

Debate model of civic education

Name of the organisation

Hrvatsko debatno društvo

Website of the organisation

[Hrvatsko debatno društvo](http://Hrvatsko.debatno.drustvo)

Location of the organisation

Berislavićeva 16, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia

E-mail address of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making
- Active citizenship/activism
- Participation of young people in activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Under the project “Democratic Vaccination” the Croatian debate society wanted to establish debate clubs and deliberative democracy as a model for the development of democratic competences and participatory decision-making.

Through diverse project activities, we expanded debate clubs as a successful model of civic education (which is not mandatory in Croatia) that develops the skills of argumentation, critical thinking, expression, and teamwork, sensitizes to diversity and the importance of human rights, and empowers for informed action.

The main purpose of this model is to ensure the participation of young people in debating clubs which will empower them to act by developing key skills and acquiring knowledge. Second, by participating in deliberative activities, young people gained practical knowledge about democratic processes and the importance of the collaborative creation of quality solutions. This experience empowered young people for future local, national and European action.

The project included the training of teachers and local volunteers for the implementation of the debate model of the civic education and support for the work of new debate clubs, as well as the training of deliberation ambassadors who will be initiators and participants in the implementation of deliberative activities at the local level.

Good practice description

As part of the project, an education was held for teachers on ways of implementing the debate model as part of civic education, in which 40 secondary schools from different counties participated. The mentors who work with the teachers are volunteers with as many as 1,600 volunteer hours in 2022, and 1,800 people have participated in the project so far, of which 1,400 are young people.

Through the project, we worked on empowering teachers who work with young people to implement informal work methods in the formal education system. We are aware that teachers need to be more accessible than they normally learned in the formal education system, and our role was to provide mentoring support to teachers in implementing the deliberation model through debate clubs. We are surprised by the number of involved teachers from vocational schools such as medical, economic and other schools who have shown that there is a great interest and need for innovative models of teaching students for active citizenship.

In the narrowest sense, deliberation means a secured space where young people can present the problem they are facing in the field and can be sure that the decision-makers will be familiar with the said problem. The decision-makers in this sense are mainly the principals of the schools involved in the project, but also the mayors of the cities and municipalities where the project activities were carried out.

Our team held approximately 50 meetings with teachers, training with students on debate methodology, and 24 deliberations, some of which were respected. In Knin, a place for young people to socialize will be provided, while in Vukovar, the first Norijada (celebration on the occasion of the end of high school education), which until now was celebrated by students in Vinkovci, was organized.

We carried out the activities in smaller schools, mostly vocational schools, whose curriculum does not allow these types of additional activities due to the system of practices or practicums that are held in the school. Students and teachers are mostly found after class, most often around 7 pm in the evening. However, regardless of the various difficulties we encountered, which were related to the organization of time in schools, it turned out that vocational schools have a great interest in these forms of work with students.

How that looked alike:

ONLINE EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS -> DEBATE TECHNIQUE - WORK IN DEBATE CLUBS OR IN CLASSES -> WORK ON SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND RESEARCH -> PREPARATION OF DELIBERATION ACTIVITIES -> DELIBERATION -> ADVOCACY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Good practice result & concrete effects

The debate model of civic education supported young people to develop democratic awareness and civic competences through participation in the work of debate clubs and deliberations. Through participation in project activities, young people gained practical experience and permanent knowledge that will provide them with a foundation for active participation in society in the future.

Through the implementation of this model, we expanded the reach of debate clubs as a successful and reliable model of civic education and create a network of teachers and volunteers trained to implement the developed program, which represents a step forward in the unresolved and unsatisfactory status of civic education in Croatia.

Also, we've developed a model of deliberative public discussion for application in the context of Croatian local self-government units adapted for the inclusion of vulnerable groups in decision-making, which brings together citizens, experts, moderators and representatives of local authorities and facilitates their cooperation and creation of solutions.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Youth work policy