



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Croatia

2021

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://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki>

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Croatia

Youth Policy in Croatia

National youth policy falls within the scope of [the Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) and is regulated by the department of youth within this office. 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, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#).

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

According to the former National Youth Programme for the Period 2014-2017 (Nacionalni program za mlade 2014 – 2017), 'youth' in the Republic of Croatia refers to persons aged between 15 and 30 years old.

According to the data provided by the Census of 2021, youth represent 15.9% of the total population of Croatia (comprising 618,054 people). Table 1 provides an overview of youth in the Republic of Croatia by age and gender.

Table 1.

		2021	
	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
15-19	189,982	97,767	92,215
20-24	212,089	108,482	103,607
25-29	215,983	110,167	105,816

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 census in the Republic of Croatia in 2011 found that there were only

652,428 children (aged between 0 and 14 years old) and 553,574 children by the census from 2021. This indicate that the number of young people in the general population is set to decrease further. Young people between 15 and 29 years are also decreasing – in 2011 they represented 18.6%, while in 2021 only 15.9%.

1.1 Target population of youth policy

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1.2 National youth law

Existence of a National Youth Law

There is no Youth Law in the Republic of Croatia.

Scope and contents

There is no Youth Law in the Republic of Croatia.

Revisions/updates

There are no revisions or updates.

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](#)).

Adoption of the Act on Strategic planning and Development Management System of the Republic of Croatia and accompanying documents established a legal framework for a comprehensive strategic planning system covering the national level and regional and local self-government. In addition, the situation resulting from the outbreak of COVID-19 has actualized the problems of young people that need to be addressed by creating new measures. Consequently, and recognising the problems faced by young people, as well as their great potential and the importance of public policies to young people, the Central State Office for Demography and Youth has launched a procedure for drafting a new National Programme for young people which will cover all important priority areas and measures of public policies for young people aimed at improving the conditions and quality of life of young people based on the current needs of young people.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the youth strategy

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) is in charge of proposing and implementation of strategic documents, laws, acts, programmes and projects in the youth policy filed as well as their monitoring and evaluation.

For the implementation of measures concerning competencies, the main designated competent authorities are also:

- [The Ministry of Science and Education](#),
- [The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#),
- The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development ([Ministarstvo gospodarstva i održivog razvoja](#))
- The Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds ([Ministarstvo regionalnoga razvoja i fondova Europske unije](#))
- [The Ministry of the Interior](#),
- [The Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets](#),
- The Ministry of Health ([Ministarstvo zdravstva](#))
- [The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs](#),
- [The Ministry of Culture and Media](#), and
- [The State Electoral Commission](#).

New Government of the Republic of Croatia was formed in summer of 2020, after parliamentary elections in Croatia. Here are listed newly formed Ministries.

The National Youth Programme is not part of a general national development policy but is a separate strategy.

Revisions/Updates

The new National Youth Programme 2022-2024 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 Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)). Within the Central State Administrative Office there is the Youth Office which is a part of the Youth and Parenting Support Sector.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth was founded in the August of 2020 by the Regulation on Internal Structure of the Central State Administrative Office for Demography and Youth (OG 97/2020) ([Uredba o unutarnjem ustrojstvu Središnjeg državnog ureda za demografiju i mlade \(NN 97/2020\)](#)). The newly formed Central State Administrative Office took the main responsibilities of the former Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy in the youth field.

- [Parliamentary Committee on the Family, Youth and Sports](#)
- [Youth Advisory Board of Republic of Croatia](#) (Savjet za mlade Vlade Republike Hrvatske)

Advisory Board:

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 organisations and provides recommendations for the improvement of their work and support systems
3. Provides recommendations for the development of youth policies at local, regional, national and European levels
4. 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.

Local level

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, 144/20](#)).

The Republic of Croatia consists of 21 counties (including the City of Zagreb), 127 towns and 428 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, 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 former 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 Central State Office for Demography and Youth 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) ([Zakon o savjetima mladih, NN 41/14](#)), and their members and deputy members are elected for a term of three years.

Main themes

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

- results and recommendations from researches
- analyses of valid strategic documents in the Republic of Croatia:
- the National Development Strategy of the republic of Croatia until 2030 ([Nacionalna razvojna strategija Republike Hrvatske do 2030.](#))
- the Croatian Qualifications Framework Act ([Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru, NN 22/13, 41/16, 64/18, 47/20, 20/21](#));
- 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, 64/20](#));
- 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 (Strategija razvoja poduzetništva u Republici Hrvatskoj 2013.-2020.);
- the Youth Guarantee Implementation ([Plan implementacije Garancije za mlade](#));
- the Labour Market Act ([Zakon o tržištu rada, NN 118/18, 32/20](#));
- the National Health Development Plan 2021-2027 ([Nacionalni plan razvoja zdravstva za razdoblje od 2021. do 2027. godine](#)).
- 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 programmes](#), 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. The evaluation 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 competent authority responsible for youth is the initiator and coordinator of youth policy strategy development. The competent authority responsible for youth sets 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 are 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 the proposal of the youth strategy, consultations with the interested public is conducted via e-Counselling ([e-Savjetovanje](#)) in which all interested citizens, civil society organizations and others can participate. The competent authority responsible for youth then harmonizes the proposal and delivers it 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.

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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 whereby 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.

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 Act on Youth Advisory Boards 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 sources

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

- [Institute for Social Research, Centre for Youth and Gender Studies](#), which is responsible for studying youth and women. The Centre carries out research in the scientific fields of sociology, political science and philosophy, with an emphasis on the interdisciplinary approach and the longitudinal monitoring of social phenomena and processes

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 Programme 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.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth, according to the [annual Financial Plan](#) for current year spends around 0,4% of the total budget for the area of youth policy. According to the [Financial Plan for 2022](#), it is planned to spend 0.37% of financial resources for the area of "youth policy".

What is funded?

The Call for Proposals for Youth-Oriented Projects in 2021 financed 110 projects within 7 priority areas:

1. Active participation of young people in society 1.1. Encouraging young people to actively participate in society (8 projects were awarded a total of 775,000.00 HRK) 1.2. Youth and sustainable community development (5 projects were awarded a total of 572,573.84 HRK)
2. Youth counselling and information, youth leisure organization and support community youth initiatives 2.1. Information centres for young people (5 projects were awarded a total of 518,346.60 HRK) 2.2. Organization of free time of young people through youth clubs (6 projects were awarded a total of 575,000.00 HRK) 2.3. Youth centres (8 projects were awarded a total of HRK 1,067,222.89)
3. Increasing knowledge and skills, employability and competitiveness in the labour market and encouraging social inclusion of young people (work with young people in NEET status) (4 projects were awarded a total of 469,785.40 HRK)
4. Youth in rural areas (23 projects were awarded a total of 2,075,000.00 HRK)
5. Prevention of violence against and among young people (22 projects were awarded a total of HRK 1,675,000.00)
6. Work with young people in areas affected by the earthquake (16 projects were awarded a total of 1,275,000.00 HRK)
7. Prevention of youth addiction (8 projects were awarded a total of 973,443.67 HRK)

The total sum for projects in 2021 amounted to 9,976,372.40 HRK.

The specific objectives of the above-mentioned tenders are:

- Encouraging young people to take on and practice the role of active citizen in various parts of social life and to solve certain social problems,
- Raising the level of information of young people about their rights and opportunities and about the programs and services offered to them in the local community,
- Reduction of all forms of violence against and among young people,
- Preservation of mental health and psychological well-being of young people,
- Prevention of all forms of youth addiction,
- Encouraging civil society organizations to take action to improve the conditions for meeting the needs of young people.

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

Use of EU funds

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth 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 relevance of youth work

Some youth and for-youth associations use EU funds.

The EU funds used are 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 ([Zakon o Agenciji za mobilnost i programe Europske unije, NN 121/17](#)) (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 budget for the youth field inside Erasmus+ programme for 2021 ([proračun – područje mladih unutar Erasmus+ programa](#)) was EUR 4,499,631.00 and for 2022 is EUR [5,130,764.00](#).

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

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 Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) has representatives in the National Working Group for the EU Youth 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.

Current President of the Managing board of the Croatian Youth Network, civil society organization that acts like National Youth Council, is a member of European Youth Forum.

International cooperation

A Memorandum on cooperation in the youth sector was signed between the former Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy of the Republic of Croatia (competent state body for youth till mid-2020) 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

Forthcoming policy developments

New Government of the Republic of Croatia was formed in summer of 2020, after parliamentary elections in Croatia. In the new Government, the competent state body for youth is the Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)), founded in the August of 2020 by the Regulation on Internal Structure of the Central State Office for Demography and Youth (OG 97/2020) ([Uredba o unutarnjem ustrojstvu Središnjeg državnog ureda za demografiju i mlade \(NN 97/2020\)](#)). The newly formed Central State Office took the main responsibilities of the former Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy in the youth field.

A national working group for the drafting of the new National Youth Programme ([Nacionalni program za mlade – novo](#)) has been formed in November 2017. 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

Public e-Consultation on the National Youth Programme Draft was held in January 2020 after which the document was not adopted. A new Working Group was established to draft the National Youth Programme for the period from 2022 to 2024 in July 2021. The new working group consists of representatives of state administration bodies, public institutions, educational institutions, youth organizations and organizations for youth. The task of the Working Group is to prepare a Draft Proposal of the National Youth Program for public consultation and, after the public consultation, to prepare a Proposal of the National Youth Program which will be sent to the Government of the Republic of Croatia for adoption. The act is expected to be adopted in 2022.

Recognising the problems they encounter, as well as the great potential of young people and the importance of public policies targeting young people, the Central State Office for Demography and Youth recognised the importance of proactive action towards creating a positive, comprehensive and inclusive youth policy, i.e. the adoption of a new strategic document in the field of youth, which will cover all important priority areas and measures of public policies for young people aimed at improving the conditions and quality of life of young people based on the current needs of young people.

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

In Croatia there is no Law on Youth Volunteering but there is an [Act on Volunteering](#) where the official definition of volunteering 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 [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#). This office 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 Development

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 former 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 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 ([Zakon o volonterstvu, NN 58/07, 22/13, 84/21](#)) 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, nine activities are recognized that cannot be considered voluntary: 1. performing those services or activities that are in contravention of the Republic of Croatia 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; 9. internships and other forms of training of persons who are employed for the first time in the profession for which they were educated, that is, who in this way acquire work experience which is determined by law or other regulations as a condition for performing the jobs of the profession for which they were trained.

2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

Governance

The main actor involved in making decisions in the field of youth volunteering is the [Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy \(MLPSFSP\)](#). It should be noted, however, that MLPSFSP is responsible for volunteering regardless of volunteer age, so it is not just directed towards youth volunteering. Under the [Act on Volunteering \(OG 58/07, 22/13, 84/21\)](#), MLPSFSP 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 Volunteering,
- taking other measures and tasks to develop volunteering and implement the Act on Volunteering.

The National Committee for the Development of Volunteering 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 Republic of Croatia (RC), who are also representatives of the MLPSFSP, [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 Volunteering](#), under the Act on Volunteering (OG 58/07, 22/13, 84/21) 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 58/07, 22/13, 84/21).

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 Republic of Croatia 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 formed the [Croatian Volunteer Development Center](#) and thus work jointly with decision-makers in the field of volunteering. In addition to regional volunteer centres, there are also about thirty local volunteer centres which, if they meet certain criteria, can become members of the national network of volunteer centres, which is one of the programmes of the Croatian Volunteer Development Centre.

Cross-sectoral Cooperation

In the past, the framework for cross-sectoral cooperation in this field had been laid out in the [National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development from 2012 to 2016](#) and the [National programme for Youth 2014-2017](#). However, currently there are no valid strategic documents which regulate cross-sectoral cooperation in the field of volunteering. Regardless, the [National Committee for the Development of Volunteering](#), as a platform for cross-sectoral cooperation, is active (the current members were nominated in 2019 for a two-year term).

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

There is no national volunteering strategy, nor there is one specifically related to youth volunteering.

In 2015 the Government drafted a proposal of the National programme for volunteering development for the period from 2015 to 2018. However, the document had never been adopted and no new initiatives have since been put forward.

Scope and Content

There is no national volunteer strategy.

Responsible authority

The development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of a national volunteering strategy is within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy.

Revisions/ Updates

There are no revisions of this strategy.

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

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

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

Funding

The relevant Ministry has been supporting the work of regional and local volunteer centres via one- or three-year grants since 2009. The awarded grants are aimed at building the capacities of civil society organizations (volunteer centres) for the development of quality and sustainable volunteering programs and increasing public awareness on the importance of volunteering for social and economic development in Croatia. Most of the volunteering programmes have young people as one of the main target groups. Many projects also focus of the development of volunteering in primary and secondary schools.

Table: An overview of the state financial support awarded to regional and local volunteer centres for the period from 2009 to 2020

Year	Number of regional volunteer centres	Number of networks	Amount in HRK	Number of local volunteer centres	Amount in HRK	Total
2009	4	/	600.000,00	/	/	600.000,00
2010	4	/	600.000,00	/	/	600.000,00
2011	4	/	500.000,00	/	/	500.000,00
2012	4	/	500.000,00	4	200.000,00	700.000,00
2013	4	/	780.000,00	12	980.000,00	1.760.000,00

2014	4	/	780.000,00	12	999.940,00	1.779.940,00
2015	4	/	925.028,00	18	2.199.757,00	3.124.785,00
2016	4	/	925.028,00	15	1.850.000,00	2.775.028,00
2017	4	/	925.028,00	18	2.000.000,00	2.925.028,00
2018	4	/	636.000,00	20	1.764.000,00	2.400.000,00
2019	4	1	891.000,00	28	2.709.000,00	3.600.000,00
2020	4	1	1.000.000,00	27	2.570.000,00	3.570.000,00
TOTAL						24.334.781,00

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

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

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

Characteristics of young volunteers

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

Furthermore, according to the [Comparative Statistics on Volunteering for 2019 and 2020](#), a total of 112,666 persons volunteered. In 2019, 3 % more persons volunteered more than in 2018, and 25 % less persons volunteered than in 2020, due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Table: Number of volunteers, volunteering hours and volunteer organizers in the period 2012 – 2020

	Total number of volunteers	Total number of volunteer hours	Total number of volunteering organisers
2012	19,422	1,222,583	446
2013	29,235	1,652,965	671
2014	45,955	2,597,121	1,032
2015	52,208	2,943,902	1,367
2016	48,731	3,332,984	1,217
2017	47,372	2,603,676	1,164
2018	62,699	3,253,667	1,497
2019	64,280	3,043,954	1,502
2020	48,386	2,819,655	1,574

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 number of volunteers continued to grow in 2019 with the exception of 2020 and the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

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. After 2018, the number of volunteer hours is falling. Year 2020 is an exception due to COVID-19.

Positive trends also include the total number of volunteer organizers, which was on a steady rise and tripled from 2012 to 2020. That means that there is growing number of volunteer organisers which included more volunteers who volunteered a little bit less volunteer hours in last two years.

Volunteers are mostly Croatian citizens, while the share of foreigners in the total number of volunteers between 2017 and 2020 is around 2,5%. In 2020, women are more likely to be volunteers (59%), while men participate on average with 41%. According to the same data, the largest share of volunteering is carried out in associations (87%), then in

institutions (8%), and other non-profit subjects (3%). The fewest volunteers are present in units of local and regional self-government, religious communities, foundations and tourist communities (none of them exceeds 1%).

Support to young volunteers

According to the [Act on Volunteering](#), the volunteer has the right to reimbursement of the expenses incurred for carrying out volunteer work (e.g. purchase of special clothing or equipment for volunteering, travel costs, accommodation, meals, etc.) and such fees are not considered as a cash award or property gain. The Comparative Statistics on Volunteering includes data on the total cost of volunteering which refers to the reimbursement for travel, accommodation, meals, education and other volunteers' expenses. The Comparative Statistics for 2019 and 2020 states that in 2019 the total cost of volunteering was 16,121,311.91 HRK (approximately 2,149,500 EUR), which is 1% more than in 2018. Same Comparative statistic for 2020 states that the total cost of volunteering was 11,324,342.78 HRK (approximately 1,509,910 EUR), which is 30 % less than in 2019. Also, a volunteer has the right to receive benefits under the EU program and international programs related to the funding of volunteering programs.

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

Quality assurance

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

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

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

The Croatian Volunteer Development Center works on standardizing and improving the quality of the most important stakeholders necessary for the development of volunteering. The Center has developed a number of resources aimed at raising quality of volunteering projects and programmes (e.g. [Quality Standards of Volunteering Programmes for Volunteer Organizations](#), [Volunteer Management for Non-Profits](#), etc.)

Target groups

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

2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

EU programmes

In the Republic of Croatia (RC), [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 were [155 completed volunteering projects](#) and only one Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas project under the new programme in the period from 2018 to 2020.

The Agency monitors the participation of end-users in the Erasmus+ program (including ESC) 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.

Other programmes

There is no participation in other cross-border programs funded by at least 50% by the state.

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, 84-21), 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 R in accordance with the provisions of the Act on Volunteering, [the Aliens Act](#) (OG 113/20), 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, 3, 75, 110 and 125.

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 (OG133/20), 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 alien volunteers 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 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 Croatia, volunteer work is classified as regular work. Volunteers coming from EU member states do not need work permits to volunteer anywhere in the EU, but on the

(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).

basis of reciprocity, restrictions on access to the Croatian labour market apply to volunteers from certain EU Member States, and they need residence and work permits to be able to volunteer in Croatia.

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, Pension System, Family and Social Policy 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, 84/21), the [Aliens Act](#) (OG 113/20) 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 does 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 Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) and the [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#).

Contact Points for getting information on volunteering:

- [Croatian Volunteer Development Center](#)
- [European Youth Portal](#)
- [Association of Youth Information Centres](#) and its member organizations

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 2021. Additionally, many volunteer centres organize regional and local annual volunteering awards.

[National Foundation for Civil Society Development](#) annually presents [Award "Heartprint" – 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 "Heartprint" was awarded in May 2019.

Croatian Volunteer Development Center has been organizing the public manifestation "[Croatia volunteers](#)" since 2011. It is a massive volunteering event involving thousands of volunteers in short-term volunteering project all over the country. It aims to point out the importance of volunteering for contemporary society's development. The manifestation is usually held at the end of May. A similar initiative entitled "[72 hours without compromise](#)" has been organized in cooperation of several Christian youth organizations since 2015. The annual three-day massive volunteering event promotes solidarity, cooperation and creativity and encourages young people across Croatia to volunteer.

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 receives 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, the communication support is awarded annually, changing the main topic every year. So, in 2020, Government of the Republic of Croatia Office for Cooperation with NGOs and Croatian Public Relations Association, this time in cooperation with PR agencies (Aplauz Communication and Manjgura) awarded two associations with "[Communication support to organizations' socially useful programmes](#)" which will carry out activities of education and raising the level of awareness in local environment/communities in order to promote sustainable development.

2.7 Skills recognition

Policy framework

According to the [Act on Volunteering](#) (OG 58/07, 22/13, 84/21), 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 ([MLPSFSP](#)), 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 Labour, Pension system, Family and Social Policy](#) (MLPSFSP). 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](#) (OG 22/13, 41/16, 64/18, 20/21) 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 non-formal 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, Rules and Examples \(second revised edition\), 2013](#)).

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 non-formal learning outcomes in projects co-financed under the Erasmus+ program, placing policies into practice and vice versa.

2.8 Current debates and reforms

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 Labour, Pension System, Family 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. The last nomination of members of the National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism was in November 2019 for next two years.

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, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) carries out administrative and coordinating tasks related to employment programmes. The main partner of MLPSFSP in the implementation of policies for employment and entrepreneurship at the level of the Government of the Republic of Croatia is the [The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development](#).

3.1 General context

Labour market situation in the country

The activity rate of Croatian youth is among the lowest in Europe, and in 2020, it was 41.0% for young people aged 15-29. According to [research results on a national representative sample of 2,000 young people in 2013](#) out of 508 young employees covered by the survey, the largest share of young people (38.0%) was employed in a small private enterprise or craft. Employment in a large private enterprise (26.5%) is almost equal to working in the public sector (23.7%). Employment in a family or a private company or craft is at modest levels and together includes less than tenth of youth. Regarding the type of contract signed by young people, half of all young people are employed on indefinite period full-time contracts (49.8%) and 41.7% on definite period full-time contracts, while only a modest part of them is employed for a certain (4.6%) or indefinite (2.8%) reduced working hours (i.e. part-time jobs). The average number of working hours indicates almost half of the young people (46.9%) who are doing average hours (40 hours a week), one third of them (33.5%) is working above the average and up to 50 hours a week, while those working more than 50 hours is 9.1%, and youth who work less than average is 11.4%. The earnings of young people are largely below the national average; 14.2% of young people receive monthly wages below 14.2%, 28.9% receive between HRK

2.501 and 3.500, 21.8% of them receive HRK 3.501-4.500, 17.1% of them receive HRK 4.501-5.400, and only 18.1% have wages around the national average.

Youth unemployment

Croatia holds the top position in Europe for youth unemployment at the time of writing this work, 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. Total unemployment of young people aged 15-29 in 2020 was [16.6%](#), while unemployment broken down into age subgroups was [50.8%](#) for young people aged 15-19, [15.2%](#) for young people aged 20-24, [13.2%](#) for 25-29 years old, and in the subgroup of 20-29 years unemployment was [14.0%](#). There are [25.8%](#) of young people (between 15 and 29 years) with low education (less than primary, primary and lower secondary education), [57.0%](#) of upper secondary education (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education) and [17.2%](#) of young people in tertiary education. In 2020, there are 3.8% long-term unemployed young people while in 2015 there was 15.3% long-term unemployed young people aged 15-29. The EU average for 2020 is 3.2%. The share of youth outside the education system, training and the labour market (NEET) is also relatively high and in 2020 it was [14.6%](#) for the 15-29 age group.

The results of the [aforementioned research](#) show that in the group of unemployed 62.9% of young people are supported by parents during the unemployment, 38.4% occasionally perform various jobs, 12.6% are supported by their employed spouse, 10.5% receive [cash benefits from the Croatian Employment Service](#), 1.8% receive assistance from humanitarian organizations, and 0.8% have 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)

3.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Public actors

Ministries

The [Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) (MLPSFSP) carries out administrative and coordinating tasks related to employment programmes, and the [Labour Inspectorate](#) is also located within the Ministry. MLPSFSP 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 – 2020](#), approved by the [Government of the Republic of Croatia](#).

The main partner of MLPSFSP 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 and Sustainable Development \(MESD\)](#). MESD carries out administrative and other activities related to small and medium-sized entrepreneurship, crafts, cooperatives, promotion of exports and foreign investments, 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 [annual programme](#), and upon consultation with a working group involving representatives of social partners and relevant civil society organizations.

- 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](#),
- [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 sector, and the purpose of partnership is to elaborate and develop 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:

- [Independent Trade Unions of Croatia](#)
- [The Association of Croatian Unions](#)
- [The Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia](#)

Schools and universities

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

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 of 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 ([OG 140-2009](#)).

Non-public actors

There are 121 [temporary employment Agencies](#) operating in Croatia.

Consultation with youth

In the area of youth policy, the [Croatian Youth Network](#) (CYN), is an alliance of 72 youth and for-youth non-governmental associations (according to the data from [2021](#)) 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.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The aforementioned stakeholders all work in youth employment related issues, policies, tasks, etc.

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, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) (MLPSFSP). 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 Education Enrolment Policy and Scholarship policy](#) and the identification of [occupational standard](#) in the [Croatian Qualification Framework - CROQF](#). Croatia had the Strategy for Lifelong Learning Career Guidance in the Republic of Croatia 2016 – 2020., but a new one has not been adopted in the meantime.

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 legislative work involving the [Ministry of Science, Education](#) and the Ministry of Labour, Pension [System](#), Family and Social Policy.

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 on Interests and Competences](#). CES also offers a number of other [e-tools](#) for career guidance and career development for young people.

Professional orientation through [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 1.438.181,00 was invested in professional orientation [in 2019](#) under the supervision of the [Croatian Employment Service](#). 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 and the aim of preserving jobs, 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 support measure refers to the subsidies for employment for the purpose of acquiring first professional experience [in industry](#) or [in the public sector](#). This measure may be used by unemployed persons up to 24 and CES subsidizes 50-100% of a young person's salary.

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

The apprenticeship programme is being promoted online and in media before the end of the academic year, and through individual sessions with students during professional counselling.

With regards 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

For the Youth Guarantee measures in the period 2014-2020 Croatia had access to 132,54 million EUR from the EU Structural Funds: 66,36 million EUR from the European Social Fund and 66,18 million EUR from the Youth Employment Initiative. With national co-funding this amounts to almost [150 million EUR](#).

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, whereas external evaluation uses self-evaluation and the 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). 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 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, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) 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, Pension System, Family and Social Policy governs the committee responsible for these policies.

[Active labour market measures](#) are within the jurisdiction of the Croatian Employment Service (CES), covers another seven 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 \(for youth between 15 and 24 years\)](#): the CES awards a monthly lump sum amount of support, regardless of the actual cost of the employer, in accordance with the level of education and the possibility of using tax benefits for the co-financed person. Amounts of support may be increased or decreased during the co-financing period involving the co-financing of minimum 40% costs of monthly lump sum, or minimum 65% for persons with disabilities;
3. [Employment subsidies - green/digital](#) (for youth between 15 and 24 years): the CES awards a monthly lump sum amount of support, regardless of the actual cost of the employer, in accordance with the level of education and the possibility of using tax benefits for the co-financed person. Amounts of support may be increased or decreased during the co-financing period. For employers who meet the criteria of a green or digital work, and in accordance with the definition of green and digital works defined by the [Glossary](#), the amounts of support are minimum of 45% cost, or minimum of 70% for persons with disabilities;

4. [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.
5. [Apprenticeship grants](#): the aim of the measure is to enable persons to work independently by encouraging the employment of persons by co-financing the cost of their annual gross I wage and other costs to employers prescribed by this measure. The CES awards a monthly lump sum amount of support, regardless of the actual cost of the employer, in accordance with the level of education and the possibility of using tax benefits for the co-financed person involving minimum of 50% to maximum of 58%.
6. [Apprenticeship grants – green/digital](#): the aim of the measure is same as above-mentioned with the emphasis on criteria of green or digital work, accordance with the definition of green and digital works defined by the Glossary. The minimum amounts of support are 60% with maximum of 70%.
7. [Apprenticeship grants – public services](#): the aim of the measure is encouraging the employment of persons who do not have more than 6 months of registered insurance experience in certain public services. The measure finances 100% of the amount according to the apprenticeship amount of the annual I wage, which is 85% of the amount of the annual I wage of the workplace, also and finances the costs of transport to the workplace.

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" [Burza Rada]; 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 93/14, 127/17, 98/19), 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 and [knowledge base](#). 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, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#), and the main provider through which the money is allocated to the beneficiaries of the measure is the [Croatian Employment Service](#).

For the year 2022, HRK 1,021,725,800.00 is foreseen for employment measures. Sources of funding are the state budget, the European Social Fund plus (ESF +) and the [National Recovery and Resilience Plan](#).

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](#) (YG) 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.

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](#) (CES) 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. More information for the Croatian Programme can be found at [the web page](#).

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 included Austria; Malta; Netherlands; Slovenia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

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

Employment of third-country nationals was possible only through [annual quota for the employment till end of 2020](#). If a person was 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.

As of January 1, 2021, the new [Aliens Act](#) entered into force in the Republic of Croatia. According to the new Aliens Act, the Government of the Republic of Croatia no longer makes a decision on determining the annual quota for the employment of foreigners. Employers are obliged to request the [Croatian Employment Service](#) to conduct a [labour market test](#) before applying for a residence and work permit for foreigners.

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

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 was supported by [the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning \(SEECCEL\)](#), whose main goal was to establish strategic cooperation between the seven 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 engaged in entrepreneurship teaching in Croatia.

3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Policy framework

Young people are recognized as a target group in the [Strategy for the Development of Entrepreneurship 2013-2020](#). According to the latest available data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor from 2020, the share of youth aged 18-34 in entrepreneurial activities was 52.1% on global level and 45.6% for EU2020. Republic of Croatia had [58,0%](#) entrepreneurial activity of young people in 2018, measured by TEA index (share in age group). One of the goals of the Strategy refers to the development of entrepreneurship competence. However, it is solely focused on supporting the development of small businesses, strengthening their management, increasing the number of highly qualified employees and supporting life-long learning of employees in small businesses. Croatia had an entrepreneurial learning strategy from 2010 to 2014 but it was not subsequently renewed. Additional strategy is the [Strategy for the Development of Women`s Entrepreneurship 2014-2020](#). The strategy aims to encourage entrepreneurship among women and reduce the gender gap. The first strategic goal of the "Competitive and Innovative Economy" includes entrepreneurship, but without a clear emphasis on youth entrepreneurship.

The new strategic goals for Croatia until 2030 are defined in the new [National Development Strategy 2030](#).

Formal learning

Education for entrepreneurship is addressed in the [National Curriculum Framework](#) from 2017, developed by the Ministry of Science and Education. The National Curriculum Framework establishes 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.

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

Continuing professional development (CPD) is available for all teachers in primary and secondary education, including school-based IVET. Starting from school year 2014/15, the Education and Teacher Training Agency (ETTA) initiated a series of CPD seminars and workshops for school staff (school heads, teachers and others) focusing on EE. These activities are financed from the regular funds for general CPD activities conducted by ETTA. [Eurydice report '[Entrepreneurship education at school in Europe](#)']

3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

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 a 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

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.

3.11 Current debates and reforms

In December 2019, the current [Labour Act](#) was adopted and its application started in January 2020. The new Labour Law was drafted during 2021, and further discussion and its adoption is expected in 2022.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

According to the [National Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021-2027](#) and the accompanying [Action Plan for the period 2021-2024](#) young people are recognized as one of ten groups at the highest risk (children and young people are first group).

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 Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) is a responsible state authority for combating social exclusion.

4.1 General context

Main challenges to social inclusion

According to the [decision](#) of Government of Croatia new [The National Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021-2027](#) that was brought in December 2021, ten groups at the highest risk are set out:

- children and youth;
- the elderly and pensioners;
- homeless
- the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed;
- single households, single-parent families, children without parental care, families with more than two children;
- returnees and displaced persons, asylum seekers, foreigners under subsidiary protection, asylum seekers, persons living in deprived areas and in rural areas;
- national / racial / religious minorities;
- children and young adults with behavioral problems, victims of crime, especially victims of trafficking and victims of domestic violence;
- children with disabilities;
- Croatian veterans and victims of the Homeland War and members of their families, as well as civilian victims of the Homeland War and members of their families facing problems such as poverty, social exclusion, disability, unemployment, illness, unresolved housing, difficult social contacts, without support families, etc.;

The causes of poverty and social exclusion are usually multidimensional, and risk categories often overlap. Nowadays, there are large numbers of young people who are at risk of social exclusion who do not necessarily fall into the existing classification of minority groups (young Roma, young people with disabilities, young people without adequate parental care, etc.).

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

Due to the large differences in the characteristics of young people at risk of social exclusion, engagement of many support systems is needed. It is therefore important to coordinate the actions of all stakeholders at different levels of society and in different areas, especially in the areas of employment and education, and the transition from education to employment, where the greatest risks occur.

When it comes to youth unemployment, there have been positive changes in the period from 2016 to 2020, but the unemployment rate remains high ([see chapter 3.1.](#)) In addition to statistics on youth unemployment, research entitled '[Needs, Problems and Potentials of Youth in Croatia](#)', published in January 2015 has indicated that young people themselves view unemployment as the most significant problem in their group. Unemployment directly influences their ability to become independent, plan for the future, build one's own skills and capabilities, and enrich one's own education.

Furthermore, in Croatia the poverty and social exclusion rate is at 19.1% in 2020 for young people aged 16-24. The percentage is in continuous descending from 2011 when the risk was at 34.8%. ([EUROSTAT](#)).

Main concepts

The National Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021-2027 emphasises differentiation between poverty and social exclusion.

The term poverty is mostly defined as a lack of material or financial assets. The term social exclusion has a wider meaning that needs to be understood as 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.

The National Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021-2027 refers to the European Commission's definition of social exclusion as a process that pushes individuals to the margins of society and prevents them from fully participating in society, by virtue of their poverty, a lack of basic competences, chance for lifelong learning or due to discrimination. It is affected by a series of different and interconnected factors, such as regional inequality, unemployment, poor professional or social skills, low income, bad housing conditions, belonging to a minority group, etc. It includes the inability of the individual to access public services, to participate in community life and to function in society with a feeling of personal dignity.

Ilišin; Spajić Vrkaš, 2013. [Needs, problems and potentials of youth in Croatia](#). Report. Zagreb: Former Ministry of Social Policy and Youth (last accessed 28/01/2022).

4.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The main governmental authority

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) is responsible for youth policy. The Office 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, programmes and projects in the field of youth policy, and monitoring and evaluation thereof, especially in the involvement of young people as partners in the processes of 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 programmes aimed at preventing the social exclusion of young people and providing the basis for a complete, creative and dignified life in their youthful times.

- [The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) carries out administrative and professional affairs related to the care of persons and families who do not have enough resources to meet basic needs or need assistance to overcome the causes of social vulnerability.

Regional/local authorities

According to 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, 144/20](#)) 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-sectoral cooperation

A number of stakeholders were participating in the preparation of [The National Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021-2027](#): government administration bodies, public administration body, civil society organisation and social partners. The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy is responsible for the National Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021-2027.

Crucial to the fight against poverty and social exclusion is the coordination of 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 national plan 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. This requires public activities directed to a greater extent towards persons with existential difficulties and aimed at relieving them from seeking out protection mechanisms on their own, which, due to insufficient familiarity among 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 national plan implementation programmes also build in measures, which strengthen cross-sectoral 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 in the areas:

1. Social welfare
2. Health care
3. Upbringing and education
4. Pension system
5. Housing care
6. Regional development
7. Civil society development

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 ([see chapter 1.9.](#)).

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, the minimum living standard for the most endangered population and to ensure that conditions are in place for the prevention of new occurrences of poverty and social exclusion. 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 indebtedness; ensuring Roma inclusion; and other goals specific for particular strategic areas.

Strategic programme 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 equal 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 on 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 housing policy development (ensuring affordable apartments for youth and the socially endangered, protecting the real estate in which a person lives, etc.) and homelessness prevention. Also pointed out is developing innovative programmes in all fields (social innovation), as well as 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

Activities under this priority focus on establishing coordination and cooperation at all levels for the purpose of harmonizing policies and establishing a data collection and exchange system. It also emphasizes ensuring high-quality analysis and research for enabling the monitoring and evaluation of implementation measures to serve as a foundation for the adoption of strategic decisions and further policymaking in this area.

Responsible authority

[The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) is responsible for the Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia (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 or updates.

4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

One of the priorities of the Central State Office for Demography and Youth is certainly to provide funds to support and operate youth organisations and further encourage the work of youth associations and youth organisations in order to improve the quality of life of young people. In addition, tender documentation is being prepared for the public call for national financing of projects aimed at young people in 2022.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth published the [Call for proposals in 2021](#) for youth-oriented projects which will be implemented in 2022. 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 encouraging young people to actively participate in society, encouraging young for sustainable community development and for quality organized leisure time and supporting youth initiative in the community. The call points out and the priority of working with young people in NEET status through increasing their knowledge and skills, employability and competitiveness in the labour market and encouraging social inclusion of young people. New initiatives in communities with fewer opportunities such rural areas and earthquake-affected areas are also mentioned, as is including young people affected by addiction or violence against and among young people.

When defining priorities of a call, the Central State Office for Demography and Youth 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 "Increasing knowledge and skills, employability and competitiveness in the labour market and encouraging social inclusion of young people (working with young people in NEET status)".

Funding

Based on Call the Central State Office for Demography and Youth was conducting 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 [2021](#), for example, the total amount for the call for proposals for all priorities was amounted of 9,976,372.40 HRK . Four projects within priority area Increasing knowledge and skills, employability and competitiveness in the labour market and encouraging social inclusion of young people (working with young people in NEET status) were awarded a total of 469,785.40 HRK (approximately EUR 62,638.00) and 23 projects within priority area "Youth in rural areas" were awarded a total of 2,075,000.00 HRK (approximately EUR 276,666.00) Additionally, new priority area in 2021 was "Work with young people in areas affected by the earthquake" and 16 projects were awarded a total of 1,275,000.00 HRK (approximately EUR 170,000.00).

In addition to youth-oriented calls, the former Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy 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 was the former Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy. The Ministry awarded 15 programmes within priority area "Youth work-oriented activities" and 2 programmes within priority area "Establishment and activities of youth centres" in May 2018.

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

- Inclusive society through reading ([Čitanjem do uključivog društva](#)), opened from December 2020 till March 2021. Total value of the grant is 41,000,000 HRK.
- 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 deinstucionalizacije 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 deinstucionalizacije – 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.

In 2020 the former Ministry of Labour and Pension System opened the Call for project proposals "[Find me!](#)" - [implementation of activities to reach and educate inactive young people in NEET status](#) (UP.01.2.0.04) under Priority Axis 1 "High employability and labour mobility", Specific Objective 8.ii.1 (IZM) Increasing employment and rapid integration of the NEET Group through the Youth Employment Initiative (IZM) into the labour market, Operational Program "Effective Human Resources 2014-2020". The Minister of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and the Director of the Croatian Employment Service A presented 31 contracts with a total value of HRK 50 million within the Call to civil society organizations, public bodies, sports societies, etc.

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

Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia ([Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina](#)) was implementing till the end of February 2020 the project "Roma Inclusion - Fulfilling preconditions for successful implementation of national minority policies - PHASE I" ([Uključivanje Roma - Ispunjavanje preduvjeta za učinkovitu provedbu politika usmjerenih na nacionalne manjine \(faza I\)](#)).

The funding is envisaged from European social fund. The total amount of the funding was 10,853,065.12 HRK (approximately 1,447,000 euros). The funding ratio is 85% from ESF and 15% was national funding.

The main outcomes were:

- The level of public and Roma awareness on the importance of preschool and high school education, and on Roma women, children and young people position is increased,
- the Office position is strengthened as well as capacities of representatives of bodies in charge for NRIS implementation, and
- the Roma participation in NRIS implementation is improved.

The main target groups addressed were:

- Representatives of the Office and bodies in charge for NRIS implementation

- Members of Roma national minority

Two activities were implemented in 2020.

The second activity was a virtual conference "[Inclusion of Roma in Croatian Society: the Position of Women, Children and Youth](#)".

The project 'National Roma Platform - Living Equality' ([Nacionalna platforma za Rome – Živjeti jednakost](#)) aims 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 which leads to violent extremism

At 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 Central State Office for Demography and Youth has published in 2021 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 za 2021. godinu](#)). 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 former Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy published in 2019 last 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 in 2019](#)). The mentioned call was 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

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, 58/21](#)) 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, 146/20](#)) 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 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 annually publish a contest for admission of pupils into boarding home in which they publicly announce the number of vacancies and conditions for admission to the boarding home for the next school year. If more pupils apply than the number of available places, the pupils' boarding home 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 is not established. Young people can exercise their rights under the general social welfare system. According to the Social Welfare Act ([Zakon o socijalnoj skrbi, NN 157/13, 152/14, 99/15, 52/16, 16/17, 130/17, 98/19, 64/20, 138/20](#)), 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 circumstance
- 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 former Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy is deinstitutionalisation and transformation of homes for children and young people ([Deinstitucionalizacija i transformacija domova za djecu i mlade](#)). 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 youth health care is described in details in [the chapter 7. Health and Well-Being](#).

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

Policy/legal framework

There is no separate legal document dealing solely with youth work in order to encourage social inclusion.

However, the goal of the [National Youth Programme for the period 2014-2017](#) was to improve the activities of state administration bodies and public institutions, which, by their sphere of competence and competencies, contribute to meeting the needs of young people and raising the quality of their lives for the purpose of their optimal social integration. As one of the ways of combating unemployment and social exclusion of young people, it is certainly youth work.

In the National Youth Programme for the period 2014-2017, Goal 1.2. Create Institutional Prerequisites for Improving Youth Work, includes Measure 1.2.1. Enhancing youth work through co-operation between civil society organizations and decision-makers. This measure envisages financing for non-formal education programs with the aim of strengthening the capacity of youth organizations and organizations for youth to promote the well-being of young people, strengthening the capacity of state administration personnel by participating in non-formal education programs on youth work and developing an analysis of the possibilities for professionalization of youth work.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth published in 2021 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.

The former Ministry provided financial support for projects and programmes in five priority areas, one of which is 'Raising of skills and knowledge, employability and labour market competitiveness, and fostering youth social inclusion. 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.

Within this priority area, the former Ministry awarded six projects total amount of 437,000.00 HRK in category 'Youth work with young people in NEET status' and six projects total amount of 480,000.00 HRK in category 'Social inclusion of young people in social care system'. Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

Concerning [calls for proposals for youth-oriented projects and programmes for financial support available from a portion of the games of chance revenues and State Budget](#), in 2017, a call for three-year program financing for specific priorities was implemented.

The annual amount for calls differs depending on current financial obligations under previously agreed programs and defined priorities. In 2015, for example, the total amount

for calls for all priorities amounted HRK 7,392,000.00. For the priority area "Youth Work with Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)", in accordance with the submitted and evaluated programs, the agreed funds amounted to HRK 795,000.00 (annually) for 7 programs. This is a three-year program financed from the state budget, and contracted each year in the same amount.

These programs are about implementation of different activities. The programs are implemented at the local level, reaching the users differently - in cooperation with schools, social welfare centres, PES regional offices, etc. All activities have in common encouraging inclusion in the education system, system of training or employment. Part of the activities are aimed at empowering, educating and motivating young people at risk of social exclusion for active inclusion in the labour market (counselling, job search support, labour market research, support for tendering, submission of open applications, preparation for interviews with employers, education focused on communication and presentation skills, etc.). Some programs also include activities that are more "preventive" in terms of working with young people at risk of leaving school, etc.

Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people

Youth work has a long tradition through the work of numerous youth organizations and organizations for youth, which are the main providers of youth work in the field of social inclusion.

Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes

No government-provided special training or support for youth workers is available in Croatia on, or related to, social inclusion.

Financial support

Please see [section 4.4.](#) for more information.

Quality assurance

Applicants whose projects are approved are obliged to submit a narrative and financial report to the Central State Office for Demography and Youth, in accordance with the provisions of the financial support agreement.

4.8 Current debates and reforms

New Government of the Republic of Croatia was formed in summer of 2020, after parliamentary elections in Croatia. In the new Government, the competent state body for youth is the Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)), founded in the August of 2020 by the Regulation on Internal Structure of the Central State Office for Demography and Youth (OG 97/2020) ([Uredba o unutarnjem ustrojstvu Središnjeg državnog ureda za demografiju i mlade \(NN 97/2020\)](#)). The newly formed Central State Office took the main responsibilities of the former Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy in the youth field (see Chapter [1.9 Current debates and reforms](#)).

[The State Audit Office](#) of the Republic of Croatia has conducted [the Performance audit of measures and activities undertaken on poverty alleviation in the Republic of Croatia](#). The audit covers the period 2014 -2018. The objects of the audit were the measures and activities adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia according to the implementation documents adopted on the basis of the Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia (2014 -2020) and their impact on poverty alleviation. On the bases of the established facts, and taking into account the objectives of the audit, the State Audit Office estimates that the measures and activities undertaken

on poverty alleviation in the Republic of Croatia are partially effective and require significant improvements.

At [the beginning of 2022](#), the Republic of Croatia is in the phase of adopting seven laws that are part of the reform of the social welfare system, and related to which are three national plans adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia at the end of 2021.

The new [Social Welfare Law](#) sets new measures. The fee for housing costs is being redefined, the amount of the fee for the personal needs of the user, the right to an accommodation service or organized housing is being increased. New services such as comprehensive assessment and planning, prior expert assessment, social mentoring and psychosocial treatment to prevent violent behaviour are also prescribed.

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 Youth Programme](#) 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 in Croatian youth policy.

Institutions of representative democracy

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 able to directly participate in administering local affairs, through meetings, referendums and other forms of direct decision-making, in conformity with law and statute.

Legislative

In Croatia, parliamentary and local elections are organized every 4 years while presidential and the European parliamentary elections are held every 5 years. According to the [Croatian Constitution](#), every Croatian citizen of full age has the right to vote and be elected. The election is conducted by secret ballot and direct suffrage. Moreover, the 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.

The Croatian Parliament (Sabor), according to the [Constitution](#) consists of 100-160 parliamentary seats. [Constitutional Law on national minorities \(OG 155/2002\)](#) allows national minorities to have at least five and not more than 8 representatives at the national parliament. Moreover, the [Act on Election of Representatives to the Croatian Parliament \(NN 116/99, 109/00, 53/03, 69/03, 167/03, 44/06, 19/07, 20/09, 145/10, 24/11, 93/11, 120/11, 19/15, 104/15, 98/19\)](#) 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 the Italian national minority shall elect one representative to Parliament
- Members of the Czech and Slovakian national minorities shall together elect one representative to Parliament
- Members of Austrian, Bulgarian, German, Polish, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenian, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vallachian and Jewish national minorities shall together elect one representative to Parliament
- Members of Albanian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Macedonian and Slovenian national minorities 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 express 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, and is responsible for the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia. The President 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 proposes laws and other acts to the Croatian Parliament, the state budget and final accounts, implements laws and other decisions of 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 defence'. 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

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 the participation of 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 old, according to [the Political Parties Act \(OG 76/93, 111/96, 164/98, 36/01, 28/06\)](#). From the age of 16, young people can become members of youth wings of political parties.

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

Currently there are [no MPs under the age of 30](#) at the Croatian Parliament (February 2022).

5.3 Youth representation bodies

Youth parliament

In Croatia, a National Youth Parliament does not exist.

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

Youth Council is an interdepartmental advisory body of the Croatian Government with the mission to participate in developing youth public policies.

Pursuant to the Croatian Government Decision on Establishing the Youth Council of 11th March 2021 ([OG 26/2021](#)) the number of Council members has increased, and the number of representatives of associations and organizations of youth and for youth in that governmental advisory body.

In pursuing its mission, the Council especially:

1. Participates in continuous monitoring and analysis of the public policy related to and/or influencing youth in the Republic of Croatia
2. Participates in giving opinion to the Croatian Government on draft regulations of particular significance for improving the status of youth
3. Follows up the work of ministries and other public administration bodies in implementing, monitoring and evaluating youth policies within their jurisdiction, and gives opinions and recommendations in that respect

4. Follows up the development of associations of youth and for youth and provides recommendations for the improvement of their work and support system
5. Gives recommendations for the development of youth policies and inclusion of youth at the local, regional, national and international level in delivering these policies
6. Monitors societal phenomena important for youth and recommends related measures
7. Assures continuous dialogue of state bodies, public administration bodies, civil society organizations, youth councils and the academic community, media and other representatives of the interested public, on the improvement of the status of youth in the Republic of Croatia
8. Executes missions in which the main purpose of the Council's agency is accomplished, with the aim of creating a stimulating environment for the improvement of the status of youth.

The Council has 33 members, representatives of public administration bodies and offices of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Association of Cities in the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Municipality Association and the Croatian County Association, representatives of scientific and educational institutions, the representative of the Croatian Students' Council, and the representative of the National Student Council of the Republic of Croatia. A total of eight representatives of associations of youth and for youth are appointed on a proposal of the Central State Office for Demography and Youth, based on the conducted selection procedure, in accordance with the Criteria for the Membership in the Youth Council. The President of the Council is elected from the pool of representatives of associations of youth and for youth, following their proposal. It has to be a person below 30 years of age. The President, Council members and their deputies are appointed for a two-year term and may be re-appointed. The Council was established based on the [Decision on Establishing the Youth Council of 2012](#), the Decision on the Amendments to the Decision on Establishing the Youth Council of 2015 and the Decision on the Amendments and Addition to the Decision on Establishing the Youth Council of 2017. The Council's agency is regulated by the [Rulebook](#). Professional and administrative service is provided to the Council by the [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#).

Higher education student union(s)

According to the Act on Students' Council and Other Students Organizations ([Zakon o studentskom zboru i drugim studentskim organizacijama, NN 71/07](#)), Students' Council 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 Students' Council, which all together form [Croatian Students' Council](#) (CSC).

Croatian Students' Council (CSC) is an umbrella organisation of all Croatian students that aims 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 and Science, as the major student organisation in Croatia. It is considered as a ministry's partner in the fields of the reform of higher education and the improvement of the student welfare, educational policies and student participation in the decision-making process. CSC became a full member of the European Student Association in 2001. In addition, CSC is 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 (student councils' members) are elected in student elections where every student can cast a vote and be elected. The higher education student union is financed from the budget of the university budget.

School student union(s)

Student school councils are defined by the Act on primary and secondary school education ([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, 64/20](#)). 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. Primary and Secondary Student councils - students are encouraged at school, city, county and national levels 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:

- Students' county councils
- Students' city councils
- National students' council of the Republic of Croatia

Other bodies

No documents suggest that other bodies exist in 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 EU Youth Dialogue. It serves as a platform for discussion on issues and priorities of youth policy. The National Working Group for the EU Dialogue with Youth consists of youth representatives, representatives from the state office 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 and on-line discussions. Depending on the topic, a researcher is contracted to analyse the results of consultation and propose a background paper for defining national priorities.

Actors

The National Working Group for the EU Dialogue with Youth consists of youth representatives, representatives from the state office in charge for young people and the national Erasmus+ agency.

Information on the extent of youth participation

There is no information on the extent of youth participation.

Outcomes

In 2020 the Advisory Board for Youth issued a series of recommendations on the topics of student welfare and participation, young people with disabilities, youth work and local and regional youth advisory boards. However, there is no evidence of concrete outcomes of these recommendations.

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

Apart from the EU Youth Dialogue campaign, named 'EU asks you' ([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 national strategy to increase youth participation in political and civil society but the National Youth Programme usually covers youth participation topic. However, the last youth programme expired in 2017 and the government still has not adopted a new one.

Scope and contents

There is no national strategy to increase youth participation.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

There is no national strategy to increase youth participation.

Revisions/Updates

There is no national strategy to increase youth participation.

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 a youth organization. Nevertheless, the [National Youth Programme 2014-2017](#) distinguishes two types of organizations – youth organizations and organizations for young people. While the former category refers to civil society organizations led by young people (people under the age of 30 in managerial positions), the latter refers to all civil society organizations with activities partially or totally oriented towards young people.

The [Law on Associations](#) (NN 74/14, 70/17, 98/19) elaborates on the constitutional right to citizens' associations, defining them as all forms of free and voluntary partnership of persons, or legal entities, for the purposes of protection of their benefits or the promotion of human rights protection and freedom, ecological, humanitarian, informational, cultural, national, pro-natal, educational, social, vocational, sports, technical, health, scientific or other beliefs and aims, with no intention of profit-making. Young people and their active participation are mentioned in the body of the text as one of examples of working for the public good. According to the Ordinance on the content and on the means of conducting the Register of Associations ([Pravilnik o sadržaju i načinu vođenja registra udruga Republike Hrvatske i registra stranih udruga u Republici Hrvatskoj, NN 4/2015](#)), each organization has to be categorized by its form, scope and target group. Therefore, civil society organizations can define themselves as working with or for young people as a specific target group.

Youth organizations participate in the Youth Council, as explained in the [section 5.3](#).

The Croatian government has also 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 which is discussed 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 and a budget item relating to the implementation of youth policy.

Details on public funding schemes through which youth organisations receive financial support are described in [Chapter 1.7 Funding youth policy](#).

Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

Usually, the National Youth Programme targets some specific groups such as unemployed young people, young people at risk of social exclusion, and youth and for-youth associations, but there is no available information since the last programme expired in 2017.

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 programme under the promising name National Programme of Education for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship. The Programme 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, etc.

In 2010, with the adoption of the National Curriculum Framework citizenship, education was defined as a separate 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: human rights, political, social, (inter)cultural, environmental and economic.

After the pilot version of the curriculum, despite positive evaluation, an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular model which diverged from the tested one was introduced in schools. The programme 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 the 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 can 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 the inefficiency, ineffectiveness and inadequacy of the existing programme.

Several local and regional governments have autonomously introduced and are implementing citizenship education as an elective subject in schools (Rijeka, Osijek)

Non-formal and informal learning

There are number of civil society organizations conducting various education programmes intended for increasing 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 a different perspective of the youth participation field.

It is particularly worth mentioning the Youth Studies programme which has been organized for over a decade by the Croatian Youth Network. The comprehensive programme is aimed at young people aged 15-30 who represent youth organizations or show high motivation for social change. It consists out of several modules which usually focus on youth work, youth participation, youth social movements and activism.

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 – encasing youth participation throughout education.

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

There are no measures in regard to a reference programme or strategy.

Educators' support

Education and Teacher Training Agency organizes training for teachers in the area of citizenship education, however this is seen as unsatisfactory, according to a study.

Numerous civil society organizations are also conducting training for teachers and the most famous coalition of civil society organizations focused on civic education is the GOOD Initiative (GOOD inicijativa).

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 focuses on The Association of Youth Information Centres in Croatia (Zajednica informativnih centara za mlade u Hrvatskoj). This non-profit organization is a national umbrella of info centres for youth and its main goal is to develop a quality system of youth information and counselling. It is a full-fledged member of Eryica. The aforementioned Association gathers regional and youth information centres.

According to the Central State Office for Demography and Youth, regional info centres have to fulfil the following criteria to be considered regional info centres:

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

- provide structured dialogue
- collect and distribute information relevant for young people
- have a youth info centre manager, respond to needs in local community
- are members of The Association of Youth Information Centres in Croatia

There are three regional info centres in Croatia, namely Info zona from Split, PRONI from Osijek, and Zamisli from Zagreb.

Local info centres have to meet following criteria:

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

There are 8 local info centres in Croatia.

The second pillar of information structure in Croatia is comprised of Information and professional guidance centres (Centri za informiranje i savjetovanje o karijeri) - CISOK. The main goal of these centres 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, counselling sessions, presentations, lectures and roundtables. There are 13 CISOK centres.

Within the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, there is a Eurodesk Croatia (Eurodesk Hrvatska), a network of national coordinators which goal is to raise awareness among young people of learning mobility opportunities and encourage them to become active citizens.

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

There are no youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and values.

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 centres and Eurodesk.

5.10 Current debates and reforms

There are no current debates and reforms.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In [2019](#), Croatia had 3% of early leavers from education and training among young people (aged 18-24), which is the lowest percentage in the EU.

In [2019](#) 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 [2019](#) were significantly lower in Croatia (2.2%) compared to the EU average (12.1%).

The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act ([Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru, NN NN 22/13, 41/16, 64/18, 47/20](#)) 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 Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) is the other important governmental body that creates youth public policies in the field of non-formal education.

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, 47/20](#)) 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 2020 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

According to [Eurostat](#) data, in 2020 the percentage of young people (aged 15-29), classified by completed levels of education, was 25.8% for ISCED 0-2, 57.0% for ISCED 3-4, and 17.2% for the ISCED 5-8. Some research findings show that school is a relevant factor of reproduction and social inequality in education at all levels (Spajić-Vrkaš and Potočnik, 2017). Another study finds long-term continuity in social inequalities in access to higher education in Croatia: "Students from better educated family backgrounds tend to be overrepresented in higher education and students from better educated and white-collar family backgrounds are more likely to enrol in academic as opposed to professional study courses" (Doolan, Puzić and Baranović, 2017, p.1).

[Eurostat](#) statistic shows that in 2020 2.2% of young people were early leavers from education and training among young people (aged 18-24), which is the lowest percentage in the EU. Although the rate is low, it is concerning that the main reason for the most of young people who left education was poor material family conditions (Spajić-Vrkaš and Potočnik, 2017).

Erasmus+ is the biggest EU programme for mobility and transnational cooperation in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport from 2014 to 2021. Erasmus+ budget for Croatia ([Erasmus+ Hrvatska](#)) for [2019](#) was 25.5 million Euros and the budget for 2020 for Croatia ([Proračun za Republiku Hrvatsku za Erasmus+](#)) is 32 millions Euros. Budget for 2021 was over 28 million Euros and for [2022](#) is over 36 million Euros. At the same time, according to the research, more than a half of students with international mobility experience had a support from their parents and only 25% had a support from European funds (Spajić-Vrkaš and Potočnik, 2017).

During ten-year period, the number of young people who are able to communicate in English has doubled as well as the number of young people who use computer for study and practice. In the same period, the number of young people who use computer for communication, internet research, and music listening has tripled. Communication in foreign language and digital competence among Croatian youth are at the same level as in EU countries (Spajić-Vrkaš and Potočnik, 2017).

The [Eurostat](#) data for 2019 also shows low levels of young people participating in non-formal education and training (during the four weeks before the survey), only 2.3%, the data shows a decrease from 2016, when the percentage was 2.7%.

Organisation of the education and training system

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

Upper secondary education Secondary school is non-compulsory. Children can choose from vocational schools, art schools, or gymnasiums. Vocational schools can offer 3-year vocational programmes or 4 - 5 years vocational programmes, while gymnasiums offer generalist programmes. Finishing a generalist 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 ([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, 64/20](#)). 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 ([Zakon o znanstvenoj djelatnosti i visokom obrazovanju, NN 123/03, 198/03, 105/04, 174/04, 02/07, 46/07, 45/09, 63/11, 94/13, 139/13, 101/14, 60/15, 131/17](#)), Professional and Academic Titles Act, ([Zakon o akademskim i stručnim nazivima i akademskom stupnju, NN 107/07, 118/12](#)), Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education Act ([Zakon o osiguravanju kvalitete u znanosti i visokom obrazovanju, NN 45/09](#)), and Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications Act ([Zakon o priznavanju inozemnih obrazovnih kvalifikacija, NN 158/03, 198/03, 138/06, 45/11](#)).

For more details about the Croatian education and training system please visit [Eurydice](#).

Main concepts

Main concepts linked with education and learning are formal, non-formal, informal, and lifelong learning, which are defined in The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act ([Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru, NN 22/13, 41/16, 64/18, 47/20, 20/21](#)) and in the Adult Education Act ([Zakon o obrazovanju odraslih, NN 114/21](#)). Besides those concepts, the Adult Education Act also recognises self-directed learning. The concepts are in line with the internationally accepted one.

6.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Main actors

Governing bodies

- [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.
- The Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) is the other important governmental body that creates youth public policies in the field of non-formal education.
- [Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) (Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskoga sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike) inter alia performs services pertaining to programmes of labour requalification and is responsible for the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan ([Plan implementacije Garancije za mlade za razdoblje od 2019. do 2020. godine](#)).

Croatian educational system at all levels is centrally governed from the Ministry of Science and Education (MSE) and the related national agencies:

- 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.
- [Agency for Vocational Education and Training](#) is tasked with planning, developing, organising, implementing, monitoring and advancing the system of vocational education and training.
- [Agency for mobility and EU programmes](#) implements and promotes the European Union programmes as well as other international programmes in the area of science, education, training, and youth.
- [Agency for Science and Higher Education](#) performs a part of the procedure of initial accreditation, procedures of reaccreditation, thematic evaluation and audit, collects and processes data on Croatian higher education, science and related systems.
- National Centre for External Evaluation of Education ([Nacionalni centar za vanjsko vrednovanje obrazovanja](#)) is a public institution for external evaluation in the Croatian education and training system and implement and implementation of exams based on national standards.
- [The Agency for Electronic Media](#) is an independent regulatory body that promotes public interest and media pluralism, justifies public trust through professional and transparent activities, encourages media literacy, creates conditions for the production of quality Croatian audio-visual content and ensures equal conditions for media development and media freedom.

Ministry and the agencies legally proscribe and accredit educational programs provided by educational institutions at all levels.

Consulting bodies

- The National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development ([Nacionalno vijeće za znanost, visoko obrazovanje i tehnološki razvoj](#)) is an expert and advisory body of the Croatian Parliament responsible for the development and quality of higher education in the Republic of Croatia.
- The Rectors' Conference ([Rektorski zbor](#)) includes all public university rectors and decides on issues of common interest for the development of universities.
- The Council of Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education ([Vijeće veleučilišta i visokih škola](#)) consists of the deans of all polytechnics and schools of professional higher education.
- Advisory Board for Youth of Government of the Republic of Croatia ([Savjet za mlade Vlade Republike Hrvatske](#)) 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.

Other public actors

- Croatian Employment Service ([Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje](#)) under which function the Lifelong Career Guidance Centres ([Centar za informiranje i savjetovanje o karijeri](#)), provide information on the possibility of further education and training.
- [The Croatian Pension Insurance Institute](#) is a public institution established on the basis of the Pension Insurance Act which at the same time designated the commencement of

the pension system reform aimed to providing for the mandatory pension insurance (PAYG) entitlements to the employees, farmers, craftsmen and others.

- [The Central Registry of Affiliates](#) (REGOS) is an institution established by the Government of the Republic of Croatia primarily as a public service to its citizens. Regos is focused on keeping and maintaining the register of contributions for mandatory pension insurance by insured persons, on selecting and modifying the mandatory pension fund, keeping records of paid contributions, and collecting and controlling data by insured persons for mandatory pension insurance.

[Representative bodies \(young people\)](#)

[Croatian Students' Council](#) is students' representative body established by the Act on Student Council and Other Student Organizations ([Zakon o studentskom zboru i drugim studentskim organizacijama, NN 71/07](#)). It is an umbrella organisation of all Croatian students aiming to promote their rights and interests.

Students' Council of Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education ([Vijeće studenata veleučilišta i visokih škola](#)) is coordinating body composed of students' representatives of Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education, which promotes their rights and interests.

[Croatian Youth Network](#) 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.

Representative bodies (trade unions and associations)

Some of the trade unions related to the education system are:

- The Trade Union of Croatian Teachers ([Sindikat hrvatskih učitelja](#))
- The Independent Trade Union of Workers in Secondary Education of Croatia ([Nezavisni sindikat zaposlenih u srednjim školama Hrvatske](#))
- The Independent Union of Research and Higher Education Employees of Croatia ([Nezavisni sindikat znanosti i visokog obrazovanja](#))
- The Trade Union of Education of Croatia ([Sindikat odgoja i obrazovanja Hrvatske](#))
- The Trade Union of Croatian School Employees ([Sindikat zaposlenika u hrvatskom školstvu – Preporod](#))

[Croatian Employers' Association](#) protects and promotes employers' rights and interests.

General distribution of responsibilities

[The Ministry of Science and Education](#) administers the salaries of teaching staff - which is the major share of the total budget for education - for all levels of education, except for the lowest level (ECEC) which is provided and administered by the local governments.

At the level of middle schools (upper secondary), regional governments and institutions share the responsibility for appointing the school heads and individual staff members.

For more details about the governance of the education and training system please visit [Eurydice](#).

Cross-sectorial cooperation is performed by cooperation of different ministries and other sector participants, as described in section "Main actors". Public and non-public actors usually cooperate in working groups with specific tasks, such as drafting laws, strategies, curriculums and similar.

One of the biggest cross-sectoral cooperation was related to the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform called "[School for life](#)". The Ministry of Science and Education made a Decision in April 2018 ([Odluka o imenovanju ekspertne radne skupine](#)) by which it has established an Expert Working Group composed from experts and governmental and students' representatives. The Expert Working Group chose [working groups' members](#) for specific curriculums while Education and Teacher Training Agency chose their coordinators.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia established National Coordinating Body and National Operating Body in 2012 for the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology. The Ministry of Science and Education^[2] named coordinators for the strategy and it established numerous thematic working groups which gathered experts from different public stakeholders.

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National Strategy

According to the [Eurostat](#) data for 2019, Croatia has a low rate of early leaving from education and training, 3.0%. 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 government authority responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the document is [the Ministry of Science and Education](#).

[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 government authority responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the document is [The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#).

[The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) 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.

(²) Former Ministry of Science, Education and Sports

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.

Financing continued education for students who have finished two-year and three-year vocational programmes with the goal of supporting lifelong education and giving them the possibility to transition to a four-year vocational education programme. The target group are users at special risk and student groups at high risk. 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 and educational institutions.

Development and implementation of matriculation exam preparations for young people aged 18-25 who have insufficient skills and knowledge to advance to higher education. The carrier of this measure is the Ministry of Science and Education, while implementation associates are secondary school institutions, educational institutions, local and regional institutions, public and private providers of matriculation exam preparation services.

Setting up a registry of human potential to monitor individuals from the start of their education to their employment. 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 and the Central Registry of Affiliates.

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 22/13, 41/16, 64/18, 47/20, 20/21](#)) was adopted in 2013, with the last amendments adopted in 2021. 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 national Ordinance on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, which was supposed to regulate its implementation, has not been adopted. Some Ordinances have been adopted at the level of some universities and polytechnics ([Požega](#), [Šibenik](#), [Rijeka](#), [Split](#), etc.).

Information and guidance

[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). 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 ([Zakon o Agenciji za mobilnost i programe Europske unije, NN 121/17](#)) 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](#)) featured several measures to encourage mobility in higher education. Some of the measures are still ongoing despite the fact that the Action plan has been expired.

The planned activities included 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 envisioned 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 ([Zakon o Agenciji za mobilnost i programe Europske unije NN 121/17](#)) 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 ([dokumenti - godišnji izvještaji](#)) on its work.

AMEUP has commissioned an independent satisfaction survey ([percepcija kvalitete usluga AMPEU](#)) in 2017. Users were most satisfied with the work of AMEUP's employees and when it comes to meeting their expectations (both statements had the average vote 4.3 of 5). Users were less satisfied with the usefulness of information on the AMEUP's website (3.5 of 5).

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 ([K internacionalizaciji obrazovanja – sudjelovanje Republike Hrvatske u programu za cjeloživotno učenje](#)) was conducted, encompassing the 2009 – 2013 period for all sub-programmes.

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Educational support

In Croatian education system a pupil or student with special educational needs is one with learning difficulties significantly exceeding those of his/her peers, or any particularly gifted child, continuously achieving above-average results, thus thus requiring special educational support. In the context of education system inclusiveness, special care is given to the children belonging to national minorities, especially Roma children ([see Eurydice report for Croatia](#)).

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:

- organise a system of individual counselling of students and parents with the school psychologist, class master, teachers, and educators and, additionally, with a speech therapist, social pedagogue and/or educational rehabilitator.
- ensure human, financial and spatial resources for a half-day school stay during which an extended professional approach is implemented.
- establish a fair and efficient system of educational assistants.
- 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.

- Eliminate spatial obstacles from kindergartens, schools, and student dormitories, and equip 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.
- 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.
- Employ the necessary number (at least two) 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- Ensuring a national system of financing for achieving a higher level of accessibility for disabled students.
- 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.
- 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.
- Ensuring technological support and educational assistants for disabled students.
- Ensuring the engagement of institutional services and official bodies in support of disabled students.
- Through ensuring spatial accessibility and universal design, make every resource intended for students available to all students, including disabled students.
- 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.
- 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.

The Ministry of Science and Education awards three types of [state scholarships](#) for full-time students of higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia: state scholarships for students in STEM area, state scholarships for students of low socio-economic status, and scholarships for special groups of students. Special groups of students are:

- full-time students of study programmes for occupations with shortages with special emphasis on teaching study programmes with shortages;
- full-time students with disabilities;
- full-time students categorised as athletes with valid categorisation;
- full-time students who had a right to social housing or organised housing as children;
- full-time students of music or art academies in the Republic of Croatia – talented young artists;
- full-time students who have lost both parents;
- full-time students who are parents.

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 following dimensions ([dimenzije građanskog odgoja I obrazovanja](#)): social, human rights, policy, cultural, economic and ecological dimension. 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 ([Stop nasilju među djecom](#)). 122 of 232 schools involved got the title "School without violence". The programme was devised in cooperation with local experts. A "[Programme Handbook: Prevention of peer violence. For a safe and enabling environment in schools](#)" was published in 2015 and provides a package of materials for the development of school programmes aimed at reducing violence and creating a safe and enabling environment in schools (the 'sees' programme).

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. According to the ministerial decision ([Odluka](#)) for the school year 2019/2020 only one project was awarded a total of 132.500,00 HRK in that field.

[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 ([kuruikulum nastavnog predmeta Tehnička kultura](#)) for primary schools lists the educational policy commitment to innovation; however, the only mention in the curriculum is of technical innovation as a process in teaching technical culture. 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 ([Cjelovita kurikularna reforma](#)) 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:

- 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. According to the ministerial decision ([Odluka](#)) for the school year 2019/2020 14 projects were awarded a total of 1.504.903,68 HRK in that field.

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

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. According to the ministerial decision ([Odluka](#)) for the school year 2019/2020 14 projects were awarded a total of 1.504.903,68 HRK in that field.

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*. The first project step was funded by very successful crowdfunding campaign and IRIM's own resources and the second step by the Ministry of Science and Education. Project goal was to improve digital literacy using micro-computers. The project participants were students in six grades, and it is taking place both in classrooms and in extracurricular activities

The Croatian Association of Innovators has developed a programme to systematically work with young innovators ([sustavni rada s mladim inovatorima](#)). The programme

encompasses establishing sections of young innovators, participation at national and international exhibitions, and national exhibition for young innovators.

The main part of [the Union of Croatian Innovators – INOVA Croatia](#)'s platform is the exhibition INOVA 2020 Special Edition which gives opportunity for inventors worldwide to exhibit their inventions on the second oldest invention show in the world, started in 1971. A part of exhibition called INOVA-YOUTH 2020 is dedicated to young people ([INOVA-MLADI 2020](#)).

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 ([Zakon o elektroničkim medijima NN 111/21](#)) dedicates some measures to the protection of young people from offensive and harmful content. The Act was adopted in 2009, while the last version of Act is from 2021. 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 authority responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring is the [Ministry of Culture and Media](#).

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 ([Pravilnik o zaštiti maloljetnika u elektroničkim medijima NN 28/2015](#)). 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.

[The Agency for Electronic Media](#) also adopted the [Recommendations for the Protection of Children and the safe use of Electronic Media \(Preporuke za zaštitu djece i sigurno korištenje elektroničkih medija\)](#) 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.

[The Office of the Ombudsman for Children](#) contributes to the protection of children's rights in the media by monitoring the protection of privacy and protection from harmful content, the realisation of the right of access to information, the provision of high-quality content for children and the participation of children in the creation of media content. As stated in the yearly report, "the Act on Electronic Media offers a solid framework for the protection of children's privacy. However, the violations of this right are rarely recognised in practice and are rarely and very mildly sanctioned" ([Report on the Work of the Ombudsman for Children for 2019](#)).

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

Both the primary school curriculum and the secondary schools curricula ([Nastavni planovi i programi za gimnazije i strukovne škole](#)) have topics 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 (generalist programs and 4-5 year vocational programs), as part of the Politics and economy class ([Nastavni planovi i programi za gimnazije i strukovne škole](#)), students are presented with the unit Politics and the public, which includes the themes of the public opinion, censorship, print, radio, and television.

The civic education ([kurikulum nastavnog predmeta Građanski odgoj i obrazovanje](#)) is an inter-subject module in both primary and secondary schools. It includes topics 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.

Pedagogical tools and support are available on web platform Media Literacy in a separate section for teachers ([Medijska pismenost - učitelji](#)). The founders of the Media Literacy platform are the Agency for Electronic Media ([Agencija za elektroničke medije](#)) and [UNICEF Croatia](#).

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.

There are two initiatives aiming at enhancing young people's media literacy and awareness about online safety issues in the context of non-formal and informal learning. The Centre for Safer Internet ([Centar za sigurniji internet](#)) conducts training, workshops, and debates for students, youth, parents and teachers. The Centre developed three apps and published an educational manual on the safer use of the Internet and starting a specialist study programme Digital safety and privacy.

The second initiative is the project *Choose what you are watching* ([Birajmo što gledamo](#)) implemented by the Agency for Electronic Media ([Agencija za elektroničke medije](#)) and [UNICEF Croatia](#).

The Centre for Safer Internet launched a phone line to report harmful Internet content as well as offering professional assistance to children and parents.

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, digital, and media literacy. According to the ministerial decision ([Odluka](#)) for the school year 2019/2020 3 projects were awarded a total of 307.849,00 HRK in that field.

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

The Centre for Safer Internet ([Centar za sigurniji internet](#)) launched a phone Helpline to report harmful Internet content as well as offering professional assistance to children and parents.

Choose what you are watching ([Birajmo što gledamo](#)) 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 Media Literacy ([Medijska pismenost](#)) aimed at increasing media literacy, as well as media skills and knowledge of children, youth, parents, caretakers, and teachers.

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.

The Croatian Employment Service ([Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje](#)) offers various services related to the career development. One of them is support for education of employed and unemployed persons ([obrazovanje zaposlenih i nezaposlenih osoba](#)).

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

The programmes and brochures ([program za cjeloživotno učenje](#)) 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.

Eurodesk Network and the [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#) holds yearly *Time to move* campaign ([kampanja Time to move](#)) which promotes mobility and non-formal learning.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

The development of the National Curriculum of the Republic of Croatia ([Nacionalni kurikulum](#)) is a part of the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform ([Kurikularna reforma – Škola za život](#)) which is one of the first measures contributing to the realisation of the [Strategy of Education, Science and Technology](#).

[School for Life](#) is a title of experimental programme of the [Ministry of Science and Education](#). The Ministry selected 74 schools in primary and secondary education through a public call. Those schools join the experimental implementation of the program in the school year 2018/2019. The experimental programme was introduced only for some subjects and generations of pupils/students. An external evaluation ([Vrednovanje eksperimentalnoga programa Škola za život u školskoj godini 2018./2019.](#)) showed that the reform is well accepted by school principals, students and parents, the reform has a positive support and that there are good foundation for full implementation.

The most part of initiatives of the [Ministry of Science and Education](#) in education during 2020 was related to the adjustment of teaching in the covid-19 pandemic, especially to organize on-line teaching in formal education system.

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.

The adoption of the Ordinance on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning was planned for 2018 and then for 2019. This was a topic during parliamentary discussion in 2019 ([Odgovor saborskom zastupniku](#)). By the end of 2020 the Ordinance haven't been adopted.

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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: [The Croatian Health Insurance Fund](#), [The Croatian Institute of Public Health](#), Regional Public Health Institutes, [The Ministry of Science and Education](#), [The Ministry of Tourism](#), [The Central State Office for Sport](#).

Currently, there is no strategy specifically targeting youth health and well-being. Other strategies exist, such as [The National Health Care Strategy 2012-2020](#). Furthermore, [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.

Although not only related to youth, the Ministry of Health has launched a public health project entitled "[Healthy Living](#)", which encompasses these priority fields:

- healthy nutrition
- physical activity
- mental health
- sexual and reproductive health

Croatia participates in the implementation of numerous EU projects aimed at improving and encouraging healthy lifestyles and diet among young people in Croatia:

- [Joint Action on Nutrition and Physical Activity \(JANPA\)](#)
- [Reducing Alcohol Related Harm \(RARHA\)](#)
- [Joint Action on HIV and Co-Infection Prevention and Harm Reduction \(HA-REACT\)](#)

A new School Sport Strategy is currently being drawn up. In Croatia, sport as an activity is regulated by [the Sports Act](#). There are many regulations and documents covering physical activity but there is no national document that covers physical activity recommendations specifically for 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 public policies being implemented in Croatia on regional and local levels.

7.1 General context

Youth health and well-being is a concept focused not only on preserving and improving their physical health but also creating a significant wider social context which would influence the well-being and health of young people, including 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 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.

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 behaviour
- 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 latest issue from 2019 data among the diseases present in the primary healthcare clinics, predominant, are respiratory diseases, with about 322 733 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 in 2018 in Croatia, 33% of 15-year-old girls rated their health as excellent, in comparison to 48% of boys. 15-year-old young people who report multiple health complaints more than once a week are 46% girls and 23% boys. 15-year-old young people who report at least one medically attended injury in the last 12 months are 36% girls and 50% boys. 15-year-olds who are overweight or obese are 13% girls and 23% boys. 15-year-olds who think they are too fat are 29% girls and 19% boys. 15-year-olds who eat breakfast every

weekday 38% girls 50% boys. 15-year-olds who eat fruit daily are 30% girls and 25% boys. 15-year-olds who consume soft drinks daily are 17% girls, 18% boys.

According to **ESPAD** (*European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs*) – a study conducted in 2019, 2 772 Croatian participants of median age 15.7 years. 29% of young people in Croatia stated that they consumed tobacco in the past month, and 54% 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, 29% of young boys and 30% of young girls smoke, which ranks Croatia among the countries with the highest prevalence of smokers that age.

According to the data on using new psychoactive substances, in the last 12 months in Croatia, 5.1% of young people used new psychoactive substances, which ranks Croatia among the countries with the highest prevalence, alongside Czechia Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. It is also important to note that Croatia is a country with the second highest prevalence of inhalants use, at 15%, and the differences between the countries which participated in the study are quite pronounced.

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

- 69% of consider cigarettes fairly or very easily available
- 40% consider cannabis, and 16% consider ecstasy easily available
- 42% tried alcohol before the age of 13
- 22% tried cigarettes before the age of 13
- around 58% have consumed alcohol in the past month
- 90% consumed alcohol at least once in their life

Painkiller use for intoxication among young people is also at a significant rate, at 5.7%, which is above the European average of 4%.

In conclusion, the trends between 1995 and 2019 show that among young people in Croatia substance use is slightly declining.

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 administer 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 programmes 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 the healthcare system, and it is enabled by the high level of knowledge, professionalism and work dedication of 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 and Sport** is responsible for the development of recreational sport programmes and facilities and encouraging 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 years old 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-sectoral 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 that they are in charge of their implementation and have the obligation to report at planned intervals.

The basic determinants of inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral 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 adaptation 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.

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 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 (healthy 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:

- healthy 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 socio-medical 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:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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, religion, 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 Programme 2016

The issuing body for [The Bicycle Training Programme 2016](#) is the Ministry of Science and Education. The bicycle training programme 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 programme 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 programme, 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 the 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 and Education. The Act entered in power in 2008 and 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 and Education. 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 the 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 and Education. 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 and Education. 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 and Education. 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.

[Curriculum for Primary School](#)

Issuing body is the Ministry of Science and Education. 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. Programme Content: 1. Basic Programme, 2. Supplementary Programme: Physical and Health Care Framework for pupils and students who, for health reasons, must have a special programme, Physical Education, Programme 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 and Sport
- the Ministry of Agriculture
- the Ministry of Labour, Pension system, Family and Social Policy
- the Ministry of the Interior
- the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
- 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 European Social Fund, 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 healthy nutrition in schools. 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.

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 certain food products, 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 year 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. Despite numerous social debates, 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 healthier 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)

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) ([Zakon o zdravstvenoj zaštiti, NN 100/18, 125/19, 147/20](#) i [Zakon o obaveznom zdravstvenom osiguranju NN 80/13, 137/13, 98/19](#)). 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

The healthy psychological development of children and youth is based on biological prerequisites, but also on relationships with family and environment. Childhood negative events are a common basis for developing mental health issues which can manifest in childhood, or in adult age, and have suicidal tendencies as a consequence. Inappropriate relationship of parents or other educational figures, mostly in the form of low level of care and high level of control, increases the risk of developing depression by two or three times. Child abuse increases the risk of developing depression by four times, but a wide array of child abuse prevention activities is already being implemented as a part of [the National Strategy of Protection against Family Violence for the period 2017 – 2022](#), as well as

different measures and activities resulting from the strategy. Promoting healthy lifestyles of children and youth as well as improving their socioeconomic circumstances is covered by [the National Strategy for the Rights of Children in Republic of Croatia for the period 2014-2020](#) and different programmes being implemented by local communities. Different programmes for developing parenting and communication skills have also been started. They propose the harmonisation and further stimulation of the development of parenting and communication skills and monitoring early parent-child interaction, with the emphasis on the availability of all possible methods of mental health protection for children and youth in the local community.

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 young people 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 1 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 (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.

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.

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. 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

Culture is permanently placed in a marginalized position in the Croatian context. Main public actor is [The Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia](#), that performs administrative and other tasks in the field of culture. There is no national strategy on creativity and culture for young people in Croatia. In the last National Youth Programme had a whole section dedicated to youth and culture, but it expired in 2017. Other strategies include [The Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2020-2022](#) and [The National Strategy to Revive Book Reading 2017-2022](#).

8.1 General context

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

Research on cultural habits of young people

Culture in youth-related research is largely analysed in the context of leisure time rather than as a separate creative and cultural experience. Leisure time research includes participation in different type of activities, including cultural and artistic ones.

According to the research report *Generation of Disillusioned Youth in Croatia at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (Ilišin and Spajić-Vrkaš, 2017) young people who spend their leisure time in cultural and artistic activities (such as going to a theatre, artistic exhibitions, concerts, cinema, listening classical music, and reading books), form so-called "elite pattern." "Elite" refers to the type of activities but also to the young people's social background. Statistical analysis indicates that socialization in families with higher social status and in urban environments as well as the higher level of academic achievement impacts strongly students' participation in cultural activities.

A survey on cultural needs and cultural capital of young people gave more specific results on the interest in culture and habits of young people (Marcelić, Tonković and Krolo, 2020). The survey from 2016 encompassed high school students from the cities on the Adriatic coast. The research has shown that young people in Dalmatian towns are extremely uninterested in cultural content. 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.

Challenges to young people's participation in cultural experiences

A research on young people's problems and needs has shown that "about a quarter of respondents are satisfied with the way they spend leisure 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" (Buković, N., ed., 2010).

This issue is also highlighted by the situation analysis in the chapter Culture and Youth of the National Youth Program for the Period 2014 to 2017 ([Nacionalni program za mlade za razdoblje od 2014. do 2017. godine](#)): "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."

Main concepts

The Strategy for Protection, Conservation and Sustainable Economic Utilisation of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Croatia (2011-2015) ([Strategija očuvanja, zaštite i održivog gospodarskog korištenja kulturne baštine Republike Hrvatske za razdoblje 2011.-2015.](#)) defines cultural heritage as "all material and non-material traces, remains and products as a result of human agency through the evolution, or it will become such at the certain point."

Culture is permanently placed in a marginalized position in the Croatian context. The position of culture in Croatia is best described by the fact that its current stake of funding is at the level of 0.5% of the total state budget. Additionally, the allocation of resources available to the Ministry of Culture and Media, about 20% of funds are spent for programme needs, while 80% of funds are intended to cover cultural costs (staff salaries, maintenance of premises, overheads, etc.).

The largest number of cultural institutions and actors are concentrated in the City of Zagreb. This is why residents, including young people, outside Zagreb are in a disadvantageous position in relation to the opportunity to participate in creative and cultural experience.

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Main public actors

[The Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia](#) performs administrative and other tasks in the field of culture. Aside from administrative units, the Ministry is composed from: Directorate for Art and Culture Development, Directorate for International Cultural Cooperation and European Affairs, Directorate for Cultural Heritage Protection, Directorate for Archives, Libraries and Museums, and Directorate for Media, and Cultural and Creative Industries.

The Ministry establishes Cultural Councils for certain areas of artistic and cultural creation. Their task is to propose cultural policies goals and measures as well as to ensure artists and cultural actors' influence on decision-making. The members of Cultural Councils are artists, cultural workers and experts.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) is responsible for youth policies.

Other public actors include the following:

- [Kultura Nova Foundation](#) (Zaklada Kultura Nova). Its purpose is the promotion and development of civil society in the Republic of Croatia in the fields of contemporary arts and culture. The initiative was recognized and supported by the Croatian Government and the Ministry of Culture and Media that continue to support further development of the Foundation. The founding of a special foundation for civil sector in culture was anticipated in the National Program for the Youth for 2009 – 2013 Period.
- [The Croatian Audio-visual Centre](#) (Hrvatski audiovizualni centar - HAVC) is the Government-backed strategic agency for the audio-visual sector in Croatia. It aims to stimulate a successful, vibrant audio-visual industry as well as to promote the widest possible enjoyment and understanding of audio-visual works throughout Croatia.
- [The State Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Croatia](#) is the State administration body with responsibilities in the field of protection of intellectual property rights.
- Libraries ([Knjižnice](#)) – as integral part of institution or independent
- Theatres ([Kazališta](#)). Some theatres are especially dedicated to children and young people:
 - [The Zagreb Youth Theatre](#), founded in 1948 as the Pioneer Theatre, has grown from an acting studio for children and the youth with a hundred students and turned into a theatre institution that continually manages to reconcile artistic and repertoire ranges with its pedagogical work.
 - The City Youth Theatre Split ([Gradsko kazalište mladih Split](#)) - together with a professional acting company there is also a studio for children and youth: drama studio for youth, children drama studio and studio for singing and dancing in the context of which there are also vocal- dancing groups "Perle" (String of beads) and "Perlice" (String of small beads).

- Rijeka's Kamov Youth Theatre ([Riječko kazalište mladih „Kamov“](#)), school of the Croatian National Theatre Ivan pl. Zajc, has three studios: a drama studio for primary and secondary school children, a ballet-dance studio for children and young people aged 14 to 25, and a drama group organized in the Italian language for children aged 8 to 12.
- Children's Theatres in Čakovec, Zagreb, Slavonski brod and Osijek as well as Puppet Theatres in Rijeka, Zagreb, Zadar, Split and Osijek
- Student's theatres and studios
- State's archives ([Arhivi](#))
- Museums ([Muzeji](#)) – public and private.
- [Croatian Conservation Institute](#) is the central public institution in the field of conservation and restoration in the Republic of Croatia which carries out activities to protect cultural goods without administrative competence.
- [Register of Cultural Property](#) of the Republic of Croatia is a public record of cultural property kept by the Ministry of Culture and Media. It comprises three lists: The List of Cultural Goods, the List of Cultural Goods of the National Significance and the List of the Cultural Goods under the Preventive Protection

Other (non-governmental) organisations include the following:

- Student Centres are independent institutions which take care of social and personal living standards of students at [Universities](#). The main activities include accommodation, catering, providing temporary and periodical part-time student employment, and organizing leisure activities (including cultural events).
- [Rijeka 2020 LLC](#) was jointly founded by the City of Rijeka and the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, for the purpose of implementing the European Capital of Culture 2020 in Croatia project. The company's goal is to independently, efficiently and transparently perform the Rijeka 2020 – ECoC project by implementing operational, programme and communication strategies, while the infrastructural investments specified by the Bid Book will be managed by the City of Rijeka and the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County.
- [The Museum Documentation Centre](#) (MDC) was registered as an independent institution on 22 July 1968 with the task of systematically collecting, recording and cataloguing material dealing with the development and activities of museums, collecting professional museological literature, documentation, and materials serving professionals in their personal and the development of the museum profession in general, promoting the work and activities of museums.
- [The International Centre for Underwater Archaeology](#) (ICUA) is an independent public institution which gained the status of a UNESCO category II centre. Management is conducted and primary funding provided by the Republic of Croatia and UNESCO. ICUA works to protect, study and preserve underwater cultural heritage in Croatia.
- National Network of socio-cultural centres ([Mreža društveno-kulturnih centara – DKC-HR](#)) is a network of civil society organizations. It's aim is to advocate for a public policy which will ensure sustainable infrastructure of socio-cultural activities based on participatory management and civil-public partnership. The founding organizations are civil society organizations, platforms and alliances:
 - [Art Workshop Lazareti](#), Dubrovnik
 - Independent culture association's forum – FUNK ([Forum udruga nezavisne kulture – FUNK](#)), Koprivnica
 - Youth Centre Platform Split ([Platforma Doma mladih Split](#))

- Platforma Hvar, Hvar
- The Alliance Kaoperativa ([Savez udruga Kaoperativa](#)) Karlovac
- [Clubture Network](#), Zagreb
- The Alliance Molekula ([Savez udruga Molekula](#)) Rijeka
- [The Alliance Operation City](#), Zagreb
- [The Rojc Alliance](#) , Pula
- Youth Cultural Centre ([Kulturni Centar Mladih](#)) is non governmental association which organizes and promotes young people's cultural life in Kutina.
- [POGON](#) – Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth is a cultural institution based on the new model of civil–public partnership. In 2008 it was jointly founded and is managed by the Alliance Operation City and the City of Zagreb.
- Numerous civil artistic organizations and associations

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 Advisory Boards under the [Act on Youth Advisory Boards](#).

Cross-sectoral cooperation

The Advisory Board for Youth of Government of the Republic of Croatia ([Savjet za mlade Vlade Republike Hrvatske](#)) is an intergovernmental advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia with the task of participating in the development of youth policies. The Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia has its representative in it.

In carrying out its tasks, the Advisory Board 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.

8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

Existence of a national strategy

There is no national strategy on creativity and culture for young people in Croatia.

- There was a national youth strategy – the National Youth Programme 2014-2017 ([Nacionalni program za mlade za razdoblje od 2014.do 2017. godine](#)) which had entire chapter dedicated to the culture (Culture and Youth), but the Programme has been expired in 2017. The National Youth Programme 2020-2024 is in the drafting phase and it should contain a chapter entitled "Culture". (see chapter 1.9.)

There are some other strategies in the culture field that target in part young people. Those strategies are:

- The [Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2020- 2022](#) ([Strateški plan Ministarstva kulture za razdoblje od 2020. do 2022. godine](#))
- [The National Strategy to Revive Book Reading 2017-2022](#) ([Nacionalna strategija poticanja čitanja za razdoblje od 2017. do 2022. godine](#))

Scope and contents

The only key political objective of the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2020 – 2022 ([Strateški plan Ministarstva kulture za razdoblje od 2020. do 2022. godine](#)) dedicated to young people is the key goal "Development of artistic and cultural creation and production" with youth related measures.

The first measure "Art and culture - support to social inclusion and civil-public partnership development" consider young people as a part of vulnerable social group, together with minority, unemployed and other vulnerable social groups. The Ministry is in charge for the preparation and implementation of cultural projects from the Operational Programme "Effective Human Resources" one of which is "Art and Culture for children and youth" (see chapter 8.4.).

The second measure is "Cultural participation and audience development" which encompasses cultural programme "A Backpack full of culture". This programme aims to increase availability of cultural content to the youth in rural areas (see chapter 8.4.).

One of [the three strategic goals](#) of the National Strategy to Revive Book Reading is development of reading literacy and encouraging readers to active and critical reading which will be accomplished, among other actions, through the support of support the reading programmes for early childhood as well as for preschool and school children (elementary and high school).

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The responsible authority for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the [Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2020- 2022](#) ([Strateški plan Ministarstva kulture za razdoblje od 2020. do 2022. godine](#)) and the [National Strategy to Revive Book Reading 2017-2022](#) ([Nacionalna strategija poticanja čitanja za razdoblje od 2017. do 2022. godine](#)) is the [Ministry of Culture and Media](#). The competent Ministry cooperates with the [Ministry of Science and Education](#) for the implementation of some measures.

Revisions/updates

There was no major revisions/updates of the strategies.

8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

There are several programmes organised by top level authorities that facilitate young people's access to cultural environment.

The first programme is *Art and Culture for children and youth* which is the title of the open call for proposals. The call's aim was to overcome young people's obstacles to the access to cultural and artistic contents as well as to encourage their participation in cultural community life. The competent authority is the [Ministry of Culture and Media](#) and programme is funded through European Social Fund under the Operational Programme "Effective Human Resources". The call was closed in 2017 and ministerial decisions on project financing ([Odluke o financiranju](#)) were made in 2018 and 2019 within 3 groups:

- Group A: 6 projects were awarded a total of 2,968,221 HRK;

- Group B: 12 projects were awarded a total of 7,500,000 HRK;
- Group C: 11 projects were awarded a total of 7,500,000 HRK.

The maximum duration of the project is 24 months and therefore the outcomes of this program will not be known in the next period.

The open call for proposals for programmes that enable access to cultural contents for persons with disabilities and children and youth with developmental disabilities in Republic of Croatia for 2020 is a national policy organised and funded by the Ministry of Culture and Media. According to the list of awarded projects ([Popis odobrenih programa](#)) the total amount of award was 1,564,438 HRK but there is no information on how many projects targeted youth with disabilities.

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

A Backpack (full of) culture is a national complementary programme of support to the elementary and high school curriculum related to art and culture which will be implemented in Croatian schools by experts (writers, fine artists as well as theatre, music and dance artists). The programme provides children and youth with access and brings them closer to art and culture, develops their aesthetic culture and in general makes children and youth sensitive to the field of art and culture. The pupils will be trained for a positive approach to all types of art and culture.

A Backpack (full of) culture is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia and a joint investment by the area of education and the area of culture at state level. The programme is financed by the state budget.

Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

There are no policies, programmes projects and initiatives organised or funded by top level authorities to support young people's discovery and appreciation of the cultural and artistic heritage of European countries.

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

[Secondary schools](#), depending on the type of education programme, can be grammar schools, vocational schools, and arts schools.

Arts education in Croatia ([umjetničko obrazovanje](#)) is regulated by the Arts Education Act ([Zakon o umjetničkom obrazovanju NN 130/11](#)) and the Act on education in elementary and secondary school ([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, 64/20](#)). Arts education can be performed in arts schools and other public institutions. Arts schools are music, dance, visual and other school that perform arts programme according to the Arts Education Act. For more information on organisation of art education in Croatia you can visit [Eurydice](#).

In grammar schools, as well as in primary and lower secondary education, there are two separate subjects related to the development of cultural and creative competencies: Music and Visual Art. Music and Visual Art are compulsory subjects in grammar schools but not present at all in vocational schools. Music curricula ([kurikulum Glazbena kultura i Glazbena umjetnost](#)) and Visual Art curricula ([kurikulum Likovna kultura i Likovna umjetnost](#)) put emphasis on personal and social development of a pupil/student.

[The Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, New Colours of Knowledge](#), adopted in September 2014 and valid until 2025, 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"⁽³⁾ 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."⁽⁴⁾

The following measures are envisaged:

- 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 [the Ministry of Science and Education \(MSE\)](#), and [the Ministry of Culture and Media \(MCM\)](#);
- 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.

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". ⁽⁵⁾ 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" ⁽⁶⁾.

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. The strategy states that students should be provided with extra-curricular contents and that facilities for cultural activities should be planned when constructing or renovating buildings in higher education.

Specialised trainings are available to teachers in formal education. They are organised by the Education and Teacher Training Agency ([Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje](#)) which 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.

"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" ⁽⁷⁾

⁽³⁾ [The Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, New Colours of Knowledge](#), MSES, Zagreb, (2014), p. 2.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 3.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 70.

⁽⁶⁾ [The Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, New Colours of Knowledge](#)

⁽⁷⁾ [The Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, New Colours of Knowledge](#)

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

In Croatian educational system there are three types of secondary schools: grammar schools, vocational schools, and art schools (see [Chapter 8.5. Developing cultural and creative competences](#)).

Vocational schools offer numerous programmes that qualify students, thus supporting the development of an individual's ability to turn ideas into action through the acquisition of practical skills, for vocations such as arranger and scenic designer, clothes designer, graphic designer, web designer, ceramic designer, media technician, photographer, etc. Those programmes are usually clustered in graphic schools and schools for applied arts (but not exclusively). For more information on organisation of vocational upper secondary education in Croatia you can visit [Eurydice](#).

There is a [Department of Cultural Studies](#) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, which offers undergraduate and graduate study programme Cultural Studies (single major). In those programmes students acquire competences to work in cultural management, cultural tourism as well as in different types of institutions and organizations. No emphasis, however, is put on entrepreneurship.

There are four Arts Academy in Croatia that offer various study programmes in the field of theatre, visual arts, applied art, and art and culture. There are also the faculties of architecture and/or civil engineering in Zagreb, Osijek and Split that offer a study programmes in architecture and urbanism, and a design study. The Faculty of Graphic Arts in Zagreb offer a [study courses](#) in graphic engineering and graphic product design. The list of higher education institutions ([ustanove iz sustava visokog obrazovanja](#)) in Croatia is available on line as well as the [register of study programmes](#).

The Croatian Employment Service offers a list of vocations with descriptions ([opisi zanimanja](#)).

The Law on Technical Culture ([Zakon o tehničkoj kulturi, NN 76/93, 11/94, 38/09](#)) states that technical culture, among other activities, includes education and training for acquiring technical, technological and IT skills and knowledge, innovative work, and spreading scientific and technical accomplishments with special concern of young people. The same Act enables foundation of Technical Culture Associations and their networks/alliances and states that technical culture is public need which will be funded through the state budget.

[The Croatian Association of Technical Culture \(CATC\)](#) is the highest national institution in the field of technical culture in the Republic of Croatia and consists of 18 national associations, 19 county and 35 city technical culture communities, and more than 600 associations of technical culture with over 60.000 members. CATC's members can be artistic-technical association such as Croatian Film Clubs' Association and Croatian Photographic Union. Associations, national associations and CATC pay special attention to the extra-curricular education of youth, for example in the field of photography and film.

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 developed the Strategic Guidelines for Development of Creative and Cultural Industry 2013 – 2020 ([Strateške smjernice za razvoj Kreativne i kulturne industrije](#)). However, there is no mention of youth in those guidelines.

[The Ministry of Culture and Media](#) (MCM) publishes every year a Public Call for Encouraging Entrepreneurship in the Cultural and Creative industries ([Javni poziv za poticanje poduzetništva u kulturnim i kreativnim industrijama za 2020. godinu](#)). In 2020 MCM awarded 139 programa a total of 8,5 millions HRK ([Odobreni programi 2020](#)). The Call didn't target young people in particular.

8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

[Croatian Academic and Research Network – CARNET](#) is a public institution operating within the Ministry of Science and Education in the field of information and communication technology and its application in education. CARNET began operating in 1991 as a project of the then Ministry of Science and Technology and became the first and only provider of Internet services in Croatia. Four years later, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Decree on the establishment of CARNET institution with the aim of innovating the education system and encouraging the progress of individuals and the society as a whole through ICT (information and communication technology).

CARNET implements a project *e-Schools*. The project was first launched in 2015 by CARNET with the goal to increase the level of digital maturity for 10 percent of primary and secondary schools in Croatia. In digitally mature schools, teachers use technology to improve teaching, develop their own digital content and provide support for independent learning and the development of critical skills in students who are at the heart of the teaching process. Students actively participate in teaching with increased motivation to learn and continue their education, and thus become more competitive in the labour market. The management of e-Schools is efficient and transparent, and communication and exchange of e-documents between the school, its stakeholders and founders is much simpler. In the second phase of the programme, by the end of 2022, all schools will be equipped with wireless local area networks and the corresponding active network equipment. The *e-Schools* project won the European Commission's RegioStars Award as a EU-funded project in the field of regional development.

Policy for making new technologies readily available to empower young people's creativity and capacity for innovation are described in [Chapter 8.6. Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture](#).

[The Ministry of Culture and Media \(MCM\)](#) is a top-level authority for media and media polices. It puts media literacy ([medijska pismenost](#)) in focus (see [Chapter 6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media](#)).

MCM has several initiatives aiming to develop and make accessible online repositories of cultural content:

- A project *E-culture – culturale heritage digitalization* ([e-Kultura – Digitalizacija kulturne baštine](#)) aims to increase access to the cultural heritage and protect it by use of digital storage.
- [Cultural content online](#) - The aim of the initiative is to ensure the availability and diversity of cultural content that cannot be held in front of the public in the coming period. In one place it will be possible to follow all the activities that were recorded or broadcast live.
- [In the service of heritage visualisation](#) - s a spot where the interested public can access the body of work of the prominent professional photographers of the national conservation service in the second half of the 20th century.

Those initiatives don't target youth in particular.

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, starts-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.

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. The only town which officially introduced Citizenship Education in schools is the city of Rijeka.

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.

Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers

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

This chapter provides the context of young people's participation at global level and their inclusion in policy making about global issues.

The participation of young people from Croatia in world affairs is moderately encouraged at national level, mostly by informing young people how and where to apply to participate (by [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#)). See chapter [Exchange between young people and policy-makers on global issues.](#)

Last valid [National Youth Programme 2014 – 2017](#) included the strategic goal “Youth in the European and global context”. The area “Youth in the European and global context” of the National Youth Programme 2014-2017 was focused on the participation of youth, youth sector stakeholders and relevant institutions in creating youth policies on the level of the EU, Council of Europe and the United Nations, as well as on stimulating youth mobility on the European and global levels.

With the support of the former 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.”

Current situation in Croatia shows that young people have an opportunity to learn about global questions and issues through formal, non-formal and informal learning. They are mostly engaged in environmental issues, preventing peer violence and sustainable development. For information on programs, initiatives and activities see also [Raising awareness about global issues](#).

9.1 General context

Main concepts

Young people in Croatia participate in policy making processes regarding global issues on an advisory level and their participation was foreseen by the last valid [National Youth Programme 2014 – 2017](#) for the Republic of Croatia.

The “Youth and the world” area of the [EU Youth Strategy 2010 – 2018](#) was based on EU member states cooperating by the Open method of coordination, structured dialogue with the youth, drawing up reports on youth issues on the EU level, youth work participation, and other similar methods. Some of these methods were recognized in areas of the last National Youth Programme 2014 - 2017.

The area “Youth in the European and global context” of the National Youth Programme 2014 - 2017 was focused on the priorities:

- 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

The new National Youth Programme 2022 -2024 is being drafted and there is no information will it include youth in the European and global context.

Young people`s participation on policy making about global issues on an advisory level is fulfilled by The Youth Council of the Government of Croatia ([Savjet za mlade Vlade Republike Hrvatske](#)). The Youth Council of the Government of Croatia, among other duties, gives recommendations for the development of policies for youth and the involvement of young people at the local, regional, national and international levels in the implementation of these policies.

The [National Development Strategy 2030](#) of the Republic of Croatia, which is the national strategic action plan for the period 2018 to 2030, does not foresee participation of young people from Croatia in the global context.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)), the state body, is competent for youth from 2020. The Central State Office for Demography and Youth is in charge of considering young people and young people`s

opinion in the processes of establishing cooperation between policy makers and young people, such is the monitoring the EU Youth Dialogue in Croatia ([Dijalog EU-a s mladima](#)).

Youth Interest in global issues

Available and relevant national studies in Croatia provide insight in youth values and attitudes, mostly about the European Union. In the paper "[Youth and politics: \(dis\)continuity trends](#)" from 2017 (Ilišin, Vlasta i Spajić Vrkaš, Vedrana, 2017, *Mladi i politika: trendovi (dis)kontinuiteta u Generacija osujećenih – Mladi u Hrvatskoj na početku 21. stoljeća*, Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja, str. 185-259), the comparative presentation of the general attitude towards the EU shows that 23.2% of young people have a positive attitude, 47.9% have a neutral attitude, and 13.9% have a negative attitude.

Regarding to the opinion of young people in Croatia towards the EU and what EU means for them, most of young people "agrees" and "completely agrees" (on a five-point scale) that on the first place of their importance is the freedom of movement with 63.7%. Every other young person, exactly 49.1% of them, puts better protection of citizen's rights in second place. The following elements that are estimated on EU significance are the following values: numerous job openings and unemployment fighting (44.6%), better future for young generations (41.9%), better protection of workers` rights (39.0%).

Their perception of positive outcomes of Croatia's accession to the EU in 2013 is the range of expectations that includes economic, political and cultural dimensions. The first place of the positive outcomes is increased options for travel and making friends (86.0%), while better and more equal education (81.8%) and better familiarization of other nations` cultures and religions (80.5%) are the second and third most common expectation. Exactly 78.1% of young people that participated in the study placed better employment possibilities as the fourth most expected positive outcome of Croatia's accession to the EU.

Croatian youth attitudes regarding issues on European level are further more focused on greater economic development (77.4%), quicker democratic of society (73.4%) and better human rights and minorities protection (72.0%).

9.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Governmental authorities:

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) is competent for youth since 2020. Within the Centrale State Office there is the Youth Office which is a part of the Youth and Parenting Support Sector. The Central State Office for Demography and Youth performs administrative and professional duties aimed at improving the quality of life for young people. The state body is [in charge for](#): connecting national and European bodies and institutions with young people; implementing strategic documents, laws and other acts; programmes and projects in the field of youth policies and their monitoring and evaluation; etc. The Central State Office participates in the work of the institutions of the European Union and cooperates with other international institutions in accordance with its competence and scope.

The former Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy started the implementation of the Structured Dialogue with Youth process in the Republic of Croatia in 2013, and for this purpose established the National Working Group for Structured Dialogue with Youth, which coordinated and monitored the implementation of the entire process. The Central State Office for Demography and Youth is obliged for monitoring the EU Youth Dialogue since 2020.

The state body organized "EU Youth Conference - Opportunities for young people in rural areas - how to ensure the sustainability of rural areas in the countries of the European Union", which was held in [March 2020](#) during the Croatian presidency of the European Union. Organizing young people for participation in other EU Youth Conferences is another task of the Central State office for Demography and Youth.

In 2020, the Republic of Croatia and the Central State Office for Demography and Youth, for the first time, [elected an official young delegate](#) to participate in the work of the United Nations General Assembly. The young delegate represents the interests of young people in Croatia and, through cooperation with delegates from other countries, participates in making decisions and political solutions on issues important to young people at the international level. The participation of young delegates in the work of the United Nations General Assembly represents a significant step forward in the active participation of Croatian young people at the international level.

The current young delegate participates in the work of the General Assembly of the United Nations, especially in the work of the Third Committee, which deals with social, cultural and humanitarian issues, and, if necessary, in the work of other bodies in the field of youth policies.

Public actors:

Another relevant public actor is [the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs](#) which is the key government body for all issues of foreign politics and international relations. [The Ministry of Science and Education](#) is the second and its main task is to create prerequisites for the free movement of students, professors, scientists and researchers in the sphere of higher education and science, which is in the spirit of the European policy of creating a uniform education and scientific area.

The Youth Council of the Government of Croatia ([Savjet za mlade Vlade Republike Hrvatske](#)) 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.

[Agency for mobility and EU programmes](#) (AMEUP) is a public institution within the Ministry of Science and Education, which is responsible for implementing and promoting European Union programmes and other international programmes in the fields of science, education, 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

[Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Centre for Youth and Gender Studies](#) is responsible for studying youth and women. The Centre carries out research in the scientific fields of sociology, political science and philosophy, with an emphasis on the interdisciplinary approach and the longitudinal monitoring of social phenomena and processes. The Centre also conducts research and projects relevant to gaining insight into young people's views on various [issues](#).

Non-public actors:

- [Croatian Youth Network](#) ([Mreža mladih Hrvatske](#)) is an alliance of 77 non-governmental youth organizations acting as the National Youth Council in the Republic of Croatia and is a member of the European Youth Forum.
- [The Institute for the Development of Education](#) edits a portal on [scholarships](#) which enables young people to apply for educational scholarships within and outside of Croatia.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

In Croatia there is no official entity for supporting or encouraging cross-sectoral cooperation for the matters of young people`s participation on policy making about global issues. The Croatian Government Youth Council ([Savjet za mlade Vlade RH](#)) only monitors the work of ministries and governmental bodies involved in developing youth policies on the European level by giving their advice and opinions.

9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

In Croatia there is a regular practice of including young people or youth representatives (youth organizations or organizations for youth) in working groups for drafting laws, amending laws, national programs and other regulations related to youth. In 2022 a young representative of the [Coordination of County Youth Councils of the Republic of Croatia](#) took part in the [Workgroup for Draft Law of Amendments to the Law on Youth Councils](#). Young representatives are part of the [Workgroup for drafting the proposal of the National Youth Program for the period from 2022 to 2024](#).

[The Coordination of County Youth Councils](#) was established in 2014 with the aim of creating a platform for the exchange of practice and continuous information of County Youth Councils, a joint analysis of the present problems of young people and the advocacy of interests towards institutions and authorities. Coordination connects the capacities of councils, harmonizes their way of working and increases the involvement of young people in the creation and implementation of regional policies.

Young people as citizens, also and as part of youth organizations, are invited to participate in [e-Counselling](#) about the policies that are interesting for them in Croatia. Consultation and involvement of the public through e-Counselling is being used in the process of adopting regulation with the interested public related to a certain public policy with the aim of raising the level of understanding and acceptance of the policy's goals, but also noticing the weaknesses and negative effects of the public policy that needs to be timely remove.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) plans to conduct consultations with the wider interested public on laws concerning young people in 2022 through e-Counselling. An example is the planned e-Counselling of the [Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Youth Councils](#).

Specific procedure through which young people have the opportunity to exchange views with national and European policy-makers on global issues is EU Youth Dialogue. When Croatia acceded to the EU in 2013, it began implementing the structured dialogue, now called the EU Youth Dialogue in Croatia ([Dijalog EU-a s mladima](#)). Its goal is to make young people`s voice heard in the national and European youth policy-shaping process. In Croatia, it is known under the slogan "EU asks" ("[EU pita](#)"). EU Youth Dialog provides the opportunities to young people to be heard by policy makers on local, regional and national level, as well as the opportunity to jointly propose measures relevant for youth policies and strategies.

The implementation is headed by the National Workgroup for EU youth dialogue, which is composed of representatives of the state competent body, the Agency for mobility and EU programmes, the Association of Youth Information Centres in Croatia and the Croatian Youth Network.

The 7th EU youth dialogue cycle was held from January 2019 till mid-2020 over the course of the Romanian, Finnish and Croatian EU Presidencies. The thematic priority of the 7th cycle was "Creating opportunities for Youth", and the Croatian national priority was "Opportunity for Rural Youth".

Training for local coordinators of EU youth dialogue in Croatia was held in October 2020 and the new one will be in 2022.

The 9th EU youth dialogue cycle takes place from January 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 under the title "Together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe" under the presidency trio of France - Czech Republic - Sweden. The Croatian Youth Network association is responsible for the implementation of 9th Cycle in Croatia.

Campaign "Democracy here. Democracy now." is being implemented on the EU level and for Croatian implementation of the campaign is in [charge of the](#) Central State Office for Demography and Youth. They also publish information and calls of invitations for youth on a web page [Mladi.hr](#) (Eng. Youth) to participate in the events in the scope of the campaign, such as the [invitation to participate](#) in the Council of Europe Youth Action Week in Strasbourg 2022.

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

The EU youth dialogue in Croatia (Dijalog EU-a s mladima) also enables the participation of young people and policy-makers on the international level. This process is administered by the European structured dialogue workgroup, composed 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 national competent body for youth (former ministries till mid-2020 and now the Central State Office for Demography and Youth) have been the promoters of the measures focused on development of a support system for youth, youth organizations and for youth participation in the UN bodies' decision-making processes.

In August 2020 a [Croatian Youth delegate to the United Nations](#) was appointed, namely Mr. Josip Perkušić and Mr. Darko Suljičić was appointed as a deputy delegate. The role of the Youth delegate to the United Nations is to participate in the General Assembly and functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. In that context, the youth delegate provides input to their delegation on issues related to youth or priority issues raised in national consultations prior to their engagement with the intergovernmental meeting. Moreover, Mr. Perkušić (or his deputy) is tasked to inform the relevant national institutions and young people on the UN work in the field of youth.

Since 2014, [the Ministry of Culture](#) has been the holder and the promotor of the measure to develop a support system for youth, youth organizations, and for youth participation in the UNESCO bodies' decision-making processes.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth ([Središnji državni ured za demografiju i mlade](#)) is the responsible for the development of a support system for youth, youth organizations, and for youth participation in the EU and Council of Europe bodies' decision-making processes. They regularly delegate young representatives to EU Youth Conferences (for example [Czech Republic, 2022](#)).

[World Federation of United Nations Associations \(WFUNA\)](#) mission is to inform, sustain and energize a global network of United Nations Associations to support the principles and programs of the United Nations and to help shape its agenda. WFUNA Youth aims to gain

more support for the spirit of the United Nations among young people, as well as to promote the world-wide activities of United Nations Youth Associations and UNA Youth Programs. It seeks to promote the establishment of United Nations Youth Associations or Youth Programs where they do not exist. WFUNA-Youth is an autonomous, not-for-profit organization, affiliated with the World Federation.

[Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#) (Agencija za mobilnost i EU programe) is responsible for implementation of the "[Europe Goes Local](#)" project for Croatia. Project goal is not just to support the recognition and improvement of the quality of work with young people as part of local youth policy, but and to strengthen the European and international dimension of work with young people at the local level and to contribute to the development of work with young people through European cooperation in the field of young people.

As part of a series of activities taking place at the European level within the framework of the "Europe Goes Local" project, the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes held the international [study visit](#) in April 2022. called "Youth policy meets youth work". The participants of the activity were representatives of local self-government units and youth organizations from four European countries: Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Serbia.

[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 has organized numerous EYP days, regional sessions, national sessions, international sessions and an international forum. The EYP is an organization led and coordinated by young people for young people. The organization actively promotes the idea of European citizenship and political participation of young people in the world. EYPC actively participates in the work of EYP on current political, economic, social and cultural topics. EYPC on National Selection Conferences, like in Rijeka 2015 about [cross-border communication in practice](#) and in [Zadar 2019](#) worked and exchanged opinions with decision-makers representatives about interculturalism.

The "[Future of Europe: European Year of Youth](#)" project is being implemented in 2022 by the Croatian member of the European Parliament [Predrag Fred Matić](#), a member of the Committee for Culture and Education.

The project is implemented with high school students all over Croatia, and its goal is to give young people from Croatia a voice at the European and national level and to include them in the decision-making process. 10 high schools from all over Croatia are participating in the project and it includes 4300 young high school students.

- In cooperation with schools, professors who coordinated the process, and students, involved participants worked on creating a comprehensive solution for young people. Through mentoring and active debates among young people and with young people, a unique document will be created and forwarded to all relevant stakeholders in Croatia and the European Union. The aforementioned document created by young people will represent a kind of map of fundamental problems, risks, potential and solutions in the field of youth policies.

9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

Formal learning

As stated in the Primary and Secondary School Education Act ([Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi](#)), with the last amendments adopted in 2020, 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 fulfill 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 included in 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 national curriculum for gymnasium education ([Prijedlog nacionalnog kurikuluma za gimnazijsko obrazovanje](#)) 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

Global problems are mostly learned through the interdisciplinary subjects Civic education for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia ([Kurikulum međupredmetne teme Građanski odgoj i obrazovanje za osnovne i srednje škole](#)) and cross-cultural topic Sustainable Development ([Kurikulum za međupredmetnu temu Održivi razvoj za osnovne i srednje škole](#)).

Informal and non-formal learning

The Catalogue of non-formal education programmes in human rights and democratic citizenship implemented by civil society organizations in Croatia ([Croatian version of the document](#)) has the goal to improve cooperation and partnership among actors engaged in the formal and non-formal education in Croatia. This Catalogue presents information gathered by the National Foundation for Civil Society Development through their call in 2004. The call was for parties interested in attending educational training/modules in 2004 and 2005.

Best example of an initiative active in this field is the GOOD Initiative ([GOOD Inicijativa](#)). Initiative aims at the systematic and quality implementation of education in human rights and democratic citizenship into educational institutions. It is comprised of 60 civil society organizations developing educational programmes and cooperating with schools. Educational programmes are implemented by:

- [The Centre for Peace Studies](#)
- [Forum for Freedom in Education](#)
- [GONG](#)

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

[Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) is obliged for implementation of the Council of Europe youth campaign [Democracy Here. Democracy Now.](#) for Croatia. Their role is to co-ordinate local and national activities in Croatia about revitalizing democracy and for strengthening mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes. Currently there are no any national or local activities, except for the delegation of young representatives to the Campaign activities outside Croatia (e.g., Youth Action Week).

Other campaigns

Scout Association of Croatia ([Savez izviđača Hrvatske](#)) organized working with scout groups in 5 counties to help the hardest hit communities by the earthquake (2020 and 2021, Croatia) in need by providing services aimed at getting life back to normal. Volunteer scouts have collected toys and educational materials, to rebuild capacity and encourage children and young people to continue with their education by creating over 50 "Happy Centres". Through the national "[Happy Centre](#)" campaign the project "[Rebuilding and Helping the Community](#)" has created a safe space where toys and educational materials are distributed, and children and young people can interact with each other.

Information providers

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth is obliged for ensuring representatives of youth-led and for youth organizations, as well as governmental bodies to participate in relevant activities on EU level and Council of Europe levels. They are continuously providing information for young people about opportunities and resources to participate in different activities on global issues through several communication channels:

- [Official web page](#)
- Official social media pages ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#))
- [Mladi.hr](#)

Mladi.hr is a portal for youth whose goal is to inform young people about opportunities and initiatives at the European and national level, but also about numerous other topics and interesting things.

Informing young people about global issues on the formal education level is the responsibility of the [Ministry of Science and Education](#).

[The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development](#) occasionally has campaigns focused on the youth, relating to the environment, sustainable development and similar topics. Celebration of World Consumers Rights Day on March 15th (2019) under the Ministries' organization was related to the trends of the modern age, entitled "Smart with smart technologies - Consumer protection in the digital world" ([Pametno s pametnim tehnologijama - Zaštita potrošača u digitalnom svijetu](#)). Special emphasis was placed on the young population, which is also the most exposed to new digital technologies.

The Association of Youth Information Centres in Croatia ([Zajednica informativnih centara za mlade u Hrvatskoj](#)) 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 NGOs providing youth information.

On other levels, information is provided to youth by different associations, agencies, projects and similar means.

Key initiatives

[The Ministry of Science and Education](#) founded the annual "[Luka Ritz](#)" festival in memory of the tragically deceased boy and all other girls and boys who were victims of violence. Since 2008, a public call has been issued to all schools and student dormitories in Croatia to submit proposals for the "Luka Ritz" award for promoting tolerance and violence-free schools. Since then, every year all primary and secondary educational institutions in the Republic of Croatia can nominate students who promote tolerance and humane and non-violent behavior.

In 2017, the Croatian Parliament announced the [Pink Shirt Day](#) as the National Peer Violence Day, which takes place every last Wednesday in February. Pink Shirt Day is marked both globally and nationally in Croatia in all interested primary and secondary schools.

The project "[Youth for Sustainable Development in Lika](#)" was launched in 2019 by the [Lika Destination](#) Cluster with the aim of contributing to the creation of awareness of the needs of sustainable development through the activities and strengthening of civil society organizations in the area of Lika-Senj County.

"[Sustainable development of society starts with young people!](#)" is a project led by the organization [Life Potential](#) by which civil society organizations contribute to the development of competences and active participation of young people in the field of sustainable development by establishing a partnership of civil society organizations, schools and local communities in raising awareness of sustainable development.

The program "[EKO LAB](#)" was launched in 2019 by the [Association Zona](#). Established EKO LAB was a place of learning, knowledge exchange and experimentation for the purpose of developing critical thinking, creativity and innovation of young people. The program was implemented through cooperation with schools, civil society, scientists and the community, in order to create the conditions for the joint creation of a more sustainable and responsible future. The activities are carried out through a concrete example of the problem of plastic waste.

9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

Green volunteering

Presently in the Republic of Croatia, there is no public national strategy for green volunteering focused on the youth population. This type of volunteering is organized by associations, organizations, towns, and municipalities.

The project "[Active Youth protecting nature and the environment](#)" is organized 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 are 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](#)" is 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 is an eco-educational project which rewards kindergartens, schools and other educational institutions for the construction of the most beautiful garden, open-air classroom, and other eco-projects.

"Urban Gardens" is an initiative for local policy and decision makers led by [PLANTaža Association](#). The key goal is to raise awareness of urban environmental biodiversity through moderated discussion around the possibilities of a horticultural approach to exterior design.

[Erasmus Student Network Croatia](#) (ESN Croatia) in cooperation with the Agency for Mobility and EU Programs organized in 2022 a prize photo/video contest [#GreenErasmusMoments](#), the aim of which is to promote the green priority of the Erasmus+ program within the framework of student mobility.

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 [Lijepa Naša](#) association. In Croatia, the Eco-school status has been awarded to 334 educational institutions.

The projects implemented within the Eco-school framework are:

- The educational project "[The Great plant hunt](#)"
- The contest "[Eco quiz "Our beautiful homeland"](#)"
- The national project "[Eco-packaging](#)"
- The "[We Eat Responsible](#)" project
- [Days of bread – fruits of the Earth thanksgiving days](#)
- "[Litter less](#)" campaign

The educational project "[The Great plant hunt](#)" started in the school year 2016/2017. The organizers 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 2017/2018, 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

The "Fridays for Future" movement is also held in Croatia under the name "[Fridays for Future Croatia](#)". High school pupils and students are organizing protests for climate justice, together with [Extinction Rebellion Zagreb](#). The Extinction Rebellion is an international mass movement of climate and environmental activists who strive to make the general public aware of the urgency of the climate crisis and encourage political action to protect life on earth. The first climate protest under the name "Marching for Survival" was held on November 12th, 2021 in Zagreb.

9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

New National Youth Program 2022 – 2024 is currently in a [drafting phase](#), therefore no information is available about the planned intercontinental youth work cooperation.

There is no national body responsible for international youth and expert exchanges, including with countries outside of Europe.

Last [National Youth Programme 2014 – 2017](#) envisioned 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.

Programs that enable intercontinental youth exchange are by non-profit associations such as:

- Rotary District 1913 Croatia
- AFS
- AIESEC

Within the framework of Rotary International and [Rotary District 1913 Croatia](#), a [Rotary Youth Exchange](#) program was established. The Rotary youth exchange program is intended for young people from 15 to 25 years of age. Young people learn about all aspects of life in another country and about different cultures.

The [AFS](#) high school student exchange program is a program of informal education and intercultural learning. The aim of intercultural learning is to erase stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination between different countries, cultures and religions. During the exchange program, the student attends a state or private high school where classes are held in the language of the host country. The AFS exchange program is recommended by the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia.

[AIESEC in Croatia](#) is a part of the largest global youth network (AIESEC as international organization) that enables young people to develop their leadership potential through volunteer and professional internships around the world, as well as many other projects that enable them to gain valuable experience for further professional development.

The AIESEC program offers international practices, but also includes the possibility of volunteering in the civil society organizations, attending various trainings and conferences, and participating in projects implemented in Croatia.

There are three types of AIESEC programs:

- [Global Volunteer](#) - a program of international volunteer internships in 125 countries around the world that offer a multicultural experience

- [Global Talent](#) - professional internship program for young people in companies around the world
- [Global Teacher](#) - an internship program that provides young people with the opportunity to improve their knowledge of a foreign language by teaching abroad.

Development cooperation activities

There is no available information about development cooperation activities organized by top level authority, targeting explicitly young people.

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 are:

- 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 the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Centre for Youth and Gender Studies.

9.7 Current debates and reforms

At the moment, a new National Youth Programme 2022 – 2024 is being drawn up.

There are no other current debates and reforms.

10. 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 \(2014-2017\)](#). There are 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. The [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) is responsible for the development of youth work policy in Croatia. Youth work in Croatia is largely based in civil society organizations, but 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.

10.1 General context

Historical development

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 January 2021, 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 [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) is responsible for the development of youth work policy in Croatia. Also formally involved in the governance of youth work is [the Advisory Board for Youth of Government of the Republic of Croatia](#) (Savjet za mlade Vlade Republike Hrvatske). 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 Advisory Board 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 Advisory Board for Youth of Government of the Republic of Croatia 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.

Funding

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.

The [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) is the main source of funding for youth work organizations. The government body for youth 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.

[Association of Cities in Croatia](#) together with the [State office for Demography and Youth, Agency for Mobility and EU programmes, Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Croatian youth Network](#) and [Alliance Society "Our Children" Croatia](#) started a process of certification of youth friendly cities. The methodology is based on eight thematic areas (participation, demography, youth work, health and sports, employment, culture, education and youth information). The prerequisites for the certification process are: active youth advisory board, signed [European charter on local youth work](#) and the appointed certification coordinator. In the first cycle nine cities qualified as Youth cities for the period 2021 - 2024, namely Karlovac, Koprivnica, Labin, Novska, Opatija, Šibenik, Varaždin i Zabok.

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 [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) 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 organizations 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 it was finalized in 2020. The Central Office organized several online presentations of the findings, mainly to representatives of youth organizations, the research report is expected to be published in 2021.

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 to be published in 2021, 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.

Participative 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](#).

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 ([Potvrda o kompetencijama stečenim kroz volontiranje](#)). 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

N/A

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 [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) is currently implementing an ESF-supported project entitled [Supporting the development of youth work in Croatia](#). One of the planned activities for autumn 2020 was the public campaign which will focus on the promotion of youth work, its benefits for young people and society at large. However, it has not been implemented so far.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

After the expired [National Youth Programme](#) in 2017, The [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) is expected to finalize the new national programme, and its adoption by the government should happen by the end of 2021. Youth work will have a more prominent place in the new programme in comparison to the old one.

Also during 2020 the [SEEW](#) project initiated 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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