

# EUROPE ENGAGE

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING  
WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE



## CROATIA NATIONAL REPORT



University of Zagreb

**EUROPE ENGAGE SURVEY  
OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the academic year 2015-16, in Croatia there were 128 institutions of higher education. Higher education system in Croatia is a binary system, offering two types of higher education studies: university studies (that offer academic programmes conducted solely at universities) and professional studies (offering professional programmes conducted at polytechnics or colleges of applied sciences<sup>1</sup>. The Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (Official Gazette 123/03) enabled the specialist education offered in professional programmes and academic education that is conducted solely in universities. The same Act allows public higher institutions to be funded from the state budget, which is allocated by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports to universities and further distributed to all constituents in accordance with their regulations. Private universities can also be funded from the state budget in accordance with the rules determined by the National Council for Higher Education<sup>2</sup>.

The Croatian higher education system consists of 10 universities (7 public and 3 private universities), which include 67 faculties, art academies and schools of professional higher education. It also consists of 14 polytechnics (11 public and 3 private polytechnics) and 23 colleges of applied sciences (3 public and 21 private colleges).

As numbers show, polytechnics are mostly public institutions, while colleges of applied sciences are mostly private and they offer similar type of study programmes, with the only difference being the number of programmes they offer. University studies have 3 levels: undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate studies, while professional studies have 2 levels: professional study and specialist professional graduate study.

The first university in Croatia was University of Zadar, which was founded in 1396.

The University of Zagreb was founded in 1669 and is considered the oldest continuously operating university, not only in Croatia, but in the whole Southeast Europe. Today, it comprises 33 constituent units: 29 faculties, 3 art academies and the Center for Croatian Studies. In the academic year 2012-2013 it had 7.373 full time teachers and 71.302 students enrolled [University of Zagreb, 2014].

The other five public universities are: J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, University of Dubrovnik, University of Rijeka and University of Split.

The University of Rijeka comprises 15 constituent units: 10 faculties, an academy of applied arts and 4 University departments. J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek consists of 11 faculties, 5 University departments and an Academy of Arts. The University of Split consists of 11 faculties, 4 University departments and an Academy of Arts. Juraj Dobrila University of Pula consists of 4 departments and Academy of Music, University of Dubrovnik has 8 departments as constituent units, while University of Zadar consists of 22 departments.

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1. <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/croatia/national-overview/complete-national-overview>

2. <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/croatia/national-overview/financing>

The number of students enrolled in institutions of higher education in Croatia in 2011-2012 was 152.857, and 36.964 of them graduated. In the academic year 2012-2013, a total of 159.589 students were enrolled in higher education institutions and 36.252 of them graduated [Statistical Yearbook, 2014].

Institutions of higher education in Croatia have become part of the European Higher Education Area, since in 2005 they have adapted their study programmes to the Bologna Process<sup>3</sup>.

Quality assurance policy in the higher education system in Croatia is based on the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, as well as on the regulations of individual higher education institutions, and rules and recommendations of Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, National Council for higher education, higher education institutions and universities themselves [Stimac & Katić. 2015].

During 2014 and 2015, universities were accredited and re-accredited according to the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (2009).

## Legislation

### *Acts*

- Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/2009)
- Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (Official Gazette, Nos. 123/03, 198/03, 105/04, 174/04, 02/07, 46/07, 45/09, 63/11, 94/13, 139/13 and 101/14)
- Act on Professional and Academic Titles (Official Gazette, Nos. 128/99, 107/07 and 118/12)
- Act on Institutions (Official Gazette, Nos. 76/93, 29/97, 47/99).
- Act on the Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications (Official Gazette, Nos. 124/09, 45/11 and 74/14)

### *Regulations*

- Regulation on the Measures and Criteria for Establishing Higher Education Institutions (Official Gazette, Nos. 9/05, 58/08)
- Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (Official Gazette, No. 124/14)

## 2. BACKGROUND TO SURVEY

The Europe Engage Survey of civic engagement and service-learning activities in Croatia was undertaken to map policy, practice, funding and strategic vision for civic engagement

3. <http://www.studyincroatia.hr/studying-in-croatia/croatian-higher-education-system/croatia-and-the-european-higher-education-area>

and service-learning within the Croatian higher education system. The Croatian partner university (University of Zagreb) in the Europe Engage project was excluded from this short survey. The data about the civic engagement and service-learning activities in the University of Zagreb (policy, practice, funding and strategic vision for civic engagement and service-learning) were collected through an earlier survey. But, considering the results of that survey, points of recommendation provided at the end of this document should be relevant to the University of Zagreb as well.

In the initial step (beginning of May, 2015), the survey was sent by email to rectors or vice-rectors of the following universities, polytechnics and colleges:

*Public universities*

- Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
- Juraj Dobrila University of Pula
- University of Dubrovnik
- University of Rijeka
- University of Split
- University of Zadar

*Public polytechnics*

- Međimurje Polytechnic in Čakovec
- Polytechnic “Lavoslav Ružička” in Vukovar
- Polytechnic “Marko Marulić” in Knin
- Polytechnic “Nikola Tesla” in Gospić
- Polytechnic of Applied Health Studies in Zagreb
- Polytechnic of Šibenik
- Polytechnic of Karlovac
- Polytechnic of Požega
- Polytechnic of Rijeka
- Polytechnic of Slavonski Brod
- Polytechnic of Zagreb

*Public colleges*

- College for Management in Tourism and Informatics in Virovitica
- College of Agriculture in Križevci
- Police college

*Private universities*

- Croatian Catholic University
- Libertas International University Dubrovnik
- University North

*Private polytechnics*

- Polytechnic “Hrvatsko Zagorje” in Krapina
- Polytechnic Velika Gorica
- VERN’ Polytechnic

*Private colleges*

- Business College “Libertas”
- Business College “PAR”
- Business College “Zagreb”
- Business College with Public Rights, Višnjan
- College for Applied Computer Engineering “Algebra”
- College for Finance and Law “Effectus”
- College for Inspection and Human Resource Management
- College for Safety
- College for Technology and Business - Pula Polytechnic
- College of AGORA
- College of Business Administration “Baltazar Adam Krčić”
- College of Economics, Entrepreneurship and Management “Zrinski”
- College of Information Technology Zagreb

- College of International Relations and Diplomacy Dag Hammarskjöld
- College of Management and Design “Aspira”
- RIT Croatia
- RRiF College for Financial Management
- Technical College in Bjelovar
- TV Academy - College of Multimedia and Communication in Split
- Zagreb School of Economics and Management

**A few representatives of institutions replied to the initial email pointing out that civic engagement and service-learning is not part of the institutional practice at their institution and therefore have not filled in the survey.**

**The six institutions** (Polytechnic of Zagreb, Polytechnic Velika Gorica, VERN’ Polytechnic, Polytechnic Nikola Tesla in Gospić, Polytechnic of Požega and Polytechnic of Slavonski Brod) **have filled in the survey, although they do not have S-L course or the subject in which the S-L experience is integrated.**

One of the polytechnics has pointed out that it is strategically focused on education for values and competences of expertise, entrepreneurship and business-orientation by academic excellence and socially responsible entrepreneurial action. The other polytechnic has provided details for the projects of student practice that connect students with the best Croatian companies, but no evidence of service-learning is present. Finally, although some polytechnics mentioned that civic engagement and service-learning is part of their study programs (curriculum), they have also pointed out that each department has teacher dedicated to practice work, not service-learning. Therefore, it can be concluded that these 6 institutions recognize the importance of service-learning, but the formal acknowledgement of civic engagement / service-learning and service-learning experiences are equated to student’s practice and/or internships.

After existing trainers, bibliography and research reports on civic engagement and service-learning were identified and analyzed, emails were sent and phone calls made to the identified trainers and teachers who published papers on their service-learning experiences. Furthermore, since analysis has showed that all these trainers and teachers belong to the fields of humanities or social sciences, emails were sent to all heads of departments in humanities and social sciences at each faculty which is part of the following universities: University of Split, University of Rijeka, University of Zadar and University of Osijek).

As a result, **one survey was filled in by the team of the Department of information science from University of Zadar, two surveys were filled at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences from the University of Split and two surveys were filled at the University of Osijek (one at the Faculty of Economics and the other at the Faculty of Education). Finally, three surveys were filled at the University of Rijeka**

**(two at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Education and one at the Faculty of Economics).**

### **3. LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SURVEY**

Despite the idea to establish a representative working group at each University that would complete the survey, it was impossible to implement this suggestion. Namely, administrative staff and senior management in all universities that were surveyed were mostly unfamiliar with civic engagement and/or service-learning and they most often interpreted civic engagement as “student practice” or “civic education”. This survey was best accepted by academic staff that has either already implemented service-learning in their courses or is planning to implement it in the near future.

The other obstacle was the fact that constituent units of each Croatian university (i.e. faculties at non-integrated universities and departments at integrated universities) have their own legal personality and may act independently, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Law on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, the Statute of the University of Zagreb and faculty’s own Statute. All university faculties at non-integrated universities consist of departments, which are basic scientific and educational units that draft the curriculum of all subjects for university and professional studies belonging to a particular Department. Both faculties at non-integrated universities and departments at integrated universities are independent in the curriculum design, but share their university’s mission statement, rules of procedures, policies and the most common university activities.

Therefore it was not possible for respondents to systematically respond to this survey because data gathered in the first section of the survey refers to the university level (when discussing management, common formal statements, etc.), while the second section of the survey requires replies at the departmental level (e.g. when discussing particular courses). In most cases it was not possible to fit integrated universities and faculties at non-integrated universities in the frame of the survey. Therefore, for the review of all activities at each Croatian university, the whole context mentioned in the previous paragraph should be taken into consideration.

### **4. UNIVERSITY CULTURE AND IDENTITY**

#### **University of Rijeka**

The Mission of the University described in its mission statements is dedicated to making strategic and development-oriented decisions on numerous issues regarding the functioning of the academic community and continued facilitation of international competitiveness in all areas of scientific, artistic and professional activities. Through active collaboration with the economic and business sector along with partnerships for community development the University endeavors to contribute toward the socio-cultural transition into a knowledge-based society.

Apart from the mission statement, strategic plans of the University for 2014-2020 and strategic plan of the Faculty of Economics for 2010-2015 were analyzed. The goal related to civic engagement listed in the University strategic plan is to “engage in research projects or professional projects for civil society organisations/institutions or in partnership with them and to increase the number of students volunteering or actively participating in the work of civil society organisations. “ Another goal related to civic engagement mentioned in the strategic plan of the Faculty of Economics is to “develop different forms of curriculum adapted to the needs of the economy and social community.”

University mission statement, strategic plans, community member participation on University boards, training for faculty, specific learning activities provided to faculty to include in modules and public lectures have some formal acknowledgment of civic engagement and service-learning.

Also, one can find moderate formal acknowledgment of civic engagement and service-learning in the university website and university publications.

Regarding the requirements for some majors/disciplines/programmes, there is also moderate formal acknowledgment.

The level of support by the senior management largely depends on the individual at the management position. There can be total emptiness of any kind of acknowledgement for some years, and then there is a period where academic staff (university professors) can make and contribute to changes simple because there is someone in the management system that understands the idea and concept of civic engagement. As a proof of support by the senior management and substantial formal acknowledgment, the Rector’s Award for Best Student Volunteer and Rector’s Award for Best Student Activist were established in this University.

The following objectives for civic engagement are described in some detail in formal documents of the University: students’ general academic achievement, connection/reflection related to students’ career goals, their life goals outside career/work, their future plans and decisions (past, current and future), their general intentions for their own lives, their contributions to the module or program and their learning of social skills.

The following objectives for civic engagement are promoted in formal documents of the University: students’ academic achievement within the specific service-learning or civic engagement and their engagement in these modules as well as their engagement in communities outside the university. Learning “good citizenship” skills, students’ contributions to the university, beneficiaries of the service, a more generalized “common good” as well as their own life purpose are also emphasized. Finally, connection/reflection related to what students consider personally important and how students personally understand the service or civic situation is also emphasized.

As an effort made to make staff aware of civic engagement and service-learning activities, university professors have written a manual in Croatian and developed dedicated website (available at: [zalaganjeuzajednici.uniri.hr](http://zalaganjeuzajednici.uniri.hr)), with the support of the University or Rijeka, as publisher as well as web provider.

Career promotion policies do not take into account civic engagement and service-learning activities.

Also, there are no organisational structures to co-ordinate civic engagement and service-learning activities in this university.

### University of Split

The Mission of the University described in its mission statements dating from 2015 emphasizes that “university performs its tasks in accordance with the needs of the community in which it acts” and that “academic freedoms, academic self-government and university autonomy shall also include the responsibility of the academic community towards the social community in which it acts”.

University mission statement, publications, public lectures and community member participation on University boards have some formal acknowledgment of civic engagement and service-learning.

The strategic plans of the University for 2015-2020 list following goals: business incubator, business accelerator, innovation center, centers of competence and smart specialization.

Overall, the University’s strategic plans are clearly oriented towards commercialization of intellectual creations, forming a stakeholder network in which economic, academic, government and public institutions should take part.

The Mission of the University states: “students who excel in learning and social activities can be commended and rewarded”. This might be a proof of the formal acknowledgement of civic engagement as awards to students, but these awards are not meant to specifically recognize civic engagement or community service.

The following objectives for civic engagement are described in some detail in formal documents of the University: students’ general academic achievement, their engagement in university and in communities outside the university.

The following objectives for civic engagement are promoted in formal documents of the University: students’ engagement in the current service-learning or civic engagement module, contributions to the module and to the university. Also, students’ own life purpose, learning academic, social and “good citizenship” skills are emphasized. The objectives such as connection/reflection related to students’ career goals, life goals outside career/work students’ future plans and decisions are mentioned or noted, but not described.

There is no support by senior management and. career promotion policies do not take into account civic engagement and service-learning activities.

Substantial efforts are made to make staff aware of civic engagement and service-learning activities through public lectures and training events organized by academic staff. Moderate efforts are made to make staff aware of civic engagement through funding for attending conferences and online dissemination of information.

There are no organisational structures to co-ordinate civic engagement and service-learning activities.

Also, service-learning was never incorporated into Bachelor and Masters curricula. Active citizenship is mentioned in the course Introduction to Civic education at the Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Split, but there is no evidence of service-learning activities in that course.

Finally, university has not offered service-learning courses in the past that no longer exist.

### University of Osijek

Although the formal acknowledgement of civic engagement and service-learning is not present in the university's mission statement, it is present in the university's strategic plan.

The strategy of the University (2011-2020) states that "the university should form partnerships and collaborative relationship with the local community (city and county governments) in the regional environment. In particular, it should develop cooperation with the business and the civil sector and become a driver of economic and regional development."

There is some formal acknowledgment of civic engagement and service-learning in university's website and marketing materials, program or discipline specific strategic plans, requirements for some majors/disciplines/programs and in training for faculty.

The following objectives for civic engagement are described in some detail in formal documents of the University: students' engagement in the current service-learning or civic engagement module, their contributions to the university and learning of academic, social and "good citizenship" skills.

Furthermore, students' contributions to a more generalized "common good", their engagement in university and communities outside the university as well as the connection/reflection related to students' career goals is emphasized.

Finally, the following objectives for civic engagement are mentioned or noted, but not described: students' general academic achievement and achievement within the specific service-learning or civic engagement module, connection/reflection related to students' life goals outside career/work, their future plans, past, future or current decisions, students' own life purpose, connection/reflection related to what students consider personally important and how students personally understand the service or civic situation as well as students' contributions to the module or program and the beneficiaries of the service that students provide.

Civic engagement and service-learning is formally acknowledged at the Faculty of Education at University of Osijek as an extracurricular activity through Volunteer student club.

Regarding efforts that are made to make staff aware of civic engagement and service-learning activities, at the Faculty of Economics (University of Osijek) no efforts are made, while at the Faculty of Education (University of Osijek), there are some efforts made to make

staff aware of these activities. We were unable to assess the data from other faculties of this University.

At the University of Osijek, there is no promotion of civic engagement at the university level.

At the Faculty of Economics (University of Osijek) there is no support from senior management for civic engagement and service-learning activities when it comes to creation of coordinating unit, provision of posts which include responsibility for civic engagement and service-learning, attendance or funding of civic engagement and service-learning events or membership of advisory boards or steering committees related to civic engagement.

However, in Faculty of Economics there are now several courses that have cooperation with community as an important and integrated part of curriculum. Also, Voluntary program which organizes many voluntary activities is offered to students.

Regarding the Faculty of Education (University of Osijek), senior management is somewhat supportive of civic engagement and service-learning activities. It generally supports the membership of some professors in civil society organizations who organize joint activities for the benefit of the local community (for instance, the organization of exhibitions or workshops for the preservation of cultural heritage in the local community).

Faculty of Education at University of Osijek is oriented towards the development of general and professional student competences for quality work in educational institutions, and raising awareness of students about the importance of social participation in the local community, the city of Osijek and throughout eastern Croatia. Academic staff usually takes part in the European Union civil society organizations and participates in education fairs, where the promotion of the Faculty includes the participation of students in volunteering activities.

We were unable to assess the data from other faculties of this University.

At the University of Osijek, there are some organizational structures in place to co-ordinate civic engagement, but none dedicated exclusively to civic engagement and service-learning activities.

At the Faculty of Economics (University of Osijek), service-learning is often incorporated into curriculum, while at the Faculty of Education (University of Osijek), service-learning seems to be infrequently incorporated into programmes. We were unable to assess the data from other faculties of this University.

### **University of Zadar**

The strategy of the University (2011-2017) lists “making the University a desirable partner for collaboration with the local and wider social community and an integral factor in the development of the city and the local economy as well as a driving force of all kinds of projects for civil society needs” as one of its main strategic goals.

Education about the community and civil society needs is described as an important strategic goal. It is emphasized that “University shall not have a marginal role in the development of a tolerant and democratic society, that is open to changes driven by responsible and moral citizens. In order for University to affect public policies, it is necessary to systematically work on formal education that meets the needs of the community and civil society. It should also work on the counseling, informing and development of collaboration with organizations of civil society, public institutions, local and regional governments, and civic initiatives.” As a consequence, University strategic plan has defined the following tasks:” to introduce an elective course for all university students that would systematically educate them on human rights and contribution to the civil society” and “to develop a framework for credit evaluation (recognition of ECTS) of organized voluntary activities in which university students take part”.

Therefore, we can conclude that although university mission statement barely acknowledges civic engagement and service-learning, the formal acknowledgment of civic engagement in the university’s strategic plan is substantial.

Unfortunately, the centralized university office or centre for service- learning or civic engagement still does not exist and there is no formal acknowledgment of training for academic staff.

Regarding the evidence on how service-learning is formally acknowledged in this university and regarding requirements for some programs, students participating in service-learning projects in Department of Information Sciences receive acknowledgement for their work in diploma supplement (described as “additional information”) and they also receive ECTS credits for the diploma project. Such evidence was not found for other departments of this integrated university.

The following objectives for civic engagement are described in some detail in formal documents of the University: students’ general academic achievement, their engagement in university and in communities outside the university. Also, objectives such as connection/reflection related to students’ general intentions for their own lives, what students consider personally important and how they personally understand the service or civic situation as well as their contributions to the module or program are described in some detail.

Furthermore, learning academic, social and “good citizenship” skills are emphasized. Finally, the following objectives for civic engagement are mentioned or noted, but not described: students’ engagement in the current service-learning or civic engagement module, their academic achievement within the specific service-learning module or program, connection/reflection related to students’ career goals and students’ contributions to a more generalized “common good”.

The senior management is somewhat supportive of service-learning activities regarding the creation of coordinating unit, provision of posts which include responsibility for civic engagement and attendance at civic engagement and service-learning events. Funding of civic engagement and service-learning events receives a moderate support by senior management, while their support for the membership of advisory boards or steering committees related to civic engagement is still absent.

Substantial efforts are made to make staff aware of civic engagement and service-learning activities through and online dissemination of information and dedicated websites, while only some efforts are made through public lectures. Moderate efforts are made to make staff aware of civic engagement through funding for attending conferences. No efforts are made through training events.

There are some organisational structures in place to co-ordinate civic engagement, but none dedicated exclusively to civic engagement and service-learning activities.

## 5. SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

From a national level, in the academic year 2013-2014, 13 courses were offered nationally (University of Zagreb excluded), the number of academic staff delivering these courses was 24, while the number of students enrolled in was 466 (this number refers to students who attended specific courses, but also to students who participated in service-learning activities as a preparatory step for their master thesis).

The broad discipline areas offering service-learning activities are Humanities and Social Sciences (more precisely: Information Sciences, Pedagogy, Social Work, Language Education, Marketing, Management and Economics).

### University of Osijek

In the University of Osijek, two faculties (Faculty of Education and Faculty of Economics) have integrated service-learning into some courses in the Bachelor and Masters curricula.

At the Faculty of Education (University of Osijek), service-learning is infrequently incorporated into Bachelor and Masters curricula. It was partially included in curricula programmes of the course Methodology of teaching Croatian Language in the academic year 2013-2014. Nine students and 2 teachers were enrolled in the course. The Faculty of Education is preparing a service-learning course for the academic year 2016-17.

At the Faculty of Economics in the University of Osijek, service-learning is often incorporated into Bachelor curriculum. Undergraduate students at this Faculty have a compulsory course within which they take part in the project Contribution to the Community. At the Faculty of Economics 100 students and several teachers were enrolled in this course in the academic year 2013- 2014.

University has not offered service-learning courses in the past that no longer exist.

### University of Rijeka

In the University of Rijeka, two faculties (Faculty of Teacher Education, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty of Economics) have integrated service-learning into some courses in the Bachelor and Masters curricula.

At the Faculty of Economics in the University of Rijeka, service-learning is infrequently incorporated into Masters curriculum. Graduate students with major in Marketing, Management and Economics at this Faculty may take part in courses Evaluation research, Market research, Promotion and Strategic management that offer service-learning activities. At the Faculty of Economics 150 students and 2 teachers were enrolled in this course in the academic year 2013- 2014.

At the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in the University of Rijeka, service-learning is infrequently incorporated into Bachelor and Masters curriculum. Both undergraduate and graduate students with major in Pedagogy at this Faculty may take part in elective service-learning activities which are part of the following courses: Pedagogy of free time, Evaluation Research, Family pedagogy, Family and children at risk, Relations in the family, Family and Prevention of asocial behaviors. These courses bear 3 ECTS credits that cover both service-learning activities and other course activities. In the academic year 2013- 2014, 17 out of 30 students and 2 teachers were enrolled in the service-learning activities in the course Family and Prevention of asocial behaviors.

Faculty of Education and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences have both integrated elective service-learning activities into some compulsory and elective courses in the Bachelor and Masters curricula (e.g. Education for Civil Society, Education for Human Rights, Project Management in Education, Education of persons with special needs).

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in the University of Rijeka has also enabled students the acquisition of part of the ECTS credits through volunteering and service-learning in the community. At the Department of Pedagogy, students at the graduate level can earn “free ECTS credits” for volunteering in exchange for an elective course, providing a certificate of their volunteering activities.

University has not offered service-learning courses in the past that no longer exist.

### **University of Zadar**

Department of Information Sciences at the University of Zadar (which is one of the 25 departments at this integrated university) organizes service-learning activities for university students where they carry out workshops for retirees in Zadar City Library or participate in service-learning activities that are carried out in information institutions with specific groups of users (e.g. reading for the elderly and disabled, information literacy workshops for unemployed, etc.). These service-learning activities are organized for the graduate students of information sciences, social work, pedagogy and andragogy in their final year as a preparatory step for their master thesis. Students participating in service-learning projects receive acknowledgement for their work in diploma supplement (described as “additional information”) and they also receive ECTS credits for the diploma project.

In the academic year 2013-2014, 190 students and 15 teachers from the University of Zadar participated in pilot service-learning projects.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The analysis of basic legal and strategic documents that regulate and describe the higher education in Croatia (Acts and Regulations listed in the introductory part of this report), mission statements and strategic plans of the University of Osijek, University of Zadar, University of Split and University of Rijeka and some of their constituents brought us to conclusion that formal acknowledgement of civic engagement and service-learning in the higher education in Croatia is still missing in most of the cases. Although all these documents mention “the responsibility of the academic community towards the social community in which it acts”, the actual civic engagement of universities still remains a mere phrase.

We can conclude that results of the research study by Ledić, Ćulum, Nuždić and Jančec [2008] are still valid and accurately describe the landscape of civic engagement and service learning in Croatian institutions of higher education in 2015: “Even though they recognize the importance of university social responsibility and see the need to encourage student participation in all academic activities, they still predominantly believe that the role of higher education is exclusively to provide opportunities for acquiring expert knowledge and qualifications for the labor market.” [Ledić, Ćulum, Nuždić and Jančec, 2008].

The institutions of higher education in Croatia have still not developed a unique system of implementation and evaluation of service-learning and civic engagement. Some faculties (which are components of the universities) offer elective service-learning activities and courses or activities that encourage civic engagement of students in the field of humanities and social sciences. None of the faculties or departments in the field of technical sciences and natural sciences has filled in the survey and we were also unable to find any information that these faculties have incorporated service-learning in their programmes.

Furthermore, senior management in all universities that were surveyed most often interprets service-learning as civic education. The reason for this can be found in the strategic document of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (Office for Cooperation with NGOs), that contains all findings related to the implementation of the National Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development from 2012 to 2016. Namely, one of the measures of this Strategy is to introduce and systematically implement civic education in the regular educational system. Service-learning is mentioned as one of the performance indicators of that measure which is related exclusively to civic education courses for future primary and secondary school teachers<sup>4</sup>. Also, student competences for civic engagement are considered to be the same as competences required for teaching civic education. Finally, existing service-learning activities are described and classified exclusively as civic education activities.

Considering the current situation of civic engagement and service learning implementation in Croatia, the following points of recommendation can be made:

4. <http://strategija.uzuvrh.hr/index.php/aktivnosti/id-104-na-nastavnickim-studijima-za-buduce-ucitelje-i-nastavnike-uvrstiti-kompetencije-potrebne-za-interaktivno-ucenje-i-poucava.html>

- it is necessary to develop a methodology for a systematic civic engagement of students in organizations of the civil society;
- mentoring programs are needed to involve students in direct service activities of different types of organizations of civil society, addressing the needs of the local community;
- establishment of service-learning centers at the faculty level (at non-integrated universities) and departmental level (at integrated universities) is necessary to support the implementation of service-learning programs in the higher education institutions ;
- it is necessary to ensure training for teachers (academic staff) to implement service-learning methods and the evaluation of students;
- training of civil society organizations' employees to work with students in service-learning programs is also needed as well as the implementation of service-learning programs in equal partnership with civil society organizations;
- it is necessary to develop teaching materials that would promote the results of the service-learning programs at each faculty/department of the University;
- enabling students to disseminate the knowledge of the needs and services of the local community through the appropriate channels may form a basis for social innovations.

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