

# VOLUNTEERING IN CROATIA - FACT SHEET

The Republic of Croatia is located in South-Central Europe and it is a country at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, Central Europe, and the Balkans. Zagreb is its capital. Croatia borders with Slovenia and Hungary to the north, Serbia to the northeast, Bosnia and Herzegovina to the east, and Montenegro to the far southeast. Its southern and western flanks border the Adriatic Sea.



## Key facts about Croatia

**Capital:** Zagreb

**Official language:** Croatian

**Government:** Parliamentary republic

**Population:** 4.437,460 (2001 census)

**Currency:** Kuna (HRK)

**Calling code:** +385

## Key economic indicators

**GDP per capita:** EUR € 11,031

**Real GDP growth in 2016:** 3,2%

**Unemployment rate in 2017:** 12%

Source:

Eurostat & International Labour Organization

## Volunteering in Croatia

**Social and historical context of volunteering** - Croatia shares a tradition of solidarity and help, a significant value in the Slavic cultures. Volunteering in Croatia has a long tradition that can be related to this concept of solidarity, although it has been exercised in different ways than it is understood today. The fact that there had been many political and social turbulences which brought lots of instability in peoples' lives in the region made people rely on help which they could give or receive through humanitarian work and through the work of volunteers.

**Official definition** - Volunteering in Croatia is defined under the Law on Volunteering and Law on Amendments to the Law on Volunteering "as an investment of personal time, effort, knowledge and skills out of free will with which services and activities are executed for the well-being of another person or wider public, and are executed by persons in a way anticipated by this Law, without existence of any conditions of providing a financial reward or seeking any other material benefit for volunteering accomplished".

**Scope and composition** - Croatia has no official systematical gathered or researched data on volunteer development in Croatia (including number of volunteers, economic value etc.). Nevertheless, there are individual efforts of local civil society organizations on one side, and certain international donor agencies on the other, aimed at designing and implementing research projects on volunteerism (volunteer frequency, types of volunteer activities and public attitudes towards volunteering). Research that has been conducted showed that volunteering remains mainly within the interest range of civil society organizations. According to the research<sup>2</sup>,

citizens who had volunteered at least once in the last 12 months had often organized some actions or activities (39.3%), or had given some practical help (31.8%), advices or information (27.1%), led some group or participated in some form of decision making (20.6%). According to the SMART<sup>3</sup> researches from 2001 and 2006, most of the interviewees volunteered in the activities of CSO's (45,4% in 2006 and 43% in 2001).

Other activities that interviewees mainly engaged (from 32,3% - 17%) were preparations of events, volunteering for the local community, school or kindergarten and church. The considerable variance in the number of people who volunteer, ranging from 5% to 46%, is due to the use of different definitions of volunteering and the use of non-comparative research methods. The majority of people who volunteer in Croatia is aged between 31 and 60. A noteworthy fact is that senior citizens take a greater part in volunteering than the young ones, and on the other hand, there is no significant difference in gender of people who volunteered.

**Volunteer profiles** - There is no general data available regarding education level, employment and financial status, but more specific differences between different categories of the each variable. Regarding the education level, highly educated interviewees volunteered more often for their own local community than lower or middle educated persons, while the lower educated ones volunteered for school/kindergarten more than the middle educated. High school pupils and employed citizens were more likely to volunteer in schools/kindergartens than the students and the retired citizens...<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Law on Volunteering, (58 6.6.2007) § 3

<sup>2</sup> Franc, R., Šakić, V., Public Stance Towards Non-Governmental Organizations, Academy for Education Development (AED), 2005

<sup>3</sup> Forčić, G. (2006.) "Volunteering and local community development - Research on civil participation in the community initiatives through volunteering", Association for Civil Society Development SMART

<sup>4</sup> Id. at p.92

## Support for volunteering

**Legislation for volunteering** - In May 2007, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Law on volunteering, first of such kind in the country and the region, and in February 2013, the Parliament, adopted the Law on Amendments to the Law on Volunteering. Significant amendments to the Law on Volunteering, refer to the principle of inclusive volunteering and Certificate of competence gained through volunteering. The law defines relationships between volunteers, organizers of voluntary activities and end-users of voluntary activities with a view to ensuring adequate social environment for the development of volunteering and prevent any misuse of the same. The law also regulates the terminology, principles and conditions of volunteering and relevant contracts, code of ethics and certificates. This Law refers only to organized volunteering which is executed according to the regulations in the law itself. It does not refer to the voluntary initiatives of individuals or groups nor to the unpaid training or internship.

In addition, it foresees allocation of governmental funds for the work of the National Board for Volunteering Development, as well as the National Volunteer of the Year award.

**Government/local/regional 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 source of financial resources for the development of volunteerism infrastructure is provided by the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy and National Foundation for Civil Society development. Ensuring structured and regular support remains one of the major challenges for the development of volunteering in Croatia.

### Policy/strategy papers/Law

- Law on volunteering, 2007/ Law on Amendments to the Law on Volunteering 2013
- National strategy for the creation of enabling environment for civil society development including the operational plan (part of the strategy is devoted to volunteering development)
- Code of Ethics for volunteering
- National Program for Volunteerism Development 2016-2019
- The National Youth Programme

## Volunteering Infrastructure

**Regional and local volunteer centers** - regularly work on the development of volunteering in Croatia. Volunteer centers are registered as non-profit / non-governmental organizations under the Law on Associations. The main objective of these centers is to promote the development of voluntary activities at the local, regional and national level.

**Croatian Volunteer Development Centre (CVDC)** - this organisation is founded officially by four regional volunteer centres in 2014., but was active since 2008 as Croatian Volunteer Centres Network. The CVDC was established with the aim of promoting volunteering, increasing the visibility of voluntary activities and the development of volunteering infrastructure. The work of the CVDC is recognized by all key stakeholders in Croatia. More info: [www.hcrv.hr](http://www.hcrv.hr)

**National Board for Volunteering Development** - is a governmental advisory body whose activities are directed towards the promotion and development of volunteering.

### Other actors/stakeholders on government level

- National Foundation for Civil Society Development
- Government Office for Cooperation with CSOs
- Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy

## Promotion

- National conferences on volunteering
- Annual celebration of the International Volunteer Day
- Campaign Croatia volunteers!- aimed at promoting the values of volunteering

## Recognition

- National, regional and local volunteering awards
- Certificate on volunteering activities issued by volunteer involving organisation to volunteers
- Certificate on Competences gained through volunteering

## Key challenges

- strengthening of volunteer centers as key "pillars" of infrastructure in the area of volunteering;
- promotion / development of volunteering in schools;
- recognition of volunteering in employment and formal education;
- increasing the level of frequency of volunteering;
- establish a system for assessing the economic value of volunteering;
- establish a system for assessing the impact of involving volunteers, on an organisational level but also national;
- increase in the level of volunteering in public institutions (in the sectors of health, culture, tourism and the local and regional administrations);
- establishing a model for the implementation of systematic research on volunteering;
- promote volunteering of the business sector;
- promote quality in the field of volunteer programmes and volunteer centres;