

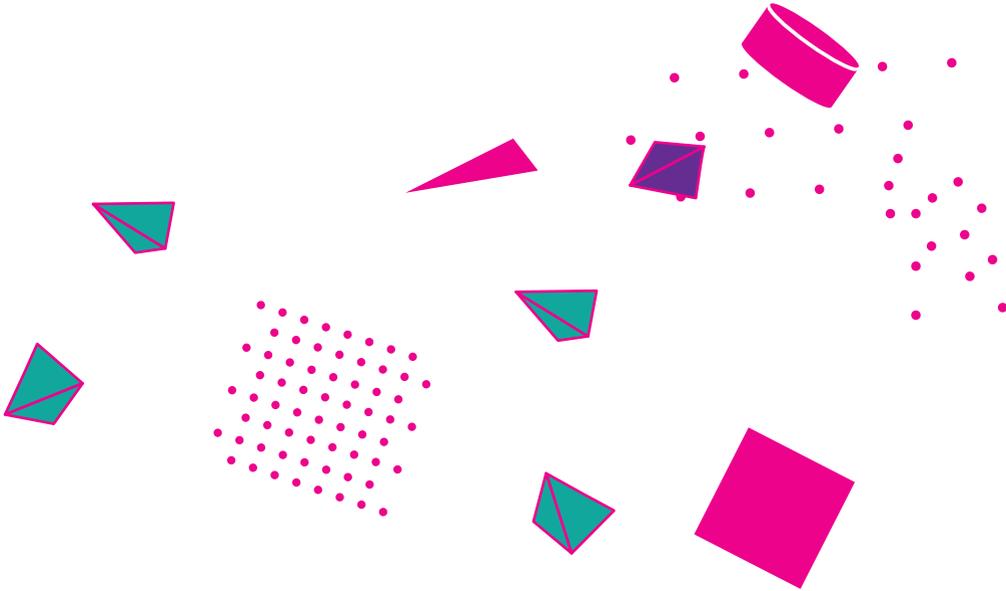
# strengthening regional cooperation through youth work



**Behind every mask there is a face and behind every face there is a different story.**

**Tear up the mask, tell your story, celebrate diversity!**





Title: Strengthening regional cooperation through youth work - A project brochure showcasing the implementation of Swapping Cultures Erasing Borders, funded by RYCO!

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Published in Tirana, Albania – February 2019

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## What is Swapping Cultures-Erasing Borders?

Swapping Cultures Erasing Borders is a 9 months project (June 2018- February 2019) financed by the first pilot call for proposals of RYCO and implemented by Beyond Barriers Association in partnership with BLINK- Kosovo\*, PEL- Macedonia and SVETLOST- Serbia.

The main aim of our project was:

- To facilitate the process of intercultural dialogue of young people in the youth field by using creative approaches and increasing the quality of youth work and,
- To encourage young people to advocate for intercultural dialogue and culture diversity as a treasure and resource of our societies and as a means for mutual respect, tolerance and understanding.

Through a set of activities, workshops, new creative tools and methods and with the use of non-formal education, the youngsters which were part of this project had an opportunity to learn and develop a stronger sense of cultural diversity, respect and mutual understanding. The basis of the project was initiated on the pillars of respect and tolerance, by addressing the respect for ourselves and other people's opinions and viewpoints, in order to nurture tolerance and respect for diversity.

It brought on board a set of creative tools such as "Swapping cultures" and "Theatre of the oppressed" with addressing a key emerging challenge for Balkan youth – promotion of intercultural dialogue and respect for each-other.

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\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Through activities organized locally, youth workers/activists tested the techniques used and analyzed the impact in local level with other young people. Inclusion of youth from various backgrounds and specifically those with fewer opportunities were crucial and an added value to make sure no one is left behind, because we believe that everyone must have a chance to participate and learn with their peers in a safe environment.

## What did we reach?

- **201 young people** (112 Females and 89 Males) aged 16-30 years old directly participated in the regional and local activities of the project and improved their knowledge, skills and attitudes in intercultural dialogue, culture diversity and inclusion.
  - **185 youth aged** 16-20 years old were introduced with the Swapping Cultures and Theatre of the Oppressed methods, both tools that help them to promote tolerance, mutual respect and fight in decreasing levels of hate speech in the region
  - **4 best postcards** showing intercultural dialogue were selected in the competition, printed and used throughout the project.
  - **3350 postcards** were used in the online campaign as a promo tool and as a direct message to: decision makers, families, friends, RYCO Local Branch Officers and Secretariat, partner organizations around WB, EU countries and citizens in all four partner promoters during the project campaign!
  - **4 regional activities and 4 local activities** were organized by the partnership and the youngsters during 9 months.
  - **7 short videos** with an aim to display, promote and treasure culture diversity and intercultural dialogue in WB were made by local youth themselves and shared online to raise awareness among the online community.
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## Our creative tools

The main two methods used in the project and introduced as novelties were Swapping Cultures and Theatre of the Oppressed. But what are these tools, and how can we use them in promoting intercultural learning and diversity?

### Swapping Cultures (SC)

S.C is a methodological instrument and training package elaborated and successfully implemented in the UK, as a tool for promoting greater social cohesion and intercultural understanding in the Balkans, with particular reference to Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia. SC is a simple model that encourages young people to talk and get to know each other, while sharing their experiences, cultures and traditions, learning each other's similarities and differences and eventually working together on a common project. With a carefully planned logical flow the tool allows youngsters to walk through the discovery process carefully, it encourages them to build trust while knowing each other through discovering similarities and helps them create empathy for the diversities. The core working tools are non-formal learning and intercultural learning techniques based on the principles of communication, listening, negotiating and reflecting. The S.C model enables young people to appreciate, respect and value their own cultures as well as others, and to embrace difference and diversity as an asset to our society.

The tool was first used in the Leaders Training where besides testing it they learned how to use it in local level. Further partners translated the tool in their local language and used it in the local activities with young people. Later on we adapted the tool with the feedback received in regional and local level and we used it during the youth exchange in Albania.

But only reflecting and raising awareness about culture diversity, is not enough. It is crucial to give to young people time, space and tools to use for actual change and action. In these regards we integrated in the project the second methodology “Theatre of the Oppressed” as a tool to put the learning in practice and increase the level of impact on participants.

## Theatre of the Oppressed (TOTO)

TOTO is a social intervention tool that helps people to stimulate their creativity, thinking, trust and local identity which enables people to be more involved in their community. It is a specific tool that transforms our monologues into a permanent dialogue and this was the reason why we chose to integrate it in the project design. It gives participants a chance to bring the “conflict” or “cultural clashes” on stage in the form of theater play, but it is unique because it makes spectators become actors, and propose solutions to the issues put on stage.



It has no standard formula, there is no list of solutions to everyday situations but it nurtures critical thinking. TOTO is a powerful educational tool, is flexible, it can be adapted to every context, depending on the characteristics of the people and the different kinds of oppressions. We used it with young people and youth workers in an adapted form, but it can be used with any other target group as well.

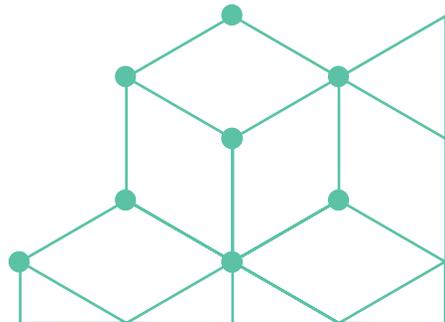


# What did we actually do?

Through the project we implemented almost 1 activity per month. 4 regional activities, 4 local activities and one online campaign, each of which had a bigger effect and produced different outcomes.

Now imagine a bus traveling around the region, and having 9 different stations where we stop.

**Get yourself in our bus and follow our journey around the Balkans!**





**The beauty of  
the world lies  
in the diversity  
of its people!**

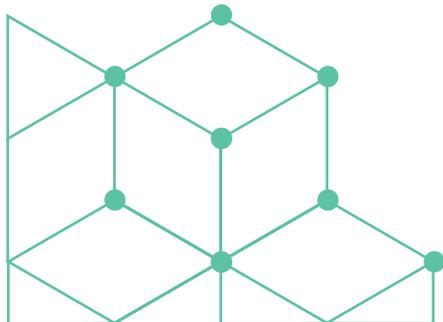




# STATION 1

## Partners Meet in Skopje

Skopje was the first city to kick off the start of the project. It started with 4 project coordinators of the consortium who met in Skopje, Macedonia in 15-17 June 2018 to fine-tune the project implementation action plan. Coordinators of the project clearly defined each step to be taken in order to make the project implementation a success and to provide a chance to youth to learn about it through the different activities and the communication tools to be used.





\*This design serves as a visual metaphor. It is neither an endorsement, a call to action nor a symbol of solidarity or the EU. Symbols on the Kosovo are used as of independence.



## STATION 2

### #4BalkanCultureDiversity

Under the slogan “4 Balkan Culture Diversity” the partners designed the campaign and launched it online and offline, with the support and participation of all youngsters that were involved in the project and other youngsters that had an opportunity to be part of it. Besides the continuous social media publications, media reporting’s of each activity, TV reportages where project was promoted, the most important highlights of the campaign were concrete products prepared by participants.

“Intercultural dialogue in my eyes”

*Short Videos by local participants*

Each partner promoter gathered their volunteers and together they created 4 short video products that were further used online to raise awareness about intercultural dialogue, culture diversity and inclusion in the WB. In total 4 videos were done locally, and 3 more were done during the youth exchange.



© Kristina Bubanja, Serbia



© Leo Alija, Kosovo\*

\*This illustration is related to postcard competition, which is the part of the project. LEADER, LEADER+ and the RCD Operations in the Kosovo, Republic of Serbia.

## Postcard Competition

A postcard competition targeting youth aged 16-25 years old coming from Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia was launched online by all partners. We received 20 entries that qualified the eligibility criteria and 4 best postcards were evaluated by a selection committee as the winners, 1 per each partner promoter.

The winners were:

- Erti Poka- Albania
- Kristinja Bubanja – Serbia
- Elena Ridona – Macedonia
- Leo Alija – Kosovo

# Postcard Competition

## #4balkanculturediversity

**WHO CAN PARTICIPATE**

- AGE: YOUTH 16-25 YEARS OLD
- COMING FROM ALBANIA, KOSOVO\*, MACEDONIA AND SERBIA.
- AMATEURS WITH SKILLS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN OR ILLUSTRATION

**TOPIC OF COMPETITION**

- INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE
- INTERCULTURAL LEARNING
- BOTH MUST BE FOCUSED AT THE WESTERN BALKANS CONTEXT

**DEADLINE**

- COMPETITION CLOSES ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2018, AT 12:00 MIDDAY
- SEND YOUR ENTRIES AT WINNERS WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2018

**SEND YOUR ENTRIES AT:**  
[balkanculturediversity@gmail.com](mailto:balkanculturediversity@gmail.com)

\*This competition is not a selection for citizenship or status and does not include LEADER, LEADER+ and the RCD Operations in the Kosovo, Republic of Serbia.

**CRITERIA OF SUBMISSION**

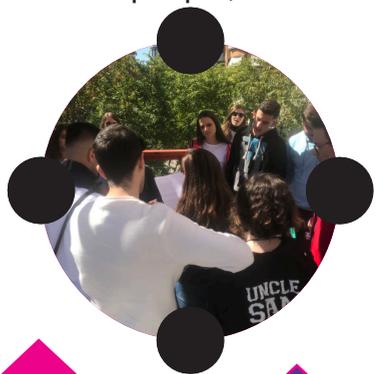
- ONE PERSON ONE ENTRY
- POSTCARDS MUST BE DIGITAL WITH DIMENSIONS OF 148 X 105 MM (A6 FORMAT) OR BIGGER
- FORMAT ACCEPTED: JPG OR PNG
- ENTRIES MUST BE YOUR ORIGINAL WORK
- NO INTERNET COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED
- POSTCARDS WILL REMAIN UNDER THE COPYRIGHT OF PARTNERS AND USED FOR THE PROJECT PROMOTION AND VISIBILITY.

**AWARDS**

- A JURY OF 4 REPRESENTATIVES OF PARTNER ORGANISATIONS WILL SELECT 4 WINNERS, 1 WINNER PER COUNTRY.
- EACH OF 4 WINNERS WILL GET 50 EURO AND A CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE FOR FREE IN ONE INTERNATIONAL EVENT IN THE NEXT YEAR. THEIR POSTCARD WILL BE STAMPED AND USED FOR THE PROMO CAMPAIGN.
- ALSO 4 MOST POPULAR ENTRIES WILL BE SELECTED BASED ON THE NUMBER OF LIKES RECEIVED IN FACEBOOK FROM 17-21 SEPTEMBER 2018.

After printing 3350 copies of all postcards, delivering it to each partner, the youngsters took over in using them.

- BLINK volunteers wrote postcards to 120 Members of Parliament, sending them strong messages of respect and mutual understanding, wishes for holiday season.
- SVETLOST organized once a week a Tea Day in local community and together with a tea and a discussion about cultures, postcards were delivered to local people.
- PEL sent the postcards to different high schools in Skopje and all local participants wrote postcards for their families and friends.
- BBA wrote postcards to all RYCO staff, national and international partner organizations, high schools in Tirana, and families and friends. Also BBA gave a postcard to 80 representatives public administration, CSOs, local governments, entrepreneurs from all WB6 that were part of the “Regional Forum of Youth entrepreneurship” held in Albania by BBA in November 2018.
- Besides, all partners used the postcards in various national and international activities and with their partners. We must say that the postcards really did catch the attention of people, offline and online.





## Station 3: Youth Leaders land in Sabac

In September 2-6, 2018 our bus stopped in Sabac, Serbia where 12 youth leaders were gathered in a four days Leaders Training. The main aim of the activity was to bring together youth workers from the consortium so they can improve their skills, knowledge and attitudes in intercultural dialogue using S.C and TOTO tools while working on social inclusion and multicultural environment.

Hosted by our partner Svetlost and trained by the experienced trainers of BBA, the 12 youth leaders are now ready to lead their local teams to the youth exchange and to organize the local workshops. This specific activity was designed in a way that the leaders get knowledge, improve their skills and competencies at the training and further have a chance to apply them in local and regional level. Topics such as the exploring own identity, culture, diversity, and intercultural dialogue and ICL steps made the content of the training.

While focus was also given to improving leadership skills, learning what makes a good youth leader, skills to organize workshops, communication in intercultural environment and importance of positive youth leadership models. All of these, implemented with non-formal learning and learning by doing approach, provided the youth leaders with theory and practice and helped them boost their leadership skills and get ready to be the active leaders in their communities.



## Station 4: Youth for intercultural dialogue Local Workshop in Prishtina

BLINK Kosovo was the first to organise and host the local workshop, on 25 September 2019 in Prishtina, with the facilitation of Elda Haziri and Rina Kadiri. Both youth leaders that were part of the Leaders Training lead the 38 youngsters of the workshop in a learning path towards discovering more about intercultural dialogue in mixed communities.

Using creativity as a driver the workshop lead the participants coming from very different backgrounds, to open up discussions and reflect about the importance of intercultural dialogue in their daily life and for a better cohesion of their communities. Interactive, informative, educative and fun were all elements of the one day workshop that allowed 38 youngsters to come together and learn with each other, know more about RYCO and its future possibilities. Specifically the mobility chance that RYCO offers to youth in WB was of particular interest for the groups, since none of them had ever traveled out of Kosovo before.





## Station 5: Cultures in Motion Local Workshop in Tirana

Tirana local workshop brought together 34 youngsters aged 16-20 years old coming from different cities of Albania and it was hosted on 27 September 2019, with the facilitation of Silvia Dervishi, Redona Hoxha and Ariola Merepeza, supported by the project coordinator. The three youth leaders prepared the workshop and had a chance to practice the learned methods and skills at the training in Sabac, with the whole group of youngsters during a 1 full day workshop. Culture and all its elements were the core of the workshop, and were addressed by the use of Swapping Cultures tool, and several other methods created by the leaders themselves. In a creative day with 4 different sessions, the participants explored concepts of culture and relation to own identity, culture diversity and communication, stereotypes and prejudices in cultural environments and ways how to fight them; how to boost intercultural dialogue and what is the role of youth in promoting diversity, respect and mutual understanding; were all addressed with participants through a non-formal learning approach with a very creative style of learning by doing sessions.

During this workshop, RYCO Local Branch Officer from Albania, Mr. Kreshnik Loka joined us in a monitoring visit. Using the opportunity he also addressed the group with a presentation of RYCO's mission and opportunities which was very welcomed by the group.

## Station 6: Diversity and Inclusion

PEL held their one day workshop in Skopje with 33 youngsters aged 16-20 years old, coming from various backgrounds and communities. Marijana Bogdanoska and Tamara Sokolovska were the two youth leaders who with the support of the organization planned and facilitated the workshop. Participants of the local workshop were introduced to the project and to what RYCO offers for all youngsters of the region.



The main topics of the workshop were culture diversity, intercultural dialogue and inclusion. Through a set of different tools the facilitators guided the group into learning more about culture diversity, respect and mutual understanding and importance of intercultural dialogue.

Further participants worked in smaller groups to initiate ideas that are inclusive and allow youngsters to take lead in their communities and shape issues of everyday life through actively participating and leading some change. During this workshop, Swapping Cultures tool was used as an introductory tool for creating group cohesion and received a lot of positive feedback from the group.



## Station 7: Promoting diversity, fostering inclusion Local Workshop in Sabac

Svetlost hosted their workshop in Sabac in 13 October 2019, facilitated by the youth leader Mica Misljenovic, Ana Stanic and Magdalena Dimitrijevic supported by the staff of Svetlost. 33 youngsters aged 16-20 years old mostly coming from disadvantaged backgrounds took part in the workshop that was focused in exploring diversity and empowering youth to be more inclusive with their peers and communities. Practicing the S.C method, using creative workshops and tools to facilitate their learning, the youngsters had a chance to do deeper in reflection and foster their critical thinking in cure diversity and fostering inclusion.

## Station 8: Intercultural dialogue meets Inclusion Youth Exchange

Our next station event brought together 32 youngsters to Durres, Albania, on 23-30 November 2018 in a youth exchange. The participants coming from each partner promoter, gathered in a tailor made program hosted in the shore of Adriatic Sea and had a chance to make friends, learn, play, exchange, discuss, reflect and create together. The main aim of the youth exchange was to increase the intercultural competencies of young people and youth workers in 4 WB, through innovative educational tools in the field of intercultural learning, culture diversity and peaceful cohabitation.

Two youth leaders from each partner, supported by the 3 experienced trainers from BBA and Svetlost implemented the 7 day activity in a very multicultural environment, a safe space to share and discuss and a creative atmosphere to enhance the skills of the young participants. We used tools like S.C and TOTO and methods like workshops about culture diversity and inclusion, creative workshops on making masks with plaster and painting them. We also had a chance to display and cherish cultural traditions that connect the WB, through the intercultural evenings. Young participants reflected on sensitive topics and worked on concrete products together. In order to also give the group space to improve skills and create something together they worked in small working groups where each of them had different tasks. This way groups worked on: Article writing, video making, interviewing each other, creative workshop and they were mentored by the youth leaders on the way. As a result, 3 short videos to promote culture diversity were produced, one newsletter with different articles written by participants, 2 thematic photo collages.





## Station 9: Let's evaluate

After all the work and after so much learning, we needed to also come together and reflect on the lessons learned. Therefore from 10-13 January 2019, we gathered in Prishtina, hosted by BLINK in an evaluation seminar as the last phase of the concrete regional activities of the project. 15 participants, leaders, youth workers and youngsters from each partner, staff spend three days evaluating the work done in the project. Analyzing challenges and problems, sharing best example and practices, providing recommendations for improvement of quality of youth work, networking and policy making impact, were the highlights of the seminar. The concrete recommendations and the lessons learned can be found in the next chapters. Detailed measures for making the project sustainable beyond the granting period and drafting follow-up activities were also planned during the seminar.





# Youth perspective what do they think?

Here are a few impressions as written and expressed from participants of the various activities.

### Kristijan Topalov, 22 year old from Macedonia

Being an exchange participant is just like riding a roller coaster. Let me explain why! On 23th November, myself and 7 other youngsters bought our tickets to Durres in Albania. There we met many adventurers from Balkans, enthusiastic people from Serbia, Kosovo and Albania. All 32 people started their excitement for 7 days.



As everybody knows, rollercoasters have many ups and downs, and so have exchange programs. It goes up, up, up just like your emotions. You are feeling happy, fulfilled with unbelievable experiences and you feel hungry for many information about others cultures and religions. We were like a team that shares everything, such as food, stories, drinks, laughs, experiences and feelings. And at the same point the ride goes down... and you are scared, homesick, you start to miss your tradition, culture and surroundings. Some of us remind of our parents words when they tell us: "You are too young and little to ride the roller coaster!" But pretty quickly, it stabilizes and you get used to the new languages, the new food, the differences that others have. **We swap our cultures and we erase our stereotypical borders.** This all went by way too fast! I had to leave what had become my family, my home, my bed!

I get down from this roller coaster and away from the park. Then I thought "maybe I will never get to experience such an amazing week and that I will never be given such huge opportunity again". When I left, I started to feel nostalgic. I started to share the story with my friends and colleagues from my society. They were so impressed of my experience and moments that we shared with each other.

**That wasn't a week in my life; it was for sure a life in a week.** I will encourage you and to let the adrenalin lead your life adventures that are waiting for you! Are you ready to feel the wind in your face, while you go down the roller coaster?

## Widening the mind and spirit-my story about Intercultural exchange!

### Xhon Haderi 17 years old from Albania

It was a Monday morning and I woke up early, experiencing mixed feelings. I felt curious and excited and as well a bit anxious for what would happen in the coming days. I saw the weather was perfect and this gave me positive energy and enthusiasm. I met with Albanian participants and leaders of Beyond Barriers and started our travel to Durres where we would meet young people from Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia.

While the minivan was going fast to Durres, images of our preparation meeting in office of the organization were passing by my mind. It was a youth exchange for intercultural learning and cultural diversity with 32 youngsters from other organizations from Balkan. But....How it will be? Are those youngsters like us (Albanians) or different? Do I have enough information to share with them? Will those people be friendly? What do I know about culture diversity? Is my English good enough to communicate with them? How do they perceive my country? All of these questions were flying through my mind, making me feel curious, fearful and excited at same time.

There I am, I arrived and met all the others. Most of people seem fine and full of enthusiasm about the new adventure. I felt good! After getting to know each other a bit more we had to work in groups. I registered myself in the journalism group and now I am reflecting about this particular experience. I think it is such a unique opportunity to bring together young people from Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia to talk about culture, intercultural learning and cultural diversity.

By the end, no matter of differences and history, **I think we the young people are all the same! We are young people with a lot of dreams and aspirations who want to travel, to know the world, to live a good life in peace with our friends and families.**

It is so nice when in the end of the day, after what we learned, we sit together, tell stories, laugh and have fun! The days in this activity went by so fast and we already are finishing the program. Everyone is a little bit sad because this experience is ending here, but what is important is that in the end of all these days we learn about each-others cultures! **We learned how to respect everyone and our own cultures as well, and I am sure I at least will always do this.** We need more respect and harmony in the Balkans, because only like this we are stronger together!





## Arbër Shala, 20 years old, from Kosovo

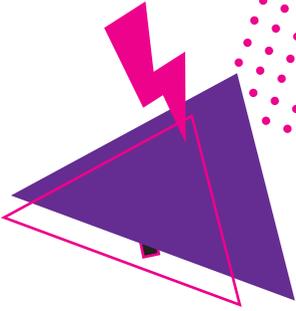
One week in Albania, with some of the best young people of Balkans, in a cultural exchange activity; what else could you ask for? It wasn't all fun in the beginning of the youth exchange and I didn't know anyone or have any friends yet! But that was only the first day, because after spending some time together and with some pretty nice working methods, **I understood that I wasn't inside of a box! The whole box was in front of me and ready to be explored.**



I will stop a minute at the working methods, because we really did a lot of fun and interactive exercises and games. Oppression is quite big problem in our countries and that is why the "Theatre of the Oppressed" was one of the best tools for us to address it, to try to look at the problem in a different way and find a proper solution. And it worked! It was great to use it and to be pushed to think differently, to be critical and creative and produce non typical solutions.

Another awesome team-building activity that I really liked was the "Orange Factory". It was great because it was not about the leader and the followers, it was a chainlike activity, where we could all participate and support each other. Methods like these made us break the cultural and social barriers and made the learning process more fun and the most important, more effective.

Days passed, the activity came to an end, our social circles got bigger and **we learned that even though we have different cultures, we still can and should find our common grounds. We learned that conflicts are a thing of the past and we as youth should look only forward with great ambitions, in order to make a change, the change that we want to see!**



MIMOZA

# Impressions by other participants



ARSINDA



REBEKA



GEZIM



ANA



RINA



**Gëzim Imeraj:** It was great experience and I learned a lot of social skills that I can use in everyday life. It was pretty great, I am glad that I had this opportunity to learn new tools on promotion of intercultural dialogue and a chance to meet new people.

**Arsinda Dervishi:** I haven't been in these kind of activities before, and as a first time I really felt great and loved. I liked learning about the culture and loved the methods that we used. It was a great experience, not only I learned a lot of stuff but I made a lot of great friends.

**Rebeca Salkunic:** This activity helped me to learn about other cultures. I'm glad I got an opportunity to be here. This week was so energetic and productive. I can't wait to go to other activities like this. I learned a lot during this activity. I made new friends, I really think that our future will be brighter.

**Mimoza Koceva:** I had the best experience till now in my life. I met many friends, I learned a lot about culture, cultural diversity and understood important things about life.

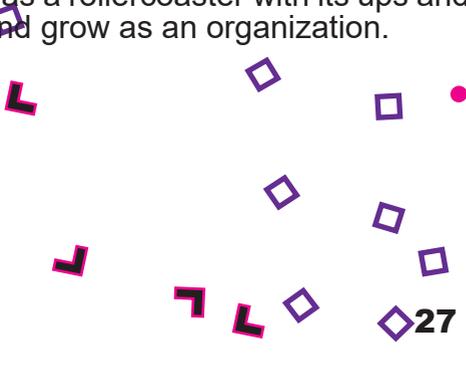
**Rina Kadiri:** This was one of those projects that I will always have in mind for the rest of my life about the impact that had in me and also in the community.



# From lessons learned to results and recommendations



As the organization in charge for the whole implementation of the project, we reflected a lot and carefully assessed the impact and the results. From specific qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods used in each activity, to partners meetings in assessing results, we also would like to share with all of you the lessons learned through this project. As one of our participants said, this was a rollercoaster with its ups and downs. As such we also learn and grow as an organization.



## Young people taught us that:

- Young people of the region NEED and WANT to meet each other! We all know this, right?
- The fear, prejudices and hesitation are there! Youngsters as young as 16, show fear in traveling in the region!
- Parents have a strong influence and we learned that some of the youngsters would not be allowed to meet their peers unless they travel with the organization's adult leaders (i.e. director)
- A very careful and detailed preparation for youth teams (especially 16-19 years old) before participating in events is a MUST! It worked very well in our case, but if they weren't that prepared the potential for conflict was there!
- Tackling reconciliation and past conflicts of the region is very sensitive, therefore adequate methods and time must be planned based on the target group.
- After the whole project we for sure know, there is a clear NEED for RYCO in the WB. Activities where youngsters are given a chance to foster their critical thinking about past and future of the region, are a highly influential element in the non-formal education setting.
- We cannot speak about the future society, if we don't dedicate our time, effort and resources to educate the present generation.



## Within the project we achieved these results:

- 201 young people** (112 Females and 89 Males) aged 16-30 years old directly participated in the regional and local activities of the project and improved their knowledge, skills and attitudes in intercultural dialogue; culture diversity and inclusion.
- 185 youth** aged 16-20 years old were introduced with the Swapping Cultures and Theatre of the Oppressed methods, both tools that help them to promote tolerance, mutual respect and fight in decreasing levels of hate speech in the region.
- 4 best postcards** mirroring intercultural dialogue were selected in the competition, printed and used throughout the project.
- 3350 postcards** were used as a promo tool and as a direct message to: decision makers; families; friends; RYCO Local Branch Officers and Secretariat; partner organizations around WB and EU countries and citizens in all four partner promoters during the project campaign!
- 4 regional activities and 4 local activities** were organized by the partnership and the youngsters during 9 months.
- 7 short videos** with an aim to display, promote and treasure culture diversity and intercultural dialogue in WB were made by local youth themselves and shared online to raise awareness among the online community.



# Young people would like to recommend

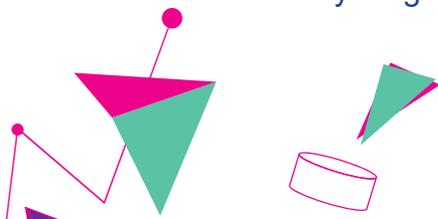
## a) Recommendations to RYCO:

- Organize an annual event of all NGO-s that were granted projects in WB, where they can share experiences and best practices.
- Make efforts to push governments of BiH and Kosovo to facilitate the mobility and visa procedures of its citizens.
- Work more with mass media to promote RYCO's missions and projects around the WB. Older generations still follow news on TV and newspaper, and they need to be aware of the new reconciled path for young people.
- Make more efforts to reach with information and info sessions the small cities and areas.
- Create a Pool of Trainers that could be a valuable resource to implement RYCO projects and increase value of WB youth work.
- Create and support a volunteer program for the WB region, i.e. "RYCO Solidarity Corps"
- Our parents also need education! To open a department for exchanging of adults/parents in the WB. Involve them more so they can change the perception on volunteering and non-formal learning activities.



## b) Recommendations to Youth Organizations

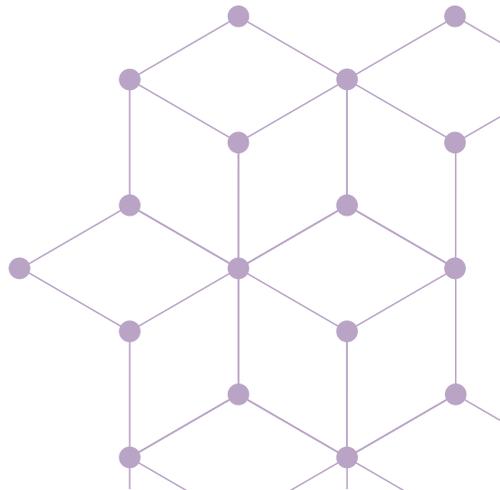
- Work more in strengthening the link and cooperation among parents – schools –NGO-s.
- Youth NGO-s should promote the best practices through youngsters who have an experience to share and use the as models for other youth to get inspired.
- Cooperate among each other and media to promote intercultural dialogue and reconciliation
- Do not forget to work with parents as they have a clear need to know the youth programs and opportunities and thus allow youngsters to participate and grow up.



- Our parents also need education! Involve them more so they can change the perception on volunteering and non-formal learning activities.
- Gather efforts, collaborate among each other and improve quality of youth work in the region, because recognition of non-formal education and youth work in all WB is nowadays a must!
- Organize awareness raising campaigns about security and mobility in the region.
- Make sure you plan and implement a good preparation of participants before the activities.
- Include and reach more people with fewer opportunities. They must have a chance to participate in such programs but they need support and necessary preparation.

### c) Recommendations to parents

- Teach us how to respect each-other and our Balkan roots, we need a positive mindset and trust from your side!
- Inform yourselves about non-formal learning activities, and the huge benefit they offer to us to meet our peer and learn together.
- Show us a positive model of mutual understanding, be open minded and accepting with us because you are our strongest support, at all time!





# Project partners



## **Beyond Barriers Association - Albania**

**Beyond Barriers Association** is a voluntary, non-profit, non-governmental organization that protects and promotes the rights and interests of young people in Albania. BBA is one of Albania's largest and most active youth organizations (over 14 years of continuous activity), especially in the fields of inclusion, volunteering and skills development. In 2018, BBA was awarded the price for the "Best Youth Organization of the Year", delivered by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in Albania. In 2011, BBA was also awarded as "The best volunteering project of the Year" also delivered by Ministry of Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports in cooperation with UNDP and National Youth Council.

BBA working areas include: Human rights, education, training, employment, entrepreneurship education, counselling and volunteerism. BBA is a Contact Point of Erasmus + Youth for Albania since April 2010, while supporting with expertise all NGOs, Institutions and youngsters in Albania. BBA is very experienced in non-formal education, providing training and learning opportunities for young people, running voluntary programs in local and international level, as well as in the implementation of bigger scale project in partnership with stakeholders and partners all across WB and Europe. BBA has realized more than 100 pieces of training with about 3000 young people as beneficiaries. BBA has a large network of partners, comprising of NGOs working in and outside the country, public institutions, other youth organizations; formal and informal networks of young people.

Find out more: [www.beyondbarriers.org](http://www.beyondbarriers.org)



**Association for progress,  
Education and Lobbying - Macedonia**

**PEL** is a non-governmental organization, established in February 2000 by young people in Macedonia. Its aim is to improve the situation of young people and women in all areas of social life. This is achieved by promotion of human rights and volunteerism and their values and by making these things possible to all citizens. Members of PEL belong to different ethnic, religious or gender groups that live in Macedonia and are among 16 to 30 years old.

Main fields of work where PEL realizes its activities are: promotion of human rights, prevention of domestic violence, gender issues, community awareness, civil society, culture, animation, volunteerism, etc. PEL has been working with hosting and sending European volunteers since 2004.

PEL works in inclusion of marginalized groups, such as: minorities, youngsters from rural areas, youngsters with social-economic background, as the association of founded by people with such backgrounds. In years PEL has been organizing activities in local, national and international level.

Find out more: [www.pel.mk](http://www.pel.mk)



## Udruzenje Svetlost - Serbia

**Udruzenje Svetlost** is established in 2001 from young people in small town of Sabac. Svetlost is dedicated to building positive and creative capacity of youth including those with fewer opportunities and encourages them to take an active role in the local and European community. Almost all people who are in and close to Svetlost use their experience in the world of education, multimedia, art and culture to send strong and clear message: Positive Consciousness – Our Sense.

Svetlost activities promote: voluntarism, a non-violent culture, intercultural activities, human rights, gender equality, employability and sustainable development issues; development of individuals and teams (capacity building); cultural, social and economic integration of marginalized youth, active citizenship, healthy life style, and all positive values. These activities promote at the same time inclusion and social rights, important issues for all students, mostly for those with fewer opportunities: Roma youth, youth living in poverty, rural youth etc. Svetlost shares its successful outputs with different stakeholders for further use. Staff has developed interpersonal skills and uses them every day to communicate and interact with young people, both individually and in groups.

Find out more: [www.nvosvetlost.org](http://www.nvosvetlost.org)

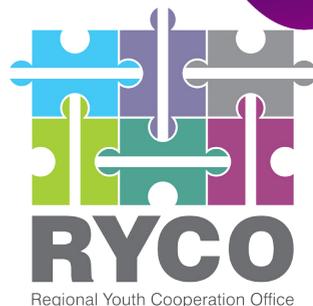
## NGO Better Life In Kosova - Kosovo



**BLINK** is a non-governmental organization NGO formed in January 2009 by a group of youngsters in Prishtina, Kosovo. Their work is concentrated more in youth development and active citizenship in local and international level, with a main mission to promote equal opportunities, and to protect the rights and interests of youngsters with fewer opportunity, offering to them support to strength and to participate actively in community. BLINK has implemented several projects under the support of different national and international donor in similar topics with young people from EU and Western Balkans. The staff and volunteers of BLINK organize and host workshops, trainings, seminars, and daily events, round tables, in local, national and international level. Having worked with Youth in Action Programme in years BLINK is experienced in non-formal activities including youth from marginalized backgrounds in Kosovo, WB region and Europe.

Find out more: [fb.com/betterlifeinkosova/](https://fb.com/betterlifeinkosova/)

# What is RYCO?



Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an independently functioning institutional mechanism, founded by the Western Balkans 6 participants (WB 6): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia, aiming to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programs. The Agreement on establishment of RYCO was signed by the WB 6 Prime Ministers on WB Summit held in Paris, on 4 July 2016.

RYCO supports great ideas, promotes reconciliation, trust, cooperation and dialogue in the Western Balkans through supporting and funding projects which bring youth of the region together.

The Head Office is in Tirana with local branches in all the capitals across the region (Podgorica, Sarajevo, Skopje, Pristina, Belgrade). RYCO is financed by the governments of the region and it is supported by the EU and other donors.

Find out more on [www.rycowb.org](http://www.rycowb.org)



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