TRIALOG Country Paper

CROATIA

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This study is one of the country papers performed by TRIALOG. The aim of the research is to provide an overview of civil society in Croatia and the relative environment.

The study is divided in four main chapters: the first gives a brief overview of the Croatia, according to the economic, political and social point of view. The second one describes briefly the relationship between the country and the EU, pointing out the different steps that have led or will lead to EU membership. The third allows to get a general idea on how Croatia and civil society organisations are involved in international development cooperation. The last chapter focuses on civil society organisations (CSOs) and their own situation in the country. At the end of the report there is a list of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and CSOs that operate in the country.

The study is based on a combination of official and governmental website researches and different reports, e.g. official and CSO reports. We would like to thank the organisations and persons that contributed to this study with their feedback.
I Introduction

Situated along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, on the cross-roads between Central Europe and the Mediterranean, Croatia has a population of 4.44 million (first results of 2011 census) with a population growth rate of –0.11%, calculated in 2010. The 2001 statistical data shows that the population is composed mainly of Croats (89.6%) but there are also different ethnic groups: Serbs 4.5%, other 5.9% (including Bosnian, Hungarian, Slovenian, Albanian, Italian, Czech and Roma). The GDP is about $13,754 per capita (current US$).

After the adoption of the Constitution in 1990 and the independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Croatia became a Parliamentary Democracy. The government in the Republic of Croatia is organised on the principle of the separation of powers into legislative, executive and judicial branches. The principle of separation of powers includes the forms of mutual cooperation and reciprocal checks and balances provided by the Constitution and law.

The legislative power is exercised by the Croatian parliament (Croatian: Sabor), which is the body of elected representatives of the people. It also performs the function of control over the executive power. The Parliament has a President and one or more Vice-Presidents and its representatives are elected for a term of four years.

The government of the Republic of Croatia exercises executive power and it is also responsible to the Sabor. The Government shall consist of the Prime Minister, one or more Deputy Prime Minister and Minister. Judicial power is exercised by the courts. The judiciary is autonomous and independent. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia, as a highest court, ensures the uniform application of laws and equal justice to all. Finally, the President of the Republic presents and represents the Republic of Croatia at home and abroad.

There is a limited tradition of civil society in Croatia; its development has been hindered by half a century of communist ideology coupled with a lack of experience with the concept of freedom of association. At the beginning of the 1990s, civil societies and groups were

1 http://www.dzs.hr/default_e.htm, [09.11.2011]
3 http://www.hr/croatia/people/national-and-ethnic-minorities, [09.11.2011]
5 http://www.vlada.hr/en/about_croatia/information/political_structure, [07.11.2011]
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
primarily engaged in peace activism (anti-war protests and activities), among them many women’s organisations.9

Independent civil society organisations were largely established during the Croatian War of Independence of 1991-1995, encouraged by foreign organisations and donors; their main activities were peace building, human rights protection, the support of war veterans and, more generally, humanitarian assistance for refugees and displaced persons. Both during and after the war, cooperation with foreign organisations continued, but at that time CSOs had due to lack of experience limited capacities in accepting and adequately distributing funds received.10

Anti-war movements have often begun with small groups voicing opposition on a purely pacifist basis. There have been significant workers’ actions against the effects of the war in Croatia.11 In 1991 the Anti-war Campaign of Croatia was founded. The main objectives of the campaign were to promote and protect human rights in Croatia, in accordance with international standards, so as to increase awareness of human rights generally, and about war-related violation in Croatia in particular.12

In the second half of the 1990s, a number of associations ceased to exist. During this time the authority had an extremely negative attitude towards CSOs, declaring them enemies of the state.13 According to the Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) office in 2009 there were in Croatia about 38,822 associations, 50 religious communities, 145 foundations, 129 foreign associations and 11 funds.14

II Croatia and the European Union

On June 24, 2011, the European Council gave the green light for Croatia to become the 28th member state to join the European Union on July 1, 2013. The demanding and difficult negotiations, which were launched in 2005, were officially concluded on June 30, 2011, with the closing of the four outstanding policy chapters out of a total of 35. These chapters cover areas that need to be fulfilled to comply with European Standards that allow entry into the European Union. Two chapters, in particular, posed the biggest challenge – Chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental rights and Chapter 11 on competition. The EU accession process provided Croatia with a strong incentive to adopt reforms and harmonise its

11 http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr189/sagall.htm
12 http://www.wiserearth.org/organization/view/b6c056d99d6aa8bb1d7049e497e7ce37
13 Ibid.
legislation with the EU *acquis communautaire*. The European Commission will continue to monitor Croatia’s reform progress during the ratification process, in particular related to the judiciary and fundamental rights.

As a part of the pre-accession process Croatia has introduced national legislation and a strategy for development cooperation. One important change that affects Croatia is the transition from aid recipient to an aid donor of ODA. In 2010 Croatia was a recipient of ODA on the list of Upper Middle Income Countries and Territories but it does not appear in the 2011 list that will take effect as of 1 January 2012.

### III Development Cooperation of Republic of Croatia

Nowadays, beside goals such as full membership in the European Union, international economic relations and a strengthening of relations with neighbouring countries, development cooperation is starting to play a very important role within the Croatian foreign policy. Croatia has been involved in international cooperation since December 2005 but before this date, during the 1990s, Croatia provided development assistance in particular to Bosnia and Herzegovina with programmes and projects related to sanitation, the health sector and education. The Republic of Croatia has also made voluntary contributions within the UN system, international organisations and peacekeeping missions, including training and development projects, as well as the contribution of civil society.

In 2007 some progress was reported on development policy and humanitarian aid. A new department responsible for development cooperation was established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European integration in November 2007. Croatia did not collect statistics on development and humanitarian aid in line with OECD/ODA standards, however it had already begun to make progress towards meeting the standard.

In 2008, international development cooperation of the Republic of Croatia got its legislative framework, “Development cooperation and humanitarian aid abroad” (OG 146/08) was adopted and a National Strategy for Development Cooperation for the period 2009 to 2014 was adopted in February 2009 (OG 24/09).

The last Croatia Progress Report of 2011 from the European Commission said that there is further progress to report on development policy and humanitarian aid. The National

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17 Ibid.
Strategy of Development Assistance for 2011 has been adopted and is being implemented and the staff of the Department for International Development Cooperation has been increased to 5 people and is being regularly trained25.

The European Commission said that preparations in this field are advanced but, at the same time, invited Croatia to continue its efforts to strengthen financial and administrative capacity in development policy and humanitarian aid26.

Developing an effective system of international aid and development cooperation is one of the priorities in the reform of the Republic of Croatia. As a participant in shaping the fundamental documents of the United Nations and other international conventions in this field, it is ready to achieve the agreed objectives of the international community. With its declared willingness to actively participate in building peace in the world and achieving the Millennium Declaration, the Republic of Croatia has decided to confirm and increase contributions to programmes and activities of the United Nations, which should be systematically increased with each successive year. Croatia is conducting a policy of international development cooperation in accordance with the principles of the European Union, the Committee for Development Cooperation (DAC) and the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations27.

The European Commission has put forward the expectation that Croatia should reach the level of spending on development assistance which was committed by the new Member State, which is 0.17% GNI for 2010 or 0.33% of GNI for 201528.

The Republic of Croatia State Budget of 2009 (Official Gazette, No. 149/08), in the section of the revenue and expense account (art. 2), shows that the designated aid to foreign governments is 82.100.000 Kuna, (approximately 10.972.415 Euro or 0.07% of the total expenses) and the aid to international organisations in of 6.772.002 Kuna, (approximately 905.057 Euro or 0.006% of the total expenses)29.

Within the context of bilateral relations, relations with the US hold special significance for Croatia. Strengthening partnership relations with the US could have a positive effect on Croatia’s overall international position and the realisation of its concrete foreign policy goals. Croatia wants to develop economic and political relations with other powerful countries, namely Russian and China, with which Croatia traditionally has friendly relations30. As part of the Croatian foreign policy, the main objective of the development cooperation, in line with EU policy and the UN, is to aim at ensuring peace, democracy and human rights, economic and social stability and the eradication of poverty in the world according to internationally

26 Ibid.
27 Provedbeni program nacionalne strategije razvojne suradnje Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, 2011, P. 2, [14.11.2011],
28 Ibid.
30 http://www.mvpei.hr/MVP.asp?pcpid=30, [09.11.2011]
recognised principles of sustainable development embedded in the Millennium Development Goals\textsuperscript{31}.

The priority area of the Croatian Development Cooperation is mainly the region of Southeast Europe and the priority themes are:

- transfer of experience from the process of political and economic transition (establishment and implementation of democratic structures, creating the conditions for a market economy, the implementation of democratic standards);
- experiences of the negotiations for EU membership, such as negotiations on social inclusion, creating the conditions for the use of pre-accession assistance and social welfare system reform and civil society;
- the reform process of harmonization with EU norms of society;
- transfer from specific experiences of war and post-war conditions (extraction, forensic science, physical and psychological rehabilitation, reconciliation);
- education, training of professionals and staff;
- health;
- environmental protection and energy efficiency\textsuperscript{32}.

IV Croatian CSOs

In Croatia, the term “civil society organisations” (CSO) is associated with associations, foundations and funds, public benefit companies, some kinds of cooperatives and non-registered initiatives\textsuperscript{33}. There are about 38,822 registered Croatian CSOs\textsuperscript{34} as of 2009. A national survey conducted by the Centre for Development of Non-Profit Organisations (CERANEIO) shows that in 2001 Croatian CSOs were involved in the following fields of activity: 24% advocacy, 20% social care, 13% environment, 9% culture and arts, 9% professional associations, 8% community development/housing, 7% health care, 5% education and research, 3% international organisations, 2% religious organisations\textsuperscript{35}.

The majority of CSOs are located in the four largest towns and, as shown in a survey conducted by CIVICUS in 2001, there was a lack of CSOs in areas with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants\textsuperscript{36}. Those geographical disparities are still present, albeit to a lesser degree, and represent one of the weaknesses of CSOs in Croatia, beside low level of membership, small

\textsuperscript{31} National Strategy for Development Cooperation for the period 2009 to 2014 (OG 24/09) \url{http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2009_02_24_530.html}, [09.11.2011]

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} Gojko Bežovan and Jelena Matančević, CIVICUS CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX IN CROATIA. Building identity: future challenges for CSOs as professionals in the societal arena, Zagreb, January 2011, p1 \url{http://www.civicus.org/images/stories/csi/csi_phase2/croatia%20csi%20analytical%20country%20report.pdf}

\textsuperscript{34} \url{http://www.tacso.org/cso-db-res/Croatia/?id=34}, [09.11.2011]


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, P. 7
number of citizens volunteering and a certain level of distrust towards CSOs by the public and the government.

Financial sustainability is also one of the key problems facing CSOs. Croatian CSOs are not dependent on local public funding only, but foreign funding plays a fundamental role in financing CSOs. Only about 7% of organisations receive state subsidies. Locally, financial resources can be raised from local citizens, businesses, local authorities, or others in a variety of forms and through many means, including: cash donations, grants from local authorities, fundraising events and sponsorship of NGOs and their activities by local businesses.

The relationship between government and civil society is now governed by a comprehensive set of institutions. The system, which now rests upon three pillars - the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, the Council for Civil Society Development and the National Foundation for Civil Society Development – and the combination of centralised policy-making with decentralised support to civil society, was dubbed the “New Model of the Organizational Structure for Civil Society Development in Croatia.”

The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs was founded by the Regulation on Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs in 1998 with the aim of performing expert work in the domain of the Croatian government with regards to creating conditions for cooperation and partnership with non-governmental, non-profit sector, especially with associations in the Republic of Croatia. The office has a wide range of activities: cooperation in creating and proposing new legislative frameworks, monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development and measures of the Operational Implementation Plan for the Strategy to forming a programme, standards and recommendations for financing the activity of civil society organisations from the state budget and other public funds, as well as pre-accession and structural funds of the European Union.

The Council for Civil Society Development is an advisory body to the Government of the Republic of Croatia acting towards developing cooperation between the government and the civil society organisations in Croatia in the implementation of the National Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development, the development of philanthropy, social capital, partnership relations and cross sector cooperation.

The National Foundation for Civil Society Development (NFCSD) is a public foundation established in 2003 with a broad mandate to promote and develop civil society in the Republic of Croatia. It is a public, not-for-profit entity established by the Croatian parliament.

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and acts outside the structures of state and local administration. In addition to providing a range of capacity-building assistance to CSOs and conducting research on civil society, the NFCSD has become a major grant-making facility. Its main source of funds is the state lottery, but it has also received support from the state budget and a number of foreign donors, including USAID, DFID, the European Commission and the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation. In 2008, its annual income amounted to 46 million HRK (approx 6.3 million EUR), of which 43 million HRK was provided by the lottery\textsuperscript{42}.

An important development affecting Croatia, also deriving from the pre-accession process in the EU, is the change of the country on the international scene with regards the development cooperation. Croatia is emerging on the international scene not more as a receptor of ODA, but as a donor country; from the 1\textsuperscript{st} of January 2012 it will be an official donor\textsuperscript{43}.

Despite the official nature of the transition from recipient to donor, Croatia is presented as a relatively small country that will have only limited resources available for development cooperation in the short-term. For this reason it will have to establish mechanisms to ensure the most effective use of development cooperation funds both for bilateral and multilateral use\textsuperscript{44}.

To support the change, UNDP has created the project “Emerging Donor: Support to National Capacities for Development and Cooperation”\textsuperscript{45}, which aims to assist in its transition from a recipient of official assistance to a donor country.

V Outlook

Gojko Bežovan and Jelena Matančević, authors of the report “Building identity: future challenges for CSOs as professionals in the societal arena” identify some strengths and weaknesses of civil society organisations in Croatia and put forward some recommendations for future positive changes\textsuperscript{46}.

The main strengths that characterise CSOs are:

- the strengthening of the network of volunteers’ centres in larger cities, as an institutional support to citizens interested in volunteering;
- the availability of diverse sources of finance for CSOs, which also have a regional dimension;
- the availability of programmes of multi-annual financing of CSOs, which contribute to the sustainability of organisations;

\textsuperscript{42} [http://www.balkansd.net/policy-research-analysis/civil-dialogue/national-level/croatia/420-ii22-state-funding-central-local.html], [09.11.2011]
\textsuperscript{43} [http://www.undp.hr/show.jsp?page=86021], [09.11.2011]
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
- the fact that European programmes favour the role of civil society as a central stakeholder in the development of contemporary societies;
- the fact that European programmes to support civil society in Croatia offer an opportunity for some organisations to establish themselves as regional leaders;
- the fact that Civil society as a topic is present in the local media; even if their work is superficially reported on;
- the fact that local authorities accept cooperation with CSOs;
- the fact that better developed business subjects are developing a practice of social responsibility.

Beside these, weaknesses such as low level of membership, relatively small number of citizens volunteering, a certain level of distrust towards CSOs by the public, and so on, still persists in Croatia.

The authors provide key recommendations to CSOs. They suggest that CSOs should put greater effort into developing sustainable and efficient programmes for the involvement of volunteers as an important resource in their work; at the same time, they stress the importance of promoting greater volunteer involvement in social or health institutions and public benefit companies. Would also be a positive step if donors were to support pilot programmes to support the employment of young professionals in the civil society sector. CSOs should play a greater role in influencing regional development policies, including those of the EU. To achieve this, civil society, development agencies and other important regional actors should strengthen the mechanisms for dialogue and also, stronger mechanisms need to be developed for involving CSOs in local government decision and policy-making processes. In order to strengthen the impact and internal governance of civil society, it is recommended that the government of Croatia, as well as regional and local government, introduce the practice of public calls for membership of boards of directors within institutions they control. By following these points and strengthening its engagement, civil society can increase its importance within Croatian civil society.

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid, P. 46.
## VI Croatian CSOs

<table>
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<td><a href="http://www.babe.hr">www.babe.hr</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:babe@babe.hr">babe@babe.hr</a> Tel: +38514663333 Fax: +38514662606</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership for Social Development</td>
<td><a href="http://www.psd.hr">www.psd.hr</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@psd.hr">info@psd.hr</a> Tel: +38516055668 Fax: +3851605569</td>
<td>HR; corruption, capacity building, straightening of CSOs Workshops, seminars and training</td>
<td>Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SMART</td>
<td><a href="http://www.smart.hr">www.smart.hr</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:gordana@smart.hr">gordana@smart.hr</a> <a href="mailto:sladana@smart.hr">sladana@smart.hr</a> Tel/Fax: +385 (0)14655-201</td>
<td>Strengthening and developing NGOs Educational trainings, technical assistance and consultations, gathers and distributes relevant information to NGO's</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YiHR</td>
<td><a href="http://www.yihr.org/en">www.yihr.org/en</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:mario@yihr.org">mario@yihr.org</a> Tel/Fax: +38598552976</td>
<td>Youth participation in the democratization of the society and empowerment, protection of victims, HR Volunteers, Conferences, Internship and other programmes</td>
<td>Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Website/Contact Information</td>
<td>Focus Areas</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>ZaMirNET</td>
<td><a href="http://www.zamirnet.hr">www.zamirnet.hr</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:zamir@zamir.net">zamir@zamir.net</a> Tel: +38514573445 Fax: +38514573457</td>
<td>Building CS, promoting a culture of peace, sustainable development</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Queer Zagreb</td>
<td><a href="http://www.queerzagreb.org">www.queerzagreb.org</a> Tel. +38513820019 Fax. +3820357</td>
<td>LGBTIQ rights</td>
<td>Croatia, former Yugoslavia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women's Network Croatia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.zenska-mreza.hr">www.zenska-mreza.hr</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:koordinatorica@zenska-mreza.hr">koordinatorica@zenska-mreza.hr</a> Tel: 098215858 Fax: +385 (0)51233650</td>
<td>Marginalized, discriminated women, gender equality</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td>RECOM</td>
<td><a href="http://www.zarekom.org">www.zarekom.org</a></td>
<td>Victim of war crimes, human right violations</td>
<td>Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
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- National Foundation for Civil Society Development, [http://zaklada.civilnodrustvo.hr/frontpage](http://zaklada.civilnodrustvo.hr/frontpage)
- Office for Cooperation with NGOs, [http://www.uzuvrh.hr/defaulteng.aspx](http://www.uzuvrh.hr/defaulteng.aspx)
- Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations, [http://www.tacso.org/cso-db-res/Croatia/?id=34](http://www.tacso.org/cso-db-res/Croatia/?id=34)