

**Report of the fourth meeting of the Working Group
for the establishment of the Regional Youth Coop-
eration Office of the Western Balkans (RYCO)**
Belgrade, 16-20 February 2016

1. Participants of the Meeting:

Members of the Working Group: Ina Avllaj, Đuro Blanuša, Marija Bulat, Krenare Gashi, Adnan Husić, Vedat Jashari, Edin Koljenović, Kreshnik Loka, Branka Malešević, Dafina Peci, Faton Pollozhani, Zorica Stamenkovska, Krsto Vukadinović.

Excused: Rejan Igor Roić

Consultant: Tihomir Popović

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

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2. Context and aims of the fourth 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 have met in four meetings between November 2015 and February 2016, the working process being facilitated by the Franco-German Youth Office. After the first meeting in Berlin from 23 to 27th November 2015, the second meeting in Tirana, from 14 to

18 December 2015, and the third meeting in Sarajevo from 25 to 30 January 2016, the meeting in Belgrade was the last meeting before the deadline of 1st March 2016 foreseen to hand over the elaborated proposals to the Western-Balkan-6-governments. The main aim of this fourth meeting in Belgrade was to work on the final versions of the different proposal concerning the mission, activities, statute and financing of RYCO. Furthermore several networking and information events regarding RYCO took place during this fourth meeting in Belgrade which has been organized thanks to the financial support of the ERSTE Foundation.

3. Main steps and results of the fourth meeting

3.1. Finalizing the proposals concerning the mission, activities, structure and financing of RYCO

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, different working documents related to these four domains, were drafted by the consultant, Tihomir Popovic, which were then sent to the members of the Working Group and also to members of a focus group made out of experts in different fields of youth work and international youth cooperation, in order to gather comments, questions and suggestions. 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 discussed within the group in order to progress in the editing of the different documents. Follow-

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3 / 11

ing this Sarajevo meeting new versions were drafted by the consultant, which were sent to the members of the Working Group for gathering comments and suggestions. The following documents were then discussed and worked on at the meeting in Belgrade:

- RYCO overview (short info sheet about the context, mission and vision of RYCO)
- Definition of the activities of RYCO
- Statute of RYCO
- Budget proposal
- Organizational chart
- International agreement on the establishment of RYCO

The first four documents were updated versions of drafts which had already circulated before, while the two last documents had been newly drafted following a corresponding proposal at the Sarajevo meeting.

During the meeting in Belgrade, the WG agreed on new versions of the documents, what included some modifications within the draft documents in comparison to the earlier drafts.

1) The "RYCO overview" document contains now in one page the essential information about the context, the mission and the vision of RYCO.

2) The "Activities"-document defines the main fields of activities and the criteria of eligibility for activities supported by RYCO and can be considered as a basis for the future guidelines of applicants for RYCO-projects which will be elaborated by the future Secretariat and the Governing Board.

3) The "Statute"-document defines mainly the organizational structure of RYCO, with the roles of the Governing Board, the Advisory Board and the Secretariat, the latter being composed of the head office and the local branches. In comparison to first versions, the very detailed articles regarding the financial provisions have been reduced, and

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4 / 11

articles about the mandate and the scope of activities of RYCO added.

4) The "Budget"-document contains a proposal for the financial contributions of the WB-6-Signatories and for the distribution of the administrative costs of RYCO.

5) The organizational chart ("Organigram") forms an overview about the general structure of RYCO. Compared to the first version, the WG emphasized the importance to highlight the Secretariat's central position, and to design the Chair and Co-Chair not as an independent body, but as part of the Governing Board.

6) The "International Agreement" forms the proposal for the Agreement on the establishment of RYCO to be signed at the next Summit in the framework of the "Berlin Process", in Paris in July 2016. It includes a preamble which takes some main elements of the "Overview"-document, and several articles on the legal dimension of this Agreement, the Statute as an Annex being an integral part of the Agreement.

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All together, during the Belgrade meeting the Working Group agreed on the content of the different documents except for two points:

1) One point concerns the finances, and more especially the calculation of the percentages of the financial contributions of the different Western-Balkans-6-Participants to the annual budget, and the ratio between the parts provided to the budget on the one hand by the WB-6-Participants, and by international donors on the other hand

2) Concerning the "International agreement", no consensus was reached concerning the use of the word "government" within this document.

The Working Group agreed that these points need to be clarified directly on the governmental level. In order to discuss about the different possibilities concerning the finances, the Working Group decided that the consultant

5 / 11

should draft a document which elaborates the different options and which will be joined to the documents which will be presented to the governments of the WB-6-Participants.

In summary, the Working Group agreed that will be handed over to the governments of the WB-6-Participants two types of documents:

a) as legal documents the drafts of the international agreement ("RYCO Agreement") and of the statute of RYCO ("RYCO Statute") as an annex of this agreement, 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 scope of activities and the financial contributions for RYCO.

b) as additional documents more detailed documents about the context and mission of RYCO ("RYCO Overview") and the activities of RYCO, ("RYCO Activities") as well as an organizational chart proposal ("RYCO Organigram") and a detailed budget proposal for the first year of RYCO ("RYCO Budget Proposal"). 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. The WB-6-governments may also decide to integrate one or some of these documents as a proper annex to the legal documents mentioned before. In order to help to clarify the financial questions which remained open the already mentioned document "Financing Proposal" will also be given to the WB-6-governments.

Concerning the time between the end of the Belgrade meeting and the official delivery of the documents to the WB-6-governments, the Working Group agreed to proceed by the following steps:

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6 / 11

Until 23rd February 2016 the Working Group members will receive by email the last versions of the different documents for a last check, with potential remarks to be sent back to the Moderation team until 25th February 2016, 1pm.

If there should be new suggestions on which there will be no time to agree within the whole Working Group, they will be noted separately.

The 29th February 2016, the FGYO, on behalf of the Working Group, will then officially send, by email and by post, the finalized documents to the Prime Ministers and to the Foreign Ministers of the Western Balkans-6-Participants, with an accompanying letter which will include explanations regarding the documents and the open questions. The Working Group asked that in this accompanying letter should also be proposed a meeting of the chief of cabinets / political advisors of the Prime Ministers of the WB-6-Participants in order to clarify the questions were an agreement had not been found and in order to prepare the steps until the Paris Summit (see also below point 3.5.: Steps after the 1st March 2016)

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3.2. Organization of consultation and information activities related to RYCO before the Belgrade meeting

As in the former meetings, at the beginning of the meeting in Belgrade, the different members of the WG reported about information and consultation activities they have been organizing since the previous meeting, 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

3.3. Information activities during the Belgrade meeting: Public event organized by the French and the German Embassy, and press conference organized by FGYO

Since the beginning of the working process, the WG aims to use the 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:

3.3.1. The second day of the meeting the French and the German Embassy in Serbia organized at the Goethe Institute a presentation and discussion about the FGYO and RYCO, to which youth organisations and other stakeholders from Belgrade had been invited. The event was opened by the German Chargé d’Affaires, Alexander Jung, and the French Chargé d’Affaires, Denis Douvneau, who both underlined the high political interest of their respective countries in the process. After this, Béatrice Angrand, the French Secretary General of the FGYO, talked about the role of FGYO in this process and highlighted the importance of the RYCO-initiative. Following this, the FGYO-moderation team presented examples of projects realized by the FGYO in the Western Balkans, and then Ina Avllaj and Edin Koljenovic presented in the name of the Working Group the work done so far by the group in order to establish RYCO. The presentations were followed by a discussion with the public, with different questions and declarations of support in relation with the RYCO-initiative. After the public discussion, the French and the German Embassy in Serbia invited the Working Group and other guests to a reception in the Residence of the French Ambassador in Belgrade.

The Serbian public television RTS reported the next day in their news about the public event, the video can be found here:

<http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/Dru%C5%A1tvo/2215509/Regionalnom+kancelarijom+za+mlade+ka+boljoj+saradnji.html>

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3.3.2. The second day of the meeting also took place a press conference organized by FGYO which was attended by around 20 journalists from Belgrade and the region. Working group members Dafina Peci and Zorica Stamenkowska presented the history of RYCO, the current working process and gave an outlook on the upcoming months. Frank Morawietz of the Moderation Team and the French Secretary General of FGYO, Béatrice Angrand, gave additional information related to the experience of FGYO in the region. The presentations were followed by questions from the journalists, first in plenary, and then in an informal way with different members of the Working Group. Especially the attending journalists from outside of Serbia were part of a regional group which had been invited by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights to a study trip to Belgrade during this week.

3.4. Informal meetings with the Serbian Minister for Youth and Sports, with the French Secretary General of FGYO and with the Balkan Trust for Democracy / German Marshall Fund

The first evening, an informal dinner for the Working Group was organized and hosted by Vanja Udovičić, the Serbian Minister of Youth and Sports, in which also participated Snežana Klašnjaja, Assistant to the Minister of Youth and Sports, and Tanja Jović, foreign policy advisor of the Serbian Prime Minister. Snežana Klašnjaja and Tanja Jović also attended the reception organized by the French and German Embassy the following day.

For the second day of the meeting, Béatrice Angrand, the French Secretary General of FGYO, came to Belgrade, where she participated at the press conference and at the public event organized and the reception organized by the French and German Embassy. Before this she also met with the Working Group, in order to transmit the greetings of her and her German colleague, Dr. Markus Ingenlath,

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9 / 11

and to congratulate the group for the important work it is doing.

The last evening, the members of the group were invited to an informal dinner by the Balkan Trust for Democracy / German Marshall Fund, with Gordana Delić, Nataša Petrović and several of their colleagues from the BTD/GMF, in continuation to the working meeting which had taken place during the meeting in Sarajevo in January and the general support BTD/GMF is providing to RYCO and the Working Group.

3.5. 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 create RYCO, the French government had announced to the FGYO its intention to invite the Working Group to Paris in March 2016. The meeting will take place between 14 and 17 March in Paris, with an encounter with Harlem Désir, the French Minister of state for European affairs, foreseen the 16 March, in order to present the results of the Working Group.

What will happen after the delivery of the proposals of the Working Group to the WB-6-governments, and how to ensure that the International Agreement creating RYCO will be signed at the Western-Balkans-Summit in Paris which will take place in July 2016? The Working Group emphasized that the letter of the FGYO which will accompany the documents for the WB-6-governments should insist on the importance of this question and should therefore propose to organize as soon as possible a meeting between the governments of the WB-6-Participants and other stakeholders in order:

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10 / 11

- To find an agreement about the open questions which the WG could not resolve, especially about the financial contributions of the WB-6-Participants.
- To define and agree on a coordination mechanism for the phase until the Paris Summit, which will especially ensure that the legal procedures for the signing of the legal documents at the Paris Summit will be engaged and finished in time in all WB-6-Participants (for example with a deadline for finalizing the legal procedures which would be four weeks before the Paris Summit, in order to keep some margin until the Summit) and also ensure the communication about RYCO towards and with the future target groups, with potential donors and other partners, and with the larger public.

As the time span between the 1st March 2016 and the Paris Summit is only of several months, and as the legal procedures to prepare the signature of the international agreement will take at least two months in some of the WB-6-Participants, it is important that such a meeting involving the WB-6-governments takes place within the next weeks, possibly Mid-March 2016 in Paris, in parallel to the presence of the Working Group invited to Paris by the French government.

At such a meeting it will be important to think and agree not only on the steps until the Paris Summit and who should have which role in this process, but also to start thinking about concrete approaches for after the Paris Summit, in order to accompany and ensure the implementation of RYCO between the signature of the international agreement in July 2016, and the 1st of January 2017, when RYCO is planned to be operational.

4. Conclusions

The meeting in Belgrade has been the fourth and last meeting of the Working Group within its mandate to develop until the 1st of March 2016 concrete proposals for

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the establishment of RYCO. The Working Group has achieved its aim to finalize the different documents which will constitute the basis and the framework in which RYCO can be officially created as an international organization which will stimulate and support youth exchanges as contribution to regional cooperation and reconciliation processes in South Eastern Europe. The Working Group could find agreement on all fields and points which were discussed, with exception of two points which will be needed to be clarified directly between the WB-6-governments. After these clarifications and the final approval of the documents by the WB-6-governments, the legal procedures need to be launched in order to allow the signing of the international agreement for the establishment of RYCO during the Paris Summit in July 2016. During the whole working process, the discussions and the work within the Working Group were characterized by a very constructive spirit and by a very good cooperation between the WB-6-Participants on the one hand, between governments and civil society on the other hand, and finally also between WB-6-Participants and international stakeholders, with the common aim to achieve a major contribution for the youth and the region. Not only through the elaborated documents, but also through this good example of cooperation, the Working Group can therefore be seen as a promising example and encouraging inspiration for the future RYCO, whose official creation is planned to take place in July 2016 with the aim to become operational from 1st January 2017 on.

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