

# Youth and Youth-Oriented Organisations in Rural Croatia: A Case Study of Lika-Senj and Zadar Counties

## *Summary*

Rural youth are one of the priority groups within European youth policies and an essential part of the neo-endogenous development concept. This article examines the role of youth and youth-serving organizations (YOs) in the rural areas of Lika-Senj and Zadar County, two counties characterized by significant rural depopulation and demographic aging. The authors analyze findings from 12 semi-structured interviews with key civil society actors working with young people, covering their activities, obstacles, and development perspectives. The study finds that YOs contribute meaningfully to social inclusion, informal education, and community development, but their impact is constrained by poor cooperation with local self-government units, lack of dedicated public space, project-dependent funding, and administrative burdens. The authors conclude that the neo-endogenous development concept is not being realized in these areas, as the potential of youth organizations remains unrecognized by decision-makers, limiting youth participation in policy-making and indirectly discouraging young people from remaining in rural areas.