

CROATIAN NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL



NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

1995 - 2005

EVALUATION EXCERPT

FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR YOUTH

Zagreb, 30 April 2005

The Republic of Croatia is the United Nations **Member State since May 1992.**

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was an original Member of the United Nations from 1945 until its dissolution following the establishment of a five new sovereign and independent states. Since 2000 all five new states are UN Members. Croatia is one of them.

The first democratic multiparty elections held in the Republic of Croatia on 30 May 1990 and transition from communist regime to western democracy began. The first Constitution of the Republic of Croatia was proclaimed on 22 December 1990.

During 10 year of authoritarian nationalistic political regime in Croatia (1990-2000), country had neither distinctive and clearly formulated Youth Policy nor had democratic non-government national youth council but had National Youth League (HSMU in Croatian) - centralized, ruling party controlled and non-democratic national youth organization which was excluded from the membership of the European Youth Forum in March 1999.

The peaceful, internationally monitored and democratic change of political power, which overwhelmed the 10 years of ex-authoritarian Croatian political regime, happened on the 3rd January 2000.

In November 2000, after the democratic political changes in Croatia, **the Croatian National Youth Council (CNYC in English) was founded (Nacionalni savez mladih Hrvatske - NSMH in Croatian)** - national-wide youth civil society organization - democratic youth structure and communication network of Regional and Local Youth Councils. Initiative for founding came from the non-government youth organizations: The Young Manager Association of Croatia, The Scout Association of Croatia and The Student Union of Croatia and was accepted by all non-governmental youth organizations.

The Croatian National Youth Council **volunteers are educated in the Council of Europe** on how to establish cooperation with Government and initiate adoption of Youth Policy, following recommended Scenario for SEE countries and European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. The Croatian National Youth Council represented Croatia at **IV. UN World Youth Forum held in Dakar 2001** especially active on unemployment and social exclusion issues as main problems of Croatian Youth.

On the occasion of International Youth Day 2001 the Croatian National Youth Council adopted National Youth Empowerment Action Plan in which dynamic, flexible and responsible partnership with Croatian Government was proposed.

President of the Republic of Croatia H.E. Mr. Stipe Mesic in September 2001 formed the Expert Working Group on Youth in which a representatives of the tree national youth civil society organizations (secondary students, university students and youth) are participating. **The President called for The First National Conference on Youth in October 2001 on which a process of adoption of Youth Policy in the Republic of Croatia officially began.**

Day later began to work Governmental (joint governmental and non-governmental) Working Group on Youth Policy established in cooperation with the Croatian National Youth Council. To participate in the Joint Working Group representatives almost all ministries, international and national youth organizations were invited.

Finally, in November 2003 the Croatian Parliament adopted National Youth Policy proposed by the Croatian Government (The National Program of Action for Youth).

The Republic of Croatia is in the transition process from a strict socialist ideology to a liberal democracy. This transition is further confounded by the fairly recent ethnic conflicts of the late 90s. Croatia is also confronted 'with serious democratic deficits and economic problems (The National Program of Action for Youth, p. 40).

Council of Europe Youth Policy Advisory Mission in its Report for a year 2003 described the National Program of Action for Youth «as a unique compilation of unadulterated facts, products and procedures which still require an ideological explanation and legislative support. It is evident from the text of the Program that in the Republic of Croatia:

- a. there is a growth in the number of unemployed in the 15-29 age group;
- b. the Education system
 - (i) lays an over-emphasis on the knowledge of facts and does not provide a satisfactory evaluation system for skill levels;
 - (ii) suffers from an inadequate and slow introduction of new technologies;
 - (iii) is burdened with insufficient training of teachers and with a shortage of scientific and teaching personnel in higher education Institutions;
 - (iv) lacks sufficient and efficient transportation facilities thus undermining student participation in non-formal education, sports and other extracurricular activities;
 - (v) does not provide special education programs for young people with disabilities in all schools; and
 - (vi) it does not provide adequate counseling services for secondary school and college students;
- c. there is an overall deficiency of information with regard to (i) resources, (ii) educational programs, (iii) entrepreneurship initiatives, (iv) employment opportunities, (v) civil society and (vi) political activity;
- d. new risks, such as, organized crime, drug addiction and sexual exploitation, are increasing in number;
- e. the Juvenile Courts Act is not yet functioning as intended;
- f. special groups, such as the Romanies, young people with diverse sexual orientations, and persons suffering from AIDS or mental illness, are still subject to social exclusion as a result of avoidance / fear among the public;
- g. the health profile of young people does not look very 'healthy' mainly due to risky lifestyles, psychosocial disorders, traffic accidents and war weaponry remnants;
- h. there is no suitably developed Institutional mechanism in charge of youth;
- i. youth NGOs are not organized within an umbrella association thus depriving them of access to the European Youth Forum;
- j. Croatian legislation does not recognize the concept of voluntary work;
- k. lack of funds, of adequate premises and public recognition is contributing to disordered free time activities for young people; and
- l. educational, cultural and tourist mobility are stagnant mainly due to the absence of an agency that would represent the country in the EU *YOUTH* Program.

With this problem-oriented vision, the National Program proposes the establishment of a co-coordinated, cross-sectoral and participatory co-management system for the implementation and delivery of a youth policy. The Program also draws up a list of 110 objectives indicating, alongside, those domains (administrative set-ups) which would be involved in the implementation of particular measures».

Croatia is now in the process of acquiring full membership to the European Union that is why Youth Policy becomes a part of the National Action Plan for EU Integration.

At the beginning of 2002 Croatian Government signed Framework Partnership Agreement with the Croatian National Youth Council and recognized CNYC as the social and civil partner.

But, cooperation between Croatian state administration and Croatian National Youth Council which follow after signing Partnership Agreement, wasn't fruitful.

Different visions on the issue of youth participation in decision making process appear.

CNYC insist on the right of all young people to participate in a decision making processes on all levels while State administration tried to complete draft of the National Youth Policy with inconsiderable number of youth NGO leaders (80 young persons participated).

Problem was also detected by the **UNDP in the sixth Croatian Human Development Report 2004**: «After drafting the first official program, the idea was to involve youth through a campaign “Join In” where they could contribute their opinions, add new proposals or evaluate what had already been written. The public campaign endeavored to include 1,000 young people in the process of writing this document before it was submitted to the Parliament and Government for adoption. Due to the poor timing and insufficient communication, the Parliament adopted the bill before the results of the campaign was collected and analyzed. »

To «solve a problem with CNYC – Croatian Government social and civil partner» state administration took initiative to establish new organization as a governmental non-governmental national representative of youth, known form from communist time. Membership in governmental non-governmental national umbrella youth organization has been set up as a non-written condition for youth NGO'S to rich state founds.

«State Institute for the protection of family, maternity and youth in association with several youth organizations initiated the process of networking youth organizations into a new umbrella organization. Croatian Youth Network was founded late 2003 by 28 youth organizations, but still did not fulfill its role of being a true national youth council such as those that exist in the EU. The reason for this was the dissatisfaction of several members with the networking process who then decided to be passive members; a certain number of members as well as the entire youth sector is faced with the problem of the lack of capable people to lead it. The main reason for this being that the number of the elected management of the Croatian Youth Network has been in reality halved. » (UNDP the sixth Croatian Human Development Report 2004).

After the National Program of Action for Youth was adopted in 2003 all government bodies responsible for measures contained in the Program where obliged to adopt operative Working Plans for individual measure within six months of the adoption of the National Program of Action for Youth. **By the May 2005 Operative plan for implementation of the National Program of Action for Youth – National Youth Policy are not yet adopted.**

New Croatian Government elected in 2003 was passive on National Youth Policy in the year 2004 because external policy and EU integration issue where their chief priority.

After former president of the Croatian Government Advisory Board for Civil Society and editor of National Youth Policy resigned, Croatian Government took consultations with Croatian National Youth Council and youth NGO's (December 2004 – April 2005).

As a result of consultations, **Croatian Government call for the Second National Youth Conference which will take place on the beginning of June 2005** with the aim to clarify several crucial issues for a future development of National Youth Policy in the Republic of Croatia such as role of national youth council, what local youth council are, how to organize

and manage youth information centres, youth clubs, criteria's for financing, how to implement National Youth Policy etc.

Learned Lessons 2000 – 2005

- UN / EU / CoE documents/ plans / recommendations / researches should be translated and used in the process of adoption and implementation of National Youth Policy
- Only financially independent youth sector can become an equal partner to Government
- Youth NGO (non-governmental organization) are different from Youth CSO (civil society organization) – roles should be clarified and partnership can be built
- Internationalization of the National Youth Policy, international obligations by the European Commission and pressure on Croatian Government gives positive results
- Formal education and non-formal training for all stakeholders in a youth policy processes are precondition for successes in youth policy adoption and implementation

Main obstacles 2000 – 2005

- Insufficient involvement of “ordinary” young people
- Unstable political situation and politicization of youth policy issue and youth NGO's
- Dissemination of information and access to ICT
- Lack of transparency in the tendering process - corruption
- Weak involvement of media and local self-governments

In stead of CNYC Conclusion

« The concept of youth participation in the activities and development of a local community is very simple and it is based on a decision according to which youth take part in a decision-making process in a more restricted sense, as well as in the development of democracy in a community, state and society where they live. Even though there is a general agreement on this issue in Croatia, in practice things look rather different.

For that reason, in Croatia at the present, there is a long list of failed projects and initiatives for youth, apathy and indifference are a common thing for them. There is a low percentage of participation in the activities of schools and communities, as well as low motivation to take initiative and make changes. Young people seem discouraged by the processes done in their name, which have not secured a place for them in the centres of power and decision-making processes. Fortunately, Croatia is on the road to developing mechanisms for these processes, and young people are aware of the fact that this will take some time, so they are taking the matters into their own hands.

When youth consider the social and political situation in Croatia, they often feel helpless so they are looking for ways to get involved and participate. Politicians, as well as other distinguished members of a community, often ignore them, thus creating an atmosphere of distrust and skepticism, and making youth passive and withdrawn.»

(UNDP the sixth Croatian Human Development Report 2004)

