

## DEAR in Croatia 2020

### Context and project observations

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## Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR) Support Team

The DEAR Support Team is a project of the European Commission:

- Supporting the Commission in the implementation of the EU DEAR Programme, including through
  - Programme Analyses and Studies, Database management, Communications about the Programme;
- Supporting EU DEAR projects in the implementation and learning from their work, including through
  - Workshops and Exchanges, Communications support for projects, Learning from and between projects.

As part of the work of the Team a series of ‘country studies’ have been commissioned to investigate the context in which DEAR projects operate in different EU Member States. Details of the country studies that have been published to date can be found at

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear/news/dear-programme-reports>.

## Contents

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1.	The national context of DEAR in Croatia .....	3
1.1	Political context.....	3
1.2	Legal and institutional framework .....	4
1.3	Social context .....	4
2.	Development education in schools.....	5
3.	Awareness raising and advocacy on global topics. ....	7
3.1	Role of CSOs .....	8
3.2	Role of the media - an opportunity for visibility .....	9
4.	Youth and DEAR .....	9
5.	Project interpretations of quality, public awareness and critical thinking.....	10
5.1	Quality .....	11
5.2	Public awareness.....	11
5.3	Critical thinking .....	12
6.	Approaches to engage the audience .....	12
7.	Similarities and differences in respect of Global Learning vs. Campaign/Advocacy projects .....	13
8.	Impact of COVID19 pandemic to the projects .....	13
9.	Conclusions - challenges and opportunities .....	14
	References:.....	14

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# 1. The national context of DEAR in Croatia

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## 1.1 Political context

The topic of international development cooperation is generally poorly present in Croatian social and political life. Being the youngest EU member state - with relatively recent experience of military conflict - Croatia is still in the transition from perceiving itself rather than as a donor, than as an aid recipient. Croatian full EU membership has contributed to the establishment of formal structures within the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs (MEFA) responsible for development cooperation – *Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid*.

In 2013, the Croatian Government published the *National Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Cooperation Abroad*<sup>1</sup> and since then has produced yearly reports on the implementation of Croatian development cooperation. Although Croatia has promised to achieve 0,33 GNI for official development assistance (ODA), the current number shows that Croatia reports only 0.11 GNI<sup>2</sup>. There are still challenges within state administration to collect accurate and updated data on ODA spending, resulting in a delay on regular ODA reporting to the Parliament and public. There is also criticism toward the structure of Croatian ODA since a significant amount of ODA is directed toward the Croatian diaspora in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This trend is also visible through the existence of the *Government Office for Croats living outside Croatia*, which distributes grants to the Croatian diaspora. This custom was changed during the social-democrat Government ruling from 2012 - 2015 but later was returned to the same.

MEFA distributes the majority of ODA through multilateral (transferring the money to international organizations) and bilateral cooperation (of Croatia and a recipient country). MEFA does not recognize domestic civil society organizations (CSOs) as potential development project providers, although there is an announcement that in autumn of 2020 MEFA will open call for projects for CSOs. In the past, the only call accessible to CSOs was launched in 2014 by MEFA. This call didn't recognize development education and awareness-raising as potential project activities. In general, one can claim that development cooperation is still not appreciated as a valuable and vital foreign policy tool.

The Ministry of Science and Education (MSE) is also not recognizing or developing projects related to development/global education. In the official MEFA report on implemented development projects for the years 2017 -2018<sup>3</sup>, MSE has reported only eight projects. Seven of them are scholarships for international students, and one provides direct support to (the Croatian medium) University of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That gives us a picture of marginal, or better to say, non-existence of development education as a concept within the MSE, which will be further elaborated in the following chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> National Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Cooperation Abroad, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2017

<sup>2</sup> CONCORD Aidwatch 2019, Leaving no one behind: time for implementation, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Report on implemented development projects for the years 2017 -2018, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, <https://www.sabor.hr/hr/izvjesce-o-provedbi-sluzbene-razvojne-pomoci-republike-hrvatske-inozemstvu-za-2017-i-2018-godinu>

## 1.2 Legal and institutional framework

In 2008 the Croatian Parliament adopted the *Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance*<sup>4</sup> which defines the institutional and legal framework of Croatian international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Every five years, the Government is obliged to adopt a *National Strategy for Development Cooperation*. The Strategy is followed by a yearly Implementation plan and implementation report. The central unit responsible for development projects is *Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid at MEFA*. To improve the coordination between different Government sectors and ensure policy coherence, the Government has established the *Committee for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance*<sup>5</sup>. The Committee is an intra-governmental body consisting of representatives from all ministries (including the Ministry of Education), other Government institutions, and CSOs. The Committee is a large body – having in a total of 35 members. Such a large membership makes the operational ability of the Committee questionable. It doesn't meet regularly, but MEFA through the Committee has achieved better documentation of implemented development projects.

Interestingly, the Government Office for Croats living outside Croatia, which distributes a significant amount of development grants to Croatian diaspora, is not recognized in the Act. As it was mentioned above NGOs are questioning the inclusion of such grants in official development aid reporting.

## 1.3 Social context

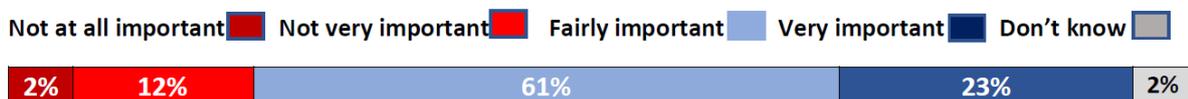
Although there is an overall weak political interest in development cooperation, Croatian citizens show an obligation for international solidarity. According to a public survey conducted in December 2019<sup>6</sup>, 64 % of Croatian citizens are fully or partially in agreement with the statement “*The EU should help poor countries outside the EU*” (only 14% fully or partially disagree). The result was even better in the EU barometer 2019 on development cooperation<sup>7</sup>. Citizens were asked: “*In your opinion, how much is important to help people in developing countries?*”. 84 % responded ‘very important’ or ‘fairly important’. Moreover, 78% agree with the statement “*Providing financial assistance to developing countries contributes to a more peaceful and fairer world.*”

” The EU should help poor countries outside the EU”



From public pool opinion conducted by CROSOL, December 2019

“In your opinion, how much is important to help people in developing countries?”.



From public pool opinion Eurobarometer: EU citizens and development cooperation, October 2019

<sup>4</sup> Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian of Assistance, Official Gazette 146/08, 2008

<sup>5</sup> Government Decision on the Establishment of Committee for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance

<sup>6</sup> Citizen's Awareness of the EU and Their Views on the Role of the Republic of Croatia in the EU Presidency, CROSOL, December 2019

<sup>7</sup> EU Citizens and Development Cooperation, special Eurobarometar 494, October 2019

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“Providing financial assistance to developing countries contributes to a more peaceful and fairer world.”

Total “Disagree”  Total “Agree”  Don’t know 



From public pool opinion Eurobarometer: EU citizens and development cooperation, October 2019

Such positive attitudes of citizens towards global solidarity and development cooperation could be explained through two relatively recent historical experiences. The most recent experience of military conflict, post-war recovery of Croatia and intense transformation of the country through the process of EU integration made Croatian citizens aware of the importance of international assistance. The older generation, living during the Yugoslavia period, will also remember the role of the Non-alignment movement during the cold war. Many international development cooperation projects were implemented by Croatian experts across Africa and Asia<sup>8</sup>. Back then there was also an active, strong development cooperation community gathered in internationally recognized research institutes, followed by specialized media reporting on foreign policy and development.

Today the situation in Croatia is rather different. With the lack of a significant development cooperation policy on a national level public research institutes and universities also show limited interest in this topic. Interest in foreign policy is generally low. Even EU related topics are only sporadically visible in the media. Foreign policy media coverage is left to a few journalists, with little specialized foreign policy TV footage or sections in the media.

However, the influx of refugees and immigrants through the Balkan route has increased the interest of Croatian citizens in the causes of migration. Unfortunately, due to the change in the EU and state policy towards migration (reflected in a more strict way of managing migration), the atmosphere towards migrants has been changed.

## 2. Development education in schools

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Reform of the education system has been one of the central social and political issues in Croatia in the last four years. The debate received immense media visibility in 2016 when the former Government stopped long term processes on comprehensive curriculum reform for ideological, not professional, reasons. This decision upset Croatian citizens who, with support of NGOs, organized one of the biggest protests in recent Croatian history under the name “Croatia can do better!” Around 50.000 citizens gathered in the main square in Zagreb requesting continuation of the reform, but also modernization of education system.

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<sup>8</sup> Development Cooperation through the Legacy of the Non-Aligned Movement, CROSOL, 2015



Public protest “Croatia Can Do Better!” in Zagreb, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. Photo: Nina Đurđević

The protest didn’t succeed in forcing the Government to continue with the reform (a month later, a vote of no confidence against the Government took place and new elections were announced). The next Government continued with the reform but gave it a narrower scope. NGOs have continued to advocate for stronger civic education in schools. Civic education exists but only as a cross-curricular subject, leaving it to teachers to include civic education topics in their specialist subjects (such as history, language, sociology, etc.). The majority of courses currently offered by the *Education Teacher Training Agency* are focused on specific subjects and neglect cross-curricular topics and interdisciplinary approaches<sup>9</sup>.

In this context, the debate on development/global education was only present around civic education curricula. There is an overall impression that, at the moment, development education should be included as an integral part of civic education. At the same time, official Government documents are rarely referring to global education. For example, in the *National development* strategy for the period 2017 -2021, there is only one reference to the concept of global education. Official Ministry of Education documents are not referring at all to this or similar concepts.

While state institutions are not ambitious about development education, civil society in Croatia has started to promote this concept within their education programs. Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity (CROSOL) – an umbrella CSO dealing with international development - had until recently a working group on development education integrated into the CONCORD development education working group. One of CROSOL’s members – Center for Peace Studies (CPS) – has since 2014 been working on the promotion of the global education concept. Since 2018 they are organizing an annual “Global Education Week”, bringing together different NGOs, state institutions and citizens to co-create programs for citizens in the framework of global education<sup>10</sup>. In 2016 they translated and published the Global Education Guidelines created by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe<sup>11</sup>.

Although the school curricula are under the Ministry of Education’s supervision, the school management is under the jurisdiction of local Governments. Moreover, the local Government may approve extra-curricula teaching. For example, the local Government of the City of Rijeka introduced civic education<sup>12</sup> as an extracurricular activity (not as a cross-curricula subject) twice a week in elementary schools. That

<sup>9</sup> SOLIDAR, Report on Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitoring 2019 for Croatia, Brussels 2020

<sup>10</sup> Global education in Croatia – recommendations and contributions to the implementation process, GONG, Zagreb, December 2018

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cms.hr/hr/gradanski-odgoj-i-mirovno-obrazovanje/smjernice-za-globalno-obrazovanje>

<sup>12</sup> Civic education, City of Rijeka

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opened doors to integrate global education in some schools too. Extra curricula teaching may also be approved individually by any headteacher. When a CSO wants to enter the school with their education program, they can do it either by:

1. asking for program recommendations from the Ministry of Education. That is usually the case when a CSO wants to enter more schools with one broader program. Ministry of Education can also ask the Education Teacher Training Agency to give a professional opinion on the proposed education program.
2. asking a headteacher directly (or through a teacher) to approve the program. That is usually the case with smaller, short term educational programs.

CSOs in Croatia have been using those opportunities to enter the schools with the implementation of civic education as non-formal education for a number of years. Based on the enthusiasm of some teachers and schoolmasters, development and human rights CSOs managed to implement numerous non-formal educational programs in elementary and high schools. Programs are usually implemented after class, in the free time of teachers and students. Some of the programs are implemented away from the school premises.

Forum for the Freedom of Education – a CSO from Zagreb - has established long-term cooperation with various schools in Croatia. Through many years of collaboration with these schools, they succeeded in developing an extensive non-formal network of motivated teachers across Croatia who are implementing civic education – including a global component. They also managed to get a recommendation from the Education and Teacher Training Agency and the Ministry of Education for their programs directed towards the teachers. This committed work has resulted in a non-formal network of motivated teachers interested in civic and global education. The network is a sustainable and valuable resource that was developed partially outside of the official educational framework. This example shows how it is possible to mobilize and organize around topics not officially recognized by the state institutions.

Apart from the cross-curricula civic education program adopted by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry has also introduced a cross-curricula subject on sustainable development. The position of this subject in schools is the same as with civic education. It is advised to the teachers to include sustainable development topics in their regular subjects. However, the introduction of this topic opens new doors to work on development education in schools.

*Despite such positive openings teachers in general have limited capacity and opportunities for development education. “The Institute for Social Research Zagreb research revealed that though the teachers show interest in Global Citizens Education and value it, teachers have insufficient capacity for this. The administrative burden is too high, organizational challenges are present, and there is insufficient monitoring from public authorities for the implementation of citizenship education” - it is stated in the SOLIDAR report on Citizenship and Lifelong learning monitor 2019 for Croatia<sup>13</sup>.*

### **3. Awareness raising and advocacy on global topics.**

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As was explained above, the awareness of global issues in Croatian daily life is low. There is an overall lack of interest in global topics. That results in only occasional campaigns or advocacy initiatives from CSOs or from the Government. Even a discussion on the Agenda 2030 didn't take place in Croatia. The majority of citizens are not aware of this program. Unfortunately, such unawareness also exists amongst the majority of public servants working in Government institutions. That is also reflected in the first report submitted by the Croatian Government on the Agenda 2030 which lacked consultations with different stakeholders.

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<sup>13</sup> SOLIDAR, Report on Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitoring 2019 for Croatia, Brussels 2020

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The absence of an up to date National Development Strategy, which could give attention to Agenda 2030 issues does not help (the last such Strategy was adopted in 2009).

In such a context, campaigns related to sustainable development goals are usually in the hands of CSOs working on awareness-raising through the smaller campaigns.

Maybe the most dynamic global topics which are mobilizing CSOs are migration and the climate crisis. The situation with migration is very tense in Croatia. It was already mentioned that Croatia is frequently accused of unlawful treatment of refugees and migrants by border police<sup>14</sup>. There have been several nationally visible campaigns conducted by CSOs calling for solidarity with migrants and refugees. This topic is highly present in the media. Particular focus was also put on the criminalization of solidarity. However, those campaigns usually are also mobilizing extreme right-wing groups to spread hate against migrants and refugees.

The second topic, which is sporadically present in the public, is related to the climate crisis. That also comes from direct Croatian experience facing natural disasters. Several floods and fires have hit Croatia hard in the last few years. That has contributed to awareness-raising on climate change and has opened doors to CSOs to be more vocal. Croatian high-school students have joined the global movement Fridays for Future. This topic has even more potential in Croatia having in mind that according to the public opinion research 84% of Croatians agree or fully agree with the statement: *Climate change is a significant threat to humanity*.

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“Climate change is a significant threat to humanity.”



From public pool opinion conducted by CROSOL, December 2019

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### 3.1 Role of CSOs

Croatian civil society is very well developed. Some groups founded in the 90s, during the military conflict, are still active today. They have valuable knowledge of war and development. That is one of the main focuses on which Croatian CSOs are trying to contribute to the international development community: to share the knowledge of post-war recovery and dealing with the conflict. The most influential and most visible organizations are those working as ‘watch-dogs’ (excluding interests-based organizations such as Chamber of Attorneys or Croatian Chamber of Commerce) and, since the last few years, workers unions. Watch-dogs are active in different fields – from human rights protection, democratization, gender equality, work with refugees to environment and development.

The majority of CSOs are still mainly dealing with national issues, but since Croatia became a full EU member in 2013 more and more CSOs are tackling European affairs. Unfortunately, we still don’t have prominent CSOs dealing only with international development cooperation. Also, the sizes of watch-dog CSOs are still relatively small comparing to some other EU CSOs. Most CSOs employ from 0-6 staff. Only a few can afford up to 15 employees and those numbers can change rapidly from year to year due to the lack of long-term financing by the state.

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<sup>14</sup> Croatia: Police brutality in migrant pushback operations must be investigated and sanctioned, UN Special Rapporteurs, June 19 2020

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It is essential to understand the dynamic between watch-dog CSOs and Government. While internationally in the field of development, CSOs are usually perceived as potential Government partners in planning and implementing development projects in Croatia the situation is different. Watch-dog CSOs have a long tradition of directly criticizing the Government and disclosing Government affairs in wrongdoings. Because of that, they are frequently under attack from the Government. The mutual trust is low.

That is also reflected in the development sector, where the Croatian Platform for International Citizens Solidarity (CROSOL) was established in 2014 as an umbrella organization for development cooperation. CROSOL members are some of the leading watch-dog CSOs that position CROSOL in the field of watch-dog. That is of great importance for the future development of the international cooperation sector within the state institutions. Since this sector is still underdeveloped it is important to have a strong CSO network that monitors the Government, prevents the Government from improvising with the excuse of their lack of capacity, and advocates for better development policies. That was particularly visible during the recent Croatian presidency of the European Council. CROSOL Platform developed alternative presidency priorities in which development was a strong component. The priorities were presented to the public four months before the Government presented its priorities. As a result CROSOL succeeded in informing public and professional debate, where CSO's priorities were frequently compared with the Government priorities. CROSOL, with its members, is the most robust CSO Platform dealing with international development cooperation. However, there are many other smaller CSOs implementing development projects which are not CROSOL members.

### **3.2 Role of the media - an opportunity for visibility**

It was already stated how the media coverage of international development cooperation and foreign policy is low. That doesn't mean that there are no excellent foreign policy journalists. On the contrary, some CSOs are collaborating with top journalists on issues related to development cooperation. This close collaboration, which is a result of long-term partnership and trust-building between CSOs and journalists, is an excellent opportunity for launching visibility campaigns and advocacy initiatives. One example of such cooperation was the establishment of so-called media HUB – clustering together independent online portals and other journalists to write the stories/ investigative articles on development from different perspectives during the Croatian presidency. This approach has been successful in opening up topics that otherwise do not find a place in official media. Media presence also enables more substantial policy impact in advocacy campaigns. This case has shown that CSOs can work closely together in the long-run with journalists and that this kind of partnership should be integrated into the implementation of development education projects.

## **4. Youth and DEAR**

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The overall anti-globalism trend coloured by nationalism and the so called illiberal political model of governance, particularly in some eastern Europe member states, is also partially visible in Croatia. Those trends are reflected in new generations too. According to the national youth research in Croatia (a young person is considered to be a person between 14 -29 years old) conducted in 2018/2019<sup>15</sup>, one-third of young people would like to leave Croatia and move to western EU member states. The most common motives for leaving are economic in nature: improving the standard of living, better employment opportunities, and higher wages. Finding a job and creating a family are top priorities for the majority of youngsters. The majority is very much supportive of traditional family values, and they get along well with their parents. They have faith in marriage, and four-fifths imagine their future in a marital union with children. Most place a lot of trust in their families.

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<sup>15</sup> Youth Research in Croatia, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Zagreb, 2019 <https://www.fes-croatia.org/news/article/istrazivanje-mladih-u-hrvatskoj-20182019/>

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More than three-fifths of youth respondents are not interested in politics. The majority does not discuss politics with their family members and friends. Most young people support democracy as a good form of governing, but at the same time, they also accept authoritarianism to a considerable extent. A slight majority is ideologically self-positioned in the political centre with a slight inclination towards the right.

Those results show how the majority of youth in Croatia are different from their counterparts in western EU member states who are more progressive and open towards political participation. However, this should not be an obstacle to work with youth on global development issues, but it should be taken into account when designing DEAR activities and programs for youth.

We should also not generalize the youth, keeping in mind that significant number of youth (although not majority) is still very open-minded and open towards global issues. Global/development education may be a powerful tool to change youth attitudes toward greater openness and acceptance of differences. The majority of education DEAR projects in Croatia are directed towards the youth, particularly working with youth in schools, generally receiving positive feedback. The youth is very interested in the development/global topics – mainly due to the lack of those subjects in their regular teaching. They also like innovative teaching methods in the form of workshops and fieldwork. However, there is a great deal of scope to extend DEAR education work with young people, including by increasing the range of settings in which youth are involved.

Awareness raising and campaigning on global issues with youth in Croatia is marginal or reduced to local environment protection actions. The only exception is the action Fridays for Future, which initially mobilized on the street a broad spectrum of high school youth but has lately lost momentum. Today this group is only sporadically active on Facebook.

The issues highlighted by the national research were not recognized in the official Government documents such as the National draft program for youth for the period 2020 – 2024. National Youth Program is one of the central strategic documents developed by the Government, consisting of very concrete policy measures and action points. The last program expired in 2017, and the new one (for the period 2020 - 2024) is still not adopted. In the draft version available for public consultations, one can find chapter Youth in European and Global Surroundings. Within this chapter, there is a separate measure titled *Development of global solidarity and intercultural dialogue to understand global problems*. Bodies responsible for the implementation of this measure are the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Culture. Activities included in the proposed measures are: 1. monitoring and reporting on UN and 2. inclusion of youth in UN work. No reference is made to global education. However, under the chapter Education, Science and Lifelong Learning there is a measure referring to increasing the capacities of education institutions for the implementation of cross-curricula subjects: Civic education, Use of Information and Communication Technology, Sustainable development, Entrepreneurship, Personal and social development, Health and Learn How to Learn. That means that the Government will continue to promote civic education and sustainable development as a cross-curricular subjects. Global education can only be attached to them.

## **5. Project interpretations of quality, public awareness and critical thinking**

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This chapter is based on the feedback collected through the workshop with CSOs representatives who are implementing or have recently implemented DEAR projects. The list of DEAR projects for Croatia was small – only six CSOs. Until now, Croatian CSOs were participating in DEAR calls either as co-applicant or sub-grantees. There is no experience of being a lead organization in DEAR. Four organizations had projects

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with a smaller scope of activities, and two had a bigger scope. In the beginning it is important to emphasize how all participants expressed great satisfaction with DEAR calls since there is no alternative funding for those topics on the national level, but there is an excellent Government financial instrument for ensuring co-funding for EU projects. For many of them, it was important to be a part of a bigger consortium due to the lack of internal capacities. The majority of participants explained how participation in EU DEAR project implementation assisted in increasing internal organizational capacities, particularly amongst those who were implementing the broader scope of activities (being a “stronger” co-applicant)

## 5.1 Quality

Quality is primarily understood as smoothness and creativity of the project implementation. It is also connected to the engagement of project partners and collaborators. If the project manages to maintain motivated engagement of staff and partners, if the synergy of activities has been achieved, the participants will call it a high-quality project. They see quality more connected to the implementation process than to project outputs. Project outputs will be achieved if there was a motivated implementation of the project. For respondents outputs shouldn't be the leading indicators of project quality. However, quality DEAR projects have to have a clear impact on the target audience or policy change. Those results will be achieved if the project team managed to motivate and include stakeholders around the project – to be pro-active.

In a field of the education-based projects, apart from project smoothness/engagement, quality should be linked to the satisfaction of the target groups (usually students and teachers). To achieve that, it is crucial to ensure the ownership of target groups over the project. Project shouldn't be “owned” only by organizations implementing it, but the sense of ownership should be present within the target groups. Also, a quality project has to impact on the target group in a way that leaves a trace in people's consciousness. That is difficult to measure, but in the work of CSOs, it is evident that they have witnessed how some projects have changed the lives (and sometimes careers) of individuals. The importance here is that such an impact can't be forced to be achieved, and aiming for large numbers of project beneficiaries to be affected in this way is not feasible. Sometimes, if the project changes only a few individuals, they are an important sustainable guarantee for long term change in their local communities.

Respondents generally feel that EU DEAR project sometimes focus too much on measuring outputs connected with large numbers. Project visibility is not necessarily the guarantee for project quality.

Respondents suggested that another aspect of quality is project sustainability - the projects should have some follow up. Follow up shouldn't be necessarily expected as a full (or a significant part) continuation of the project once it is officially finished. Follow up should be understood in a broader sense – recognizing any activity initiated by project beneficiaries after the project, including an individual change that results with concrete policy or activist action.

In the Croatian context, where there is a lack of capacities within CSOs and state institutions on global topics, it is very helpful to have reliable, experienced partners within project consortium. The exchange of knowledge and support provided by “senior partners” was crucial for the quality implementation of larger projects.

## 5.2 Public awareness

Public awareness means to develop a sense of responsibility within target groups. DEAR projects are focused on the development of global responsibility. That is more challenging to achieve in the Croatian context due to overall low interest in global issues. However, work with different target groups has shown that in each target group, there is a critical number of individuals who are open towards change and are

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very curious about global issues. In that sense, awareness raising shouldn't necessarily target "big numbers" but instead focus and invest in those who are open to changes.

Almost all respondents have their own experience of being touched by different projects which have strongly influenced and changed their personality, and today they are active in their communities and are investing in the further work on public awareness and social change. Having this authentic experience helps in better project implementation. That should be an approach of DEAR projects – focus more on smaller individual changes, which will have later spin-off effect on more and more individuals. DEAR projects shouldn't be PR projects only. Development is not stock on the market that has to be sold by PR agencies.

Experience from the implementation of DEAR projects in Croatia shows how there is also little knowledge within state institutions, schools, media etc. on global issues. That is an opportunity to continue and to increase the activities on the topic of international development cooperation. The topic is still new, and has many potentials.

Sometimes it is challenging to communicate messages to the public in the context of relatively low economic standards of Croatian citizens when compared with some other EU member states. For example, if we want through the DEAR project to promote responsible consumer behavior taking into account food quality, fair labor conditions around food productions, etc., we will be faced with the fact many citizens in Croatia cannot afford such products themselves. Also, since there are no such products on the Croatian market, the project puts beneficiaries in the position of advocating for more imports. Such messages can have a negative connotation among citizens. The context is different in the Netherlands from that in Croatia. When designing the projects, we have to be aware of those internal differences within the EU and find a way to balance them.

Domestic publics will be more open to the topics and messages that are embedded in the local context. For example, since Croatia borders a sea, projects that relate to the sea protection and consequences of climate change to the marine environment are much closer to them, than the implications of the glacier melting. Placing topics in a local context within global projects is of great importance for efficient public awareness.

### **5.3 Critical thinking**

There is a broad consensus amongst project beneficiaries how critical thinking is an efficient and accepted approach within project implementation methodologies. This approach is especially fostered in educational activities, where together with ensuring the ownership of the project by target groups (students, teachers) - results in successful project impacts. Critical thinking is engaging people on the action and is fully integrated into the project methodologies, including in campaigns on public awareness. Students and teachers are very much open towards this approach due to the lack of critical thinking in regular school curricula. For them – this is a kind of refreshment.

## **6. Approaches to engage the audience**

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Two important principles should be, if possible, respected to ensure audience engagement. First is the principle we have already mentioned – to ensure the ownership of target groups/audience over the project. We have to avoid approaches when we are only delivering the messages/knowledge to the audience without their involvement. That is why "engagement activities" have to try to integrate "ownership activities" too. Such an approach may be easier to implement in activities related to education and in advocacy activities we can put more effort in creating an ownership atmosphere if possible.

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The second approach is to try to be authentic as much as possible while approaching the audience. For example, in one of the DEAR projects dealing with the sea and fishery, a former fisherman was engaged as a project coordinator. It was much easier for him to engage other fishermen in the project activities than to someone who is not from this field.

There have also been several innovative methods developed within local DEAR projects to engage more audience. We have already mentioned closer collaboration with influential free-lance journalists. That is maybe easier to achieve in Croatia, a relatively small country where social contacts with top journalists are easier to make, but working long term with journalists on trust-building and exchanging intelligence on different topics will result in mutual trust-building. There is a mutual interest, as from journalists, as from CSOs, to deliver the stories/activities which are contributing to the more just societies. This approach was fostered in one of the DEAR projects where the media HUB was created, consisting of activists and journalists working together to deliver stories related to international development cooperation. That has engaged more audiences who contributed to the public debates around published stories or have been included pro-actively in public discussions moderated by top journalists.

The second method, which was present in one DEAR project, is a stronger engagement of the artists in the implementation of activities. Working with performing and street artists, the project managed to mobilize the new audience - especially youth. An artistic interpretation of global issues can be more attractive to the audience than classical CSOs methods. It is also interesting to explore to establish collaboration with mainstream cultural events in the country, attracting a broad audience and adjusting messages to the festival audiences. Those approaches have shown good results in Croatia.

## **7. Similarities and differences in respect of Global Learning vs. Campaign/Advocacy projects**

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The majority of project beneficiaries don't see the significant differences in those two approaches. Moreover, they see it as interconnected methods that logically complement each other. Work on campaign/advocacy has direct educational effects since, through the campaigning, we are sending information on particular global issues. However, education through campaigning is less powerful in having an impact on sustainable change. Campaigning is more about informing/reminding the people on a particular topic/problem, while working on long term education activities, Croatian project respondents are more confident that sustainable change will be achieved within the target groups. When individuals are empowered through education they have also been motivated to be proactive in starting engagement in advocacy activities. Respondents agreed that DEAR methodologies should continue as they are.

## **8. Impact of COVID19 pandemic to the projects**

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The COVID19 pandemic has influenced all current projects. The main feeling which was created around the pandemic is uncertainty. Most of the activities were transferred online, and some of the events were postponed and implemented while national protection measures were reduced. Although COVID 19 pandemic is a global phenomenon, politically, there is a lack of global response to the crisis. That is overall threat to the "philosophy of global learning" - since in the practice, when is the most needed – global solidarity was lacking. On the other hand, this is an opportunity and obligation not to give up when political discourses are dominated rather by national than global interests. The additional challenge is that in the time of crisis, people are looking for fast short-term solutions. Global topics are becoming less important in their lives.

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From the first few months of implementing projects during pandemic, the internet and communication technologies were a temporary substitute for many activities that had been planned to be held live. This change to online technology is possible, but the impact of that is still unclear. Many things around project implementation will still be unclear in the coming months, and there is a recommendation to take time to experiment with different technologies and adopt old methodologies to new technologies.

## 9. Conclusions - challenges and opportunities

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Croatia, as the youngest EU member state, is experiencing the transition from aid recipient to aid donor. This transition is still not finished, and topics related to international development cooperation are still on the margins. Allocations for international development projects are symbolic and very much directed towards the Croatian diaspora. CSOs are more advanced in promoting global education and campaigning/advocacy on global issues than the Government. However, their interests are more focused on national issues than on global ones. National financing for DEAR projects almost doesn't exist.

There are no national strategies for integrating global education in schools. Teachers are using the cross-curricula subject civic education to teach about global issues in their extra-curricular time. However, there are motivated informal networks of schools and teachers committed to these topics working mostly with CSOs. CSOs, in general, face a lack of capacities and are small. However, there are a significant number of influential watch-dog NGOs shaping Government policies – including the ones in the field of development cooperation and global learning.

Some local communities/authorities are very much open to DEAR topics. It is easier sometime to implement DEAR projects on a local than on a national level. Important partners on DEAR projects could be journalists and artists.

Although there is no significant foreign policy media scene in Croatia, foreign policy reporters are open to collaborations with CSOs. Artistic interventions on global issues, in the form of street performances or cooperation with a mainstream cultural festivals, have been proven to attract a wider audience.

Although recent research on youth shows how Croatian youth is more conservative than their counterparts in western EU member states, the pupils and students participating in DEAR projects have shown strong motivation and interest in global issues, particularly around environmental protection. DEAR projects in Croatia ensure and support that future generations are more open towards global issues and resistant to the overall trends of national policies.

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