the task to elaborate, until the 1st March 2016, „concrete proposals for the mission, structure, activities and financing of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office". This Working Group gathers governmental representatives and representatives from youth organizations from the WB-6-Participants. After the nominations of the members of the WG, the first of a total of four meetings took place from 23rd to 27th November 2015 in Berlin, in the premises of the Franco-German Youth Office and of the *Bundesjugendring* (German Federal Youth Council). As also foreseen by the Joint Declaration, the working process is facilitated by the Franco-German Youth Office.

3. Aims of the first meeting:

- Team-building within the Working Group

51 rue de
l'Amiral-Mouchez
75013 Paris
Tél.: +33 1 40781818
www.ofaj.org

Molkenmarkt 1
10179 Berlin
Tél.: +49 30 288 757-0
www.dfjw.org

2 / 8

- to discuss and agree on the basic functioning of the Working Group during the four-months-working-process
- to receive inputs and discuss about the general outlines related to the four working areas of the WG: mission, structure, activities and financing of the RYCO

4. Main steps and results of the first meeting

4.1. Informing and exchanging about the work done so far, the experiences and expectations of all the WG-members and the role of FGYO:

The group was first welcomed by Dr. Markus Ingenlath, the German General Secretary of FGYO, who provided information about the history of the FGYO and its role in the process to establish RYCO. After the presentation of the aims of the WG, the meeting continued with the presentation of the WG members, especially about their experience and expertise regarding international youth cooperation and their expectations regarding the working process. After this part, the representatives from the Fact Finding Mission – four of them are also members of the WG - shared information about the steps which lead to the Joint Declaration on 27.08.2015, followed by a discussion about the importance of RYCO for reconciliation processes in the Western Balkans.

51 rue de
l'Amiral-Mouchez
75013 Paris
Tél.: +33 1 4078 18 18
www.ofaj.org

Molkenmarkt 1
10179 Berlin
Tel.: +49 30 288 757-0
www.dfjw.org

4.2. Agreement on the general working plan until February 2016:

The group agreed on a working plan organized around four meetings between November 2015 and February 2016. The first meeting (23-27.11.2015, in Berlin) is mainly dedicated to team-building, getting all Working Group members on the same level of information, agreeing on internal working procedure of the group, and starting the discussion about the four working areas (mission, structure, activities, financing). During the second meeting (14-18.12.2015, in Tirana) the group will focus on the four working areas, and agree on the big outlines concerning these four working areas. Between the second and the third meeting, draft documents related to these four working areas will be produced, which will be discussed at the third

3 / 8

meeting (25-29.1.2016, in Sarajevo). Until the fourth meeting (16-20.2.2016 in Belgrade) will take place the finalization of the documents, which then will be transmitted to the governments of the WB6-Participants.

At the end of the process should have been produced the following documents:

- Mission Statement
- Legal statute of the RYCO and organigram concerning the structure
- Definition of activities to be supported / organized by the RYCO
- Financing plan for the first five years of RYCO

The group also agreed to organize different public activities during the working process in order to ensure the visibility and transparency of the process, and in order to include other organization in the process. These activities include:

- Information and consultation activities towards decision and policy makers, donor community and main international stakeholders
- Information and consultation activities in each of the WB-6-Participants, associating youth organisations and civil society actors on the one hand, and on the other hand all relevant ministries and institutions dealing with youth, but also ministries of culture and especially ministries in charge for education
- Press work, through TV and Radio programs' participation, press conferences and articles
- A newsletter about the working process will be published after each meeting and in relation with specific events
- Social media: creation of a facebook-page, a twitter-account and a ryco-hashtag
- Establishment of a website informing about the working process

For the detailed working plan and the calendar of activities see Annexes 2 and 3.

51 rue de
l'Amiral-Mouchez
75013 Paris
Tél.: +33 1 40 78 18 18
www.ofaj.org

Molkenmarkt 1
10179 Berlin
Tél.: +49 30 288 757-0
www.dfjw.org

4 / 8

The group also discussed about communication measures for RYCO beyond March 2016. All together, the establishment of RYCO can be seen as 3-phase process:

(1) developing / ongoing phase (until 1st of March 2016), when WG has a task to develop and deliver concrete proposals about the Office;

(2) interphase / intermediate stage (after 1st March 2016 - until Paris Conference in August 2016) and

(3) after Paris phase

For every and each phase, different communication and visibility strategy should be developed, having in mind different target groups for each of above mentioned stages/phases. In developing phase, as mentioned before, the accent and focus should be on decision and policy makers, donor community, main international stakeholders, and, on the national levels, on youth organisations and civil society and all relevant ministries and institutions dealing with youth, through different activities in order to attract wider attention about the process.

Once the final proposal is adopted by respective governments (hopefully in late March, or beginning of April 2016), slightly different visibility/communication strategy should be launched. The main focus could be switched towards main and real beneficiaries of RYCO - young people in the region! The idea to design the unique LOGO was proposed in order to ensure recognizability and stronger visibility in the region and wider. It was also proposed to organize a donor Conference in late spring 2016, with the aim to collect the additional money for the activities in so called "pilot phase" of RYCO (just after Paris Conference).

After the international treaty is signed in Paris, very wide, comprehensive and extensive promotional and visibility campaign should take place in the region and beyond.

4.3. Agreement on the working principles within the WG:

The WG agreed on several principles for its internal working procedure, in order to allow a constructive and productive working process.

For the working principles see Annex 4.

4.4. Agreement on the Terms of Reference for the external expert:

An external expert will be tasked to draft the legal documents which the WG will produce. The working group agreed on Terms of Reference for this external expert. The expert will be chosen through an open call between the first and second meeting ; the chosen person then will be present at the second meeting and will draft a first version of the final documents until the third meeting.

For the Terms of Reference see Annex 5

4.5. Sharing experiences with other international youth cooperation structures:

In order to gather inputs in relation with already existing international youth cooperation structures, meetings took place with Helge Meyn-Hellberg, former coordinator of the Baltic Sea Secretariat for Youth Affairs (BSSYA), Stephan Erb, General Secretary of the German-Polish Youth Office, Béatrice Angrand and Dr. Markus Ingenlath, General Secretaries of the FGYO, and with Tobias Koeck and Jochen Rummenhoeller, respectively vice-president and head of international cooperation of the *Bundesjugendring* (German Federal Youth Council). The presentations and discussions gave very useful insights in the functioning and challenges of international youth cooperation structures, and despite the fact that each organization has its own functioning and can of course not be copy-pasted to create RYCO, some major lessons learned came to light, especially:

- the importance of a clear and sustainable commitment of the involved governments to support the structure (the BSSYA ceased to exist after several years, because this support was lacking)
- the importance to have the governmental support, but in the same time to protect the structure from political changes and attempts of instrumentalisation, what can be guaranteed the best through the status as an international organization
- the importance of having the civil society being actively involve at different level of the structure

4. 6. Discussing the big outlines of the four domains: mission, activities, structure, financing:

51 rue de
l'Amiral-Mouchez
75013 Paris
Tél.: +33 1 40781818
www.ofaj.org

Molkenmarkt 1
10179 Berlin
Tél.: +49 30 288 757-0
www.dfjw.org

Based on the concept note on RYCO, elaborated in Summer 2015 by the Fact-Finding-Mission, the WG started to work on the four domains. The WG took the parts of the concept note related to these four areas as starting point for discussions, to see whether they can agree with the main outlines and what are points which need to be added or deepened.

The WG agreed that the concept note constitutes a good and useful basis and starting point for the working process. In this framework, the group listed some first questions which will be deepened in the further meetings.

- Concerning the mission, the group agreed with the text of the concept note; only some terms should be added or changed, and it was proposed to add a paragraph "Vision" regarding RYCO.

- Concerning the activities, the group agreed with the text, emphasizing that it needs to be more elaborated, and for example be mentioned what should be the role of remembrance in exchange programs.

- Concerning the structure, one major point needs to be clarified in order that the WG can continue its work: The governments of Serbia and Albania have proposed in Vienna that Belgrade and Tirana would host the headquarters of RYCO, but there is no answer from the four other governments concerning this proposal. It is essential that this question be clarified as fast as possible, as the question of the seat(s) is linked to the question of the structure and the finances, and without clarity regarding this point, the WG cannot really advance in its work. The WG therefore asked the FGYO if they can ask the six governments to clarify this question as fast as possible, with two possible directions: a) the six governments, on the political level, find a common agreement concerning the seat(s) of the RYCO, b) the six governments task the WG to find, in the framework of their working process, an adequate solution concerning the seat(s) of the RYCO.

- Concerning the financing, the group agreed that it is important, when calculating the contribution of each of the WB-6-Participants, to take into consideration the population and the GDP of each of the WB-6-Participants, and listed several questions which need to be more deeply discussed.

The extracts of the concept note regarding these four domains have been gathered in a new document, together with the dif-

51 rue de
l'Amiral-Mouchez
75013 Paris
Tél.: +33 1 40 78 18 18
www.ofaj.org

Molkenmarkt 1
10179 Berlin
Tél.: +49 30 288 757-0
www.dfjw.org

7 / 8

ferent remarks and questions from the group, and are constituting the basis for further discussion: See Annex 6

4. 7. Exchange of the first results of the WG with representatives of Embassies and other organisations:

In order to share the first results and impressions of the Working Group and to get external feedback, a meeting was organized, the last day of the meeting, with representatives of the WB-6-Embassies in Berlin: Irida Jaci (Albania), Artana Bardhi (Kosovo), Zihnaida Sadikovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Boro Suput (Serbia), Dragan Petkovski (Macedonia) and Marko Stevanovic (Montenegro). Also participated at the meeting Mr. Josip Juratovic, Member of the German Federal Parliament, Clemence Weulerese, from the French Embassy in Berlin, and Robin Gosejohann, from the Erste Stiftung. Everybody agreed on the importance of the work which is currently undertaken and the future RYCO, for the youth in the region on the one hand, but also more generally for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. Some concrete suggestions for the working process were also provided, for example to associate young parliamentarians in each of the WB-6-Participants in the working process, and to establish a link of the RYCO-website also on the websites of the embassies of the WB-6-Participants.

The idea is to organize similar events also within the next three meetings of the WG.

4.8. Evaluation of the first working meeting:

In an evaluation-round at the end of the first meeting, the members of the WG emphasized that this has been a promising and encouraging start, underlining the positive and constructive atmosphere within the group and being optimistic about the outcome of the process. In the same time everybody is aware that it will not be an easy process, needing a lot of working efforts, responsibility and coordination, within and outside of the WG. The challenge also consists in the fact that RYCO constitutes a truly innovative undertaking, not only within the Western Balkans but also regarding – usually bilateral – international youth cooperation structures in general. This un-

51 rue de
l'Amiral-Mouchez
75013 Paris
Tél.: +33 1 40 78 18 18
www.ofaj.org

Molkenmarkt 1
10179 Berlin
Tél.: +49 30 288 757-0
www.dfjw.org

8 / 8

derlines also the importance of this initiative whose success will be an important step in bringing together the youth of the Western Balkans, in order to overcome political, ethnic and psychological borders and to develop the regional cooperation within the region.

4.9. Planning of the 2nd meeting in Tirana

The planning of the second meeting of the WG in Tirana (14-18.12.2015) will take place in close cooperation between the FGYO-facilitation-team and the representatives of the WG in Albania. The invitations to the meeting in Tirana and the following meetings will be sent to the WG-members in the first days of December 2015, and the agenda proposal for Tirana the 7th December 2015.

51 rue de
l'Amiral-Mouchez
75013 Paris
Tél.: +33 1 40781818
www.ofaj.org

Molkenmarkt 1
10179 Berlin
Tel.: +49 30 288 757-0
www.dfjw.org

List of annexes:

1. Members of the Working Group and of the facilitation-team
2. Working Plan of the Working Group
3. Calendar of activities
4. Working Principles of the Working Group
5. Terms of Reference of the Expert
6. Working Document Mission/Activities/Structure/Financing