

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

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National Programme for Youth Volunteering

The National Youth Volunteering Programme, as a comprehensive programme meant specifically for youth population and volunteering, does not exist.

However, since 2009 the relevant Ministry has been supporting a number of regional and local volunteer centres across the country which represent core infrastructure for the development of (youth) volunteering in Croatia.

Funding

The relevant Ministry has been supporting the work of regional and local volunteer centres via one- or three-year grants since 2009. The awarded grants are aimed at building the capacities of civil society organizations

(volunteer centres) for the development of quality and sustainable volunteering programs and increasing public awareness on the importance of volunteering for social and economic development in Croatia. Most of the volunteering programmes have young people as one of the main target groups. Many projects also focus on the development of volunteering in primary and secondary schools.

This is an overview of the state financial support awarded to regional and local volunteer centres for the period from 2009 to 2019:

Year	Number of regional volunteer centres	Number of networks	Amount in HRK	Number of local volunteer centres	Amount in HRK	Total
2009	4	/	600.000,00	/	/	600.000,00
2010	4	/	600.000,00	/	/	600.000,00
2011	4	/	500.000,00	/	/	500.000,00
2012	4	/	500.000,00	4	200.000,00	700.000,00
2013	4	/	780.000,00	12	980.000,00	1.760.000,00
2014	4	/	780.000,00	12	999.940,00	1.779.940,00
2015	4	/	925.028,00	18	2.199.757,00	3.124.785,00
2016	4	/	925.028,00	15	1.850.000,00	2.775.028,00
2017	4	/	925.028,00	18	2.000.000,00	2.925.028,00
2018	4	/	636.000,00	20	1.764.000,00	2.400.000,00
2019	4	1	891.000,00	28	2.709.000,00	3.600.000,00
TOTAL						20.764.781,00

Source: Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy

The data indicate a small but steady increase in the number of supported volunteer centres, as well as the allocated funds, except in 2018 and 2019, when the state support declined.

Apart from state funding, EU support is also available for volunteering centres and volunteering projects. For example, in 2013, the [National Foundation for Civil Society Development](#) announced a tender in the area of volunteering for the European Union funds for the first time. Under the IPA Component IV "Human Resources Development", is the Priority Axis 5: Strengthening the role of civil society for better governance, and measure 5.2 Strengthening the Role of Civil Society Organizations for Socio-Economic Growth and Democracy Development, was published a call for proposals for grant scheme called "Supporting Contribution of CSOs Active in the Field of Volunteering to Strengthening of Economic and Social Cohesion", aimed at promoting and empowering inclusive volunteering in civil society. The competition was defined by the [Government of the RC Office for Cooperation with NGOs](#) in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth. A total of HRK 6.5 million was allocated to nine projects of civil society organizations. In 2017, the [Government of the Republic of Croatia Office for Cooperation with NGOs](#) awarded HRK 35 million in grants under the call "Support to the volunteering organizers for the improvement of volunteer management and the implementation of volunteering programs". This Call is implemented within the European Social Fund, i.e. the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020, Priority Axis 4, Specific Goal 11.ii.1. "Developing capacities of civil society organisations, especially NGOs and social partners, and enhancing civil and social dialogue for better governance".

Characteristics of young volunteers

There are no statistics related only to the characteristics of young volunteers. However, in 2018, according to the [Comparative Statistics on Volunteering for 2017 and 2018](#), a total of 62,699 persons volunteered, which is 32% more than in 2017. Volunteer distribution in terms of age on the part of the younger population - volunteers aged between 15 and 30 make up 50.62% of the total number of volunteers which is 1.68% more than in 2017.

Table: Number of volunteers, volunteering hours and volunteer organizers in the period 2012 - 2018

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total number of volunteers	19,422	29,235	45,955	52,208	48,731	47,372	62,699
Total number of volunteer hours	1,222,583	1,652,965	2,597,121	2,943,902	3,332,984	2,603,676	3,253,667
Total number of volunteering organisers	446	671	1,032	1,367	1,217	1,164	1,497

Source: Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy

The table shows that the total number of volunteers from 2012 to 2015 almost tripled, until 2016, when it comes down slightly for two years in a row. But in 2018 there was a big jump in numbers that shows almost 25% more volunteers and 20% more volunteer hours, if compared with the year before.

The total number of volunteering hours was growing almost continuously until 2017, when it drops for 22%.

Then, in 2018 the number raises again but it does not reach the total number of volunteer hours from 2016.

Positive trends also include the total number of volunteer organizers, which was on a steady rise and tripled from 2012 to 2018. That means that there is growing number of volunteer organisers which included more volunteers who volunteered a little bit less volunteer hours in last two years.

Volunteers are mostly Croatian citizens, while the share of foreigners in the total number of volunteers is about 3.67%. During the year, there were 2312 foreign volunteers reported, which is almost double than in 2017. Women are more likely to be volunteers (63%), while men participate on average with 37%. According to the same data, the largest share of volunteering is carried out in associations (84%), then in institutions (10%), and other non-profit subjects (4%). The fewest volunteers are present in state bodies, units of local and regional self-government, religious communities, foundations and tourist communities (none of them exceeds 1%).

Support to young volunteers

According to the [Act on Volunteering](#), the volunteer has the right to reimbursement of the expenses incurred for carrying out volunteer work (e.g. purchase of special clothing or equipment for volunteering, travel costs, accommodation, meals, etc.) and such fees are not considered as a cash award or property gain. The Comparative Statistics on Volunteering includes data on the total cost of volunteering which refers to the reimbursement for travel, accommodation, meals, education and other volunteers expenses. The Comparative Statistics for 2017 and 2018 states that in 2018 the total cost of volunteering was 15,968,910.16 HRK (approximately 2,150,000 EUR), which is 41% more than in 2017. Also, a volunteer has the right to receive benefits under the EU program and international programs related to the funding of volunteering programs.

Besides the reimbursement of expenses, the volunteer has the right to appropriate training, support and supervision.

Quality assurance

The [MLPSFSP](#), the body responsible for the monitoring of implementation of the [Act on Volunteering](#) once a year invites all associations, institutions, foundations, other non-profit legal entities, state bodies, and local and regional self-government units to submit report on organized volunteering via a web applications. The report contains general information on the organizer of volunteering, information on organized volunteering during the reporting period, information on the type of activity/service in which the volunteers were involved in the reporting period. Also, the MDFYSP make a [list of volunteer organisers](#).

Beneficiaries of state grants (local volunteer centres and regional volunteer centres) are obliged to submit a descriptive and financial report twice a year (once in 6 months). In a written report, volunteer organizers should describe project achievements and outcomes in the reporting period, co-operation with partners, project providers and their obligations, how the organization's capacities have been strengthened and how the project's performance is valued.

Programmes/Projects Monitoring Service of the Ministry analyses reports on the implementation of programs and projects, among others, and those related to volunteering. Their responsibility is to establish a system of financial control and spending funds in line with their specific purpose. Also, related to volunteering in cooperation with the Directorate for Social Policy, Strategy and Youth, it advises and monitors the volunteer organizers in the field.

The Croatian Volunteer Development Center works on standardizing and improving the quality of the most important stakeholders necessary for the development of volunteering. The Center has developed a number of

resources aimed at raising quality of volunteering projects and programmes (e.g. [Quality Standards of Volunteering Programmes for Volunteer Organizations](#), [Volunteer Management for Non-Profits](#), etc.)

Target groups

Act on Volunteering stipulates that particular attention is to be paid to volunteers coming from groups at risk of social exclusion and that is contained under the article 14. (OG 22/13) “Principle of inclusive volunteering”. In that article, ‘socially excluded youth’ as a group is not explicitly stated, therefore we can conclude that this principle of inclusive volunteering is applied to youth as well as all other age cohorts in society. The article contains the phrase “socially excluded groups of population” and nothing more specific than that.