

**Report of the third meeting of the Working Group
for the establishment of the Regional Youth Coop-
eration Office of the Western Balkans (RYCO)**
Sarajevo, 25-30 January 2016

1. Participants of the Meeting:

Members of the Working Group: Đuro Blanuša, Marija Bu-
lat, Krenare Gashi, Adnan Husić, Vedat Jashari, Edin
Koljenović, Kreshnik Loka (representing Ina Avllaj), Bran-
ka Malešević, Dafina Peci, Faton Pollozhani, Rejan Igor
Roić, Zorica Stamenkovska, Krsto Vukadinović.

Consultant: Tihomir Popović

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

2. Context and aims of the third meeting:

On the basis of the "Joint Declaration on the establish-
ment 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 consti-
tuted with the task to elaborate, until the 1st March
2016, „concrete proposals for the mission, structure, ac-
tivities and financing of the Regional Youth Cooperation
Office". This Working Group gathers governemental repre-
sentatives and representatives from youth organizations
from the WB-6-Participants which were nominated in No-
vember 2015 and which will meet in four meetings bet-
ween November 2015 and February 2016, the working
process being facilitated by the Franco-German Youth Of-
fice. After the first meeting in Berlin from 23 to 27th No-
vember 2015, and the second meeting in Tirana, from 14
to 18 December 2015, the main aim of the third meeting

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2 / 9

in Sarajevo was to work in detail on the different working documents concerning the mission, activities, statute and financing of RYCO which had been drafted between the second and the third meeting. Furthermore several networking and information events regarding RYCO were organized during the meeting in Sarajevo.

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. Based on these discussions, between the second and the third meeting, the following working documents related to these four domains, were drafted by the consultant, Tihomir Popovic, and sent to the members of the Working Group, in order to gather comments, questions and suggestions:

- Draft on the vision and mission of RYCO
- Draft on the context of its establishment
- Draft on the activities to be supported by RYCO
- Draft of the legal statute of RYCO
- Draft of the budget
- Draft for the formula for the calculation of the financial contributions of the Western-Balkans-6-Participants

These draft documents were additionally also sent to a focus group made out of experts in different fields of youth work and international youth cooperation, in order to gather additional point of views and suggestions.

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During the meeting in Sarajevo, the comments, suggestions and questions from the members of the Working Group and from the Focus Group were presented, and were discussed within the group in order to progress in the editing of the different documents.

The WG discussed and worked in detail on each of the documents, here only some main points and results of these discussions:

1. The WG decided to merge the draft documents "Context" and "Mission and Vision" into one document, and to make it more concise, what will shorten the document from three pages to maximum one and half pages.
2. Regarding the activities, a common approach still needs to be found concerning the question to what extent public institutions can apply for grants, and if yes, which ones / and under which conditions. Furthermore still needs to be found a formula which will especially support exchange programs with partners from three or more WB-6-Participants, but which does not exclude also interesting bilateral projects. Also still needs to be found a formulation, which does not exclude young entrepreneurs to organize exchange projects, if these are in the scope of the RYCO-mandate and do not aim to make profit. Concerning the age group, the WG agreed that young people between 15 and 29 should be the main target group, but that activities with younger and older participants should not be excluded. Concerning the languages the WG agreed to have only English for the grant application procedure, in order to make the procedures as simple as possible, but that the information documents about RYCO should be published in the different official languages of the WB-6-Participants, and also that it should be thought about mechanisms how to encourage organizations to apply which are not used to communicate in English. Furthermore, the

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4 / 9

WG agreed to strongly develop the part about capacity-building, and this also as a activity domain where RYCO, in partnership with other organisations, should be very active, not only by supporting such activities, but also by organizing them themselves.

3. Concerning the statute: The WG mainly agreed that the Chairmanship and the Working groups should not be separate bodies within the RYCO-structure, but that the structure should finally be articulated around the following three bodies: the Governing Board, the Secretariat, and the Advisory Board. The Chair of the Governing Board would be the government representative, with the youth representative from the same WB-6-Participant as co-chair, on the basis of an annual rotation between the RYCO-signatories. The WG emphasized the importance of a partnership between governments representatives and youth representatives within the Governing Board, that the Governing Board should take decisions in consensus and that in order to show the commitment of the governments, it should be the Minister of Youth (or equivalent position) of each of the WB-6-Participants which should be sitting on the Governing Board.

4. Concerning the budget and the financing, the WG agreed that in order to ensure that each WB-6-signatory provides an amount of financing that is proportional to the size of its youth population and economic strength, a combination of Gross National Income (GNI) controlled for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of each signatory and the population aged between 15-29 should be used. One major problem for calculating the contributions of the different WB-6-Participants is that not for each of them there are reliable data concerning the overall population. Concerning the programs which will be realized by organizations of each of the WB-6-Participants, the Working Group agreed that it is essential that applicants from all WB-6-Participants will be funded and also that imbalances within

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the region should be prevented, but also that over-regulations in this domain through too many or too restrictive clauses should be avoided.

3.2. Next steps concerning the draft documents

The WG specified that until the 1st of March, it will transmit to the governments of the WB-6-Participants two types of documents:

a) as legal documents drafts of the international agreement and the statute of RYCO, proposed to be signed by the WB-6-Participants and constituting the legal basis of the future RYCO. These documents will include all the essential points concerning the mission, the structure, the activities and the financial contributions for RYCO.

b) as additional documents more detailed documents about the context/mission/vision and the activities of RYCO, as well as an organizational chart proposal and a detailed budget proposal for the first three years. These additional documents will constitute the working basis for the Governing Board and the Secretary General, which needs to be installed after the signing of the International Agreement in July 2016 and before the start of the programs in January 2017.

It will be the aim of the fourth and last meeting of the WG, from 16 to 20 February 2016 in Belgrade, to finalize these different documents. In order to progress as much as possible already before the Belgrade meeting it is foreseen to proceed as follows:

The 2nd February 2016, the members of the WG will receive the updated versions of the documents context/mission/vision, activities, legal statute and budget, drafted by the consultant, Tihomir Popovic, and will send back their comments/suggestions/questions until 8th Feb-

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ruary 2016. Until the 11th February they will then receive the newly updated versions of these documents, as well as the drafts for the international agreement and the organizational chart, for further consultation until the Belgrade meeting.

The main aim of the Belgrade meeting will then be to finalize the different documents.

3.3. Organization of public activities related to RYCO

At the beginning of the meeting in Sarajevo, the different members of the WG reported about information and consultation activities they have been organizing or are planning to organize, in order to ensure the visibility and transparency of the RYCO-initiative, and in order to involve other organization in the working process. The list of these activities is published and regularly updated on the website www.rycowesternbalkans.org

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3.4. Information and exchange activities in the framework of the Sarajevo meeting:

Since the beginning of the working process, the WG aims to use the working meetings to make more known the work of the group and the future RYCO within the country where the meeting is hosted. This regarding two events took place during the meeting in Sarajevo:

3.4.1. The second day of the meeting the French and the German Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with the FGYO, organized a presentation and discussion about the FGYO and RYCO, to which mainly young people and youth organisations from Sarajevo and other towns in BiH had been invited. In their introductions, the French Ambassador, Claire Bodony, and the German Cultural attaché, Natascha Garloff-Jonkers, representing the German Ambassador, underlined the role of youth ex-

change in reconciliation processes and the strong support from France and Germany for the RYCO-initiative. After this, the FGYO-moderation team presented the role of FGYO in the Western Balkans and within the RYCO-process, and then Marija Bulat and Krenare Gashi presented the work of the Working Group, what was followed by a discussion with many questions, remarks and suggestions from the audience.

3.4.2. The last day of the meeting the Minister of Civil Affairs from BiH, Adil Osmanović, invited the Working Group to an exchange and discussion in the premises of the Parliament of BiH, in presence of Ambassadors from the WB-6-Participants, France, Germany, Slovenia and Turkey, as well as representatives from the OSCE and the UNDP in BiH. The event was opened by the State Secretary Zlatko Horvat, representing the Minister, in presence of Biljana Camur Veselinović, Assistant Minister for science and culture, and Adnan Husić, Assistant Minister for education and also member of the WG. After the presentation of the the WG, by Kreshnik Loka, and of the role of FGYO, by Frank Morawietz, the other guests made different statements where they expressed their support for the RYCO-initiative.

3.5. Meeting with Balkan Trust for Democracy / German Marshall Fund and SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre

Within its networking activities, the WG aims also to explore what connections and partnerships can be established with other regional and international organizations in order to support RYCO during its establishment and its implementation. During the meeting in Sarajevo, a meeting was organized with Nataša Petrović from the Balkan Trust for Democracy / German Marshall Fund and Sonja Mitter from SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre. Both presented the work of their organizations and em-

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phasized that they are very interested to cooperate with RYCO in different ways. The Balkan Trust Fund for Democracy is already supporting financially the meetings of the Working Group.

3.6. Clarification of the question of the seat of RYCO:

After the Vienna summit in August 2015, different proposals concerning the future seat of RYCO had been publicly formulated by different governments of the WB-6-Participants (cp. reports of the meetings in Berlin and Tirana). During the meeting in Berlin and Tirana, the WG agreed that it is essential that this question should be clarified as fast as possible on the political level, as the question of the seat is linked to the question of the structure and the finances, and without clarity regarding this point, the WG could not really advance in its work. Asked by the Working Group, the General Secretaries of the FGYO sent the 13th of January 2016 a letter to the chief of cabinets of the Prime Ministers of the WB-6-Participants, in order to underline the urgency of this question, and to propose that the political advisors of the six Prime Ministers should meet during the Sarajevo-meeting of the WG in order to agree on the question of the seat. Based on this proposal, a meeting of the political advisors or other representatives of the WB-6-Participants was organized in Sarajevo the 29th January, during which they unanimously agreed to propose Tirana as seat for the RYCO. This meeting was hosted by the Regional Cooperation Council, in presence of the Ambassadors from France, Germany, and Austria.

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3.7. Steps after the 1st of March 2016

In the framework of the preparation of the Western Balkans Summit which will take place in July 2016 in Paris and where it is aimed that the Western-Balkans-6-governments will sign the international agreement to

9 / 9

create RYCO , the French government has announced to the FGYO its intention to invite the Working Group to Paris probably in March 2016. As soon as there will be more detailed information about this, the FGYO-moderation team will communicate it to the Working Group.

Beyond this, it will be important, during the meeting in Belgrade, to think also more precisely about what should happen until the Paris Summit, and after the Paris Summit, in order to ensure the implementation of RYCO, and to propose for example a time-table for the different steps between 1st of March 2016, when the Working Group will transmit the documents to the Western-Balkans-6-governemnts, and the 1st of January 2017, when RYCO is planned to be operational.

3.8. Conclusions

As in the previous meetings, the work within the Working Group was characterized by a very constructive spirit, and the work has been progressing as foreseen in the working plan. Also it was very encouraging to see interest and support for the RYCO-initiative and the Working Group from different sides. The meeting of the political advisors of the Prime Ministers of the WB-6-Participants in order to discuss the future seat of RYCO has shown the commitment of the six governments regarding the establishment of RYCO, and was important to make the working process progress. The meeting in Belgrade, from 16 to 20th February, the last of the foreseen four meetings before the 1st of March 2016, will be decisive for the finalization of the different draft documents which will then be transmitted to the governments of the Western-Balkans-6-Participants.

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