

WHAT IS BIKLOPOPRAVLJAONA AND WHO IS IT FOR?

Biciklopopravljajona (or BicPop as it's more commonly known) is a volunteers collective based in Zagreb, Croatia, within Green Action/ Friends of the Earth Croatia NGO. The main idea of Biciklopopravljajona is strengthening of social solidarity through free exchange of knowledge and services and the promotion of sustainable transport. Our mission is to provide space, tools and advice on how to repair a bicycle to anyone who wants it. We have a wide range of bike tools and every Thursday between 17:00 and 20:00 our volunteers are available to help you fix anything you don't know how to do yourself. There's no charge for our help, but you may need to go and buy parts if they need to be replaced.

HOW IS BIKLOPOPRAVLJAONA DIFFERENT FROM A TYPICAL BIKE SHOP?

First, this bike workshop is based on DIY principles: you repair everything yourself or you learn how to repair it. Unlike other bike shops, you can't leave your bike and come back when it's done. You can ask volunteers for advice and help, but we expect that you want to learn about your bike and are willing to get oily.

Second, it is free of charge for everyone. Use of the tools and volunteers' help costs nothing. Of course, you'll need to buy new parts if yours are worn out or broken, and you'll need to go elsewhere for this as we are not a shop and don't have parts for sale. All our donations are spent on new tools and consumables (various lubricants, grease, degreasers, tyre patches...) which are also free of charge for all our customers. But nobody is obliged to give anything, regardless of the job done or amount of help received.

RECYCLING BICYCLES

One of the more important goals of this project is to stop old but usable bicycles and spare parts ending up as trash.

WHAT ARE OTHER ACTIVITIES BIKLOPOPRAVLJAONA IS DOING?

We organize bicycle repair courses. The last one was female only course in October and November 2017. We go out from our workshop and fix bicycles in open spaces or when invited to other cities. We publish a bicycle themed cartoon as another way of promoting sustainable living. We are often invited to speak in different media about our mission. We collect old bicycles, restore them and donate them. We work with different groups of people in need and provide them with bicycles.

HOW DID BIKLOPOPRAVLJAONA START BICYCLES FOR REFUGEES PROJECT?

It all started in 2014 when we donated bikes to 10 asylum seekers accommodated at the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers in Zagreb. In 2015 we worked with NGO Are You Syrious? providing assistance in the repair of bicycles, to meet the needs of refugees accommodated in the Zagreb and Kutina shelters. In time, as the number of refugees grew and people started talking about us in shelters, the demand for bicycles got much bigger and we started collecting bicycles on a larger scale. We invite people regularly through social media to donate bicycles. We organized a waiting list for people that need bicycles. Our project is still growing, in 2017 we donated more than 100 bicycles, which means not only 100 more cyclist on the streets and 100 happier people, but also that much less trash.

WHY ARE BICYCLES IMPORTANT FOR REFUGEES?

„Every new bike is a new sign of hope for refugees and asylum seekers, while the very act of repair and maintenance of bicycles meeting place, friendship, mutual understanding and acceptance. Ride a bike

free means to move freely - and that sense of freedom brings back hope and dignity.“ (I GET YOU <http://www.igetyou-jrs.org/biciklopopravljajona/>)

WHAT DO REFUGEES SAY?

Ibrahim, 14: "I am very glad I got a new bike! Now that spring has come at last I will be able to do some research around the city and have fun. I love to ride a bike, I often took it out after school in my hometown. It's nice to know that someone cares. This bike is for me a sign that at least something can be as before, that I will not be a refugee forever. Thank you all!"

Hamzah: "This bike gives me a sense of independence and free movement. I feel a little bit important and I will keep good care and maintain this bike. It was nice in Biciklopopravljajona - we had to roll up our sleeves and work, which made me feel useful. We had many laughs and now just seeing the bicycle gives me a smile on the face!"

(As told to Jesuit Refugee Service <http://www.igetyou-jrs.org/biciklopopravljajona/>)

HOW IS ALL OF THIS FINANCED?

All the bicycles we donated to refugees have been collected as donations from citizens. Biciklopopravljajona's activities in general have been financed within some projects run by Green Action NGO: School of Sustainability - project financed by European Union, Knowledge Centres – program financed by National Trust for Civil Society Development, etc. We are also partly funded by donations of our users, for e.g. repair material for donated bicycles has been financed from this donations. All the work that included bicycle collection, repairs and distribution has been done by our volunteers.

HOW DO WE PLAN TO CONTINUE?

We are preparing a basic repair course for refugees in Zagreb, for people that showed interest in this. The course will start in the middle of December.

We continue to collect old bicycles and in 2018 we plan to at least match the number of donations with 2017 (100). We also continually assist with bicycle repairs for people that received our donations.

We are organizing a bicycle festival in April and we are going to involve refugees to share their bicycle related stories.