

National Foundation for Civil Society Development

The National Foundation for Civil Society Development (NFCSD) in Croatia envisions a resilient, inclusive society where local communities are empowered to drive sustainable change. NFCSD has long sought innovative ways to reduce dependency on public funding and empower grassroots leadership. Their collaboration with Relativ Impact has spanned over 14 years, beginning with pioneering crowdfunding initiatives and evolving into systemic community development programmes. This enduring partnership aligns closely with Relativ’s impact goals of supporting responsible, learning organisations and catalysing long-term, community-led transformation.



Sector
**Community
Development**



Location
Croatia

The Challenge

NFCSD sought to build resilient local ecosystems capable of sustaining change beyond traditional donor support. They aimed to shift mindsets, build capacity, and create systems that empower local actors to lead change. Relativ Impact partnered to help introduce new models of learning, funding, and collaboration.

What We Contributed

Over the course of our working relationship we have contributed to the following initiatives of the National Foundation:

- > The launch of Croatia’s first crowdfunding platform for civil society
- > EuroMed Academy: equipping Mediterranean changemakers to lead local initiatives
- > i3.0 Programme: supporting intergenerational, community-led development
- > Philanthropy Academy: training Croatian foundations, with Relativ experts sharing practical approaches



“There is growth in the understanding of how to make change and how to really improve the way these foundations and other organisations work; this also created a kind of domino effect... new possibilities were created for the beneficiaries as well.”

Cvjetana Plavša-Matić, National Foundation for Civil Society Development

Our Impact

Highlights from our journey together in conversation with Cvjetana Plavša-Matić, National Foundation for Civil Society Development.

Pioneering a New Funding Culture

Over a 14-year partnership, we've collaborated to spark meaningful transformation in Croatia's civil society. This journey began with the introduction of crowdfunding, which enabled over 60 organisations to explore new ways of mobilising support. This early effort not only provided a practical funding alternative but also planted the seeds for a shift in mindset around agency, initiative, and innovation in the non-profit sector.

Responding to Crisis with Community-Led Innovation

Along with the COVID-19 crisis came a recognition of the urgent need to build local resilience. In response, Relativ and NFCSD co-developed the EuroMed Academy and i3.0 Programme, equipping intergenerational and cross-sector teams across Croatian cities to lead community change initiatives. This work laid the foundation for the i3.0 Community Potentials Programme, a bold new model of partnership launched via public call. Through this initiative, communities received training, mentorship, and seed funding to identify local challenges and implement grassroots solutions.

Shaping Organisational Thinking and Strengthening Trust

The partnership influenced NFCSD's internal practices, strategic decisions, and approach to impact, building a culture of learning and confidence within NFCSD and the broader civil society ecosystem. Over the years, the relationship has evolved, resulting in increased capacity, trust, and mutual success.

Catalysing Broader Impact and Regional Influence

Relativ Impact's support has enabled greater visibility and influence for NFCSD and its partners, fuelling new collaborations across education, philanthropy, urban development, and cultural dialogue. Through this work, a model of participatory democracy and resilient community-building is maturing and being shared regionally into the Mediterranean. Today, the partnership continues to shape ambitions for broader regional influence; empowering young people, strengthening intergenerational ties, and proving that transformative change is possible when people are equipped, connected, and trusted to lead.

Enabling, Catalysing & Amplifying Impact

“We are running a marathon and ... in these 14 years, we have these points on our journey where we can say this is the impact and change we made and everything that we are doing now is a kind of harvest from what we seeded at the beginning.”

Thriving & Resilient Communities



“I really believe that we have more resilient and sustainable local communities... people who will be dedicated and at the same time engaged in these changes, not only as a passive part of the community, but somebody who is really going to contribute.”

Synergistic & Healthy Environments



“There's a very nice synergy between them... it's amazing how these young people are taking care of the elderly.”

Learning, Responsible Organisations Maximising Positive Social & Environmental Impact

“You brought to us a different way of thinking, you broadened our horizons, gave us some knowledge and experience that we can use in our work.”

