Contracting Authority:

Regional Youth Cooperation Office

Call for Project Proposals 2024

RYCOnnecting You(th)

Guidelines for Grant Applicants

Deadline for submission of project proposals: 20 November 2024

Table of Content

1.1. Background Information

About RYCO?

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an intergovernmental organization that stewards and promotes regional, cross-border, and intercultural cooperation within and among its six Western Balkan Contracting Parties (WB6) – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo[*], Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. RYCO's unique governance system brings together government and civil society representatives to ensure young people are represented at all levels within the organization. Its Local Branch Offices ensure RYCO is represented in all the six Contracting Parties[2], while its Head Office is the organizational hub.

RYCO's Vision

Young people are playing a pivotal role in fostering reconciliation and building a culture of understanding and dialogue. They are active contributors to democratic development, social and economic prosperity, and European integration in an increasingly open Western Balkan region. Contracting Parties in the Western Balkans are providing proactive support to youth exchange and youth engagement within the Contracting Parties, and across the region.

RYCO believes that building true and enduring reconciliation involves a process that brings together individuals, groups, and societies burdened by past or present conflicts and negative representations and perceptions of „the other". Through shared experience, cooperation, and ongoing exchange, new pathways can be built to reconcile people who would otherwise remain trapped in the past.

RYCO's overall programme

Over the years, significant efforts have been made to support youth exchange in the region. However, until recently, these initiatives primarily focused on enabling young people to visit CPs outside the Western Balkans. While these cross-border exchange opportunities were valuable, they did not allow young people to engage with their peers within the region. As a result, although their worldview was broadened, their perspectives and behaviors towards their regional peers remained largely unchanged. Connecting with strangers outside the Balkans was easier than confronting the essential but potentially uncomfortable task of building a prosperous and peaceful future with their immediate neighbors.

Young people in the Western Balkans face social and political narratives distorted by prejudice, denial, revisionism, and nationalism. These inherited negative narratives influence their future life choices regarding careers, residence, friendships, and the potential for dialogue with others, thereby reinforcing negative stereotypes about "the other." In this volatile environment, there is a significant lack of opportunities for young people to move within the region for volunteering, formal and non-formal education, and training, or simply to meet and share experiences peacefully. This scarcity of opportunities is further exacerbated by legal obstacles.

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[*] 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

RYCO's program is dedicated to creating opportunities for young people to engage in activities that foster mutual understanding and reconciliation across civic, social, educational, cultural, and sports domains. By initiating and participating in policy-making, RYCO advocates for reforms that support the development of a political and social environment conducive to youth exchange. In its mission, RYCO is committed to upholding human rights, human dignity, and building peace through mutual respect and trust.

1.2. General Objective and Thematic Areas of the Call

General Objective

The primary objective of this call for proposals is to support civil society in the Western Balkans in fostering reconciliation, peacebuilding, regional cooperation, and intercultural learning. This will be achieved by providing young people with opportunities that create spaces for dialogue, mutual learning, and increased understanding across communities and RYCO Contracting Parties.

RYCO is founded on the belief that when young people are given the opportunity to learn, grow, and express their voices, both they and their communities benefit in the long term. This call aims to provide decisive support to actors who can contribute to this vision, whether they are engaging in such actions for the first time or need assistance to continue or expand their existing work.

All projects funded under this call for proposals must promote and uphold the values upon which RYCO was established, and align with the vision of societies where young people foster a culture of mobility, reconciliation, and intercultural exchange. Project organizers must ensure that their activities do not create further divisions among youth, but instead contribute to mutual understanding, peace, and social cohesion. Every young person participating in RYCO-supported projects must be free to express themselves without fear of punishment or retribution for their beliefs. Additionally, every young person must be protected from violence, bullying, or belittlement, especially based on their identities, origin, social standing, or abilities. For more information on the safety and protection standards in RYCO's projects, check section 2.7.

Thematic Areas

This call encompasses several thematic areas for applicants to focus their project proposals on. Applicants should select the area that aligns most closely with the specific focus of their project. While most projects will likely contribute to multiple thematic areas, applicants are encouraged to consider how they can integrate elements from all thematic areas into their project design, even if they are applying under a single focus area.

Based on RYCO's experience and research, applicants are strongly encouraged to engage young people beyond merely being participants. Including youth in all stages of the project, including the design phase, ensures a better response to their needs and enhances the overall impact and relevance of the project.

[Please, note that in the course of the assessment and selection processes, we reserve the right to categorize your project under a thematic area other than the one you stated in your application, should we find it more closely related to your project design. This, however, will not impact our assessment in terms of decreasing the potential of your proposal for success in this call.]

The thematic areas under this call are presented below:

Thematic Area 1: Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

RYCO believes that achieving genuine and lasting reconciliation requires a process that unites individuals, groups, and societies affected by past or present conflicts and negative perceptions of "the other." By fostering shared experiences, cooperation, and continuous exchange, we can create new pathways to bring together people who might otherwise remain divided by their histories.

Through projects focused on this thematic area, RYCO aims to support initiatives that encourage young people to address and navigate their differences related to the region's historical conflicts and inherited narratives. These initiatives should facilitate guided processes in safe and supportive environments, allowing youth to challenge and reframe the narratives they have inherited. The projects should create spaces for meaningful intercultural learning and dialogue, enabling young people from diverse communities within their Contracting Parties and across the Western Balkan region to engage with one another in constructive ways.

Sub-Areas of Focus:

1. **Intercultural Learning and Dialogue**: Projects should promote opportunities for young people to learn about and engage with cultures, traditions, and perspectives different from their own. This involves creating structured environments where dialogue can occur, allowing participants to exchange experiences and viewpoints. The goal is to foster understanding and respect among diverse groups, breaking down cultural barriers and building connections.

2. **Constructively Dealing with the Past**: Initiatives should focus on helping young people engage with and understand the historical contexts and legacies that have shaped their current realities. This includes creating spaces for reflection and discussion about past conflicts, prejudices, and injustices, and guiding participants through processes of reconciliation and healing. By addressing historical grievances and narratives, these projects can contribute to overcoming the divisions that have been perpetuated by historical events.

3. **Countering Hate Speech**: Projects should aim to tackle and reduce the prevalence of hate speech and discriminatory language among youth. This involves raising awareness about the impact of hate speech, providing education on respectful communication, and promoting counter-

narratives that challenge and deconstruct harmful stereotypes and prejudices. Initiatives could include workshops, campaigns, and online interventions designed to promote positive and inclusive discourse.

Key Aspects of Valued Projects:

- **Meaningful Engagement**: RYCO places high value on projects that move beyond superficial encounters and instead create deep, impactful interactions among diverse groups of young people. These projects should enable participants to engage in substantive dialogue and collaboration, helping them to develop a genuine understanding of one another's perspectives and experiences.

- **Opportunities for Learning and Understanding**: Projects should offer young people structured opportunities to explore and understand each other's communities, traditions, and viewpoints. This can be achieved through exchange programs, joint activities, and collaborative projects that encourage participants to engage with and learn from one another.

- **Innovative Use of Digital Tools**: RYCO is particularly interested in supporting projects that leverage digital tools and platforms to engage young people. This includes using online resources, social media, and virtual collaboration tools to facilitate intercultural learning and dialogue. Innovative digital initiatives can help reach a broader audience and provide new ways for young people to connect and collaborate.

Overall Aim:

The overarching goal is to create lasting and transformative impacts by addressing prejudices, stereotypes, and historical grievances while fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding among youth. By supporting these types of projects, RYCO seeks to contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious Western Balkans, where young people are empowered to bridge divides and build a shared future.

Thematic area 2: Youth empowerment and engagement in society

This thematic area seeks to empower youth and enhance their civic engagement in reconciliation and intercultural learning. It focuses on promoting youth mobility and exchange both within and among the Contracting Parties in the Western Balkan region. RYCO is committed to developing social capital among young people and facilitating their awareness, ability, and motivation to actively participate in society. RYCO believes that youth should be key drivers of democratic development, social and economic prosperity, and European integration in an increasingly open Western Balkans region.

Projects under this thematic area should promote youth participation in social, political, cultural, educational, and economic processes, enhancing the lives of youth, their communities, and the region as a whole. We aim to support projects that build youth capacities and create platforms for them to be active contributors in their schools, communities, and societies.

We are particularly interested in projects that amplify youth voices, provide spaces for them to openly discuss their grievances, and find common ground on issues shared across communities and RYCO's Contracting Parties. We encourage applicants to involve their target group beyond mere participation, inviting them to actively contribute to all project stages, including design. We welcome innovative ideas that establish sustainable platforms and opportunities for youth participation, ensuring lasting impact beyond the project's implementation period. The types of change RYCO is interested in supporting include but are not limited to the following areas:

1. **Policy Integration &Recommendations**: Proposing well-researched and practical recommendations to address identified challenges or to develop more youth-oriented policies. This involves engaging with youth, collecting their insights and feedback, and translating these into actionable policy suggestions that can be presented to and adopted by decision-makers Incorporating reconciliation and intercultural learning topics into the agendas of decision-makers at local, national, and regional levels. This involves advocating for these subjects to be prioritized in policy discussions,

2. **Stakeholder Networking**: Advancing the networking and collaboration of key stakeholders working on reconciliation and intercultural learning. This includes fostering partnerships among governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, community groups, and international agencies to create a cohesive and comprehensive approach to these issues.

3. **Focus on Digital Participation**: Projects could incorporate digital platforms to encourage youth participation in social, political, and economic processes, enabling young people to engage with their communities virtually.

4. **Youth-led Initiatives &Youth Leadership Programs** : Support projects where youth take on leadership roles, ensuring their active involvement in designing and implementing programs that affect their communities. This includes training in leadership skills, providing mentorship opportunities, and creating platforms for young leaders to influence their peers and their communities.

5. **Inclusive Participation**: Prioritize projects that promote the participation of marginalized groups, such as rural youth, youth with disabilities, or ethnic minorities, ensuring diverse voices are heard in social, political, and cultural processes.

6. **Civic Engagement Training**: Projects that focus on capacity-building in civic education and political engagement, encouraging youth to understand and participate in democratic processes.

7. **Environmental Advocacy**: Incorporate sustainability and environmental activism into youth participation, allowing them to contribute to climate action and eco-friendly initiatives in their communities.

8. **Entrepreneurial Opportunities**: Projects that equip youth with skills and resources for economic empowerment, focusing on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and innovative business ventures.

9. **Cultural Exchange Programs**: Initiatives promoting cultural understanding and intercultural dialogue between youth from different regions to strengthen regional cooperation and unity.

10. **Best Practices Identification:** Identifying and promoting best practices that have proven successful in specific contexts or locations within the region. This includes documenting successful initiatives, creating case studies, and sharing these practices through workshops, seminars, and publications to inspire and guide similar efforts in new contexts.

11. **Community Engagement Projects**: Encouraging projects that bring together diverse groups of youth from different backgrounds to engage in community activities. These projects should aim to break down barriers, build mutual respect, and promote intercultural understanding through joint efforts in community service, cultural exchange programs, and collaborative problem-solving activities.

12. **Digital and Media Campaigns**: Utilizing digital tools and media platforms to raise awareness about the importance of reconciliation and intercultural learning. This involves creating engaging content such as videos, social media campaigns, and interactive websites that can reach a wide audience and encourage dialogue and understanding.

By supporting these types of changes, RYCO aims to create a lasting impact on reconciliation and intercultural learning in the Western Balkans, fostering an environment where young people can thrive in a culture of mutual respect and understanding.

Other cross-cutting thematic areas that RYCO expects project applicants to incorporate into their proposals include social inclusion, social cohesion, youth policy, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and digital literacy. Projects are encouraged to promote interethnic dialogue, address marginalization, foster civic engagement, and create safe spaces for youth to express their ideas. Additionally, RYCO expects initiatives to focus on enhancing employability skills, mental health awareness, youth entrepreneurship, and capacity-building activities that equip young people with the tools to actively contribute to social change and community development.

RYCO is committed to fostering inclusion and diversity through all of its work. This means ensuring that individuals and groups with different backgrounds and capabilities are culturally and socially accepted, welcomed, valued, and enabled to participate equally. When organizing youth activities, it is of utmost importance for RYCO to ensure that every person has equal opportunity as a prerequisite, regardless of their origin, age, race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, educational level, socioeconomic status, or capabilities.

1.3. Financial Allocation Provided by RYCO

The overall financial envelope for this call is EUR 300.000. RYCO reserves the right to not award all available funds.

Size of Grants

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- minimum amount: EUR 15.000
- maximum amount: EUR 30.000

A larger financial envelope is indicative planned for **LOT 1**, specifically targeting CSOs/grassroots organizations with an annual turnover of up to EUR 50,000. **LOT 2** is indicative planned for CSOs with a previous year's turnover exceeding EUR 50,000.

Indicative allocation of funds by lots:

- LOT 1: Up to EUR 200.000 : CSOs with last year's annual turnover of up to EUR 50,000.
- LOT 2: Up to EUR 100,000 : CSOs with last year's annual turnover higher than EUR 50.000.

Applications, which are related to Thematic Area 1: Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, will receive higher priority in terms of financial allocation. This emphasis reflects our commitment to supporting initiatives that directly contribute to fostering peace and reconciliation in the region. By prioritizing projects within this thematic area, we aim to address critical issues and support efforts that are essential for building lasting peace and understanding among communities.

Key Points for Priority Allocation:

Impact on Peacebuilding and Reconciliation: Projects that focus on peacebuilding and reconciliation will be evaluated with a special emphasis on their potential to make a meaningful impact. This includes initiatives that work towards healing divisions, fostering dialogue, and creating opportunities for collaborative solutions to past conflicts.

Alignment with Thematic Goals: To qualify for higher financial allocation, applications should align closely with the objectives of Thematic Area 1. This means that the projects should demonstrate clear strategies for addressing historical grievances, promoting intercultural dialogue, and building mutual respect among diverse groups.

Demonstrated Need and Relevance: Priority will be given to applications that address significant needs within the region and show how their proposed activities are relevant to current peacebuilding and reconciliation challenges. Projects should provide a comprehensive approach to tackling these issues and offer innovative solutions.

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact: We are particularly interested in projects that not only achieve immediate outcomes but also contribute to long-term peacebuilding efforts. Applications should outline how their initiatives will create lasting change and continue to benefit communities beyond the project's duration.

Collaborative and Inclusive Approaches: Projects that involve diverse stakeholders, including youth, local communities, and relevant organizations, will be favored. Efforts that promote inclusive participation and collaboration are essential for ensuring that peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts are effective and widely supported.

By focusing on these criteria, we aim to maximize the impact of our financial resources and support projects that are integral to achieving our overarching goals of peace and reconciliation in the Western Balkans.

RYCO foresees that a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20 proposals will be funded under the call.

At least one project from each of the Western Balkans 6 will be funded under the call. In determining the project origin, the Contracting Party of registration of the Lead Applicant will be considered.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

This document set out the rules for the submission, selection, and implementation of the projects financed under this call (available also on the RYCO website: www.rycowb.org).

2.1. Eligibility criteria

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

1. the actors:

➢ The **Lead Applicant**, the entity applying (2.2.1.),

➢ **Partner(s)** (2.2.2.),

2. the activities:

➢ activities for which a grant may be awarded (2.3, 2.5, 2.6.);

3. the costs:

➢ types of cost that may be considered in setting the amount of the grant (2.9 - 2.11).

2.2. Eligibility of Actors

2.2.1. Lead Applicant

To be eligible for a grant, a Lead Applicant must:

a) be a legal entity, and

b) be a non-profit-making CSO, established in one of the six Western Balkan Contracting Parties, a minimum of one year prior to the launch of this call for proposals.

Potential applicants may not participate in RYCO"s calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations indicating that they are bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures; where their assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court; where it is in an arrangement with creditors; where their activities are suspended; or where they are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under national laws or regulations; they are in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions, in accordance with the law of the Contracting Party in which they are established.

CSOs that employ or are represented/overseen by members of the RYCO statutory bodies (i.e., Governing Board or Advisory Board) are not allowed to apply for this Call for Project Proposals. These applications will be subject to conflict-of-interest policy and rejected.

Grants to individuals will not be considered.

The Lead Applicant **must act with partner(s).**

If awarded a grant contract, the Lead Applicant will become a Beneficiary. It represents and acts on behalf of any other partners and coordinates the design and overall implementation of the project activities.
The number of applications and grants per Lead Applicant:

A Lead Applicant may submit only one (1) application under this Call for Proposals.

A Lead Applicant (in 1 application) may be a partner in only one (1) **other** application under this Call For Proposals.

Thus, at maximum, a single applicant can only appear in two applications, given it appears in one as a Lead Applicant and another as a partner.

In case a Lead Applicant or a partner appears in more applications than allowed, either as Lead Applicant or as a partner, all project proposals in which they participate will be automatically disqualified.

RYCO values sustainable networks but will be particularly keen on supporting first-time applicants and/or new partnerships.

Alongside the Application Form, applicants must fill out, sign, stamp, and upload the Declaration by the Applicant as defined in the List of Supporting Documents.

2.2.2. Partner(s) and collaborators

Each Lead Applicant must apply with at least one other partner from a different Contracting Party, meaning that a partner must be **registered as a legal entity in a Western Balkans six Contracting Party other than the one where the Lead Applicant is registered.**

The following are eligible to be a partner under this call for project proposals:

• non-profit-making CSOs, registered as legal entities established a minimum of one year prior to the launch of this Call;

It is expected that partners participate in all phases of the project design and implementation together with Lead Applicants. The costs incurred by partners are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the Lead Applicant. The Lead Applicant and partners should jointly ensure that project activities and follow-up are planned and implemented with young people and/or by young people. RYCO is committed to supporting youth empowerment and engagement in society and through this open call it specifically aims to support ideas coming from young people.

RYCO recognizes the added value of collaborators that can support the partnership to further reach the intended goals and outcomes of their projects. The following are considered as potential collaborators:

- cultural institutions (private and public) from the WB6;

- sports associations and organizations in the field of sports from the WB6;

- trade unions from the WB6;

- educational institutions such as universities and institutes (public and private).
- Youth informal groups with a proven track record of working with and for young people.

Whereas partners should act together from project proposal design and in implementing the projects, the collaborators play a different role by providing valuable resources, expertise, and diverse perspectives in enriching the learning experience and fostering intercultural understanding.

The Lead Applicant must submit, together with the Application Form, the declarations of the **partners,** filled out, signed, and stamped by the partners, as defined in the List of Supporting Documents. *This does not apply to collaborators.*

Partners are obliged, upon request of the Lead Applicant, to provide all relevant information deemed necessary for the purposes of applying for this Call for Project Proposals.

Number of Partnerships per Lead Applicant

There should be a minimum of 1 partner but no more than 5 partners, **with at least one** from a different WB6 Contracting Party than the one of the Lead Applicant. Having more than one partner from another WB6 Contracting Parties will be considered an advantage.

RYCO does not provide direct support to the applicants for the creation of partnerships but provides information on platforms that serve the purpose of facilitating partnerships. RYCO has created a Facebook group "RYCO Meeting Point" that aims to support this process. During the promotion of this call for applications, RYCO will also provide prospective applicants with info sessions. Follow our website and social media channels for updates on such events and opportunities.

2.3 Eligible Activities

Definition:

A project is composed of a set of activities. Activities must fall under the set General and Specific Objectives of the Call (section 1.3.). Activities should also be implemented in the locations as defined in these Guidelines (section 2.4), have proper target groups (section 2.5.), and respond to the objectives of the Call and types of activities (section 2.6.)

Duration:

The duration of the project must be a minimum of **4 months and a maximum of 8 months**.

2.3.   Location(s)

All the project activities financed by RYCO must take place in the Western Balkans 6 Contracting Parties (WB6): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

2.4.   Target groups

This section refers to the target groups that will benefit directly from the project implementation.

Please note that the eligible target group under this call are young people from the WB6, from **14 to 30 years old**. The application form should indicate the exact number of targeted

participants in the project, classified by gender, if possible. It should describe how the actors plan to include youth from the most excluded groups such as: NEETs (youth "not in education,

employment or training"), young people with disabilities, marginalized groups based on race, ethnicity, religious identity, gender, and sexual orientation, etc. or youth with fewer opportunities (youth from rural/remote areas, youth with unprivileged educational and/or economic backgrounds, etc.), as well as youth without parental care and youth exposed to conflict, violence and/or bullying.

Significant involvement of the most excluded and vulnerable youth groups, particularly supporting their social inclusion and participation in decision-making, will be considered an advantage, especially the involvement of youth who did not have any opportunity to travel and participate in any similar projects. Active contribution of youth is welcome to all stages of the project, including project design and project management. Please ensure gender balance in the selection of your target group (**14-30 years old from the WB6).**

RYCO pays special attention to the number of direct beneficiaries chosen and will score accordingly if the project is trying to reach as many young participants as possible in line with the project's objectives.

2.5. Types of Activities

The activities in a project proposal should be planned and implemented in partnership, as described in section 2.2.2. of these Guidelines.

Each project needs to have at least one intercultural youth exchange which should last a minimum of 5 days, including the traveling days.

The topics and activities eligible for funding under this Call for Proposals include, but are not limited to:

- **Capacity Building and Professional Development:**

  - Specialized **trainings, workshops, and study visits** focused on enhancing the skills and knowledge of youth leaders in areas such as innovation management, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence.

  - **Peer support groups** and mentorship programs that facilitate the exchange of expertise and experiences in emerging technologies.

- **Conflict Resolution and Historical Awareness:**

  - **Workshops and discussions** centered on conflict resolution, transitional justice, and the preservation and understanding of historical memory, incorporating innovative digital tools and methods.

- **Diversity, Identity, and Stereotypes:**

  - Interactive sessions and **workshops** exploring issues related to diversity, identity, stereotypes, and prejudices, with an emphasis on leveraging AI tools for research and analysis.

- **Promoting Intercultural Dialogue:**

  - **Joint activities** that foster intercultural dialogue through innovative formats such as virtual reality exhibitions, immersive theater experiences, and collaborative sports events.

- o **Art exhibitions, theater performances, and sports events** that utilize cutting-edge technology to enhance participant engagement and understanding.

- **Digital Skills and Cybersecurity:**

  - o **Advanced training** on digital skills, including the development and application of cybersecurity measures and tools.

  - o **Workshops on digital safety and ethical hacking**, designed to equip youth with the skills to protect themselves and their communities from cyber threats.

- **AI and Media Literacy:**

  - o **Training on artificial intelligence** and its applications in media, focusing on AI's role in shaping public opinion and its impact on digital literacy.

  - o **Media literacy programs** that incorporate AI-based tools for analyzing and addressing misinformation and hate speech.

- **Educational Campaigns and Awareness:**

  - o Development of **educational materials and campaigns** that leverage new technologies to raise awareness about the dangers of hate speech and promote constructive dialogue and understanding.

- **Inclusion and Accessibility:**

  - o **Activities aimed at including vulnerable or excluded groups**, using innovative methods to ensure equal participation and access to opportunities.

- **Advocacy and Equal Rights:**

  - o **Local and regional events** promoting equal access and rights, supported by advocacy campaigns that utilize digital platforms for broader outreach and impact.

- **Youth Engagement and Volunteering:**

  - o **Camps, workshops, and roundtable discussions** that support constructive dialogue, reconciliation, and intercultural learning, with a focus on integrating technology and innovation.

  - o **Volunteering programs** that facilitate cross-regional collaboration and service, incorporating tech-driven solutions to enhance volunteer coordination and impact.

- **Cultural and Artistic Collaboration:**

  - o **Joint art and cultural performances** that blend traditional and digital forms, including virtual concerts, digital art installations, and interactive festivals.

  - o **Intercultural Art Exhibitions**
    Host art exhibitions featuring collaborative works from youth across conflicting communities, showcasing themes of unity and reconciliation.

- **Peacebuilding and Mediation:**

  - o **Dialogue and mediation workshops** that use innovative tools and methods to foster

peace, including AI-driven conflict analysis and virtual mediation platforms.

- **Innovation and Regional Cooperation:**

  o Support for **new and innovative approaches** to regional cooperation, with a particular emphasis on integrating cutting-edge technologies and methodologies into project designs.

- **Virtual Reality (VR) Peacebuilding Simulations**

  Develop VR experiences that allow youth to immerse themselves in historical events or conflict scenarios, promoting empathy and understanding.

- **Peacebuilding Hackathons**

  Organize hackathons where young people create digital solutions (apps, websites, social media campaigns) to address local conflict issues and promote peace.

- **Storytelling and Digital Narratives**

  Create platforms for youth to share personal stories of conflict and reconciliation through blogs, podcasts, or video series, highlighting diverse perspectives.

- **Conflict Resolution Escape Rooms**

  Design escape rooms based on historical conflicts where participants must work together to solve puzzles that promote understanding and reconciliation.

- **Mobile Peace Libraries**

  Create mobile libraries that travel to different communities, offering books and resources on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and intercultural understanding.

- **Interactive Theatre Performances**

  Use participatory theatre where audiences engage in the performance to explore and resolve conflict scenarios, promoting dialogue and empathy.

- **Peace Journalism Workshops**

  Train youth in peace journalism, encouraging them to produce media content that promotes reconciliation and counters divisive narratives.

Youth Empowerment and Engagement in the Society (proposed activities)

- **Youth Leadership Bootcamps**

  Intensive training programs that equip young people with leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills, fostering active civic engagement.

- **Job Matching and Career Development Platforms**

  Offer platforms that match young people with job opportunities, internships, and career development resources tailored to their skills and interests.

- **Social Entrepreneurship Incubators**

  Support young entrepreneurs with innovative ideas for social change, providing mentorship,

funding, and resources to implement their projects.

- **Participatory Budgeting Initiatives**

  Involve youth in local government budgeting processes, giving them a voice in how public funds are allocated and ensuring their needs are met.

- **Digital Civic Engagement Platforms**

  Develop online platforms where youth can propose, discuss, and vote on community projects, fostering a sense of ownership and participation.

- **Youth Policy Labs**

  Create spaces where young people can collaborate with policymakers to develop and advocate for policies addressing youth issues and concerns.

- **Environmental Peacebuilding Projects**

  Engage youth in environmental conservation and sustainability projects that bring together conflicting communities to work towards common goals.

- **Cultural Heritage Preservation**

  Involve young people in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage through digital archiving, community events, and educational programs.

- **Creative Expression Workshops**

  Offer workshops in various forms of creative expression (music, dance, writing, visual arts) as outlets for youth to explore their identities and share their visions for society.

- **Peer Mediation Programs**

  Train youth as peer mediators to resolve conflicts in schools and communities, empowering them to take an active role in maintaining peace.

  These activities not only address the themes of peacebuilding and reconciliation but also empower and engage youth, fostering a generation of proactive and socially responsible individuals.

RYCO's Thematic Areas:

- Applicants must plan for a minimum of two sessions focusing on RYCO's thematic areas during the exchanges. If the initial proposal does not include these, RYCO will collaborate with the applicant to incorporate them if the proposal is successful.

2.6. Visibility

The results of the Open Call should be strongly promoted. Applicants are obliged to submit a communication action plan as part of the Application Form. If supported, the applicants will be obliged to promote the results of the projects, financial support of RYCO, and follow and respect RYCO Visibility and Communication Guidelines that will be provided. Applicants will have the support of the RYCO Communication Team in that part.

For the best quality of materials, grantees, and partners, when developing them, should contact

the RYCO Communication team for inputs on design, photo selection, wording and terminology, layout, and use of logos of RYCO and other partners. Draft materials should be sent by email for comments and approvals to the RYCO Communication Team <u>before</u> publishing.

<u>RYCO keeps the right to use all the materials created within a supported project for its promotional purposes.</u>

2.7. Safety and Protection

If supported, the applicants and partners will have to align their activities with the RYCO Safety and Protection Guidelines.

RYCO strongly believes that with quality safety procedures and responsible organization of activities, risks can be mitigated and even neutralized. Likewise, it is very important to emphasize the core values of safety and protection for youth involved in any kind of process. Some young people could be more vulnerable to abuse and other forms of discrimination and marginalization based on any of their characteristics. RYCO stands firmly against such violations and empowers its employees, associates, and partners to prevent them, speak up against them, and when noticed, immediately report them to the respective authority.

2.8. Eligibility of Costs

Only eligible costs can be covered by the grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for eligible costs.

Contributions by the applicants:

a) For Lead Applicants with a total last year budget of less than 50,000 EUR, RYCO will cover up to 95% of the total project costs.

b) For Lead Applicants with a total last year budget between 50,000 EUR and 300,000 EUR, RYCO will cover up to 85% of the total project costs.

c) For Lead Applicants with a total last year budget of more than 300,000 EUR, RYCO will cover up to 75% of the total project costs.

2.9. Eligible Direct and Indirect Costs

Eligible direct costs under this Call for Proposals include, but are not limited to:

Human resources: salaries (gross amounts) e.g. Project Coordinator and Project Assistant, project activities and related costs such as venue rental, equipment rental, food and beverages, translation/interpretation, fees of external experts, trainers, etc., domestic and international travel, office supplies, visibility costs, publications, design, etc. The costs must be directly related to project activities.

The following direct costs of the Grantee and/or Partner(s) shall be eligible:

a) Costs of staff assigned to the project, corresponding to actual gross salaries including social security charges and excluding performance-based bonuses. Salaries and costs shall not exceed those normally borne by the Grantee and/or Partner(s). RYCO may request timesheets of the staff involved per each month when submitting the monthly and final report (slips, timesheets, basis for calculation of monthly or daily rates and working days);

b) Travel and subsistence costs for staff and other people taking part in the project, which are in line with the Grantee's/Partner's travel rules and regulations and in accordance with the applicable legislation. In case of private car usage, the rates indicated in the instructions for budget of the project should be used;

c) Rental costs for equipment (new or used) and supplies dedicated to the purpose of the project, provided that it is rented or written off in accordance with the applicable legislation and beneficiary's usual accounting practices;

d) Costs of consumables;

e) Costs of service, supply and contracts awarded by the Grantee/Partner serving the purposes of the project;

f) Costs deriving directly from RYCO's contractual requirements such as visibility and dissemination of information, monitoring and evaluation, translation, reproduction, insurance, etc.) including financial service costs;

h) Duties, taxes and charges

g) Bank fees.

<u>Eligible indirect costs</u>

The indirect costs are costs incurred during the implementation of the project. They include but are not limited to stationaries, telephone, fax, internet, and courier expenses as well as financial service costs (bank transfers and financial charges) incurred by the Lead Applicant and/or partners.

Indirect costs are the only costs to be eligible for flat-rate funding. In any case, the total amount of these costs must not exceed 7% of the estimated total direct costs.

Indirect costs must not include costs assigned to another budget heading. The Lead Applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the budget is approved, no supporting documents will need to be provided for indirect costs during the reporting period. The Contracting Authority reserves the right to request clarifications regarding the final report, including any costs related to indirect expenses.

2.10. Ineligible Costs

The following costs are not eligible for funding by RYCO:

a)   customs and import duties, or any other related charges;
b)   purchases of land, any means of transport, or buildings;
c)   fines, financial penalties, and expenses of litigation;
d)   contributions in kind;
e)   debts and debt service charges (interest);
f)   provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
g)   currency exchange losses;
h)   any leasing costs;
i)   depreciation costs;

j)   credit to third parties;
k)   performance-based bonus staff costs.

3. HOW TO APPLY AND PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

3.1. Application Process

Before submitting their applications, applicants are required to:

- complete the Application Form;
- complete the Budget Form in EURO;
- complete, sign, stamp, scan and compile the Declarations by the Applicant and the Partner(s), by using the templates provided by RYCO;

3.1.1 Supportive Documents for Lead Applicant :

1. Copy of valid legal entity's registration form (applicable for the Lead Applicant). Theorganizers of this Open Call for Proposals reserve the right to request the original documentation. Please note that the Lead Applicant and partner/s must be establishedprior to **one year .**
2. Copy of the statute (for Organizations) or other document confirming the mandate of the organization (applicable for the Lead Applicant).
3. Complete, sign, stamp, scan and compile the Declarations by the Applicant, by using the templates provided by RYCO
4. Complete, sign, stamp, scan and compile the Declarations by the Partner(s), by using the templates provided by RYCO
5. Copy of the balance sheet and income statement for last year certified by a chartered accountant or authorized person/institution, or equivalent. Certificate from the relevant
6. tax authority that the legal entity (Lead Applicant) has paid all due taxes in accordance with the local legislation. This certificate should be issued in **September 2024** or later during the application period.

   If shortlisted they will be invited to submit
   1. Administrative Identification Form (Word)
   2. Financial Identification Form (Bank account)

   Handwritten form submissions will not be accepted.

Applicants must apply in English.

Any error related to the points listed in the checklist of the Application Form or any major inconsistency in the full application (e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when the information provided is unclear, thus preventing RYCO from conducting an objective assessment of the application.

Please note that only the described documents which must be filled out will be taken into consideration during the selection process. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL relevant information concerning the project. **No additional documents should be sent**.

3.2. Where and How to Send Applications

The Applicant will be required to register at the platform which you find in the official RYCO's website. Upon registration, they will have access to the Application Form. They will have to fill out the Application and upload the Activity Timeline. Applicants are required also to upload the scanned Supporting Documents in PDF format.

Applications sent by any other means (e.g., by fax or by mail), or delivered to other addresses, will be rejected.

Applicants must verify that their application is complete by using the checklist of the Informative Grant Application Form. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

3.3. Deadline for Submission of Applications

The deadline for submission of applications is **20 Nov 2024**. The submission of your applications will not be possible after the deadline.

3.4. Further Information About Application Process

Information sessions on this Call for Project Proposals will be held in each of the RYCO contracting parties before the deadline for submissions of proposals. The date and the schedule of the information sessions will be published on the RYCO website www.rycowb.org

Before contacting RYCO, applicants should read in detail the available FAQs.

Questions may be sent ONLY via email, no later than 7 days before the deadline for the submission of applications, to the following e-mail address: grants@rycowb.org.

The subject of the email should be: RYCO CfP 2023/Question for Clarification

RYCO will not be able to provide clarifications to questions received **13th of November 2024**. Questions should be specifically related to the clarifications of the Guidelines for the Grant Applicants and not individual project proposals. RYCO will not be able to respond to any phone or mail queries.

During the evaluation procedure, all important notices for applicants will be posted on the RYCO website: www.rycowb.org. It is therefore recommended to visit the website regularly, to stay informed about the grant evaluation process.

4. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by RYCO with the assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed in accordance with the steps and criteria described below.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed project does not meet the <u>administrative and eligibility criteria,</u> the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

4.1. Administrative and Eligibility Check of the Applications

Evaluation of the project proposals will be conducted in three steps:

1. Step 1: Opening , Administrative and Eligibility Check:

Assessment whether the application satisfies all the criteria specified in these guidelines and in the checklist outlined in the Informative Grant Application Form.

The proposals that do not pass the administrative and eligibility check will not be further assessed.

Eligibility check of the application:

Assessment of whether the Lead Applicant and partners satisfy the eligibility criteria in sections 1.1. – 2.6, and sections 2.9 – 2.11 of the Guidelines for Applicants.

The proposals that do not pass the preliminary eligibility check will not be further assessed.

The applicants that didn't provide supportive documents as set out in the list of supportive documents will not be considered for further evaluation phases.

Please note: Applications should be following all the mentioned criteria and all supportive documents should be uploaded in the system and will be informed by official email for this step.

2. Step 2: Assessment and Selection Process:

All eligible applications will be evaluated by independent experts based on the criteria outlined in the following grid.

Technical Assessment	
CRITERIA	**POINTS**
Relevance of the project *The assessors look at whether the project idea is based on a sound understanding of the issues faced by youth in the project context. They also assess whether the project idea is relevant in view of the specific objective selected by the applicant and the general objective of the call. They gauge whether the project is likely to be inclusive and whether it has the potential to be transformative for the project participants.*	30
Quality and suitability of methodology *The assessors gauge whether the proposed methodology is adequate in view of the project objectives and verify that the sequencing of the different steps is feasible and appropriate. They pay particular attention to the quality and meaningfulness of the interaction that the project will enable among participants. They gauge whether the project results are likely to be visible and inspire others.*	30
Relevance and potential of the project partnership *The assessors evaluate the partners' collective potential to address the issues targeted by the project. In doing so, they assess whether all partners will contribute to and learn from the project. Finally, they take into account the fact that RYCO highly values partnerships that are genuinely diverse and intercultural.*	25
Project management capacity and learning *Assessors look at the cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget. Assessors evaluate whether the Lead Applicant and its partners understand possible risks arising from their project and gauge whether the foreseen monitoring and evaluation measures will enable learning.*	15
TOTAL	**100**

The assessment results lead to the establishment of a shortlist (top-scored projects per Contracting Party).

Step 3 : Assessment based on strategic criteria of RYCO's Selection Committee

As a final step of the assessment process, RYCO"s Selection Committee reviews the shortlist in light of the strategic criteria outlined below.

Strategic criteria of RYCO's Selection Committee	
Likelihood of positive impact and multiplier effects *The Selection Committee appraises whether the project is likely to make a lasting positive impact on the target groups and looks at the project's prospects for multiplier effects.*	25
Strategic relevance of the project for RYCO's portfolio *The Selection Committee ensures that the preliminary list consists of a compelling mix of different actors, themes, and approaches that contribute to RYCO's key strategic goals.*	25
TOTAL	**50**

3. Submission of the supporting documents

The applicants must submit list of supporting document during application process as listed in the "List of supporting documents" up to **20th of November**. The applicants who fail to submit the documents as requested will not be considered for further assessment by RYCO.

If at any point in the selection process, RYCO notices that the applicant doesn't fulfill the eligibility criteria as set by this CfP, the application will be rejected.

4.2. Programme and budget negotiations

The selected applicants under the preliminary list will receive feedback on their project and budget proposals submitted for this call for project proposals. It is expected that the applicant makes the necessary changes in the proposal and budget before RYCO proceeds with contracting. The feedback on the proposal will be limited to the envisaged programme for the exchanges and how to maximize the impact that the applicant is trying to achieve. The feedback on the budget will be focused on aligning the proposal with the budget, clearing it of arithmetical mistakes, and making sure that it is based on cost-efficiency.

As mentioned previously, RYCO is very much keen to see that a high number of young participants are direct beneficiaries in RYCO's call, therefore, if feasible, RYCO might propose a higher number of young participants to be included in the project proposal.

4.3. Notification of RYCO's Decision

At the completion of the programme and budget negotiation, RYCO will notify all applicants of the final results in writing, as well as of the next steps to be undertaken, including the signing of the contractual document and specificities of the financial transfer to an indicated bank account.

The final list of approved proposals will be published on RYCO"s website once the selected applicants have been contracted.

5. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

Activity	Date	Time
Launching of the Call for Project Proposals	**14th 0f October**	**13.00**
Deadline for requesting any clarifications from RYCO	**13th of November**	**23.59**
Deadline for submission of the applications	**20th of November**	**23.59**
Administrative and Eligibility Check	**22th of November**	**23.59**
Assessment and Selection Process	**22th of November- 02th of December**	**23.59**
Preliminary List published on the RYCO website	**14th of December**	**23.59**
Budget Clearance & Contracting	**20th of December**	**23.59**
Final List published on the RYCO website	**20th of December**	**23.59**

All times are in the Central European Time zone. This indicative timetable may be updated by RYCO during the procedure, in which case the updated timetable will be posted on the RYCO website: www.rycowb.org.

6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Following the decision to award a grant, the grantee will be offered a contract. By submitting the full Application Form, the Lead Applicant agrees, if awarded the grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the grant contract.

Prior to the signing of the contract, the applicant must submit two additional documents requested by RYCO in due time :

1.Financial Identification Form

2.Legal Entity Form.

Important: All applicants will be informed regarding the status of their application in STEP 1. In case they have any questions they should be addressed to the Contracting Authority not later than 5 days.

Applicants who have not successfully passed Step 1, **can lodge a complaint** no later than 5 days from the date when the written notification announcing the result of an evaluation Step 1 is sent by the Selection Committee.
A Complaints Committee will check if the complaint is substantiated with relevant arguments in light of the provisions of the Guidelines for Grant Applicants and relevant domestic legislation.

The complaints will be answered within 5 (five) days from their receipt. In order to be considered, a complaint must:
- be submitted by the Lead Applicant and not by partners or collaborators;
- be submitted in written to the following email address: grants@rycowb.org no later than 5 days from the date when the written notification announcing the result of an evaluation Step 1 is sent by the Selection Committee;
- be written in English;
- be addressed to the Complaints Committee;
- be signed and stamped *(if applicable)* by the legal representative of the Lead Applicant;
- clearly outline the nature of alleged infringement considered as being made by the Selection Committee and make clear references to the corresponding provisions of the Guidelines for Applicants with pertinent reasoning.

The complaint that does not follow the above mentioned criteria will not be taken into consideration. The reply to the complaint represents the final decision regarding the application in question.

The Contracting Authority/RYCO reserves the right to update the Indicative Timeline in case the decision making process takes longer than initially envisaged. All information will be available at the RYCO website: www.rycowb.org or contact us at grants@rycowb.org.

The decision on the number of grants' installments will be decided during contracting.

Depending on the quality of submitted project proposals, RYCO reserves the right to award less projects than envisaged by the specific LOTs /thematic areas or to reallocate the remaining funds to another LOT/thematic area.

6.1 Reporting

During the project implementation, the grantee is expected to regularly report on the project progress to RYCO as laid down in the contract. **For means of monitoring and coaching RYCO may request an interim financial and narrative report.**

The grantee will be required to submit a final narrative and financial report, no later than 30 days after the official project completion, using RYCO templates annexed to the grant contract.

6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular reporting is mandatory and a crucial aspect of project monitoring and evaluation. Grantees should conduct internal monitoring and evaluation as outlined in their Application Form. Additionally, grantees are required to participate in RYCO's monitoring and evaluation processes as specified in the contract. Upon request, grantees must provide RYCO with all documentation related to project implementation. RYCO will also evaluate the project's follow-up activities, sustainability plans, and dissemination of results.

Grantees must document all visibility activities, such as newspaper articles, TV appearances, and campaigns, and regularly update RYCO on these activities. This includes sharing communication products produced during the project, such as leaflets, posters, publications, photos, and testimonials.

Grantees may also be asked to participate in research projects conducted by RYCO and its partners. Evaluation forms for both participants and organizers, provided by RYCO, must be used for all activities.

Participation in the activities organized within a project shall be recorded through participants and staff lists. These lists need to have the following info: name and surname of the participant, address/CP, email address, and signature (if it is a physical meeting) including the date, name, and venue of the activity. Grantees will need to insert logos and a disclaimer in both participant and staff lists' stating that participants allow and agree that these data can be used by the donor of the activity and RYCO.

6.3 Sustainability

RYCO aims for its projects to create lasting impacts beyond the implementation period and reach beyond direct beneficiaries. Applicants should consider this in their planning and outline their strategies for ensuring the sustainability of the project and its results in the relevant sections of the Application Form.

7. LIST OF DOCUMENTS

All the documents listed below are available on the RYCO website.

7.1 Documents to Be Completed and Submitted

Important note: Only pdf-files are allowed to be uploaded and can be saved on the platform otherwise the system will not accept other formats included from the applicants and the application will not be considered as successfully submitted.

a) Activity Methodology and Timeline (Excel format)
b) List of Supporting Documents (PDF format)

Document for later stage

1. **Financial Identification Form**
2. **Legal Entity**

7.2 Documents for Information

1. Informative Grant Application Form
2. General Information on Call for Proposals
3. Guidelines for Grant Applicants