

Study visit Kosovo

for members from Western Balkan territories in the framework of the project *“Supporting the Western Balkan’s collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)”* project

Supported by UNICEF Albania



Background and rationale for the study visit

Adolescence should be a period of opportunity, growth, exploration and creativity. There are 1.8 billion young people¹ in the world today and nearly 90 percent of these people live in low and middle-income countries – the largest cohort ever. Today’s generation present a major force for social, economic and demographic change, with the potential to contribute to a competitive labour force, sustained economic growth, improved governance, and vibrant civil societies.

Across Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Region, 55 million adolescents make up between 14 and 24 per cent of their country’s population. Today, many of them struggle to find a place for themselves as active citizens and productive members of their community. As they enter adulthood and see little opportunities to do meaningful work nor the chance to learn the skills needed for jobs in an innovation-driven world, many dream about emigrating to a better life in a new country. Some are at risk of falling prey to the influences of ideologies promoting

¹ Young people are defined as aged 10-24. Other terms often used are adolescents (10-19) and youth (15-24)

xenophobia, hatred and intolerance; others may fall into the hands of criminal gangs that recruit them into illegal work; yet others may fail to see any hope for the future, so they become disheartened, depressed or resign themselves into a life of poverty and social exclusion.

Youth in Western Balkans 6 (WB6) live with the pressures and influences of a social and political narrative that is distorted by prejudice, denial, revisionism and nationalism. Inherited, negative narratives form the basis for young people's future life choices about career, residence, friendships and even the possibility of dialogue with other people. Very often school curricula and teaching practices of the countries in the region do not provide the young people with positive images of their peers in other countries and their history being unable as such to break a cycle of prejudices on neighbor countries and failing to provide the young generation with the needed skills to foster intercultural understanding and cooperation in the region. In order to create reconciliation across the (WB6) region UN agencies are supporting RYCO² to enhance mutual trust by building RYCOs capacity and aiding its ability to engage hard-to-reach youth and high school students/teachers under the project *"Supporting the Western Balkan's collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)*. "The main interventions of the project are designed by taking into consideration the wealth of knowledge coming from UNICEF experience working in Peace Building initiatives and new methodologies used successfully from UNICEF in the region such as "UPSHIFT", that is among a range of programmatic interventions that UNICEF is using around the world to equip adolescents with a broad set of transferrable skills needed to learn, support their transition into the labour market and become informed and active citizens. In countries as diverse as Kosovo, Tajikistan, Jordan and Vietnam, the UPSHIFT package of interventions include: 1) learning through human-centered design³ methodologies; 2) mentoring opportunities; 3) seed funding to support and engage young people to:

- Acquire transferrable, 21st century skills to increase their competence, employability skills and capacity to make a positive social impact;
- Design and develop ideas, services and models to address social issues they identify as problems in their communities;
- Co-create solutions that foster positive relationships within their communities.

Why a study visits in Kosovo?

² RYCOs establishment in 2017 – by all six contracting parties² in the region – comes at a critical moment when countries are aiming to accelerate their EU Integration processes. One of the main EU Enlargement requirements is Regional Dialogue and Reconciliation. RYCO has emerged from the Berlin Process, a political dialogue supported by several EU Member States and the WB6 and is endorsed by governments, CSOs and youth representatives (who also sit on its Governing Board) in WB6 and promotes diversity and democratic values, fostering reconciliation and remembrance and intercultural mobility.

³ Human-centered design is a creative approach to problem solving. At the start of the process are the people in the community for whom the design is meant to benefit, and at the end is a new solution (either a product or service) tailor made to suit their needs. Human-centered design creates deep empathy and that connects the designers and the people in the community. Through the process, the designers generate ideas, build prototypes, share newly created solutions with the community, and eventually put the innovative new solution out in the world.

UPSHIFT was first modeled by UNICEF in Kosovo in 2014, and in 2017 was selected by the World Bank as an example of “solutions for youth employment”. In Kosovo, UNICEF is leading globally in implementing UPSHIFT. UNICEF is working with Kosovo’s Ministry of Innovation on a National Strategic Plan on Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship to strengthen links between the country’s education and innovation agendas. UNICEF Kosovo foresees the accreditation of the UPSHIFT curriculum by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and expects strengthened collaboration with academia through the institutionalization of UPSHIFT curriculum within the education system and establishment of social innovation hubs within the structures of the universities and colleges. Beyond 2019, UNICEF is working with government and implementing partners to scale-up the model countrywide.

Objectives of the study visit

The **goal** of the proposed study visit will be for key actors in WB6 involved in “*Supporting the Western Balkan’s collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)*” project to get informed on UPSHIFT programmed and how to best use UPSHIFT methodology as a means for improving social cohesion, peacebuilding, and cultural dialogue

By the end of the study tour, participants would have:

- Developed an understanding of content and outcomes of the UPSHIFT Programme in the leader country;
- The participants will get insights on how UPSHIFT can be adapted to different contexts and delivered in different settings - ranging from youth innovation labs to non-formal education centers;
- Get an understanding of the social innovation skills curriculum that is developed to enable the UPSHIFT experience to reach much larger number of young people.
- Observe the best examples of the UPSHIFT in Kosovo;
- Interacted with a variety of stakeholders involved that are involved in the UPSHIFT programme;
- Established closer working relationship with peers from the other countries and work fields, so that they can collaborate in order to successfully implement the project;
- Learnt about the social innovation skills and the social enterprise concept.

Dates

Study Tour to Kosovo will be 2 days in the period (October tbc)

Participants

The group will be made up from:

- Government partners from the Western Balkan countries
- Non-government partners from the Western Balkan countries

- UNICEF CO interested to participate
- RYCO local branch offices
- Others tbc

Full list of participants expected to be agreed with partners such as RYCO and another UNICEF CO-s. The group will be made up of 10-12 participants.

Key Activities

- Meeting with UNICEF staff responsible for the implementation of the UPSHIFT programme.
- Visit initiatives that are undertaken by youth groups in Kosovo in the framework of the UPSHIFT programme.
- Organize reflection on the use of UPSHIFT as a tool for improving intercultural dialogue and peace building

Language

The language of the study tour will be in English. Should CO-s send participants who do not speak English they would also have to provide for a translator.

Outputs

When they return home, participants will be required to prepare and deliver a presentation about their visit and share the information with the other stakeholders.

Roles and Responsibilities

- UNICEF Albania - supports the event and jointly and prepares a reflection on how best UPSHIFT can be used as a means for social cohesion and peacebuilding;
- UNICEF Kosovo - hosts the activities, helps with organizing the agenda, accompanies the delegation during the visit

Costs

All costs of the visit will be covered by UNICEF Albania. Participants will be on a daily allowance, they will pay for rooms, meals, etc. An administrative note will be jointly prepared with UNICEF Kosovo.

Contact Persons

- UNICEF Ms. Linda Bushati mbushati@unicef.org
- Dren Rexha, Kozeta Imami other tbd by UNICEF Kosovo?

Annex: agenda to be developed