



# POLO-Cro28

Opservatorij politika u Hrvatskoj  
Jean Monnet potpora institucijama  
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## **An Overview of Activities and Project Results: POLO-Cro28 Policy Observatory in Croatia, Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Support to Institution**

POLO-28 Policy Observatory in Croatia is an Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Support to Institution Project led by the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) over three years, from September 2015 to August 2018. The project was designed as an observatory for the implementation of selected European Union (EU) economic policies in Croatia and new EU Member States. Researchers and junior collaborators at IRMO in Zagreb participated in the project, coordinated by Ass. Prof. Višnja Samardžija. All project results are published on the IRMO webpage in Croatian and in English language.

This project aimed to identify key challenges in implementing chosen EU policies in Croatia and to use the experiences and examples of best practice from other New EU Member States to prepare recommendations for Croatian policymakers. It also aimed to improve communication about EU policies among researchers, policymakers and civil society and to improve the level of knowledge, transparency and understanding related to these policies. The project's long-term goal was to improve, expand innovate and strengthen the visibility of IRMO's research activities in certain selected fields of EU economic policies, encourage public debate and increase public awareness about these topics. Another equally important project goal was to develop the skills and knowledge of junior researchers by including them in the research activities with the support of a mentor.

POLO-Cro28 systematically monitored and used a multi-disciplinary approach to analyse six areas of EU policies: i) economic governance and the European Semester, ii) competitiveness, iii) social policy and youth unemployment, iv) cohesion policy and coordination of EU funds, v) energy

policy, vi) environmental protection policy. A methodological framework was developed for the scientific research and analytic work. Furthermore, round-tables were organised for each individual thematic area, research documents were prepared (policy papers and analyses), an international conference was organised and finally, a book compiling the research was published.

Six thematic round-tables were organised within the project, each of them covering one project area, with the goal of increasing awareness on the need for continually implementing economic and social reforms in Croatia using the revised Europe 2020 strategy. The European Commission Representation in Zagreb was a partner in the organisation of each round-table event, which significantly contributed to the visibility and quality of public debates. Each round-table was designed and implemented in collaboration with researchers, policymakers and stakeholders for specific thematic area. On the local level the round tables were organised in Osijek and Opatija, in cooperation with the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University Osijek, and Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka and the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellency in Opatija.

Round-tables featured experts from Croatia who discussed current challenges aiming to improve the implementation of European recommendations. Croatia's achievements were critically assessed in comparison to the results achieved by other new Member States, in order to identify examples of best practice and the possibility of these being used in Croatia. The round tables were also an opportunity for communicating issues in implementing European policies to the Croatian public. Four round tables (European Semester, environmental protection, competitiveness and cohesion policies) were held at the European Commission's Representation in Zagreb. The final two events were organised outside Zagreb in order to achieve a more balanced geographic distribution of the project's activities. The event on social policies and youth unemployment took place at the Rectorate of Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, while the event on energy policy was held at the Jean Monnet Inter-University Centre for Excellence in Opatija. Both audiences and media were very interested in all six events. Junior researchers prepared reports for each event, which were then disseminated over the website, providing the public an opportunity to gain insight into the presentations and ensuing debates.

The project's main scientific research results were included in six policy papers which examined Croatia's achievements in comparison to other selected new Member States for the six analysed areas. These policy papers were published on the project website and at the end of the project period in this book. Each of the papers uses the same methodological approach. Analyses are based on academic sources and official documents as well as on relevant statistical indicators. Each policy paper offers analytical,

augmented recommendations for policymakers in Croatia, with the goal of improving the implementation of EU policies. The policy papers' authors are senior researchers at IRMO and external experts. Each policy paper was reviewed twice, proofread and translated into English.

Junior researchers published eighteen short analyses online with the mentoring of the project leaders. These analyses included selected and current issues facing policy implementation in selected areas in Croatia, Croatia's success in comparison with other countries, and oftentimes they further elaborated aspects of analyses previously published in policy papers. Eleven junior researchers, IRMO employees, interns and external collaborations participated in the preparation of these analyses. Same as the policy papers short analyses were continually published on the project's website.

The research results were also presented at scientific conferences. For example, the results of the policy paper in the area of economic governance and the European Semester were presented by the project's coordinator at the conference "EU and North America: An Inevitable Partnership" in Halifax, Canada from 9 to 11 May 2016. The conference was organised by the European Community Studies Association – Canada (ECSA-C) with the support of the EU's Erasmus+ Program.

During the project's implementation, special care was taken to network with people implementing other, similar projects. As a result, the project coordinator participated at the Jean Monnet Seminar "European Union à la carte", held in Malmö, Sweden from 19 to 20 June 2016, where she presented some of the results of the POLO-Cro28 project. In October 2016, a junior project collaborator participated in a training program organised as a part of PONT – Professional Training on EU Affairs, held in Brussels by the Trans-European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA). The same training was attended by other junior collaborator in May 2018. The trainings were organised as part of a similar project, called "Professional Training on EU Affairs – PONT" which was financed by the Jean Monnet Program of Erasmus+, as was POLO-Cro28. The results of the majority of policy papers were used by IRMO researchers to inform their teaching activities at Croatian universities, where many of them are lecturers.

Project visibility was made possible through creating and regularly updating the project's bilingual (Croatian-English) website, (<http://polocro28.irmo.hr/en/>). The website was created at the very beginning of the project's implementation as a sub-page of the IRMO website; it includes sections on news, project information, events and research. All the reports and research materials created during the project were disseminated through the website, and the news section regularly featured relevant news for the selected research areas. The website is

linked with the IRMO Facebook and Twitter accounts, which were also used to disseminate information about the project's activities. As a member of TEPSA, IRMO was also able to use the TEPSA newsletter as a key channel for visibility and dissemination of project events and publications.

An international conference called "The Challenges in Implementing EU Policies in Croatia and Other New Member States" was organised in Zagreb on 9 July 2018. The conference convened Croatian and foreign experts to discuss current issues in the project areas and was an opportunity to present all the project's activities. The conference was opened with a plenary presentation by the High Representative of the European Commission. The remainder of the conference's work was divided into two thematic panels: i) Economic governance and the coordination of socio-economic policies, and ii) Cohesion policy, energy and environmental protection issues. The conference was organised in collaboration with the Representation of the European Commission in Croatia, as were the four round tables held in Zagreb.

The final output of this project is the bilingual book "*Izazovi provedbe europskih politika u Hrvatskoj / The Challenges in Implementing European Policies in Croatia*", issued by IRMO. The book is available in printed and electronic version. It brings the updated versions of the policy papers written during the project period that were available on the project's website.