



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Croatia

2019

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>

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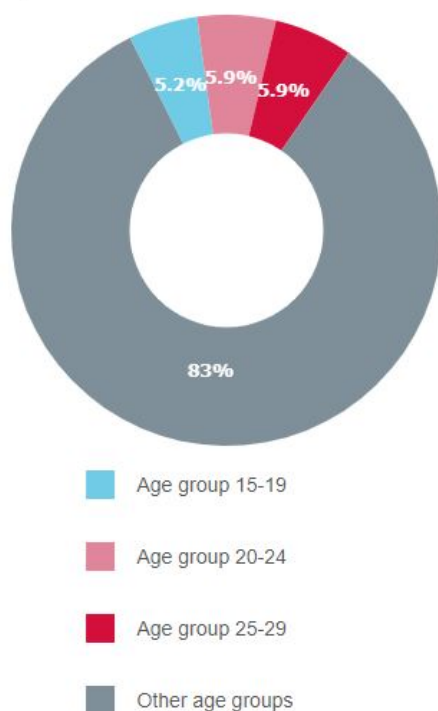
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Croatia

Young People in Croatia

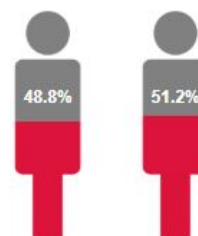
Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January



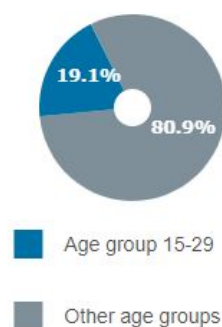
Total number of young people:

699 788

Ratio of men and women in the youth population



Ratio of young immigrants in all immigrants from non-EU countries



Youth Policy in Croatia

National youth policy falls within the scope of the Ministry for [Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) and is regulated by the department of youth within this ministry. Even though recognized as a unique field, youth policy is still a shared domain across other ministries, predominantly [Ministry of Science and Education](#) and [Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#).

The needs, potentials and possibilities for young people are not defined nor supported by the Law on Youth but with the strategy ([The National Youth Strategy](#)) which is considered to be the focal point for youth policy in Croatia. Nevertheless, the only normative act within the youth field is the [Law on Youth Advisory Boards](#) which conceptualizes the basic aspects of local youth policy.

Youth policy is made through the participatory process of consultation with relevant youth organization and tends to be supported in evidences produced by scientific research.

In Croatia, the share of young people, aged 15–30 is declining, while at the beginning of the 1990s there was around 21%, according to the last census (2011) there the share of young people in the population is around 18,6%.

1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

Youth policy in Croatia is coordinated by the [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#). Apart from that ministry, the youth Council of the Government of Croatia, consisting out of governmental officials, youth organizations and academic community supervises and supports the development of youth policy.

At the local level there are youth advisory boards which jurisdiction, scope and obligations are stipulated at the [Law on Youth Advisory Boards](#).

1.1 Target population of youth policy

According to the [Act on Youth Advisory Boards](#) 'youth' in the Republic of Croatia refers to those persons between the ages of 15 and 30.

According to the data provided by the Census made in 2011, the youth represents 18.6 % of total population in Croatia (794,901 people). Table 1 shows an overview of youth in the Republic of Croatia by age and gender.

	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN
15-19	244177	124918	119259
20-24	261658	133455	128203
25-29	289066	147416	141650

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics

However, the proportion of young people in the general population has been decreasing. In 1953, this proportion was 27.7%, in 2001, 20.3%, and the demographic picture provided by the last census in the Republic of Croatia in 2011 found that there were only 652,428 children (aged between 0 and 14 years old), indicating that the number of young people in the general population is set to decrease further.

1.2 National youth law

Existence of a National Youth Law

There is no Youth Law in the Republic of Croatia

1.3 National youth strategy

Existence of a National Youth Strategy

In October 2014, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the third youth strategy of the Republic of Croatia entitled the National Youth Programme for the Period 2014-2017 ([Nacionalni program za mlade 2014 – 2017](#)).

The new National Youth Programme 2019-2025 is in the drafting phase

Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

The Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy is in charge of:

- developing a strategy for young people,
- implementing measures under its jurisdiction,

- coordinating the implementation of measures,
- preparing the annual report on the implementation of the strategy for young people and referral to the Government of the Republic of Croatia for its adoption,
- ensuring the implementation of the external evaluation of the implementation and the effects of the strategy after the expiry of the strategy.

Revisions/updates

The new National Youth Programme 2019-2025 is in the drafting phase

1.4 Youth policy decision-making

Structure of Decision-making

National level

Youth Policy decision-making takes place primarily at a central government level. The main responsibility for youth policy lies within:

- the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy ([Ministarstvo za demografiju, obitelj, mlade i socijalnu politiku](#)). Within the Ministry there is the Department of Youth and Volunteering ([Odjel za mlade](#)) which is a part of the Directorate for Demographic development, Family, Children and Youth.
- Parliamentary Committee for Family, Youth and Sport ([Odbor za obitelj, mlade i sport Hrvatskog sabora](#))

Youth Council of the Croatian Government

[The Youth Council](#) is an interdepartmental advisory body of the Government of Croatia purposed to participate in developing youth public policies.

The Youth Council:

- monitors the work of ministries and other state administration bodies in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth policies within their jurisdictions and, in this context, provides opinions and recommendations
- monitors the development of youth organisations and provides recommendations for the improvement of their work and support systems
- provides recommendations for the development of youth policies at local, regional, national and European levels
- monitors and reacts to phenomena in society that are significant for youth

Members of the Youth Council are representatives of relevant government bodies, representatives of scientific institutions and county associations.

The president of the Youth Council is a youth organization representative.

Local level

Local and regional self-government

Apart from central government, regional and local self-government units also coordinate local and regional youth policy even though this is not explicitly stipulated in the Law on Local and Regional Self-government ([Zakon o lokalnoj i područnoj \(regionalnoj\) samoupravi, NN 33/01, 60/01, 129/05, 109/07, 125/08, 36/09, 36/09, 150/11, 144/12, 19/13, 137/15, 123/17, 98/19](#))

The Republic of Croatia consists of 21 counties (including the City of Zagreb), 127 towns and 429 municipalities. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia ([Ustav Republike Hrvatske, NN 56/90, 135/97, 08/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10, 05/14](#)) and the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government (Official

Gazette 33/01, 60/01, 129/05, 109/07, 125/08, 36/09, 36/09, 150/11, 144/12, 19/13, 137/15), counties, cities and municipalities are independent in deciding on affairs in their self-governing sphere.

Counties, towns and municipalities decide independently on the financial means that will be provided annually for the implementation of various youth-targeted activities.

However, the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy has, for the last few years, provided certain funds intended for the preparation of local and regional youth programmes in accordance with the specific interests and needs of young people in a specific area.

The implementation of recommendations by counties, towns and municipalities is a part of every annual report on the implementation of the National Youth Programme submitted by the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy to the Government of the Republic of Croatia for adoption.

Youth advisory boards

Youth Advisory Boards are advisory bodies of local and regional self-government units that promote and advocate the rights, needs and interests of young people at local and regional level. They are established based on the [Youth Advisory Boards Act \(OG 41/14\)](#), and their members and deputy members are elected for a term of three years.

The Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy oversees the implementation of the Youth Act and gives recommendations to counties, towns and municipalities for its more effective implementation.

Main Themes

The priority areas of the National Youth Programme are usually determined on the basis of:

- results and recommendations from research
- analyses of valid strategic documents in the Republic of Croatia:
- the Croatian Qualifications Framework Act ([Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru, NN 22/13, 41/16, 64/18](#));
- the Primary and Secondary School Education Act ([Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi, NN 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14, 07/17, 68/18, 98/19](#));
- the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Science of Education and Sport ([Strateški plan Ministarstva znanosti i obrazovanja](#));
- the Entrepreneurship Development Strategy in the Republic of Croatia 2013-2020 ([Strategija razvoja poduzetništva u Republici Hrvatskoj 2013.-2020.](#));
- the Youth Guarantee Implementation ([Plan implementacije Garancije za mlade](#));
- the new Labour Market Act ([Zakon o tržištu rada, NN 118/18](#));
- the National Health Development Strategy 2012-2020 ([Nacionalna strategija razvoja zdravstva 2012.-2020.](#));
- the results of the evaluation of previous national youth programmes
- European Commission and council documents relating to youth, including the EU Youth Strategy

The National Agency for Youth

The Republic of Croatia has no National Agency for Youth, however there is a National Erasmus+ agency, [Agency for Mobility and the EU](#), which actively participates in the youth policy framework.

Policy monitoring and evaluation

Local self-government units are obliged by the Law on Youth Advisory boards to annually submit a report on the youth advisory boards programme.

The only evaluation ever made of the National Youth Strategy conducted by an independent youth researcher was in December 2017 which showed that only 36,44% of measures were implemented (Baketa, 2017).

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

In the Republic of Croatia, cross-sectoral policymaking for youth is based on co-ordination. The ministry responsible for youth is the initiator and coordinator of youth policy strategy development. The ministry responsible for youth has set-up several working groups for the purpose of drafting a valid youth strategy, depending on the priority area. In practice, this means that the goals, measures and activities were defined by the representatives of the ministry responsible for the priority area, but in cooperation with youth and for-youth associations working in the respected field, as well as representatives of relevant scientific institutions.

Upon completion of drafting a youth strategy, it was delivered to all proposed designated competent authorities for additional reading and consent. Having received all the approvals thereof, it was sent firstly to the Youth Council of the Republic of Croatia, and then to the Government of the Republic of Croatia for adoption.

1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

The creation of youth policies in Croatia is being carried out, as stated in the National Youth Programme, in line with the recommendations of the European Union and the good practice of the Council of Europe in drafting documents where by public policies are defined via knowledge-based and evidence-based approaches. All policy documents within the framework of policies for young people are based on official statistics, the results of scientific research on youth, documents of the European Commission and the Council of Europe relating to youth and strategic documents of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in relevant areas. It should be noted that members of the academic community dealing with youth have always been involved in all expert working groups for the creation, definition, regulation or analysis of any of the youth policy segments.

The process of the National youth strategy creation that started in 2018 was the first national youth strategy-making process that does not rely on research conducted for that purpose.

Cooperation between policy-making and research

There are three modes of co-operation between the research public and policy decision-makers. The first mode is research that serves as a basis for the development of normative and other documents related to youth policy. Since 2000, such analyses have been made for the writing of national youth programmes, the Youth Act, the Youth Advisory Board Act, and research to define work with young people is currently underway. The second mode of cooperation involves social scientists in the process of drafting the aforementioned

documents, i.e. appointing researchers to expert working groups related to youth policy. Since 2000, members of the academic community dealing with youth have been members of all working groups for drafting normative acts. The third mode of cooperation concerns consultations of policymakers and researchers whose scientific interest focuses on a specific aspect of youth policy.

National Statistics and available data source

[Croatian Bureau of Statistics](#); [census 2011](#)

[Institute for Social Research, Center for Youth and Gender Studies](#)

Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field

There are no governmental budgetary allocations supporting research in the youth field.

1.7 Funding youth policy

How Youth policy is funded

At the end of each year, the Government of the Republic of Croatia drafts a proposal for the state budget for the next year and discuss this at the Croatian Parliament. Once the Croatian Parliament adopts the state budget, the Croatian Government can use it. The State Budget contains a budget line related to the implementation of youth policy.

Other ministries responsible for the implementation of certain measures from the National Youth Programme do not have special line items for the implementation of these measures, but funds are put in budgetary positions specific to their competence.

Financial resources for the implementation of the [National Youth Program](#) are ensured not only from the state budget but also those provided on the basis of the Decree on the criteria for defining beneficiaries and ways of allocating a portion of proceeds from the state lottery funds. The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall adopt the decree at the beginning of each year for the current year.

What is funded?

The Call for Proposals for Youth-Oriented Projects in 2018 ([Poziv za prijavu projekata usmjerenih mladima za financijsku potporu iz raspoloživih sredstava dijela prihoda od igara na sreću i Državnog proračuna za 2018. godinu](#)) financed 72 projects within 9 priority areas:

1. Active participation of young people in society (16 projects were awarded a total of 1,000,000 HRK)
2. Regional info centres (4 projects were awarded a total of 457,000 HRK)
3. Local info centres (7 projects were awarded a total of 435,000 HRK)
4. Youth clubs (8 projects were awarded a total of 500,000 HRK)
5. Youth Centres (5 projects were awarded a total of 430,000 HRK)
6. Training for (social) entrepreneurship and self-employment (10 projects were awarded a total of 700,000 HRK)
7. Young people in NEET status (5 projects were awarded a total of 415,000 HRK)
8. Youth in rural areas (10 projects were awarded a total of 843,000 HRK)
9. Local and regional youth programmes (7 projects were awarded a total of 457,000 HRK)

The total sum for projects in 2018 amounted to 5,237,000.00 HRK.

The specific objectives of the above-mentioned tenders are:

- Encouraging young people to assume and practice the role of an active citizen in different areas of social life and in solving specific social problems
- Raising the youth's awareness of their rights and options, and of programs and services available to them in the local community
- Encouraging civil society organisations and local and regional self-government units to improve conditions for satisfying youth's needs

Target groups of the tender include, inter alia, unemployed young people, young people with NEET status and young people in rural areas.

Financial accountability

All who have applied for youth policy funds, and received funds, are

- Responsible of reporting on the funds used (accounting report).
- To report if the main goals of the project/program applied for were achieved.

Use of EU Funds

The Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy is currently implementing the project "Support to the development and expansion of youth work in Croatia". The funding is envisaged from European social fund through the direct assignment. The total amount of the funding is 1,717,046.78 HRK.

The project aims to analyse the existing conditions in the field of youth work in Croatia and to identify needs and possibilities for further development and improvement of quality of youth work.

The main objectives of the project are:

Increasing the level of knowledge and amount of information on availability and the state of development of youth work

Influencing the professionalization of youth work and raising the awareness of the public, especially of experts and young people, about the relevance of youth work.

Erasmus+

The Agency for Mobility and European Union Programmes (hereinafter referred to as the Agency) was established by the Act on the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (OG 107/2007, hereinafter the Act on the Agency) as a public institution with jurisdiction to implement programmes of the European Union - Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme, in accordance with the negotiating position under the Accession Negotiations of the Republic of Croatia and the European Union in Chapter 26, Education and Culture.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Croatia and the European Union on the participation of the Republic of Croatia in the Youth in Action Programme and the Lifelong Learning Program 2007-2013 (Official Gazette - International Agreements, No. 4/2011) was signed on 7 December 2010, thus completing the preparatory phase, and since 2011 the full participation of the Republic of Croatia in the aforementioned programmes with equal rights and opportunities as well as for the member states of the European Union and other countries with full participation of the programme beginning. The Memorandum of Understanding entered into force on 30 March 2011.

The Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy carries out the tasks of the national body responsible for ensuring the implementation of this programme in the field of youth.

The budget for the youth field in 2018 was EUR 3,401,914.00.

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

A Memorandum on cooperation in the youth sector was signed between the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy of the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine.

International cooperation

Council of Europe

The Republic of Croatia has its representative in the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ). The representative of the Republic of Croatia in the CDEJ was elected member of the CDEJ Bureau for a two year term (2016 - 2017).

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EU

The Republic of Croatia regularly participates in meetings of the Youth Working Party (K2) at EU level, as well as in Youth Conferences and DG Meetings.

The Youth Department of the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy has two representatives in the National Works Group for the Implementation of Structured Dialogue in the Republic of Croatia.

The Republic of Croatia is a signatory of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card and it is a member of the Board of Coordination of the Partial Agreement.

Bilateral agreements

A Memorandum on cooperation in the youth sector was signed between the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy of the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Azerbaijan Republic.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia signed a Memorandum of Understanding concerning Youth Mobility with the Government of Canada.

1.9 Current debates and reforms

In November 2017 a national working group for the drafting of the new National Youth Programme ([Nacionalni program za mlade – novo](#)) has been formed. The national working group is made of representatives from state administration bodies, youth organisations, research and educational institutions, employers and other relevant stakeholders. The group had two meetings during which they defined 10 priority areas:

1. Employment and entrepreneurship
2. Education and life-long learning
3. Active youth participation
4. Social inclusion
5. Health and sport
6. Youth in rural areas
7. Youth and sustainable community development
8. Culture

9. Youth work

10. Youth in the European and global context

There is no available information on the time frame for further actions.

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

In Croatia there is no Law on Youth Volunteering but there is an [Act on Volunteering](#) where there is the official definition reads: "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, without existence of any conditions of providing a financial reward or seeking any other material benefit for volunteering accomplished".

The main actor involved in making decisions in the field of youth volunteering is the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#). This ministry coordinates [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#), an advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia that implements measures and activities aimed to promoting volunteering and work on its development.

2.1 General context

Historical developments

Croatian society inherited tradition of various forms of volunteering whilst being attached to the Church at the beginning of 20th century. During the period of socialism, volunteering was related to sport and culture, and the more present was traditional organising of citizens in volunteer fire-fighting associations (Bežovan, 2004). Historical development of volunteering in Croatia as a research topic is neglected, and this can be said for research interest in volunteering today as well. There are researches of regional and local character that give a very fragmented picture of the situation, dynamics and aspects of volunteering, whereat young volunteering is marginal and insufficiently explored. National research of specifically young populations only began in the previous decade with the study of the widespread volunteering and, in some cases, the types of volunteering.

According to the 2008 European Value Survey conducted among general population in Croatia, there are only 8.3% volunteers, the most of whom are active in religious organizations (5.3%), in educational and cultural activities (3.5%), and sports and recreational organizations (2.3%) (Bežovan and Matančević, 2011). A significant drop in the number of volunteers compared to 1999 may be discussed, when according to the same survey there were 21.3% of them. The authors find causes of this decline in the tradition of informal voluntary work, the widespread economic (non) opportunities, the lack of adequate information and, in the still insufficiently adequate relationship of the society towards voluntary work (Bežovan and Matančević, 2011). Responsibility for a low percentage of volunteering at the individual level is limited. Namely, practicing civic virtues in the form of voluntary work should not be directed only to organizations that already have poorly developed programs for the involvement of volunteers. In other words, the closure of state and public institutions has been detected with regard to the inclusion of this type of work in the area of its activity. In addition, the economic crisis has further directed people to engagement within the circle of family and friends (Bežovan, 2004). It is to assume that the lack of satisfactory functioning of some institutions that should take care of and help the citizens in need contributes thereto.

This situation is related to the overall dynamics of civil society characterized by weak civil participation, lack of trust among citizens, and partly inadequate public institutions' relations with civil society organizations as well (Zrinščak, Lakoš et al., 2012). Still Zrinščak, Lakoš et al. (2012) state that the development of volunteering over the last decade is evident, and that Croatia is more similar to Slovenia and the Czech Republic on this issue, and/or countries of the Central European circle of more developed civil society than those of the underdeveloped ones such as Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine.

Volunteering can have the features of formalization and informalization. Formal volunteering has the characteristics of contractual relations within the organizational structure and carries therein the authority of the organization, and partly the professional

knowledge. The latter is less structured and contains the sense of responsibility borne by the individual social role of friends, neighbours or citizens (Onyx and Leonard, 2002). When it comes to informal forms of volunteering among young people, there is no reliable comprehensive data in Croatia, but there are some recent researches that give a picture thereof ([Ilišin et al., 2013](#)).

According to recent research, 60% of young people have never volunteered, 32% sometimes and 7.8% often volunteered, suggesting a relatively weak presence of volunteer activities among young people (Youth Research of the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, 2013). According to the youth research data ([Ilišin et al., 2013](#)), the experience of volunteering during 2011, (given that the survey was conducted in 2012), had 13% of respondents. According to the same source, there is a significant proportion of informal structured volunteer work, given that a third of volunteers engaged in helping people with special needs and the elderly, and just over a quarter helped the schoolmates to master the subject matter. A quarter of the respondents participated in the organization of cultural events, and almost one fifth of them organized sports events. Public works in the local community attracted less than a fifth of volunteers, and every sixth volunteer engages in religious activities. Although volunteering is also a chance to gain work experience, a relatively low percentage of them experienced work in the business sector (9%) and non-governmental organizations (7%).

The statistical monitoring of the widespread of formal volunteering was initiated by the introduction of the legislative framework yet in 2007 and as well as the establishment of the [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#), an advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (RC) carrying out measures and activities related to the promotion and development of volunteering. In that sense, it can be said that, in Croatia, the development of volunteering itself as well as related instruments to encourage and monitor it still are not in full boost.

Main concepts

The basic characteristics of volunteering are voluntarism, performed without remuneration and general usefulness, which are manifested as mutual support, provision of services and active inclusion in society (Barić, 2008). The official definition of volunteering is contained in the [Act on Volunteering](#) (OG 22/13) which reads: "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, without existence of any conditions of providing a financial reward or seeking any other material benefit for volunteering accomplished".

Volunteering differs in terms of its duration and frequency. Long-term volunteering is the one that a volunteer performs regularly and continuously on a weekly basis for a period of at least three months without interruption. Short-term volunteering is what a volunteer performs one-time or periodically in limited time of duration.

Based on the same Act, eight activities are recognized that cannot be considered voluntary: 1. performing those services or activities that are in contravention of the RC Constitution, laws and international obligations; 2. performing services and activities that imply the payment of cash benefits or property gains without the establishment of employment; 3. performing jobs for an employer that have the characteristics of employment-based relationship; 4. professional training for work without the employment relationship established by special regulations; 5. performing services or activities that are formally agreed between the two parties (except when it comes to a contract on volunteering); 6. performing services and activities that are considered to be binding between the two persons on the basis of laws or other regulations; 7. executing services in accordance with court decisions and judgments; 8. performing services or activities that are common in close relationships.

2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

Governance

Management structure and involvement of main actors

The main actor involved in making decisions in the field of youth volunteering is the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) (MDFYSP). It should be noted, however, that the said MDFYSP is responsible for volunteering regardless of age, so it is not just directed towards the youth volunteering. Under the [Act on Volunteering \(OG 22/13\)](#), MDFYSP is:

- ensuring implementation of this Law and other regulations deriving therefrom,
- monitoring the situation in the field of volunteering and proposing the adoption of appropriate measures,
- collecting data on the number of volunteer organizers, the number of volunteers in the RC and the number of Croatian citizens who volunteer abroad, as well as other data based on annual reports of volunteer organizers,
- convening the inaugural session of the National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism,
- taking other measures and tasks to develop volunteering and implement the Act on Volunteering.

According to the MDFYSP 2017-2019 Strategic Plan ([Strateški plan Ministarstva za demografiju, obitelj, mlade i socijalnu politiku za razdoblje od 2017. do 2019.godine](#)), the Ministry of the as the central state administration body is responsible for development and promotion of volunteering but it is not a priority area for this period.

[National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#) is an advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia that implement measures and activities aimed to promoting volunteering and work on its development. It consists of 19 members appointed by the Government of the RC, who are also representatives of the [MDFYSP](#), [Government of the Republic of Croatia for Cooperation with NGOs](#), [Office for Human Rights and National Minorities' Right](#), [National Foundation for Civil Society Development](#), [Ministry of Science and Education](#), [Ministry of Health](#), and representatives of civil society organizations who are volunteer organizers and independent experts. [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#), under the [Act on Volunteering \(OG 22/13\)](#) proposes measures to improve the position of volunteers in society. Then, in co-operation with the relevant bodies, proposes regulations on volunteer benefits, decides on the award of a state volunteering award, initiates the adoption or modification of regulations regulating volunteering, issues the Ethics Code of Volunteers, undertakes other activities for the development of volunteering and performs other measures and activities determined in the [Act on Volunteering \(OG 22/13\)](#)..

[Government of the Republic of Croatia Office for Cooperation with NGOs](#) is an expert service of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, which carries out professional tasks from the domain of the Government of the Republic of Croatia with regards to creating conditions for cooperation and partnership with non-governmental, non-profit sector, especially with associations in the RC. Within its scope, the [Government of the RC Office for Cooperation with NGOs](#) performs, inter alia, the work of drafting, systematic monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the implementation of strategic programs for creating a stimulating environment for the development of civil society, and the preparation and implementation of measures of other strategic documents covering activities of cooperation with NGOs and participation in making, systematic monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the normative framework for the activities of associations and other civil society organizations in the RC.

Non-public actors that participate in developing policies in the area of youth volunteering are Regional Volunteer Centres (non-profit/non-governmental organizations - [Volunteer Centre Zagreb](#), [Volunteer Centre Split](#), [Volunteer Centre Rijeka](#), [Associations for Civil Society Development SMART](#) and [Volunteer Centre Osijek](#)) whose main objective is promotion and development of volunteer activities at local, regional and national level. Regional Volunteer Centres have gathered in Croatia in the [Croatian Volunteer Centres Network](#) and thus work jointly with decision-makers in the field of volunteering. In addition to regional volunteer centres, there are also local volunteer centres which, if they meet certain criteria, can become members of the Croatian Volunteer Centres Network.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Cross-sectoral cooperation in the field of volunteering exists and it is envisaged in strategic and operational documents, as follows: [National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development from 2012 to 2016](#) and [National programme for Youth 2014-2017](#). The relevant parts of mentioned documents related to cross-sectoral cooperation are dealt with in more detail in section 2.3. and/or 2.5 herein. Also, representatives of various sectors are represented in the Government Body [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#).

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

There is no national strategy specifically related to youth volunteering.

The Draft Proposal of National programme for volunteering development from 2015 to 2018 and Draft Proposal of Operative Plan of National program for volunteering development implementation from 2015 to 2018 is awaiting the adoption. Public consultations related to these two drafts were held in 2015. However, to date, the two official documents mentioned above have not been adopted nor are they available in an integral form.

In the part of the [National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development from 2012 to 2016](#) that relates to the priority area: Civil Society and Participatory Democracy, one of objectives is to increase awareness of children and youth about the benefits of volunteering and increase the number of citizens who volunteer. As per that objective, it is envisaged the implementation of measure (Measure 12) that relates to introducing education programmes aimed at acquiring knowledge, attitudes and values in connection with volunteering into the education system. Implementing bodies are the [Ministry of Science and Education](#), the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#), and co-implementing partners are the [Agency for Education](#), [Croatian Volunteer Centres Network](#), [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#) and the [Government of the RC Office for Cooperation with NGOs](#). The second measure is to develop systems of recognition and validation of pupil and student volunteering in line with the existing positive EU practice. The implementing bodies for this activity are the [Ministry of Science and Education](#) and the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#), and co-implementing partners are: [Agency for Education](#), [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#) and universities. According to monitoring measures from the [monitoring measures from the National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development from 2012 to 2016](#), the first measure is on-going, and the second is completed. on-going, and the second is completed.

The youth strategic document adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia – [National Programme for Youth 2014-2017](#) stated the objective in the area of youth active participation in the society dedicated to improvement and promotion of volunteerism. Objective 5.4 of the National Programme refers to increasing the number, quality and availability of volunteer youth programs. Also, it is foreseen that this goal will be achieved through the support of NGO projects involving young volunteers, youth associations and

youth organizations that encourage self-organization of young people through volunteering. The implementing body for the said measure is the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) (at the time the National Program was adopted, the Ministry was named the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth). Within this measure, it is foreseen that annual tenders are conducted with the aim of supporting projects involving young volunteers and encouraging self-organization of young people through volunteering.

Responsible authority

The development and supervision of the national Strategy is within the jurisdiction of the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#)

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

The National Youth Volunteering Program as a comprehensive program meant for specific youth population and volunteering, while being organized, supervised and funded by the state in Croatia, does not exist.

However, there is established volunteer support system supported by the [MDFYSP](#) as a holder thereof. In 2012, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth by way of a public call signed a cooperation agreement with four Regional Volunteer Centres (RVCs) and 4 Local Volunteer Centres (LVCs) as a pilot program whereby it provided co-financing and support to volunteer centres as a core unit of infrastructure for the development of volunteering in Croatia. The amount of 700,000.00 Kuna was allocated for this purpose from the state budget.

There is no official statistics that accompanies the participation of specifically young people in projects funded by the Ministry. A general statistics on volunteering is followed on the basis of annual reports submitted to the Ministry by volunteer organizers.

Funding

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. It was allocated HRK 6.5 million for nine projects of civil society organizations. The activities of contracted projects are aimed at building the capacities of civil society organizations for the development of quality and sustainable volunteering programs and increasing the level of public awareness on the importance of volunteering for social and economic development in the RC.

Means for funding in the field of volunteering are secured by the way of state budget funds tender, while volunteer organizers, as well as volunteer centres, provide funds to a larger extent from various sources (most often from international funding sources). The Ministry of Social Policy and Youth co-finances the work of volunteer centres, so in 2013 and 2014, the work of volunteer centres was co-financed with an amount of HRK 780,000.00 per year (HRK 195,000 for each volunteer centre at the regional level). In 2012, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth started co-financing projects of local volunteer centres and in 2014, HRK 999,940.00 was allocated for co-financing 12 projects of local volunteer centres. In 2015, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth continues to co-operate with four regional volunteer centres and co-financing selected projects for a total of 18 local volunteer centres. For co-financing one-year project of local volunteer centres in 2015 and

the first year of implementation of the three-year programs of regional volunteer centres for the period from 2015 to 2018, funds were provided in the total amount of HRK 3,124,785.00. ([Annual Work Report for 2015 of the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth](#)). In 2016, the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) allocated HRK 1,850,000.00 to finance one-year local volunteer centre projects in 2016. Funds were allocated to 15 civil society organizations. In 2017, the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) funded one-year projects of local volunteer centres ([call for applications for one-year local volunteer centre projects in 2017](#)) with HRK 2 million, which is 7.5% more than in 2016.

In 2018, the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy funded 20 one-year projects of local volunteer centres and 4 one-year projects of regional volunteer centres (call for proposals for one-year local and regional volunteer centre projects in 2018) with HRK 2,4 million. In comparison to 2017 there is an increase of 16.67% in the total amount of funds allocated to the volunteer centres. But the call for proposals in 2018 targeted once again regional volunteer centres, since the financial support for three-year programmes, which started in 2015, expired. If comparing two calls for proposals for both local and regional volunteer centres (in 2015 and 2018), that would be a decrease of 30.20% in 2018.

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 youth volunteering

There are no statistics related only to the characteristics of young volunteers. However, in 2018, according to the [Comparative Statistics on Volunteering of MDFYSP for 2017 and 2018](#), 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 2010 - 2016

	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 volunteer 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 a growing number of volunteer organisers which included more volunteers who volunteered a little bit fewer volunteer hours in the last two years.

According to the data of [MDFYSP](#), in Croatia, 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

The [Act on Volunteering](#) does not consider some cash payments to volunteers to be a cash award or property benefit. Among the aforementioned payments, these are pocket money payments to volunteers but only for travel related to volunteer work. Volunteer has the right to reimbursement of the costs incurred for carrying out volunteer work (e.g. purchase of special clothing or equipment for volunteering, payment of travel, accommodation, meals, etc.) and such fees are not considered as a cash award or property gain. The Comparative Statistics on Volunteering of MDFYSP includes data on total cost of volunteering which refers on 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.

Quality Assurance

The [MDFYSP](#), the body responsible for the monitoring of the 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 that were organisers of volunteering to submit report on organized volunteering via the 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 makes a [list of volunteer organisers](#).

Beneficiaries of support by the MDFYSP (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 MDFYSP 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. So, in 2015, 156 volunteer organizers received advisory assistance in the implementation of approved projects and programs ([Annual Work Report for 2015 of the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth](#)).

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.

2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

EU programmes

In Croatia, [the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#) administers the Erasmus+ program and the European Solidarity Corps ([Europske snage solidarnosti](#)), which started in 2018. According to the available data, there was [56 projects](#) under this new programme that was started or implemented in Croatia during 2018 and 2019.

The Agency monitors the participation of end-users in the Erasmus + program (including EVS) through the EU Survey, the RAY Standard Survey as well as by the EU program monitoring tools such as the Mobility Dashboard, Mobility Tool, etc.

Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

The principle of volunteering trans-nationality is defined in Article 17 of the [Act on Volunteering](#) (OG 58/07, 22/13), and items relating to the regulation of volunteering of foreigners in the RC are as follows: foreigners and persons recognized asylum status may volunteer in the RC in accordance with the provisions of the [Act on Volunteering](#), [the Aliens Act](#) (OG NN 130/11, 74/13, 69/17, 46/18), the Asylum Act^[1] and other regulations of the RC and assumed international legal obligations.

According to the [Act on Volunteering](#), Article 26, the organizers of volunteering who uses services of a volunteer/foreigner must have signed a written contract on volunteering with a volunteer/foreigner.

Foreigners may volunteer in the RC by regulating their stay in accordance with the provisions of the [Aliens Act](#), Articles 2, 64a, 64d, and 82.

A contract on volunteering concluded by a volunteer/foreigner in writing and in accordance with the [Act on Volunteering](#) shall be considered as evidence of the justification of a temporary stay.

According to the [Aliens Act](#) (OG NN 130/11, 74/13, 69/17, 46/18), ^[1] up to 90 days in the calendar year based on a work registration certificate, the aliens may work in the organization of Croatian associations or institutions, come to perform volunteering work in work camps and similar working programs. Also, on the same manner may be engaged volunteers to work in non-profit associations and institutions in the RC in accordance with special regulations, i.e. based on international volunteer exchange and cooperation programs. For these volunteers, the permit for stay and work outside the annual quota can be issued if they are between 18 and 65 years of age and a contract on volunteering has been concluded. The organization in which an volunteers/foreigner must take full responsibility for the alien at the time of volunteering, including the costs of subsistence, accommodation, nutrition, health insurance and return costs.

According to the same law, based on a work registration certificate, the alien/volunteer who volunteer within the framework of the Community Programmes, the Lifelong Learning

1 The Law on Volunteering, Art. 17 mentioned the Asylum Act, which was in force until 1 July 2015, and after it was adopted a new [Act on International and Temporary Protection](#) (Official Gazette 70/15, 127/17).

Program and the Youth in Action Program and other international programs and other programs and initiatives implemented by the body competent for education and science and bodies under which jurisdiction is volunteering.

In RC, volunteer work is classified as a regular work. Volunteers coming from EU member states do not need work permits to volunteer anywhere in the EU, but on the basis of reciprocity, restrictions on access to the RC labour market apply to volunteers from certain EU Member States, and they need residence and work permits to be able to volunteer in RC.

The residence and work permit must be requested for volunteers/foreigners coming from Austria and third countries in the period from 2018 to 30 June 2020. The list is available on the [Ministry of Labour and Pension System web pages](#).

Visa is a permit for entry and stay of a volunteer/foreigner for up to three months in the RC territory. It is issued for one, two or more entries for the purposes of transit, tourist, business, private, or other travel. On the basis of visa, a volunteer, an alien cannot volunteer in the RC and the volunteer/foreigner is obliged to submit an application for a work registration certificate or a temporary residence permit application and an application for issuance of stay and work permit, depending on the duration of the volunteer engagement. Aliens and persons recognized as asylum seekers may volunteer in the RC in accordance with the provisions of the [Act on Volunteering](#) (OG 58/07, 22/13), the Aliens Act (OG NN 130/11, 74/13, 69/17, 46/18) and other regulations of the RC and assumed international obligations.

Pursuant to the Law on Confirmation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and the RC on the Participation of the RC in the Youth in Action Program and the Lifelong Learning Action Program (2007-2013) (OG 4/11), participants in the Youth in Action Program are obliged to pay contributions whereby foreign nationals regulate mandatory health insurance in Croatia. For the purpose of their temporary residence in the territory of the RC, the right to health insurance is exercised on the basis of policies concluded between the European Commission and the insurance company for certain program actions, and for this category of aliens, the proof of health insurance do not need to be attached to the application for a stay and work permit.

2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

Information providers

Institutions as information providers at national level on various aspects of volunteering are the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) and the [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#).

Contact Points for getting information on volunteering:

[Croatian volunteer development centre](#) (former Croatian volunteer centre's network that changed its name in 2017)

[European Youth Portal](#)

Key initiatives

Competent ministry marks 5th December, the International Volunteer Day by awarding the State Award on Volunteering from 2007, according to the [Rules on State Awards for Volunteering](#). The State Award on Volunteering is the upmost recognition that the Republic of Croatia assigns to volunteering, contributing to the promotion of volunteering and other volunteering activities. It is awarded to the natural (volunteer and volunteer coordinator) and legal persons (volunteer organizer). The last State Award on Volunteering was awarded in December 2018.

[Annual Work Report for 2015 of the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth](#) states that its personnel promoted volunteering through participation in round tables, conferences, other professional gatherings and in media appearances, and promoted certificates of competences acquired through volunteering (at professional conferences, media performances and written and oral responses to volunteer inquiries and volunteer organizers sent to the Department within the Ministry responsible for volunteering).

[National Foundation for Civil Society Development annually](#) presents [Award "Heart print" – for children and youth volunteering development](#). Prizes are awarded to elementary schools for innovative volunteering initiatives by students and secondary schools for innovative models of youth involvement in volunteering activities. The last "Heart print" was awarded in May 2019.

[Croatian volunteer development centre](#) organizes the public manifestation "[Croatia volunteers](#)" since 2011. It aims to point out the importance of volunteering for contemporary society's development. The manifestation is usually held at the end of May.

In 2016 Government of the Republic of Croatia Office for Cooperation with NGOs and Croatian Public Relations Association, in cooperation with the former Croatian Volunteer Centres Network founded award "Communication support to organizations' socially useful programmes". Based on this award, two associations will receive expert support in the implementation of the program to increase the visibility of the activities of NGOs acting for the common good and to promote socially responsible entrepreneurship. Associations can apply for support in the organization of a public campaign promoting volunteering aimed at high school students and/or organizing a public campaign to promote volunteering directed at students.

Since then, communication support is awarded annually, changing the main topic every year. So, in 2019, Government of the Republic of Croatia - Office for Cooperation with NGOs and Croatian Public Relations Association, this time in cooperation with PR agencies (CTA Communications and Equestris), awarded two associations with "[Communication support to organizations' socially useful programmes](#)", which will carry out educational activities and raise the level of awareness on sustainable development at a local level.

2.7 Skills recognition

Policy Framework

According to the [Act on Volunteering](#) (OG 58/07, 22/13), upon the request of volunteer, the volunteer organizer is obliged to issue a Certificate of Competences Acquired through Volunteering if it is a long-term volunteering. The Competent Body ([MDFYSP](#)), in consultation with the [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#), adopts framework criteria for the recognition of competences, skills and experience gained through volunteering, whereby it defines the framework content of the Certificate of Competences gained through volunteering. The framework criteria and the framework content of the certificate are published on the website of the competent authority of the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#). For the sake of easier understanding and filling, a [Guide for Filling in the Certificate of Competences Acquired through Volunteering](#), including an example of a completed Certificate, has been prepared.

[Croatian Qualification Framework Act](#) (NN 22/13, 41/16, 64/18) defines the objectives of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CQF), among which is mentioned building of a system of recognition and evaluation of informal and informal learning. However, a rulebook has not been produced yet to regulate the area of recognition and evaluation of informal knowledge and skills as an integral part of the CQF (Balković, 2016). Additionally, CQF does not have most of the bodies to deal with the approval of certain elements of occupation and qualifications - sectoral councils, detailed descriptions of occupations and qualifications (standards) and complete implementation instructions and formal rules that would make this system useful to qualification system users and other stakeholders and

fully applicable (Balkovic, 2016). Part of the system of qualifications that has not yet been conceived and for which the legal basis does not exist is the one that supports the recognition and evaluation of informal learning (Balković, 2016).

Existing arrangements

Although there is a possibility of obtaining a Certificate of Competences Acquired through Volunteering that organisers of volunteering issue to volunteer after long-term volunteering, there is currently no ordinance to regulate the area of recognition and evaluation of the outcomes of informal and informal learning, so that in reality there are no standardized mechanisms for recognition and evaluation of volunteer work, especially youth work.

Recognition and evaluation of volunteering of pupils and students is realized through a volunteer booklet as a form of volunteering certificate describing the name of the volunteer organizer, the number of volunteer hours and volunteering time and the type of specific activities. It is filled by the volunteer organizer, who is obliged to issue a certificate to the volunteer at the end of volunteering, and it is therefore certified by his/her stamp. The booklet may also include education related to the volunteer's education.

Higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia issue a diploma supplement in Croatian and English at the end of Bologna studies for all students free of charge. Further studies, scholarships and acknowledgments, as well as the extra-curricular activities of the student may be included in the diploma supplement. Extracurricular activities are those which contain the category that include volunteering activities. In addition to explaining the effects of student's work on qualification, this whole part allows a higher education institution to recognize additional work and success of a student during a study. If information is added herein that are not an integral part of the study program (e.g. student cooperative's work, student's presentation, awards or a success in a study not issued by a qualifying higher education institution), the higher education institution is obliged to provide all students with equal information for this part ([Diploma Supplement: Instructions, Regulations and Examples, 2008](#)).

The practice of enrolling extracurricular activities in the diploma supplement is only just starting at the Croatian higher education institutions, and it is not yet implemented both systematically or equally (Kotlar and Čulum, 2014). In other words, universities are left to independently evaluate the volunteer work of students in the sense of awarding ECTS credits - there is no developed unique system for evaluating students both between universities and between components within a particular university.

It should be noted that the diploma supplement issued under the Croatian higher education system does not bear the designation of Europass, which is the only difference between the Croatian version of the document and the original which was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO ([Europass](#)) as part of the Europass initiative.

Since 2010, each year a competition is being announced and a rector's award for a volunteer of the year is awarded at the universities in Croatia.

Youthpass as a tool of the European Commission to plan, monitor, evaluate and recognize the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes in projects co-financed under the Erasmus + program: Youth in Action, placing policies into practice and vice versa.

2.8 Current debates and reforms

Although, as quoted by the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, the Final Proposal of the National Programme for the Development of Volunteering for the period 2016-2019 with Final Proposal of the Operative Implementation Plan of National Programme for the Development of Volunteering for the period 2016-2019 was drafted, the National Program and the Operational Plan have not been adopted yet or made

available to the public. It should be noted that these documents were publicly electronically advised during 2015, which covered the period 2015-2018 and not 2016 - 2019: [Draft Proposal of the National Programme for the Development of Volunteering for the period 2015-2018 with Draft Proposal of the Operative Implementation Plan of National Programme for the development of volunteering for the period 2015-2018.](#)

In the event that volunteer activity is carried out in direct contact with some of the vulnerable social groups, additional information on the volunteer must be attached to the contract. According to the [Act on Volunteering](#), it is necessary to obtain an extract from criminal or misdemeanour records. The extract from the criminal record serves as proof that the volunteer has not committed a criminal offense against life and body, against sexual freedom and sexual maturity, and against marriage, family and youth. Likewise, the extract from the criminal records is a guarantee that a volunteer does not pursue a security measure of compulsory psychiatric treatment or treatment of addiction or measures of prohibition of performing a vocation, activity or duty in connection with the volunteering s/he wishes to perform. The excerpt from the misdemeanour record is evidence that the volunteer has not been subjected to the misdemeanour sanction prescribed by the [Act on Protection against Family Violence](#). Given that this is a very strict regime for the issuance of such certificates and confidentiality of personal data prescribed by the [Criminal Code](#) and the rules on criminal or misdemeanour records, current regulations do not allow the majority of volunteer organizers to obtain information required by the [Act on Volunteering](#), which in practice prevents the proper application of that Act.

[Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#), at the proposal of the [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#) presents a State Award for Volunteering. The State Award for Volunteering for 2016 was not presented. Also, there are no [official minutes of the National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism's meetings](#) for the whole of 2016 and the first half of 2017. The term of office of the members of the National Committee is 2 years, and the mandate expired in autumn 2016, since new members have not been nominated. In other words, one year backward, it can be said that the development of volunteering in terms of support at the institutional level is slowed down.

There is still a lack of legal basis for recognizing the qualifications gained through volunteering or recognition and evaluation of informal and informal learning.

Most of the documents actually deal with volunteering in general, a very small proportion of them being specifically targeted at young people who are engaged in volunteering activities.

3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Croatia is one of countries with highest youth unemployment rates in Europe which has been the main social challenge for a long time alongside precarious work and the increasing number of young people who opted for (long) lasting leave abroad.

[The Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#) (MLPS) carries out administrative and coordinating tasks related to employment programmes. The main partner of MLPS in the implementation of policies for employment and entrepreneurship at the level of the Government of the Republic of Croatia is the [Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts \(MEEC\)](#).

3.1 General context

Labour market situation in the country

Youth employment

The activity rate of Croatian youth is among the lowest in Europe. According to research results on a national representative sample of 1,500 young people (age 15-29) in 2018 (Shell Youth Survey: in print), out of 689 young employees covered by the survey, the largest share of young people (76.3%) was employed in a private sector, 19.9% in a public sector and the rest are working in international or civil society organisations. Regarding the type of contract signed by young people, 23.5% of all young people are employed on indefinite period full-time contracts, 19.8% on definite period contracts, while 0.6% are self-employed and 4.2% are having occasional jobs. At the same time, 0.6% of young people are in occupational training, 11.2% do not have a job and do not seek for one, 39.5% are active job-seekers and 0.6% are in some other status. The average number of working hours indicates there are 60.5% of employed young people who are doing average hours or up to 40 hours a week, while the rest is working more than this norm. The earnings of young people are below the national average; 91.4% earn less than 800 euro of the national average, while 5.2% earns less than the national minimum of 360 net euro monthly. Accordingly, only 8.6% of young people earn more than 800 euro monthly. It is also important to note that only 36.9% of youth work within their profession, which is a cause of their job-dissatisfaction and deterioration of the skills they have acquired during their schooling.

Youth unemployment

Croatia had a high rate of [youth unemployment](#) for a long time (around 30% between 2011 and 2015), but it has been significantly decreased in the last years. Total unemployment of young people aged 15-29 in 2018 was 17.6%.

Broken down into age subgroups, the unemployment rate was: 31.7% for young people aged 15-19, 21.8% for 20-24-year olds and 12.9% for 25-29-year olds.

There are [22%](#) of unemployed young people with a lower level of educational attainment (less than primary, primary and lower secondary education) and [17.7%](#) with upper level of educational attainment (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education).

There are 4.7% [long-term unemployed](#) young people aged 15-29 years, while the EU average is 3.6%.

The share of youth not in education, employment or training ([NEET](#)) was 4.5% for the 15-29 age group.

Although, there is no recent national survey on youth unemployment after 2013, the results of the [aforementioned research](#) showed how young unemployed people in Croatia lived in absence of job related income: among the unemployed, 62.9% of young people were supported by parents during the unemployment period, 38.4% occasionally

performed various jobs, 12.6% were supported by their employed spouse, 10.5% received [cash benefits from the Croatian Employment Service](#), 1.8% received assistance from humanitarian organizations and 0.8% had another source of unemployment support.

Main concepts

Active labour market measures to help unemployed people back to work include job placement services, benefit administration, and labour market programmes such as training and job creation. (Source: OECD)

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their life, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their career. (Source: OECD)

Employment rate represent persons in employment as a percentage of the economically active population. (Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS)

ILO defines unemployed persons as persons who:

- are without work;
- are available to start work within the next two weeks;
- and have actively sought employment at some time during the previous four weeks.

The unemployment rate is the number of people unemployed as a percentage of the labour force (the total number of people employed plus unemployed). (Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS)

Long-term unemployed persons are persons who have been unemployed for one year or more. Long-term unemployment shares show the percentage of the long-term unemployed persons in the total unemployed population in the same age group. However, in this report as young people are marked as long-term unemployed if unemployed for 6 months or longer. (Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS)

Self-employed are persons who work in their own business, professional practice or farm for the purpose of earning a profit, and who either work on their own or employ at least one other person. (Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS)

Skills forecasting measures, at the national level, the friction on the labour market between demand for, and supply of, skilled labour for defined education groups in the next time period (usually in next five years).

3.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Public actors

Ministries

[The Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#) (MLPS) carries out administrative and coordinating tasks related to employment programmes, and the [Labour Inspectorate](#) is also located within the Ministry. MLPS coordinates employment policies as regulated by the [Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Active Employment Policy in the Republic of Croatia for the period 2018–20120](#), approved by the [Government of the Republic of Croatia](#).

The main partner of MLPS in the implementation of policies for employment and entrepreneurship at the level of the Government of the Republic of Croatia is the [Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts \(MEEC\)](#). MEEC carries out administrative and other activities related to small and medium-sized entrepreneurship, crafts, cooperatives, the promotion of exports and foreign investment, and the promotion of competitiveness in the field of small and medium-sized entrepreneurship. MEEC also operates in the field of international co-operation in crafts and small and medium-sized entrepreneurship.

Agencies

The [Croatian Employment Service](#) (CES) is the main agency in the field of employment, which keeps the database of unemployed persons and provides incentives for the employment of unemployed persons on the basis of an [annual programme](#).

Labour market stakeholders include the following institutions and organizations:

- REGOS – Central Registry of Insured Persons that maintains a database of all persons who have a pension insurance.
- Croatian Pension Insurance Institute (CPII) that enables the exercise of rights arising from pension insurance
- Agency for Securing Employees Claims in the event of Employer's Bankruptcy
- Institute for Expert Evaluation, Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities
- Institute for Occupational Safety Improvement.

Local and regional level

Communication at the local and regional level is mainly carried out via the [administrative departments of economic affairs in counties](#), branches of the above listed agencies and [regional development agencies](#).

CES is a leading partner in [local partnerships for employment](#), which complement national policy with initiatives geared towards regional labour markets. Local partners are stakeholders from the public, private and civil sectors, and the purpose of partnership is to elaborate and develop an institutional framework for human resources development at county level (based on partnership) and strengthen the capacities of local stakeholders for the development and implementation of labour market policies.

Labour unions

Three major national [trade unions](#) in Croatia are mentioned below:

- Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia
- Independent Trade Unions of Croatia
- The Association of Croatian Unions

Schools and universities

- [Primary schools](#)
- [Secondary schools](#)
- [Universities and polytechnics](#)
- [The Adult Education Institution](#)

Croatian bureau of statistics

[Croatian Bureau of Statistics](#) keeps the national database in the area of employment and entrepreneurship.

Research institutes

[The Economic Institute](#), [The Institute for Social Research in Zagreb](#), [The Institute of Social Science 'Ivo Pilar'](#) and [The Institute of Public Finance](#) are the leading institutions in the area of research on employment and entrepreneurship.

Public consultations

Cooperation with civil society organizations takes place as needed, and/or according to the invitation to the individual organization, depending on the area and based on the Code

of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts.

Non-public actors

There are 91 [temporary employment Agencies operating in Croatia](#).

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Consultation with youth

In the area of youth policy, the [Croatian Youth Network](#) (CYN), is an alliance of 63 youth and for-youth non-governmental associations acting as a national umbrella organization for young people and is a member of the [European Youth Forum](#). CYN is involved in decision-making processes on youth policies in Croatia by consultations and counselling.

3.3 Skills forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

[The Survey on Employers](#) is a survey of employers' labour force needs for certain occupations, which is carried out once a year by the [Croatian Employment Service](#) (CES) in cooperation with the Croatian Chamber of Economy, [Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts](#) and [Croatian Employers' Association](#) for the purpose of more successful labour market performance and matching supply and labour demand in Croatia.

The questionnaire of the Survey on Employers is supplemented with the [Survey on the Occupational Standard](#) conducted by CES with the support of [The Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#) (MLPS). The survey is conducted through an online survey (Lime Survey system) and employers and experts are expected to provide data on: key jobs needed to work in a certain profession in a particular organization; the knowledge and skills needed to carry out key tasks; the necessary level of key competences for lifelong learning, generic skills and psychomotor skills; the necessary education for work in the profession and the characteristics of the workplace and the characteristics of the organization.

At this time, there is no evaluation either of the Quality Assurance System of the Survey of Employers or the Survey on the Occupational Standard.

Skills development

Findings of the [Survey on Employers](#) and the [Survey on the Occupational Standard](#) are also used as information in the development of the Recommendations for Educational Enrolment Policy and the identification of [occupational standard](#) in the [Croatian Qualification Framework - CROQF](#). Also, in accordance with the [Strategy for Lifelong Learning Career Guidance in the Republic of Croatia 2016 - 2020](#), the wider public will, through the MLPS web site which is under construction, get insights into the trends in employment and unemployment of all occupations in the labour market, and the number of enrolled students and students in educational programmes.

The results of these surveys i.e. the Survey of Employers and the Survey on the Occupational Standards were not used in the organization of non-formal or informal learning at the time of writing of this report.

3.4 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

The objective of the [Strategy for Lifelong Learning Career Guidance in the Republic of Croatia 2016 - 2020](#) is to identify the priorities, measures and activities in setting up a lifelong learning guidance system and provide a basis for enabling citizens to have access

to quality professional guidance services to develop their lifelong career in accordance with their abilities, interests, personality traits and job market demands.

Professional guidance is provided through the legislative work involving the [Ministry of Science, Education and Sports](#) and the [Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#).

The main provider of vocational guidance is the [Croatian Employment Service](#) (CES), and other institutions conducting professional guidance are:

1. [Primary and secondary schools](#);
2. [Adult education institutions](#);
3. [Universities and polytechnics](#);
4. [Croatian Employers' Association](#);
5. [Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts](#);
6. [Agencies for vocational education and training and adult education](#);
7. [Agency for Science and Higher Education](#);
8. [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#).

CES provides professional orientation to [pupils of final grades of primary school and secondary school students](#), including professional information and professional counselling, and it is implemented in collaboration with schools and parents through a [Survey of Professional Choices for Primary and Secondary School Students](#). Information on education, relevant areas for occupational choice and employment is organized for [students](#).

Professional orientation through the [lifelong career guidance centres](#) is also available to other users who wish to participate in formal education or retraining system or want to change their profession, and [professional rehabilitation](#) programmes are also being implemented.

In Croatia, there is no system of non-formal and informal professional orientation that is in some way co-ordinated or funded by the public bodies.

Funding

The amount of HRK 1,200,000.00 is foreseen for professional orientation under the supervision of the [Croatian Employment Service](#) at the annual level. The costs include the procurement of psychological measuring instruments, the development of new instruments and methods of assessment and counselling, including e-guidance, professional training, etc. Special funds are provided for professional rehabilitation procedures for people with disabilities.

Quality assurance

At the time of writing this report, there was no quality assurance system and evaluation of professional guidance system in Croatia. However, the Croatian Employment Service submits annual reports on its work to the Croatian Parliament.

3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

Vocational education and traineeships

The general framework for vocational education is the [Law on Vocational Education](#) (OG [30/09](#), [24/10](#), [22/13](#), [25/18](#)), and the main mechanism for vocational training is [vocational education for bound craft programmes](#), which consists of an expert-theoretical part and practical teaching and exercises. Education lasts for three years, with practical

work in at least one part of the programme, and is compulsory for all participants as prescribed by the [Crafts Act](#) (OG 143/13).

The [Apprenticeship Contract](#) is concluded by the craftsman and the student and/or their parent or guardian. The contract governs mutual rights, obligations and responsibilities between craftsmen and students during the course of apprenticeship programmes: the beginning and duration of apprenticeship, the student's working time at the workshop or at the work site, the duration and schedule of the student's leave, the material allowance for the duration of the apprenticeship and the obligations of craftsmen regarding the implementation of curriculum.

As a rule, the programme participants receive a cash award for the workshop that is paid each month in accordance with the provisions of the [Apprenticeship Contract](#), which is an integral part of the [By-law on the Minimum Requirements for Apprenticeship Contract \(OG 63/14\)](#) and [By-law on Amendments to the By-law on the Minimum Requirements for Apprenticeship Contract \(OG 80/2018\)](#).

The main social partner in the implementation of the apprenticeship programme is the [Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts](#), and in some programmes the [Croatian Employers' Association](#) is also included. In the regular education system at secondary school level, the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts conducts licensing of crafts and legal entities for the implementation of practical teaching and training.

The unemployed and traineeships

Apart from attending regular vocational education, the main beneficiaries of the vocational training programme are unemployed persons, who undergo a re-qualification programme within the [Croatian Employment Service](#). The Croatian Employment Service also conducts [Subsidies for employment](#) with the aim of encouraging further education of newly employed or employed persons with the aim of preserving jobs and introducing new technologies and production programmes and raising competitiveness. This institution also makes available [on-the-job training](#), aiming to enable unemployed persons to acquire the knowledge and skills required to perform jobs in the same workplace.

Apprenticeships

The above-mentioned models of engagement in vocational training are not linked to the implementation of the [Youth Guarantee](#) (YG) in Croatia, but its implementation has expanded a package of measures aimed at introducing young people to work. Croatia began the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in 2013 by upgrading the then packet of measures called [Young and Creative](#). New [Plan for the Youth Guarantee Implementation 2019-2020](#) was adopted in April 2019. The main component of the Youth Guarantee – [occupational training without commencing employment](#) – is on-the-job advancement at with employer lasting for 12 or 24 months, covering health, retirement insurance and travel expenses by the employer, and salaries to the amount of HRK 2,620.80 covered by the [Croatian Employment Service](#). This measure may be used by unemployed persons up to 30 years of age who have no more than 12 months of internships, who have been educated and reported to CES for 30 days. The acquired qualifications are recognized at the level of formal education through the ECVET system.

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

The apprenticeship programme is being promoted by appropriate TV spots before the end of the academic year, and through individual discussions with students during professional counselling.

With regard to the involvement of youth organizations in designing and evaluating the YG, the [Croatian Youth Network](#) is an active member of the Council for the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, but the Council's decisions are not binding and they are not brought for all YG implementation components.

Recognition of learning outcomes

Qualifications acquired through education are recognized at the level of formal education through the [ECVET system](#), while vocational training is evaluated only through the acquired work experience.

Funding

By 2018, Croatia will receive a total of €144 million for programmes under the Youth Guarantee, out of which about €66 million will come from European funds – Youth Employment Initiative, just as much from the funds that will be allocated through the European Social Fund, and 11.5 million will be the result of national co-financing.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance of traineeships

VET institutions are required to carry out self-evaluation in cooperation with the [Agency for vocational education and training and adult education](#), and external evaluation in cooperation with the [National Centre for External Evaluation of Education](#). The quality assurance system links and harmonizes the self-evaluation and external evaluation of educational institutions, whereat external evaluation uses self-evaluation and development plans of the institution as the starting point for evaluation.

Quality assurance of programmes under Youth Guarantee

In the year 2016, [the Evaluation of participant, mentor and employer experiences of the Occupational training without commencing employment](#) coordinated by the [Croatian Employment Service](#), and conducted by the [Ipsos Puls](#) Agency, with the help of experts from the [Institute of Public Finance](#) was undertaken. Three questionnaires were administered in the survey: for young people (N = 537), employers (N = 458) and mentors (N = 375) were. The objectives of the study were:

1. to determine the quality of the content of the vocational training;
2. to examine familiarity with the objectives of vocational training;
3. to evaluate the quality of the implementation of the vocational training programme;
4. to examine experiences related to the adoption of programmes (knowledge transfer, adoption of professional competencies);
5. to determine the familiarity/knowledge of the contents and objectives of the vocational training programme by the user;
6. to evaluate the satisfaction with the aspects of defining and implementing the vocational training programme;
7. to examine the expectations of participation in the measure in the area of competence acquisition;
8. to examine the circumstances of entry/decision on entry into the measure;
9. to determine the expected objectives of applying vocational training programmes in the context of occupation/profession;
10. to identify the factors of favourable outcomes;
11. to examine the attitudes of competences achieved after exiting the measure and assess the fulfilment of the expectations of vocational training.

[Evaluation of the Youth Employment Initiative under the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020 \(OPEHR\)](#) (2015) was coordinated by the [Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#) (MLPS) and conducted by the [ECORYS Croatia](#). The overall objective of the evaluation was to evaluate the impact of planned activities in the context of the sustainable integration of the NEET1 young people into the labour market. The evaluation

indicators are linked to the degree of relevance and justification, consistency and internal coherence, effectiveness, external coherence and effectiveness. The interviews with the users of vocational training have also been conducted as part of the evaluation.

[Evaluation of occupational training implementation](#) was conducted by the [Croatian Youth Network](#) 2016. This evaluation, along with the numerical indicators of implementation and characteristics of the beneficiaries, included the assessment of the effect on employment (12 months employment after expiry of the measure) and the structural and financial aspects of the YG implementation.

3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

Youth employment measures

[Act on Employment Mediation and Unemployment Rights](#) in Article 34 stipulates that the Government of the Republic of Croatia designates the action plans for employment, and the Minister of Labour and Pension system governs the committee responsible for these policies.

[Active labour market measures](#) are within the jurisdiction of the Croatian Employment Service, which besides the [vocational training](#) under the [Youth Guarantee](#) also covers another three programmes that facilitate the inclusion of youth into the labour market:

1. [Public works](#) based on socially useful work initiated by the local community or civil society organizations;
2. [Employment subsidies](#) involving the co-financing of up to 50% costs of the annual gross II wage, or 75% for persons with disabilities;
3. Measure "[permanent seasonal worker](#)" aimed to financially support workers who are employed only during the season, and the second part of the year they are not employed. Employer is financed with 100% of the expense of extended insurance for the first 3 months, and in the next period lasting for no more than 3 months 50% of the extended insurance.

The [Croatian Employment Service](#) offers supporting measures for youth via the [youth centres](#), where job recruitment specialists are trained for effective communication with young people, group work and workshops for young people. Youth centres offer counselling and support in job search; active job seeking workshops; employment mediation; access to computers and portals to database of vacancies; publishing of the curriculum vitae on the portal called "job market" [BurzaRada]; thematic lectures on important topics related to employment and information on active employment policies.

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

Regulations enabling labour market flexibility are introduced by the [Labour Act](#) of 2014 (OG 93/2014), whereat young workers are not specifically targeted by the legislative framework. However, young workers are the ones who use the most flexible forms of employment, mostly through the [Agency for Temporary Employment](#).

Security provisions for young employees and young job-seekers

Measures that facilitate an inter-employment period or mobility between employments are ensured through the [Youth Guarantee](#) and imply obtaining a quality offer within 4 months of leaving or ending education, or entering unemployment, regardless of whether a person is registered with CES or not.

[Pre-qualification within the](#) Croatian Employment Service and access to [lifelong career guidance centres](#) are the main mechanisms that facilitate job finding for young people. These centres, in addition to information on potential employment and employment programmes, offer the possibility to use [tools for self-informing](#) and [assessment of](#)

[competencies](#), [educational opportunities](#), [the labour market](#) trends. The centres also provide individual and group information, presentations and workshops.

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

[Parental leave](#) is the main tool for facilitating the reconciliation of private and working life of young people. Parental leave can be used up to 12 months after the birth of the child for the first and second child and up to the third year of the child's life for the third child.

Part-time work is provided to parents of children with developmental difficulties. Outside this framework, part-time work is seldom used and depends on the agreement between the employer and the employee.

Working from home as a flexible form of engagement also depends on the agreement between the employer and the employee and is used only to a lesser extent.

There are no incentives or measures for the inclusion and retention of young women in the labour market.

Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

Financing of the employment measures come either from the national budget or through European programmes, such as the European Social Fund. The main body responsible for administering the financing of employment measures is [The Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#), and the main provider through which the money is allocated to the beneficiaries of the measure is the [Croatian Employment Service](#).

For the year 2017, HRK 1.5 billion is foreseen for employment measures, of which 650 million will come from the European Social Fund.

Quality assurance

Mechanisms and indicators used to measure the quality of employment programmes relate to the number of beneficiaries by certain characteristics (age, gender, profession, educational status, work experience, type and size of company, and the like). Based on the above mentioned characteristics, monthly and annual statistics are produced, which are monitored through the [Croatian Employment Service](#) (CES) publication. If necessary, the CES, on the basis of the implementation of measures, adjusts the conditions for the implementation of measures in a particular year.

[The Council for the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan](#) was established to monitor the implementation of the [Youth Guarantee](#) measures. The Council adopts [annual reports on the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan](#), based on which it provides recommendations for further implementation. The number of beneficiaries included in a particular YG measure, the moment of entry/exit from the measure, as well as the situation upon exiting the individual measure (whether the person has returned to unemployment or remained in the labour market/education). There are also [Annual Reports on the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan Implementation](#).

The Croatian Employment Service contracted the [Evaluation of participant, mentor and employer experiences of the measure "the Occupational training without commencing employment"](#), which was conducted by [The Institute of Public Finance](#) in 2016.

The [External Evaluation of Active Labour-Market Policy Measures 2010-2013](#) was conducted in 2015 and, based on evaluation results presented in 2016, employment measures are redefined for the period 2017-2018.

3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

The main mechanism for encouraging the employment abroad is the [EURES network](#), whereat the [Croatian Employment Service](#) was a partner in implementing [Your first EURES Job 4.0](#) from 2015 to 2017. From 2013 to 2017 the CES took part in the project [The Job of my Life – MobiPro EU](#), funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mobility programmes for young entrepreneurs are available through the [EU Erasmus Programme for Young Entrepreneurs in Croatia](#). The [Croatian Chamber of Economy](#) is listed as a contact point that has had active projects (3 projects) so far. [Web page containing information for the Croatian Programme](#) was under development at the time of writing this report.

Legal framework

After Croatia joining the European Union, citizens of the European Union can freely get employed without obtaining work permits. However, according to the principle of reciprocity, the Republic of Croatia has introduced measures of employment restrictions for all countries which have introduced restrictions for Croatian citizens in transitional period (until 1 July 2018), which includes for Austria; Malta; Netherlands; Slovenia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

With regard to incoming mobility, there are no tax incentives for employed foreigners in Croatia.

Employment of third-country nationals is possible only through [annual quota for the employment](#). If a person is a third-country national, s/he can only work in the Republic of Croatia for those jobs for which he or she has been granted a residence and work permit, and only to an employer with whom he or she has a working relationship and/or concluded employment contract.

The web page of the [Croatian Employment Service](#) provides basic information on the employment of foreigners, regulated by the [Ministry of Interior](#).

The conditions of entry, movement and residence, as well as the work of foreigners, the conditions of work and rights (health and pension insurance) of foreign workers in the Republic of Croatia are prescribed by [the Asylum Act](#), [The Aliens Act](#), and [The Act amending the Act on Croatian Citizenship](#).

3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

Policy Framework

Croatia currently has no active learning strategy for entrepreneurship, but only the [Strategy for Entrepreneurial Learning 2010-2014](#), which parts are still being applied according to information from the [Ministry of Education and Science](#). At the time of writing this report, there was no plan to work on the new strategy.

The Action Plan for the period 2010-2014 contained 10 measures:

1. develop a positive attitude and sensitize the public about entrepreneurship;
2. increase the interest in training for entrepreneurship;
3. introduce entrepreneurial learning and training in all development policies and programmes;

4. introduce entrepreneurship as one of the key competences in all educational curricula;
5. increase the capacity of educational institutions for the introduction of education for entrepreneurship;
6. increase the competences of educators, teachers and trainers for entrepreneurship education;
7. strengthen cooperation and networking of educational institutions, scientific-research and business entities on programmes;
8. develop additional entrepreneurship programmes and contents of professional entrepreneurial competencies in formal and non-formal education and teaching;
9. develop the entrepreneurial competence of all employees;
10. increase the number of successful small businesses.

Formal learning

Education for entrepreneurship is addressed in the [National Framework Curriculum](#) adopted in 2010. The National Framework Curriculum determines entrepreneurial learning as a cross-curricular theme in primary and secondary education but there is still no curriculum developed to implement this component. Several schools have recognized the need to develop entrepreneurial attitudes of students and independently developed learning for entrepreneurship through faculty teaching.

Learning for entrepreneurship is supported by [the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning](#), whose main goal is to establish strategic cooperation between the eight Western Balkan countries and Turkey, and which headquarter is in Zagreb.

Non-formal and informal learning

There are no non-formal and informal learning programmes for entrepreneurship in Croatia that are coordinated by public institutions or financed from public resources.

Educators support in entrepreneurship education

There is no current entrepreneurial learning strategy or curriculum that would support the introduction of entrepreneurial learning in the education system, and there is no support system for teachers in engaged in entrepreneurship teaching in Croatia.

3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Access to information

The main channels of support and informing young entrepreneurs are [34 entrepreneurial incubators](#) and [52 development agencies](#) run by the [Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts](#). Entrepreneurial incubators and development agencies offer support in the form of:

1. consulting services;
2. education for start-up entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in the stage of growth and development;
3. subsidized rental of business premises;
4. the use of common infrastructure that facilitates the start of operations;
5. subsidized rental of equipment.

Access to capital

Beside [entrepreneurial incubators](#) and [development agencies](#), financial resources for young entrepreneurs are ensured by:

1. [Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovations and Investments \(HAMAG-BICRO\)](#) through [Financial instruments: guarantees](#) and loans ([programmeEU Beginner](#)), [grants](#) and [innovation programmes Eureka](#).
2. [The Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#), through the [Entrepreneur Starter Programme for beginners entrepreneurs](#), [Youth Entrepreneurship](#), [micro-crediting with the EU support](#) and [Free Zones](#), established by local and regional self-government units with an aim to enable businesses to operate at much more favourable conditions.

[The Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts](#) through the programme E-impuls, which is the result of Croatia's participation in European and Structural Funds, and helps micro and small enterprises to start up and expand their operations.

3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

In Croatia, promotion of entrepreneurship takes place through the organization of international, regional and local trade fairs of entrepreneurs and craftsmen. Their organization is under the jurisdiction of the [Croatian Employers' Association](#) and [Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts](#). Moreover, public institutions, such as some ministries and agencies, are involved through patronage.

There are no public events and activities aimed at strengthening the entrepreneurial culture of youth, organized by government or financed from public resources.

The development of social entrepreneurship in Croatia is supported by the [Strategy for Development of Social Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia 2015-2020](#), whose specific objectives are:

1. establishment and improvement of the legislative and institutional framework for the development of social entrepreneurship;
2. establishment of financial framework for the effective performance of social entrepreneurs;
3. promoting the importance and role of social entrepreneurship through all forms of education;
4. ensuring the visibility of the role and possibilities of social entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia and informing the general public about themes related to social entrepreneurship issues.

Networks and partnerships

At the time of writing this report, the [Startup Factory Zagreb – programme which encourage development of smart city solutions](#) was the only networking and partnership promotion programme facilitated and funded by public institutions. Through this programme, [Development Agency Zagreb](#) in cooperation with ICT companies Croatian Telecom, IBM and SmartIS facilitates networking of development teams and startups.

3.11 Current debates and reforms

External quality assurance of employment measures

In 2017, [The Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#) (MLPS) will set up a working group to monitor employment measures, among which the representatives of social partners and civil society organizations will be appointed.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

According to the [The Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia \(2014-2020\)](#) young people are recognized as one of four groups at the highest risk, together with the elderly and pensioners, the unemployed and people with disabilities.

Modern problems, such as the high percentage of youth unemployment in the Republic of Croatia and the prolongation of parent-dependent time, lead to the increasing number of young people who are at risk of social exclusion according to the categories of education, housing, employment, poverty and health care.

In Croatia, the [Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy \(MDFYSP\)](#) is a responsible state authority for combating social exclusion.

4.2 Administration and governance

Governance

[Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy \(MDFYSP\)](#) is competent for the youth policy and social policy.

The Ministry performs administrative and professional tasks related to improving and promoting the quality of life of youth and building a complete, comprehensive and cross-sectorial youth policy. The aforementioned scope includes: proposing and implementing strategic documents, laws, other acts, programs and projects in the field of youth policy and monitoring and evaluation thereof, especially in the area of involvement of young people as partners in the processes of participation in decision-making, informal education, leisure and youth culture, volunteering and participating in the development of civil society, promoting political participation and protecting human rights, information, mobility and the provision of quality and regular support to the organized youth sector and its activities. The Ministry develops measures and programs aimed at preventing social exclusion of young people and providing the basis for a complete, creative and dignified life in their youthful times.

The Ministry also carries out administrative and professional affairs related to care of persons and families who do not have enough resources to meet basic needs or are in need of assistance to overcome the causes of social vulnerability.

Pursuant to the [Law on Local and Regional Self-Government](#), municipalities, towns and counties are independent in deciding on affairs from their self-governing sphere of competence. At regional and local levels, municipalities and counties establish administrative departments or services to carry out activities within their scope, including, among others, activities in the field of social services, education, social welfare, etc.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

A number of stakeholders are participating in the preparation of [the Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia \(2014-2020\)](#) as well as in the implementation thereof: government and public administration bodies, local and regional self-government units, representatives of educational and scientific institutions and civil society organisations and social partners.

Crucial to the fight against poverty and social exclusion is the coordination of the competent government, public and local authorities, and the cooperation of the government, public and civic actors, and the involvement of citizens. In this context, the Strategy highlights the importance of finding new solutions based on guaranteed rights and the promotion of solidarity and social participation. It is important to attain a higher level of solidarity and make efforts to build new social capital. The said requires public activities directed to a greater extent to persons with existential difficulties and aimed at

relieving them from seeking out protection mechanisms on their own, which, due to insufficient familiarity of the beneficiaries with the social welfare system and their rights, often results in unexercised rights and a consequent inability to come out of poverty and exclusion.

Therefore, the strategy implementation programmes also build in measures which strengthen cross-sectorial connections within the solidarity policy that support initiatives of civil society organisations and the involvement of citizens and promote the development of participation of poor and socially deprived persons in the implementation and monitoring of public policy. Namely, besides the contribution of civil society organisations which are active in their work with socially deprived citizens, the voice of persons facing existential difficulties is equally important.

Considering that poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional categories, more strategic areas are foreseen for their combat and prevention. For each strategic area, the [Implementation Programme of the Strategy](#) defines measures that are already being implemented or planned to be implemented, the main and specific objectives, designated/co-designated competent authorities, the target groups, the means of monitoring the implementation, the implementation deadlines and funding sources, and implementation costs. All relevant stakeholders are involved that can contribute to the achievement of conditions for reduction of poverty and social exclusion.

Designated competent authorities for each strategic area are:

1. education and lifelong learning (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports);
2. employment and access to employment (Ministry of Labour and the Pension System);
3. housing and availability of energy (Ministry of Construction and Physical Planning);
4. access to social benefits and services ([Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#));
5. access to healthcare system (Ministry of Health);
6. care for elderly (designated authority: Ministry of Labour and the Pension System);
7. financial independence and fight against indebtedness (Ministry of Finance) and
8. balanced regional development (Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds)

In order to implement the measures of the [National Youth Programme for the Period from 2014 to 2017](#), in the area of social protection and inclusion, different designated competent authorities have been appointed (Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Ministry of Health, Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, Office for Human Rights and National Minorities' Rights of the Government of the Republic of Croatia). Co-designated competent authorities are also appointed for the implementation of measures (Croatian Employment Service, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, National Foundation for Civil Society Development, academic community and civil society organizations).

4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

In Croatia, there is no strategy for the social inclusion of young people as a separate strategic document. The basic document in the field of social inclusion is [the Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia \(2014-2020\)](#), wherein young people are listed as one of the groups at the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Usually, one of the chapters of the National youth programme is dedicated to the social protection and inclusion of youth, but the programme has expired in 2017.

Scope and contents

The purpose of the Strategy [for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia \(2014-2020\)](#) is to achieve, by a common approach of various stakeholders, that the minimum living standard is ensured for the most endangered population and that conditions are ensured for the prevention of new poverty and social exclusion occurrences.

Goals of the Strategy are related to eliminating poverty among children, active integration of vulnerable groups into society and the labour market, ensuring appropriate housing for all; preventing and eliminating causes of discrimination against vulnerable groups; preventing financial exclusion and overindebtedness; ensuring Roma inclusion; and other goals specific for particular strategic areas.

Strategic program activities are focused on the following three priorities and primary objectives:

1. Ensuring conditions for a successful fight against poverty and social exclusion and for reducing inequalities in the society.

Activities under this priority focus on reducing the number of persons at risk of poverty and increasing the adequacy of social benefits in the social welfare system. Also, the emphasis is on the uniform availability of educational, health care, social welfare and other services, the availability of housing, the reduction of regional differences and the prevention of indebtedness and financial dependence. The goals are also related to increasing the share of population with completed tertiary education, reducing the rate of unemployment and insufficient participation in the labour market, reducing the share of early school drop-outs by 2020.

2. Ensuring the conditions for the prevention of formation of new categories of the poor, as well as reducing the number of poor and socially excluded persons.

Activities under this priority are aimed at ensuring the conditions for providing high-quality and accessible services for children from the earliest age/preschool services, extracurricular activities, primary and secondary-school education, and incentives for higher education and lifelong learning, as well as ensuring high-quality and accessible social services for all citizens (social welfare, health care, education). Furthermore, the emphasis is on creating opportunities for raising the employment rate of working-age persons and increasing the employability of disadvantaged groups. This priority also includes the housing policy development (ensuring affordable apartments for the youth and the socially endangered, protecting the real estate in which a person lives...) and homelessness prevention. It is pointed out to developing innovative programmes in all fields (social innovation), as well as developing new work skills and greater use of EU funds.

3. Establishing a coordinated system of support for groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion, as well as a monitoring and evaluation system.

Responsible authority

The Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy is responsible for the Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia (2014-2020). and the National Youth Programme 2014-2020.

Usually, the Ministry adopts Implementation programme of the strategy for two-year period and then, it has an obligation to produce an annual report on the implementation of measures and submit it to the Government of the Republic of Croatia for adoption. The Implementation programme of the strategy has expired in 2016 and the last available report was submitted for 2016.

Revisions/Updates

There are no revisions nor updates.

4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

In the area of youth policy, programmes are intended for the general population of young people and the emphasis is on inclusion. The [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) provides incentives for civil society organizations and local and regional self-government units to implement projects and programmes at local level and create conditions that will contribute to meeting the needs of young people and raising the quality of their lives.

The ministry publishes the [Call for proposals for youth-oriented projects](#). Resources for the financial support distributed through the call are ensured from the state budget and from a portion of the state lottery funds.

In the context of social inclusion, the call points out that the priority for funding have organizations that include volunteers in their work, and which intend to employ at least one young unemployed person in the implementation of the project in an appropriate profession and/or as a volunteer. Specific priorities include the development of multiculturalism, tolerance, gender and sexual equality, human rights, non-violent conflict resolution and youth participation in decision-making. New initiatives in communities with fewer opportunities such as areas of special state concern, islands, rural and less urban environments with a lower development index are also mentioned, as is including young people from socially marginalized groups, young people in war-affected areas, rural areas, islands and small places, and young members of national minorities.

Priority areas of the call are based on measures from the National Youth Programme 2014-2017 (also in 2018 and 2019), as well as the ministry's obligations stemming from the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, and are defined separately in each annual call.

When defining priorities of a call, the ministry recognized that young people who are leaving education early face numerous employment barriers and it is of utmost importance to offer ways to return to the formal education system. Also, initiatives for non-formal education can help young people to become qualified for employment. With focus on creativity and innovation, civil society organizations play an important role in providing support to young people at the local level. In addition, the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan contains reforms and measures implemented in close partnership of various stakeholders. A significant part of the measure refers to working with young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Measures aimed at supporting youth work will also strengthen youth organizations and organizations for youth to work with young people and support the development of programmes and support projects for their peers, with a special emphasis on hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups.

In view of the above, one of the priority areas of the Call for proposals was 'Youth Work with NEETs'.

Funding

Based on the National Youth Programme 2014-2017, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy annually conducts the abovementioned call for proposals (see previous paragraph and/or 1.7.Funding youth policy).

The annual amount for calls differs depending on current financial obligations under previously agreed programmes and defined priorities. In 2018, for example, the total amount for the calls for proposals for all priorities was amounted of HRK 7,392,000.00. For financing projects within priority area 'Youth Work with NEETs', the competent Ministry

ensured 800,000.00 HRK (approximately 108,000.00 euros) and after evaluation 5 projects were awarded a total of 415.000 HRK (approximately 56,000.00 euros).

In addition to youth-oriented calls, the Ministry opened in December 2019 a Call for project proposals oriented towards social exclusion reduction and prevention and social inclusion and integration of socially vulnerable groups for 2019/2020 ([Poziv za prijavu projekata usmjerenih smanjenju i prevenciji socijalne isključenosti te socijalnom uključivanju i integraciji socijalno osjetljivih skupina za 2019. /2020. godinu](#)). The call is aimed at non-profit organizations targeting work with socially sensitive, vulnerable and marginalized groups, people with approved international protection, former prisoners, and those targeting work with older people and homeless people. Youth organizations and organizations for youth may also apply for financial support for projects contributing to social inclusion if they act according to the priority areas of this call. Total planned value of the call is HRK 6.500.000,00. The same call was implemented for 2018/2019 and total sum for 33 projects amounted to 5,237,000.00 HRK.

The call for proposal entitled 'Support for youth-oriented programmes' ([Podrška programima usmjerenih mladima](#)) was opened in 2017 with the aim of increasing social inclusion of young people. The call determined programmes' activities as follows: quality spend leisure time, informing young people and providing counselling on relevant topics, youth violence prevention, improvement of social skills and competences development, which contribute to the labour market competitiveness and social inclusion, and active participation of young people in society. Total grants within this call amount to HRK 12,000,000 (85%:15% ratio of EU and national funding) which were ensured through the European social fund, Operational programme the efficient human resources. The public body in charge for its implementation is the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy. The competent Ministry awarded 15 programmes within priority area "Youth work-oriented activities" and 2 programmes within the priority area "Establishment and activities of youth centres" in May 2018.

The same Ministry is in charge for implementation of the following calls for proposals from the European social fund, within the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020:

- Including children and young people in the risk of social exclusion, people with disabilities, and children with developmental difficulties in community through sport ([Uključivanje djece i mladih u riziku od socijalne isključenosti te osoba s invaliditetom i djece s teškoćama u razvoju u zajednicu kroz šport](#)), opened from June 2018 till December 2019. During that period 57 projects were awarded a total of 63,702,712.05 HRK.
- Support to the marginalised groups' social inclusion and employment ([Podrška socijalnom uključivanju i zapošljavanju marginaliziranih skupina](#)), opened from September 2017 till December 2019. During that period 80 projects were awarded a total of 263,240,256.50 HRK.
- Support to the deinstitutionalisation process and the prevention of children and youth institutionalisation ([Podrška procesu deinstitutionalizacije i prevencije institucionalizacije djece i mladih](#)), opened from March 2017 till December 2020. During that period 7 projects were awarded a total of 39,657,575.31 HRK.
- Art and culture for youth ([Umjetnost i kultura za mlade](#)). The call was opened in 2017 and during 2017 and 2018 29 projects were awarded a total of 17,968,221.23 HRK.

The Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds was competent body for implementation of the Call for proposals 'Improving the social services providers' infrastructure to the children and youth as a support to the deinstitutionalization process – phase 1) ([Unapređivanje infrastrukture pružatelja socijalnih usluga djeci i mladima kao podrška procesu deinstitutionalizacije – faza 1](#)), from the European Regional Development Fund, within the Operative programme Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014-2020. The

call was opened from 2016 till 2018. During that period 5 projects were awarded a total of 51,471,423.28 HRK.

Quality assurance

Applicants whose projects were approved are obliged to submit a narrative and financial report to the competent public bodies, in accordance with the provisions of the financial support agreement.

4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

Intercultural awareness

The Office for Human Rights and National Minorities' Rights of the Government of the Republic of Croatia ([Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina](#)) is implementing the project 'National Roma Platform - Living Equality' ([Nacionalna platforma za Rome – Živjeti jednakost](#)). The aim of the project is to encourage the implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy at the local and regional level for the period 2013-2020. The intention thereby is to improve co-operation and coordinate the work of implementing partners and other stakeholders whose activities are aimed at involving and improving the socio-economic position of Roma in Croatia. Under this project, the office organized a seminar and a two-day discussion with young Roma in order to identify their needs, as well as their participation in policymaking for Roma.

Young people's rights

There are no specific initiatives targeting young people's rights as such.

Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

At a national level, no initiative was established that would be directed solely at the prevention of radicalization leading to the violent extremism of young people. However, the fight against racism and discrimination, the promotion of active citizenship and the diversity of opinions, convictions, beliefs and lifestyles, being against all forms of inequality, strengthening of critical thinking and the sense of initiative and engagement are backed up by non-formal learning and youth work.

The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, based on the National Youth Programme for the period 2014-2017, publishes calls for proposals for youth-oriented projects and programmes for financial support available from the state budget and from a portion of the state lottery funds ([Poziv za prijavu projekata usmjerenih mladima za financijsku potporu iz raspoloživih sredstava dijela prihoda od igara na sreću i Državnog proračuna](#)). The call favours, inter alia, those civil society organisations, which implement projects that encourage the development of multiculturalism, tolerance, gender and sexual equality, human rights, non-violent conflict resolution and youth participation in decision-making.

The same Ministry publishes a Call for proposals in the field of prevention of violence against and among the children and young people. ([Poziv za prijavu projekata udruga u području prevencije nasilja nad i među djecom i mladima](#)). The mentioned call is meant for funding projects in the following priority areas:

1. Prevention of violence among young people (non-violent conflict resolution among youth, education on the acceptance of diversity among youth and others)
2. Prevention of violence in partnership relationships among young people.
3. Prevention of electronic violence against and between children and young people (projects aimed at protecting children from the dangers of using computers, the

internet and other means of distance communication, prevention of violence on social networks with an emphasis on prevention of hate speech, etc.)

4. Prevention of sexual abuse and violence against children
5. Prevention of children's emotional violence and corporal punishment
6. Prevention of violence among children (support for non-violent conflict resolution among children, education on accepting differences among children and others)

4.6 Access to quality services

Housing

There is no housing policy in the Republic of Croatia focused solely on addressing the needs of young people. However, young people can use measures that have been established to address housing issues in all sections of the population.

The Act on State-Subsidised Housing Construction ([Zakon o društveno poticanoj stanogradnji](#), NN 109/01, 82/04, 76/07, 38/09, 86/12, 07/13, 26/15, 57/18, 66/19) was adopted in 2001 and the latest amendments in 2019. Based on the Act, a Programme of State-Subsidised Housing Construction (POS) was adopted with the aim of enabling citizens to solve their housing issues under terms significantly more favourable than those on the market.

The right to buy a flat from a Programme of State-Subsidised Housing Construction (POS) is available to all citizens of the Republic of Croatia, and the advantage is given to first-time buyers who have not properly solved their housing issues. This means that they do not own housing that is adequately equipped with communal infrastructure (water, sewage) or that does not meet the hygienic-technical conditions for healthy housing, which is about 35 square meters of usable area for one person, or for every other person, around another ten square meters. Amendments to the Act allowed the lease of flat which are built according to the POS scheme with the possibility of buying property to meet housing needs.

An Act on Housing Loan Subsidies ([Zakon o subvencioniranju stambenih kredita](#), NN 65/17, 61/18, 66/19) was adopted in June 2017. This Act regulates the subsidizing of housing loans for the purpose of encouraging demographic renewal of society, urban regeneration of settlements and the reduction of emigration among young families and assisting citizens. Citizens get loans from credit institutions to buy a flat or house and/or for the construction of a house in order to resolve their housing issues, and loan subsidies may be requested by a public notice published by the Agency for Transactions and Mediation in Immovable Property. Loan subsidies are secured in the state budget of the Republic of Croatia.

Subsidizing loans for the purchase of a flat or house, and/or the construction of a house, for solving one's own housing issue is granted under the conditions and in the manner prescribed by the Act. Subsidies may be granted to a citizen who is a resident in the area of the Republic of Croatia who qualifies for a housing loan established by a credit institution which, and who is not older than 45 years at the time of submitting an application. The basic requirement is that the applicant or his/her spouse or partner, a life partner or an informal life partner, owns no flat or house or owns only one flat or house that he/she is selling it for the purchase of a larger flat or house and/or house construction due to a need for one's own housing.

The Act provides for additional subsidies if, for example, the applicant or a member of a family is a person with disabilities and if the family increases in the anticipated term of subsidizing by the birth or adoption of the child.

In the context of education, the Ministry of Science and Education is responsible for the system of pupils' boarding homes ([učenički domovi](#)) and students' dormitories ([studentski](#)

[smještaj](#)). The Ordinance on conditions and manner of exercising rights of full-time students to subsidized housing ([Pravilnik o uvjetima i načinu ostvarivanja prava redovitih studenata na subvencionirano stanovanje, NN 63/2019](#)) provides for the right to subsidized accommodation in students' dormitories, pupils' boarding homes and subsidized accommodation of students staying with private landlords.

Pupils' boarding homes Student's dormitories are educational institutions at the level of secondary education, which, as a part of their education, provide accommodation and meals for students while attending secondary education. Pupils' boarding homes Students' dormitories annually publish a contest for admission of pupils into boarding home dormitory in which they publicly announce the number of vacancies and conditions for admission to the boarding home dormitory for the next school year. If more pupils students apply than the number of available places, the pupils' boarding home student's dormitory makes a selection according to the established points. Individual family, health and social circumstances allow students to achieve more points. For example, a higher score is achieved by a student living with one or both parents with long-term illness, a student who lives with a long-term unemployed both parents, a student living with a single parent or a social welfare user.

Accommodation in students' dormitories is awarded based on a public tender. Student centres issue a public call for tenders for student accommodation and a public tender for the granting of housing subsidy for each new academic year. The point-based system comprises of points based on the average grade and academy performance with additional points based on socio-economic status. For example, additional points are assigned to a student with one parent who is deceased, missing or unknown, a student who has a sibling of preschool age or in full-time education, a student who has a sibling with developmental disabilities due to which the sibling does not participate in full-time education, conditioned by living in a common household, a student who is a child of divorced parents living in a single-parent household with only one parent, a student who has one or both parents with a 100% disability, a student with disability in 6th-10th category (10%-50% of bodily harm), students whose common household is a beneficiary of minimum income allowance (permanent support for compliance with social security regulations) and students with low monthly income per member of the common household. The right to direct accommodation is granted to students whose both parents are deceased, missing or unknown, students who were placed in social care centres or foster homes until the age of 18, students with disabilities (50% of disability or more).

Social services

A social services system that would focus solely on young people was not established. Young people can exercise their rights under the general social welfare system.

According to the [Social Welfare Act](#), social welfare is an organized activity of public interest for the Republic of Croatia. The aim is to provide assistance to socially deprived persons, as well as persons in unfavourable personal or domestic circumstances, which include prevention, promotion of changes, assistance in fulfilment of basic living needs and support to individuals, families and groups for the purpose of improvement of the quality of life and empowerment of beneficiaries in independent fulfilment of basic living needs and their active inclusion in the society.

Rights in the social welfare system under this Act are: guaranteed minimum social assistance benefit, housing allowance, fuel allowance, personal needs allowance for a residential care beneficiary, one-time assistance, education-related allowances, personal disability allowance, assistance and care allowance, parent caregiver status or caregiver status, job-seeker benefit, social services and benefits for energy buyers at risk.

Social welfare users are:

- single persons or living in a household who do not have enough resources to meet basic living needs;

- an orphan or without appropriate parental care, young adults, child victims of domestic, peer or other violence, child victim of trafficking, children with disabilities, children and young adults with behavioural problems, an unaccompanied minor who is outside his/her place of residence without parental supervision or other adult responsible for his/her care, and a child who is a foreign citizen found in the territory of the Republic of Croatia without parental supervision or other adult responsible for his/her care;
- a pregnant woman or parent of a child younger than one year without family support and appropriate living conditions;
- a family whose professional or other support is needed due to disturbed relationships or other unfavourable circumstances;
- a disabled adult who is not able to meet the basic living needs;
- an adult victim of domestic or other violence and a victim of human trafficking;
- a person who, due to age or helplessness, cannot independently care about basic living needs;
- a person dependent on alcohol, drugs, gambling and other forms of addiction;
- homeless;
- other persons fulfilling the conditions prescribed by this Law.

In the context of social inclusion, an important process implemented by the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy is [Deinstitutionalisation and transformation of homes for children and young people](#). Children and young people placed in homes for children and young people without adequate parental care and homes for children and young people with behavioural problems (so-called accommodation as a form of institutional care) are provided with different forms of accommodation and care (non-institutional care) and their inclusion in community life. Also, the placement of children and young people without adequate parental care and children and young people with behavioural problems are prevented from placement in homes by providing non-institutional services and community support services (out-of-institutional care).

Parallel to deinstitutionalisation, the process of transformation of homes is carried out. Homes and other legal entities performing social welfare activities in the Republic of Croatia are encouraged to provide those non-institutional social services that are in line with the needs of community users and become "homes transformed into community service providers in all counties according to the needs of users".

The main goal is to empower children's families, provide support in the development of parenting skills and enable the child to live in a family environment (primary, foster or adoptive family). By carrying out these processes, social, educational, cultural, material and other conditions for inclusion of users - children and young people without proper parental care and children and young people with behavioural problems in community life are created.

Health care

Everything about the youth health care is described in details in the chapter 7.

Financial services

Within the system of education of awarding state scholarships, it is within the competence of the Ministry of Science and Education. One of the scholarship categories refers to socioeconomic status.

The Ordinance on the conditions and procedures regulating the right to state scholarships ([Pravilnik o uvjetima i načinu ostvarivanja prava na državnu stipendiju na temelju socio-ekonomskoga statusa, NN 83/2018](#)) defines 3 categories of scholarships:

1. D-1 – the students who are children of the killed, deceased and missing, under the circumstances laid down in articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Act on the Protection of Disabled Civil and Military War Victims, and children of peacetime disabled military and civil war victims whose disability occurred under the circumstances specified in the mentioned articles.

2. E – students of a low socio-economic status

3. P – students with disability and students without adequate parental care enrolled in postgraduate study programmes

A call for the award of scholarships for school/academic year 2018/2019 ([Natječaj za dodjelu stipendija za školsku odnosno akademsku 2018/2019 godinu](#)) announced by the Fund for scholarships of the Croatian Homeland War Veterans and Children of Croatian Homeland War Veterans is published by the Ministry of Croatian Veterans.

The right to a scholarship during full-time secondary education, a full-time university and professional study, as well as not awarding a part of compensation for tuition costs of postgraduate studies at the higher education institutions of this Fund may, under certain conditions, be eligible for the children of the mortally wounded Croatian war veterans from the Homeland War, the children of the detained or missing Croatian war veterans, children of Croatian war veterans from the Homeland War, war volunteers from the Homeland War.

According to the Act on 'Croatia for Children Foundation' ([Zakon o zakladi 'Hrvatska za djecu', NN 82/15](#)), whose founder is the Republic of Croatia, one of the supports of foundation relates to granting of scholarships to pupils and students during full-time schooling.

Quality assurance

There is no particular quality assurance scheme in this field.

4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy publishes a call for proposals for youth-oriented projects and programmes for financial support available from state budget and from a portion of the state lottery funds ([Poziv za prijavu projekata usmjerenih mladima za financijsku potporu iz raspoloživih sredstava dijela prihoda od igara na sreću i Državnog proračuna za 2018. godinu](#)). The Ministry provides financial support for projects and programmes in nine priority areas, one of which is 'Youth Work with NEETs'. Within this priority area, the competent Ministry awarded five projects total amount of 415,000.00 HRK. Eligible activities were oriented toward fostering social inclusion of young people with NEET status, development of social skills and competences that contribute to the competitiveness in the labour market and to the young people's social inclusion, and activities oriented toward violence prevention among young people.

4.8 Current debates and reforms

The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy conducted a public consultation in period from November to December 2019 on the draft of the Implementation Programme of the Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia (2014-2020), for period till 2020 ([Javno savjetovanje o Nacrtu prijedloga Programa provedbe Strategije borbe protiv siromaštva i socijalne isključenosti u Republici Hrvatskoj \(2014.-2020.\), za razdoblje do 2020.](#)). In November 2019, the Ministry made a Decision on establishment of working group for drafting and monitoring of the mentioned Implementation programme, until 2020.

The same Ministry formed in November 2017 a national working group for the drafting of the new National Youth Programme (see Chapter [1.9 On-going debates and reforms](#)).

5. PARTICIPATION

[Research results](#) demonstrate low level of civic and political participation among young people in Croatia therefore one of goals of Croatian government, stipulated at the [National Strategy for Young People](#) is to support youth participation. There are several opportunities for young people to engage in decision-making process, either via institutional options (such as Youth Council, youth advisory boards) or via consultations and participatory processes in decision-making.

5.1 General context

Main concepts

There are no definitions, concepts, or specific terminology regarding youth participation which might compromise the understanding of an external reader.

Institutions of representative democracy

As written in the [Constitution](#), The Republic of Croatia is a unitary, indivisible, democratic and social state. Power in the Republic of Croatia derives from the people and belongs to the people as a community of free and equal citizens. Moreover, the Republic of Croatia is formed and is developing as a sovereign and democratic state in which the equality, freedoms and rights of man and citizen are guaranteed and ensured, and their economic and cultural progress, and social welfare promoted.

Government in the Republic of Croatia is organised on the principle of the separation of powers into: legislative, executive and judicial but limited by the right to local and regional self-government. Hence, citizens are guaranteed the right to local and regional self-government. The right is to be realised through local and regional representative bodies elected in free elections and citizens are also stated to be able to directly participate in administering local affairs, through meetings, referenda and other forms of direct decision-making, in conformity with law and statute

Legislative

In Croatia, parliamentary and local elections are organized every 4 year while presidential and the European parliamentary elections are held every 5 year. According to the [Croatian constitution](#), every Croatian citizens of full age have the right to vote and be elected. The election is conducted by secret ballot, and its direct suffrage. Moreover, Croatian constitution allows voting to all citizens who at the time of elections might not be present in Croatia.

The Croatian Parliament (Sabor) is the body of elected representatives of the people and is vested with the legislative power in the Republic of Croatia.

Croatian Parliament (sabor), according to the [Constitution](#) consists of 100-160 parliamentary seats. The [Constitutional Law on national minorities](#) allows national minorities to have at least five and not more than 8 representatives at the national parliament. Moreover, [Act on Election of Representatives to the Croatian Parliament](#) states that:

Members of the Serbian national minority shall elect three representatives to Parliament consistent to the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities.

- Members of the Hungarian national minority shall elect one representative to Parliament.
- Members of Italian national minority shall elect one representative to Parliament.
- Members of Czech and Slovakian national minority shall together elect one representative to Parliament.

- Members of Austrian, Bulgarian, German, Polish, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenian, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vallachian and Jewish national minority shall together elect one representative to Parliament.
- Members of Albanian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Macedonian and Slovenian national minority shall together elect one representative to Parliament.

The Croatian Parliament currently has 151 representatives.

The Croatian Parliament decides on the enactment and amendment of the Constitution, passes laws, adopts the state budget, decides on war and peace, passes acts which expresses the politics of the Croatian Parliament, decides on the strategy of national security and the strategy of Defence for the Republic of Croatia, carries out civil control of the armed forces and security services of the Republic of Croatia, calls referendums, carries out elections, appointments and relief of office in conformity with the Constitution and law, supervises the work of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and other holders of public powers responsible to the Croatian Parliament in conformity with the Constitution and law, grants amnesty for penal offences and conducts other affairs as specified by the Constitution.

Executive

1. The President of the Republic of Croatia

The President of the Republic of Croatia presents and represents the Republic of Croatia at home and abroad. The President of the Republic cares for the regular and conformed operation, and stability of state power. The President of the Republic is responsible for the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia. The President of the Republic is elected on the basis of direct universal and equal suffrage by secret ballot for a term of five years.

Nobody can be elected President of the Republic more than two times.

2. The Government of the Republic of Croatia

The Government of the Republic of Croatia exercises executive power in conformity with the Constitution and law, with the organisation, operation and decision making regulated by the Law on the Government of the Republic of Croatia and its rule of procedures.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia: proposes laws and other acts to the Croatian Parliament, proposes the state budget and final account, implements laws and other decisions of the Croatian Parliament, passes regulations for the implementation of laws, conducts foreign and internal politics, directs and controls the work of state administration, works on the economic growth of the country, directs the activities and expansion of public services, conducts other affairs as specified by the Constitution and law.

The Government is responsible to the Croatian Parliament.

Local self-government in Croatia

Constitutional provisions state that the units of local self-government (municipalities and towns) are "to carry out the affairs of local jurisdiction by which the needs of citizens are directly fulfilled, and in particular the affairs related to the organization of localities and housing, area and urban planning, public utilities, child care, social welfare, primary health services, education and elementary schools, culture, physical education and sports, customer protection, protection and improvement of the environment, fire protection and civil defense". Then the units of regional self-government (counties) are "to carry out the affairs of regional significance, and in particular the affairs related to education, health service, area and urban planning, economic development, traffic and traffic infrastructure and the development of networks of educational, health, social and cultural institutions

5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

Young people as voters

According to the [Constitution](#), the citizen of the Republic of Croatia can exercise its active and passive suffrage (from the local level up to the EU-level) from the age of 18 years.

Imminent plans to lower the voting age limit

There are no plans at this time to lower the voting age limit.

Special provisions

There are no special provisions for young people in the electoral laws/rules. No legislation aims at facilitating specific groups of young people.

Turnout

There is no data collection on the youth turnout, as the State Election Commission does not record any data on youth participation in elections.

Young people as political representatives

Young people can become members of a political party from the age of 18 years, according to the [Law on political parties](#). From the age of 16 young people can become members of youth wings of political parties.

There are no quota of seats reserved for young people and there exist no special provisions to facilitate young people to stand as political candidate.

Currently at the [National Parliament](#) there are four MPs under the age of 30 (three men and one women) which is only 2,65% of the total MPs.

5.3 Youth representation bodies

Youth parliament

In Croatia, the National Youth Parliament does not exist.

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

Youth Council

In 2003, the Croatian government founded the Youth Council. This governmental body consists of 27 members - civil society and private sector representatives, public officials and experts (Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts, Ministry of Construction and Physical Planning, Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds, different governmental offices, Office for Cooperation with NGOs, Office for Human Rights and national minorities issues, Office for Gender Equality, Association of Cities of the Republic of Croatia, Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Croatia, Association of Counties of Republic of Croatia, representatives of academic and research institutions and youth civil society representatives) and has goal to supervise and develop national youth policies. According to the Decision of the Croatian government, the mandate lasts for three years and the president of the Council is a youth organizations' representative. The idea behind this Council is co-management idea of Council of Europe. The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy coordinates the work of the council.

Youth advisory boards

According to the [Law on Youth Advisory boards](#) (LYAB) the goal of Youth Advisory Boards Act is to enhance the participation of young people in public affairs of their interest, active engagement of young people in public life and their informed participation at the local level

in Croatia, Hence, the primary role of youth advisory boards is counseling local and regional representative bodies on issues of interest to youth. The implementation of the LYAB is the responsibility of local and regional self-administration. This entity within the regional/ local representative body of local authorities is responsible for the preparation of acts and decisions of the assembly or the council relating to young people (e.g. drafting of local youth action programme).

In [2016](#), despite the legal provision, only 52% of cities, 15% of municipalities and 90% of counties formed youth advisory boards.

Higher education student union(s)

In Croatia there is a [Law on higher education student unions and other students organizations](#) which was adopted in 2007. According to the aforementioned law, higher education student union is a student representative body which protects students' interests, participates in the decision-making process within university bodies and represents students in higher education structures. All universities, universities of applied sciences must have higher education student unions which all together form [Croatian Student Council](#) (CSC).

According to the website of the [Croatian Student Council](#) (CSC), it is an umbrella organisation of all Croatian students and aiming to meet the interests of more than 200.000 students of Croatian faculties, academies, as well as professional and vocational colleges.

It was established in 1996 and is recognised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, as the major student organisation in Croatia and it is the partner of Ministry in the fields of the reform of higher education and betterment of the student welfare, educational policies and student participation in the decision-making process. CSC became a full member of ESIB, now ESU, in 2001. Apart from that CSC is also one of the founders of the network of student unions from the South-East Europe (SEI – South-East Initiatives) and a member of MedNet – Mediterranean Network of Student Representatives.

Student representatives (members of higher education student union) are elected on student elections where every student can cast one's vote and be elected. Higher education student union is financed from the budget of the university budget.

School student union(s)

Students are encouraged on a school, city, county and national level to show their interest, to resolve problems through participating in a real school or community life with the support of teachers, parents local community authorities and national school authorities. They are legally organized through the:

Student school councils defined by the [Act on primary and secondary school education](#). According to the act, each primary and secondary school should have a student council and the representative of the student council participated in school bodies but without the decision-making rights.

- Student county councils
- Student city councils
- National student council of the Republic of Croatia

5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

There is no prescriptive mechanism for consultations with young people in Croatia apart from the structured dialogue. It serves as a platform for discussion on issues and priorities of youth policy. The National Working Group for the Structured dialogue consists out of

youth representatives, representatives from the ministry in charge for young people and the national Erasmus + agency. Depending on the topic, external members can be appointed. There are various methods used for consultation with young people, for instance public consultations, national conferences, workshops, discussions, on-line questionnaires, on-line discussions etc. Depending on the topic, a researcher is contracted to analyze the results of consultation and propose a background paper for defining national priorities.

During the preparation of the National Youth Program for the period 2014-2017, the ministry responsible for youth consulted young people through:

- implementation of research on the needs, problems and potentials of young people in the Republic of Croatia (2000 young people),
- participation in working groups for the preparation of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017. Considering the priority areas of the Youth Strategy, 8 working groups were active. Each working group was composed of 2 representatives of state administration bodies, 2 youth representatives and 1 academic community representative,
- participation in the Commission of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017 tasked to draw up a draft youth strategy,
- public consultation with the interested public on the Draft Proposal of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017, and
- Youth Council of the Republic of Croatia, of which 7 members are elected from youth and for-youth associations. The role of the Youth Council of the Government of the Republic of Croatia was to adopt the Draft Proposal of the National Youth Program proposal for the period 2014-2017 prior to its submission to the Government of the Republic of Croatia for adoption.

Actors

The consultations during the preparation of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017 were attended by:

- civil society organizations (youth associations and youth foundations),
- young people,
- youth advisory boards,
- student associations,
- state administration bodies responsible for implementing measures from the document
- Ministry of Finance, and
- The Legislation Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

Information on the extent of youth participation

The participation in policy-making processes is not measured systematically, however:

- The number of 16 young people who are representatives of youth and for-youth associations participated in the very drafting of the Proposal of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017.
- The outcome of online consultation with the interested public on the Draft Proposal of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017 over the period from 21 March 2013 to 5 April 2014 was comments submitted by a total of 7 youth and for-youth associations.

Outcomes

In drafting a Youth Strategy, young people have contributed in a process and content sense. Given that the members of the Working Group on Youth Development Strategy included young people, they have contributed to the process of developing a strategy, but also to defining the priority areas, goals and measures and activities of the various priority areas of the document.

An online consultation with the interested public on the Draft Proposal of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017 was published on the official website of the ministry responsible for youth. In addition to the announcement of the beginning of an Internet consultation, a comment delivery form was also published. At each comment received, the ministry responsible for youth has been made public, and it is also published in the Report on Public Consultation with the Interested Public on the Draft Proposal National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017 on the website of the ministry responsible for youth.

An online consultation with the interested public on the Draft Proposal of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017 was published on the official website of the ministry responsible for youth. In addition to the announcement of the beginning of an online consultation, a comment delivery form was also published. At each comment received, the ministry responsible for youth has made it public, and it is also published in the Report on Public Consultation with the Interested Public on the Draft Proposal of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017 on the website of the ministry responsible for youth.

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

Apart from the Structural Dialogue campaign named [Tko te pita – EU pita](#) there are no large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

There is no specific state policy strategy to increase youth participation in political and civil society, however The National Youth Programme has one of its priorities named Active participation of young people in society and politics and in the the [National Strategy for the creation of an enabling environment for civil society development](#) 2012-2016 one of goals is to enhance civic education in Croatian schools in order to support youth participation.

Scope and contents

The current National Youth Strategy (2014-2017) consists out of seven chapters, 40 policy measures and 118 tasks for which implementation is entrusted to 17 state authority bodies.

Priority Area	Objectives
Education, professional training and life-long learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active citizenship and non-violence • Youth work • Competitiveness in the labour market
Employment and entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour market integration

Social protection and social inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining the category “youth in poverty risk” • Raising awareness among state authorities about different vulnerable groups • Improving the support system for vulnerable youth
Health and social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polyvalent advisory centers • Health education
Active participation of young people in social and political issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling environment for youth organizations • Youth in the decision-making process • Quality and availability of volunteer programs
Youth in the European and global context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for active participation • Mobility and better representation in IGOs
Youth and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater cultural content in formal education • More accessible cultural content • Financial support for cultural activities • Sustainability and stability of places where culture can be exercised • Analytical support

As seen from the table, content-wise, the National Youth Strategy follows the EU Youth Strategy, apart from the volunteering part which is encompassed at the National Strategy for volunteering (please see chapter 2)

Build upon the two previous national youth programs, this one also aims to create the conditions for the improved development and well-being of youth. Its strategic goals include:

- Improving legislation on youth;
- Defining and providing clarity to public bodies on their obligations in relation to youth;
- Including as many young people as possible in decision-making;
- Creating conditions that reduce emigration and promote a return to Croatia
- Setting out a plan for implementation and financing.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

Authority responsible for the implementation of the strategy is [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#).

In terms of other relevant stakeholders, there are carriers of the objectives who are in charge for the coordination of the specific goal and objective providers who are implementing bodies.

Carriers	Implementing bodies
Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy	Elementary and secondary schools, universities
Ministry of Science and Education	Ministry of Administration
	Croatian Institute of Public Health
Youth Council	

Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts	Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes
	The Ministry of State Property
Ministry of Labour and Pension System	
	Agency for Teachers Training
Ministry of Health	
Ministry of Culture	Agency for Science and higher Education
Ministry of Foreign and European affairs	
Parliamentary committee for Youth Family, Culture and Sports	Governmental Office for cooperation with CSOs
	National Foundation for Civil Society Development
Youth advisory boards	
Local and regional governments	Croatian Employment Service

Revisions/Updates

There are no revisions nor updates of this Strategy.

5.6 Supporting youth organisations

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

In Croatia, there is no Law on youth (organizations), therefore there is no legal definition of youth organizations. Nevertheless, the National Strategy for Youth 2014-2017. distinguishes two types of organizations – youth organizations and organizations for young people. While the former category refers to civil society organizations who are led by young people (people under the age of 30 have to be in managing positions), the later categories refers to all civil society organizations which activities are partially or totally oriented on young people. [According to the Law on Associations](#). The Law elaborates on the constitutional right to the citizens' associations, defining them as all forms of free and voluntary partnership of more natural persons, or legal entities, for the purposes of protection of their benefits or promotion of human rights protection and freedom, ecological, humanitarian, informational, cultural, national, pronatalist, educational, social, vocational, sports, technical, health, scientific or other beliefs and aims, with no intention of profit-making. Young people and their active participation is mentioned in the body of the text as one of examples of working for the public good. According to the [Codebook on the content and managing CSO register of the Republic of Croatia](#), each organization has to be categorized by its form, scope, target group. Therefore, CSOs can define themselves as working with or for young people as a specific target group.

Croatia has [The National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development](#) which goal is to improve the existing and to create a new legal, financial and institutional system of support for civil society development, as well as an enabling environment for the further development of civil society in the Republic of Croatia. In its creation it is mandatory to involve youth organizations' representatives.

Youth organizations participate in youth Council, as explained in the section 5.3.

Croatian government has established a Council for the Implementation of the Youth Guarantee where youth civil society organizations have their representatives.

Public financial support

At the end of each year, the Government of the Republic of Croatia drafts a proposal for the State Budget for the next year and discuss thereof at the Croatian Parliament. Once the Croatian Parliament adopts the **State Budget**, the Croatian Government can use it. The State Budget contains a line of the ministry responsible for youth of a budget item relating to the implementation of youth policy.

Other ministries responsible for the implementation of certain measures from the National Youth Program do not have special line items for the implementation of these measures, but the funds are in budgetary positions that are specific to their competence.

Financial resources for the implementation of the [National Youth Program](#) are ensured not only from the State Budget but also those provided on the basis of the **Decree on the criteria for defining beneficiaries and ways of allocation of a portion of proceeds from games of chance**. The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall adopt the Decree at the beginning of each year for the current year.

Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

The National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017, with specific measures and activities, focuses on specific groups such as unemployed young people, young people at risk of social exclusion and youth and for-youth associations.

Table shows concrete targets for specific groups as well as responsible state administration bodies.

Specific group	Goals	Competent state administration bodies
Unemployed young people	Facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market	Ministry of Labour and Pension System Ministry of Science and Education Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts
Young people at risk of social exclusion	Determine and systematically use risk of social exclusion for collecting data on youth; Make key stakeholders of youth policies, in education, employment, health and social care systems, more sensitive and more effective in meeting the needs of different categories of youth at risk of social exclusion; Improve the support system for young people at risk of social exclusion	Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy Ministry of Science and Education Ministry of Labour and Pension System Ministry of Health Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds

5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

Policy Framework

At this point, in Croatia there is no national strategy that has as its sole objective the development of the social and civic competences of Croatian youth.

The first indication of grasping the importance of adequately adapting the educational system to enable the development of youth citizenship competences emerged in 1999 with the adoption of a program under the promising name National Program of Education for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship. The Program consisted of the following elements: (1) Education for human rights; (2) Education for democratic citizenship; (3) Intercultural education; (4) Education for peace and nonviolent conflict resolution; (5) Education for sustainable development; (6) Education for the prevention of prejudice and discrimination; (7) Exploration of humanitarian law and practices, and the like.

In 2010 with the adoption of the National Curriculum Framework citizenship education was defined as a separate educational area, it created preconditions for the development of a new citizenship education curriculum. In this process, a Curriculum for Citizenship Education was developed and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports endorsed its experimental implementation

in the year 2012. The development of students’ citizenship competences was foreseen by the Curriculum via six structural dimensions: the human rights dimension, the political, social, (inter)cultural, environmental and economic dimension.

After the pilot version of the curriculum, despite positive evaluation, an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular model which diverges from the tested one was introduced in schools. The program included none of the student and teacher suggestions from the previous experimental implementation phase, nor did it offer any new content connected to human rights, intercultural education or citizenship participation (Kekez-Kostro, Horvat, Salaj, 2017: 24).

Formal learning

For the past two decades Croatia has witnessed a public debate on the need of the introduction of civic education in schools. However, despite clearly articulated needs and a degree of political consensus, the integration of this content has been at best sporadic and dependant on motivation and good will of individual teachers and schools. Since 2014 in Croatia there is the Programme of Cross-curricular and Interdisciplinary Contents of Citizenship Education for Elementary and Secondary Schools. With the adoption of the Cross-curricular and Interdisciplinary [Civic and Citizenship Education Programme](#) "civic and citizenship education is introduced cross-curricular so that education could contribute to the full development of civic competency in students. In doing so, it acknowledges the fact that all school subjects are directly connected with the general right to education and all other special rights which are guaranteed to every child, and require the development of specific skills and values that more or less contribute to the realization of civic and citizenship education."

Numerous [studies](#), [papers](#) and [international comparisons](#), clearly state inefficiency, ineffectiveness and inadequacy of the existing programme.

Non-formal and informal learning

There are number of civil society organizations conducting various education programs intended for enchainning youth participation. Civil society organizations therefore provide educational activities, produce different didactic material and offer a platform for civic engagement practice. There are several structured programmes aimed towards young people covering different perspective of youth participation field.

In 2014 an public educational institution named Mirta was founded by the Centre for Peace Studies Centre for Peace Studies, in cooperation with partners: [Croatian Youth Network](#), [Volunteer centre Osijek](#) and [Smart Association](#) from Rijeka and Zagreb. It was founded with the aim of realizing non-formal and verified educational programs, seminars, lectures and other public events pertaining to adult education. In the initial period, the partners will cooperate with Mirta and implement the following non-formal educational programs: Peace Studies, in cooperation with the Centre for Peace Studies, Youth Studies, in cooperation with the Croatian Youth Network, Demo academy, in cooperation with Volunteer centre Osijek, as well as Teacher development in areas of peace, civic and democracy education and the Academy for NGO Management, in cooperation with Smart.

It is particularly worth mentioning the Youth Studies program which brings together 30 youth participants from Croatia between the age of 15 and 30 who represent youth organizations or show high motivation for social change. It consists out of four modules, namely youth work, youth research methodology, youth social movements and activism and the fourth one depends on the topic which is relevant in a society that year.

Apart from youth studies, there are different trainings by the GOOD initiative aimed exclusively at civic education as such. Even though their trainings do not target only young people, but parents, journalists and teachers too, their scope and content correspond to the idea of this chapter – enchasing youth participation throughout education.

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

There are no measures in this regard in the absence of a reference program or strategy.

Educators' support

Education and Teacher Training Agency organizes training for teachers in the area of citizenship education, however these are seen as unsatisfactory, according to the [study](#).

Numerus civil society organizations are also conduction training for teachers and the most famous coalition of civil society organizations focused on civic education is the [GOOD Initiative](#).

5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

Information providers / counselling structures

There are three pillars of information structure for young people in Croatia.

The first pillar focuses on [The Association of Youth Information Centers in Croatia](#). This non-profit organization is a national organization of info centers for youth and its main goal is to develop a quality system of youth information and counseling. It is a full-fledged member of Eryca. The aforementioned Association gathers regional and youth information centers.

According to the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, regional info centers have to fulfill the following criteria to be considered regional info centers:

- provide services in at least three local units (municipalities, cities or counties)
- provide information and counseling services free of charge for at least 40 hours per week
- provide information on categories of National Youth Strategy
- promote Youth Guarantee
- have website and social network that contain information relevant for young people
- provide information services or point out to other information sources
- provide structured dialogue

- collect and distribute information relevant for young people
- have youth info-center manager, respond to needs in local community
- are members of [The Association of Youth Information Centers in Croatia](#)

There are four regional info centers in Croatia, namely, [Association UMKI](#) (Rijeka), [Info zona](#) (Split), [PRONI](#) (Osijek), [Zamisli](#) (Zagreb)

Local info centers have to meet following criteria:

- provide services in one or more local units
- provide information and counseling services free of charge for at least 40 hours per week
- provide information in at least three categories of National Youth program
- promote Youth Guarantee
- have website and social network that contain information relevant for young people
- provide information services or point out to other information sources
- provide structured dialogue
- collect and distribute information relevant for young people
- have youth info-center manager, respond to needs in local community
- local info center manager has to participate in activities organized by regional info centers.

There are 12 local info centers in Croatia.

The second pillar of information structure in Croatia are [Information and professional guidance centers](#) (CISOK). the main goal of these centers is to provide all information on possibilities for education and employment in Croatia and abroad. CISOK offers services of setting professional goals for young people by offering various workshops, counseling sessions, presentations, lectures and round tables. There are 11 locations of CISOK.

Within the [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#), there is a [Eurodesk office](#), a network of national coordinators which goal is to o raise awareness among young people on learning mobility opportunities and encourage them to become active citizens. Eurodesk provides contents for the European Youth Portal that offers comprehensive information to young people on volunteering, work, studies, participation, culture and creative activity, health, social inclusion, global thinking and travelling. Eurodesk operates in cooperation with its multipliers (currently 17 CSOs: [ACT Grupa](#) (Čakovec), [Carpe Diem](#) (Karlovac), [CTK Rijeka](#), [Europski dom Dubrovnik](#), [Europski dom Slavonski Brod](#), [Info zona](#) (Split), [Mirovna grupa mladih Dunav](#) (Vukovar), [Mreža udruga Zagor](#) (Zabok), [PRONI Centar za socijalno podučavanje](#) (Osijek, Sisak, Vukovar), [Mladi u EU](#) (Šibenik), [UMKI](#) (Rijeka), [CINAZ](#) (Zadar), [Alfa Albona](#) (Labin), [Udruga IKS](#) (Petrinja), [Udruga Impress](#) (Daruvar), [Udruga ZAMISLI](#) (Zagreb), [Udruga ZUM](#) (Pula)). The main way of communication include facebook page, e-mail and newsletter.

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

Apart from the national campaign [Say No To Hate Speech](#) which The general aim was to inform and sensitize the public, especially children and the youth, about human rights and negative effects of hate speech. Young people will have a key role in the Campaign and they will proactively work on the Internet to raise awareness of the meaning of hate speech and the consequences of such unacceptable ways of expression. Despite the campaign ended in 2015, Facebook page is still active and still reaches rather big number of young people.

Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

There is no youth specific activity in this field coordinated by the state.

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

There are no policy frameworks or guidelines on transparent public communication targeting young people

5.9 E-participation

In Croatia, there are no policy documents which would focus on enhancing youth e-participation. There are two mechanisms relatively connected to this issue, namely youth information centers and Eurodesk.

5.10 Current debates and reforms

In November 2017 a national expert group for the drafting of the new National Youth Program has been formed. It is expected for the new National Youth Program to be confirmed by the government in the first half of 2018.

In October 2017 a public call for the new Youth council has been announced so far results are not known.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In [2018](#), Croatia had 3.3% of early leavers from education and training among young people (aged 18-24), which is the lowest percentage in the EU.

In [2018](#) in comparison to the EU, Croatia had a lower percentage of young people aged 15-29 that completed level of education ISCED 0-2, higher percentage when it comes to ISCED 3-4, and lower percentage again when it comes to ISCED 5-8.

The levels of participation of young people aged 15-29 in non-formal education in [2018](#) were significantly lower in Croatia (1.4%) compared to the EU average (11.6%).

The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act ([Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru, NN NN 22/13, 41/16, 64/18](#)) defines main concepts linked with education and learning and the following levels are recognized: formal learning, non-formal learning, informal learning and lifelong learning.

The Ministry of Science and Education (Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja) along with competent departments - Department for education and care, and Department for higher education ([Uprava za odgoj i obrazovanje i Uprava za visoko obrazovanje](#)) - are in charge of administrative and other responsibilities in the system of primary and secondary education, development of education, and development of higher education.

Education and Teacher Training Agency (Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje) performs professional and advisory services in education and care, participating in monitoring, advancement, and development of education and care for the sectors of primary and secondary education.

The Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy ([Ministarstvo za demografiju, obitelj, mlade i socijalnu politiku](#)) is the other important governmental body for education and training in Croatia that creates youth public policies aimed at creating educational conditions for permanent youth benefits through the Department of social policy, strategy and youth drafts bill propositions, strategies, and other acts.

Croatia does not have a specific strategy for preventing ELET, however there are strategies which deal with the issue of early leaving from education and training, such as: [The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology](#), [The Strategy for Lifelong Guidance and Career Development in the Republic of Croatia 2016-2020](#), and The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan ([Plan implementacije Garancije za mlade za razdoblje od 2019. do 2020. godine](#)).

The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act ([Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru, NN NN 22/13, 41/16, 64/18](#)) defines non-formal and informal learning and envisions the development of a system to recognize and evaluate non-formal and informal learning, however, from the adoption of the Act to the December 2019 the Ordinance on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, which was supposed to regulate its implementation, has not been adopted. The Agency for Science and Higher Education has published Guidelines and procedures for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning ([Smjernice i postupci za priznavanje i vrednovanje neformalnog i informalnog učenje \(RPL\), istraživanja potreba tržišta rada te razvoj i vrednovanje ishoda učenja u visokom obrazovanju](#)) that describes the procedure for recognition (although there is not yet an official procedure or the Ordinance prescribing it).

In [the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology](#) one of the goals in the field of education is the internationalization of education. The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes Act ([Zakon o Agenciji za mobilnost i programe Europske unije, NN 121/17](#)) gave the Agency the responsibility of managing the mobility programmes of the European Union.

While there is no strategy for youth concerning media literacy and safe use of new media, both the primary school curriculum and the secondary schools curricula ([nastavni planovi](#)

[i programi za gimnazije i strukovne škole](#)) have materials dealing with media literacy included in the Croatian language classes.

6.1 General context

Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

[Eurostat](#) statistic shows that in 2017 3.1% of young people were early leavers from education. According to [Eurostat](#) data, in 2017 the percentage of young people (aged 15-29), classified by completed levels of education, was 25.8% for ISCED 0-2, 57.6% for ISCED 3-4, and 16.6% for the ISCED 5-8. The [Eurostat](#) data also shows low levels of young people participating in informal education and training (during the four weeks before the survey), only 1.3% (with low reliability), the data shows a decrease from 2016, when the percentage was 2.1%. [Erasmus+ budget for Croatia](#) in the 2014 - 2017 period ranged from 13.3 million to 18.81 million Euros. Funds utilisation was over 99% in the field of education, training, and youth. In the 2009-2016 period, the contracted funding rate was over 98% and included 40 182 individuals and 2048 organizations participating in 2948 projects. Student mobility (ISCED 5-8) is low. [Eurostat](#) data shows that the number of incoming mobile students from 33 European countries grew from 500 students in 2013 to 822 students in 2016, while the number of [outgoing](#) mobile students grew from 3291 to 4273.

Organisation of the education and training system

Children start their compulsory education at age 6. It lasts for eight years and encompasses elementary school. It is compulsory for all children with residence in Croatia regardless of their nationality.

Secondary school is non-compulsory. Children can choose from vocational schools, art schools, or gymnasiums. Finishing a gymnasium programme, the students have to take a state matriculation examination. Vocational schools education lasts from one to five years, depending on the educational programme in question. Finishing an educational programme lasting three, four or five years, the students achieve middle vocational qualifications while finishing a programme lasting up to two years grants them lower vocational qualifications.

Primary and secondary education is carried out according to the provisions of [Primary and Secondary School Education Act](#).

Higher education is carried out by institutions of tertiary education. Those are universities, polytechnics, and schools of professional higher education. Universities can encompass other tertiary institutions (faculties and art academies). Universities conduct university and professional studies while polytechnics and schools of professional higher education conduct only professional studies. Higher education is regulated by the [Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act](#), [Professional and Academic Titles Act](#), [Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education Act](#), and [Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications Act](#).

Main concepts

[The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act](#) defines main concepts linked with education and learning:

Formal learning is an organised activity by an accredited legal entity or an individual, carried out according to accredited programmes, aimed at acquiring and upgrading competences for personal, social and professional needs. It shall be proven by a certificate, diploma or other public document issued by an authorised legal entity.

Non-formal learning is an organised learning activity aimed at acquiring and upgrading competences for personal, social and professional needs. It shall not be proven by a public document.

Informal learning is an unorganised activity related to acquiring competences from everyday experience, and other influences and resources from one's environment, referring to personal, social and professional needs.

Lifelong learning is all forms of learning during one's lifetime, aimed at acquiring and upgrading competences referring to personal, social and professional needs.

Validation of units of learning outcomes is the assessment of acquired competences, including issuing a certificate by an accredited legal entity or a natural person, respectively, according to criteria and standards to be defined and approved in advance.

6.2 Administration and governance

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Cross-sectorial cooperation is performed by cooperation of different ministries and other sector participants (employers, civil society associations, educational institutions and others) in groups working on law drafts and other documents. Specific activities presented in this chapter show cross-sectorial cooperation in responsibility for specific tasks (such as the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology) as well as in implementing project activities.

Governance

[The Ministry of Science and Education](#) (MZO) along with competent departments (Department for education and care, Department for higher education) are in charge of administrative and other responsibilities in the system of primary and secondary education, development of education, and development of higher education.

[The Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) (MDOMS) through the Department of social policy, strategy and youth drafts bill propositions, strategies, and other acts, creates youth public policies aimed at creating educational conditions for permanent youth benefit.

[The Ministry of Labour and Pension System](#) (MRMS) inter alia performs services pertaining to programmes of labour requalification and is responsible for the [Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan](#).

[Youth Council of the Croatian Government](#) is an interdepartmental advisory body of the Government of Croatia purposed to participate in developing youth public policies. It monitors the work of ministries and other state administration bodies in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policies.

[Education and Teacher Training Agency](#) (AZOO) performs professional and advisory services in education and care, participating in monitoring, advancement, and development of education and care for the sectors of primary and secondary education.

[Agency for mobility and EU programmes](#) (AMEUP) implements and promotes the European Union programmes as well as other international programmes in the area of science, education, training, and youth.

[Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education](#) (ASOO) is tasked with planning, developing, organising, implementing, monitoring and advancing the system of vocational education and training.

[Croatian Employment Service](#) (HZZ) under which function the Lifelong Career Guidance Centres (CISOK) and Vocational guidance Centres (CIPS) which provide information on the possibility of further education and training.

Croatian Youth Network (MMH) is an alliance of youth-led and for-youth organizations empowering young people to actively and responsibly participate in society, and contributing to the development of quality youth and civil society policies. It is committed to collaborating with government bodies, educational and scientific institutions, civil society participants, and the media.

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National strategy

According to the [Eurostat](#) data for 2018, Croatia has a low rate of early leaving from education and training, 3.3%. There is no current strategy dedicated to this issue, but there are several strategies and documents touching on this problem.

[The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology](#) provides several measures which deal with the issue of early leaving from education and training. The strategy was adopted in October 2014.

[The Strategy for Lifelong Guidance and Career Development in the Republic of Croatia 2016-2020](#) also addresses this issue. It was adopted in October 2015.

The Ministry of Labour and Pension System adopted the new Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2019-2020 ([Plan implementacije Garancije za mlade za razdoblje od 2019. do 2020.godine](#)). In The Strategy for Lifelong Guidance and Career Development in the Republic of Croatia 2016-2020 (2015:13) it states: "The Youth Guarantee represents a structural reform which will enable the quick activation of young people aged 15 – 30 within four months of leaving education or losing a job, in order to keep them connected with the labour market, i.e. to prevent long-term unemployment or inactivity."

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

In the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology there are four proposed measures dealing with the issue of early leaving from education and training.

6.4.1. Draw up and implement a system to early recognize the risk of education leaving

6.4.2. Conduct systematic monitoring and research into the causes of early leaving from education

6.4.3. Draw up and implement measures to support students in danger of early leaving from education on the level of the educational institution and in cooperation with other institutions.

6.4.4. Develop compensation mechanisms and flexible curricula for acquiring relevant qualifications, adapted to the special needs and capabilities of students returning to the education system.

The Ministry of Science and Education is responsible for these goals, while their implementation is the responsibility of various operators depending on the individual goals.

The goal of these measures is to determine the cause of early leaving from education and training, its systematic prevention and providing support to those who are at risk for early leaving from education.

The Strategy for Lifelong Guidance and Career Development in the Republic of Croatia 2016-2020 provides measures which among their goals include prevention of early leaving from education:

1.1.1. Drawing up a legislative framework to implement the service of lifelong guidance with clearly defined responsibilities and authorities. The goal is to increase the students' skill level in career management and consequently reduce the probability of early leaving from education due to inadequate selection of education programme.

The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan also provides measures for staying in education:

Ensuring that students with disabilities have access to education assistants in primary and secondary educational institutions with the goal of providing support for students with disabilities, behaviour issues and learning disabilities. The carrier of this measure is the Ministry of Science and Education, while implementation associates are the units of local and regional self-government and the schools.

Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan provides measures, reforms, and initiatives which would ensure early intervention and youth empowerment. The following measures are proposed:

Setting up a way of following NEET individuals by systematically analysing which people are leaving education. The carrier of this measure is the Ministry of Labour and Pension System and the implementation associates are the Ministry of Science and Education, the Croatian Employment Service, the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy, [the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute](#) (HZMO), and [the Central Registry of Affiliates](#) (REGOS).

Providing an opportunity for young people leaving education – education for young people with low qualifications or without any qualifications. The goal is to ensure a second chance for young people with the lowest degree of education and prevent or stop their long-term unemployment. This measure is addressed at about 1600 young people dropping out of the education system as well as those with the lowest degree of education or without any education. The carrier of the measure is the Croatian Employment Service, and the implementation associates are the Ministry of Labour and Pension System and education services providers.

Providing training for youth counsellors and career counsellors. The goal is to enable a more efficient support system in accessing qualifications according to abilities as well as upgrading career management skills, and the target group is early leavers from education. The carrier of the measure is the Croatian Employment Service, and the implementation associates are the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, the Ministry of Science and Education, and local administration.

The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan envisions the development and implementation of an evaluation programme for non-formal and informal learning based on the qualification standard in the Croatian Qualifications Framework Register with the purpose of enabling NEET youth to achieve higher qualifications. The carrier of this measure is the Ministry of Science and Education, and the implementation associates are secondary education institutions, local and regional educational institutions.

The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan also lists empowering youth-led and for-youth organizations for youth work. However, it was only listed in a general sense without specifying the field of empowerment.

KA1 project under the Erasmus+ programme [Preventing Early School Leaving Through Inclusive Strategies](#) deals with this issue. The Croatian carrier is the Education and Teacher Training Agency. A professional training course for teachers is scheduled to take place. The goal of the project is to train educational employees to work in schools using methods and techniques to prevent early leaving from education in order to improve workplace conditions for students and teachers, as well as principals and professional associates.

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

Monitoring and intervention coordination were previously described as a part of the Youth Guarantee measures Implementation Plan. Those measures envision the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, the Ministry of Science and Education, the

Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy, the Croatian Employment Service, the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute, and the providers of educational services.

6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act ([Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru, NN NN 22/13, 41/16, 64/18](#)) was adopted in 2013, with the last amendments adopted in 2018. The Act defines non-formal and informal learning and envisions the development of a system to recognize and evaluate non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, article 15 of the Act states that "Application procedure, recognition and validation of previously acquired units of learning outcomes shall be stipulated in detail by an Ordinance on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and shall be conducted according to corresponding programmes for validation of units of learning outcomes from the Register".

From the adoption of the Act to this day the Ordinance on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, which was supposed to regulate its implementation, has not been adopted.

Information and guidance

The Agency for Science and Higher Education has in 2015 published guidelines with instructions for future candidates – [Guidelines and procedures for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). The brochure describes the procedure for recognition (although there is not yet an official procedure or the Ordinance prescribing it). It provides that the application should be submitted to the office for lifelong learning or the office for recognition of previously acquired learning. A self-evaluation form is to be filled along with evidence of previous learning. There are two possible approaches – a summarising approach which includes examinations to validate acquired learning as well as an evidence-based approach aimed at previous learning and proof of that learning.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance is included in the Croatian Qualification Framework Act. It provided for the founding of the Croatian Qualifications Framework Register, where information on learning outcomes, occupational standards, qualification standards, programmes for acquiring and validating learning outcomes and programmes for acquiring qualifications. The application for the register is filled with the ministry in charge of education and science, and the application for the occupational standards sub-register with the ministry in charge of labour. The decision is made based on the professional opinion of the relevant sector council which ascertains that all formal and professional requirements have been met.

6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

Policy framework

In the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology one of the goals in the field of education is the internationalization of education.

[The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes Act](#) was adopted in 2007. It gave the Agency the responsibility of managing the mobility programmes of the European Union.

Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

The main financial instruments of implementing mobility measures are international programmes (EU programme for education, training, youth and sport Erasmus+), bilateral agreements in the field of education concluded by the Croatian Government and regional [Central European Exchange Program for University Studies](#) (CEEPUS).

Erasmus+ is the largest EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, and it encompasses the 2014 – 2020 period. It enables the achievement of international mobility for the individual and international cooperation for organizations. [The budget](#) available to Croatia in 2017 amounted to 18.81 million euro.

The CEEPUS programme framework provides for the financing of a period of learning abroad on the basis of an international agreement signed by the governments of 16 Middle and East European countries. Croatia signed the CEEPUS Agreement in 1995 and there is also a National CEEPUS office that is a part of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes. Croatia grants a total of 450 months of scholarship per year. The Ministry of Science and Education provides about 1 500 000 HRK yearly for the requirements of the CEEPUS programme with the purpose of financing the stay of foreign students and teachers, as well as the traveling expenses of Croatian students and teachers.

The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology, in the section pertaining to higher education, has a goal to: 7.1. Increase the mobility of arriving and departing students and teachers.

The proposed measures are:

- 7.1.1. Increase allocations for student and teacher mobility to ensure by 2020 a 10% mobility of departing students and a 5% mobility of arriving students, including mobility per semester and whole qualification mobility.
- 7.1.2. Remove internal obstacles to mobility in tertiary education institutions. It is necessary to remove the obstacles to mobility pertaining to recognizing ECTS points achieved through mobility and organize appropriate ways of encouraging students to be mobile.
- 7.1.4. Ensure a system of scholarships for arriving students of Croatian doctoral studies.
- 7.1.5. Ensure a system of scholarships for students departing for doctoral studies abroad.

The measures 7.1.1., 7.1.4., and 7.1.5. fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Science and Education, while the measure 7.1.2. is the responsibility of the Croatian Rectors' Conference and the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges.

The Action plan to internationalize education 2015 – 2016 ([Akcijski plan za internacionalizaciju obrazovanja za razdoblje od 2015. do 2016. godine](#)) features several measures to encourage mobility in higher education. The planned activities include encouraging the mobility of departing students which enables them to acquire qualifications abroad by means of a single payment support for studying abroad, increasing the number of scholarships for priority countries by principle of reciprocity, the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes conducting informational and promotional activities, improving the Higher Education and Scholarships Fair, and encouraging participation in Horizon 2020 programme activities.

The Action plan also envisions encouraging the mobility of departing students during their studies abroad through increasing funds allocated to the CEEPUS programme, AMEUP conducting informational and promotional activities, directly supporting AMEUP in projects aimed at the internationalization of higher education within the [Operational programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020](#).

Also, the web portal [Study in Croatia](#) has been launched, offering information on the possibility of studying in Croatia. The portal was launched as part of the measures from the Action Plan for removing obstacles and enhancing international learning mobility for the period 2010-2012. ([Akcijski plan za otklanjanje prepreka i jačanje međunarodne mobilnosti u obrazovanju za razdoblje od 2010. do 2012. godine](#)).

In the fields of primary and secondary education, the Action plan to internationalize education 2015 – 2016 provides that the Ministry of Science and Education will provide systematic support to international mobility. An analysis to determine existing obstacles to mobility and preparations to implement certificates for the recognition of learning outcomes achieved during mobility are planned. However, international mobility in primary and secondary education is not mentioned in the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology.

Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

The mobility implementation is performed through the Erasmus+ programme which provides a share of the funds for youth mobility.

The [National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017](#) as a goal numbered 7.2 lists that it is necessary to increase educational, cultural, and tourist youth mobility on a national, European and global level. The following measures are proposed for achieving that goal:

7.2.1. Ensuring programme support for youth-led and for-youth associations promoting youth mobility on all levels.

7.2.2. Improving the system of European Youth Card utilization in Croatia.

The carrier of both these measures is the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy.

The Eurodesk Croatia ([Eurodesk Hrvatska](#)) was founded in 2014, within the AMEUP framework. It is a part of the European youth information network the purpose of which is to provide young people and everyone in youth work quality information on European projects and youth policies, with the purpose of promoting mobility for learning. The Eurodesk Croatia provides support to organizations which inform and advise young people on mobility possibilities. conducts local and participates in European info campaigns, cooperates with other information networks and partners, and participates in the process of structured dialogue in the National Workgroup.

Quality assurance

In accordance with the [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes Act](#), the ministry in charge of education and the ministry in charge of youth are responsible for supervising the Agency's work. The AMEUP Bylaws state that the Agency itself is required to perform studies, analysis, and research of programme activities on a national level. AMEUP has an internal Department of coordination and quality assurance for mobility programmes and publishes yearly reports on its work.

AMEUP has independently conducted a [satisfaction survey](#) among the users of Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action programme. In February 2013 an online questionnaire was sent to users who had in 2011 or 2012 signed a financing contract with AMEUP. Out of the 767 users, 44.58% completed the questionnaire. Also, an evaluation study titled [Towards the internationalization of education – Croatian participation in the Lifelong learning programme](#) was conducted, encompassing the 2009 – 2013 period for all sub-programmes.

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Educational support

In the context of support, the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology is focused on students with disabilities, students belonging to the Romani minority, general improvement of the social dimension of studying, ensuring institutions have minimal accessibility standards for disabled students.

On the issue of students with disabilities, the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology provides several measures pertaining to young people in the system of formal education.

6.2.2. To organise a system of individual counselling of students and parents with the school psychologist, class master, teachers, and educators.

6.2.3. To include counselling with students in the teachers' norm of direct educational work with students.

6.2.4. To organize a system of additional individual counselling of students with disabilities and their parents with a speech therapist, social pedagogue and/or educational rehabilitator.

6.2.5. To ensure human, financial and spatial resources for a half-day school stay during which an extended professional approach is implemented.

6.2.6. To establish a fair and efficient system of authorising, engaging, financing, educating, and licencing of educational assistants.

6.2.7. To design peer support groups and include them in the school (dormitory) curriculum.

The carriers of these activities, depending on individual measures, are schools, the Ministry of Science and Education, the Education and Teacher Training Agency, centres for education and care of students with disabilities, student dormitories, school founders, and units of local and regional self-administration.

Further measures have been provided to remove obstacles for students with disabilities.

6.2.11. To eliminate spatial obstacles from kindergartens, schools, and student dormitories, and adapt the spaces to students with disabilities. Equip kindergartens, schools, and student dormitories with specific equipment need for appropriate participation of students with disabilities in the educational process.

6.2.12. Utilise regular education classes and homeroom classes, lectures and workshops to raise awareness in all children, students, their parents, and all employees of the kindergarten, schools, and student dormitories to the specific needs of children and students with disabilities, and to the role which the kindergarten, school, and student dormitories should play in their fulfilment.

6.3.1. Employ the necessary number of professional associates so that every kindergarten, primary, and secondary school, and student dormitory has a professional team of at least two professional associates, one of which must be a psychologist, and the other an education-rehabilitation professional (educator, speech therapist, social pedagogue) or a pedagogue, depending on the specific needs of individual institutions. The overall number of professional associates mustn't be lower than the number prescribed by the current National Pedagogical Standards.

6.3.2. To draw up/revise the competency framework for (1) professional associates (pedagogues, psychologists, education-rehabilitation professionals) and (2) educators and teachers, so that it contains the competencies necessary for providing different forms of support to children and students, including specific forms of support for children and students with disabilities or talented children and students.

6.3.3. Adjust (redefine) programmes of (1) initial and specialist education of professional associates, and (2) initial education of educators and teachers with the new competency framework, so that they incorporate the development of professional competencies for providing different forms of support to children and students, including specific forms of support for children and students with disabilities or talented children and students.

6.3.4. To improve the system of professional training of (1) professional associates and (2) educators and teachers, so that it incorporates programmes of developing professional competencies for providing different forms of support to children and students, including specific forms of support for children and students with disabilities or talented children and students.

The carriers of these measures are the Ministry of Science and Education, the Education and Teacher Training Agency, units of local and regional self-administration, schools, student dormitories, founders of educational institutions, the National Council on upbringing and education, professional education institutions which conduct initial and specialist education of professional associates, and professional education institutions which conduct initial education of educators and teachers.

Five measures are proposed for the better inclusion of Romani minority students, two of which relate to those who fall into the youth group.

6.6.4. Subsequent enrolment in secondary school programmes will be made possible for Romani minority students who previously left from education.

6.6.5. A curriculum for classes in Romani language and culture will be drawn up.

These measures fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Science and Education, while their implementation lies with the Ministry of Science and Education, units of local and regional self-administration, educational institutions and the Education and Teacher Training Agency.

With regard to the accessibility of institutions of higher learning to disabled students, there have also been measures proposed which aim to advance the social dimension of sub-represented groups in higher education.

6.2.2. It is necessary to identify sub-represented and vulnerable groups in higher education as well as determine which factors contribute to the poor inclusion of students from those groups.

6.2.3. Drawing up and implementing a national action plan to advance the social dimension of higher education, keeping in mind the need for coordinated measures on all levels of the education system. Developing and instituting a system of national scholarships for students of sub-represented or vulnerable groups.

6.2.4. Developing an integrated system of monitoring enrolment, dynamics and successful completion of studies for students of sub-represented or vulnerable groups.

These measures fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Science and Education and the National Council for Science and Higher Education.

In the field of higher education, there are several measures to ensure minimal accessibility standards of institutions of higher education for disabled students.

6.4.1. Ensuring a national system of financing for achieving a higher level of accessibility for disabled students.

6.4.2. Adapting application and registration procedures on institutions of higher education to disabled students. All relevant information concerning enrolment into institutions of higher education must be made equally accessible to disabled individuals.

6.4.3. Adapting classes and tests of knowledge, skills and abilities to disabled students, and providing them with an equitable method of proving that they achieved defined learning outcomes. Also, in regard to this, provide necessary education to teachers.

6.4.4. Ensuring technological support and educational assistants for disabled students.

6.4.5. Ensuring the engagement of institutional services and official bodies in support of disabled students.

6.4.6. Through ensuring spatial accessibility and universal design, make every resource intended for students available to all students, including disabled students.

6.4.7. Ensuring adapted transportation for disabled students. Every academic year, the institutional support services for disabled students attending institutions of higher education should emphasize their need for adapted transportation.

6.4.8. Systematically collect data on disabled students achieving their rights and using the support systems of the institutions of higher education with the goal of monitoring the course of their studies and improving the support system for disabled students.

The carriers of these measures are the Ministry of Science and Education, and the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

Social cohesion and equal opportunities

Since 2014, all primary and secondary schools have the obligation to implement an inter-subject civic education module which includes topics of human rights, fighting discrimination and similar.

The Education and Teacher Training Agency is providing professional training for teachers in the area of civic education in order to qualify them for the inter-subject classes.

In the 2003 – 2012 period, in cooperation with UNICEF and the Education and Teacher Training Agency, a project titled [Stop Violence among Children](#) was conducted in 185 schools. The programme was devised in cooperation with local experts. Following its success, the project was also conducted in Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, and Slovenia. In 2012, UNICEF handed the programme over to the Ministry of Science and Education, with the goal of it being systematically incorporated into regular school programme in Croatia.

The Ministry of Science and Education grants non-refundable funds to associations for projects in the field of extra-institutional education of children and youth, inter alia for education on the rights and identity protection of national minorities, interculturalism and multiculturalism, and integration of national minorities and migrants.

The National Foundation for Civil Society Development invites tenders for individual priority fields, and one of them is a community school with a zero-tolerance policy for hate speech and violence (upbringing and education in human rights, non-violent conflict resolution, responsibility and active citizenship).

The Ministry of Science and Education has been presenting the Luka Ritz award, given to students involved in promoting tolerance and non-violent schools. The aim of the award is to encourage students to actively participate in building a better, fairer and more humane society.

6.7 Skills for innovation

Innovation in formal education

The teaching curriculum for primary schools lists the educational policy commitment to innovation; however, innovation is explicitly mentioned only in the field of technical creativity, in the aspect of technical innovation. The plans and programmes for individual classes have no mention of innovation.

The Strategy of education, science and technology mentions innovation as an important determinant of the education system. A [Comprehensive curriculum reform](#) was proposed,

with one of its goals being the development of innovation. None of the proposed measures is specifically aimed at the students' innovation skills.

The [VET System Development programme 2016-2020](#) lists the following measure in support of innovation:

3.2. Supporting innovation and vocational schools' projects for boosting capacities and ensuring relevant, creative and contemporary vocational education and training in partnership with companies and the community in general.

The carrier of this measure is the Ministry of Science and Education, while the implementation also involves AMEUP and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education. The envisioned result is ensuring normative, financial and organizational prerequisites for school, teacher, employee and student participation in projects aimed at the innovation of the different sectors and educational practice.

The Croatian Academic and Research Network [CARNet](#) project titled Schools 2.0 is aimed at providing quality and comprehensive distance learning and e-education. The schools were equipped with wireless networks so students and teachers have access to online learning materials, digital textbooks and distance learning. Also, the schools were equipped with scientific learning technologies (sensors) for natural sciences.

The Ministry of Science and Education grants non-refundable funds to associations for projects in the field of extra-institutional education of children and youth, inter alia for encouraging creativity and imagination of children and youth.

Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work

Innovation promotion was launched by a non-governmental association [the Institute for Youth Development and Innovativity](#) (IRIM) in cooperation with schools. Their activities promote programming skills and robotics. In 2017, The Ministry of Science and Education, in cooperation with CARNet and the Institute for Youth Development and Innovativity are conducting the project [Pro Mikro](#). Project goal is to improve digital literacy using micro-computers. The project participants are students in six grades, and it is taking place both in classrooms and in extracurricular activities.

6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

National strategy

Croatia currently does not have a strategy solely devoted to media literacy and safe use of new media.

In the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology, the section dealing with primary and secondary education mentions the plans for implementing materials dealing with media literacy.

The [Electronic Media Act](#) dedicates some measures to the protection of young people from offensive and harmful content. The Act was adopted in 2009, while last amendments were adopted in 2013. The Act specifies that it is not allowed to encourage, promote or extol violence and crime in audio-visual and radio programmes. Also, it is not allowed to encourage children and youth to consume tobacco products, alcohol, and drugs. Also forbidden are programmes which could impair their physical, mental or moral development, especially those presenting pornography or senseless violence. In the case of such programmes being aired, special measures are prescribed.

The Act also envisions the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in Electronic Media, from which content connected to media literacy is funded.

The [Agency for Electronic Media](#) deals with issues of media literacy and the safe use of new media. The Director of the Agency is appointed by the Croatian Parliament. One of the internal units of the Agency is the Department for media analysis and monitoring.

In 2015, the Agency for Electronic Media adopted [the Ordinance on the Protection of Minors in Electronic Media](#). The Ordinance defines materials which could impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, the method of portraying and protecting minors in the media, and what warning measures must be used for programmes containing such material.

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

Both [the primary school curriculum and the secondary schools curricula](#) have materials dealing with media literacy included in the Croatian language classes. The field of media culture encompasses themes of media communication training and radio, television and movie programme evaluation training. In secondary schools, as part of the Politics and economy class, students are presented with the unit Politics and the public, which includes the themes of the public and public opinion, censorship, print, radio, and television.

The civic education is an inter-subject module in both primary and secondary schools. It includes materials connected with media literacy in other subjects. The themes being covered are the media and critical understanding of media content, the positive and negative influence of the media, the advantages and dangers of the Internet, Internet safety, resilience and critical understanding of media content.

Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

The report of the European Audio-visual Observatory titled [Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28](#) states that there are no media literacy networks facilitating cooperation across a large number of partners. Only two initiatives were singled out. The [Centre for Safer Internet](#) and the network initiated as part of the project [Choose what you are watching](#).

The Centre for Safer Internet launched a phone line to report harmful Internet content as well as offering professional assistance to children and parents. It conducts training, workshops, and debates for students, youth, parents and teachers. Further plans include developing an app and publishing an educational manual on the safer use of the Internet and starting a specialist study programme Digital safety and privacy.

The Ministry of Science and Education grants non-refundable funds to associations for projects in the field of extra-institutional education of children and youth, inter alia for the education in financial and media literacy.

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

[Choose what you are watching](#) was a joint campaign of UNICEF and the Agency for Electronic Media with the purpose of raising awareness on the importance of increasing media literacy among parents, caretakers, children, and youth. It points out the importance of choosing media content, paying attention to content rating notifications, and encourages the critical evaluation of media content.

Following the “Choose what you are watching” project, the Agency for Electronic Media in cooperation with UNESCO, launched the Internet portal www.medijskapismenost.hr aimed at increasing media literacy, as well as media skills and knowledge of children, youth, parents, caretakers, and teachers.

The Agency for Electronic Media also adopted [the Recommendations for the Protection of Children and the safe use of Electronic Media](#) addressed at youth groups. The recommendations include guidelines for classifying audio-visual content potentially harmful to children and youth, recommendations for editors and media employees, recommendations for parents, and recommendations for educators.

In 2015, The National Foundation for Civil Society Development started a [Campaign for the prevention of hate speech on the Internet](#). The campaign offered an opportunity to young people aged 18-30 who write blogs to attend educational workshops with the goal of coming up with a campaign to prevent hate speech on the Internet in Croatia and to encourage their individual engagement in the field of tolerance promotion and hate speech prevention.

6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

Information providers / counselling structures

[Lifelong Career Guidance Centres](#) (CISOK) offer information on professional guidance and help with making informed decisions on the choice of education or training.

[Vocational guidance Centres](#) (CIPS) located in the regional offices of the Croatian Employment Service offer information on education possibilities.

The programmes and brochures used by the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes are those used by the European Commission within the Erasmus+ programme, Youth in Action, and SALTO Youth Resource Centres.

Awareness raising initiatives

The Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education is organising a [Lifelong Learning Week](#). The goal of the event is raising awareness on the importance of learning and education. It is an effort to motivate citizens to engage in different forms of learning and realize the existence of non-formal and informal forms of learning. The lifelong learning week is not focused only on youth group but it does encompass that group. The event features lectures, workshops, panels, open days and similar. The event was first organised in 2002, and since 2008 it has become a yearly event.

In 2014, the National Foundation for Civil Society Development launched a financial support pilot programme which ensures institutional support for stabilisation and/or development of youth-led and for-youth associations.

The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes holds yearly Erasmus+ informational campaigns which include youth work conferences, and which promote mobility and non-formal learning.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

The hottest issue currently is the process of the Comprehensive curriculum reform which was launched in 2015 but has, in the meantime, been stopped while new professional leadership is elected to continue the process. The reform includes implementing a curriculum and learning outcomes instead of plans and programmes, extending primary education to nine years, and implementing digital education materials and information-communication technology. In 2018, a pilot version of the curricular reform named [A School for Life](#) has been launched in 48 elementary and 26 secondary schools.

The Ordinance on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is currently in the process of adoption which should be finished in 2019, and contribute to the development of the field of training and recognition of learning outcomes achieved outside the formal education system.

Also, in 2018, the Ministry of Science and Education made [the Decision on adoption of the curriculum for computer science for primary and secondary schools](#), and [the Curriculum for the computer science in primary and secondary schools](#).

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

7.1 General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

The most important youth health and well-being trends in Croatia refer to the increase in the number of young people suffering from chronic non-communicable diseases or disorders and injuries arising as a consequence of behaviours, habits, and lifestyles, which also speaks of their social causes. In the last 10 years we are seeing an increase in:

-the number of young people excessively consuming alcohol, tobacco products and psychoactive drugs

- engaging in risky sexual behavior
- showing high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases
- having poor nutritional habits and not getting enough physical activity
- suffering from eating disorders
- having consequences from traffic accidents
- having psycho-social problems resulting in suicides
- mental disorders
- injuries and deaths caused by easily accessible firearms

Infectious diseases are not an expressed problem among the youth due to the many years of systematic vaccination programmes.

The [Croatian Public Health Institute](#) publishes annually the **Croatian Health Statistics Yearbook** and according to the 2017 data among the diseases present in the primary healthcare clinics, predominant are respiratory diseases, with about 380 689 cases in the 7-19 age group (not including the young 15-30).

According to **HBSC** (*Health Behaviour in School-aged Children*) – a survey conducted from 2013 to 2014 in Croatia, 28% of girls and 14% of boys aged 15 judged their own health as fair or poor. 15-year-old young people who report multiple health complaints more than once a week are 47% girls and 21% boys. 15-year-old young people who report at least one medically attended injury in the last 12 months are 32% girls and 45% boys. 15-year-olds who are overweight or obese are 9% girls and 24% boys. 15-year-olds who think they are too fat 36% girls and 19% boys. 15-year-olds who engage in weight-reduction behavior are 24% girls and 11% boys. 15-year-olds who eat breakfast every weekday 44% girls 52% boys. 15-year-olds who eat fruit daily are 29% girls and 25% boys. 15-year-olds who consume soft drinks daily are 24% girls, 26% boys.

According to **ESPAD** (*European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs*) – a study conducted in 2015 in which participated 96 043 young people aged 15 and 16 from 35 countries, with 2 558 Croatian participants of median age 15.7 years. About 33% of young people in Croatia stated that they consumed tobacco every day in the past month, and about 62% tried tobacco at least once in their life. It is interesting to note that since 1995, when Croatia first participated in the ESPAD study, the difference between the numbers of young girls and boys smoking has drastically reduced, which is a trend also seen in other countries. According to the information on smoking in the past month, 31-35% of young boys and 34-40% of young girls smoke, which ranks Croatia among the countries with the highest prevalence of smokers that age. According to this data, 23% of young people in Croatia (boys and girls equally) smoked in the past month, which ranks Croatia as second, behind Bulgaria, on the prevalence of smoking in the past month scale.

According to the data on using new psychoactive substances, in the last 12 months in Croatia, 5-8% of young people used NPS (new psychoactive substances), which ranks Croatia among the countries with the highest prevalence, alongside Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, and Poland. It is also important to note that Croatia is a country with the highest prevalence of inhalants use, at 25%, and the differences between the countries which participated in the study are quite pronounced.

About 87% of young people in Croatia consider alcohol fairly or very easily available:

- 72% of consider cigarettes fairly or very easily available
- around 10% consider illegal drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine, and crack easily available
- 64% tried alcohol before they were 13 years old
- 32% tried cigarettes
- around 55% have consumed alcohol in the past month
- 92% consumed alcohol at least once in their life

Painkiller use for intoxication among young people is also at a significant rate, at 10%, ranking Croatia at second place after Romania (12%). According to the data on the prevalence of internet activities on 4 or more days in the last 7 days:

- 23% of young people in Croatia use the Internet for online gaming
- 9% for buying/selling
- 6% for online money gambling.

In conclusion, the trends between 1995 and 2015 show that among young people in Croatia cigarette use is slightly declining, while the rate of alcohol, cannabis, and inhalants use is increasing.

Main concepts

The youth health and well-being is a concept focused not only on preserving and improving their physical health but also on creating a significant wider social context which would influence the well-being and health of young people and would include illness prevention and health promotion in order for young people to achieve their full health potential.

Faced with a significant burden of chronic non-communicable diseases and premature deaths, a number of western countries started intensive programmes of their prevention and suppression. However, it was shown that the traditional approach of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention was not having the desired effect on the population level. This led to the idea of health promotion, with the goal of not only preventing disease but boosting the health level of the entire population; focused on the entire populace and its environment, instead of only focusing on groups at higher risk. Intervention measures relate to health determinants, which also points out that the performers are almost all segments of society.

The population of Croatia has finished its "demographic transition" and it belongs to the "ageing population" group with a high percentage of the population aged 65 and over. Trends point to a poor condition of "demographic health" which presents a significant challenge for the sustainable development of society as a whole, but also for the health system which will have to respond to the health needs of a growing number of elderly citizens.

7.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The main governmental authority responsible for youth health and well-being is the Ministry of Health. There are also many public actors involved in the creation of public policies, advisory bodies, agencies and other governmental bodies with their appropriate roles, as listed:

- **The Ministry of Health** is responsible for health care and welfare, health-enhancing physical activity and health policy, initiation and delivery of frameworks for action plans/programmes, guidelines and subsidies. In addition, creating and maintaining links with other ministries and sectors concerning physical activity promotion is one of their tasks.
- **The Croatian Health Insurance Fund** is a public institution whose rights, obligations and responsibilities are defined by the Mandatory Health Insurance Act and CHIF's Statute, with the Croatian Ministry of health in charge of legal oversight. The CHIF structure consists of the Directorate and four regional offices (Zagreb, Osijek, Split, Rijeka) which administrate the operation of 16 regional branches on 134 locations. The framework of mandatory health insurance covers around 4 300 000 insured persons (99.7%), while the supplemental health insurance covers around 2 500 000 insured persons. The vision of the healthcare system from the CHIF perspective is to become a health system where quality healthcare is available to everyone, according to the principles of comprehensiveness, accessibility, and solidarity and the mission is to rationally invest the funds of insured persons in quality and efficient health services and programs that will add years to life and health to years
- **The Croatian Institute of Public Health** is a central public health institution in Croatia and the region. This development vision is a commitment arising from the role the Institute has within and beyond the framework of our healthcare system, and it is enabled by the high level of knowledge, professionalism and work dedication of our professionals, scientists, and employees. The way to this development vision of the Croatian Institute of Public Health was paved by its long history. The Institute's fundamental mission is to enable clear and efficient recognition of current population public health problems and anticipation of future trends while ensuring prerequisites for their efficient management, all with the basic goal of preserving and enhancing the health of the population. The Croatian Institute of Public Health performs activities relating to the epidemiology of infectious diseases and mass non-communicable diseases, public health, health education, promotion and disease prevention, health ecology, microbiology, school medicine, mental health and addiction prevention. In order to achieve the fundamental purpose of a public health system, the preservation and enhancement of population health, it is essential to have good cooperation, coordination, and partnership between stakeholders on national, regional and local levels, which is where the public health institutes network becomes crucial. Internationally the Institute cooperates with the World Health Organisation as well as other relevant international and European bodies, institutions, and organisations. Achieving the fundamental purpose of a public health system requires a general acceptance of the equally available health concept, reducing inequality in all polyclinics and sectors, as well as perceiving health investment as the most cost-effective investment into society's growth and development.
- **Regional Public Health Institutes** – There are 21 regional public health institutes. According to the Health Care Act, a regional self-administration Institute of Public Health is the dedicated health institution for public health in the area under that regional self-administration. Among the services the institute offers in the area of the regional self-administration are an epidemiological service, microbiology, public health, health ecology, school medicine, mental health protection and addiction prevention and outpatient care.

- **The Ministry of Science and Education** is responsible for the primary, secondary and tertiary education, research institutions and sports
- **The Ministry of Tourism** is responsible for the development of tourism and in their plans/programmes recreational sports programs and facilities are included in the tourist offer
- **The Central State Office for Sport** (CSOS) is responsible for documents regarding sport and recreation. The Central State Office for Sport was established on the basis of the Law on Organization and Scope of Ministries and other central state administration bodies, and its scope is defined in Article 24 of the said Act. Bearing in mind the importance we attach to sport as a society and the great tradition of Croatian sports achievements at the international level, the Central State Sports Office is primarily aimed at meeting the following specific goals: strong development of sport (long term strategy for sport development), investment in a number of small sports Facilities, promoting sports in the health service, redefining the position of professional and amateur sports clubs, providing adequate technical and financial conditions for top athletes, implementing measures to combat violence in sports grounds, and greater financial responsibility and transparency. The Central State Sports Office, in accordance with the provisions of the Sports Act, co-finances public sporting programs at state level, encourages and cares for the development of sports from the youngest age, through recreational to top and professional sports. One of the CSOS's priority tasks is to encourage children and young people to engage in day-to-day physical activity.
- Besides the listed institutions, numerous other governmental bodies, offices, state institutes and agencies, as well as educational institutions, regional and local self-administration bodies and other actors have a significant role in implementing measures within their jurisdiction which partially overlap with the measures implemented by the Croatian health system.

The civil society and a number of NGOs participate greatly at the operative level. Many of the NGO's representatives are involved both in the processes of creating the strategic frameworks and at the operative level by performing the activities directly with the young people. The general distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities is not strictly defined, except at the institutional level.

Croatian health system has several levels of monitoring the health of the population, and those sources can also provide statistical health information on youth, although it's worth noting that there is no comprehensive and targeted monitoring of the youth population aged 15-30 health through all system levels. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics is the main body for statistical data on the state level, while the main body for health statistics data on the state level is the Croatian Institute of Public Health. In publicly available publications detailing health statistics results, due to the routine age group distribution, the youth group is mostly presented divided between other groups – children and adult populations.

The care of sick school-age children and students in the primary health care is the responsibility of family medicine physicians, while the preventative and specific health care is the responsibility of adolescent medicine specialists in health centres and county institutes of public health as part of their specific activities. The secondary and tertiary health care is provided to the youth through their mandatory health insurance provided by the Croatian Health Insurance Fund.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The cross-sectional cooperation in the health sector is defined through the constant information exchange and inclusion of many authority bodies, depending on the topics and area of health protection of youth in Croatia. Many of the abovementioned governmental, academic and many other institutions are involved in the processes of decision making, creation of the legislative framework etc.

Numerous action and strategic plans, strategies and other documents on the national level include a significant number of actors which are the carriers of individual measures, meaning they're in charge of their implementation and have the obligation to report on the in planned intervals.

The basic determinants of inter-sectorial and cross-sectorial cooperation in the health system imply its development within a stimulative and legal framework; a basis on facts established by research and evidence, ; the coordination of several sectors and disciplines on numerous levels; the education of public policy creators and their implementers; securing funds to enable long-term sustainability of the system; drawing up a sustainability framework by using revision and adaption mechanisms; continuous data collection and support in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating strategies of prevention of particular youth problems.

Below are listed several of the most important strategic documents creating the political direction of public policies development which, among others, include youth health, although many of them relate to a significantly wider population and/or relates to several age groups which also include youth.

The National Health Care Strategy 2012-2020

[The National Health Care Strategy 2012-2020](#) (Official Gazette num. 116/12) is an extremely significant document for the field of vulnerable groups, and especially youth, health protection. This strategy includes a wide circle of measure and activities carriers, and it contains the following basic goals:

- Early detection of disease and disorders
- Prevention of risky and socially unacceptable behaviours
- Healthy lifestyles adoption
- Developing responsibility for personal health and the community health
- Mental health protection, especially in school surroundings
- Reproductive health protection, including responsible sexual behaviour and parenthood planning

Strategic Plan for Public Health Development

- The new [Strategic Plan for Public Health Development 2017-2020](#) is currently being developed.
- [The Strategic Plan for Public Health Development 2013-2015](#) is an integral part of the [National Health Care Strategy 2012-2020](#) and the umbrella document of the Public Health of the Republic of Croatia defining the development priorities, objectives, activities, and responsibilities of the relevant partners. Health care activities are defined by the [Health Care Act](#). The main carrier and the coordinator at the national level is the Croatian Institute for Public Health, while county-level activities are coordinated and implemented by County Public Health Institutes. The core tasks of the Croatian Institute for Public Health are to monitor, analyse and evaluate the health status of the population and to plan, propose and implement measures to preserve and improve the health of the population, which are realized through activities at the state level, and with the cooperation of County Public Health Institutes at the county level. The basic activities of public health Institutes include epidemiology of infectious and chronic non-communicable diseases, microbiology, health promotion, public health, ecology, school medicine and prevention of addiction and mental health.

The Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases 2015-2020

[The Action plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases 2015-2020](#) is based on a series of international and Croatian strategic documents placing the prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in a foreground position. [The](#)

Health 2020 represents a strategic framework for developing a health care policy which would include NCDs prevention among the four priorities of developing health care policies. The goal of developing health care policy for NCDs prevention is the development of efficient public health interventions representing coordinated action in the widest sense, and including the cooperation of the health care system, the civil sector, and other governmental departments. In this context, the Public Health system has an important role in advocating, proposing and cooperating in the implementation of interventions which have to ensure health equality, take into account the social determinants of health and the need of ensuring a healthy environment to empower and support both the individual and the community in maintaining and improving their health. These interventions, which have to be mutually compatible, require a combination of different management approaches – centralised, decentralised and participative – with the purpose of ensuring health and well-being for all.

The fundamental principles of Health 2020, which are incorporated into the [European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases 2012–2016](#), were also the guidelines for developing this Action plan. Its core messages are:

- The investment in prevention must be considered an investment in health without which sustainable social development is impossible.
- Sustainable social development will be impossible without ensuring an environment supportive of health and facilitating individuals making healthy choices.
- The health care system should be developed according to the needs and disease burdens of society, with constant health promotion for the entire lifecycle.

The National Programme “Healthy Living”

The National Programme “Healthy Living” is in accordance with the following documents:

- WHO Health for All
- The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion
- Health in All Policies
- UN Political Declaration on Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases
- UN Millennium Declaration, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- the National Health Care Strategy 2012-2020
- the Ministry of Health Strategic Plan 2014-2016
- the Strategic Plan for Public Health Development 2013-2015
- the National Youth Strategy 2013-2017

In order to stop the growing rates of morbidity and mortality trend connected to chronic non-communicative diseases, the Ministry of Health has launched a public health project entitled “[Healthy Living](#)”. In October 2002, the Ministry founded the Committee for promoting healthy nutrition and physical activity with the goal of preventing two (proper diet, physical activity) out of three (proper diet, physical activity, smoking) greatest behavioural risks for developing current leading causes of disease and death. The basic goal is achieving social concern for protecting the population health from the harmful effects of poor nutrition and physical inactivity by drawing up, implementing and evaluating a programme of healthy nutrition and physical activity promotion.

Taking into account that besides chronic non-communicable diseases, another public health priority are measures being implemented in the field of mental health protection and improvement, as well as the field of sexual and reproductive health, the National Programme “[Healthy Living](#)” encompasses all four priority fields:

- proper nutrition
- physical activity

- mental health
- sexual and reproductive health.

The goal of the programme is:

- promoting healthy lifestyles
- taking a comprehensive approach to improving the health of the Croatian population
- improving the life quality and demographic situation

Even though the measures and activities of this national programme relate to the entire populace, almost all activities take the youth into account as a target group with greater behavioural, biomedical and sociomedical risk factors.

Activity implementation was designed in five years periods, followed by an evaluation. The National Programme "[Healthy Living](#)" was developed as a programme of promoting and improving the health of the citizens of the Republic of Croatia by promoting proper nutrition and physical activity with the goal of preventing overweight problems and obesity as well as preserving mental and sexual health in different environments.

The carriers of the National Programme are the Ministry of Health and the Croatian Public Health Institute, and the implementation is the responsibility of the Croatian Public Health Institute, county public health institutes, non-governmental organisations and civil society associations on the local level. The National Programme activities will be implemented in accordance with the priorities adopted on the basis of evaluating the health condition in each county.

The National Programme "[Healthy Living](#)" focuses on three priority areas:

- Proper nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention – this implies promoting proper nutrition through education, informing and campaigns; stimulating the building of needed infrastructure in kindergartens, schools and workplaces; stimulating the adoption of legislative frameworks regulating this field in all environments; stimulating food manufacturers to properly label and manufacture healthy foods; monitoring and control of overweight problems and obesity; implementing campaigns and initiatives promoting breastfeeding, etc.
- Mental health – this implies improving the mental health of the population by developing and strengthening self-protective mechanisms within the community; implementing stress reduction programmes, smoking prevention programmes, programmes of primary prevention of psychoactive substance use and early alcohol use; promoting mental health in older age groups; violence prevention by non-violence promotion.
- Sexual health – this implies contributing to the protection and improvement of sexual and reproductive health in the general population and target groups by raising awareness, educating and informing the public on the importance of responsible sexual behaviour as well as protecting sexual and reproductive health; promoting the acquisition of responsible sexual behaviour and lifestyle aimed at protecting and improving sexual and reproductive health; stimulating, implementing and supporting research and preventive programmes in the field of sexual and reproductive health protection, HIV and STDs prevention, as well as preventing unwanted and teenage pregnancies.

The National Programme "[Healthy Living](#)" affects the development of above-mentioned priorities by proposing legislative frameworks to regulate the area of health promotion in all environments, by continuous media promotion and by supporting the implementation of effective interventions on a local level with special focus on vulnerable target groups.

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

In Croatia, there are many regulations and documents covering physical activity but there is no national document that covers physical activity recommendations specifically for young people, but the WHO Physical Activity Guidelines and ACSM Physical Activity Recommendations are being followed.

A new School Sport Strategy is currently being drawn up. In Croatia, sport as an activity is regulated by [the Sports Act](#).

The Sports Act

The publication date of [the Sports Act](#) is 28th June 2006 and it is still in effect.

The issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The key objectives are:

- regulation of sports and sporting activities, professional sports, sporting competitions, sport financing, supervision and other issues of -relevance for sport
- defining sport that is based on the principle of volunteering
- defining the sport as equally accessible to anyone regardless of age, race, sex, eligion, nationality, social status, political or other belief
- defining sport as an activity of special significance for the Republic of Croatia.
- In the Republic of Croatia, the development of sport is promoted by the construction and maintenance of sports facilities, education and training of professional staff, scientific projects in the area of sport, economic measures, the stimulation of partnership between government and non-governmental organizations in sport and private entrepreneurship and the financing of sports by state, local and regional self-government units and the City of Zagreb.

The Action Plan for development of Cyclotourism

[The Action Plan for development of Cyclotourism](#) was published in October 2015. The issuing body is the Ministry of Tourism. A brief description of the contents (and, if indicated, an explanation why it is considered to be one of the most important documents): In the Action Plan, cyclotourism is viewed in the widest possible sense, i.e. as a tourist bicycle trip, cycling trip, additional sports recreational bicycle riding sport event, and occasional driving. The Action Plan also takes into account the needs of domicile population using the bicycle as a means of transport and a means of recreation as well as cycling infrastructure in larger cities and their immediate vicinity. Cyclotourism is especially important for the development of continental tourism as well as the pre and post-season tourism.

The Bicycle Training Program 2016

The issuing body for [The Bicycle Training Program 2016](#) is the Ministry of Science and Education. The bicycle training program is conducted in primary schools and institutions that provide education and training for children and young people and/or the organization of free time for children and young people who are eligible for their performance. The program is primarily intended for students of the primary school fifth grade who have been chosen for it. The examination is carried out in cooperation with teachers, employees of HAK (Croatian Auto Club) or auto clubs and police officers. By adopting the program, fifth-grade students are offered the opportunity to acquire additional competencies that contribute to their safer participation in traffic, as well as the opportunity to take bicycle exams and obtain a certificate of competency for bicycle riding.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

The programme promoting and supporting sport and physical activity in Croatia among young people is the National Programme “[Healthy Living](#)”. Through the programme component “Physical activity and health”, the goal is to promote sports and physical activity. Although walking is the most popular physical activity and its benefits exceed by far the benefits of all other activities, its prevalence is still declining. The analysis shows that fewer and fewer children walk to school; and the same trend is seen in adults, who never walk to their workplace. There is no possible obstacle to including more walking in our daily routines, if possible in a natural environment, with the goal of reducing the risk of disease and improving or maintaining health.

Activities in the community are aimed at informing and sensitizing all age groups of the population of Croatia on the positive aspects of physical activity as well as offer and start-up organised walking groups (circular), both for a single time and regular participants. This project is intended to become a part of the international project The Walk of the World and achieve future cooperation with other participating countries. The project also envisages volunteer education on criteria determining walking trails and marking them, and on ways of implementing this physical activity. This project envisaged the cooperation of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Tourism, Croatian Tourist Board, Croatian Employers' Association and the Faculty of Kinesiology in Zagreb.

All county public health institutes would actively participate in the implementation of this project.

Following the implementation of the [Walking Towards Health](#) project in all counties, the Croatian Public Health Institute will consolidate all gathered data and evaluate the project. Further cooperation will be arranged, in the sense of educating more volunteers and participants. Also, an annual calendar will be drawn up, containing regular (at least once a week) Walking Towards Health activities in all counties of the Republic of Croatia, which will be available on websites of all local tourist boards and their partners. Besides this, once a year, a date will be chosen for simultaneous walking events to take place in all counties on beforehand selected walking trails.

The basic intention of the project is an activity accessible to all citizens of Croatia, regardless of their ethnic descent, religion, sex, territorial position, minority affiliation or disability. This would provide every individual with an equal possibility for improving their health and socialising in a healthy environment with support personnel helping the integration of special needs individuals. The plan is to achieve this through single and multi-day summits and programme presentation in various environments.

These programmes are also envisaged to be implemented in nature.

For this to be possible, it is necessary to adapt and clean external spaces where the programme will take place. The project anticipates activities of preparation, adaptation and walking trails development with the participation of the local community, citizens and environmental volunteering associations.

Also planned is the active cooperation and inclusion of mountaineering and sporting associations and clubs through sports meets, competitions and presentations of various sporting activities.

Physical education in schools

The goal of physical and health education is to satisfy biopsychosocial need for movement, to increase creative abilities and adapt to contemporary living conditions and work.

Existing national and strategic documents in the field of education in Croatia are:

Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The Act entered in power in 2008 regulates the activities of primary and secondary education and education in public institutions. It is a unique and fundamental act that links the same activity, goals, principles, organization, the rights of the immediate holders of the educational activities (teachers and teachers) and participants of the educational process (pupils) at the level of elementary and secondary education and education. It assumes that a series of bylaws will be drafted which will ensure a deeper and more detailed elaboration of the authority and responsibility of the educational participants in all segments of the educational activity. It is innovative in the goals and principles of education, pedagogical measures, network of schools, planning and purpose of school establishment and external evaluation; encourages the integration of disadvantaged pupils into the educational system, prescribes equal access and equal conditions of education and training for children belonging to national minorities and teaching assistance to children of EU citizens.

Strategy for Construction and Development of the National Curriculum for Preschool, General Compulsory and Secondary School Education

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The Strategy was introduced in 2007. Accepting the curriculum approach implies the construction of a national curriculum and is to be preceded by efficiency evaluation of all the immediate actors in the field of education and the redefinition of education on all its levels, in order to respond to the developmental needs of the Croatian society, while bearing in mind a wider European and global context.

Strategy for the Construction and Development of the National Curriculum for Preschool, General Compulsory and Secondary School Education (hereinafter: the Strategy) contains propositions of guidelines and ways to improve education in Croatian social context, as well as the propositions on how to ensure a quality system of education, with special emphasis on those components that relate to the creation and implementation of the national curriculum for preschool, general compulsory and secondary school education. The Strategy contains expert suggestions on how to modernize, upgrade and improve the quality of the education system. The Strategy is a developmental document open to changes and improvements depending on the needs and developmental tendencies in the education area, as well as on the various studies and evaluation results.

State Pedagogical Standard of Primary Education System

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The publication date was in 2008. The state pedagogical standard of primary education system in the Republic of Croatia establishes minimum infrastructure, financial and human resources conditions for the realization and development of activities and the same conditions for a uniform development of primary education throughout the Republic of Croatia. Thus, the conditions necessary for the realization of the teaching of Physical Education are prescribed.

National Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education, General Compulsory and Secondary School Education

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The Framework was introduced in 2010. The preparation of the National Curriculum Framework was set as one of the priorities of the Croatian education policy, since this document enables harmonisation and integration of all elements of the system. The National Curriculum Framework is a fundamental document that determines all the essential elements of the education system, from the pre-school level to the completion of the secondary education.

The basic characteristic of the National Curriculum Framework is a transition to a system based on competence and student achievement (learning outcomes), unlike the previous (i.e., current) one, which focuses on content. Applying the National Curriculum Framework results in the harmonisation of all levels of education that precede the higher-education level (which has changed its system by introducing the Bologna process).

Law on Higher Education

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. This Act regulates the establishment of higher education institutions, the establishment, valuation and financial support of their activities, the organization and performance of university and professional studies, and the position of students and teachers. This Act regulates the status of scientific research institutes and libraries as well as other legal entities whose activities provide for the operation of higher education systems, if they are established within higher education institutions. The Law is in power since 1996.

Croatian Qualifications Framework

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The Croatian Qualifications Framework is a reform instrument for regulating the system of qualifications at all levels in the Republic of Croatia through qualifications standards based on learning outcomes and following the needs of the labour market, individuals and the society. It was introduced in 2013.

National curriculum for Preschool nurture and education

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science and Education. The National Curriculum for Early and Pre-School Education and Education is a fundamental curricular document. The document from 2014 defines all the essential curricular components that should be reflected in the overall organization and implementation of educational work in all kindergartens in the Republic of Croatia.

Regulation on the content and duration of pre-school program

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. Pre-school program has to provide each child a year before leaving for elementary school, optimal conditions for developing and improving skills, habits and competences and acquiring knowledge and satisfying interests that will help him adapt to new living conditions, growth and development in the school environment. The primary task of pre-school program is to develop and improve the physical, emotional, social and cognitive potentials of the child also to promote the communication skills required for new forms of learning. The regulation from 2014 on the content and duration of pre-school program prescribes the content and duration of pre-school program for all children in the year preceding school leaving, as for children attending kindergartens, as well as for children and non-part time children.

Curriculum for Primary School

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The Curriculum was issued in 2013. The basic level of education is related to teaching students knowledge and developing those competencies that they will need to play different roles in adulthood. Educational values and goals are presented in this document for elementary school, the basic determinants for the achievement of teaching work in accordance with educational changes are presented, the forms of school and teaching work, work with gifted students and pupils with developmental disabilities, educational forms and methods of extracurricular work, education and vocational training of school and teaching staff. The role and function of the immediate participants in school and teaching work is presented, as well as expectations regarding their role in reflection and implementation of activities for overall improvement of the educational work at school and outside the school.

Grammar Schools Curriculum

Ministry of Science and Education is the issuing institution. The Curriculum for Physical Education for Grammar Schools includes: I. Purpose and Goal; II. Program Content: 1. Basic Program, 2. Supplementary Program: Physical and Health Care Framework for pupils and students who, for health reasons, must have a special program, Physical Education, Program for students in the period of health recovery; 3. Didactical instructions.

As in other subjects, the Physical and Health Culture curriculum is an official document based on the development of kinesiological science, and defines the contents that students must adopt. Besides the abovementioned frameworks, the national programme promoting and supporting physical education in Croatian schools among young people is the National Programme „Living Healthy“.

Through the “Health education” programme component, the goal is to promote proper nutrition and physical activity in order to prevent overweight and obesity. Besides educating teachers and students on the basics of proper nutrition, such nutrition will be made accessible in accordance with the adopted National Guidelines for Nutrition in Primary Schools which prescribe groups of normative menus balanced depending on the nutrition and energy needs of the students as well as the season and seasonal availability of certain foods. Alongside additional education of teachers and students on the importance of physical activity for preserving health, physical activity will be stimulated by two additional programmes; through daily 10-minute exercise routines and by introducing training polygons for school children.

The fundamental goal of daily exercise is the formation of healthy life habits and implementing regular physical activity. General training exercises have a great impact on proper posture which is an important prerequisite for the wellbeing of the entire organism. These are aimed at students of the first four classes of primary schools, and they would take place in the classrooms in ten-minute intervals. Exercise intensity is tailored to the spatial constraints. Physical activity polygons have been conceived as an additional programme for implementing physical education in Croatian primary schools without the necessary material, technical or spatial conditions. The polygon is a didactic equipment set consisting of 25 elements optimised for their purpose by their composition, shape, dimension, and characteristics while also allowing easy handling and transport.

Collaboration and partnerships

Depending on individual strategic document, programme, strategy or other health system framework, the cross-institutional partnership is defined for each specific area and some programmes also envisage cooperation with the education system, social welfare system and with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). For example, the National Programme “[Healthy Living](#)” proposes implementation partnerships with:

- the Ministry of Science and Education
- the Ministry of Tourism
- the Ministry of Agriculture
- the Ministry of Labour and Pension system
- the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy
- the Ministry of the Interior
- the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy
- the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Croatian Government
- the Croatian Health Insurance Fund
- medical and kinesiology faculties
- the Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology
- the Education and Teacher Training Agency
- the Croatian Employers Association
- the Croatian Chamber of Economy
- the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts
- the Croatian Tourist board

- the Croatian Food Agency
- the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia
- the Independent Trade Unions of Croatia
- the Association of Croatian Trade Unions
- the Croatian Trade Union Association.

The programme also includes the participation of health-friendly partners:

- Kindergartens
- primary and secondary schools
- companies

The financing through strategic documents is defined in the content of those documents, mostly from the state budget in accordance with the department area financing, while some programmes are financed from the ESF funds, partly referring to inter-sectorial cooperation.

7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

National Programme “Healthy Living”

The Croatian Public Health Institute has started to promote proper nutrition in kindergartens and schools. Proper nutrition is especially important for development while children grow up. Ensuring necessary conditions for adequate psychophysical development proper nutritional habits acquired in early childhood influence food selection and diet habits later in life, thereby also influencing health later in life. Childhood is the age when we acquire life habits and behaviours which, if improper, represent the basis for later development of chronic non communicable diseases which currently kill as much as 90% of the developed world population.

Through the “Health education” programme component, special emphasis was placed on the role of proper nutrition in health preservation, with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Croatian Employers Association, the Croatian Chamber of Trade and Crafts, The Croatian Food Agency and the Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology.

Based on these facts, in 2013 the National Guidelines for Nutrition in Primary Schools were drawn up, which prescribe groups of normative menus balanced depending on the nutrition and energy needs of the students as well as the season and seasonal availability of certain foods.

Another measure aimed at better informing consumers and facilitating their selection of food products with recommended proper nutritional balance is the programme of marking food products with a “Healthy Living” guarantee brand, awarded for a period of three years. Also, another aim of highlighting the “Healthy Living” guarantee brand on food products is to stimulate manufacturers to develop or reformulate their products in accordance with recommended criteria for energy and nutritional intake as per Annex XIII B of the EU Regulation no. 1169/2011.

In order for the brand to be awarded to a certain food product, the food industry and distributors have to apply to the Croatian Public Health Institute where the product is verified to fulfil the requirements based on individual elements of declared nutritional content. The food products can be analysed in any accredited laboratory pursuant to the 17025 standard but the verification is always conducted by the Croatian Public Health Institute during the evaluation process. If the product fulfils the required criteria, it is awarded the “Healthy Living” guarantee brand. By awarding the brand, the information

on proper nutritional food products becomes more publicly accessible in order to ensure proper nutrition for everyone.

The guarantee brand is distinctly designed so as to provide the consumers with simple insight into proper nutritional food products. This makes it easier to select products with proper nutritional balance without the need for reading the nutritional labels.

This project builds on the [Strategic Plan to Reduce Table Salt Intake in the Republic of Croatia 2015-2019](#) by 16% in the stated period.

On average, Croatian citizens consume more than 11 grams of salt daily, which is almost twice the WHO recommended intake, and which has significant consequences for public health.

There are a growing number of small family farms and small manufacturing plants (mini dairy farms, cheese dairies, meat processing plants, honey manufacturers, tea producers, fruit and vegetable product manufacturers) in Croatia which offer products of proper nutritional balance. The "Healthy Living" guarantee brand aims to specially certify these products, while at the same time encouraging national production and civil society and associations cooperation.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

Besides numerous activities provided for by the aforementioned interdisciplinary framework, Croatia also participates in the implementation of numerous EU projects aimed at improving and encouraging healthy lifestyles and diet in young people in Croatia.

Joint Action on Nutrition and Physical Activity (JANPA)

JANPA is a project within the framework of the Third EU Health Programme oriented at improving diet and physical activity. The overall aim of the project is to contribute to halting the rise of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents in EU member states by 2020. In implementing this joint action, Croatia is participating in activities within work package 4 "Cost of Childhood Obesity" and work package 7 "Early interventions". The activities in Croatia are carried out by the Health Promotion Service of the Croatian Public Health Institute.

Reducing Alcohol Related Harm (RARHA)

The Joint action for Reducing Alcohol Related Harm (RARHA), funded by the European Union under the second EU Health Programme, is a 3 years action aiming at supporting Member States to take forward work on common priorities in line with the EU Alcohol Strategy and strengthen Member States' capacity to address and reduce the harm associated with alcohol. The project implementation has 32 associated partners and 28 collaborating partners. In Croatia, these are the Croatian Public Health Institute (associated partner), the Office for Combating Drug Abuse of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and Dr. Andrija Štampar Institute of Public Health (collaborating partners). Croatia is involved in the Monitoring and Guidance work packages.

The project is aimed at providing a foundation for comparative evaluation and monitoring of alcohol epidemiology, including the amount of alcohol consumed and consumption patterns and alcohol-related harm in the EU; strengthening the capacity for comparative methodology in alcohol research and a growing interest for future use of comparative methodology; clarifying the scientific basis and implications of a public health policy of using low risk drinking guidelines to reduce alcohol-related harm; facilitating the exchange of good practice examples between public health institutions of member states by using information approaches to reduce alcohol-related harm; providing guidelines and tools to plan public health policy for using information approaches to reduce alcohol-related harm within a broader public health policy framework. This joint action will provide EU member states with support for reducing alcohol-related harm and in this way improve the health of EU citizens and reduce the disease burden.

Joint Action on HIV and Co-Infection Prevention and Harm Reduction (HA-REACT)

HA-REACT (Joint Action on HIV and Co-Infection Prevention and Harm Reduction) is a project co-financed by the EU Health Programme. The project represents a joint action of 23 associated partners from:

- Finland
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxemburg
- Malta
- Poland
- Portugal
- Slovenia
- Spain

The goal of the project is to advance the capacity for responding to HIV infection and co-infection risks and provide harm reduction programmes aimed at people injecting drugs in the EU. Total project duration is 36 months (from 1st of October 2015 to 30th of September 2018).

The joint action on HIV and Co-Infection Prevention and Harm Reduction addresses existing gaps in the prevention of HIV and other co-infections (especially tuberculosis and viral hepatitis) in EU priority areas. Despite great progress in treatment and successful preventative interventions based on evidence from many EU member states, these infections still remain unchecked in certain target groups and areas. The HA-REACT project directly builds upon the Communication from the European Commission [COM(2009)569] on Combating HIV/AIDS in the European Union and neighbouring countries 2009 -2013 and the prolonged EU action plan on combating HIV/AIDS 2014-2016. The project was envisaged as a practical action, not limited to providing theoretical approach or guidelines. The HA-REACT project provides for pragmatic action aimed at people who inject drugs.

Project activities are organised in five specialised areas: Testing and linkage to care, Scaling up harm reduction, harm reduction and continuity of care in prisons, integrated care, Sustainability and long-term funding.

In implementing this joint action, Croatia is participating in activities within work package 5 "Scaling up harm reduction". The project activities in Croatia are carried out by the Health Promotion Service of the Croatian Public Health Institute.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

The goal of health education in Croatia is the improvement of the physical, mental and social health of young people, as well as the overall community health. [The National Youth Program 2014-2017](#) states that educational programmes must be aimed at the perceived significance of protecting one's own health, influencing the overall community health as well as providing support and help to those with health problems to the general benefit of society.

Despite numerous social discussions, it is absolutely clear that the health education implementation must follow scientific knowledge and understanding of negative social influences on young people, and use youth suitable approaches. In order for young people to adopt positive changes to their own health-related behaviour during growing up and in adulthood, it helps to influence them on a peer-group level in a school environment. For them to adopt new knowledge and question their negative attitudes leading to various health risks, it is necessary to use a positive approach to their development, including caring for youth, supporting their personality development by personal contribution and linking youth to their environment. A standardised multi-sectorial cooperation is necessary to achieve these prerequisites. Although people implementing health education have received the required methodological preparation, it takes a continuous effort to adopt a non-formal approach required for developing a trusting relationship with young people, which is the only way of initiating permanent behaviour changes. Peer education has proven to be an excellent bridge-building method, and exceptionally successful if conducted in cooperation of adults and youth as a form of building intergenerational trust. When working with young people, it is necessary to continually keep in mind the social influence on youth health and empower them to create a more healthy community by analysing and changing society. It is necessary to realise in what ways social influences stimulate risky behaviour and use an evidence-based approach to encourage youth to realise their own rights while building responsible behaviour towards their health and the health of the community.

Health education implementation is a unique opportunity to involve young people in the processes of improving community health, by viewing them as a solution instead of a problem. The yearly evaluation of education and training systems of the European Commission - [Education and Training Monitor](#) lists the need for continuous investment into the lifelong training of school personnel as one of the key challenges. Among others, this measure responds to that need. Since the school year 2012/2013, Croatian primary and secondary schools have been implementing a health education programme as an integral part of the curriculum.

The health education programme defines methodological units, learning outcomes and performers. The health education programme also includes educating the youth on the importance of organ, tissue, cells and blood donation with the goal of sensitising them and raising their awareness of and responsibility towards the community health. The implementation of the programme is the responsibility of professors and teachers, while some topics are covered by competent school physicians and nurses, as well as mental health professionals and the police.

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

Besides the aforementioned strategic frameworks within which awareness-raising activities on youth health in Croatia are implemented, numerous civil society associations are implementing activities from the same field through their projects, financed by the Ministry of Health, other governmental bodies, local communities, and EU funds.

7.5 Mental health

National strategy(ies)

Mental health protection in Europe is based on fundamental common values and principles of universality, solidarity, availability, efficiency, high quality and safety of health protection. At the WHO Ministerial Conference on Mental Health held in Helsinki in 2005, two key documents were adopted: [the Mental Health Declaration](#) and [the Mental Health Action Plan for Europe](#). These documents give a strong political support to mental health protection as well as a framework for a comprehensive action. In 2008, on an EU High-Level Conference, the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being was adopted. It calls for action in five priority areas for mental health protection:

- prevention of depression and suicide
- mental health in youth and education
- mental health in workplace settings
- mental health of older people
- combating stigma and social exclusion

Croatia has a decades-long tradition of mental health protection. Some of the areas of mental health protection are directly addressed in Croatian documents (***The Health Care Act, Law on Protection of Persons with mental disorders, Healthcare Measures Program***), as well as indirectly within a number of other laws, strategies, and plans. During the negotiations for EU membership, the Republic of Croatia made a commitment to adopt strategic and implementing documents in individual fields, among which is the field of mental health protection.

There is no current national strategy for mental health in Croatia.

Mental health protection is covered on the level of primary, secondary and tertiary health protection, as prescribed by the legal framework ([The Health Care Act](#) and [the Mandatory Health Insurance Act](#)). Health protection is implemented by the Croatian Public Health Institute, county public health institutes and health institutions.

The network of public health service also includes a network of teams in charge of mental health protection, prevention and outpatient addiction treatment in public health institutes on the county level. The existing addiction prevention services expanded their activities to include mental health protection, so the activities of mental health protection, prevention and outpatient addiction treatment were organised on the county institute level. The Croatian Public Health Institute has been given a strategic and coordination role, along with the Mental Health and Addiction Prevention Department, and the Mental Health Promotion Counselling Service within the Mental Health and Addiction Prevention Service framework.

Improving the mental health of young people

Croatia doesn't have specific public policies targeting young people in the field of mental health improvement, although there are certain measures within already mentioned public policies being implemented in Croatia on regional and local levels, such as the activities of the public health institutes network and the activities of numerous civil society associations aimed at young people.

7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

Policy framework

Croatia has a legal framework defining the concept of early intervention, mostly aimed at parents and children so that they might achieve their full health and social potential as they grow up. There is no strategic framework specifically focused on youth in the sense of different health risks, except the abovementioned wider frameworks. We will now discuss the policy framework defining and prescribing mechanisms of early detection and early intervention in Croatia, noting that in these legislative and strategic frameworks the term children also pertains to youth aged 15-18.

[The Social Welfare Act](#) defines early intervention as a social service in the case of a determined development risk or development difficulty, providing children with professional help in the form of encouragement, and taking the form of counsel for their parents, as well as other family members or foster parents. The early intervention service is provided for children and parents, or foster parents, in a family setting to ensure the child's inclusion in the wider social network, unless such a service is provided in the healthcare framework. Such a service is provided for children who have, at an early age, shown signs of development deviation, development risk or development difficulty, typically prior to the child turning 3, and never after they turned 7 years of age. Following a professional assessment by a neonatal or paediatrician specialist, or exceptionally a physician of a different specialisation, the social welfare centre asks the service provider for an assessment of the length and frequency of the service from the first paragraph of this article and adopts an order granting the right to the service.

Speaking of social welfare, one of the proposed measures is the development of risk assessment criteria and procedure with the goal of standardising the implementation of early intervention measures and other socially protective measures and services from the social welfare system.

The Republic of Croatia is one of the signatories of the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). Croatia signed the convention on the 1st of June 2007, and the convention came into effect in May 2008, signed by 24 countries. The reason for particularly mentioning this document is that it will become the foundation for the complete legislation in the field of persons with disabilities and children with disabilities.

Recognising the need for international cooperation in this field was one of the incentives for creating this document. Recognising the need for persons with disabilities to actively participate in self-representation was another incentive. The document's article 7, relating to children with disabilities, prescribes the State's duty to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.

[The Health Care Act](#) provides that within the framework of primary health care exists a specific preventative health care aimed at children, health rehabilitation of children with physical or mental disabilities and the health care of preschool children (article 25). The health care of children is the responsibility of a paediatrician specialist, while the implementation of individual primary health care measures for children can involve a psychologist, speech specialist, social worker and other professionals (article 26). Article 69 prescribes the obligation of community health centres to provide care for infants and preschool children. Furthermore, article 70 prescribes that some of the health care obligations from the previous article can take place in private practices. The planning, coordination, and monitoring of specific child-oriented health care are the responsibility of the Croatian Public Health Institute. The specific care and improvement of children's mental health is the responsibility of the Mental Health Service.

Stakeholders

Beside the stakeholders in the health care and social welfare systems, the early intervention process also includes the Office of the Ombudsman for children, the Office of the Ombudsman for persons with disabilities, the Office of the Ombudsman for gender equality, the Office of the Croatian People's Ombudsman, the UNICEF Croatia Office (the lifelong learning programme of health care professionals for supporting families and the well-being of children), the WHO Country Office Croatia, the EU and EP institutions in Croatia, the Government and Ministries of Croatia, the Croatian Parliament, the Office of the Croatian President, the Croatian Health Insurance Fund (monitoring the finances and rights of parents and children with special health needs to accommodation in special hospitals for medical rehabilitation, and recompenses the transport costs for the child and parent), the Croatian Public Health Institute (the registry of disabled persons, the Public health service – Department for research and monitoring of mothers' and preschool children's health care) and county public health institutes, county social welfare offices and others (professional associations: the Croatian Medical Chamber, Croatian Physicians Association professional societies (the evaluation of neurodevelopmental rehabilitation procedures in regard with proposed standardisation and implementation of new therapeutic procedures with additional education of health care professionals performing them), the Croatian Nursing Council, Our Children Society (The Child Friendly City initiative, the Child Friendly Maternity Hospitals, „A child's smile in the hospital“) etc.)

Visiting nurses in the community health care centres and current programmes (maternity courses, visiting pregnant women, visiting new mothers and infants, breastfeeding support groups, diet/breastfeeding counselling, cooperation with primary care physicians and nurses, cooperation with other community services, educating parents during pregnancy – complementing maternity courses with mini-workshops – proper baby handling etc. Local counselling service for the support of children, parents and entire families within the Healthy city project, but also in other organisational frameworks are a significant resource aimed at supporting the family and early child development. Psychological counselling services staffed with professionals in the near vicinity are a strong community protective factor. By offering support to the family and children after the identification of early risk signs conditioned by different factors, it is possible to achieve a greater functionality of the child and family, stimulate the child's positive growth and development and provide the family with support in sensitive periods of the family cycle. By following scientific knowledge and evidence on the significant influence of early development on a person's health for the rest of their life, support centres like these can function as preventative community centres. However, psychological counselling services for the support of families and early child development are not the standard of family and child care in Croatia, but rather they represent the super-standard of communities standing out by their readiness for strategic thought and health planning in their own environment.

The social welfare act provides for the possibility of founding social welfare institutions analogous to community service centres where different forms of psychological and psychosocial activities could take place, and which could be founded by the unit of local self-administration. With the insufficiency of state organised psychological and psychosocial protection of family and children at early development risk, this legal regulation offers units of local self-administration the possibility of founding and financing institutions/centres for counselling and psychosocial support of families.

This gives units of local self-administration with a legal and operational solution for providing a super-standard of service which could influence the health of entire generations, provided that they possess the necessary information on the significance of investing in children's early development and are ready to responsibly manage with health in mind.

Guidance to stakeholders

Target groups

In Croatia, besides the preventative mechanisms of early disease detection in the health care system and the mechanisms for improving and promoting health, most of the early intervention mechanisms are focused on parents and children, in order to provide them with the opportunity to realise their full health and social potential when they grow up. The stated mechanisms apply also to young people up to 18 years of age.

Funding

Funding is provided through previously mentioned strategic frameworks and programmes, as well as through the existing system of financing the health care and social welfare in Croatia.

7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

Croatia has no comprehensive strategy or policy document aimed at changing existing infrastructural capacities in a way to make them more youth-friendly in the full meaning of that phrase, although there are certain tendencies provided by some of the strategic frameworks.

The National Youth Programme

In the School and University Medicine Services of county public health institutes, each of the teams (160 teams specialised in school and university medicine), in charge of every single primary and secondary school, and university/faculty, has a polyvalent counselling service for pupils and students provided for by the Plan of health care measures of the mandatory health insurance. These counselling services are available to young people in the education system, while young people outside the system have access to them only on an exceptional basis, because of previously started procedures or as partners in couples counselling or as parents of school children. The definition of a polyvalent counselling service means that this is a counselling service covering a wide range of problems and that the problems are only defined after a person and/or group starts counselling. This doesn't exclude the possibility of specialised counselling targeting specific problems such as learning disabilities, mental or reproductive health issues or other.

7.8 Current debates and reforms

In the Croatian health care system, young people have a significant position and their health is viewed as a value which must constantly be promoted, improved and protected, and in case it is endangered by some disease, treated by providing health care and social welfare in accordance with the needs of the individual. There are numerous strategic and legal frameworks prescribing and envisaging programmes of improving, preserving and increasing youth health, however, the youth remain unrecognised by the health care system as an integral group and are often divided into other age groups such as children and adults because the health care system was adapting over time to the perspective of other frameworks. Accordingly, Croatia still lacks a completely developed system of comprehensive monitoring of youth health which results in the need for a continuous effort on improving and creating targeted age-specific public health youth policies.

In general, the health care system is still disconnected and largely fragmented so the psychiatric patient care, rehabilitation and counselling efforts are still quite fragmental, while the preventive and promotional activities on the national level are strategically well defined but the system of implementing and evaluating on a local level is not yet developed. It is often the case that there is no continuous cooperation or responsibility division between relevant professions, such as individual stakeholders. It relevant to point

out that certain areas are still not covered by national policies or have not been fully implemented.

There is a need to go beyond the provision of services towards the creation of structural changes incorporated in health in all policies (HiAP) or as health impact assessment initiatives. Systematic social inequalities in adolescents (applicable to both genders and for all three subjective health outcomes) are found in eight countries and regions, and no social gradient in only one. Croatia should review local policies to determine to what extent they address social determinants and how they should be tackled. Gender differences are found in all measures, with girls reporting lower levels of perceived health and life satisfaction and more frequent health complaints. These increase with age. Efforts need to be made to address this clear gender-difference issue. Screening and counselling for more sensitive mental health issues should be provided as part of routine preventive care to ensure a balance between physical and mental health. In addition to family wealth, other well recognized and interrelated social determinants of health in adolescence (such as access to high-quality education, developing personal skills, social support and safe neighbourhoods) should be addressed to increase understandings of pathways and mechanisms of inequity.

While overweight and obesity remain stable during adolescence or show a slight decrease with age, perceptions of overweight and dieting behaviour increase markedly in girls during this time.

Clear gender differences are apparent, with boys tending to be more overweight in most countries and regions.

Higher overweight prevalence is associated with lower affluence in some, but findings must be interpreted with caution due to the self-report nature of height and weight data used to categorize BMI status. Gender and age patterns in relation to body image and weight-reduction behaviour seem consistent with previous findings: girls are more likely to be discontented with their body weight regardless of country or region. Being female is a stronger predictor for self-perceived fatness and weight-reduction behaviour than BMI or family affluence. policy reflections The prevalence of overweight and obesity is not increasing but remains high in many countries and regions. WHO provides leadership, advocacy and evidence-based recommendations for international action to improve dietary practices and increase physical activity through its global strategy on diet, physical activity and health. It also promotes and supports research in priority areas to facilitate programme implementation and evaluation. A systemic approach is needed to address high overweight and obesity rates and enable young people to have positive thoughts and feelings about their body as a means of improving well-being. Communities, families and individuals need to work together to address this issue. International and national support is needed to protect children and promote health through the provision of healthy and nutritious food, safe neighbourhoods, safe activities and opportunities for physical activity and sports participation.

Identification of shared risk and protective factors for overweight and body dissatisfaction can support the development of relevant interventions for a broad spectrum of weight-related problems.

8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

8.1 General context

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

Culture in youth-related research is largely observed and analysed in the context of free time and leisure rather than as a place in which young people are directed and affirmed professionally and creatively. Leisure time research includes youth recreational and sports activities, socializing with friends - going to cafés and clubs, watching TV and playing computer games, as well as going to cultural events or participating in different creative groups (drama, music, art, etc.). In this report, data from the three most recent available researches were chosen, given the institutional frameworks in/for which they were created. The said includes a survey *Needs, problems and potential of youth in Croatia* created for the needs of the [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#), and then *Researching the problems, needs and social position of young people: Young and Entrepreneurial Culture* commissioned by the Development Agency of Sisak-Moslavina County Simora Ltd., as well as research on cultural needs and cultural scientists from the Department of Sociology of the University of Zadar, about capital of youth in cities on the Adriatic coast conducted by scientists from the Department of Sociology of the University of Zadar.

According to the research report on *Needs, problems and potentials of youth in Croatia* conducted for the [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) by Prof. Vlasta Ilišin, Ph.D. Senior scientist, the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, and Prof. Vedrana Spajić Vrkaš, Ph.D. Senior scientist from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zagreb, it is said that in "contemporary society the cultural needs of people are fulfilled in free time, which is why it is the main research polygon of youth culture, although their cultural life does not exhaust completely in free time". The authors emphasize that free time is important because it implies socialization potentials. It is particularly emphasized that "in the context of free time in modern society, the products and contents of mass culture, which are perceived as a culture produced according to the large scale standards of industrial output and distributed by techniques of mass circulation (according to a weird Anglo-Latin neologism: *mass-media*); addressed to a social *mass*, that is, to a gigantic agglomerate of individuals existing before and beyond the internal structures of society (class, family, etc.)".

In the chapter "Culture and Young Researchers", the authors placed the emphasis on "examining the free time of youth and/or activities that absorb free time. In addition, attention is also paid to their mobility which is not primarily of economic character. This includes examining the use of annual vacations outside permanent place of residence as well as traveling within and outside Croatia. In exploring the free time of young people, the important starting point is: how much free time is available to young people in Croatia at all?".

Research has shown that 73% of young people have more than 3 hours of free time per day, which is in line with the results of the 1999 Survey entitled *The Value System of Youth and Social Changes in Croatia* headed by Vlasta Ilišin. At the same time, it is emphasized that respondents differ in terms of socio-professional status, age, regional affiliation, gender and degree of education. "Comparisons show that unemployed people have the most free time, young people aged between 15 and 19, residents of Eastern Croatia and men, while the least free time has employed and highly educated respondents from the oldest cohorts, women and residents of Dalmatia and Istria and Primorje."

An important insight highlighted by researchers is that "findings clearly show that at the moment of taking of some professional obligations - which is more common in a more mature youthful age - begins reducing the amount of free time". This builds on the previously mentioned thesis on changes in work dynamics, transformation and flexibility

of work occurring in the 1980s, beginning with the transition to the neoliberal system: "On the one hand, employers' demands [...] and fostering of consumerism have contributed to the extension of working time at the expense of free time, so after demanded 'society with as much leisure' we are faced with a society in which there is a lack of free time, with consumer culture guided by the motto 'work and spend'. On the other hand, the development of technology, which has enabled to work 'remotely' and outsourced, removes clear boundaries between working and free time."

The authors further point out that comparative data from previous studies point to youth stability in terms of absorption of free time, at the same time noting the drop in frequency of participation in most of the investigated activities. Activities in which most young people participate are socializing with friends, going to a café and sitting in front of computers and TVs. Researchers also point out that it was similar to the previous decades whereat radio and rock music are replaced by computers and the Internet as a new medium. In most other activities, such as going to concerts, lectures, cinema, theatre, family gathering, sports or hobbies, and the like, young people are most likely to participate sometimes, so the researchers conclude that thereby is "best able to identify differences in the lifestyles of different youth subgroups".

Although Ilišin and Vrkaš Spajić in their research show that the frequency of performing the investigated activities in free time is similar to research conducted over the past 15 years, research in 2015 has shown some significant changes. "Listening to the radio and reading the newspapers and books, going shopping and going out to disco clubs is particularly rarefied. These changes confirm the trend of suppression of "old" media (by new ones), but also point to the impact of the economic crisis that decreases the purchasing power of young people. Nevertheless, it is very important to note that emerged some of the young people's participation in increase within the dominantly present reduction of the more frequent participation of young people in the surveyed leisure activities. It is about active sporting and dealing with some hobby, volunteer and political work. This shows that there is a slight growing need for public engagement among young people - which, however, remains below the level of formal participation in political parties and associations - as well as for less passive and more creative ways of spending leisure time."

[The Croatian Youth Network](#), the umbrella organization of young people and for-young people in the Republic of Croatia, came up with similar indicators in their research entitled "[Researching the Problems, Needs and Social Position of Young People: Youth and Entrepreneurial Culture](#)". And, according to their research, young people spend most of their time in socializing with friends, 72%, followed by watching television and video. The interesting thing about this research is that the researchers, Nikola Buković, Emina Bužinkić and Anamarija Sočo, paid attention to the wishes of the respondents i.e., they addressed the very needs of the young people and their wishes concerning the ways of spending their free time. Thus, research has shown that "about a quarter of respondents are satisfied with the way they spend free time, while the majority of respondents (just over 28%) point out their dissatisfaction of offered desired content, followed by a lack of money (about 20%), time (about 16%), and a combination of dissatisfaction caused by all three factors - lack of money, time and adequate places."

These data seems indicative because they point to the modesty of the cultural-environmental offer as well as supplementary contents in smaller communities outside the centre, but also to the lack of cooperation and inter-sectoral policies between the MSES and the [Ministry of Culture](#). This issue is also highlighted by the analysis of the situation in the chapter Culture and Youth of the [National Youth Program for the Period 2014 to 2017](#): "Their approach is often very endangered for various reasons: lack of time and/or money, offers that do not match the real needs of the youth, inadequacy and insufficiency of organizational resources, inadequate support for cultural and artistic expression of young people and for young people, geographical constraints - life in poorly developed environments, inadequate public transport, etc."

Somewhat more specific results of the interest in culture and habits have been shown by a survey on cultural needs and cultural capital of young people in the cities on the Adriatic coast which encompassed 2650 third and fourth grade high school students of Pula, Rijeka, Zadar, Šibenik, Split and Dubrovnik carried out by scientists from the Department of Sociology of the University of Zadar - Krešimir Krolo, Ph.D, Senior Scientist, Sven Marčelić, Ph.D. and Željka Tonković, Ph.D. which was carried out in the period from November 2015 to March 2016. This research is still not publicly available, and it is planned to be published in 2018. Somewhat data is available via media presentations by researchers in which they shared some findings they obtained through the research implementation. The research has shown that young people in Dalmatian towns are extremely uninterested in cultural content and are much more intolerant towards minorities, both national and sexual, than their peers in Istria and Kvarner, and are at the same time much more religious than them. As compared to other Dalmatian cities, the exception is Šibenik, the most tolerant and the most open Dalmatian town. According to the survey, 46% of high school students from Split have not once been in the library in the year before the survey, while in Zadar, 63% of high school students have not visited the theatre in the past year, while 43% of them have not visited museums or galleries.

There are two key indicators that arise from the comparative reading of available data in the analysed research. On the one hand, they point to the ever smaller participation of young people in cultural and artistic content, while on the other hand there is an unequal availability of diverse cultural-artistic contents in the surrounding areas outside Zagreb, which greatly limits young people to recognition, fulfilment and attaining their needs and the realization of creative impulses.

Main concepts

Culture is permanently placed in a marginalized position in the Croatian context. One indicator thereof is the state's share of funding culture, so the position of culture is best described by the fact that its current stake is at the level of 0.5% of the total state budget. Additionally, the allocation of resources available to the [Ministry of Culture](#), about 20% of funds are spent for program needs, while 80% of funds are intended to cover cultural costs (staff salaries, maintenance of premises, overheads, etc.). A similar ratio is also visible at the level of the City of Zagreb, the city with the largest budget in the Republic of Croatia which has the largest allocations for culture, between 7 and 9% of the total annual budget. The largest number of cultural institutions is concentrated in Zagreb, out of which the city itself is the founder of 34 cultural institutions, while it is a co-founder with the Republic of Croatia of the Croatian National Theatre, Klovićevi Dvori Gallery and the Zagreb Film, as can be seen in the [Strategy for Cultural and Creative Development of the City of Zagreb 2015-2020](#).

The cultural field since the independence of the Republic of Croatia has not gone through the process of reform, so it is dominated by large institutional establishments - national theatre houses, museums, restoration institutes, archives, concert halls, which primarily produce highly professionalized cultural products as well as representative culture. Such institutions have a weak or low degree of inclusion and socialization of the inhabitants of the city in the creation and realization of cultural events, which, according to the paper [According to the paper Cultural Centres – Paradigms of the Past or Potential for the Future?](#), have by the early 1990s been dealt by cultural centres and homes of culture represented in both cities and small communities, whose activities and extremely active engagement in the previous period, with the collapse of Yugoslavia, suddenly pauses and goes through a period of stagnation and weak activity.

The largest number of cultural institutions and actors are concentrated in the City of Zagreb. As stated in the [Strategy of Cultural and Creative Development of the City of Zagreb 2015-2020](#), "annually, on average, 270 festivals, 550 exhibitions, 228 concerts, performances and projections are realized" and this number reaches up to 5000 cultural and artistic events. This is why Zagreb is predominantly ahead of other communities in the Republic of Croatia, whereby residents, and even young people, outside Zagreb are in

a disadvantageous position. All the more are gaining in traction cultural centres with their socialization, participatory and inclusive features, which are neglected and insufficiently developed in the current system, and therefore young people have significantly fewer opportunities to engage in cultural life as well as the realization of their own talents, interests and other forms of development that enable engagement through cultural-artistic content and activities.

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Administratively, the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy is responsible for youth policies and the [Youth Advisory Board](#), in which the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia is represented by its representative. The Advisory Board is an intergovernmental advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia with the task of participating in the development of youth policies.

In carrying out its tasks, the Council in particular:

1. Monitors the work of ministries and other state administration bodies in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth policies within their jurisdictions and, in this context, provides opinions and recommendations.
2. Monitors the development of youth and for- youth associations, and provides recommendations for the improvement of their work and support systems.
3. Provides recommendations for the development of youth policies at the local, regional, national and European level.
4. Monitors and reacts to phenomena in the society of importance to youth.

At the levels of regional and local self-government, city offices are responsible for youth programs, i.e. departments for social activities that most often involve apart from young people, culture, education and sport. In their budgets, local and regional self-government units ensure funds for financial support for projects and programs of youth associations, youth associations, national youth associations and youth and for-youth organizations and umbrella youth organizations, in accordance with capabilities and fiscal capacities. Local and regional self-government units can make their own local youth programs and establish youth councils under the [Youth Advisory Boards Act](#).

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Concerning concrete allocations for culture at national and regional or local levels, they are also very limited. According to CBS data, the state budget for culture in 2015 amounted to 0.52% of GDP. The largest number of counties (10) has allocated between 4 - 6% of their budget for culture, even four of them less than 4%, and only one county has invested more than 8% of the budget in culture.

Another institution that deals with young people is the "Kultura nova" Foundation. As presented in the description of its activities, the "[Kultura nova Foundation](#)" provides professional and financial support to programs of civil society organizations in the field of contemporary culture and art that: stimulate the development of the production and organizational capacities of the program holders; raise the level of professional activity through informal education and professional development; encourage the establishment of cross-sectorial cooperation; promote networking and collaboration on a national, regional and international level; encourage artistic creativity and cultural action of young people; encourage also other programs aimed at achieving the purpose of the Foundation."

As noted in the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017, research and analysis related to youth programs is insufficient, and the issue of non-tailored and adequate strategies and guidelines in line with the needs of local communities is also underlined in the research of the Croatian Youth Networks: "Researching the problems,

needs and social position of young people: Young and Entrepreneurial Culture", the Croatian Youth Network highlights: "National Programme of Action for Youth 2003-2008 (NPAY) is the first strategic policy document for young people in the Republic of Croatia and it has recognized as a very important component of its successful implementation the quality, coherence and complementary interaction of different levels of government in the field of youth policy. In this regard, it made clear recommendations to local (cities and municipalities) and regional self-governments to bring municipal/county and/or county youth programs. After the adoption of the NPAY Implementation Plan for 2006/2007, the ministry relevant to youth in the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Family, Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity, provided certain financial support for the adoption of such strategic documents.

It is important to point out that the decision on the manner of adopting a local/county youth program was (and still is) in the hands of local/regional authorities. However, it should also be admonished that practice has shown that exceptionally few LRSGUs adhered to the relevant international standards when making youth programs. Speaking of international standards, we note that one of the most important "research/knowledge-driven policies" (Denstad, 2009: 16). This recommendation is particularly important when it comes to local and regional youth programs because, in order to achieve their purpose, they must be aligned with the needs and addressed the problems of communities intended thereto. Unfortunately, precisely because the county/local youth programs are often brought with the aim of meeting the purely formal requirements for the existence of such documents, they usually (according to *"Researching the problems, needs and social position of young people: Young and Entrepreneurial Culture"*):

- a) follow the NPAY structure, often with identical measures and activities, without taking into account the scope of LRSGUs powers and the lack of capacity to implement such measures;
- b) are completely incompatible with the local/regional context, problems and needs of young people."

8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

Existence of a national strategy

The last strategy for the culture area was created in 2000 and adopted in 2002, and it is entitled "Strategy of Cultural Development". Young people are recognized therein as cultural actors and producers which should be observed as opportunities or options for cultural development: "The existence of creative talent, intellectual openness and curiosity, especially among young people, in which should, however, yet be systematically invested in order to build strong focal points of creativity, such as milieus of innovation (technical, institutional, design, financial support, stimulating social environment, etc.), alternative culture labs (carried out by non-governmental and non-profit organizations), international projects in favour of more elastic i.e. locally modified and structurally diversified forms of global production, markets, networking, communication, etc. The latter is particularly necessary in a new economy characterized by unexpected changes and tendency towards improvisations, individualism and competitiveness (the "networked society") in order to find locally sustainable solutions that are appropriate to the small economy and culture to which recipes of great and successful (countries or corporations), built on the basis of their own experiences or of exclusive interests, are not sufficient and can be harmful." In addition, the same document stresses the need to carry out systematic research on youth needs as set out as one of priorities: "Enable systematic empirical research of free time, especially of young people, and appropriate cultural statistics (as per Eurostat model)", as well as providing conditions for youth participation: "to systematically introduce the facilitations for participation of young people in culture by identity cards, blocks and discounts in ticket prices."

Although this document, the Strategy of Cultural Development, recognizes the field dynamics and the rapid changes that are taking place therein, in the meanwhile, no new or updated strategy for developing creativity and culture has been developed, nor a separate document that would youth oriented and their position in the context of development of culture and creativity, but it is part of the National Youth Program. The National Youth Programme is currently in force for the period 2014 to 2017, according to which culture is set as a factor that significantly contributes to the formation of identity and individuals' sense of belonging to the community. Here it seems important to note that there is some kind of shift forward in defining the role of culture in the life of citizens, namely the youth in this case, because the area of the Action Plan in the current plan is titled Culture and Youth, unlike its name in the previous [National Youth Programme](#), which covered the period from 2009 to 2013 where the area was entitled Youth Culture and Free Time. This change is also important because it places the focus on the socialization and emancipatory role of culture in young people's lives and emerges outside the leisure setting. Such a change is emphasized by [the current plan](#): "Culture influences the creation of a new symbolic field and contributes to the construction of social values based on the principles of openness, diversity, solidarity, social cohesion and co-operation. The key is the benchmark and the assumption of the development of a responsible, inclusive, tolerant and equitable society. That way culture can play an important role in shaping the attitudes and values of young people, and can have important positive effects on socialization, personal formation and social affirmation of young people. At the same time, culture is not only an important aspect of spending free time for young people and/or young people not only can be beneficiaries of cultural events and cultural product consumers, but often young people act (pro)actively through various forms of self-organization in the field of art and culture. Using available resources, young people act as independent actors in the production of cultural content of general and public interest, accessible to other young people and open to the public."

Scope and contents

In the analysis of the situation concerning culture and youth, the National Program highlights the problem of accessibility and/or access of young people to culture and various cultural contents: "[...] their approach is often very endangered for various reasons – the lack of time and/or money; an offer that does not respond to the real needs of young people, the inadequacy and insufficiency of organisational resources, the insufficient of support for cultural and artistic expression of young and for-young people, geographical constraints - life in poorly developed environments, inadequate public transport, etc. The studies and researches that the European Commission has carried out in previous years (e.g. InterArts, Access of Young People to Culture, Final Report) have shown that ensuring access of young people (as actors and organizers, users, buyers, consumers, audiences) to culture and art is one of the key preconditions for their full participation in society. [...] Without an adequate approach to cultural life, young people do not have the same opportunities to develop their social and cultural ties and capital. [...] Also, it is very important, when considering the issue of youth access to different forms of cultural life, to take into account the differences in ways of facilitating access to urban and rural environments. When it comes to the access of young people to culture and artistic programs, state institutions have various policy measures that can directly stimulate and facilitate access, in the range from ticket subsidies, season tickets, organized group visits, free and free of charges access to cultural events and institutions, etc. Besides, taking into account the fact that many public cultural institutions still lack access to facilities for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility, the state administration bodies should take particular account of this aspect of access to culture in order to provide adequate accessibility to public buildings. Thus, it is the responsibility of attracting young people as regular users in the hands of decision-makers, but also issues related to facilitated access of young people to cultural facilities and content must be high amongst the priorities of the leading persons and employees of cultural institutions and other organizations in culture. However, as the existing legislative and institutional framework does not contain solutions to the barriers regarding the access of youth to culture, it is important to include

this matters in strategic documents such as the National Youth Program, specific decisions of competent state administration bodies, action plans and other documents."

The key measures stated in the culture program are directed towards:

1. Promoting youth education in contemporary culture and art; designated competent authority: Ministry of Culture, Implementing Associate: Ministry of Education, Science and Sports;
2. Equal opportunities for access to culture for all young people, especially those at risk of social exclusion, designated competent authority: Ministry of Culture, Implementing Associate: Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds;
3. Providing financial support to youth programs and activities of culture for youth; designated competent authority: Ministry of Culture; Implementing Associate: Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts; Sub-measure: Support to non-profit media youth projects for youth; designated competent authority: Ministry of Culture;
4. Ensuring diversity, stability and development of spatial resources for the implementation of youth and for-youth culture programs and activities; designated competent authority: Ministry of Social Policy and Youth and Ministry of Culture, - Implementing Associate: Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, State Property Management Office, National Foundation for Civil Society Development, Foundation "Kultura nova";
5. Implementation of scientific research in the field of culture and youth; designated competent authority: Ministry of Culture; Implementing Associate: Ministry of Science, Education and Sport.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

There is no single strategic document on the development of cultural field as a whole at the level of the Republic of Croatia. The [Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2016-2018](#) is available on the website the Ministry of Culture. Given the fact that it is about an internal document created within the Ministry of Culture, without the extensive participation of various stakeholders in the field of culture - cultural workers, artists, representatives of executive authorities and decision-makers and other reference bodies and institutions - we can consider this to be the internal program orientation of the institution itself, not a national cultural development program that encompass targets and measures targeted at young people in the field of culture and creativity.

Revisions/updates

8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

This chapter outlines the key goals of the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture dedicated to young people followed by youth-related measures provided in the same document.

The key goals are:

1.1.5. Programme "Art and culture for young people " is a national complementary programme of support to the kindergardens, elementary and high school curriculum related to art and culture implemented in Croatian schools by professional artists and experts. The programme is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and a joint investment by the area of education and the area of culture at the state level. The programme provides children and youth with access and brings them closer to art and culture, develops their aesthetic culture and makes children and youth sensitive to the field of art and culture in order to train them for a positive approach to all types of art and culture. It is an interdisciplinary program that includes various forms of artistic and cultural expression from different cultural and

historical periods. The comprehensiveness of the program stems from the inclusion and (joint) presentation of all art in all forms: musical, theatrical, visual and reproductive/performing arts, film arts, literature and cultural heritage. The programme implementation started as a pilot in 2013. During its development, it will adapt to the needs of counties or units of local and regional self-government, and the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will make fundamental recommendations on its implementation. A public call for 2016 will be announced by the end of 2015. In 2016, a program for high school students will be funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

1.1.9. Preparation and implementation of cultural projects from the Operational Programme "Effective Human Resources"

ESF-funded cultural programs will help develop (1) socio-cultural centres, (2) social entrepreneurship in culture, (3) community media, (4) developing the interests of young people and (5) older people for cultural and artistic content and (6) social inclusion of marginalized groups through cultural and artistic activities and reduce the share of financial resources from the public budget.

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

Both of the abovementioned goals correspond to the chapter of Measure 2 titled Culture and Youth of the National Youth Program - Ensuring greater access of young people to culture. A program aimed at greater access of young people to culture was launched in 2013 under the title [A Backpack full of culture](#) with the purpose of "encouraging children and young people to understand and adopt art and culture in dislocated and traffic-poorly connected areas of the Republic of Croatia" with the aim of "preparing and implementing different cultural and artistic programs tailored to children and young people in kindergardens, elementary and secondary schools in dislocated, traffic-poorly connected areas of the Republic of Croatia "and is intended for" children aged 3 to 6, 1st to 4th grade pupils of primary schools, pupils from 5th to 8th grade of primary schools and secondary school students ". The program for the [Art and Culture for Youth](#), funded by the European Social Fund is an extension of this program, and the programme summary states: "Participation in cultural and artistic activities is an important aspect of inclusion into the society, and limited access to this type of activity can result in reduced opportunities for young people to develop social ties and skills and knowledge that contribute to their personal development. Therefore, the Call for Proposals "Art and Culture for Youth" aims to overcome the limitations of access due to unfavourable financial conditions, disabilities, etc.) and to encourage young people to actively participate in the cultural life of community." The first bidding cycle was announced on 12 December 2016. The competition was closed on 21 April 2017. The results have not yet been published and therefore the implementation of the accepted project proposals has not even started. The maximum duration of the project is 24 months and therefore the outcomes of this program will not be known in the next two years.

In addition to these programs and measures, young people are represented in the separate, disciplinary chapters of the strategic plan:

1.3.1. Encourage the development of national, public, private and regional theatres and art organizations and ensembles

- implies stronger linkage and cooperation between national homes, which should contribute to greater mobility of artists, primarily young people

1.3.2. Support to publishing and incentives to create new musical and dramatic works

Encouragement of projects by independent publishers within the music industry includes musical, discography, publicist, audio-visual and multimedia material. It equally refers to the new musical opuses of contemporary Croatian composers and the works that is granted the Marin Držić Award. By supporting such programs, on the one hand, they stimulate authors, and, on the other, make it easier to see the premieres and

performances of their works. Creative potentials of contemporary Croatian composers, Croatian classics, young interpreters and other genres of music (jazz and ethno) are also thereby promoted).

1.4.2. Encouragement of versatile complementary audio-visual activities

It is necessary to encourage the spread of film and general audio-visual culture and specific knowledge of audio-visual creativity through publishing, film festivals, and nonprofessional creativity, as well as to encourage diverse forms of education - both for professionals and for young generations and for the general public.

1.5.5. National Strategy for the Promotion of Reading

Making of the National Strategy for the Promotion of Reading will increase the interest in reading of all age groups, interest groups, especially children and young people as a particularly important target group, support of other institutions to encourage reading, which will result in increased number of readership clubs, library membership and ultimately by purchasing books.

[National Strategy for the Promotion of Reading](#) was publicly presented in April 2017. It is still not officially adopted.

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

[The Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, New Colours of Knowledge](#), adopted in September 2014, for early and preschool, elementary and secondary education, states that the proposed modification lead towards establishing "a system that should enable every person to: develop the ability to participate actively in social and cultural events and become capable of accepting and participating in establishing a value system that is in line with the principles of contemporary democracy" and that "every person must acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to meet their cultural needs in a globalized intercultural environment, while at the same time respecting and nurturing their own cultural and historical heritage."

The following measures are envisaged:

2.4.21. Experimental introduction of the National Curriculum for Art Education and curricula for the acquisition of qualifications in formal art education into the education system for which competent bodies are ministries of science, education and sport, and culture, and for the implementation thereof are responsible the Expert working group for the preparation of the National Curriculum for Art Education, working groups for the preparation of curricula for the acquisition of qualifications in formal art education; Unit for expert and administrative support for the preparation of curricular documents; Support network for the introduction of curricular documents into the education system; school teams; local and regional self-government units.

2.4.22. Apply the National Curriculum for Art Education and curricula for the acquisition of qualifications in formal art education in charge of the MSES and the Ministry of Culture, for the implementation thereof are responsible Expert working group for the preparation of the National Curriculum for Art Education; working groups for the preparation of curricula for the acquisition of qualifications in formal art education; Unit for expert and administrative support for the preparation of curricular documents; Support network for the introduction of curricular documents into the education system; school teams; local and regional self-government units.

Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

Furthermore, in the pre-school to higher education system, it is important to enable the transformation of "schools in the local community into centres for lifelong learning, culture and sport. It is also important to encourage the implementation of different public needs programmes (for children with difficulties, gifted children, national minority children and children in pre-school education) and of other activities in order to meet the needs and interests of children and youth". We point out to this referral because it emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning and ensuring appropriate premises and IT infrastructure for the implementation of formal and non-formal education programmes focused on adult education in which is identified, as one of the strategic goals, the encouragement of the "implementation of formal and non-formal education programmes, which would include the development of economic and financial literacy, parenting skills, civic, cultural, political and ecological awareness, consumer and media literacy. Foster and develop creativity, artistic and cultural expression".

The Higher Education Programme of the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology envisaged in the measure 6.5. Encouraging activities and programmes for student participation in culture, sports and social events. "In addition to activities related to their studies, students should be provided with extra-curricular contents that are currently under-represented at the majority of higher education institutions in Croatia. For instance, the University of Zagreb only has five sports halls and has neither a theatre nor a venue that would be appropriate for music events. Therefore, in addition to constructing (or renovating) buildings at higher education institutions, facilities will be planned for activities aimed at increasing student participation in culture, sports and social events. This is particularly important for the construction of new student campuses. In addition, the specific needs of art students in students' dormitories should also be taken into account. It is also necessary to enable the interaction of art students with other students on student campuses in order to develop new cultural activities available to all students"

It has to be noted herein that the process of implementing the Strategy started in November 2014, and in 2015 started the process of making the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform, but due to numerous political turmoil, both processes are currently in the phase of stagnation.

8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

The author of the study, "[Made to measure – Practices and Tendencies of Cultural Education in Croatia](#)", created by Ana Žuvela for the needs of the Foundation Kultura nova, says that the Council of Europe adopted in 2011 "Conclusions on cultural and creative competences and their role in building intellectual capital of Europe in which cultural and creative competences are interpreted as a basis for creativity and innovation in the context of their contribution to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Member States are invited, by conclusions, to implement, among other things, incentives for lifelong learning, mobility, cross-sectoral professional development and developing cooperation between culture and education for artists, teachers, workers, youth organizations, volunteers and others." and point out to another document, the one from the European Commission of 2012. Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes which underlined the "need to consider the EU actions in the field of education and training and measures that should be implemented by 2020. It is further underlined the unavoidable importance of culture in securing and expanding opportunities and access to lifelong learning, especially for socially disadvantaged groups."

The Republic of Croatia has no elaborated or adopted strategy for the development of cultural and creative industries. The [Croatian Cluster of Competitiveness of Creative and](#)

Cultural Industries - CCCCCI, an association founded on the initiative of the Croatian Ministry of Economy RC, from the Economics Institute in Zagreb, commissioned a project study "[Mapping of the Creative and Cultural Industries in the Republic of Croatia](#)" published in June 2015. The study served as a basis for the development of the [Strategic Guidelines for Development of Creative and Cultural Industry 2013 – 2020](#), but as it is not a document adopted at the national level, we will not go into more detail here.

Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

The Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship Development oriented towards the development of entrepreneurship in culture, in 2008, as a special program of small value state aid, launched the project "Entrepreneurship in Culture". The project was jointly implemented and developed for five years, ending in 2012, and since 2013 the Ministry of Culture continues to carry it independently with a total amount of HRK 2 million. "The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacities of cultural/creative industries and entrepreneurs in the field of cultural and artistic creativity and cultural production, and include entrepreneurs targeting the investments needed to expand into new markets, create new products, new consumers and new technologies aimed to increase values - oriented towards employment, growth and development. Beneficiaries are small business entities whose prevailing - main activity according to NKD is publishing books and performance and visual (fine) arts". The project "Entrepreneurship in Culture" encourages employment (by co-financing 50% of gross wage costs for newly unemployed persons as part of the project cost), the acquisition of new technologies - machinery and tools, and IT and multimedia equipment and programs intended solely for carrying out business activities and promotional activities (investing in increasing/expanding public).

8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

The very introduction of the chapter Culture and Youth of the National Youth Program for the Period from 2014 to 2017 recognised the role of new technologies and opportunities for young people: "[...] young people are strongly associated with the creative and innovative uses of new technologies and the Internet, and in their own authentic way accumulate, analyse and disseminate information and knowledge, so digitization of cultural content today represents a very important aspect of access to youth culture. The digital environment in general, and also in the field of culture, can be one of the key elements of youth and for-youth culture, and it is still not enough exploited here. When it comes to expanding the opportunities for access of young people to culture, it is certainly important to take into account the lack of information and knowledge about different possibilities, so it is important to develop various forms of promotional campaigns as well as information support systems for information platforms, in particular the media of the civil society organisations and media in community (community media), printed and electronic, which are largely addressed right to young people, and often young people participate in their work, and as such represent a key source of information and knowledge dissemination about different aspects and problems related to youth and for-youth culture. Considering all the above, Measure No 2. "Enabling Equal Opportunities for Access to Culture for All Youths, and especially Young People at Risk of Social Exclusion", is defined. This measure specifically focused on the media and/or the use of new technologies, shaped task 3. Support the development of media of the civil society organisations and media in community (community media), both printed and electronic.

It should be noted here that the media and media policies are within the competence of the Ministry of Culture, which is responsible for the regulation of the media sector, as well as the development of programs dedicated to the media. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia implemented a support program for non-profit media in the period from 2012 to 2016. Under this program, start-ups have also been funded and/or project

proposals aimed at launching new media. The program was abolished in early 2016, and so far no substitute program has been introduced to support either non-profit or any other media. Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture, within the framework of the Public Needs of Culture in the Republic of Croatia, supports cultural media within the framework of support to Books and Publishing. Support for this program is provided for specialized journals and publications in culture as well as electronic publications dedicated to culture and art. As part of the program, youth and for-youth media were not prioritized in any way. These are all programs dedicated to the media within the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, while the other bodies in charge of youth do not have special programs or project lines to support media and media projects, the creative use of new technologies.

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

Thus, there is no official document on the national level or the program of encouraging the creative use of new technologies, and the empowerment and development of technological competences is part of the media literacy program which is an integral part of Implementing citizenship education, conducted within informal educational programs or as optional classes in primary and secondary Schools. Towns and counties which officially introduced Citizenship Education in schools are: Rijeka, Osijek, and the Istria County.

8.8 Synergies and partnerships

Synergies between public policies and programmes

Although the Youth Advisory Board of the Republic of Croatia is an inter-sectoral body comprised of representatives of local and regional levels of government and the national level (ministries), as well as representatives of the academic community and educational institutions and youth organizations, the National Youth Program is created through the inter-sectoral approach and in the implementation of measures it also implies the cooperation of various Ministries, ; numerous difficulties have been faced in the very implementation of measures. One of the good examples is the [Service-learning](#) programme implemented through ESF -

European Social Fund. The objectives of this program are:

1. Strengthen the professional, analytical and advocacy capacities of civil society organizations through cooperation with higher education institutions;
2. Establish viable programs of service-learning at higher education institutions as part of a systematic approach to strengthening the social responsibility of professors and students.

Although the framework of this program is to be welcomed, the different ways in which these systems operate, i.e. the differences in formal procedures that are subject to these areas of action, have led to the achievement of the set goals and the achievement of the desired results to a level that is dependent on the good will of individuals and their personal interest. Namely, the procedure for introducing changes within the official education curriculum at faculties and academies largely deviates from the dynamics of work and the manner of functioning of the non-formal education programs, as well as the bidding cycles themselves. Thus, successful implementation, in its essence of rigid project programs, is dependent on individuals and their interest in introducing some innovations in the academic framework and establishing cooperation with non-formal education programs of civil society organizations and other actors from the non-academic field.

8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

Culture as a space for social inclusion, sensibilisation and encouragement of social equality recognizes both the National Youth Program and the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology - New Colours of Knowledge. As Ana Žuvela points out in her research *Made to Measure*: "Access and participation in culture are defined through measures whereby barriers of inequality would be overcome and ensured equal treatment and opportunity to participate in culture for all social groups. The concept of access focuses on facilitating intercourse between the new audience and existing cultural sector resources, "Open the Door" to non-traditional public whose access was blocked by a series of restrictions: "Access to culture is the fundamental right of all citizens, but becomes crucial to those facing economic and social challenges, such as youth, the elderly, people with special needs or members of minorities. Nationwide institutions such as the European Union and its member states have done a lot in terms of incorporating strong normative cultural practices and principles in creating their own public policies. However, there is a significant gap and a lack of political and public debate about and between the principles and everyday practices of fostering access to culture"

Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

Addressing the European Agenda for Culture, Žuvela single out following factors for the removal of barriers to cultural participation and the achievement of its inclusive role: "As a first step in removing barriers that separate individual groups, as stated, is overcoming physical obstacles (especially for handicapped persons); financial obstacles (ranging from the cost of transport to ticket price); geographic barriers (for people in rural areas) and immaterial barriers to culture (interests, lifestyles, language barriers) in the form of features (e.g. institutional environment) and perception (e.g. perceptions of exclusivity i.e. exclusivity of cultural institutions, dislike towards the certain forms artistic creation).

8.10 Current debates and reforms

The chapter dedicated to Culture and Youth in the [National Youth Programme 2014-2017](#) highlights the lack of research on the relationship, needs and habits of young people in the field of culture, as well as topics related to artistic and cultural education. At the same time, the area of culture and youth is one of the areas that need to be systematically explored so that future strategic documents are based on relevant indicators and arguments derived from research work and recommendations, thereby contributing to ensuring the quality and facilitation of young people's cultural life. It is therefore necessary to implement Measure 6, "Conduct of Research in the Field of Culture and Youth". As stated in the [Report on the Implementation of the National Youth Programme for the Period from 2014 to 2017](#) of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, as part of this measure, no activities have been undertaken to achieve this Measure.

9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

9.1 General context

Main concepts

The Croatian National Youth Programme is based on the [EU Youth Strategy](#). The Croatian priorities are:

- drawing up youth policies modelled on the policies of the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN
- youth participation in the decision-making processes on the level of the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN
- stimulating youth mobility on both the national and global levels

Since the accession to the EU in 2013, the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy has been participating in the process of [structured dialogue](#) with the youth in Croatia.

The Croatian Government [Youth Council](#) monitors the work of ministries and governmental bodies involved in developing youth policies on the European level.

With the support of the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy, Croatia has been successfully implementing the [European Youth Card](#) project, the purpose of which is: "To support the youth in researching and preserving the rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage of Croatia and Europe, expanding and enriching the youth experience, developing their creativity and desire to research new cultures, expanding multiculturalism and active youth participation in society."

[Croatian Youth Network](#) (MMH) is an alliance of 60 non-governmental youth organisations acting as the National Youth Council in the Republic of Croatia and is a member of the European Youth Forum.

[Agency for mobility and EU programmes](#) (AMEUP) is a public institution within the Ministry of Science and Education. It implements EU programmes in the fields of education, science, training, and youth:

- Erasmus+ – with the goal of improving the quality of education and training abroad
- Europass – Europass Curriculum Vitae and Language Passport make your skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe
- CEEPUS – the academic mobility programme
- Bilateral programme – a scholarship programme in which partner countries award scholarships to Croatian citizens

The Portal of the Institute for the Development of Education www.stipendije.info enables young people to apply for educational scholarships within and outside of Croatia.

Youth interest in global issues

Values and attitudes

Although there is no relevant research on youth and global issues on the level of Croatia, there are several studies on youth values and attitudes.

According to the data in [Flash Eurobarometer No. 455](#) (published in 2018):

- young people in Croatia that stayed abroad for the purpose of volunteering: less than 2 weeks – 3%; 2 to 4 weeks – 1%; longer than 1 month – 1%

- young people that had the opportunity to volunteer abroad but chose not to do so – 15%; and young people that haven't had the opportunity to volunteer abroad – 80%
- young people that participated in any activities or projects aimed at fostering cooperation with youth from other countries: in activities and projects with young people from other European countries – 12%; in activities and projects with young people from other continents – 2%; young people that didn't participate – 80%

In the paper "Youth and politics: (dis)continuity trends" from 2013 (Ilišin, Vlasta i Spajić Vrkaš, Vedrana, 2017, Mladi i politika: trendovi (dis)kontinuiteta), the comparative presentation of the general attitude towards the EU shows: 23.2% have a positive attitude, 47.9% have a neutral attitude, and 13.9% have a negative attitude.

Their estimate on EU significance (the combination of "I agree" and "I completely agree" responses):

- 63.7% - the freedom of movement
- 49.1% - better protection of citizens' rights
- 44.6% - numerous job openings and fighting unemployment
- 41.9% - better future for young generations
- 39.0% - better protection of workers' rights

Their perception of positive outcomes of Croatia's accession to the EU:

- 86.0% - increased options for travel and making friends
- 81.8% - better and more quality education
- 80.5% - better familiarization of other nations' cultures and religions
- 78.1% - better employment possibilities
- 77.4% - greater economic development
- 73.4% - quicker democratisation of society
- 72.0% - better human rights and minorities protection
- 70.0% - higher living standard
- 69.2% - better military protection of Croatia

Programmes and associations stimulating dialogue, solutions or awareness on global issues

Model United Nations (MUN) is a club of the Croatian United Nations Association, first founded in 1992. The association was founded with the goal of becoming an important source of information about the United Nations, and also a place where young people and professionals can discuss and exchange views on United Nations issues. The association strongly promotes the United Nations principles, as embodied in the UN Charter.

Moot Court Croatia is a competition taking the form of a simulated trial procedure where student teams helped by a mentor solve a hypothetical legal case. The competition enables students to acquire new knowledge, new acquaintances and practical experience under the leadership of recognized legal experts. The MCC team is involved in the organisation and implementation of the whole competition, beginning with the promotion and application of students from all Faculties of Law in Croatia and following up until the very end of the competition.

The Erasmus+ programme enables young people in Croatia to apply for the "European Solidarity Corps" project. The goal of this project is promoting solidarity as one of the European values; the others being:

- democratic participation

- environment
- protecting the nature
- health and wellbeing
- education
- employment
- culture
- social welfare and care
- reception and integration of refugees and migrants
- preventing disasters

[The European Youth Parliament](#) (EYP) is one of the largest platforms for political debate, intercultural encounters, international dialogue, and the exchange of ideas among young people in Europe, present in more than 40 European countries. The European Youth Parliament Croatia was founded in 1994. Since its founding, the EYPC organized numerous EYP days, 8 regional sessions, 26 national sessions, two international sessions and an international forum. The EYP is an organisation lead and coordinated by young people for young people.

Within the Erasmus+ programme, young people can participate in the [Transnational Youth Initiative](#), with the goal of solving community problems through cooperation with peers from other countries.

Some of the associations active in the field of volunteering, EU citizenship and democracy:

The association for promoting positive affirmation of youth in society "Impress" Daruvar
Carpe diem – the association for stimulating and development of creative and social potential in children, youth and adults

- Velebit association Kuterevo
- Youth association Alfa Albona
- Eco Centre Latinovac
- Independent youth association
- The Argonaut association
- The Youth for Marof
- The Žmergo association
- Interaktiva
- PRONI Centre for Social Education
- Volunteer centre Osijek
- Local action group Vallis Colapis
- The IKS association
- Association alliance Rojca
- The ZUM association
- Centre of technical culture Rijeka
- Sustainable development association Pozitiva Samobor
- The Enas association
- Split Youth club

- Youth help association HELP – Split
- Youth association “Youth in the European Union”
- ISTRIAN de Dignan - ECOMUSEUM
- INFORMO – organisation for encouraging employment, training, and education
- Suncokret Center for Community Development
- Zagor association network
- The Forum for Freedom in Education
- Outward Bound Croatia
- O.A.ZA – Sustainable Alternative to Community
- Ocean of Knowledge Croatia
- Syncro Synergy Croatia
- The Amazonas association
- The Volim Volontirati association – Vovo
- Urban Youth
- Krila – Therapeutic horseback riding
- Croatian Red Cross – Gradsko društvo Crvenog križa Županja

Some of the associations active in the field of environment and climate change:

- Prism – association for stimulating the development of human potential and creativity
- Ludbreg association of young enthusiasts (LUMEN)
- The Argonaut association
- The Žmergo association
- O.A.ZA – Sustainable Alternative to Community

Some of the associations active in the field of health and healthy lifestyle:

- Avadhuta – association for promoting multiculturalism and healthy lifestyle
- Velebit association Kuterevo
- Eco Centre Latinovac
- Sea Scouts Posejdon
- Outward Bound Croatia
- Poplar Trees
- Krugovi - Centre for education, counselling, and humanitarian aid
- Life Potential

Some of the associations active in the field of fighting discrimination and intolerance, doping and drug use:

- Regional Youth Info-centre Rijeka – UMKI

Some of the associations active in the field of equality and inclusivity:

- Platypus
- RNV

9.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The [Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) performs administrative and professional duties aimed at improving the quality of life for young people, building an integral, comprehensive, and inter-departmental youth policy (recommending and implementing strategic documents, laws and other acts, programmes and projects in the field of youth policies and their monitoring and evaluation, especially in the field of youth partnership inclusion in the decision-making process, informal education, leisure time and youth culture, volunteering and civil society development participation, political participation and human rights promotion, informing, mobility and ensuring quality and regular support for organised youth sector and its activity), as well as developing measures and programmes relating to the prevention of youth social exclusion. Youth issues within the ministry are delegated to the department for democratic development, children and youth, within which functions the service for youth and volunteering.

The [Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs](#) is the key government body for all issues of foreign politics and international relations.

[Youth Council of the Croatian Government](#) is an interdepartmental advisory body of the Croatian Government with the mission to participate in developing youth public policies. The Council monitors the work of ministries and other governmental bodies in implementing, monitoring and evaluating youth policies. Furthermore, it monitors the development of youth-led and for youth associations and gives recommendations for the advancement of their operation and support system; also, it makes recommendations for developing youth policies on the local, regional, national, and European levels; monitors and reacts to social incidences significant to youth.

[Youth Councils](#) are founded as advisory bodies of local and regional self-administration. Their task is to promote and advocate youth rights, needs, and interests on their local and regional levels. Youth Councils enable young people to participate in the procedures and processes of official decision making by the government representatives.

[Agency for mobility and EU programmes](#) (AMEUP) is a public institution within the Ministry of Science and Education, implementing and promoting European Union programmes and other international programmes in the fields of science, education, training, and youth.

[Croatian Youth Network](#) (MMH) is an alliance of 60 non-governmental youth organisations acting as the National Youth Council in the Republic of Croatia and is a member of the European Youth Forum.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Although there is no official body designated for cross-sectorial cooperation, governmental bodies do cooperate between themselves and with non-governmental organisations, associations, agencies, and others when activities, projects or initiatives require it.

9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

When Croatia acceded to the EU, it began implementing the process of [Structured dialogue](#) (2013), with the goal of making young people's voice heard in the national and European youth policy-shaping process. In Croatia, it is known under the slogan "EU asks".

The implementation is headed by the National Workgroup for youth structured dialogue, which is comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and

Social Policy, the Agency for mobility and EU programmes, the Association of Youth Information Centres in Croatia and the Croatian Youth Network.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, [Youth Councils](#) enable young people to participate in the procedures and processes of official decision making by the government representatives.

The sixth dialogue cycle began on July 1st, 2017 and lasts until the end of 2018, and it is dedicated to the drawing up of a new European Youth Strategy.

Erasmus+ project "[Local stories: structured dialogue driving local change](#)" – From January 1st, 2018 till October 31st, 2018 in Croatia. The project is being implemented by the Croatian Youth Network in partnership with the Association of Municipalities and the Association of Cities of Croatia. The goal of the project is to empower the implementation of structured dialogue on the local level.

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

The [Structured dialogue](#) also enables the communication of young people and policy-makers on the international level. This process is administrated by the European structured dialogue workgroup, comprised of the European Youth Forum, European Commission and the trio of countries presiding over the EU.

Since 2014, [The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs](#) and [the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) have been the carriers of the measure to develop a support system for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the UN bodies' decision-making processes.

Since 2014, [the Ministry of Culture](#) has been the carrier of the measure to develop a support system for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the UNESCO bodies' decision-making processes.

Since 2014, [the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) has been the carrier of the measure to develop a support system for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the EU and Council of Europe bodies' decision-making processes.

9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

As stated in [the Act on primary and secondary education](#), with the last amendments adopted in 2018, the goals and principles of education in Croatia include the following goals:

- -Education according to general cultural and civilizational values, human rights and children's rights;
- -training students to live in a multicultural world
- -respecting diversity and tolerance
- -active and responsible participation in the democratic development of society

The National Youth Programme 2014-2017 attempted to improve the existing system of formal education and strengthen the synergy of the public sector with the economic and non-profit sectors, with special emphasis on non-formal education and expansion of the youth work field. Special attention was given to:

- the development of social and civil competencies through civil education which provide young people with the means to successfully fulfil their civil role and advance society as a whole
- promoting a culture of non-violence on the level of primary and secondary education

In formal education, global problems are analysed on all education levels, most often with an interdisciplinary approach because of their nature. Primary and secondary education covers these problems across varied subjects (Science and social studies, geography, biology, sociology, psychology, politics and economy, Croatian language and literature, history).

The proposed [curricular reform](#) as part of the comprehensive education reform envisages further development of new content and methods. For example, in the humanities and social sciences area of curriculum, the following topics are envisaged:

- Man in the world – the students are introduced to basic views on life, religion, and ethics and their dependence on the cultural-temporal context
- Man in communities – the students learn about the individuals' position in social structures and processes, and the mutual influence of individuals and society in the past and present, on levels ranging from the personal and local, to the global community; they research the position of Croatian society in relation to social processes and discover their own identity, with strong emphasis on developing awareness about belonging to the Croatian and European cultural circle and cultivating the basic values of contemporary democratic society. They critically consider different interests present in the community, engage in creating their own living conditions by contributing to the community in which they live, promoting human rights, participating in the social, cultural, economic, and political development of society. They research and learn about the social, political, cultural, religious, and other diversity in the community, and train for interpersonal and intercultural cooperation by cultivating social values.

Furthermore, the curriculum for several inter-subject topics is to be developed:

- personal and social development
- -health
- -sustainable development
- -civil education

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

The project "[#saferinternet4EU](#)" has the goal to promote online safety, media literacy and cyber-hygiene in order to make children, parents, and teachers more aware of digital opportunities and challenges.

Information providers

Informing young people about global issues on the formal education level is the responsibility of the [Ministry of Science and Education](#). It performs administrative and other duties relating to:

- the system of preschool, primary and secondary education, both in Croatia and abroad
- the national curriculum
- textbooks, standards and other conditions for educational work
- developing the school system
- student standard
- training children, youth, and adults in vocational knowledge and skills, as well as the activity of associations in this field
- developing higher education
- achievement of national strategies and programmes for higher education
- monitoring the successfulness of studies and other higher education processes

- stimulating lifelong learning and higher education of adults, as well as performing administrative oversight of institutions of higher education.

The Ministry of Environment and Energy occasionally has campaigns focused on the youth, relating to the environment, sustainable development and similar topics.

The associations implementing the programme of regional info centres with the financial support of the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy are:

- Regional Youth Info-centre Rijeka (UMKI) – programme "Regional youth info-centre Rijeka"
- Info zone – programme "Regional youth information centre Info zona (RICM Info zona)"
- PRONI Centre for Social Education – programme "Regional youth info-centre Osijek (RICM Osijek)"
- The Association for the promotion of quality education of youth with disabilities "Imagine" – programme "Regional youth info-centre Zagreb"

The associations implementing the programme of local info centres with the financial support of the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy are:

- Youth association "Youth in the European Union", the project "TOČKA – Youth info centre"
- The association for the promotion of IT, culture and coexistence (IKS), the project "INFO! INFO! Info centre Petrinja"
- PRONI Centre for Social Education, the project "Youth info centre Vukovar"
- The "Argonaut" association for environmental protection and promoting sustainable development, the project "O-točka" local youth info centre
- The Zagor association network, the project "Inform and create! 2.0"
- The Zum association, the project "Youth info centre Pula"
- Independent youth association, the project "Youth info centre Lepoglava"
- The healthy life promotion association Awakening, the project "Local youth info centre Šolta"
- Bjelovar centre for the development of civil society, the project "Youth info centre Like"
- Europe House Slavonski Brod, the project "Youth info centre of the Brodsko-posavska county"
- The Youth Triangle Kaštela association, the project "Youth info centre Kaštela"
- The "Impress" association, the project "Possibilities info centre"

The Association of Youth Information Centres in Croatia is a non-profit NGO founded in 2008 in Zagreb with the aim of developing a quality youth information system in the Republic of Croatia. The Association is a national umbrella organization for youth information work, and its target groups are youth information centres and NGO's providing youth information. The Association of Youth Information Centres in Croatia is a member of European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA), and it works to support local info-centres by establishing a system of quality assurance, education, and certification of professionals to work in the info-centres.

On other levels, information is provided to youth by different associations, agencies, projects and similar means.

Key initiatives

In the National Youth Programme, the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy lists the following goals:

The goal 7.1. is to establish a system of supports for youth participation in decision-making processes on the European and global levels. The proposed measures are:

- Measure 7.1.1. – developing a system of support for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the UN bodies' decision-making processes. Tasks:
 1. Develop and implement an education programme about the UN General Assembly and the commissions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), especially the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, and others if necessary
 2. Regularly monitor and discuss the conclusions and decisions of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in the Youth Council of the Croatian Government
 3. Inform the relevant stakeholders and youth organisations of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council activities, conclusions, decisions, programmes, and initiatives relating to youth issues
- Measure 7.1.2. – developing a system of support for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the UNESCO bodies' decision-making processes. Tasks:
 1. Develop and implement a programme of educating young delegates at the UNESCO General Conference and the UNESCO Youth Forum
 2. Regularly monitor and discuss the conclusions and decisions of the UNESCO General Conference and the UNESCO Youth Forum in the Youth Council of the Croatian Government
 3. Inform the youth sector of the UNESCO General Conference and other UNESCO bodies' conclusions and decisions in the field of advancing youth policies
- Measure 7.1.3. – developing a system of support for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the EU and Council of Europe bodies' decision-making processes. Tasks:
 1. Ensure that representatives of youth-led and for youth organisations, as well as governmental bodies, have the necessary conditions for participation in the youth relevant decisions making processes on the EU and Council of Europe levels
 2. Implement an electronic system of informing relevant youth sector stakeholders of the EU and Council of Europe conclusions and decisions relating to youth issues
 3. Regularly monitor and discuss the conclusions and decisions of the EU and the Council of Europe bodies in the Youth Council of the Croatian Government
- The goal 7.2 is to increase the educational, cultural, and tourist youth mobility on national, European and global levels. The proposed measures are:
- Measure 7.2.1. – Ensuring programme support of youth-led and for-youth associations implementing programmes which promote youth mobility on all levels. Tasks:
 1. -Invite a tender for the financial support of youth-led and for-youth associations implementing programmes from the field of mobility, including programmes informing on mobility possibilities and taking into consideration the regional representation of associations
- Measure 7.2.2. – improving the system of European Youth Card utilization in Croatia. Tasks:

1. -Ensuring support for developing the European Youth Card in Croatia
2. -Ensuring support for a campaign on the possibilities offered by the European Youth Card

The Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia was adopted in 2009 for a period of ten years and it contains an analysis of the existing economic, social, and environmental state, as well as guidelines for long-term action, basic principles and standards for setting goals and priorities in considering long-term transformation towards the sustainable development of the Republic of Croatia. Key areas which present challenges for Croatia:

- encouraging population growth in the Republic of Croatia
- environment and natural resources
- promoting sustainable production and consumption
- ensuring social and territorial cohesion and justice
- ensuring energy independence and increasing the efficiency of energy use
- strengthening public health
- the interconnectedness of the Republic of Croatia
- protection of the Adriatic Sea, coastal area, and islands

9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

Green volunteering

Presently in the Republic of Croatia, there is no official strategy for green volunteering, which would be focused on the youth population.

This type of volunteering is organised by associations, organisations, towns, and municipalities, and some of the examples are:

- The project "[Active Youth protecting nature and the environment](#)" – organised by the Bioteka association in Zagreb, Rijeka, Osijek, and Split. The project was co-funded by the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy. The goal of the project is to empower youth to actively participate in the recognising and solving issues of environmental protection in local communities
- The "[Green purge](#)" and "[Blue purge](#)" projects – the largest volunteer one-day action of cleaning the environment, sea, and seabed in Croatia. The action is part of the global project Let's do it! and "World Clean-up" yearly actions
- The "[Recyclastics for our beautiful homeland](#)" project – a project of manufacturing musical instruments from various sorts of waste aimed at all schools in the Republic of Croatia
- The "[Most beautiful school garden](#)" project – an eco-educational project which rewards kindergartens, schools and other educational institutions for the labour of constructing the most beautiful garden, open-air classroom, and other eco-projects.

Green production and consumption

The Republic of Croatia is participating in the "[Eco-school](#)" international programme. The programme serves to implement educational guidelines on the level of educational institutions: kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, schools for students with disabilities, student homes and faculties. The goal of the programme is the incorporation of environmental education into all segments of the educational system and the everyday life of students and employees of Eco-Schools.

The national coordinator of the Eco-Schools in Croatia is the Association Lijepa naša. In Croatia, the Eco-school status has been awarded to 334 educational institutions:

- 89 kindergartens
- 195 primary schools
- 7 centres for education and training
- 38 secondary schools
- 2 student homes
- 3 institutions of higher education

The projects implemented within the Eco-school framework:

- -The educational project "[The Great plant hunt](#)" started in the school year 2016/17. The organisers are the Foundation for Environmental Education and Toyota Motor Europe, along with The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the national coordinators of the Eco-schools programme in individual countries. In the school year 2017/18, 50 Eco-schools from Croatia are participating, through the Lijepa Naša association, the Eco-schools national coordinator in Croatia
- The contest "[Eco quiz "Our beautiful homeland"](#)" has been implemented since 1992 by the Lijepa Naša association. The contest is implemented in primary and secondary Eco-schools.
- The national project "[Eco-packaging](#)" is aimed at children and youth with the purpose of educating them about the importance of properly managing TETRA PAK packaging and acting responsibly towards the environment. It is conducted by Eco-schools in Croatia, and the main communications channel is the webpage [Eco-paket](#) and [Facebook](#)
- The "[We Eat Responsible](#)" project was registered by the Lijepa Naša association in cooperation with 9 member countries of the Foundation for Environmental Education. The project encompasses 1800 teachers, 65 000 primary school students, 25 000 secondary school students and college students, and 100 000 parents and local community members
- [Days of bread – fruits of the Earth thanksgiving days](#) are an annual October project taking place in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, student homes, schools for students with disabilities, and branches of the Lijepa Naša association
- -The Lijepa Naša association started a "Litter less" campaign which took place from 2011 to 2017 across 172 Eco-schools in Croatia. The campaign was implemented with the support of the Foundation for Environmental Education and the Wrigley Company Foundation

9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

The National Youth Programme 2014-2017 envisioned further participation of youth, youth sector stakeholders, and youth relevant institutions in the drawing up of youth policies on the levels of the EU, Council of Europe and the UN, as well as further stimulation of youth mobility on the European and global levels. In accordance with those goals, the National Programme proposed the following measures (described in detail in chapter 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues):

- developing a system of support for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the UN bodies' decision-making processes
- developing a system of support for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the UNESCO bodies' decision-making processes

- developing a system of support for youth, youth organisations, and for youth participation in the EU and Council of Europe bodies' decision-making processes

The carriers of these measures are the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy, The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, The National Foundation for Civil Society Development and numerous youth-led and for youth organisations.

Development cooperation activities

Since 2014, within the AMEUP functions the Eurodesk Croatia, serving as a free info service of the European Commission and providing youth and youth workers with information on European programmes and youth policies, with the purpose of promoting mobility for the sake of education and training. The Eurodesk Croatia is a part of the European network, comprised of the central Brussels office, national coordinators in 34 European countries and more than 1200 local and regional partners. Eurodesk operates as a structural support to the Erasmus+ programme in the youth field.

CROSOL (Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity) is a non-governmental and non-profit organization of civil society, which is active in the area of international development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The platform goals:

- building and strengthening the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) for providing international development cooperation and humanitarian aid
- to be the link between the ministry that is responsible for international development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and the CSOs projects of international development cooperation and humanitarian aid
- to participate and influence the improvement, shaping, implementation, and evaluation of the policies of the Republic of Croatia, the European Union and other international bodies in the area of international development cooperation and humanitarian aid
- to deliberate and improve international development cooperation of the CSOs in and outside of Croatia on values, principles, methods, and standards of actions
- to articulate and affirm activist initiatives and civil society organizations from southeast Europe toward the EU in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid
- to promote education for development and international solidarity
- to promote international development cooperation and solidarity

[The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy \(EKCYP\)](#) is an on-line database intended to provide the youth sector with a single access point to reliable knowledge and information about young people's situation across Europe. EKCYP aims at enhancing knowledge transfers between the fields of research, policy and practice through the collection and dissemination of information about youth policy, research and practice in Europe and beyond. The data is collected by national correspondents for each country, and for Croatia that is Marko Kovacic.

9.7 Current debates and reforms

At the moment, a new National Youth Programme 2018 – 2021 is being drawn up.

[The Croatian National Development Strategy until 2030](#) – Croatia as We Wish It until 2030 defines developmental directions and strategic goals, elaborated in detail in short-term and medium-term national plans and plans for the development of local and regional units of self-administration. The [drafting](#) process and its adoption in the Croatian parliament by 2020, its implementation in 2021, as well as achieving the desired results by 2030, requires the engagement of all social and administrative levels in Croatia. The institutional framework for the drafting and implementation of the National Development Strategy is:

- [Management Committee](#)

- [Executive workgroup](#)
- Information gathering and analytical background workgroup
- Thematic workgroups
- Ministries and other central governmental bodies
- Units and bodies of local and regional self-administration

The drafting and implementation of the National Development Strategy will be executed by joint action of all relevant bodies and institutions on all levels of administration.

10. YOUTH WORK

10.1 General context

Historical developments

Youth work in Croatia has a long-standing history dating back to the former Yugoslavia, and its youth work actions, activities and organizations under the wing of the Communist Party. The youth work of the era had a straightforward ideological goal to propagate the communist regime. It also conceptualized young people as a resource in (re-)building state infrastructure (roads, dams, bridges...) and society at large in the decades following WW2. At the same time, it promoted youth engagement in diverse hobby, cultural, sports, leisure-time and technical organizations and activities which benefited young people in the process of socialization and skills-building.

In 1991 Croatia declared its independence and five years of civil war ensued. During and immediately after the war, civil society organizations and initiatives set up a wide anti-war campaign promoting peace building in the face of armed conflict. The Anti-war Campaign was initiated and carried out by thousands of young peace activists from Croatia and abroad. In war-affected areas and divided communities, they (mainly volunteers) organized a myriad of bottom-up actions related to direct peacebuilding, the protection of human rights and media activism.

This can be seen as the point of inception of contemporary youth work in Croatia. The main paradigmatic shift in youth work in the early 1990s in Croatia was premised upon a very different approach towards young people – they were seen as a subject in need of various social services, while previously youth people had been treated as a subject that delivered services following the agenda of the Party in order to build and support the regime.

Youth work in the 1990s was exclusively situated within civil society. Although it was subversive in relation to the socio-political context of the time, it was not perceived as having any substantial societal influence. It was supported by international donors and, due to its peacebuilding character, youth work developed very distinctive principles which led it to evolve strongly in the direction of non-formal (youth) education.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, youth organisations continued to deliver various youth work programmes and activities, mostly focusing on non-formal education, but still with a strong emphasis on non-violent communication and conflict resolution. Such activities were often designed to support and encourage young people to engage in community-building actions and to develop their leadership skills. That period also saw a proliferation of youth organizations and initiatives in the field of arts, culture, environmental protection, social integration, etc., which, in 2002, led to the creation of the [Croatian Youth Network](#) – a platform for exchange and advocacy gathering most relevant youth organizations in the country.

Youth organizations and different civil society organizations working for youth have since expanded their programmes and activities with young people. However, they have also strengthened their role, becoming watchdogs, advocates and partners in policy-making processes. Today, as a result, youth work is gaining a more prominent place in the youth policy framework of contemporary Croatia. The current state of youth work development in Croatia is characterised by a strong orientation towards advocacy for the professionalization of youth work.

National definition or understanding of Youth Work

There is no official definition of youth work in Croatia. For the first time, in 2014, youth work found its place in an official national document. The [National Youth Programme \(2014-2017\)](#) emphasised the importance of youth work as "...a set of activities which

contribute to the personal and social development of young people. Participation in youth work activities is voluntary and complementary to formal education. Youth work activities contribute to the development of self-confidence and self-respect in young people, as well as the competences necessary for the creation and maintenance of quality personal and social relations. Youth work offers young people opportunities to learn and develop competences across various fields. It also enables young people for active participation in society and decision-making processes". This provisional definition heavily relied on European best practice and was not an outcome of a wider national debate or research. Therefore, one of the measures of the [National Youth Programme \(2014-2017\)](#) stipulated that an analysis and definition of youth work in Croatia should be completed by the end of 2017. As of December 2019, the measure has not been implemented. Moreover, the expired National Youth Programme still does not have a successor and a potential youth work definition in Croatia remains elusive.

A glimpse into a common understanding of youth work can be gleaned from the 2016 survey on the youth work profession conducted by the [Croatian Employment Service](#). The survey shows that youth professionals understand youth work as a variety of tasks which are, among others, normally carried out by teachers, social workers or psychologists. It is obvious that the term "youth work" in Croatia is rather vague and can be seen as a stretched concept.

This, in turn, is also a result of linguistic ambiguities concerning the term "youth work" in Croatian. Although there is no official consensus, "youth work" in Croatian is usually called "rad s mladima", which literally translates into English as "working with youth". As such, it is not a coherent concept but rather a descriptive category without specific meaning, as many professionals across many different disciplines "work with youth". As a consequence, youth work is generally poorly understood, except by a very limited circle of experts.

10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

Governance

The [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) (Directorate for Demographic Development, Family, Children and Youth -> Family, Children and Youth Sector -> Office for Youth and Volunteering) is responsible for the development of youth work policy in Croatia. Also formally involved in the governance of youth work is the [Youth Council of the Croatian Government](#). This is a cross-sectoral advisory body to the government with the purpose of participating in the development of youth policy, which also extends to the field of youth work. The Council is based on a quasi co-management principle and has members from the ranks of relevant ministries and public institutions, academia and youth (work) organizations. Additionally, during the last decade the relevant ministry has periodically set up (and dissolved) various working and expert groups on youth work, involving different youth organizations, youth workers and other experts in consultations about issues related to youth work.

Youth work is not a mandatory policy area within the competence of regional and local authorities. The National Youth Programme offers broad recommendations to regional and local authorities but it is up to them to decide if and how they will tackle different areas of youth policy, which includes youth work. Some regional and local authorities opt to focus on youth work in their strategic documents and many offer some kind of support to local youth work organizations, usually in terms of grants and public spaces for youth work activities. Thanks to initiatives such as [Europe Goes Local - Supporting Youth Work at the Municipal Level](#), there is a growing number of local authorities which recognize the importance of youth work and are willing to support it.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

There are no specific mechanisms for cross-sectoral cooperation in the field of youth work, except the aforementioned [Youth Council of the Croatian Government](#) which has members from other relevant ministries (education, employment, health...).

10.3 Support to youth work

Policy legal framework

According to a few brief paragraphs in the (now expired) [National Youth Programme \(2013-2017\)](#), the goal of youth work is to contribute to the personal and social development of young people, to support them in the creation and maintenance of quality personal and social relations, to offer young people non-formal learning opportunities and to empower them as active participants in society and decision-making. It is based on the principles of voluntary participation and non-formal education.

There are no official regulations as to the types of activities which are considered youth work, but traditionally they refer to various non-formal education activities, open youth work, volunteering, international exchanges, peer education, leisure-time activities, activities geared towards social inclusion, health and prevention youth work, environmental protection activities and activities geared towards active participation of young people, informing and counselling.

National youth strategic documents have normally recognized several main categories of youth work providers. They include local and regional youth information and counselling centres, youth clubs, youth centres, and youth organizations. These are almost exclusively civil society initiatives but there is also a growing number of public youth work providers (youth clubs and youth centres founded by local or regional authorities).

Social inclusion has been the main policy focus in the field of youth work in the last several years. The Government has thus encouraged youth work projects focusing on several groups of young people at risk of social exclusion, particularly unemployed young people and NEETs, young people leaving care, young Roma and young people living in rural areas.

Youth work organisations in Croatia do not have stable and adequate financial support for their work. They are forced to take on as many projects as they can in order to secure basic (almost exclusively one-year) funding for their youth work activities. Since there is no institutional or long-term programme support for youth work organizations, youth work activities are mostly (short-term) project activities and heavily influenced by the priorities of different donors and calls for project proposals. Such project dynamics make activities less sustainable and it becomes more difficult to focus on the process element of youth work or on the development of competences and attitude and behaviour change (which usually require a long-term intervention). Another issue which threatens youth work organizations is the unreliability of funding sources. Although all national public bodies are obliged to schedule their calls for project proposals in advance and publish the tentative dates in a joint calendar, many of them do not stick to their plans. This makes operational planning for youth work organizations extremely difficult.

Funding

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The [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) is the main source of funding for youth work organizations. The Ministry normally issues two yearly calls for project proposals aimed at youth work providers (a call for project proposals in the area of violence prevention among children and young people and a call for project and programme proposals aimed at youth). This second call has several priorities which usually include the support for regional and local youth information and counselling centres, youth clubs and youth centres, as well as for projects which promote active participation of young people in society and decision-making. Other areas of support may change according to yearly priorities. For example, in 2019 they included support to young people in rural areas, unemployed young people, NEETs and young people at risk of social exclusion.

Normally, there are no specific criteria for applicants, except for those which compete for the support for regional and local youth information and counselling centres, youth clubs and youth centres. They have to satisfy a comprehensive list of criteria related to their work (space where activities take place, types and number of activities and services offered, geographical scope of activities...). Sometimes, ministry support is also conditioned by mandatory project partnerships or membership in organizations.

Generally, there are no proscribed activities which are funded (although calls for project proposals usually list potential or preferred activities), except in the case of regional and local youth information and counselling centres, youth clubs and youth centres, as explained above.

Other ministries also issue calls for project proposals which fall in the category of youth work. For example, the [Ministry of Science and Education](#) has a yearly call for projects supporting extra-curricular activities for students, and the [Ministry of Health](#) has a call for civil society organizations which work in health promotion and prevention. However, these calls are not geared exclusively towards youth work organization. Many local and regional authorities also support youth work activities. Usually, only bigger cities have a call for project proposals aimed specifically for youth work organizations, while in smaller towns and municipalities youth organizations have to compete with other civil society organizations in a single unified call for project proposals. The same is true for the three-year institutional support offered by the [National Foundation for the Development of Civil Society](#). The Foundation is one of the very few public bodies which operate institutional grants but there is not one specifically dedicated for youth work organizations.

EU funds are available to youth work organizations within the [Erasmus+](#) programme. Every year more and more organizations apply for support and the absorption of funds is almost complete. Other EU funding opportunities come from the [European Social Fund](#) and other programmes. However, very few youth work organizations have sufficient operational and financial capacities to be able to implement such demanding projects. Moreover, the extensive administrative burden imposed by the national operating bodies implementing the European Social Fund is so overwhelming that most youth work organizations are discouraged from even attempting to apply.

Cooperation

There are no frameworks for cooperation among youth work stakeholders established or promoted by the national authorities. It is only possible to single out the well-established practice of grant-making public bodies to encourage cooperation by adding extra scores in the project proposal evaluation if the project will be carried out in partnerships between youth work organizations and public bodies (such as schools or social services). Sometimes these kinds of partnerships are mandatory, which occasionally has negative effects. For example, in previous years in order to get support for their work, youth information and counselling centres had needed to secure a partnership with their local or regional

authority. There had been instances when, for political reasons, a local authority had refused to cooperate with an organization, which, in turn, could not apply for the grant even though it had been offering excellent youth work services.

Although encouraged, cooperation with schools is often hard to establish for youth work organizations because many schools have very arbitrary criteria for the programmes which may be run by civil society organizations. However, most schools require the youth work extra-curricular programmes be verified by the [Ministry of Science and Education](#). Yet, the Ministry does not have a defined procedure and publicly known criteria for verification which is very discouraging for many youth work organizations.

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

Quality assurance

There are no quality assurance standards or systems for youth work activities. The only exception to some extent is the work carried out by local and regional youth information and counselling centres. Croatia is a signee of the [European Youth Information Charter](#) which lays out basic principles of information and counselling youth work. All organizations running activities in this area are required to adhere to the Charter, and if they wish to receive funding from the Ministry, they must be members of the [National association of youth information and counselling centres](#). The national association is supported by the Ministry to provide accredited training for its members to ensure a certain level of quality of work as well as the adherence to the Charter.

Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

There is no institutional framework supporting research and evidence-based youth work. The national authorities fund an occasional general research into the youth population or an evaluation of the implementation of the national youth programme but there is no systematic research approach to youth work by the relevant Ministry.

So far there has been only one attempt at research in the area of youth work – a survey of youth work providers conducted by the [Croatian Employment Service](#) in 2016. The survey was standardized and it is used generally with employers as a first step in the process of creating occupational and qualification standards. The survey targeted managers of youth work organizations and it focused on the scope of work of their employees - youth workers - tasks they normally perform, competences necessary for these tasks, working condition, etc.

The [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) has secured funds from the European Social Fund to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the state of the art of youth work in Croatia within the [Supporting the development of youth work in Croatia](#) project. The plan was to use the results of the research, derived from the perspectives of youth work providers, other youth organisations and young people themselves, as a basis for the development of a coherent occupational and qualification framework for the youth worker profession. Originally, the research was supposed to be implemented by the end of 2017 but the latest information indicate that it will be carried out in the first half of 2020.

Meanwhile, due to the slowness of the process, other stakeholders ([Institute for Social Research Zagreb](#) and its partners) got involved and initiated a similar research in 2019 in the framework of the [SEEW](#) project. The findings, which are expected in early 2020, will be used in the process of professionalization of youth work and the development of formal youth work study programmes.

It should be noted that the [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#) collects and publishes youth work best practices in order to facilitate learning in the sector and to contribute to better quality of youth work activities.

Participate Youth Work

There are no specific youth work policies but a few measures targeting youth work in the expired [National Youth Programme \(2013-2017\)](#). National youth programmes are usually developed in a participative way, with young people taking part in several ways. Usually, they are targeted in research which precedes the development of a youth programme. Representatives of youth organizations normally make up the majority of thematic working groups in the process of drafting measures for the programme. They are also present as members of the [Youth Council of the Croatian Government](#) which is involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of a youth programme and other youth policy strategic documents.

Increasingly, young people are participating in youth policy issues, which include youth work, through the mechanism of the [EU Youth Dialogue](#).

Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

There are no top-level initiatives in the area of smart or digital youth work initiated or supported by national authorities. The only exception are international training opportunities organized within the [Erasmus+](#) programme and facilitated for Croatian youth workers by the [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#). The Erasmus+ programme also offers funding opportunities for innovative projects in the area of digital youth work.

10.5 Youth workers

Status in national legislation

The status of youth worker is not recognized in the national legislation and there are no specific standards and criteria for youth workers.

Education, training and skills recognition

There are no specific educational paths for youth workers in Croatia and there is no youth worker qualification. Youth workers in Croatia have diverse backgrounds but they are predominantly coming from education, social work and other social and humanities fields. Apart from their original fields of study, they acquire their youth work competences by the “learning by doing” principle as well as by undergoing non-formal training in the field of youth work. There are no procedures for the validation of skills and competences gained by youth workers through non-formal and informal learning.

In 2018 the [Institute for Social Research in Zagreb](#) and the [University of Rijeka](#) embarked on a joint project of creating the life-long learning educational programme [Young People in Contemporary Society](#), the first of its kind in the Western Balkans region. One semester-long programme, accredited with 30 ECTS credits is designed as a certified programme for the professional development of those already working with young people in civil society organisations or in other institutions relevant for carrying out the measures and activities outlined within the national youth programme, as well as for those considering a career in the youth work field.

Mobility of youth workers

There are no existing national programmes offering youth workers mobility opportunities, with the exception of the [Erasmus+](#) programme. In 2019 youth work organizations from Croatia carried out 24 EU-wide youth worker mobility projects (training courses and job shadowing) with a total of 664 mobilities.

10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

Existing arrangements

There are no specific tools for recognition / validation / accreditation of competences acquired by young people participating in youth work activities. The only recognition tool promoted by the national authorities is the so-called [Certificate of competences acquired during volunteering](#). However, the tool had not been developed specifically for young people but for volunteers of all ages.

Young people participating in international activities within the [Erasmus+](#) programme are encouraged to use [YouthPass - Recognition tool for non-formal & informal learning in youth projects](#).

Skills

There are no top-level national policies and/or recognition mechanisms which identify specific skills and competences that can be acquired through youth work

10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

Information providers

The network of local and regional youth information and counselling centres offers up-to-date information about youth work opportunities for young people in their local communities and beyond. The information is available on their websites, but also in different physical places like the centres themselves, or their various info stands in schools, libraries, cafes, pop-up stands in the streets.

Many other youth organizations run info services for their members, mainly through mailing lists or social media.

The [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#) offers information about youth work opportunities within the [Erasmus+](#) programme on its website, social media and mailing lists.

In Croatia there is also a wide network of local [Eurodesk multipliers](#) (youth organizations) which offer information about scholarships, internships, training opportunities, seminars, etc.

Key initiatives

The [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#) continually informs the public about the value of youth work, particularly in the EU context, targeting youth organization, schools and young people.

The [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) is currently implementing an ESF-supported project entitled [Supporting the development of youth work in Croatia](#). One of the planned activities for autumn 2020 is the public campaign which will focus on the promotion of youth work, its benefits for young people and society at large.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

After the expired [National Youth Programme](#) in 2017, The [Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) is expected to finalize the new national programme, and its adoption by the government should happen in early 2020. Youth work will have a more prominent place in the new programme in comparison to the old one.

Also in 2020 the [SEEW](#) project will initiate the process of developing occupational and qualification standards for the youth worker profession. This will pave way for the development of formal and non-formal education and training programmes for youth workers and further professionalization of the field.

In 2021 and beyond [University of Rijeka](#) is expected to host a life-long and a tertiary level education programme for youth workers based on the findings of the [SEEW](#) project.

Ongoing debates

The current state of youth work development in Croatia is characterised by a strong initiative towards the professionalization of youth work, driven by a group of youth workers, researchers and other experts. This primarily focuses on the development of basic professional standards in youth work practice and the training of youth workers with the aim of raising the quality and the scope of youth work provision. This initiative still has to get a wider support from youth work organizations and youth workers across the country. There are opposing voices who fear that professionalization of youth work would kill the volunteering base on which most of youth work in Croatia still rests. Another fear is that professionalization would push aside existing youth workers who will not have a formal qualification but possess youth work competences and experience. This process will also touch upon other related professions which share some feature of youth work and it will be necessary to jointly explore and negotiate boundaries, as well as points of convergence. Another big issue that should be explored is the impact of professionalization on the education system and the labour market.

Therefore, the next couple of years should be devoted to creating spaces for conversation between youth workers, youth organizations, young people, decision-makers, representatives of education system, labour market experts, researchers, practitioners in related professions and all other interested parties who might contribute to the inclusiveness and the quality of the process.

GLOSSARY

Higher education student union - a student representative body which protects students' interests, participates in the decision-making process within university bodies and represents students in higher education structures

National Youth Strategy - documents that lists activities of state administration bodies and public institutions that, through their scope and responsibilities, contribute to meeting the needs of young people and improving the quality of their lives for the purpose of their optimal social integration

Occupational training without commencing employment - on-the-job advancement at the employer's lasting for 12 or 24 months, covering health and retirement insurance and travel expenses by the employer, and salaries in the amount of HRK 2,620.80 covered by the Croatian Employment Service. This measure may be used by unemployed persons up to 30 years of age who have no more than 12 months of internships

Permanent seasonal worker - measure aimed to financially support workers who are employed only during the season, and the second part of the year they are not employed. Employer is financed with 100% of the expense of extended insurance for the first 3 months, and in the next period lasting for no more than 3 months 50% of the extended insurance.

Poverty - lack of material or financial assets

Public work - socially useful work initiated by the local community or civil society organizations

Social exclusion - a relatively permanent, multiply conditioned and multidimensional deprivation of an individual. Social exclusion involves more than a shortage of money or material goods, and in addition to the economic it includes social, cultural, political and other dimensions. It means that anti-exclusion policies presume a better access to institutions and other mechanisms of social integration.

Student school councils - bodies that represent interests of pupils, to resolve problems through participating in a real school or community life with the support of teachers, parents local community authorities and national school authorities

Volunteering - 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, without existence of any conditions of providing a financial reward or seeking any other material benefit for volunteering accomplished

Youth Advisory Boards - advisory bodies of local and regional self-government units that promote and advocate the rights, needs and interests of young people at local and regional level.

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ARCHIVE

Information from previous years can be accessed and freely downloaded through the PDF files below.

2018:



[Croatia.pdf](#)

2017:



[Croatia.pdf](#)