



GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

RYCO Superschools Western Balkans Exchange Scheme



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About RYCO

RYCO is an intergovernmental organization that stewards and promotes regional and intercultural cooperation of young people within and among six Western Balkans contracting parties. RYCO's programs focus on creating opportunities for young people to engage in activities that build mutual understanding and reconciliation in the civic, social, educational, cultural, and sports domains. RYCO initiates and participates in policy-making and advocates for reform. It supports the development of a political and social environment that empowers and facilitates youth exchange.

RYCO puts young people at the center of its work and believes they should create a culture of mobility, intercultural exchange and reconciliation. Young people should also be active contributors to democratic development, social and economic prosperity, and European integration in an increasingly open Western Balkans region. The Western Balkans contracting parties should be providing proactive support to youth exchange and youth engagement within the WB6 and across the region.

About the Superschools program

RYCO is presenting you with an opportunity for schools, students, and teachers - the RYCO Superschools. This newly initiated scheme aims at providing the ground for creating strong and sustainable bonds between secondary schools within the region and building long-term partnerships. Through this exchange scheme, schools, students, and teachers will have a chance to travel, present themselves, their schools, and customs to their hosts, and learn new things about local communities in different parts of our region – and RYCO will help to make it happen.

RYCO Superschools is a program for school exchanges in the Western Balkans that supports peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, intercultural learning and dialogue among schools, students and their communities. By participating in this program, secondary schools will have a chance to apply and, if selected, implement school-to-school exchanges and participate in the program's activities dedicated to their capacity building, networking, and cooperation. The proposed activities aim to make the Western Balkan societies more resilient to the region's political challenges by empowering their youth to participate in intercultural dialogue and regional cooperation. An important priority of youth exchange is to give all young people equal opportunities to access exchange activities. The activities should be open to all young people regardless of their gender, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, etc.

In the first cycle of Superschools exchanges, 60 schools from the Western Balkan region took part, 805 young people were included, and 118 inspiring teachers were involved in the program.

RYCO Superschools Western Balkans School Exchange Scheme is part of a multi-donor project co-financed by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) together with RYCO.



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Who can participate?

Public or private secondary schools from the Western Balkans can apply and implement school-to-school exchanges. RYCO Superschools give you an opportunity to partner with another secondary school from the region and implement two student exchanges. Schools are invited to apply with another partner school from a different Contracting Party (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, or Serbia). Each school would host and visit the partner school in the local communities with students from 15 to 17 years old.

The two partner schools will act equally and have equal roles and responsibilities throughout the exchange program. The students participating in each exchange shall not have an age difference higher than two years among them in order to ensure fruitful and meaningful interaction.

School teachers will also participate in the exchanges. They will be the ones accompanying the students during the exchanges and coordinating the overall activities of the program, both while visiting and hosting partner schools. The coordinators (teachers) from the participating schools will develop their skills throughout the exchanges and participate in the regional training sessions and the annual regional school conference.

Schools already funded under the 1st Superschools Open Call also have the possibility to apply:

- either under this Call but with a different partner school than in the 1st Superschools Open Call
- or**
- with the same partner only for the Long-Term partnership call.

However, priority will be given to new schools that were not funded under Superschools.

Implementing the activities in this exchange scheme will strengthen the school's capacities to provide meaningful exchange and other opportunities to their students in the long term.

RYCO will pay special attention to the inclusion of usually excluded groups such as young people with disabilities, marginalized groups based on ethnicity, religious identity, sexual orientation, etc. or youth with fewer opportunities (youth from rural/remote areas, youth with unprivileged educational and/or economic backgrounds, etc.).

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 similar activities previously. Gender balance must also be ensured in the selection of your participants.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with Security Council Resolution 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence



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What are the activities of RYCO Superschools exchanges?

Each partner school shall organize one exchange visit to the second one, with a group of 10 to 12 students and 1 to 2 teachers lasting five days of program implementation and two travel days.

Activities should address any of the topics of intercultural learning and dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. The following types of activities are considered eligible but not limited to:

- training, workshops, camps, study visits, peer support groups, etc., art, cultural, and sports activities,
- use and development of ICT and media tools,
- activities ensuring long-term partnerships between schools,
- joint art and cultural performances, such as festivals, concerts, theater plays, street performances, exhibitions, etc.,
- activities that support youth initiatives in local communities,
- other activities and innovative ideas in line with the program's priorities and objectives.

After visiting the partner school, each school is expected to have a follow up activity with the main aim to disseminate the results of the conducted exchange and initiate reflection and discussion among students reaching a larger group of young people. The desired number of participants for each activity is up to 30 students per activity. The follow up activities can have various and different forms such as presentations, workshops, youth fairs, etc.

All activities within the two exchanges are to be implemented in the local community of each partner school.

RYCO encourages schools to consider organizing homestays for students from partner schools, in cooperation with the student's families. Homestays are a widely used concept of hospitality in many exchange programs. RYCO will provide monetary and mentorship support to the families hosting students from the partner school.

What types of costs does RYCO cover?

Each partnership will be financed with approximately 15,000.00 EUR which will be managed jointly with RYCO. The fund will be managed jointly by RYCO and the school coordinator (teacher) as described in the following table:



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| Types of costs | Description |
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| <p>Travel costs; Insurance; Accommodation; Visa; Administrative costs;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travel costs for students and teachers which are related exclusively to traveling via minibus/bus during the exchanges from and to each location of the partnering schools. RYCO will cooperate closely with the schools' teachers to organize each trip in due time and according to the exchange plan. - Insurance cost: RYCO will cover all participants' travel and health insurance costs. - Accommodation: Accommodation of participants will be covered and organized entirely by RYCO considering participants' necessities and preferences when necessary and possible. However, when possible, the participants are encouraged to organize homestays for the visiting students during the exchanges or host them at school dormitories. <li style="padding-left: 40px;">-In the case of homestays, families who will be hosting exchange participants will be provided with monetary support for it. - Visa and administrative costs for traveling within the region are eligible costs, as long as they are necessary for the realization of the exchanges. Visa is an endorsement for pupils and teachers to enter, leave, or stay for a specified period in a place different from their own. Administrative costs include, for example, declarations to the notary public for parents' permission for the young people to participate in the exchanges. Other administrative costs might be considered following further assessment from RYCO. Every cost included in this category is to be managed by RYCO. |
| <p>Subsistence costs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When visiting the partner school, teachers will receive lump sums of 300 € per exchange. |



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| <p>Activity costs</p> | <p>- Activity costs may be, for example, costs of museum tickets, cultural visits, and other costs of services related to the exchange activities. RYCO will advance the payment for such costs to the school teachers, who will need to submit to RYCO an invoice and any other relevant documents after the payment.</p> <p>The potential need for external expertise may also be covered under activity costs. RYCO will manage the selection, contracting, and payment of experts.</p> |
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**The amounts mentioned above can be subject to changes based on the exchange needs.*

How to apply?

A) Schools may visit www.superschools.net and create an online profile of your school

Every school willing to apply shall visit the online platform www.superschools.net. While creating the online profile, each school shall upload a registration document issued by a relevant local authority proving the school's working existence.

After completing the profile and registration, each applicant will receive a confirmation email. The confirmation email for the activation of the online profile shall be expected within two working days. We strongly advise schools to create the online profiles as soon as the call is launched in order to avoid delays in the process to follow.

Once a school receives its confirmation email, it is able to look for a partner through the "Find partner", where already registered schools are listed.

B) Find and match with your partner school

After schools receive the registration confirmation, they shall look for a partner through the "Find partner" option. This part of the platform provides information on the schools' locations, the type of the schools and their fields of interest which shall be used as the criteria for partner finding and matching.

Once a school finds a potential partner suiting its criteria, the school may send a partnership request along with a short description of their school and why they wish to enter into a partnership. The school receiving the request may either accept or reject it. Before accepting a partnership request, the two schools are highly encouraged to communicate with each other (email addresses and telephone contacts will be visible to each other) to discuss their exchange ideas and ensure a productive partnership.

Each school will have the possibility to send a partnership request to only one school from another Western Balkans Contracting Party. A school reserves the right to withdraw a



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partnership. Once a partnership is confirmed, the two partners will be able to start filling out a joint application form.

C) Fill out the joint application form

The application process will be completed online through the platform by filling out the joint application form, in which both schools will shortly explain their joint idea for the two exchanges.

Partner schools are encouraged to have an active and equal role in answering the questions. The application shall be submitted only after both partners agree on its final form. Then one of the partners submits the application online, and both schools get a confirmation email on the application submission.

For technical support, you can contact us at: superschools@rycowb.org

What are the conditions for participation?

To be able to participate in the program, an applicant must be a secondary school (private or public), established, and working within the Western Balkans Contracting Parties.

Number of applications:

One partnership may only submit one application under this call. The partnership consists of two high schools from different Western Balkans Contracting Parties. They will act equally by having equal roles and responsibilities throughout the exchange program.

Timeline:

The implementation of the exchanges shall take place between end of March 2023 and mid-October 2023 and will have two implementation periods: the first one from the end of March 2023 until the end of June 2023 during which the 1st exchange per each partnership should take place; and the second one from the last week of August 2023 to mid-October 2023, during which the second exchanges per partnership should take place. Whereas this is the general framework, when deemed necessary, adjustments can be made upon the schools' requests and validation from RYCO.

What do we pay special attention to?

In addition to the eligibility criteria, there are elements that RYCO will consider important when assessing applications. We encourage schools to pay particular focus to and include the



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following in the joint application:

- Interaction of diverse and intercultural groups within the exchange,
- Diversity of partnership and participants,
- Inclusion of vulnerable groups, minorities, marginalized groups, etc.,
- Inclusion of young people who are new to youth exchange programs,
- Gender balance of participants,
- Activities promoting community engagement,
- Youth participation in project development and implementation.

How will the applications be evaluated?

The exchange proposals will be assessed as follows:

All applications that pass the eligibility criteria check will go through a quality assessment by RYCO. A shortlist will be produced and further evaluated by the Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee, consisting of RYCO Secretariat and donors' representatives, will assess all shortlisted applications to ensure strategic relevance and geographical distribution among the selected applications.

The Selection Committee's assessment produces a preliminary list (top-scored applications for all Western Balkans 6 contracting parties) based on the quality and strategic assessment results. The Preliminary List is established and endorsed by the RYCO Governing Board.

After the selection process, RYCO will notify all applicants of the final results in writing and the following steps to be undertaken. Once the applicants are selected, the final list of approved proposals will be published on www.superschools.net and [RYCO's website](#).

What to expect if you are selected?

Contracting

After the final selection of the school exchanges to be funded under RYCO Superschools, the schools will sign a Partnership Agreement with RYCO as a legal basis for their participation in the program. Before signing the Partnership Agreement, the schools need to submit an additional document requested by RYCO in due time - the Legal Entity Form.

Regional Conference and support in the development of agendas of exchanges

In addition to the two school exchanges, teachers and (selected) students will also be able to participate in additional activities organized by RYCO such as the annual regional school conference, which will take place after both implementation periods. One teacher and one student per school will be invited to participate and will have the opportunity for networking, mentorship, and capacity building.



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Given that the mentorship sessions are an essential part of the process and the schools' capacity building, they will start after the selection process is completed. During this phase, they will have the chance to work on their exchange ideas and further develop them and finalize the full Exchange Program Agendas and the accompanying Budget Forms.

The Local Program Officers will assist in the designing of the program activities in the fields of reconciliation, peacebuilding, intercultural learning, and dialogue, when necessary. The goal of the mentorship phase is to support selected schools in planning their exchange activities, ensuring program quality of Agendas, and increasing their capacities for implementation.

Teacher's training

The main coordinator teacher per partner school will be part of the regional training session aiming at developing skills necessary for improving cooperation such as facilitation/moderation skills, intercultural learning, and dialogue, remembrance, reconciliation, peacebuilding, gender mainstreaming, youth participation, outreach (communications, social media, storytelling), digital tools in youth work, etc.

This training is to take place before the start of the exchange implementation periods.

Each participant will receive a certificate of participation.

Youth Camp

The Youth Camp, an activity specifically designed for students, will take place after the end of the implementation period (tentatively November 2023). The objective is to involve the most active young people in this joint regional activity and produce story-telling, digital and video materials by transforming their experiences from the exchanges into sustainable products.

During implementation

Monitoring and Evaluation

During the implementation of the exchanges, RYCO will request the participants to support the monitoring and evaluation process.

The selected schools will be required to use online evaluation forms (for both teachers and students) for their activities. The online forms and additional information will be provided by RYCO after the successful selection of schools participating in the RYCO Superschools.

Safety and Protection

If supported, the beneficiaries must align their activities with the RYCO Safety and Protection Guidelines.

RYCO strongly believes that with quality safety procedures and responsible organization of



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activities, risks can be mitigated and even neutralized. That being said, it is very important to emphasize the core principles of safety and protection for youth involved in any kind of RYCO-supported activities. 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 immediately report them to the respective authority when they are noticed.

All activities to be implemented within this call shall be conducted in line with the current COVID-19 related measures imposed by the relevant local authorities. In case the COVID-19 pandemic further deteriorates, all activities envisaged within the Superschools program, including the submitted proposals, are subject to revision, postponement or cancellation.

Reporting

The selected schools will be required to submit an exchange report, no later than 15 days after the completion of each exchange by using RYCO templates annexed to the partnership agreement. Each partner will be responsible for completing and submitting the exchange report after the completion of the exchange they are hosting. The visiting partner school shall support the reporting as well.

Timeline

For the application process

The deadline for submission of applications is **28 October 2022, 23.59 pm**. Applications sent after the deadline will be automatically rejected.

| <u>Activity</u> | <u>Deadline</u> | <u>Time</u> |
|---|------------------------|-------------|
| Launching of the Open Call for Project Proposals | 16th of September 2022 | 17.00 |
| Deadline for requesting any clarifications from RYCO | 21st of October 2022 | 23.59 |
| Deadline for submission of the applications | 28th of October 2022 | 23.59 |
| Preliminary List published on the RYCO website | by mid-December 2022 | |
| Contracting, Final List published on the RYCO website | mid-December 2022 | |



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