



INTERNATIONAL
Youth CONFERENCE

DEAR READER,

It is with utmost pleasure that we share with you this brochure on the International Youth Conference of 2022. This year's conference was special as it commemorated the two decades of our work with youth and bettering our region. There have been many highlights and we want to show you the best.

The 20th edition of the conference holds a special place with its jubilee nature. We celebrated it with 70 individuals from all over the South East Europe region. This year's participants came from a range of countries, including North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey. The conference was made even more significant by placing a special focus on promoting and bringing the spotlight on the good practices of the region when it comes to active youth work in the last two decades. The aim was to inspire and empower young people with success stories from the region that they can replicate in their own communities. Without further ado, we hope you enjoy our recap of the 2022 International Youth Conference, and get encouraged to be more active!

20 YEARS IN NUMBERS

1271

Young leaders from the SEE region have participated in the conferences

24

Countries from SEE region and Europe were represented

255

Presidents, ministers, professors, experts, activists, and leaders were speakers

109

Team members, making the conference a reality

51

Members of the International Preparatory Group

30

Supporters, and donors that put effort to support the conferences

119

Topics covering democracy, reconciliation, integration, tolerance, and prosperity

113

Interactive workshops and active discussions

1:17

Social return of investment of youth participation in the conference

22

Partners directly involved in the preparation and implementation

2078

Social media announcements, stories, tweets, and videos published

24515

Meetings held for the purpose of organising the conference and bringing the youth to Krusevo

0

THE OPENING CEREMONY



WHAT DOES THE #IYC MEAN FOR US AND HOW DID WE GET HERE?



HOW ARE WE CHANGING THE REGION WITH OUR IMPACT?

H.E. Anke Holstein,
Ambassador of Germany to North Macedonia

Prof. Dr. Tanja Mišević,
Deputy Secretary General of RYCO

Mr. Blazen Maleski,
Researcher at the think tank Reactor Research in Action, and Youth Representative of North Macedonia to RYCO

Mr. Metodija Stojceski,
Executive director and president of Youth Alliance - Krusevo

Mr. Ivaylo Tsonev,
Friedrich Neumann Foundation Representative



DAY 1



29.10.2022

18:30 - 21:30

KEY MESSAGES FOR THE FUTURE

"But if you want to have what you want, you have to do it yourself. "

You can create the future you dream of if you become active and don't wait on others to make it for you based on their perceptions.

H.E. Anke Holstein

"The future is on the youth, but if the future is on the youth then the future starts today."

Mr. Blazen Maleski

"If we strive for success in a more youth-centered region, we have to remember that we cannot achieve any of it by living in a bubble of self-interest, but instead we have to focus on mutual needs and cooperation."

Prof. Dr. Tanja Mišević

1

STOP, BREATHE, AND THINK-

SENSEMAKING OF THE THESSALONIKI SUMMIT TO TODAY



IS THE EU INTEGRATION PROCESS A MARATHON OR A SPRINT?



IN WHICH WAYS COULD THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS BE
ENHANCED?

IN WHICH WAYS COULD WE MAKE THE INTEGRATION SUSTAINABLE
AND MORE RESILIENT?

Ms. Radmila Sekerinska,

Former Deputy Prime Minister for EU Integration in
North Macedonia

Mr. Jovan Tegovski,

National Coordinator/Head of the Delegation of the
Republic of North Macedonia to the International
Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and Special
Envoy on antisemitism, MFA, Skopje

Ms. Zvezdana Kovac,

Secretary General at European Movement
in Serbia



DAY 2



30.10.2022

9:30 - 11:00

Two decades appear to have not brought too many changes to the status quo in the SEE region. We are still stuck on discussing topics that were also on the 2003 IYC agenda. It raises the question whether this is the right path for us, whether the pursuit of EU accession will be fruitful since it needs both sides to be ambitious about its success.

The EU integration process is usually perceived as the solution to all the region's problems and that in order to finalise it you need to give it your all. What isn't discussed sufficiently is that sometimes your best efforts aren't enough. The reason for that being the fact that the final decision is up to the members of the EU, regardless of the achieved results.

This latent side of the process is not getting the same amount of attention despite the fact it should. We are usually just presented with the benefits of joining the EU with little to no insight on what after or what happens behind the doors during the process.

The key message from this session was to take everything you are presented, both in media and real life, with a grain of salt, and utilise critical thinking skills to analyse the given information. We shouldn't be a mass of nodding and agreeing individuals, but rather an informed group guided by reason and the desire to question everything.



We gave enlargement skeptics in the EU enough excuses. But the real problem for me, this was never a real crisis, because you can always be better for your own sake. You can always say okay, I learned from my mistakes, and this time we won't do that. The problem actually occurs when you see that sometimes the problem is also on the other side, and you cannot influence them.

Ms. Radmila Sekerinska

2

THE YOUTH FRONTLINE.

REFLECTING ON YOUTH
FOR REAL CHANGE



IN WHICH WAYS HAS YOUTH MOBILISATION EVOLVED
OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS?



WHAT DOES NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE EMERGING
CONTEXT LOOK LIKE?

Mr. Blazen Maleski,
Researcher at the think tank Reactor Research
in Action, and Youth Representative of North
Macedonia to RYCO
Mr. Lazar Vulević,
NGO Seafra – Radio Krš
Mr. Marko Vidojković,
Serbian novelist



DAY 2



30.10.2022

15:30 - 17:00

THREE EASY STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN TRYING TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE:

1

FIND PEOPLE THAT SHARE YOUR VISION

2

BE BRAVE IN FIGHTING FOR YOUR CAUSE

3

SHOUT WHAT YOU THINK AND DON'T
LET ANYONE KEEP YOU QUIET



Mr. Blazen Maleski

But the question is, and what is important for you and for us as a young generation, is to have a clear mind of what we want to achieve; first of all, how we want to achieve it, with whom we want to achieve it.

And always remember at the end, there will come a day where you have to think from the other side, which you have fought for, maybe years, maybe months, but you will be in a place where you have to take the decisions after the revolution.

And that's a really tough job.

3

COMPLEX CRISIS IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD— SHOULD WE PANIC?



HOW CAN WE TRANSFORM THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL CRISIS INTO CLIMATE REVOLUTION?



HOW CAN WE MAKE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC POLICY CHOICES FOR A THRIVING SOCIETIES?

HOW CAN WE CHALLENGE 'PETRO-DICTATORSHIP' IN ENABLING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUTURES?

IN WHICH WAYS DO MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION, MALINFORMATION INFLUENCE THE BUILDING OF HEALTHY SOCIETIES?

Mr. David Geer,
EU Ambassador to Republic of North Macedonia
Mr. Aleksandar Dragičević,
Citizens and eco-activist
Mr. Pavlos Petides,
Policy Assistant / Scientific Associate at the
Network for Reform in Greece and Europe
Mr. Thomas Leszke,
Elections Expert at ZIF



DAY 3



01.11.2022

9:30 - 11:00

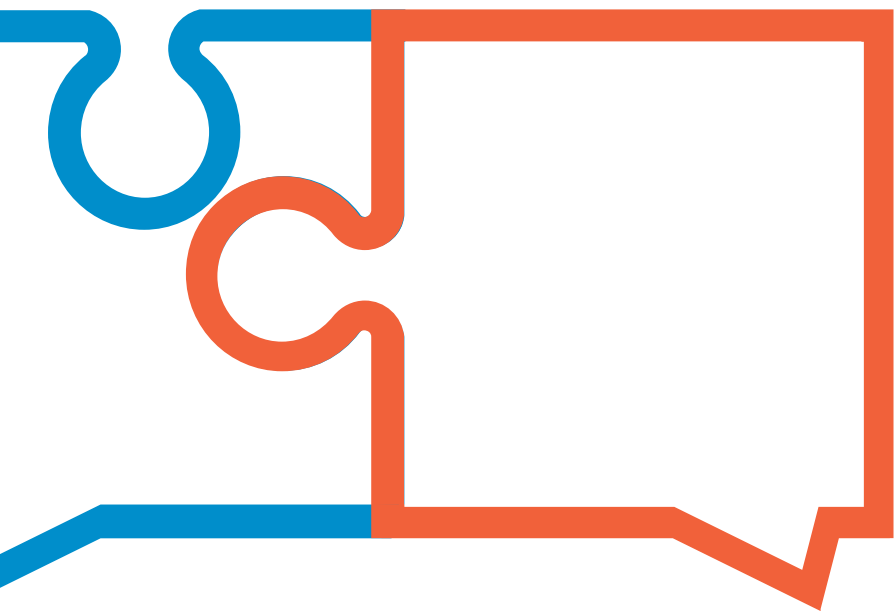
Have you ever asked yourself what kind of a world did the previous generations leave for us? It looks like that the newer generations are left with the remnants of a failed experiment with no instructions on how to salvage the situation. The reality is that the world is feeble and keeps facing crisis after crisis - the fossil fuel crisis of the 70s, the climate change crisis, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, just to name a few.

The bright side is that we still have enough time to create our own instruction manual on how to create a better present as well as future, and it all starts with cooperation.

Cooperation and working together are what makes us more resilient in times

of crisis. There is no room for panic when trouble o'clock strikes, but rather there's only space for deliberation and brainstorming of solutions together. What is most helpful is talking about the best solutions and not just visions. One way to do that is by utilising social media platforms. It is one of the easiest tools for starting conversations with a large audience reach and we should exploit all the mechanisms available to us in the modern age.

Start small in your social media quest, build a community, gain their trust, and get people to talk and think about the pressing problems. That is the way we can contribute to paving the way towards a brighter future.



Mr. Pavlos Petides



Europe provides a form of dialogue and cooperation, but what I want to see is more solutions, concrete solutions that not only touch the higher level of policy making, but touch the local level. Dialogue can be good, but if it's not complemented with concrete proposals, for me, it doesn't have so much importance. Why? Because the thing is that policy making, and this is what I wanted to add, not only drives growth, but also is the tool for our visions. So if you have a vision for your country, policy making can be the tool...

4



THE ART OF COLLABORATIVE FUTUREMAKING THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE RELATIONS IN THE REGION




ROADMAP: FROM VISEGRAD TO WB6 AND BACK



RYCO SUPERSCHOOLS A GROUND FOR STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE BONDS COOPERATION FOR A COMMON FUTURE

Ms. Marianna Neupauerová,
Deputy Executive Director of the International Visegrad Fund
Ms. Marta Podinace, Mission:Reconnect
Ms. Zorana Milovanović
Coalition of Solidarity Economy Serbia
Mr. Dimitar Dimitrov,
Foreign Policy Analyst and Candidate MP
Ms. Ivana Antonijević,
Superschools Coordinator at RYCO
Mr. Metodija Stojceski,
Executive director and president of Youth Alliance - Krusevo



DAY 3 
01.11.2022
15:30 - 17:00

Building a future together isn't an easy task. It starts with an idea and collaboration, but it shouldn't stop there like it usually does. Staying together even after the work is done is one of the ways to ensure the envisioned future that's being worked on grows more resilient and becomes the present. The work takes a lot of effort; however, the results make it worthwhile, especially when it creates a spillover effect that draws in other actors as well.

An indispensable part of the futuremaking process can be identified as the finding and examining of positive practices around us, and determining how it can be molded to fit in our context.

The interesting part about good examples is that they multiply. One example serves as

the inspiration for the other and the cycle repeats again.

Alongside useful examples, attention needs to be placed on better communication and openness when talking about collaborative futuremaking. Sometimes what is hindering the success of the construction of a prosperous future together is the fact that there's hate among people. Hate that arose because of a lack of communication and knowledge about the other side.

In order to prevent hate from spreading, and ensure a rewarding future, we need to be ready to approach the process with an open mind and pockets full of mutual respect as well as recognition.

I believe in our generation, I would say, because I think that we are living in times of consequences of many things that were done in the past. And I think that we are not obligated to fix things in the past. I think we are obligated to create a better framework for our cooperation, a better framework for our joint life in this region.

A BETTER
FRAMEWORK FOR
OUR JOINT LIFE IN
THIS REGION.

Ms. Zorana Milovanović

5

PONDERING ON POTENTIAL TRIPPING OR TURNING POINTS IN THE REGION



HOW DO WE READ AND MAKE SENSE OF THE CURRENT
OUTLOOK ON SKOPJE-SOFIA, BELGRADE - PRISTINA,
TIRANA - ATHENS, ATHENS - SKOPJE RELATIONS?



WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THE CRISIS OF
EUROPEAN SECURITY?

WHAT ARE THE OPINIONS ON THE OPEN BALKAN INITIATIVE?

Dr. Yorgos Christidis,
Associate Professor of Comparative Politics in the
Balkans at the Department of Balkan, Slavonic and
Oriental Studies of the University of
Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece

Dr. Katerina Koložova,
Director, scientific advisor and full professor of the
Institute in Social Sciences and Humanities-Skopje



DAY 4



02.11.2022

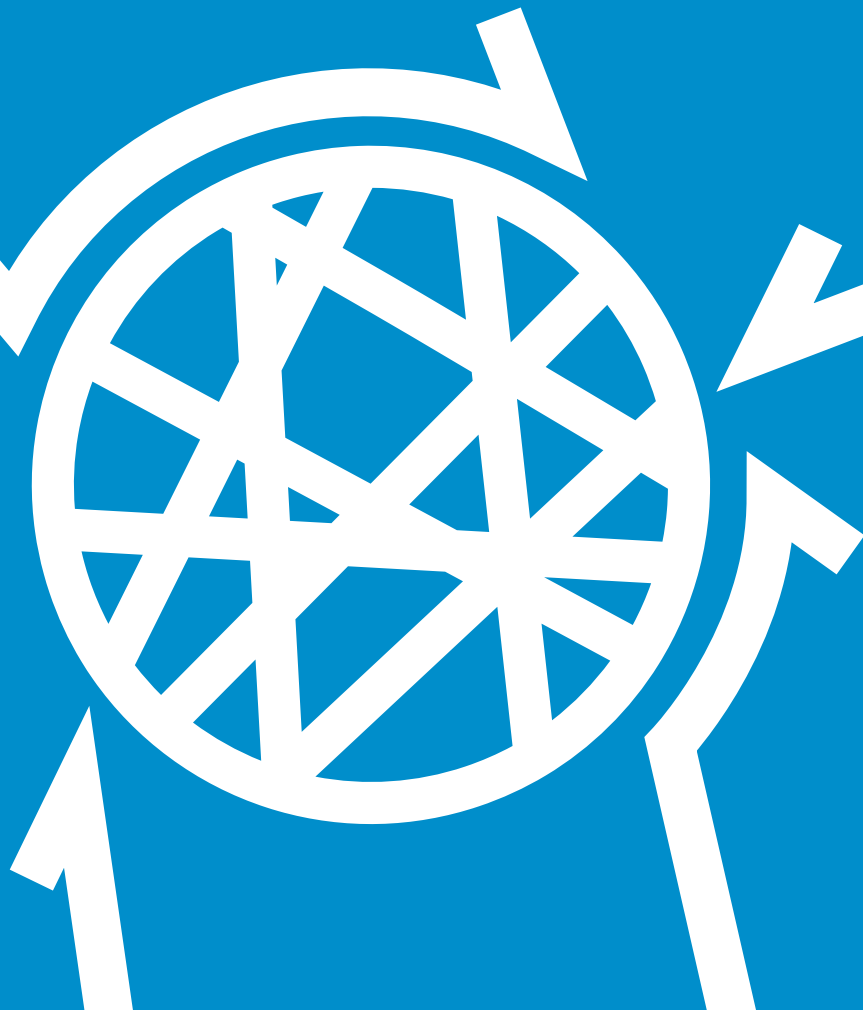
9:30 - 11:00

One thing is certain. Politics is volatile and unpredictable. Within the realm of politics, all events seem to be interconnected. The happenings in one part of the world can lead to consequences, both positive and negative, on the other part in the form of a domino effect. An example of this is the situation in Ukraine right now.

The developments on the Ukrainian territory affect the politics in the Western Balkans in many ways - one of them is that it strengthened the EU's interest in the region and demonstrated the importance of keeping the region stable and secure.

In crises like this, it is beneficial to ask questions such as who benefits from the status quo and the increased instability, and how can stability be restored. Understanding the actors and the underlying interests at play in the situation will provide a wider picture that reflects the true reality behind the manufactured one.

The pursuit of regaining stability is a demanding one. What can't be ignored is that stability can't be achieved overnight, but rather it requires continuous effort. Small steps taken towards peace and security will accumulate to produce a more stable region. So there is where we should start.



Dr. Katerina Kolozova

So things are, if you're not lying to yourselves and to your neighbors and to Europe, things are complicated, interlinked. And we should talk and every conversation should not be experienced as an attack, as a threat, but as an honest exchange of different truths because we experience them as truths.

6

PACT TOWARDS PEACE:

EUROPEAN PATH FOR THE BALKANS



**CAN THE PRESPA AGREEMENT BE SEEN AS A PACT OF
STABILITY, SECURITY, AND RECONCILIATION?**



WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN THE REGION NOW?

Mr. Nikos Kotzias,

Former Minister for Foreign affairs of the Hellenic
Republic

Mr. Nikola Dimitrov,

Former Minister for Foreign affairs of the
Republic of North Macedonia



DAY 4



02.11.2022

11:30 - 13:30

AUDIENCE ASKS AND ACQUIRES ANSWER

How can you guarantee that you're doing the right thing, taking into account that the public opinion is not on your side?

"So first there are many people in the public opinion which do not accept the "Prespa Agreement". Quotation marks because in the reality, they do not accept what the mass media of the oligarchs told them that the Prespa Agreement is. ...So the big problem with this agreement is that it hasn't been explained enough to the people."

Mr. Kotzias further accentuated the problem of the people not being informed correctly about political affairs, but rather being fed a narrative that is a loose interpretation of the actual situation.

The issue of propaganda and disinformation is a rather prominent problem in the Western Balkans region that seems to be impossible

to eradicate. Nevertheless, we can still combat it by keeping a positive outlook on the world, and a wellinformed mind from unbiased sources. One of the key takeaways from the session when it comes to this aspect was to make sure you are aware of the information you are being served in your everyday life and to critically analyse it before accepting it as something true.



Mr. Nikola Dimitrov

And instead of competing on who is friendly, who is more digital, whose economy is more innovative, whose media are most free, whose judges are most independent, whose politicians are cleanest and least corrupt. We compete in unhealthy races regardless of whether a country is a member state or not. And usually these emotional disputes are used by political leaders to defocus from real problems.

7

LEAPING INTO THE SHARED EU HORIZON -

WB6, SEE REGION, EU
WHAT LIES AHEAD?



**WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY AND
THE RULE OF LAW IN EUROPE LOOK LIKE?**



**WHAT DO THE WB6 BRING TO THE TABLE
REGARDING THE EU INTEGRATION PROCESS?**

**DISSECTING AND EXPLORING THE NEW EU
ENLARGEMENT AND ACCESSION METHODOLOGY
HOW CAN WE REMOVE UNEQUAL TREATMENT
REGARDING THE ACCESSION PROCESS?**

Dr. Simonida Kacarska,
Director of the European Policy Institute in Skopje
Mr. Emir Hasanović,
Western Balkans Coordinator at Institute for Strategic
Dialogue
Mr. Kristijan Fidanovski,
PhD in Social Policy from Oxford University



DAY 4



2.11.2022

15:30 - 17:00

**THREE KEY POINTS TO PONDER ON WHEN
LEAPING TOWARDS A MORE PROSPEROUS
(AND EU-ORIENTED) FUTURE:**

1 HOW CAN WE BUILD MORE BRIDGES BETWEEN PEOPLE?

The prosperous future we desire can't happen without bridging the gaps between groups of people in the region. We have to be unified in order to thrive together.

2 CAN YOU SHOW ME THE MONEY?

Building an affluent region with a flourishing future in front of it can happen, but we need to raise the question of where are the funds that will support that endeavour. We have to make sure we utilise the available resources given by international actors.

3 WHEN WILL THE OUTDATED STRUCTURES BE REFORMED?

The improved future can't be built on the same outdated principles and structures that have caused the current disadvantaged situation. We have to push for reforms where they're needed.



So it's really important to continue with some optimism, because the road ahead is not going to be easy, especially for North Macedonia, which is in parallel with all the EU conditions, also facing the issue with Bulgaria. So one thing that we can do is to continue to appeal to the EU, to Brussels, and to European countries to perhaps think about getting rid or at least bypassing the unanimity rule.

Mr. Kristijan Fidanovski

DOSE OF DIGITAL INSPIRATION



Democracy, respect for HR, rule of law, youth participation, regional cooperation are all topics that should be brought closer to the young generations and that is something that we cannot learn in school or we cannot learn from our families and friends, but we really need to feel those values and to feel regional cooperation. In order to feel it, we really have to, join you for example in Krusevo, and meet young people from other economies and EU member states so by networking and learning from each other, learn also about EU values while maybe not even being aware of it.

Mr. Ognjen Marković,
Team Leader of RCC's Western
Balkans Youth Lab Project

DAY 2
30.10.2022
13:00 - 14:00



Mr. Manuel Sarrazin,
Federal German Government Special
Representative for the Countries
of the Western Balkans

DAY 4
02.11.2022
13:00 - 14:00



We call it Mitbringsel in Germany, so the biggest present the region can give to the EU is creative, and engaged people which have clearly European mindsets. Which are, I think, in mindset sometimes even more European, in the best sense, than we in the old European member states.



Petar Wagener, Germany,
former volunteer in Kavadarci,
student of European Studies



DAY 2
30.10.2022
19:00 - 20:00



Do you ever think about how little we know and how little we are taught about the SEE region, especially if you're coming from well-developed countries? Peter has.

As someone coming from Germany, he has experienced this first hand. He accentuated how little the people know of the colourful Balkan history and if they are taught something, it is a drop in the ocean. The attention is mostly directed towards the West, not only when it comes

to politics, but education as well. It leaves you pondering - why is there such a strong focus on all things western?

Another thought-provoking point that was raised during the chat was how people of the SEE region talk about Europe as if they are not a part of it. There is a firm perception that Europe equates to the European Union, so the citizens of the region develop a conviction that they aren't part of the European club. This makes you think- how can we change such a perspective?

Viktoria Tomova, Bulgaria,
advocate for digital rights
on EU level



DAY 4
01.11.2022
19:00 - 20:00



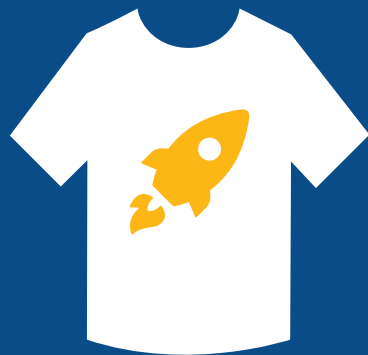
People are constantly being exposed to different information and content, particularly nowadays in the modern times with easy access to mass media. In the light of this topic, Viktoria raised a dexterous point - Who holds the influencers, like the musicians and singers, accountable for the content they share to their large audiences? They have the power to shape people's minds and opinions, yet there aren't enough discussions led about this.

The discussion on social media and influence inevitably reaches the stage when we ask whether this digital sphere can somehow be regulated. Most of the times, that brings to the forefront the EU as a legislative body that ought to take action in solving the issue. However, such thinking, as Viktoria pointed out, should be done carefully and our expectations of the EU's influence should not be too high, as its power to bring change on a substantial level isn't as potent.

FIRESIDE CHAT'S HOT TAKES



THE TEAM



MR. METODIJA STOJCESKI
PROJECT COORDINATOR
youthalliance@youthalliance.org.mk

MS. BILJANA STOJCESKA
FIRST PROJECT ASSISTANT
biljana@youthalliance.org.mk



MS. ANELIJA MITROVA
SECOND PROJECT ASSISTANT
anelija@youthalliance.org.mk

MS. SARA STOJKSKA
LOGISTICS ASSISTANT
sara@youthalliance.org.mk



MR. ANDREJ STOJKOSKI
SUPPORT STAFF

MS. NINA JOVANOVSKA
SUPPORT STAFF



MS. ZHANETA MARKOVA
SUPPORT STAFF

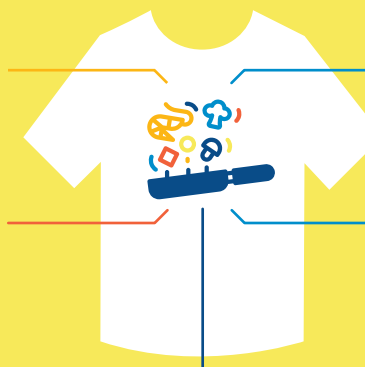
PREPARATORY GROUP

FRANCESKA MUCO
ALBANIA

NIKOS BAKIRTZIS
GREECE

AMINA IBIŠEVIĆ
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

NIKOLA IVANOVSKI
NORTH MACEDONIA



MARKO VUKCEVIC
MONTENEGRO

GET INSPIRED!

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR FUTURE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO MAKE OUR REGION BETTER.

