

National  
Foundation  
for Civil  
Society  
Development

Twenty years  
of weaving support

2003-2023



# People for people

The publication “Twenty Years of Weaving Support” is a summary of all that the National Foundation for Civil Society Development has done in its 20-year pursuit of its mission. It allows you to track these achievements year by year: from 2003 to 2023.

The National Foundation’s greatest accomplishment is the continuity of its activities and the continuity of its support to civil society, as well as the recognition and appreciation it enjoys in the international community.

Over the past 20 years, we have based our work on building trust and mutual understanding and appreciation, with the well-being of man and society always at the heart of all our activities and programmes.



Support to the development of civil society requires commitment, patience, and vision, but also the ability to listen, recognize needs, and improve on the basis of experiential learning – which the National Foundation has applied in its work from the very beginning of its activities.

That is why we are proud of all that we have jointly managed to do and grateful to all the previous terms of the National Foundation’s Board of Directors, employees, and thousands of civil society organizations to whom we have provided support, as well as to the Government, Parliament, and all the institutions in Croatia and in the international community which have supported us.

I believe that in the next 20 years we will continue to support the civil society with the same enthusiasm, commitment, and professionalism in building an inclusive, solidarity-based, sustainable and modern society in our country.

On this path, as always – it is important to have: support! People for people!

Thank you for 20 years of trust and shared weaving of support!



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**Cvjetana Plavša-Matić, MEcon**

Director of the National Foundation  
for Civil Society Development

# Vision





# Vision



2003

The Act on the National Foundation for Civil Society Development was adopted on 16 October 2003 in the Croatian Parliament as the last item on the agenda of the last session of the 5th term of the Croatian Parliament. The establishment of the National Foundation for Civil Society Development was **the realization of the vision of an institution that would support civil society development in the Republic of Croatia** continuously, transparently and effectively, and also one of the requirements from Chapter 23 for accession to the European Union, by which the Republic of Croatia had proven a high level of readiness to cooperate and support civil society development. The establishment of the National Foundation completed the institutional framework of the Republic of Croatia for support to civil society development (in addition to the Office for Cooperation with NGOs established in 1998, and the Council for Civil Society Development established in 2002).

The first, inaugural session of the Board of Directors of the National Foundation for Civil Society Development was held on 19 November 2003, at which the Director of the National Foundation was appointed and the Statute and other basic documents necessary for the operation and activities of the National Foundation were adopted, after which it was entered in the Register of Foundations in the Republic of Croatia on 24 November 2003.

# Support



*For a EUR 25,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations achieved an improvement in the living conditions for 153-170 beneficiaries*



*For a EUR 15,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations trained 54-66 beneficiaries*



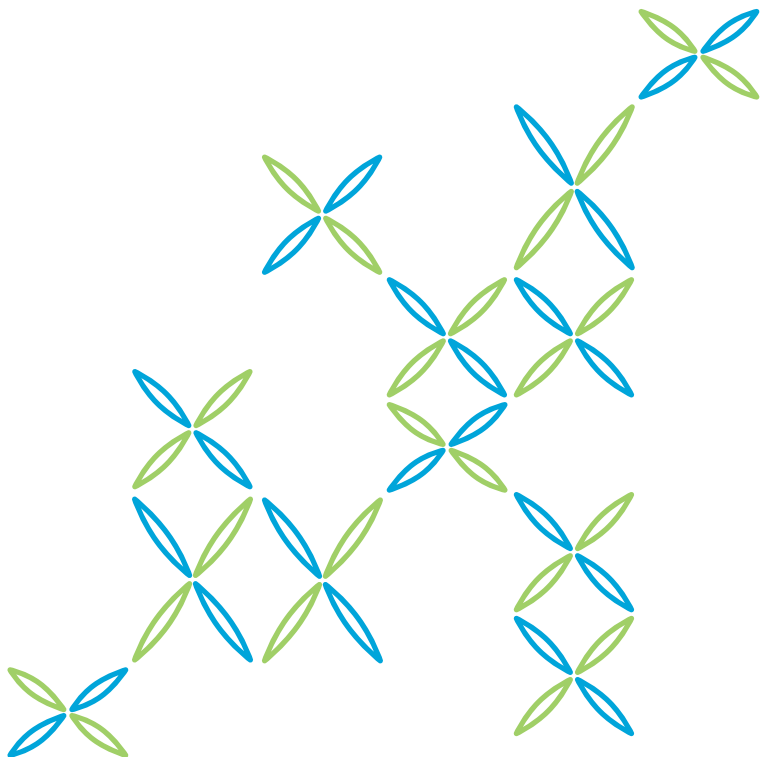
*For a EUR 25,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations increased the engagement/inclusion in the society of 46-51 beneficiaries/persons in need*

# Support

The task in its first year of operation was to make the National Foundation's operating model possible: the structure of the new institution was set up, strategic guidelines were developed and procedures established for publishing and evaluating calls that would ensure a clear and transparent allocation of public funds, i.e. part of the revenue from games of chance, which is the main source of the National Foundation's revenue. At the same time, it was necessary to ensure sustainability, i.e. the resources to operate in the years to come. In April 2004, the first three persons were employed in the administrative and professional service of the National Foundation, which created the preconditions for the commencement of work on numerous and diverse calls for the award of financial forms of support by the National Foundation to civil society organizations, which were launched in 2004. From the very beginnings of the National Foundation, the greatest international support was obtained from the Government and professional organizations from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the Netherlands, as well as the United Nations Development Programme – UNDP.

# Quality





# Quality

In its second year of operation, in accordance with the strategic objectives set before the National Foundation by its Action Strategy for the period from 2004 to 2007, numerous enhancements and improvements to the operating system were introduced: additional mechanisms to prevent potential conflicts of interest, a new business information system (BIS), and a new model of managing the foundation's assets, to help achieve the National Foundation's financial self-sustainability. At the same time, the process of preparation and **certification for the quality management system ISO 9001:2002 was initiated.**



# Cooperation

2026



# Cooperation

The National Foundation became the first public institution in Croatia to receive the HRN ISO 9001:2000 certificate for the operating quality system in the management of the process of financing projects/grants to civil society organizations. The process of decentralization of financial grants and capacity building of civil society organizations at the local and regional level was also initiated, as well as the implementation of the project to establish **IMPACT – European Centre for Cross-sectoral Partnership in Zadar**. Indicators and the feedback suggested that the model of institutional grants is one of the most effective ways to support the sustainability of associations in the period of decreasing interest by international donors and at the same time of the newly initiated process of European integration.



# Decentralization





# Decentraliza- tion

The year 2007 saw the commencement of the implementation of the new **decentralized model of financing** and allocation of financial grants to civil society organizations, enabling local associations and other non-profit organizations to finance citizens' initiatives at the regional level closest to them. To this end, the National Foundation signed agreements with four regional foundations that launched calls for the award of financial grants to citizens' initiatives. In the same year, the National Foundation signed a cooperation agreement with five regional networks of organizations for the implementation of the programme to improve the capacities of civil society organizations through the **Civil Society Regional Development** programme, thereby initiating the professional and high-quality training of registered and unregistered local associations. Thus many years of working on the model of strengthening the capacities of associations at the local and regional level were translated into practice.

# Digitalization





# Digitalization

2008

At the ceremony marking the fifth anniversary of its activities, the National Foundation presented two new computer programmes with the purpose of further fostering the development of civil society in the field of new information technologies – the programme **Točno.to** for more efficient operations of civil society organizations, and the system **Potpورا\_Plus** (previously developed as BIS) which allows all financial grant providers to manage and supervise effectively the implementation of approved grants/projects/programmes of civil society organizations. The future activities of the National Foundation were determined by the Action Strategy for the period from 2008 to 2011.



# Euro-Mediterranean



For a EUR 25.000  
grant from the  
National Foundation,  
associations cleaned  
138-168 sites in local  
communities



# Euro-Mediterranean

2009

At the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations, in January 2009 the National Foundation was selected as the national coordinator of the **Croatian Network for Cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean**, thus becoming the official representative of the “Anna Lindh” Foundation in Croatia, and by the end of the same year, the Croatian network was joined by numerous civil society organizations, some of which received financial support for their projects in the calls of the “Anna Lindh Foundation”. **IMPACT — The European Centre for Cross-Sectoral Partnership** was opened on 16 October 2009 in the former “Franko Lisica” army barracks in Zadar, in the premises received by the National Foundation by the Decision of the Committee of the Croatian Government for State Property Management, and acts as a centre of excellence for the development of training programmes on building cooperation and partnership between the public, business, and non-profit sectors in the Republic of Croatia, but also in the region of Southeast Europe and Euro-Mediterranean.



# Philanthropy





# Philanthropy

The year 2010, a time of recession and crisis, was marked by several achievements: launch of the programme **“Za dobro.BIT!”**, which finances the development of philanthropy and the culture of giving for the common good, initiation of the establishment of the Europa Plus programme for co-financing, pre-financing and interim financing of contracted projects from EU funds, and a cycle of seminars on self-financing and social entrepreneurship held for civil society organizations in cooperation with the British Council office in Croatia. Although the programme **Potpura\_Plus** was originally launched for the purposes of the National Foundation, through upgrades and further improvements based on experiential use it was prepared for multiple users and made available by the National Foundation, in cooperation with the Office for Cooperation with NGOs, to all state administration bodies and local and regional self-government units and other institutions and donor organizations in the Republic of Croatia, thus fulfilling the related measures from the Anti-Corruption Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.



# Information





# Information

The National Foundation initiated and supported the development of a multimedia portal to inform the public about the activities of civil society organizations in the Republic of Croatia, which has been active since October 2011 at: [www.civilnodrustvo.hr](http://www.civilnodrustvo.hr). From July to September 2011, pre-accreditation audits were carried out, on the basis of which the National Foundation was awarded a national accreditation in October 2011, and in December a final audit was carried out by auditors from Brussels. This signified the fulfilment of prerequisites for the National Foundation's entry into the Operational Structure of Component IV of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) "Human Resources Development", and soon the European Social Fund (since 2013), which would provide additional financial opportunities that would enable the National Foundation to support further development of civil society in the Republic of Croatia in the forthcoming period.

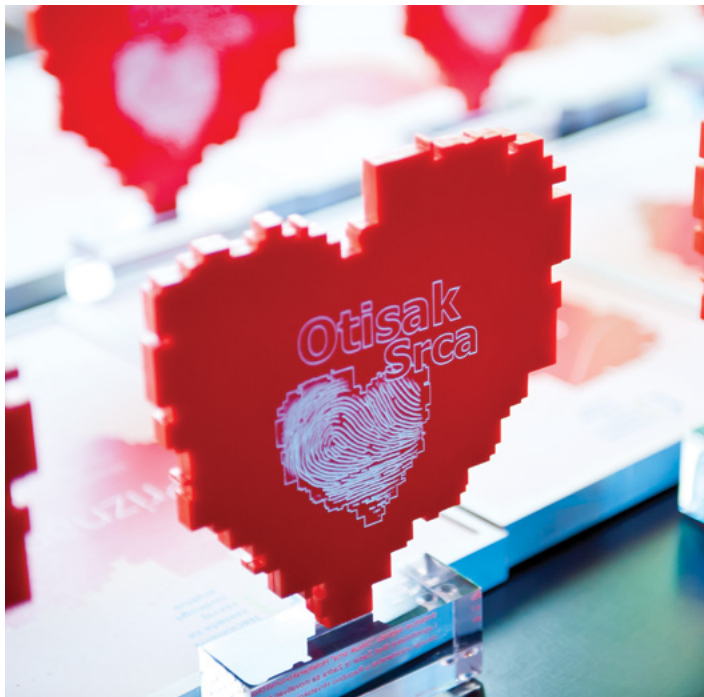


# Knowledge



2012





# Knowledge

The National Foundation for Civil Society Development, after extensive preparations, was accredited in August 2012 by the European Commission as the implementing body for the management of EU pre-accession funds for the area of civil society in the implementation of IPA Component IV – Human Resources Development. At the same time, the “Social Capital of the Community” call was launched for the first time within the framework of the decentralized model of awarding financial grants, introduced by the National Foundation in 2007. As part of the development cooperation on the pilot programme of the **Centres of Knowledge for Social Development**, seven areas of activity were encompassed, and in September 2012 a call for applications was launched and cooperation established with as many prominent civil society organizations, creating jointly the preconditions for future activities of the Centres of Knowledge.



Since 2012, the National Foundation has been giving out social innovation awards "I=d2a" (Idea for Good Social Engagement) based on inclusiveness and solidarity, with the aim of developing models of being effective and cost-efficient in the field of social development, and finding new ways and models to solve existing problems

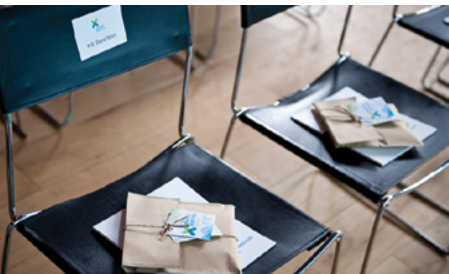


# Accreditation





# Accreditation



2013

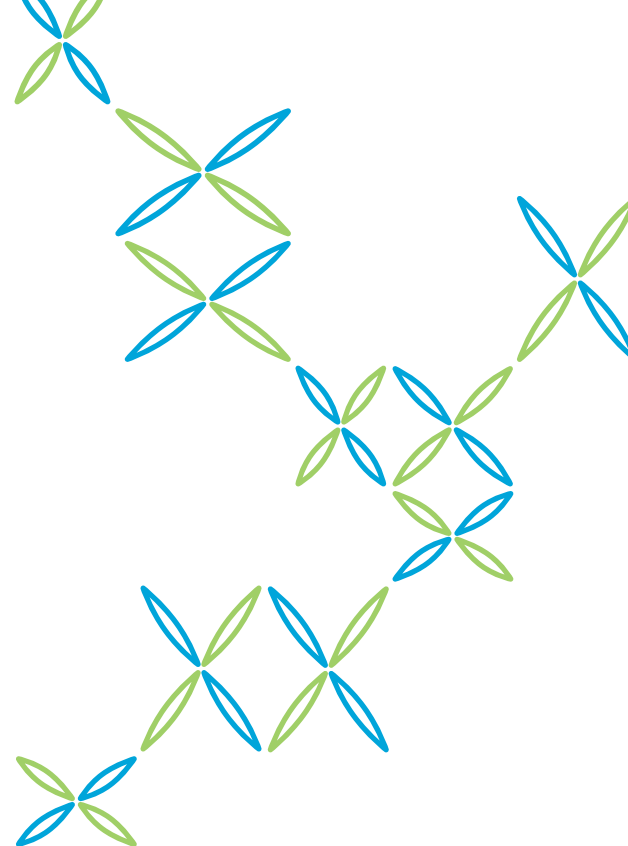
The year 2013 marked a new anniversary - the 10th anniversary of the National Foundation's establishment, and the Republic of Croatia became a full member of the European Union. This year was also the European Year of Citizens, in which the National Foundation, through regional events called "Active in the Community", gave special recognition and gratitude to the most active citizens from local communities, who had over the past years influenced social changes in their community and improved the quality of life of its citizens. In the multiannual financial period 2007–2013 of the use of EU funds, in the Republic of Croatia, as a new EU member state, it became possible for its civil society to use structural funds for the remainder of the period (from 1 July to 31 December 2013) through the so-called "mini" European Social Fund (ESF). The National Foundation, as an **accredited institution in the system of managing EU funds as Intermediate Body Level 2 (IB-2)**, participated in the creation of key calls within the framework of the ESF for civil society organizations, thus opening the possibility of obtaining grants for a larger number of local associations that had not previously had the experience of using European and international grants. Based on decisions at the national level, the National Foundation abandoned numerous calls that it had launched and conducted in previous years, since almost all of these were reprogrammed into ESF calls, thus creating opportunities for civil society organizations to obtain much higher financial grants.

Innovation

2014

# Innovation

In June 2014, the National Foundation was accredited by donors of the European Economic Area and Norway Grants as the operator for the Civil Society Programme in the Republic of Croatia. Based on an analysis of the new needs and challenges of civil society development, in 2014 the National Foundation launched the **thematic fund “Democratization and Civil Society Development 2.0”** as a new, innovative model of investment in social and civil society development, complementary to the existing forms of support by the National Foundation, which encouraged the networking of civil society organizations with each other, as well as with other stakeholders of social and economic development in Croatia (universities, trade unions, scientific and research institutions, etc.) through 4 thematic areas that no institution in the Republic of Croatia had previously announced or implemented.



*For a EUR 15,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations encouraged creativity in 66-73 beneficiaries*



# Connection



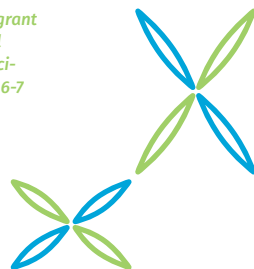


*For EUR 100,000 invested in grants, associations manage to have 3-4 proposals/changes included in public policy*

*For a EUR 25,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations provided humanitarian aid to 75-91 citizens*



*For a EUR 15,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations connected 6-7 associations*



# Connection

In 2015, a new online way of applying to the National Foundation's calls was made available through the system [www.financijskepodrske.hr](http://www.financijskepodrske.hr) which connects financial grant providers and recipients and the public, i.e. it combines information and procedures related to the publication of calls, application to calls, and their results. Within the framework of the Civil Society Programme funded by the European Economic Area and Norway Grants, on International Peace Day (21 September), the National Foundation launched in cooperation with young bloggers the campaign "It is not funny – hate speech is a serious matter", with the aim of increasing public awareness, especially among children and young people, about the importance of preventing hate speech and encouraging positive communication.

# Continuity







2016

60

## Continuity

In 2016, 13 alliances of associations of persons with disabilities became the 8th Centre of Knowledge, and the first Philanthropy Week in Croatia was held under the motto “Little by little becomes a lot!” in cities all over Croatia. In that year, certain decisions were made at the level of the executive government, due to which the long-developed institutional framework for support to civil society development in Croatia was relativized and shaken. The adoption of the Regulation on the Criteria for Determining Beneficiaries and Manner of Distribution of Part of the Revenues from Games of Chance in 2016, which reduced the funds for the National Foundation’s activities and support programmes by 51%, undermined the overall funding of the civil society. The Decision of the Board of Directors of June 2016 to approve an additional 20% of the funds from the National Foundation’s financial assets for all approved and contracted grants in 2016 made it possible to provide to a larger extent all of the contracted services with 70% of the funds, and to carry out all activities of civil society organizations – beneficiaries of the National Foundation’s grants, without significant layoffs in those organizations. This allowed for **continuity of the activities** of the supported civil society organizations and of the National Foundation for Civil Society Development itself.

# Development





*For a EUR 15.000  
grant from the  
National Foundation,  
associations fostered  
creativity in 66-73  
beneficiaries*

# Development

The greatest advance and **development** in 2017 was achieved by the Decision of the National Foundation's Board of Directors of September 2017, which started the process of establishing the National Foundation's Regional Branches in Osijek, Rijeka and Split, as an integral part of the newly established Department for EU Programme Support and Implementation Monitoring in the National Foundation as Intermediate Body Level 2 (IB-2). Fifteen associations from the Homeland War successfully completed the transitional period of development cooperation to enter the 9th Centre of Knowledge, and for the first time a special call for institutional support was launched, intended for associations that had not used this form of the National Foundation's support in previous periods.



# Growth



# Growth

*The majority of employees in associations are between 28 and 35 years old*



2018

In addition to marking the 15th anniversary of the National Foundation's activities, 2018 saw a **large number of newly hired employees** in the newly established departments for EU programmes within the framework of the National Foundation's activities as Intermediate Body Level 2 (IB-2). This year also saw the commencement of more intensive launches of ESF calls, and contracting and implementation of a large number of projects funded by ESF grants, responding to the challenges in our society, including calls in the areas of STEM, Thematic Networks for Socio-Economic Development, and Active in Retirement. In parallel with the increased number of calls and contracted projects, the National Foundation as Intermediate Body Level 2 made major advances in the digitalization of all procedures for receiving applications and monitoring the implementation of contracted projects through the ESF+, ZNS\_Analize and ESF\_platforma computer programmes.

In 2018, for the first time there were 4 separate calls for the award of institutional grants, intended for a) associations active in the field of democratization and social development, b) associations that had not used the mentioned form of support from the National Foundation in previous periods, c) associations from the Homeland War, and d) associations of persons with disabilities operating at the local level, allowing for a more uniform evaluation of associations of different levels of development and capabilities operating in specific programme areas.



# Networking





# Networking

*For a EUR 15,000 grant, associations connected 132 to 148 beneficiaries/citizens*

In 2019, a major conference was organized under the title Civil Society 2030: RH-EU\_Mediterranean, which was held in late October in Šibenik, and served as an opportunity for **training, networking and structured dialogue on the vision of civil society in 2030 in Croatia**, at the level of the European Union and in the Euro-Mediterranean. This year was marked by the Euro-Mediterranean and the preparation of MED FORUM 2020 in April 2020 in Šibenik, which was to gather over 1000 participants from 42 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean. In the context of preparations for the Forum, the National Foundation, as the coordinator of the Croatian Network for Cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean, also organized two meetings of representatives of the Croatian Network's member organizations and representatives of 22 national networks from countries of the Euro-Mediterranean.



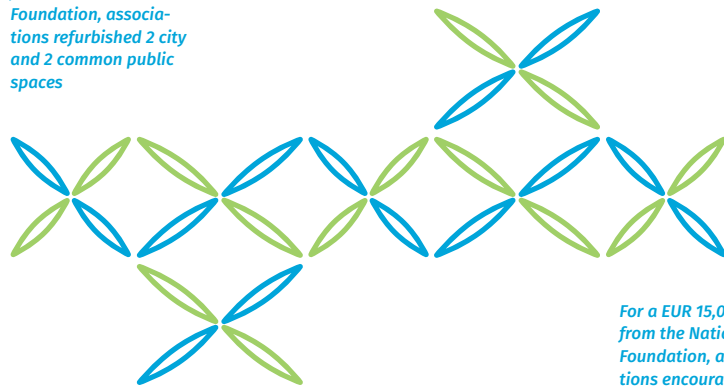
2019



# Community



*For a EUR 15,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations refurbished 2 city and 2 common public spaces*



*For a EUR 15,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations encouraged 55-61 citizens to participate in democratic processes*

# Community

In March 2020, faced with the pandemic caused by coronavirus and the consequences of the earthquakes in the City of Zagreb and in the Zagreb, Karlovac and Sisak-Moslavina counties, the National Foundation rendered decisions related to the reorganization of employees' work, digitalization of procedures, and direct communication with all the beneficiaries of the National Foundation's support, in order to provide them with clear instructions on new forms of work and the prompt payment of a part of the funds for awarded grants (which saved jobs) to enable them to continue operating under new, changed circumstances. Thus, the greatest achievement in the National Foundation's activities in 2020 was precisely this continuity of support and **community** in acting under extraordinary circumstances. The publication of the "Our Stories" series on [www.zadobrobit.hr](http://www.zadobrobit.hr) was a testimony to all the activities and services that civil society organizations had provided soundly and efficiently since the first days of the pandemic and dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake. The influential European portal EUROACTIV published an article by the director of the National Foundation on the unity, solidarity and activities of civil society organizations in Croatia, which was affected by a double crisis – the pandemic and the consequences of devastating earthquakes.



# Volunteering



# Volunteering

Following the initial response to the global pandemic and the need for adaptation, the National Foundation continued to improve its operations with regard to the use of all available digital tools related to business process adaptation. As the coordinator of the Croatian Network for Cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean, in 2021 the National Foundation managed to include Croatia in the first celebration of the International Day of the Mediterranean on 28 November, thus spreading messages about the importance of strengthening Mediterranean identity and cooperation between Euro-Mediterranean countries. Further to the National Foundation's long-standing programme "Heart Print", which in cooperation with primary and secondary schools continuously encouraged children and young people to volunteer in their local communities, a new, systematic dimension was introduced in 2021 through two international programmes for children and youth. That way 13 schools joined the international platform 'DoGood People', through which children and young people are encouraged to **volunteer** in the local community and meet the collective challenges programmed to achieve the UN's global Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and in cooperation with the European Foundation for Philanthropy and Social Development, the National Foundation became more closely involved in the international digital donation platform: Transnational Giving Europe.

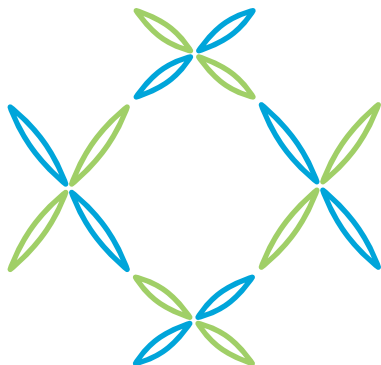


*For every EUR 15,000 grant from the National Foundation, associations manage to include an average of 6-8 volunteers*

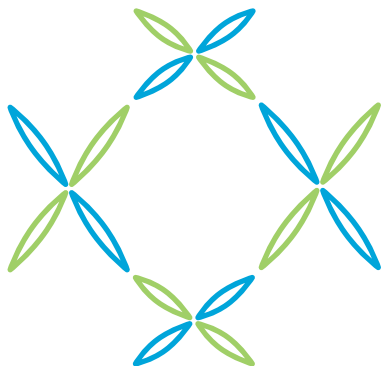
# Sustainability







*A survey of 272 supported organizations on the satisfaction with cooperation with the National Foundation yielded the following results: 245 organizations rated the cooperation as excellent (90%), and 27 organizations (10%) rated it as good.*



# Sustainability

At the PHILEA Forum 2022 in Barcelona, attended by over 700 representatives of foundations from all over Europe and the world with the mission and aim of sustaining the role of foundations as catalysts of change and bridge builders between communities, different sectors and generations, connecting and exchanging experiences with the purpose of improving future activities, Croatia was announced as the host of the PHILEA Forum 2023, co-organized by the National Foundation. The Croatian version of the sCOOLFOOD Programme “Do Good with a Heart Print”, launched by the National Foundation, was included in the curricula of 10 schools from different parts of Croatia, and in 2022, in cooperation with teachers, educational modules and work plans were prepared to enable children and young people to participate actively in the achievement of **Sustainable Development Goals**.

# Trust



# 2023

# Trust

2023

In 2023, two new forms of support were introduced, namely systematic grants – basic, national and thematic, primarily targeted at and continuously supporting associations of persons with disabilities and associations from the Homeland War, and strategic partnerships for social development, which through connecting the i3.0 programme and Community Potentials open a new innovative way of investing in positive social change in Croatia and in the Euro-Mediterranean.

The year 2023 has been marked by celebrating the 20th anniversary of the National Foundation, which started in May during the PHILEA Forum 2023 in Šibenik, gathering over 700 representatives of the most influential foundations from Europe and the world. The National Foundation was the co-organizer and host of this great and, for the development of Croatian philanthropy and foundations, important gathering. In September, the Philanthropy Week was held in numerous Croatian cities, with final events in Zadar, where children and young people showed everything they had learned through the programme “Do Good with a Heart Print” (DoGood and sCOOLFOOD) about solidarity, care for themselves, others and those that are different, and the preservation of the environment. In doing so, the National Foundation transfers acting for the common good and promoting the values of civil society to the younger generations as a pledge for successful further development of civil society in our country.

# Thank you for 20 years of your trust and shared weaving of support!



Twenty years  
of weaving  
support





Over the past **20 years**, we have invested more than **€ 120 million** through the National Foundation's programmes in just under **9,000** supported organizations, enabling (co-)financing of wages for about **36.000** people (m/f) in those organizations, and involving more than **1.5 million** volunteers engaged in activities for the common good and for the benefit of local communities.

This year also marks **10 years** of the National Foundation's activity as Intermediate Body Level **2**, which has enabled us to invest almost **€ 200 million** in over **1,500** projects funded by grants from the European Social Fund. Through the various and numerous calls we have conducted within the ESF framework, which respond to the challenges in our society, of special note are those in the field of STEM, Thematic Networks for Socio-Economic Development, Active in Retirement, and the popularly named COVID call that empowered civil society organizations at the local level in the post-pandemic period and in the aftermath of devastating earthquakes.

## Our achievements, in numbers

During 20 years of support, we have invested

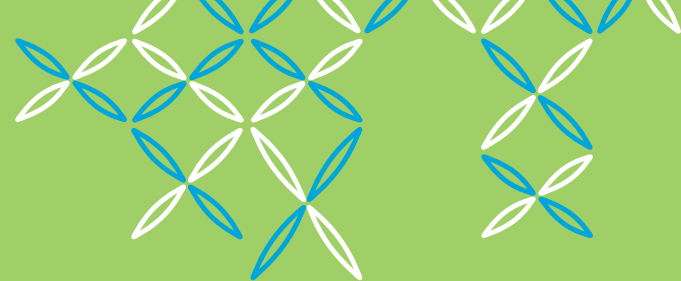
€ 120,000,000

in just under  
9,000 supported  
organizations



We have co-financed

the wages  
of 36.000  
people



With European Social Fund (ESF) grants,  
we have supported

1.500+  
projects

nearly

9,000  
organizations

1,500,000  
volunteers

have been engaged in  
activities for the common  
good and benefit of local  
communities





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