

# VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE IN CROATIA

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

## BEFORE 2001.

### REGIONAL VOLUNTEER CENTRES

Volunteer Centre within Association MI

Dalmatia area

Volunteer Centre Zagreb

Dealing only with the international volunteer exchange

## AFTER 2001. – CURRENT >>>

### ORGANIZATIONS/BODIES INVOLVED

#### CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTEERISM

##### National Board for Volunteering Development (2001)

- advisory body of Croatia government. Ministry for family, war veterans and intergenerational solidarity is logistic support to the Board.

Representatives of different stakeholders (representatives of different civil society networks, Ministries, local government, independent experts). Representative of the Network of Volunteer Centers is the president of the Board.

**The role of National Board for Volunteering Development**  
promotion of volunteering on national level;  
influencing national policy and legislation;  
connecting/linking different stakeholders on the national level.

##### The role of Regional Volunteer Centres:

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

##### Single Civil Society Organisations

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

##### The role of LVC

- promotion of the values of volunteering,
- matching volunteers to opportunities

#### GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

##### Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity -

This institution is a leading institution at the government level, participating in the work of National board for development of volunteering and coordinating volunteering issues at the national level

**National Foundation for Civil Society Development** - It grants the annual award "School - a friend of the community" through which it selects, and presents to the public the most innovative volunteering initiatives in elementary schools and models of youth volunteering in high schools in Croatia.

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

##### Policy/strategy papers/Law

Law on volunteering, 2007

National strategy for the creation of enabling environment for civil society development including the operational plan 2006-2011 (part of the strategy is devoted to volunteering development)

Code of Ethics for volunteering

Quality Standards for the Volunteer Centers in Croatia

## Promotion

- 4 National conferences on volunteering
- Annual celebration of the International Day of Volunteering - regional and national campaigns
- Days of volunteer work - regional activity

## Recognition

- National Volunteer of the Year award (2001, 2007)
- Regional Volunteer of the Year award (Osječko-baranjska county since 2006; Primorsko-goranska county since 2007); City of Zagreb (2009)
- Local Volunteer organization/program of the Year award (Split since the year 2000)
- Volunteering and education record keeping booklet

## Funding

In general, the support for the development of volunteering from the national as well as local and regional government still has a fairly low profile. Although progress has been made quite recently, in April 2008, when the Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity announced a public call for co-funding of the regional volunteer centers, this issue of structured and permanent support still remains one of the greater challenges in Croatia.

Significant financial support still coming from international resources. (EU funds, State Development Agencies, International foundations)

## Research

- "Research on civil participation in community initiatives through volunteering" SMART, 2001;
- "Volunteerism and public institutions", published in collaboration with Zid, Montenegro and SEEYN Network, Volunteer Centre Zagreb, 2003;
- "Research on volunteerism", National Foundation for Civil Society Development, 2005; "Volunteerism and local community development – civil participation in community initiatives", SMART, 2006;
- "The research on civil participation in community initiatives through volunteering", AED, Croatia, 2006;
- "Volunteering, attitudes and practice – research results", MI Association, MOST Association, 2007; "Who volunteers?",
- Online research, MojPosao, 2006 ([www.moj-posao.net](http://www.moj-posao.net));
- Research on public recognition of civic associations and citizens' attitudes toward volunteering in the city of Osijek and its surroundings, City of Osijek, Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights, Osijek, 2005.;
- "Student volunteering activities at the University of Zagreb", Social Work Studies, University of Zagreb, 2006

### Key challenges in research studies:

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

## Challenges

- strengthening the Volunteer centres as a key pillar of volunteer infrastructure
- promote the law and inform potential volunteer organizers about the existing law
- encourage/develop volunteering in schools
- recognition of volunteering in the process of employment and formal education
- increase frequency of volunteering
- setting up a system information gathering, regarding the frequency of volunteering
- set up a system for assessing the economic value of volunteering
- increase volunteering in public institutions (i.e. health and social care and local and regional government)