

THINK  
**BIG**  
DO LITTLE

*start an  
avalanche*



Young  
Researchers  
of Serbia

Voluntary Service of Serbia

**2021 Annual Activity Report**

Belgrade, September 2022

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# 1. Introduction and our team in 2021

The Annual activity report of Young Researchers of Serbia summarizes and presents our work and achievements in 2021.

The year of “Covid transition” was challenging but we have worked with enthusiasm and with a great support of our donors and partners.

We have reinforced our capacities for supporting others in actions, giving opportunities to citizen associations, non-formal groups and individual citizens to act in environmental protection and volunteerism.

We are continuously supporting education and giving opportunity to young people to experience non formal education on the national and international level.

We volunteer and give opportunity to others to do so.

Our contribution to environmental policy development and implementation is constant and strong, although effects of many of our proposals and actions are not immediately visible.

Our team was growing and new people in YRS brought new quality and new challenges. In 2021 our team consisted of 14 enthusiastic people dedicated to achieving goals of the organization.



## 2. What has been done in 2021

### 2.1. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING



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 volunteers, mentors and coordinators 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. Upgrading of the platform was done in 2020 and 7 new courses were added. By the end of 2021, **more than 1500 users have been registered** at the platform, while around **400 new users were registered in 2021** and **1 new course was developed** – Internal controls in CSOs.

## Training for Camp Leaders

Each year, for more than 20 years in a row, we are organising training for Camp Leaders as an intensive, 3 days long training delivered by staff of YRS. In 2021, the training for camp leaders was held for **30 participants (young people from Serbia 18-30 years old)** for the season of 2021. We empowered participants in their leadership skills and support them to coordinate international/national group of volunteers. We shared knowledge about volunteer work, values of volunteering and its principles, as well as created a space for sharing participant's experiences from the workcamps for creating the pool of the best practices.

## Trainings for volunteers and mentors of youth “Šta nam teško” non-formal groups

In 2021, we organised 6 training courses for volunteers and mentors. Each training course was held online via the ZOOM platform and lasted 5 days. **12 mentors and 306 volunteers** that were part of non-formal groups were participating in those training courses. The training courses gave to the participants necessary theoretical and practical knowledge for project implementation. Participants were introduced with useful tools and mechanisms that can be used in their projects.

## Online campaigns

Online campaigns were conducted as part of diverse YRS programmes' activities and mainly were connected with raising environmental awareness, Chapter 27, e-learning platform, Coalition 27 Shadow Report and promotion of voluntarism and citizen's activism. Environmental campaigns as part of the ECO SYSTEM programme and Green Incubator had reach of over 4 million people.

**4 PEOPLE**

Through different online campaigns, we were raising awareness about the impact of volunteering and how much volunteering reflects our values: what we care about, our vision for the community, our perception of justice, and our sense of responsibility for the planet and all those with whom we share it. Celebration and promotion of volunteering was marked on 5<sup>th</sup> December, which is International Volunteer Day, by organizing online event.



Apart from online campaigns, the most important campaign for practical demonstration of values and impact of volunteering was organizing workcamps and supporting non-formal groups to make changes in their local communities.

All these campaigns reached more than **one million people**.

1 000 000

### *The Danube Art Master 2021 Competition*

For the eleventh time, YRS was the national coordinator for Serbia. The Danube Art Master Competition was jointly organised by the Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe (GWP CEE) and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), this competition encourages children to have a closer look at their local river, to reflect on what the environment means to them, and to create original artworks to celebrate the region. **Around 130 children from 14 schools in Serbia** took part at the national competition, while one school won international prize in online competition.

### *Diverse educational events*

YRS organized over **20 educational events** (workshops, trainings, study visits) in 2021.

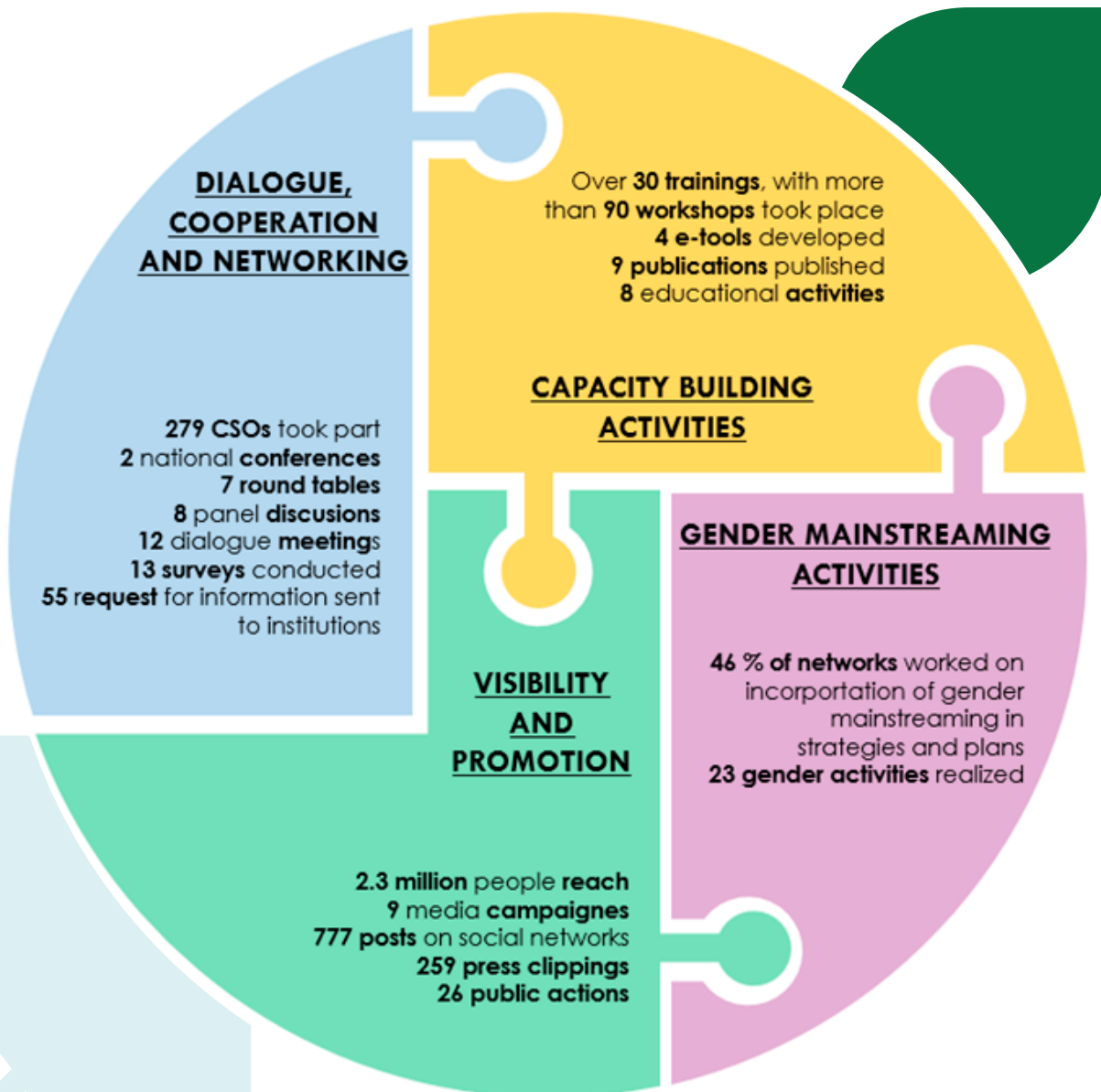
One example is Study visit for environmental CSOs to Croatia and Slovenia, in November 2021, during which **5 study sights** were visited, **10 meetings and sessions** organized, **9 guest speakers/hosts/guides** from host country and **25 participants** from Serbia.

## **2.2. STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

### *Support to environmental CSOs through ECO SYSTEM Programme*

In 2021 the ECO SYSTEM – Environmental reforms supporting programme has spread new positive energy among environmental CSOs in Serbia. Within the first cycle of the ECO SYSTEM Call for Grants, 13 projects were successfully implemented by 12 environmental networks, involving 64 organizations from 31 municipalities in Serbia. Through the ECO SYSTEM programme they got opportunity to straighten networks, work on internal capacities building, increase knowledge on environmental policies and monitoring Chapter 27 on local level, as well as renew or initiate communication and improving dialogue with institutions. Main results are:





## 2.3. STRENGTHENING CITIZENS' ACTIVISM (NON-FORMAL GROUPS)

### *Green Power-up Programme*

As a part of Green Incubator project, the support to non-formal groups was done through Green Power Up Programme. The 22 supported non-formal groups conducted in total 113 interventions and 4 initiatives in 2021. All of the interventions were followed by media campaign and information for the wider public about achieved results. Some of the interventions were dedicated to educating the

**113**  
interventions



youth and children about the importance of environmental protection (action of cleaning, workshops on waste management etc).



### *Šta Nam teško volunteer projects*

137 #ŠtaNamTeško (#ŠNT) volunteer projects in 23 districts were implemented by 114 non-formal groups of young people. More than 950 volunteers have been involved in those projects. The topics of the projects were mostly connected with raising awareness for environmental protection and climate change issues as well as the reconstruction (parks, schools) of some local communities.



## Voluntary Workcamps

In 2021, we have organised 30 workcamps together with partners from different parts of Serbia. Due to the pandemic and border closing problems, the workcamps were national and involved **more than 500 volunteers** that have made changes in the local community. This was opportunity for volunteers to reconnect, exchange experiences and knowledge with each other while doing something useful and build more self-confidence which is one of the keys for empowering young people to become more active in their local communities and society.



## 2.4. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

In 2021 YRS has continued working on environmental policy in a different ways and on different levels.

- as a result of YRS's moderation, 8 policy documents were developed with active CSO participation;
- YRS has stimulated dialogue between institutions and the civil sector by initiating various discussions and conferences on good environmental governance, intersectoral cooperation mechanisms, nature protection etc. YRS team participated in 117 events related to environmental policy, out of which 56 are connected with institutions;
- participation in the implementation of international environmental agreements (such as the Aarhus Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity) continued; YRS is acting as Aarhus center New Belgrade;
- participation in consultations during the development of Action plan for the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, draft Law on the Nature Protection, draft law on Environmental impact Assessment, Draft Law on Strategic Environmental Assessment, draft Law on Environmental Protection; Consultation meetings with other CSOs regarding Spatial Plan of RS for the period 2021-2035; Consultation meeting with Coalition 27 regarding planned dialogue meeting with Rio Tinto Company. Consultation process on Amendments to the Law on Water with Coalition 27 members, where the result of taken action was withdrawal of the proposed Amendments to the Law etc.
- continued 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;
- the YRS contributed 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.
- in the sphere of the EU integration, i.e., monitoring of Chapter 27, the work at the national and international level has continued. The preparation and promotion of the Coalition 27 Shadow Report was one of the most important activities in the field of the EU integration. 2021 Shadow Report was named "Chapter 27 in Serbia: Progress in lockdown". Its focus was on the lack of participation of citizens, civil society, and numerous interest groups in the environmental decision-making processes. YRS was involved in writing 5 Chapters of the Shadow report: Nature protection, Horizontal legislation,



- water protection, waste management and financing in the field of the environment and climate change;
- the YRS representative participated in the Regional Task Force for Biodiversity within the Regional Cooperation Council, which contributed to greater participation in defining priorities for the Action plan of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

## 2.5. VOLUNTARISM

Our volunteer exchange programme exists for more than 30 years, through which we exchange **1000 volunteers yearly** (since 2002 it is 20-25 EVS\* volunteers yearly). We thrive to improve environment for volunteering in Serbia by taking part in building volunteerism strategies, policies and recognition of competencies gained through volunteering. YRS is a member of the National Working Group for development of volunteerism strategies and legislation, and on international level YRS contributes to Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations as one of their most active members.

Since COVID-19 pandemic was still present, in 2021 international exchange of volunteers through workcamps was on hold due to the border closing. However, we managed to promote and organise **30 workcamps** and to support **137 Šta Nam Teško volunteering projects** (that have already been mentioned in the previous sections), with **more than 1500 volunteers from Serbia**. The volunteering activities were coordinated and organised by YRS through National programme of volunteering youth – Youth Rules 2021.

30 volunteer workcamps were successfully organized in 15 local communities throughout Serbia with more than 500 volunteers from all over the country.

Two large one-day volunteer actions #ŠtaNamTeško involved more than 240 volunteers at 16 different locations throughout Serbia (and Belgrade) who together donated over 1,600 volunteer hours.

157 #ŠtaNamTeško (#ŠNT) volunteer projects in 23 districts were implemented by non-formal groups of young people.

These activities gathered more than 1500 young people who donated 42000 volunteer hours to the local communities.

\* EVS is now ESC-European Solidarity Corps

**42000**  
volunteer  
hours

**1500**  
YOUNG  
PEOPLE

**157**

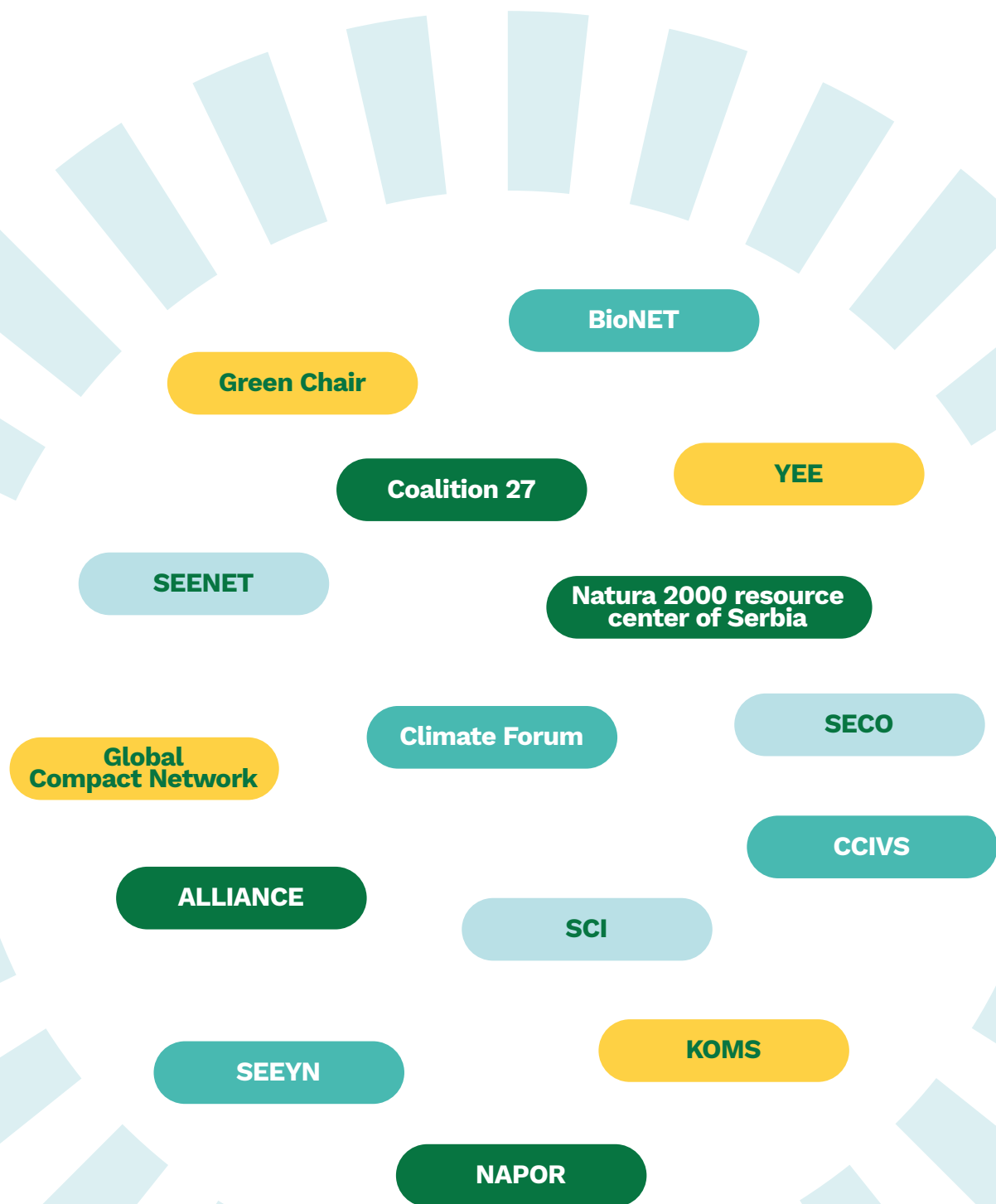
#ŠtaNamTeško  
(#ŠNT)  
volunteer  
projects



## 2.6. NETWORKING

The YRS is making great efforts in the networking process, joint work with other citizens' associations and creating a more favourable environment for the networks operation in Serbia and the region.

*YRS is a member of following networks:*



## 2.7. GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Our activities were mostly focusing on capacity building, research, mainstreaming gender issue in environmental policy. We also worked on establishing new partnerships with expert institutions and CSOs and continued promoting developed online courses “Brief guide to feminist knowledge and action” and “Gender responsive budgeting”.

In 2021 we have mainstreamed gender issue in environmental sector as a part of ECO SYSTEM programme through training and concrete actions in local communities performed by supported CSOs: 6 research conducted by integrating gender-related questions within surveys, 2 publications published, 6 sessions held within educational activities, organized 1 local action with citizens regarding raising awareness, organized 1 training, 1 seminar, 1 panel, 3 workshops, created gender sensitive promo material.

Also, we became part of the first women’s network in Serbia that deals with nature and environmental protection regarding integrated management of natural resources and helped them in building capacities.

Looking to further promote the transition to sustainable business models among female entrepreneurs, we organized an online webinar intended at awareness-raising and capacity development targeting circular activities, principles of circular economy, the legal framework for establishing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), available financial instruments for strengthening sustainable entrepreneurship, networking, and cooperation in the field of sustainable women’s entrepreneurship.

## 2.8. YRS DEVELOPMENT

YRS is continuously improving its organizational capacities. In 2021 we have developed and/or improved:

- **YRS Grant Forwarding Policy**, with setting good risk management in grants forwarding, assuring transparency and full implementation of YRS anticorruption policy;
- **YRS’s Policy on Sexual exploitation**, abuse and harassment (SEAH) and staff capacity building related to it;
- **YRS Strategic plan.**

Additional capacity-building intervention was executed and it was related to improving the knowledge and skills on YRS junior staff related to the Project Cycle Management.



# 3. Our donors and main partners in 2021



#ЕУ  
ЗА ТЕБЕ



# 4. Our projects in 2021

ECO-SYSTEM: Support to Environmental Reforms programme

Green Incubator: Development of Competent Civil Society to Support the Implementation of the EU Acquis

Youth Rules 2021

Route 6 for the Western Balkans

IMPROVE YOUR IMPACT

Circular economy as a tool for economic empowerment of women

Stand up & Step up! Local Action – Climate is changing, and you?

ESC Buddy



*\* Descriptions of projects are available on <https://www.mis.org.rs/en/completed/>*





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## **2021 Annual Activity Report of YRS**

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