

Erasmus Student Network Croatia

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About ESN

Erasmus Student Network Croatia is an independent, non-profit, student, voluntary, apolitical, non-governmental and non-religious national organisation governed by the principles of Erasmus Student Network AISBL. ESN is the biggest student association in Europe. It is present in more than 1000 higher education institutions from 42 countries and the network is constantly developing and expanding. We have around **15 000 active members** who are in many sections supported by non-members or so-called buddies mainly taking care of international students. Thus, ESN involves around **40 000 young people** offering its services to around **350 000 international students** every year.

ESN works towards the development of a more mobile and flexible education environment by supporting and developing the student exchange from different levels and providing an intercultural experience also to those students who cannot access a period abroad ("internationalisation at home").

All of our volunteers share the same mission, vision, and values. Our areas of work can be described under a common name - causes. Six causes of ESN are **Culture, Environmental Sustainability, Health and Well-being, Education and Youth, Skills and Employability, and Social Inclusion**.

ESN is operating on the local, national, and international levels. ESN Croatia is considered to be the national level of ESN present in the Republic of Croatia and it has six local sections in six different cities across the country: ESN Dubrovnik, ESN Osijek, ESN Rijeka, ESN Split, ESN Zadar, and ESN Zagreb.

Students Helping Students

In ESN we value volunteering and active citizenship, so we work in the interest of international students and that is why we represent their needs and rights on the **local**, **national**, and **international** level.

For the international students who come to study in Croatia, we work on improving their social and practical integration and provide relevant information about their stay and the country's culture. We are doing that through:

- **ESNbuddy programme** (a project that aims to assign an incoming Erasmus student with an "ESNbuddy" who is a local student willing to help an exchange student to get up on their feet in their first weeks in a new country);
- **Welcome Weeks** (a week at the beginning of a semester with many orientation activities for introducing the international students to each other, their university, and to the city);
- **integration in the local communities** (activities in the local sections, which include cultural and social events such as trips to various places within the country, film nights, language projects, international food festivals and last, but not least, parties).

We also provide help to the students going abroad from our country by providing relevant information about mobility programmes, motivating students to study abroad, working with the reintegration of homecoming students, and contributing to the improvement and accessibility of student mobility. We especially focus on:

- sharing **personal mobility experiences** from our ESN volunteers;
- providing **contact information** for mobility programmes;
- having **contact with the universities** in Croatia through our local ESN sections.

Volunteering in ESN

We highly value all our volunteers and look after each one of them. They are the young European leaders which means they are open-minded, internationally-minded, very mobile, dynamic, active, multilingual, and communicative people.

Being in ESN gives the opportunity to live in an international environment at home, but also contribute to the mission of ESN: enrichment of society through international students. Advantages of being an ESN volunteer are connected to both your personal and professional life. You have a chance to develop many hard and soft skills, such as **event management**, **time management**, **communication**, **practice in foreign languages**, and a lot more, through various local events, but also training and conferences.

The most valuable part is, of course, **creating new friendships** all over the world and your **personal growth**. In the end, it all looks amazing in your CV and we are sure your future employees will be impressed by this kind of experience!



Local sections

Erasmus Student Network is present in 42 countries and 538 local sections, while ESN Croatia has six of those: **ESN Dubrovnik**, **ESN Osijek**, **ESN Rijeka**, **ESN Split**, **ESN Zadar**, and **ESN Zagreb**.



ESN Dubrovnik

ESN Dubrovnik was founded in 2012 by several students who returned from their student exchange to Dubrovnik. With the intention of encouraging the rest of the local students and attracting foreign students to the Erasmus programme, they founded an association, which at the moment has around 30 members. The main mission of ESN Dubrovnik is to make every international student feel like at home!



BEST PRACTICE EVENT – Trip To Sarajevo and Mostar

In February of 2020, ESN Dubrovnik organized a trip to Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was at the beginning of the new semester, so international and local students got to know each other better, share ideas, and stories. We got to promote each other's cultural heritage in a multicultural city of Sarajevo, where we witnessed a diverse religious background of the city and its united spirit. We educated foreign students on the Balkan heritage, lifestyle, and overall culture, so each went back to Dubrovnik realising the cultural beauty and complexity of this region.



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ESN Osijek

Everything started with a group of wanderlust students who experienced the beauty of travelling and learning from other cultures. During their Erasmus experience, some of them came in touch with ESN sections and that is how on the 18th of December 2012, our section was born.

Throughout the years the number of our partners kept increasing and still is, the people changed, but the overall atmosphere, and will to leave an impact on our local, national, and international environment, stood the test of time and remained unwavering. In the spirit of the famous statue in Osijek called *The Walker*, we will continue to create the path for a better tomorrow step by step!



BEST PRACTICE EVENT - An International Evening of Poetry and Music

An International Evening of Poetry and Music marks the cooperation of the Faculty of Economics in Osijek, Erasmus Student Network Osijek, and incoming Erasmus students with the aim of promoting linguistic and cultural diversity, intercultural communication, and competencies, as well as internationalisation of the University. In an authentic and globally oriented context, the gathering of young people marks World Poetry Day by reading poetry in their mother tongues, playing music, singing, or painting. The event has been traditionally organised for several years and the engagement of Erasmus students, as well as the attendance of local students, is increasing year by year.



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ESN Rijeka

The road has been long, but the section has grown from a crew of very few people to a well-organised team of motivated members who take their tasks seriously. One of our strong points is sharing tasks and cooperation so that all of our members are kept active and involved.

We started with only a dozen Erasmus students, but now we welcome around 100 each semester and our schedule is always filled with events. We were always proud of the connections our volunteers make with the incoming students - countless lifelong friendships started exactly in our city (some great romances, too)!



BEST PRACTICE EVENT - Human Library

The aim of this event was to introduce Erasmus students to diverse social minorities that have an unique and special story, story of overcoming the barriers, obstacles, and prejudice. Every *book* had its own corner around which several students gathered and listened to their story. After 20 minutes, the students went to another book and listened to the next person's story. This event served to connect foreign citizens with the locals, and students with diverse social groups, and to unite them through life stories, showing that despite our differences, we all have something in common.

ESN Rijeka received the first award for *inclusionSTAR* (the best socially inclusive activity) for the event Human Library held in January 2018 at the *Annual General Meeting* of Erasmus Student Network 2018.

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ESN Split

Aim of ESN Split is supporting international students who choose Split as a place for their studies. Each semester we get around 200 students, which is a really big number for us, and we are glad to know that our lovely city attracts more and more students every semester.

During their stay, Erasmus students are engaged in a plethora of activities organised by ESN Split that introduce them to the historical background of the city centre, beautiful islands in the region, breathtaking coast, and blue sea that is mentioned all around the world.



BEST PRACTICE EVENT – Local Platform

For the past few semesters, ESN Split has been organising different local platforms to educate new members and to show them what we do. These platforms were educational reporting programs with greater emphasis on education. We are also focusing on the knowledge transfer between coordinators, monthly reports on our work and activities, learning how to improve ourselves, and encouraging the interest and engagement of the members within the association.

We did a lot of workshops such as ESN on your CV, Google tools, Project management, Leadership, Mental Health workshops, etc. Through these workshops, we develop skills we will need for our future jobs.



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ESN Zadar

ESN Zadar was founded only two months after the establishment of the first Croatian section, ESN Zagreb, in November 2011. Everything we do for Erasmus students we do for us as well. We use the time we need for organising events for team-building activities and we have lunch together pretty much every single day. We live in a really small city and not a day goes by that we don't see each other on the streets. But the things we do just for us as ESN-ers and team building are movie nights, trips, and most usually long coffee breaks, something Croats are known for. It really feels like we are on Erasmus with our international students and we make the best out of every situation!



BEST PRACTICE EVENT – Free Hugs

Free Hugs is an event where ESN volunteers give hugs to passersby in the Old Town of Zadar. However, it is more than just an event. It taught us that even the smallest gestures may make someone's day, even if we do not know that person for a long time. Sometimes it is easy to take things for granted and forget about their importance. And sometimes we can take people for granted as well, often without realising it. That is why we have achieved a great feat in this event – by showing people that things like hugs are never an issue. Who knows? They might completely change the person's point of view for the day, or that person might be there for us when we face the same challenges they did before.



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ESN Zagreb

In the capital of Croatia, the city of Zagreb, is where you can find the first Croatian ESN section. Each semester our members organise a great number of diverse and educational activities for the incoming students in Zagreb which aim to help them connect with each other during their stay, get to know the local culture and everyday life, and the beauty of nature in Zagreb and Croatia.

Through different events and activities, we connect with international students and the local community in order to enrich our society and create the best possible mobility experience!



BEST PRACTICE EVENT – Be Part of Art

ESN Zagreb volunteers have organised a workshop for international students together with the Croatian painter Stjepan Perković. Mr Perković has been suffering from cerebral palsy his entire life, is famous for graduating on Art Academy in Split, and continuing his professional career by painting with his feet.

With this workshop, we wanted to allow our ESN volunteers and other students to talk with the artist about his life, and the challenges a person with a disability, who paints for living, faces. Moreover, they had a chance to try out painting with their feet themselves.



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