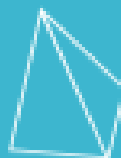


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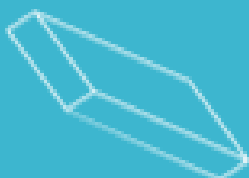
VOLUNTEERING  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
IN EUROPE

AUTHOR  
Croatian Volunteer  
Development Centre  
(CVDC)

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## 1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE CONCEPT DEFINITION

The Volunteering Infrastructure (VI), following a definition used by Croatian Volunteer Development Centre (CVDC), encompasses different systems, mechanisms and instruments needed to ensure an environment where volunteering can grow and flourish. It stimulates cross-sectoral cooperation and the engagement of different stakeholders, in an effort to promote volunteering possibilities and citizen engagement.

The following elements of volunteering infrastructure are already established or are in the process of establishment or further development:

- Public policies (laws, regulations) on volunteering;
- Volunteer involving organisations: organisations and networks at local, regional and national level; local/regional/national institutions;
- Regional and local volunteer centres and the Croatian Volunteer Development Centre;
- Volunteering opportunities and brokering mechanisms between (potential) volunteers and volunteering opportunities, including national on-line placement database;
- Volunteering promotion and raising public awareness on values of volunteering, on local, regional and national level;
- Funding mechanisms to ensure sustainability of volunteer involving organisations and volunteering opportunities;
- Academic and CSO's research projects;
- Quality standards of volunteer programs for VIO's;
- Quality standards of Volunteer Centres.



The role of volunteering infrastructure is to create an enabling environment (political, social, and economic) in order to support and further develop volunteerism in Croatia. Although Croatia has greatly developed its volunteering infrastructure throughout the last decade, relevant elements of volunteering infrastructure are still missing: (I) cross-sectoral cooperation between stakeholders, in particular the involvement of businesses and universities, (II) recognition of volunteering, (III) longitudinal (academic) research projects acting as an empirical support tool for further infrastructure development.

## 2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

The Law on Volunteering (The Official Gazette NN 58/07) was adopted by the Croatian Parliament on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The amendments on the Law on Volunteering were adopted (The Official Gazette NN 22/13) by the Croatian Parliament on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013. It stipulates the following definition:



*Volunteering is an investment in personal time, effort, knowledge and skills out of free will to carry out services and activities for the well-being of another person or the wider public, and are executed by the persons without existence of any conditions of a financial reward or any other material benefit for the work done, unless otherwise stated by the*

*Law (Article 3, p. 1).*

Besides the principles embedded in the definition, the Law on volunteering defines additional basic volunteering principles, such as:

- The principle of non-discrimination of volunteers and volunteering beneficiaries;
- The principle of protection of volunteering beneficiaries;
- The principle of non-exploitation of volunteers;
- The principle of protection of volunteers minors;
- The principle of education for volunteering purposes (educating for values);
- The principle of inclusive volunteering;
- The principle of non-chargeability for volunteering;
- The principle of free will and solidarity of volunteering;
- The principle of mobility of volunteers.

Croatia is seriously lagging behind in conducting (longitudinal) research projects on volunteerism, therefore the relevant empirical data is inconclusive. Although in the past decade several research in the field of volunteering was conducted, which, generally speaking, to a greater or lesser extent, indicate a positive attitude and interest of respondents for volunteering, empirical insight into volunteering is difficult because the research were carried out on convenient samples, lack of comparative research in time perspective, a problem is also different definitions and different understanding of volunteering. In fact, the percentage of people declaring engagement in volunteering activities varies from 9% to more than 50% (Zrinščak i sur., 2012). Considering that representative studies show lower shares of volunteering, the more likely conclusion is that volunteering in Croatia is very low, and that the incidence of volunteering is at a very low level. For example, data of the European Values Survey conducted in Croatia in 2008, on a representative sample, in which volunteering is defined as unpaid voluntary work for at least one activity or social organization i.e. organizations dealing with health, religion, education, culture, work with youth, social care for older or sports and recreation (Bežovan and Matančević, 2011) show that in Croatia only 8.8% of the population volunteers.

Research projects conducted in 2001 and 2007 (Ledić) suggest that there is no significant difference among the gender quotas or particular age group ratios. Being member of associations has proven to be helpful: citizens who are members of associations are more keen to volunteer on a more regular basis. Men usually volunteer for a political party and the local community, while women volunteer for kindergartens, schools and churches. Younger age groups (below 35) are more inclined to participate in organised activities while pensioners often help the church and volunteer for the local community in non formal settings. Research studies conducted so far prove a positive attitude of Croatian citizens towards volunteering and a relatively high interest in volunteering.

The "Research on civil participation in community initiatives through volunteering" conducted by SMART in 2001 shows a positive attitude of the population towards volunteering. Nevertheless, the people interviewed also admitted to have been surrounded by people having a negative attitude while volunteering. Among the reasons why people do not engage in volunteering we find: (I) economic crisis and hard living conditions, (II) crisis of values and (III) insufficient information on volunteering opportunities. (Ledić, 2001).

In a 2003 research study, "Volunteerism and public institutions", the Volunteer Centre Zagreb still shows a general positive perception of volunteerism and highlights the openness of public institutions towards the volunteers' involvement. Research on volunteerism conducted by the National Foundation for Civil Society Development in 2005 shows that Croatian people consider volunteering as respectful community work, and see volunteering as a way to contribute to the development of the whole society. The study "Volunteerism and local community development - civil participation in community initiatives"

conducted by SMART in 2006 shows that the positive perception on volunteering is preserved at similar levels as in 2001, but that the attitude towards volunteering is getting more negative among the young and more sceptical among the elderly. A good amount of spare time and financial stability, alongside with a sincere interest, are seen as prerequisites for volunteering (Forčić, 2007).

Another study from 2007 conducted by the associations MI and MOST confirms the positive attitude towards volunteering and the belief that volunteering is important and can help solve community problems.

The study of civil society in Croatia, conducted in 2005 in the framework of international comparative CIVICUS research has shown that as many as 38.4% of the population in the year prior to the survey was volunteering, but mostly outside of activities of an organizations therefore mostly informal. Respondents with higher education, but also those with lowest, as well as those with higher incomes. (Bežovan and Zrinščak, 2007a, 2007b).

Generally speaking, volunteering is not widespread among the young. Among those who have such experience informal type of volunteer work directed towards those who need some form of assistance is prevalent. Such focus is confirmed by expressed motivation for volunteer work in which is the underlying value of altruism.

The research study Youth in times of crisis (Vlasta Ilišin, Dejana Bouillet, Anja Gvozdanović, Dunja Potocnik, 2013) analyzed, among other things, voluntary youth activities in the community to provide insight into the structural dimension of their social capital. This is the dimension investigated by a possession of experience of volunteering during the last 12 months, and the data showed that about 13% of young people had the experience of voluntary work in the mentioned period. Sons and daughters of fathers with completed four-year secondary education, as well as participants from the countryside prefer voluntary work, the lack of interest of young people from the big cities is highlighted. One-third of surveyed volunteers assisted people with disabilities and the elderly, a little more than a quarter helped their classmates in mastering the material, suggesting a significant share of informally structured volunteer work. A quarter of respondents participated in the organization of cultural events, and almost one fifth of them in the organization of sports events. Public works in the local community have attracted less than one in five volunteers, and in religious activities one in six volunteer are involved.

As the main reason for their voluntary involvement, 36% of volunteers highlights altruistic motivation, and a sense of commitment to helping others. Around a fifth expressed a general desire for social engagement, a little more than a tenth had a specific reason for the solution of a problem. Less than 10% of young volunteers the reasons attributed to family tradition, then the motivation to apply some knowledge in practice, and the desire to make new friends. About 5% of the volunteers attributed volunteering to religious beliefs, and about 2% noted a pragmatic reason for opportunities to meet future employer. Socio-political beliefs was a motivation for less than 1% of the participants.

A survey conducted on a sample of 255 graduate students of the University of Zagreb (Pološki Vokić, Maric, Horvat, 2013) was focused on the motivation for volunteering, and has researched the connection of selected personal characteristics of young people (sex, personality, and area of study) with the primary reason for volunteering. The research results show that the primary motivation of the largest number of respondents (33%) stems from their own beliefs, not for material gain, which means true identification with the idea of volunteering (motive "values"). All other so-called egotistical reasons (better understanding, personal development, career, social relationships, self-protection) are less present. Research has shown that incentives to participate as volunteers depend on the specific characteristics of individuals. In particular, the reasons for volunteering to a greater extent depend on the field of study / work of an individual, but to a lesser extent on sex and characteristics of the individual.

Research results unambiguously show that in Croatian society volunteering has not happened as generally accepted social value, and further research is necessary. The lack of research linking the tendency of individuals volunteering with their characteristics (sex, personality, age, level of education, field of education, religion and financial status) prevents getting a clear picture of the structure of volunteers.

The individual efforts of civil society organizations on the one hand, and universities and international donor agencies on the other side to launch and conduct research projects certainly make a valuable contribution to the advancement of volunteerism. However, the results of systematic and coordinated research should be the basis of public policy, promoting change and taking measures in the development of volunteering in Croatia.

### 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Law on volunteering (The Official Gazette NN 58/07) has been adopted by the Croatian Parliament on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

The approval of this law was a process that lasted for several years. It started as an initiative within the civil society to create an enabling environment for volunteering in Croatia. Initial draft of the Law on volunteering was defined by the National Board for Volunteering Development in cooperation with the expert team from the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) in 2001. In 2004, the draft was sent to the Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity - the institution that proposed the law to the Croatian Parliament. During the two-year process, the Law underwent public debate and revised several times, a new text being worked out in 2006 by a newly formed working group. The Croatian Parliament finally adopted the Law on volunteering on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The Law on volunteering defines the organised or formal volunteering and does not cover non-formal or spontaneous volunteering and voluntary undertaken activities with the main purpose of individual professional advancement, this type of involvement being regulated in Croatia under the Labour Law.

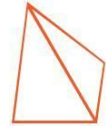
Considering the need to improve the Law on Volunteering, on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2013, the Croatian Parliament adopted the amendments of the Law on Volunteering (The Official Gazette NN 22/13). Significant changes to the Law on Volunteering relate to:

- long-term and short-term volunteering and volunteering in crisis situations;
- the definition of volunteers;
- definition of volunteer involving organisations;
- the principle of inclusive volunteering;
- situations in which the Volunteering Contract is compulsory;
- the rights and obligations of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations;
- competences acquired through volunteering.

The Law on Volunteering contains: definition of volunteering, principles and conditions for volunteering, the rights and obligations of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations, the conditions for conclusion of volunteering contracts, the adoption of the Code of ethics for volunteers, the issuing of the

volunteering certificate, national volunteer award as well as means for supervising the implementation of this Law. The Law on Volunteering in Croatia has encouraged other organisations (particularly social care institutions) to *open their doors* to volunteers. Furthermore, there are also individual cases of local, regional, and national public bodies involving volunteers.

Currently, The Ministry of demographics, family, youth and social policy ensures the implementation of this law and other regulations deriving from it. Furthermore, the Ministry monitors the implementation of the Law and collects feedback from the implementing organisations about the consequences of its implementation. Their tasks are:



- ensuring the implementation of this Law and other regulations deriving from this Law,
- monitoring and proposing adequate measures,
- collecting data on the number of volunteer involving organisations and the number of volunteers in the Republic of Croatia and the citizens of the Republic of Croatia who are volunteering abroad, based on yearly reports,
- convening the inaugural session of the *National Board for Volunteerism Development*,
- implementing activities and measures to develop and implement this law,
- acting as a coordinator and technical support for the National Board for Volunteerism Development.

Besides the Law on Volunteering, there are other regulations of volunteering, which all together form a national policy on volunteerism development:

1. *National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2012- 2016* and its *Operational Implementation Plan* provide basic guidelines in order to improve the existing legal, financial and institutional mechanisms, to support civil society development and to achieve the enabling environment for civil society development in Croatia. Within the National Strategy, volunteering is incorporated as a part of different chapters and there are few measures and activities relating on volunteer development<sup>1</sup>:
  - a. provide a support system for the development of volunteering in Croatia
  - b. evaluate the implementation of the Law on Volunteering
  - c. improve the statistical monitoring of data relating to the work of CSOs in Croatia (especially number of volunteers, number of volunteer hours)
  - d. support the organisation of volunteer programs carried out by CSOs and educational institutions
  - e. develop a system of recognition and validation of volunteering of pupils and students in accordance with the existing good practices of the EU
  - f. develop high-quality volunteer programs within the organisations/institutions providing social services
  - g. build capacities for the development of inclusive volunteering programs.

National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2017 - 2021 is currently being developed, CVDC is involved in the process.

<sup>1</sup> National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2012 - 2016 and the Operational Implementation Plan (2012), Zagreb: Government of the Republic of Croatia.



2. *National Program for Volunteerism Development 2016-2019*, which is in the process of adoption and provides basic guidelines/priorities for the future development of volunteerism in Croatia.
3. *Volunteer Code of Ethics (The Official Gazette No. 55/08)* prescribes rules of conduct for volunteers, volunteer involving organisations and beneficiaries in accordance with the principles of volunteering from the Law on Volunteering.
4. *Certificate of competencies gained through volunteering* is an official national instrument for recognition and validation of competencies gained through volunteering prepared and published by the Ministry responsible for volunteering in cooperation with the National Board for Volunteerism Development. The aim of this instrument is to provide support to volunteers in recognition of their competences (knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility) acquired through volunteering experience, for a full presentation to any third party. The Certificate contributes to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning through volunteering, using the key competences for lifelong learning as a framework. This instrument is especially important because it is created as a response to the need to make these competences visible and useful for extension of personal education and broadening employment prospects. At the same time, the recognition of competences acquired through volunteering plays an important role in supporting the motivation for volunteering.
5. Regulation on the content and form of the *Report from Volunteer Involving Organisations (The Official Gazette No. 106/07, 121/07, 101/08, 104/15)* on accomplished services and activities for volunteer involving organisations, the period and deadline for delivering the reports as well as other related issues.
6. *The Regulation on the National Volunteer Award (The Official Gazette No. 106/07)* regulates the procedure, how to publish the call of proposals, selection criteria, amount of the prize, the awarding of medals and certificates.
7. *The National Youth Programme (2014-2017)* allows youth organisations to participate to the development of the programme. Section 5. of the National Youth Programme deals with active participation of youth in the society and states that volunteering is especially important for acquiring work experience and skills, for facilitating active participation by young people in social development and social solidarity affirmation. Through volunteering, young people are given an opportunity to express their professional interests, helping others and improving their community activities. National Youth Programme for coming years is currently being developed by the Ministry of demographics, family, youth and social policy.

Besides the Ministry of demographics, family, youth and social policy, the main public bodies responsible for supporting volunteering in Croatia are:

- *The National Foundation for Civil Society Development* was founded by the Croatian Parliament on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2003, with a special law (The Official Gazette, 173/03), as a public foundation with the purpose of promoting and developing civil society in Croatia. The National Foundation offers professional and financial support to programmes which encourage

sustainability of the non-profit sector, the inter-sectoral collaboration, civil initiatives, philanthropy, volunteerism and which improve democratic institutions. It is financed from the national budget, provided by the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations, from the earnings of National lottery, the main assets, donations and other funding, in accordance with Article 16 of the Law on Foundations and Funds. In accordance with its strategic objectives, it grants the annual award "School - a friend of the community" through which it selects, and presents to the public the most innovative volunteering initiatives in elementary schools and models of youth volunteering in high schools in Croatia.

- *The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations* was founded in 1998 for attending expert assignments from the domain of the Government of the Republic of Croatia with regards to creating conditions for cooperation and partnership with non-governmental and non-profit sector, and especially with civil society organisations. The office has a wide range of activities: from proposing new legal framework for the non-profit/non governmental operations, to monitoring the implementation of the *National Strategy for Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development* and measures of the Operational Implementation of the Strategy, to developing financing activities through the national budget, other public sources and European Union funds.
- *National Board for Volunteerism Development* is an advisory body for the Croatian Government. Its activities are public and it implements measures and activities with the purpose of promoting and further developing volunteerism. National Board for Volunteerism Development proposes measures for the advancement of volunteers status in society, in collaboration with authorities, it proposes regulations on volunteer privileges, it decides about the National Volunteer Award, it initiates new regulations or changes to the existent ones concerning volunteerism, introduces the Volunteer Code of Ethics within which the Ethics Committee operates, it undertakes other activities for promoting volunteerism. National Board for Volunteerism Development has 19 members, representatives of the public sector, civil society organisations or independent experts, appointed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The Board has a president and a vice-president elected by the members of the Board.
- *The Council for Civil Society Development* is a qualified advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The Council works for the development and implementation of the collaboration programme between the Croatian Government and the non-profit sector. The programme deals with the implementation of the National Strategy for Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development, with development of philanthropy, social capital, partnerships and inter sectoral collaboration. The Council has 23 members and a president elected by the members of the council.



According to the national study "Assessment of the development level of CSOs in Croatia"<sup>2</sup>, which examined the issue of cooperation between CSOs and the government, a large majority of the CSOs surveyed had an experience of cooperation with governmental bodies.

<sup>2</sup> National Foundation for civil society development (2011). National study "Assessment of the development level of CSOs in Croatia."



In most cases this refers to cooperation at the national level. The most common form of cooperation was projects funding by the public sector, followed by project partnerships, or exchanges of experience and information. It is interesting to note that only 7,5% of all associations who had experience of cooperation with the public sector mentioned that the collaboration had been smooth. One of the most common problems, highlighted by a fifth of the associations who have had this experience, refers to the prevalence of personal contacts over the institutional relationship, also identified as a problem in several other studies on civil society in Croatia. In the past three years, the Government institutions have put volunteering policy out of the focus of interest; National program for volunteerism development is waiting to be approved, National volunteer award has a very low profile, development and sustainability of the infrastructure is jeopardised with financial cuts and shorter financial cycles.

## 4. STRUCTURE OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEERING

From 2008-2014 Croatia didn't have a formal National Volunteer Centre nor a national umbrella organization for organizations involved in volunteering, but had a Croatian Volunteer Centres Network (non-formal organisation, CVCN). In December 2014 the Croatian Volunteer Centres Network formalised its work in a way that the CVCN is now registered as an association. In 2017., Croatian Volunteer Centres Network changed it's name to Croatian Volunteer Development Centre CVDC. CVDC has been established as a result of collaboration of civil society organisations from four major cities in Croatia, which have been improving and promoting volunteerism for a number of years already. CVDC encourages the development of volunteerism in Croatia through four main areas with strategic goals: (I) Promotion and information, (II) Capacity building and knowledge and quality management (III) Connectivity, networking and advocacy, (IV) Strengthening organizational capacities. .

In Croatia there are four regional volunteer centres (RVC), which are either *wide-ranging RVCs* - all activities of the centres are focused on volunteering or *in-house RVCs* - activities of volunteer centres are part of the wider program of the organisation. The main purpose of the regional volunteer centres is promoting and developing volunteerism on the local, regional and national level. It is done through education in the area of volunteer management, educating the public about volunteerism, matching potential volunteers with available volunteering opportunities, organising informational and promotional campaigns, editing publications and conducting research on volunteerism. Regional volunteer centres take proactive steps by offering their support in organising volunteering and they Regional closely cooperate through the Croatian Volunteer Centres Network.

Apart from the regional volunteer centres there are around 30 local volunteer centres in Croatia, conducting activities on a regular basis (Belišće, Beli Manastir, Slavonski Brod, Vukovar, Požega, Županja, Pula, Labin, Ozalj, Dubrovnik, Zadar, Sinj, Metković, Šibenik, Brač, Imotski, Slatina, Čakovec, Sisak, Petrinja, Varaždin, Gvozd, Karlovac, Kutina, Orosavlje, Zabok, Zaprešić, Križevci, Bjelovar and Sv. Ivan Zelina). RVCs serve as a resource centre for the LVCs, especially through the framework of CVDC.

Based on the yearly reports of the volunteer involving organisations collected by The Ministry of demographics, family, youth and social policy there is evidence of an increased number of volunteers and volunteer hours, and thus an increased number of registered volunteer involving organisations<sup>3</sup> :

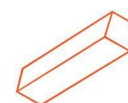
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of volunteers	13 922	16 018	19 422	29 235	45 955	52 208	48 731
Number of volunteer hours	725 680	1 050 791	1 222 583	1 652 965	2 597 121	2 943 902	3 332 984
Number of VIO's	206	345	446	671	1 032	1 367	1 217

According to the national study "Assessment of the development level of CSOs in Croatia"<sup>4</sup>, 93,9% of the surveyed CSOs have been engaged in some kind of cooperation with other CSOs. The main motivation for such cooperation was shared interests, followed by effective use of available resources, and easiest way to gather financial support for projects. In most cases, cooperation involved implementation of joint projects, assistance in equipment, office space and common requirements to donors. Regional and local volunteer centres have established cooperation with a wide range of organisations that involve volunteers on a regular basis.

## 5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS (state, private, etc.)

Based on the yearly reports of the "volunteer involving organisations", collected by the Ministry in 2016, the structure of volunteer involving organisations consisted: 83% of associations, 11% of public institutions, 4% of other non-profit organisations, and some small percentage of religious organisations, local/regional governments, governmental bodies, foundations.<sup>5</sup>

Involvement of businesses in volunteering is still at the early stage. Businesses are beginning to recognise the benefits of social responsibility programmes for the company's competitiveness. Regional volunteer centres inform businesses on volunteering related issues through several promotional activities, with the aim of showing them how any investment in community may have a positive return for the company, and also build a bridge between a business and the local community. Also, additional investments have been done by Regional volunteer centres for the validation and valuing of volunteering experience by employers. In 2015, 23 different employers have signed the Charter for recognition of competencies gained through volunteering thus expressing readiness for the introduction and promotion of good practice in recognition of competencies acquired through volunteering at the workplace and/or educational environment.



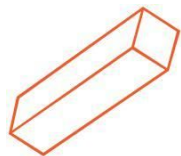
<sup>3</sup> Yearly report on volunteer involving organisations from 2010 to 2015, The Ministry of Social Policy and Youth. The report was used for the first time in 2009, which was considered as a testing year. There is still a need to find the appropriate promotional mechanism to encourage volunteer involving organisations to send their reports.

<sup>4</sup> Source: national study "Assessment of the development level of CSOs in Croatia" which was carried out by the National Foundation for civil society development in 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Yearly report of the volunteer involving organisation for 2016, Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy

There are some institutional models established for the promotion of volunteerism or formal assessment of the volunteer contribution in the Croatian educational system. Different initiatives at different educational levels are rather individual efforts and not institutional or systemic ones. Volunteering is a part of the broader inter - subject called Civic education which is now implemented in some elementary schools and high schools in Croatia. RVC's and CVDC have implemented different projects aimed at developing school volunteering and significant changes have been done in the last 3 to 4 years. Most schools do have some kind of a school volunteering program, mostly aimed at humanitarian help but a lot of them having school volunteer clubs. Unfortunately, the quality and sustainability of these school volunteer programs is often left in the hands of individuals rather than the educational system. Several service-learning initiatives are found at universities, with students receiving ECTS credits for community work.

Studies also suggest a rather low level of young people involvement in volunteering activities. As part of an international comparative research of students in 14 countries, a survey was conducted of student volunteering on University of Zagreb and the Technical and Social College in Zagreb, in the period from 2006 to 2007. (Zrinščak et al., 2012). The aim was to collect data on different forms of volunteering (experience, basic forms, the reasons and benefits of volunteering, the value associated with volunteering), and in particular to gain insight into international differences. The results showed that the Croatian students, together with the Japanese, are on the rear of the countries analyzed. When volunteering, students do it irregularly and informally, and most volunteer for the neighborhood / local activist group, in homes for the elderly, shelters and similar organizations, helping young people as a teacher, mentor, coach, counselor or participate in some other activity to help young people.



The analyzed data show that the experience of volunteering ranges from 28.8% to only 4%, and 42.3% of students surveyed reported that they had volunteered in the past 12 months, but most of them did so occasionally, a minority (9.5%) regularly, ie. monthly, weekly.

Research has shown that volunteering is generally not promoted through the educational system. For example, 72.8% of students surveyed said that they were not invited to volunteer by their professors, while most consider such potential call as useful. Among the studied countries, Croatia is not a country with the lowest representation of volunteering, but is at the very end.

The National Foundation for Civil Society Development has had a significant role in promoting youth volunteering across the elementary and secondary schools in Croatia. In 2006 the National Foundation established an annual award "School - a friend of the community" for the recognition of volunteering initiatives in elementary schools, followed, one year later, by a similar initiative for secondary schools. The award consists of around 1,500 EUR per school project.

National government and local authorities have been involved in promoting volunteering, usually in cooperation with Regional volunteer centres through annual regional awards for volunteer contribution. There are currently regional awards for volunteerism in all four counties/regions, but also many local initiatives initiated by local volunteer centres which are aimed at promoting and valuing volunteering at the local level.

These regional and local awards coexist with the National Volunteer Award, which is awarded annually as part of the official Governmental protocol for the celebration of the International Volunteer Day. The Ministry of demography, family, youth and social policy award the National Award for

individual volunteer contribution, the National Award for individual volunteer coordinator contribution and the National Award for a volunteer involving organisation.

During the 2011, in cooperation of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Volunteer Centres Network and Ministry of Family Affairs, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity established the "European Year of Volunteering Journalist Award". The above listed partner organizations issued calls for the award in order to raise awareness of the importance of volunteering and to make its own contribution to the European Year of Volunteering (2011). By presenting this award, it wants to give credit to Croatian journalists who have been raising public awareness of the importance of volunteering and encourage media to report on this relevant issue. The award had two categories: best written report on volunteering in 2011 and the best report on volunteering in audio-visual media.

Besides the national and regional annual awards, National Conferences on Volunteerism have played a significant role in volunteering promotion.

## 6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The main national provider of continuous financial support for volunteering is the Ministry of demographics, family, youth and social policy. There is a one-year based support for the local volunteer centres (total budget around 280.000 EUR) and also a three-year based support for the regional volunteer centres (total budget around 130.000 EUR) which is unfortunately changing to a one - year based programme. There are also various targeted opportunities within the European Social Fund where volunteer centres can obtain financial support (approximately 422.000,00 EUR). Volunteer centres also have local and regional funding opportunities in their communities.

These financial resources have been included in the yearly national budget, approved by the Croatian Parliament and Government and announced in The Official Gazette. These financial resources do not fully cover all the volunteering activities within the country, but allow for proper implementation of basic activities as defined by the Law on Volunteering. A large part of the budget is allocated through public call for proposals for (I) projects of local volunteer centres and (II) co-funding institutional grants for supporting regional volunteer centres development. Other possible funding sources include local budgets, the National Foundation for Civil Society Development, the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, businesses and EU funds.

## 7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

Over the last ten years, research on volunteering has been conducted primarily by the CSOs. However, measurement of volunteering and its impact are still a neglected area in Croatia. There is no research conducted on a regular basis, civil society not being considered an important research area by the academic community. Research initiatives by CSOs are subject to limitation of expertise in this field and are marked by different methodologies and sampling that make comparisons very difficult.

## 8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

Regional volunteer centres have developed a National curriculum for the training programme on volunteer management. It consists of 3 training modules lasting altogether 6 days. During 2015 there were 384 representatives of VIOs beneficiaries of the training programme. Evaluation indicates a great influence of such educational inputs for the development of volunteering programmes. Participants also receive different toolkits to help them involve and manage volunteers. Efforts have been made to include the occupational profile of volunteer coordinator in the national classification of occupation but this is still in progress.



The Croatian Volunteer Centres Network created the Quality standards for volunteer centres and is responsible for monitoring the process of ensuring quality standards. The standards offer detailed information and guidelines for their implementation. The standards were developed in order to: (I) facilitate a common approach to volunteering, which includes the vision, values and basic abilities; (II) set up the basis for organisational and programme excellence, (III) professionalize the work of the volunteer centres and strengthen their impact; After the formalisation/registration of the CVDC, Standards were improved and will soon be used in practice. Standards are based on self assessment but external certification of volunteer centres is planned in coming period.

CVDC also developed Quality Standards for Volunteer Programs for VIO's. These Quality Standards consists of three main areas of quality, (I) Setting the foundation for the development of volunteer program, (II) Preparation of volunteer positions and steps towards inclusion of volunteer, (III) Creating an enabling and motivating environment for volunteers, with respective standards, criteria and suggested written evidence that prove the fulfilment of criteria. For now, the Quality Standards are based on self assessment but some kind of external certification of volunteer programs is planned in coming period.

In addition, there is a Volunteer Code of Ethics (published in the Official Gazette No. 55/08) of Croatia. It prescribes rules of conduct for volunteers, volunteer organisers and beneficiaries in accordance with the principles of volunteering from the Law on volunteering. The National Board for Volunteering Development is responsible for ensuring that the Code of Ethics is properly implemented.

## 9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

RVCs and LVCs manage regional on line databases including data on the supply and demand of volunteers. Databases allow for searching, filtering and sorting information according to several criteria. Media coverage works better at regional and local level than it does on the national level. There are several public events aimed at raising awareness about volunteering.

The following promotional tools/mechanisms are in place in Croatia:

- Celebrating the International Volunteer Day (December 5) - Regional and local volunteer centres organise a public campaign with the purpose of informing and promoting volunteerism and encouraging citizens and stakeholders to take part in it. As a part of the campaign, regional and local awards for volunteer contribution are presented. Each year, a great number of volunteers are involved in the campaign;

- Local, regional and national Volunteer Awards
- Volunteer Fairs
- Promotional products such as leaflets, posters, T-shirts, balloons, bookmarks, calendars, postcards, maps, linen bags, caps, chocolates, invitations, newsletters etc.
- TV and radio spots/jingles (broadcasted also in local cinemas)
- National Conference on Volunteerism - since 2001
- Marking the 2011 European Year of Volunteering - The members of CVDC, co-organised the campaign "Croatia Volunteers!". This campaign is still being carried out and since 2014 it lasts for one week, in May.

Currently, CVDC is developing a national, online database of volunteering opportunities to increase the visibility of VIO's and volunteers in whole Croatia and to increase the accessibility of volunteering opportunities and the mobility of volunteers within Croatia.

On a national level, web page of CVDC, [www.hcrv.hr](http://www.hcrv.hr) encompasses relevant information about volunteering, e.g. legislative, funding opportunities, publications, research, information about LVC's and RVC's.

## 10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

The most important challenges of volunteerism development in Croatia are:

- I. establishing systematic research on volunteerism and data collection,
- II. increasing cross-sectoral cooperation among stakeholders, in particular businesses and universities,
- III. recognizing volunteerism, particularly in the process of employment and education,
- IV. adopting a system for measurement of the economic value of volunteering and
- V. ensuring diversity of funding opportunities for volunteerism.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the improvement of volunteering infrastructure in Croatia:

- strengthening the volunteer centres as a volunteer infrastructure (particularly important in engaging with policy makers to create the conditions for volunteering);
- promote the law and inform volunteer involving organisations about the law;
- further encourage/develop policies and programmes for school volunteering;
- further recognition of volunteering in the process of employment and formal education;
- increase frequency of volunteering;
- setting up a system for information collection, especially related to volunteer profile, frequency of volunteering, motivation, types of activities;
- set up a system for assessing the economic value of volunteering;
- increase volunteering in public institutions (i.e. health and social care and local and regional government);
- strengthening the partnership and cooperation between different stakeholders (cross-sectoral cooperation);
- secure sustainable funding;
- encourage/develop policies and programmes for volunteering in crisis.





Recommendations for volunteering on a European level:

- promote volunteering infrastructure as a tool for encouraging citizens to volunteer;
- ensure basic elements of volunteering infrastructure;
- achieve a common understanding at European level about what is meant by "volunteering infrastructure" and what are its main roles and elements;
- supporting the good balance between spontaneity of volunteering and organised volunteering;
- showcase the good practice examples as well as bad practice ones in order to improve quality of volunteering.

These types of recommendations are particularly important for the countries such as Croatia that still lag behind other EU countries in terms of volunteerism development.

## 12. RESOURCES

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