

# ACTIVITY REPORT OF YOUNG RESEARCHERS OF SERBIA FOR 2015 AND 2016



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Voluntary Service of Serbia  
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# ABOUT US

**THINK BIG – do little: start an avalanche!** is our motto.

Our vision is to be the driving force for all those whose aim is to make our planet a more peaceful, just and healthy place.

Driven by science and education, our mission is to contribute:

- to environmental protection and nature conservation,
- to development of voluntarism and its values,
- to scientific creativity and active participation of the youth

Our main aims are environmental protection, environmental education, youth exchange and work with young people, as well as the promotion of sustainable development, scientific creativity, and voluntarism.

## OUR TEAM IN 2015 and 2016

Tanja Petrović – executive director

Jelena Ristić Beronja – coordinator of Voluntary Service of Serbia

Milka Gvozdenović – coordinator of environmental programmes

Bojan Beronja – coordinator of volunteers' exchange

Dušica Trnavac – project manager

Jelena Mičić – PR coordinator and coordinator of Erasmus +

Milan Ratković – coordinator of workcamps, involved in activities of the environmental sector

Vera Bukilić Radusin – bookkeeping and administration

Ivana Banković – cooperating on volunteers' exchange

Tijana Ljubenović – cooperating on activities of Aarhus center New Belgrade

YRS also involves external experts for activities in the number of projects.

Annually more than 150 volunteers are engaged in the activities.

## IN 2016 WE HAVE CELEBRATED 40<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY



The movie about history and successful work over 40 years of YRS is available

on

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jv5N\\_0bBLM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jv5N_0bBLM)

# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

## The scope of work and key activities

In the reporting period, the key activities were in the nature protection and biodiversity conservation, implementation of international environmental agreements (Aarhus convention, CBD), public participation in environmental decision making, sustainable development (transport and agriculture).

The activities that have been implemented are: education (trainings, seminars, online courses, creation and dissemination of educational materials); monitoring the process of negotiating EU membership on Chapter 27; work on environmental policies (participation in public debates during drafting of laws, membership in working groups for the drafting of by-laws, the development of common positions of CSOs on environmental policies); the coordination of the work of the Green Chair and the SECO Environment and Climate Change; Campaigns (Belgrade would be white if you ride a bike, Green steps); initiatives such as the award "The Volunteer for nature "; work on the dialogue between CSOs and institutions, etc.

## Aarhus center New Belgrade

Aarhus Center New Belgrade was established within the Young Researchers of Serbia in November 2015 with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection and the OSCE Mission to Serbia.

The mission of Aarhus Center Novi Beograd is to improve the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the city of Belgrade, with a special focus on the municipality of Novi Beograd.

Aarhus Center New Belgrade fulfills this mission by:

- acting as a bridge between state and city authorities, civil society, the business, and the public sectors;
- Promotes the introduction of regulations and methods aiming at facilitating access to information, public participation and access to justice in the field of environment;
- Assist the national and city authorities to fulfill the obligations and duties stated in the Aarhus Convention;
- Encourages the implementation of the Convention by raising awareness and enhancing the capacities of stakeholders;

## Projects and donors of environmental protection program in 2015 and 2016

Projects:

Establishment of Aarhus Center New Belgrade  
Interested in the sustainability of protected areas - 3ZA  
Belgrade would be white if you ride a bike  
Transferring experiences from Visegrad countries in the field of agriculture and nature protection  
Enhancing SECO's work  
Green steps  
Aarhus mirror  
Institutional REC grant for EU integration and Chapter 27  
Activities of Aarhus Center New Belgrade supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia  
BioNET – supporting nature conservation CSOs in the Western Balkans.

Donors of environmental projects were:

REC offices in Serbia  
Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection  
Višegrad fund  
Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure  
OSCE Mission in Serbia  
TACSO



### Activist group

The establishment of Aarhus Center New Belgrade was the occasion to gather again a group of activists involved in environmental protection. The group gathered over 20 young people. During 2015 the activist group had trainings and seminars, organized workshops in elementary schools, street actions, participated in the organization of seminars and conferences, etc.

### Partnerships, networks, and coalitions

**Coalition 27** - a group of organizations that follow the negotiations related to Chapter 27. In 2016 YRS had the role of the Secretariat of the Coalition.

**SECO Environment and Climate Change** - a mechanism for involving CSOs in the programming and monitoring of international development assistance. YRS is the coordinator of the Group for Environment and Climate Change.

**Green chair** - participation of representatives of CSOs in the work of the Committee for Environmental Protection of the National Assembly. YRS coordinates the work of the group together with the Center for Modern Skills and the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence.

YRS representatives are active in the international networks of YEE, SEEnet, CEEweb and the Environment and Climate Forum (participation in meetings, annual assemblies, joint project planning, etc.)



# VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

YRS volunteer programmes are developed and carried out through Voluntary Service of Serbia (VSS). The aim of VSS is the development and promotion of volunteering and volunteer exchanges and it is being achieved through several of its regular programmes, in close relation with other

YRS programmes:

- International exchange of volunteers and coordination of the informal network of contact points in Serbia, through which up to 1600 foreign and national volunteers took part in 2015/2016;

The programme consists of:

- Sending Serbian volunteers to international workcamps abroad (outgoing).
- Placement of national and foreign volunteers to international workcamps in Serbia (incoming)
- Preparatory meetings for volunteers that are participating at international workcamps for the first time.
- Coordination of the informal network of 8 contact points in Serbia.

- **Identification and validation of the skills acquired through volunteering on workcamps through the PCE (post-camp event) workshops of I'VE methodology.**
- **Organization of international voluntary workcamp in Serbia.** In 2015 36 workcamps with 53 local partners; in 2016 42 workcamps with 65 local partners.
- **Long-term training for the camp leaders of international voluntary workcamps.** During 2015/2016 altogether 6 trainings were held in the framework of the annual long-term training programme, through which about 120 young people passed. Eventually, 75 of them experienced a camp leading.  
Training includes:
  - Assessment of leadership skills prior to the training itself (through the entrance application) and after the realization of the camps,
  - Three-day internationally standardized training,
  - Practical phase of coordination of workcamps, with mentoring, when leaders will transfer into practice what they learned during the training,
  - Evaluation, reporting and issuing certificates with described competencies acquired through this long-term theoretical and practical training.
- **European Voluntary Service and long-term volunteering.** During 2015 and 2016 we have applied for the partnership with 25 organizations (for 25 volunteers). In this period 30 EVS volunteers were sent abroad.
- **Educative programmes through Erasmus + programme of EU:** in over 30 youth exchange programmes, training and seminars we have sent over 90 participants in 2015/16.
- **Volunteering on the events in Belgrade,** we have participated in 4 events with 136 volunteers.

- **Development of infrastructure, enabling an environment for volunteering and networking of relevant actors in Serbia and the world**, participation in working groups, commissions, and membership in national and international networks. Our multiannual engagement as one of the most active actors in creating volunteering policies and an enabling environment for volunteering shows continuity, credibility and ethical attitude towards volunteering as the basic value of a society.

The center of VSS activities is an international workcamp, a special form of international volunteer service, an important way of nonformal education that encourages the development of local communities, intercultural understanding and dialogue, active and democratic participation and mobility of young people, social inclusion, gender equality, solidarity, freedom, and peace. Camps have been organized worldwide since 1920 among more than 90 volunteer services connected through 5 international networks, which together exchange over 20,000 volunteers a year.

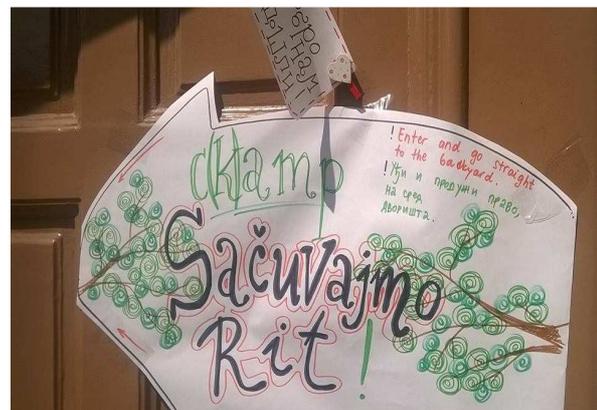
The programs of the Voluntary Service of Serbia address the following actors:

- volunteers of all ages, and especially young people aged 15 to 30 from all over Serbia and the rest of the world, regardless of their origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation or social status;
- Associations, including:
  - a) our contact points for the exchange of volunteers: since 2010, 14 organizations and the Youth Offices throughout Serbia are the contact point for the exchange of volunteers,
  - b) organizers of volunteer camps in Serbia: 53 organizers of 36 camps in 2015, 65 of 42 camps in 2016,
  - c) international volunteer services: about 90 partners from 50 countries around the world with a signed agreement on cooperation on international volunteer exchange;
- Institutions and networks relevant to our work, both nationally and internationally.

#### **Membership and networking:**

YRS is a founding member of KOMS, an associate member of NAPOR, and member of international networks: Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organizations, CCIYS – Coordinative Committee of International Voluntary Service, partner of Service Civil International in Serbia. YRS is a founding member of SEEYN.

We are registered as a youth organization within the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and as an organizer of volunteering at the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs. Our programs and projects are realized especially among young people and for young people.



## Working groups

- PR-group (Promoter Activists): a promotional group of volunteers in charge of promotion of VSS activities. In the last seven years, the PR group is in charge of the strategy of promoting international workcamps in and out of Belgrade: online promotion (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, update the website, linking to and with various forums, portals, etc.), radio and television promotion, organizing events on faculties and other places where it is best to publish a call for camps).
- Camp leaders: young people with previous experience at international workcamps abroad, as well as representatives of camp organizers - local leaders. Selection, leader pairing and campsite allocation were conducted in accordance with the following criteria: level of motivation, previous experience as participants in similar programs and recommendations by local organizers of volunteer programs in Serbia, taking into account the uniform distribution of sex, geographical coverage in order to provide them opportunities for everyone and their availability.
- Mentors and help in the office: mentors are volunteers with previous experience in camps that give direct support to young people who will go to the workcamps for the first time. In addition to direct support, every working day in YRS office in May-June there are volunteers with experience who provide information about camps from their own experience. In 2015/2016, 90 mentors were involved, and 30 people volunteered in the office.



Projects and donors of the volunteer program in 2015/16

"Volunteer to learn," the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

"National Youth Volunteering Program 2015 – Workcamps", Ministry of Youth and Sports.

"Mix & Match -European dimension to national realities of voluntary service"; European Commission, Erasmus + program.

" National Youth Volunteering Programme YOUTH RULES", Ministry of Youth and Sports.

General Conference of the Alliance of European Volunteer Services, Petnica. National agency of Germany.

General Assembly of the Alliance of European Volunteer Services, Petnica. Alliance of European Voluntary Service.

"I'VE - I Have Experienced. Recognition and Validation of Volunteering Through Peer Support ", National Agency of Italy.