

WIND AT THE BACK NGO (UDRUGA VJETAR U LEĐA)
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“Wind At The Back” NGO was founded on 6 of July 2012. One of our NGO’s founders, Ksenija Ranogajec Benaković, gathered experience in running a gifted children’s program for one of the public kindergartens. She and her colleagues realized that there is a need for comprehensive program that meets the needs of preschool and school children alike and that’s how the initial idea to establish an independent organization came to life. They founded our organization and named the program “Little Sparks”, using the same name they used while starting their work in the kindergarten.



At “Wind At The Back” we believe that “Little Sparks” is a unique program in Croatia, because it combines different methods and fields. It encourages children to get involved with STEM field, as well as trying to spark interest in creativity, both artistic as well as intellectual. The program is aimed at developing analytical skills, logical reasoning, creative problem solving and social skills. It usually starts at the beginning of October, shortly after the start of school year and ends in May. Children join groups of peers and meet once a week for 75-90 min sessions organized and ran by two teachers.

In six years of its existence, “Wind At The Back” has managed to propel itself to the top of Croatia’s field of gifted education, becoming one of the best known names, both in Zagreb where it is situated, and in the rest of the country. Today we have a number of members from different fields of science, mainly psychologists and teachers, as well as more than a 100 children attending workshops. We have plans and ambition to expand even more and become a nation wide center.



First few years were the hardest, with a small number of children and a few enthusiasts running the program, trying to make do with limited resources and worrying about finding adequate housing and securing a long term lease. Years of hard work did not go unrecognized and “Wind At The Back” got its application for ETSN membership accepted in 2015., becoming one of the initial seven institutions from Croatia that got recognized as Talent points. A year later, the organization won the “Reach For Change” competition, getting more publicity and financial support. Last two years we spent trying to establish relationships with different institutions in and outside of Croatia, building a network and looking for partners with similar ideas to our own.

Today, we have around 150 children (aged 5 - 14) in 17 different groups involved in our "Little Sparks" program. Alongside our regular 18 teachers, we always have guests from different walks of life who join our workshops and cover different themes. Each year we organize a visit to Science and Education Center in Višnja, one of our partners. We attended “Excellence & Innovation in Basic & Higher Education and

Psychology'' conferences in Rijeka and Lisbon, Talent Education Conference (Portorož), 2nd International Professional-Research Meeting – Identifying the gifted and work with them in education (Ljubljana) and ECHA conference in Dublin in 2018. We partnered with Zagreb University, organizing volunteer work for psychology students interested in the field of giftedness and talent. We also started organizing workshops for teachers, mainly in schools where gifted and talented have not yet been supported by additional programs. So far we provided training for staff in 10 different schools and kindergartens.



We plan to start an international project with our partners from Israel's Bar-Ilan University that would give our teachers a one year education in creativity. Also, we plan to develop a plan of education for teachers in regular schools and to connect children from our gifted program with children attending gifted programs in Israel.

As of September 2018, four of our members are studying at RITHA, International training in gifted education, organized by Radboud University. After completion, we will become the number one institution in Croatia when it comes to number of Specialists in Gifted Education. We plan to use our knowledge and expertise to reach our long term goal which is the foundation and establishment of the Center for Talent Development.