

October 2022

JOINT DECLARATION

OF THE WESTERN BALKANS YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROMOTION PLATFORM

Preamble

In the framework of regional youth entrepreneurship support project “Balkans Youth: Linking Education, Abilities and Partnership Potential in Regional Employment Practice (BY LEAP), over the past three years, an alliance of organizations and institutions from 6 WB countries and Turkiye worked on strengthening intersectoral partnership to support youth entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship ecosystem development.

On 2nd regional partnership development forum held on 25-27 October 2022 in Skopje, North Macedonia, participating stakeholders reviewed the draft declaration and finalized the document for further dissemination towards national authorities in Western Balkan countries and Turkiye.

Declaration

We, organizations, institutions and individuals supporting entrepreneurship and youth business development in the Western Balkans and Turkiye,

Taking part in various entrepreneurship development and promotion activities under the regional BY LEAP project,

Believing that entrepreneurship is a key driver for youth personal and economic development and social inclusion, and that quality entrepreneurial learning is essential for the creation of entrepreneurial minds and environments,

Supporting implementation and sustainable institutionalization of entrepreneurial learning programs in secondary schools in countries of the region, such as student company program of Junior Achievement network,

Understanding that ever since the World Economic Crises in 2008 regional economies in the Western Balkans and Turkiye have been focusing on promotion of entrepreneurship as a mitigation tool to soring long-term unemployment in youth (15-30-year-old) population, and some measures have been taken to embed entrepreneurship as a competence in national educational programmes and learning practices,

We call upon the governments of the Western Balkans countries and Turkiye, to build upon the processes and initiatives established within the BY LEAP project, and support further endeavours nationally and regionally:

1) Intersectoral partnership on entrepreneurial learning promotion and entrepreneurship ecosystem development to be maintained and open for participation and contribution of various national and local stakeholders, especially those representing the voice of vulnerable and disadvantaged youth groups and youth from rural and remote areas with limited access to resources and opportunities. National governments are called to provide further support to exercising functional cooperation between and purposeful participation of various state and non-state actors and stakeholders in the partnership and its activities with national and sector impact.

2) Dialogue of all relevant stakeholders to be continued about legal regulation of student and youth companies, and especially regulation of transformation of student companies into youth companies. Youth entrepreneurs are disadvantaged group in an open market and is vulnerable to numerous risk factors which may hamper and close down the business in an early stage of establishment. Youth entrepreneurs are important drivers of innovation and growth, but due to lack of life and professional experience, and lack of resources and technical knowledge, many of them do not get opportunity to develop their business venture but had to close it down. Due to same reasons, and the lack of supportive transformation options, the most of student companies that were successful during their school life time, get closed upon the graduation of their founders. BY LEAP project has initiated a content dialogue in all the countries of the region and Turkiye, and has supported the development of the national models of regulation of student and youth companies. Thus the dialogue should be continued in an improved and more mature form, leading to the selection of sustainable policy alternative for regulation of student and youth companies.

3) Entrepreneurial competences to be mainstreamed in education and training at different education levels, leading to the provision of high quality entrepreneurial learning ensuring the creation of entrepreneurial minds and environments. Development of a knowledge-based society and entrepreneurial ecosystem should be based on education and training system which is capable of creating entrepreneurial mindset among students and learners. To reach such educational standards, the countries of the region and Turkiye should invest more effort to embed entrepreneurship competences in their education and training at various levels and domains.

4) Commitment to be demonstrated to support and implement the following principles relevant for further development of entrepreneurial education and youth business:

- Partnership and open participation – cooperation with different stakeholders and sectors is based on partnership and is open for all relevant stakeholders to take part.
- Evidence-based approach is exercised in the cooperation and decision-making processes.
- Innovation – innovative solutions and approaches are applied in cooperation and support provision.
- Regional perspective – all national partnerships keep strong regional perspective and have understand that all regional governments share the same values in supporting entrepreneurial education and youth business development.
- Open cross-border communication – regional governments maintain an open communication and share good practices from supporting national partnerships.

For additional information, please contact Ms. Jasmina Radoičić policy officer, at jasmina.radoicic@wb-institute.org, or at + 381-65-2549608, or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), and the website <https://by-leap.com/>.

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