



# VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE IN CROATIA

The Volunteering Infrastructure (VI) encompasses the different systems, mechanisms and instruments needed to ensure an environment where volunteering can grow/prosper. Adequate volunteer infrastructure is a precondition for development of the volunteering in the country. In order to achieve these, different stakeholders should be involved in volunteer infrastructure development.

## Before 2001. REGIONAL VOLUNTEER CENTRES



## After 2001. > Current ORGANIZATIONS/BODIES INVOLVED



**National Board for Volunteering Development (2001)** - advisory body of Croatia government. Ministry for family, war veterans and intergenerational solidarity is logistic support to the Board. Representatives of different stakeholders (representatives of different civil society networks, Ministries, local government, independent experts). Representative of the Croatian Volunteer Development Centre is the president of the Board in all the mandates of the Board.

**Civil Society Organisations**  
 Many civil society organisations include volunteers into their activities and volunteering is present in various areas: ecology, charity work, working with children and youth, working with the elderly and sick, etc. Due to the lack of regular monitoring of the volunteering activities, it is impossible to say what the exact number of organisations which include volunteers is.

**The role of Regional Volunteer Centres:**

- promoting the values of volunteering,
- information and consultancy,
- education on volunteer management,
- education of citizens on volunteering,
- matching volunteers to opportunities,
- engaging with local policy makers to create the conditions that support and sustain volunteering
- research on volunteering,
- publishing.

**The role of Local Volunteer Centres:**

- promotion of the values of volunteering,
- matching volunteers to opportunities,
- education of citizens in volunteering.

**Croatian Volunteer Development Centre, CVDC** – Officially established in 2014, but was active as a non – formal organisation since 2008. Influencing the public policies and legal settings, promoting and establishing educational standards in the area of volunteering and volunteer management, ensuring the quality standards of the services provided by volunteer centres and their capacity building, ensuring the quality of involving volunteers for volunteer involving organisations, promotional activities.

**Government institutions**

**Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social policy** - This institution is a leading institution at the government level, participating in the work of National board for volunteering development and coordinating volunteering issues at the national level.

**National Foundation for Civil Society Development** - 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.

**Croatian Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs** - The Office was involved in the setting up the first National Board for Volunteering Development. Coordinate implementation of the National Strategy for the creation of enabling environment for civil society development.

**Policy/strategy papers/Law**

- Law on volunteering, 2007/2013
- National strategy for the creation of enabling environment for civil society development including the operational plan
- National Program for volunteering development
- National Youth Programme
- Code of Ethics for volunteering
- Quality Standards for Volunteer Centres in Croatia and for volunteer programmes for non - profit organisations

## Promotion

- National conferences on volunteering
- Annual celebration of the International Volunteer Day - regional and national campaigns
- Croatia Volunteers! – a national promotional campaign regional activity

## Recognition

- National, regional and local volunteer awards
- Certificate on volunteering activities, issued by Volunteer involving organisations to volunteers
- Certificate on competences gained through volunteering

## Funding

In general, the support for the development of volunteering from the national as well as local and regional government still has a fairly low profile. 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. Significant financial support still coming from international resources. (EU funds, State Development Agencies, International foundations).

## Research

- “Research on civil participation in community initiatives through volunteering” SMART, 2001;
- “Volunteerism and public institutions”, published in collaboration with Zid, Montenegro and SEEYN Network, Volunteer Centre Zagreb, 2003;
- “Research on volunteerism”, National Foundation for Civil Society Development, 2005; “Volunteerism and local community development – civil participation in community initiatives”, SMART, 2006;
- “The research on civil participation in community initiatives through volunteering”, AED, Croatia, 2006;
- “Volunteering, attitudes and practice – research results”, MI Association, MOST Association, 2007; “Who volunteers?”;
- Online research, MojPosao, 2006 ([www.moj-posao.net](http://www.moj-posao.net));

- Research on public recognition of civic associations and citizens' attitudes toward volunteering in the city of Osijek and its surroundings, City of Osijek, Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights, Osijek, 2005.;
- “Student volunteering activities at the University of Zagreb”, Social Work Studies, University of Zagreb, 2006;
- “Volunteering of students in Zagreb in a comparative context”, Social Policy Review, 2011;
- “Youth in times of crisis”, Institute for Social Research; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013.
- “Volunteering motivation - Are volunteering motivations related to gender, personality and area of study?”, Social Policy Review, 2013;

### Key challenges in research studies:

- a wide range of the extent of volunteer work considering the examinees reported to volunteer from 5% to more than 40% - this range possibly demonstrates an inconsistency in defining and understanding volunteer work, of both the researchers and the examinees;
- low volunteer frequency;
- mostly positive attitudes, but still a relatively low degree of activity inclusion – programmes in accordance with reported motivational factors;
- negative attitudes of the younger population;
- insufficient collaboration between the academic community and civil society organisations in the field of planning and conducting research studies on volunteerism;

## Challenges

- strengthening the Volunteer centres as a key pillar of volunteering infrastructure;
- recognition of volunteering in the process of employment and formal education;
- increase frequency of volunteering;
- information gathering, regarding the frequency of volunteering;
- assessing the economic value of volunteering;
- assessing the impact of voluntary activities (on the organisation, local and wider community);
- increase volunteering in public institutions (i.e. health, culture, tourism and local and regional government);
- strengthening the partnership and cooperation between different stakeholders;
- further development of volunteering of the business sector;
- further development of inclusive volunteering;
- developing quality in volunteer management