

FACT SHEET

RECOGNITION & VALIDATION OF LEARNING ACQUIRED THROUGH VOLUNTEERING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN CROATIA

A Supportive Legal Framework for Volunteering in Croatia

In Croatia, the Law on Volunteering (Official Gazette 58/07, 22/13, 84/21) provides a supportive environment that encourages the recognition and validation of learning acquired through volunteering. Article 2 of the Law acknowledges that volunteering enables individuals to gain experience and develop competencies that are necessary and beneficial for active participation in society, personal development, and personal wellbeing.

Article 2, paragraph 4, states that children and young people in the Croatian education system, as well as in non-formal learning settings, should be introduced to the values, role, and importance of volunteering; provided with opportunities to gain volunteering experience; and supported, through civic education, in developing the competencies needed for volunteering, social solidarity, and active citizenship.

Article 30, paragraph 3, emphasises that volunteers have, among other things, the following rights:

- the right to acquire new knowledge, skills and competencies through volunteering
- the right to have the skills, competencies and experience gained through volunteering recognised
- the right to receive a Certificate of Competencies Acquired through Volunteering in cases of long-term volunteering, on their request.

Volunteering in Educational Institutions

The results of the survey on the recognition and validation of learning acquired through volunteering in educational institutions in Croatia show that volunteering plays an important, yet still insufficiently¹ recognised and systematically valued role within the Croatian education system.

A majority of respondents - almost 65% - reported that their institution implements volunteering activities for pupils and students, while just under 39% have a volunteer club or programme through which pupils/students engage in volunteering. Only 14% stated that their institution does not involve pupils or students in volunteering at all.

Nevertheless, the largest share of respondents - 43% - reported that learning acquired through volunteering is not recognised or valued in any way. Around 37% stated that learning is recognised within regular teaching, while approximately 25% use the Certificate of Competencies Acquired through Volunteering.

Educational Institutions as Volunteer-Involving Organisations



According to the National Research on Volunteering,² educational institutions (together with other public institutions) account for only 12% of all volunteer-involving organisations.

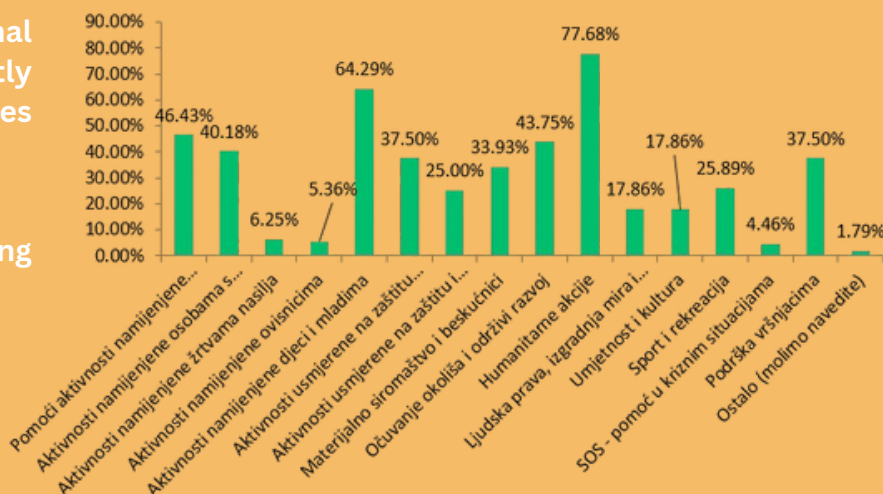
[1] Analiza ispitivanja prepoznavanja i vrednovanja učenja kroz volontiranje u odgojno-obrazovnim ustanovama u Hrvatskoj (Hrvatski centar za razvoj volonterstva, July 2025)

[2] Čulum Ilić i Kozjak, Rezultati istraživanja o volonterstvu u Republici Hrvatskoj, str. 23. (Hrvatski centar za razvoj volonterstva, 2023.)

Type of activities and frequency of volunteering

Among the surveyed educational institutions, the most frequently implemented volunteering activities include:

- humanitarian actions (78%)
- activities for children and young people (64%)
- activities for older people (46%)



In most institutions, volunteering activities take place regularly (weekly) in only 8% of cases.

Barriers and Challenges in Recognising Learning Acquired Through Volunteering

- Lack of time and curriculum overload
- Volunteering not being recognised as part of the educational process
- Lack of clearly defined criteria for assessing competencies gained through volunteering in the education system
- Insufficient awareness of existing tools and documents, such as the Certificate of Competencies Acquired through Volunteering



Most respondents believe that clearer guidelines, good practice examples and more time and space within the curriculum would help their institutions improve the recognition and validation of learning through volunteering. A considerable number of respondents stated that training and professional development on assessing learning through volunteering, as well as guidance and support from the Ministry of Science and Education and/or the Education and Teacher Training Agency, would be beneficial.

A smaller, but still significant, number of respondents emphasised the need for greater support from school leadership and the establishment of cooperation with other organisations and institutions in the community.

Civic Education and Service-Learning

In most of the institutions surveyed, civic education is implemented as a cross-curricular topic (68%).

Only slightly more than 10% implement it as a separate subject, while in 12% civic education is not implemented at all.

On the other hand, service-learning is implemented in less than 30% of surveyed institutions, while almost 17% of respondents are not familiar with the concept at all.

As for the assessment of learning outcomes and competencies acquired through service-learning, this mostly takes place through classroom discussions and evaluations (48.65% of respondents), followed by group or individual presentations or reports (35.14%).

The smallest share of institutions assess the impact of service-learning projects through pupils' reflective journals (18.92%) or by issuing a Certificate of Competencies Acquired through Volunteering (16.22%).