



FABLAB.HR

ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF DIGITAL FABRICATION

CROATIA'S FIRST FABLAB · EST. 2013

A Croatian Contribution to a European Renaissance

Building local ecosystems that rebalance Europe — from the city to the remote island.

MASTER PUBLICATION · 2026

Not a technology organisation that does social good — a social organisation for which technology is a tool.



We are not a technology organisation that happens to do social good. We are a social organisation for which technology is a tool.

For more than a decade, FabLab Zagreb has worked from a single conviction: that the widening gap between those who can access new technology and those who cannot is not a side effect of progress to be tolerated — it is a form of poverty in its own right.

Closing that gap is a social obligation. The tools of digital fabrication — 3D printers, laser cutters, code, and the confidence to use them — are not amenities for the already-connected. They are social infrastructure, as fundamental to a community's future as a school or a library, and they belong to those who need them most.

THREE CLAIMS THIS DOCUMENT MAKES

01 The gap is structural — and closable

Access to technology now determines who shapes the future and who merely receives it. We show a working method for narrowing that gap, from a city district to a remote island.

02 The periphery is a laboratory, not a liability

Croatia's geography compresses the European condition on a small territory. What is proven here — in reactivated schools, factories and hospitals — is legible across the Mediterranean and beyond.

03 Trust can be made accountable

We ask Europe to trust local actors — and we bring the instrument that makes that trust verifiable, built from within the sector and already piloted.

THE DOCUMENT AT A GLANCE

Parts I–II · The frame & who we are

LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS · DIGITAL POVERTY · TWELVE YEARS OF REACH

Part III · The model & two contexts

PEOPLE · PLACES · POLICY — URBAN ↔ RURAL & REMOTE

Parts IV–V · People & Places

DFA AND THE APP · FOUR REACTIVATED LOCATIONS

Part VI · The Mediterranean

ADRIATIC GREENLAB · THE NETWORK · REWEAVE

Parts VII–VIII · Policy & proof

RECOGNISE · TRUST · VERIFY — AND THE RECORD

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

One argument, told in order: why local ecosystems (the frame) — where they are built (two contexts) — who they empower (People) — where that happens (Places) — and how it lasts (Policy). Then the record that shows we are already doing it.

Creating local ecosystems

Europe's strength has always been its diversity of places. Yet that same geography now carries a widening imbalance — opportunity concentrates in a handful of dense urban centres while islands, rural regions and small towns lose people, services and confidence. Our answer is not a programme delivered to these places, but ecosystems grown inside them.

A local ecosystem, as we build it, joins three things that are usually funded separately: people with the confidence and skill to create; a physical place — most often a reactivated public building — where that capability can be practised and shared; and the policies that make access durable beyond any single project cycle.

The distance between Europe's centres and its edges is not only economic. It is a distance in capability — in who gets to imagine, prototype and shape the technologies that will define the coming decades. When access

depends on where you were born or what you can afford, the gap is no longer personal. It is structural. We name it plainly: digital poverty — a form of poverty in its own right, worth fighting directly.

Left unaddressed, the gap compounds. Communities that cannot participate in shaping technology become dependent on receiving it — and dependency accelerates the very depopulation and loss of confidence that created the gap in the first place. The cost of inaction grows with every school generation that passes without access.

THE NARRATIVE, IN FOUR STEPS

01 People can be strengthened

Our academy and its application already do this — daily, measurably, and at a distance: creative confidence built from the youngest pupil to a ministry team.

02 But capability needs a place

Without infrastructure, capability has nowhere to compound — and the risk of inequality and poverty will not shrink. In remote and rural areas the market will never provide that place on its own.

03 So infrastructure is a social obligation

Open access to the tools of making must be understood the way Europe once understood schools and libraries — as something a community is owed, not something it purchases.

04 And that is why policies are needed

Only policy makes access durable beyond a project cycle. People, then Places, then Policy — one narrative, not three programmes.

THE PREMISE

When access to technology depends on where you were born or what you can afford, closing the gap is not charity. It is a social obligation — and the means of closing it is infrastructure.

The imbalances we set out to narrow

Cohesion is usually measured in transfers and infrastructure spend. We propose a complementary lens: the distribution of creative and technological agency. By that measure, four European gaps run in parallel — not four problems, but one, seen from four sides.

THE GAP IN PLACE Centres vs. edges Dense urban centres vs. islands, rural and remote regions history has passed by. Croatia had 100 inhabited islands a century ago; fewer than 50 remain. Every closed school and emptied village is capability Europe loses.	THE GAP IN GEOGRAPHY North vs. south & west vs. east In development and GDP per head, Europe's map splits along two axes at once: a developed north beside a Mediterranean south, and a western core beside an east still converging two decades after enlargement. Croatia sits at the intersection of both — and its own east, the Slavonian plains, mirrors the continental pattern.
THE GAP IN MEANS Those who can afford access — and those who cannot A professional 3D printer costs a monthly salary; the confidence to use one costs a community that shows you how. When access is priced privately, it stops at the household budget.	THE GAP IN GENERATIONS Fluent vs. left behind Retirees, workers in declining industries, anyone whose education predates the digital turn and who was never invited back in — left behind not by ability, but by the absence of an open door.

These are not separate problems but one: a distance between those who shape technological futures and those who merely receive them. A network of open, inclusive innovation spaces — running one shared method — is a direct instrument for narrowing all four at once.

WHERE EACH GAP IS ANSWERED IN THIS DOCUMENT

The gap in place	PLACES • FOUR REACTIVATED SITES, FROM CAPITAL TO ISLAND • PART V
The gap in geography	THE MEDITERRANEAN DIMENSION • AGL → BASIN • PART VI
The gap in means	PEOPLE • OPEN ACCESS, FREE AT THE POINT OF CURIOSITY • PART IV
The gap in generations	PEOPLE • INTERGENERATIONAL METHOD, FROM PUPILS TO RETIREES • PART IV

ONE DISTANCE, FOUR FACES

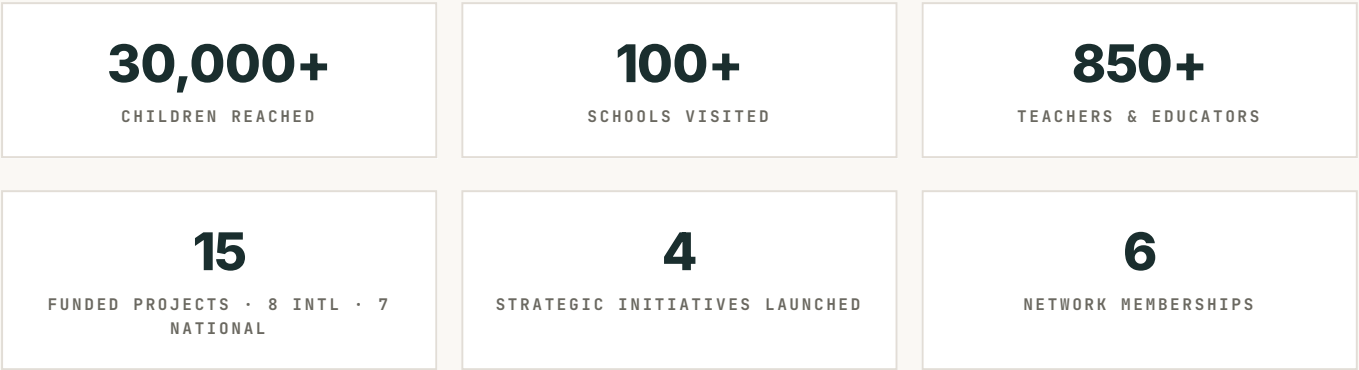
These gaps are not closed by transfers alone. They close where a person can walk into an open workshop, be shown a tool, and leave with the confidence to return — whichever side of whichever gap they started on.

Twelve years of making impact — measured by reach

In Zagreb, in 2013, the doors of Croatia's first FabLab opened. What began as a small space with a handful of machines has grown into one of the most recognisable hubs of the maker and innovation scene in this part of Europe. Its core question never changed: who gets left behind when technology moves fast, and what can be done about it?

The idea was deceptively simple, and quietly radical: put the tools of digital fabrication — 3D printers, laser cutters, CNC machines — into anyone's hands, not only engineers and companies that could afford their own equipment. A child shaping an idea on a 3D printer for the first time, a retiree learning laser cutting, an entrepreneur prototyping before risking their savings — in our eyes these are the same act: the democratisation of knowledge once locked behind the doors of universities and corporations.

Over more than a decade this grew from one room into an organisation working at three levels at once — on the ground with schools and communities across the country, at the institutional level with universities and city governments, and at the European level through Horizon Europe, Interreg and Erasmus consortia. The lab measures itself, above all, by who it reaches.



FOUR INITIATIVES WE LAUNCHED

Designing the Future Academy	METHOD • CURRICULUM • APP — LIVE AT APP.DFA.FABLAB.HR
Adriatic GreenLab	ISLAND LIVING LAB • NATIONAL INITIATIVE SINCE 2020
Mediterranean Makers Initiative	MANIFESTO LAUNCHED ZAGREB • DECEMBER 2025
People • Places • Policy	THE STRATEGIC FRAME OF THIS DOCUMENT • 2026

FOUNDED 1 MARCH 2013 • SYSTEMIC SUPPORT SINCE 2024

Beneficiary of Thematic Systemic Support for "STEM as a driver of development" — National Foundation for Civil Society Development.

People • Places • Policy

Everything we do organises around three layers that feed one another. It is not three separate programmes — it is one argument, seen from three sides: who we empower, where they create, and how we make it last.

CAPABILITY

People

Strengthen creative confidence and practical skill, with deliberate priority for those furthest from access — by distance, age, income or ability. Technology is the tool; human capacity is the goal.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Places

Transform abandoned and underused heritage into open, inclusive spaces where knowledge, skills and generations meet — reading empty buildings not as a maintenance burden but as a social demand.

OBLIGATION

Policy

Treat democratic access to technology as shared European infrastructure — a condition for cohesion, not a reward for it — and make that access accountable from within.

HOW THE CIRCUIT RUNS

What is learned on the ground — in a workshop, with a class, in a village — feeds upward into curricula, tools and institutional partnerships. What is won at the policy level — funding, legitimacy, recognition — feeds back down to the ground as new spaces, new programmes and new reach. Most organisations choose one level and stay there; we have insisted for over a decade on working all three simultaneously, because each is weaker without the others.

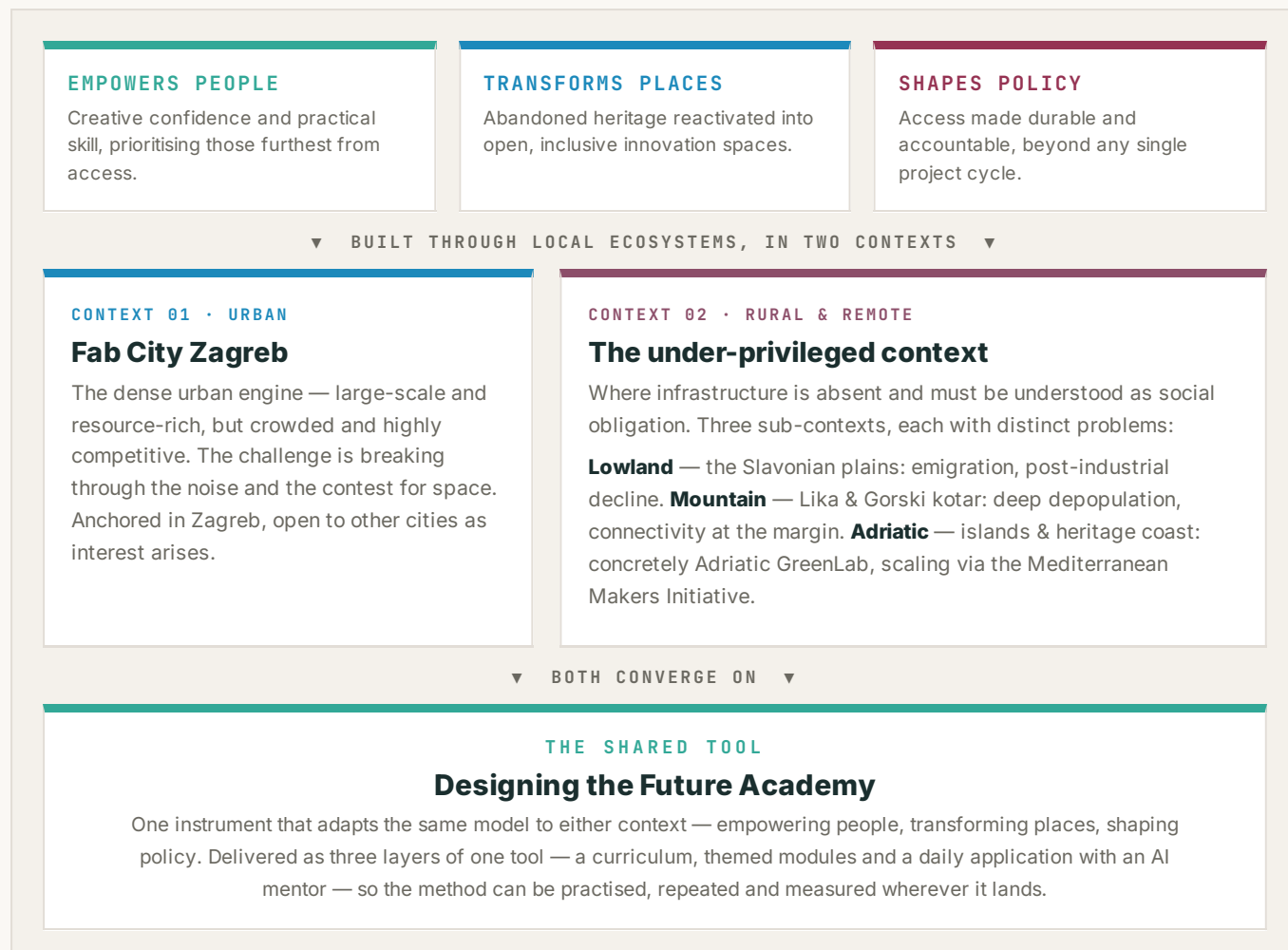
The same principle appears at every scale. The participatory, transparent decision-making we practise in a physical workshop is built into the digital tools we develop for schools and teams. The local-ecosystem model tested in Zagreb travels to the Adriatic islands and on to heritage sites across the Mediterranean. Ideas are not prescribed to others — they are practised in our own work first.

THE THROUGH-LINE

Technology is a tool, not the goal. Innovation begins with understanding people — and only then putting technology in the service of the common good. It is why we open with poverty and inequality rather than with machines — and why the machines matter anyway.

One method, two basic contexts

Local ecosystems are not built in the abstract. They are grown in two fundamentally different starting conditions — and Croatia's small territory contains all of them, close enough to research and compare.



Why one method and not several? Because the difference between the city and the island is a difference in starting conditions, not in what people need. Both need creative confidence, a place to practise it, and policies that make access durable — and each context teaches the method something the others cannot: the city to compete for attention, the plains to work with industry in decline, the mountains to operate with almost no one around, the islands autonomy. A shared instrument means every lesson learned in one context immediately strengthens the other.

EUROPE'S LABORATORY

Croatia's geography compresses the European condition on a small territory — a capital region beside depopulating islands, plains and mountains, a developed north beside an underserved south. We do not present Croatia as Europe's periphery. We offer it as Europe's laboratory.

Empowering those furthest from access

The future will be shaped by people who can face problems no one has solved before. Designing the Future Academy (DFA) builds exactly that capacity — creativity, creative confidence and personal empowerment — and makes it accessible to those who need it most.

WHO "LESS-PRIVILEGED" MEANS TO US

GEOGRAPHY

Islands, rural & remote communities.

ECONOMICS

Technology priced out of reach.

AGE

Disconnected from new tools.

ABILITY

Physical ability and access needs.

WHAT DFA BUILDS

01

Creativity

02

Creative confidence

03

Personal empowerment

04

Future-readiness

THE METHOD • DESIGN THINKING, PRACTISED DAILY

At its core DFA is design thinking, structured as a five-phase journey applied to real challenges anchored in the UN Sustainable Development Goals — explored through digital skills, prototyping and design, circular economy, and new materials.

01

Empathise

Step into a stakeholder's shoes.

02

Define

Frame the real problem.

03

Ideate

Generate many options.

04

Prototype

Make the idea tangible.

05

Test

Learn and iterate.

Why creative confidence, specifically? Because skills age, but the capacity to face an unfamiliar problem does not. A person who has practised the journey from empathy to tested prototype carries that capability into every job, every community role, and every crisis — long after any particular software or machine is obsolete.

THE THROUGH-LINE

Technology is a tool, not the goal. Innovation begins with understanding people — and only then putting technology in the service of the common good.

Not a pilot that fades — a platform that scales

The DFA app — live at app.dfa.fablab.hr — brings the method into daily practice, about ten minutes a day. Users take the perspective of a real stakeholder affected by a challenge, guided by an AI mentor and motivated through progress, streaks and badges. It is infrastructure, not a project that disappears when funding ends.

THREE SPECIALISED CONTEXTS

CIVIL SOCIETY

Community

Facilitated SDG workshops for local groups and civil society. Participants explore one local challenge from many stakeholder perspectives and see each other's contributions.

SCHOOLS • FROM THE YOUNGEST

Class

For schools from primary level upward: randomised teams that break up cliques, and a two-level competition between teams and between classes — because it starts with the youngest.

COMPANIES • INSTITUTIONS • MINISTRIES

Org

Colleagues work in mixed teams to build one shared solution across five phases — participatory decision-making practised on real strategic challenges.

ONE METHOD • THREE LAYERS

Layer 01 — Curriculum

THE STRUCTURED DESIGN-THINKING JOURNEY ACROSS FIVE PHASES

Layer 02 — Modules

DIGITAL SKILLS • PROTOTYPING • CIRCULAR ECONOMY • MATERIALS

Layer 03 — Application

DAILY, MEASURABLE PRACTICE WITH AN AI MENTOR

A workshop reaches a room; a platform reaches a country. The physical FabLab remains the heart of the method — the place where hands touch machines — but the app removes the constraint of geography. A school on an island without a makerspace, a ministry team between meetings, a community group meeting once a week: all practise the same journey, measured the same way.

Because progress is tracked per phase and per team, the platform also generates something workshops alone cannot: comparable evidence of learning across contexts, schools and regions — the kind of data that turns "we believe this works" into evidence of what changed, where, and for whom. Education, class and organisational modes are privacy-safe by design, competing on aggregates rather than exposing individuals.

FROM THE YOUNGEST TO THE MINISTRY

From the youngest pupil to a ministry working group, the same method builds the same thing: the confidence to face an unfamiliar problem and design a way through it.

Abandoned spaces as a social demand

Across Croatia and the wider Mediterranean, hundreds of public buildings stand abandoned — schools, hospitals, factories, civic halls. They are usually treated as a maintenance burden. We read them differently: as a latent network of spaces that, reactivated, can host exactly the kind of open, hands-on, intergenerational innovation that rebalances a continent.

Behind every abandoned space is a community with fewer jobs, fewer reasons for young people to stay, and a lower quality of life. Turning it into a working innovation hub is not a renovation project — it is an answer to poverty and depopulation.

The building is heritage; the content is the future. Each space runs the same approach — a learning programme that builds creative confidence, hands-on access to fabrication and digital tools, and an open invitation across ages and backgrounds. What makes scattered sites a single contribution is this shared method: a model proven in one village can run on an island, in a city district, across a sea basin.

This is where the narrative turns. People can be strengthened by the academy alone — but without a place, capability has nowhere to compound. In remote and rural contexts the market will never provide that place; it must be part of a social obligation. The approach is, in spirit, a New European Bauhaus argument: an abandoned modernist hospital or a century-old village school carries cultural memory no new-build innovation park can replicate — and reactivating it signals to a community that its past has a place in its future.

1 of 4

SITES ALREADY TRANSFORMED AND
OPERATING

100 ha

LARGEST SITE — FORMER FACTORY,
ZAGREB

30 yrs

LONGEST ABANDONMENT — KRVAVICA
HOSPITAL

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Four abandoned public sites we are reactivating, together forming a spectrum from a major city to the remote Mediterranean edge. One is already complete.

We are already doing this

This is not a proposal in the abstract. Across Croatia, we are reactivating four abandoned public sites — a 100-hectare factory, an island youth centre, a village school and a modernist hospital. One is already complete.



01 • URBAN SCALE

PROPOSED

Sljeme — Fab City HUB

Zagreb · Sesvete · former meat factory · 100 ha · abandoned 20 yrs. Sesvete (~100,000 residents) would be Croatia's third-largest city yet has no real centre. A City-owned complex becomes a productive neighbourhood centre — maker & innovation hub, music school, art depot. With City of Zagreb · CENTRINNO · proGireg.



02 • REMOTE / ISLAND

IN BRUSSELS 2019/2022

Adriatic GreenLab — Prvić Luka

Vodice · Šibenik · former youth & astronomy centre · abandoned 10 yrs. A former island youth centre becomes a living lab for sustainable, year-round island life and reversing depopulation — water conservation, isolated energy systems, circular use of marine waste. With Town of Vodice.



03 • PROOF OF CONCEPT

DONE 2025/26

Grobnik Centre for Creativity

Čavle · Primorje · former school → community centre. Our first completed transformation: an unused village school is now a centre for creativity and science promotion — a replicable model that draws visitors to the historic fortifications and creates demand for local revitalisation. Proof the method delivers, on time, with a small municipality.



04 • MEDITERRANEAN SCALE

PROPOSED / STARTED 2026

Krvavica — European Heritage Lab

Makarska · Dalmatia · former children's hospital · abandoned 30 yrs. An architecturally significant modernist hospital becomes a European learning centre for heritage-to-innovation conversion — anchoring a Mediterranean Makers network for the whole basin. With Town of Makarska.

ONE METHOD ACROSS THE SPECTRUM

Together the four sites form a working spectrum — urban district, remote island, village, Mediterranean coast — each running the same method: a learning programme that builds creative confidence, hands-on access to tools, and an open invitation across ages and backgrounds.

From the island to the whole basin

Adriatic GreenLab is where our rural-and-remote thesis is tested at its hardest — on an island. And it is the anchor from which the model scales beyond Croatia's shore: through the Mediterranean Makers Initiative, we see the Mediterranean not as a dividing line but as a common space for innovation and creative production.

Croatia has around 1,000 islands; a century ago 100 were inhabited, today fewer than 50. Adriatic GreenLab answers that trajectory directly: a living lab for remote areas, testing sustainable year-round island life and reversing depopulation — water conservation, isolated energy systems, rainwater micro-grids and the circular use of marine waste. First piloted on the island of Biševo in 2019, the initiative is anchored at the former youth and astronomy centre in Prvić Luka and has been presented twice to European institutions in Brussels.

What travels from the island to the basin is not a building type but a logic: living labs tuned to their territory. An island lab works on water, energy autonomy and marine waste; a lowland lab on smart agriculture and bio-based materials from agricultural waste; a mountain lab on sustainable forestry, digital fabrication in wood and remote connectivity. Not general-purpose labs, but targeted resilience hubs — each a civil-defence centre in crises and a community centre in peacetime, where local manufacturing capability, repair culture and trained people are already in place when a storm, a fire or a supply disruption arrives.

THE ADRIATIC GREENLAB TIMELINE

Biševo island pilot	2019 • FIRST LIVING-LAB PRACTICE
Presented to European institutions, Brussels	2019 & 2022
Adriatic GreenLab — national initiative	LEAD • SINCE 2020 • AGL.FABLAB.HR
Pact for the Mediterranean, Barcelona	NOVEMBER 2025 • CIVIL-SOCIETY RESPONSE
Mediterranean Makers Initiative	SCALING BASIN-WIDE • 2026 →

~1,000 CROATIAN ISLANDS	< 50 STILL INHABITED TODAY – 100 A CENTURY AGO	2x PRESENTED IN BRUSSELS • 2019 / 2022
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THREE PILLARS OF VALUE

Community and resilience — inclusive, intergenerational, fighting the loneliness of remote places. Openness and sharing — a solution proven on a Croatian island instantly reaches a village in Egypt. Sustainability and autonomy — repair, reuse and local production over global consumption.



A maker network across the Mediterranean

Connected and networked through the VULCA partnership, anchored by Adriatic GreenLab, with education practice delivered through the DFA.

12

COUNTRIES IN THE NETWORK

20+

MAKER HUBS

6

NETWORK MEMBERSHIPS

VULCA PARTNERSHIP • TWELVE COUNTRIES

Portugal

Spain

France

Italy

Slovenia

Croatia

Bosnia & Herz.

Albania

Greece

Malta

Türkiye

Egypt

NETWORK MEMBERSHIPS OVER TIME

Fab Lab Network	MEMBER • INTERNATIONAL • SINCE 2014
VULCA — mobility & residency	MEMBER • INTERNATIONAL • SINCE 2017
Fab City	MEMBER • INTERNATIONAL • SINCE 2018
Adriatic GreenLab	LEAD • NATIONAL INITIATIVE • SINCE 2020
SCOPE — "STEM as a driver of society"	FOUNDER & LEAD • NATIONAL NETWORK • SINCE 2022
MyMachine Hrvatska	MEMBER • NATIONAL • SINCE 2023
Global Innovators Gathering	MEMBER • INTERNATIONAL • SINCE 2026

KEY PARTNERS

International: Fab Lab Barcelona · Fab City Global Initiative · VULCA Network · Fab Foundation · Happylab Wien · StrojLab, Brno University of Technology · MyMachine Global.

National: Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb · Ruđer Bošković Institute · City of Zagreb · Krapina-Zagorje County · Center of Technical Culture Rijeka · Association of Islands, Prvić · National Foundation for Civil Society Development.

The network is not a list of logos — it is the delivery mechanism: a solution proven in one node travels to all the others.

THE MEDITERRANEAN MAKERS MANIFESTO • TEN PRINCIPLES

Inclusive

Participatory

Distributed

Resilient

Human-centred

Intergenerational

Resourceful

Sustainable

Creative

Open

THE MEDITERRANEAN IS OUR COMMON SPACE • ZAGREB, 4 DECEMBER 2025

The Manifesto — initiated by FabLab Zagreb and supported by Adriatic GreenLab — frames the Mediterranean as a cultural and geographic bridge between Europe and Africa, and invites makers, labs, educators, municipalities, islands and rural communities to shape the initiative through an open co-design process. A first spark, not a final structure: let us shape its future — together.



A European Centre for Heritage-Led Innovation

At Krvavica, we propose to take the fourth location one step further: a European Centre for Heritage-Led Innovation — working name REWEAVE — anchored in the abandoned modernist children's sanatorium on the Makarska coast, and proposed to the Croatian Government as a national contribution to Europe's transformation. Re-weaving heritage, community and innovation.



BUILT ON THREE PROVEN BODIES OF WORK

CENTRINNO

Horizon 2020 — we delivered the Zagreb pilot at the abandoned Sestvete factory, one of nine European pilots alongside Amsterdam, Barcelona, Milan, Paris, Copenhagen, Geneva, Tallinn and Blönduós.

ADRIATIC GREENLAB

Living-lab practice for remote communities — piloted on Biševo in 2019, anchored in Prvić Luka, presented twice in Brussels.

MEDITERRANEAN MAKERS

Extending maker culture and participatory innovation models across the Mediterranean basin, aligned with the Pact for the Mediterranean.

FOUR PILLARS OF THE CENTRE

01

Research

Heritage-to-innovation transformation as a discipline — systemic design, transformative design, and the evidence base that makes conversions replicable.

02

Creative hub

Production, residencies and art-science collaboration in a building whose architecture is itself the first exhibit.

03

Education — a European study programme

Training transformation leaders: people who can recognise a site's potential, map its stakeholders, build a local ecosystem and carry the methodology — especially for less-privileged communities: islands, rural, abandoned.

04

European network

Replication across heritage sites basin-wide — every converted school, factory and hospital becomes a node that teaches the next one.

NOT A NEW VERTICAL — AN INSTITUTIONAL ROOF

The centre is the frame that lets the heritage-to-innovation model proven in Croatia travel across Europe. Proposed to the Croatian Government as a national contribution to Europe's transformation, and prepared with the Town of Makarska for the 2026 European windows in culture, heritage and the New European Bauhaus.

Recognise • Trust • Verify

If access to technology reduces inequality — and the evidence suggests it does — then providing that access cannot be left to the market or to individual initiative. It requires deliberate public commitment, expressed in three moves.

- 01

Recognise
Treat makerspaces and access to technology as social infrastructure — as fundamental as public schools and libraries — in the spirit of the New European Bauhaus: sustainable, inclusive, and beautiful. Access as shared European infrastructure.
- 02

Trust
Recognise peripheral communities and local actors as contributors, not recipients. Build resilience from local capacity rather than importing it from the centre — funding that reaches the places and populations least served today. Confidence in local actors, built from below.
- 03

Verify — accountably
Answer the fair question every decision-maker asks — "if we extend trust and funding, how do we know it is justified?" — not through control from above, but through accountability built from within the sector itself.

The same logic that built public schools and public libraries must now extend to the tools of the digital age. Democratic access to technology is a condition for cohesion — not a reward for it.

THE EUROPEAN VALUES THIS WORK PROMOTES — AND MAKES GUARANTEED

Human dignity • equality • solidarity	ARTICLE 2 TEU — PRACTISED AS OPEN, UNCONDITIONAL ACCESS
Education, training & lifelong learning	EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS • PRINCIPLE 1
Access to essential services	EPSR • PRINCIPLE 20 — EXTENDED TO THE TOOLS OF THE DIGITAL AGE
Economic, social & territorial cohesion	ARTICLE 174 TFEU — THE PERIPHERY AS CONTRIBUTOR

Promoted through every workshop and reactivated space; guaranteed when policy makes access durable beyond project cycles — and verifiable through accountability built from within.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE • 2028-2034

For the next multiannual financial framework, this translates into concrete design choices: funding mechanisms that reach organisations and territories least served by existing programmes; recognition of maker spaces within social-infrastructure investment categories rather than solely innovation or culture lines; support for distributed education models that validate informal skills; and durability rules that let reactivated heritage spaces plan in decades, not project cycles. None of these requires new instruments — only the deliberate use of existing ones.

A working answer to the Court of Auditors' finding

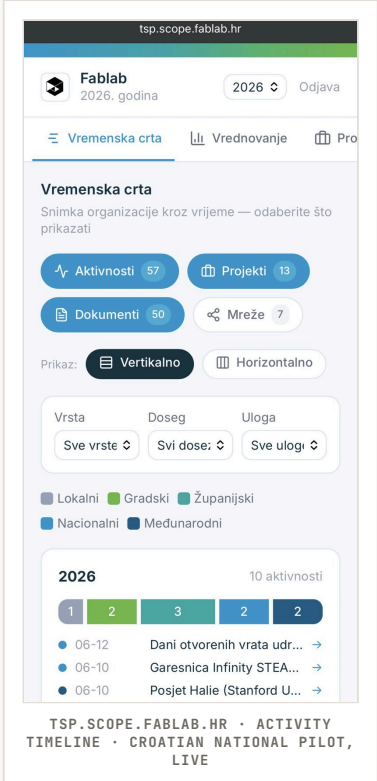
The European Court of Auditors found, in Special Report 11/2025, that despite progress the overview of EU funding granted to NGOs remains unreliable. Most responses run top-down: more control, more reporting. We propose the complementary answer — and we have already built and piloted it.

CONTROL Starts from verification and distrust. Carried out externally, from above.	SELF-EVALUATION Starts from trust and ownership of data. Built from within, from below.
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Organisations voluntarily record their work — each activity backed by evidence — and a public profile, annual report and comparable impact index generate automatically. If every organisation holds a structured, evidenced, comparable record, the overview becomes reliable because the sector created a credible trail, not because someone audited it from outside. This directly supports the performance-framework direction of Opinion 10/2026: measuring impact, not just spend.

The loop closes where it began. Grassroots practice produces evidence; evidence informs policy and funding design; policy feeds back into curricula and training that create new practice. Evidence → policy → curriculum — a continuous circuit, with the self-evaluation platform as its measuring instrument. It is consistent with our own thesis: we ask decision-makers to trust local actors, and we make that trust accountable and verifiable.

484 CUMULATIVE IMPACT INDEX · PILOTED ON FABLAB	100% DOCUMENTATION MATURITY · MATURE / LEAD	→ 50+ PATH TO SCALE · SCOPE (12) → STEM NETWORK → SECTOR
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EVIDENCE → POLICY → CURRICULUM

A continuous loop: what communities practise becomes evidence, evidence becomes policy, and policy returns as curriculum and new capacity on the ground.

Where our activities meet the new budget's indicators

Mapping FabLab's work onto the intervention fields of COM(2025) 545, Annex I

The next MFF replaces 5,000+ programme indicators with one horizontal framework. Every intervention field carries four spending coefficients — **CCM**, **CCA**, **ENV**, **SOC** — plus pre-defined output and result indicators. FabLab's activity concentrates in fields weighted **SOC 100%**, and the DFA app produces the result-level evidence the framework asks for.

PEOPLE · CAPABILITY

INTERVENTION FIELD	COEFFICIENT	OUTPUT → RESULT INDICATOR	OUR ACTIVITY / EVIDENCE
#127 Basic skills	SOC 100	participants → gaining a qualification or self-reported skills improvement (by gender)	DFA curriculum + app; STE[A]M weeks
#129 Basic digital skills	SOC 100	→ participants reaching a basic level of digital skills (ESTAT DSI)	DFA module: digital skills
#128 Advanced digital skills	SOC 100	→ qualification / self-reported skills improvement	Fabrication, prototyping & design
#130 Green skills	CCM 100 SOC 100	→ qualification / skills improvement (only skills field that also carries the climate coefficient)	DFA modules: circular economy, new materials
#134 Adult learning	SOC 100	participants incl. STEM, curricula, equipment → qualification / skills improvement	DFA Community / Org ; older & rural learners
#120 Learning mobility (non-formal & youth)	SOC 100	→ participants considering they increased their key competences	DFA app — measured creative confidence
#136 Non-formal & informal education (youth)	SOC 100	→ participants report increased key competences	DFA Class & Community
#116-133-133 Access & up/re-skilling — disability, marginalised	SOC 100	participants by gender & age; participants in education/training	Our less-privileged definition: ability, marginalised, isolated
#87 Creative, cultural & arts activities	SOC 40	→ artists / cultural professionals who acquired new skills or competences	HERITAGE-01 — artistic intelligence track

PLACES · INFRASTRUCTURE

INTERVENTION FIELD	COEFFICIENT	OUTPUT → RESULT INDICATOR	OUR ACTIVITY / EVIDENCE
#88 Physical regeneration of public spaces	COPE	open space created or rehabilitated (m²) → number of annual users	Sijeme · Prvić · Grobnik (baseline) · Krvavica
#93 Cultural heritage & tourism services	SOC 40	sites + capacity & skills-development activities → visitors, partnerships among sites	Krvavica — European Heritage Lab
#266 Rehabilitation of industrial sites	ENV 100	km² of rehabilitated area	Sijeme — 100 ha former factory
#208-219 Renovation of education / social buildings	CCM CCA SOC 40	m² renovated; annual users (by gender)	Building reactivation across all four sites

POLICY & CROSS-CUTTING · CLIMATE · ENVIRONMENT · DIGITAL

INTERVENTION FIELD	COEFFICIENT	OUTPUT → RESULT INDICATOR	OUR ACTIVITY / EVIDENCE
#257 Circular economy services (repair, re-use)	CCM 100 ENV 100 SOC 40	number of products supported by repair / re-use services	REWEAVE · Right-to-Repair · circular use of marine waste
#293 Remediation of water pollution	ENV 100	pollutant reduction (tonnes/year) — incl. plastics	RIPPLE — marine plastics (Horizon Europe, approved)
#98 AI, data & robotics	—	size of the AI-ready workforce	DFA app — AI mentor guiding daily practice

How to read the coefficients. Each field is tagged with the share it contributes to the budget's horizontal goals: **SOC** social · **CCM** climate mitigation · **CCA** climate adaptation · **ENV** environment. A field at SOC 100 counts fully toward the social spending dimension. Fields tag expenditure primarily under shared management (National & Regional Partnership Plans); Horizon Europe keeps its own programme indicators, but the intervention-field logic is the budget's common language. (Source: COM(2025) 545 final, Annex I — intervention fields & indicators.)

...and the goals the world has already set

The intervention fields on the previous page are how the next EU budget will count; the Sustainable Development Goals are why. The work is not aligned to the SDGs as an afterthought — the challenges participants tackle are drawn directly from them. Each pillar advances a distinct cluster of goals:

PEOPLE → SDG 4 & 10

Education & equality

Quality education and reduced inequalities — creative confidence and access for those furthest from it.

PLACES → SDG 11 & 8

Communities & work

Sustainable communities and decent work — reactivated heritage as local economic and social infrastructure.

POLICY → SDG 17 & 9

Partnerships & infrastructure

Partnerships and resilient infrastructure — access to technology as shared, accountable public infrastructure.

SIX GOALS, SIX TARGETS, SIX THINGS WE CAN ALREADY SHOW

GOAL	UN TARGET WE ADDRESS	OUR INDICATOR TODAY
SDG 4 · Quality education	4.4 — skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship	30,000+ children, 850+ teachers; app tracks progress per phase and team
SDG 10 · Reduced inequalities	10.2 — social and economic inclusion of all, irrespective of age, disability or location	Deliberate priority for islands, rural, remote ; intergenerational programmes
SDG 11 · Sustainable communities	11.4 — protect and safeguard cultural heritage	4 heritage sites in reactivation; Grobnik delivered 2025/26
SDG 8 · Decent work	8.3 — policies that support job creation, creativity and innovation	Local demand created around reactivated sites; entrepreneurs prototyping before risking savings
SDG 9 · Industry & infrastructure	9.b / 9.c — domestic technology development; access to technology	Open fabrication access; distributed academy removing the constraint of geography
SDG 17 · Partnerships	17.17 — effective public and civil-society partnerships	15 funded projects; self-evaluation index piloted (484 , 100% doc. maturity)

Through the challenges themselves, participants additionally work on **SDG 6** (water), **SDG 7** (energy), **SDG 12** (circular economy), **SDG 13** (climate) and **SDG 14** (marine waste) — the working themes of the island, city and mountain labs. People advance SDG 4 & 10 · Places SDG 11 & 8 · Policy SDG 17 & 9.

How does one organisation credibly cover this span? Not by running one programme per goal, but by anchoring every activity in a real challenge. A DFA participant designing rainwater capture on an island is working on SDG 6 and SDG 11 at once; a class prototyping from marine waste touches SDG 12 and 14; a reactivated village school delivers SDG 4, 8 and 11 in a single building. The goals are not reporting categories added afterwards — they are the raw material of the method.

And because the self-evaluation platform records every activity with evidence, the coverage is not claimed but shown: each workshop, space and partnership carries a documented trail that maps simultaneously onto the EU intervention fields opposite and the UN goals above — one record, two frameworks, no extra reporting burden for the organisation doing the work.

THE THROUGH-LINE — ACCOUNTABILITY FROM WITHIN

Two things make this our strongest card. **First, most of what we do is weighted SOC 100%** — every euro we help deliver counts fully toward the social dimension, while Green skills (#130) and circular economy (#257) add climate and environment weight. We touch social **and** green, not one alone.

Second, the result indicators are self-reported — the exact weakness the European Court of Auditors flagged (measuring impression, not achievement). The DFA app measures those same competences structurally, per phase and per team, comparably across schools and regions. It turns "self-reported skills improvement" into **verifiable evidence** — the accountability-from-within answer to ECA Opinion 10/2026: measuring impact, not just spend.

Years of making impact

European and national projects delivered since our founding on 1 March 2013 — not a plan in the abstract, but a decade-long record.

SELECTED EUROPEAN & INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

MAKE-IT	2015-16 • HORIZON 2020
FabLabNet	2016-19 • INTERREG CE
DO IT Europe	2017-20 • HORIZON 2020
21st Century Students	2020-22 • ERASMUS+
CENTRINNO	2020-24 • HORIZON 2020
Open Minds	2021-23 • ERASMUS+
DiSTT	2024-26 • INTERREG CE
RIPPLE	2026-30 • HORIZON EUROPE

NATIONAL PROJECTS & SYSTEMIC SUPPORT

SCOPE — "STEM as a driver of society"	2020-23 • ESF
RCK Slavonika 5.1	2019-23 • ESF
STEMerica	2021-23 • ESF
BIOPLANet	2021-23 • ERASMUS+
Thematic Systemic Support	2024-28 • NZRCD
STEMerica moves on	2025-28 • ESF

WHY WE LIST THEM

These projects are more than proof. Every consortium was also a classroom: through work funded and co-funded by the European Union, we learned from partners across Europe, absorbed methods we later adapted for our own contexts, and built the networks and credibility this document stands on. The experience accumulated across all of them is what strengthens FabLab to offer this proposal at all — Europe invested in our capability, and these pages are that investment returning as a contribution.

AND ON THE GROUND, EVERY YEAR

Maker Faire Zagreb (~11,000 visitors at its first edition in 2019), European Makers Week, STE[A]M weeks across Croatian cities, PopUp FabLab from Zagreb's Design District to Zadar, IoT Festival, Right-to-Repair events — a continuous public presence that keeps the tools and the method visible far beyond any single grant.

Do not just buy the future — help make it

People · Places · Policy is offered as a contribution, not a request. We would welcome the opportunity to develop it with European partners, institutions and regions who see the same possibility — that Europe's renaissance can begin at its edges.



To policymakers

Recognise makerspaces as essential public infrastructure — like libraries or schools — and support the distributed academy that validates the skills of the future workforce.



To educators

Partner with us. Move out of the lecture halls and into the Living Labs where practical innovation actually happens.



To citizens

Join us. Do not just buy the future; help make it.

WHAT PARTNERSHIP CAN LOOK LIKE

PILOT WITH US Bring the DFA method to a school network, a region or an institution — measurable from day one.	OPEN A SPACE Identify an abandoned public building; we bring the method, the network and the proof of concept.	SHAPE THE FRAMEWORK Work with us on recognising access to technology as social infrastructure in the 2028–2034 period.
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WHAT WE BRING TO THE TABLE

A method	DESIGN THINKING, PRACTISED DAILY · DFA CURRICULUM, MODULES, APP
Proof	GROBNIK DELIVERED 2025/26 · 15 FUNDED PROJECTS SINCE 2013
A network	12 COUNTRIES · 20+ HUBS · VULCA · FAB CITY · FAB FOUNDATION
An instrument of accountability	SELF-EVALUATION PLATFORM · PILOTED, READY TO SCALE

THE MEDITERRANEAN IS OUR HOME

Let us build it together — access to the tools of the future is shared infrastructure every community deserves.

Notes

A Croatian Contribution to a European Renaissance

Building local ecosystems that rebalance Europe — People, Places, Policy.

FIGHTING DIGITAL POVERTY

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

HUMAN DIGNITY · ART. 2 TEU

LIFELONG LEARNING · EPSR 1

ESSENTIAL SERVICES · EPSR 20

TERRITORIAL COHESION · ART. 174

NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS

ACCOUNTABILITY FROM WITHIN

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