

RYDE

Regional Youth Dialogue
for Europe



Funded by
the European Union

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Call for Proposals

Active Achievement Fund for Regional Informal Groups

Guidelines for applicants

Deadline for submission of the proposals:

18th July 2025 at 20:00 CET



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SUMMARY

The Active Achievement Fund provides support to regional creative groups, particularly those operating informally, aiming to empower youth in the Western Balkans to participate in a structured dialogue on public policies relevant to youth, to advocate for the adoption of European values and strengthening of democratic and responsible institutions, and to promote regional cooperation and political, economic and social benefits of the EU integration for the Western Balkans societies.

The Active Achievement Fund is a sub-granting activity of the three-year regional project **“Regional Youth Dialogue for Europe” (RYDE)**, funded by the European Union in the period 2023-2026.

Total available budget of the Active Achievement Fund in 2025 is 15.000 EUR. Regional informal groups can apply for financial support for project that must fall between the following minimum and maximum amount:

- minimum amount: **2.000 EUR**
- maximum amount: **4.000 EUR**

Only informal groups are eligible to apply for this Call for Proposals. These groups are not formally registered and have a low level of formality and weak technical and managerial skills.

The regional groups shall be composed of **at least 5 young people who are citizens of at least 3 out of five Western Balkan countries** in which the RYDE project is being implemented (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*¹, North Macedonia and Serbia). At least one person from the informal group must be of legal age in order for the project implementation contract to be signed.

Support will be provided through direct payments conducted by RYDE partner organizations **that will act as intermediary organizations for the particular project.**

With the project proposal, the applicants should select the project host country which will consequently determine which partner organization will act as intermediary organization. The

¹ 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.

partner organisation will execute payments for costs incurred as per the approved small project budget.

The Call is open to informal groups that spontaneously gathered to solve a problem in the local community, with priority to individuals that participated in RYDE activities such as Politeia School, Politeia Thematic Sessions, Youth Policy Labs and Internship program.

The duration of the projects is **from three to six months**.

The selected informal groups are obliged to implement their projects within the period from **1 August 2025 to 31 January 2026**.

The deadline for submitting applications is **18th of July, 2025** at 20:00 CET.

Applicants must apply in English and submit their applications electronically to the e-mail address: info@iksweb.org.

I INTRODUCTION

1.1. Active Achievement Fund Context

The Active Achievement Fund for Regional Informal Groups is a FSTP (financial support to third parties) i.e. sub-granting activity of the three-year regional project “Regional Youth Dialogue for Europe” (RYDE), funded by the European Union in the period 2023-2026 through EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023 (IPA III). The RYDE project is being implemented by the Center for Democracy Foundation from Serbia as a lead partner in cooperation with the partnering civil society organizations from the region: Academy of European Integrations and Negotiations (Albania), Youth Act Center (Albania), Kosovar Stability Initiative (Kosovo*), Network of Progressive Initiatives (Bosnia and Herzegovina), NGO Info Center Foundation (North Macedonia) and Regional Academy for Democratic Development (Serbia).

The overall objective of the RYDE project is to contribute to strengthening participatory democracy, EU integration and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans through increased impact of civil society organizations (CSOs) and particularly youth organizations in promoting democratic values, political, economic and social benefits of the EU integration of the WB. Specific objectives of RYDE project are:

- **Specific objective 1:** Increase participation of CSOs and youth in structured dialogue on public policies on national/ regional level, with focus on human development and social investment policies relevant for youth and other marginalized groups
- **Specific objective 2:** Strengthen capacities and foster cooperation of CSOs and youth in the WB in addressing political, economic and social challenges in the context of EU integration and development of the social resilience;
- **Specific objective 3:** Promote participatory democracy, democratic values and tolerant political culture, and political, economic and social benefits of the EU integration for the WB societies.

RYDE project refers to the **key challenges** common to all Western Balkan economies:

- a) Slow advancement of democracy with rising political polarization with authoritarian tendencies in some WB economies, periodical/ continuous crisis of democratic institutions, lack of quality public dialogue and general lack of trust in institutions which all result in low participatory practice of citizens in general, and particularly of youth;
- a) Slow socio-economic development - even when there is economic growth, poverty is very high in all WB economies, with high youth unemployment, informal economy, gaps between education and labour markets, with deep rifts between urban and rural areas, coupled with serious demographic challenges as result of ageing societies and high brain drain of young people;
- c) Long lasting EU integration processes have diminished the transformational strength and appeal of the EU perspective in the eyes of citizens, while other international actors in the region have gained strength and visibility, bringing in new wave of re-traditionalization. However, in all WB economies there is still substantial commitment to reforms and the EU integration.
- d) Nearly all the economies in the Western Balkans have been developing structures for institutional/structured dialogue for monitoring reforms, with specifics that reflect political and civil society situation in each of them, but youth participation is not satisfactory. Capacities for measuring reforms impact are still insufficiently developed; The need to involve and empower youth has emerged as a critical part of societal growth in the dynamic terrain of the Western Balkans.

Within this context, there is an assessed need to increase capacities of youth to participate in structured dialogue on public policies relevant to youth (employment, education, green agenda, sexual and reproductive health, youth participation, culture etc.), to advocate for the adoption of European values and strengthening of democratic and responsible institutions, as well as to promote regional cooperation and political, economic and social benefits of the EU integration for the Western Balkans societies.

RYDE project and its Active Achievement Fund, are being implemented in the context of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and Youth Action Plan for EU external action 2022-2027 adopted by the European Commission, especially with Goal 9 of the Strategy: Space and Participation for All and Goal 1: Connecting EU with Youth. The aim of first field of action, as formulated in the EU Youth Strategy: "Young people's participation in representative democracy and civil society at all levels and in society at large should be supported". The first ever Youth

Action Plan aims to provide a political framework and operational roadmap for a strategic partnership with young people in the EU's external action and it is based on three pillars of action: 1) Engage 2) Empower and 3) Connect.

RYDE project is closely related to the Economic-Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and its 10th flagship - Youth Guarantee program, which is at various stages of implementation in the Western Balkans economies.

RYDE project is also in line with the EU Youth Dialogue, the mechanism that provides a platform for active participation of young people in decision-making process at the EU level (formerly known as a Structured Dialogue). It is a consultative process between policy makers and young representatives based on the principle of co-management which ensures that the opinion and needs of young people are taken into account when adopting youth policies. Serbia is the only economy in the Western Balkans and the only one outside the European Union that implements the EU Youth Dialogue.

RYDE project is also complementary with the Western Balkans Youth Lab project established by Regional Cooperation Council, aimed to strengthen formal and informal mechanisms of youth participation in policy-making process and increase co-creation of relevant policies with youth.

Through RYDE activities related to knowledge sharing (Research on the Attitudes of CSOs and Youth on decision-making process in the WB, Comparative analysis of youth policies in the region, Politeia Regional School for Youth Participation, Politeia Thematic sessions etc.), conducting a public dialogue on youth-related public policies at all levels (Policy labs, public debates, regional conference), as well as through FSTP activities including *Youth Fund for Local Youth Initiatives* and *Active Achievement Fund for Regional Informal Groups*, the RYDE project aims to empower CSOs, particularly youth organization activists and citizens to ensure better environment for young people in the Western Balkans and makes their voices better heard in society.

1.1. Youth in the Western Balkans

Out of nearly 18 million people living in the Western Balkans, approximately 3 million are young. The Western Balkan labour market involves roughly 7.5 million people (15-64), and only approximately 30% of the Western Balkan's youth are active in the labour markets, which is lower than the EU average of 37.8%². The average regional youth unemployment rate is 35.1%, more

² Study on Youth Employment in the Western Balkans, Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, <https://www.rcc.int/docs/573/study-on-youth-employment-in-the-western-balkans>

than double that of 14,5% in the EU³. Data show that 23.7% of young people in the Western Balkans are NEET (Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training), which compares poorly with the 11.1% in the EU.

According to the results of the Research on the Attitudes of civil society organisations and young people “Western Balkans Youth in Policy Making Processes”⁴ conducted within the RYDE project and published in January 2024, top 5 priorities recognized by Western Balkans youth are as follows:

- 1) Employment possibilities
- 2) Quality education
- 3) Housing and affordable living conditions
- 4) Youth participation and empowerment
- 5) Mental health support

Data from this Research also shows that 77% of young people in Albania have never participated in policy making process. That percentage is 70% in North Macedonia, 65% in Serbia, 62% in Kosovo*, 53% in Montenegro and 47% in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Even 93% of young people in Montenegro and Serbia believe that current public policies **do not adequately** address youth needs, as well as 89% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 85% in North Macedonia, 76% in Albania and 67% of young people in Kosovo*. Therefore, it is crucial to continue investing in designing and implementing of youth policies and programmes to facilitate positive changes and improve the situation of young people in the region.

Young people in the Western Balkans participate in political and social processes through non-conventional mechanisms of participation (participation in protests, digital engagement, signing petitions, etc.) to a much greater extent than traditional mechanisms (membership in political parties, voting in elections etc.). Young people's trust in state institutions is at an extremely low level in all Western Balkan economies. That is why civil society organisations in the region, particularly youth organizations, play an important role in mobilising young people to participate in political and civic activities.

³ Youth unemployment rate in the European Union for 2022, Eurostat, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem140/default/table?lang=en>

⁴ Research on the Attitudes of civil society organisations and young people “Western Balkans Youth in Policy Making Processes”, 2024, Center for Democracy Foundation <http://www.centaronline.org/en/publication/1935/western-balkans-youth-in-policy-making-processes>

According to the National survey “Young People and Politics” conducted by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in 2019,⁵ young people of Albania are distanced from political parties. The vast majority of them (80%) are not engaged as political party activists either.

According to the Study on Youth compiled by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2018/2019⁶, the majority of young respondents have a clear understanding of their role in legitimising the rule of representative democracy, but apart from voting, they are not politically engaged either in terms of participating in protests and petitions or working for political parties.

According to the latest research and assessments of local policies related to young people and the needs of young people in 15 local self-governments in Montenegro, conducted by the Institute for Strategic Studies and Projections from Podgorica in 2022⁷, on average every second young citizen of Montenegro considers that young people are interested in being involved in decision-making in matters that directly concern them, while one quarter of young people state that they are predominantly ready to participate in decision-making processes.

Research conducted by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in Macedonia⁸ shows that 71% of young people describe themselves as socially inactive citizens. Only 7% of young people declared themselves as members of political parties, and an additional 20% as supporters.

According to a survey carried out in 2023 by the National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS)⁹, only 2.3% of young people were members of a political party. When it comes to unconventional mechanisms of youth participation in Serbia, KOMS research shows that over 46% of respondents participated in signing a petition or initiative in the previous two years (for example, this percentage at the EU level is 42%). Almost 43% of young people participated in a protest organised by an association, students, informal group or citizens, while 7.4% of young people participated in a protest organised by a political party.

Young people are an important resource for the future of the Western Balkans. On one side, young people can be the key factor for building partnerships and bridging gaps in the Western Balkans as young people do not carry the burden of the past and therefore can contribute to

⁵ Westminster Foundation for Democracy, National Survey: Young People and Politics in Albania, 2019, <https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/national-survey-young-people-and-politics-albania>

⁶ Study on Youth Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2019, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, <https://shorturl.at/dGQY3>

⁷ Institute for Strategic Studies and Projections, Research and assessments of local policies related to young people and the needs of young people in 15 local self-governments in Montenegro, 2022 https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-06/Istra%C5%BEivanje%20i%20procjena%20omladinskih%20politika%20i%20potreba%20mladih%20u%2015%20LSU_0_1.pdf

⁸ Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019, Youth in North Macedonia: Optimism, Apathy or Disappointment? <https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/youth-north-macedonia-optimism-apathy-or-disappointment>

⁹ Alternative report on the position and needs of youth in the Republic of Serbia, 2023, National Youth Council of Serbia

building trust, tolerance and mutual respect. Through regional cooperation young people are to be included in policies aimed to economic growth, intercultural exchange, building trustworthy institutions and democratic society and creating an environment that will entice youth to stay in this region. At the same time, young people are not spared from influence of nationalism, prejudices, hate speech and fake news which are all also reflected on their attitudes towards European future of their economies and the region.

II OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL

The main objective of this Call is to strengthen creative groups in the Western Balkans, particularly informal ones, by providing financial support for initiatives aiming to:

- 1) Increase youth activism in their communities and participation in structured dialogue with decision makers on public policies relevant to youth
- 2) Advocate for the adoption of European values and strengthening of democratic and responsible institutions
- 3) Promote regional cooperation and political, economic and social benefits of the EU integration for the Western Balkans countries

III TYPES OF SUPPORT

3.1. Financial support

Regional informal groups can apply for financial support for project that must fall between the following minimum and maximum amount:

- minimum amount: **2.000 EUR**
- maximum amount: **4.000 EUR**

Total available budget of the Active Achievement Fund in 2025 is **15.000 EUR**.

Informal groups are not obliged to provide co-financing for their small projects.

Financial support will be provided **through direct payments by RYDE partner organizations** that will act as intermediary organizations for the particular project.

3.2. Support of intermediary organizations

Selected informal groups will implement their projects primarily with support intermediary organizations and that support will consist of two segments:

1) Programmatic support

Intermediary organizations will help informal groups in implementation of projects and achievement of the set goal through provision mentoring and expert support. Once their projects are selected for support, the members of the group (project authors) will attend a one-day online training on project implementation, visibility requirements and reporting procedure. The applicants may address RYDE partnering organizations for any clarification on issues stated in the Call.

2) Financial support

All payments for costs incurred by informal groups as per the approved small project budget will be paid by intermediary organizations. With the project proposal, the applicants will select the project host country in order to determine which RYDE partnering organization will act as intermediary organization that will pay off the invoices for costs incurred as per their approved small project budget.

E.g. a group of 5 participants - 2 from Albania, 2 from Serbia and 1 from Bosnia and Herzegovina will prepare a project and decide that the project host country will be Bosnia and Herzegovina; In that case, Bosnian partner Network of Progressive Initiatives from Sarajevo will be their intermediary organization and will pay the cost incurred during the implementation of the project of informal group.

The selected informal groups will work with the following intermediary organizations depending on which country they choose as their host country:

Host country	City	Intermediary organizations	Contact
Albania	Tirana	Youth Act Center	info@youthact.al
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sarajevo	Network of Progressive Initiatives	info@mpi.ba
Kosovo*	Pristina	Kosovar Stability Initiative	info@iksweb.org
North Macedonia	Skopje	NGO Info Center Foundation	contact@nvoinfocentar.org.mk
Serbia	Novi Sad	Regional Academy for Democratic Development	office@regionaladd.org

IV RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSAL

4.1. Who is eligible to apply?

Only informal groups are eligible for applying under this Call for Proposals. These groups are not formal registered and have a low level of formality and weak technical and managerial skills.

The Call is open to informal groups that spontaneously gathered to solve a problem in the local community, with priority to individuals that participated in RYDE activities such as Politeia School, Politeia Thematic Sessions, Youth Policy Labs, Internship program and other project activities.

The regional groups shall be composed of **at least 5 young people aged 16-30 who are citizens of at least 3 out of five Western Balkan countries** in which the RYDE project is implementing (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*¹⁰, North Macedonia and Serbia).

Although Active Achievement Fund will not be implemented in Montenegro (RYDE project is not implemented in Montenegro), the activities foreseen by the submitted project proposals may preview participation of young people from Montenegro as participants of particular activities (e.g. trainings, campaigns, researches, debates, etc.)

At least one person must be among the members of the informal group of legal age duo to signing the project implementation contract.

One person can be a member of several informal groups that submit an application but can only be a contract signatory for one group. Informal groups must be directly responsible for project preparation and implementation.

4.2. What are eligible projects?

The projects that can be supported under this Call are the following:

- ✓ Capacity building actions for strengthening youth capacity to monitor reforms and participate in public policy dialogue on local national and regional level
- ✓ Projects to motivate young people to engage in consultation processes relevant for the ongoing reforms in economic and social field

¹⁰ 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.

- ✓ Advocacy and lobbying actions, such as for respect of fundamental rights, anti-discrimination practices, policies responding to youth needs and priorities, social cohesion and social resilience;
- ✓ Promotion of anti-discrimination culture, inter/cultural dialogue, gender equality and countering social and political polarization
- ✓ Promotion of sustainable development and youth related policies in the context of EU integration process
- ✓ Promoting anti-discriminatory practices, including those experienced by youth disadvantaged groups
- ✓ Distribution of information on EU membership benefit for the youth
- ✓ Educating members of their organizations, schools and local communities about their rights

Innovative elements, cross cutting issues, regional relevance and achieved level of networking and cooperation among the project authors, outreach, replication and multiplier potential will be additionally evaluated.

4.3. What are eligible activities?

The following types of activities may be financed under this Call:

- ✓ Awareness raising actions in support to youth participation in policy making processes on local, national and regional level;
- ✓ Organization of local, national, regional events, debates, workshops, seminars to increase capacities of young people, including those belonging to vulnerable groups
- ✓ Networking and partnering with youth in the WB region
- ✓ Conducting research and analytical work in the context of monitoring youth related policies and in the context of EU integration processes;
- ✓ Development of policy papers, monitoring reports, proposals for legislation revision and budget analysis and modification proposals;
- ✓ Creation of innovative tools for youth participation – (music, video, exhibitions etc.)
- ✓ Promoting inter-generational dialogue and solidarity, and addressing the demographic challenges in the WB region
- ✓ Actions promoting social cohesion, inclusive development and social resilience
- ✓ Conduct awareness raising campaigns

4.4. What are eligible costs?

The eligible direct costs are all those related to the implementation of project activities as outlined in the project budget proposal and approved during the selection procedure. These costs are the following:

- **Fees for informal group members**

These costs cannot exceed 25% of the total project costs. It is expected that the informal groups that are the project beneficiaries implement most of the project activities themselves and that they already possess most of the necessary human resources;

- **Communication costs**

These costs are related to informing the public about the results and activities of the proposed projects through the media, social networks, public events, etc. This includes advertising, production of promotional video materials, organization of promotional events, etc.; Production of printed material, gadgets, pencils, notebooks, t-shirts and similar branded products are generally not recommended;

- **Direct costs necessary for the project activities**

These costs include all costs that are directly related to the implementation of the activities listed in the project application. They include the following:

- acquisition costs consumables and other materials
- costs for preparation of studies/analyses and other public policy documents
- costs for hall rental and equipment for certain events
- refreshments and catering costs
- travel costs for project team and participants of project activities
- fees for speakers, moderators, trainers etc.

4.5. What are ineligible costs?

The following costs **are not eligible** under this Call:

- Value added tax (VAT) is not a justified cost and it is necessary to costs will be shown without VAT. All other costs in the budget proposal, which they do not contain VAT but other types of taxes, they must be presented in gross amounts (for example: fees for informal group members, speakers, moderators, researchers etc.). VAT exemption is feasible only in the host country of the selected intermediary organizations.

- Indirect costs - costs related to bank charges, payment room rent, maintenance, utility services, internet, telephone costs and similarly;
- Interests and other debts incurred before the beginning and during the duration of the project;
- Buying a car or real estate, financing construction works on real estate owned by the project holder or over which the holder project realizes the right to lease;
- Purchase equipment (computers, telephones, printers etc.);
- Financing or partial financing of activities of public authorities
- Salaries and fees of public administration officials for activities that fall within their regular job activities
- Financial support to other CSOs, informal groups and individuals such as donations, scholarships and/or sponsorships.

4.6. Duration of projects

The duration of the projects is up to six months.

The selected informal groups are obliged to implement their projects within the period from **1 August 2025** to **31 January 2026**.

V HOW TO APPLY?

5.1. How and when to send your application

Applicants must prepare and submit their application in English using the following documents:

Annex 1: Application form

Annex 2: Budget proposal

Annex 3: Statement of the informal group

The deadline for submitting applications is **18th July 2025** at 20:00 CET.

Applicants must apply in English and submit their applications electronically to the e-mail address: info@iksweb.org.

VI EVALUATION

The evaluation committee will consist of representatives of the Center for Democracy Foundation as the lead organizations at the RYDE project and partnering organizations that will act as intermediary organizations who are experts in the field of youth participation and activism.

Administrative check	YES/NO
The application must contain: Annex 1: Application form; Annex 2: Budget proposal; Annex 3: Statement of the informal group	
The submission deadline has been met	
The project was submitted by an informal groups consisting of at least 5 young people who are citizens of at least 3 out of five Western Balkan countries in which the RYDE project is implementing (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* , North Macedonia and Serbia).	
The minimum project budget is 2.000 EUR and the maximum amount is 4.000 EUR.	
The project duration is up to six months.	

If the answer to all these questions within the administrative check is YES, the application is accepted and will be evaluated.

Criteria for evaluating the project proposals	Score
The project proposal aligns with the objective of the Active Achievement Fund	10 points
The project proposal is coherent, clearly presenting the problem and the realistic solution	10 points
The project has a clear plan for strengthening youth activism and participation in the Western Balkans	10 points
The project budget proposal is in line with the proposed activities	10 points
Project proposal has innovative elements, cross cutting issues, regional relevance and achieved level of networking and cooperation among the project authors, outreach, replication and multiplier potential.	10 points
Total score:	50 points

VII NOTIFICATION

Informal groups that submit project proposals will be notified of the competition results at the end of July 2025 via e-mail.

VIII INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

Description of the activity	Date
Publishing of the Call for proposals	18 th June 2025
Deadline for submission of applications	18 th July 2025
Evaluation of Concept notes	Until the end of July 2025
Notification of applicants	Until the end of July 2025
Start of grant implementation	August 2025