

**Report of the second meeting of the Working Group
for the establishment of the Regional Youth Coop-
eration Office of the Western Balkans (RYCO)**

Tirana, 14-18 December 2015

1. Participants of the Meeting:

Members of the Working Group: Ina Avllaj, Đuro Blanuša, Marija Bulat, Krenare Gashi, Adnan Husić, Vedat Jashari, Edin Koljenović, Dafina Peci, Faton Položani, Rejan Igor Roić, Zorica Stamenkovska, Krsto Vukadinović.

Excused: Branka Malešević

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

Consultant: Tihomir Popović (2nd and 3rd day)

2. Context and aims of the second meeting:

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 which were nominated in November 2015 and which will meet in four meetings between November 2015 and February 2016, the working process being facilitated by the Franco-German Youth Office. The first meeting of this Working Group took place from 23 to 27th November 2015 in Berlin and was mainly dedicated to team-building, getting all Working Group

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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). On this basis, the aim of the second meeting was mainly to work concretely on the four designed working areas, in order to agree on big outlines regarding the mission, structure, activities and financing of the RYCO and to specify the questions which need to be deepened and clarified.

3. Main steps and results of the second meeting

3.1. Work on the four domains: mission, activities, structure, financing

During the first meeting in Berlin, the WG had started to discuss very generally on the four domains – mission, activities, structure, financing – on the basis of the concept note on RYCO elaborated in Summer 2015 by the Fact-Finding-Mission. During the meeting in Tirana, the WG continued and deepened this work, by working very concretely on the different domains, especially on the activities, the structure and the financing of the RYCO.

Concerning the activities, the WG reached agreement on the main type of activities, and on the criteria for the applicants and the programs to be supported, and also on the fact that criteria should be different depending on school exchange and youth exchange program. One question which will need more discussion is whether RYCO should support only trilateral/multilateral or also bilateral exchange programs regarding youth exchange. Concerning the structure and the financing, the WG also agreed on several proposals, for example to add, besides the secretariat, the governing board and the advisory board, also a rotating chairmanship for RYCO, and concerning the financing of RYCO that there should be a progressive budget from the first to the third year and that the financial contribution of each WB-6-participants should depend on

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three factors: the GDP, the total number of population, and the percentage of young people within the total population. Questions which will need more discussion are for example how exactly to calculate the financial contribution of each WB-6-Participant, and what should be the link between the financial contribution of each WB-6-Participant and the number of programs supported from each WB-6-Participant.

For more details on the work on the three domains see the annex at the end of this report.

3.2. Presentation and role of the consultant-expert:

During the Berlin meeting the WG had agreed that an external expert-consultant should be tasked to draft the legal documents which the WG will produce and to consult the WG on questions which need clarification. On the basis of Terms of Reference for this external expert on which the WG had agreed on, an open call was launched after the Berlin meeting, and among the different candidates the WG chose Tihomir Popović, who has already worked on different international cooperation processes and structures, and is also familiar with the RYCO process. Tihomir Popović participated at the second and the third day of the meeting, where he presented himself and then participated as “active listener” at the discussions on the different working areas. His task will now be to draft, until the 11 January 2015, on the basis of the work done at the Tirana meeting, a first version of the final documents concerning the mission, activities, structure and financing of RYCO, including different options concerning the points which still need to be agreed on.

3.3. Launching of social media concerning the RYCO working process

In order to ensure the transparency of the working process and to inform interested stakeholders, groups and

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individuals about it, different social media have been launched during the meeting in Tirana:

- the website www.rycowesternbalkans.org
- the twitter account: @rycobalkans
- the hashtag #ryco#

A facebook-group will also be created after the meeting in Tirana.

3.4. Organization of public activities related to RYCO

Since the Berlin meeting, different members of the WG have started to organize public activities related to RYCO in order to ensure the visibility and transparency of the process, and in order to include other organization in the process. The list of these activities will be published and regularly updated on the website www.rycowesternbalkans.org

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3.5. Public event in the framework of the Tirana meeting:

The last day of the meeting in Tirana was organized a public event where different stakeholders were invited in order to inform them about RYCO and the ongoing working process and to allow networking activities. The event was hosted and opened by the Minister of Youth from Albania, Mr. Blendi Klosi, and was moderated by Ina Avllaj and Frank Morawietz. Besides the members of the WG participated at this event representatives of the Embassies of Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, as well as representatives of the World Bank, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, EU Delegation in Albania, World Vision, OSCE, and Swiss Contact.

3.6. Necessity to clarify the question of the seat(s) of RYCO:

At the Vienna summit in August 2015, the governments of Serbia and Albania have proposed that Belgrade and Tirana should host the headquarters of RYCO, but there has been no agreement among the WB-6-Participants concerning this proposal. In the meantime, alternative proposals have also been officially formulated: in December 2015, the Minister of Civil Affairs of BiH expressed the wish that the RYCO should be seated in Sarajevo, and the Prime Minister of Kosovo that it should be hosted in Pristina. During the meeting of the Working Group in Tirana took place an intervention of Ferit Hoxha - General Director of General Directorate for Political and Strategic Issues of the Foreign Ministry of Albania - who exposed several reasons why in his opinion the seats should be in Tirana and Belgrade.

The position of the WG regarding the question of the seat(s) is the following: It is essential that this question to be clarified as fast as possible on the political level, 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. Basically there are two possibilities: 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.

Asked by the Working Group, the FGYO had started after the first meeting in Berlin to sensitize the governments of the WB-6-Participants to the importance to clarify the question of the seat(s) ; in continuation to this and in order to underline the urgency of this question, the FGYO will send, beginning of January 2016, a letter on this topic to the advisors of the Prime Ministers of the WB-6-Participants.

3. 7. Next steps:

Until the 11th January 2016, first versions of the following documents will be drafted by the expert-consultant:

- Legal statute of the RYCO
- Definition of activities to be supported by the RYCO
- Financing plan for the first three years of RYCO
- Mission Statement

These drafts will be sent to the members of the Working Group, so that they will have time to consult with their Ministries / other youth organizations until the third meeting in Sarajevo, and come to the meeting in Sarajevo with comments / questions / suggestions regarding these documents. During the Sarajevo meeting (25-30.1.2016), the detailed work on these documents will then be realized, and 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.

As there will be a lot of detailed work to be done during the Sarajevo meeting, the WG decided to extend the length of this third meeting from three to four days.

Between the meetings in Tirana and in Sarajevo will also continue different information and consultation activities within the WB-6-Participants.

3.8. Evaluation of the second working meeting:

The work within the Working Group was characterized, as in Berlin, by a very constructive spirit and atmosphere, and because of this, and also because the members of the WG has again demonstrated a vivid sense about the importance of the process, the regional dimension of the RYCO and the complexity of the questions which need to be taken into consideration, the work has been progressing as foreseen in the working plan. But there is an urgent need to clarify the question of the seat(s) of RYCO

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on the political level: as the question of the seat(s) is also linked to other questions (especially related to the structure and to the financing), the working process cannot progress on these points until the question of the seat(s) has been clarified.

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Annex:

Main points discussed in relation to the structure, the financing and the activities of RYCO. (For mission see annex to the report of the first meeting in Berlin). These points will be elaborated in the documents which will be prepared by the consultant until 11th January 2016.

A. Structure:

1. Establishment and Legal Status

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office is an independent international organization established by WB 6 Participants as guarantees of its functioning and sustainability. It is essential to define means in order to secure the independence of the RYCO. Civil society should play a significant role in outlining the mandate of the RYCO and designing its activities.

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2. Members/Participants

Participants include: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Serbia.

Even if Croatia and Slovenia did not sign the "Joint Declaration on the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans" the 27.8.2015 in Vienna, it is not excluded that both countries might join or participate at the RYCO after its establishment.

RYCO is open for collaboration on projects and/or programs (based on special agreements) with other countries from region and not only

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3. Structure

RYCO should have a structure which is avoiding too much bureaucracy and large structural costs.

This structure should involve representatives of governments, institutions, civil society, and experts. Principles of co-management should be respected.

Proposal for the bodies of the RYCO:

→ Chairmanship:

Chairmanship (3 countries - the previous, the current and the future one)

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Duration of the chairmanship: 1 year

Governmental representatives from the Governing Board are the chairs when those respective countries hold the chairmanship?

The order is chosen on the basis of alphabetical order.

Responsibilities/Tasks:

- Hosting the annual meetings, meetings of governing board, coordinating the meetings of advisory board (all this with the support of secretariat)
- Political representation and promotion of RYCO
- Annual Meeting with Ministers (youth and education?) of the Region

→ Governing Board:

Composed of Government and Youth representatives; Two for each WB-6-Participant: 1 Government Representative- High political level or high ranking civil servants, and 1 Civil Society Representative, both with mandate to make decisions.

Governmental representatives: from ministries or other highest institutions in charge for youth.

How to choose representatives from CSOs? Open call? Different alternatives for different countries?

Selection process? – who's organizing? who's making decisions?

Criteria for CSO-representatives:

- Age (young people)
- Language competences (?)
- Experience in regional cooperation
- Experience in youth policy and youth work
- Understanding of RYCO process
- Representation and legitimacy???

How to ensure that if the selection is made by the government it's not influenced by the government?

Duration of Mandate of GB 3 Years (linked to financial plan and perspective)

→ Advisory Board:

Composed of experts, civil society, institutions.

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Include Donors, Personalities and NGO at AB?

How to define the format of election of AB?

Who has the right to engage advisory board and ask for opinions?

Working groups (ad hoc) within the advisory board, based on different topics

→ **Secretariat:**

Is operational, professional, independent body;

Secretary General (rotating- discussion) minimum 3 years

Deputy or deputies of SG?

Staff (depends on the financing)

→ **Contact points in six capitals**

Secretariat to open the call for six contact points to be as part of staff.

Two persons per contact point, plus volunteers and interns.

Who will be contact point? Legal status of the contact point?

Contact points should receive technical support (premises, equipment) from the governments.

They will work on:

- Monitoring the implementation
- Consulting applicants
- Promoting in national level/ informing
- Creating visibility
- Managing the bureaucratic and administrative issues

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B. Financing / Budget structure

1. Governmental contributions

Criteria for governmental contributions

- GDP
- Number of population (already existing formulas from existing structures in the region: RCC...) – check with finance ministries
- Number of young people

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Exact formula to be developed

2. Other sources:

- European Commission
- Countries EU Delegations
- Donor community (UN agencies, USAID, Erste Stiftung, Friedrich Ebert, Bosch Foundation, Balkan Trust for Democracy, Olof Palme International...)
- World Bank
- Cooperation with other regional programs (OFAJ, SHL, GIZ...)
- Voluntary contributions from business sector
- Municipalities

Donor Conference for RYCO (August 2016, Paris)

3. General:

Balance of the budget (half from governmental, half from other sources) ; 51% of the budget should come from government contribution

Ratio between cost of Office and cost of Activities: From the total budget: 15-20% for RYCO Office, 80-85% for activities.

Special budgets for additional donor money

Relationship between country contribution and number of programs financed?

3 years projection (budget only for support activities, not for office costs) : first year 1 million €, second year 1,5 million €, third year 2 million €.

Paid annually

Currency: EURO

After 3 year revision, the overall budget cannot be reduced comparing with the last budget

What will be the % of the costs covered for each program? Full or support?

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C. Activities of the RYCO

RYCO will support the projects that are aiming to:

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- promote democratic values and diversity
- enhance regional youth cooperation and establish new relations among young people
- foster reconciliation and constructive approaches of remembrance
- contribute to intercultural learning
- increase mobility of young people in the Region

taking into consideration specific situation of each Western Balkan participants.

Projects that are promoting interests of any specific ideology, confession, political orientation or groups that confront with RYCO defined values will not be supported.

RYCO will especially support projects in the domains of:

- Education and Research: This program will support exchanges of elementary and high schools, universities, young scientists and researchers,
- Non-formal education and youth work: ...
- Exchange between young professionals and vocational schools/trainees /VET: ...
- Culture and Sports: This program will support joint activities and coproduction in fields of arts and culture, as well as exchanges in amateur sports.
- Participation, Activism and Social Inclusion: This program will enhance and foster the development of active citizenship and youth participation in the decision making processes, as well as different volunteering programs and social inclusion of young people.

Exchange programs can take a place in form as group exchanges or in individual exchanges through: internships, fellowships, trainings and apprenticeships.

In order to ensure the quality of these activities RYCO will organize and support the activities in the domain of:

- Capacity-building for all persons who are involved on the institutional level and on the program development and implementation level, in order to insure the competences

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of the involved persons and the quality of the implemented programs

Eligible applicants for RYCO funding are:

1. Civil Society

- Youth NGO-s (also Youth Councils, Youth Centers, Youth Networks)
- Other Civil Society organizations (students organizations, cultural organizations, environmental protection organizations, human rights, scouts organization ...)
- Non-formal groups of young people

2. Educational Institutions

- High Schools,
- Colleges
- Universities
- Research Institutions

3. Others

- Media
- Journal Associations
- Museums
- Individuals (Writers, Journalists, Historians, Artists, Researchers)

Cannot apply but can participate:

Youth Branches of Political parties,
Religious communities,
Government/municipalities/institutions representatives.
Youth Branches of Trade unions

Eligibility criteria for projects are:

- Diversity of participants (to be specified)
- Project participants age 15-30 years old (see standards, "youth age" in countries from the region, EU standards, elementary schools?)
- At least two countries
- Duration minimum 1 or 2 months up to 1 year? (discuss ; From the signature date?)

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- Physical meeting of the participants in one or several countries
- Equal representation of participants from all countries participating in the project
- Clear legal status of the applicant/ for first application need to join all legal documents
- partner-agreement on the project
- in case of non-formal groups they should have administrative support by any legal entity
- Students exchanges must have at least two different participants from WB 6 included in the program / Youth exchanges must have at least three different participants from WB 6 included in the program?

RYCO will have 2 Open calls per year (First one in October for project starting from January next year, and has to be end by the end of that year?, and Second one in February for the second part of the year.)

Open calls for school exchanges (May and November)?

Multiannual projects are possible, but grants are allocated on the annual basis

Deadlines for submitting reports?

Participation of other countries:

Countries outside of WB6 can participate in exchange programs supported by RYCO. In this case the number of participating countries from WB6 must be at least equal/superior? to the other countries.

Governing Board shall decide upon which countries can participate in programs of RYCO and about the financing criteria for these programs.

Language:

Communication and administrative language – English;
Application forms language – local languages / English (maybe summaries)? Nota: Application forms will be maximum five pages and could be submitted in English or in local languages ; the applications in local languages could be translated in English for the selection procedure.

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Program language – encourage use of local languages through language animation; English is possible
External communication (Website and publications etc.) – local languages + English

In general:

At least 15%/10? of supported projects should come from each country (change of rate depending on the countries) – how to measure? Quotas? To be discussed and deepened.

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