

# THINK BIG

## do little

START AN AVALANCHE



Young  
Researchers  
of Serbia  
Voluntary Service of Serbia

**2020 Annual Activity Report**

Belgrade, August 2021

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# Introduction

Considering that we are the organization that has existed for 45 years, we are used to both remembering and forgetting. We love reading and writing. We believe that we should write down both bad and good things – and remember them. Despite all the challenges, in 2020 we grew stronger. Our team has grown, and our new colleagues have brought new energy that helped us cope with all the challenges of covid-19 pandemic. Instead of a long introduction, we'll make a small note, a resume of all the good and not-so-good things that happened to us in 2020. We'll conclude that we created some beautiful memories.

## GOOD

- » We started a three-year programme ECO-SYSTEM;
- » We started a project Green Incubator;
- » We volunteered online;
- » We implemented another National programme of youth volunteering;
- » We organized camps for domestic volunteers;
- » We supported local actions of informal groups;
- » We successfully organized two large volunteering actions;
- » We upgraded online YRS platform for e-learning and communication;
- » We nurtured solidarity, both within our organization and with our partners;
- » Members of our team in 2020 were: Vera, Tanja, Dušica, Milka, Bojan, Tijana, Marija, Lena, Sanda, Asja, and Jelisaveta

## NOT-SO-GOOD

- » Due to covid-19 pandemic, we didn't get to be together as much as we wanted to – we worked from home, organized online events and had to cancel or adapt our activities in a way that didn't leave much room for building friendships and connections;
- » For the first time in more than two decades, we did not organize the international volunteer exchange.



# Environmental Protection Programme

## THE SCOPE OF WORK AND KEY ACTIVITIES

The Young Researchers of Serbia (YRS) priority areas of activity in environmental protection are nature protection and biodiversity conservation, water protection and management, environmental policies, sustainable development, gender equality and environment, and implementation of the Aarhus Convention.

### *Nature protection and biodiversity conservation*

The YRS continued to work on nature protection through the implementation of volunteer activities in protected areas, the promotion of nature protection at both national and regional levels, through the preparation of educational materials, advocating for better management of protected areas and the like.

Some of the most significant activities were:

- Advocating for better management of protected areas and changes to the Law on Nature Protection that resulted in the inclusion of the YRS recommendations in the Open Government Partnership Action Plan 2020-2022;
- National campaign implemented within the ECO-SYSTEM programme, which included 10 key topics in the field of environmental protection in Serbia. Through billboards, illustrations, animated videos, native-advertising articles in the most widely read media and stories by popular Instagram “influencers” and public figures, the public had the opportunity to learn about environmental issues. Some of the highlighted problems were uncontrolled deforestation and exploitation of natural resources, as well as threats to biodiversity in protected natural areas. Within the three-month campaign, more than 3 million people saw the promotional messages, and about 900,000 reacted to them.
- Volunteer actions in protected areas, which are a common practice of Young Researchers of Serbia. In September 2020, within the BioNET network and with the support of GIZ an action was organized in the Special Nature Reserve “Obedska bara”. During the action, the media were introduced to the concept of volunteering for nature and the benefits of staying in nature;
- Thirty volunteer work camps in fifteen local communities across Serbia, as well as two large one-day volunteer actions under the slogan #ŠtaNamTeško



#DaPočistimo, in line with the tradition of the Young Researchers of Serbia, were the way to emphasize the importance of preserving and revitalizing natural areas. In the year when domestic tourism has grown significantly due to restrictions caused by the pandemic, the one-day actions were dedicated to cleaning up popular tourist destinations often devastated by huge visits.

- Education through the preparation and promotion of educational material in the form of online courses (lectures and videos) and publications. Seminars and workshops were organized in cooperation with other organizations.

## *Water Protection and Management*

During 2020, the topic of water was mostly covered by the YRS activities that were part of the process of developing methodologies for monitoring environmental indicators and/or educational programmes.

This year the YRS:

- Assisted in drafting the part of the Coalition 27 Shadow Report related to the water quality;
- Published online events related to the celebration of the Sava River Day and the Danube River Day and in this regard monitored the activities of the Republic Water Directorate;
- Created new “Water Resources and Water Crisis” e-training with educational material accompanied by educational videos;
- Organized for the 10th time the “Danube Art Master” international award competition for students aged 6-18, in which representatives from Serbia won four out of seven awards;
- Participated in the BioNET online training on the “Water acquis/international agreements and hydro-power in relation to biodiversity protection/conservation”
- Followed the Second Interested Parties Conference on the Water Management Plan on the territory of the Republic of Serbia;
- Participated in the creation and implementation of the webinar “Water, Health and Dignity” at the invitation and within the project of the Belgrade Open School.

## *Environmental Protection Policies*

Even though 2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and the elections in Serbia, which significantly hampered decision-making processes and policy work, a large number of activities were successfully implemented.

During 2020, the YRS focused on:

- Participation in the implementation of international environmental agreements (such as the Aarhus Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity). Through social networks and in direct communication with organizations, the YRS promoted the process of preparation of the IV National Report on the



Implementation of the Aarhus Convention and encouraged citizens' associations to send their opinions and recommendations during the public debate. An online discussion on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention was organized, and conclusions and recommendations were included in the IV National Report;

- Monitoring the implementation of international agreements in the field of water and transposition of the EU legislation in the sphere of water;
- Education of all actors in environmental protection and sharing of experiences through the participation of the YRS representative as a lecturer in the National Assembly members training who are part of the Green Parliamentary Group;
- Participation in consultations and public hearings during the development of the IPA III Support Programme at the regional level, the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, the Open Government Partnership Action Plan, as well as early public insight into the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia. The YRS representative was appointed as a member of the committee for monitoring the implementation of the “Natura 2000” project in Serbia;
- Development of joint positions of civil society organizations on environmental protection policies at the national level, but also in connection with the accession negotiations with the EU and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans;
- Stimulating cross-sectoral and intra-sectoral dialogue by supporting the civil society organizations networking and participation in decision-making processes through activities within the Green Chair network and the ECO-SYSTEM programme;
- The campaign on environmental problems in Serbia, through which a message was conveyed to citizens about the importance of their participation in environmental decision-making processes.

The YRS contributes to public involvement in environmental decision-making processes through the coordination of the Green Chair network. Coordination implies organizing the participation of the CSO (civil society organizations) representatives in the sessions of the National Assembly Committee for Environmental Protection – through open doors with the MPs and creating educational brochures.

At the same time, the YRS has stimulated dialogue between institutions and the civil sector by initiating various online panel discussions and conferences on good environmental governance. One of such conferences was the annual conference “Eco + System = Good Environmental Management in Serbia”. It consisted of two parts – a panel discussion “Environmental Reforms in Serbia – Who Will Take the Lead?” and three work groups dealing with cooperation between the CSOs and institutions in environmental management, the role of women in environmental management and the role of volunteerism in environmental management. Eighty-three representatives of institutions, CSOs, professionals and citizens, attended the panel discussion while the work groups brought together 58 participants.

Intra-sectoral cooperation was also encouraged during the Eco-Network Week , which was attended by more than 50 representatives of environmental organizations and informal net-



works. During the meetings, they discussed the needs of individual organizations and networks, common goals and practical steps towards achieving them.

The ECO-SYSTEM campaign has made a major contribution to citizens' involvement. Through illustrations, video animations, billboards, newspaper articles and promotional messages of public figures, citizens were educated on the causes of numerous environmental problems and ways to solve them – starting with more active participation of citizens in decision-making processes. The campaign was seen by over three million people, with an extremely high level of positive reactions in the target groups and launching of several spontaneous local initiatives with the aim of solving certain problems.

In the sphere of the EU integration, i.e., monitoring of Chapter 27, the work at the national and international level has continued. In partnership with the Coalition 27 organizations, the YRS has developed a methodology for monitoring the implementation of environmental policies at the local level. The methodology covers the areas of Chapter 27: horizontal legislation, protection of nature, water, waste, forests, air and noise. A very extensive set of indicators and work methodologies were developed in collaboration with an external expert, and then testing of the methodology at the local level began.

The preparation and promotion of the Coalition 27 Shadow Report is one of the most important activities in the field of the EU integration. The report finalized in 2020 covers the reporting period between March 2019 and February 2020. The YRS participated in the preparation of the Report in the sectors of financing in the areas of environment and climate change, water quality, nature protection and horizontal legislation, as well as in the organization of the annual promotion of the report that was broadcast by more than 40 media and followed by more than 130 participants on the platform and over 200 in live streaming on social media.

At the regional level, cooperation continued through the EPPA project (Environment Partnership Programme for Accession) where the YRS, as an interested party, participated in numerous seminars and trainings related to the EU Acquis (“Waste Management and the EU Acquis”, “Invasive Species in the EU”, “Green Infrastructure and Ecological Connectivity”, etc.). The YRS also prepared joint positions of the CSOs for the meeting with the European Commission, which was held in May 2020.

The YRS representative was elected to participate in the Regional Task Force for Biodiversity within the Regional Cooperation Council, which contributed to greater participation in defining priorities for the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

## *Waste Management*

In 2020, the YRS continued its contribution in this segment through participation in round tables and workshops, such as the round table “Pharmaceutical Waste Collected from Citizens: Problems and Challenges in Novi Sad” organized by the CSO Environmental Engineers and TAIEX – EPPA workshops on waste and environmental management, as well as in the development of common positions of civil society organizations regarding local waste management strategies, specifically work on the Initiative for the introduction of textile waste reduction programmes in the Local Waste Management Plan of the City of Belgrade 2021-2030.

In addition, within the ECO-SYSTEM programme, in cooperation with experts in the field of waste management in Serbia, an educational video and online course called “Waste



Management in Serbia” was created, which includes basic concepts in this area, the current situation in our country and recommendations for promotion. The course is available on the site [obuke.mis.org.rs](http://obuke.mis.org.rs).

## *Chemicals Management*

The YRS had a representative in the Coordination Team of Civil Society Organizations in Serbia that works on planning chemicals safe management policies, and within the “Involvement of the Civil Sector in Monitoring the Implementation of Chemical Safety Policies and Exercising Citizens’ Rights to Information on the Presence of Hazardous Chemicals in Products” project realized by the CSO Alhem. The YRS also participated in the expert debate “Phthalates in Products on the Market of the Republic of Serbia”, as well as in the development of joint positions of civil society organizations regarding the ban/restriction of phthalates in consumer goods by adopting the Regulation (EU)2018/2005 of December 2018 into domestic legislation

## *Sustainable Development*

Representatives of the YRS participated in several events (seminars, conferences) organized by institutions and partner organizations related to sustainable transport, climate change and other aspects of sustainable development.

In 2020, the YRS continued its cooperation in the Global Compact in Serbia (Global Compact), which performs activities related to the goals of sustainable development (SDG goals) and brings together more than 60 members, private and public companies, institutions and organizations. The YRS contribution to the goals of sustainable development is also presented in the brochure “How Our Members Contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals Achievement”, on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Global Compact initiative and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations.

In addition, given that 2020 was marked by the pandemic, the YRS joined the initiative of the UNICEF Serbia, and with the support of the USAID and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia, an online volunteering programme called “Volunteers Online” was developed. That way the YRS has contributed to SDG goal number 3 – the Good Health.

Cooperation continued with the Belgrade Open School, and other members of Coalition 27, in testing the methodology for monitoring the implementation of sustainable development goals at the local level in the Republic of Serbia.

## *Gender Equality and the Environment*

In the field of gender equality, activities are organized through several segments:

- Collection of data on the state of gender equality in the civil sector in Serbia within the ECO-SYSTEM programme. The data collection aim was to map the current state of gender sensitivity in the environmental sector, as well as to assess the needs of sectoral CSOs. The research was conducted through questionnaires and in-depth interviews held during the Eco-Network Week, in which 12 representatives of civil society organizations took part.



- Discussion on the importance of women contribution and role in the environmental sector during the sessions within the Eco-Network Week within the ECO-SYSTEM Programme, which was attended by 51 CSOs.
- Organizing educational activities (online courses “A Short Guide to Feminist Knowledge and Action” and “Gender Responsible Budgeting”, webinar “Introduction to Gender Equality and Environmental Connectivity” and seminar “Green Talks: Women Entrepreneurship on the Road to a Circular Economy and Post-COVID recovery”) in which more than 70 participants took part, representing civil society organizations, institutions, initiatives and informal groups.
- Writing and publishing the “Handbook for CSOs: How to Build Green Awareness for a Green World?” and “Introducing Gender Perspective into the Environmental Movement of Serbia” publications.
- Gathering the CSOs and institutions’ views in a work group on “The Role of Women in Good Environmental Management” at the annual conference of the ECO-SYSTEM programme that brought together 85 participants.
- Participation in the Palić Conference 2020: “Feminism. Rebellion. Change”, organized by the Women’s Platform for Development of Serbia. The YRS also participated in the consultative meeting “Gender Equality and Social Cohesion – Encouragement Through Advocacy” within the Dialogue for the Future programme, organized by the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence.

### *Aarhus Centre New Belgrade*

The Aarhus Centres network in Serbia, with the support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, held consultative meetings in 2020 as well.

The YRS representative participated in the annual assembly of the Aarhus Centres, held online, and at which the work of Aarhus Centres from all the convention signatories were presented, as every year. Current problems and possibilities for activities that would contribute to better implementation of the Aarhus Convention were also discussed.

Information on the activities of the Aarhus Centre New Belgrade is published on the website [www.arhusnbg.mis.org.rs](http://www.arhusnbg.mis.org.rs) and on the Facebook page [@arhuscentarnbg](https://www.facebook.com/arhuscentarnbg).

Environmental protection programmes are intended and/or implemented in cooperation with:

- Citizens,
- Civil society organizations working on environmental protection, and
- Sustainable development,
- Managers of protected areas,
- Relevant institutions at the local, national and international levels.



# PROJECTS AND DONORS IN 2020

## *ECO-SYSTEM*

The “ECO-SYSTEM: Support to Environmental Reforms” programme has begun in 2020 and will last until 2022. It is implemented by the Young Researchers of Serbia, and supported by Sweden. The aim of this programme creation was to support environmental reforms in the Republic of Serbia by more active civil society organizations and other actors’ involvement in society in implementation of the European Union (EU) Acquis communautaire.

One of the main goals is to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations by encouraging their networking, but also to initiate changes in attitudes towards environmental protection and practices of citizens, local authorities and state institutions.

ECO-SYSTEM is implemented through three main activities: a campaign that promotes the benefits of environmental reforms, grants for networks of citizens’ associations dealing with environmental protection and the Oikos support by the YRS team in charge of education and organizational support for grants.

During the first year of the project, more than 3 million people saw a citizen-focused campaign and the first steps were taken to strengthen cooperation within the civil sector through the Eco-Network Week. In addition, seven online courses in the field of environmental protection were finalized, as well as two publications intended for civil society organizations, focused on gender equality and successful media promotion of programmes and projects.

## *Green Incubator*

The “Green Incubator: Development of Competent Civil Society to Support the Implementation of the EU Acquis” is a three-year project supported by the European Union whose implementation has started in 2020. The project leader is the Belgrade Open School, and the partners are the YRS and the Environmental Engineering Group . The project general goal is to develop a competent civil society that contributes to the reform processes and integration of Serbia into the EU, while the specific goal is to strengthen formal civil society organizations, as well as non formal groups of citizens to more effectively address environmental and socio-economic development challenges and issues in their local communities.

Within this project, the YRS is implementing the Programme of Support to non formal Groups for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Community Development “Strengthened Green ”, through which in 2020 were supported 21 non formal groups, whose members carried out more than 100 activities during the project implementation with 1000 citizens directly included. Supported non formal groups are:



Ekolucionari	Inicijativa Vazduh nije roba
GreenTeen	Zeleno i održivo
Za manje smeća i više sreće – zero waste & low impact Serbia	Mudre sove
Milanovački reciklari – volonteri	Aktivisti iz komšiluka
Zelene brigade	Lomnica za Lomničku reku i Jastrebac
Mladi za selo	Kosjerci u akciji
Idi u peršun	Dečiji centar ART 019
Novokneževački ptičari	Zeleni talas
Grupa za zaštitu modrovrane	Novi Sad ima ptice
Eko Ćićevac	Omladinci u zelenom preduzetništvu
	Ideja Distrikt

During the first year of the project, the YRS developed a methodology for monitoring the process of implementing environmental policies at the local level. In addition, organized were Green Talks – thematic discussions aimed at bringing together various interested parties and encouraging dialogue led by civil society organizations and the government to identify challenges and opportunities in the field of environmental protection and local development.

### *Green Decisions*

The aim of the project was to contribute to creation of a more favourable environment for the participation of citizens' associations in the implementation of environmental policy. Most of the activities during the project were of an educational nature, but work was also done on the promotion of the existing mechanisms for involving citizens in decision-making processes.

Educational material created during this project (online course on the platform [obuke.mis.org.rs](https://obuke.mis.org.rs)) is available free of charge to all interested citizens. During the project, also three short films were made about positive examples of citizens' involvement in decision-making processes: the Green Chair mechanism, Coalition 27 and the Tara National Park Users' Council. The films are part of the online course, but are also available separately on the Young Researchers of Serbia YouTube channel.

The project was co-financed by the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia.

### *Public Dialogue Strengthening*

The Aarhus Centre New Belgrade, with the support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, implemented a project aimed at strengthening public dialogue on the draft IV Report on the Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Serbia through online discussion, as well as dialogue on opportunities for women's green entrepreneurship in the post-COVID period.



## *Agenda 2030*

The YRS continued cooperation with the Belgrade Open School (BOS) on the implementation of the “SDG 2030 Local Monitor in Serbia” project within which the central activity was testing the methodology for monitoring sustainable development indicators in selected cities and municipalities in Serbia.

In the project implemented by the BOS and partners called the “Sustainable Development for All”, the role of the YRS was in designing and implementation of activities related to the sustainable development goal 6 “Clean Drinking Water and Better Sanitation”, as well as in the moderation of the “Water, Health and Dignity” webinar held at the end of December 2020.

## **PARTNERSHIPS, COALITIONS AND MEMBERSHIP IN OTHER NETWORKS**

The YRS is making great efforts in the networking process, joint work with other citizens’ associations and creating a more favorable environment for the networks operation in Serbia and the region. Within the first year of the ECO-SYSTEM programme, the first steps towards stronger networking of civil society organizations dealing with environmental protection have been successfully taken.

### *Green Chair*

In cooperation with the Centre of Modern Skills and the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, the YRS coordinates the work of the Green Chair – an institutional mechanism for the cooperation of the CSOs and the Environment Committee of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

In addition to monitoring the work of the Committee by regularly attending meetings and reporting to the CSO network members on the course and conclusions of the meeting, in 2020 the YRS supported the network meeting organization and the shooting of a film about this network.

### *Coalition 27*

Coalition 27 is the network of civil society organizations established in 2014, with the aim of monitoring and contributing to the process of harmonization and implementation of policies and regulations of the Republic of Serbia with the EU Acquis communautaire in the field of environment and climate change (known as the Chapter 27 in the EU accession negotiations). At the same time, Coalition 27 advocates and encourages public participation in the accession negotiations process and proposes solutions that will contribute to the protection and improvement of the environment and the citizens’ quality of life.

Through cooperation with other organizations within Coalition 27, the YRS participates in the creation of Shadow Reports providing an overview of the Chapter 27 progress, highlighting the views and recommendations of the CSOs. Coalition 27 is also preparing contributions to the European Commission’s annual Progress report on Serbia.



The report, published in 2020, entitled “Chapter 27 in Serbia: Progress in the Mist” , was the seventh in a row.

In addition to the report, in 2020 the focus of Coalition 27 was strategic planning and improvement of the media strategy that will position the network as a relevant and recognizable actor in the field of environmental protection in Serbia.

The organizations united in Coalition 27 are Alternative for Safer Chemicals, Belgrade Open School, Centre for Environmental Improvement, Society for the Protection and Study of Birds of Serbia, Environmental Engineers, One Degree Serbia, European Climate Action Network (CAN), Young Researchers of Serbia and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

### *BioNET*

In the course of 2020, the network of 14 organizations dealing with nature protection and biodiversity had a large number of activities in which the YRS participated. In addition to working on the strategy and documents that regulate the work of the network, events with the media were organized in order to promote nature protection, online campaigns, numerous trainings and consultations with regional partners. The media, including two public services, Radio-Television of Serbia and Radio-Television of Vojvodina, also attended the cleaning action in the Special Nature Reserve “Obedska bara”.

The YRS had participants in several educational activities organized by the BioNET network with the support of GIZ.

### *SEENET*

SEENET is a network of 35 civil society organizations from Southeast Europe, gathered around the topics of energy and transport. Given the epidemiological situation, the YRS activities in this network during 2020 took place through online platforms, through monitoring and support of organizations from the region engaged in these topics.

### *YEE*

In view of the epidemiological situation, there were no trainings or seminars organized by the Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) on projects where the YRS is a partner. The collaboration continued with the YRS’s participation in the YEE newsletter writing, through which the YRS promoted its activities during 2020.

The YRS also actively participated in the meetings and activities of the Natura 2000 Resource Centre of Serbia and the Climate Forum networks. Within the ECO-SYSTEM programme, also was supported the work of the following networks: Let’s Afforest Vojvodina, the Green Lists of Serbia, the Good Energy Networks, and the Green Initiative.



# Volunteer Programme

The goal of the YRS volunteer programme is the development and promotion of volunteering that is achieved through various projects during the year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to certain changes and delays in the planned activities that the YRS implements within the volunteer programme (international exchange of volunteers and volunteer camps), but it has also stimulated the adaptation of existing and the development of new ways of volunteering.

One of the most important activities during the past year was the participation of representatives of the Young Researchers of Serbia in the work group that analyzed the Law on Volunteering. The work group was formed by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and consisted of representatives of civil society, other line ministries, representatives of the UNICEF and the OSCE Mission to Serbia. The analysis was finalized in 2020, and the results were presented at the annual Closing Conference on Volunteering, traditionally organized by the YRS.

## PROJECTS AND DONORS IN 2020

Within the volunteer programme of the Young Researchers of Serbia, several projects were realized during 2020.

### *Youth Rules 2020*

The Young Researchers of Serbia together with four (4) partner organizations implemented the National Youth Volunteering Programme “Youth Rules 2020”: the Movement of Vojvodina from Sremski Karlovci, Empower from Požega, TIM42 from Leskovac and the Centre for Civic Action from Obrenovac.

The project organized:

- Thirty volunteer work camps (two of which international and 28 weekend volunteer camps) in 15 local communities throughout Serbia (Zemun; Deliblato, Kovin; Obrenovac; Sremski Karlovci; Titel; Obedska bara, Pećinci; Kupinovo, Zlakusa, Negotin; Temštica, Stara planina; Jazak; Mošorin) with more than 460 young people from all over the country and the world;
- Two large one-day volunteer actions under the slogan #ŠtaNamTeško #DaPočistimo; one in the Belgrade area, while the other included 10 different locations throughout Serbia (Sremska Kamenica, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Orašac, Gornji Milanovac, Valjevo, Obedska Bara, Irig, Priboj and Belgrade) with the aim to sanitize the consequences of waste disposal after the tourist season in Serbia (COVID tourists); these actions involved more than 240 volunteers at 15



different locations throughout Serbia (and Belgrade) who together donated over 1,600 volunteer hours;

- 159 #ŠtaNamTeško (#ŠNT) volunteer projects (organization and renovation of public spaces, environmental protection, promotion of intergenerational cooperation, implementation of promotional campaigns, culture and creativity of young people, sports and healthy lifestyle, peer education, etc.) in 23 districts, through 6 rounds of competition, with more than 1,200 directly actively involved young people, with 42,700 volunteer hours;
- 260 #ŠNT volunteers participated in 6 ten-day online trainings, in order to prepare for the implementation of ŠNT volunteer projects and 30 camp leaders participated in two one-day online trainings;
- Large volunteer quiz, with 10 thematic units/questions, joined by at least 120 young people through questions and answers, learning about the Law on Volunteering, types of volunteering, rights and obligations of volunteers and volunteering organizers, as well as on the history of the volunteer movement;
- Two online promotional campaigns on volunteering

The first campaign called #IJaSamVolonter focused on the importance of volunteering and included 30 youth leaders who activated and organized more than 450 volunteers. Over 200,000 young people via social media saw the campaign. Its main goals were:

- Promotion of volunteering among young people
- Raising awareness of young people about the importance of volunteering (both for volunteers and for the community)
- Informing young people about different types of volunteering by showing positive examples of volunteering activities
- Improving volunteer capacity for volunteer management, time management and online facilitation.

Volunteers and leaders joined the campaign by posting and sharing their volunteer experiences (in the form of photos, videos and text) on social media, as well as information material on volunteering.

The second “100 Stories for 100 Years of Camps” campaign lasted a month with a closing ceremony at the International Volunteer Day celebration. The aim of the campaign was to mark the volunteer camps centenary by sharing 100 volunteer stories and experiences. One hundred and thirty volunteers’ stories arrived for the competition and they were published on social networks (at least 100,000 people have seen them). On December 5, at the celebration of the International Volunteer Day, the best volunteers’ stories (from the point of view of volunteers, local communities, camp leaders, organizations, etc.) were presented and awarded.

On December 5, 2020, at the celebration of the International Volunteer Day, organized online for the first time, the results of the Youth Rules 2020 programme were presented. More than 100 young people watched the event live and 10,000 followers/visitors subsequently saw the video;



At the Closing Conference – “On Volunteering in Serbia 2020: New Reality, Adaptation and Innovation” – presented were the results of the Analysis of the Law on Volunteering and examples of good practice of five volunteering organizers during the COVID (Young Researchers of Serbia, Red Cross, UNICEF, Novi Sad Volunteer Service and Regional Office for Youth Cooperation).

## *Online Volunteering*

“Volunteers Online” is an online volunteering project implemented by the Young Researchers of Serbia together with the UNICEF Serbia with the support of the USAID and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia.

This programme is designed to enable all interested volunteers to engage and volunteer online – from home.

Young people had the opportunity to volunteer online by getting involved in one of five activities:

- Informative online campaign – sharing relevant information from different areas via social networks;
- U-report volunteers – promotion and joining in the use of the platform for surveying and statistical processing of the youth attitudes;
- Peer support – online support during learning, new skills adopting, quality leisure time;
- Group volunteering – the work of a volunteers’ group on solving problems in their local communities;
- Translation of educational material

Through these activities, the project involved more than 800 volunteers from all over Serbia.

The YRS also joined the initiative of the Alliance of International Volunteer Services to create virtual international camps – creating spaces and activities to connect volunteers from around the world (which was extremely important due to the pandemic travel restrictions).

## *Route 6 for the Western Balkans*

Route 6 for the Western Balkans is a three-year volunteer and peacebuilding project that has begun in January 2019. The project, supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, is coordinated by the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation (RYCO) and implemented with six partner organizations from the Western Balkans that are national volunteer centres or services.

During 2020, the second project year, the partners’ activities were focused on the design of the future regional youth volunteering programme in the Western Balkans, through expert work and the implementation of a series of workshops. At the beginning of the year, the YRS hosted the first workshop in Belgrade. At the workshop held in Bitola and the next two online workshops, the YRS actively participated. At the year’s end, project activities focused on advocating the improvement of volunteer infrastructure, celebrating International Volunteer



Day, and launching a promotional campaign announcing a regional volunteer youth exchange programme .

### *IMPROVE YOUR IMPACT 2020-2022*

“Improve Your Impact” is a two-year strategic partnership project in which the YRS is one of the partners. The aim of the project is to contribute to measuring the impact and recognition of the volunteer/youth activities impact on the development of youth capacities. Two other CSOs from Slovenia and the Czech Republic are also involved.

An analysis of different methods and practices for measuring the impact of volunteer activities among organizations is planned, as well as an analysis of the needs from different sectors (educational, business, and civil) for the recognition of volunteer work. Collected data and analysis will be aggregated and published in a handbook on the impact of volunteering for the CSOs.

In addition, during the project, participating volunteers will have the opportunity to test and use an application for translating and tracking skills and competencies before, during and after participating in various volunteer activities with the aim of personal development and increasing employability.

## **PARTNERSHIPS, COALITIONS, MEMBERSHIP IN OTHER NETWORKS IN 2020:**

- Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organizations – the European-based network of 53 volunteer services from 35 countries, with whose members the YRS exchanges volunteers most intensively,
- Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Services (CCIVS), a global network of volunteer services, under the auspices of UNESCO,
- SCI – Service Civil International – the volunteer exchange network, in which the YRS has been a partner for thirty years,
- KOMS – Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije (Serbian Youth Umbrella Organization – participation in the Assembly,
- NAPOR – Nacionalna asocijacija praktičara i praktičarki omladinskog rada (National Association of Youth Workers),
- SEEYN – South-East European Youth Network



# Educational Programme

The YRS educational activities are integrated into the projects and activities of the previous two programmes. The educational programme is based on the development of an e-learning platform and expanding the range of courses, conducting an annual *Leader Training Seminar* for new coordinators of volunteer programmes and training for leaders of informal groups, participation in *Erasmus+ Projects* and long-term competitions for students in environmental protection.

## E-COURSES

The YRS online educational programme ([www.obuke.mis.org.rs](http://www.obuke.mis.org.rs)) was launched in 2013. By the end of 2020, registered have been 1382 users on the platform, and a total of 16 courses in six areas have been functional.

During 2020 the platform has been improved, seven new online courses (with video materials and presentations) dealing with key topics in the field of environmental protection have been added to the courses within the ECO-SYSTEM programme and the Green Decision project. These courses are:

- Public participation in environmental protection
- Waste management in Serbia
- Get to know the chemicals to live healthier
- Water resources and the water crisis in Serbia
- Brief guide to feminist knowledge and action
- Gender responsive budgeting
- Volunteering in emergencies

During 2020, more than 700 participants attended the trainings. A short film was made about the ECO-SYSTEM programme, good examples of environmental protection in Serbia and the role that Sweden plays as a donor in that area. It was distributed through the Infobiro agency, and 38 domestic and regional media broadcasted it.

## ERASMUS+ YOUTH EXCHANGES, TRAININGS AND SEMINARS

In 2020, five youth exchanges and three trainings were planned within the Erasmus plus project with the Young Researchers as partners. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities could not be realized and were postponed for the next year.



## THE DANUBE ART MASTER 2020

In the 15<sup>th</sup> jubilee year of the Danube Art Master realized by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River and the Global Water Partnership for Central and Eastern Europe, the YRS were 10th-time national coordinators for Serbia. This specific year, the novelty was that the international competition, which is being conducted on the territories of 14 countries from the Danube River basin, was held outside the framework of the Danube Day celebration in June. It was held at the beginning of the 2020/21 new school year. The traditional target group of 6-18 year olds was divided into two age categories, and in thematic terms, in addition to artwork in nature and video, another category (map) was added and adapted to work in an online environment.

In the national competition competed thirty-six teams from ten schools and three informal groups, from ten municipalities in Serbia, and with 30 works of art, four videos and two maps.

The most successful in the junior category were members of an informal group from Belgrade and Novi Sad with the work “Interactive map – One mountain, one river, a unique gorge”. The work “In an embrace of the Danube River” from the elementary school “Stefan Nemanja” from Niš was declared the best work in Serbia in the teenager category.

Out of the ten most successful works from Serbia, in the international shortlist competition of 54 works from 14 countries, as many as four works won one of the seven awarded prizes, which is an exceptional success.

The Danube Art Master 2020 international winners are from Serbia in the categories of artistic work in both age groups, namely the elementary school “Stefan Nemanja” from Niš (teenagers) and the Marazzi team with the work “The Danube River Ecosystems” from Belgrade (juniors). The works from the elementary school “Ljupče Španac,” Bela Palanka and the elementary school “Despot Stefan Lazarević,” Babušnica were declared the work and video with the most likes, respectively.



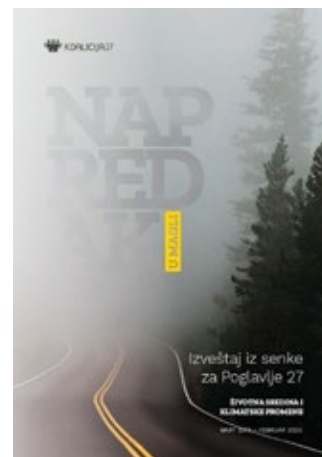
# Publications

## SHADOW REPORT

Coalition 27 issues an annual ‘Shadow Report’ that follows the report of the European Commission. The Shadow Report provides an overview of the achievements of the Republic of Serbia in the areas of the Chapter 27, environmental protection and climate change, and provides recommendations on how to improve existing processes. The report is made available to the public and sent to the relevant national and European institutions.

Due to the pandemic and epidemiological measures, the 2020 publication and promotion of the report entitled “Chapter 27 in Serbia: Walking in the Mist” took place later than in previous years, in October. Speakers at the promotion included Ms. Madalina Ivanica, Enlargement Sector Coordinator at the European Commission Directorate General for the Environment, and Mr. Branko Čečen, Director of the Centre for Investigative Journalism of Serbia. Despite the restrictions, more than 130 people on the online platform attended the promotion, while the broadcast on Facebook was seen by more than 8,000 and actively followed by more than 240 people, while the EU officials quoted the report in statements.

The report published in 2020 analyzes the state of the environment in the period between March 2019 and February 2020. The report covers ten thematic areas: financing in the areas of environment and climate change, horizontal legislation, air quality, waste management, water quality, nature protection, chemicals management, noise, climate change and forestry. The YRS contributions to the Report include data and recommendations in the spheres of financing, nature protection and waste management.



## HOW TO BUILD GREEN AWARENESS FOR A GREEN WORLD?

Publication “How to Build Green Consciousness for a Green World?” was created within the ECO-SYSTEM programme. Its goal is to provide future grants (and also any interested representative of civil society organizations) with the practical guide through the promotion of environmental protection. This includes the promotion of one’s own organization, its branding, as well as the technical details of communication with the media, target groups and promotion on social networks.



Within the guide, there is a separate section “Women and the Environment: How to Change Awareness?” which focuses on the basic differences in gender perspectives in the environment, as well as the causes and consequences of the existing gender dynamics. At the same time, this part of the handbook provides guidance on how women and the environment are mutually reinforcing through successful social initiatives and campaigns.

## **INTRODUCING GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT OF SERBIA: MAPPING THE CURRENT SITUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CSO GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICIES IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR**

This publication maps the current situation in the field of gender equality in the functioning of civil society organizations dealing with the environment. The study was created with the aim of empowering women in the environmental sector through the development of guidelines and tools necessary to develop civil society organizations’ gender mainstreaming policies recommendations for the implementation in the environmental sector. The publication is based on the gender analysis of data and needs of organizations within the civil society organizations ecological networks that participated in the empirical research during the fall of 2020. The research was conducted for the needs of the ECO-SYSTEM programme.





# Young Researchers of Serbia

Voluntary Service of Serbia

## **2020 Annual Activity Report of YRS**

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**YOUNG RESEARCHERS OF SERBIA**

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