



ASSOCIATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NEW OPTIONS



REGIONAL INCUBATOR FOR
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

RISE Journey 5: Call for Applications

Supporting social entrepreneurship ideas
and development of young people from
the Western Balkans

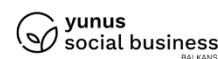
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Hello there! Are you ready to embark on a Journey? This is not just any journey; this is your chance to change the World! Okay, maybe first your community, then the World. Everyone can RISE as a hero of their own micro world. All you need is motivation, an idea, a bit of courage, and possibly some sort of support. This is where we come. And who are we, you wonder?

WHO WE ARE?

RISE is a **consortium of 9 partners from the Western Balkans, Germany, and France¹**, looking for young change-makers from the region, like yourself, to help us develop social businesses for better societies. RISE supports **ventures by young people in the Western Balkans that aim to have a positive social or environmental impact on their ecosystems.**

The general objective of RISE is to **foster reconciliation in the Western Balkans through the promotion and strengthening of social entrepreneurship.** We strongly believe that social entrepreneurship can be a great bridge between youth, and also societies and that it can bring amazing opportunities for growth and development. RISE opens new spaces of reconciliation for the youth of the Western Balkans, through a regional program to support social entrepreneurship.

After the success of its first cycle, RISE has launched its second phase (2022-2025) with a focus on enabling young people in the region to get to know each other better, exchange ideas, and boost regional cooperation. Through the **RISE Journey**, young social entrepreneurs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo², Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia will be supported throughout an **Ideation and Incubation Chapter** from which innovative solutions nourishing a dynamic ecosystem will emerge.

The RISE Journey is a specially tailored programme that is **free of charge** to participate in and it will help you learn, grow, and make a change in your surroundings. RISE Journey also provides you with the chance to participate in special **mobility and business development grants** in the second phase of the Journey. These grants will help you to explore regional social business practices and give you a financial kick-off.

So, do you have an idea or innovative solution for a new and better way to approach education, women empowerment, culture, rural development, health, or employment in your community? Social entrepreneurship skills, knowledge, and experience will help you solve social and/or environmental issues that you are passionate about and help you make a profit while doing it!

¹ RISE Project is co-funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Union, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office for the Balkans (RYCO) and the Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse (OFAJ). RISE activities are implemented by RYCO, OFAJ, SEEYN (South East Europe Youth Network), PULSE Groupe SOS, ARNO, Balkan Green Foundation, IEC Technopolis, Nešto Više, Smart Kolektiv and Yunus Social Business Balkans.

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL BUSINESS?

A social business is a type of business entity that seeks to achieve social or environmental goals while also generating sustainable financial returns. Unlike traditional for-profit businesses that primarily focus on maximizing profits for shareholders, social businesses aim to address societal issues, create positive impact, and improve the well-being of communities or the environment.

Social enterprises operate by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and use their profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers, and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities. **Basically, it's business for social good!**

What Do We Offer?

Our tailor-made **support programme** is implemented by **six local incubators** in the Western Balkans region: ARNO (North Macedonia), Balkan Green Foundation (Kosovo*), IEC Technopolis (Montenegro), Nešto Više (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Smart Kolektiv (Serbia) and Yunus Social Business (Albania). The RISE Journey consists of two phases and at each phase of the journey, you will be accompanied by a local incubator that will provide you with training and technical skills:

- **Ideation chapter** (October 2024 - February 2025)
- **Incubation chapter** (March 2025 - June 2025)

Ideation Chapter (from October 2024 to February 2025):

You will have access to a series of **training, and mentoring sessions** about social entrepreneurship and intercultural learning. At the end of the ideation chapter, you will **present (pitch) your social business model** addressing the identified problem, with impact and sustainability. Two of the best social business ideas per local incubator will be selected by a professional jury and will receive **financial support of €2,500**, an expedition in the Western Balkans, and a regional incubation programme.

Incubation Chapter (from March 2025 to June 2025):

The support programme continues with a regional dimension! You will complete the training with the aim of creating a **working prototype** of your idea while traveling around the region at a **regional Bootcamp** to meet Risers and at the **RISE expedition**, which will introduce you to the region's social enterprises. Your Journey ends with a **final RISE regional event**, attended by the RISE consortium, RISers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to recognize and celebrate our achievements, and advocate for better support of youth and social entrepreneurship in the region!

RISE ALUMNI COMMUNITY

In the first three editions of the program, the RISE Journey has supported **over 500 young social entrepreneurs (175 social enterprise ideas) and incubated 48 social enterprises**. This is our **RISE alumni community** of young social innovators and leaders changing the region with their ideas and actions. After completion of the RISE Journey, you will become part of this vibrant community

and have more opportunities for personal development of your ideas such as the **RISE alumni awards, study visits in Europe, access to a regional pool of experts, mentors, and professionals**, and many more. [Check out](#) the ideas that ARNO supported in the previous years of RISE!!!

Who Can Apply?

Young people from 16 to 35 years old from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, speaking English well enough to actively participate in the program, in a group of a **minimum of 2 persons** and **non-governmental organizations** (minimum 2 young persons/representatives, between 16-35 years old) **who have an idea for social enterprise** who is not in a testing phase or has a business activity and generates profit. The applicants should also have:

- Availability and readiness to participate in a program with 4-5 hours of active participation per week and meetups during 4 months of the ideation phase (online or offline format).
- High motivation to learn about social entrepreneurship and to be involved in a regional intercultural program
- The ambition to develop a concrete idea with a social impact
- The willingness to learn from other actors in the region
- At least, have identified a social/environmental issue they want to tackle
- At most, worked on their idea on a small scale / at a personal level, without having engaged in a real business activity yet
- Idea with local or regional impact

Who Cannot Apply?

- Incorporated/registered entities who have an idea for a social enterprise that is not in a testing phase or has a business activity and generates profit
- Political parties, government, and state agencies
- Scholarships ideas
- Capital funding ideas
- Research ideas
- Projects already selling their products or services
- Ideas with discriminatory practices, risking to create or reinforce divisions
- Ideas where the main impact is outside the region

What are our criteria for selection?

Key criteria

The key criteria that applicants will need to demonstrate are:

- Strong motivation to participate in the program, the mindset of a true change-maker, and commitment to fully participate in 4 months of ideation program
- How the idea tackles a critical social/environmental issue
- The potential for the idea to become a sustainable business
- More than half of the team members speak English

Advantageous criteria

Additional points are going to be awarded if the idea:

- Is innovative in a local context
- Has the potential to scale or replicate in the region
- Has the potential to create additional jobs
- Respect gender equality principles

*Advantage will be given to teams that haven't previously been supported/funded by another existing support program that delivers similar training and knowledge to entrepreneurs.

HOW TO APPLY?

You can apply simply by filling out the **application form** available at the following [LINK](#).

*The application should not take you more than 45-60 minutes of your time.

DEADLINE AND SELECTION

The deadline for application is **20 September 2024 at 23.59**.

In case of a large number of applications, we will engage in a pre-selection process, shortlisting the most successful applicants. The shortlisted applicants will be invited to a short online interview or presentation/pitch of their ideas.

*Overall, the selection process will be finalized in the second half of October 2024.

For any questions, please contact us at: stefani@arno.org.mk

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