



# EUROPEAN CIVIC IDENTITY AMONG YOUTH IN CROATIA

education program by the  
Youth Initiative for Human Rights

September/October 2013

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights – Croatia (YIHR) project *European Civic Identity Among Youth in Croatia* was planned and developed with an aim of enhancing European civic awareness among younger generations in Croatia by raising their general understanding of the EU — the heritage of its past, and the perspectives of its future.

The project included study visits of secondary school students from Zagreb to eleven embassies of EU member-states and several relevant institutions, such as the European Commission Representation in the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as well as the Institute for Development and International Relations.

Each study visit included a lecture, and was followed by a discussion with representatives of diplomatic missions to Croatia, scholars and officials. Topics were organised around three main questions:

- Structure of the EU, its foreign policies, and its inter-state relations;
- Croatia's responsibilities and opportunities as an EU member-state;
- Missions, challenges and successes of other countries' diplomatic representations to Croatia.

At the end of every study visits, students were asked to fill out an evaluation survey, with an aim of providing feedback to the organisers, such as their opinion on the usefulness of the visit and suggestions for improvements. The survey was also designed to gather the opinions of the participants on the concept of European civic identity. Some of the answers became an important part of this brochure.

This brochure is designed to share a vision of the emerging need for a contemporary, informed, and constructive understanding of EU politics, amongst young people in particular. The brochure is intended to inform and help attract future participants turning this project into a long-term forum beneficial to students, embassy representatives, and teachers alike.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

### SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>

#### EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA

Mr. Georg Diwald, Minister Counsellor, gave a lecture to the participants on his vision of Croatia as the newest EU member state. He explained that one important role of EU countries' representations to Croatia is to monitor the status of human rights. Finally, Mr. Diwald reflected upon the crucial aspects of a modern, tolerant and open-minded European civic culture that needs to be nourished by younger generations.

### SEPTEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>

#### MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Students had an opportunity to hear lectures by H.E. Mr. Mladen Andrić, Director of the Diplomatic Academy, Ms. Dubravka Smolić Vlaić, Second Secretary at Directorate-General for EU affairs and Mr. Dubravko Žirovčić, Director of the Division for EU Training and Publishing. In the first part of the lecture, Mr. Andrić spoke about the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs – its formation, past and present. Asked to comment the affair known as 'Lex Perković', Mr. Andrić described its possible outcomes, and gave a detailed picture of the European Arrest Warrant and the jurisdiction of the European Commission in case of its violation. Finally, Ms. Smolić Vlaić explained in brief Croatia's path to becoming an EU member state.

The lecture was concluded by questions and comments of participating students and their teachers, Ms. Marijana Švenda Lekić and Ms. Zlata Paštar.

#### EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Mrs. Vladislava Iordanova, Deputy Head of Mission, welcomed the visiting group of pupils. After showing them around, explained the basic functioning and an average workday of Embassy's employees. Mrs. Lada Burić, Consular attaché, and Mrs. Hélène Kazalicki Blary, Political attaché, gave a short lecture explaining their role in upholding and enhancing relations between the countries.

Later, Mr. Mile Grubišić, Economic and Commercial Assistant, explained the kinds of tasks and challenges that his team has to face in performing their duties. Among other tasks, their job is to

conduct market research, to contact, inform and connect potential business partners, Mr. Grubišić explained, outlining the importance Belgium puts on trade relations.

#### **EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

Mr. Momčil Raičevski, Second Secretary and Consul, received the visitors and guided them around the Bulgarian Embassy and Consulate, describing everyday situations and challenges that his job and the job of his colleagues carries.

#### **SEPTEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup>**

#### **EMBASSY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY**

Mr. Bruno Boban, the Spokesperson of the Embassy, explained the main tasks and means by which his embassy operates. Mr. Boban presented the advantages of studying abroad and provided the pupils with promotional and informational materials with detailed opportunities of studying in Germany.

The students had several questions regarding the historical importance of international relations between Germany and Croatia, especially in the recent past when the Republic of Croatia, was established as an independent and sovereign state. Mr. Boban answered that one must not jump to conclusions in interpreting such complex events in order to avoid false interpretations and dangerous prejudices.

#### **SEPTEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>**

#### **EMBASSY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

In his presentation Mr. Josef Zrzavecký, Deputy Head of Mission, focused on the similarities between the Czech and Croatian political past. Mr. Zrzavecký spoke of the main benefits of EU accession and emphasized the importance of a responsible attitude toward taking the opportunities that EU has to offer.

## **SEPTEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup>**

### **EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN**

H.E. Mr. Rodrigo Aguirre de Cárcer y García del Arenal, Ambassador, hosted the visiting group of pupils in his office and gave an insightful overview of the most important moments of European and World politics since the end of World War II. Furthermore, the Ambassador explained his view on the causes of the latest economic crises that struck numerous countries worldwide providing examples of what the 'real estate bubble' is.

## **OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup>**

### **EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**

Several members of the diplomatic corps and embassy staff provided a sequence of interactive, creative and edifying content to the participants. First, Mrs. Gabriella Sancisi, Deputy Head of Mission, provided the guests with general information about the Netherlands and its foreign policy priorities and strategies toward Croatia. At that time, Mrs. Sancisi presented the social transformation program of the Dutch government called MATRA – a program that supports the efforts of south-eastern European countries with European Union accession to meet the EU's standards of institutional and civil society development. Then, Mr. Tom Harmsen, Policy Officer and Mrs. Emmie Verbeke, Secretary/Archivist, organized a quiz on interesting facts about the European Union.

### **EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND**

Mr. Ville Andersson, Deputy Head of Mission and Ms. Laura Stojic, Project Officer, received the visiting students with a multimedia presentation of Finland, followed by a question and answer session.

The students heard a lot of new information on Finland since only few of them visited the country before.

### **OFFICE OF THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

Mr. Deividas Stankevičius, Minister Counsellor, took the opportunity to present his home country Lithuania and to present his job within the diplomatic mission, which largely consists of taking care of Lithuanian citizens on the territory of the Republic of Croatia, and enhancing economic and cultural relations between the two countries.

## **OCTOBER 3<sup>RD</sup>**

### **EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATION IN CROATIA**

H.E. Mr. Branko Baričević, Ambassador Head of the Representation, gave a speech to the audience of visiting pupils on the core values of the European Union. H.E. Mr. Baričević presented the EU as a successful peace project and Europe as a place on Earth with the highest level of social rights, which need to be respected, protected and advanced by the younger generations.

### **EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN**

Mrs. Karin Maria Anderman, Counsellor, welcomed the group of students and spoke to them about the general tasks and responsibilities of the diplomatic mission of Sweden to Croatia. Furthermore, Mrs. Anderman talked about the kinds of services and help that Swedish citizens occasionally require abroad, such as cases of lost passports, stolen cars or injuries. Finally, Mr. Hrvoje Pokupec, Commercial Officer, revealed the importance of enhancing the commercial and business relations between Croatia and Sweden.

## **OCTOBER 7<sup>TH</sup>**

### **EMBASSY OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC**

H.E. Ms. Michèle Boccoz, Ambassador, accompanied by, Mr. Luc Lévy, Counsellor for Culture and Mr. Frédéric Frapaise, Attaché for Economic and Administrative Cooperation, received the guests with a warm welcome. The students seized the opportunity to hear comprehensive and detailed information on the French Embassy's activities in Croatia, including its cultural and economic aspects. At the end, the students were provided with information on studying possibilities in France.

**OCTOBER 10<sup>TH</sup>**

**EUROPE HOUSE ZAGREB**

**INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

The closing ceremony of the program began with an opening speech of Mr. Mario Mažić, Program Director of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, and was followed by the lecture entitled *European Union: Perspective and Challenges*, delivered by Ms. Senada Šelo Šabić, Research Associate at the Department for International Economic and Political Relations. Ms. Šelo Šabić presented the current focuses of migration policies within the EU as well as the common foreign policy of its member states, and pointed to the pressing need for understanding, solidarity and help for those who have chosen such desperate measures as crossing the EU border illegally.

Finally, the participants of the project *European Civic Identity among Youth in Croatia* were handed formal certificates for their attendance and contribution.



## PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATIONS

*“I believe that European civic identity is real. Beside the coexistence on the same territory of Europe, we share a common history, our cultures have similar characteristics and we are moving together towards the same values. This kind of European civic identity has to be nourished while respecting the differences among us but at the same time focusing on the feeling of unity and belonging.” – Participant, Evaluation survey #09*

*“We can recognise European civic identity in the context of the civil society that represents the sphere of public activity separate from the administrative and state framework, with an aim of resolving issues of public interest and exerting influence over political elites.” – Participant, Evaluation survey #15*

*“I think that European civic identity exists because EU member states are operating in a legal symbiosis – political, economical and migrational – at the same time. The EU is arranged in a way that respects national specifics gathered within the EU, as long as they are not violating human rights.” – Participant, Evaluation survey #21*

*“Once you become a European citizen, you earn specific privileges and duties that form your identity to a certain degree.” – Participant, Evaluation survey #38*

*“Although European civic identity exists, most of the people in Croatia are not aware of it at all. This is the case especially amongst older generation citizens. We, the younger generations, learn a lot about Europe and know a lot in theory. However, in practice, as we entered the EU, we are not sure what exactly is expected from us and what benefits became accessible to us. I believe that the majority of the people have insufficient knowledge on EU, but at the same time a lot of people are still consciously remain ignorant. That is why the altering of such an awareness is a duty of the young.” – Participant, Evaluation survey #52*

## CONTRIBUTORS' FEEDBACK

*“The Austrian Embassy in Zagreb highly values your initiative. Indeed, the development of a European civic awareness is a highly important topic, and one in which many EU-member states have invested a lot of ideas.”*

– Georg Diwald, Minister Councillor, Embassy of the Republic of Austria in Zagreb

*“We discovered with great interest your project – the European Civic Awareness Among Youth in Croatia and would be pleased to participate and host a student visit in the Embassy of Belgium in Zagreb.”*

– Nancy Rossignol, Ambassador, Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium in Zagreb

*“We have good experiences of YIHR and would be happy to participate in the program again.”*

– Karin Anderman, Counsellor, Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden in Zagreb

## **PARTNERS AND CONTRIBUTORS**

- EUROPE HOUSE ZAGREB
- INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
- MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATION IN CROATIA
- EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
- EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM
- EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
- EMBASSY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC
- EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND
- EMBASSY OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC
- EMBASSY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
- OFFICE OF THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
- EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
- EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN
- EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN



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YIHR Croatia is a member of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Regional Network with organizations also in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia