



Regional Youth Cooperation Office

# Operational Plan 2026



[rycowb.org](https://rycowb.org)

Following the implementation of the Operational plan in 2025, the 2026 Operational Plan represents the second phase in advancing the Strategic Plan.

## **Abbreviations**

**CBT** – Capacity building training

**CSO** – Civil Society Organization

**CP** – Contracting Parties

**ERP** – Enterprise Resource Planning platform

**EVZ Foundation** – The EVZ Foundation (Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft)

**GIZ** – Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation)

**HR** – Human Resources

**ICL** – Intercultural learning

**LBO** – Local Branch Office

**MP** – Member of Parliament

**MoU** – Memorandum of Understanding

**M&E** – Monitoring and evaluation

**NALAS** – Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe

**NYC** – National Youth Council

**OFAJ** – L'Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse (French-German Youth Office)

**OSCE** – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

**REL** – Research, Evaluation and Learning

**RYCO** – Regional Youth Cooperation Office

**UN** – United Nations

**UNDP** – United Nations Development Programme

**UNFPA** – United Nations Population Fund

**YPS** – Youth, Peace and Security agenda

**WB6** – Western Balkans Six

**WFD** – Westminster Foundation for Democracy

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Overview of RYCO's mission, vision and guiding principles

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an independently functioning intergovernmental organization founded in 2016 by the Western Balkan 6 participants (WB6: Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo\* , Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia), aiming to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation in the region through youth exchange programs.

RYCO creates and supports environments where young people can engage in meaningful dialogue, intercultural learning, and collaborative initiatives that connect communities and foster mutual understanding across the Western Balkans. The vision of the organization is centered on young people creating a culture of mobility, participating in intercultural exchanges and reconciliation as well as actively contributing to democratic development and European integration across the region.

RYCO's guiding principles such as **inclusivity, positive youth development, cooperation, empowerment, innovation, and resilience** ensure that all young people, regardless of background or circumstance, have opportunities to participate, lead, and shape the societies they live in. These principles advance RYCO's mission to support youth exchanges, strengthen youth-dedicated institutions, and coordinate regional cooperation based on tolerance, diversity, and human rights.

### 1.2. Strategic Framework 2025–2027

The Operational Plan 2026 is based in RYCO's 2025–2027 Strategic Plan, which is built on a Theory of Change outlining long-term transformation toward sustainable peace in a supportive political and social environment across the Western Balkan 6. This strategy identifies four pathways of change: **young people, supportive socio-political environments, youth structures, and RYCO** as an organization.

The strategy's overarching impact statement "Young people effectively cooperating and fostering reconciliation within a supportive environment" guides the operational direction of 2026. The period marks a shift from foundational, short-term achievements initiated in 2025 toward deeper, intermediary outcomes that strengthen youth-led initiatives, broaden regional cooperation, and reinforce the mechanisms that enable long-term policy and institutional change.

---

\*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.

### **1.3. Significance of the 2026 Operational Plan**

Following the implementation of the Operational plan in 2025, the 2026 Operational Plan represents the second phase in advancing the Strategic Plan. While in 2025 the organization focused on expanding youth participation, mobility, and institutional strengthening, in 2026, the Operational plan targets measurable progress toward intermediary outcomes, including:

- Increased youth-led exchanges and peacebuilding initiatives;
- Enhanced cooperation among youth organizations, institutions, and stakeholders;
- Policy mechanisms supporting youth cooperation and contextualized implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda;
- Strengthened institutional capacities across the Western Balkan 6 to support reconciliation and youth engagement.

In 2026, RYCO places emphasis on deepening partnerships, supporting policy alignment, and empowering youth and youth structures to initiate and lead reconciliation efforts at both local and regional levels. By driving forward these intermediary outcomes, the 2026 Operational Plan works toward the long-term changes envisioned for 2027 “Ensuring that young people and the structures around them are better equipped, connected, and empowered to contribute to sustainable peace, cooperation, and regional development”.

## 2. Objectives for 2026

Aligned Objectives and Intermediary Outcomes:

The objectives for 2026 are aligned with the intermediary outcomes outlined in the RYCO Strategic Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which include:

- Young people are building closer relationships across and within communities, dealing with the past and contributing to long-term regional stability, motivated by an **increased understanding of diversity among young people (IO1)**.  
*To be achieved in 2027.*
- **Increased youth-led exchanges**, peacebuilding initiatives, and intercultural learning activities at the local and regional level (IO2).
- Improved regional cooperation through **strengthened partnerships** with youth organizations, NYCs, relevant associations, educational institutions, NGOs, research institutes, and other relevant stakeholders (IO3).
- **Adopted local and regional policies and mechanisms** that support regional youth cooperation and contextualized implementation of YPS (IO4).
- **Increased capacities of WB organizations and institutions** working for and with young people to effectively support youth engagement and policy processes for peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts (IO5).
- WB6 governments have expressed **commitments for regional initiatives** and policy alignment on YPS and culture in their agendas and have provided support for their implementation (IO6). *To be achieved in 2027.*
- RYCO is supporting and engaging with policy-influencing efforts towards regional policy coherence and alignment of youth-related investments at various levels (across all 6 CPs as well as foreign interventions and funding) (IO7)

- **RYCO is credible and influential institution** in the field of youth policy and reconciliation in the Western Balkans 6 (IO8).
- **RYCO's programming is data-driven and evidence based**, as well as in line with the mandate, strategic plan, and respect for integrity of RYCO (IO9). *To be achieved in 2027.*
- RYCO's human capacities are **further strengthen and expanded** (IO10).
- A system covering **internal learning components** (HR), **capacity-building approaches** (programmes), **impact-oriented programming and regional youth research coherence** (REL) is established (IO11).

### 3. Operational plan

Pathway 1: Young people						
Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
Increased youth-led exchanges, peacebuilding initiatives, and intercultural learning activities at the local and regional level (IO2).	Implementation of RYConnecting granting scheme (7th open call)	<p>At least 10 CSOs supported by the Open call.</p> <p>At least 10 regional mobility programs implemented by grantees.</p> <p>200 young people gain skills and knowledge on thematic areas of RYCO through exchange programs.</p>	Q1, Q2, Q3	Program department: Grant Unit	Core budget	<p>4.2.6. Sub-Granting (7th OC)</p> <p>300.000 EURO</p>
	RYConnecting Info Sessions	<p>6 online local info sessions organized on a local level.</p> <p>At least 100 participants gain information on RYConnecting granting scheme.</p>	Q1	Program Department: Grant Unit	Core budget	<p>No budget required</p> <p>(organized online)</p>
	Implementation of Superschools exchange scheme.	<p>At least 50 partnerships supported.</p> <p>At least 100 exchanges implemented.</p> <p>At least 1500 young people engaged in regional exchanges,</p>	Q1, Q2	Program department: WB6 Schools Exchange Scheme – Superschools 2.0	Project budget	<p>5.1. School exchange</p> <p>552.302 EURO</p>

**Pathway 1: Young people**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
		fostering intercultural dialogue and peacebuilding.				
	Local outreach activities: Bridges to Peace workshops  (Superschools project)	At least 100 local outreach activities are supported.  At least 2000 young people take part in local outreach activities and gain knowledge on intercultural learning and reconciliation.	Q1, Q2	Program department: WB6 Schools Exchange Scheme – Superschools 2.0	Project budget	2.1. Pool of teachers  8.500 EURO
	Implementation of Japan’s Friendship Ties Program “MIRAI- Western Balkans Meet Japan”	At least 13 young people from the WB participate in an exchange program in Japan 13 young people gain skills and knowledge on thematic areas of RYCO thorough exchange program.	Q1	Program department: Japan’s Friendship Ties Program “MIRAI”	Activity supported by Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs	No budget required
	Organization of the challenge of presence in the media during 100 days	A 100-day media challenge campaign with a minimum of 200 media appearances across at least 30 different media outlets.	Q1, Q2	LBO Bosnia and Hercegovina	Project budget	Project budget  11.300 EURO

**Pathway 1: Young people**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
	Creation of Peace Clubs and Initiatives in collaboration with NYC and DANA	<p>At least 3 new high school peace clubs created.</p> <p>At least 6 initiatives of Peace Clubs supported.</p> <p>At least 100 young people gain knowledge of peace activism and become leaders of peace initiatives in their schools.</p>	Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Kosovo	Activity supported by OSCE	No budget required
	Production of articles in MagDa magazine	<p>At least 5 duo pieces articles produced by young people and published in MagDA magazine.</p> <p>At least 10 young people trained to produce articles for MagDa (Dialogue Academy Magazine).</p>	Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Kosovo	Activity supported by OSCE	No budget required
	Awarding Harmony Heroes in cooperation with German Embassy	At least 3 awards given by RYCO to young people who advocate for initiatives and produce activities contributing to the YPS agenda at local and regional level.	Q3, Q4	LBO Kosovo	<p>Activity supported by German Embassy and</p> <p>Core budget</p>	<p>4.3.4. LBO program activities costs</p> <p>3.000 EUR</p>

**Pathway 1: Young people**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
	Intercultural astronomy bootcamp in cooperation with French Embassy	At least one intercultural astronomy bootcamp organized, engaging youth from diverse backgrounds (including Kosovo, France, and Germany) to foster exchanges, peacebuilding, and YPS-aligned learning.	Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Kosovo	Activity supported by French Embassy and  Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  1.000 EUR
	Implementation of Young European Voices for a Shared Remembrance project in cooperation with OFAJ and EVZ Foundation	<p>Increased knowledge and critical consciousness among 30 youth (10 from Bosnia and Herzegovina) regarding historical narratives, remembrance, and democratic values.</p> <p>Enhanced skills in civic engagement, communication, and project design among young people.</p> <p>Implemented youth-led initiatives that reach peers, challenge dominant narratives, and create local impact.</p> <p>Strengthened transnational connections and solidarity among</p>	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Bosnia and Herzegovina	Project budget  Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  1.000 EUR

Pathway 1: Young people						
Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
		youth in Europe and the Western Balkans.				

Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)						
Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
Adopted local and regional policies and mechanisms that support regional youth cooperation and contextualized implementation of YPS (IO4).	RYCO YPS strategy established	RYCO adopted an internal strategy on the implementation of the Youth Peace and Security agenda.	Q1, Q2, Q3	Program department	Core budget	4.3.1. External Program Expertise  2.000 EURO
	Implementation of RYCOgnizing YPS granting scheme.	At least 7 CSOs supported by the RYCOgnizing YPS granting scheme.  At least 10 policy paper recommendations are created by 7 grantees in the region in cooperation with public institutions from local to central government institutions.	Q 1, Q2, Q3	Program department: RYCOgnizing YPS: Meaningful Youth Participation in the WB6	Project budget	2.1. Sub Granting Scheme  350.000 EURO
	Activities that support	At least 50 young people are informed about RYCO's	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Albania	Core Budget	4.3.4. LBO program

**Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)**

Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
	alignment with the YPS Agenda in cooperation with the youth sector stakeholders in Albania (NYA, OSCE, YPS network).	programs and the YPS Agenda through coordinated outreach and engagement carried out with youth sector stakeholders.				activities costs  600 EURO
	Supporting activities for Establishing the Commission on Youth Issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Functional coordination body for youth policies established.	Q1, Q2, Q3	LBO Bosnia and Herzegovina	Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  2.000 EURO
	Supporting activities for YPS mainstreaming in local public policies in cooperation with UNFPA, UNDP and NYC.	At least 5 local self-governments in Serbia committed to the implementation of YPS agenda on municipal level.	Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Serbia	Activity supported by UNFPA, UNDP and  Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  1.500 EURO
	Established partnership	Signed MoU on strategic cooperation in YPS	Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Montenegro	No budget required	No budget required

**Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)**

Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
	agreements (MoUs) with RYCO and Ministry of Interior in Montenegro.	implementation as regional Initiative.				
	Supporting activities for YPS mainstreaming and contextualization in cooperation with OSCE.	<p>Strengthened municipal awareness and openness to integrating YPS principles through targeted advocacy efforts.</p> <p>At least three municipalities create internal documents or statements expressing support for YPS principles and indicating intention to integrate them into their youth policies.</p>	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Kosovo	Activity supported by OSCE	No budget required
	Student, Peace & Security Conference in Cooperation with NYC	<p>At least 200 high school students take part in a YPS-focused conference.</p> <p>At least 200 young people participate in production of recommendations on YPS</p>	Q4	LBO Kosovo	Core budget	<p>4.3.4. LBO program activities costs</p> <p>2.500 EUR</p>

**Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
		alignment to be shared with policy and decision makers.				
	Workshop on localization of YPA agenda on a Municipal level.	<p>Increased level of knowledge and skills for the implementation of the YPS agenda at municipal level.</p> <p>Created synergies and connection between youth structures- NGOs, Youth Umbrella Organization with Municipalities as local self-governments.</p> <p>Concrete Localized YPS plan designed as potential follow up activities.</p>	Q1	LBO Montenegro	<p>Activity supported by OSCE and</p> <p>Core budget</p>	<p>4.3.4. LBO program activities costs</p> <p>2.200 EURO</p>
	YPS talks with Members of Parliament	At least three YPS talks with MPS organized in 3 Municipalities- targeting rural areas and grassroots youth CSOs.	Q2	LBO Montenegro	Core budget	<p>4.3.4. LBO program activities costs</p> <p>2.100 EURO</p>
	YPS forum with Members of Parliament in	YPS Forum organized, gathering Members of the Parliament, young people,	Q2	LBO Montenegro	Activity supported by OSCE	4.3.4. LBO program

**Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
	cooperation with OSCE.	youth CSOs and other relevant authorities (local and state/ competent ministries).			and Core budget	activities costs  1.500 EURO
RYCO is supporting and engaging with policy-influencing efforts towards regional policy coherence and alignment of youth-related investments at various levels (across all 6 CPs as well as foreign interventions and funding) (IO7).	Regional Education Conference  (Superschools project)	At least 180 teachers take part in a regional education conference.  At least 20 stakeholders (representatives of educational institutions in the WB6) take part in discussions to enhance regional school cooperation.	Q2, Q3	Program department: WB6 Schools Exchange Scheme – Superschools 2.0	Core budget	4.3.3. Superschools event  50.000 EURO
	Local awareness raising events  (Superschools project)	6 Local raising awareness activities are organized gathering relevant stakeholders from the education sector sharing project results, lessons learned and discuss sustainability and future collaboration.	Q3	Program department: WB6 Schools Exchange Scheme – Superschools 2.0	Project budget	5.6. Local Awareness raising events  12.000 EURO

**Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
	Meeting with Ministry representative from Ministries of Youth, Education and Sports  (Superschools project)	At least 2 regional meetings with representatives from Ministries of Youth, Education and Sports are organized to review project progress, exchange best practices, and strengthen coordination on future initiatives.	Q2, Q3	Program department: WB6 Schools Exchange Scheme – Superschools 2.0	Activity supported by GIZ	No budget required
	Meeting with Ministry representative from Ministries of Culture  (Western Balkan Youth Cultural Fund)	At least 6 meetings organized between representatives of Ministries of Culture and Western Balkan Youth Cultural Fund grantees.  Increased direct cooperation among the Ministries of Culture and cultural practitioners from Western Balkan	Q1, Q2	Program Unit: Western Balkan Youth Cultural Fund	Project budget	Budget realignment required
	Donor coordination meetings  (Superschools project)	At least 2 donor coordination meetings organized.  At least 20 relevant donors present their project and ensure project alignment in the youth sector.	Q2, Q3	Program department: WB6 Schools Exchange Scheme – Superschools 2.0	Activity supported by GIZ	No budget required

**Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)**

Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
	Regional Closing Conference  (Western Balkan Youth Cultural Fund)	At least 65 participants take part in regional closing conference including cultural workers, cultural CSOs and representatives from Ministries of Culture.  WBYCF grantees are promoting their project results and innovative practices for initiating positive social changes through culture.	Q2, Q3	Western Balkans Youth Cultural Fund	Project Budget	Budget realignment required  Total 32.520 EURO
	Western Balkan Youth Forum	At least a 100 young people participate in International conference and directly engage in discussions and advocacy efforts on regional level.  Berlin process youth recommendations 2026 are created and presented at Leaders' summit.	Q3	Program department	To be fundraised	N/A

**Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)**

Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
	Western Balkan Ministerial meeting of Ministers of Youth	Ministerial meeting of Ministries of Youth Organized.	Q3	Program department	To be fundraised	N/A
	Follow-up meetings between MPs, young people, and other stakeholders on advancing the localized Youth Forum Recommendations in Albania	Cooperation with MPs and Parliament is strengthened through at least one follow-up meeting with young people and stakeholders.	Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Albania	Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  600 EURO
	Localization Workshop on Youth Forum Recommendations in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Youth Forum recommendations localized to the BiH context with input from NYC, ministries, CSOs, and MPs.  Joint roadmap/action plan for implementation agreed and endorsed by key stakeholders.	Q1	LBO Bosnia and Herzegovina	Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  1.500 EURO

Pathway 2: Socio-Political Actors (Supportive environment)						
Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
		Stronger coordination and ownership among youth, institutions, and civil society for follow-up				
	Activities in support of localization of the YPS agenda on a municipal level in cooperation with UNFPA, OSCE and NALAS.	<p>Municipal representatives and local youth councils increase their knowledge on YPS agenda.</p> <p>Municipalities create local youth strategies aligned with the national youth strategy and YPS principles.</p>	Q1, Q2, Q3	LBO North Macedonia	<p>Activity supported by UNFPA, OSCE and</p> <p>Core budget</p>	<p>4.3.4. LBO program activities costs</p> <p>3.500 EURO</p>

Pathway 3: Youth structures						
Strategic outcome	Key activity	Expected result	Timeline	Responsible unit	Funding Source	Budget line & Amount
Improved regional cooperation through strengthened	Established partnership agreements (MoUs) with research institutions	6 MoUs signed with research institutions to provide opportunities for capacity building programs in research and policy making to university students from WB6.	Q1	<p>Program department:</p> <p>Research Mentorship Program</p>	No budget required	No budget required

**Pathway 3: Youth structures**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
partnerships with youth organizations, NYCs, relevant associations, educational institutions, NGOs, research institutes, and other relevant stakeholders (IO3).	(Research Mentorship Program)					
	Established partnership agreement (MoU) with European Youth Card.	1 MoU signed with European Youth Card organization to increase cooperation in implementing activities that provide opportunities for regional mobility through employment of young people.	Q1	Program department	No budget required	No budget required
	Established partnership agreements (MoUs) with Student Career Centers	At least 2 MoUs signed with Career Centers of Universities for Capacity Building Training on Peace Activism and RYCO thematic topics	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Kosovo	No budget required	No budget required
	Regional meeting with high school student unions (Superschools project)	At least 1 regional meeting organized with representatives from high school student unions to provide platform for enhance regional collaboration of student structures	Q1, Q2	Program department: WB6 Schools Exchange Scheme – Superschools 2.0	Project budget	3.2. Meeting of student unions  3.250 EURO

**Pathway 3: Youth structures**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
Increased capacities of WB organizations and institutions working for and with young people to effectively support youth engagement and policy processes for peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts (IO5).	Regional training of grantees under RYConnecting granting scheme	One online regional training organized for the grantees of RYConnecting scheme.  At least 30 participants (CSO's beneficiaries) have increased capacities in thematic areas of RYCO, project cycle management and are familiar with internal RYCO granting regulations.	Q1	Program department: Grant Unit	Core budget	No budget required  (organized online)
	Capacity building training for CSOs in Serbia in cooperation with OSCE Mission to Serbia	One capacity building training organized.  At least 14 representatives of CSOs - potential applicants within the RYConnecting Open Call increase their level of knowledge on ICL topics, RYCO strategic priorities, YPS and project writing.	Q3	LBO Serbia	Activity supported by OSCE and  Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  1.500 EURO
	Capacity Building workshops on Peace Activism	At least 1 capacity building workshop organized.  At least 50 young people trained in peace activism.	Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO Kosovo	Activity supported by OSCE	No budget required

**Pathway 3: Youth structures**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
	Capacity building for peer educators on YPS in collaboration with UNFPA and UNDP	<p>One capacity building training organized utilizing the Y-PEER manual.</p> <p>20 young people (high school students and university students) equipped with skills for becoming peer educators on YPS and peace education</p>	Q2, Q3	LBO Serbia	<p>Activity supported by UNFPA and</p> <p>Core budget</p>	<p>4.3.4. LBO program activities costs</p> <p>4.300 EURO</p>
	Capacity building training for teachers on Y-PEER methodology and efforts for initialization of the Y-PEER manual as an elective subject in schools in cooperation with UNFPA and Bureau for educational development	<p>Capacity building training for teachers organized for the implementation of the Y-PEER manual.</p> <p>Y-PEER manual introduced in formal education curricula.</p>	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	LBO North Macedonia	Core budget	<p>4.3.4. LBO program activities costs</p> <p>1.000 EURO</p>

**Pathway 3: Youth structures**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
	Training on the Youth Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda for ASuBiH (High School Union) Board Members	<p>Board members' understanding of the YPS agenda, its pillars, and relevance for BiH strengthened.</p> <p>Enhanced capacity of ASuBiH leadership to integrate peacebuilding and reconciliation into their work.</p> <p>Improved skills for initiating and leading youth-led actions that promote dialogue, non-violence, and inclusion.</p> <p>Concrete follow-up plan developed for ASuBiH to apply YPS principles in advocacy and school-level initiatives.</p>	Q1, Q2	LBO Bosnia and Herzegovina	Core Budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  2000 EURO
	Capacity building training for CSOs in Montenegro in cooperation with OSCE	<p>Organized capacity building training for CSOs.</p> <p>At least 20 representatives of CSOs - potential applicants within the RYConnecting Open Call to increase level of knowledge of ICL topics, RYCO Strategic Priorities, YPS and Project Cycle management.</p>	Q3	LBO Montenegro	Activity supported by OSCE	No budget required

**Pathway 3: Youth structures**

<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible unit</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Budget line &amp; Amount</b>
	Capacity building training for CSOs in Albania in cooperation with FES	Organized capacity building training for CSOs.  At least 15 youth professionals from CSOs – potential applicants within the RYConnecting Open call increase capacities in project development and YPS, improving their capacity to participate in RYCO Open Calls.	Q2	LBO Albania	Activity supported by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung – FES and  Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  2.700 EURO
	Capacity Building Training for members of Local Youth Councils in cooperation with OSCE	One capacity building training for members of local youth councils organized.  At least 15 representatives of Local Youth Councils in south Albania gain knowledge on intercultural learning and regional youth cooperation and strengthen their capacity to engage in local youth participation processes.	Q2, Q3	LBO Albania	Activity supported by OSCE and  Core budget	4.3.4. LBO program activities costs  2.700 EURO

#### **4. Monitoring, Evaluation and learning**

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Department plays a pivotal role in ensuring that programs and activities are designed, implemented, and assessed with a strong focus on inclusivity, accountability, and learning. The M&E Department leads the development of M&E frameworks, performance indicators, data collection tools, and processes that monitor and measure impact across both regional and local activities. Through evidence-based insights and recommendations, the department strengthens program quality, supports strategic decision-making, and ensures alignment with RYCO's mission to foster reconciliation and cooperation among youth in the WB6.

Building on the significant achievements of the previous year, including major operational and structural reforms, the M&E Department will continue its work with a reinforced foundation for evidence-based planning and evaluation. With the upgraded systems and tools now fully in place, including standardized M&E tools across all programs, tailored instruments for LBO local activities, improved reporting mechanisms, and expanded capacity-building for staff and grantees, the department will continue advancing RYCO's coherent and data-driven approach throughout 2026. Significantly, the newly completed M&E Baseline Report for the 2022–2024 strategic period, developed through retrospective data assessment, will enable the department to conduct in-depth analyses of RYCO's progress in achieving the goals set for the 2025–2027 strategic period.

These developments have positioned the M&E Department to play an even more central role within RYCO's organizational structure through its transformation into a dedicated Research, Evaluation, and Learning (REL) Department. Central to this transformation is the elevation of research as a core organizational function, not as a by-product of M&E. This transition will ensure that RYCO's programs are not only data-driven and evidence-based, but also strategically aligned to maximize impact, strengthen regional credibility, and drive measurable progress in youth reconciliation and cooperation. The operationalization of the REL Department will unfold in several phases, ensuring a gradual and sustainable process, including the establishment of the department's structure, development of the REL Strategy and Work Plan aligned with RYCO's Strategic Plan 2025–2027, and introduction of new data management tools and research templates across all programs.

## 5. Risk management

Effective implementation of the Operational Plan 2026 requires identification, monitoring, and mitigation of risks that may affect RYCO's ability to deliver its strategic outcomes. RYCO operates in a dynamic socio-political environment, where regional developments, youth sector vulnerabilities, and internal organizational factors can influence progress. The Strategic Plan 2025–2027 outlines four key areas of risk based on the organization's key pillars: **external socio-political conditions, youth structures and stakeholders, young people, and RYCO's internal capacities.**

### 5.1. Risks Related to the Wider Socio-Political Environment

The Western Balkans<sup>6</sup> continue to experience shifting political dynamics and periodic tensions that may influence cooperation efforts, mobility initiatives, and youth-focused programs. Differences in legal frameworks, political priorities, and institutional readiness across the region can affect the pace and implementation of regional activities. In addition, varying levels of public trust in institutions and broader geopolitical developments may impact stakeholder engagement and willingness to support youth cooperation processes.

In 2026, such factors are particularly relevant for activities connected to policy alignment, implementation of the YPS agenda, mobility initiatives, and regional cooperation efforts. While these factors are out of the sphere of control of the institution, to mitigate them, RYCO will continue to promote dialogue with institutions and strengthen partnerships to maintain broad institutional support for its initiatives.

### 5.2. Risks Related to Youth Structures and Other Stakeholders

Youth structures across the region face decreasing engagement, limited funding, and capacity gaps, particularly among smaller CSOs and organizations working in rural or underserved communities. The reduced civic space can impede collaboration, limit participation in RYCO programs, and slow policy advancements related to youth cooperation and reconciliation.

Given that 2026 focuses on intermediary outcomes, such as improved regional cooperation and strengthened institutional capacities, these risks may affect the ability of partners to sustain activities or fully participate in policy processes. RYCO will address these risks by prioritizing capacity-building, expanding mentoring and training mechanisms, and reinforcing partnerships with NYCs, educational institutions, and relevant stakeholders.

### **5.3. Risks Related to Young People**

Young people in the Western Balkans continue to experience high unemployment, social exclusion, limited opportunities for participation, and increased emigration intentions. Many report declining trust in institutions and limited avenues for civic engagement. Additionally, post-conflict narratives, ethnic divisions, and exposure to hate speech and disinformation continue to influence reconciliation efforts.

These risks may reduce youth participation in exchanges and peacebuilding initiatives or deepen polarization, directly affecting the achievement of youth-led outcomes envisioned for 2026. To mitigate these concerns, RYCO will expand outreach to marginalized groups, promote inclusive programming, and strengthen its reconciliation approach through intercultural learning, dialogue tools, and youth-led initiatives.

### **5.4. Risks Related to RYCO's Internal Capacity and Systems**

As an intergovernmental organization with roles in grant-making, program implementation, process coordination, and advocacy, RYCO operates within a complex institutional environment that requires careful allocation of time, resources, and staff capacities. The Strategic Plan acknowledges that ongoing organizational development is essential to ensure RYCO can effectively respond to evolving priorities, new tools, and the changing needs of young people across the region.

As 2026 serves as a midpoint of the strategic cycle, there is a possibility that gradual progress in areas such as human resources development, internal systems, or monitoring and learning processes could influence the pace at which intermediary outcomes are achieved. To support continued progress, RYCO will focus on strengthening organizational structures, enhancing internal coordination, and building staff competencies.

Finally, the establishment of the Research, Evaluation and Learning department represents a proactive step toward more structured learning and evidence-informed programming. Continued investment in this department, alongside improvements in HR processes and internal systems, will contribute to sustained organizational effectiveness and support the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

## 6. Budget overview

RYCO's detailed budget for the Operational plan 2026 is available in the budget Annex for 2026. Below are presented percentages of the organization's projected overall budget.

RYCO Budget Breakdown			
Budget Category	Budget Category	Percentage of the Total Budget	Budget Amount
Projected Income			
Prior-year unrestricted surplus carried forward		35%	730,000.00
Contributions outstanding from previous years		15%	325,000.00
Projected CPs contributions		50%	1,044,000.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>2,099,000.00</b>
Projected Expenditures			
Personnel	1	41%	742,976.00
Administrative Costs	2	26%	478,828.00
Contingency Operational Costs	3	1%	23,941.40
Program Activities Costs	4	30%	546,500.00
Contingency Program Activities Costs	5	2%	27,325.00
Capital Expenditures (large items/assets)	7	0%	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>1,819,570.40</b>
<b>Net Balance</b>			<b>279,429.60</b>

