Croatian Wikipedia Disinformation Assessment-2021

This page summarizes a recent evaluation the Wikimedia Foundation commissioned to better understand current and past challenges of the Croatian Wikipedia. Discussion is welcomed on the talk page in any language.

Croatian Wikipedia (Hr.WP) has been struggling with content and conduct-related challenges, causing repeated concerns in the global volunteer community for more than a decade. With support of the Wikimedia Foundation Board of Trustees, the Foundation retained an external expert to evaluate the challenges faced by the project. The evaluation, conducted between February and May 2021, sought to assess whether there have been organized attempts to introduce disinformation into Croatian Wikipedia and whether the project has been captured by ideologically driven users who are structurally misaligned with Wikipedia's five pillars guiding the traditional editorial project setup of the Wikipedia projects.

The Case of Croatian Wikipedia:
Encyclopaedia of Knowledge or Encyclopaedia for the Nation?

Croatian Wikipedia Disinformation Assessment

Croatian Wikipedia represents the Croatian standard variant of the Serbo-Croatian language. Unlike other pluricentric Wikipedia language projects, such as English, French, German, and Spanish, Serbo-Croatian Wikipedia's community was split up into- Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, and the original Serbo-Croatian wikis starting in 2003. The report concludes that this structure enabled local language communities to sort by points of view on each project, often falling along political party lines in the respective regions. The report asserts, furthermore, it deprived the newly-created

communities of editorial diversity that normally guides and underpins the traditionally successful process of editorial consensus in other pluricentric language projects.

The evaluation concluded that Hr.WP had been dominated by ideologically driven users who are misaligned with Wikipedia's five pillars, confirming concerns about the project's integrity from the global community. This review of Hr.WP articles and community-related documentation reveals that a group of administrators and editors have held de-facto control over the project for more than a decade. During that time, evidence that the expert evaluated suggests that they have intentionally distorted the content presented in articles, abused power, and systematically obstructed otherwise accepted global Wikipedia community practices.

While this investigation was proceeding, the volunteers of the Croatian-speaking community independently started to reorganize and pursue actions. As a result, a series of administrative actions against some of the concerning administrators resulted in one revocation of their administrator privileges. The report argues that this change is clearing the way for a potential restoration of the community. Further, it states that the current admins and active editors are making tangible improvements to some of the most sensitive and most disputed articles on the project.

Based on extensive investigation, and on insights into how the movement has approached setting up other pluricentric Wikipedia language projects, the report provides three recommendations:

1. **Encouraging the Croatian-speaking community to continue re-establishing a robust local governance system, requesting oversight and support from the rest of the Wikimedia movement as needed.**

2. **Encouraging the affected communities to discuss unifying community elections for admin and functionary roles across the involved wikis (Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, and Serbo-Croatian).**

3. **Encouraging the affected communities to discuss the possibility of re-merging Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian language projects into the original Serbo-Croatian language projects to re-align with the practices of other pluricentric languages with unified Wikipedia projects; including but not limited to Chinese, English, German, Spanish, Tamil, Korean, and French language Wikipedias.**

The report provides pros and cons regarding each recommendation and the lessons learned to support a stronger and more resilient community.

Greater context ✏️

The threat may be gone but the vulnerability remains:

Why is this report being released?