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European Affairs

South-South and Triangular Cooperation In Action

Croatia: A Unique Bridge between North and South  
Development Cooperation

South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Action Series  
Croatia: A Unique Bridge between North and South Development Cooperation

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Image on the cover page: "Transportation vehicle provided for female workers within the Women Entrepreneurship Project, 2012, Afghanistan. Photo courtesy of MFEA."

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CROMAC	Croatian Centre for Demining
CROSOL	Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity
CTRO	Centre for Testing, Development and Education
EU	European Union
GICHD	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
GSSD	Global South-South Development
IDP	internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MFEA	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
MFF	Multi-Annual Financial Framework
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
RSSRP	Regional Security Sector Reform Platform
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEECCEL	South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning
SEESAC	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for Small Arms and Light
SSTC	South-South and triangular cooperation
ToT	training of trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNMAC	United Nations Mine Action Centre
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
UNPF	United Nations Peace Forces
UNTAES	United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and

# Foreword



**Joseph Gene Petrić**

**Assistant Minister for Trade and  
Development  
Ministry of Foreign and European**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized representation of the name.

Croatia is honoured to join the UNOSSC South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Action Series featuring inspiring and often less-known development stories by developing countries, regional organizations and other partners. Croatia's National Strategy for Development Cooperation 2017–2021 includes South-South and triangular cooperation as an indispensable tool for jointly achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The pledge of the 2030 Agenda, leave no one behind, is enshrined in the South-South principles of solidarity, respect, equality, and the mutual exchange of experiences and expertise.

Having joined the European Union (EU) in 2013, Croatia is one of the representatives of the world's single largest development cooperation partner. In addition, Croatia is a country that has recently shifted from being a humanitarian and development aid recipient state to a development partner in its own right. Due to its recent history, Croatia has developed a very diversified set of skills that are in high demand across the globe, the most prominent of which are: rebuilding the economy and tourism; developing an effective mine action system and related industries; providing dignified and sustainable care refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and managing their return; providing specialized mental health expertise in post-trauma stress (PTSD); providing expertise on missing persons and forensic support systems; reforming the security sector; mainstreaming gender; promoting innovative financing of development projects; raising awareness on non-violence; involving religious minorities; and strengthening civil society. A substantial part of Croatia's South-South cooperation (SSC) was focused on its immediate neighbours by providing expertise and legislation for complex European integration processes.

At first, one may wonder how it is that a European Union (EU) member state considers its own development cooperation activities as being part of SSC. We feel that Croatia enjoys a unique position as a bridge between what is traditionally seen as North and South development cooperation. Indeed, as an EU member state, Croatia can be viewed as a typical Northern donor. At the same

time, Croatia in its own national development cooperation, bilaterally and regionally, often acts like a South-South partner assisting fellow countries on the basis of mutual exchange of knowledge, solidarity and equality. Countries and regions, identified as priority partners in our National Strategy for Development Cooperation, face similar political, economic and societal challenges as Croatia had faced only recently and, in some cases, still is facing. Croatian long-term assistance to its own neighbouring region of Southeast Europe, as well as to a wider European Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, is based on South-South principles. This makes Croatia a rather unique development partner.

My gratitude goes to United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) for showcasing the role that Croatia has played to date and can play in the future towards achieving our global, ambitious 2030 Agenda for everyone on this planet. The only way to do this is to know and use everyone's potential and strong points, to cooperate, and share our experiences, good practices and setbacks as well. This report is bringing us one step further towards this goal.

# Foreword



**Jorge Chediek**  
Envoy of the Secretary-General  
on South-South Cooperation and Director,  
United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and lines.

The global development cooperation landscape is evolving, with many former development partner-recipients transitioning into partner-providers. Through this transition, the global development movement has enhanced and complementary cooperation approaches such as South-South and triangular cooperation are gaining prominence as modalities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Since gaining its independence in 1991, Croatia has transformed from a Southern country to the newest member of the European Union in 2013. Within this new role, the country is sharing with other countries the knowledge and experience that contributed to its development. As is evident in this publication, Croatia is providing expertise very much in line with the principles of South-South cooperation and solidarity. For example, it is supporting the process of evolution within the development landscape of the Balkan Region, and actively extending its partnership with Southern partners beyond the region.

I am pleased to present this latest edition of South-South in Action, titled “Croatia: A Unique Bridge between North and South Development Cooperation”. It has been produced as a collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

The publication demonstrates a new paradigm in development cooperation where the spirit of South-South cooperation has been infused into a model of North-South cooperation. It showcases new innovative solutions to development challenges that Croatia accumulated as a Southern country that have the potential to be transferred on a demand-driven basis to other countries through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation toward the achievement of regional and global sustainability and inclusiveness. The unique role that Croatia plays and modalities of development cooperation that the country utilizes may serve as examples for new emerging development partners to adapt and replicate successful practices on their way to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

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# Executive Summary

Many countries around the globe struggle with the challenges of a post-conflict, broken social fabric in education, health, decent jobs, psycho-social and economic recovery of vulnerable populations, mine action systems and in the sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced populations (IDPs).

Croatia is an EU member state and accordingly, it represents the largest global development cooperation partner and humanitarian donor. In parallel, based on its rich experiences of war and post-war transition, Croatia has developed a set of unique tools that is directing and shaping its cooperation with other countries facing similar challenges, based on the principles of South-South cooperation (SSC) – solidarity, equality and best-practice sharing. This makes Croatia a unique development cooperation partner.

This report aims to showcase Croatia's capacities for the achieving of global Agenda 2030. With all of the recent paradigm changes in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, as set out in major new documents such as Agenda 2030, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Agenda for Humanity and the Paris Agreement, it is clear that their implementation requires joint efforts by all. Since Official Development Assistance (ODA) can never be enough, and Humanitarian Response Plans can never be sufficiently financed, new ways must be sought to capitalize on Croatia's potential.

Bearing in mind Croatia's specific experiences and capacities, this report presents some of the experiences acquired during Croatia's post-war political, economic and societal transition and transformation process, which in some cases is still ongoing. Furthermore, it describes Croatia's development cooperation with Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Colombia and Ukraine, who are facing challenges of post-conflict recovery in many different aspects where Croatia can offer expertise, knowledge and useful lessons learned. Croatia cooperates with these countries on the basis of South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) principles. The expertise provided relates to women's empowerment as peace builders, education, mine action, psycho-social support to vulnerable populations, the dignified and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

This report is a product of a series of still ongoing consultations among Croatia's governmental institutions that have been and/or still are in charge of, or involved in, building legislative and

institutional frameworks during the process of post-war democratic transition. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, acting as a national coordinator for international development cooperation and humanitarian aid, has been acquiring experiences and expertise in cooperation with the relevant institutions with the aim of standardizing them, promoting their qualities and potential impact nationally and internationally, and systematically sharing knowledge among global development partners. This should, inter alia, encourage stronger involvement of Croatia's institutions in development cooperation, open new possibilities for the personal development of relevant experts through international engagement, establish new contacts, and promote mutual learning and exchange with peers across the globe.

Croatia considers SSTC a key partnership tool together with ODA, grants, investments and domestic resources for achieving the ambitious global agenda of leaving no one behind.







## Chapter I: Historical Background, Policy Framework and Structure

# Chapter I: Historical Background, Policy Framework and Structure

## Context

Development cooperation has been undergoing intense changes during the last decades. These changes are first marked by the new global trends, challenges and influencing factors. Furthermore, new non-traditional donors are emerging, which, more than ever, render development cooperation a two-way relationship. This fact strongly impacts the new relationship paradigm between the development partners, which shifts from a one-way donor-recipient relationship towards the reciprocal partnership between equals who learn and gain from each other. These factors subsequently emerge in using new methods of development cooperation, whose financial assistance is being enriched by the exchange of knowledge and experience through technical assistance. Wise exploitation of these new trends can make development cooperation more effective and can use the full potential of all actors involved. Countries that have undergone and are still undergoing processes of development have both unique expertise and a specific perspective of their own development. These two elements bring these countries closer to the partner countries that face similar challenges, thus their experience can be more easily matched.

Furthermore, experience and lessons learned of recent democratic transitions of new development partners are a unique product in development cooperation, giving this South-South or East-East learning relationship a comparative advantage within the global development community. New partners focus more on sharing knowledge and building partnerships in a peer-to-peer setting. Instead of giving pledges and focusing on financial allocations, new development partners focus on strengthening national capacities in partner countries in order to avoid aid dependency and create sustainability. In addition, the experience as recipient country offers a comparative advantage of a more in-depth understanding of the recipient's needs and thus almost intuitively avoids low quality aid and focuses on better cooperation. In a reciprocal partner relationship, smaller development partners focus on identifying the strengths on which cooperation can be built and support the partner country in assuming ownership, with guaranteed sustainability as a final result.

## Correlation between Foreign and Development Policy

Changes in the development landscape have a reciprocal impact on a number of other global political, economic and social challenges and threats. Natural disasters have become more common, increasingly widespread and lethal. Man-made crises no longer only occur in traditionally fragile and unstable states and regions, but also occur in the very neighbourhood of developed countries.



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Countries that have undergone and are still undergoing processes of development have both unique expertise and a specific perspective of their own development. These two elements bring these countries closer to the partner countries that face similar challenges, thus their experience can be more easily matched.

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In this context, the interdependence of foreign, security and development policy becomes eminent. This wise policy blend is being used to resolve geostrategic issues, promote values and principles, and establishes comprehensive partnerships. Croatia considers development policy a key instrument for addressing the root causes of crises, preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, controlling migrations, reducing poverty and strengthening economic cooperation. Foreign policy, which applies development cooperation as a result of democratic and partnership agreement among equal partners, respects partner's priorities and ownership, and represents a wise and advanced statesmanship policy. Such policy, when supported by financial resources, knowledge and partnerships, contributes to the development of all, builds responsible and functioning institutions, and creates fertile ground for long-term relationships in other areas. It thus earns its legitimacy and becomes a win-win game.

Development policy is indivisible from foreign policy. Furthermore, various key national policies, such as on security, trade, agriculture, the environment, have an ever-growing external dimension that must be coordinated with foreign policy and especially with foreign development policy. The main challenge at stake is to build synergetic partnerships, make use of Croatia's various advantages and effectively coordinate between all stakeholders – major, minor and emerging donors – as well as the institutional, private and civil sectors.

### Historical Background

In only two decades following the declaration of its independence in 1991, Croatia followed a path of transition from facing military aggression, to a humanitarian crisis, and finally to post-war reconstruction and recovery in parallel with unprecedented political, economic and societal transformation from a totalitarian to a democratic political system, from planned to market economy and from hermetic to open society. By becoming a Member of the European Union (EU) in 2013, Croatia joined the group of the most developed countries globally that is the largest and most influential development partner in the world, which provides more than half of total global development assistance.

Already in 1990s, during the turbulent transition process, Croatia had been providing certain forms of humanitarian aid and official development assistance (ODA). Hundreds of thousands of refugees from BiH were hosted in Croatia during that period. Development cooperation with BiH and neighbouring countries eventually evolved in numerous projects that enabled social, economic and political activities of Croatians in these countries. Over time, Croatia increasingly realized the potential of the policy of international development cooperation as a fundamental catalyst for furthering political, economic, foreign-strategic, cultural and other ties with the partner countries – not solely in its immediate neighbourhood – hence advancing this policy by supporting overall development in targeted countries.

In 2011, due to an increased gross-national income (GNI) per capita, Croatia was removed from

the list of ODA recipients defined by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), thus becoming a donor in its own right. Being considered a developed country, Croatia assumed, together with the rest of the developed world, and in particular as an EU Member State, all internationally agreed obligations and principles, in particular concerning the allocation of ODA for developing countries. However, the transition process in Croatia is in many cases still ongoing. The institutions, the economy and above all society still face several transformation challenges, which are often fuelled by the remaining consequences of the post-war transition.

The position of Croatia in the global development policy framework is determined by its size and capacities, and by the challenges of being new development partner country. It is also determined by its experience of post-war transition, which is recognized as an added value in development policy and as a new opportunity to contribute to the global development community more than countries of a similar foreign policy reach and economic capacity. Indeed, during the war and post-war democratic transition, Croatia acquired unique experience and knowledge that give its development policy a comparative advantage in the global development community. Many of these experiences are still continuing and lessons learned are being collected. Subsequently, due to the transition challenges that Croatia is still facing despite its economic development, it will continue to understand the development processes, and steer its strategy as a bridge between developed and developing countries. Hence, this position between both worlds will be used as an advantage, which is highlighted in the experience of many development projects. Croatia is being viewed by partner countries as a country that has strong experience, understanding and willingness to truly cooperate, learn and exchange.

## Legislative, Institutional and Strategic Framework

By adopting the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Abroad in 2008, Croatia for the first time legally regulated the area of international development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and established the principles for its implementation, and determining the goals, inter-institutional cooperation and financing of development cooperation.

Furthermore, in the same year, the first organizational unit for development cooperation and humanitarian aid was established within the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA). This unit was responsible for drafting the first National Strategy for Development Cooperation in 2009. The current strategic framework for development cooperation and humanitarian aid is set by the second National Strategy for 2017–2021.

Croatia has officially recorded its ODA allocations since 2009. Implementation of development projects is decentralized; hence, while the MFEA serves as a national coordinator for development policy, any state administrative body in Croatia implements development projects within its field of expertise and authority. In this way, development cooperation is devolved to the in-

stitutions that have led the democratic transition process in the particular field and thus own this unique expertise and have the appropriate tools and experts to transfer it. The advance planning of these projects at the national level is carried out through Annual Implementation Programmes, which are adopted by the Government. Furthermore, the annual reports on the implementation of ODA projects of the previous year, which have been approved by the Croatian Parliament Sabor, serve as a central repository of ODA reporting.

Policy coherence and coordination of efforts at the national level are ensured by the Inter-Institutional Working Group for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Abroad. The Working Group is chaired by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, its members being officials from relevant state administrative bodies, but also representatives of relevant public sector institutions, civil society, the private sector and the academic community. The criterion for being a member of the Inter-Institutional Working Group is having implemented development projects and having transferred the particular institutional knowledge – or having at least the identified potential for doing so. The purpose of the Inter-Institutional Working Group is to establish the framework for the development policy in accordance with international trends, secure the coordination of development policy at the national level and propose guidelines for strengthening the effectiveness of development cooperation projects.

### Advantages

In addition to the above-mentioned experience of war and post-war democratic transition, which provided Croatia with practical knowledge and a perspective of a recipient, a further comparative advantage of its development policy is its experience of accession to the European Union. This implies both a comprehensive political, economic and social transformation and a heavy administrative and technical undertaking in establishing a highly complex institutional infrastructure. As a strong advocate for the further enlargement of the EU to the countries of Southeast Europe, Croatian experts, who have led the process of negotiations for accession to the EU, are participating in various multi-country twinning projects in the countries of the region, assisting them in their efforts to develop their institutions and align their legislation with the EU's legal framework. Furthermore, several Croatian counties at the regional level are participating in cross-border cooperation with the neighbouring provinces in the countries of Southeast Europe, with important development projects on the environment, capacity building for local authorities, and on the improvement of quality of life in the region, among others.

Finally, having the knowledge and the experiences and with its particular position in the global development, Croatia intends to make further use of the pre-war partnership relations with developing countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. This is an opportunity to establish relationships with developing countries and is more closely related to the principles of South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation. This way, Croatia can directly contribute to these global concepts, and thus make it possible approach developing countries more directly, serving as a liaison between the traditional donor countries, in particular the EU, and developing countries.



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Having recent experience in post-war recovery, Croatia is aware of the central role that women play in peace-building and in the recovery of the social structure. The transformational impact on society is multiplied quickly when investing in women, youth and children.

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## Priorities

The National Strategy sets the sectorial (thematic) and geographic priorities of the Croatian development cooperation policy, which are mutually interlinked and selected depending on Croatia's political, economic and security interests, and driven by specific knowledge and experience in the area of peace and security. In general, the priorities are set based on where Croatia can truly make a difference.

The first sectorial priority is the dignity of every human being, which reflects Croatia's focus on human development, human dignity, rights and well-being as well as human capacity development and the use of full human potential. Within this sectorial priority, special attention is given to education as one of the most important tools for promoting personal and professional development as well as mutual respect. Furthermore, health is at the centre of Croatia's development policy as a prerequisite for personal development, especially of women, children and youth, on whose empowerment Croatia also focuses its efforts.

The second sectorial priority is peace, security and development of democratic institutions. Knowledge of the far-reaching and long-term consequences of conflicts and risks of their outbreaks, spill-over and renewal underline Croatia's focus on the importance of the timely recognition and action on the root-causes of conflict. In particular, special attention is given to the area of post-war transition, which includes, inter alia, sharing knowledge on inter-ethnic and inter-religious reconciliation, disarmament, demobilization and re-socialization of war veterans. Furthermore, accession to the EU and the accompanying comprehensive process of transforming institutions and society as a whole are another integral element of this priority.

The third sectorial priority is responsible economic development, which involves building sound foundations for the development of a society that depends on establishing a smart, sustainable and inclusive economic environment based on corporate, social and environmental responsibility.

The first geographic priority of Croatia's development cooperation, South-Eastern Europe, focuses on the interdependence of the overall foreign and security policy. Moreover, being at its external borders, this region is of key importance for the EU. Croatia gives special attention to development cooperation with BiH, and fosters project cooperation with Albania, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*.

The second geographic priority is the EU Southern and Eastern neighbourhood as the second foreign and development policy area of interest. Within this region, Croatia gives special atten-

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\* *References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)*

tion to Jordan and Ukraine while promoting project cooperation with Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria.

The third geographic priority – developing countries – is geographically dispersed but thematically very similar, facing similar challenges of fragility, instability, conflict and political, economic and social transition. In this priority, Croatia focuses on project cooperation with Afghanistan, Colombia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

## Goals

Croatia has established a set of goals to be achieved in the medium term based on the set-out strategic framework, the advantages and priorities. First, Croatia will continue promoting the policy of preserving peace, interdependence of international security and development, prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Second, Croatia will continue promoting and applying its unique lessons learned from war and post-war democratic transition as well as draw from experience acquired in joining the EU in its international development projects. One of the tasks is also creating the conditions for closer cooperation and global recognition of new and small donors that have similar and comparable advantages, challenges and priorities, in line with the principles of South-South cooperation (SSC).

Furthermore, Croatia is involving national political, economic and social stakeholders and strengthening public support in development and humanitarian policy. With regard to the implementation of development projects, comprehensive development programmes with a smaller number of consolidated, focused and effective projects will be fostered, thus ensuring a gradual increase of ODA in accordance with international obligations. Finally, Croatia will streamline its national legal and budgetary framework with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of its projects abroad.

## Cooperation

In accordance with the principle of policy coherence for development, Croatia promotes inter-institutional cooperation between the MFEA as the national coordinator of international development and humanitarian policy, and relevant institutions that influence development and humanitarian policy in terms of planning, implementation and reporting. As mentioned above, it is the relevant institutions that preserve expertise and institutional memory, and their efforts are essential in systematizing and exchanging this expertise with Croatia's partners. Strengthened cooperation with selected institutions in collecting the expertise and identifying experts is one of the major strategic tasks of Croatia's development cooperation policy. The optimal utilisation of the Croatian unique experience will depend on the success in their systemic gathering.

Moreover, the comprehensiveness of the development and humanitarian policy depends on cooperation with non-institutional partners as well, in particular with civil society, the private sector, the academic community and religious communities.

With regard to civil society, Croatia works actively with international civil society organizations and cooperates with national organizations within the Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity (CROSOL),<sup>2</sup> the civil society platform for international development cooperation, through which experience and knowledge in, and advice on, strengthening the development cooperation and humanitarian aid policy are exchanged.

A similar cooperation initiative is being created with the private sector, where a platform is to be established through umbrella organizations and business associations, comprising the economic operators that have the interest and the presence in the developing countries that are set as a geographic priority.

Cooperation with the academic community is focused on developing and enriching curricula on development cooperation and humanitarian aid. This way, Croatia aims to improve the understanding of and the interest in policy within the national scientific community and consequently boost their involvement in international scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Finally, the role of religious communities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid is of great value. In particular, Croatian development cooperation can immensely benefit from joining forces with the Catholic missionaries that have a long tradition of being present and having achieved positive development in the least developed countries, where Croatia has limited or no diplomatic presence.

## Identification and collection of transition experiences

Institutional building of the development cooperation policy in Croatia established a suitable framework and was strengthened during the process of negotiations for accession to the EU. During that period, two major conclusions emerged. First, development cooperation is mostly driven by large traditional donors that have the necessary instruments and a strong diplomatic presence in the developing countries. To be able to effectively contribute to this established global policy, Croatia decided to identify a niche product. Second, Croatia's development in the last two decades had some distinctive features when compared to other members of the EU and globally. A comprehensive democratic transition burdened by conflict and post-conflict in such a short time span is indeed a unique niche product, which provides Croatia, a new and relatively small development partner, with a comparative advantage through which a valuable and distinguished contribution to the global development community can be given.

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<sup>1</sup> CROSOL is a non-governmental and non-profit organization of civil society in Croatia, which is active in the area of international development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

For these reasons, the transfer of transition experiences has been defined as a priority of the Croatian development cooperation policy around which identity and visibility as a development partner was built. The notion has been integrated into its strategic foreign policy and development documents. Croatia's bilateral development projects, multilateral engagement and diplomatic outreach are guided and streamlined by the principles drawn from this experience. Its discourse within the European Union and the relevant international development forums is steered by the knowledge and experience collected during the development process. Croatia is, therefore, increasingly becoming a well-known and established partner and foreign policy actor with a specific niche product that many developing countries seek.

Having realized and promoted these advantages, it is necessary to consolidate the experiences and translate them into lasting knowledge. Hence, efforts must be made to establish a systematic framework with the mechanism and tools for the collection, management, transfer and evaluation of the transition experiences. In concrete terms, a background study should be carried out on each particular experience, collected from the relevant field experts and comprising a description of the transition challenge and the established Croatian model for resolving it. Second, it should comprise a list of the same experts that are willing to share that experience with countries in need.

By establishing this framework, Croatia will be able to swiftly respond to requests of the interested partners for both South-South and triangular cooperation. Moreover, project implementation would be centralized to facilitate oversight, evaluation and reporting, ensuring the mutual learning cycle and consequently long-term sharing of expertise even when the primary experts are not available. Further, by being engaged in development projects, Croatian experts will gain international experience, enrich their knowledge and skills, and widen the contact base, which will in turn influence the quality and the visibility of Croatian development cooperation, both internally and externally. Finally, having established such a system, Croatia will benefit internally by preserving its institutional memory and enhancing it with new knowledge during the sharing exercise.







## Chapter II:

**Overview of Experiences and the Implementation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation Activity**

## Chapter II: Overview of Experiences and the Implementation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation Activity

Within this framework, a comprehensive follow-up to the reporting is envisaged. At present, follow-up is ensured so that the current experts' deliverables are tracked by regular project implementation reporting to the contracting institutions and subsequently to the MFEA through an annual reporting procedure. Annual reports on the Implementation of ODA are submitted to Parliament for approval (discussed below), thus ensuring wider visibility and support.

### Description of concrete experiences

The following will provide a short description of the selected concrete experiences that Croatia has collected during its transition process. It is important to note that some of the experiences are already systematized and being used in Croatian development projects, while others require further work in gathering and mobilizing knowledge and experts. Still others have been identified that require thorough research and development to become suitable for exchange with the partners; this task has not yet begun.

The experiences, described below, are divided into three groups, according to the level of current replication with partner countries.

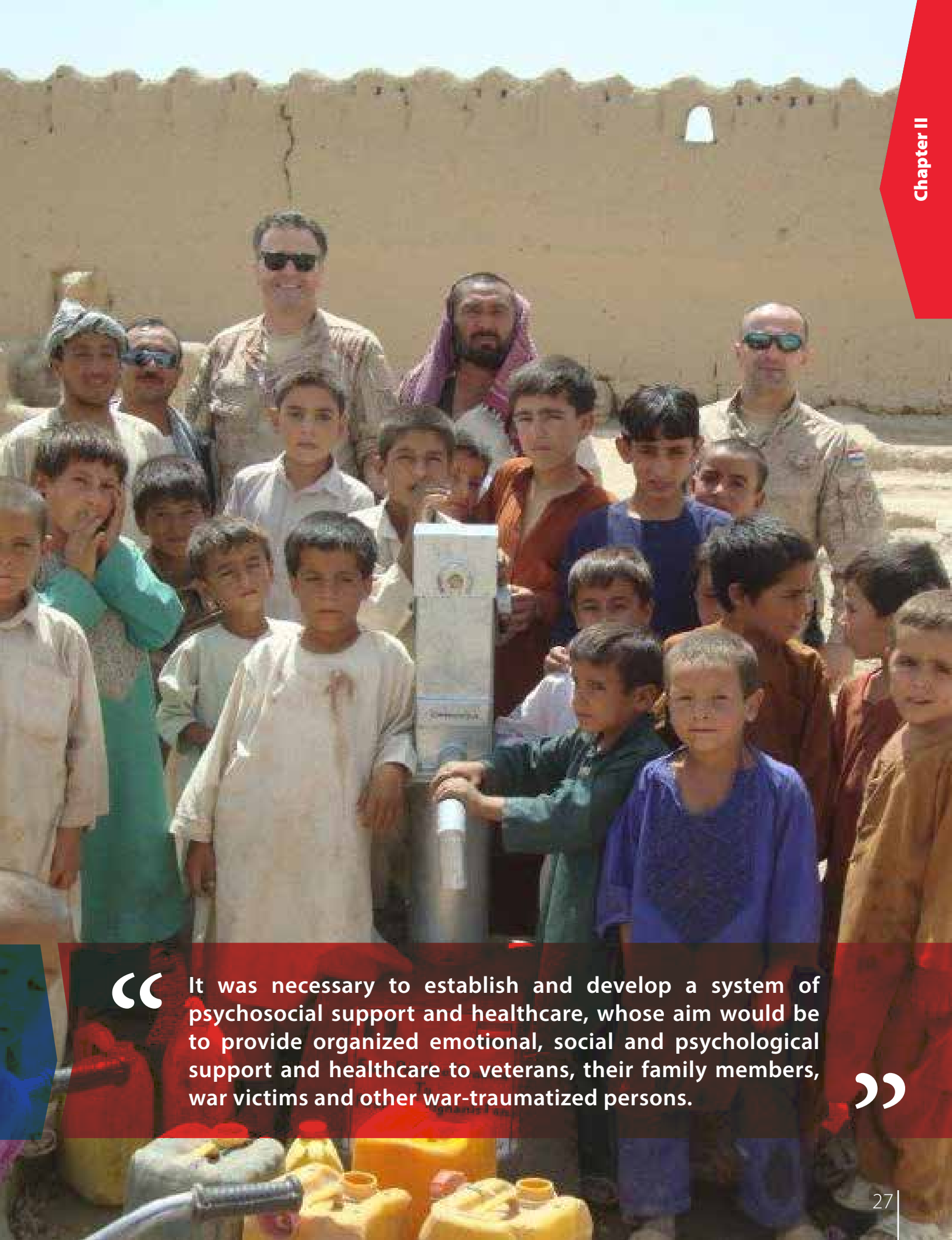
### Experiences replicated with partner countries

#### Veterans' Re-Socialization and Care Programmes

Direct war experience leads to traumas and affects the possibility of veterans integrating into everyday life and their psychosocial adjustment in the post-war period. It also leads to difficulties in confronting the expectations of, and trusting the social environment. Veterans lacked social and emotional support due to having been separated from families and relatives during the war, and suffered the loss of fellow-soldiers, friends and/or family members. For these reasons, it was necessary to establish and develop a system of psychosocial support and healthcare, whose aim would be to provide organized emotional, social and psychological support and healthcare to veterans, their family members, war victims and other war-traumatized persons. This type of care provided to participants in, and victims of, the Homeland War<sup>3</sup> in Croatia is implemented by the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs within the framework of the National Programme for Psychosocial Support and Healthcare for Participants in and Victims of the Homeland War and the Second World War, and for Returnees from Peacekeeping Missions.

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<sup>2</sup> *Homeland War is a common term used in Croatia to describe the War of Independence fought in Croatia from 1991 to 1995.*



“ It was necessary to establish and develop a system of psychosocial support and healthcare, whose aim would be to provide organized emotional, social and psychological support and healthcare to veterans, their family members, war victims and other war-traumatized persons. ”

The Centres for Psychosocial Support are active at the local and county levels and are the backbone of the system of psychosocial support for war-traumatized persons. They engage experts of different profiles – psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, lawyers and other experts in social sciences and humanities, who provide in-house counselling and psychosocial support through daily duties and counselling services, both at the Centres and in the field through mobile teams who pay visits to homes and families.

Support includes group psychosocial treatment organized through group work for the Croatian disabled veterans, groups of parents and spouses of deceased soldiers. It also includes children's workshops, and legal aid and the dissemination of information about all activities and programmes implemented by the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs.

Although counselling is one of the key elements in PTSD treatment, in some cases, it is not sufficient, and a percentage of persons who suffer from PTSD also require hospitalization. Knowing the important role of hospitals and medical specialists in the treatment of persons who suffer from PTSD, Regional Centres for Psychotrauma and the National Centre for Psychotrauma were established within the healthcare system, operating as separate departments at University Hospital Centres.

Education and training of experts working with the beneficiaries of this Programme are ongoing so that at any moment, beneficiaries can receive social support and assistance, psychological counselling or psychotherapy, and psychiatric treatment and be hospitalized if necessary. From the initiation of programme implementation to date, the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs has organized 15 annual conferences on the topic.

In order to track complex issues and establish needs in providing organized and basic emotional, social and psychological support and healthcare to people traumatized in the war, a central register was established of the types of professional support provided and categories of users requesting help. Data have been tracked on the numbers and structure of users and the provided psychosocial support interventions from the beginning of programme implementation.

The implementation of the National Programme involves around 130 expert associates who provide different forms of psychosocial support to around 30,000 beneficiaries annually.

Since 2004, the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs has systematically been tracking suicides among Croatian veterans and analysing collected data in detail, and on this basis, has created prevention programmes.

### **Veterans' Employment Programmes**

Upon returning from the battlefield, a large number of Croatian veterans were faced with the loss of their jobs (either because of redundancies or because of failing employers due to the difficult economic situation), which brought even greater existential problems caused by unem-

ployment and loss of income. Given the age of some of the Croatian veterans and the fact that by going to war, they missed out on regular university education and the acquisition of necessary professional knowledge and experience, it was difficult to employ them upon their return. Furthermore, over the years, a similar problem related to the difficulty in finding employment was also experienced by the children of the deceased, captured or missing soldiers. Due to the loss of one or both parents, they were deprived of adequate support during their childhood and educational period.

In search of a solution to the above situation, in 2004 the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs designed and is since then implementing a *Programme for professional training and employment of Croatian veterans and children of deceased, captured or missing Croatian veterans*, with the aim to provide unemployed war veterans an opportunity to re-enter the labour market, be it through various forms of education (re-training, acquisition of additional knowledge and skills adjusted to the new needs of employers), or through aid when starting their own business, or as an additional incentive to employers to employ unemployed war veterans.

Within the framework of the Programme, measures targeting Croatian veteran cooperatives are also implemented, primarily in order to increase their social inclusion, to reduce the risk of social isolation, and to psychosocially strengthen their involvement in cooperatives. Through these cooperatives, programmes and projects can be initiated for the benefit to the entire local community. Indirectly, cooperatives provide veterans with employment and economic integration. Supporting veteran cooperatives is recognized as an example of good practice for strengthening veteran's competencies and awareness of their work capabilities, and also recognizing their entrepreneurial potential. Furthermore, it was observed that work in a cooperative helps its members, especially those suffering from PTSD; it yields results similar to those achieved by occupational therapy.

The veteran cooperatives present their products and services at specialized fairs, during which the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs organizes thematic roundtables and panel discussions on current topics related to cooperative entrepreneurship and activities in order to continuously improving support for veterans. Croatian veteran cooperatives comprise more than one-third of the total number of cooperatives registered in the country. There is potential for further development of veteran cooperative activity in the economy, particularly in the areas of tourism, environmental protection and rural development, the food industry, as well as the development of social entrepreneurship.

Through the implementation of Programme, employment was facilitated or found for over 12,000 individuals from the target group (unemployed veterans and unemployed children of soldiers who were killed or captured or went missing in action). Of these 12,000, about 2,500 had their education costs covered; over 4,000 received aid to start their own independent business, over 380 were employed by different employers, and over 4,300 were involved in the work of Croatian veteran cooperatives.

## The issue of missing persons and the Croatian Model of Tracing Missing Persons

Mass disappearances may occur as a result of ecological disasters or terrorist attacks, but they most commonly occur as a result of armed conflicts. Disappearances caused by armed conflicts usually lead to other serious violations of human rights, such as the right to freedom from abuse and torture, and inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life. Any gross violation of human rights leaves deep and long-lasting consequences, both for family members of missing persons and society as a whole. Croatia's experience with mass disappearances is the result of the aggression against the country in 1991–1995. The ravages of war in Croatia led to more than 19,000 detained and missing persons. Faced with large-scale mass disappearances and a large number of forced disappearances during the Homeland War, Croatia was forced to develop a system for addressing and mitigating the consequences of war, and resolving the issue of missing persons, which has been ongoing since 1991. The fact that hundreds of persons are still missing is one of the persistent obstacles to reaching the ultimate goal of achieving long-term peace and stability.

The issue of missing persons in Croatia is one of the most current as well as the most complex consequences of war. There are three aspects regarding this aspect: the main one is humanitarian (i.e. the families' right to know the truth about the fate of their loved ones), followed by the legal aspect (procedures related to investigation and prosecution of war crimes committed during the war before international and national judiciary bodies) and the historical aspect (i.e. determining historical facts about the war events). Furthermore, this issue is related to other issues – the status rights of war victims, the return of displaced persons and refugees, the establishment of peaceful coexistence in war-affected areas, and normalization and improvement of relations with other countries.

Preconditions that ensured the development of an efficient search system were: the adoption of the legal framework, the establishment of institutional mechanisms and the securing of funds.

Due to violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms, the issue of persons who went missing during armed conflicts is regulated by a number of core international human rights instruments. Being party to all core international treaties on human rights, under its Constitution, Croatia has adopted human rights legislation accordingly. In addition to international instruments, the issue of missing persons in Croatia is also covered and regulated by the Criminal Procedure Act, as well as by the Croatian Government's regulations and decisions. In 1991, Croatia established competent bodies to address issues of detained and missing persons, i.e. at the beginning of the armed conflict. These bodies were established at the highest state levels. Today, the Commission of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on Detained and Missing Persons addresses the issue and serves an expert and advisory body of the Government to all institutions participating in the search process, such as the Ministry of the Interior, the State Attorney's offices, Croatian Red Cross, security and intelligence agencies, institutes and clinical hospital centres for identifying mortal remains. In addition, the Directorate for Detained and Missing Persons operates within the ministry responsible for veterans' affairs, which performs professional tasks related to the search for missing persons.

The "Croatian model for search of missing persons was developed on the basis of experiences of international organizations dealing with missing persons that were faced with the issue of mass disappearances, as well as on the basis of direct experiences and specific circumstances in the country.

This model consists of the following elements:

### 1. The recording of missing persons

The recording of missing persons is a key step in the search process in order to identify the exact status of missing persons, as well as to collect uniform and comprehensive information required for a successful search. In this context, it should be noted that Croatia has fully accepted the definition of the International Committee of the Red Cross for missing persons:

*Missing person is a person whose whereabouts are unknown to his/her relatives and/or who, on the basis of reliable information, has been reported missing in accordance with the national legislation in connection with an international or non-international armed conflict, a situation of internal violence or disturbances, natural catastrophes or any other situation that may require the intervention of a competent State authority.*

This is also the recommendation of the United Nations General Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Croatia has further improved these standards by collecting standardized data on the circumstances of disappearance (important for the reconstruction of events and participants, and for the identification of unrecorded persons); antemortal data (important for preliminary identifications, i.e. targeted identifications through DNA analysis); and data on family members and blood relatives (important for collecting reference samples for identification by using the method of DNA analysis).

### 2. Cooperation with competent bodies of other countries

Effectively addressing the issue of missing persons is not possible without dialogue with the opposing/belligerent side. The areas of cooperation within bilateral relations are exchanges of prisoners, exchange of information and documentation on missing persons and grave sites, and the return of human remains.

Cooperation with competent bodies of other countries also includes: the definition of the legal framework for cooperation (agreements/protocols); mutual expert monitoring of the process of exhumation and identification; and detection and exhumation of unregistered and registered grave sites in the territory of another country.

### **3. Collection of information on missing persons and unregistered grave sites**

Over time, due to changes in the terrain and the fact that mass and individual disappearances are linked with criminal offences of war crimes, it is becoming increasingly harder to obtain information about missing persons and unregistered grave sites. Therefore, the Directorate for Detained and Missing Persons prepares and distributes promotional leaflets with detailed information concerning competent bodies that can be contacted anonymously by citizens who have useful information. Furthermore, the Directorate has set up an anonymous phone line for reporting any information about missing persons, which is available 24 hours a day.

### **4. Exhumation of mass, individual and collective graves**

Since 1995, exhumations in Croatia have been performed by interagency operational expert group whose members are trained to work in the most difficult conditions (speleological caves, secondary graves and the like) on the basis of experience gained by the exhumation of almost 5,000 victims. The Directorate for Detained and Missing Persons of the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs is responsible for the organization and coordination of the exhumation process.

The methodology for discovering unregistered graves includes the application of geophysical methods such as probing and geological radar. Further development of the methodology for discovering mass and individual graves is currently being financed from EU funds.

### **5. Processing and identification of human remains**

The purpose of processing human remains is to determine the cause of death, which is significant in court proceedings, and to establish the identity of the person.

Methods used for the identification of human remains in Croatia are standard forensic methods (anthropological, dental X-ray processing) and DNA analysis. DNA analyses are performed by three DNA laboratories in Croatia, which also perform genomic and mitochondrial DNA analyses.

### **6. Burial of identified human remains and proper storage of unidentified human remains**

Identified persons are buried according to the wishes of their family members, and funeral costs are partly covered by the state budget.

Since the start of their operations in 1991, the competent bodies of Croatia (Directorate for Detained and Missing Persons of the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs) have clarified the fate of 90 per cent of missing persons.

When the United Nations Working Group on Enforced Disappearances visited Croatia in June 2014, it advised Croatia to share its experience with all interested countries that had similar experiences with mass and individual enforced disappearances.

### Mine Action

Since its establishment, the Croatian Mine Action Centre has worked intensively in creating a mine action system which is recognizable and acknowledged within the international community. It implemented the acquired experiences of advisers from international organizations (United Nations, World Bank, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining [GICHD]), and from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors. As a result and due to Croatia's specific position as an EU Member and as a country known for its economic development and stability in comparison with other countries faced with the mine problem, the Croatian mine action system has become highly regarded in the international mine action community. With their understanding of problems and direct experience as a mine-contaminated country, with the help of Croatian Mine Action Centre, Croatia can best provide development and humanitarian assistance to other countries by funding precisely what is mostly needed for future sustainable growth and the security of the population in the assisted recipient country.

In December 1995, the Command of the United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF) established the United Nations Mine Action Centre (UNMAC) to support its operations. UNMAC was responsible for coordinating international assistance to the mine action programmes of Croatia, providing counselling, capacity-building support and education for the population.

The first estimation of the mine-contaminated area was carried out in 1996 by UNMAC by taking the demarcation line as the basis and spreading it to a few kilometres to both sides; the mine-contaminated area was thus estimated at 13,000 km<sup>2</sup>. In 1996, Croatia adopted the Act on Demining, and in 1998, the Croatian Mine Action Centre was established. The Centre defined the mine-contaminated area more precisely and produced the Strategy of Mine Action with a set of demining priorities. At the time, mine-contaminated area was 4,500 km<sup>2</sup>. Today, around 450 km<sup>2</sup> of territory in Croatia is considered mine-contaminated. According to estimations, around 44,000 mines remain in this area.

In 2003, the Croatian Mine Action Centre established the Centre for Testing, Development and Education with the aim of developing the operational testing and evaluation of technologies for detecting mines and contaminated areas, and carry out systematic research and development of mine action.

Mine action in Croatia is financed by the state budget, World Bank loans, EU funds and the private sector.

Mine action comprises several activities:

- Humanitarian demining

- Mine-risk education of the population
- Assistance to victims of mines
- Destruction of mine stocks
- Advocacy for the prohibition of landmines.

In 2008, the Group for Humanitarian Demining Abroad was established consisting of the Mine Action Centre, commercial demining companies and equipment producers, with the aim to export Croatian knowledge and technology to the countries in need.

### **The Regional Security Sector Reform Platform**

After years of experience in post-conflict regional cooperation in arms control, Croatia took the lead in establishing a regional knowledge platform in partnership with the countries of the region of Southeast Europe and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Office in Istanbul. This structure is a good example of a triangular cooperation model, including Croatia with countries of the region and UNDP as the implementing partner.

In 2014, a diplomat from the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs served as a temporary expert for a year with the UNDP Regional Office in Istanbul in order to establish the regional knowledge exchange and advisory platform in the fields of arms control and gender mainstreaming in the security sector. This initiative was inspired and founded on years of successful regional security cooperation facilitated by UNDP's South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) Office. Since 2002, SEESAC has been a unique regional cooperation model mandated jointly by UNDP and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), primarily for the Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control measures.

The Regional Security Sector Reform Platform (RSSRP) was thus developed based on 12 years of solid experience in regional security cooperation in a post-war region. This is neither an easy task. During its two years of existence, the RSSRP has served as a South-South knowledge transfer mechanism, creating opportunities for Southeast European states to become stronger contributors to global security while enhancing SSC to address major rule of law challenges.

The RSSRP today gathers an important number of experts on security sector reform from the countries of the region, with six deployments to Europe and Africa completed in 2016–2017 and many more requests arising both within the UNDP Country Offices network and beyond. The experts range from police officers, defence employees, armed forces, diplomats as well as SEESAC staff members. The RSSRP boasts a 50 per cent women-men ratio among the experts within the context of a traditionally male-dominated area of security-related work.

More information about the platform is available at [www.seesac.org/RSSRP](http://www.seesac.org/RSSRP)

### **The South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning**

The South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SSECEL) regional centre was established in 2009 as a result of a successful cooperation in the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Small Enterprises. It receives direct support from the European Commission. Headquartered in Zagreb, SSECEL implements projects in the region of Southeast Europe.

The main task of the Centre is to promote and develop entrepreneurial culture and learning for entrepreneurship as the basic competence in the target countries of Southeast Europe. The goal is to increase the competitiveness of small enterprises by supporting the target countries in developing policies and policy implementation models. Furthermore, the Centre promotes cooperation and networking within the region as well as intergovernmental partnership with the EU Member States. It gathers knowledge and experts, fosters learning and exchange among peers, and develops new models of entrepreneurial learning to ultimately increase the economic competitiveness of the region.

Concretely, some of the tasks of the Centre are expert secondments, organizing forums and working groups to network with the existing regional strategies and initiatives, e.g. the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, integration of entrepreneurial learning in the national curricula, and the economic empowerment of women

### **Knowledge Transfer Division – Centre of Excellence for Transition Processes**

The Centre of Excellence for Transitional Processes, recently renamed the Knowledge Transfer Division within the MFEA, was mentioned as the example of best practice in the First Regional Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, presented in June 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The Centre of Excellence on Transitional Processes was established in 2012 as an innovative mechanism for structuring Croatian expertise in demand in the immediate neighbourhood, and wider. It grew quickly in its scope and number of activities. It was presented for the first time at the Global South-South Development Expo in Washington in 2014 and again in 2016 in Dubai, together with wider Croatian development cooperation. From 2012 to 2015, the Centre organized on-demand knowledge exchanges with as many as 13 countries and territories – Albania, BiH, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Kosovo. The activities involved over 4,000 participants and over 300 Croatian experts through seminars, workshops, presentations, round table discussions, study visits, individual consultations, conferences and forums.



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There are many examples of triangular development cooperation implemented between Croatia and partner countries and territories, sometimes together with traditional donors and international organizations.

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Most of the work was based on the knowledge transfer of EU integration processes, which usually involved legislation screening and facilitating necessary reforms. The target audience was composed of civil servants from different levels of government, as well as civil society, the media and citizens. The Centre established cooperation with more than 30 international institutions as well as other donors from the EU, thus qualifying its work as triangular cooperation in some cases.

In sum, development cooperation priorities and activities of what was known at the time as the Centre of Excellence on Transition Processes were and still are:

- providing and coordinating technical assistance to countries in economic and political transition;
- transferring Croatian transition knowledge and experience, with a focus on the European integration process;
- collecting, standardizing strengthening and sharing Croatian know-how and establishing a Croatian base of experts in EU integration processes.

In addition to those development cooperation activities that are most relevant for SSC, the Centre was also designated as the EU Twinning instrument contact point.

There are many examples of triangular development cooperation implemented between Croatia and partner countries and territories, sometimes together with traditional donors and international organizations. Technical assistance focused on legal screening and harmonization with the EU's legislation or related reforms.

For example, in 2012-2013, in BiH, and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo, the partner was UNDP; in Montenegro and Serbia, the partners involved Germany and UNDP; in Georgia, the partner was the EU; cooperation with Albania and Tunisia was purely bilateral. The Centre's own report for the 2012-2015 period identified cooperation with UNDP country offices in Southeast Europe as the best practice for maximum, both in better positioning Croatia as a donor and for tailoring assistance to the recipients.

In 2014, the Centre included Moldova as a new recipient state and Poland and France as new partners together with Germany. In 2015, the Centre's work spread to Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in cooperation with UNDP, for assistance in energy efficiency and systematic energy management. Croatia offered study visits for delegations from the relevant ministries of the four countries where Croatian experts presented national experiences on particular subjects. Even though most of the cooperation was targeted and implemented for the civil servants, there were civil society recipients as well in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, focusing on democratic transition and election reforms and civil monitoring.

## Experiences requiring further systematization and promotion

### Managing refugees and IDPs during armed conflict

The increase in refugees and IDPs as a consequence of armed conflict in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which began in 1991, was a massive humanitarian, economic, social and financial challenge that directly endangered the social and economic stability of Croatia at the time.

The first response was to organize the care, first in the framework of the national social care system, Croatian Caritas and Croatian Red Cross. In 1991, a National Centre for Care and Assistance to Refugees was established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Care. The National Centre comprised the relevant ministries, Caritas and the Red Cross. At the later stage, an Office for Refugees was established with 16 regional offices, while the Centres for social care were the central organizations for the recognition of refugee status and assistance provision. In 1991, an enormous increase in IDPs was recorded: from 9,638 on 1 August, to 536,000 on 22 November. Subsequently, legislation was adopted to organize the registration and over-all care for IDPs and refugees alike.

An Office for IDPs and refugees was established, which assumed responsibility for: building accommodation capacities; medical and psycho-social protection; collecting, sorting, transport and distribution of humanitarian aid; financing accommodation in organized housing; and collecting and registering data. Various housing had been used – social care institutions, boarding schools, barracks of the construction companies, hotels, tourist housing and homes of families who were willing to accommodate IDPs and refugees. In January 1992, Croatia had over 718,000 IDPs (15 per cent of the overall population).

In April 1992, due to the war spill-over to Bosnia and Herzegovina, around 350,000 refugees from BiH entered Croatia. By March 1993, around 545,000 refugees from BiH passed through Croatia, mainly to Germany (230,000), Austria (70,000) and Switzerland (25,000). In the same year, around 367,000 refugees from BiH remained in Croatia, resulting in a total number of 652,000 IDPs and refugees in the country in 1993. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data, at that time, around 3.1 million people were displaced or in need of assistance.

### Peaceful reintegration of the occupied territory

Vukovar is the town that suffered the most from the war. It was devastated and occupied in 1991, and peacefully reintegrated to Croatia in 1998 after the completion of the United Nations peace operation, the United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES). The operation, which lasted from 1996 to 1998, consisted in demilitarizing the area, introducing the provisional authority, and creating the conditions for holding local elections in 1997 as a prerequisite for handing over the administration of the area from the international to the national political authority.

Peaceful reintegration was preceded by military reintegration of other previously occupied areas of Croatia.

In order to peacefully reintegrate this area, the Croatian Government undertook constitutional changes where several minorities, including the Serbian minority, were recognized. Furthermore, in 1997, Croatia adopted a programme for establishing trust and the swift return and normalization of life, whose aim was to: create a climate of tolerance and security; create equality among all citizens before the state authorities; build trust among citizens; create the general civic, political, security and economic preconditions for the normalization of life; ensure the swift return of internally displaced citizens; involve all citizens in building a democratic society; and create a political framework for the implementation of legal norms. A National Committee for Establishing Trust was established.

UNTAES achieved its mandate by demilitarizing previously occupied territories, establishing joint police forces and organizing elections. Although small in scope, this peace operation is considered a global paradigm example of peaceful reintegration.

### **Assessment of war damage and reconstruction**

The methodology for assessing damage caused by the war in Croatia was introduced by a legislative act. During the establishment of the methodology, experiences of previous wars, e.g. the Gulf War, were used as well as directives provided by the specialized United Nations agencies. The Act established the State Commission, which was tasked in registering and assessing total war damage. The assessment was organized in cooperation within a network of 21 county commissions.

The material damage affected the economy, social activities, cultural and natural goods and personal goods. Indirect damage consisted in the loss of jobs and income, migrations and demographic loss.

During the war, around 183,000 family homes and apartments, 330 schools and 1,300 churches were destroyed. The total estimated war damages, including material damage, and the cost of war, human life and health care and rehabilitation, was at around EUR31.5 billion.

The reconstruction of the damaged buildings followed a damage categorization. The buildings assigned with the lower categories received financial support from the state budget for reconstruction, while for the ones assigned a higher category, the reconstruction was organized entirely by the State. The homeowners of devastated buildings received donations in the form of construction materials, new state-owned houses or apartments.



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The Croatian model of integrating Islam in society has been deemed exemplary at the highest echelons in the religious hierarchies. For example, Pope Francis publicly greeted and complimented Croatian Mufti after his lecture in Rome on inter-religious dialogue and reconciliation in Croatia.

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## Reconciliation

The framework for inter-ethnic and inter-religious reconciliation encompasses a collection of multifaceted processes that Croatia underwent during the war and post-war period. Major stakeholders in this process are the national institutions, local authorities, religious communities, civil society and economic operators. The reconciliation process was accelerated through legislative activities and by breakthrough statesmanship and actions of Croatian politicians. There are also several examples of civil society engagement during and after the conflict that created some unique models of reconciliation on the grass-roots level. Finally, the return of capital and investments, and the subsequent job creation in the areas affected by conflict created new options for developing these areas and fostered the reconciliation.

The example of Croatia shows that the international community – United Nations, the EU and several other major global actors – played a decisive role in the reconciliation process. In particular, during the Homeland War in Croatia, the decisions of the international community, e.g. the international recognition of Croatia, the arms embargo or the sanctions imposed against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, have had a major and long-term influence on the situation on the ground. Furthermore, the presence of international, United Nations and EU peace-building missions in some cases played an important role in ending conflict and encouraging reconciliation. The peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia under the UNTAES mission, which is further detailed above, is considered one of the major breakthroughs in the reconciliation process in Croatia, showing that occupied territory can be reintegrated in a peaceful way. Finally, during the negotiations for accession to the EU, Croatia made important steps towards finalizing the national reconciliation process. Finally, international investments and further integration into the global economy prioritize economic growth and the well-being of the individuals, thus indirectly generating preconditions for reconciliation.

The process of reconciliation is very complex, and its effectiveness is difficult to measure. The reconciliation process in Croatia has been analysed and many studies conducted resulting in various conclusions. Nevertheless, the experience of the reconciliation process in Croatia can in many ways be considered unique, and the concrete solutions and results can be of great help to countries undergoing similar process.

### Relations with religious minorities – the example of the Muslim minority in Croatia

Croatia is regulating relations with religious minorities on its territory with state contracts, including with the Muslim minority. The Croatian model of integrating Islam in society has been deemed exemplary at the highest echelons in the religious hierarchies. For example, Pope Francis publicly greeted and complimented Croatian Mufti after his lecture in Rome on inter-religious dialogue and reconciliation in Croatia.

Moreover, a celebration of 100 years of Islam in Croatia was held in 2016 with the high-level political and religious participation from Croatia and the wider region. On the occasion, the international conference entitled “Muslims in Europe – Heritage and Future”, which gathered

# Podrska dojenju i prehrani male djece u kriznim situacijama

ISKUSTVA STEČENA TIJEKOM MIGRANTSKO-IZBJEGLIČKE KRIZE  
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Veljača 2017.

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One recent experience that deserves a closer look is the promotion of breastfeeding and infant and young children feeding during the 2015–2016 migrant and refugee crisis in Croatia, as part of the “Balkan Route”.

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religious leaders, adopted the Zagreb Declaration condemning terrorism and calling for mutual understanding and recognition. One of the main messages was that “[w]e should not just talk about tolerance; we should simply live together.”

In concrete terms, the model is also being actively used in training provided to civilian and military personnel who will be engaged in peace-building missions in countries with a prevalent Muslim population. The preparation for the mission encompasses the module where the participants learn about the specificities, principles, concrete obligations and rules to be respected in the community on the field.

This approach of actively integrating religious minorities into the highest political levels is considered a suitable Croatian model to be replicated elsewhere, drawing on its experiences and lessons learned.

### **Other examples which can be further replicated**

Other interesting development projects from Croatia that can be replicated should be highlighted. One example is the “Crowdfunding Academy Croatia” developed by the social impact agency Brodoto and the UNDP Office in Croatia together with other non-profit partners. The project gained significant recognition in promoting alternative financing. Through the training module and international conferences, the Croatian model was shared in a number of countries, such as Ukraine.

Another project is the “Croatian Green Cluster” uniting innovative companies specialized in energy efficiency management, which enjoyed wide cooperation in Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in close cooperation with the UNDP offices.

One recent experience that deserves a closer look is the promotion of breastfeeding and infant and young children feeding during the 2015–2016 migrant and refugee crisis in Croatia, as part of the “Balkan Route”. This experience has been systematized through a publication by UNICEF and the NGO Roda containing hands-on experiences in promoting and enabling breastfeeding environment in emergencies as well as recommendations for state institutions and organizations involved.

Finally, as mentioned above, Croatian institutions, civil society and the private sector have several other experiences that are yet to be collected and systematized. These include, among others, the organized collection and destruction of arms after conflict, revitalization of the economy, in particular the tourism sector, the development of civil society, assessment of war damages, and the reconstruction of cultural heritage. Further efforts will be made to collect these experiences and pool together the experts involved in these processes in order to expand Croatian expertise and to strengthen knowledge sharing.

## Hands-on experiences applied in partner countries

The choice of partner countries for development cooperation reflects Croatian sectorial and geographic priorities set in the National Strategy for Development Cooperation, which, among others, include Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia and Ukraine, countries chosen here to showcase the Croatian model of SSC. The projects and the approach are guided by the South-South principles of development assistance among people and sharing solutions between countries in similar situations, be it political, economic, social or cultural.

The examples, among others, show that expertise is being shared following the request expressed by partner countries through direct diplomatic channels or through multilateral fora. The same communication channels are applied for partnerships with developed countries when engaging in joint projects. The examples of such cooperation are through the EU Twinning Instrument projects, which bring together EU Member States in order to assist EU candidate countries in their reform processes. Further, in accordance with the principle of local ownership, the Croatian demand-driven concept requires close cooperation with communities from the onset of the project. Cooperation with Afghanistan is a case study of this good practice.

All four countries are post-conflict societies facing a certain specific set of challenges for which Croatia has developed tools. Yet, each context is different, and as a recent recipient of international assistance, Croatia is fully aware of the value of context-specific solutions and national ownership of the whole process.

### AFGHANISTAN – Small-scale projects with a significant impact

**Trigger for action:** There was a post-conflict recovery context.

**Main components:** These are state building, education, health and development of small enterprises. Emphasis was placed on the reproductive health of women, strengthening the role of women in politics, the economy and society, as well as on the education of girls.

**Transformational impact:** Women, youth and children become agents and multipliers of change in a post-conflict society recovering social and economic networks.

Afghanistan is one of the countries facing conflict and post-conflict development challenges where Croatia has a specific set of experiences. In the 2007–2013 period alone, Croatia has implemented more than 42 development cooperation projects in Afghanistan. After Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan has been Croatia's largest development partner. Bilateral projects with Afghanistan have been implemented in close cooperation with the relevant authorities, provincial and local, and in cooperation with the local community, based on commonly identified priority needs on the ground.

In Afghanistan, Croatia learned an important lesson – that multi-annual implementation with relatively modest financial contributions, which is always jointly carried out in close cooperation with the provincial and local authorities and communities, is the key to sustainable and meaningful results. This has led to the recognition of Croatia's development cooperation and acceptance by the population of Afghanistan. The programme Small-scale Projects with Significant Impact can be seen as Croatia's blueprint for South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) as well as for Croatia's development cooperation at large.

Some best practices of Afghan-Croatian development cooperation are as follows:

Having recent experience in post-war recovery, Croatia is aware of the central role that women play in peace-building and in the recovery of the social structure. The transformational impact on society is multiplied quickly when investing in women, youth and children. It is crucial to focus on minorities, including religious ones, when dealing with the post-conflict societies. Again, Croatia has direct experience in working in such contexts with some of the same stakeholders.

Therefore, guided by the Afghan cultural context and Croatia's own experience, a number of micro projects were designed to strengthen women's entrepreneurship, such as the purchase of beehives for a women's bee cooperative that secured an alternative source of income for a group of women who did not have the basic necessities for a dignified life. Similar projects included tailoring and sewing lessons, as well as carpet weaving – all by women. Carpet weaving is a traditional Afghanistan craft that directly or indirectly employs at least 1.5 million people, of whom the majority are women. Croatia and Afghanistan jointly decided to focus on this product because it is the only one that offers superior quality to other global competitors. The Croatian project Carpets from Afghanistan employed women from the Hazar ethnic minority. In order for them to safely reach the production facility, small vehicles were provided. Another project led by local needs was provision of drinking water for families in villages.

The largest infrastructure project is the construction of the Zar Shakh primary healthcare centre in the village of Layoba, which was carried out in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It is used by 23,000 people from surrounding villages. In addition, Croatia is the only development partner to have implemented a project of small entrepreneurship development in an isolated and inaccessible mountain area in the north of Balkh Province in northern Afghanistan. This project entailed the construction and equipping of a primary school in the village of Homaro Farog in cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of Education. The school is used by 250 children from the area. Indeed, the construction and opening of the school has had a major impact both in increasing visibility and in improving the acceptance of members of the Croatian military personnel operating in the area of Mazar-e-Sharif. The school was equipped with desks and chairs made by local craftspeople, which resulted in increased local employment. The 'small project – big Impact' philosophy showed multiplier effects yet

again: two schools were furnished (since this project inspired another school), small entrepreneurship was developed, and apprenticeship introduced. The continuation of the successfully implemented project in Homaro Farog resulted in the construction of a high school in Camp Sakhi in the same Balkh Province for a total of 600 children. A library for girls was built in the Khorasan High School in Mazar-e-Sharif with books in Dari and some in English. To this end, an access road was constructed, a metal fence erected and a library completely equipped.

A unique project for which Croatia received praise and unofficial reputation as a 'dignified partner' by several established donor states was the publication of an Afghani poetry collection entitled 'My Village'. It features local modern poetry in the original language with translations in English. Croatia partnered with Afghanistan on the principle of assisting a fellow country facing similar challenges, by identifying lessons learned and good practices. The projects differed completely from the ones implemented in Croatia but the approach and the goal were the same: rebuilding the social fabric after conflict.

In countries affected by conflict, where security is the main prerequisite for development, Croatia is successfully combining development cooperation with its participation in international missions and operations. Understanding the link between security, diplomacy and development has proven to be of vital importance in an unstable environment. Croatian development cooperation was channelled through: the framework of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT); civil-military cooperation (CIMIC); the training of the Afghanistan Police Force within the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) and Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (POMLT); and projects of multilateral organizations (International Organization for Migration and World Food Programme).

With the aim of creating effective development cooperation and measurable results in close cooperation with local partners and Croatia's own post-war experience, projects focused on four priority sectors: state building, education, health and development of small enterprises. Emphasis was placed on the reproductive health of women and the strengthening of the role of women in politics, the economy and society as well as the education of girls.

### **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – Croatia's most important development partner**

**Trigger for action:** A neighbouring country facing many of the same challenges as the ones that Croatia faced in the past. In the spirit of cross-border cooperation (CBC), the main objective is to support progress towards shared prosperity and good neighbourliness. However, examples shown are not part of EU CBC or its instruments.

**Main components:** These are Euro-Atlantic Integration Process training and expertise sharing; veterans' economic and psycho-social rehabilitation and re-socialization; the dignified and sustainable return of refugees and IDPs to their homes; and mine action.



“ With the aim of creating effective development cooperation and measurable results in close cooperation with local partners and Croatia’s own post-war experience, projects focused on four priority sectors: state building, education, health and development of small enterprises. ”

**Transformational impact:** Societal post-war stabilization and reconciliation; good neighbourly relations; and shared prosperity.

Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are neighbouring countries sharing a land border of over 1,000 km. There are manifold relations between the two countries at all levels of government and society at large. Connections are historical, cultural, political and economic. Development cooperation is a natural continuation. There are several projects to showcase because of their nature and impact:

The dignified and sustainable return of refugees and IDPs: Since 2001, Croatia has been active in helping create the conditions on the ground for a dignified and sustainable return. In addition to helping rebuild homes and energy/water infrastructure, it has rebuilt hospitals, facilities for people with disabilities, schools, retirement homes, cultural centres and religious objects. Centres for sustainable development in rural areas were organized as well as agricultural associations for the self-employment of veterans. The model of supporting the self-employment of veterans through agricultural cooperatives was successfully applied and used in BiH.

Euro-Atlantic Integration Process: The Croatian Centre of Excellence on Transition Processes (re-named in 2016 as the Division on Knowledge Transfer) has conducted many activities on different aspects of Euro-Atlantic integration regarding: the market economy; traffic policies; science and higher education policies; veterinary standards; the management of public policies; human trafficking prevention; and awareness raising among citizens on the EU matters. A major component of cooperation involved legislative screening and its alignment with the European legal framework as well as providing its translation. The partners were UNDP, GIZ, EU, different foundations and trust funds. After becoming an EU Member State, Croatia was able to transfer its relevant knowledge and experiences in the implementation and alignment of EU legislation in third countries through the EU Twinning instrument. Croatia has assisted BiH through this channel as well in partnership with the Bosnian Ministry of Interior on the topic of criminal prosecution.

Mine action: Croatia and BiH are closely cooperating on the demining as well as other aspects of mine action, such as mine-risk education and victim assistance. In 2018, BiH was featured as the main partner country at the jubilee 15th Mine Action International Symposium 15th held under special patronage of the President of Croatia. Mine Action International Symposiums are held in Croatia regularly since 2003. The mine action cooperation projects are led by the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC) and the Mine Action Centre of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHMACH), with a strong support from the EU. CROMAC and BHMACH are considering clearing cross-border mine suspected areas. A recent example of excellent cooperation occurred after heavy floods that hit Croatia, BiH and Serbia in 2014 causing landslides of mined and mine suspected areas. Affected countries had cooperated closely, exchanging information and best practices, and eventually developed new standard operating procedures (SOPs) in the event of floods in mined areas.

## COLOMBIA – Experiences transferred in partnership

**Trigger for action:** Conflict and post-conflict society with mined and mine-suspected areas, as well as the presence of Croatian immigrants of many generations in Latin America.

**Main components:** First phase (2009–2016) – High-level education and mine action in all its aspects; second phase (2016–ongoing) – Adding to the existing cooperation, the psycho-social support to victims of armed violence as well as post-mortem identification expertise.

**Transformational impact:** In the first phase, contributing to stabilization through higher education and mine action; in the second phase, contributing to stabilization by facing the facts and consequences after a long conflict through psycho-social work.

Development cooperation with Colombia began in 2009 in two areas of work: high-level education and mine action. In the past two years since the cessation of armed conflict, two more relevant areas were added: psycho-social work with war-traumatized people and post-mortem identification techniques and experiences, which were developed in Croatia after the Homeland War.

Since 2009, Croatia has provided scholarship to Colombian nationals to study in Croatia. Furthermore, the University of Zagreb undertook a pilot project in 2010 with the Pontifical Javeriana University in Bogota to strengthen the capacities of professors in management and in addressing technical needs. Development cooperation in the demining sector commenced in 2011 with a project aimed at capacity building of the Ministro de Defensa Nacional (Ministry of Defence) through a three-member delegation consisting of the Croatian Centre for Demining (CROMAC) and the Centre for Testing, Development and Education (HCR-CTRO). The aim of this project was to train Colombian partners in the preparation of procedures for proposing and adopting normative legal legislation on the regulation of demining activity, which was successfully implemented. Within the framework of the project, standardized measures were proposed, and methods, procedures, working tools, equipment, mapping of the surveyed areas and a database for the evaluation and accreditations of equipment were used in demining.

The project allowed for local ownership of the project results, and the Colombian partners were trained in carrying out further actions to create the required legislative framework on humanitarian demining.

In 2013, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia financed the second phase of the implementation of the project in Colombia, which encompassed the transfer of knowledge and know-how for the specific implementation of measures regulating demining as well as the activities, projects and accreditation, testing and certification methods used in humanitarian demining.

In 2014, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia financed the third phase of the implementation of the project in Croatia and Colombia, which consisted in the training of supervisors to carry out quality mine action. As part of the training, standardized measures, methods, procedures, tools and equipment used in humanitarian demining were proposed to the Ministry of Defence. Furthermore, as part of this third phase, Croatia donated 15 complete sets of demining clothing for the training participants to the Ministry of Defence made by Croatian companies. This clothing complies with the highest international standards.

Within the EU framework, the Croatian project Capacity Development for Psychosocial Support – Strengthening Colombian care professionals for providing basic psychosocial services was approved for implementation by the Society for Psychological Assistance (SPA) based in Zagreb, in cooperation with Arq Psychotrauma Expert Group from the Netherlands. This project aims to help increase the professional capacities of Colombian care providers to develop a range of community-oriented psychosocial services through the transfer of practical and theoretical knowledge, professional skills, the sharing of practical experiences and adapting practices from other post-conflict settings with relevant experiences.

The overall approach is based on respecting the professional knowledge, skills and experience of the training participants while developing new perspectives and specific competencies on the evidence-based interventions and services.

The cascading training-of-trainers (ToT) model will serve to disseminate the new competencies and reach new care providers who work with populations in need. The ripple effect of this capacity-building model will ensure cost-effectiveness. The support of and collaboration with governmental services and training institutions will ensure sustainability of the project outcomes. The overall objective of the action is to increase the professional capacities of Colombian care providers working in the two sectors: social services and civil society organizations. The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Strengthen the competences of the psychosocial services providers in supporting war veterans, their families, traumatized civilians and other affected people;
- Increase the number of care professionals skilled in transferring knowledge and skills required for providing adequate psychosocial support to communities in need;
- Increase the capacity of civil society representatives to improve the conditions in the communities affected by conflict, foster peace-building and social development at the local level.

### UKRAINE – Similarities in development challenges

**Trigger for action:** There is complex political and security situation regarding the temporarily occupied territories and widely mined areas, psycho-social assistance to war veterans and civilians exposed to armed violence and injury with an emphasis on children.

**Main components:** These are training of doctors in dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder



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(PTSD); psycho-social support and mine-risk education for children; physical and psycho-social rehabilitation of wounded soldiers; national organization structures of humanitarian demining; peaceful reintegration of temporarily occupied territories; and EU legal harmonization.

**Transformational impact:** Focusing on mental health brings much needed support in times of armed violence and presence of armed danger, including mines. Psycho-social support to children from areas exposed to armed violence brings great value to communities.

From 2009, development cooperation with Ukraine has been varied and in 2014, became intensified. Croatian national experience in dealing with war veterans and civilians with PTSD proved crucial in the cooperation to Ukraine. Historic connections and similarities, the similarity of the Slavic language and culture, as well as recent history made Ukraine a natural development partner. Concurrently, Croatia formed a Task Force for Ukraine based in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, dealing with all aspects of cooperation and knowledge sharing. More recently, the Ukrainian delegation, composed of representatives from different levels of government and the Parliament, visited Croatian institutions involved with the Mine Action. Croatian expertise, particularly lessons learned in all aspects of Mine Action, is highly valuable for the Ukrainian side.

Some examples of best practices are as follows:

1. Since 2015, the project War Psychiatry and Psychology – Training of Ukrainian Psychiatrists and Psychologists focused on preventing and addressing the consequences of PTSD for soldiers and civilians in war situations; providing mental protection of civilians during war through panic prevention; addressing life in exile and ensuring and promoting understanding of mental illnesses, needs and treatment.
2. Since 2014, projects on the physical rehabilitation of wounded soldiers in Croatian specialized institutions.
3. Knowledge and experience sharing between relevant state institutions in building legal and administrative frameworks for managing high numbers of internally displaced persons.
4. Strengthening of civil society in collecting and documenting human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity.
5. Since 2015, Croatia has been hosting Ukrainian children from Eastern parts of Ukraine during summer holidays, in cooperation with regional and local governments and local families. This project is enjoying great success. Although this project is much smaller than many others, the Ukrainian side showcases it as a meaningful one. Croatia sees it as a high transformational impact project.

The Croatian Centre of Excellence on Transitional Processes and Euro-Atlantic Integration within the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs participated in the screening of Ukrainian legislation within the EU project EU Association in the Field of Financial Services: Current payments and movement of capital. Croatia's experience was also shared in the framework of the EU technical assistance programme Strengthening Capacities of Ukrainian Governmental Institutions, focusing on the project Donor Coordination for the Civilian Security Sector.

Cooperation with Ukraine keeps growing into new areas on many different levels of society. Similarities with Croatia's culture, religion and history render the exchanges at all levels highly efficient and relevant. Croatian experiences – psycho-social and economic support to war victims with emphasis on children, programmes for veterans, the mine action system, peaceful reintegration of territories, the care and return of IDPs and civil society engagement – are all relevant to the Ukrainian current and future context.

### Other examples

Croatia has been extending its development cooperation, based on the SSTC model, to all countries in its Southeast neighbourhood as well those in the Mediterranean basin and even further – such as Iraq, Myanmar and sub-Saharan African countries, as briefly described below:

**FYR Macedonia:** Empowering women against gender-based violence and discrimination; post-conflict democratic transition processes.

**Serbia and BiH:** Carrying out mine action after floods, regional disaster risk reduction through technology transfer, and capacity building.

**Jordan and Turkey (for Syrian refugees):** Carrying out mine action through mine risk education for children.

**Tunisia:** Transferring knowledge to Tunisian experts on sustainable tourism and rebuilding Tunisia's image as a safe tourist destination following the conflict.

**Iraq:** Providing psycho-social support after war-related stress for Iraqi children as well as psychological rehabilitation for wounded children in Croatian specialized resorts; supporting the peace-building process through the protection of national and religious minorities by fostering inter-cultural dialogue and psycho-social rehabilitation.

**Myanmar:** Empowering women in building peace and a human rights-based society.

**Multilateral Cooperation:** Involving seven African and Asian States in the United Nations Police Officers Course organized and led by Croatian experts for 14 female police officers from seven African and Asian states.





## **Chapter III: Links to Major Regional and Global Development Agendas**

## Chapter III: Links to Major Regional and Global Development Agendas

The Croatian development cooperation strategy is part of a wider framework both regionally and globally. At the regional level, Croatia is in line with the European Consensus on Development, newly revised and signed in June 2017. The revision of the original Consensus of 2006 was motivated by new global challenges and documents such as the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as well as the EU's Lisbon Treaty of 2009 and the new Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy of 2016.

### New European Consensus on Development

The revised European Consensus on Development is entitled *Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future* ("Consensus"). This new, ambitious collective European development policy addresses in an integrated manner the main focus points of the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The new Consensus contributes to the objectives and principles of EU external action as laid down in the Lisbon Treaty, and supports the Global Strategy on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy presented in June 2016 by the EU High Representative. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a cross-cutting dimension for the implementation of the EU's Global Strategy.

Poverty eradication remains the primary objective of development policy under the new Consensus.

The Consensus also integrates the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It underlines the links between development and other policies, including peace and security, humanitarian aid, migration, the environment and climate change.

The new Consensus reaffirms the EU's commitment to a rules-based global order, with multilateralism and the United Nations at its core. Given the strong link with climate action, through the new Consensus, the EU is also giving a timely political signal to reaffirm common EU strong commitment to implement the Paris Agreement.

The Consensus highlights important cross-cutting elements such as: youth; gender equality; mobility and migration; sustainable energy and climate change; investment and trade; good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights; innovative engagement with more advanced developing countries; and the mobilization and use of domestic resources. Given the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, the Commission will pay particular attention to actions that meet multiple goals in a coordinated way.

The Consensus takes a comprehensive approach to implementation, drawing on the framework agreed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, combining aid with other resources, sound policies and a strengthened approach to EU's Policy Coherence for Development. It includes a more coordinated common EU and each EU Member State approach to development, promoting joint programming and joint actions. It puts emphasis on better-tailored partnerships with a broader range of stakeholders and partner countries.

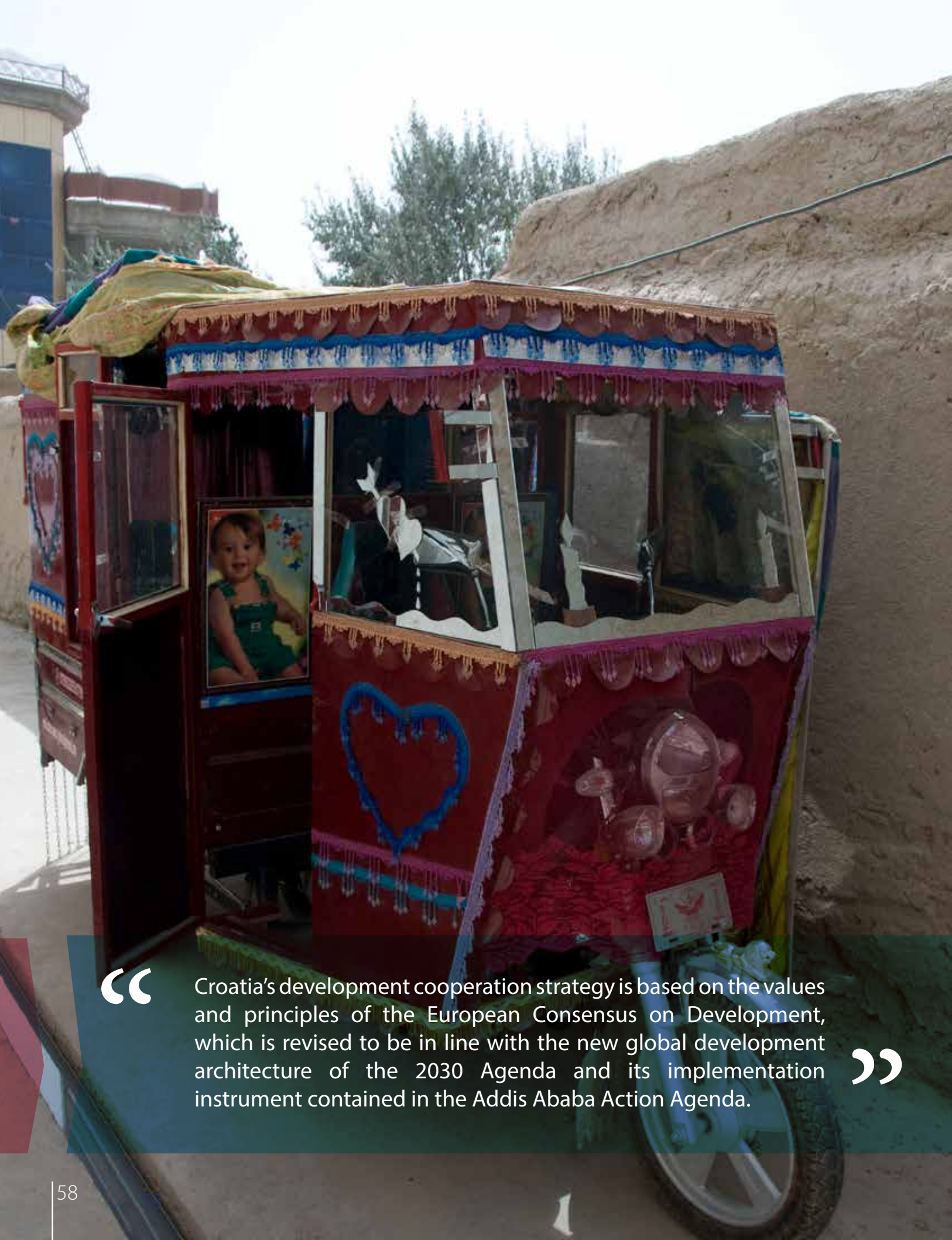
The Consensus is structured around the priorities of the 2030 Agenda: People – human development and dignity with special focus on youth, gender and migration; Planet – protecting the environment, managing natural resources and tackling climate change; Prosperity – inclusive and sustainable growth and jobs with focus on investment and trade; Peace – peaceful and inclusive societies, democracy, effective and accountable institutions, rule of law and human rights for all; and Partnership – the EU as a force for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Under Partnerships, the Consensus recognizes SSTC cooperation as a tool for innovative engagement with more advanced developing countries. The Consensus states:

*More advanced developing countries have important impact and influence within their regions, including as sources of regional stability. Their cooperation with other developing countries is expanding rapidly and represents an important proportion of all international cooperation.*

*The EU and its Member States will develop new partnerships with more advanced developing countries in order to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through a broader range of cooperation. At the core of these partnerships lies dialogue on public policy and reform. The policy dialogues will promote mutual interests and identify common priorities, partnerships and principles for cooperation for the implementation of the SDGs, which provide a common and integrated framework for cooperation. These new partnerships will promote the exchange of best practices, technical assistance and knowledge sharing. In addition, the EU and its Member States will work with these countries to promote South-South and triangular cooperation consistent with development effectiveness principles.*

EU is also reviewing its major partnerships through the post-Cotonou framework dealing with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), as well as the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF), where Croatia is participating for the first time as a EU Member State. These reviews are demonstrating the commitment to remain one of the strongest global development partners. The EU is finalizing a new development partnership agreement with what is currently referred to as ACP countries, taking into account new ways of financing for development based on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted in 2015.



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Croatia's development cooperation strategy is based on the values and principles of the European Consensus on Development, which is revised to be in line with the new global development architecture of the 2030 Agenda and its implementation instrument contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

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## The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Croatia's development cooperation strategy is based on the values and principles of the European Consensus on Development, which is revised to be in line with the new global development architecture of the 2030 Agenda and its implementation instrument contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. SSTC is an important and cost-effective tool in helping to achieve the SDGs together with ODA, grants, investments and, in particular, the mobilization of domestic resources.

In the spirit of comprehensive and partly innovative nature of the whole package, in its National Strategy, Croatia emphasizes its areas of strength in contributing to joint global efforts towards achieving the SDGs by 2030. Indeed, a development policy document that incorporates peace and security in its core goals is a major paradigm shift. Croatian development cooperation priorities fully adjusted to this shift. Croatia offers development cooperation to its partners in several SDG areas, in particular, SDG 3 on good health, SDG 4 on education and SDG 5 on gender equality. Furthermore, SDG 16 on peaceful and just societies lies at the heart of Croatian know-how. On SDGs related to achieving responsible economic growth, particularly SDG 8 on decent work and economic, but also SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG 12 on sustainable production and consumption patterns, SDG on climate action, SDG 14 on life below water and SDG 15 on life on land, Croatia can share valuable experiences of the economic transition challenges, developing sustainable tourism and more. All SDGs are inter-related and inseparable, thus dealing with any one of them contributes towards achieving to the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

The Croatian National Strategy will end in 2021. The country will then assess the achievements made in view of developing the next two strategies ending in 2030. Fostering SSTC is stated as one of its policy tools for achieving the SDGs. Considering the estimated cost in achieving the SDGs, SSTC is an indispensable partner.







## Chapter IV: Conclusions and Way Forward

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### Internationally

As in all new development partner countries, the important challenge to Croatia's development cooperation and humanitarian aid policy is its positioning on the global development map. By continuous promotion of its comparative advantages as well as by promoting the interdependence of peace, security, state building and development in international forums, primarily the United Nations, Croatia will make efforts to influence the global strategic documents and thus promote its development policy.

Croatia will use its EU membership to get involved in the work of EU institutions and working parties with targeted secondment of experts in order to leverage unique experience, knowledge and capacities with the final aim to improve and widen the scope of the EU's development and humanitarian policy. In particular, through active participation in the development of strategic documents and guidelines, Croatia will promote the relevance of its own experience and incorporate it into EU development tool-box. Through cooperation with traditional donors, Croatia will gather knowledge on project implementation techniques and inter-institutional cooperation. Moreover, Croatia will involve its national experts in the implementation of the projects, include its national experts in international missions and consequently strengthen its international visibility.

Furthermore, as a relatively small and new development partner, Croatia will actively encourage closer cooperation among EU Member States and other international partners with similar experiences and capacities to create a coalition of small and new development donors that can work towards reducing the traditional global divisions between the North and South, and serve as a bridge between them. This framework will also be used to promote the importance of small donors, as well as address challenges, such as reduced opportunities to effectively contribute to strategic planning and implementation of development policy.

Croatia will also encourage South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in the international context. These forms of cooperation will diversify the global development paradigm and open up new spaces for sharing Croatia's experiences. In this way, less developed countries will be able to benefit from the development lessons learned collected by the transition countries and emerging economies, on whose example and experience they will be able to base their own development. By promoting this type of cooperation, Croatia can strengthen its relations with developing countries.

### Nationally

Key to success in addressing numerous other challenges relies on the raising of awareness among the Croatian public. Croatia will work towards drafting a comprehensive communication strategy, transparent planning and implementation of development and humanitarian

projects, public outreach and providing information. Accordingly, the local public will gain a more comprehensive picture of development and humanitarian policy and its benefits, thereby providing public support for a policy that has a direct impact on global as well as on national development and security.

Cooperation with institutions and with other key national stakeholders by creating consortia for specific projects in priority sectors and countries should also add to the comprehensiveness and appeal of the Croatian development package.

Furthermore, by creating a more flexible and effective legislative and administrative framework for implementation, Croatia should be able to react more swiftly to requests and use the expertise in a wider scope. Preserving a significant bilateral component in development projects will provide fast learning, closer relations with the partner countries, more visibility among the general public, and finally, a steady increase in ODA levels.



Croatia will continue to explore and develop new ways of providing development cooperation, including through SSTC channels. Based on its own features, advantages and challenges, Croatia will continue to engage with interested countries in its neighbourhood and beyond. It is hoped that UNOSSC and its products, such as the South-South in Action series, will inspire and stimulate new partnerships, and further mobilize the process of collecting experiences and expertise.

Countries in similar situations assisting each other are an indispensable and yet still under-represented resource – one of the keys for achieving the SDGs, together with ODA and all other innovative ways of financing and implementing policies. Croatia would like to draw attention to newer and relatively smaller development donors that are unknown and often invisible on the global stage. The mainstream EU and global development “architecture” is often very complex and its efficiency can be slowed down by its own size and procedures. Croatia supports all current global efforts in making the assistance and cooperation more efficient and closer to partners. Smaller development partners have much to offer in this respect in complementarity with traditional ODA. However, smaller development partners also face a set of institutional, legislative and financial challenges to adapt to the current structure. Finding ways of using everyone’s potential to their maximum is a challenge in collectively achieving 17 SDGs while leaving no one behind.

To date, Croatian lessons learned in the development cooperation are as follows:

- 1. Smaller and newer donor countries make the difference.** When looking at the international arena, Croatia should find ways to encourage increased participation of smaller and newer development partners that have knowledge and experience of their own development but insufficient administrative and financial capacities to transfer this experience.
- 2. The techniques of development cooperation must be acquired.** Related to the above point, channels of cooperation with traditional donors and international organizations must be identified so as to acquire the necessary skills for programming and project implementation to effectively capitalize on knowledge gathered during the transition process.
- 3. Outreach raises awareness and acceptance.** At the national level, Croatia should increase efforts to communicate and promote the concept of SSTC among the general public and among institutions. This would allow to gain political support, bring together the most relevant experts, and collect and transfer their knowledge.
- 4. It is not all about money.** Smaller projects can have a relatively higher impact on the community if used wisely and based on the principles of SSC.
- 5. Learn first, then teach.** Deep understanding and thorough learning of the context and the background in the partner community, as well as mutual collaboration in the initial

phase of analysing, planning, implementing and monitoring the project ensure sustainability and effectiveness.

6. **Aim at projects with a higher impact.** Directing efforts towards particular sectors and groups, e.g. women, children and youth, minorities, education and health, has proven to have a relatively higher impact on the development of the community and subsequent acceptance by the same community.
7. **There is no development without security and peace.** Croatia is a case in point. Conflict not only burdens but also undermining development. Croatia needed more than 20 years to return to pre-war GDP levels. The consequences for the social fabric are even graver. Conflict affects entire generations and, if not managed appropriately, there is a high potential of reversal and/or sliding into new conflicts.
8. **Leave no one behind.** Development efforts should be focused on human development, i.e. the wellbeing of an individual. Cooperation between governments should always keep this in mind as a priority.





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