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EVALUATION REPORT

**NGO DAYS 2011 - CIVIL SOCIETY IN CROATIA 2016 - VISION,
STRATEGY AND ACTION**

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SUMMARY OF THE PERFORMED EVALUATION OF THE NGO DAYS 2011

The Evaluation Report of the NGO Days 2011 - Civil Society in Croatia 2016 - Vision, Strategy and Action, held in Pula from 26th until 28th May 2011, provides an overview of the evaluation provided by the participants in relation to the organization and program of the entire event. The primary purpose of the report is to provide an insight into the evaluation of the event by the participants for the co-organizers, including suggestions and recommendations for the organization of future events of similar range and purpose. The evaluation results are based on data gathered through an evaluation questionnaire consisting of the following aspects: evaluation of the entire NGO days, evaluation of organizational elements, evaluation of applied methodology/way of work, and evaluation of the celebration of the European Year of Volunteering within the framework of the NGO Days. The participants completed the evaluation questionnaire at the end of the NGO Days or upon their earlier departure from it. Out of the 132 participants at the NGO Days, 76 of them completed the evaluation questionnaire, which is 57,5% of the total number of participants.

There were a total of 132 participants at the NGO Days, primarily from the public and civil sector, 73% of whom were representatives of various civil society organizations from the Republic of Croatia.

The NGO Days have been assessed with a very high grade - 4.54. It is important to mention that only two participants graded the entire NGO Days with the grade 3, 41% of participants graded them with 4, while 57% graded them with 5. The participants assigned their high grades mostly to the approach to work and to the Open Space Method, which enabled a high degree of interaction among participants, as well as a high level of participation with the possibility of offering suggestions and proposals on the part of the participants. In addition, the participants gave high grades owing to organizational aspects of the NGO Days, as well as the contents, the choice of topics and area for discussion.

When it comes to the organizational aspect of the NGO Days, the participants assessed all organizational aspects with a very high average grade. The lowest grade (4.13) relates to the previous information about the NGO Days. Informational and promotional materials, as well as the venue of the NGO Days were evaluated very highly with 4.7 and 4.8.

When it comes to manner/approach to work, the participants commended it and gave an overall positive opinion about the use of the Open Space Method already on giving a general grade of the NGO Days. The participants assessed their level of personal participation with 4.85, the possibility of exchanging ideas with 4.82, the possibility of establishing contacts with 4.74 and the results obtained through group work with 4.36.

On the final day of the NGO Days 2011, Saturday 28th May, there was the celebration of 2011 European Year of Volunteering, with which Croatia joined the other EU countries in marking 2011 as the year of volunteering. As a whole, celebrating the European Year of Volunteering in the framework of the NGO Days was graded with 4.

The participants' suggestions for the organization of similar events in the future were primarily directed towards the development of various organizational elements, which includes: work time dynamics, enabling more free time and time for informal socializing of the participants, improvement of organizational/logistics (accommodation, timely and accurate notification of potentially interested parties for participation, possibilities of participation, location), methodology. According to participants, the NGO Days might be improved in their contents by organizing a volunteering action, providing the possibility of presenting NGOs and reducing the number of topics and work intensity.

INTRODUCTION

The **NGO Days 2011 - Civil Society in Croatia 2016 - Vision, Strategy and Action** was held in Pula on 26th until 28th May 2011. The NGO Days were organized by the NGO Office of the Croatian Government in cooperation with TASCOS - Office for Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations in Croatia and the Foundation for Partnerships and Civil Society Development. The NGO Days 2011 dealt with the subject *Civil Society in Croatia 2016 - Vision, Strategy and Action*. The meeting was intended to create space and time for the participants to talk and shape in a creative manner the proposals for the vision of civil society development in Croatia, thus contributing to the draft proposal of the National Strategy and Action Plan for the period from 2012 to 2016.

Total costs for the NGO Days 2011 (including the main organisers' financial and in-kind contributions by the Istrian County, Arenaturist and the Union of Technical Culture Pula) was 311.127,00 HRK (42,142.00 EUR), that is 2,357.00 HRK (320 EUR) per participant.

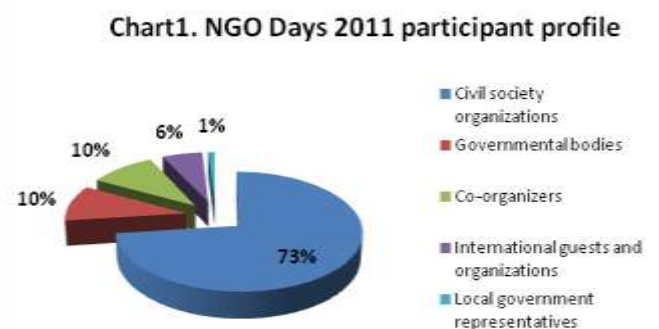
This report shows the perception/evaluation of organizational and content aspects of the held NGO Days from the perspective of the participants. The purpose of the report is to provide an insight into the participants' evaluation of the event for the co-organizers with proposals and suggestions for the organization of future events of similar range and purpose.

The Association for Civil Society Development SMART was engaged by TASCOS Office of Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations in Croatia to perform the evaluation of the NGO Days 2011.

The evaluation results are based on data gathered through an evaluation questionnaire which was completed by the participants at the end of the NGO Days or before their earlier departure from it. Out of 132 participants at the NGO Days, 76 of them completed the evaluation questionnaire, which is 57,5% of the total number of participants. The evaluation questionnaire consisted of the following units: evaluation of the entire NGO days, evaluation of organizational elements, evaluation of applied methodology/manner of operation and evaluation of the celebration of the European Year of Volunteering in the framework of the NGO Days.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

There were a total of 132 participants at the NGO Days, primarily from the public and civil sector. There were 73% of the representatives of various civil society organizations from Croatia, 10% of the representatives of co-organizers, 6% of international guests and representatives of international organizations, 10% of the representatives of government authorities and 1% of the representatives of local government.

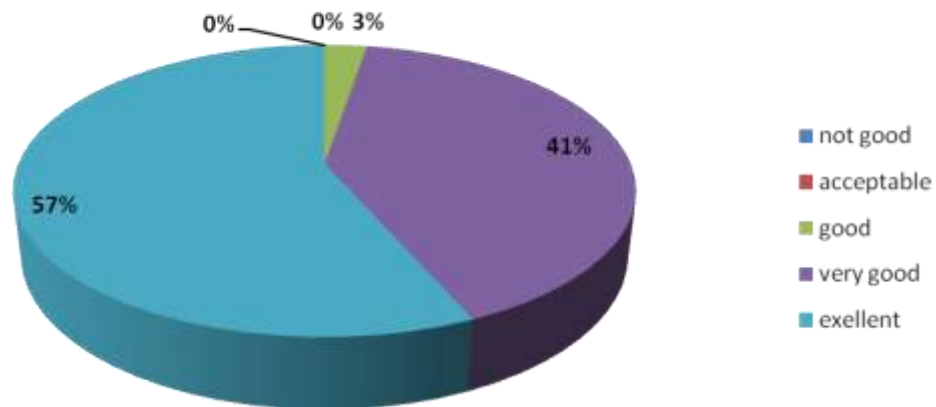


OVERALL ASSESMENT OF NGO DAYS

The NGO Days have been very highly graded - 4.54. It is important to mention that only two participants graded the entire NGO Days with the grade 3, 41% of participants graded them with 4, while 57% graded them with 5. The participants assigned their high grades mostly to the **approach**

to work and to the Open Space method, which enabled a high degree of interaction among participants, as well as a high level of participation with the possibility of offering suggestions and proposals on the part of the participants. In addition, the participants gave high grades owing to organizational aspects of the NGO Days, as well as the contents, the choice of topics and area for discussion.

Chart 2. Overall grade of NGO Days (N=76)



The explanations by the participants concerning the approach to work and Open Space Method:

- ✓ *Useful, Open Space Method is great.*
- ✓ *Possibility of elaborating burning issues, group work in which everyone was able to participate actively, kind hosts.*
- ✓ *Excellent approach, we should do this more often.*
- ✓ *Open Space concept functions perfectly.*
- ✓ *Excellent preparation and execution. The moderators could have been more active and make more correlations between suggestions at the plenary session.*
- ✓ *Mutual communication among participants. Open Space method initiated many discussions, numerous conclusions were made.*
- ✓ *It was interesting; I liked the manner of work.*
- ✓ *Open Space Method was positively accepted. The topic of volunteering dominated on 28 May, despite the understanding of its celebration.*
- ✓ *Interesting approach to work, much better than traditional lecturing - more meaningful and useful.*
- ✓ *Direct participation by all participants in expressing and treating top subjects. Very good organization and the importance of the subject emphasized.*
- ✓ *Interesting manner of work (Open Space).*
- ✓ *Open Space is really a full hit!*
- ✓ *Topics - interesting, groups good, creative, exchange of experiences welcome.*
- ✓ *The use of methodology was an excellent choice.*
- ✓ *Innovative, fun and efficient approach.*
- ✓ *Something new, very well thought-out. Interaction in groups excellently accepted.*
- ✓ *Excellent opportunity to contact the organizations from other areas of operation, seeing that we do not share the same problems, exchange of experiences.*
- ✓ *Owing to the Open Space method, it was possible to gain a large quantity of input from a relatively large number of persons, and as it was about the suggestions for the new National Strategy, it was very useful and valuable.*

- ✓ *Possibility of participating in discussions - OK. A large number of organizations from various areas of operation.*
- ✓ *Well-conceived meeting, excellent choice of method which completely corresponds to this kind of topics. The problem was group work, because when the groups were in the same room - it was hard to hear.*
- ✓ *Pleasant surroundings, interesting and good execution, active participation, a synergy of diversity.*
- ✓ *A large number of participants, original thoughts and ideas, while the most important characteristic was openness.*
- ✓ *New concept, new possibilities, good organization, all together equals 5.*
- ✓ *Very well structured and guided.*
- ✓ *Innovative, meaningful, organizer's effort.*
- ✓ *Interactive, great! Closeness, great!*
- ✓ *Interesting and innovative way of work will produce the same kind of results - there is only the question of final implementation.*
- ✓ *Everyone had the chance to express his or her opinion and everyone's opinion was taken into consideration.*

Furthermore, the participants often mentioned the **quality of contents, the choice of topics and areas for discussion** as reasons for their high grades:

- ✓ *Interesting topics, way of work, you thought of everything.*
- ✓ *By participating at the NGO Days, I got a very good insight into the current condition of civil society, which is important for my future work.*
- ✓ *Functional, democratic, professional - something concrete. I hope the Strategy will be the same, because the participants gave their best to contribute to its creation.*
- ✓ *Very useful subjects, way of work and the possibility of making acquaintances.*
- ✓ *I consider the possibility of CSOs' participation in the preparation of the Strategy for Civil Society Development until 2016 very useful, and especially the possibility of applying the way of work which by itself improves the operation and cooperation of CSOs.*
- ✓ *It is certainly a great plus that the associations got the possibility to define the topics and participate in discussions, but it seems that group discussions needed some guidance, because like this the discussions often dissipated or remained on a general level.*
- ✓ *Fulfilled expectations regarding the topics at round tables concerning social entrepreneurship. Acquaintance with a few interesting people and the possibility of new partnerships.*
- ✓ *Excellent opportunity for exchanging opinions within CSOs.*
- ✓ *As this was my first workshop of this type, I came here without expectations, but I was more than pleasantly surprised. The atmosphere was comfortable, the program very interesting.*
- ✓ *I liked the new Open Space methodology very much, because it enabled the active participation of all participants.*
- ✓ *5 points for openness towards new ways and approaches (Open Space).*

Organizational aspects were often mentioned as reasons for high grades by the participants:

- ✓ *Excellent organized transport, very good organization of the entire NGO Days. Unfortunately, we were not able to participate in all topics that interested us. The volunteers were not very well informed (where lunch is served, use of vouchers, etc.). Small organizational oversights.*
- ✓ *Organization (transport, accommodation) professionally done, professional evaluators and volunteers. Many representatives of various associations improved and enriched the NGO Days.*

- ✓ *The site and event organization were very good.*
- ✓ *Organization and choice of topics were excellent.*
- ✓ *I think everything was very well organized with excellent moderators.*
- ✓ *The organization and logistics excellent. Too little time or too many topics in Open Space method. Plenty of information lacking structure (although it will be carried out in the Strategy).*
- ✓ *Accommodation, logistics, program, attendance - all very good.*
- ✓ *Everything was well-organized, but the part relating to the celebration of the European Year of Volunteering was inappropriately and badly fitted into the entire NGO Days.*
- ✓ *Well organized, dynamic, active. A small criticism - too many topics in relation to the number of participants (the max number of topics for so many participants might possibly be - all three periods, 15 topics).*
- ✓ *Excellent accommodation and hotel position, food, hosts, organization, volunteers and working method - a lot of results produced in a short time period.*

General comments by the participants stated as reasons for their grades:

- ✓ *I consider this a good step forward in the civil society development in Croatia.*
- ✓ *A large number of positive intentions in one place must yield a positive result.*
- ✓ *Excellent.*
- ✓ *Great!*
- ✓ *Everything was as it should have been. There were a few novelties, which keeps the NGO Days fresh. Again outside Zagreb!*
- ✓ *I liked it. I have been here for the first time and I am very satisfied.*
- ✓ *Everything was OK, only the schedule was too tight, so my grade is 4.*
- ✓ *According to the program, cheerful, with enthusiasm.*
- ✓ *I had a great time, although I have been to the NGO Days for the first time. I must confess that I listened more than I participated in discussions, but next time I will do much better, because now I have guidelines and I know how things are done here.*
- ✓ *Everything was up to the standard.*
- ✓ *Although I was unable to participate in all groups I wanted (many interesting topics), I realize many topics were covered in little time. I will read about it on the web. Thanks!*

The explanations of lower grades included:

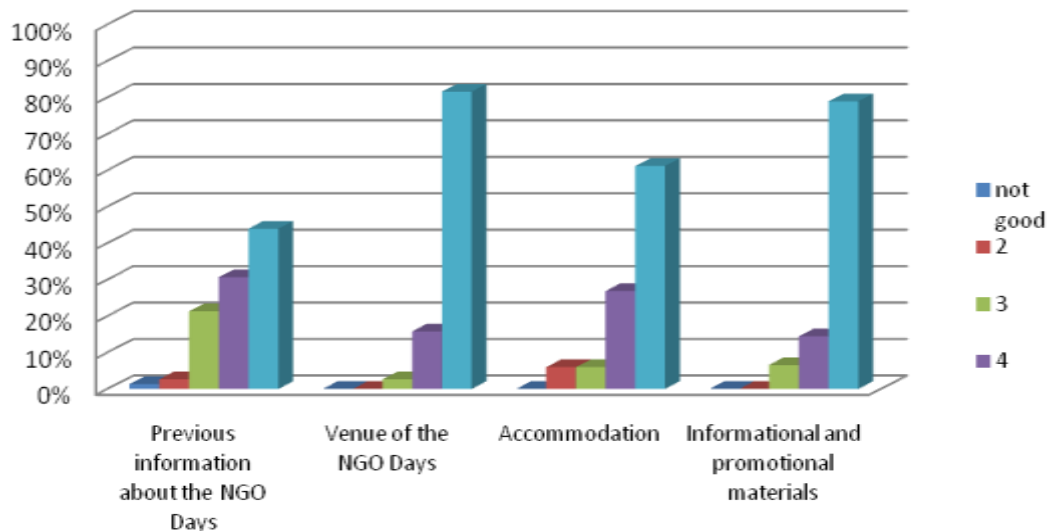
- ✓ *Open Space method is appropriate for gathering general information from CSOs, but not for a detailed consideration about actions and measures. Therefore, I think Friday afternoon was unnecessary or it should have been organized differently. The work planned for that period required more knowledge and skills.*
- ✓ *It would have been more efficient if there had been a possibility of dividing the program into more days.*
- ✓ *Bilateral conversations require more time. Better informing/logistics.*
- ✓ *Over packed program, so I was unable to participate in all the topics I was interested in.*
- ✓ *To me, the greatest problem was that, tired from a long journey, we started with important discussions, considerations... while this morning (Friday) it was better, I had some sleep and rest. Although the schedule, that is the program, was really tight, without any breaks or free time to get to know this beautiful city.*

ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS

When it comes to the organizational aspect of the NGO Days, Chart 2 shows that the participants evaluated all organizational aspects with a very high average grade. The lowest grade (4.13) relates

to the previous information about the NGO Days. Informational and promotional materials, as well as the venue of the NGO Days were evaluated very highly with 4.7 and 4.8.

**Chart 3. Evaluation of organizational aspects of NGO Days
(N=67-76)**



The **explanations** by the participants who assessed the organization with 4 or 5 on their evaluation questionnaire:

- ✓ *Everything was great!*
- ✓ *The venue was excellently chosen, I would definitely recommend it for next time. There were plenty of materials. A great 'thank you' for the offered promotional area.*
- ✓ *All great!*
- ✓ *Information came in time, the hotel, halls and food OK, the materials were great.*
- ✓ *The entire organizational part was excellently done.*
- ✓ *Notification and information correctly done. Interesting informational and promotional materials.*
- ✓ *Perhaps a bit more free time was needed. At the end of the second day (Friday), my concentration wavered.*
- ✓ *Organization and efficient use of time.*
- ✓ *Good place and time, many opportunities for the exchange of information and learning.*
- ✓ *Thanks for the sticks.*
- ✓ *Information arrived timely by e-mail. The accommodation (Hotel Palma) was appropriate. The venue was excellent.*
- ✓ *Carry on doing the same in the future. As opposed to 2010, the fact that the accommodation was free is commendable - available to small organizations.*
- ✓ *All in all, it was very nice and educational.*
- ✓ *It was great!*
- ✓ *All information received timely, location and accommodation more than good. Informational and promotional materials easily available and clear.*
- ✓ *General informing - the notifications should be sent more often (not only for NGO Days).*
- ✓ *Great organization, from transport to all events at the NGO Days.*
- ✓ *It would be great to increase attendance, to have more information and a better organization.*
- ✓ *I am not too demanding, but this surpassed my needs.*

- ✓ *Everything was great. Pula might be too far for some parts of Croatia.*
- ✓ *I am active in the work of organizations in general, and I am satisfied because when comparing to some other meetings I attended this is SPACE.*
- ✓ *Timely, good information. Good promotional materials.*
- ✓ *The NGO Days were prepared in a very creative way, professionally and well, from the information about the NGO Days to stimulating everyone to get involved in the work on the strategy.*
- ✓ *I wish I had had more information on how it will all look like in order to prepare better, especially previous information and material with more information.*
- ✓ *Everything was excellently organized, meeting with the young.*
- ✓ *In relation to the previous information about the NGO Days, we should have been better acquainted with the system of work. The venue was fantastic, and informational and promotional materials are very good.*
- ✓ *Nice environment, pleasant surroundings for work and accommodation, good food. Kind staff in charge of organization.*
- ✓ *I have finally completely realized what civil society is - who, where, how, what...? I have realized a whole bunch of issues.*
- ✓ *I have no objections to the venue, or anything else.*
- ✓ *We had studied some prior information on the net before the journey, the chosen venue was fantastic. Accommodation was OK, informational and promotional materials very well prepared.*
- ✓ *I had almost no prior information, but now I came to know this, I am delighted. The venue was great, I liked it. The Hotel Palma was very noisy at night. Informational and promotional materials are great.*
- ✓ *Not everything can be great, so my grade for the accommodation is 4.*
- ✓ *Information and venue was fine. The Hotel Palma was OK, as were the promotional materials.*
- ✓ *Everything was professionally organized.*
- ✓ *Accommodation and food, as well as full support to the participants were great.*
- ✓ *The previous information and info materials should have contained the hotel addresses. The venue was appropriate, the accommodation quite satisfying - separate rooms.*
- ✓ *Commendations regarding the accommodation.*
- ✓ *The Hotel Palma where I stayed - excellent. I recommend holding future NGO Days in a similar manner.*
- ✓ *I have no complaints about the venue, accommodation or materials; on the contrary, everything was very good.*
- ✓ *Very good choice of the city, informing about the arrival to Pula timely and detailed.*
- ✓ *Information were timely and detailed, the materials arrived fast.*
- ✓ *Excellent accommodation and level of information about the event.*
- ✓ *I will not comment anything in particular about this grade, because I think I said it all on the previous question. (As this is the first workshop of this type I participated in, I came without any expectations, but I was more than pleasantly surprised. The atmosphere was pleasant, the program very interesting.)*
- ✓ *The Hotel Histria - great, especially the food and surroundings.*
- ✓ *My expectations were lower, I am pleasantly surprised.*
- ✓ *Additional information about the Open Space method required, more coordination regarding transport. The venue was excellent for this type of event and accommodation. Stimulate organizations to bring their own promotional materials; those at the site were OK.*

The explanations of participants who gave grades 1, 2 and 3 in the evaluation questionnaire:

- ✓ *I was not really informed about the topic and way of work at the NGO Days through previous information, so this was all new to me.*
- ✓ *I think previous information should have been more detailed.*
- ✓ *I think there may have been some lack of clarity on applications.*
- ✓ *I hold that there was not enough information about the NGO Days before the event itself.*
- ✓ *The Hotel Palma is good in its interior. Some information was missing at the site and was not transferred (leaving the hotel at 10...).*
- ✓ *Organization lacks more contact with the guests and more technical information (instruct where, when, what).*
- ✓ *Accommodation (the Hotel Palma) - cockroaches, therefore, my grade is 2.*
- ✓ *Some feedback information was missing on the organization of the transport of participants.*
- ✓ *Some programs were not available for the disabled.*
- ✓ *Some oversight in informing most organizations in the area of Pula. We received the first information after the deadline for the application.*
- ✓ *Great distance of Pula from other areas of Croatia.*
- ✓ *I was situated at the Hotel Palma. There is room for improvement in this area, as the hotel is not in the best condition, but it served its purpose.*
- ✓ *We did not have a chance to see the city. Considering the rather demanding way of work, the program was too crammed with content and activities. In the future, it would be a good idea to shorten the working hours, for example, till 5 p.m., instead of 7 p.m. I do not know anyone who can keep their concentration till 7 p.m.*
- ✓ *The Hotel Palma - cockroaches and stale linen.*
- ✓ *I had very few information about the NGO Days.*

ASSESSMENT OF OPEN SPACE METHOD, WAY OF WORK

The novelty of this year's NGO Days referred to the structuring of the program and work in accordance with the modern Open Space method, which enables group thinking of complex topics and achieving significant results in a relatively short period of time. Already while providing a general grade of the NGO Days, the participants commended and gave positive opinions in their explanations about the use of Open Space method at the NGO Days. To the question: ***"In your opinion, how much was the Open Space method useful for the NGO Days?"*** the participants gave the following replies:

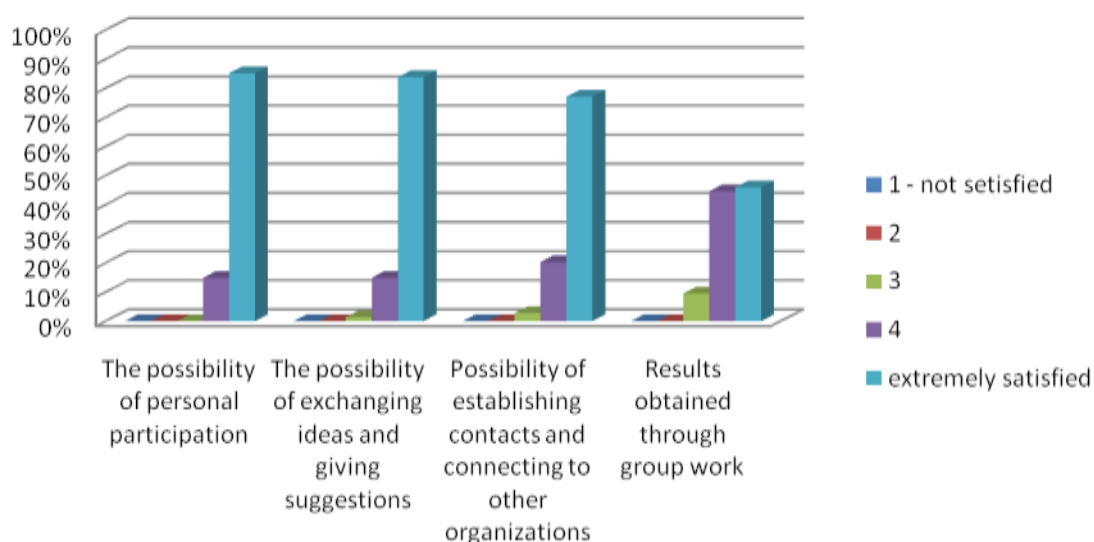
- ✓ *Extraordinarily efficient. Good method, unimagative hostesses.*
- ✓ *There were more possibilities for expressing your opinion and ideas.*
- ✓ *Excellent method, it stimulated the participants to take an active part and get to know each other better, to articulate their views.*
- ✓ *A very successful method, the effect is surprising, very efficient. Fully functional, carry on!*
- ✓ *Very, something new. Particular congratulations and commendations to the hosts.*
- ✓ *The method is great, but the moderators - proposers of topics should pay more attention to the structure of communication, i.e. try to watch out that they are followed by analysis, arguments, and conclusions.*
- ✓ *Open Space was a very good method enabling everyone to say what they wanted, but precisely this transfer "reduced" group work, because the group managers did not know how to manage a group - some groups had a pronounced need for facilitation!*
- ✓ *Excellent!*
- ✓ *Very efficient, because all the participants were successfully included and everyone had the opportunity to come into picture and contribute with their participation.*

- ✓ *Very efficient. Still, when working in smaller groups, it seems that they needed a little help in the first round, or even better, more detailed instructions in the large circle, both for the hosts and the participants.*
- ✓ *It was great.*
- ✓ *Very efficient, the possibility of opening numerous issues, many different opinions, topics.*
- ✓ *Completely. The participants took an active role.*
- ✓ *Very, we met a large number of people, we listened to each other, but owing to the amount of topics, there should have been one more day.*
- ✓ *Highly efficient, because it enables the participation of all participants. The overall choice of topics that are very important for the participants at the moment enables the identification of the really "hot" topics for all participants.*
- ✓ *Very good, I will use it in my work place. 5+*
- ✓ *"Solving" a larger number of issues, making a greater number of conclusions.*
- ✓ *I think that this method is a full hit; it made this process very dynamic. We also got the possibility to participate in more topics, which was great.*
- ✓ *Perfect - working without any pressure, it is much more entertaining to listen to what we are really interested in.*
- ✓ *A highly efficient method, because by removing an obligatory structure, it suggested a more leisurely structure and achieved better results, than choosing groups and giving them tasks.*
- ✓ *A very efficient method.*
- ✓ *More than any other method I am familiar with. Very creative and fun. I believe that Open Space is the space for creativity.*
- ✓ *Open Space method is great, interactive, and all the participants were motivated to join in. Perfect!*
- ✓ *This is an excellent method of work where all the participants had the opportunity to express their opinion and experiences.*
- ✓ *Excellent method. I regret that I could not have been at two places at the same time owing to very interesting topics, which is commendable.*
- ✓ *I believe that this method is extremely efficient.*
- ✓ *Completely efficient.*
- ✓ *Open Space functions fantastically, fully planned and engaged. Very good.*
- ✓ *I saw this method for the first time and I was not disappointed. The participants should be relaxed, and I was not. I will have to get used to it.*
- ✓ *A very well chosen method for the beginning of the process of creating the vision of the National Strategy.*
- ✓ *Very good, I have never seen something like that; therefore, it deserves all commendations.*
- ✓ *Very efficient, in my opinion, different and because of that more open for communication.*
- ✓ *Freedom. Perhaps the topic of the Croatian civil society 2016 should have provided a list of topics, in order to make a good basis for civil programs.*
- ✓ *Very interesting, stimulating, creative...*
- ✓ *In this line of work, the Open Space method provides a possibility and stimulus to get involved in the work, and to "think and act" strategically.*
- ✓ *Strategy will give the answer.*
- ✓ *A very efficient method, a large possibility of participation through "self-organization".*
- ✓ *Completely OK, I was able to choose two topics which were particularly interesting.*
- ✓ *Surprisingly efficient! Great!*
- ✓ *Efficient when it comes to time, i.e. structured work in a shorter period of time, where some other topics are omitted.*
- ✓ *100% and a bit more.*

- ✓ *In the first part, it seemed great, but I was not impressed with the second part, because it repeated itself.*
- ✓ *It was successful, but there should have been more organizations (if the number was not limited).*
- ✓ *It was efficient, we socialized a lot, got to know each other, exchanged addresses, and we will continue doing so. Great.*
- ✓ *Considering the topic, great.*
- ✓ *I hear that you have made some progress in relation to previous years.*
- ✓ *To me, this is something new, something most acceptable so far.*
- ✓ *The method was very efficient. We got all the necessary information in a not at all dull way, and we also exchanged our opinions on a certain topic.*
- ✓ *Extremely efficient. For the first time at the NGO Days, all participants were able to participate actively, which achieved an excellent result in a very short time period.*
- ✓ *Enough. It enabled everyone to take an active part.*
- ✓ *Very efficient, and be sure to carry on like that.*
- ✓ *To be honest, I have no knowledge or experience about some other methods, so...*
- ✓ *Efficient, productive method, commendations!*
- ✓ *Gives an opportunity to think things through and have a different approach, which in turn enables the production of a greater number of ideas and solutions than regular methods.*
- ✓ *The method was appropriate and efficient.*
- ✓ *Very efficient.*
- ✓ *The method is very good.*
- ✓ *Much more efficient than the previous method.*

Within the evaluation questionnaire, concerning the manner/approach to work, the participants had the possibility to estimate the level of their personal participation, the possibility of exchanging ideas and giving suggestions, as well as the possibility of establishing contacts. From the above comments related to the Open Space method, it is obvious that the choice of the mentioned method primarily contributed to the high level of participation by the participants, the possibility of exchanging ideas and giving suggestions. In addition, the Open Space method stimulated them to participate, exchange experiences and opinions, communicate with a large number of persons which provides the possibility of establishing contacts. Chart 3 shows that the participants evaluated all aspects with very high grades. The lowest graded aspect (4.36) was the one relating to the results obtained through group work.

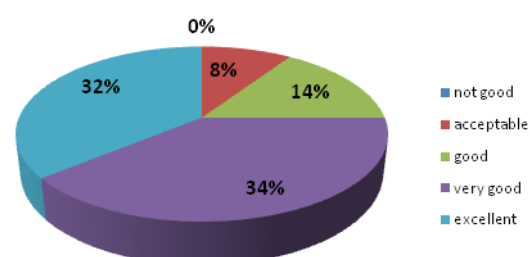
Chart 4. Methodology/way of work (N=74)



EVALUATION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING

On Saturday 28th May, the final day of holding the **NGO Days 2011**, we celebrated the **European Year of Volunteering 2011**, by which the Republic of Croatia joined the EU member states in marking 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering. As a whole, the celebration of the European Year of Volunteering as a part of the NGO Days was assessed with grade 4.

Chart 5. Evaluation of the celebration of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 (N=64)



Explanations of grades:

- ✓ *On the third day of the NGO Days, the participants were a bit tired, although the topic itself was very well presented through excellent moderating.*
- ✓ *Useful exchange of experiences.*
- ✓ *All great, 5. We got encouragement, ideas, useful information.*
- ✓ *The discussion pointed out some issues with which we have to deal, but it did not present any solutions.*
- ✓ *A volunteering activity should have been listed as a part of the program.*
- ✓ *It was all tight, short and informative.*
- ✓ *Nice, but the year lasts an entire year, so the overall grade should be given at the end. Still, we are always lagging behind Europe.*
- ✓ *There was no "monopolized" topic. Lots of ideas, topics, solutions, which in the end came down to a few dominant ones.*
- ✓ *I think there are plenty of ways and forms organized in Croatia on the occasion of the European Year of Volunteering.*
- ✓ *Interesting and educational.*
- ✓ *All of the above mentioned - commendations to the organizer.*

- ✓ *Small oversights in organization which resulted in asking the hotel staff about some organizational details, creating confusion and commotion.*
- ✓ *In my opinion, the best so far.*
- ✓ *This was a great opportunity to exchange ideas, establish contacts and connect with other organizations.*
- ✓ *Everything was explained in detail, smart questions and good answers.*
- ✓ *It was great! It was extremely effective that in a short time everyone could have given their best for the thing he or she is most interested in.*
- ✓ *Debate/panel discussion OK. Perhaps all of us could have done the volunteering action in Pula.*
- ✓ *People know that finally our or their voice must be heard!*
- ✓ *A lot of effort was made on the part of organizations to promote volunteering, but I think that there is still much room for the promotion of the need and significance of volunteer engagement, but also ensuring certain “satisfaction” and acknowledgement of volunteer work. Volunteer work is not adequately appreciated.*
- ✓ *Capability, openness. Lots of good topics in too little time. Subject wide and complex.*
- ✓ *In the sea of important topics, the emphasis on volunteering got a bit lost.*
- ✓ *I think we can always do better.*
- ✓ *As this was my first time to participate, this time I observed more, but everything was going on fantastically and it was very interesting.*
- ✓ *Everything was great. Considering this was my first time at the NGO Days, I am delighted, richer, with much more beautiful feelings and will to help my organization and others.*
- ✓ *Local authorities and local government need more education. In counties they still do not know what it is, let alone support it.*
- ✓ *It gives you credit to have dedicated a part of your program to the European Year of Volunteering, thus enabling a discussion and exchange of ideas. It can always be better.*
- ✓ *I think significant space was dedicated to discussing about volunteering and the future of volunteering. There was plenty of room for questions. Perhaps the only thing that was missing was a bit more discussion about relevant experiences (not just problems) of volunteering development, that is how the already established volunteering centers started and some good recommendations.*

Explanations following the grades 2 and 3:

- ✓ *Unfortunately, in my opinion, considering the importance of volunteering for civil society, we should not have, especially this year as it is the European Year of Volunteering, discussed it in a very general manner, addressing different aspects of the topic related to volunteering. Despite the good moderator and obviously a great experience, everything remained on a superficial level.*
- ✓ *The moderator did not moderate the discussion well and was not familiar with the topic.*
- ✓ *Static, too few people remained to listen and discuss.*
- ✓ *Organizing a round table on the final day was not efficient. If emphasis was to be laid on this topic, this should have been at the beginning, at the very opening, with a short effective promotional film, or something similar.*
- ✓ *A rather badly moderated discussion, sometimes the participants commented outside the topic.*
- ✓ *It was all right, short and informative.*
- ✓ *I think the local government should have had their space relating to the European Year of Volunteering. The national level was overly-emphasized; I believe that something is done on lower levels as well.*
- ✓ *It might have been more appropriate if about 130 participants joined a specific volunteering action. Pity that the celebration was left for Saturday when many participants had already left.*

- ✓ *It was all right, but boring. Too long. It would have been better if we had planted flowers around the hotel.*
- ✓ *Besides other also important subjects, this one took too much time, more than necessary.*
- ✓ *Talk about volunteering was too superficial, and there was too little time, vague purpose of the topic.*

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This year's NGO Days were very highly graded and according to the results gathered through evaluation, it is obvious that the participants were extremely satisfied with the use of the Open Space method, which enabled a high level of participation, exchange of experiences, ideas, giving suggestions and recommendations, as well as establishing contacts and communication with a large number of participants. The organizers are recommended to use the Open Space method in the future in organizing similar events.

The participants' suggestions for the organization of similar events in the future might be grouped into the suggestions for the development of various organizational elements, including: work time dynamics which would enable more free time and time for informal socializing of the participants, development of the organization (accommodation, timely and accurate informing of the potentially interested parties for participation, possibilities of participation, location), methodology. In their contents, the NGO Days might be improved by organizing a volunteering action, providing the possibility of presenting the organizations, reducing the number of topics and work intensity.

Considering the **development of the use of Open Space method**, the participants gave certain recommendations and had very different views about the limitations of the existing method:

- ✓ *I have explained earlier (Open Space method is appropriate for gathering general information from CSOs, but not for a detailed consideration about actions and measures. Therefore, I think Friday afternoon was unnecessary or it should have been organized differently. The work planned for that period required more knowledge and skills.)*
- ✓ *This is a very interesting and useful technique partially, because it enables everyone to participate in accordance with their possibilities and responsibilities. On the other hand, it is restrictive in the detailed elaboration of guidelines according to areas and in defining actions, because it requires the understanding of a wider image and knowledge.*
- ✓ *This way of work has its good and bad sides. The obvious challenge is that not everyone can participate in everything. All participants were unable to take part in all discussions. Bumblebees and butterflies disrupt the discussion; they cannot follow what was going on before. A lot of time was wasted on repetition.*
- ✓ *The method is very efficient, but it requires some minor changes. There were too many topics, i.e. they should have been grouped or structured better. Some topics required more time (e.g. 2 conversation circles) or "external" moderating.*
- ✓ *It was quite efficient. Still, in an hour and a half it is difficult to go in deeply or more consistently into the subject matter, especially in large groups, and when taking in consideration the different participants' profiles and backgrounds.*
- ✓ *A very good method, but if there had been more conversation circles, I would have taken part in more topics that interested me, thus I feel deprived.*
- ✓ *I suggest the cancellation of the "bumblebee flights". They disrupt the work too frequently; there is a lot of idle work, repetition of what had already been said. It might be a good idea to group similar organizations together.*

In relation to **organization development**, the participants suggested the following:

- ✓ *Organize similar events in Splitsko-Dalmatinska County.*
- ✓ *Better organization in hotels relating to the meals for the participants who did not have accommodation, in order to avoid unpleasant surprises. Avoid delays with the opening of the NGO Days.*
- ✓ *Increase the number of organizations which participate with the co-financing by the organizations as much as they can afford it.*
- ✓ *On arrival, ensure more technical information to the guests: the hotel where they are situated, when the meals are served, when the hotel must be left...*
- ✓ *Provide a list of topics in advance; reason - possibility of preparation would be better. The choice of topics in the organization depends on the current atmosphere in the society.*
- ✓ *Include a greater number of participants at the NGO Days and ask the participants to participate in the expenses (at least symbolically).*
- ✓ *I do not know how many organizations were turned down and why, but I think it would be good to have more of us; I learned something new from every person I talked with. Thank you, I wish you plenty of success in the future. Information must be available before the beginning of the NGO Days.*
- ✓ *The organization was very successful. I propose for all activities to take place during the working week, so one can participate in everything.*
- ✓ *Perhaps special theme meetings, which were the subject of the greatest interest here.*
- ✓ *Just a little bit more details in information to participants about transport, accommodation and program.*
- ✓ *More contact with the organizations who wish to participate, but do not have IT so they are uninformed.*
- ✓ *Care for the needs of all participants (relates to the earlier commentary: Some programs were not available to the disabled).*

Concerning the **work time dynamics**, the participants suggested:

- ✓ *A bit more free time for socializing and sightseeing.*
- ✓ *A bit more time for socializing and exchange of experiences.*
- ✓ *A bit more free time.*
- ✓ *The program was crammed. It would have been more effective if the participants had had 3-4 hours off (e.g. sightseeing of Pula), and not be engaged 12 hours a day (and more).*
- ✓ *Definitely ensure more time for socializing, exchange of experiences, sightseeing...*
- ✓ *I know it is hard to do, but breaks should be longer and there should be less pressure.*
- ✓ *I suggest that after arrival, we first get into our rooms, after that we get the program and guidelines, and finally we get to know each other with a welcoming address. Next day, after getting some rest, we start dealing with the topics, talk and discuss.*
- ✓ *Open Space method is great, but the activities were overbooked. Pay attention to that next time.*
- ✓ *There should be more room for rest. Working 9 to 14 hours is too much. Another half a day, and we would have done this with more concentration.*
- ✓ *As this pace of work is too demanding - stagger it with breaks. It would be more effective. And there would be more time for socializing and getting to know the participants, as well as to exchange work experiences.*
- ✓ *Perhaps a bit more time for work, and then a bit longer pause, to have a greater effect.*

Participants' **recommendations** relating the contents:

- ✓ *It would be a good idea to include a real volunteering action, in which all the participants would take part - this would be a standard practice for future NGO Days.*

- ✓ *If there will be more organizations whose topic is offering support to the making of the National Civil Society Strategy, take more into consideration the results and basis of the old strategy.*
- ✓ *There should have been a volunteering activity.*
- ✓ *Organizing a round table on the final day was not efficient. If this was supposed to be given special importance, then it should have been held on the first day, at the very opening, with some promotional film or something similar.*
- ✓ *I think that the local government should have had their space related to the European Year of Volunteering. National level was given too much attention, but I believe that something is done on lower levels as well.*
- ✓ *Debate/panel discussion OK. Perhaps we might have done a volunteering action in Pula all together.*
- ✓ *It was good, but boring. Too long. It would have been better if we had planted flowers around the hotel.*
- ✓ *It might have been more appropriate if about 130 participants of the NGO Days joined some real volunteering action. Pity that the celebration was left for Saturday, after a large number of participants had already left.*
- ✓ *In the sea of other important topics, the emphasis on volunteering got a bit lost.*
- ✓ *Unfortunately, in my opinion, considering the importance of volunteering for civil society, we should not have, especially this year as it is the European Year of Volunteering, discussed it in a very general manner, addressing different aspects of the topic related to volunteering. Despite the good moderator and obviously a great experience, everything remained on a superficial level.*
- ✓ *Organizing a volunteering activity; enrich the contents/program with cultural, sports and entertaining events.*
- ✓ *It would be great if we could get all necessary information about the activities of the organization in one place, like on a stand.*
- ✓ *Celebrating volunteering, presenting volunteer programs by certain organizations and volunteering actions.*
- ✓ *Present a few organizations which achieved good results in the previous period. Also take one organization which has problems in its work, and try to help it.*
- ✓ *“Report” about the cooperation with the government, about legislation and its changes for the better, which web pages are best for tracking changes.*
- ✓ *Try to guide the discussion to talk more about the organization and less about the finances (in the end, all discussions end there).*
- ✓ *If you want to organize something relating to volunteering well, in the process of organization a lot of effort should be made to exchange information about volunteering.*
- ✓ *Carry on doing as you have done so far. In the future, there could be more study programs.*
- ✓ *Each organization has its own stand, a place where it could present its work “live” (brochures, souvenirs, hand-made works...).*
- ✓ *Commendations to organization. A small objection has already been mentioned - too many topics for discussion considering the number of participants.*

General commentaries:

- ✓ *Great, continue like this. Informal workshop activity is a winning method for the civil society.*
- ✓ *More modern hotel and informing about small organizational details on site, and not just in preparatory stage.*
- ✓ *While organizing such events, it would be great to use the Open Space method.*
- ✓ *Interactive socializing and work in the future as well.*
- ✓ *Perhaps in Pula again, I expect your invitation.*

- ✓ *The organization was excellent. All information and materials easily available, timely, and updated. Excellent idea with vouchers. Open Space method fantastic, but it should be a bit modified.*
- ✓ *Just carry on, commendations to organizers.*
- ✓ *Year after year, the NGO Days keep getting better and better, up to date and creative. I think this approach should be remained, first of all in the creative was of work and in its role of exchanging information and CSOs cooperation.*
- ✓ *Carry on.*
- ✓ *If possible, always use Open Space.*
- ✓ *I think this was a useful and motivating experience, and I am grateful for the invitation.*

Annex 1. Evaluation questionnaire

Evaluation questionnaire (NGO Days, Pula, 26 – 28 May 2011)

Please reply to the following questions by circling the chosen grade or writing your reply in the allocated space.
Thank you!

1. How would you grade the entire NGO Days?

1 (not good)	2 (acceptable)	3 (good)	4 (very good)	5 (excellent)
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Please provide a brief explanation of your grade:

2. Please evaluate the organizational part of the NGO Days.
(1 – not good, 5 – excellent)

Previous information about the NGO Days	1	2	3	4	5
Venue of the NGO Days	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodation (<i>please specify where you were situated</i>)	1	2	3	4	5
Informational and promotional materials	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide an explanation of your grades, including additional commentaries concerning the organization of the NGO Days:

3. In your opinion, how much was the Open Space method useful for the NGO Days?

4. Please evaluate the following questions on a scale from 1 to 5
(1 – not satisfied, 5 – extremely satisfied)

Possibility of personal participation	1	2	3	4	5
Possibility of exchange of ideas and giving suggestions	1	2	3	4	5
Possibility of establishing contact and connecting to other organizations	1	2	3	4	5
Results obtained through group work	1	2	3	4	5

5. How would you grade the entire celebration of the European Year of Volunteering in the framework of the NGO Days?

0 I did not participate	1 (not good)	2 (acceptable)	3 (good)	4 (very good)	5 (excellent)
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Please provide a brief explanation of your grade:

6. Please make suggestions which would assist us in the organization of similar events in the future:
