

Young Researchers of Serbia

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2025

April, 2026.



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INTRODUCTION

The year 2025 is not that can be easily summarized. It was *the year* in Serbia, across many dimensions, for organizations, groups, and individuals.

Thanks to the core support from Sweden, the first of its kind to YRS in its 49-year history, along with contributions from other donors, we successfully implemented all planned activities and achieved good results, despite highly turbulent environment we were operating in.

Students protest, supported by citizens, dominated the social landscape. Emotions ran high, many developments were difficult to comprehend, and certain events highlighted the fragility of the rule of law, democratization, human rights, and mutual respect in Serbia. Like many other organizations, YRS had limited cooperation with government institutions in 2025. At the same time, we built highly productive partnerships with public enterprises, schools, media, international organizations, and local civil society organizations.

Through the ECO SYSTEM programme, we supported 15 environmental projects, strengthening local initiatives and encouraging citizens associations to continue their important work.

Some of our plans were changed when the USAID stopped its support to civil society in Serbia, and worldwide. As a consequence of this decision, the project “Together for the environment”, where we had a partner role, was terminated and we couldn’t support 10 informal groups and 2 protected areas’ managers for their actions, although their projects were already selected.

But, as in all hard times, we have had the most beautiful and powerful collaborator that gave us support – the nature!

We launched a new project whose name reflects our mission - "Volunteers for nature"! We have celebrated International Biodiversity Day in our special place - Obedska bara, with a team from Swedish Embassy in Belgrade and the Ambassador of Sweden, H.E. Charlotte Samelin.

Once again, we drew attention to the European Pond Turtle – together with our partners we have received an award - the Grand Prix in the ECO category at the “Campaigns with purpose” awards for the fundraising campaign “Kornjača spornjača”.

Education and awareness raising continued to be an important segment of our work. In 2025., our educational campaign “Transparent” engaged numerous schools across Serbia in raising awareness about glass use and recycling, while also inspiring many artists to upcycle materials by creating artwork. An exhibition in Belgrade marked the culmination of these activities, with more details provided in the following sections of this report.

We wish you a good reading,
YRS team

Like a dandelion through concrete, YRS continues to persist despite increasingly challenging conditions.

Source: dreamstime.com

ABOUT YOUNG RESEARCHERS OF SERBIA (YRS)

Young Researchers of Serbia (YRS) is a non-profit, non-governmental and non-party organization that evolved from a research movement originating in 1969 in Valjevo. In 1976, it was officially established as a network of research organizations, societies, clubs and sections, brought together by shared interest and coordinated by a national-level office. The number of YRS's members has changed throughout its history, but it is beyond doubt that more than 50 different organizations were its members at one point in time. In the 1990s, the organization of Young Researchers of Serbia was transformed by abandoning the vertical hierarchy form of organization, and from thereon it continued to evolve and change by adapting to the development of the civil sector in Serbia. Voluntary Service of Serbia and the Aarhus Center Novi Beograd are part of YRS.

VISION

We stand for a world in which natural resources are used sustainably, and a society that is just, solidary and affords equal opportunities to everyone and support for development.

MISSION

Our mission is to be a driving force in society which contributes to the environmental protection and the sustainable development of communities by using scientific knowledge through educational programs, environmental and climate action and volunteering.

VALUES

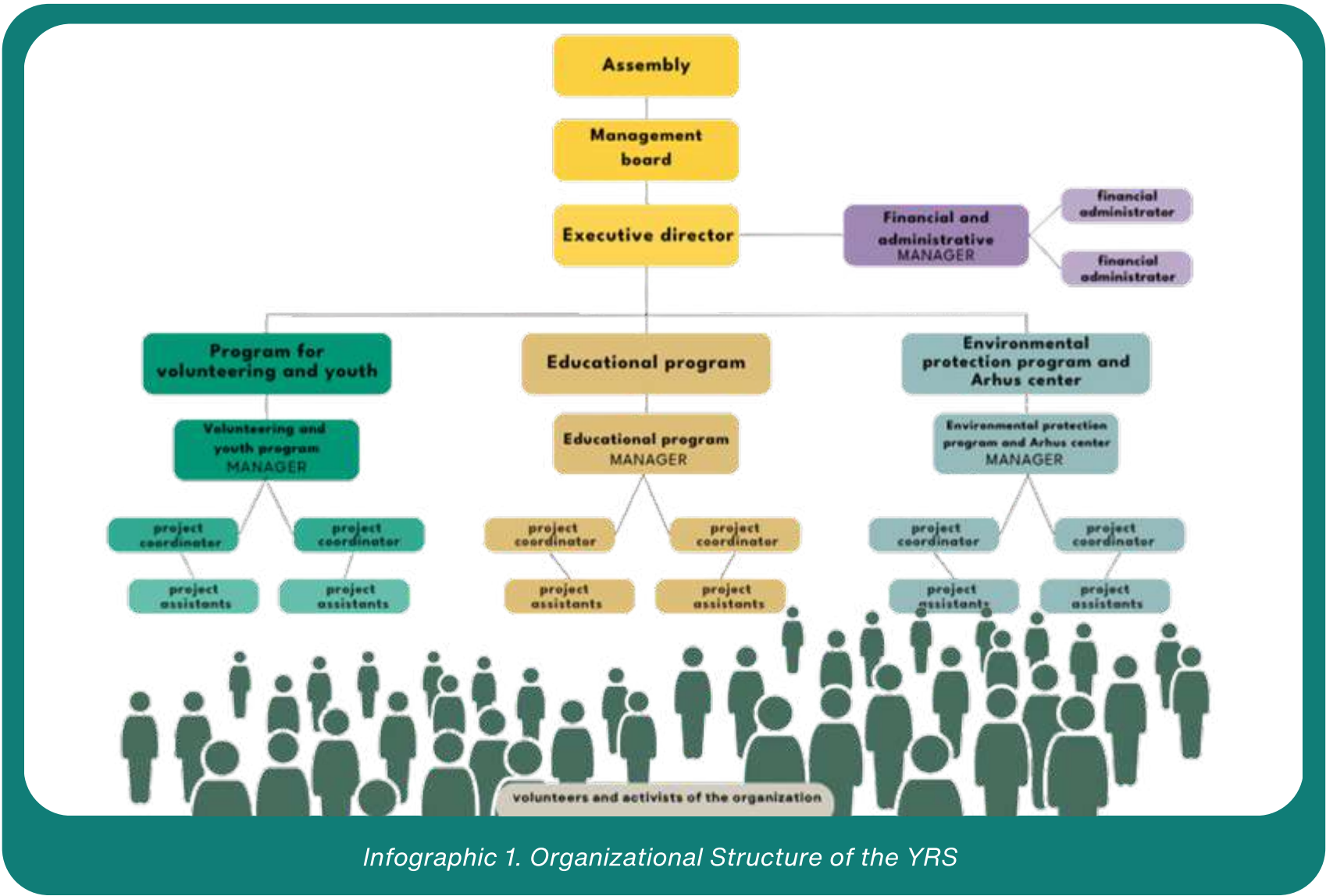
YRS stands for the preservation of freedoms, environmental justice and transparency, equality and solidarity in society and the participation of all in designing and implementing the public interest.

YRS team in 2025

- Managing Board:**
Dragana Randelović, PhD – Chair
Snežana Jovičić, PhD
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Katarina Klačnja
- Volunteers exchange coordinator:**
Nebojša Knežević
- Secretary of Coalition 27:**
Milena Antić
- Financial Administrator:**
Vera Bukilić Radusin



Infographic 1. Organizational Structure of the YRS

IMPACT OF YRS ACTIVITIES IN 2025

YRS's THEORY OF CHANGE:

if adequate resources are strategically invested in the development of volunteering, the strengthening of civil society capacities, and the delivery of innovative environmental education,

then formal recognition of volunteering as a powerful instrument for community development will happen, civil society will gain influence in decision-making, and citizens will adopt responsible environmental behaviours,

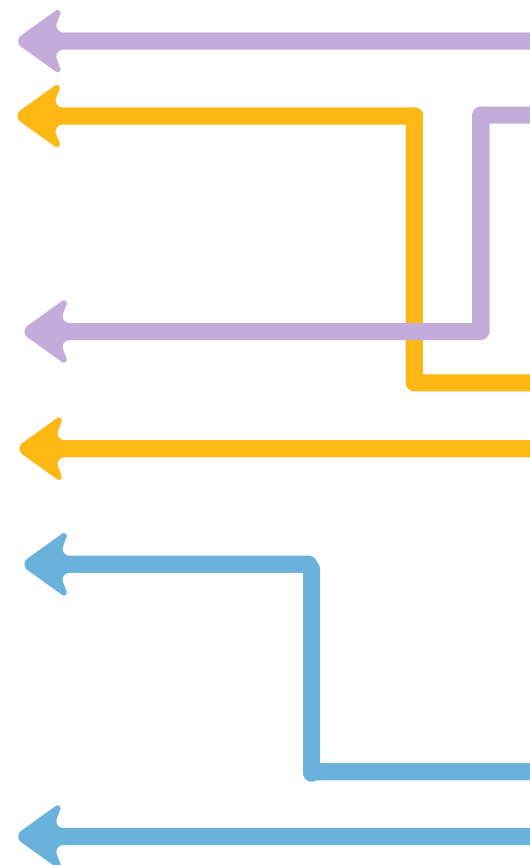
which will eventually contribute to a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient society in Serbia.

IN 2025, YOUNG RESEARCHERS OF SERBIA:

informed and educated the public on various topics related to environmental protection and volunteering,

built the capacities of citizens' associations, informal groups and protected area's managers in the context of environmental protection and volunteering,

advocated on issues of importance for environmental protection and volunteering.



STORY OF CHANGE *related to the first YRS's strategic objective - volunteering is increasingly recognized as an important tool for community development, and mechanisms and volunteering programs have been established throughout Serbia that contribute to strengthening society's capacity for sustainable development.*

THE WATER

Although they differ in origin, geographic location, physical features, biodiversity, and many other aspects, Lake Kraljevac and Lake Gruža share one essential element: water.

Lake Gruža serves as an important source of drinking water for a large population, while Lake Kraljevac is a protected area, valued for its natural heritage. Despite their different roles, both lakes face similar challenges. Their waters are affected by pollution, water levels fluctuate due to climate conditions, and continuous monitoring is necessary to preserve their quality. Fortunately, both lakes share another important element - volunteers.

In the Special Nature Reserve Kraljevac, voluntary workcamp marked its 10th anniversary in 2025. Over this period almost 100 volunteers from around the world contributed by cleaning the lake's banks, maintaining fishing areas, restoring pathways, and removing invasive species - efforts that directly support the preservation of water quality.

Lake Gruža also hosts volunteer initiatives, where participants engage in activities aimed at protecting the lake and raising awareness about the importance of sustainable water management. Volunteers from Mexico, Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece and other countries were in Gruža in 2025 to save the nature and water.

Volunteer work plays a crucial role in safeguarding both lakes. However, it is not only the contribution of international volunteers that matters, volunteers from local communities are even more essential.

By reducing pollution and addressing other negative environmental impacts, work during workcamps and voluntary actions brings meaningful and lasting improvements. At the same time, they strengthen local communities by highlighting the international importance of their lakes and water resources.

*Kraljevac Lake, Deliblato
Source: YRS media archive*

STORIES OF CHANGE *related to YRS’s second strategic objective - empowered civil society, with greater influence and competence to take part in the decision-making processes in an informed manner and to implement activities aimed at environmental protection and community development.*

THE AIR

Another element that needs us is the air.

Invisible, without smell or taste, but so influential.

Air pollution remains one of the most urgent environmental and public health challenges in Serbia, particularly in municipalities and cities classified in the third category of air quality. Behind this problem lies a less visible, but significant source: individual households. Across both urban and rural areas, many rely on solid fuels with low energy efficiency and high emissions, contributing heavily to the pollution we all share.

Yet for years, there has been a gap: no standardized cadastre of individual households, no clear system to track pollution sources, and no reliable data to guide local decision-making. This is where change begins.

Through the ECO SYSTEM program, the local organization iRevolution was empowered to step in to address this gap. Their work has already led to meaningful progress: the cities of Kraljevo and Novi Pazar have integrated a digital cadastre into their future air quality action plans, formally recognizing individual heating units as an important source of pollution - one that demands a systemic solution.

Beyond policy, the impact reaches further. The initiative has strengthened the capacity of civil society organizations to advocate for concrete air protection measures and has improved the transparency of local government actions.

Small, very small progress considering complexity of air pollution, but important step.

THE LIGHT

In 2025 there was a lot of dark around Serbia - civil society space was constrained by media closures, negative narratives around the work and financing of organizations, and threats directed at activists, communities, and the environment itself.

But, at the same time in Serbian society there have been numerous stories of change.

One of them is the light brough by ECO SYSTEM programme of support to environmental organizations: 15 implementing partners were supported, gathering 40+ organizations that disseminated information using diverse communication formats such as podcasts, animated videos, and other multimedia content. Diverse publications were produced and disseminated in both online and print formats, further enhancing outreach and ensuring accessibility of key project messages to different target audiences.

The organizations’ communication activities achieved a total reach of 3,302,954 people and generated 57,842 interactions across online channels, supported by the publication of 534 social media posts. In addition, 89 website posts were published, providing regularly updated information and contributing to transparent communication.

Media coverage further strengthened visibility and credibility, with 107 online media placements and 11 features in TV and print media, ensuring broad dissemination of project messages across communities.

Visibility was ensured through integrated digital, media, print, and offline channels, including branded communication materials like roll-ups and billboards, contributing to the wide dissemination and consistent presence of project activities and results.

Light is a form of energy that travels as both a wave and a particle.

Light is less about physics and more about clarity, positivity, and truth.

STORY OF CHANGE *related to YRS's third strategic objective - increased personal responsibility and competences of citizens in relation to the environment as a result of innovative educational programs.*

BIODIVERSITY

Being a civil society organization, we are used to receive feedback, evaluations and recommendations on our educational programs and activities.

But we have one collaborator that is silent, that gives feedback slowly but strongly – the biodiversity.

Agriculture plays a crucial role in maintaining the health of biodiversity in any given area. The way we farm directly shapes the life around us: affecting soil, water, insects, birds, and entire ecosystems. Across Europe, agriculture is the most frequently reported pressure on habitats and species, responsible for 21% of all recorded impacts. At the same time, climate change is rapidly reshaping agricultural practices: seasons shift, yields fluctuate, and traditional methods become less reliable. Without urgent action, the combined pressure on agriculture and biodiversity will only intensify.

In nature all is connected. We need to mitigate and to adapt.

But before mitigation and adaptation, there must be understanding.

First, we educate, then we transform.

Thanks to the work of YRS and FAO in the 2025/2026 school year, the elective subject “Climate Change in Agriculture” is included in the curricula of 12 secondary schools. At the same time, 5 informal groups from secondary agriculture schools implemented projects and tested the new knowledge in practice.

In Sombor, students “Eco-educators” conducted lectures for elementary school students, covering various branches of agriculture, from vegetable and fruit growing, through livestock breeding, to viticulture, with a focus on climate change and its application in practice.

The students are introducing changes also in their practices within small cultivations they have, making them more biodiversity friendly.

Looking at the insects and birds, we can say that feedback from biodiversity is coming.



Secondary agricultural and chemical school
Source: YRS media archive

ACHIVED RESULTS → PROGRESS TOWARDS YRS'S OBJECTIVES

PROGRAMME STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (PSOs)

PSO 1

Volunteering is increasingly recognized as an important tool for community development, and mechanisms and volunteering programs have been established throughout Serbia that contribute to strengthening society's capacity for sustainable development.

PSO 2

Empowered civil society, with greater influence and competence to take part in the decision-making processes in an informed manner and to implement activities aimed at environmental protection and community development.

PSO 3

Increased personal responsibility and competences of citizens in relation to the environment as a result of innovative educational programs.

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES (OPOs)

OPO 1.1

Diverse volunteering programmes developed, contributing to the development of local communities, focusing on topics related to sustainable development and environmental protection, through educational, financial support and networking.

OPO 2.1

Empowered CSOs for active participation in the reforms within the EU Integration process in the field of environmental protection and climate change (Cluster 4, Chapter 27, the Green Agenda) through a capacity-building programme that includes educational and financial support and support through networking on a local, national and international level.

OPO 3.1

Developed platform for education that brings together experts, actors in the field of education (educational institutions, institutes, research units), international and domestic CSOs who recognize the topics and needs of different target groups for environmental education.

OPO 1.2

Increased public awareness on the benefits of volunteering for the development of society/local communities and benefits from the volunteering programmes implemented in partnership with CSOs, schools, informal groups, businesses etc.

OPO 2.2

Empowered CSOs, partners, informal groups and individuals in implementing volunteering programmes/voluntary workcamps through a capacity- building programme that provides educational and financial support, as well as support through improvement of international cooperation on volunteer exchange.

OPO 3.2

Developed innovative educational programs and integrated into the relevant projects-activities of YRS.

OPO 1.3

Improved quality of volunteer programs and legislative frameworks for volunteering through promotion and implementation of international standards in volunteering.

OPO 2.3

Empowered institutions and CSOs for engaging the public and civil participation in decision-making processes that are relevant to environmental protection and monitoring the development and implementation of environmental protection/climate change policies.

OPO 3.3

Raised awareness of citizens about the need to protect and preserve the environment as a core value and improved capacities for participation in decision- making processes at the local level..

PROGRESS TOWARDS PSO 1

OPO 1.1

Diverse volunteering programmes developed, contributing to the development of local communities, focusing on topics related to sustainable development and environmental protection, through educational, financial support and networking.

OPO 1.2

Increased public awareness on the benefits of volunteering for the development of society/local communities and benefits from the volunteering programmes implemented in partnership with CSOs, schools, informal groups, businesses etc.

OPO 1.3

Improved quality of volunteer programs and legislative frameworks for volunteering through promotion and implementation of international standards in volunteering.

Since YRS adapted the Strategic Plan in 2023, it has been used as the foundation for developing annual action plans, work plans and projects.

Following the frameworks set by the Action Plan in 2025, the YRS team worked on all strategic and operational program objectives. The expected results were achieved through the implementation of numerous activities.

During 2025, the development of diverse volunteer programs continued, contributing to the development of local communities, with a focus on topics related to sustainable development and environmental protection, through education, financial support and networking (*Operational Program Objective 1.1*). Partnerships were established with the scientific community, schools, protected area managers, local self-governments, civil society organizations and local businesses in the implementation of camps (*Result 1.1*). Four volunteer programs focusing on sustainable development in protected areas though nature restauration were developed (*Result 1.2*).

Various educational packages were developed (online courses, trainings, brochures, leaflets) and promoted through protected areas, universities, schools and local self-governments (*Result 1.3*), as well as a methodology for reaching and promoting programs tailored to the needs of target groups and partners (*Result 1.5*). Through the implementation of an annual thematic campaign and events aimed at promoting volunteering (*Result 1.6*), progress was made toward achieving *Operational Program Objective 1.2*. Increased public awareness on the benefits of volunteering for the development of society/local communities and benefits from the volunteering programmes implemented in partnership with CSOs, schools, informal groups, businesses etc.

As in the previous years, YRS participated in international networks and national coalitions aimed at strengthening the quality of volunteer programs and advocating for the creation of a functional legislative framework (*Result 1.9*), which improved quality of volunteer programs and legislative frameworks for volunteering through promotion and implementation of international standards in volunteering (*Operational Program Objective 1.3*).

INDICATORS FOR OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES 1.1., 1.2. AND 1.3

10 partnerships strengthened and over 5 new established for the organization of workcamps (camp organizers were: Wemsical Serbia, Szabo Denes, Pact Ruthenorum, Ekomar, Municipality Voždovac, Eko-heroj, High agricultural school "Ljubo Mičić", Živimo zajedno, Deliblatsko Jezero, Fakiri sa juga, Ja volim Topli Do, Vladimir Mandić Manda, Zeleni pogled, Ruralni centar Sova, AstralUM).

Improved cooperation on volunteering: in June 2025 organized **meeting with 10 organizers** of the workcamps (24 persons) in Obedska bara, defined cooperation and financing needs.

18 workcamps organized in 16 local communities in Serbia: Sremska Mitrovica, Ruski Krstur, Požega, Rtanj, Petnica, Golija, Golubinci; Kragujevac; Sremski Karlovci; Topli do, Totovo selo i Orom, Perućac, Kupinovo, Deliblato, Ražana.

11 protected areas managers participated in consultations for developing volunteering programmes in protected areas; **4 protected areas** (National Parks Fruška gora, Đerdap and Kopaonik and Nature Park Sićevačka klisura) developed comprehensive programmes for involving volunteers in nature protection.

Over 10 international best practice examples on volunteering in protected areas analysed and used for planning in Serbia.

Approximately **a half of volunteers** who participated in the activities **actively joined the YRS network** (they attend promotional events, participate in camps and engage in informal initiatives and local organizations; 5 board-game nights in a board-game club Groot, in Belgrade with approximately 25 volunteers each event etc.).

Two educational campaigns conducted: one related to LGBTQI+ safety and wellbeing on workcamps and another one on nature restauration and voluntarism in protected areas.

10+ approaches applied in education and communication with different target groups.

About **50 participants** (volunteers from abroad, local partners, representatives of the Young Researchers of Serbia) gathered **to celebrate the International Youth Day** at the volunteer camp on Lake Kraljevac, as well as the tenth anniversary of that camp.

Several post-camp activities with volunteers **brought together over 200 young people** (e.g. 5 informal meetings with volunteers after the season that brought together about 100 young people).

The number of volunteers increased by 10% compared to the previous year (350 volunteers were recruited for camps in Serbia and abroad, 90 on educational Erasmus+ programs, and about 215 young people were supported though Šta Nam Teško support programme to informal groups).

Over 80% of the volunteers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their participation in the activities and demonstrated readiness for further engagement.

YRS participated in **10+ international meetings**, has been a member of the Alliance's Education Team and took part in other four working groups within this network.

A network of partner organizations contributed to the creation of a functional legislative framework for volunteering in Serbia (e.g. through work on Action plan for implementation of Youth Strategy of the Republic of Serbia).

More than **70 different stakeholders** make up the informal network Youth Rules (Mladi su zakon). These include local communities, municipalities, associations, youth offices, ministries and international organizations.

Annual Meeting of the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations – first time held in Serbia: 94 representatives from 55 member organizations, partners, and guest organizations from various parts of the world gathered to work together on improving volunteer programs in Zrenjanin, in March 2025.

Across **5 volunteering actions with 5 companies**, more than 130 volunteers participated in volunteering for nature initiatives within the protected areas of Obedska Pond and Lake Kraljevac, as well as the natural monument Miljakovačka Forest and the locally protected area of Avala near Belgrade.

PROGRESS TOWARDS PSO 2

OOP 2.1

Empowered civil society, with greater influence and competence to take part in the decision-making processes in an informed manner and to implement activities aimed at environmental protection and community development.

OOP 2.2

Empowered CSOs, partners, informal groups and individuals in implementing volunteering programmes/voluntary workcamps through a capacity- building programme that provides educational and financial support, as well as support through improvement of international cooperation on volunteer exchange.

OOP 2.3

Empowered institutions and CSOs for engaging the public and civil participation in decision-making processes that are relevant to environmental protection and monitoring the development and implementation of environmental protection/climate change policies.

YRS's work in 2025 related to *Operational Program Objective 2.1*, which focuses on empowering CSOs for active participation in reforms within the EU integration process in the field of environment and climate change (Cluster 4, Chapter 27, Green Agenda) was very intensive. The progress towards this Objective is achieved through a capacity-building program that includes educational and financial support, as well as support through networking at the local, national and international levels.

Unfortunately, due to the sudden termination of USAID support to “Together for the Environment” project, which happened in January 2025, YRS couldn't support implementation of 10 projects of informal groups.

The YRS team collected and assessed the needs of CSOs and informal groups for support in their activities within local communities in defined priority areas of environmental protection. The findings were incorporated into the annual research (*Result 2.1*). During 2025, support programs were implemented for civil society organizations to carry out initiatives/projects aimed at environmental protection and improvement at the national and local levels (*Result 2.3.1*).

YRS continuously documents examples of good practice (such as the impact of projects at the local level, capacity building, participation in decision-making, etc.) and promotes them at the national, local and international levels (*Result 2.4.1*). Through various activities and cooperation with other civil society organizations and some institutions, mechanisms for citizen participation in national-level decision-making processes have been strengthened (*Result 2.10*).

Operational Program Objective 2.2 is a distinctive feature and is a kind of YRS tradition. The Voluntary Service of Serbia works on strengthening CSOs, partners, informal groups and individuals to implement volunteer programs and camps through a capacity-building program that provides educational and financial support, as well as support through enhanced international cooperation for volunteer exchanges. In 2025, educational programs were developed and implemented for various stakeholders on priority topics (*Result 2.2*). The challenges and support needs of different stakeholders for the implementation of volunteer programs and environmental protection programs were identified, and the findings were included in the annual research (*Result 2.5*). Educational programs and mentoring for camp leaders and organizers were developed and implemented (*Result 2.6*). Support for volunteer projects of 41 informal groups of citizens was provided through the "Youth Rules" project (*Result 2.7*). Exchanges of more than 350 volunteers who participated in over 100 workcamps and programs were carried out (*Result 2.9*).

Through the implementation of educational and informational sessions on volunteer exchange, public awareness and motivation for volunteering were increased (*Result 2.11*).

Progress towards *Operational Program Objective 2.3*. Empowered institutions and CSOs for engaging the public and civil participation in decision-making processes that are relevant to environmental protection and monitoring the development and implementation of environmental protection/climate change policies, was limited due to the very complex political situation in Serbia. 2025 was significantly tumultuous period in Serbia. It saw widespread citizen protests highlighting concerns over undermining democratic values. The government responded with repressive measures against citizens and civil society organizations, deepening societal polarization. Additionally, Serbia's EU accession process was deprioritized by the Government, reflecting the country's complex political landscape.

Using various tools and capacity-building programs, CSOs were empowered to participate in decision-making processes and to monitor the development and implementation of environmental and climate change policies (*Result 2.13*). At the local level, through the "ECO-SYSTEM" program, certain institutions were sensibilized to the importance of public involvement and civic participation in decision-making processes (*Result 2.14*). Shadow Report of Coalition 27 was prepared and published, and communication materials for engagement with citizens were developed (*Result 2.15*).

INDICATORS FOR OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES 2.1., 2.2. AND 2.3.

The needs of over 50 CSOs and informal groups for financial support and capacity-building support assessed. The formulated recommendations used in planning support programs in 2025 and 2026.

A total of **15 projects implemented by 2 networks and 28 different civil society organizations, in over 40 municipalities and local communities across Serbia**– supported to implement projects through the “ECO-SYSTEM” program.

40% of the supported organizations improved their project management capacities.
30% of the supported organizations work more effectively on monitoring the implementation of environmental policies, either independently within local communities or as part of national and local networks.

10+ examples of good practice from CSO projects documented and promoted.

One meeting of the Green Chair network held.

46 IGs trained to implement projects (though FAO – Climate change and agriculture project 5 informal groups, and though Šta Nam Teško 41 informal groups).

At least **20% of the initiatives** continue to be active in year 1 after the project.

Over **70% of participants/volunteers reported being satisfied or very satisfied** with their participation in the activities and demonstrated readiness for further engagement.

Three trainings for camp leaders held: one in Serbia and two in cooperation with international partners (in Italy and Germany), during which 29 young leaders from Serbia were trained.

Capacities of camp organizers built in 16 local communities across Serbia.

More than 30% of camp leaders continue their cooperation with YRS, engage in YRS volunteer programs and further develop their personal competencies.

A total of **41 "Šta Nam Teško" volunteer projects of informal groups implemented**, with a participation of **500+ young people**.

380+ volunteers exchanged: 289 volunteers exchanged on **workcamps:** 152 international volunteers come to Serbia and 137 Serbia volunteers went to workcamps abroad; 9 volunteers from Serbia were sent to short **term and long-term volunteering programmes**; during 2025 YRS sent participants to 38 **youth exchanges/trainings/seminars** - around 90 volunteers to different countries for exchanges (mostly to France, Germany and Italy).

Innovative volunteering programmes and possibility to volunteer in four selected areas were promoted during the campaign and YRS already have **received 448 applications of citizens** (YRS website, as per January 2026) willing to volunteer.

Around 40% of young people who participated in the programs **took part in the activities** or improved their knowledge on environmental protection.

Over 100 citizens informed about volunteer camps through educational and informative sessions: **two promotional and preparatory events** for volunteer camps were held with 50 participants; **12 meetings** were also held in the premises of the YRS with volunteers gathering 25+ participants.

4+ public policy documents influenced: YRS participated in working groups and/or consultations focused on the development of public policies and regulations (National Strategy with Action plan for Implementation of Aarhus Convention in the Republic of Serbia; National Programme for Nature protection; Law on Nature Protection; Decree on Appropriate Assessment.).

More than 20 meetings and events attended, along with one online consultation process ("Kaži-Ukaži"), contributing to the formulation of recommendations and positions for participation in decision-making processes.

Work on the **Green Cards improved**, with methodology elements revised in accordance with regulatory changes and practical findings from methodology implementation.

30 CSOs trained to monitor the implementation of environmental protection policies in local self-governments, while 14 CSOs attended trainings covering specific area (waste management, horizontal legislation, climate change, air quality).

As a result of the **mentoring work of Coalition 27**, more than 80% of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their participation in activities and demonstrated readiness for further engagement or advocacy initiatives.

YRS participated in writing three chapters of the Shadow Report on Chapter 27.

Data for **the Green Cards** collected and processed from **14 local self-governments**.

The Shadow Report titled "System Error" was prepared, printed and promoted in Belgrade, Brussels, Novi Sad, Valjevo and Leskovac.

PROGRESS TOWARDS PSO 3

OOP 3.1

Developed platform for education that brings together experts, actors in the field of education (educational institutions, institutes, research units), international and domestic CSOs who recognize the topics and needs of different target groups for environmental education.

OOP 3.2

Developed innovative educational programs and integrated into the relevant projects-activities of YRS.

OOP 3.3

Raised awareness of citizens about the need to protect and preserve the environment as a core value and improved capacities for participation in decision-making processes at the local level..

Through the implementation of more than twenty educational events on topics of interest for environmental protection, in cooperation with partners from the platform (*Result 3.6*), the foundations were established for developing an educational platform that brings together experts, education stakeholders (educational institutions, institutes, research units), and both international and domestic CSOs that recognize the topics and needs of various target groups for education in the field of environmental protection (*Operational Program Objective 3.1*).

YRS worked intensively on developing innovative educational programs and integrating them into relevant projects and activities (*Operational Program Objective 3.2*). Tailored trainings were delivered to strengthen the capacities of individuals and young professionals, informal groups of citizens, CSOs, teaching staff, based on their needs and interests (*Result 3.5*).

Two national campaigns on the need for environmental protection and sustainable development were conducted (*Result 3.7*), mechanisms for citizen cooperation and information-sharing were established and initiated in municipalities and protected areas (*Result 3.8*), public awareness of the need to protect and preserve the environment as a core value was raised and capacities for participation in decision-making processes at the local level were strengthened (*Operational Program Objective 3.3*).

INDICATORS FOR OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES 3.1., 3.2. AND 3.3.

Over 20 representatives of schools, research and educational units and organizations expressed their interest to participate in educational platform in the field of environmental protection.

One meeting of interested stakeholders for collaborating within educational platform held in Belgrade, in cooperation with a network of Arhus centres of Serbia - event related to environmental education - **the round table "Education - ecology, sustainable development, environmental protection"**.

Collaboration with **21 schools on celebration of FAO80 and World Food Day** and **26 schools on Danube Master Arts competition**. In addition, **10 primary schools and 2 secondary schools** participated in the **campaign "Transparent"**.

57 scholars individually and 4 groups applied with their artworks for **Danube Master Arts 2025 Competition** (200+ schools were invited to participate).

Five training sessions (on gender equality, financial management of project, visibility, networking, anticorruption) for civil society organizations held within the “ECO-SYSTEM” program during introductory training.

Green Talks events on topics from Chapter 27 – Shadow Report conducted in Leskovac, Valjevo and Novi Sad and reached approximately **150 people who attended the events in person and over 1500 people on social media streaming**.

Increased number of citizens reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their participation in the activities and demonstrated readiness for further engagement.

8 capacity building sessions on volunteering and communication held for 4 management authorities of protected areas in Serbia.

Two online courses published: “Climate change adaptation” and “From atom to climate – a look at nuclear energy”.

107 new participants in the online courses, **202 course registrations, and 70 certificates issued**. More than **80% of participants** who completed the evaluation reported being **satisfied or very satisfied** with the course content.

All together **38 youth exchanges/trainings/seminars** with almost 90 volunteers enhancing their knowledge and skills in ecology, interculturality, sustainability and group leadership. Out of those, there were several exchanges that focused on training future camp leaders.

A two-day educational seminar on climate change and agriculture **gathered 22 participants from eight secondary agricultural schools** across Serbia.

In the 2025/2026 school year, the **elective subject “Climate Change in Agriculture” is included** in the curricula of **12 secondary schools**.

Best practice examples of YRS educational programmes presented to international partners in Zrenjanin in March 2025, and in France in October 2025.

The campaign “**Transparent: Don’t Buy – Create**. Reduce Consumption, Gift Creativity” achieved strong visibility across channels, including **35 social media posts and nearly 100 Instagram and Facebook stories, having 1.1 million impressions, 490,000+ reach, and more than 17,000 clicks** across all promoted content, while 41 artists exhibited their artwork at a joint exhibition in Belgrade.

Nature restauration - **Volunteers for nature campaign reached over 3.522.696 people**.

Educational material on Climate Change in Agriculture promoted at the 2025 Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad.

Educational **board game “(A)Klimatizuj se! developed**, tested with high school students and further promoted.

MAIN CHALLENGES

The main challenges in 2025 for implementing activities and achieving objectives were related to environmental protection policies and dialogue with institutions. Year 2025 was one of the most complicated years in CSOs-institutions cooperation as Serbia's political crisis has intensified, and almost 60% of Serbian citizens were supporting the protests. Demonstrations were often met with repression and police brutality, and the civic space continues to shrink, aggravating the trend of the past years.

It was very challenging to make open dialogue and cooperation, although YRS maintains longstanding relationships with certain state authorities based on mutual respect, the organization's reputation, achievements, and extensive environmental protection tradition.

Coordinating the work of the Green Chair – a mechanism intended to enable CSO participation in the work of the National Assembly's Environmental Protection Committee – was particularly challenging.

YRS, together with many other environmental CSOs has decided to withdraw their participation in some working groups (e.g. working group for drafting Action plan for Aarhus convention implementation in Serbia) but also not to participate in some calls for participation launched by Serbian Government until political situation became more stable.

Still, having in mind importance of environmental policy and legislation, YRS team participated in over 20 events for policy developments.



In many moments, there was simply no one on the other side of the podium.

Source: Canva Pro

LESSONS LEARNED

In 2025, as many other organizations in Serbia, YRS has experienced stressful working environment, caused by conflicts in society but also by termination of support from USAID.

To remain effective in challenging environment, YRS learned that:

- diversifying funding sources beyond international donors, e.g. include local businesses and community fundraising has to be improved (financial and resource resilience);
- strengthen internal management, legal compliance, and strategic planning is very important (operational and governance capacity);
- protect staff well-being and upgrading IT infrastructure to mitigate cybersecurity threats is also very important (digital and physical security).

Projects and programmes' monitoring, evaluation and learning were a very important in 2025.

The YRS team regularly assessed results, reflected on lessons learned and integrated them into following activities.

One of the most widely recognized learning theories, Kolb's experiential learning cycle, was applied because it supports YRS's overall methodological approach: concrete experience – engaging in or repeating an activity (in communication, grant implementation or decision-making) – leads to reflective observation, thinking about what happened and drawing conclusions from the experience.

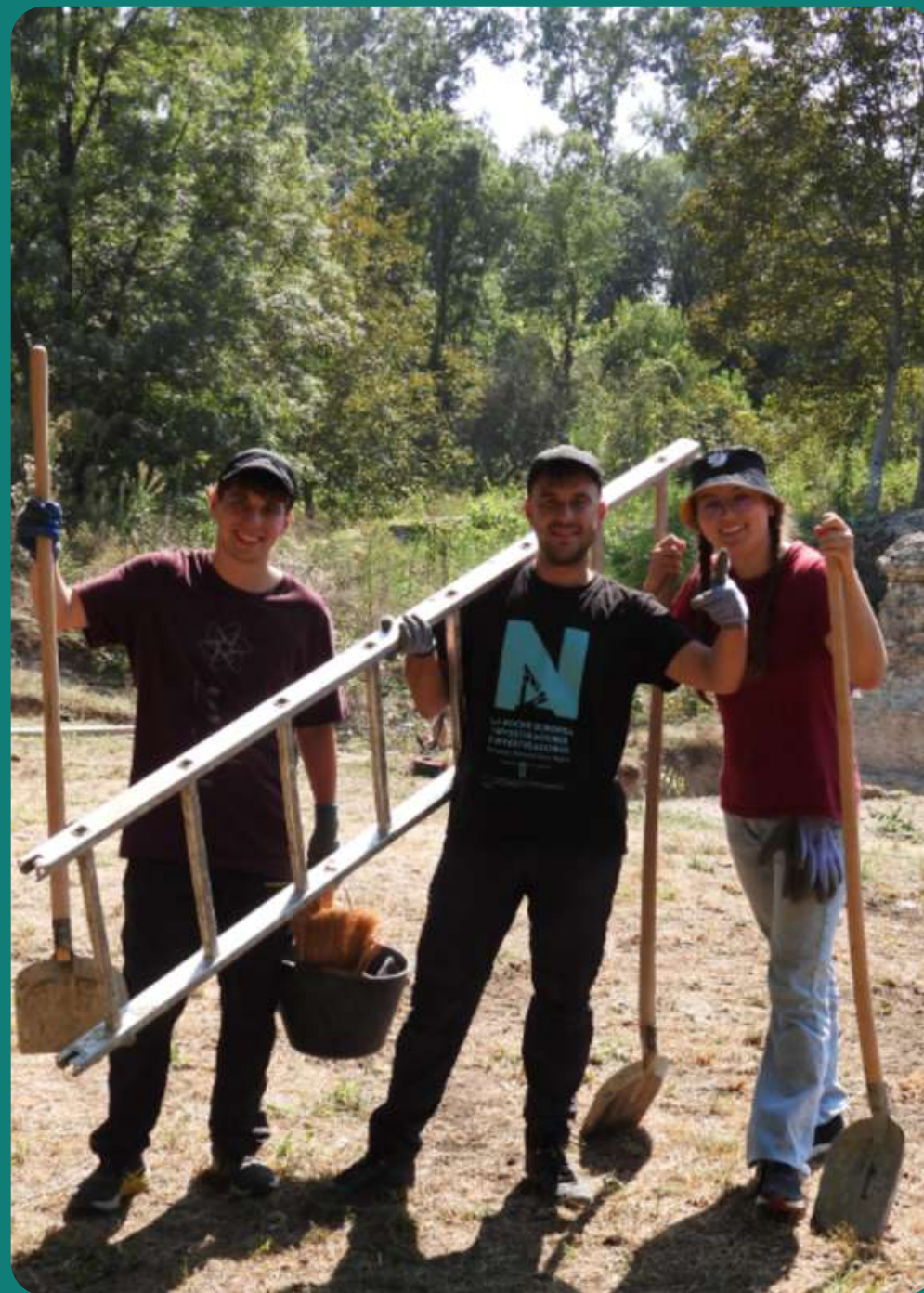
These concrete experiences helped target groups to learn about environmental and nature protection, collaborate effectively, implement better projects and become informed citizens who make environmentally responsible choices and decisions.

The following photos explain the main lessons YRS learned in 2025.



Elementary school workshop, FAO80 project
Source: YRS media archive

Kids and youth's environmental education, especially in challenging times, is of significant importance as it brings many positive inputs (knowledge, skills, personal satisfaction and happiness, collaboration etc.)



Workcamp Archaeofun II, Obedska bara
Source: YRS media archive

Workcamps bring powerful and inspiring changes to local communities and the environment



Alliance Technical Meeting, Zrenjanin
Source: YRS media archive

Thinking and working globally gives us strength and power



Ambassador of Sweden, H.E. Charlotte Sameli, and Swedish Embassy in Belgrade team visiting Obedska bara
Source: YRS media archive

Good partners are the key for sustainability of CSOs

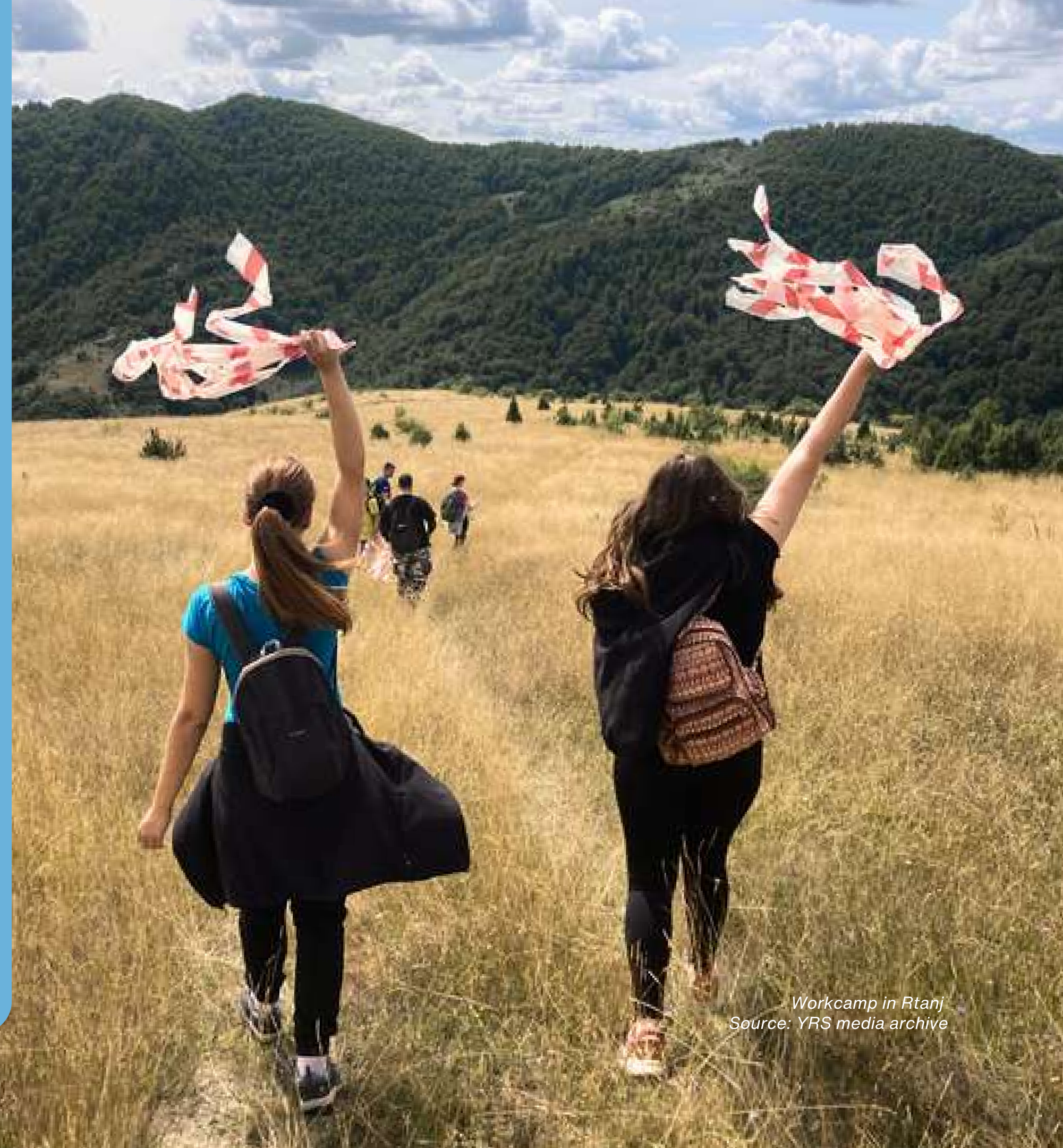
ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 1.

Volunteering has been recognized as an important tool for community development, and mechanisms and volunteering programs have been set in place throughout Serbia that contribute to strengthening society's capacities for sustainable development.

Operational Programme Objective 1.1.

Diverse volunteering programmes developed, contributing to the development of local communities, focusing on topics related to sustainable development and environmental protection, through educational, financial support and networking.



Workcamp in Rtanj
Source: YRS media archive

Voluntary Service of Serbia (VSS), being a part of YRS for over 30 years, continuously sends volunteers to activities and programs both abroad and in Serbia. Throughout 2025, YRS-VSS was actively involved in numerous activities within the Alliance network. At the local level, efforts were made to strengthen existing partnerships and establish new collaboration models at the level of individual camps.

“Season 2025” - workcamps planning

Following annual dynamics, YRS has collected all applications from workcamps organizers and presented workcamps in Serbia to international partner organizations in February. Preparation of the workcamps proceeded and has diverse dynamics for each individual workcamp. In June 2025, YRS organized meeting in Obedska bara with 10 organizers of the workcamps (24 persons) for defining cooperation and financial needs. It included an information session on important aspects of the implementation of volunteer camps, reporting and promotion; information and plans exchange, assessment of financial needs etc. In 2025, Sida core grant helped YRS to financially support 17 international and 5 national workcamps.

2025 workcamps in Serbia

In 2025 YRS co-organized 18 international workcamps with total of 152 volunteers. Biggest incoming was from SVI Spain (37), GSM Turkey (13), GHD Turkey (11) and COCAT (11).

• VSS2501 Windmill festival 30.07. - 10.08.

This workcamp was held in early august in the village of Orom in the north of Serbia. It was hosted by the organization Wemsical Serbia, and the workcamp was organized by Hungarian community. Work consisted of setting up the stages and fences for the festival, as well as cleaning of the field where festival was held. Volunteers also made the decoration and sold tickets. Volunteers were hosted in tents in the camping area of the festival. This camp was a part of the project "European Youth in Action: policymakers for climate justice", co-funded by the Citizens, Equality. Rights and Values (CERV) programme of the European Commission therefore there was a day workshop held by our trained youth leaders. This workcamp hosted 9 volunteers (7 female and 2 male) from Spain, Serbia, Ireland, Turkey and France.

• VSS2502 Totovo squad in action 21.07. - 31.07.

Another workcamp in the north of Serbia in the Totovo village, also near Hungary. Just like the previous one, this workcamp was also hosted by a local Hungarian community. It was hosted by the association Sabo Denes that works in field of youth, culture and tourism. During this workcamp volunteers have achieved several different goals in maintenance and preservation of a local park. They did work planting various flowers, mowing the lawns, sanding and painting wooden sculptures. They also prepared ground for new statue in the memorial park and there was even some creative work of making totems out of wood.

Workcamp location in Serbia, 2025



**This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 (1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.*

The volunteers were accommodated in a local boarding house and had food provided in the dining hall in the centre of village. The local community was very engaged and provided accommodation and use of the dining hall. This workcamp hosted 8 volunteers, 2 male and 6 female. Volunteers were from Mexico, Spain, Germany, Russia, Serbia and Hungary.

- **VSS2503 - Rollercoaster with Rusyns 14.07. – 27.07.**

This workcamp was held in the village of Ruski Krstur with a major population of Rusins. Hosting organization was Pact Ruthenorum – an organization dedicated to promotion of Rusyn's culture (ethnic Eastern-Slavic minority in South-Slavic Serbia). It is founded in 2004. with the mission to connect people all over the region and even all over the world. With that aim, they organized numerous festivals (mostly musical or traditional with the cultural topics) and workcamps. Its main focuses are music, nature and socializing.

During the workcamp volunteers main aim was to activate the village – make it move but also learn about the local culture. Some of the tasks were: renovation of the mural at the bus station, help with making the local Youth center prettier with artistic and maintenance tasks, cleaning the garbage on boats from the canal, painting the kids' playground, making sports' terrains look more representative, watering the trees, supporting the organizers of the festival "PactON" etc. This workcamp hosted 9 volunteers, 3 female and 6 male. Volunteers were from Mexico, Spain, Turkey, Japan, Italy, Hong Kong and France.

- **VSS2504 - Gruza's Eco mission 15.08 – 25.08.**

This environmental workcamp happened in august at the lake Gruža and was hosted by Ekomar which is an association whose goal is promotion and ecological marketing of natural resources. Their focus is mainly on the work with youngsters through different projects and programmes. Important outcome of the efforts in last years is the informative Eco-center on the lake Gruža, whose aim is to educate people about the importance of water eco-systems.

The work consisted of 3 parts. First one concerned painting of 10 informative signs with protective material. After that, they were installed onto planned locations. Second task was preparing wooden baskets for trash and placing them at designated positions. Third one was two big actions of cleaning the lake area. Volunteers were accommodated in the rooms of their Eco-informative centre.

This camp was a part of the project "European Youth in Action: policymakers for climate justice", co-funded by the Citizens, Equality. Rights and Values (CERV) programe of the European Commission therefore there was a day workshop held by our trained youth leaders. There were 12 volunteers in total, 6 male and 6 female. Volunteers were from Mexico, Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Germany and Greece.

- **VSS2505 - Everybody smiles in the same language 01.07. – 10.07**

This workcamp was held in July in Belgrade and was hosted by Association for helping persons that need additional support - "Voždovac", a non-governmental, non-profit humanitarian organization that for goal has social inclusion of their users.

Volunteers spent mornings in various activities with the members that Association supports. There were artistic tasks (mosaics), educational (different workshops), sports... Every day, after the lunch, together with the users, volunteers walked in city center visiting main museums (National one, Nikola Tesla museum, Ethnographic...). The main aim was to be there to meet the people that don't have that many opportunities for that in regular life. Volunteers were hosted in the local school.

This workcamp hosted 12 volunteers, 3 male and 9 female. Volunteers were from Turkey, Spain, Mexico, Japan, France and Estonia.

- **VSS2506 - Pyramid Festival 03.08. – 13.08.**

This workcamp happened in August on the Rtanj mountain and was hosted by association "Eko Heroj" (Eco Hero) - a non-profit organization that has for its goal protection of the environment, then promotion of ecological topics, but also of volunteerism in general.

Volunteers were in charge of ecological part of the festival. They took care of waste separation, composting, and education of visitors about the preferable dealing with the trash. They also learned and taught about compost toilets and biofilters for water. Also, there were opportunities for them to be part of healing and musical events at the festival. They were accommodated in tents in the camping area of the festival. There were 7 volunteers, 2 male and 5 female. They were from Spain, Belarus, Russia and Italy.

- **VSS2507 - Together for community 27.07. – 09.08.**

This workcamp was held during July and August in the town of Požega and was hosted by local agricultural high school. school is regional center and it offers many opportunities for those who need to obtain certain knowledges in the field of plant and animal treatments.

Volunteers did many tasks in cooperation with many associations in Požega. With those of social character, it was decided which families are in need for additional support, so volunteers can help those in danger with their regular activities. Then there was visit to the local association for those with cerebral paralysis (help and workshops was done there). Also, volunteers participated in the activities with local Gerontological center, where they took care of the garden, but also spent quality time with older people. There also helped with maintenance of school's yard, as well, with picking up the raspberries (one of the Serbian national fruits) and blackberries. Planting seeds, taking out the bad plants, feeding the animals-just few of extra actions that were done during the stay in this workcamp. There were 8 volunteers, 1 male and 7 female. Volunteers were from Turkey, Spain, France and Mexico.

- **VSS2508 - Oasis in Golubinci 07.07. – 20.07.**

This workcamp was hosted in July, in the picturesque village of Golubinci by the association "Living together" - a group of parents with the aim of improving the quality of life of their children - persons with intellectual disabilities, families and the entire social community since 1997. The mission of the Association is to make people with developmental disabilities visible, present and active in all segments of social life, to affirm their abilities and individuality, to promote their rights and enable them to live a dignified and fulfilling life.

The camp was designed as a place for socializing, mutual communication and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities with volunteers from the regular population, who come from different cultures and environments. Volunteers worked in the "Oasis" on everyday activities with the users of the house. Main activities were activities that the users also engage in daily life: maintenance and arrangement of work and living space; tidying up the yard and plot; pulling weeds and working in the garden (planting, hoeing, watering, crop care and harvesting); sorting of the obtained fruits and vegetables - separation for feeding in the camp, for distribution to socially disadvantaged members of the local community, for livestock and for compost; feeding of animals and maintenance of premises where animals stay; emptying recycling containers with PET packaging, pressing the packaging, visiting vulnerable families from the local community. The part of the camp was dedicated to the artistic decoration of the wall in the garden. Volunteers were hosted in the house that users also use. There were 6 volunteers, 1 male and 1 female. They were from Spain, Denmark, Serbia, Turkey and Czech Republic.

- **VSS2509 - Stories by the lake EYA 19.07. – 01.08.**

Workcamp “Stories by the lake” happened during July in the village of Deliblato and was hosted by the Sport Fishing Association “Deliblato Lake” that was established in 2000 with the aim to promote sport fishing and nature conservation among the local community and young people in Deliblato. It manages Special Nature Reserve Kraljevac.

This is the second oldest workcamp of YRS and it focuses on the natural protected reserve “Kraljevac” and what it has to offer to the locals and visitors. In order to preserve the important balance in the zone, volunteers worked on the areas around the lake, cleaning up the bank, taking care of the fishing place, restoring the paths, etc. There were, also, some plants (roots, invasive species) that were removed, so that the eco-system could thrive. Also, some areas with long grass were cut and restored in order. Volunteers were accommodated in the local hostel.

This camp was a part of the project “European Youth in Action: policymakers for climate justice”, co-funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme of the European Commission therefore there was a day workshop held by our trained youth leaders. There were 13 volunteers, 5 male and 8 female. They were from Spain, France, Mexico, Hong Kong, Denmark, Czech Republic, Hungary and South Korea!

- **VSS2510 - NEST fest is calling you! 02.07. – 16.07.**

This workcamp was hosted in July in the town of Kruševac and was hosted by the organization “Fakiri sa juga” (Fakirs-faquirs from the South) - a non-governmental and non-profit association. Their work started when they took care of one ruined (abandoned) object of the local football club and formed AKC “Gnezdo” (alternative cultural center Nest), a unique place where youth can express itself through performances, workshops, movie projections...

Volunteers helped in preparing the local festival (“Gnezdo”-Nest fest). They mowed the lawns, limited the space for guests, putting up and disassembled the stage, set up amenities for the festival, but also cleaned the riverbanks. The improvised stairs in the ground were made to ensure safer and better circulation of visitors, signs were made and positioned, and the trash bins were made and installed at certain locations. The volunteers also helped with everything that was there to be done during the 3-day festival (giving instructions, direct people, answer the question, carry things from one side to another, cleaning the property and emptying the trash bins). They were accommodated in one large tent on the camping area of the festival. There were 9 volunteers, 2 female and 7 male. They were from Spain, Turkey, France, Serbia and Greece.

- **VSS2511 - Free rivers and mountains festival 16.08. – 25.08.**

This workcamp was hosted in one of Serbias wonderful and picturesque villages named Topli do and it was hosted by the association “I love Topli Do” which aims to preserve nature and develop Stara Planina and nurture the spirit of freedom of the people of Stara Planina (Old Mountain). One of the goals of the association is to prevent the village from further dying, by restoring new life through various projects.

Work itself was divided into cleaning and arranging paths that lead up to some nice viewpoints of Stara planina as well as the local natural swimming pool “Ženski vir” (Women vortex). Also, volunteers helped clean the spot for creating small picnic area at the top of the hill nearby, where the view on the surroundings is magnificent. Second part was the support in organization of the festival for nature lovers - arranging the centre of village, setting up the stage and info counters and support of the workers in handing out flyers and in the whole production. Volunteers were accommodated in the local house. There were 9 volunteers, 4 female and 5 male. They were from Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Russia.



Workcamp in Deliblato
Source: YRS media archive



Workcamp in Obedska bara
Source: YRS media archive

- **VSS2513TEEN - Together for community 2 10.08. – 23.08.**

This was a teenage workcamp organized in Požega, also by agriculture high school of Požega. Volunteers did many tasks in cooperation with many associations in Požega. With those of social character, it was decided which families are in need for additional support, so volunteers can help those in danger with their regular activities. Then there was visit to the local association for those with cerebral paralysis (help and workshops was done there). Also, volunteers participated in the activities with local Gerontological center, where they took care of the garden, but also spent quality time with older people. There also helped with maintenance of school's yard, as well, with picking up the raspberries (one of the Serbian national fruits) and blackberries. Planting seeds, taking out the bad plants, feeding the animals-just few of extra actions that were done during the stay in this workcamp. There were 12 volunteers, 4 male and 8 female. They were from Serbia, Spain, Italy, France and Turkey.

- **VSS2514 - Birds ELDORADO EYA 17.08. – 30.08.**

This is our oldest workcamp and this year it was hosted for the 25th time, in the village of Kupinovo and Obedska bara. It was hosted by the association "Zeleni pogled" (Green look) from Kupinovo. The main topics they deal with are volunteerism, environmental protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

The work consisted of taking out invasive species and bushes while cleaning up the wetland soil that enables it to be inhabited by various species. A large area in Obedska bara was cleared up with the help of local organization. After 20 years, the Glossy Ibis was spotted in the Obedska pond, bird that is so important to this wetland area. It is one of the few places in Europe where you can see it and that's why the role of volunteers is so crucial in helping to maintain the area. Volunteers also helped with maintenance of local medieval fortress Kupinik. Volunteers were hosted in the local school.

This camp was a part of the project "European Youth in Action: policymakers for climate justice", co-funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme of the European Commission therefore there was a day workshop held by our trained youth leaders. There were 11 volunteers, 5 male and 6 female. They were from Spain, Italy, Mexico, Japan and Czech Republic.

- **VSS2515 - Archeofun I 31.08. – 14.09.**

This workcamp happened in the village of Kupinovo and was hosted by the association "Zeleni pogled" (Green look) from Kupinovo. The main topics they deal with are volunteerism, environmental protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

The tasks that volunteers took were conservation of fortress together with the archaeologists and students. They did dig and cleaning of the artefacts (metals and bones) that were found during excavations. The specificity of this year is work was on repairing parts of walls for the first time in many years. On some days, participants also took out the invasive plants and collected the trash in surrounding area, that endanger the fortress. In the middle of the camp, popular local festival "Kupinik-Days of Dragons" with medieval topics was held on the fortress. Volunteers helped in the organization by setting up tents and chairs and also participated in various activities (workshops and games, gaining new valuable skills). They were accommodated in the local former municipal house/office. There were 8 volunteers, 2 female and 6 male. They were from Turkey, Serbia, Hong Kong and Czech Republic.

- **VSS2516 - Archeofun II 14.09. – 27.09.**

This workcamp happened in the village of Kupinovo and was hosted by the association "Zeleni pogled" (Green look) from Kupinovo. The main topics they deal with are volunteerism, environmental protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

This workcamp had the same topic as the first one and volunteers continued where the previous group left off. They did more digging and cleaning of the artefacts (metals and bones) that were found during excavations. They also continued with repairing parts of walls. On some days, participants also took out the invasive plants and collected the trash in surrounding area, that endanger the fortress. They were accommodated in the local former municipal house/office. There were 5 volunteers, 4 female and 2 male. They were from Greece, Serbia, Netherlands and Germany.

- **VSS2517 - Rural in 01.07. – 10.07.**

This workcamp was hosted in a protected natural reserve Zasavica and was hosted by the association "Rural center Owl" - an organization with the goal of doing good to both, local community in the municipality of Sremska Mitrovica and to all the species, which are very present in this rural area.

Firstly, volunteers made various bird houses and then positioned them in designated spots. Also, they prepared info-tables (boards) and installed them on specific locations (local eco-center and few other important points). Volunteers also helped with cleaning and arranging of winter areas for owls, arranging of the river coast, as well as some cleaning of the local beach. In the end they also formed local eco-garden in the bio-center "Green Zasavica". They were accommodated in tents on a property of a local bio centre. There were 10 volunteers, 6 female and 4 male. They were from Spain, Italy, Turkey, Hong Kong, France and Belgium.

- **VSS2518 - Art in nature 04.08. – 14.08.**

This workcamp took place in a beautiful town of Sremski Karlovci and was hosted by AstralUM - an association of young independent artists. The goal and the mission of it is to provide every possible support to young people who are working in the field of art.

Volunteers work on creative workshops with the goal of producing various artistic creations. There were workshops such as painting, playing music, photography and filmmaking. It gave platform to many young artists to try new things, different mediums and to express themselves. The auditive and visual works were presented on an exhibition in September in Novi Sad. They were accommodated in tents. There were 12 volunteers, 5 female and 7 male. They were from Turkey, Spain, Russia, Serbia, Czech Republic and Poland.

Establishing and promoting tailor made volunteering programmes in nature protected areas

As a part of “Volunteers for Nature” project, which is supported by EU, comprehensive volunteering programmes were created, responding to the specific needs of protected areas and the interests of different target groups. As a result, selected protected area managers are now equipped with practical, operational, and long-term volunteering programmes, providing a solid foundation for systematic citizen engagement in nature protection and improved management of protected areas.

The programmes define clear objectives, expected results, volunteering activities, timelines, volunteer roles, and mechanisms for recruitment, motivation, training, and monitoring. Emphasis was placed on intergenerational volunteering and the inclusion of youth, pensioners, and local communities, ensuring safe, structured, and sustainable volunteer engagement.

The process involved 17 representatives of PA managers, 5 external experts (team leader, legal expert, expert for target groups’ needs assessment, GIS expert and communication expert), number of meetings, visits to protected areas, consultations, analyses (including focus groups with youth, business sector and elderly volunteers).

Selected areas were NP Fruška Gora, Đerdap and Kopaonik and nature park Sićevačka klisura.

Innovative volunteering programmes and possibility to volunteer in four selected areas were promoted during the campaign and YRS already have received 448 applications of citizens (YRS website, as per January 2026) willing to volunteer.

Youth Rules 2025

The project "Youth Rules 2025" was supported by Ministry of Tourism and Youth of the Republic of Serbia, and its aim was to strengthen youth activism and improve conditions for volunteering of young people and for young people.

The core idea of the program was to promote the importance of volunteering, affirm volunteer work and enhance the volunteering program in Serbia. During 2025, more than 1000 volunteers have directly contributed to the development and gave solution to challenges in their local communities. It is about over 15,000 volunteer hours that young people have invested to raise awareness and move the community to solve problems recognized as important in their community. Both volunteer workcamps and Šta Nam Teško volunteer projects are created around the needs of local communities across the country.

With the support provided through the project, are young people are empowered to be the bearers of local projects that involve the local community and thus motivate different stakeholders (local associations, businesses, volunteers, institutions) to contribute together.

Project "YOUTH PATH"

Finalisation of this project, which YRS implemented in cooperation with partners from the Azores and Canary Islands, happened in 2025. EU support programs for local initiatives and their impact on local communities were tested in the context of non-standard EU frameworks (island regions and countries in the process of EU accession).

In Gran Canaria (July 22-26, 2025), the Youth Path project held its final meeting, gathering youth workers, young people, and project managers from partner organizations. The event aimed to evaluate the project’s achievements, assess outcomes, and discuss future steps: review of youth proposals and learning outcomes for youth workers and young people with fewer opportunities; impact of EYPS in partner organizations; assess the impact on local communities and stakeholders. The meeting highlighted the success of empowering youth, especially those facing barriers, and promoted the lasting impact of the project. The collaboration across borders is expected to inspire future youth work initiatives.

Project C.L.I.C.

The C.L.I.C. – Long-Term Volunteering Community Empowerment project which aim was to strengthen organizations that support volunteers on long-term European Solidarity Corps (ESC) projects, in order to increase the program's impact on inclusion, environmental protection and the promotion of European values, also concluded in 2025. The final project conference, SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY, was held on February 18, 2025 in Zrenjanin.

The conference was focusing on the topics of mentorship, volunteers 'initiatives and the impact of volunteering in communities. Linked to the ALLIANCE Technical Meeting, the biggest gathering of international volunteering organizations, it was a fruitful opportunity of networking for any organization involved in mid- and long-term volunteering projects. Beyond, it was a milestone for EU-based organizations to advocate together, with youth workers and volunteers 'perspectives, for the future of the European Solidarity Corps. Organized in Serbia, the conference was also a clear invitation to enhance the participation of Western-Balkans countries in the ESC program.

Enhancing corporate volunteering

YRS continued its cooperation with interested companies and organized volunteering activities for corporate volunteers in 2025 as well (details are available in separate Chapter of this Report).



C.L.I.C. Conference, Zrenjanin
Source: YRS media archive

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 1.

Volunteering has been recognized as an important tool for community development, and mechanisms and volunteering programs have been set in place throughout Serbia that contribute to strengthening society's capacities for sustainable development.

Operational Program Objective 1.2:

Increased public awareness on the benefits of volunteering for the development of society/local communities and benefits from the volunteering programs implemented in partnership with CSOs, schools, informal groups, businesses etc.



*"Volontiraj za prirodu" campaign visuals
Source: YRS media archive*

Gender Diversity and LGBTQIA+ in workcamps

In 2025, the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations introduced, for the first time, a Topic of the Year, accompanied by the establishment of a dedicated working group. The selected theme for 2025 was Gender Diversity and LGBTQIA+. The working group focused on developing approaches and tools to make International Voluntary Service (IVS) spaces more inclusive for queer volunteers. Young Researchers of Serbia actively contributed to this initiative as a member of the working group. As a result of this activity, a set of educational materials was developed and promoted through the social media campaign “Spill the Tea on Diversity”, aiming to raise awareness, improve accessibility, and foster more inclusive IVS environments for LGBTQIA+ volunteers. The campaign was designed to reach and support all actors involved in the implementation of volunteer camps, including IVS organizations, local hosts, placement officers, camp leaders, and volunteers. In addition to contributing to the development of these materials, YRS supported the campaign’s dissemination by sharing and amplifying content through its social media channels. As a result, the campaign contributed to increased visibility of diversity and inclusion topics within the IVS network, strengthened collaboration among member organizations, and supported the integration of more inclusive practices in volunteer programs across the network.

International Youth Day 2025

International Youth Day, August 12, was marked during a volunteer camp in the Special Nature Reserve “Kraljevac.” The global theme set by the United Nations this year was to highlight the importance of local youth actions in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Youth Day was celebrated through a volunteer initiative in which, in addition to volunteers from abroad, local volunteers from partner organizations and representatives of YRS also participated, working on the removal of invasive plant species. The event was covered by local media, drawing public attention to the challenges and issues young people face, as well as to their potential as partners in society who can make a serious and measurable contribution to sustainable development.

Awareness raising campaign “Citizens for nature restoration”

The campaign was carried out under the title “Volontiraj za prirodu” (“Volunteer for Nature”), while the key message “Svaka tvoja odluka ostavlja trag na svetu.” (“Every decision you make leaves a trace on the world.”) framed the overall communication and emphasized individual responsibility and active engagement in nature restoration efforts. The aim of this activity was to raise awareness of citizens on nature protection and to stimulate citizens to become active in nature restoration. The main focus of the campaign was the promotion of the new EU Nature Restoration Law, while the promotion of volunteerism for nature was also included. The campaign covered the entire territory of Serbia, with a particular focus on locations in the vicinity of protected areas where tailor-made volunteer programmes are planned to be implemented in 2026.

Visual and written content was developed and adapted to the selected communication channels in line with the project’s visual identity. As part of the campaign, three short films were produced. In addition, billboard visuals were developed to support offline visibility, a dedicated landing page was created on the YRS website to provide project information and enable registration in the volunteer database, and a newsletter targeting members of the volunteer database was prepared. Branded promotional materials were also designed and produced to strengthen campaign visibility and support future volunteer engagement. The campaign was implemented as an intensive, multi-channel communication activity designed to reach diverse target groups. Communication activities were carried out in parallel through online, offline, and direct channels which included project partner’s websites (including a dedicated landing page), project partner’s social media channels (Instagram and Facebook), national and local media outlets, direct communication through newsletters, and outdoor advertising through billboards placed at selected locations. The published content reached 1.000.461 unique accounts and generated a total of 1.013.486 views, 1443 interactions and 1160 link clicks across social media platforms. In total, 68 media publications were recorded across 44 different media outlets, including online portals (54), print media (6), television (4), and radio (4). Among these, three paid articles were published in national media outlets (Cord Magazine, Nedeljnik, and Ekolist). The estimated cumulative media reach was 3,522,696 citizens. In addition, nine billboards were placed in selected cities across Serbia (Belgrade, Irig, Kopaonik, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Leskovac, Niš, Novi Sad, and Smederevo), further strengthening the campaign’s offline presence and territorial outreach. The implemented communication activities contributed to increased visibility of the topic and directly supported the achievement of the planned indicator related to raising awareness on nature restoration and volunteering.

International Volunteers Day 2025

In 2025, under the inspiring theme “Every Contribution Matters,” IVD 2025 takes on historic significance as it marks the official global launch of the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development (IVY 2026). YRS traditionally celebrated IVD by organizing gathering for its volunteers - over 25 volunteers gathered for “the board games nigh”, on December 5, 2025, to celebrate IVD but also to exchange experiences, plans, tricks and tips for participation on voluntary workcamps. Additionally, promoting volunteerism in media was done on the occasion in order to raise awareness of public on importance of volunteering.

Additional awareness raising

As in previous years, during monitoring visits to volunteer work camps (performed by YRS team), organizers were introduced to the opportunities and benefits of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) program. Expanding ESC accreditation to YRS’s local partners and organizations running international volunteering activities would provide further support to the camps and volunteers.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 1.

Volunteering has been recognized as an important tool for community development, and mechanisms and volunteering programs have been set in place throughout Serbia that contribute to strengthening society's capacities for sustainable development.

Operational Program Objective 1.3:

Improved quality of volunteer programs and legislative frameworks for volunteering through promotion and implementation of international standards in volunteering.



Alliance Technical Meeting, Zrenjanin
Source: YRS media archive

Improving policy and legislative framework on volunteering

There were not many occasions in 2025 to work directly on policy and/or legislation related to volunteering in Serbia, mostly due to the political instability caused by students and citizens' protest.

Still YRS took part in some consultative processes, which have helped setting preconditions for policy and legislation improvement.

- White Book on Youth Policy in Serbia prepared by National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS) [link](#)

YRS took part in series of consultative meetings and supported development of recommendations related to the chapter on Youth Participation – related to volunteerism.

- Action Plan for the implementation of National Youth Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, for period 2026-2028.

YRS participated in drafting document and consultations organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Youth of the Republic of Serbia.

- Local Voluntary Services - The importance of investment and capacity building in services and spaces for all young people, panel discussion organized by UNICEF and Kruševac Educational Center (June 4, 2025).

YRS took part in panel discussion aiming at presentation of tools and approaches in youth work in the field of volunteer management, examples from practice within Local Voluntary Services and Youth Centers, as well as plans for networking of stakeholders and further steps in expanding this approach.

During 2025, within its youth-volunteering program, YRS was highly active in networks and bodies advocating for and working to create a better environment for volunteering.

Through global networks (CCIVS) and primarily European networks (the Alliance of International Voluntary Service Organizations and Service Civil International), YRS contributed through its active involvement to improving network operations, as well as enhancing conditions for volunteering and volunteer exchanges.

Participation in international network meetings and active involvement in the Alliance work not only contribute to developing a better environment for volunteering but also allow YRS to remain an active organization in the field of volunteer work, increasing the number of partnerships that YRS establishes.

The Alliance Technical Meeting 2025 and C.L.I.C. Conference

The meeting was hosted by YRS and took place from 18 to 23 February 2026 in Zrenjanin, bringing together 94 representatives from 55-member, partner, and guest organizations from all over the world. As an annual gathering ahead of the workcamp season, the meeting provided a space to exchange project plans, strengthen partnerships, and prepare for the year ahead. Alongside numerous bilateral meetings, participants engaged in 18 workshops focused on expanding the reach and impact of International Volunteer Workcamps for volunteers, leaders, and organizations.

The event concluded with a shared sense of motivation as members prepared to host around 1500 projects for around 20 thousand volunteers worldwide in the upcoming season.

2025 meeting was among the biggest meetings of volunteer organizations in the world. A key highlight was the introduction of the Alliance's first "topic of the year," focusing on LGBTQIA+ wellbeing and safety on workcamps, an especially meaningful theme in the Serbian context. The program also included a volunteer fair attended by around 50 volunteers, a visit to the local agricultural secondary school to showcase additional initiatives, and cultural activities such as a guided city tour and an intercultural evening connecting participants with the local community. Overall, the meeting successfully combined program planning with knowledge exchange and community engagement, setting a strong foundation for the year ahead.

The C.L.I.C. European Conference was held on 18 February 2025 in Zrenjanin, just ahead of the Alliance Technical Meeting, creating strong synergies between the two events. Organized by YRS and supported by 9 other organizations of the Erasmus KA2 C.L.I.C. project, the conference brought together 71 delegates from 38 organizations across 28 countries. The event featured contributions from key stakeholders, including representatives from national agencies, the European Volunteer Centre, SALTO European Solidarity Corps, and European Youth Forum. The content and facilitation were developed collaboratively, with partner organizations leading workshops and actively contributing to discussions, dissemination of results, and advocacy efforts at national and regional levels.

Originally planned to take place in Brussels in late 2025, the conference was strategically relocated to Serbia and aligned with the Technical Meeting to increase participation, strengthen connections with organizations in the Balkans, and better respond to the European policy timeline related to the future of the European Solidarity Corps. The event focused primarily on capacity building and knowledge exchange, presenting the outcomes of the C.L.I.C. project, particularly the White Paper of recommendations developed through a bottom-up process involving volunteers, mentors, and youth workers. While the conference successfully expanded outreach, fostered collaboration, and provided a platform for sharing evidence-based recommendations, its impact remained stronger at the practitioner level than at the political level. Nevertheless, it contributed to reinforcing partnerships and supporting ongoing dialogue on the future of European volunteering programmes.

Study session “WE too: Workcamp Equality too! Creating a safer and more encouraging international youth projects for LGBTQIA+ youth

In March 2025, YRS participated in study Session which aimed to ensure that International voluntary Service (IVS) projects, particularly workcamps, are inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth.

The objectives were to gather insights and lived experiences for LGBTQIA+ volunteers, allies and IVS practitioners to share their experiences and collectively identify the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ youth in accessing and participating in IVS programmes; to disseminate best practices, approaches, and expertise that effectively promote the safety and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ youth within IVS activities, particularly within the context of workcamps; to collaboratively explore, create, and support the development of new resources and materials that will enhance the safety and inclusivity of workcamps for LGBTQIA+ youth and bring them in the toolbox of change for IVS networks.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 2:

Empowered civil society, with greater influence and competence to take part in the decision-making processes in an informed manner and to implement activities aimed at environmental protection and community development.

Operational Program Objective 2.1:

Empowered CSOs for active participation in the reforms within the EU Integration process in the field of environmental protection and climate change (Cluster 4, Chapter 27, the Green Agenda) through a capacity-building program that includes educational and financial support and support through networking on a local, national and international level.



Introductory ECOSYSTEM programme training, Srebrno jezero
Source: YRS media archive

In 2025, as in previous year, YRS implemented a comprehensive support program to strengthen civil society organizations, combining capacity-building activities, financial assistance and structured networking opportunities at local, national and international levels, with a focus on building cross-sector coalitions and enhancing CSOs' advocacy capacities locally, nationally and regionally.

The YRS team continuously collected information on CSO needs through the selection process, trainings, thematic events, project monitoring and evaluation of supported projects. The collected data are processed and analysed, then used to develop recommendations for capacity-building programs and financial support for citizens' associations and informal groups.

Informal groups in secondary agricultural schools

In 2025, YRS with a support of FAO, supported informal groups of students attending the elective subject "Climate Change in Agriculture" in secondary agricultural high schools.

Five supported projects were:

- **EkoFLOCK, Agricultural Secondary School Požarevac** - Students aimed to contribute to local climate change mitigation measures by integrating solar energy use with animal welfare and environmental protection. The project involved the implementation of a solar shepherd, powered by solar energy instead of fossil fuels, thereby reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Depending on grazing needs, the system will also be used on pastures outside the school grounds areas without access to electricity thus supporting extensive and sustainable meat and milk production.
- **Eco Educators, Agricultural Secondary School Sombor** - Third- and fourth-year students wanted to share essential knowledge on climate change adaptation by showcasing measures already implemented at their school. Believing that climate education should be accessible to younger generations, students and teachers organized five educational visits for elementary schools in the Sombor area. During these visits, eighth-grade pupils explored the school grounds, participated in workshops, and learned directly from students about how climate change affects agricultural land and livestock, as well as the measures used to mitigate these impacts.
- **The Green is Valuable, Agricultural Secondary School Zrenjanin** - This group focused on the rehabilitation of degraded land by greening the area adjacent to the city landfill and the municipal animal shelter. Students applied their knowledge to convert degraded soil into functional grassland by covering technogenic substrates at the municipal waste landfill. The project aimed to repurpose devastated land into a green public area, implemented with the active participation of students and the local public utility enterprise.
- **Aqua Sheep, Agricultural Secondary School Kraljevo** - Students addressed climate change adaptation and animal welfare by installing a thermal watering system for approximately 100 sheep. The system requires no additional power source, features insulated thermal walls, and is resistant to frost down to -25°C . It prevents water overheating during summer months and includes a high-flow valve. Students were responsible for installing and testing the equipment, as well as monitoring water temperature and animal behaviour.

- **No Stress Hens, Agricultural Secondary School Požega** - This project focused on adaptation to climate change in poultry production, with an emphasis on animal welfare in organic egg production systems. Students installed a protective shading net over the outdoor roaming area for laying hens. The net provides shade, reducing air temperature by an estimated 1–6°C, depending on external conditions, while lowering soil surface temperature by 5–15°C by blocking direct solar radiation. The measure directly contributes to improved animal wellbeing and production conditions.



*Agricultural Secondary School, Sombor
Source: YRS media archive*

"ECO SYSTEM" Program

The ECO SYSTEM support program encompassed a total of 15 projects implemented by 2 networks and 28 different civil society organizations across Serbia. The initiatives reached over 40 municipalities and local communities across Serbia, including urban and rural areas as well as protected natural zones. The projects addressed a wide range of environmental and social topics, including:

- Forest management and conservation – improving transparency, legal compliance, and sustainable management of forests; financial valuation of ecosystem services; public awareness campaigns.
- Waste management and recycling – source separation, prevention of packaging waste in protected areas, public campaigns, educational workshops, and policy recommendations.
- Water supply and climate change adaptation – inclusive approaches to water access, climate-resilient practices, advocacy for women and youth involvement, and promotion of Nature-based Solutions.
- Air quality and energy transition – development of digital cadastres for heating units, citizen energy engagement, energy policy advocacy, and public education on sustainable energy.
- Youth and community engagement – environmental education, capacity building, volunteer initiatives, local actions, and strengthening participation of youth and women in decision-making.
- Biodiversity and protected areas – educational programs, field research, environmental monitoring, and strengthening cooperation among local stakeholders.
- Policy development and advocacy – preparation of action plans, submission of recommendations, public consultations, and improved collaboration between CSOs, local governments, and national institutions.

Overall, the program enhanced institutional capacities, fostered civic engagement, and elevated public awareness, thereby establishing enduring foundations for sustainable environmental management, active community participation, and evidence-based policy influence throughout Serbia.

ECOSYSTEM programme: supported projects*



**This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 (1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.*

Supported projects:

From Forests for Forests – Phase 4 - National Forest Owners Association “Dendroserbia”

Locations: Belgrade, Užice, Zlatibor, Leskovac

The project “From Forests for Forests – Phase 4”, implemented by the National Forest Owners Association “Dendroserbia”, focused on improving transparency and strengthening the implementation of legal obligations related to the earmarked use of funds generated from wood utilization fees within local self-governments in Serbia. Through nationwide monitoring of Forest Law implementation across all 145 local self-governments, direct communication with authorities, and analysis of 86 collected responses, the project provided the first comprehensive national overview of actual practices and identified key challenges in fund management. It developed two practical tools - a template for the Programme for the Use of Funds and a reporting template for the competent ministry - enabling local authorities to more easily fulfil their legal obligations. Additional activities included a national online training (40 registered, 32 participants), outreach to over 350 contacts, production of a promotional video and video tutorial, and a two-day workshop with 20 participants. The project clearly highlighted a significant gap between legal obligations and actual practices in forest fund management, as well as a low level of institutional engagement in addressing these issues, demonstrating the need for stronger accountability and more effective implementation of the Forest Law in Serbia.

Oplaneti se: Let’s Reduce Waste – Serbian Green Network

Locations: Raška District, Bor District, and Rasina District

The project “Oplaneti se: Let’s Reduce Waste”, implemented by the Serbian Green Network, contributed to strengthening the role of civil society in waste management and environmental policy reform in Serbia. Through capacity-building activities and educational programs for local stakeholders, particularly within the Green List of Serbia (GLS) network, the project enhanced the ability of its 12 member organizations (including a newly admitted member) to participate in decision-making processes and advocacy at local, regional, and national levels. The project supported the development of evidence-based analyses, including surveys conducted in Trstenik and Vrnjačka Banja and a case study in Bor, which informed local waste management initiatives and policy monitoring aligned with Coalition 27 methodology. It also contributed to public policy development through active participation in consultations on the Waste Management Law, submitting four comments, one of which was adopted. Public awareness was significantly increased through a campaign reaching over 230,000 people via media, social networks (over 32,000 views across 64 posts), and printed publications. Key activities included organizing multiple trainings and workshops for over 150 participants, including educators and students, focusing on waste reduction, recycling, and circular economy principles, as well as the development of a comprehensive education program for all stakeholders. Additionally, the project strengthened organizational capacities through the adoption of a new Strategic Plan (2025–2028), updates to gender equality and policy participation guidelines, and improved cooperation with public authorities, resulting in a stronger foundation for long-term environmental governance and waste management improvements in Serbia.

Building Knowledge, Protecting Nature - Novi Sad Environmental Movement

Locations: Novi Sad and Sremski Karlovci

The project “Building Knowledge, Protecting Nature”, implemented by the Novi Sad Environmental Movement in partnership with the Children’s Academy of Ecology, focused on strengthening environmental awareness and education on air, water, and soil protection among youth, educators, and local communities in Vojvodina. Through targeted trainings and the development of a practical manual containing 15 interactive workshops, the project directly trained 14 young people and 17 teachers, while an additional 26 teachers were reached through a provincial seminar, enabling them to apply the knowledge in both curricular and extracurricular activities. The project expanded its impact across a wide network of educational institutions from over 20 cities and municipalities and achieved strong synergy with the Provincial Government program “For Cleaner and Greener Schools in Vojvodina.” Local environmental engagement was encouraged through social media challenges, with 7 schools implementing and sharing conservation actions. Public awareness and outreach were significantly strengthened through a comprehensive communication campaign, including educational visuals, quizzes, media outreach, and sponsored content, resulting in a 66% increase in Instagram followers and improved audience engagement. The project successfully enhanced the capacities of educators and young people to actively contribute to environmental protection and ensured the practical application of knowledge through continued work in schools and local communities.

Air Under Control - iRevolution

Locations: Novi Pazar, Kraljevo, Valjevo

The project “Air Under Control”, implemented by iRevolucija in partnership with the National Ecological Association and the Eko Barajevo Initiative, focused on improving air quality governance through the introduction of a digital cadastre of individual heating units as a key tool for local policy development. The project had a direct impact in Kraljevo and Novi Pazar, where the cadastre software was successfully implemented, while an additional eight local self-governments were introduced to its application and policy potential. Through targeted capacity-building and advocacy activities, the project strengthened the role of civil society organizations, including direct engagement with one partner organization, in promoting transparent and data-driven decision-making related to energy efficiency and air protection. The initiative enabled several municipalities, including Paraćin, Sremska Mitrovica, and Smederevo, to recognize individual heating units as a major source of pollution and to consider integrating the digital cadastre into future air quality plans. Key activities included trainings, workshops, and presentations that established strong cooperation with local institutions and decision-makers, resulting in improved understanding and readiness for implementation. As a result, two local governments were fully trained and equipped to independently manage the digital cadastre, while broader awareness and capacities were strengthened across both public institutions and civil society for advancing effective and transparent air quality measures.

Youth and Nature - Together We Create Opportunities for Sustainable Development – CSO Proaktiv

Locations: Pirot and Niš, Old Mountain and Sićevo nature park

The project “Youth and Nature – Together We Create Opportunities for Sustainable Development”, implemented by CSO Proaktiv in partnership with Society Stara Planina in the Stara Planina protected area and Sidevo Nature Park, strengthened youth engagement in environmental protection, improved cooperation between local stakeholders, and increased public awareness of sustainable management. Through educational workshops, field visits, advocacy, and public communication, 40 young participants enhanced their knowledge of biodiversity and protected areas, while two partner citizen organizations strengthened capacities in project management, youth work, and communication. Five local institutions joined the dialogue on sustainable tourism and resource management, formalizing cooperation through a memorandum, and community outreach reached five agricultural and tourism households. The project initiated at least three new collaborations between civil society, youth groups, and local communities, while six media reports and a targeted social media campaign reached nearly 289,000 people online. Overall, the initiative built long-term capacity for youth-driven environmental actions and fostered stronger local engagement in the Stara Planina region.

At Least One Fire Less - Volunteer Fire Department Kraljevo

Locations: Kraljevo, Mataruška Banja, Vrba, Bogutovac

The project “At Least One Fire Less”, implemented by the Volunteer Fire Department Kraljevo in partnership with the Voluntary Firefighting Association Padobranac, Voluntary Firefighting Association Mataruška Banja, Voluntary Firefighting Association Studenica, and Voluntary Firefighting Association Vrba, increased awareness and capacity for fire prevention and nature protection among young people, local residents, and school communities. Educational programs for primary and secondary students combined lectures, practical demonstrations, and volunteer actions, including tree planting, resulting in the creation of the first eco-classroom in Kraljevo, complemented by an educational trail on forest fire prevention. Workshops educated local residents on safe plant waste management and biomass use, reducing fire risks, while teacher trainings and school fire sections established models for implementing the Fire Protection Law in three schools. The project strengthened cooperation between farmers, residents, and regional voluntary fire brigades, enhanced the visibility of rural fire brigades, and improved readiness through the provision of manual fire-extinguishing equipment. Over the course of implementation, 11 workshops and trainings engaged 70 local residents, 65 students, and 9 teachers, one volunteer action organized the eco-classroom with 16 participants, and meetings with institutions promoted better coordination and compliance with legal fire protection education requirements, contributing to both practical prevention and long-term community engagement.

The Power of the Green Community: Youth and Women for a Sustainable Future - Centre of Modern Skills

Locations: Subotica, Sremska Mitrovica, Novi Pazar

The project “The Power of the Green Community: Youth and Women for a Sustainable Future”, implemented by the Centre of Modern Skills in Subotica, Sremska Mitrovica, and Novi Pazar, strengthened the participation of youth and women in environmental protection and enhanced local mechanisms for inclusive decision-making. Through targeted info sessions, the project directly engaged 33 decision-makers and stakeholders, raising awareness of the importance of involving these groups in the creation and implementation of local environmental policies. In all three municipalities, initiatives were developed to ensure systemic support, including proposals for a local environmental ombudsperson, youth forums, educational workshops on recycling and the circular economy, tree registries, and measures for green space preservation, with additional proposals addressing pollution’s impact on reproductive health and increasing women’s participation in public and political life. These proposals were forwarded to the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and to the Parliamentary Environmental Protection Committee, extending the project’s influence to national-level policy. Trainings on gender equality and environmental protection empowered 41 participants, while the annual Green Chair network gathering connected 27 members and Women for Nature representatives, fostering networking, knowledge exchange, and joint advocacy. Public visibility was significantly enhanced through 106 social media posts, five videos, and ten editions of the Green Bulletin distributed to 1,289 recipients, reaching over 37,000 views, thereby increasing public awareness and engagement. Overall, the project achieved measurable progress in building capacities, promoting participation, and laying the foundation for the long-term inclusion of youth and women in environmental decision-making.

Green Screen - Forum of Civil Action FORCA

Locations: Požega and Čajetina

The project “Green Screen”, implemented by the Forum of Civil Action FORCA, significantly improved waste source separation through education, research, and policy recommendations. Surveys of 410 students and citizens provided insights into current knowledge, practices, and barriers, forming the basis for the document “Recommendations for Successful Waste Source Separation in the Municipality of Požega”. Lessons learned from Čajetina and the high quality of produced educational video materials enabled broader use of the resources beyond Požega. The project directly engaged youth through 32 educational workshops and screenings of the animated film “Click on Green”, reaching 704 students, of whom 87.4% improved their knowledge scores, while schools received the film as a permanent teaching resource. Media campaigns raised public awareness of proper waste separation, particularly during the regional landfill crisis, and strengthened communication between schools and local authorities, advancing local policy development. The project also enhanced FORCA’s capacities in research, policy development, and communication on environmental topics, ensuring long-term sustainability and continued engagement in promoting waste management and environmental protection.

Horizons Without Pollution: Public Participation in Legislative Reform and Procedures for Effective Control and Protection Against Industrial Pollution - Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute

Locations: Belgrade, Požarevac, Obrenovac, Paraćin

The project “Horizons Without Pollution”, implemented by the Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute (RERI), improved transparency, public participation, and accountability in industrial pollution control. The initiative contributed to the publication of the Draft Law on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, introducing public consultation where previous amendments had lacked it. Through the Baseline Analysis of the Draft Law, the project exposed institutional gaps and legal violations by major polluters, providing decision-makers, civil society, and citizens with critical insights into legislative drafting and law implementation. RERI also developed and publicly shared specific recommendations for improving the law and promoted innovative mechanisms, such as administrative complaints, to hold inspection bodies accountable. Public engagement was strengthened through events, media outreach, and social media, reaching over 34,000 users organically, while 19 media reports covered the final events promoting the analyses and public participation guidelines, amplifying the project’s visibility and impact on industrial pollution awareness and governance.

Inclusive Practices for Sustainable Water Supply in the Context of Climate Change -Association for the Promotion and Environmental Marketing of Natural Values - Ekomar

Locations: Kragujevac, Knić, Raška, Sjenica, Tutin

The project “Inclusive Practices for Sustainable Water Supply in the Context of Climate Change”, implemented by Ekomar in partnership with Polekol and Eko Hero, strengthened understanding of local water supply challenges, with a focus on the experiences of women in rural communities. Based on data collection and interviews with women, local institutions, and public utility companies, the project produced the publication “Dry Truth: Climate Change and the Water Supply Crisis in Serbia”, offering integrated analysis and policy recommendations. A three-day training program engaged 37 members of the Network of Women for Nature and the Environment, leading to the launch of community initiatives as part of an activist challenge. The project’s outreach included seven thematic posts and two video stories, reaching around 35,000 people, while a roundtable in Tutin and final events in Belgrade and Kragujevac presented the results to wider audiences. Overall, the project enhanced the capacities of local women activists, increased public awareness of climate-induced water supply issues, and fostered dialogue between citizens and institutions for more inclusive and sustainable water management.

Climate and Energy in the Hands of Citizens - Environment Improvement Centre

Locations: Belgrade, Čačak

The project “Climate and Energy in the Hands of Citizens”, implemented by the Environment Improvement Centre, strengthened civic participation in Serbia’s energy transition by informing, educating, and activating target groups, particularly youth and women. Combining analytical content, digital formats, and public events, the project improved understanding of key energy topics and increased the capacity of citizens and civil society to engage in energy transition processes.

Through two case studies, applicable EU models were presented, domestic barriers identified, and an evidence-based foundation for advocacy was established. The project achieved broad visibility, with 161,000 views of four podcast episodes, 3,208 views of interviews, 1,987 views of two citizen energy case studies, a Solar Meetup with 16 participants, a lecture on energy communities with 42 participants, analysis of local climate policies, 491,740 citizens reached via social media, and 29 media publications. The initiative exceeded planned indicators, demonstrated strong potential for scaling, and confirmed that the combination of education and digital communication produces significant and lasting impact on citizen energy engagement in Serbia.

What Our Forests Mean to Us: Initiative for Higher Evaluation of General Benefits of the Forests - Ecological Center „Habitat“

Locations: Serbia

The project “What Our Forests Mean to Us”, implemented by the Ecological Center „Habitat“, introduced scientifically grounded proposals for the financial valuation of three key public utility functions of forests, including carbon sequestration, prevention of torrential floods, and soil erosion control, and suggested regulatory changes to integrate these functions into forest management plans and nature protection studies. The project had a significant impact on citizen associations and the wider public through targeted campaigns and promotion of results. A meeting of 13 associations within the "Afforest Vojvodina" network led to joint advocacy for adopting the proposed forest valuation methodology. The social media campaign generated 26 posts with over 1.4 million views, successfully raising public awareness about the economic and ecological importance of forests and establishing a strong foundation for future advocacy and education efforts.

Communities in Balance - Nature and Sustainable Development - Eco Infinity

Locations: Sjenica, Novi Pazar, Tutin

The project “Communities in Balance – Nature and Sustainable Development”, implemented by Eco Infinity, enhanced understanding of environmental conditions and strengthened cooperation between citizens, civil society organizations, and local institutions. Through systematic field research and analyses, the project collected consolidated data on waste management, water pollution, and the conservation status of protected areas for the first time across the target communities. It encouraged active citizen participation, particularly among youth, through environmental actions and educational activities, increasing awareness and readiness to address local environmental challenges. Roundtables and a forum facilitated dialogue with decision-makers, and the identified problems and recommendations were compiled into a publication serving as a foundation for future local environmental policy planning for 2026–2030. The project also strengthened local stakeholder capacities, improved institutional cooperation, and raised the visibility of environmental issues. Key results include over 10 project activities, 3 field research initiatives, identification and mapping of dozens of critical points, 3 roundtables, 68 citizens involved in field activities, 33 young participants in educational programs, 1 forum with around 60 attendees, and a 32-page publication distributed to 95 relevant institutions.

Ecosystem - Based Adaptation – UNECOOP

Locations: Šumadija and Pomoravlje administrative Districts

The project “Ecosystem-Based Adaptation”, implemented by UNECOOP in partnership with "Aarhus Centre", "GREEN LIMES" and "SN Agrar" had a significant impact on target groups by strengthening civil society organizations, local administration staff, youth, and media representatives in understanding climate change adaptation and applying Nature-based Solutions (NbS). Through trainings, on-site advocacy, study visits, and Open Days, participants improved their knowledge of legal obligations and practical approaches to reducing risks from flash floods, erosion, and urban heat islands. The project contributed to local policy development by analysing 13 municipalities and producing 10 recommendations for enhancing local climate policies, which were submitted to local self-governments and SKGO. Additionally, the team participated in national consultations, submitting 16 comments and amendments on 9 national policies, thereby reinforcing CSO advocacy capacity. The project directly benefited 110 target group members and indirectly reached over 450,000 citizens, enhancing community resilience through improved knowledge, awareness, and strengthened local capacities for advancing climate policies.

Packaging Waste Has No Place in Protected Natural Areas – Goodbye Waste – Ibar Development Association IDA

Locations: Biosphere Reservation „Golija-Studenica“, Kraljevo and Ivanjica

The project “Packaging Waste Has No Place in Protected Natural Areas – Goodbye Waste”, implemented by Ibar Development Association IDA in partnership with Eko centar and Udruženje Rudnjaskih domaćina, had an impact on farmers, civil society representatives, and local organizations operating in the Biosphere Reservation „Golija-Studenica“. It influenced nature protection policies by enabling the preparation of an Action Plan for agricultural waste management with active participation of key stakeholders and the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation for its implementation. The project improved management of packaging waste in the protected area through organized collection actions for pesticide packaging, increased the visibility of civil society organizations, and strengthened collaboration among project partners. Key achievements include 23 representatives of CSOs and public sector improving knowledge on citizen participation and waste management, preparation of 2 training material packages, 12 social media posts to raise awareness, integration of gender equality guidelines into the Action Plan, 51 students educated on pesticide types and environmental impacts, 32 farmers and 100 citizens informed on proper pesticide packaging disposal, and 51 farmers collecting 24 kg of pesticide packaging as part of the campaign.



*Building Knowledge, Protecting Nature - Novi Sad Environmental Movement
Source: YRS media archive*

"Šta nam teško" program

Support to informal groups though "Šta nam teško" program is organized in cooperation with partner organizations: Environmental Movement of Vojvodina (Sremski Karlovci), GM Optimist (Gornji Milanovac), Team42 (Leksovac) and CeGraD (Obrenovac).

In 2025 altogether 96 applications were received, out of which 41 projects of informal groups were selected for support. These projects involved about 500 young people from 19 districts in Serbia, who carried out activities in their local communities. The projects focused on diverse topics, such as arranging a park or a place where young people gather, drawing attention to a problem in the language of young people, intergenerational cooperation, peer support. There was also a growing number of youth initiatives related to mental health and environmental protection.

An online training was organized for selected informal groups. The training was attended by 35 representatives with the support of the representatives of partner organizations and four mentors. A guide for the implementation of youth volunteer projects though informal groups has been updated and used as part of online training.



Zrenjaninski gimnazijalci - "Otpaci lete, ptice slete", Zrenjanin
Source: volimzrenjanin.com

LIST OF SUPPORTED PROJECTS IN 2025

INFORMAL GROUP	PROJECT NAME
Slobodarci	- "Možemo."
BREZE	- "Napravimo hlad"
Dramski studio "Čošē"	- "Jednog dana ćemo se ovome smejati"
Vidi ga ovaj.	- "Za naš kraj"
Ekološko udruženje "Vilin Konjic"	- "ECO Hub"
Izviđači Obrenovca	- "Jasen za hlad"
Hemijski šmekeri	- "Nauka iz rukava"
ZAŠTO DA NE	- "OZNAČIMO PUT"
Društvo Omladine Rušnja	- "Rušanj - Zeleni bedem"
Učenički parlament OŠ "Aca Milosavljević"	- "Učenički parlament OŠ "Aca Milosavljević"
Boje Zlatara	- "Daj mi prostor i stvoriću svet."
Spasilačka garda Srbije	- "Budi IZVOR promene"
Rikoma Markovac	- "Rikoma ECO PARK"
Sejači sreće	- "Oiviči budućnost" - akcija izgradnje ivičnjaka"
LiberKop	- "Via Kopaonik - nova zelena planinska ruta"
Deca iz vode	- "Siđi do Despotovice"
Zli Dusi	- "Ritam Humanosti"
Pravi Sekuričani	- "Juhor Bike Fest – Planinska vožnja i prirodni ritam 2025."
Šahistkinje	- "Kraljica poteza- Šahovski festival za devojke"
Bezbednost mladih na internetu	- "Ruke prave čuda – dan radosti u Putincima"
Zrenjaninski gimnazijalci	- "Otpaci lete, ptice slete"
Obnovimo Titel	- "Čuvari titelskog brega"
NovoSnažni	- "Naše novo Novo naselje"
AstralUm	- "Studio u Etru"
Učenički tim Tehničke škole	- "Škola u bojama velikih naučnika– krećenje škole"
Kreativci na delu-čarobne četkice	- "Boje dobrote"
SKOK	- "Druženje u SKOKu"
OSET grupa	- "OSETI"
Pionir slobodna škola	- "Izazov: Talas koji dolazi"
Zajednica koja sadi promene	- "Trg živih boja"
"Umetnost kao most razumevanja"	- "Izrazi se bojom i rečiju"
Niška književna družina	- "Za znanje nije teško"
Mali Plavi Front	- "Stanica za druženje- gde reka priče nosi"
5-ica na delu	- "Trilogija zabave"
Ekološka družina Niš	- "Plastika svuda - priroda luda"
Zona mladih	- "Nacrtaj mi..."
LIBERTA	- "Ispod lipe – priče koje ne smeju u zaborav"
Za nas Cukljenik	- "Rastemo kroz igru"
Hakatorijum Hakerski pismenjaci	- "Hakerski Pismenjaci - mladi u akciji"
KOLEKTIV+	- "Veče otvorenih razgovora: Ja + Ti = Mi"
Volonteri omladinske terenske jedinice Crvenog krsta Jagodina	- "Spremni za odgovor – Mladi za sigurne zajednice"

Support for greater influence and competences for participation in the decision-making processes in an informed manner

Support for CSOs and informal citizen groups had a significant impact on increasing citizen participation in decision-making processes.

In 2025 cooperation with institutions was limited. But, YRS and Coalition 27 advocated for more transparent and just selection of organizations to be part of governmental bodies for law drafting – opinion was given on the selection of two organizations for the working group for drafting Law on Nature Protection.

On August 7, 2025 Ministry of Environmental Protection has published a public call for collecting opinion on so called starting points for Law on Nature Protection development. YRS has prepared “KAZI UKAZI” (have your say) questionnaire for public and shared on its website. With a 162 pageviews, 4 online entries and additional comments sent to YRS by email, over 30 comments and suggestions, prepared by 8 organizations, were sent to the Ministry of environmental protection of the Republic of Serbia.

YRS supported the capacity-building of the Green Chair network of organizations by assisting in the organization of meeting. Due to the political instability and protest, no cooperation with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia – Environmental Protection Committee was done in 2025.

Project “Dialogue, Partnership and Volunteering - for biodiversity!”

The project will impact citizens involvement in decision making for the nature protection. It will support individuals to be equipped with sufficient knowledge and evidence to participate in the environmental policy debates and practices. Its purpose is to build capacities, establish and/or strengthen cooperation, and give volunteering opportunities to youth and women in protected natural areas.

Project started in October 2025 and will last until October 2026. It is supported through BOOST project - which is funded by Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

Sharing best practices with partners, donors, media

Support to informal groups and organizations brings numerous best practices examples and possibilities to learn, share, use know how of local activists.

During the Alliance annual meeting in Zrenjanin, in February 2025, the results of YRS's volunteer workcamps were presented, and a visit to a local school was organized, whose students were supported through the "Šta Nam Teško" program. Support to informal groups is a unique example of good practice in the world because it has efficient methodology of support, that enables young people to do something good in their local community, without prior knowledge and experience.

On 29 April 2025 the ACCTING project held its Final Conference in Brussels, bringing together researchers, policymakers, civil society leaders and representatives of diverse communities. YRS, being a grantee of this project, was invited to present best practice examples of work of informal groups and volunteers in Serbia, being part of ACCTING's contribution to building a fair and inclusive European Green Deal.

Ecological-research centar “Jezero Gruža“ is one of good examples, which was presented to Sida representatives during study visit in December 2025. Ekomar has been working for more than ten years to improve water quality and protect lakes Gruža, Šumarice and Bubanj, as well as to strengthen the participation of citizens through cooperation with local self-governments, education of children and the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes. The support through the ECO-SYSTEM program has enabled Ekomar to continue its work, connecting citizens, institutions and the professional community in the fight for sustainable and equitable access to water for all.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 2:

Empowered civil society, with greater influence and competence to take part in the decision-making processes in an informed manner and to implement activities aimed at environmental protection and community development.

Operational Program Objective 2.2:

Empowered CSOs, partners, informal groups and individuals for implementing volunteering programs/camps through a capacity-building program that provides educational and financial support, as well as support through improvement of international cooperation on volunteer exchange.



Workcamp leader training, Sremski Karlovci
Source: YRS media archive

International exchange of volunteers through international networks of CSOs and projects

YRS-VSS has had very intensive volunteers exchange during 2025. The interest of Serbian volunteers to participate in workcamps and trainings abroad increased.

Summarized, 289 volunteers were exchanged on workcamps (152 international volunteers come to Serbia and 137 Serbia volunteers went to workcamps abroad), and 9 volunteers from Serbia were sent to short term and long-term volunteering programmes.

Volunteers on workcamps in Serbia were from Spain, Italy, Turkey, Hong Kong, France, Belgium, Mexico, Germany, Russia, Hungary, Japan, Czech Republic, Greece, Estonia, Denmark, Belarus, South Korea, Netherlands, Poland.

Additionally, during 2025 YRS sent participants to 38 youth exchanges/trainings/seminars - around 90 volunteers to different countries (mostly to France, Germany and Italy). Volunteers from Serbia were supported by YRS team in choosing workcamps, preparing for volunteering but also, they were involved in post-camp evaluation and information exchange. Some of the volunteers were presenting their stories on the website on YRS but also during diverse events.

For the volunteers at the so called “national camps” – those organized in Serbia for Serbian volunteers, YRS was available for meetings in the office but also peer support was disponible from volunteer mentors who had already participated in the camps, as well as from camp leaders.

Trainings for workcamp leaders

National training: the training took place in Sremski Karlovci, May 8-11, 2025 and was organized by YRS. The camp leader training programme engaged 14 selected volunteers who completed a short but intensive preparation to take on leadership roles across more than 20 workcamps organized during the summer. Participants were chosen based on their motivation and demonstrated problem-solving abilities, which were further strengthened throughout the training. Marking the first full return of this annual programme after the pandemic, the training was significantly redesigned to better respond to the evolving needs of local partners and the objectives of the workcamps.

Developed by the volunteering and educational programme teams, the training combined personal development, focusing on communication, problem-solving, and group facilitation skills, with practical knowledge required for leading workcamps. Through non-formal education methods, participants actively contributed to the learning process and engaged in simulations of real-life camp situations. The programme received highly positive evaluations, with all participants successfully transitioning into leadership roles, each taking responsibility for one or more workcamps during the 2025 season.

International trainings: during May and June 2026, in cooperation with international partners in Germany and Italy, 6 camp leaders from Serbia were additionally trained. The Camp leaders gained insight into the work of voluntary services, the importance of international camps and the exchange of volunteers, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to run a camp and manage an international group.

The trainings also included: assessment of leadership skills before the training and after the implementation of the camps and a practical phase of coordination of volunteer camps, with mentorship.

Assessing needs of diverse stakeholders for voluntary programs

In 2025 YRS had continued collecting the information on the needs of camp organizers, camp leaders, volunteers through diverse processes and events - for example through application form for camp organizers, training’s evaluation, workcamps monitoring visits, individual meetings etc. Collected information was used for organizing workcamps, voluntary actions, events with volunteers, volunteers’ programmes in protected areas.

Volunteers for Nature – assessing needs of youth, seniors and business

As a part of project “Volunteers of nature” a focus groups were organized in Donji Milanovac, Raska, Novi Sad and Nis. Additionally, online focus group was hold with representatives of business sector.

The focus groups on volunteering in protected natural areas were organized with the aim of better understanding the attitudes, motives, needs and obstacles of potential and existing volunteers in the Đerdap National Park, Kopaonik, Fruška gora and nature park Sićevačka klisura. Focus group participants were selected using the intentional sample method, in order to include people who have experience with volunteering, interest in preserving the local community and nature conservation, or expressed readiness to engage in such activities in the future. The process was organised during June-July 2025 and involved over 50 young and senior citizens.

Additionally, interviews on the topic of volunteering in protected natural areas were organized with the aim of better understanding the attitudes, motives, needs and barriers to the inclusion of the business sector.

Promotion of volunteering within the network of partnering CSOs and local self-governments

Following already established channels of communication, YRS continued promoting volunteering in 2025.

Adequate preparation of communities by camp organizers, ensuring partnerships with youth offices, local rural households, young local entrepreneurs, schools and various informal groups; inviting local young people to work, educational and leisure activities, so that they can come into contact with an international group of volunteers at the camps, are some of the used methods. YRS organized and took part in numerous promotion events, where volunteering was presented to public.

On the occasion of International Biodiversity Day (May 22, 2025) YRS, together with PE Vojvodinašume, hosted the Ambassador of Sweden H.E. Charlotte Samelin in the Special Nature Reserve "Obedska bara". After more than a quarter of a century since the organization of the first international volunteer work camp at Obedska bara, YRS presented its unique approach to nature conservation that makes a great contribution to its restoration, establishing a balance between human and natural communities, mobilizing the population to preserve protected areas and cooperation between citizens, civil society organizations and protected area managers. YRS expressed its gratefulness to Sweden for recognizing the potential of this approach and, together with the EU, for supporting innovative methods in the protection and restoration of Serbia's ecosystems.

In December 2025, YRS took part in Volunteering fair in Belgrade, which was named "Volunteering in digital era". YRS was invited to participate in the panel discussion to share experience and opinion as it has a unique insight into how volunteer practices have transformed from classic, field models to contemporary online and hybrid formats. During the fair YRS team also presented volunteering opportunities and workcamps to visitors.



*Ambassador of Sweden, H.E. Charlotte Sameli,
and Swedish Embassy in Belgrade team visiting Obedska bara
Source: YRS media archive*

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 2:

Empowered civil society, with greater influence and competence to take part in the decision-making processes in an informed manner and to implement activities aimed at environmental protection and community development.

Operational Program Objective 2.3:

Empowered institutions and CSOs for engaging the public and civil participation in decision-making processes that are relevant to environmental protection and monitoring the development and implementation of environmental protection/climate change policies.



"System Error" - Shadow Report of Coalition 27
Source: YRS media archive

Participation in environmental decision making

2025 was very challenging because of political instability and a pressure of the Government over civil society in Serbia. Still, having in mind importance of environmental policy and legislation the YRS team participated in over 20 events, for following processes of policy developments:

- **National Strategy with Action plan for Implementation of Aarhus Convention in the Republic of Serbia** - YRS took a part in working group meeting for drafting National Strategy with Action plan for Implementation of Aarhus Convention in the Republic of Serbia (03 February 2025, Belgrade).
- **National Programme for Nature Protection** – YRS participated in 6 meetings of working group during 2025 and contributed to its development.
- **Law on Nature Protection** - In July 2025, a public call was announced for civil society organizations to join the working group for the drafting of the Law on Nature Conservation. YRS did not apply, believing that socio-political circumstances do not allow for a transparent, inclusive and fair law-making process. The opinion of YRS and Coalition 27 is that the Law on Nature Conservation should be drafted in accordance with the legislation of the European Union, confirmed international agreements, good practice in this area and the needs of nature conservation in Serbia. On August 7, Ministry of Environmental Protection has published a public call for collecting opinion on so called starting points for Law on nature protection development.
- YRS has prepared “**KAZI UKAZI**” (“Have your say”) questionnaire for public and shared on its website. With a 162 pageviews, 4 online entries and additional comments sent to YRS by email, over 30 comments and suggestions, prepared by 8 organizations, were sent to the Ministry of environmental protection of the Republic of Serbia.
- **Green Agenda for Western Balkans** – over the year YRS took part in diverse events related to development of Action plan of Green Agenda and Regional Biodiversity Strategy.
- **Decree on Appropriate Assessment** – YRS participated in consultations organized by UNDP (November 27, 2025).
- **Draft UN Women ECARO Strategic Note (2026–2029) with Civil Society** – YRS was part of the virtual consultation meeting with CSOs on the relevance of regional priorities, systemic outcomes and outputs, identifying opportunities to strengthen civil society engagement in delivering and monitoring results of the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) to guide its work in the region.

Joint advocacy actions of CSOs

Request for responsibility for irregular issuance of conditions for nature protection - Jadar project

In February 2025, YRS was supported by 34 civil society organizations dealing with nature conservation, in its call to the Government of Serbia and the Ministry of Environmental Protection to take responsibility and take measures to sanction those responsible in the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia for the non-transparent and illegitimate process of issuing nature conservation conditions for the "Jadar" project.

Believing that good environmental management and preservation of Serbia's natural resources should be based on the quality work of institutions, the implementation of laws, compliance with procedures, the use of scientific data and expert opinions, organization expresses protest against the fact that the Decision on Nature Conservation Conditions for Determining the Scope and Content of the Environmental Impact Assessment Study of the Project of Underground Exploitation of Lithium and Boron Deposits "Jadar" was issued on August 21, 2024 at the request of Rio Sava, by the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, without respecting procedures and integrity of experts.

Pointing irregularities in choosing CSOs’ representatives for the working group for drafting Law on Nature Protection

Twenty-six civil society organizations have raised concerns about irregularities in the process of selecting members of the Working Group for the drafting of the Law on Nature Protection and call on the Ministry of Environmental Protection to review the Commission's proposal.

Two organizations that have been chosen for the working group were only applicants, but did not fulfil requirements. By inconsistent application of procedures and selection criteria, the Ministry sends a message that the participation of civil society in decision-making is seen as a formality, with no real intention for organizations to be effectively involved in decision-making. This advocacy action took place in August 2025 and was leaded by YRS and Belgrade Open School. No reaction from the Ministry was received and no further information on the work of this working group.

“System Error” - Shadow Report of Coalition 27

The network of civil society organizations Coalition 27 publishes Shadow reports since 2014. The 12th Shadow report, published in 2025, covers 11 thematic chapters assessing Serbia’s progress in Chapter 27 (Environment and Climate Change) as part of accession negotiations with the European Union, including industrial pollution and risk management, as well as financing in the field of environmental protection and climate change. YRS actively participated in the preparation of the content of the Report, collecting information and data over months and preparing recommendations.

For the preparation of the Shadow Report, different methods (desk analyses, interviews, consultative meetings etc.) were used. Additionally, both YRS was involved in coordinating technical preparation of the report, translation, printing etc.

The key conclusions and recommendations of the 12th Shadow Report of Coalition 27 entitled “System error” were presented to relevant stakeholders and wider public. Shadow report promotion included: live event in Belgrade which was streamed and shared on social media; promotion in diverse media (TV, newspapers); presentation of Shadow Report in Brussels to institutions and CSOs; sharing the Report with stakeholders via email etc.

Green Talks in Leskovac, Valjevo and Novi Sad additionally promoted Chapter 27 and environmental topics during live events, but also in local media. Summarizing all events and media promotion, it is estimated that at least 10 000 citizens were informed about the state and challenges in topics of Chapter 27.

This year, the promotion of the Shadow report was acknowledged by 27 media outlets, most of them (18) online portals: Građanske, EU Delegation, Danas, Activity4sustainability.org, RTS, Time.rs, FONET, Agronews, Prvi na skali, Klima 101, Energetski portal, Vreme, Nedeljnik.

Advocacy visit to EU institutions in Brussels

Shadow Report on Chapter 27 in Serbia is an important source of information also for EU based environmental organization and institutions. In order to promote it on international level, but also with the aim to strengthen advocacy activities of Coalition 27, advocacy visits of Coalition 27 to Brussels based institutions and organizations was organized from 26 to 28 November 2025.

YRS co-organized and participated in this visit during which the Report was presented to representatives of the Directorate-General for Environment (DG Environment) - Ms Madalina Laxton, Coordinator of the Enlargement Unit; Ms Valentina Superti, Director for the Western Balkans (Directorate B) within the Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST), and her team. In addition to presentations to EU institutions, the Shadow Report was also presented to the representative of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia in Brussels and to representative of organization EuroNatur.

Green Cards – monitoring environmental policy and legislation implementation on local level

This was the fifth year that YRS, Coalition 27 and local organizations worked on Green Cards.

- The process consists of few steps:
- 1st Updating methodology and documents for monitoring
 - 2nd Training for CSOs – how to use methodology
 - 3rd Collecting data in local communities
 - 4th Elaboration of data and preparation of Green cards

In 2025, in collaboration with one key expert and experts from Coalition 27, YRS worked on updating and improving the methodology for monitoring environmental protection policies at the local self-government level. This methodology, applied since 2020, enables the creation of **Green Cards**.

Through the ECO SYSTEM programme, YRS also organized **training for CSOs on monitoring the implementation of environmental protection policies in local self-governments**. Data were collected in 9 local self-governments with the participation of 8 organizations. Through mentorship from Coalition 27, all data were verified and prepared for publication in the form of Green Cards in 2025.

Other events and activities

Despite the significant challenges in implementing the activity "establishing a permanent dialogue between the civil sector and institutions", in 2025 YRS participated in 70+ events, at least 15 of which were organized by institutions or involved representatives from institutions.

As in previous year, in 2025 regional cooperation on nature protection and biodiversity conservation policies continued through the BioNET network, as well as through YRS's participation in the work of the Regional Biodiversity Task Force. YRS also took part in planning activities for the implementation of the fifth pillar of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 3:

Increased personal responsibility and competences of citizens in relation to the environment as a result of innovative educational programs.

Operational Program Objective 3.1:

Developed platform for education that brings together experts, actors in the field of education (educational institutions, institutes, research units), international and domestic CSOs who recognize the topics and needs of different target groups for environmental education.



*"Climate Quest" challenge, Agricultural Fair Novi Sad
Source: YRS media archive*

YRS has a long-standing tradition in environmental education and is widely recognized by the public for its contributions. Through its activities and partnerships, YRS has established strong frameworks for collaboration with numerous schools, universities, organizations, associations and other institutions.

Over the course of 2025, YRS developed and implemented educational programs, seminars, campaigns, training for camp leaders, art competitions and raising public awareness activities.

Collaboration on environmental education though the joint platform

Over 20 representatives of schools, research and educational units and organizations expressed their interest to participate in educational platform in the field of environmental protection. The platform gathers representatives of elementary, high schools and universities, national and international organizations and individual experts. During 2025 the platform was initiated and the first exchanges of information, materials and similar, among members started. YRS is managing platform for the time being.

Trainings for managers of protected natural areas

In November and December 2025, as a part of Volunteers for Nature project, YRS and Team 42 organised three targeted trainings for the management authorities of the selected protected areas.

In Niš (protected area Sićevačka klisura), the training gathered three representatives of management authorities and three representatives of the local community. In Fruška Gora, nine representatives of management authorities participated, while in Đerdap, nine representatives of management authorities were also present.

The trainings focused on strengthening skills related to volunteer management and communication. The communication trainings were tailored to the existing capacities of each management authority, taking into account their specific skill levels, available communication channels, and technical equipment. As a result, management authorities were empowered to effectively promote the volunteering programmes, maintain ongoing communication with volunteers, and ensure the sustainable implementation of volunteering activities.

Green Talks

The Green Talks were organized to present to citizens findings of Shadow Reports, to explain influence of EU acquis and reforms and to stimulate citizens involvement in environmental decision making. Three events were organized, as a part of Volunteer for Nature project, in collaboration with Environment Engineering Group, Team 42 and Coalition 27. Green talks events were organised in Leskovac (on December 11, 2025), Valjevo (on December 16, 2025), and Novi Sad (on December 18, 2025).

At these events, the Shadow Report was presented with a particular focus on air and water quality, as these are issues that especially affect these cities. In addition, through partners' websites and media appearances, citizens were informed about the importance of reforms in the environmental protection sector and the significance these reforms have for the health of all of us. At the event in Leskovac, there were 30 participants present in person during the Green Talks; in Valjevo, 22 participants were present; and in Novi Sad, there were 30 participants. Media coverage of these events was extensive, so the overall reach of those who became familiar with the key messages from these events was significantly greater than the number of participants who were directly present.

Events in Leskovac, Valjevo and Novi Sad reached approximately 150 people who attended the events in person and reached over 1500 people on social media streaming. Communication with citizens continued after the Green Talks though newsletter and via social media in order to keep them knowledgeable.

Seminar for professors at secondary Agricultural High Schools

A two-day educational seminar for secondary school teachers was organized in September at the Agricultural High School in Požarevac, Serbia, and took place on 26 and 27 September 2025. The seminar brought together 22 participants from eight secondary agricultural schools across Serbia.

This event represented the fourth educational seminar implemented during the FAO project, through which more than 107 teachers from majority of secondary agricultural schools in Serbia have now participated in at least one training.

The seminar is accredited by the Ministry of Education and is included on the official List of Seminars of Special Importance, under Decision No. 151-00-00005/2023-03, Code 5379. All participating teachers received certificates and were awarded 16 professional development points (training hours), which contribute to their professional records.

In the 2025/2026 school year, the elective subject “Climate Change in Agriculture” is included in the curricula of 12 secondary schools (original target was three), representing an increase of four schools compared to the previous year. Schools in Sombor, Požega, Požarevac, Zrenjanin, Kraljevo, Vršac, Svilajnac, and Leskovac continued implementing the subject, while schools from Obrenovac, Pančevo, Valjevo, and Surdulica joined as new schools.

Exchange and study visit to the Agricultural Faculty in Belgrade, visit to agricultural demonstration field in Radmilovac

YRS organized a two-day educational event in Belgrade in cooperation with the Faculty of Agriculture, with the objective of showcasing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures across different agricultural fields. The activities took place at the faculty's experimental field “Radmilovac”, located near Belgrade.

A total of 39 participants attended the event. Students from six secondary agricultural schools participated in a series of practical workshops and field experiments. These activities demonstrated the measures implemented by Faculty staff to protect animals, fruit, and vegetable production from extreme weather conditions, as well as preventive approaches used to reduce climate-related risks in agriculture.

Workshops for CSOs supported withing ECO SYSTEM capacity building programme

As part of the capacity building activities with ECO SYSTEM programme, 4 workshops were implemented at Introductory training for supported CSOs in June. This year's focus remained on gender and climate change/ environmental protection and monitoring the implementation of policies in the field of protection environment in local communities. In addition, 2 new topics were introduced: transparency of local governments in Serbia and its impact on environmental protection and overview of the legal perspective and key obstacles regarding Jadar mining project. Based on evaluation of 30 participants on behalf of CSOs, these workshops strengthened the capacities of their participating by deepening their understanding of key environmental and governance issues, equipping them with practical knowledge on gender and climate linkages, policy monitoring, and legal frameworks. By introducing new topics such as transparency in local governance and the legal aspects of complex environmental cases, the sessions further enhanced their ability to critically assess policies and advocate more effectively within their communities.

Panel of Young Advisors of the Ombudsman on environmental issues

YRS collaborate with Council of Europe - Serbia and Ombudsman's Office on straightening capacity of young people, members of "young advisors' group". From 2nd till 4th of June 2025, in Zlatibor, YRS hold a training session on environmental protection for over 20 young people. Additionally, as a part of this project, YRS supported CESID in the development of a research methodology and in reviewing report. The overall objective of this research was a comprehensive analysis of perceptions, attitudes and the level of participation of young people in environmental protection in the Republic of Serbia, with a focus on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the context of their participation, as well as on identifying key challenges and opportunities for improving the active participation of young people.

Networking and promotional event on the Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad

In May 2025, two events were successfully organized in Novi Sad during the International Agricultural Fair hosting in total of 50 students and teachers coming from six Agricultural schools.

The first event was a one-day networking session, that brought together students, teachers, and school principals from six secondary agricultural schools in Serbia that are currently implementing the elective subject "Climate Change in Agriculture". Participating schools were from Sombor, Zrenjanin, Vršac, Požarevac, Požega, and Kraljevo.

On the second day, five mixed-school teams participated in the "Climate Quest" challenge, collaborating to complete as many tasks as possible within the allocated time. The game required students to interact with visitors of the Agricultural Fair, gathering their perspectives on climate change, as well as to engage with exhibitors in order to learn about technologies and practices that enhance climate resilience in agriculture. Following the field activities and a joint lunch, teams presented their findings, and videos produced during the game were screened. All participants received symbolic gifts and trophies in recognition of their active participation and teamwork. The events concluded with a public roundtable discussion focused on the role of innovation in education as a key driver for strengthening climate change education within the agricultural sector.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 3:

Increased personal responsibility and competences of citizens in relation to the environment as a result of innovative educational programs.

Operational Program Objective 3.2:

Developed innovative educational programs and integrated into the relevant projects-activities of YRS.



EYA Workshop, Deliblato
Source: YRS media archive

Online educational platform of YRS

The online educational platform <https://obuke.mis.org.rs>, which has been operating since 2014, offers 16 free courses.

In 2025 there were 107 new participants in the online courses, 202 course registrations, and 70 certificates issued. Two new courses were published on platform.

The course about diversification of energy sources called “*From atom to climate – a look at nuclear energy*” covering following topics: how energy from atoms is released and used; are reactors are solution to climate change; the Chernobyl case and a need of a reactor in Serbia.

The course about climate change adaptation called “Climate change adaptation” which offers basic understanding of key climate concepts such as adaptation, mitigation, vulnerability, and resilience, while clarifying the difference between global warming and climate change. It also presented examples of climate impacts in Serbia and the region and introduced relevant international and national frameworks.

Promotion of online educational platform was done through the social media of YRS but also during diverse events where YRS representatives took part.

FAO 80 and World Food Day

At the invitation of FAO, YRS joined the "FAO80 – celebration 80th anniversary of FAO" project in Serbia by establishing cooperation with schools and preparing teachers for the implementation of school activities.

YRS held two online workshops where ideas about the methods, structure and cross-curricular connection of activities were conveyed to teachers.

Over 30 teachers from a total of 16 schools participated in both workshops. The first workshop was held on October 16, 2025, on World Food Day, and the second on November 18, 2025. The participants of workshops were primary school teachers from the following places: Rudnik, Beška-Indija, Kovilj-Noví Sad, Babušnica, Uzdin-Kovačica, Kikinda and Nakovo-Kikinda, Gornji Milanovac, Čačak, Bela Palanka, Valjevo, Ruski Krstur-Kula, Sremska Mitrovica as well as from schools from Belgrade municipalities Resnik-Rakovica, Zvezdara and Palilula.

Round table “Education – ecology, sustainable development, environmental protection”

YRS - Arhus centar Novi Beograd, on 24 November 2025, with the support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Sweden, organized a round table to analyse the growing need to improve the quality of environmental education and enable citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes.

The aim of the round table was to open and start a dialogue among the key actors of formal and non-formal education and to identify needs, challenges and opportunities for stronger cooperation in the coming period. Bearing in mind that quality education directly affects the extent to which citizens are informed, involved and empowered to participate in processes related to environmental protection and sustainable development.

The event was attended by more than twenty representatives of universities, primary and secondary schools, student parliaments, civil society organizations, media and the private sector.

The exchange of experiences and insights between science, education, practice and local communities is key to improving access to education, but also to creating systemic solutions that contribute to better implementation of the rights guaranteed by the Aarhus Convention.

Cooperation on Erasmus+ programmes

In 2025 YRS cooperated on diverse educational Erasmus + projects. One of them was a seminar related to promoting cooperation between non-formal education and formal education through European cooperation and exchange projects - "Learning in the classroom, and outside the classroom" was held on October, 7-9th 2025 in France. YRS received an invitation from a partner organization from Alliance. Through this seminar, Solidarités Jeunesses and their regional subsidiary Vir'Volt wanted to bring together teachers and youth workers, directors of school and non-school institutions, both French and European, to enrich practices and perspectives on education, to imagine new ways of teaching and to build educational pathways with diverse approaches. The team of 3 representatives from Serbia consisted of a manager of educational programs and 2 professional collaborators of YRS – one high school professor and one university professor. A total of 20 representatives of formal education and non-formal educators from several countries were gathered, compared educational practices and worked on developing an idea for a new joint European project.

EYA workshops

The EYA – European Youth in Action project aims to empower young people in Europe to express their views to decision-makers on key climate justice issues, with a focus on three themes: energy transition - promoting sustainable energy solutions and equitable energy policies; greenwashing - combating misleading environmental claims and promoting transparency; biodiversity - protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services for a sustainable planet. Project is coordinated by Legambiente, YRS is a partner together with De Amicitia, Youth Environment Europe, European Environmental Bureau, Allianssi Youth Exchanges.

As part of the EYA project in 2025, YRS realized 4 national workshops on climate justice, biodiversity protection, greenwashing and just energy transition. The workshops were held in Zrenjanin, Pančevo, Požarevac and Belgrade and gathered over 100 young people from Serbia.

Workshops were also held at 4 international volunteer camps on the topic of climate justice, biodiversity protection and greenwashing and gathered over 50 participants worldwide.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS IN 2025.

Program Strategic Objective 3:

Increased personal responsibility and competences of citizens in relation to the environment as a result of innovative educational programs.

Operational Program Objective 3.3:

Raised awareness of citizens about the need to protect and preserve the environment as a core value and improved capacities for participation in decision-making processes at the local level.



*"Transparentno" art exhibition opening, Galerija N.EON, Beograd
Source: YRS media archive*

During 2025, YRS in cooperation with 60+ schools, CSOs, PA managers and similar, (co)organized around 50 educational events (workshops, trainings and field activities) and participated in more than 30 awareness-raising, promotional and monitoring events.

At the same time, intensive exchange was done on international level: YRS participated in 38 youth exchanges/trainings/seminars. There were almost 90 volunteers from Serbia participating in those events and enhancing their knowledge and skills in ecology, interculturality, sustainability and group leadership.

International training “Young Activists for Peace and Climate Justice “

The international training held from 21 to 28 July 2025 in the Darmstadt Forest in Germany, brought together more than twenty young people from Europe and neighbouring countries. The program was intended for young activists and youth workers who want to deepen their understanding of climate justice, sustainability and collective action, but also to learn how to deal with the emotions and challenges that the climate crisis brings. Among the participants were two representatives from Serbia, among them one volunteer of the Young Researchers of Serbia, dedicated to environmental protection, climate justice and sustainable development. The training was attended by representatives from Georgia, Armenia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, France, Lithuania, Romania, Greece and Finland.

Board game “(A)klimatizuj se!”

YRS with the support of FAO advisors designed and developed the educational board game “(A)klimatizuj se!” with the aim of encouraging students to collaboratively test and strengthen their knowledge of the elective subject “Climate Change in Agriculture”. The game was conceived as a practical classroom tool, with the objective that each school implementing the elective subject receives at least one copy for regular educational use.

The board game consists of a playing board, figurines, and question cards, with players advancing across the board by correctly answering questions. With the support of teachers from schools, a pool of 200 questions across the four thematic areas was developed and printed on question cards. The questions varied in both content and level of difficulty. A rulebook was also created to guide students through the setup and gameplay process. To ensure sustainability and ease of reproduction, the game was designed as a printable booklet, including cards, figurines, and a board that can be cut out and assembled, allowing schools to reproduce the game independently if needed.

Workshops in elementary schools – For better food and better future

During the last quarter of 2025, YRS, in cooperation with Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, marked World Food Day and 80 years of FAO. 21 schools, with more than 40 teachers and over 1,000 students were involved. They participated in the implementation of school activities on the occasion of the FAO jubilee and World Food Day.



*Board game “(A)klimatizuj se!” try-outs, Radmilovac
Source: YRS media archive*

The school's activities were interactive and hands-on, designed for teachers and students to explore the topics of food, sustainable agriculture, fishing and livestock together, with a particular focus on the conservation of water, soil, energy and biodiversity.

Diverse activities were implemented, such as: thematic workshops related to healthy eating, composting, making natural dyes from fruits and vegetables; debate on food surpluses and waste prevention; presentations of school sensory gardens with medicinal herbs; extremely creative works created in art classes (posters, drawings, mosaics); lessons learned regarding climate change, desertification, the role of green belts, etc.

All workshop participants received a FAO manual – a book of activities "Hand in hand for better food and a better future", which served as a support to teachers in the design and implementation of school activities.

Danube Art Master 2025

The purpose of this contest is to encourage children and teenagers, citizens of a country within the Danube river basin, to pay more attention to the watercourse in their area, reflect on environmental issues, and thus create original artistic works to promote the Danube region. YRS is a national organizes for this competition.

In 2025, inspired by the theme "Our Danube - Our Future," school pupils had the task of reflecting on the activities of people along the Danube and creatively presenting their vision in one of the offered categories: artwork, video or photography. Competition in Serbia was opened in September and lasted till October 22, when 39 works were received.

More than 100 students from 26 educational institutions (three preschool, 17 primary and six secondary schools) from 25 municipalities and towns across Serbia applied for the competition. Among them are Banatsko Karađorđevo near Žitište, Brza Palanka near Kladovo, Belgrade (Banjica, Stari grad, Voždovac, Vračar, Zemun, Zvezdara), Bor, Čačak, Donji Milanovac, Golubac, Ivanovo near Pančevo, Indjija, Kovilj near Novi Sad, Niš, Obrenovac, Opovo, Pirot, Rača near Kragujevac, Smederevo, Sombor, Temerin, Uzdin near Kovačica and Zrenjanin).

International Turtle Day

YRS gattered the donor community of Kornjača Spornjača fundraising campaign, and joined celebration of International Turtle Day (May 23, 2025) in Special Nature reserve Kraljevac. Numerous presented children participated in educational activities - workshops, interactive lectures, quizzes and the game "Turtle Search", through which they had the opportunity to learn about pond turtles in a fun and interesting way, as well as to observe them up close in their natural habitat, while visitors of all ages enjoyed walking and staying by the lake, bird watching, boat rides and local specialties.

Just a few days later, as a final step in Kornjača Spornjača campaign, the herpetologists successfully placed GPS locators on female pond turtles preparing to lay eggs. The deployment of these devices is an important step towards a better understanding of their biology and protection.

Environmental awareness raising campaign (part I) : upcycling workshops
"Transparent: Don't Buy - Create!"

YRS, in cooperation with twelve civil society organizations, grantees of the ECO SYSTEM support program, implemented a series of creative upcycling workshops across Serbia as part of the campaign “Transparent: Don't Buy - Create!”. Fifteen upcycling workshops were organized as creative and educational activities, supported by promotional and educational materials developed by YRS, including a structured presentation used during the sessions. This activity was designed as an effective way for a civil society organization working in the fields of environment to engage new audiences and communicate key environmental messages within community.

The activities engaged over 400 primary and secondary school students from Kraljevo, Kragujevac, Pirot, Užice, Bor, Požega, Novi Sad, Valjevo, Vrnjačka Banja, and Milutovac in creative upcycling workshops and educational sessions focused on responsible waste management, with a particular emphasis on glass as a resource.

In addition, a cleanup action was organized near Sjenica, where more than 40 pupils collected waste from a local landfill located near the river, highlighting environmental challenges and raising community awareness. The campaign activities were further promoted through World CleanUp Day, contributing to broader visibility and outreach.

Overall, the campaign generated significant media attention, resulting nearly 30 media outputs, including coverage by one local TV station and two radio stations, with several outlets reporting directly from the field. As part of YRS visibility efforts, 20 social media posts and over 30 Instagram and Facebook stories were published, reaching 19,000 people, generating over 200,000 impressions and more than 1,500 engagements.

Environmental awareness raising campaign (part II) : open call for artists and group art exhibition "Transparent"

The campaign included also an Open call for submission of artworks and the organization of a public exhibition.

The campaign targeted secondary art schools, university art faculties, and independent artists, with a focus on upcycling as an artistic practice. Participants were encouraged to explore creative reuse of waste, by-products, and discarded materials, transforming them into new, functional, or value-added works. Through this approach, the campaign promoted upcycling as a practical contribution to reducing environmental impact, changing everyday consumption habits, and supporting biodiversity protection.

Upcycling was positioned as the central theme and creative framework of the campaign, contributing to increased visibility of YRS and strengthening public awareness of sustainable practices.

65 art works were submitted for contest. Selection committee selected the best works and authors – artists were invited to participate in joint exhibition which took place at N.EON gallery in November 2025.

Over 40 artists got opportunity to present their work. The exhibition opening was attended by the Anne-Charlotte Malm, Counsellor/Head of Development Cooperation - Embassy of Sweden and moderated by a well-known N1 journalist, marking the beginning of a valuable ongoing collaboration.

The campaign achieved strong visibility across channels, including 35 social media posts and nearly 100 Instagram and Facebook stories, with coverage by almost 70 media outlets. Its reach was further amplified through collaborations with media, galleries, and artists, including joint posts featuring campaign visuals and artworks.

Paid and organic communication efforts included targeted advertising promoting the Open Call, exhibition opening, and digital catalogue. These activities generated over 1.1 million impressions, 490,000+ reach, and more than 17,000 clicks across all promoted content. The digital exhibition catalogue alone achieved over 500,000 impressions and nearly 192,000 reached users, confirming strong audience engagement. Organic communication contributed an additional 84,000 reach and over 200,000 views.

Media visibility was further strengthened through paid partnerships with BETA News Agency, BURO.247, Oblakoder portal, City Magazine and the print magazine Lice ulice, whose editorial teams provided on-site coverage and distributed content across their digital and social media platforms.

Promotional activities also included video materials provided by BETA News Agency, as well as six video recordings from the opening published on the YRS YouTube channel, further enhancing the campaign's multimedia outreach and audience engagement.

World Environmental Day

On the accession of WED (June 5, 2025), in elementary school Kralj Petar in Belgrade, YRS organized workshop for pupils. The theme of 2025 World Environment Day was dedicated to the fight against plastic pollution – a problem in which everyone, even the youngest, can participate. The workshop named "Little Guardians of Nature" inspired kids to talk about how each of us, regardless of age, can contribute to reducing the use of plastic in everyday life. Pupils had the opportunity to creatively design and draw their own superheroes that solve environmental problems. The event was promoted on social media.



*“Transparentno” art exhibition details, Galerija N.EON, Beograd
Source: YRS media archive*

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Strategic Plan for Organizational Development of Young Researchers of Serbia (YRS) was developed as part of YRS's overall Strategic Plan through 2027.

The organizational development strategic objectives are:

- Enhanced organizational structure and strengthened human resources necessary for the implementation of program strategic objectives;
- Established system for monitoring the impact of work and capacity development;
- Developed capacities for public advocacy by staff and collaborators, with a defined advocacy and communication strategy.

Through various processes, projects and activities in 2025, the following results were achieved:

- YRS employees were encouraged to participate in information-sharing and planning processes.
- Job descriptions are regularly updated. Employees are familiar with their job descriptions, and expected results are clearly defined.
- The practice of hiring employees through a competitive process continues, following established guidelines and selection procedures.
- Mechanisms for supporting and monitoring employees in the implementation of annual plans are defined (mentoring, trainings, shadowing etc.).
- Employee progress is regularly documented.
- Advocacy campaigns within programs have been prepared and implemented.
- Methodologies and tools for communication with the base/target group have been developed based on identified needs.
- Employees' capacities to implement campaigns have been strengthened.

In September 2025 YRS management team held tree day action planning in Fruška gora. During this meeting evaluation of YRS Action plan 2024-25 was conducted, results assessed and Action plan for 2026-27 developed.

During 2025, with the support of consultants, work on operational plan for fundraising model and campaigns continued, including tactics for building and engaging a community through various communication channels.

At the level of documents and procedures, YRS continued aligning all policies with changes in legislation and with international/national standards.



Source: YRS media archive

VISIBILITY

During 2025, Young Researchers of Serbia achieved significant outreach and engagement across its digital communication channels.

Content published on Facebook and Instagram reached over 2,000,000 users, generating more than 5,000,000 views, indicating strong visibility and consistent audience interaction. The organization's social media community continued to grow, with approximately 24,000 followers on Facebook and 14,000 on Instagram, including an increase of over 1,000 new followers on Instagram compared to the previous year.

Throughout the year, over 1,700 posts were published across Facebook and Instagram channels, not including additional content shared via LinkedIn and YouTube. In parallel, the organization secured over 400 media mentions, further strengthening its public presence and outreach.

The official website remained an important communication hub, with more than 100 published articles and updates, contributing to the accessibility and transparency of program activities.

In addition, a newsletter for volunteers was launched as part of the Volunteers for Nature project, reaching a growing base of over 400 subscribers, and opening a new direct communication channel with engaged supporters.

In addition to achieving numerous media mentions across various national and local outlets, Young Researchers of Serbia further strengthened its public presence through notable recognition within the communications field.

A key highlight of the year was receiving the Grand Prix in the ECO category at the "Campaigns with purpose" awards for the campaign "Kornjača spornjača". This recognition not only confirmed the quality and impact of the campaign but also positioned the organization as a relevant actor in the field of purpose-driven communication.



*"Campaigns with purpose" awards
Source: YRS media archive*

Digital communication channels and content development

During 2025, communication activities were implemented across multiple digital platforms, including three Facebook pages (Mladi istraživači Srbije, Aarhus Centar, and Ekosistem Program), as well as Instagram accounts (mis.vss, ekosistemprogram and sta.nam.tesko). Additional channels included the official YouTube channel (YRSVSS) and LinkedIn (Mladi istraživači Srbije). In addition, the e-learning platform continued to serve as an important tool for expanding the accessibility of educational content and strengthening the visibility of the organization’s programs.

Throughout 2025, continued efforts were made to further develop a cohesive and recognizable visual identity across all programs and projects, while ensuring that communication remained tailored to the specific needs of different target audiences.

In terms of content performance, carousel formats with a strong storytelling approach - featuring personal stories of volunteers, informal groups, and community members - proved to be the most effective in driving engagement.

The communication strategy prioritized increasing organic engagement, which was successfully achieved through more authentic audience-centered and narrative-driven content, resulting in stronger interaction and connection with followers. At the same time, paid promotion was strategically used, including collaboration with external agencies, to further boost different projects and activities visibility and ensure that key messages reached both targeted and broader audiences.

Key campaigns and initiatives

During 2025, Young Researchers of Serbia implemented several communication campaigns aimed at promoting volunteering, environmental awareness, and community engagement.

- **Promotion of the Voluntary Service**

The campaign aimed to promote both national and international volunteer camps, as well as volunteering as a valuable form of civic engagement. As part of the campaign, regular board game evenings were organized, creating informal spaces for volunteers to connect - both with the organization and among themselves - thus strengthening the volunteer community.

The campaign reached approximately 500,000 users, reflecting strong interest in volunteering opportunities. Additionally, as part of these promotional efforts, a volunteer fair was organized during the Alliance Technical Meeting in Zrenjanin, hosted by the organization, further contributing to the visibility of volunteer programs and direct engagement with potential participants.

- **“Transparent: Don’t Buy - Create!” campaign**

Another significant campaign, “Transparent: Don’t Buy - Create!” is described in more detail in a previous section of the report. The campaign brought together grantees of the ECO SYSTEM Programme around the theme of glass and upcycling, engaging diverse audiences through creative and educational activities.

The campaign included a series of workshops for children and adults, as well as a final public event featuring an exhibition dedicated to upcycling, which served as a visible and engaging culmination of the campaign. The campaign reached millions of artists and upcycling enthusiasts.

- **“Volunteers for Nature” campaign**

A new and particularly important campaign in 2025 was “Volunteers for Nature”, aimed at expanding the organization’s volunteer base and promoting active participation in nature protection. The campaign focused on raising awareness about protected areas, the Nature Restoration Law, and opportunities for volunteering, while also marking an important strategic shift - being the first campaign not exclusively targeting youth, but also actively engaging a new target group: senior citizens. The total social media reach of the campaign amounted to 1,200,000.

Partnerships and collaborations

During 2025, Young Researchers of Serbia continued to strengthen partnerships with the private sector, particularly through the organization of corporate volunteering activities. These initiatives provided opportunities for companies to actively engage in environmental protection, while also contributing to stronger long-term collaboration and mutual visibility.

Although influencer partnerships were not a primary focus, the organization prioritized building meaningful, activity-based collaborations, resulting in deeper engagement with partners and more direct impact on target groups.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In 2025 YRS used the developed methods, routines and tools for monitoring projects and core activities based on best-practice principles, such as results-based management, including learning and adaptation, and the theory of change.

The use of theory of change is a new approach for YRS, introduced because a monitoring and evaluation system without a Theory of Change is data collection without fundamental purpose. At the same time, a theory of change without a monitoring and evaluation system is an untested hypothesis.

Information obtained from monitoring and evaluation was used for learning and for adapting project management.

The basic documents for planning and implementing YRS activities in 2025 were: the YRS Strategic Plan through 2027, the YRS Action Plan through 2025, as well as the work plans of the projects that were implemented.

Monitoring and evaluation were conducted in several ways:

- Members of the project team presented the implemented activities, achieved results and their indicators at weekly meetings.
- Internal evaluation by the project team was carried out, as well as assessments by participants – all capacity-building and networking activities were evaluated by the participants/program beneficiaries.
- Quantitative analysis of web platforms and social media was conducted (website web analytics, training platforms, social media statistics and media content analysis).

The Quality Assurance Team consists of the Program Director and the Chair of the YRS Managing Board. This team assesses progress and controls the quality of achieved results at the level of the entire organization. Quality assurance is ensured through quarterly in-depth analyses of results, based on which recommendations are made for improving upcoming activities.

MONITORING

For monitoring of the projects in 2025 YRS used a combination of methods, which included regular progress reports, site visits, surveys, interviews, and data analysis. The feedback received from beneficiaries, target groups and other stakeholders was an essential component of the monitoring and evaluation process. By gathering and analysing this feedback, YRS was able to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments.

In 2025, the YRS team conducted 14 monitoring visits through the "ECO SYSTEM" program, 18 monitoring visits to 18 camps and 5 monitoring visits within the project "Climate Change in Agriculture".

As a part of FAO80 project, YRS representatives visited 2 schools (Primary School "Setre Ilic" in Valjevo and Primary School "Kosta Abrasevic" in Resnik) in November 2025, where they had the opportunity to talk with teachers about the implementation of activities and give them the necessary support.

EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES
YRS used evaluation forms after each workshop or training or any other activities that could be evaluated (e.g. mentorship support).

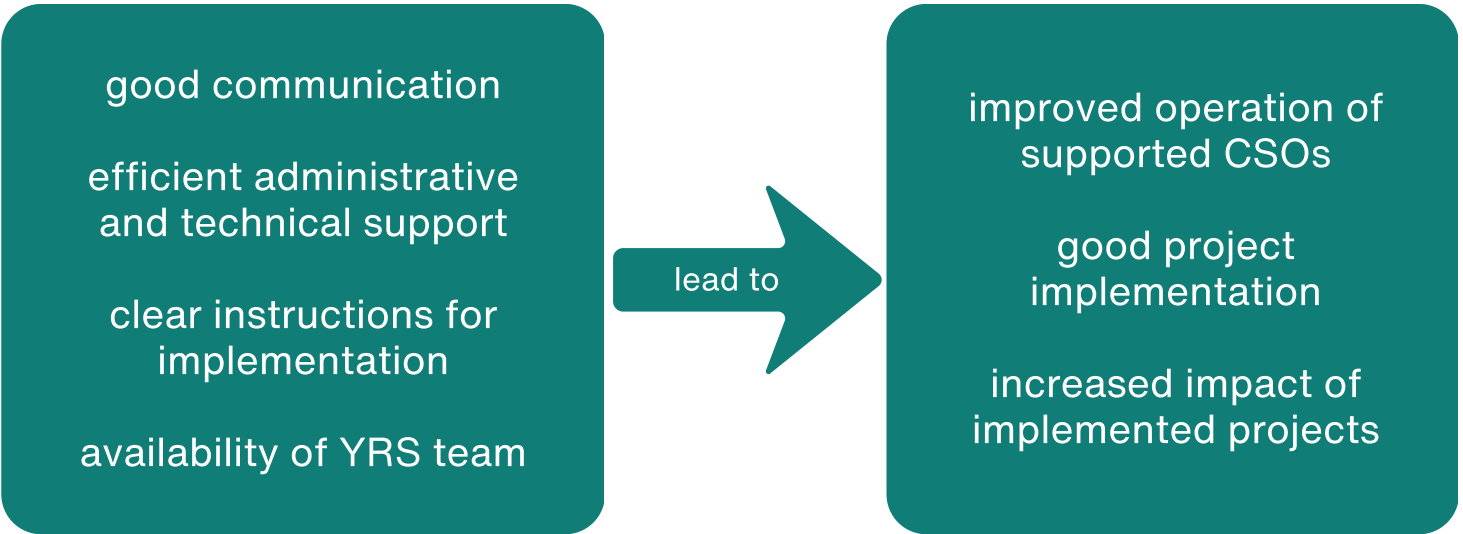
Some of the main findings of evaluation of the project “**Climate Change in Agriculture**” in secondary agricultural high schools are:

- Used approach - engaging students through the practical application of acquired knowledge, has once again proven effective, resulting in increased student satisfaction with the subject. Teachers also reported higher levels of satisfaction with both student engagement and the quality of knowledge students demonstrated.
- Seminars for teachers were a success: the level of interest among participants was very high and has remained strong even several months after the seminar, as teachers continue to express interest in future training opportunities. Participant evaluations of the seminar were excellent.

YRS-VSS collects **evaluations from camp organizers and camp leaders** through reports prepared after the camps. Data extracted from the submitted reports are processed and used for further planning and for improving cooperation with local partners (camp organizers) and volunteers (camp leaders).

For grant support to CSOs, YRS collects information during monitoring and reporting.

In 2025, CSOs assessed as positive aspects of YRS’s monitoring and mentoring process through **ECO SYSTEM programme** following:



RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk, an uncertain but potential element that always appears in technical, human, social and political events, reflecting changes in outcomes with possible adverse and irreversible impacts, can affect also the achievement of the objectives of the YRS.

Thus fore, risk management is an important part of the organization’s planning and operations. The risk management process is designed to reduce or eliminate the threat of certain types of events that could pose a danger or affect operations.

The key stages of the risk management process carried out by YRS are risk identification, risk analysis and risk response.

Risk identification is conducted periodically by the entire YRS team.

Risk analysis is carried out after identification, with the recognized risks being entered into the database (an Excel document).

Decisions on risk assessment are made by consensus during a session in which the risks are evaluated.

After the risk analysis, a risk response plan is developed, and the relevant section of the Excel table is completed as an action plan.

In 2025, the YRS risk database included the following risks:

1. Corruption leading to loss of YRS reputation and reduced support from partners and donors.
2. Non-compliance with financial reporting rules, payment mechanisms, financial and systemic requirements, internal controls, etc., causing operational blockages in the organization.
3. Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) leading to loss of staff and volunteers and jeopardizing the working environment and YRS’s reputation.
4. Support programs for CSOs and informal groups leading to YRS being perceived primarily as a donor organization.
5. Unstable political situation, lack of freedom of speech and rule of law, and extremely negative attitudes toward CSOs, creating an unfavourable environment for YRS operations.
6. Youth passivity, the organization’s target group, leading to insufficient quantitative and qualitative participation in YRS programs.
7. War in Ukraine, conflicts in Gaza and unstable political and economic situations in the EU, affecting Serbia’s EU integration process and negatively impacting environmental reforms.
8. Lack of adequate services and adherence to traditional habits by partners and collaborators, resulting in inadequate application of environmental protection standards during activities.
9. Insufficient engagement with activists and volunteers, causing the loss of activist groups and active volunteers committed to YRS and its goals.
10. Imbalanced cooperation with other CSOs (giving much more than receiving in programmatic and financial terms), leading to the exhaustion of YRS resources.
11. Non-compliance with internal HR policies and rules, resulting in poor work organization, employee stress and frequent staff turnover.
12. Gaps in employee skills and knowledge, as well as insufficient ability to adapt to new external circumstances (political, social, digital, etc.), threatening work performance and organizational effectiveness.

In addition to the YRS’s general risks, risk databases are also prepared for projects that are managed as a part of project management cycle.

ANTI-CORRUPTION AND SEAH

Recognizing that corruption undermines trust, weakens democracy, threatens economic development, deepens inequality, poverty and social divisions and is one of the causes of environmental degradation, YRS is committed to preventing and combating corruption.

YRS upholds a zero-tolerance principle toward corruption, which means that all members and employees, as well as collaborators and partner organizations, are familiar with YRS’s anti-corruption policy and associated rules and are required to apply them consistently in every aspect of their work.

YRS’s policy is to treat its employees, volunteers, partners, suppliers and external collaborators with honesty and integrity. YRS expects them to behave toward each other and toward the organization according to the same principle.

The regulations and procedures of Young Researchers of Serbia that prevent corruption are:

- 1.Code of Conduct
- 2.Employment contracts for staff
- 3.Rulebook on Financial and Administrative Operations, with defined procedures for procurement, travel, payment responsibilities etc.
- 4.Rulebook on Job Classification
- 5.Rulebook on Human Resource Management
- 6.Rulebook on Internal Whistleblowing Procedure
- 7.YRS Risk Management and Risk Database
- 8.Rulebook on Prevention and Fight against Corruption

The responsibility for combating corruption, in accordance with YRS’s policies, regulations, and procedures, lies with:

- The Managing Board of Young Researchers of Serbia;
- The Executive Director of Young Researchers of Serbia;
- Employees.

The reporting of suspected corruption, regardless of the party submitting the report, is carried out by notifying the Managing Board of the Young Researchers of Serbia via email. YRS enables anonymous reporting of suspected corruption across all its programs, including the work of partner organizations, and guarantees the protection and anonymity of whistleblowers throughout the process of reviewing and handling reports.

YRS has invested significant effort in developing procedures and policies that are implemented alongside a high level of voluntary transparency, enhanced operational efficiency, accountability and minimized risk of corruption. On the organisational level continuously works on strengthening the anti-corruption capacities of its employees, associates and the organizations to which YRS forwards funds.

As in previous year, during the introductory training for supported organizations within the "ECO-SYSTEM" program, one session was dedicated to the prevention of corrupt practices, this time focusing specifically on Jadar project and all irregularities it has had so far.

YRS’s policy and Code of Conduct governing the rights and obligations of the employer, employees and engaged personnel regarding the **prevention and prohibition of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment** (SEAH) were adopted in 2021 and have since been actively implemented in daily organizational operations and throughout program activities.

The key objectives are:

- preventing and eliminating all forms of violence, harassment, sexual harassment, abuse and sexual coercion in the workplace and in connection with the Employer’s work, by regulating the organization and conduct of the Employer, employees and volunteers in a manner that enables effective prevention and protection of victims;
- protecting employees, engaged personnel and all third parties from all forms of harassment;
- establishing guidelines for reporting and referral to the appropriate procedures for handling harassment and violence;
- providing support to and empowering victims.

NETWORKS AND PARTNERS, SYNERGIES

Believing in the importance and power of cooperation and networking, the YRS team invested more than 40 working days in network-related activities in 2025 (on meetings, conferences, coordination, planning and the implementation of joint activities and similar).



*Alliance Technical Meeting, Zrenjanin
Source: YRS media archive*

In 2025, YRS was an active member of the following networks in Serbia:

- **Coalition 27**, whose mission is to jointly advocate for and contribute to the process of alignment with and implementation of European Union policies, regulations and standards in the fields of environmental protection and climate change through the coordinated efforts of its member organizations.
- **The National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS)**, an advocacy platform that represents the interests of young people, ensures their active participation and develops systemic solutions aimed at improving the position of youth through the development of strategic partnerships, cross-sectoral and international cooperation, as well as strengthening the capacities of member organizations and other stakeholders in youth policy.
- **Green Chair**, whose mission is to improve communication with the Serbian Parliament - Environmental Protection Committee through an established mechanism – the only one of its kind – and to exert influence on improving legislative proposals in the field of environmental protection.
- **The Natura 2000 Resource Center of Serbia**, which focuses on connecting, supporting and developing organizations that, in cooperation with other institutions and organizations, work on establishing the European environmental network NATURA 2000 by the time the Republic of Serbia joins the European Union.
- **The Climate Forum**, a network of organizations working on climate change issues, raising awareness and supporting adaptation to climate change.

At the regional and international level, YRS is a member of the following networks:

- **SEENET**, a network of organizations from Southeast Europe whose mission is to provide a platform for cooperation among civil society organizations working on environmental protection at the regional level and to mobilize other civil society sectors in achieving shared environmental goals.
- **BioNET**, a regional network of organizations advocating for nature conservation in the Balkans through joint action.
- **Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)**, which aims to unite non-profit youth environmental organizations across Europe in order to improve international cooperation, increase knowledge about the climate crisis, raise awareness of environmental issues and strengthen youth participation in environmental decision-making processes.
- **The CEEweb for Biodiversity (CEEweb)**, whose mission is to conserve biodiversity by promoting sustainable development through advocacy, networking and influencing decision-makers, as well as through the implementation of national and transnational projects and the delivery of capacity-building and awareness-raising activities.

- **The Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations**, an international non-governmental youth organization representing national organizations that promote intercultural education, understanding and peace through voluntary service programs.
- **The Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS)**, which strengthens international voluntary services worldwide by connecting and empowering its members, and by promoting and advocating for international voluntary services and their values at both local and global levels.
- YRS is also an associate member of **National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR)** and partner of the **SCI** network in Serbia.

Some of the networking activities and synergies in 2025 were:

- YRS hosted **Alliance technical meeting** in February 2025 and has been active in numerous working groups and meetings of this network. Through continuous engagement in the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations network, YRS has strengthened its commitment to international cooperation, capacity building and the promotion of sustainable development through youth volunteering.
- As a member of the YEE network, YRS has representative in **Board Members of Climate Action Network Europe**, an international network focused on climate change. Participation in the work of this network included 4 online Board Members meetings and virtual attendance at the General Assembly in Spring.
- YRS participated in **SALTO SEE Partnership** building activity (hold in Bar-Montenegro, October 10-17, 2025) gathered Western Balkan organizations that are ESC accredited together with 10 Italian organizations to form partnerships in further activities.
- In December 2025, YRS took part in the **BioNET annual meeting** in Split (Croatia). YRS is part of the BioNET network secretariat, together with three other organizations, and coordinates the network's activities, strategic decision-making processes and related matters.
- During 2025 YRS team participated in over **20 meetings with Coalition 27**: regular Board meetings, meetings related to preparation and promotion of Shadow Report etc.
- YRS participated on the **inaugural meeting of the Community of Practice on Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkans**, held in Skopje – the North Macedonia, in March 2025. Organized by IUCN ECARO within the ADAPT 2.0 project, and the EU4Green project, the event brought together policymakers, experts, and civil society representatives to strengthen regional cooperation on sustainable solutions.
- The **United for Rivers initiative - Biannual River Protection Conference** in Skopje, North Macedonia, organized The Nature Conservancy in April 2025, with over 100 participants. The aim was strengthening regional collaboration and building momentum for the initiative across the Balkans. YRS participated and presented, together with Belgrade Open School, fundraising campaign Kornjača Spornjača, as a good practice example.

- In addition to participating in the **UN Global Compact Network in Serbia**, in 2025, YRS took part in regular network’s meetings and attended 3 events.
- The **2025 Annual Meeting of the Aarhus Centres** was held on October 30–31, 2025, in Vienna, hosted by the OSCE. The meeting focused on strengthening environmental democracy, access to justice, the protection of environmental defenders, the role of Aarhus Centres in disaster risk reduction and sharing good practices of gender mainstreaming in environmental projects, where YRS – Aarhus center New Belgrade was one of the speakers and shared its experience.
- From September 5th to 7th, forty women - members of the **Women’s Network for Nature and the Environment** gathered on Kopaonik for a three-day seminar titled “Thirsty for Justice – Women’s Voice for Water”, where YRS had its representative. The event focused on highly relevant topics: the right to water, climate change, and local struggles to preserve natural resources.

YRS'S DONORS IN 2025



COOPERATION WITH THE BUSINESS SECTOR

YRS cooperates with the business sector in Serbia on several levels: through capacity building, networking and securing financial support from the private sector for activities and initiatives. In addition to participating in the UN Global Compact Network in Serbia, in 2025, YRS representatives took part in different events organized by companies and served as speakers at regional symposia aimed for the business sector.



*UNIQA Insurance employees taking part in a volunteering action, Obedska bara
Source: YRS media archive*

In Obedska bara, in cooperation with JP Vojvodinasume – the manager of the Special Nature Reserve "Obedska bara" and employees (volunteers) of UNIQA Insurance Serbia, a 3 km fence for water buffaloes was set up. With their natural behaviour, these animals maintain balance in the ecosystem, prevent overgrowth of habitats and perform some of the work that would otherwise require the constant engagement of volunteers and mechanization. The action provided significant support to the conservation and restoration of the wetland ecosystem, contributing to the long-term sustainable management of this area.

Together with the employees of Atlantic Group and Pfizer, YRS carried out a volunteer action to remove sour wood on the pasture "Spasovina" in the Special Nature Reserve Kraljevac, collected over 20 bags of waste from the edge of the lake and renovated several movables along the pedestrian path. With these activities, concrete support was provided to the day-to-day management of the reserve and improved the conditions for visitors' stay, in accordance with long-term efforts to preserve and restore the ecosystems.

On Avala, in front of the Avala Tower, in cooperation with Gen Digital, YRS planted new trees and in a symbolic, but very concrete way, added a little more oxygen to Belgrade, reminding that caring for nature does not happen somewhere far away, but in our immediate environment. On the occasion of World Cleanup Day, Siemens Energy employees took part in a volunteer action focused on maintaining urban parks, including the “Miljakovačka Šuma” nature park. More than 50 bags of mixed waste were collected, contributing to the preservation of this small urban green oasis.

YRS took a part in many events organized by diverse companies. For example, The Bloomberg Adria Sustainable Strategies Conference that was a regional business and sustainability event held in Belgrade that brought together different stakeholders to discuss the future of sustainable development in the Adria region. The conference focused on how companies can balance green transition goals with economic competitiveness, particularly in the context of evolving EU regulations (such as the Green Deal and CSRD) and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence and its energy demands. Key themes included ESG integration in business strategy, sustainable finance, renewable energy investment, and the role of innovation in accelerating the green transition. YRS was one of the CSOs that were invited to attend the conference.

YRS also received an annual direct donation from Microsoft for the use of Microsoft 365 Business Premium software and associated licenses.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS – YRS CONTRIBUTION

The focus of YRS's work is environmental protection, volunteering, education and youth empowerment.

Special attention is devoted to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda's targets into public policies and promotion of its main principle - Leave No One Behind.

YRS promotes a peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development, advocates for access to justice for all and collaborates in building efficient, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Sustainable Development Goal 16).

Through its work, YRS contributes to the following global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Young Researchers of Serbia believes that an annual report is far more than a simple summary - it is a key instrument for ensuring transparency, strengthening accountability, and building credibility.

Through our 2025 report, we aim to further inspire the trust and engagement of citizens and donors, encouraging their continued support for our work and mission.



Attaching GPS tracking devices to European pond turtles for monitoring purposes, Kraljevac lake
Source: YRS media archive

MORE THAN JUST A REPORT...

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Thank you for reading,
YRS team

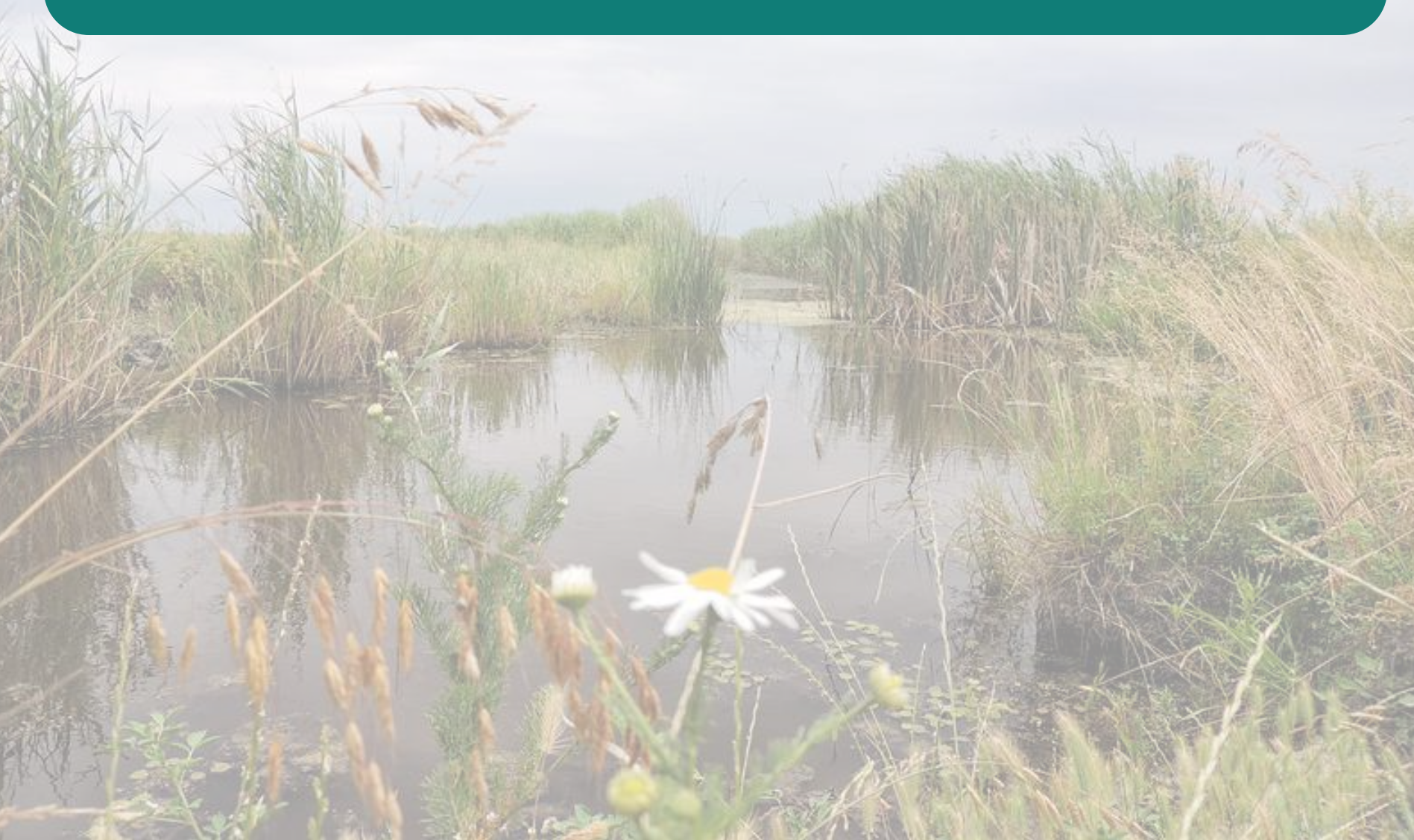


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Executive Director:
Tanja Petrović

