

Analysis of the Possibilities *for Non-Formal Civic Education*

CROATIA, FINLAND, AUSTRIA, AND ROMANIA



IMPRESSUM



AUTHOR

doc.dr.sc. Monika Pažur

DESIGN

Bojan Crnić

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Oriana Ivković Novokmet

Ulica Antuna Mihanovića 14

10 000 Zagreb

gong@gong.hr

www.gong.hr

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Nacionalna
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Introduction

Education for human rights and democratic citizenship is defined by the UN¹ World Programme for Human Rights Education (2004) as “education, training, and information aimed at building a universal culture of human rights.” The aim is not solely to promote knowledge about human rights and mechanisms of their protection but also to develop skills and attitudes necessary for the promotion, implementation, and protection of human rights in everyday life. In this way, this type of education contributes to the democratisation of society as a whole. The Council of Europe’s Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education², adopted in 2010, emphasises that these concepts imply education that equips participants with knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes and behaviours that enable them to take an active role in democratic life with the main aim to promote and protect democracy, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. Education for human rights and democratic citizenship means education, training, raising awareness, informing, practising and engaging in activities aimed at empowering students in their contribution to building and defending a universal culture of human rights in society, as well as valuing diversity and taking an active role in democratic life (Council of Europe, 2010). In other words, it aims to acquire knowledge and understanding, develop skills and abilities, and foster attitudes and values within the substantive dimensions of human rights and fundamental freedoms, political literacy, economic and sustainable education, intercultural education, and social and civic competencies.

This type of education can and should be implemented both in formal and non-formal education formats. The main characteristic of non-formal education is that it serves as an addition, alternative, and/or supplement to formal education in the lifelong learning process of individuals. It has often been viewed as a basis for achieving the right to education for all. It serves people of all age groups, can be of short duration and/or low intensity, and is usually offered in the form of short courses, workshops, or seminars. Non-formal education generally leads to qualifications that competent national educational bodies do not recognize as formal qualifications or do not recognize at all. However, the recognition of learning through non-formal education or informal learning has become more common in many countries in the last decade. ISCED 20113 allows for the recognition of qualifications obtained through non-formal education, which are acquired by

1 UN (2014). World Programme for Human Rights Education.

— [link](#), accessed on March 7, 2024

2 Council of Europe (2010). Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

— [link](#), reviewed on February 25, 2024

3 UNESCO (2012). International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011.

— [link](#), reviewed on February 25, 2024

demonstrating skills, knowledge, and competencies comparable to the successful completion of a formal educational program.

In the action plan for the implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education⁴, it is emphasised that a key priority is to continue to promote and consistently implement non-formal education programs for human rights, especially those working with children and youth. Education for human rights and democratic citizenship has become a priority in educational policies at the European level and within the European Union. The aim is to enable young people to develop self-awareness as members of a social group and subsequently become active citizens on local, national, or European levels. The Council of Europe, in its Charter on Education for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship (2010), particularly highlights the importance of non-formal education in developing active citizenship. It identifies civil society organisations and other organisations involved in education and professional training as key actors in these activities. In its Recommendation from 2012 on Education for Democratic Citizenship, the Council of Europe emphasises the importance of recognizing all stakeholders working on this subject in non-formal education and informal learning. Similarly, in the conclusions of the Council of the European Union on education and training⁵ from 2009, one of the four strategic objectives highlighted is learning and teaching about equality, social cohesion, and active citizenship through greater openness to non-formal education, increased transparency and recognition of achieved educational outcomes. Based on comprehensive EU research and study by the European Parliament⁶, EU programs promote lifelong learning about human rights and democratic citizenship through non-formal and formal educational activities.

In this study, an analysis will be conducted on non-formal education in the field of civic education and training in Croatia and three other EU member states. Considering that education for human rights and democratic citizenship directly contributes to the increase of democracy level in a society, the analysis includes Croatia and three countries at different stages of democratic development. The Global State of Democracy Initiative⁷ ranks countries annually within four categories: representation, rights, rule of law and participation. The countries selected for this analysis are Finland (ranking in the top 5 in all four categories), Austria

4 UNESCO (2017). *World programme for human rights education. Third Phase: Plan of Action.* — [link](#), searched on February 25, 2024

5 European Union (2009). *Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training.* — [link](#), reviewed on February 25, 2024

6 European Parliament (2023). *Civic education and education in national curricula.* — [link](#), reviewed on February 25, 2024

7 — [link](#), reviewed on February 26, 2024

(mid-ranking among EU countries in all four categories) and Romania, which ranks at the bottom in all four categories compared to EU countries. Croatia is mostly positioned between Austria and Romania. The analysis was conducted regarding (1) the recognition of educational outcomes in the field of civic education and training; (2) the recognition of qualifications acquired through non-formal education; and (3) the sources of funding for non-formal education programs.

*Recognition of
Educational
Outcomes
in Civic
Education*

Civic education is the fundamental component in building a strong democracy. It provides citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to understand the complex challenges our societies are facing and prepares them to take the initiative in addressing them. However, despite its importance, civic education is not immune to the very challenges it addresses. One of the biggest challenges civic education face today is a global phenomenon manifested in the citizens' loss of trust in policies and institutions. The consequences of such political apathy are manifold, ranging from low election turnout and poor political activism to insufficiently developed media literacy skills which hinder critical assessment of information and informed decision-making. Furthermore, there is a growing social tension between ethnic groups worldwide, creating an environment of conflict and division, thereby complicating the achievement of the educational outcome of civic education: promoting social cohesion and understanding. These changes suggest that civic education should have clearly defined guidelines of action at the national level, and its educational outcomes should correspond with the current issues and changes happening in society. These outcomes should be offered as a framework within which various regional and local contexts can operate. For this to be possible, high-quality initial education of teachers is necessary, preparing them to adapt content to everyday life while still achieving the goals of civic education. Existing research suggests that civic education should be included as a set of educational outcomes in formal educational systems. The following will present whether the criteria for the formal implementation of civic education are met in the countries included in this analysis: whether there is a legal framework, how the implementation is envisaged, and what, if any, educational outcomes of this program exist at the national level⁸ (Table 1).

8 The information for this part of the analysis was taken from the European Commission's website where an overview of national policies on various elements can be found — [link](#), searched on March 6, 2024.

	FINLAND	AUSTRIA	ROMANIA	CROATIA
There is a legal framework specifically designed for Civic Education	✓	✓	✗	✗
Legal and financial support for the implementation of non-formal Civic Education programs	✓	✓	✗	✗
Implementation of Civic Education as a separate subject	✓	✓	✓	✗
Implementation of Civic Education through cross-curricular approach	✓	✓	✗	✓
Clear Educational Outcomes of Civic Education	✓	✓	✗	✓

TABLE 1: BASIC INFORMATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CIVIC EDUCATION FORMAL EDUCATION

Finland has a comprehensive approach to Civic Education; it is implemented as a separate subject, as a cross-curricular approach, and its content is integrated into other subjects. Schools at all levels of education must implement multidisciplinary learning modules relevant to Civic Education. Mandatory Civic Education exists in lower and higher secondary education, starting when students are 12 years old and lasting for 5 years and students actively participate in planning content and teaching processes. Elements of civic education which include participation, volunteering, awareness of various forms of civic participation and impact on society are integrated into all educational activities and subjects and are closely related to History, Social Sciences, Geography, Religion and Ethics, Economics and Health Education. The main goal of Civic education is to support students' growth into active, responsible, and entrepreneurial citizens, with two key outcomes stated: (1) students should be guided to act pluralistically in a society that understands diversity and respects human rights and equality in line with the values and principles of democracy, and (2) students should be provided with a knowledge base on how society functions and how they can actively engage as citizens in its social and economic development. The school environment is seen as a safe place where students should practice and apply competencies to grow into active citizens who responsibly use their democratic rights and freedoms. Non-formal Civic Education programs are also legally recognized. For example, in the National Democracy Programme 2025, the implementation of educational programs for human rights and democratic citizenship is highlighted as one of the objectives and funding for organisations who implement them is provided within the framework of the same Programme.

In Austria, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research issued the General Regulation on Civic Education (Unterrichtsprinzip Politische Bildung, Grundsatzlerlass 2015), which regulates the implementation of Civic Education in formal education. They have also issued the Framework Regulation on Intercultural Education (Grundsatzlerlass Interkulturelle Bildung, 2017), which impacts both formal and non-formal citizenship-related programs. In Austrian schools, Civic Education is integrated in various ways: (1) as a teaching principle integrated into all subjects; (2) as a separate subject or as part of modules integrated into cross-curriculum subjects, starting from the 7th grade of elementary school and lasting a minimum of 3 years; and (3) as activities within legally defined and mandatory school partnership with relevant stakeholders and involving students in decision-making processes. The educational outcomes of Civic Education as cross-curricular principle are: (1) to contribute to the stability and development of democracy and human rights; (2) to empower individuals to recognize social structures, power relations and potential for further development, and to examine their fundamental interests and values, evaluate them, and change them according to their own opinions when necessary; (3) to demonstrate democratic ways of participation at all social and political levels and enable individuals to actively participate as individuals, as members of social groups, or as part of society; (4) to promote interest in social issues and readiness to participate in political life to advocate for one's interests, the interests of others, and issues of general welfare; (5) to open fundamental political questions, such as the legitimization of political power and its control, fair distribution of resources, responsible and environmentally friendly approach to nature, political rights equality; (6) to enable individuals to recognize, understand, and assess different political concepts and alternatives; (7) to develop an environment based on democratic principles and values such as peace, freedom, equality, justice and solidarity; and in this context to contribute to overcoming prejudices, stereotypes, racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism, as well as sexism and homophobia; and (8) to indicate that a just order of peace and fair distribution of resources is necessary for the survival of humanity which requires global coordinated efforts as well as understanding that this is also personal obligation.

Currently, Croatia lacks a national strategy exclusively dedicated to the development of social and civic competencies for children and students. The first signs of understanding the importance of adapting the educational system to facilitate the development of civic competencies of young people emerged in 1999 with the adoption of a program under the promising title 'National Education Program for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship'. In 2010, with the adoption of the National Qualifications Framework, Civic Education was marked as a specific field which gave the foundation for the development of a new curriculum. During this process, the Civic Education Curriculum was created, and its experimental implementation was approved by the former Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports in 2012.

The curriculum intended the development of students' civic competencies through six structural dimensions: human rights, political, social, (inter)cultural, ecological, and economic dimensions. Despite the positive assessment of the pilot version of the Curriculum, schools introduced a new interdisciplinary and cross-curricular model, which differed from the one tested (Pažur, 2017)⁹. The program did not incorporate suggestions from students and teachers from the previous experimental phase, nor did it introduce new content related to human rights, intercultural education, or civic participation. Since 2019., a new Curriculum for cross-curricular implementation of Civic Education has been in place for elementary and secondary schools in Croatia. In Croatia, over the last two decades, there has been a public debate about the need to introduce Civic Education into schools. However, despite clearly articulated needs and a certain level of political consensus, the integration of this content has been, at best, occasional and dependent on the motivation and good will of individual teachers and schools. Due to dissatisfaction with achieving the educational outcomes of Civic Education through cross-curricular implementation, a large number of local and regional self-governments independently introduce and implement Civic Education as an extracurricular activity in schools. In the Curriculum for cross-curricular implementation of Civic Education in elementary and secondary schools the learning and teaching objectives are: (1) to develop civic competence and enable students as informed, active, and responsible members of social communities at all levels, to effectively perform their civic role; (2) to adopt knowledge about human rights, political concepts and processes, political systems and characteristics of a democratic community and the ways of participating in its political and social life; (3) to promote human rights values (dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity), democratic principles in the community within and outside of school life, to develop critical thinking and argumentation, communication skills necessary for social and political participation in shaping a comprehensive experience of active citizenship; and (4) to develop, in a democratic school atmosphere and broader democratic community, the fundamental values prescribed by the Croatian Constitution - freedom, equality, ethics, morals, family values, and the value of marriage, national equality and gender equality, peacekeeping, social justice, respect for human rights, inviolability of property and home, preservation of nature and the environment, rule of law, and a democratic multi-party system.

Romania has no specific national strategy or regulation regarding the development of social and civic competencies. Civic Education is mentioned among other elements in the Youth Strategy for the period 2021-2025. It is implemented as a mandatory subject in primary and lower secondary education, starting when students are 11 years old and lasting approximately 4 years. However, there is no

9 Pažur, M. (2017). Overview of the development of civic education and education in the Republic of Croatia from 1999 to the present, *Školski vjesnik*, 66 (4), 605-618.

prescribed recommended number of hours for its implementation. Additionally, it can be integrated into various elective subjects, such as Social Education, European Education, and Intercultural Education. There is no cross-curricular implementation; it is only integrated as part of general educational principles. Educational outcomes are focused on: (1) developing political literacy; (2) obtaining critical thinking and analytical skills; (3) developing certain values, attitudes, and behaviours important for participation in a democratic society; (4) promoting active participation and engagement at the school and community levels¹⁰.

Quality implementation of Civic Education programs, whether within the formal or non-formal educational system, is possible when there is a legal framework for it, when there is a system of financial and other support and when there is a clear professional framework (in the form of educational outcomes) which guides the actions of stakeholders. Based on the comparative analysis, it can be concluded that countries at a higher level of democracy, Finland and Austria, both have legal documents defining the framework for the implementation of Civic Education. Furthermore, both countries have developed programs that enable and even provide financial support for the implementation of non-formal Civic Education programs. Romania and Croatia do not have a regulated legal framework for the implementation of Civic Education, nor do they have documents that encourage and provide support for the implementation of non-formal programs in this area. Regarding the implementation of Civic Education, all three countries included in the analysis, along with Croatia, have a mandatory subject within lower and/or higher secondary education, which must be implemented for 3 to 5 years of schooling. The subject Civic Education does not exist only in Croatia. Countries with a higher level of democracy, Finland and Austria, also implement Civic Education as a cross-curricular subject, clearly stating the educational outcomes and content that fall within this area. The seriousness of a country in developing democratic citizenship is reflected through the degree of defining a particular area. This analysis has shown that countries at a higher level of democracy have a structured system for implementing Civic Education, both at the legal and professional levels, considering and enabling its implementation within both formal and non-formal educational systems. Among the countries included in the analysis, Croatia has the lowest level of system structuring which suggests the least interest for the development of active and responsible citizens from those shaping national educational policies.

10 European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Civic education and education in schools in Europe: 2017*, Publications Office, 2018
— [link](#)

*Recognition of
Qualifications
Obtained
Through
Non-Formal
Education in the
Field of Civic
Education*

The recognition of qualifications obtained through non-formal education is an issue of national or, in some countries, regional educational policies and equally applies to educational programs of various themes, including Civic Education. The Council of Europe, in its 2012 Recommendation on the validation of non-formal education and informal learning¹¹, emphasises that countries should begin to develop procedures for the recognition and evaluation of non-formal education and informal learning at the national level. A necessary precondition for validation is that non-formal education programs contain data on individual educational outcomes obtained through the program, and documented processes for obtaining them, an assessment of the degree of achieving individual educational outcomes, and a certificate containing these elements. Table 1 presents the foundations for validating qualifications gained through non-formal education in the countries included in this analysis¹².

The results of the analysis, visible in Table 2, suggest that in Croatia, compared to other countries, there is the lowest level of recognition of professional qualifications gained through the field of non-formal education. Moreover, the possibility of validating non-formal programs is not legally recognized, nor have basic elements been developed to enable this. Considering that Civic Education in the Croatian educational system is currently being implemented as a cross-curricular subject and there is no initial education through which teachers would acquire qualifications for these contents, the recognition of qualifications obtained through non-formal programs would undoubtedly be a solution leading to the quality implementation of the Civic Education subjects in the educational system.

11 European Union (2012). Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.
— [link](#), searched on February 26, 2024.

12 The analysis was conducted based on 2018 data available within national reports
— [link](#), searched on February 26, 2024

	FINLAND	AUSTRIA	ROMANIA	CROATIA
PRE-AGREED FRAMEWORK FOR VALIDATION	There are agreed-upon validation methods in all five ¹³ sectors in the field of education	There are agreed-upon validation methods in all sectors in the field of education	There are agreed-upon validation methods in 2 sectors in the field of education	There are no agreed-upon validation methods in the field of education
WELL-ESTABLISHED LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VALIDATION OF NFE	There is a legal basis, which was improved in 2017, providing clear recommendations for validation.	National Validation Strategy (2017)	There is no specific document; it is recognized as an option in several other documents related to lifelong learning	There is no document defining validation at the national level.
RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATION LEVEL	Recognizes full and/or partial formal qualification	Recognizes full and/or partial formal qualification	Recognizes full and/or partial formal qualification	There is no system for recognizing qualifications

TABLE 2: FOUNDATIONS FOR THE VALIDATION OF QUALIFICATIONS ACQUIRED THROUGH NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Throughout the EU’s member states, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are key actors in providing non-formal Civic Education. This includes a range of organisations from large established entities to small community-based groups. Often, their work is focused on very specific topics or areas such as human rights, environmental protection or youth engagement. The CIVICS Innovation Hub conducted research on the implementation of Civic Education in 21 European countries¹⁴, including Finland, Austria, Croatia, and Romania. The research involved individuals who implement Civic Education programs. Identifying the sectors from which these individuals come is an indicator of the educational sphere from which the actors who implement Civic Education come. In Finland, the respondents were equally involved in non-formal education and informal learning about Civic Education (85.7%). Almost all respondents identified as working on Civic Education programs are employed by civil society organisations (92.9%). All civic educators

13 The 5 sectors in the field of education and training are: higher education, initial vocational education and training, further/additional vocational education and training, adult education, primary education.

14 Slavokova, L. and Kurilić, M. (2023). Great expectations: Demands and realities of civic education in Europe. The CIVICS Innovation Hub. — [link](#), searched on March 6, 2024.

from Finland who responded to the survey carry out activities at the national level. In Austria, there were 37 civic educators, the majority of whom conducted activities in a non-formal (70.3%) and informal (62.2%) setting. Most of them work in non-profit organisations (81.1%). The majority of activities related to Civic Education take place locally (67.6%) or regionally (62.2%). Despite the challenges faced in Croatia, there is a large number of people working in the field of Civic Education, with 48 individuals involved in those programs. Almost all of them (93.8%) were engaged in activities related to non-formal Civic Education. Most respondents (64.6%) reported implementing activities in a non-formal setting, followed by only 25% who worked in a formal environment. The majority of activities take place locally (72.9%). In Romania, the survey reached 16 civic educators, many of whom are involved in non-formal Civic Education programs (81.3%) and work in non-formal Civic Education (68.8%). The respondents were mostly representatives of associations (75%) and non-governmental organisations (68.8%).

This research indicates that most activities related to Civic Education occur in the non-formal sphere, are primarily conducted by civil society organisations and are operating locally to respond to local needs. All of the above serves as an argument for the need for a higher level of validation of qualifications acquired this way in Croatia. It would help identify experts in Civic Education and consequently improve the quality of implementing these contents.

*Funding
Sources for
Non-Formal
Education
Programs in
Civic Education*

The funding sources for actors operating in the field of Civic Education play a crucial role in their ability to effectively perform their tasks. There are various funding resources; however, when it comes to non-formal Civic Education programs, the most common sources are national public funding and financing through EU funds (Table 3).

	FINLAND	AUSTRIA	ROMANIA	CROATIA
NATIONAL PUBLIC FUNDING	100 %	84 %	38 %	85 %
EU FUNDS	64 %	32 %	63 %	83 %

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF ORGANISATIONS IMPLEMENTING CIVIC EDUCATION FINANCED FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES (2022)

Table 3 shows that the availability of specific programs supporting Civic Education varies significantly from country to country. Finland has several such programs, primarily relying on national public funding, which is further strengthened by EU fund allocations. However, Romania receives the least national public funding and ranks at the bottom among all EU countries in terms of funds allocated for Civic Education programs from national sources. Croatian actors are funded equally from both national public funds and EU fund allocations.

The financial insights into the yearly budgets of civil society organisations, which play a pivotal role in implementation of non-formal Civic Education initiatives, are quite revealing (as shown in Table 4). It is evident that in Finland, more than half of the organisations have an annual budget of over 500,000 EUR to carry out activities. In Romania and Croatia, about half of the organisations operate with less than 100,000 EUR annually, indicating limited resources for implementing civic education activities. In Austria, approximately 40% of organisations have a budget of more than 100,000 EUR annually, which is similar to about 50% of organisations in Croatia. Interestingly, a significant portion of respondents did not disclose their budgetary information. This may suggest an unwillingness to share financial information due to an unfriendly environment for civil society organisations in their respective country or the presence of entities with budgets significantly larger or smaller than those officially reported.

	FINLAND	AUSTRIA	ROMANIA	CROATIA
UP TO 5.000 EUR	0 %	8 %	13 %	8 %
5.001 – 50.000 EUR	0 %	11 %	25 %	10 %
50.001 – 100.000 EUR	21 %	11 %	25 %	25 %
100.001 – 500.000 EUR	7 %	27 %	13 %	46 %
MORE THAN 500.001 EUR	57 %	11 %	13 %	6 %

TABLE 4: AVERAGE ANNUAL BUDGET OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE REPRESENTS ORGANISATIONS THAT CHOSE NOT TO RESPOND TO THIS QUESTION)

Concerning the funds organisations acquire from European sources, projects aimed at implementing programs related to civic education in Europe are diverse, with some originating from the EU level and others from the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe (CoE) describes itself as the “leading human rights organisation” on its official website. It encompasses 47 member states, of which 27 are European Union members. All member states of the Council of Europe have signed the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, a fundamental treaty designed to protect human rights, promote democracy and ensure the rule of law. One of the key areas of action for the Council of Europe is education. As part of its activities, the Council of Europe develops materials for the implementation of non-formal Civic Education programs and funds national training and education on human rights and democratic citizenship topics for various groups, including youth, young leaders, minorities, etc.

In its 2020 EU Citizenship Report, the European Commission highlighted its commitment to “promoting a sense of European identity among young people through the Erasmus+ program, the European Solidarity Corps and the Jean Monnet Actions.” The Commission also committed to exploring the possibility of using other EU funds, such as projects from the Cohesion Policy and Horizon Europe, “to develop deliberative and participatory democracies through experimentation and explore the practices, challenges and impacts of deliberative democracy processes at different geographical scales and in different social groups”.

The EU’s Erasmus+ program aims to create more cohesive and inclusive societies that enable citizens to play an active role in democratic life. Education and working with young people are key to promoting common European values. Through these programs, social integration should be encouraged, intercultural understanding strengthened, and a sense of belonging to the community developed with intention to prevent violent radicalization. Programs that contribute to these objectives are implemented in the form of educational mobility for individuals, fostering innovation collaborations and the exchange of best practices, as well as supporting the development and reform of policies.

	FINLAND	AUSTRIA	ROMANIA	CROATIA
ERASMUS+ YOUTH MOBILITY PROJECTS	2 936 445.43 EUR 43 projects 101 organisations	2 390 557.60 EUR 59 projects 326 organisation	8 203 174. 00 EUR 184 projects 787 organisation	3 007 930. 73 EUR 74 projects 318 organisation
ERASMUS+ YOUTH COOPERATION PROJECTS	2 740 000.00 EUR 14 projects 59 organisations	3 920 000.00 EUR 27 projects 98 organisation	4 664 341.00 EUR 35 projects 126 organisation	2 380 000.00 EUR 16 projects 62 organisation
ERASMUS+ YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT PROJECTS	320 000 EUR 1 project 1 organisation	198 000 EUR 2 projects 2 organisation	1 511 760.00 EUR 4 projects 26 organisation	314 469.38 EUR 2 projects 9 organisation
JEAN MONNET ACTIONS	60 000 EUR 2 projects 2 organisations	113 000 EUR 4 projects 4 organisation	347 437 EUR 7 projects 7 organisation	158 000 EUR 6 projects 6 organisation
TOTAL	6 056 445.43 EUR 60 projects 163 organisations	6 621 557.60 EUR 92 projects 430 organisations	14 726 712.00 EUR 230 projects 946 organisations	5 860 400.11 EUR 98 projects 395 organisations

TABLE 5: FUNDING RECEIVED BY INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES UNDER THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME IN 2022¹⁵

From the data provided in Table 5, it is evident that the majority of funds from the EU Erasmus+ Europa projects were directed towards Romania, where in 2022, 946 organisations implemented or participated in the implementation of 230 projects. Overall, organisations had access to approximately 15 million EUR. Croatia and Austria executed a similar number of projects (Austria 92, Croatia 98), involving around 400 organisations. However, Austria secured about one million EUR more than Croatia for project implementation. Consequently, Croatia had the least amount of funding within the Erasmus+ program, and over half of these funds were allocated to mobility projects. For collaboration projects, Croatia secured the least funding, almost half of what Romania and Austria received.

To understand the focus areas of the received funds, we can examine the percentage of funds allocated under each Erasmus+ program priority. In Croatia, collaborative projects primarily contributed to digital transformation (65.39%), followed by inclusion and diversity (56.07%), environment (53.28%), and participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement (13.14%). Concerning Erasmus+ priorities in Finland, collaborative projects primarily addressed

15 — [link](#), searched on March 3, 2024.

environmental issues (59.31%), followed by digital transformation (52.80%) and inclusion and diversity (48.62%), with the least focus on participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement (16.58%). Collaborative projects in Austria primarily addressed environmental issues (51.60%), followed by digital transformation (48.09%), inclusion and diversity (41.01%), and the least participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement (20.93%). In Romania, collaborative projects equally addressed digital transformation (54.31%) and inclusion and diversity (50.74%), about 34.88% of projects focused on environmental issues, and 23.04% on Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement.

Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programs aim to ensure Europe's global competitiveness. The emphasis is on excellent science, industrial leadership and societal challenges as responses to contemporary issues. The objective is to ensure that Europe produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation and facilitates collaboration between the public and private sectors in delivering innovation.

Other EU programs that enable countries to secure funding for the implementation of non-formal programs on Civic Education are Europe for Citizens, Creative Europe, and European Solidarity Corps. The Europe for Citizens program supports initiatives discussing why and how totalitarian regimes that influenced modern European history came to power and offers alternative perspectives and insights into Europe's history. Priorities for 2019 and 2020 included: commemorations of major historical turning points in recent European history, civil society and civic participation under totalitarian regimes, antisemitism, anti-gypsyism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance, democratic transition and EU accession. The Creative Europe program supports artists, designers, filmmakers, musicians, and theatre professionals in a wide range of initiatives that help consolidate and express democracy through art. The European Solidarity Corps helps young people participate in projects contributing to community development in various areas: education, citizenship and democratic participation, environment and nature protection, migration and culture, among others. Table 5 shows that the highest number of these projects, from the analysed countries, are being implemented in Romania, followed by Croatia, then Austria, and finally Finland. In other words, most projects are currently active in countries with lower levels of democratic development, suggesting that non-governmental organisations are trying to enhance the rule of law and participation through non-formal programs.

	FINLAND	AUSTRIA	ROMANIA	CROATIA
EUROPE FOR CITIZENS	15	34	164	48
CREATIVE EUROPE	16	23	18	36
EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS	76	61	182	81
TOTAL	107	118	362	165

TABLE 6 OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS ACTIVE IN 2023 FROM EU PROGRAMS

To conclude, funding and resources for non-formal Civic Education programs are limited and inconsistent. Many civil society organisations struggle to secure long-term funding, making effective planning and implementation of programs challenging. This is particularly evident from the data suggesting that more projects are being implemented in Romania and Croatia compared to Austria and Finland; however, the funding amounts are not proportionally increased. In other words, the average funds allocated per project in Finland and Austria are significantly higher than in Croatia and Romania. Moreover, in Romania and Croatia, a larger number of organisations operate with an annual budget of less than 100,000 EUR compared to Austria and Finland. Additionally, funding sources vary greatly, with some countries providing more state support than others. Generally, organisations implementing Civic Education programs in countries on a higher democracy level (Finland, Austria) usually receive more government support without the fear of state interference in civil society work, and there is also greater support from local private philanthropists. However, organisations in countries with less developed democracies often rely on public and private funding from abroad and EU funds for Civic Education. It is evident in the significantly higher number of European projects being implemented in Romania and Croatia compared to Austria and Finland. The lower the democracy level in the countries, the more civil society organisations work on empowering their citizens. However, since these countries allocate less for Civic Education programs, civil society organisations rely more on European funds, implementing a series of smaller projects and interventions making their operations more challenging and unpredictable. Planning activities according to the priorities set by certain European programs prevents civil society organisations, which rely solely on these funds, from maintaining continuity in working on topics and content that are important to them. Instead, it imposes a work dynamic where their actions adapt to the direction set by the donor, whoever that may be.

Conclusions and Recom— mendations

Democracy is based on the development of a culture of human rights and empowering citizens who are active and responsible in the communities they participate in. In the development of democracy, the right to education plays a significant role and is recognized as a fundamental right crucial for realization of all other human rights. The right to education encompasses not only the availability and accessibility of education but also learning and development inside human rights (Tomaševski, 2001¹⁶). This implies that educational institutions should be inclusive and adaptable to various groups of children, youth, and adults, nurturing a democratic culture at all levels, from governance to daily relationships. The development of democratic culture is a long-term process requiring continuous and systematic action from all stakeholders (Rusch, 1994¹⁷), and realising citizens' right to education can only be achieved through a combination of formal, non-formal education and informal learning. Providing opportunities for citizens to learn in various ways, within different programs, and acquiring competencies for active participation in democratic society enables them to realise their right to education and development according to their needs and desires.

Dewey (2005¹⁸) argues that the connection between democracy and education is crucial and that educational institutions should be the centre of social activities and key to community engagement. Similarly, Dundar¹⁹ (2013) contends that the concepts of democracy and education are interlinked, as democracy is ensured by education, and education is ensured by democracy. Currently, some of the most influential global and European organisations require their member states to develop educational policies that promote the development of democracy (OECD, 2020²⁰; UNESCO, 2016²¹). Central to these processes are educational programs for human rights and democratic citizenship, and the actors taking on roles in them, when national policies fail to meet the set standards, are civil society organisations operating in the realm of non-formal educational systems.

- 16 Tomaševski, K. (2001). *Human Rights obligations: making education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable*. Gotenburg: Novum Grafiska AB
- 17 Rusch, E. A. (1994). *Gaining Voice: Democratic Praxis in Restructured Schools*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994).
- 18 Dewey, J. (2005). *Democracy and education*. New York: Barnes and Noble
- 19 Dundar, S. (2013). Students' Participation to the Decision-Making Process as a Tool for Democratic School. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 13 (2), 867-875.
- 20 OECD (2020). Are students' career expectations aligned with their skills?. *PISA in Focus* No. 104. OECD Publishing: Paris
- 21 UNESCO (2016). *Leading better learning: School leadership and quality in the Education 2030 agenda: Regional reviews of policies and practices*. — [link](#), accessed 5th January 2023.

The analysis conducted indicates that in Croatia, there is the lowest level of consensus within the formal education system regarding the implementation of Civic Education and its outcomes. There is no systematic way of teaching human rights and democratic citizenship defined at the national level, and Croatia is the only country among those included in the analysis that has not introduced Civic Education as a separate subject or as content integrated through modules into other subjects at any stage of primary and/or secondary education. Even Romania, which ranks below Croatia when it comes to democracy level, has introduced Civic Education as a subject in primary education. In such societies, where there is a lack of consensus and a legal framework for empowering citizenship, non-formal education plays a significant role. Non-formal education is inherently based on democratic values and promotes inclusivity and voluntarism. It is more flexible and can adapt to the needs and specificities of the groups it works with, contributing to community bonding by connecting various actors around topics of interest. However, for non-formal education to function effectively and contribute to the development of democracy, certain prerequisites must be met at the level of national educational policies. Primarily, it is important to enable participants in non-formal educational programs to have their qualifications recognized for knowledge and skills acquired through other means outside the formal education system. To make this possible, there must be a clear national framework and defined qualifications for a specific field. Unfortunately, unlike Finland and Austria, Croatia lacks a legal framework that allows and provides guidelines for recognizing qualifications acquired in non-formal educational systems. Besides, in the field of civic education, there needs to be a consensus on the outcomes to be achieved at each educational level, which further hinders targeted and continuous action of non-formal programs. Lastly, since non-formal Civic Education programs are mainly conducted by civil society organisations, they should have secure funding sources that allow them to maintain continuity in addressing topics that are relevant to them, rather than adapting to the priorities of organisations through which they receive funding. In Croatia, there is no form of secure public funding and a large part of the organisations rely on implementing projects at the European level, adjusting their activities annually to the priorities of these projects.

BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS, CERTAIN RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE MADE TO NATIONAL DECISION-MAKERS IN CROATIA:

- Legal framework which recognizes and enables the implementation of Civic Education through non-formal programs needs to be established
- Professional framework for the field of Civic Education needs to be established, clearly defining educational outcomes for various educational levels, including educational outcomes for teachers
- Legal and professional framework needs to be developed to introduce Civic Education as a mandatory subject or include modules from civic education areas as part of the curriculum of existing mandatory general education subjects
- Council of Europe's guidelines from 2012 Recommendation on validation of non-formal education and informal learning should be followed and a legal, qualification, and professional framework for validating competencies acquired through non-formal programs should be developed
- A system for financing civil society organisations from public funds should be institutionalised, and regular and continuous co-financing of non-formal Civic Education programs should be provided as something that contributes to the development of democracy. This can also be achieved by allocating financial resources to achieve the objectives of certain national programs that emphasise the importance of implementing education for human rights and democratic citizenship

doc.dr.sc. Monika Pažur

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