

**Thirtieth anniversary of the  
Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration  
and Platform for Action (1995)**

**Comprehensive national-level review**

**THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

*– narrative report*

*Prepared by the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia*

Zagreb, June 2024

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## Section One: Highlights

The Republic of Croatia report on the situation at the national level on the occasion of marking the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the *Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action* (hereinafter: BDPA) covers the period from May of 2019 (when the previous report was submitted) to June of 2024. In the previous period, the Government of the Republic of Croatia paid great attention to the issue of gender equality and the protection of women from all forms of violence, while working in many other areas related to women's equality, including special measures and activities aimed at strengthening the position of women in society.

All annual strategic plans of the Government of the Republic of Croatia until 2025 include the goal 'Elimination of gender discrimination and creation of conditions for real equality of women and men in society'.

The *Government Programme for the period from 2024 to 2028*<sup>1</sup> states that the equality of women and men in society, on the labour market, and in the family will continue to be promoted. The government will lead the fight against domestic violence and violence against women, which are, unfortunately, serious problems in Croatian society, and will implement a policy of zero tolerance for violence. In order to sensitize the public about the harmfulness and unacceptability of violence against women and domestic violence, media campaigns will be carried out, and the capacities of experts who deal with these issues in their work will continue to be strengthened. Efforts to prevent peer violence, electronic violence and virtual abuse of children and among children will be intensified.

In February of 2021, the Croatian Parliament adopted the *National Development Strategy until 2030*<sup>2</sup>, whose development directions are fully aligned with the implementation of the United Nations (hereinafter: UN) *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (hereinafter: *Agenda 2030*), and its 17 sustainable development goals. The strategy is the basis for the sustainable, inclusive, and innovative development of the Republic of Croatia and strengthening the resilience of society and the economy to global crises. All public policies and priorities from said strategy and related strategic planning acts are being implemented with the aim of establishing equality and promoting equal opportunities (as a horizontal principle) without discrimination on all legal bases.

In the past five years, progress has been made in most of the critical areas of the BDPA based on the constitutional and legal principle of gender equality. Positive changes and developments were recorded in various areas including, among others, significant legislative changes, adoption of new plans, programs and other acts, implementation of media campaigns, and raising public awareness of the need to end discrimination against women and combat gender stereotypes. This report presents a summary of the most important achievements and upcoming challenges, noting that intersectoral cooperation has been improved, with frequent cooperation with civil society organizations and numerous international bodies.

In relation to the fundamental processes of drafting the report at the national level, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: OGE) coordinated and prepared its drafting, which was reported in more detail in the answer to Q33 and Q36.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocImages/ZPPI/Dokumenti%20Vlada/2024/Program\\_16\\_Vlade\\_RH.pdf](https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocImages/ZPPI/Dokumenti%20Vlada/2024/Program_16_Vlade_RH.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/actions/national-initiatives/national-strategies/croatia-national-development-strategy-2030>.

## Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

### **1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?**

#### *Amendments of the legislative and strategic framework*

In the last five years, significant progress has been made in the field of gender equality related to the adoption of improved labour, family, criminal, and misdemeanour legislation, accompanied by the new strategic framework in the field of combating discrimination and empowering women.

The most important strategic documents are described here, and others will be reported on in the continuation. In 2023, the Government of Croatia adopted the new *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* and the *Action Plan for Implementation of the National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2024*<sup>3</sup> (more information is given in the reply to Q33).

In the same year, the Government of Croatia adopted the *National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination until 2027*,<sup>4</sup> accompanied by two action plans: the *Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2023* and the *Action Plan for Combatting Discrimination for 2023*. The gender dimension is recognized in these documents, which contain measures for dealing with gender-based discrimination as one of the basic types of discrimination with regard to the analysis of human rights in education, health care, labour and employment, media, crises, etc. The importance of education on elimination of gender-based violence (hereinafter: GBV) and gender equality.

In 2022, the new *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027* was adopted.<sup>5</sup>

Suppression of all forms of GBV has been the biggest challenge in the reporting period. In this context, the Ministry of the Interior (hereinafter: Ml) is responsible for monitoring and analysis of the security situation and phenomena that favour the emergence and development of criminal behaviour. The most common criminal acts with characteristics of violence committed against women and their loved ones were physical injuries, threats, and domestic violence.

The number of the most frequent crimes committed against women was continuously increasing from 2019 to 2023. The number of victims of a criminal offense qualified as physical injury increased from 453 to 1,126 occurrences since 2019; the number of victims who suffered serious bodily injuries increased in the same period from 70 to 116; 1,925 women were exposed to threats in 2019, and 3,053 in 2023, and the number of domestic violence victims increased from 992 women to 2,006 in the observed period.

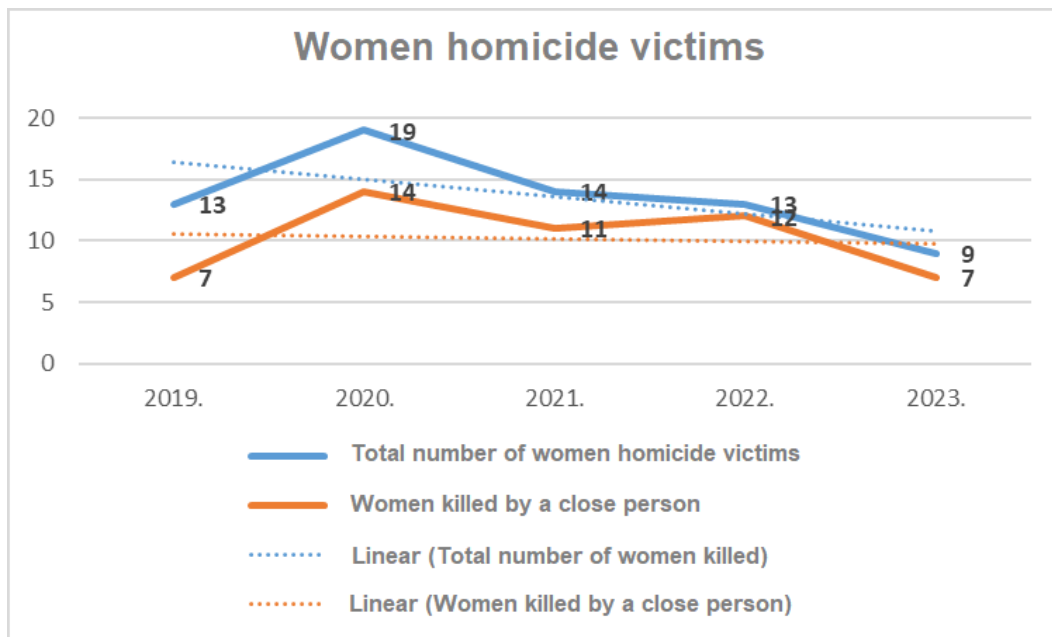
In the graph below, we present an overview of the total number of women who were homicide victims in the reporting period:

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<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/nacionalni-plan-za-ravnopravnost-spolova-za-razdoblje-do-2027-godine/3442>.

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20ZPLJP%20razdoblje%20do%202027.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Available at: [https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Dokumenti/NACIONALNI%20PLAN%20ZA%20SUZBIJANJE%20SEKSUALNOG%20NASILJA%20I%20SEKSUALNOG%20UZNE MIRAVANJA%20do%202027.g\\_final.pdf](https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Dokumenti/NACIONALNI%20PLAN%20ZA%20SUZBIJANJE%20SEKSUALNOG%20NASILJA%20I%20SEKSUALNOG%20UZNE MIRAVANJA%20do%202027.g_final.pdf).



Graph 1. Women homicide victims

The increase of GBV reports is a result of a changed social climate, strengthened sensibility of the public and the competent bodies, as well as numerous successful campaigns which are continuously being conducted by national institutions and civil society organisations.

With the aim of elimination of violence against women and girls, since 2019, the legislative framework has continuously been changing. In the continuation, the most important amendments to the *Protection against Domestic Violence Act* (Official Gazette, 70/17, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 36/24), the *Criminal Code* (Official Gazette, 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 114/23, 36/24), and the *Family Law* (Official Gazette, 103/15, 98/19, 47/20, 49/23, 156/23).

With the adoption of the *Act on Amendments of the Domestic Violence Protection Act* (Official Gazette, 126/19) three objectives were achieved: (1) tightening the statutory sentencing policy, (2) reviewing manifestations of domestic violence, and (3) enlarging the range of persons to whom the act applies. The first objective, strengthening the statutory penalty policy, was achieved by imposing higher fines and imprisonment for all forms of domestic violence, with sentences ranged so that repeated domestic violence offenders or those who commit it in the presence of a child or a disabled or elderly person would be punished by a higher fine and a longer prison sentence. Through the second objective, physical violence was redefined in such a way that is now described as the use of any physical force, including the situations in which it did not cause bodily injury in judicial medical terms. The third objective was related to the group of people subject to the *Domestic Violence Protection Act*, which harmonised misdemeanour legislation regulating the protection against domestic violence with the respective felony legislation. Thus, the amendments allowed for this law to be applied to the same people protected by the *Criminal Code* in the event of offences related to domestic violence.

The *Act on Amendments of the Domestic Violence Protection Act* (Official Gazette, 84/21) expanded the provision of Article 8 (Paragraph 2), which details the persons to whom the law applies, by supplementing it with current or former partners in an intimate relationship, thereby aligning it with the *Criminal Code*.

The newest *Act on Amendments of the Domestic Violence Protection Act (Official Gazette, 36/24)* removed sexual harassment from the definition of domestic violence, eliminating the possibility of misdemeanour liability for sexual harassment between those who are subject to the *Protection against Domestic Violence Act*, and those who are in the close circle of the victim, in accordance with the provisions of the *Criminal Code*. The accompanying amendments to the *Criminal Code* ensure criminal liability for sexual harassment committed against a close person, bringing the social protection against this form of violence to a higher level.

The need to enforce legal strengthening of misdemeanour penalties prescribed in the *Protection against Domestic Violence Act* has been recognised. Therefore, the minimum imposed fine has been increased with regard to manifested forms of domestic violence punishable under the Article 22 of the *Protection against Domestic Violence Act*, and the minimum and maximum fines have been increased for entities obliged to report violence, but fail to report it to the police or public prosecutor after becoming aware of the perpetrated domestic violence in the performance of their work. For a perpetrator of domestic violence who does not comply with an imposed protective measure, the option of a fine for misdemeanour has been removed and replaced by a prison sentence of at least 10 days.

The *Act on Amendments of the Criminal Code (Official Gazette, 126/19)* which has entered into force in January of 2020, reinforced the statutory criminal justice policy for a number of offences in which the perpetration of acts towards a close person is prescribed as a qualified form of the offence of domestic violence. The amendment reduced the scope for alternative sentences – such as community service and probation – in relation to offences committed against a close person. The offence of domestic violence has also been expanded in its legal description by introducing a state of long-lasting suffering as a new consequence of the perpetration. Furthermore, the new *Criminal Code* amended the concept of rape referred to in Article 153, which now also includes any non-consensual sexual intercourse or an equivalent sexual act, even if there is no use of force or threat to the life and body of the raped or other person. This change in the concept of the offence of rape has consequently resulted in the deletion of the offence of sexual relation with no consent (Article 152 of the previous *Criminal Code*).

Moreover, the new *Criminal Code* has supplemented the meaning of the term ‘close person’ in Article 87 (Paragraph 9) as a current or former partner in an intimate relationship, which, in relation to these persons, has resulted in stronger protection under criminal law, by prosecuting offenders *ex officio* and by issuing a higher prison sentence imposed on the acts committed against the current or former intimate partner.

The *Act on Amendments of the Criminal Code (Official Gazette, 84/21)* redefined the procedural presumption for prosecution of the sexual harassment felony, referred to in Article 156, which ensured that the sexual harassment felony is prosecuted *ex officio* for all categories of victims, instead of the previous legal provision that prosecuted the offence in question on proposal, unless it was committed against a person particularly vulnerable on the grounds of age.

The *Act on Amendments of the Criminal Code (Official Gazette, 36/24)* introduced the definition of GBV against women in the general provisions of the law, which determines it as violence directed against a woman because she is a woman, and forms of violence which disproportionately affect women. Committing GBV against women is now an aggravating circumstance, except in cases where a more severe punishment is explicitly prescribed by the *Criminal Code*.

The newest amendments also introduced a new felony 'severe murder of a woman' (femicide) in Article 111.a. This felony is committed by a person who commits gender-based murder of a woman. In determining this felony, the court shall consider if the act has been committed against a close person, a person who was previously abused by the offender, a vulnerable person, a person in a relationship of subordination or dependence, or if in circumstances of sexual violence or in a relationship placing women in an unequal position, and if there are other circumstances indicating that it is GBV. Also, severe murder of a woman has been added to the catalogue of felonies with no statute of limitation.

Aiming to enhance the preventive effects of punishment, the criminal law policy of punishment of rape has been strengthened, and thus the basic form of rape excludes the option of replacing the imposed prison sentence with community service, whereas the provisions on probation for this felony can only be ordered with the application of mitigating circumstances. Consequently, the statutory criminal justice policy has been tightened for severe felonies against sexual freedom, as well as the felonies of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 15, and sexual abuse of a child over the age of 15.

The same amendments specify the legal description of the felony of domestic violence and, with regards to deletion of sexual harassment as a misdemeanour from the *Protection against Domestic Violence Act*, sexual harassment of a close person was included in the legal description of the felony of sexual harassment in Article 156 of the *Criminal Code* as a qualified form of criminal act, punishable by imprisonment of up to three years. Likewise, the felony of sexual harassment has also been revised in such a way that it may concern a single act of sexual harassment, provided that the harassment is gross.

In the prison and probation system, psychosocial treatment programmes are being implemented for perpetrators of violent crimes, including the perpetrators of GBV and sex offenders. In addition, officials of the prison and probation system attend regular training within the implementation of these programmes, i.e. for the implementation of safety measures of the mandatory psychosocial treatment referred to in Article 70 of the *Criminal Code*. The purpose of the psychosocial treatment programme is to prevent offenders' future violent behaviour by achieving positive changes in their conduct, and by raising awareness of their own violent behaviour, in order to recognise their responsibility and to adopt patterns of non-violent behaviour.

The *Family Law* went through additional alignment with the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence* (hereinafter: *Istanbul Convention*). Its amendments, which entered into force in December of 2023, stipulate that separate interviews are held with the parents in proceedings of divorce, for the purpose of arranging parental care, and in the event of known existence of domestic violence. Professionals and experts are also given the opportunity to assess the expediency of a joint meeting, along with the option of requiring a separate interview in the procedure for a justified reason, which provides security to the victim, and on the other hand, enables them to arrange their relationships through the procedure and reach an agreement in the divorce process. Furthermore, the obligation of spouses to participate in the first meeting of family mediation before the initiation of court proceedings for divorce is abandoned, but the same is left as an option, which enables spouses to have unhindered access to the court, regardless of participation in family mediation. It is also stipulated that family mediation is not conducted in cases of allegations of domestic violence. When making a decision on parental care, on which parent the child will live with and on the child's personal relationship with the parents, it is stipulated that the court will also take into account the existence of allegations of domestic violence as an important circumstance for further decision-making.

For information about achievements related to achieving work-life balance, please refer to the replies to Q7. For information on achievements in the field of public and political decision-making, please refer to the replies to Q7 and Q22.

## **2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?**

Over the past five years, the main priorities were related to the suppression of all forms of GBV, the promotion of equality and non-discrimination within legal changes, the harmonization of private and business life, improving the position of women in public and political decision-making, and changing negative social norms and stereotypes. All of this is reported on in detail in the remainder of this document, as well as Q1.

## **3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?**

### ***Roma Women***

In June of 2021, the Government of Croatia adopted the *National Plan for Roma Inclusion 2021–2027* and the accompanying *Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion, for 2021–2022*, and the *Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion, for 2023–2025*<sup>6</sup> in October of 2023. All indicators for the purpose of monitoring implementation of the national plan are gender and age based.

In March of 2019, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of Croatia (hereinafter: OHRRNM) launched a three-year project with the title ‘Roma Inclusion – Fulfilling Preconditions for Successful Implementation of National Minority Policies – PHASE I’, co-funded under the European Social Fund Plus (hereinafter: ESF+), which was completed in September of 2022. The project consisted of promotional, research, publishing, and educational activities, a great number of which were implemented regionally, i.e. in the counties populated by a large number of members of the Roma national minority. Project activities were especially focused on the position of more marginalized groups within the Roma population: women, children, and youth.

During 2020 and 2021, the OHRRNM conducted a series of activities directly aimed at Roma women. The publication *Roma Inclusion in the Croatian Society: Women, Youth, and Children* was published and translated into English. The main goal of the research was to identify and determine the complex links between individual indicators of social status of the three target groups, and unite them in a single framework of recommendations for improving the social position of Roma women, children, and youth in relation to majority population and other national minorities. The study presents data and results of analyses on the social position of Roma women, children, and youth, collected in 2017 using a complex mixed methodology (through the IPA 2012 project). Presentations from the conference and the publication in Croatian and English in the PDF format are available online<sup>7</sup>, and

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocImages/NPUR%202021-2027/National%20Plan%20for%20Roma%20Inclusion%202021-2027.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <https://ukljucivanje-roma.com/zdm.html>.



a video based on the results of the publication is available on the official YouTube channel of the OHRRNM, in Croatian with English subtitles<sup>8</sup>.

A short documentary about successful Roma women 'Her Own Self' was filmed and shown on Croatian Radiotelevision and the Human Rights Film Festival. It tells the stories of three young Roma women – Vedrana, Rosa, and Adriana – who, despite the lack of support within the Roma community and wider society, followed their paths and achieved their goals. The stories of three women show how it is possible to overturn prejudices and get rid of traditional roles, and at the same time be an inspiration to all young Roma women. The film was made with the idea of showing the public the deprived position of Roma women who face multiple discrimination – as women and as members of the Roma minority.<sup>9</sup>

Activities such as these aimed to encourage young Roma women to engage in education and other areas of life, and to overturn stereotypes and prejudices about the Roma women among the majority population.

Croatian Romani Union 'Kali Sara' is the largest organisation of Roma in the Republic of Croatia. It is an umbrella organisation presided by a Roma woman. 'Kali Sara' is quite active in all areas relevant to improvement of Roma position, such as poverty prevention, education, housing, health, cultural autonomy, including the Roma language and historical memory. Many relevant activities are supported by the OHRRNM, the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: OCNGO), and the City of Zagreb in the implementation of the project with the title 'Educated Roma women, empowered Roma communities!' The general goal of the project was to increase the number of young Roma women who complete primary and secondary education, and one of the aims is to educate 200 young Roma women about women's human rights, especially the right to live without violence, and on sexual and reproductive rights and health. The project was implemented in the period from February of 2021 until January of 2024, with the financial support of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway within the framework of the European Economic Area and Norwegian grants in the amount of € 149,999.51.

Related to the financing of other national minorities, it can be added that, in the period from 2019 to 2024, the Council for National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia co-financed a total of 315 programs and sections of women belonging to national minorities with funds from the State Budget in the total amount of € 1,101,252.91.

### **Women with Disabilities**

The *National Plan for Equalizing Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities from 2020 to 2027* was adopted in 2021 with the accompanying *Action Plan for Equalizing Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities from 2021 to 2024*, which implements the measures aimed at education of experts and other workers dealing with persons with disabilities, on the rights protected by the provisions of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Activities are being conducted with the purpose of informing and sensitizing the public about the possibilities of inclusion of persons with disabilities, especially women and girls. One of the measures of the Croatian national plan is 'Education and promotion of active implementation of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons*

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<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://youtu.be/qrq47mTX3WY>.

<sup>9</sup> The film is available at the official YouTube channel of the OHRRNM, in Croatian with English translation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WII6pmqjqu&feature=youtu.be>.

*with Disabilities*’, which includes the organization of public events. As one of the implementers of this measure, the OGE continued to financially support the Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities in 2022, 2023, and 2024 (with a total of € 2,490.00) within the project ‘Training of the Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities – A Network of Women with Disabilities’. The project, which aims to empower women with disabilities in dealing with GBV, and educate participants about the provisions of the *Istanbul Convention*, has so far been co-financed by the OGE.

Within the ESF+ call aimed at the development of personal assistance services for persons with disabilities, there was a financing of personal assistance services for persons with the most severe type and degree of impairment. Through projects contracted in 2019/2020, with a total value of around € 24,740,000.00, personal assistance services were provided to a total of 2,521 persons with disabilities, 1,299 of which were women with disabilities, while the projects contracted in 2021, with a total value of € 20,200,000.00, brought the personal assistance services to 1,835 persons with disabilities, 940 of which were women. After the completion of implementation of contracts financed by the ESF+, until the entry into force of the *Personal Assistance Act (Official Gazette, 71/23)* in July of 2023, the continuation of financing the service of personal assistance to persons with disabilities during 2022 and 2023 was covered from the national funds.

With the entry into force of the *Inclusive Allowance Act (Official Gazette, 156/2023)* in January of 2024, a new right was introduced – the right to an inclusive allowance, which represents monetary compensation intended for persons with disabilities with the purpose of overcoming the obstacles preventing them to efficiently contribute to society.

Until the end of 2023, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy (hereinafter: MLPSFSP) was continuously financing two- and three-year programs of associations which provide assistance services to persons with disabilities from national funding sources. In 2023, 134 associations were financed in the amount of € 18,937,666.27.

In order to address the risk of further social exclusion of the elderly and persons with disabilities, and to provide them with daily help and support, the ESF+ call ‘Make a Wish – prevention of institutionalization’ was published in 2023 as an integral measure of long-term care and prevention of institutionalization. The activities include support in everyday life of the elderly and persons with disabilities (organizing meals, performing household chores, maintaining personal hygiene, meeting other daily needs), along with procurement and distribution of packages of household and basic hygiene items. Following seven financing decisions, 519 projects with a total value of € 464,700,000.00 were approved for 2024, which will include 58,686 elderly people and persons with disabilities.

Most of the data collected by the Croatian Institute of Public Health (hereinafter: CIPH) is classified by gender (data for primary health care, as of 2020). For the needs of particular institutions, various databases and registers are regularly interconnected for a more detailed analyses, such as the one on the number of puerperae with disabilities (the result of connecting the Register of Persons with Disabilities and the Register of Births).

## *Women and girls who are migrants, refugees and asylum seekers*

As a part of the implementation of the *National Action Plan of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace, security*, and related resolutions for the period from 2019 to 2023, specifically the 'Measure 2: Provide information about services available to refugees and asylum seekers and persons who have been granted international protection, and especially in the case of gender-based violence', the OGE printed an information leaflet *Information for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers* in 11,000 copies, which was distributed to the services working on reception of refugees and migrants through the MoI and the Croatian Red Cross. In addition to Croatian and English, the leaflet was printed in seven other languages (Farsi, Urdu, Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Ukrainian, and French). The OGE translated, printed and presented 500 copies of the *Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Girls and Women, Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, CM/Rec(2022)17. It should also be noted that the OGE has established cooperation with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (hereinafter: UNHCR) Croatia. Leaflets and the Croatian edition of the mentioned recommendation were presented to public on the occasion of celebrating International Women's Day in 2023.

In April of 2022, in cooperation with the Council of Europe (hereinafter: CoE), the UNHCR held an online conference 'Prevention, fight and response to GBV in the context of asylum and migration', which brought together representatives of institutions, ministries, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society. The opening speeches were given by the representative of UNHCR in the Republic of Croatia, the Director of the OGE and the representative of the MoI. The UNHCR representative referred to the timeliness of the online event, taking into consideration the war situation in Ukraine, which has displaced five million refugees, more than half of whom are women and children. Women who are migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are at a high risk of GBV and human trafficking in all stages of forced displacement, whether it is in the country of origin, the host country, or somewhere between these two destinations. The Director of the OGE condemned the aggression against Ukraine and emphasized the seriousness of the problem of sexual violence and human trafficking against refugees, noting that we still do not have accurate data on the scale of it. The Government of the Republic of Croatia opened its doors to all refugees from Ukraine, and applied various measures in order to realize their integration, such as, for example, education, work, accommodation, etc. The Director highlighted Croatia's past experience in caring for refugees during the Homeland War, when it received several hundred thousand refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The representative of the MoI stated that there is ensured access for refugees to the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Violence. The MoI, in cooperation with the UNHCR, created the *Standard Operating Procedures for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response in Shelters for Seekers of International Protection (SOP)*, which defines the procedure and establishes a clear referral procedure to persons in charge of protection and prevention.

In an effort to ensure Croatia with additional funds for implementation of the programmes of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (2021–2027), the Ministry of Health (hereinafter: MoH) delivered the project proposal 'ZDRAVKO – Support in the provision of health care to those seeking international protection' to the MoI. The project will ensure the possibility of a continuous, individualized, linguistically adapted, and culturally aware support during the provision of health monitoring and care in refugee shelters. The project proposal for the implementation of the tender provides support for the provision of health care for applicants for international protection, for a period of 36 months. In addition to dealing with physical injuries, these people need to be provided with adequate psychological help, in the form of various types of interventions, such as individual psychological counselling, group work, and access to psychiatric care.

During 2021 and 2022, the Croatian Institute for Public Health participated in the CoE Pompidou Group project on the topic of creating manuals and guidelines for working with refugees, migrants, and exiles in the field of drug addiction. One of the objectives of the project was to protect the rights of women refugees and migrants, with the problem of drug addiction.

In December of 2021, a round table with the title 'Inclusion of refugee women in society – opportunities and challenges' was held in Zagreb to mark the International Human Rights Day. At the round table, it was concluded that the key is the exchange of experiences related to all the prerequisites for the socio-economic inclusion of refugee women, from language training, through participation in available professional training programmes, to active participation in everyday life of the community.

In the context of exercising the right to international protection, given the fact that women and girls are recognized as the most vulnerable population groups in the matters of migration, there is a continuous promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls seeking international protection, such as the right to health services and legal protection, the inclusion of girls in the education system, along with informing on the services available to women and girls, especially in the case of GBV. All identified survivors of any form of GBV – such as sexual, physical, psychological, socioeconomic violence, and harmful traditional practices – are referred to organizations providing psychosocial support in shelters for international protection seekers, namely the Croatian Red Cross and Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World, MdM), and are continuously provided access to psychosocial care, and if necessary, they are involved in the monitoring and treatment of a psychiatrist.

Considering the realization of international protection, the needs of vulnerable groups are systematically being monitored, with a special focus on survivors of GBV, which includes acting in accordance with the *Standard Operating Procedures for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response in Shelters for Seekers of International Protection (SOP)*, with the purpose of faster and more efficient treatment in cases of GBV.

Since 2021, a standardized form for reporting cases of sexual and GBV has been applied as a part of the *Standard Operating Procedures for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response in Shelters for Seekers of International Protection*, which established an effective referral system to national mechanisms for women and men who survived sexual and GBV. The operational procedure is under the mandate of the MoI, in cooperation with the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Croatian Red Cross, Medecins du Monde (Doctors of the World, MdM), the Croatian Legal Centre, the Jesuit Service for Refugees, and the Society for Psychological Assistance.

#### 4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

##### *COVID-19, Earthquakes, Care Crisis*

Many factors influenced the process of determining the economic and social priorities of the Republic of Croatia in the past five years, including two catastrophic earthquakes in the area of the City of Zagreb and surrounding areas. Regardless of the new priorities, the crisis has not led to a significant reduction in the resources available for programs and projects aimed at women, nor a reduction in the engagement of state institutions with regard to gender equality issues.

Among the efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of adjustments were introduced in the social welfare system. The regional offices of the Institute for Social Work of the MLPSFSP have formed crisis intervention teams that quickly go where they are needed and take all the necessary measures in accordance with their authority and rules of profession, even in situations where their lives and safety may be at risk (domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, etc.). There are 24-hour on-call services provided to deal with cases of domestic violence, and experts go to interventions and carry out increased control and monitoring of families at risk.

The Family Centres provide counselling and assistance services to victims of domestic violence. The work of the counselling centre takes place via electronic media and/or telecommunications applications (Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, Zoom, etc.), and is conducted by specially trained experts employed in the Family Centres.

Recommendations and information for potential victims on how to behave in situations of suspected violence<sup>10</sup>, as well as notifications to social welfare service providers in pandemic conditions, have been made publicly available.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it is estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to children being more active online, often without adequate supervision, which has led to an increase in the number of criminal activities related to sexual abuse of children, both on the regular, and on the dark web. It is particularly worrying that the pandemic has also increased the demand for (new) materials of sexual abuse of children, which has led to new forms of abuse and an increased number of victims.

In May of 2022, the Ombudswoman submitted a special report to the Croatian Parliament, with the title *Impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on human rights and equality – recommendations for strengthening resilience to future crises*. The report covers a two-year period (2020 and 2021), and consists of an analysis and a total of 72 recommendations, divided into those related to the COVID-19 pandemic and those that are general and applicable in future crisis situations. The entire report is available online.<sup>12</sup>

As for the care crisis, a large number of Croatian cities are struggling with a worrying lack of kindergarten capacities, and particularly a lack of homes for the elderly, which shifts the burden of care from society to the family, most often to women.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/MDOMSP%20dokumenti/Priop%C4%87enje%20o%20postupanju%20u%20situaciji%20poja%C4%8Danog%20rizika%20od%20nasilja%20u%20obitelji%20i%20zlostavljanja%20i%20zanemarivanja%20djece.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. <https://mrosp.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/najcesca-pitanja-i-odgovori/socijalna-politika-11808/11808>.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/download/izvjesce-utjecaj-epidemije-covid-19-na-ljudska-prava-i-jednakost-preporuke-za-jacanje-otpornosti-na-buduce-krize>.

## 5. Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

### *Priorities for the next five years to accelerate progress for women and girls*

This question has already been answered in various parts of this report. The priorities were contained in the effective implementation of legislative and strategic acts passed in the reporting period. The priority is the elimination of all forms of GBV, the suppression of poverty, the availability of quality health care, the promotion of women's political participation, equality on the labour market, gender-sensitive social protection, work-life balance, digital inclusion of women, and changing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes. The *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* contains measures to achieve these priorities, as well as other adopted strategic plans and programs in the field of women empowerment and the realization of human rights, all of which are mentioned in this report.

Within the key areas of intervention for the implementation of the *Strategy for the Demographic Revitalization of the Republic of Croatia 2033 (Official Gazette, 36/2024)*<sup>13</sup>, there is a strategic goal related to the creation of a stimulating environment for families and youth. It is focused, among other things, on continuous increase of financial allowances for families with children who are minors, in order to reduce the costs of upbringing and child care (increasing the amount of compensation for the period of exercising the right of employed and self-employed parents to parental leave, extending the duration of paternity leave, and improving the material rights of other groups of beneficiaries).

The MLPSFSP, in cooperation with other competent bodies and civil society organizations, started drafting the *National Plan for Protection from Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence until 2028*. The document will contain measures aimed at the prevention of GBV, the improvement of assistance and support services for victims of violence, and greater effectiveness of the system of interventions in relation to perpetrators of violence against women.

Within the framework of the ESF+, in 2024, a call for the direct allocation of funds to the MLPSFSP was issued under the name 'No gender-based violence', in the amount of € 2,500,000.00 for activities aimed at improving the system of prevention and protection of victims of GBV, with special focus on victims of sexual violence and harassment. Implementation of a media campaign is planned with the aim of raising awareness of professionals and the general public about the unacceptability of GBV and the possibilities of victim protection, as well as the training of experts and people who work and/or come into contact with victims. Further support for the operation of the 24-hour helpline for victims of violence will continue. The website of the MLPSFSP will be upgraded with the aim of ensuring the availability of information to victims and potential victims of GBV, create informative materials relevant to the area of dealing with GBV, and determine the assessment of needs and conditions necessary for establishment of a network of specialized services for working with victims of sexual violence and harassment.

Within the ESF+, it is planned to provide funds for the establishment of a network of specialized services to work with all victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Also, an ESF+ call is planned, within which organizations, including those that provide support and shelter for victims of violence, will carry out activities to empower women with the aim of activating them on the labour market and re-joining life in the community. Furthermore, there are plans of ESF+ calls aimed at

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<sup>13</sup> Available at: [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024\\_03\\_36\\_580.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024_03_36_580.html).

expanding the network of social services for children, and the network of social services in the community, within which the quality and availability of social services will be increased and institutionalization will be prevented.

The MoH is especially focused on the improvement of women's reproductive health care, and increasing the availability of gynaecological care. The availability of gynaecological care at the primary level is ensured through the Croatian Network of Public Health Institutes (hereinafter: NPHI), which determines the required number of gynaecological teams for the territory of the Republic of Croatia, i.e. units of regional government and the City of Zagreb. The Croatian Health Insurance Fund concludes contracts focused on the implementation of health care with these institutions, which enables the use of health services in the field of gynaecology and obstetrics at the expense of compulsory health insurance funds.

In 2023, there were 277 teams in gynaecology and obstetrics within in the NPHI, whereby it was possible to preserve the previous state of availability of gynaecological care, and to ensure the filling of positions that remained empty after the previously contracted gynaecologists exited the system (most often to retirement).

The total of 335 primary health care teams in the field of gynaecology and obstetrics were provided by the decision of the Minister of Health within the NPHI, and there is room for the expansion, i.e. for increasing the availability of health care. The process of expansion of the network at the primary level of health care through introduction of new teams in the basic primary activities of general/family medicine, paediatrics, and gynaecology has in recent years been burdened by the problem of an insufficient number of specialists of these activities on the labour market. The reasons for such a situation are various. In order to deal with this problem, the MoH introduced a system of central planning and financing of the specialist training for doctors of medicine. The ministry is especially focused on the provision of funds, and financing of medical doctor's specializations in the basic primary activities of general/family medicine, paediatrics, and gynaecology. As a result, financial resources for specializations were secured and used in the previous financial plan within the ESF+, through the Operational Programme 'Effective Human Resources' 2014-2020. Consequently, in 2023, 27 doctors of medicine completed the specialist training in gynaecology financed from the ESF, thereby becoming available to join the activities of the network of teams in gynaecology and obstetrics.

During 2023, the MoH continued to intensively work on planning, securing the financing, and referring to the specialist training of a new generation of doctors of medicine, focusing on specializations in the basic primary activities of general/family medicine, paediatrics, and gynaecology, using the funds allocated to the MoH for the implementation of the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026*<sup>14</sup>. As a part of it, the project 'Central financing of specialization' is being implemented. The application deadline for the public call for financing of the specialist training was closed in December of 2023, and the processing and selection of submitted offers is ongoing. To date, 38 grant agreements have been signed for gynaecology and obstetrics within the call, which means that approximately the same number of new specialists in gynaecology can be expected to be available to join the network of teams upon completion of this cycle of specialist training.

For information on faster progress in the area of digital inclusion of women, please refer to the reply in Q8.

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<sup>14</sup> Available at: <https://planoporavka.gov.hr/>.

## Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

### Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

#### Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- F. Women and the economy
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

### **6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?**

#### *Activities to promote gender equality in labour*

In December of 2021, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the *National Plan for Labour Safety at Work and Employment for the period from 2021 to 2027* and the *Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan for Labour Safety at Work and Employment for the period from 2021 to 2024*.<sup>15</sup> This national plan emphasises that one of the important factors influencing the increase in employment rate is the competence of the workforce, which must meet the needs of the labour market and strengthen employability and adaptability. Active employment policy measures should also contribute to strengthening employability, which should provide adequate support for inclusion in the labour market, especially for vulnerable groups. Greater inclusion of women in the labour market will reduce the gap in the employment rate between men and women. The employment rate of women increased from 45.8% in 2019 to 48.7% in 2022.<sup>16</sup>

According to internationally comparable data published by Eurostat<sup>17</sup>, the wage gap in the Republic of Croatia was 12.5% in 2022, which is slightly better than the EU average of 12.7%, and much better than some of the most developed European countries (for example, data on the gender pay gap for Austria indicate a difference of 18.4%, for Germany 17.7%, for Finland 15.5%, for France 13.9%).

As an example of good practice, we can present the programme 'Make a Wish' ('Zaželi'). The programme, financed primarily from the ESF+, is focused on employment activities for women who are less employable in jobs providing support and assistance for the elderly and/or persons with special needs, especially in rural areas. A total of € 770 million was allocated for the 'Make a Wish' programme, whereby 33,000 women have been activated on the labour market and provided assistance to 195,000 people.

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<sup>15</sup> Available at: <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Glavno%20tajni%C5%A1tvo/Godi%C5%A1nji%20planovi%20i%20strate%C5%A1ka%20izvje%C5%A1C4%87a/26.11.Prijedlog%20Nacionalnog%20plana.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Source: *Women and Men in Croatia*, available at: [https://podaci.dzs.hr/media/04pff1do/women\\_and\\_man\\_2022.pdf](https://podaci.dzs.hr/media/04pff1do/women_and_man_2022.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics).



## Legislative changes

The *Act on Amendments to the Labour Act (Official Gazette, 151/2022)*, which entered into force in January of 2023, redefined the concept of equal work and work of equal value in accordance with international legal sources, and determined mandatory application of the rules on equal work and work of equal value in relation to income the worker earns through employment. For the purpose of applying the principle of equal wages to workers for equal work and work of equal value regardless of gender, it is explicitly stated that said principle also applies to other material rights related to employment, i.e. to those types of income that are not considered salaries as defined by law. The amendments also introduce the obligation of employers to exercise the right to equal pay for women and men, and to provide the worker, at their request, with information on the criteria on the basis of which the workers who perform tasks of the same or similar nature have earned their salaries. In addition, to increase workplace safety, a provision was added in procedures related to the protection of workers' dignity, according to which employers with more than 75 workers are obliged to appoint two persons of different genders authorized to resolve complaints related to protection of workers' dignity, while those employing at least 20 workers have the duty to appoint one person. The persons so appointed may be employees or persons working for the employer. Finally, there is an introduction of an obligation of the employer to vet recruits for previous convictions and conduct of criminal proceedings for criminal acts of sexual abuse and child exploitation, when hiring persons who are to work with children or who may come into contact with children.

In 2022, *Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU* (hereinafter: *Directive 2019/1158*) was transposed, which, among other things, expands the legal framework regarding enabling flexible working conditions for workers who are parents or caregivers. In addition, the *Labour Act (Official Gazette, 93/14, 127/17, 98/19, 151/22, 46/23, 64/23)* was amended in 2022 so that a worker working on the employer's premises can request permission to work at a separate workplace by signing an annex to the employment contract, and in cases related to changed working conditions (due to an epidemic of diseases, earthquakes, flood, environmental incident, etc.) and enabling the protection of workers' health and safety, work at a separate workplace can be approved without changing the employment contract.

The introduction of remote work is also regulated at the civil service level. In November of 2023, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the *Decree on the possibility of civil servants working at a separate place of work, remote work and part-time work (Official Gazette, 141/2023)*.<sup>18</sup> In doing so, the so-called temporary hybrid work, which concerns the care of family members and/or parental obligations towards children up to the age of eight. In this way, the possibility of working from home is opened for easier reconciliation of business and private life.

During the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (hereinafter: CoEU) in 2020, the OGE of the Government of the Republic of Croatia organized a high-level international conference 'Women's participation in the labour market – a social profit' held in January of 2020 in Zagreb.<sup>19</sup> The conference gathered over 200 participants from the entire European Union (hereinafter: EU), Croatian and international experts, researchers, academics, representatives of the European Parliament and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, together with numerous representatives of civil society and social partners. One

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<sup>18</sup> Available at: [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023\\_11\\_141\\_1921.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_11_141_1921.html).

<sup>19</sup> More detailed information about the conference can be found on the URS website, at the link: <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/vijesti/konferencija-visoke-razine-sudjelovanje-zena-na-trzistirada-drustvena-dobit-3342/3342>.

of the goals of the Croatian presidency of the CoEU was to encourage the inclusion of women in the labour market, and in this sense, there was a discussion on obstacles to full participation of women in the labour market, and consideration of measures to mitigate their effects at the EU level. The following challenges were particularly highlighted: 1) supply and demand of skills and occupations on the labour market from the perspective of gender equality, 2) the gender dimension of non-standard, atypical jobs, 3) long-term care for family members in the context of work-life balance, 4) harassment and sexual harassment in the world of work. After the conference, the OGE of the Government of Croatia drew up and published conclusions and recommendations in Croatian and English, and published a video with the key messages of each panellist. Financial support for the organization of the Conference was successfully secured by the OGE of the Government of Croatia by applying the 'Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme' of the European Commission (hereinafter: EC). The final value of the project was € 67,044.01, whereas € 53,259.76 of that was co-financed by the EC.

The analysis of the percentage of female entrepreneurs in the ownership structures of companies in the period from 2012 to 2021 shows a slight increase in the percentage of women who are owners/founders of companies (from 18.3% to 22%).<sup>20</sup> Nominally, the largest number of female entrepreneurs was found in the field of professional, scientific and technical activities (26.5%), and considering the ownership share by field of activity, the female entrepreneurs predominate in the field of service activities (49.6%). According to data from the Trade Registry, in December of 2023, 36.95% of craft enterprises were owned by women, which presents a slight increase compared to 2022, when that percentage was 36.42%. In 2023, 54.37% of women were newly included in the programs of the active employment policy, and through the most important measure of the active employment policy – backing for self-employment – 40.36% of women were supported.

From May of 2019 to December of 2023, the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development granted a total of 157 loans to women entrepreneurs through the 'Youth, Women, and Beginners Entrepreneurship Programme'. In 2023, women entrepreneurs were granted 65 loans in the total amount of € 37.02 million.

It should be added that, in the reporting period, the Republic of Croatia had a woman as the Minister of Finance, and that two out of eight official positions in the Croatian National Bank are held by women, namely the position of Deputy Governess and the position of Vice Governess.

## **7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?**

### **Work-life balance**

In the reporting period, the Government of the Republic of Croatia was continuously investing in measures and family support for parenthood, and the amounts of systematic financial support for maternity and parental leave have been increased. In accordance with the objectives of the *Directive (EU) 2019/1158*, legal prerequisites have been provided that enable flexibility in the use of existing rights and the introduction of new rights, all with the aim of greater involvement of parents in the

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Fina, *Analysis of percentage of female entrepreneurs in the ownership structures of companies – from 2012 to 2021*, available at: <https://www.fina.hr/-/udio-zena-poduzetnica-u-vlasnickoj-strukturi-trgovackih-drustava-od-2012.-do-2021.-godine>.

use of parental leave and a more equal distribution of care for children at an early age by both parents, with a focus on stronger involvement of fathers in participation in early childhood education.

The need to adapt and improve public policies in the area of harmonizing family obligations and paid work was recognized through improvement of legislation and strategic measures in the reporting period. Within the *Demographic Revitalization Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2033*, the focus is on the importance of building a stimulating environment for families, and defining the measures which will enable easier harmonization of business, family and private life in the context of technological changes. Enabling the participation of both parents in the labour market is an extremely important part of family care, implemented through improvement of legislation in the area of maternity and parental benefits, as well as labour relations. The focus was on the introduction of a new right to paternity leave, and on the increase in the amount of compensation for using the right to parental leave, which further motivates parents, especially fathers, to use parental leave, in order to influence the increase in the number of employed and self-employed fathers using the right to parental leave, and consequently strengthen the role of fathers in raising and caring for a new-born child.

Immense focus is continuously being placed on the need for involvement of the local community, social partners and employers, with whom it is necessary to develop further dialogue in order to reach the best possible solution in the field of harmonizing private and work life.

The need to take measures to achieve a work-life balance is being highlighted in order to reduce stereotypes and differences in terms of work and care between women and men. Additionally, it was determined that when fathers had activated work-life balance measures, such as paternity leave or flexible working conditions, this would have a beneficial effect on reducing the share of unpaid work performed by women, thus leaving them more time for paid jobs. This way, there was an effort to enable parents to divide work and family tasks more evenly, and to encourage a fair division of responsibilities between women and men in terms of providing care.

Within the changes of the legal system of maternity and paternity support in the past period, the amounts of financial support for certain groups of employed beneficiaries were increased, more favourable conditions for the exercise of rights were made possible, and new institutes were introduced: paternity leave (with a duration of 10 work days per child, or 15 work days in case of twins, triplets or simultaneous birth of several children, paid from the national budget at a full salary rate). The maximum amount of salary compensation for the period spent at parental leave for employed and self-employed parents was also increased from the previous € 750.44 to € 995.44. It should be emphasized that this compensation was increased three times for a total of € 642.29 or 281.87%, i.e. from € 353.15 to € 995.44.

The *Directive (EU) 2019/1158* was transposed into Croatian national legislation, which was fully complied with it through the *Act on Amendments to the Labour Act*, mentioned in the reply to Q6. Parents and other workers who have to care for dependent family or household members have the right to paid leave and flexible working conditions. This encourages women and men to equally use their employment rights (rights from the system of maternity and parental benefits).

In the period of four years, a total of € 13.48 million from the national budget was invested through measures of support to municipalities and cities for development of preschool activities. The number of awarded allowances grew continuously, reaching 19,316 children, while many parents were given a month of free kindergarten. The Ministry of Science and Education (hereinafter: MSE) passed a regulation ensuring the financial stability of kindergartens. Thus, there is no need for the Central State Office for Demography and Youth (hereinafter: CSODY) to continue financing that

sector, and can allocate more funds for the needs of sports, cultural and educational programs for preschool and school children in 2024. In March, there was an open call for the pilot project for local government units to co-finance educational, cultural, and sports activities for preschool children and children in first four years of elementary school, with the aim of relieving the financial burden on families with preschool and primary school children, as well as encouraging equal inclusion, and increasing the number of children participating in educational, cultural, and sports activities. The goal is to ensure the availability and accessibility of these activities in order to provide support to parents facing financial challenges related to the upbringing and education of children. Furthermore, it is important to note that the taken measures target not only the children who need special care, but also all children of preschool age, and children in the first four grades of elementary school.

The *Act on Amendments to the Maternity and Parental Benefits Act (Official Gazette, 85/2022)*, which entered into force in August of 2022, improved the legal regulations and harmonized legislation for the purpose of transposing the *Directive (EU) 2019/1158*. It introduced a new right to paid paternity leave for employed or self-employed beneficiaries, in the duration of 10 work days for one child, or 15 work days in the case of birth of twins, triplets or the simultaneous birth of several children, which is fully paid as a regular salary, but from the national budget. There is also an increase in the maximum amount of salary for employed and self-employed parents during the use of parental leave (from € 750.44 to € 995.44). The salary has also been increased when the right to parental leave is used as the right to work half-time from € 309.01 to € 485.58, and greater flexibility is enabled in relation to the way of using the right to parental leave.

As of January of 2023, the new *Maternity and Parental Benefits Act (Official Gazette, 152/22)* entered into force, which increased the amounts of compensation for certain categories of beneficiaries and the conditions for exercising rights, and it introduced the right of the second adoptive parent to parental leave and foster care leave, modelled on the example of paternity leave. The financial support has been increased from the previous € 309.01 to € 551.80 for the following groups of beneficiaries: financial compensation to parents of a child with severe developmental disabilities during the use of childcare leave until the child turns 8; financial compensation for part-time work due to enhanced care of the child up to the age of 3; financial benefits for parents who use parental leave for a duration of 30 months, for the birth of twins, the third and each subsequent child; salary in cases where the parent does not fulfil the legally prescribed condition of insurance based on work experience (previous insurance) and other rights of employed and self-employed persons.

The mentioned legal changes have resulted in a continuous increase in the number of beneficiaries of rights and budget expenditures from the system of maternity and parental support. It is expected that the measures will have a positive effect on the increase of the number of employed and self-employed fathers using the right to parental leave, and consequently strengthening the role of fathers in upbringing and caring for a new-born child.

The CSODY launched the implementation of the 'National Campaign for the Promotion of Positive and Equal Parenting', with the aim of promoting positive family surroundings, cooperation between parents, and encouraging men to be actively involved in childcare, with a special focus on the use of paternity and parental leave by fathers.

Since 2021, the CSODY has been continuously funding programs and projects of associations that promote parenting support, and encourage fathers to be more involved in family life and play a more active parental role. Each year, the project 'Employer as a friend of the family' is implemented, awarding recognition to companies that distinguished themselves, within the framework of their

business, with quality programs and benefits for employees or innovative solutions in the implementation of family-friendly measures.

Continuing the ESF call 'Improving services for children in the system of early and preschool education' from 2018, and considering the exceptional need for financing for the activities aimed at improving the services, extending the working hours of kindergartens, introducing new programs, hiring educators and professional workers, and based on the positive experiences of parents and kindergartens implementing the projects, there was a second ESF call in 2020, 'Continuation of the improvement of services for children in the system of early and preschool education', within which 121 projects were implemented with the amount of € 38,200.000,00, which included 15,402 children.

By adopting the *Act on Personal Assistance (Official Gazette, 71/23)*, assistance and support to people with disabilities is assured in activities they cannot perform on their own due to the type and degree of disability, and which is needed on a daily basis. Simultaneously, the family members of a person with a disability, who were previously their informal caregivers, were provided with time for themselves, i.e. to take a break from caregiving and join the labour market. More detailed activities carried out with the aim of providing support to persons with disabilities are listed in the answer to the Q3.

## **8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?**

### *Reducing digital gender inequality*

In 2022, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the *Digital Croatia Strategy for the period until 2032*<sup>21</sup>, which determines the guidelines for achieving the goal of transformation of the Republic of Croatia towards a green and digital lifestyle, as prerequisites for future sustainable development. The strategy defines the vision of digitization of society, public administration and the economy, while it lists the associated strategic objectives, along with their key performance indicators. As a part of the 'Strategic objective 4: Developed digital competences for working and living in a digital age', there is the 'Goal #5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. This goal promotes the involvement of women and girls in education and careers in the information and communication technologies (hereinafter: ICT) field, and it encourages a stronger representation of women among ICT experts by actively promoting the importance of their equal participation in the sector, and by encouraging activities aimed at popularizing the employment of more women. The estimated budget is € 93 million.

By signing the EU *Declaration on Commitment on women in digital*<sup>22</sup> in 2019, the Government of the Republic of Croatia joined the EU initiative focused on encouraging an increase in the number of women in STEM. According to the implementation areas of said declaration, one of the objectives is to encourage girls in high school, through various campaigns and events, to choose STEM or ICT as their future professions. As the implementer of the Declaration, the Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society (hereinafter: CSODDS) organized an educational information campaign titled 'You too should become an IT girl' ('*Postani i TI djevojka IT*'). The aim of the campaign

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<sup>21</sup> Available at: [https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocImages/SDURDD-dokumenti/Strategija\\_Digitalne\\_Hrvatske\\_final\\_v1\\_EN.pdf](https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocImages/SDURDD-dokumenti/Strategija_Digitalne_Hrvatske_final_v1_EN.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Available at: [https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocImages/SDURDD-dokumenti/Deklaracija%20o%20posvecenosti%20pitanju%20zena%20u%20digitalnom%20svijetu\\_prijevod.pdf](https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocImages/SDURDD-dokumenti/Deklaracija%20o%20posvecenosti%20pitanju%20zena%20u%20digitalnom%20svijetu_prijevod.pdf).

was to promote STEM, especially the ICT, among girls. Various lectures by successful business women in ICT served to break prejudices and stereotypes, and the inspiring stories encouraged girls to choose to continue their education in ICT.

In 2023, a two-day workshop was held in Zagreb for all female graduates of Zagreb high schools. A set of short interactive lectures with examples of good practice by speakers who are successful ICT business women aimed to introduce and represent the diversity of professions that are offered by the faculties from this field. During 2024, the educational campaign 'You too should become an IT girl' is planned to continue through several meetings in the regions of the Republic of Croatia, with the aim of breaking stereotypes about ICT as a men's profession.

The CSODDS has been responsible for implementation of the *Path to the Digital Decade 2030 (Roadmap)*. One of the goals of this plan is 'to promote women's access to the ICT field, while increasing the number of people with a diploma in the ICT field'. The programme is a strategic tool for coordination and achievement of successful digitalization in the EU. It sets specific goals of digital transformation in Europe, and presents the means needed to achieve those goals by 2030.

In relation to STEM, the MSE has been implementing the 'STEM and ICT Scholarship Award' project, related to the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026*. The project seeks to increase the retention rate of college and university students in STEM study programmes, i.e. to increase the study completion rates. Thus, in the academic year 2023/2024, a total of 186 scholarships for teaching studies in STEM was awarded to female students, compared to 69 scholarships for male students, which means that 72.9% of scholarships went to female students. They receive monthly allowances in the amount of € 600 for teaching studies in STEM, and € 300 for other STEM studies, as well as the possibility of future employment, which increases the attractiveness of STEM studies at the national level.

## **9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?**

### ***Financial Consolidation***

In the reporting period, the Republic of Croatia was not obliged to implement fiscal consolidation measures, and it was primarily focused on stimulating the Croatian economy, and creating a foundation for a strong and sustainable economic growth. Positive fiscal trends in the years preceding the COVID-19 crisis created fiscal space for a quick and strong fiscal support to maintain employment and overall economic activity during the COVID-19 and energy crisis. Ensuring the conditions for a quick recovery after the crisis, through strong reform efforts and public investments, especially within the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026*, created the preconditions for opening quality jobs, especially for women, and improving their social status. A particularly favourable effect came from increased expenditures for social protection, as well as expenditures encouraging the employment and education of women, which affects employment growth and increased productivity for women. Furthermore, special attention was given to groups in a disadvantageous position on the labour market, such as single mothers, women who are victims of violence, those unemployed for a long time, and people over 50. In so doing, the effect of fiscal policy measures was not evaluated in relation to women and men.

Strong economic growth and responsible fiscal policy contribute to the protection of the entire population in the best possible way. Cyclical movements of the economy have a particularly negative effect on vulnerable social groups, including women who, in the times of economic decline, lose their jobs more easily, and remain unemployed for longer than men. Strong economic growth and a fiscal policy the main goal of which is to improve the entire economy is the most effective long-term policy in promoting the equality of the entire population, and its overall protection.

## Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

### Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

### **10. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?**

#### *Combating the poverty of women and girls*

The *National Plan for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period from 2021 to 2027*,<sup>23</sup> the goal of which is to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and to reduce the poverty risk rate, establishes development priorities for elimination of poverty and social exclusion, and expresses the needs related to vulnerable groups, which includes the category of elderly women. The *Action Plan for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion for the Period from 2021 to 2024* proposes the implementation of the measure 'Increasing the adequacy of social benefits and improving the coverage of the most vulnerable group of health insured persons with supplementary health insurance', with the goal to gradually (annually) increase the basis for allocation of social benefits, in accordance with the established line of extreme poverty. The measure 'Development and implementation of programmes aimed at reducing material deprivation and social exclusion of vulnerable groups' ensures food and/or basic material assistance for the most deprived, and strengthens the capacities of civil society organizations which carry out activities aimed at meeting the needs of vulnerable groups.

Within the Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived (FEAD), there was a financing of projects providing assistance in food and basic material assistance to the most vulnerable groups of society. In the period from 2019 to the end of 2023, projects with a total value of € 39.400.000,00 were contracted, and at the level of the entire FEAD, assistance in food or basic material assistance was provided to 326,694 people, 168,820 of which were women, and 110,162 of which were girls under the age of 15.

In order to deal with child poverty, a particular measure was implemented to finance free school meals for children at risk of poverty. Out of the total number of people who received help, in the period from 2019 to the end of 2023, a free meal was provided for 198,819 children of primary school age, 97,575 of which were girls.

The *Social Welfare Act (Official Gazette, 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23)* introduced a new social service of social mentoring, which enables work self-activation of long-term unemployed persons, who are the most marginalized and furthest from the labour market, by focusing on their abilities and potential.

The free legal aid system in civil and administrative matters is governed by the *Free Legal Aid Act (Official Gazette, 143/13, 98/19)*. Primary legal assistance includes the provision of general legal

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<sup>23</sup> Available at: <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Glavno%20tajni%C5%A1tvo/Godi%C5%A1nji%20planovi%20i%20strate%C5%A1ka%20izvje%C5%A1C4%87a/Nacionalni%20plan%20borbe%20protiv%20siroma%C5%A1tva%20i%20socijalne%20isklju%C4%8Denosti%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202021%20do%202027.pdf>.



information, legal advice, the writing of submissions, and representation in proceedings before public law bodies. Primary legal aid is provided by authorised associations and legal clinics, and funding is awarded on the basis of an approved project. Secondary legal aid includes representation in court proceedings, exemption from court fees, and litigation costs. Secondary legal aid is provided by lawyers, experts, and interpreters. Over the period since 2019, the funding for the free legal aid system has gradually increased, including an increase in the total funding intended for projects of primary legal aid providers, and in 2019 the level of lawyers' fees was increased by 40%. In 2023, further measures were taken to strengthen the free legal aid system. As a result, the funding for projects of authorised associations and legal clinics for the provision of primary legal aid increased by 100% compared to 2022. A total of € 548,756.96 was allocated to 23 projects of primary legal aid providers (20 authorised associations and 3 legal clinics). Project activities envisage the provision of primary legal aid to vulnerable social groups, such as socially underrepresented people, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to national minorities, victims of violence, victims of domestic violence, applicants for international protection, etc. In addition, a three-year project funding is intended for the period from January of 2023 to December of 2025, with the aim of enabling primary legal aid providers to stabilise and strengthen their capacities so that they can adequately ensure the provision and accessibility of their services to beneficiaries. All of the primary legal aid providers successfully completed the project activities in 2023, and according to recorded and reported data, 67% of primary legal aid beneficiaries in 2023 were women. Furthermore, in 2023, the compensation for providing secondary legal aid was increased by 69% for lawyers, 62% for experts, and 60% for court interpreters, in order to ensure a sufficient number of interested service providers, particularly lawyers. During that year, 66% of the beneficiaries of secondary legal aid were women.

In the reporting period, the Directorate for Railway Infrastructure and Transport of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure (hereinafter: MMATI) enabled free transport for pupils and pensioners in public railway transport, and also subsidized railway transport for college and university students – which includes women and girls. Moreover, the same benefits were assured by the Directorate for Maritime Affairs of the MMATI for the public coastal liner shipping, with free and discounted transport for pensioners, students, pupils, and island inhabitants, as well as free transport for persons with disabilities, which includes women and girls. The Directorate General for Civil Aviation, Electronic Communications and Postal Services participates in the EU Platform of the EC 'Women in Transport' in order to ensure gender equality in the transport sector.

## **11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?**

### ***Access of women and girls to social protection***

Child support is a monetary income used by a parent or another person designated by law to support a child. The *Act on Amendments to the Child Support Act (Official Gazette, 156/2023)* entered into force in March of 2024. In order to increase the number of child support beneficiaries, as well as the number of children for whom the right is exercised, the condition of income threshold for exercising the right to the allowance was increased from the previous 70% of the budget basis to 140%. The income censuses were changed, on the basis of which the individual amount of child support is determined by defining a wider range of income classes (the number of census groups was increased from the previous three to five), in order to distribute the child support more fairly, and the sums of the child support for all user groups in the range from € 30.90 to € 61.80.

The new *Social Welfare Act* has increased the basis for granting the General Minimum Income, as the basic benefit in the social welfare system, from the previous € 106.18 to € 132.72. The maximum amount of General Minimum Income per household was increased from 100% to 150% of the gross minimum wage in the Republic of Croatia. Furthermore, the group of General Minimum Income beneficiaries was expanded (homeless people who use shelter accommodation services, victims of domestic violence, and victims of human trafficking who are receivers of temporary accommodation services in crisis situations, are all granted 50% of the amount of the General Minimum Income). In January of 2024 the basis for calculating the amount of General Minimum Income was additionally increased from € 132.72 to € 150.00.

## **12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?**

### ***Promoting women's access to health services***

In the last 5 years, the Republic of Croatia has intensified the processes of adopting the important political documents related to improvement and protection of mental health. The *Strategic framework for the development of mental health until 2030*<sup>24</sup> was adopted in November of 2022, its objectives being: improving the mental health of the entire population; reorganization and redirection of the mental health care system, from a system mainly based on hospital care to a system which provides most of its services within the community, in accordance with the needs of the beneficiaries. Redirection of care implies the organization of a greater extent of mental health care at the primary level, as well as greater availability of psychological support in primary social communities such as: family, school, workplace, and the organization of mobile psychiatric teams to provide all interventions including pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy, and social therapy in the community, or in the user's home. In order to achieve all the goals of the *Strategic framework for the development of mental health until 2030*, the development of numerous action plans for the protection of mental health began, including the *Action Plan for the Protection of Mental Health in the Community*, the *Action Plan for the Protection of Mental Health of Children and Youth*, and the *Action Plan on Dementia*. Additionally, the Republic of Croatia participates in numerous international activities aimed at improving mental health. As of 2021, the EU JA project 'ImpleMENTAL' has been carried out. The Republic of Croatia has already begun the processes of implementation of the programme of redirecting the mental health care system in the community by organizing a mobile psychiatric team for interventions in the patient's home. In 2024, the new NPHI was formalized, which plans to organize 30 mobile teams for the protection of mental health, 24 dispensaries for mental health, and 23 dispensaries for early intervention. The organization of first teams for psychological help at the primary level has already begun, and by 2024 teams were established in Zagreb and Split.

The 'Screening of risks to the mental health of students in systematic examinations' started as a pilot project at the beginning of 2020. The screening is being conducted via a short standardized questionnaire answered by every student during a systematic medical/physical examination in the 5th and 8th grade of elementary school, the 1st grade of high school, and students in their first year of studies. If the school doctor determines a risk in mental health, they refer the student to further processing and treatment. The screening is included in the digital application of school medicine,

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<sup>24</sup> Available at: <https://zdravlje.gov.hr/UserDocImages/2022%20Objave/STRATE%C5%A0KI%20OKVIR%20RAZVOJ%A%20MENTALNOG%20ZDRAVLJA%20DO%202030..pdf>.

which will enable monitoring and evaluation. The results of the screening of risks in the mental health of students in the academic year of 2022/2023 for students of the 8th grade showed that a higher percentage of girls than boys were positive (11% of girls vs. 5% of boys), and a similar result was found in the 1st grade of high school (10% girls vs. 5% boys).

Considering that the available data shows that 33.6% of the total number of people undergoing treatment for drug addiction in the hospital and outpatient system, and therapeutic communities are women, activities aimed at developing services for women with addiction problems were carried out in coordination with the Croatian Institute for Public Health. Acknowledging the need to respect the gender dimension in the implementation of policies dealing with addiction, and taking into account that women with addiction problems also suffer from numerous other problems, in the 2023 *National Addiction Strategy for the period up to 2030 (Official Gazette, 18/23)*, and the *Action Plan in the field of addiction for the period up to 2026* (adopted in January of 2024), special focus is placed on this target group. One of the planned measures seeks to improve and ensure better treatment and care for women with addiction problems, including the mothers and children of persons with addiction problems. In order to encourage employment of socially vulnerable groups, including women treated for drug addiction, measures were implemented to strengthen their education and employment. In order to implement project activities more effectively, two regional trainings were held (in 2021 and 2023) for representatives from the health, social and judicial sectors.

In 2021, throughout the evaluation of implementation of the *Croatian guidelines for psychosocial treatment of drug addiction in the health, social and prison system*<sup>25</sup>, which also include interventions aimed at women with drug addiction problems, focus groups were held with women who are being treated for drug addiction. Additionally, as a basis for creating science-based interventions for this group, in 2022, the CIPH conducted a qualitative research analysis among women with addiction problems who are treated in the outpatient system, therapeutic communities, and the prison system. The main goal was to determine the availability of treatment for women with drug addiction problems who have small children, especially the pregnant women. Following the recommendations from the evaluation of the guidelines and the study, the new guidelines for psychosocial treatment were drafted in 2023, which include interventions aimed at women with addiction problems. Three trainings were also held in 2022, with the topic 'Preparation, monitoring, and evaluation of psychosocial treatment programs for experts from the health, social and prison system'. In 2021, the drafting of the *Protocol for collaboration between health institutions and social care institutions* began, with the aim of strengthening cooperation of the health and social system, and improving the quality of services provided to women with addiction problems. In 2022, a round table was held on the topic of 'Women with addiction problems', with a discussion on the needs and challenges in implementation of specific treatment and rehabilitation programs aimed at women with drug addiction problems. In 2023, an expert meeting 'Multidisciplinary approach in providing support to families with the addiction problems'.

In 2021, the CIPH established a multi-sector Commission for the evaluation/verification of psychosocial rehabilitation and social reintegration programs being implemented in institutions providing care services for persons with addiction problems. The programme standards for programme evaluation and verification were adopted in May of 2022.

Since 2006, the 'National Breast Cancer Early Detection Programme' has been implemented. As a part of the implementation, all women between the ages of 50 and 69 are invited to undergo a

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<sup>25</sup> Available at: <https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Smjernice-za-psihosocijalni-tretman-ovisnosti-o-drogama-u-zdravstvenom-socijalnom-i-zatvorskom-sustavu-2014..pdf>.

mammographic examination every two years, with the aim of detecting the disease as early as possible, and a more successful treatment. To date, seven cycles of the programme implementation have been completed, and the 8th cycle has begun in 2023. In the last 20 years, the incidence of breast cancer has been on the rise, but the mortality trend, after years of a stable trend, has been declining for the last eight years, by 25-30% compared to the years with the highest number of deceased women. With the implementation of media campaigns on television, radio and social media, and in print media, since January of 2024, the 'National Breast Cancer Early Detection Programme' has been improved in accordance with the recommendations of the European Society of Breast Imaging, whereas women with the fibro glandular tissue density over 75% are being invited to do breast magnetic resonance once every 2-4 years, in order to detect breast cancer in the initial stage.

### **13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?**

#### ***Women and Education***

The *Curriculum for the cross-curricular subject of Citizenship Education for primary and secondary schools in Croatia (Official Gazette, 10/2019)* was introduced in January of 2019. The field of gender equality is appropriately integrated in the curriculum. In addition, decisions were made on adopting the curricula for the other six cross-curricular subjects that were introduced in all of the primary and secondary schools, including the *Curriculum for the cross-curricular subject of Health for primary and secondary schools (Official Gazette, 10/2019)*. The following domains are covered within that topic: 'Physical health', 'Mental and social health', and 'Help and self-help'. A component of the 'Physical Health' domain is the preservation of reproductive and sexual health, with a focus on raising awareness of a positive approach to sexuality, and the importance of personal responsibility in preventing sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancy.

The 2018 adoption of the *Act on School Textbooks and Other Educational Materials (Official Gazette, 116/2018)*, and the *Ordinance on Textbook Standards and the Members of Expert Committees for the Assessment of Textbooks and Other Educational Materials (Official Gazette, 9/2019)* also aligns with the obligation to promote gender equality in textbooks in an appropriate manner, using an equal proportion with illustrations of characters of different sexes, and using gender sensitive nouns, especially in the naming of professions and occupations.

Content related to issues of gender equality is an integral part of preschool, primary and secondary education, and higher education, as well as lifelong learning, and it includes the preparation of all students, regardless of gender, to actively and equally participate in all aspects of life.

One of the measures of the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* and the *Action Plan for Implementation of the National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2024* is to motivate and encourage students to choose future educational and professional paths unencumbered by gender stereotypes. According to the strategic objectives of these documents, a total percentage of female students in the vocational education system increased from a ratio of 57.02% male and 42.98% female students in the academic year 2018/2019 to a ratio of 56.46% male and 43.54% female students in the school year 2022/2023. A significant increase of female students

is noted in the sectors of traffic and logistics, and building and mechanical engineering<sup>26</sup>. The implementation of this measure involves integrating related activities into the annual *Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Plan* of the Education and Teacher Training Agency<sup>27</sup>. This includes organizing state-level interdisciplinary conferences addressing the impact of gender stereotypes on the educational system in the Republic of Croatia, aimed at teachers, professors, expert collaborators, etc. The conferences seek to achieve the following learning outcomes: apply knowledge of different concepts to eliminate gender stereotypes and inequality; recognize the imperative of ensuring equal opportunities for exercising all rights, regardless of gender; compare instances of demonstrated societal actions with personal behaviour.

The positive aspects of the education system in the Republic of Croatia in the last five years are related to the increase in the number of women in higher education: they make up 61.0% of the total number of graduated students, 65.7% of masters of science, and 52.5% of the doctors of science. Simultaneously, from 2019 to 2022 the percentage of women among the associate professors increased by 1.3% (from 40.5% to 41.8%), and among the assistant professors the increase was by 0.1% (from 52.4% to 52.5%), while that number decreased among the teaching assistants by 2.2% (from 56% to 53.8%).<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the representation of women in science and technology is on the rise, and the number of women in this area grew from 43.5% to 46.3%.

Since 2021, when the first research on menstrual poverty<sup>29</sup> was conducted in the Republic of Croatia, there have been major developments in the issue of reproductive health policies for girls and women. Already in 2022, some cities and counties have provided free sanitary napkins and tampons for their residents, and some universities for their students. From 2023, the MLPSFSP, in cooperation with the Libresse company and the CROATIA polyclinic, launched a national campaign to combat menstrual poverty 'For you for a month, for them for the whole year'. The aim of the campaign is to support girls from children's homes and foster families who face menstrual poverty.<sup>30</sup>

The Republic of Croatia lowered the VAT for menstrual supplies, which can be presented as an example of good practice to other countries.

#### **14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?**

Please refer to the reply to Q4.

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<sup>26</sup> Available at: <https://app.powerbi.com/>.

<sup>27</sup> Available at: <https://www.azoo.hr/strucni-skupovi-arhiva/katalog-drzavnih-strucnih-skupova-agencije-za-odgoj-i-obrazovanje-za-2024-godinu/>.

<sup>28</sup> Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, *Women and Men in Croatia*, 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Available at: <https://pariter.hr/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Menstrualno-siromastvo-izvjestaj-1-1-1.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> More information on the campaign is available at: <https://mrosp.gov.hr/vijesti/pocela-nacionalna-kampanja-borbe-protiv-menstrualnog-siromastva-tebi-za-mjesec-njima-za-cijelu-godinu/13063>.

## **Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes**

### **Critical areas of concern:**

- D. Violence against women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

## **15. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?**

### ***Priorities for action to combat all forms of GBV***

Please refer to the replies to Q1, Q2, Q3, Q16, and other parts of this report. In the reporting period, the most important issue was combating all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual violence and harassment, cyber violence, violence against marginalized groups of women. That was accompanied by the changes of the legislative and strategic framework, along with the implementation of numerous campaigns and other activities aimed at raising public awareness of zero tolerance towards all forms of violence.

## **16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?**

### ***Priority measures in the approach to GBV***

Please refer to the replies to Q1 and Q2.

The amended *Social Welfare Act* prescribes a new service of psychosocial treatment for prevention of violent behaviour, as a counselling-therapeutic and psychoeducational service aimed at stopping and preventing violent behaviour in the family. The service is used by persons or partners/parents who have been assessed for the existence of a risk of violent behaviour, or a risk of mutual violent behaviour, as well as a risk for the well-being and development of the child, in cases where violence has not occurred. For the purposes of implementing this service, 52 experts from the social welfare system were trained within the project 'Let's stop violence against women – There is no excuse for violence'.

Within the ESF call 'Ensuring a support system for women victims of violence and victims of domestic violence', € 7,300,000.00 was invested in the implementation of 6 projects for the establishment of shelters for women victims of violence and victims of domestic violence. The project holders were the counties in which where no shelter had been previously established, and with implementation partners from civil society organizations which work on prevention of GBV and provide support and assistance to victims of GBV. In relation to services for victims of violence, it should be noted that there are 25 shelters operating in the Republic of Croatia, with a total accommodation capacity of 379 beds. Counselling centres for victims of violence operate in all counties. All services for victims are assured free of charge, and the operating costs of counselling centres and shelters for victims of violence are covered from the national budget and/or the budgets of cities and counties.

As a part of the ESF direct allocation of funds to the MLPSFSP under the title 'Let's stop violence against women and domestic violence – There is no excuse for violence' (with a total amount of € 1,300,000.00), a 24-hour advisory telephone helpline was established for women victims of violence and victims of domestic violence for entire Croatia, the capacities of experts dealing with violence against women were strengthened, and a media campaign was carried out to raise public awareness. The project was implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration (hereinafter: MJPA) and the Victim and Witness Support Service. A 24-hour emergency call for victims of violence is available on a total of 8 SOS telephones in the Republic of Croatia, seven of which are financially supported by the MLPSFSP, through the projects and programs for associations. There are also the harmonized numbers intended for victims, namely:

- 116 000 Call Centre for Missing Children,
- 116 006 Call Centre for Victims of Crime (available 24/7),
- 116 016 Call Centre for Helping Victims of Violence against Women (from 10.00 to 17.00 on weekdays)
- 116 111 Call Centre for children (from 9:00 to 20:00 on weekdays).

The MJPA is implementing the activities and measures provided in the *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027* and the *National Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence 2017-2022*.

The Article 2 of the *Act on Amendments of the Courts Act (Official Gazette, 36/24)* prescribes specific conditions for judges working on domestic violence cases. In accordance with the provisions of this Article, the annual work schedule designates the judges and civil servants to deal with such cases, and the court president must ensure that those who are designated have a strong sense and propensity to work in such cases, with the obligation to undertake specialized training on a regular basis in order to ensure specialisation and the highest level of competence. This obligation is specifically laid down in the action plan accompanying the *National Gender Equality Plan for the period until 2027*.

One of the main objectives of the latest amendments to the *Criminal Procedure Act (Official Gazette, 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 126/19, 130/20, 80/22, 36/24)*, which entered into force in April of 2024, is to improve the legislative framework for protection against violence against women and domestic violence. The procedural position of the victim in criminal proceedings has been clarified from the provisions governing general and specific catalogues of victims' rights. Thus, the general catalogue of victims' rights has extended the right of the victim to easily accessible, confidential, and free access to support services immediately after the crime has been committed, and for as long as necessary. The amended *Criminal Code* explicitly states that the victim has the right to be accompanied by a trusted person of their choice, from the moment the crime is reported until the final conclusion of the proceedings. It defines a new general victims' right to confidentiality of data, the disclosure of which could endanger their security, or the safety of those close to the victim. The victim's right to information, which was previously attainable 'upon request', is now provided in such a way that it is presumed that the victim wishes to receive the prescribed information, unless the victim waives that right. The right to information is extended to notifying the victim of the perpetrator's release. The special catalogues of rights of victims of sexual offences, as well as victims for whom the specific protective measures have been identified, have been expanded with the right to be questioned via audio-video devices, unless the victims themselves request to be present in the courtroom while being deposed.

Furthermore, to strengthen the safety of the victim of GBV, domestic violence, and violence against a close person, it is stipulated that risk factors for recidivism should be considered, as well as the

results of a prior assessment of the victim's needs, through an individual assessment related to those categories of victims. In the case of these types of felonies, the court and the public prosecutor, before issuing an order imposing, prolonging or revoking a precautionary measure, are obliged to debrief the victim on whether there is danger to their personal safety, or the safety of their family members and close persons, and to consider the response to the proposal for application of precautionary measures, and the results of the assessment of the victim's needs, whereas the victim may also be debriefed through the means of ICTs, or by other appropriate means. The victim is also entitled to appeal against the order imposing, prolonging or revoking the precautionary measure.

In order to ensure a prompt reaction of the system to a breach of precautionary measures, the amendments introduced a new legal basis for the arrest of a suspect who breached the precautionary measure. The amendments also set a time limit and the authority competent to decide on the replacement of a precautionary measure with remand prison sentence. A minimum distance of 100 metres may now be determined by the court as a precautionary measure of a restraining order, and the provisions about the notification of a precautionary measure order have been supplemented.

The victim notification of the release of a perpetrator or suspect, and of the revoking of pre-trial detention has been further specified with regards to the authority which informs the victim. With the aim to protect the victim's right to privacy and dignity, the obligation to anonymise the victim's personal data, and the data from which the victim's identity can be inferred, when the documents are being published on the court's notice board.

As amended, the summons to a witness who, as a victim of violence against women, domestic violence, and violence against close persons, is placed in a shelter, are to be served through the competent social welfare body, or victim and witness support units. In addition, in order to improve the protection of safety of a victim of the felony of violence against women, domestic violence, and violence against close persons, it is stipulated that their place of residence at the time of their witness deposition will be determined in a safe and confidential manner, and that information will be enclosed in a special envelope and kept separately, and will not be permitted to be viewed or used without permission of the authority conducting the proceedings.

In order to strengthen the procedural position of domestic violence victims, and to exercise the guaranteed rights of the victim, the latest amendments to the *Protection against Domestic Violence Act* have modified the catalogue of victims' rights so that certain guaranteed rights have been clarified, extended, or harmonised, such as the right to access to affordable support services for victims of domestic violence, which are easily accessible, confidential, and free of charge, while being accessible to victims immediately after the perpetration of the felony, and for as long as necessary. It explicitly states that a domestic violence victim has the right to be accompanied by a trusted person, from the time of reporting of the offence until the final conclusion of the court proceedings, while having the right to be notified of termination of detention or escape of the alleged perpetrator, and the repeal of the decision to impose protective measures, or the lifting of the precautionary measures imposed for their protection, or of the release of the perpetrator from imprisonment. The victim is to be informed without undue delay, unless the victim waives that right. Furthermore, the amendments introduce additional rights, such as the right of the victim of domestic violence to propose a questioning via an audio-video device.

The new amendments also prescribe the minimum distance that may be determined by the court when imposing a protective measure of a restraining order, and victim protection from harassment



or stalking. The distance which the offender must not cross from the victim of domestic violence, is now at least 100 metres, thereby achieving the purpose of that protective measure.

The *Protocol on the Procedure in Cases Sexual Violence*<sup>31</sup>, i.e. its fourth updated edition, was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in 2023. It is one of the most important documents for ensuring standardized and effective assistance and support for victims of sexual violence reporting and processing it. It is a document which contains the obligations of competent authorities and other stakeholders involved in detecting and suppressing sexual violence and providing assistance and protection to persons exposed to sexual violence. It also describes the forms, manner, and content of cooperation between the competent authorities. The Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the first such protocol in 2012, which has been updated three times, in 2014, 2018, and 2023. The newest protocol contains novelties in the procedural steps when victims of sexual violence are children, and it is expanded by an elaboration of procedures for sexual harassment. One of the reasons for updating the text of the protocol were the changes in criminal legislation, and the amendments of the *Protection against Domestic Violence Act*.

Within the implementation of the *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027*, the measure 'Encouraging victims and witnesses to report sexual and gender-based violence', OGE printed 5,000 posters with the aim of raising awareness among victims of sexual and GBV, and encouraging the witnesses of violence and third parties who have knowledge of violence to report it. For this purpose, the Office spent € 1,440.00. The posters contain telephone numbers for violence reporting, since they are primarily intended for social welfare institutions and health establishments. They were delivered to the relevant ministries for distribution. The MLPSFSP is responsible for the implementation of the *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027*.

Article 21 of the *Act on Amendments to the Police Act (Official Gazette, 66/2019)* stipulates that domestic violence is regarded as a serious breach of official duty, thus amending the Article 112 of the *Police Act (Official Gazette, 34/11, 130/12, 89/14, 151/14, 33/15, 121/16, 66/19, 155/23)* in such a way that it now defines that a police officer is to be removed from service if they are subject of a criminal complaint, filed with the competent state attorney's office, following a criminal investigation due to a well-founded suspicion of committing the felony of domestic violence.

For the sake of uniformity of action of all organizational units, and in order to systematically inform the victims about their rights and the possibilities of obtaining support, the MoI created form templates – notices to victims of criminal offenses about their rights, which are handed to victims by police officers, along with a list of contacts for the victim and witness support departments at the county courts, the National Call Centre for Victims of Felonies and Misdemeanours, and contact information of state administration bodies and civil society organizations dealing with the support and protection of victims of felonies and misdemeanours, in the area of a particular police department. Police officers are obliged to inform the victims in a comprehensible manner about their rights, as well as the way they can exercise them, and to give them a written notice of rights with attached contact information of organizations providing psychosocial and legal assistance to victims and witnesses of felonies and misdemeanours. A duly filled *Form on the conducted procedure of individual assessment of victim's protection needs*, together with the filled form on the *Notification of the Victim's Rights*, is submitted to the competent judicial authority in order to ensure a timely exchange of information, and to enable a comprehensive assessment of the victim's needs

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<sup>31</sup> Available in English at: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/resource-centre/-/asset\\_publisher/ICGym75EBhwG/content/protocol-on-the-procedure-in-cases-sexual-violence](https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/resource-centre/-/asset_publisher/ICGym75EBhwG/content/protocol-on-the-procedure-in-cases-sexual-violence).

in each case. The individual assessment of the victim for special protection measures, in addition to criminal cases, is carried out by police officers not only in felony cases, but also in misdemeanour cases of domestic violence (before the legislature was changed so that domestic violence is no longer a misdemeanour but a felony).

Regarding the obligation to assess the risk of repetition of violent behaviour and/or occurrence of more severe forms of violence, the *Form of risk factors for repetition of violent behaviour* was created. It is a template all police officers apply since November of 2022, with the obligation to submit the filled form to the competent judicial authority – the court/department or the state attorney's office. Police officers are obliged to assess the risk of repetition of violent behaviour and/or occurrence of more severe forms of violence in all cases of violent behaviour to the detriment of close persons/family members, and in cases of violence against women.

Through the Information System of the MoI, standardized monitoring of the notifications delivered to the victim is enabled, as well as keeping track of the rights previously used by the victim.

An agreement was signed between the MoI, the MJPA, and the Victim and Witness Support Service, on cooperation in implementation of a victim-oriented pilot project seeking to establish a referral system leading to the Victim and Witness Support Service/National Call Centre for Victims of Felonies and Misdemeanours, at the phone number 116 006. In order to develop and strengthen the support system for victims and witnesses of criminal acts, the pilot project has been implemented since February of 2022, and its goal is to ensure the practice of the association or National Call Centre employees contacting the victims, with their consent, after reporting the crime to the police.

In 2023, an agreement was signed on partnership with the association Hrabri telefon (Brave telephone) in the implementation of the project, with a memorandum on cooperation in the implementation of a pilot project, which entails obtaining the parents' consent for the police officers to hand over the contact information of the child victim/parent to the association Hrabri telefon, after which the association establishes contact with the child victim and/or parent/guardian within two working days, in order to provide the traumatized child with timely support.

In order to facilitate citizens' reports on violence, in addition to the usual phone lines for emergency police intervention, 192 and 112, and the e-mail address [policija@mup.hr](mailto:policija@mup.hr), it is also possible to make an online report, including an anonymous one, through the 'Red Button' online application available at the official website of the MoI.

For the sake of systematic and coordinated monitoring of misdemeanours and felonies in the field of domestic violence, the workplaces are planned to be established for police officers dealing with issues of domestic violence, and elimination of discrimination in police administrations and police stations. Special focus is also given to increasing competences for dealing with GBV and domestic violence, and police officers regularly participate in workshops dedicated to these topics, as well as issues related to combating discrimination.

For the past 5 years, the Polytechnic of Criminology and Public Security has been educating students, most of whom are active police officers, on issues related to GBV. In the academic year 2020/2021, within the undergraduate professional study of Criminology, the course 'Criminal methodology of domestic violence investigations' was introduced, which devotes special focus to the prevention and processing of GBV, and the protection of victims from serious consequences (from bodily injury to

femicide), along with the implementation of new international and national protection standards. In the last 4 years, from 2019 to 2024, 181 students have passed these courses.

In order to better understand the extent, causes, and consequences of violence against women and girls, the Polytechnic of Criminology and Public Security conducted several research projects. These are as follows.

In 2020, a scientific research was conducted, with the topic 'Risk factors for the occurrence of domestic violence'. In 2022, a similar research was conducted, 'Victimological characteristics of domestic violence offenses in the area of the Pitomača Police Station'.

The teachers of the Polytechnic of Criminology and Public Security participated in the research conducted within the research project 'Croatian violence monitor: Research on the forms, causes, and processing of delinquent violence, with a special focus on protection of particularly vulnerable groups of victims' (CroViMo), which was financed by the Croatian Foundation for Science (project number: UIP-2017-05-8876). The official website of the project <sup>32</sup> aims to establish a multidisciplinary group of young scientists who will conduct innovative research on violence in the Republic of Croatia through its 'Violence Analysis Laboratory'. The main goal of the research is to empirically and normatively record and analyse the phenomenology, aetiology, and processing of delinquent violence in the Republic of Croatia, whereas the focus is on particularly vulnerable groups of victims, with their very specific and different needs for protection from violence. These particularly vulnerable groups include children, women and girls, the elderly, minorities, foreigners, refugees and migrants, persons in institutionalized care, personnel in risky occupations, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community, with the purpose of transferring scientific knowledge into practice and everyday life.

There is an ongoing scientific research project of the Polytechnic of Criminology and Public Security on the topic 'Attitudes and experiences of students on domestic violence', which is being conducted on the population of students of criminology, as well as among other students of the university and professional studies in the Republic of Croatia, the aim of which is to collect and empirically analyse data on the domestic violence attitudes among students of criminology, and other studies. Based on the obtained results, there will be proposals for improvement of the existing police practices in terms of protection of victims of domestic violence, but also for the improvement of the education system of police officers.

## **17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?**

In 2022, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027*. It contains measures related to prevention of sexual violence and sexual harassment, protection and support for victims, and work with perpetrators of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

In the period from November of 2020 to November of 2023, the MLPSFSP implemented the project co-financed from the ESF 'Let's stop violence against women – There is no excuse for violence', which is mentioned in the answer to Q16. As a part of this project, there was the media campaign #empatijasada (*#empathynow*), accompanied by social media activities, while professional and

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<sup>32</sup> Available at: [www.violence-lab.eu](http://www.violence-lab.eu).

public events were held with the aim of sensitizing the public about the harmfulness and unacceptability of violence against women and domestic violence.

The National Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (22<sup>nd</sup> September) and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25<sup>th</sup> November) are continuously being celebrated by holding an international conference and a panel discussion, and by printing informative, educational and professional materials relevant to the area of dealing with violence against women and domestic violence.

The *Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on preventing and combating sexism*<sup>33</sup> was translated into Croatian in 2019, and printed as a publication by OGE. The publication was disseminated to members of the Croatian Parliament, county assemblies, county committees for gender equality, and civil society organizations (in total, 936 copies to date). The same year, the CoE has launched the #StopSexism website, on the occasion of celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The website was also translated into Croatian by the CoE as a part of the campaign to eliminate sexism, under the slogan: *Spot it. Name it. Stop it.*, which was joined by the Republic of Croatia. A representative of OGE also participated in the work of the working group for drafting the document.

It should also be noted that a campaign on raising awareness about gender stereotypes was promoted on the website of the OGE<sup>34</sup> in 2023. The campaign was launched by the EC, and it originated from the *EC Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*.<sup>35</sup>

The MoI systematically and continuously implements the following preventive activities.

'Lily' – a national preventive project with the aim of establishing networking across the competent state bodies, civil society organizations, legal entities, and other socially responsible subjects, in order to achieve a coordinated joint response to prevent all forms of violence against women. Through its components, the project includes activities intended for men with the aim of sensitizing them on the topics of gender equality, as well as elimination of all forms of violent behaviour. The programme is also based on the empowerment of girls and women in terms of gender equality and equity, and it includes self-defence training, the techniques taught directly by police officers. During 2023, as a part of this project, more than 50 public events, and over 350 educations were attended by more than 5,000 elementary school students, and about 600 parents. As a part of this preventive project, three videos have been made to date, aimed at sensitizing citizens about the importance of reporting violence against women. On the occasion of marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a new promotional and educational leaflet 'Lily' was presented, the content of which is aimed at providing information to victims of domestic violence on where, how and whom to report violence, and how and where to ask for help, as well as information on the rights of victims of domestic violence.

'I live a life without violence' is a national primary prevention project that the MoI implements continuously and systematically, in cooperation with the MSE, and other partners. It is aimed at preventing violence against women, domestic violence, violence among the youth, and cultivating a

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<sup>33</sup> Available in English at: <https://rm.coe.int/168093b26a>; and in Croatian at: <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Biblioteka%20ONA/Sprjecavanje%20i%20borba%20protiv%20seksizma%20-%20web.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Available at: <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/>.

<sup>35</sup> Available at: <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Europska%20unija/Gender%20Equality%20Strategy%202020-2025.pdf>.

culture of non-violence and tolerance. It is intended for children and students of higher grades of primary schools.

'I have a choice' is a national preventive project of the MoI and partners that is implemented continuously and systematically during the school year in educational institutions in the Međimurje County. Through this project, the police have established a high-quality cooperation with associations of the Roma national minority, civil society organizations, and educational institutions. The project is aimed at prevention of peer violence, vandalism, domestic violence, violence against women, risky and socially unacceptable behaviour of children and the youth, drug abuse and other types of addiction, reduction of risk of trafficking and people smuggling, and strengthening the traffic culture. The target group are the students aged 10 and 11, and their parents and teachers.

'A day like a dream' is a preventive project of the MoI whose purpose is to raise the level of awareness and information of the elderly and people with disabilities, in order to reduce the likelihood that they will become victims of felonies and misdemeanours, and increase their subjective sense of security, thereby improving their quality of life.

The MoI implements a large number of preventive measures and activities aimed at improving the attitudes of children, citizens, the public, as well as police officers, in dealing with cases related to persons with disabilities and the elderly, with the aim of eliminating discriminatory behaviour towards these vulnerable groups.

**18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?**

***Preventing cyber violence against women and girls***

The police procedures in the Republic of Croatia conducted over the last five years confirm that the so-called cybercrime escalates and permeates all modalities of violence, i.e. physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence. It is also increasingly being recognized as a specific form of victimization, which particularly affects vulnerable groups of society – women and children.

The greatest number of felonies registered in the area of criminal offenses of sexual abuse and exploitation of children are the felonies of sexual abuse of a child under the age of fifteen, and felonies of sexual abuse and exploitation via the internet – criminal offenses of exploitation of children for pornography. Thus, in 2023, a total of 367 criminal acts of sexual abuse of children under the age of fifteen was recorded (which is a 40.6% increase compared to 2022, when 261 criminal acts were recorded), with a total of 460 felonies of exploitation of children for pornography. Therefore, there were 4.5% more felonies than in 2022, when 440 such felonies were recorded.

With the aim of eliminating technology enhanced violence against women and children, the *Criminal Code* was amended. It defines sexual harassment as a felony (Article 156), which also includes the perpetration via the internet, punishable by a prison sentence of up to two years, and if committed in one of the qualifying circumstances referred to in Paragraph 2 of that article, up to three years. The Article 140 refers to the felony of intrusive behaviour, which includes cyberstalking, punishable by a prison sentence of up to one year, unless perpetrated on a close person or a child, when it is punishable by a prison sentence of up to three years. The Article 144 is related to the felony of

unauthorized image recording, committed by anyone who creates an unauthorized recording of another person in an apartment, or a space specifically protected from view, or uses such a recording, or makes it accessible to a third party, thereby violating the privacy of the recorded person. It is punishable by prison sentence of up to one year. If the felony is committed by a public official in the performance of the service, or by a person responsible for a public authority, it shall be punishable by a prison sentence of up to three years. The felony of abuse of sexually explicit content was previously introduced in the Article 144a following the *Act on Amendments of the Criminal Code (Official Gazette, 84/21)*, which has also introduced a qualified form of criminal offence of unauthorised video recording in a situation where the perpetrator makes the recording accessible to a large group of people, and the minimum prison sentence for severe felony of sexual abuse and exploitation of a child referred to in Article 166 (Paragraph 1) is increased from three to five years.

The 2021 amendments introduced a new felony of ‘abuse of sexually explicit content imagery’ in Article 144a of the *Criminal Code*. It defines the offence of a person who misuses a relationship of trust and makes the recording of sexually explicit content of someone, taken without consent, available to a third party, without the consent of the recorded person, thereby violating his or her privacy (so-called ‘revenge pornography’). In addition, in Paragraph 2, this felony also incriminates anyone who, using a computer system or otherwise, creates or modifies an existing image of sexually explicit content and uses that recording as an authentic one, thereby violating the privacy of the person in that recording (‘deep fake pornography’). The described basic forms of felonies are punishable by imprisonment of up to one year, while the qualified form, for acts committed by means of a computer or a network system or otherwise, rendering the recording accessible to a number of persons, punishable by imprisonment of up to three years.

The specifics of victimization and the seriousness of threats of misuse of modern technologies in the Republic of Croatia have been recognized and included, for the first time, in one of the most significant (operational) interdepartmental procedures – the creation of the *Protocol on Actions in the Case of Violence Among Children and Youth*,<sup>36</sup> which was drafted after an extensive activity of the interdepartmental working group, and adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027*, within the ‘Special Objective 1. Prevention of sexual violence and sexual harassment’, provides for measures aimed at developing children’s awareness of the possible dangers and risks of using the internet, mobile phones, and other communication network devices, and the protection of their privacy, by providing educational trainings suitable for children, but also by strengthening the technical and personnel capacities of the police in order to prevent and eliminate sexual abuse and child exploitation committed through communication technologies, and to work with child victims of online crimes through psychological counselling within the health system.

Through the financing of civil society organizations, availability of support for victims of violence has been improved by ensuring access to safe places, and through support for victims of online violence, which includes helplines, counselling centres, and other forms of support available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Legal protection is also financed, i.e. the provision of legal protection to victims of online violence through legal mechanisms which enable the prosecution of perpetrators, and the access to justice for victims, as well as cooperation with non-governmental organizations that deal with issues of gender equality.

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<sup>36</sup> Available at: <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Protokol%20o%20postup%20anju%20u%20slu%C4%8Daju%20nasilja%20me%C4%91u%20djeecom%20i%20mladima.pdf>.

This year, the implementation of the 'ZoomIn4PinkHats' project is planned with the aim of promoting and greater inclusion of women and girls in the field of cyber security. The objective of the 'ZoomIn4PinkHats' project is to promote cyber security skills among the young women in the education system. The goal is to empower female mentors to popularize cyber security among the students, educate them through workshops on various cyber security topics, and initiate the creation of peer-to-peer learning projects in the mentoring community.

During the last five years, detection and suppression of cybercrime has been an integral part of several police trainings at the national level, i.e. the participation of representatives of the MoI in international and interdepartmental education (e.g. specialist courses for youth, training in the field of dealing with cybercrime, etc.). The MoI has been conducting various preventive programmes and campaigns, presented in the continuation.

The goal of the preventive programme 'Safety and protection of children on the internet and social media' is to raise awareness of the general public about the possible dangers and risks of using the internet, mobile phones, and other communication technologies. The programme contains a series of activities, such as educational lectures, interactive workshops, information campaigns, public forums, panel discussions, round tables, public events, production of multimedia content, educational and informational publications, as well as the application of relevant preventive and educational content created by of the CoE, the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN), UNICEF, and other competent institutions and organizations of civil society, with the aim of preventing sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, and eliminating child pornography. Furthermore, with the aim of preventive and educational action towards children and youth, in cooperation with the MSE, the MoI continuously produces preventive video content. Special focus has been given to the virtual police officers who advise children and parents on the importance of proper protection on the internet. In this regard, the mentioned preventive and educational programme also contains a component aimed at eliminating sexual exploitation of children via the internet, and eliminating child pornography, as well as reducing the demand for sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.<sup>37</sup>

As a part of the preventive project 'Who is playing around with my data', the purpose of which is to raise the level of knowledge and awareness of citizens about the importance of protection of personal data and privacy in the context of the use of internet and social media, the MoI is implementing a separate component of a preventive and educational nature, intended for children and parents, under the title 'What happened to Tina?', which addresses grooming. The educational and preventive content aims to sensitize parents and children, with the purpose of preventing sexual exploitation of children through the virtual world.<sup>38</sup>

The work on the topic of combating sexual exploitation of children and child pornography is also visible through systematic cooperation with the Centre for a Safer Internet, on the preventive programmes 'Web Detectives' and 'Internet Alphabet', as well as other preventive activities, campaigns, and actions. More information is available on the Centre for a Safer Internet page.<sup>39</sup> The goal of the 'Web detectives' project is to educate and train children to acquire and develop the skills of recognizing inappropriate and dangerous media content on the internet. After completing the

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<sup>37</sup> Videos available at: <https://policija.gov.hr/vijesti/video-za-dan-oceva-virtualni-policajac-savjetuje-roditelje-i-djecu-kako-sigurno-na-internet/5287>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2XTakruqfE>, <https://youtu.be/s1ajvjOuPJY>.

<sup>38</sup> Video available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bEub\\_dZnuY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bEub_dZnuY).

<sup>39</sup> Available at: <https://csi.hr>.

education, students attending grades between 5th and 8th received diplomas and web detective cards, which they can use to report any inappropriate content on the internet.

The preventive programme 'Internet Alphabet' consists of a play for students of higher grades of elementary schools. It aims to make students aware of the dangers and advantages of using the internet, and to encourage them to discuss their experiences on the internet with the school's personnel and, if necessary, seek professional help. Education is also intended for parents of both the higher and lower grades of primary schools, on the topic of protecting children from unwanted content in the online world.

During September of 2021, within the EMPACT activity (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats), the MoI, in cooperation with Europol, intensified the implementation of the mentioned 'Say No' campaign, the aim of which is to provide information to children who already are, or may become victims, but also to strengthen the mechanisms for reporting such cases, as well as providing support to victims in the Republic of Croatia. The campaign is particularly focused on preventive activities to avert the felonies of online sexual abuse of children, as a response to this increasingly widespread phenomenon.<sup>40</sup>

The MoI also participates in the implementation of Europol's campaign aimed at protecting children against online grooming '#DontBeACatch – #NemojPostatiLovina', which warns children and the youth about the dangers and consequences of creating and sharing personal photos/video materials to known or unknown persons via the internet. During the implementation of preventive and educational lectures, police officers, in cooperation with educational institutions, educate students about the dangers of sharing photos on social media. On this occasion, they inform the students about the term 'sexting' and why it is dangerous, aiming to prevent sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, as well as reducing the 'demand' for these felonies.

The MoI is one of the stakeholders among the relevant government institutions and civil society organizations in the Republic of Croatia, which participate in the implementation of the CoE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children 'ONE in FIVE'. Police officers cooperate with the relevant partners (educational institutions, representatives of health and social care systems) to conduct preventive and educational workshops with the title 'Underwear Rule', aiming to stop and prevent sexual violence against children.

## **19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV?**

### ***Funding of women's organizations working on the prevention of GBV***

Through contracts or three-year programmes, the MLPSFSP continuously finances organizations and other legal entities which provide counselling services and shelters for women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

The programs include services of care outside the family (shelters for women who are victims of violence and domestic violence); counselling and psychosocial support; empowerment and motivation of women who are victims of violence and domestic violence to activate and enter the

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<sup>40</sup> The materials are available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/obilježavamo-medjunarodni-dan-prevencije-zlostavljanja-djece-i-medjunarodni-dan-djeteta/287379>. 'Say No' – Europol campaign for dealing with online exploitation of children available at: <https://youtu.be/Ohqm7NRJHV0>, <https://youtu.be/b3NsCKfyuS4>.



labour market; empowerment and motivation of said women to attend verified adult education programmes; providing programmes of empowerment, support and monitoring after leaving care; implementing programmes, measures and activities to prevent domestic violence. In the period from 2019 to 2023, a total of € 9,021,730.00 was allocated from the National Budget and the ESF+ to support the work of shelters for victims of violence.

Since 2019, the MLPSFSP has continuously financed one-year projects of associations which provide counselling services for victims of sexual and domestic violence, as a part of the 'Call for applications for projects of associations which provide counselling services for victims of domestic violence and victims sexual violence'. In the period from 2019 to 2023, a sum of € 2,100,000.00 has been allocated for this purpose.

As a part of the 'Call for implementation of the first year of the three-year programmes of associations operating in the field of social welfare', under the title 'Development and expansion of the network of social services for the period 2023 to 2025', financial assistance in the amount of € 550,000.00 was approved for 19 programmes aimed at providing support to victims of violence.

In order to ensure continuity of work of the National Call Centre, and before the contracting and financing of the project from the *Effective Human Resources 2021-2027 Programme*, the MLPSFSP secured financial resources in the amount of € 59,828.16 from the national funds for the payment of salaries from December of 2023 to June of 2024 for five support providers participating in the implementation of the programme of the National Call Centre for victims of felonies and misdemeanours.

Civil society organizations are successful applicants for numerous financial tenders. The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations of the Government of the Republic of Croatia launched public calls for applications for co-financing of projects of civil society organizations contracted within the EU and different foreign programs from April of 2011 until today. The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations of the Government of the Republic of Croatia is co-financing up to 70% of the mandatory share of a beneficiary organization or project partners, where co-financing is requested. Through this call, in the period from 2019 to 2023, 29 projects dealing with GBV or some of its aspects were co-financed in the amount of € 247,979.23.

The replies to other questions of this questionnaire contain additional information on the financing of women's organisations dealing with prevention of GBV.

## **20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?**

### ***Measures for elimination of gender prejudices in media***

In 2022, the Agency for Electronic Media conducted training on reporting online violence against women, as a partner in the project 'SURF and SOUND – Support, Unite, Respond, Fight to Stop Online Violence', together with the project holder, the association B.a.B.e. The training was intended for media workers, journalists and editors covering violence against women, and the total value of the project was € 207,077. Funds from the 'Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the EU (2014–2020)' financed 80% of the project, while the rest was co-financed by the OCNKO, and the City of Zagreb. The objective of the project was to raise citizen awareness of the problem of online violence

against women, but also to educate media workers, develop a platform for reporting online violence NEON, and classify 'publication of intimate footage without consent' as a felony. The Agency for Electronic Media, as the project partner, participated in organization and implementation of the training for media workers, and in the organization, implementation, and management of the awareness raising campaign. Five workshops were held, with over 80 journalists and editors as participants.

The *Electronic Media Act (Official Gazette, 111/2021)*, which entered into force in October 2021, stipulates the following: the activity of publishing audio-visual and radio programs, and the content of electronic publications shall be of public interest when the programs relate to the realization of equality between men and women (Article 11); audio-visual and radio programs, and the contents of electronic publications shall publish accurate information, respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promote the equality of women and men (Article 15).

Furthermore, Article 71 (Paragraph 2) defines that means from the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in Electronic Media shall be allocated to content, projects, and programmes of public interest, aimed to encourage raising awareness of gender equality and other highest values of the constitutional order. *The Electronic Media Act* also provides misdemeanour penalties for legal entities that publish audio-visual communication, which includes or promotes any gender-based discrimination. As examples of good practice, it can be noted that 44 publishers received funding in the 2019 and 2020 public tenders for allocation of resources from the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in Electronic Media, for broadcasts in the category 'encouraging raising awareness of gender equality and other highest values of the constitutional order'. This means that 29.1% of radio and television broadcasters exercised this right.

The *Agreement between the Government of Croatia and Croatian Radiotelevision for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2022* and the newly signed *Agreement between the Government of Croatia and Croatian Radiotelevision for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2027* oblige the Croatian Radiotelevision, as a public broadcaster of significant status and influence, to take into account the way women and men are portrayed. All three of the editors-in-chief are women, and out of 288 editors, 194 are women, which makes up 67,4%. The majority of directors within Croatian Radiotelevision are women, i.e. three out of five.

The measures and activities that are aimed at improving the position of women in the media, with a focus on combating gender stereotypes, are an integral part of the *Implementation Programme of the Ministry of Culture and Media for the Period from 2021 to 2024*.<sup>41</sup> As such, they are included in the measure 'encouraging pluralism and diversity of electronic media and the development of media literacy', which is a part of the *National Plan for Development of Culture and Media from 2023 to 2027*,<sup>42</sup> and the corresponding *Action Plan for Development of Culture and Media for the period from 2023 to 2024*. The objective of the measure is to keep contributing to raising awareness and sensitizing the public to the matters related to gender equality, inclusive society, and a society of equal opportunities for all of its members. It is a medium-term umbrella document that includes development needs and potentials, specific goals and indicators, the financial, monitoring and evaluation framework for the entire culture and media sector. Therefore, this is an important document for the future structuring of cultural and media policies. The improvement of status of

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<sup>41</sup> Available at: [https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Provedbeni%20plan%202021%20-%202024/Provedbeni%20program%20Ministarstva%20kulture%20i%20medija%202021-2024%20\(2021-01-29\).pdf](https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Provedbeni%20plan%202021%20-%202024/Provedbeni%20program%20Ministarstva%20kulture%20i%20medija%202021-2024%20(2021-01-29).pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Available at: [https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20razvoja%20kulture%20i%20medija/Nacionalni%20plan\\_objava.pdf](https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20razvoja%20kulture%20i%20medija/Nacionalni%20plan_objava.pdf).

the journalistic profession and the media sector, with the encouragement of pluralism, was defined as one of the special goals.

The *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* states that the way media content portrays women and men is one of the key factors in promoting and strengthening social awareness of gender equality, as well as in both the prevention and elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination. It is emphasized that printed and electronic media have a great responsibility in suppressing gender stereotypes, eliminating sexism from public spaces and political discourse, and including non-discriminatory content in their plans and programmes. Moreover, the *Act on Gender Equality* stipulates that the obligation of the media is to promote awareness of equality between men and women through programme content, programme framework, programme guidelines and self-regulating acts (Article 16). It also stipulates that it is prohibited to publicly present women or men in an offensive, degrading, or humiliating manner, with regard to their sex or sexual orientation. According to *European Council Conclusions, 17-21 July 2020*,<sup>43</sup> member states are encouraged to implement media literacy education so that the children and youth may learn to critically approach media content. The Ministry of Culture and Media (hereinafter: MCM) is a co-organizer of the 'Days of Media Literacy', an issue considered the most important element of critical thinking. The struggle against hate speech, and in this case stereotypes as well, requires a proactive and multidimensional approach, making media literacy crucial in all segments of society.

In order to strengthen professional journalism, through the 2020 *Regulation on criteria for determining beneficiaries and the method of distribution of part of the income from games of chance*,<sup>44</sup> funds have been provided to encourage excellence in journalistic work and research on topics of public interest. One of the prominent topics is the position of women in society, along with its empowerment. From 2020 to 2022, a total of € 507,000.00 was provided for implementation of this regulation. In 2023, the amount was € 200,000.00, and in 2024 it grew to € 350,000.00. Since then, the project 'Encouraging journalistic excellence' has been implemented by the Agency for Electronic Media.

## **21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?**

### ***Measures intended to address violence against women and girls from marginalized groups***

Through financial support for the projects of various associations dealing with GBV, the Republic of Croatia continuously undertakes a number of measures to support women living in remote and rural areas, as well as those who are marginalized on the basis of ethnicity and/or religion, including women with disabilities and elderly women, in dealing with GBV. These are primarily support programmes for those living in rural areas, i.e. ensuring access to support and services, such as shelters for victims of violence, helplines, counselling centres, and other services and necessary resources for victims of violence, adapted to the needs of women living in rural and remote areas.

For more information on these matters, please refer to our answer to Q3.

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<sup>43</sup> Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45109/210720-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Available at: [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023\\_03\\_31\\_533.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_03_31_533.html).

## Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

### Critical areas of concern:

- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

## **22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?**

### *Promotion of women in public life and decision making*

After the parliamentary elections held in July of 2020, the original representatives mandate was held by 34 women, which amounted to 22.51%. This is a significant increase, compared to the previous parliamentary term, when the share of female representatives with the original mandate was 12.58%. With the introduction of replacements for the elected candidates serving in positions incompatible with representative duties, the total number of female representatives in the Croatian Parliament at the end of the term, at the beginning of 2024, was 51 (33.7%). This is a significant increase, compared to the end of the previous parliamentary term (at the beginning of 2020), when the percentage of female representatives was 19.2%.

After the parliamentary election held in April of 2024, the original mandate was won by 37 women representatives (24.5%). With the introduction of replacements for elected candidates serving in positions incompatible with parliamentary duties, the current number of female representatives in the Croatian Parliament is 51 (33.7%). The total number of representatives in the Croatian Parliament is 151. Out of 5 vice-presidents of the Croatian Parliament, one is a woman, and out of the 14 parliamentary clubs of representatives, three are presided by women. After said parliamentary election, two out of 19 members of the Government are women (10.5%), both as ministers. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the percentage of women among the officials and managerial state and public servants was 27.1% in 2022.

The participation of women in the representative and executive power at the local level is not satisfactory, although an increase is evident compared to the previous local elections. The local elections held in 2021 brought more changes compared to those in 2017. The number of municipal and city councilwomen increased by 3%, and county councilwomen by 3.4%. Two female county governors were elected (9.5% share), while the percentage of female mayors increased by 1.89% compared to 2017.<sup>45</sup>

In the term of the European Parliament from 2014 to 2019, the Republic of Croatia had 11 representatives. In this context, it is particularly noteworthy that, after Finland (62%) and Ireland (55%), Croatia had the largest percentage of women among its European Parliament representatives in that term – 6 women (55%) and 5 men. At the European Parliament elections held in May of 2019, twelve Croatian representatives were elected, four of which were women (33%). The elections for EU Parliament members held in June of 2024, and the percentage of female candidates on the lists for Croatian representatives is 46.33%, which is an increase, compared to the previous elections,

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<sup>45</sup> Source: State Election Committee open data on election results, available at: <https://www.izbori.hr/site/opce-informacije/rezultati-izbora-otvoreni-podaci/izbori/480>.

when the percentage of female candidates was 40%. The election for the latest convocation of the European Parliament resulted in parity in the original mandates won (six women and six men), but after the activated mandates, the Republic of Croatia is represented in the European Parliament by five women (41.7%) and seven men (58.3%).

In order to encourage equal representation of men and women, the *Law on Financing Political Activities, Election Campaigns and Referendums (Official Gazette, 98/19)*, which entered into force in 2019, stipulates that the units of local and regional self-government, political parties, independent representatives, i.e. independent councillors, also have the right to compensation in the amount of 10% of the amount provided for each representative, i.e. member of the representative body; where under-representation is considered to exist if the representation of one gender in the Croatian Parliament or a representative body of a local government unit is lower than 40%. The *Law on the Election of Representatives to the Croatian Parliament (Official Gazette, 98/19)* stipulates that, when establishing and proposing party lists and independent lists for the election of parliamentary representatives, the list proponents are obliged to respect the principle of gender equality and promote a balanced representation of women and men on the lists, and that the list for the election of representatives is in accordance with the mentioned principles if it includes at least 40% of members of each gender, as defined by the *Gender Equality Act (Official Gazette, 82/08, 69/17)* since 2008.

At the international level, Croatian female politicians hold high-level positions: the Vice-President of the EC for Democracy and Demography, the Secretary General of the CoE, and the members of the European Court of Auditors.

Efforts are being made to increase the number of women in leadership positions in foreign affairs services, including the number of female ambassadors at the head of diplomatic and consular missions, especially at international organizations, the jurisdiction of which includes international security affairs. At the end of 2023, 672 out of the 1,173 employees in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (hereinafter: MFEA) were women. The percentage of women in official positions in 2023 remained the same as the previous year, but women still predominate in other management positions. There is a momentary stagnation in the number of female ambassadors (18 female; 43 male), but also a smaller increase in the number of female consuls general (7 female and 19 male consuls general, compared to 5 female and 18 male consuls general in 2022).

In 2022, the percentage of female presidents of county courts was 20%, the percentage of female presidents of municipal courts 70.6%, and that of commercial courts 77.8%. In the same year, the percentage of female judges in the Constitutional Court was 23.1%, and in the Supreme Court 30.6%. Regarding the gender structure of state prosecutors, 69.8% are women. Likewise, women make up 80.7% of all employees in state attorneys' offices<sup>46</sup>.

There is still a low percentage of women in the management and supervisory boards of percentage issuers companies. Nevertheless, in the period from 2018 to 2022, there is an evident trend of a slight increase in the percentage of women in management boards (from 13% to 16%) and supervisory boards (from 21% to 23%) of Croatian companies. Therefore, the implementation of the *Directive on improving the gender balance among the directors of listed companies*, which EU

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<sup>46</sup> Source: *Report of the Chief State Attorney of the Republic of Croatia on the work of state attorneys' offices in 2022*, available at: <https://dorh.hr/sites/default/files/dokumenti/2023-04/IZVJE%C5%A0%C4%86E%20DORH-a%20za%202022..docx>.

member states must implement by the end of 2025, is expected to bring the necessary progress in this area.

Progress is achieved in other areas as well. For example, in the area of promoting the status of women in sports, the Statute of the Croatian Olympic Committee (hereinafter: COC) was amended by a provision which states that the Council of the Croatian Olympic Committee needs to ensure that at least 40% of the total number of members are women.

### **23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?**

#### *Participation of women in the media*

At the proposal of the Agency for Electronic Media, in July of 2019, the web portal *Women and media (Žene i mediji)*<sup>47</sup> was created as a central online site covering the topics related to women's position in society, gender equality, and media as key stakeholders in promoting equality and raising awareness about it. The special feature of the website is that it is a common platform for the exchange of knowledge, experiences with examples of good practice, as well as news and regulations created by all of the key stakeholders who deal with this socially important topic. On this occasion, cooperation agreements between the Agency for Electronic Media and partner institutions and organizations were signed, namely: the OGE, the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy, the Central State Office for Sports, the CSODDS, the Ombudswoman, the Ombudswoman for Gender Equality, the COC, the Caritas House for Victims of Domestic Violence of the Zagreb Archdiocese, the Women's Room – Centre for Sexual Rights, the association B.a.B.e., the Croatian Society of Dramatic Artists, and other organizations and individuals.

In 2021, the project 'Voice of Women in Sports' was presented by the Agency for Electronic Media and the COC, which is being implemented in cooperation with the OGE of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. In addition, the project is being implemented in cooperation with the Ombudswoman for Gender Equality and the Croatian Paralympic Committee, under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, and the MCM.

This project is a part of implementation of the *Agreement on Accession to the project 'Voice of Women in Sports'*, which was signed by the mentioned bodies and institutions, and the goals of this cooperation were the presentation and promotion of Croatian woman Olympians in the public, especially those who competed at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo 2020 (which occurred in 2021 due to COVID-19), through the creation and broadcasting of video clips in electronic and social media; conducting research on the representation of women's sports in the media; promoting greater representation of women and women's sports in the electronic and social media by implementing a campaign for greater media visibility of women's sports; organizing workshops for athletes and other interested parties in order to improve their knowledge and skills in public speech and cooperation with the media; organizing workshops for journalists, on the basis of the *Recommendation for better coverage of women's sports in the electronic media*,<sup>48</sup> in order to further sensitize them for women's rights in journalistic work; organizing workshops for representatives of

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. [www.zeneimediji.hr](http://www.zeneimediji.hr).

<sup>48</sup> Available at: <https://www.aem.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Preporuke-Zene-i-sport-EN.pdf>.

governing bodies of national sports federations with the aim of educating them about gender equality in the media; organizing an international conference on the topic of equality of female athletes in all segments of society, including in the media; the printing various publications that can be useful for the realization of the project's goals and the implementation of all other activities aimed at improving and achieving gender equality between sportsmen and sportswomen in the electronic media and beyond.

At the event of the presentation of the project, videos of Croatian Olympians were presented, and all the media broadcast the videos free of financial compensation until the summer Olympic Games in Tokyo.

For additional information, please refer to the replies to Q20.

**24. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.**

#### *National machinery for women's rights*

The MLPSFSP is the government body responsible for development and coordination of the implementation of policies and procedures in the field of protection against GBV and domestic violence. With the adoption of the *Act on Validation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Official Gazette, 3/2018)*, the MLPSFSP has been designated as the body responsible for coordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the policies and measures for preventing and combating all forms of violence covered by the Convention.

Compared to the previous reporting period, there were no changes in the institutional framework for gender equality. Thus, we refer you to the answers contained in Q32 of the 'Section 3: National institutions and Processes of the Comprehensive Review of the Situation at the National Level on the Occasion' of the *Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)* (Beijing+25) submitted in 2019.

The mentioned replies provide a detailed description of the mandate of mechanisms for gender equality, prescribed by the *Gender Equality Act* and the *Rules of Procedure of the Croatian Parliament (Official Gazette, 81/2013, 113/2016, 69/2017, 29/2018, 53/2020, 119/2020, 123/2020, 86/2023)*. In accordance with these acts, the Committee for Gender Equality of the Croatian Parliament, the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, the OGE, coordinators for gender equality in state administration bodies, and county commissions for gender equality continue to operate. The only change is that the offices of state administration have been annexed to the county assemblies.

In 2024, a total of € 338,029.00 is allocated from the national budget for the activities of the OGE and the programmes it implements. General income amounts to € 336,038.00, and the EU financial support adds € 1,991.00.

The financial plan of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality for 2024 amounts to a total of € 913,323.00; € 554,724.00 of which is intended for regular business expenses, while € 358,599.00 is the EU financial aid.

The OGE is responsible for implementation and monitoring of the *Gender Equality Act*,<sup>49</sup> as well as the creation, implementation, and monitoring of implementation of the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027*, and the implementation of measures of other national policies and strategies.

**25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women's organizations)**

***Intersectoral cooperation***

During 2024, a body responsible for the coordination, application, supervision and evaluation of policies and measures is planned to be established to prevent and deal with all forms of violence against women and domestic violence by constituting an independent internal organizational unit of the MLPSFSP, which is an obligation based on the provisions of the *Istanbul Convention*. The task of said body is the coordination of all competent bodies and institutions in implementation of the provisions of said convention. For the purpose of implementing the role of the coordinating body, new activities were introduced, with the cost of € 410,000.00 on an annual basis in the national budget for 2024, and the projections for 2025 and 2026.

With the aim of improving interdepartmental cooperation, and thus achieving a greater number of gender-sensitive policies, an important Interdepartmental Working Group was established for monitoring the implementation of the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* and the *Action Plan for Implementation of the National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2024*. In accordance with the obligation to monitor and annually report on the implementation of said plans, as well as the obligation to continuously monitor the progress in their implementation, in 2023, at the initiative of the OGE, an Interdepartmental Working Group was established, consisting of representatives of 18 state administration bodies.

When drafting laws or strategic and other documents, state administration bodies regularly include representatives of civil society organizations in working groups, and it is also important to point out that civil society organizations were key stakeholders in the consultations with the President and Vice-President of the Government, held in 2023, on the topic of changing legislation for the suppression of GBV.

The Council for Human Rights and the Council for Youth are also a good example of this type of cooperation, as they are government interdepartmental advisory bodies in which, in addition to representatives of ministries and the ombudsperson's office, representatives of civil society organizations also participate.

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<sup>49</sup> For additional information on institutional mechanisms for gender equality, please cf. Article 18-29 of the *Gender Equality Act*.



## 26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

### *National human rights institution*

Pursuant to Article 12, Paragraph 1, of the *Anti-Discrimination Act (Official Gazette, 85/08, 112/12)* and the *Law on the Ombudsperson (Official Gazette, 125/111)*, the duties of the central body responsible for the elimination of discrimination are performed by the Ombudsperson. The national human rights institution for the Republic of Croatia is the ombudsperson appointed by the Croatian Parliament for promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms, established by the Constitution, laws, and international legal acts on human rights and freedoms which are a part of the internal legal order of the Republic of Croatia.

Additionally, based on Article 19, Paragraph 1 of the *Gender Equality Act*, the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality is an independent body responsible for eliminating discrimination in the area of gender equality.

Considering the special institution of the ombudsperson for gender equality, the institution of the ombudsperson cooperates with the specialized ombudsperson in matters related to gender equality, i.e. sex-/gender-based discrimination, and forwards citizens' complaints to said institution. Thus, in 2023, out of the total number of complaints received by the Ombudswoman, 5% were due to gender-based discrimination. The complaints were forwarded to the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality.

During 2023, the cooperation between the ombudsperson and the ombudsperson for gender equality, the ombudsperson for children, and the ombudsperson for persons with disabilities continued through work on cases, including by forwarding complaints in accordance with the jurisdictions of these institutions, through mutual consultations on individual cases and meetings and collaboration on common topics. In cooperation with special ombudspersons, the ombudswoman prepared and forwarded an alternative report on the *Second Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* to the competent UN Committee in 2023.<sup>50</sup>

In the reporting period, the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality implemented several EU projects:

- 'Building a more effective protection: changing the system for dealing with violence against women', the value of which was € 427,762.27. It was implemented from April of 2017 until December of 2019. The project, the value of which was € 427,762.27, dealt with the role of the police, the judiciary system, and the media in cases of violence against women, with a special focus on cases of femicide.<sup>51</sup>

- 'Equal rights – equal wages – equal pensions – Expanding the scope of implementation of actions and legal standards of gender equality with the aim of achieving gender equality and preventing poverty in Croatia', with a total value of € 468,510.20, which was implemented from October of 2018 until February of 2021.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocImages//2016/Sjednice/2021/Prosinac/91%20sjednica%20VRH//91%20-%2019%20Drugo%20periodi%C4%8Dko.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> More information is available at the project's official website: <https://vawa.prs.hr/>.

<sup>52</sup> More information about the project is available at the project's official website: <https://gppg.prs.hr/>.

- In January of 2023, the Ombudswoman has begun to implement the EU project 'Raising awareness of gender-based cyber violence against girls and women, and creating a safer online environment', partnered with organizations from Croatia, Spain, and Portugal. The project, with a total value of € 2,194,983.02, was co-financed by the EC, following the CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values) programme. The implementation of the project will last for 36 months. The state bodies in the Republic of Croatia which support the project are the MoI, and the MSE.<sup>53</sup>

In the period from 2019-2023, the ombudswoman for gender equality issued a total of 621 warnings, 900 recommendations, and 1,004 proposals. Overall, classified by the gender of the affected persons, the Ombudswoman received cases that mostly related to women (75% on average in the period from 2019 to 2023). The analysis of complaints received in previous years indicates that the largest number of them refers to the area of administration, followed by social security, including social welfare, pension and health insurance, the area of work and employment, public information and media, health care, justice, and other areas.

All ombudsperson's offices submit annual reports on their work to the Croatian Parliament.

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<sup>53</sup> More information about the project is available at the project's official website: <https://be-safe.prs.hr/cms>.

## Peaceful and inclusive societies

### Critical areas of concern:

- E. Women and armed conflict
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

### **27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?**

The Republic of Croatia is fully committed to security policy in the function of comprehensive development and prosperity of the country and society centered around the well-being of citizens. The Republic of Croatia has been strengthening gender balance in activities of the security and defence system, by increasing the representation of women in decision making processes in the field of security, defence and peace building. Internal acts are regularly being harmonized with the national legal and strategic framework for gender equality and with international documents, including *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) on women, peace and security* and related resolutions for the period from 2019 to 2023, promoting gender equality in the internal and foreign policy plan.

At the proposal of the MFEA, in 2019 the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the second *National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) on women, peace and security, and related resolutions for the period from 2019 to 2023 (NAP II)*,<sup>54</sup> which was drafted by a working group with members from the Ministry of Defence (hereinafter: MoD), along with representatives of other competent bodies. In *NAP II*, which follows the structure of *NAP I*, the MoD is responsible for a series of implementation measures and activities in three areas of action: prevention, participation, protection and post-conflict recovery. Through successful implementation of measures, progress towards the goal has been recorded, which implies full awareness of the need to include a gender sensitive approach to peace and security, strengthening the role of women in peace policies, as well as the defence and security sector, and gender mainstreaming.

In the field of prevention, special focus is placed on strengthening the gender perspective through training and education programs related to human rights, gender equality, and the gender perspective in military operations, the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, protection of civilians, specific needs of women and children, and similar topics included in all levels of military education and training, and especially pre-deployment training for participation in international missions and peace support operations (NATO, UN, the EU). In order to increase the number of trained experts in the field of gender equality, the MoD and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia have built a strong network of certified NATO instructors for the gender perspective in military operations. Once a year since 2014, the Armed Forces, in cooperation with RACVIAC – Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre – or Centre for Security Cooperation Rakitje, and under the mentorship of the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations – NCGM, Sweden), conduct the ‘Gender Training of Trainers Course’, which is of an international character and held in RACVIAC. During the 10 years of this course, 67 employees/members of the Armed Forces and the MoD were trained and certified, 40 of which were

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<sup>54</sup> Available at: <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/croatia/>.

women, and 27 men. Simultaneously, eight members of the Armed Forces were trained and certified as gender advisors in the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, through the programmes 'Gender Field Advisor Course' (GFA) and 'Gender Advisor Course' (GENAD).

In the area of participation, special focus was placed on introducing gender balance in the activities of the security and defence sector, and increasing the representation of women in activities and decision-making processes. Significant results were achieved in this area as well. The MoD and the Armed Forces have been actively promoting the employment of women since their formation. All jobs are equally available to men and women, and there are no gender-based restrictions. Campaigns to attract personnel to the Armed Forces are equally aimed at various genders, and the selection and recruitment processes are the same for women and men. The number and percentage of women in the MoD and the Armed Forces is continuously increasing. Thus, in the last five years, the percentage of women in active military personnel has increased from 12.77% in 2019 to 14.53% in 2024. The percentage of women in the cadets is very high, and ranges between 20-25% in that period. The percentage of women in command and leadership positions has also increased, from 10.95% in 2019 to 12.87% in 2024. In the category of generals, there has still been one female general in the last five years, which makes the percentage of women 3.33%. Recognizing the contribution that women can make to the overall security and stability of society, there has been an active encouragement of registration of women for all decision-making levels in international organizations and initiatives in the field of security, as well as in military-diplomatic missions. Thus, since 2020, a female officer of the Armed Forces has been the military envoy of the Republic of Croatia for France, Spain, and Portugal. In 2017, the first woman took office as a military envoy of the Republic of Croatia, mandated until 2021 for Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo. From 2016 to 2020, a female member of the Armed Forces of Croatia, who also happens to be the first female general of the Croatian Army, held the position of Deputy Director of the RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation in Rakitje.

Finally, in the thematic area of protection and post-conflict recovery, special focus was placed on promoting the protection of the rights of women and girls who are victims of GBV in conflicts, and thus through all forms of military education and training, in the reporting period, efforts were made to raise awareness of zero tolerance towards sexual violence, and the need to protect the safety of women and children in conflicts, whereas special attention was paid to processing this topic through pre-deployment training for peace support missions and operations.

**28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?**

***Women in peace missions***

For more than twenty years, female members of the Croatian Army have been actively participating in missions and peace support operations around the world, holding various positions. Their representation is constantly increasing. The percentage of women who were engaged in international missions and peace support operations (UN, NATO, and the EU) in the last five years has been between 6% and 9%: in 2019, this percentage was 6.09%, while in 2023, it was 8.21% (2020 – 5.83%, 2021 – 6.93%, 2022 – 8.57%). Currently, 9% of peace support missions and operations members are women. It should be noted that, before the withdrawal of the national forces from the

*Resolute Support* peace operation in Afghanistan, from 2015 to 2020, female officers of the Croatian Army were appointed as advisors (mentors) for the training of women in the Special Forces of the Afghan National Army (ANA SOF) in the system of HRVCON Special Operations Advisory Team (SOAT).

In calls for participation in international missions and operations, the application of women is encouraged, and the call for participation in UN peacekeeping missions specifically emphasizes the supplementary UN criteria adopted with the aim of increasing the representation of women in UN (in accordance with *Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028*)<sup>55</sup>. Special criteria that apply to women, i.e. female officers, include the option of applying for officers with the personal rank of first lieutenant with at least five years of service in the Armed Forces of Croatia, which is a lower rank than the standard criteria for the personal rank of captain-colonel (criterion that only applies to men); as well as the possibility of registering female officers for a shortened rotation of six months instead of a regular rotation of 12 months, if the she is the mother of a child under the age of seven.

In 2019, one female officer participated in the UN mission according to the additional criteria for mothers of children under the age of seven; in 2020, two out of four women who participated in UN missions were sent according to special criteria; and in 2022, the participation of one female officer was ordered according to additional criteria. It should also be emphasized that the percentage of female members of the Croatian Army in UN peacekeeping missions in 2021 and 2022 was significantly above the planned percentage of representation of women, according to the UN *Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy*. Thus, in 2021, the percentage of female members of the Croatian Army in UN peacekeeping missions was 21.43%, while the target amount for the specified year was 18%. In 2022, the percentage of female members of the Croatian Army in UN peacekeeping missions was 26.66%, while the target amount for that year was 19%. In 2023, the percentage of female members of the Croatian Army in UN peacekeeping missions was 20%, which was in line with the target percentage of 20% for that year, according to the *Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy*.

Efforts are being made to increase the number of women in decision making positions in the service of the MFEA, especially in international organizations whose jurisdiction includes international security. For years, women have been in charge of key organizational units of said ministry in which international security issues are within their scope (for example, in the Sector for NATO and International Security, the Service for NATO, and the Service for International Security).

The MFEA continuously points to the key role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and it advocates for a stronger presence of women in all forums dealing with issues of peace and security, as well as in the selection for key positions in international organizations.

In 2023, 15 members of the Armed Forces were sent to UN peacekeeping missions, four of whom were women, and the proportion of women was a high 26.66% (above the target percentage of women's representation of 19% in 2022, according to the UN GPS for contributing countries). The percentage was already respectable in 2021 – 3 women out of 14 members of OSRH (21.43%). The percentage of women engaged in international (UN, NATO and EU) missions and peace support operations in 2023 was 8.50 to 9.00%, which is an evident progress (8.57% – 2022; 6.93% – 2021; 5.83% – 2020; 6.09% – 2019).

Efforts will continue to increase the number of military envoys in embassies and permanent missions of the Republic of Croatia to international organizations the jurisdiction of which includes international security affairs, in accordance with the *Decision on the establishment of the Commission of the Ministry of Defence for the determination of proposals for candidates for*

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<sup>55</sup> Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/uniformed-gender-parity-2018-2028.pdf>.

*appointment, i.e. referral to the duties of military envoy and other military-diplomatic duties and duties in international organizations and military missions* (2016). The selection is made on the basis of meeting the set conditions, regardless of gender.

In order to encourage the participation of women in international missions of the Republic of Croatia, the MoI conducted several tenders for participation in EU civilian missions, via the *Goalkeeper* electronic system, in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

In the reporting period, in the thematic area of protection and post-conflict recovery, special focus was placed on promoting the protection of the rights of women and girls who are victims of GBV in conflicts, and thus through all forms of military education and training, efforts were made to raise awareness of zero tolerance towards sexual violence and the need to protect the safety of women and children in conflicts, whereby special attention was paid to processing this topic through pre-deployment training for peace support missions and operations.

The Republic of Croatia continues its diplomatic engagement in promoting the *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security* by encouraging the exchange of experiences on implementation at the international and regional level (using the role of UN Economic and Social Council [hereinafter: ECOSOC] 2022–2024 member for communication). Pre-deployment training for peace support missions and operations includes educational modules on international law related to armed conflicts and international humanitarian law, dealing with gender equality in the context of *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security*, and the UN policy of zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation, along with other relevant documents/policies of NATO and the EU.

The role of women, Croatian experts in the fields of international public and humanitarian law, international relations, and other relevant professions, which make significant contributions and influence the prevention and resolution of conflicts and humanitarian disasters, has been strengthened.

**29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?**

***Measures taken to combat trafficking in women and children***

The Republic of Croatia has recognised women and girls as an exceptionally vulnerable group with regard to trafficking in human beings, given the statistical data. According to the data delivered to the OHRNM by the MoI, from 2019 to 2023, there were 111 victims of human trafficking, 74 of whom were women, which makes up 66.6%.

Recognizing the importance of protection of women and girls, the drafted *National plan for prevention of human trafficking for the period until 2030*,<sup>56</sup> has a specific goal dedicated to prevention of human trafficking, which entails that campaigns will be organized and maintained in

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<sup>56</sup> Available at: <https://esavjetovanja.gov.hr/ECon/MainScreen?entityId=26672>.

order to raise awareness in the public on the phenomenon of human trafficking, as well as cyber security, primarily aimed at women and girls who are victims of human trafficking.

It needs to be emphasised that annual international conferences have been held since 2022, on the topic of elimination of human trafficking related to sexual exploitation, especially when it comes to women and girls. In cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), OHRRNM organises international conferences with the aim of strengthening cooperation among the countries of South-Eastern Europe in combating sexual exploitation of women and girls, but also with the goal of raising awareness among all the stakeholders in the system about the challenges and problems regarding this form of human trafficking.

At the 2023 Congress of Roma Youth, the national coordinator for suppression of human trafficking noted a number of dangers for young people, particularly stressing the concern regarding illegal/forced marriages, to which the female members of the Roma national minority are exposed.

In order to raise public awareness about the criminal offense of trafficking in human beings and with the aim of preventing it, an SOS telephone line has been established for victims of human trafficking to request assistance, report cases of human trafficking, or obtain related information. The OHRRNM continuously finances SOS telephone line: 0800 77 99.

The OHRRNM also funds Croatian Red Cross (CRC) since they are crucial part of victim support in suppression of human trafficking, and are members of a mobile team (covering both the education of personnel and support to victims). Mobile teams consist of specially trained representatives of the CRC and civil society organizations engaged in providing assistance and protection to victims of human trafficking. Individuals engaged in the mobile teams receive an authorization for such work after completing specialized trainings organized by the OHRRNM in cooperation with other state bodies, the CRC and civil society organizations. The OHRRNM signed two contracts with CRC, one in 2021 and the other in 2023, thus allocating a total of € 31,854.00 for the purpose of mobile teams' trainings and victim support.

The MFEA maintains project activities with the aim of spreading information about the services available to women and girls who are refugees, asylum seekers, and persons with approved international protection, especially in the case of GBV and human trafficking. For example, there is a joint project with the Croatian Red Cross in the production of the leaflet 'Dear people, welcome to Croatia' (with advice related to safety of displaced persons from Ukraine, and useful telephone numbers).

The Republic of Croatia has increased capacities in the security sector, especially in the area of human rights and prevention of sexual and GBV, as well as sexual harassment and abuse. The Government has been adopting significant measures for elimination of women and child trafficking.

As for the preventive action 'Together', which the MoI is conducting in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, it includes preventive activities focused on the issue of human trafficking, with the aim of sensitization, informing, and education, as well as identification of potential crime hotspots in order to reduce the number of victims of human trafficking, especially a component intended to reduce the demand for sexual exploitation of children and minors in the process of human trafficking.

Similarly, related to the topic of human trafficking and reducing the 'demand' in the context of sexual exploitation, the Police Directorate, in cooperation with the Centre for Education, Counselling and

Research (CESI), uses the preventive and educational video material 'Two Girls' about dealing with human trafficking, with a special focus aimed at suppressing sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of the youth moving to a new place of residence (for employment, further education, etc.). The target group of the video are the students.<sup>57</sup>

For more information on matters related to migrants and refugees, please refer to our reply to Q3.

### ***War crimes committed during the Homeland War***

In the past five years, the MoI has intensified criminal investigations of war crimes, in order to determine individual (direct) and command responsibility for murders and severe physical abuse of civilians and prisoners of war during the Homeland War. On the basis of the *Strategy for the investigation and prosecution of criminal acts of war crimes committed during the Homeland War in the period from 1991 to 1995* and *Plan for the investigation and prosecution of criminal acts of war crimes committed during the Homeland War in the period from 1991 to 1995*, in the period from January of 2018 to May of 2024, in the Republic of Croatia, a total of 75 criminal reports were filed against 137 suspects (26 of which were arrested), for 445 criminal acts of war crimes against the civilian population and/or prisoners of war to the detriment of 855 persons, civilians, prisoners of war and/or war patients. Within the mentioned category of victims, special attention is devoted to women and girls as victims of rape (most often), and other forms of sexual exploitation during war conflicts, who are severely traumatized today as well, approximately 30 years after the most significant critical events from the Homeland war. According to the collected and analysed data (up to June of 2023), which cannot be considered final, it was established that the police keeps records for 209 persons who were victims of war crimes, committed by rape or other forms of sexual abuse, during the Homeland War. The data refers to all persons for whom there is knowledge, statements, or documents of being victims, and those who have deceased in the meantime, or have been in denial due to the passage of time, shame, fear, or changed family and life circumstances. An aggravating circumstance in the collection of data is the very nature of the mentioned criminal acts, which is why most of the victims, particularly those with changed life circumstances, deny that they were ever sexually abused. Only a very small number of survivors confirmed that they were victims, but due to old age, illness, or new life circumstances, they did not want to talk about it, and they refused to testify and initiate criminal proceedings. In order to legally regulate the status of such victims, the *Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence Suffered during the Armed Aggression against the Republic of Croatia in the Homeland War (Official Gazette, 64/15, 98/19)* has been in force since June of 2016, and which defines sexual violence in the Homeland War as a type of violence committed during the armed aggression against the Republic of Croatia, as established by the *Declaration on the Homeland War (Official Gazette, 102/2000)*, in the period from August 5, 1990 to June 30, 1996 on the territory of the Republic of Croatia or during detention in an enemy camp or prison outside the territory of the Republic of Croatia, and status and rights victims of sexual violence in the Homeland War.

The Ministry of Croatian Veterans protected the rights of women and girls through legal protection and the implementation of special programs aimed at achieving the quality of life of participants and victims of the Homeland War. The programme of preventive systematic examinations has been continuously implemented since 2016. From the beginning of 2019 to the end of 2023, 3,485

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<sup>57</sup> The video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVOyExZz6w0>.



Croatian female veterans were sent for examination, which accounts for 5% of the total preventive systematic examinations performed.

The intensive psychosocial rehabilitation programs for women who are victims of the Homeland War has continued, following the Government's *National Programme of Psychosocial and Medical Assistance to Participants and Victims of the Homeland War, World War II and Returned Foreign Fighters* (2014).

### **30. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?**

#### *Elimination of discrimination against women and girls*

The MLPSFSP was the coordinator of the preparation of the *National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee*,<sup>58</sup> which encourages additional investments by EU member states in the development of services for children living in poverty and social exclusion, as well as additional support mechanisms for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

In order to equalize the opportunities for students with developmental disabilities to participate in the educational processes on an equal basis with other students, and to make them independent, the *Personal Assistance Act*, which entered into force in 2023, defines the right to support during the educational processes, provided by a teaching assistant. More information on the act is given in the reply to Q3.

In the Republic of Croatia, there are systematic efforts to prevent gender discrimination, and this is applicable to all of the students, based on the *Primary and Secondary School Education Act (Official Gazette, 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14, 07/17, 68/18, 98/19, 64/20, 151/22, 155/23, 156/23)*<sup>59</sup> and other related laws, regulations, and protocols which guarantee equality and protection of rights of all of the students, regardless of their gender. The conditions of education in primary and secondary school are equal for all students, and boys and girls have equal access to education, without discrimination based on any criteria. The MSE systematically works on prevention of all forms of unacceptable behaviour, and additionally encourages this through the 'Public Call for financing of the preventive projects of primary and secondary schools and student dormitories' for the purpose of supporting and strengthening school preventive strategies. Data is collected and records on violence in schools are kept with the purpose of further supporting and planning activities to prevent all forms of violence, including discrimination. Civil society organizations projects are continuously being supported, with special focus on gender equality.

The MoI reported on measures and activities it implemented in the last five years, given in the continuation.

The MoI uses the educational documentary film 'Marry when you are ready' for the needs of education and sensitization. The film was created in cooperation with the Roma Women's

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<sup>58</sup> Available at: <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocImages/slike/2023/3.7.%20KONA%C4%8CNO%20Tekst%20Nacionalni%20Oakcijski%20plan%20NAP%20CG.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> Available at: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/317/Zakon-o-odgoju-i-obrazovanju-u-osnovnoj-i-srednjoj-%C5%A1koli>.

Association 'Roma heart', and it was financed by EU funds. It covers the problem of early marriage of Roma girls, as early as the ages between 9 and 15, and thus aims to prevent sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.<sup>60</sup>

The preventive project 'I have a choice' is also being implemented in cooperation with educational institutions and other partners. The project aim is strengthening the social inclusion of minority social groups in the community, with a special focus on sensitizing and empowering underage girls of the Roma population, so that they do not become victims of criminal acts, especially violent offenses with elements of sexual exploitation or abuse, including forced marriages.

With the aim of sensitizing different target groups, in cooperation with competent Ombudsperson for Children and civil society organizations (e.g. Association 'Roda', Women's Room, etc.), various preventive activities are being implemented on the topic of sexual exploitation and abuse of children and the youth. One of such activities is the action 'I have rights', where special focus is given to the implementation of the interactive workshop for children 'The Right Touch'. In accordance with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*<sup>61</sup> and the *Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA*,<sup>62</sup> it promotes the child's right to safety and focuses on the importance of preventing all forms of child abuse, including the prevention of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.<sup>63</sup>

In cooperation with the Polyclinic for the Protection of Children and Youth of the City of Zagreb and the digital agency Degordian, the campaign 'Behind the Door' was launched. It is aimed at identifying violence against children, including violence in digital environment, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and encouraging citizens to immediately report violence to the police. Electronic media, radio and TV stations joined the campaign by broadcasting it on their channels. The campaign was particularly noticed during the Croatian presidency of the CoEU<sup>64</sup>, as well as in the social media of the EC<sup>65</sup>. The campaign was also supported by the European Crime Prevention Network and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Europol highlighted the campaign as an example of good practice, and information about the campaign was published on the EPE website (Europol platform for experts), thus it was consequently taken over in the Slovak Republic. Members of the Lanzarote Committee also shared information about the campaign as an example of good practice.

Every year, the MoI celebrates 18<sup>th</sup> November, the European Day for the Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, during which citizens are additionally informed and educated about this topic, with a focus on children who are also victims of these punishable actions. The current multimedia package of preventive and educational measures of the CoE on the website of said ministry, with the aim of comprehensive prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation of children.<sup>66</sup>

In this sense, the most important activities are the promotion of the *Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention)*<sup>67</sup>, as well as the EMPACT priorities regarding systematic action in the field of the protection of children

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<sup>60</sup> The film is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNUb-X3tMHQ>.

<sup>61</sup> Available at: [https://www.unicef.hr/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Konvencija\\_20o\\_20pravima\\_20djeteta\\_full.pdf](https://www.unicef.hr/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Konvencija_20o_20pravima_20djeteta_full.pdf).

<sup>62</sup> Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011L0093>.

<sup>63</sup> More information is available at: <http://zenskasoba.hr/hr/podrucja-rada/aktivnosti/izdavastvo/>.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. <https://eu2020.hr/Home/OneNews?id=275>.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. <https://twitter.com/EUHomeAffairs/status/1252602938146484224>.

<sup>66</sup> Video is available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/europski-dan-zastite-djece-od-seksualnog-zlostavanja-i-iskoristavanja/287374>.

<sup>67</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168046e1d1>.

from sexual exploitation, with sensitization of the target group on all the essential preventive tools of the CoE.

Through public announcements, the MoI encourages citizens to get involved in the fight against sexual abuse of children by participating in EUROPOL's 'Trace an Object' campaign, seeking the citizens' help in identification of the origin of objects found in images of child sexual abuse, as well as in the 'EU Most Wanted' campaign, with pictures of the most wanted fugitives in Europe, including sex offenders against children.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia created the *Protocol on Actions in the Case of Violence Among Children and Youth* in 2024, which defined procedures for the protection of children and students in the event of sexual and peer violence.

## Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

### Critical areas of concern:

- I. Human rights of women
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child

### **31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?**

#### *Integrating the gender perspective into environmental protection policy*

In the *Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia 2020 – 2024* strong emphasis was placed on the green transition of society through action priorities. With regard to the priority of achieving greater economic sovereignty, the Government of the Republic of Croatia recognized the disruptions in global supply chains caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is why one of the main focal points was the necessity of achieving greater self-sufficiency in food and energy production, by producing domestic and organically grown food; along with the transition to low-carbon and renewable energy sources. The importance of developing a circular economy, improving waste management, and the active fight against climate change, which is a threat to agriculture and coastal areas, was also highlighted. The programme also emphasizes that the *European Green Deal* is an opportunity for accelerated energy transition of the Republic of Croatia towards clean energies.

Through the second *Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the Goals of the United Nations Programme for Sustainable Development until 2030*, the Government of the Republic of Croatia defines the key elements of the green transition until 2030, guided by the goals of the *UN 2030 Agenda*. As stated in the document, when building more resilient and fairer institutions, Croatia prioritized the implementation of reforms and investments aimed at building an efficient, digital, and competent public administration. This includes adaptability to numerous social challenges, such as globalization, the pandemic, and the digital and green transition. The *Voluntary National Review* points out that the Republic of Croatia is making significant efforts to increase the capacity of renewable energy sources, and notes that the share of renewable energy in total final energy consumption in the Republic of Croatia is above the EU average. Significant efforts are being made in the decarbonisation of the energy sector and the economy, as well as in the security of energy supply, with the aim of providing citizens with clean, sustainable, and affordable energy. As the leading member state of the EU in terms of water supplies, the Republic of Croatia is fully dedicated to the mission of water conservation. Thus, significant progress is also made in the area of ensuring access to healthy, drinking water and water management.

Regarding the measures that were taken in the past 5 years to integrate a gender perspective into environmental protection policy – specifically the protection and management of water, as well as policies and programs for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation, there is a high degree of availability of public water supply for everyone (94% of the total population), all measures related to reducing the risk of disasters apply equally to all citizens, therefore including women and girls. Significant (equal) number of women are employed in water management institutions (the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development – Directorate of Water Management and Sea Protection, the Croatian Waters, and the Josip Juraj Strossmayer Water Institute), including management functions in all of them. Additionally, we point out the fact that in July of 2023 the *Law on Amendments to the Water Act (Official Gazette, 47/23)* entered into force, which implemented certain provisions of *Directive (EU) 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16*

*December 2020 on the quality of water intended for human consumption*<sup>68</sup> (amendments), related to improving access to water intended for human consumption for all, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups. The *Water Act (Official Gazette, 66/19, 84/21, 47/23)* also guarantees water delivery to every household in the amount of 50 liters per member per day, even in the case of suspension of delivery due to non-payment of the service, while the citizens of lower financial status are provided with an adapted price for water services in the amount of up to 60% of the price paid by other citizens.

The *2023-2026 Action Plan for promoting and establishing gender equality* of the Ministry of Agriculture states that the gender perspective is to be considered in the implementation of the *Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme of the Republic of Croatia until 2027*,<sup>69</sup> and the projects related to it will seek to analyse the effect of gender differences on project activities. The priorities determined within these measures are the promotion of sustainable fishing, and the restoration and preservation of aquatic biodiversity. The specific goal is to collect data to improve recognition of the role of women in aquaculture. The organization of trainings was also designated, in order to ensure sensibility for gender equality among the representatives of institutions and bodies of the management and control system of the *Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme*.

In 2024, the Committee for Agriculture of the Croatian Parliament held a thematic session, with a discussion on the position of women in forestry. At the session, the Croatian Chamber of Forestry and Wood Processing presented the results of the international project 'Forests in Women's Hands'. In the company Hrvatske šume d.o.o. founded by the Republic of Croatia, 18% of the employees are women, while the Croatian Forestry Institute is at an exceptional 58% of women employees. The Croatian Forestry Institute is the only institution in the forestry sector with more women than men employed as scientific staff.

In the reporting period, the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology of the University of Zagreb notes a positive trend of increasing representation of the female students in all study programmes, and the women in scientific-teaching positions and associate positions. According to the latest data, the percentage of female students at that faculty is 37%, while there are 22 women in scientific and teaching positions, and 33% in associate positions.

Raising public awareness about the equality of women and men and creating equal opportunities in the forestry sector, as well as the promotion of forestry as a complete economic and ecological system in which the role of women is recognized, is essential for investing efforts in implementing a green transition sensitive to gender equality. After the 2024 elections for the Croatian Parliament, the Government has established the Ministry for Sustainable Development, headed by a woman.

Awareness of specific dangers to the environment and health (e.g. consumer products and technologies, industrial pollution) has significantly increased, and the Croatian government, business, and non-governmental sectors strongly encourage education of women and girls in science, engineering, technology and other disciplines related to natural environment. Environmental protests are most usually led by women.

Numerous areas of activity reflect Croatia's efforts to integrate a gender perspective in key areas related to climate change and disaster risk reduction, with the aim of ensuring equality and resilience of all citizens. For example, the gender perspective is integrated into the strategies of the Civil Protection of the Republic of Croatia, and then also through the practical activities of the Croatian

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<sup>68</sup> Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2020/2184/oj>.

<sup>69</sup> Available at: <https://www.apprrr.hr/op-za-pomorstvo-i-ribarstvo-2021-2027/>.

mountain rescue service. The implementation of educational programmes and campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of gender equality in the context of climate change and disaster risk includes workshops, seminars, and other forms of education for civil servants, local communities and civil society.

**32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?**

Please refer to the reply to Q31.

## Section Four: National institutions and processes

### **33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.**

The *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* and the *Action Plan for Implementation of the National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2024* (both documents were adopted in 2023) are mid-term strategic planning acts which define and establish gender equality. The OGE is responsible for their creation. They were created following the provisions of the Coordination Body for Strategic Planning and Development of Croatia, based at the Ministry of regional development and European funds, which receives the reports on the implementation. The *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* presents seven priorities: 1. Promote human rights of women and gender equality; 2. Advance the position of women in the labour market; 3. Eliminate violence against women; 4. Create a gender sensitive education system; 5. Advance the position of women in positions of and political and public decision-making, 6. Implement gender mainstreaming; 7. Promote gender equality within international policies and cooperation. There are 33 defined measures for implementation of these goals, some of which are aimed at raising awareness on gender equality among especially vulnerable groups of women.

Gender equality is an area that is listed in the *National Development Strategy until 2030* as a horizontal priority, and in this sense, all public policies and priorities in said strategy and in strategic planning acts arising from the Strategy will be implemented with the aim of establishing equality and promoting equal opportunities.

The objectives of the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* are aligned with the critical areas of the BDPA, and support the implementation of the *2030 Agenda*, i.e. Sustainable Development Goal 5: achieving gender equality and empowering all UN women and girls.

For the implementation of the *Action Plan for Gender Equality until 2024*, it is expected that budgetary beneficiaries will spend € 28,882,826.00 and an additional € 7,668,922.00 from the non-budgetary ones (the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance). The expenditure of funds for the implementation of measures from the *Action Plan 2025 – 2027* is planned to be determined after its adoption.<sup>70</sup>

### **34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.**

#### *Monitoring the share of the national budget invested in the promotion of gender equality*

In the reporting period, the Republic of Croatia did not directly monitor the share of the national budget invested in promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. Funds intended for

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<sup>70</sup> For more information, please cf. <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/nacionalni-plan-za-ravnopravnost-spolova-za-razdoblje-do-2027-godine/3442>.

promotion of gender equality and women empowerment are planned in and covered from the National Budget, in accordance with the programme classification by activities and projects of budget beneficiaries. In some cases, it is possible to recognize, by the programme classification itself, that the funds planned in certain budget positions refer exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment of women, while in some cases this is not entirely possible, given that certain activities and projects include funds planned for implementation other regular activities of the budget beneficiary.

In the National Budget, the funds for work of the OGE are presented separately. In the period 2019-2023 a total of € 1,048,796.18 was spent on the activities and projects of the OGE.

The Ministry of Finance is currently implementing a project to revise the programme classification with the purpose of reducing the total number of activities and projects, and their division, as well as defining them better, so that the programme classification itself is even clearer with regard to the purpose of directing the budget funds. During this process, efforts will be made to recognize activities and projects aimed at promoting gender equality and women empowerment as the first step towards a gender-sensitive budget.

### ***Official development aid invested in promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment***

Development cooperation projects related to protection and empowerment of women aim to improve the health, education, and economic independence of women in third countries. These projects contribute to achieving gender equality and improving the quality of women's lives.

In the *Action Plan for Implementation of the National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2024*, a measure related to the activities in promotion of the principle of gender equality in international development cooperation is planned. Its purpose is to financially contribute to projects that promote gender equality, and to increase the international visibility of the Republic of Croatia in the field of gender equality. The Ministry of External and European Affairs provided annual funds in the amount of € 92,000.00.

The Ministry of External and European Affairs has been implementing projects with civil society organisations since 2021, and so far three public calls for financing projects of international development of cooperation with civil society organisations have been announced, and a fourth one is in development. The public calls are aimed at empowering vulnerable social groups, and one of the thematic goals in the calls is strengthening the role of women, children and youth, as well as promoting gender equality. The funds were allocated to civil society organisations with experience in implementing humanitarian and development projects abroad. In the three-year period, 28 projects were financed with € 1,467,247.86, and implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Turkey, Ukraine, Tanzania, Kenya, Morocco, and Zambia. In 2022/2023 the financing of non-government organisations' projects has continued, 11 of which were aimed at empowering women and girls, in the total amount of € 600,000.00.

For example, the Ministry of External and European Affairs supported the implementation of two UNICEF projects in 2023; 'Empowering girls to access relevant, quality education and skills development opportunities in Kenya', and 'Improving girls' digital skills in Ethiopia'. The projects contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including goals related to education and gender equality. Funds for each project – € 100,000.00 each – were paid to the implementing partners.



The Ministry of External and European Affairs supported the ambitious humanitarian and development project of the association 'Kolajna ljubavi' under the title 'WWW – Wonderful World of Women' in the amount of € 39,550.00, for 18 months (the project ended in March of 2023). The goal of the project is to improve the status of girls living in poverty in Kenya and Tanzania. In December of 2023, a new contract worth € 65,379.00 was signed with the association 'Kolajna ljubavi', which includes an additional user group of people, those with disabilities.

The project 'PreobražENA' ('Transformed WOMAN') of the association 'Society of Integrative Gestalt Pedagogy' was created in 2021 with the aim of strengthening the role of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (members of associations, institutions, religious communities, entrepreneurs, representatives of micro, small and medium enterprises, unemployed women) in making a step forward in the direction of education, entrepreneurship, and political engagement, but also the implementation of international cooperation with CSOs through the exchange of knowledge. The Ministry of External and European Affairs secured € 39,815.94 for a 16-month project that ended in March of 2023. In December of 2023, a new 12-month contract was signed for the project 'Mostarka' (€ 70,000.00), with the aim of encouraging women in the education system of Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop innovative entrepreneurial ideas, as well as to attend education on implementation of EU projects.

### **35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

#### ***Formal mechanisms for implementation and monitoring of the BDPA and the 2030 Agenda***

The institutional framework for monitoring the implementation of the *Sustainable Development Goals (UN Agenda 2030)* consists of the National Council for Sustainable Development (hereinafter: NCSD), the MFEA, the State Bureau of Statistics, and the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds. It functions as a coordinating body for the strategic planning system and coordinators, as well as regional government units. The NCSD is chaired by the Prime Minister, while its members include the heads of ministries and government offices with the relevant jurisdictions, a representative of the Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia, and the State Bureau of Statistics. It is also intended for the work of the NCSD to include representatives of other sustainable development stakeholders as advisors, primarily those from the local and regional government units, the business sector, the interested scientific and professional public, and civil society.

The Council for Sustainable Development adopts reports on the results and activities of implementation for the purposes of international cooperation, i.e. it harmonizes the positions of the Republic of Croatia for the purposes of participation in the work of the United Nations (particularly for the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council – ECOSOC, and the Political Forum on Sustainable Development at a high level – HLPF), and the EU. Through its results, it also contributes to the implementation of 'Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', as well as other UN programmes and documents closely related to the implementation of the *2030 Agenda*, as well as key areas addressed by the BDPA.

In 2023, at the UN High-Level Political Forum, the Republic of Croatia presented its second *Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, i.e. the *Global Goals of Sustainable Development in Croatia*.<sup>71</sup>

Since the purpose of that document was to show the activities and results of the implementation of 17 sustainable development goals in three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and ecological – the contribution included content related to ‘Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’. In this regard, the Croatian *Voluntary National Review* contains a contribution to the draft of an act in the form of a review of indicators on women’s participation in political and public life, as well as a review of the content of the new national plans, and activities undertaken with the aim of eliminating and preventing GBV.

The OGE is responsible for monitoring the implementation of international obligations, including the implementation of the BDPA, the reports on which are regularly submitted to the competent bodies of the UN (UNECE).

### **36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.**

#### ***Preparation of the Comprehensive National-level Review (Beijing +30)***

The OGE is the body with the mandate to create the *Comprehensive National-level Review (Beijing +30)*. In order to accomplish this task, said office founded the Working Group for Creation of Beijing +30, with the members from the following national bodies:

- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for social affairs and human rights
- Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of Croatia
- Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of Croatia
- Ombudswoman for Gender Equality
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics
- Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society
- Central State Office for Demography and Youth
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
- Ministry of Croatian Veterans
- Ministry of Culture and Media
- Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Justice and Public Administration
- Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy
- Ministry of the Interior
- Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
- Ministry of Health

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<sup>71</sup> Available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/2016/Sjednice/2023/Lipanj/229%20-%20sjednica%20VRH/2%20CRO%20VNR%202023%20HR.pdf>.

- Ministry of Science and Education.<sup>72</sup>

The questionnaire from UN's *Guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews* was translated to Croatian and sent to the members of the Working Group. The stakeholders replied to each question from the areas in their respective scope of activities. The Council for National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia was also consulted, as well as members of the academic community. Based on the received contributions and through the analysis of data from other reports, documents, and acts, the narrative part of the *Comprehensive National-level Review* (Beijing +30) was compiled.

Considering that the report was being prepared at the time of the 2024 parliamentary election and the constitution of a new government, several stakeholders did not manage to deliver their contributions in the predicted deadlines, which consequently prolonged the sending of the *Comprehensive National-level Review* (Beijing +30).

### **37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.**

#### ***Reports to the Committee for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women and the Human Rights Committee***

*The Fourth and Fifth periodic reports of the Republic of Croatia according to Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*<sup>73</sup> were submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) in 2013. The reports were presented to the CEDAW Committee at its 61st session in July of 2015. In the *Closing Remarks on the Fourth and Fifth Periodic Reports of the Republic of Croatia*, adopted in July of 2015, the CEDAW Committee stated that the Republic of Croatia is required to provide, within a maximum of two years, the written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations related to certain articles of said convention. The requested information was submitted in 2017. The sixth periodic report has been finalized and is planned to be submitted to the CEDAW Committee in 2024, after being adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

A significant part of the recommendations from the *Closing Remarks* on the last submitted report were implemented in the reporting period, and part of the recommendations were included in the measures of new national plans and programs.

In the reporting period, the Republic of Croatia produced two reports following the UN *Universal Periodic Review* of human rights.<sup>74</sup> This is the *Third Report* following the *Universal Periodic Review*, which was created during 2020 and presented in November of 2020, despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the Republic of Croatia prepared the *Interim Report* according

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<sup>72</sup> The stakeholders are listed by their names at the time of formation of the Working Group for Creation of Beijing+30.

<sup>73</sup> Available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n15/234/47/pdf/n1523447.pdf?token=Jei4Xsw6OART27EbsN&fe=true>.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. The Croatian contributions to *Universal Periodic Review*. Available at: <https://mvep.gov.hr/informacije-za-gradjane-244593/ugovori-dokumenti-i-obrasci/dokumenti/univerzalni-periodicni-pregled-ljudskih-prava/27170>.

to the *Universal Periodic Review*, on the basis of which the fourth report will be prepared, and it is expected to be presented in May of 2025. The Republic of Croatia successfully responded to all the recommendations of member states regarding gender equality policies and the elimination of violence against women.

The Republic of Croatia also submits periodic reports on the application of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. In 2024, the 4th Report on its implementation was presented.

## Section Five: Data and statistics

### **38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?**

#### *Progress in the implementation of gender statistics at the national level*

Since 2006, the State Bureau of Statistics regularly issues its annual, bilingual (Croatian and English) publication 'Women and Men in Croatia',<sup>75</sup> a comprehensive overview of data disaggregated by gender, covering a number of different statistical areas (population, health care, education, employment and earnings, pension insurance, poverty indicators, administration of justice, political power).

From December of 2020 to April of 2023 the State Bureau of Statistics implemented the EU financed project 'Gender-based and interpersonal violence Survey (full implementation)'.<sup>76</sup> The research on gender-based and interpersonal violence was developed with the coordination of Eurostat, via a dedicated Task Force (the Republic of Croatia was one of the members). The survey methodology was standardised and the survey questionnaire has been developed. In addition, survey implementation guidelines were created, for all relevant implementation aspects.<sup>77</sup>

In line with methodological postulates,<sup>78</sup> the survey had the title 'Safety Survey'. It was implemented on the initial sample of 23,000 persons living in private households. Fieldwork was carried out in the period October of 2022 to mid-February of 2023. The used data collection methods were computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) as well as computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The Database of the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Croatia in 2021 has been utilised as a sample frame. Target population were the persons between the age of 18 and 74, men and women. There was 6,171 successfully completed interviews (3,416 for female respondents, and 2,755 for male respondents). Results of the 'Safety Survey' should enable addressing, fully or partially, the statistical input for different Sustainable Development goals indicators, primarily within Goal 16. Statistical survey results for female respondents per individual participating country are available at the Eurostat's page<sup>79</sup> while the national dissemination is planned for December of 2024, on the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (hereinafter: CBS) web page.

In the period from November of 2022 to November of 2023 the CBS implemented 'Time Use Survey' on a nationally representative sample. Database of the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Croatia in 2021 has been utilised as a sample frame. The survey was implemented on the initial sample of 4,680 private households and their members aged 15 and above. The used data collection methods were Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) for

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. <https://podaci.dzs.hr/en/publications/>.

<sup>76</sup> Contract number: 101018003-2020-HR-GBV. Survey and basic project information available at: <https://dzs.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Dokumenti/Finalised%20projects%20funded%20by%20the%20EU.pdf>, page 33.

<sup>77</sup> Prior to this project, CBS implemented EU grant with the title 'Testing and piloting survey on Gender-Based Violence', basic project information available at: <https://dzs.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Dokumenti/Finalised%20projects%20funded%20by%20the%20EU.pdf>, pp. 112 and 113. This pilot was utilized, inter alia, in order to test different data collection methods.

<sup>78</sup> Methodology available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/13484289/KS-GQ-21-009-EN-N.pdf/1478786c-5fb3-fe31-d759-7bbe0e9066ad?t=1633004533458>.

<sup>79</sup> Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/gender-based-violence/database>.

household and individual questionnaires, while the 'Pen-and-Paper' method was utilized for time use diaries. Response rate was slightly above 20%. This was the first time that the time use statistical instrument was implemented on a nationally representative sample, making it viable to derive statistically sound frequencies and rates. The results of 'Time Use Survey' should enable addressing, fully or partially, the statistical input primarily for SDG indicator 5.4.1. The national dissemination is planned for December of 2024, on the CBS web page.

The results of statistical activities in which the statistical unit is a person are presented, *inter alia*, through disaggregation by gender.

When it comes to gender-based statistics, the official statistics endeavours, as well as the potential developments in broader national data ecosphere should be taken into consideration. To that end, for example, it is worth noting that GREVIO<sup>80</sup> indicated the following in its '(Baseline) Evaluation Report' for Croatia<sup>81</sup> (p. 7): 'Data collection on violence against women should be improved in the criminal justice, healthcare and social welfare sectors – disaggregated by sex, age and relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, type of violence and geographical location – and these data should be analysed for the purpose of evidence-based policy making.'

### **39. Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?**

#### ***Priorities of development of national statistics***

Gender-based and interpersonal violence survey, described in the answer to Q38, marked the first official statistics survey on victimization implemented on a nationally representative sample, making it viable to derive statistically sound frequencies and rates. Simultaneously, there are several pending initiatives in the EU when it comes to potential future statistical monitoring of GBV phenomenology. One of the initiatives comes from Eurostat, where a Task Force is in place to prepare the methodological infrastructure as a starting point for potential future implementation (either in the form of statistical legislation or under an umbrella agreement). The CBS is actively participating in this process, as a Task Force member.

On the other hand, the *Istanbul Convention*, which has been ratified by the Republic of Croatia,<sup>82</sup> in its Article 11 Paragraph 2 states the following: 'Parties shall endeavour to conduct population-based surveys at regular intervals to assess the prevalence of and trends in all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.' *The GREVIO's (Baseline) Evaluation Report for Croatia*,<sup>83</sup> In the 'List of proposals and suggestions by GREVIO', chapter 'II. Integrated policies and data collection', item 13, it is stated that 'GREVIO encourages the Croatian authorities to regularly conduct population-based surveys addressing all forms of violence against women covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention (Paragraph 70)'. Thus, it is expected that, in the future, one or more processes will be in place related to population statistics on GBV (either as complements or in parallel).

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<sup>80</sup> GREVIO – Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. <https://rm.coe.int/baseline-evaluation-report-on-croatia/1680ac76c9>.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/medunarodni/2018\\_05\\_3\\_27.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/medunarodni/2018_05_3_27.html).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. <https://rm.coe.int/baseline-evaluation-report-on-croatia/1680ac76c9>.

On the EU level there is a multitude of developments (current or upcoming) within the *EU Data Strategy* framework,<sup>84</sup> acknowledging both the intrinsic value and importance of data for future social and economic development, as well as outstanding and potentially historically unparalleled technological proliferation and development (artificial intelligence being somewhat of a ‘poster child’). This of course will have influence on statistics in every form (official statistics, administrative statistics, etc.) and in presumably all statistical areas. It includes also gender statistics, which is in fact a reflection of the state of gender related issues as a whole. This has been recognised also by CoE.<sup>85</sup> Those developments might have a streamlined and synergic national influence, with a possible strategic mid to long term effect.

#### **40. What gender-specific indicators<sup>86</sup> has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?**

##### *Gender-specific indicators for monitoring the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals*

The preparation of a national action plan for systematic monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals is in progress.

The document *Performance Audit of the Preparedness of the Republic of Croatia to implement the Sustainable Development Goals from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, implemented by the State Audit Office of the Republic of Croatia, has been published in March of 2021.<sup>87</sup>

The State Audit Office made several recommendations, two of which might be of relevance to this matter, namely: ‘develop a national action plan in coordination with other statistical data holders and official statistics holders, as well as decision makers, for systematic monitoring and reporting on sustainable development goals’; take the necessary actions in coordination with other statistical data holders and official statistics holders, as well as decision-makers, in order to conduct a mapping of availability of data necessary for the calculation of sustainable development goals indicators’. Significant work has been done, but further synergic efforts are still required to optimise national SDG data and metadata infrastructure.

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-data-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-data-strategy_en).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/-/artificial-intelligence-bridging-the-equality-gap>.

<sup>86</sup> The term ‘gender-specific indicators’ is used to refer to indicators that explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For example, SDG indicator 5.c.1 captures the percentage of countries with systems to track public allocations that are directed towards policies and programmes that promote gender equality—the underlying objective is the promotion of gender equality. The term is also used for indicators where women and girls are specified within the indicator as the targeted population (see UN Women. 2018. *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York).

<sup>87</sup> The English version is available at <https://www.revizija.hr/UserDocImages/ENG/Reports/2020/SDG%202020.eng.pdf>.

Activities described in answers to Q38 and Q39, partially address certain gender-specific indicators, specifically: the Time Use Survey: indicator 5.4.1; Safety Survey: indicators 5.2.1,<sup>88</sup> 5.2.2,<sup>89</sup> 11.7.2, 16.1.3, 16.2.3,<sup>90</sup> 16.3.1.

Rather interesting supplementary metadata initiatives should also be of note, for example a *Report submitted by Croatia pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Baseline Report)*<sup>91</sup> from February of 2022.

As indicated in other parts of the reply to this question, a partial collection of data for SDG indicators, namely: 5.3.2, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.6.1, 5.6.2, 16.1.1, 16.2.2, 16.3.2, 16.4.2, 16.5.1, 16.5.2, 16.7.1, 16.9.1.

#### 41. Which data disaggregations<sup>92</sup> are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

##### *Variables used in research*

The statistical surveys on households and individuals form a backbone of social statistics in the Republic of Croatia. They are methodologically harmonized in a relevant number of cases in the EU, and/or prescribed by the EU statistical legislation.

The *Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 October 2019*<sup>93</sup> serves as the umbrella regulation and establishes a common framework for European statistics related to persons and households, based on data at an individual level, collected from representative samples of those persons and households. This regulation does not apply to population and housing censuses, as referred to in the *Regulation (EC) no 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 on population and housing censuses*.

The Article 3 Paragraph 1 of the *Regulation (EU) 2019/1700* establishes statistical domains it refers to: (a) labour force; (b) income and living conditions; (c) health; (d) education and training; (e) use of information and communication technologies; (f) time use; (g) consumption. The Paragraph 3 of the same article prescribes that data sets are to cover the following common topics: (a) technical items; (b) person and household characteristics; (c) health: status and disability, access to, and availability and use of health care and health determinants; (d) labour market participation; (e) educational attainment and background. This is the necessary information which needs to be collected, while possible additional or supplementary information is to be implemented following the acts of the EU Commission.

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<sup>88</sup> GBV or Safety Survey covers slightly different dimensions: proportion of ever-partnered women (18-74) who experienced psychological, physical, or sexual violence by an intimate partner, during the last 12 months, the last 5 years, and during their lifetime to date, by type of violence, by age: 18-74; 18-29; 30-44; 45-64; 65-74, and by certain intersectional aspects (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/13484289/KS-GQ-21-009-EN-N.pdf/1478786c-5fb3-fe31-d759-7bbe0e9066ad?t=1633004533458>, p. 516).

<sup>89</sup> GBV or Safety Survey includes respondents between 18 and 74 years of age.

<sup>90</sup> However, as the EU-GBV considers childhood before the age of 15, the following indicator observes young women (18-29) who experienced sexual violence before the age of 15 (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/13484289/KS-GQ-21-009-EN-N.pdf/1478786c-5fb3-fe31-d759-7bbe0e9066ad?t=1633004533458>, p. 575).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-inf-2022-2-eng-state-report-croatia/1680a5a0e4>.

<sup>92</sup> As specified in A/RES/70/1, with the addition of education, marital status, religion and sexual orientation.

<sup>93</sup> Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1700>.



Consequently, all of the major official statistics surveys are standardized and regulated on the EU level, and they are accompanied with the 'Core' socio-demographic and socio-economic variables, most notably: gender, age in completed years, country of birth, country of citizenship at the time of data collection, legal marital status, *de facto* marital status (consensual union), household composition, country of residence, region of residence, degree of urbanization, self-declared labour status, status in employment, occupation in employment, economic sector in employment, highest level of education completed, net monthly income of the household.

## Section Six: Conclusion and next steps

This report shows that in the past five years, significant progress has been made towards achieving the goal of real equality between men and women. This is primarily related to numerous changes in legislation, the adoption of new strategies, plans and programs, and the implementation of many other activities aimed at raising public awareness of the importance of gender equality to the benefit of whole society. Simultaneously, numerous activities were carried out in cooperation with civil society organizations and other important stakeholders. The position of women has improved in many areas, but this is still not enough, therefore it is important to emphasize the effective implementation of adopted national plans, programs and policies aimed at combating discrimination, intensifying respect for rights, and improving the social position of women, with the aim of faster progress towards establishing real gender equality.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the following steps have been defined in the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027*. The plan contains seven priorities: 1. Increase the level of public awareness of gender equality and multiple discrimination; 2. Improve the position of women on the labour market; 3. Create prerequisites for eliminating GBV; 4. Increase the sensibility of all levels of the education system for issues of gender equality and non-stereotypical selection of education programmes at all levels; 5. To increase the representation of women in public and political decision making processes, 6. To introduce gender mainstreaming in public policies; 7. To increase the visibility of the Republic of Croatia on the international level in the field of gender equality.

The *National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027* and the associated action plans for gender equality (until 2024 and from 2025 to 2027) will also contribute to the implementation of 'Goal 5' (Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls) of the *Agenda 2030*, as well as the implementation of the BDPA.

In the future period, it is necessary to continue the efforts towards achieving zero tolerance towards all kinds of GBV, including domestic violence.

In the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia from 2024 to 2028, the fight against violence against women and children and domestic violence is listed as one of the goals (within priority 3.4). It states that 'the fight against violence against women and children, and domestic violence will continue with the expansion of the support system for victims and witnesses in courts, as well as with the training of judicial officials and officials in judicial bodies on the rights of victims of violence. In order to better coordinate, apply, monitor and assess the policies and measures to combat violence and prevent it in all of its forms, an independent organizational unit will be established in the MLPSFSP, which will be responsible for this area. Special focus will be placed on the systematic collection, strategic analysis, and processing of data related to violence against women and domestic violence, as well as on intersectional cooperation. In every county, the family centres will provide support to children who are victims of peer violence, and victims of domestic violence. After leaving the shelter, the victims of violence and children leaving the social welfare system will be provided with additional financial resources for renting an apartment or providing housing until they gain independence. For the temporary upbringing of children whose parents do not pay alimony, a special Alimony Fund will be established, and the increased compensation will ensure their maintenance until they reach adulthood, or until they find their first permanent job. In order to protect child victims of violence, a Children's House will be established, based on the Barnahus model, which is the leading European model for the protection of rights and interests of

child victims, and which unites all relevant services in one place. The *Act on Protection of Children from Violence* will be adopted, which will tighten the penalties for all forms of violence against children, introduce additional mechanisms for the protection of children, and investigation of abusers. The Government will lead the fight against all forms of violence and hate speech in society, and will strengthen the legislative framework on suppressing hate speech, especially towards vulnerable groups and national minorities, because in modern Croatia there is no place for hooliganism and violent outbursts, including both the physical violence and hate speech, whether it is at a public space, in the media, on internet platforms, or social media. The fight against hate speech and any form of violence will be encouraged by investing in education, professional advice, public campaigns, and strengthening media literacy in order to act preventively. Necessary efforts will continue to be made so that everyone who publicly spreads hate speech or incites violence is brought before the judicial authorities as soon as possible, and appropriately punished.”

Equally, attention shall be focused on ensuring the availability of educational programs, combating poverty and social exclusion, full participation of women in all areas of life while respecting the needs and creating assumptions for the equal distribution of family and business obligations. Importance should be given to systematic education, professional development, and exchange of experiences and good practices on the national and international level, standardization of procedures, and further development of intersectoral cooperation and continuous finding of new solutions, tools and mechanisms.

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## Annex

### *List of abbreviations*

BDPA	<i>Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action</i>
CEDAW	<i>UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</i>
CBS	Croatian Bureau of Statistics
CIPH	Croatian Institute of Public Health
COC	Croatian Olympic Committee
CoE	Council of Europe
CoEU	Council of the European Union
CSODDS	Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society
CSODY	Central State Office for Demography and Youth
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
EC	European Commission
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
FEAD	Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived
GBV	Gender-based violence
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
MCM	Ministry of Culture and Media
MFEA	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
MJPA	Ministry of Justice and Public Administration
MLPSFSP	Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy
MMATI	Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure
MoD	Ministry of Defence
Moi	Ministry of the Interior
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSE	Ministry of Science and Education
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NPHI	Network of Public Health Institutes
OCNGO	Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of Croatia
OGE	Office for Gender Equality of the Government of Croatia
OHRRNM	Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of Croatia
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## List of laws

- Law on the Ombudsperson (Official Gazette, 125/11)*
- Anti-discrimination Act (Official Gazette, 85/08, 112/12)*
- Gender Equality Act (Official Gazette, 82/08, 69/17)*
- Act on Validation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Official Gazette, 3/2018)*
- Act on School Textbooks and Other Educational Materials (Official Gazette, 116/2018)*
- Act on Amendments of the Domestic Violence Protection Act (Official Gazette, 126/19)*
- Law on Financing Political Activities, Election Campaigns and Referendums (Official Gazette, 98/19)*
- Law on the Election of Representatives to the Croatian Parliament (Official Gazette, 98/19)*
- Free Legal Aid Act (Official Gazette, 143/13, 98/19)*
- Ordinance on Textbook Standards and the Members of Expert Committees for the Assessment of Textbooks and Other Educational Materials (Official Gazette, 9/2019)*
- Act on Amendments to the Police Act (Official Gazette, 66/2019)*
- Electronic Media Act (Official Gazette, 111/2021)*
- Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence Suffered during the Armed Aggression against the Republic of Croatia in the Homeland War (Official Gazette, 64/15, 98/19)*
- Act on Amendments of the Criminal Code (Official Gazette, 126/19)*
- Act on Amendments of the Criminal Code (Official Gazette, 84/21)*
- Maternity and Parental Benefits Act (Official Gazette, 152/22)*
- Act on Amendments to the Labour Act (Official Gazette, 151/2022)*
- Act on Amendments to the Maternity and Parental Benefits Act (Official Gazette, 85/2022)*
- Law on Amendments to the Water Act (Official Gazette, 47/23)*
- Water Act (Official Gazette, 66/19, 84/21, 47/23)*
- Labour Act (Official Gazette, 93/14, 127/17, 98/19, 151/22, 46/23, 64/23)*
- Personal Assistance Act (Official Gazette, 71/23)*
- Inclusive Allowance Act (Official Gazette, 156/23)*
- Family Law (Official Gazette, 103/15, 98/19, 47/20, 49/23, 156/23)*
- Act on Amendments to the Child Support Act (Official Gazette, 156/2023)*
- Act on Personal Assistance (Official Gazette, 71/23)*
- Primary and Secondary School Education Act (Official Gazette, 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14, 07/17, 68/18, 98/19, 64/20, 151/22, 155/23, 156/23)*

*Rules of Procedure of the Croatian Parliament (Official Gazette, 81/2013, 113/2016, 69/2017, 29/2018, 53/2020, 119/2020, 123/2020, 86/2023)*

*Social Welfare Act (Official Gazette, 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23)*

*Police Act (Official Gazette, 34/11, 130/12, 89/14, 151/14, 33/15, 121/16, 66/19, 155/23)*

*Criminal Code (Official Gazette, 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 114/23, 36/24)*

*Criminal Procedure Act (Official Gazette, 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 126/19, 130/20, 80/22, 36/24)*

*Act on Amendments of the Courts Act (Official Gazette, 36/24)*

*Act on Amendments of the Criminal Code (Official Gazette, 36/24)*

*Protection against Domestic Violence Act (Official Gazette, 70/17, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 36/24)*

## List of strategies, programmes, national plans, and protocols

### Strategies

#### *National Development Strategy until 2030*

- [https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/ZPPI/Dokumenti%20Vlada/2024/Program\\_16\\_Vlade\\_RH.pdf](https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/ZPPI/Dokumenti%20Vlada/2024/Program_16_Vlade_RH.pdf)

#### *Digital Croatia Strategy for the period until 2032*

- [https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/SDURDD-dokumenti/Strategija\\_Digitalne\\_Hrvatske\\_final\\_v1\\_EN.pdf](https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/SDURDD-dokumenti/Strategija_Digitalne_Hrvatske_final_v1_EN.pdf)

#### *National Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence 2017-2022*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/MDOMSP%20dokumenti/Nacionalna%20strategija%20zastite%20od%20nasilja%20u%20obitelji%20za%20razdoblje%20do%202017.%20do%202022.%20godine.pdf>

#### *Path to the Digital Decade 2030*

- <https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//National%20Roadmap%20for%20Digital%20Decade%20Policy%20Programme%202030.pdf>
- <https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Program%20politike%20Putu%20u%20digitalno%20desetlje%20C4%87e2030.pdf>

#### *Strategy for the Demographic Revitalization of the Republic of Croatia 2033 (Official Gazette, 36/2024)*

- [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024\\_03\\_36\\_580.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024_03_36_580.html)

#### *Strategic framework for the development of mental health until 2030*

- <https://zdravlje.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/2022%20Objave/STRATE%C5%A0KI%20OKVIR%20RAZVOJA%20MENTALNOG%20ZDRAVLJA%20DO%202030..pdf>

### Programmes

#### *Government Programme for the period from 2024 to 2028*

- [https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/ZPPI/Dokumenti%20Vlada/2024/Program\\_16\\_Vlade\\_RH.pdf](https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/ZPPI/Dokumenti%20Vlada/2024/Program_16_Vlade_RH.pdf)

#### *Implementation Programme of the Ministry of Culture and Media for the Period from 2021 to 2024*

- [https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Provedbeni%20plan%202021%20-%202024/Provedbeni%20program%20Ministarstva%20kulture%20i%20medija%202021-2024%20\(2021-01-29\).pdf](https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Provedbeni%20plan%202021%20-%202024/Provedbeni%20program%20Ministarstva%20kulture%20i%20medija%202021-2024%20(2021-01-29).pdf)

#### *National Breast Cancer Early Detection Programme*

- [https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/HR-smjernice\\_Rak-dojke.pdf](https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/HR-smjernice_Rak-dojke.pdf)
- <https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Nacionalni-program-ranog-otkrivanja-raka-dojke.pdf>

## National action plans

*National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and related resolutions for the period from 2019 to 2023*

- <https://mvep.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/2022/datoteke/2201311558-nap-ii-eng.doc>
- <https://mvep.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/2022/datoteke/2201311558-nap-ii.pdf>

*National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/slike/2023/3.7.%20KONA%C4%8CNO%20Tekst%20Nacionalni%20akcijski%20plan%20NAP%20CG.pdf>

*National Plan for Roma Inclusion, for 2021-2027*

- <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/NPUR%202021-2027/Nacional%20Plan%20for%20Roma%20Inclusion%202021-2027.pdf>

*Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion, for 2021-2022*

- <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/NPUR%202021-2027/Akcijski%20plan%20za%20provedbu%20NPUR-a%20za%202021.%20i%202022..pdf>

*Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion, for 2023-2025*

- <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//NPUR%202021-2027//AP%20NPUR%202023-2025.pdf>

*National Plan for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period from 2021 to 2027*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Glavno%20tajni%C5%A1tvo/Godi%C5%A1nji%20planovi%20i%20strate%C5%A1ka%20izvje%C5%A1%C4%87a/Nacionalni%20plan%20borbe%20protiv%20siroma%C5%A1tva%20i%20socijalne%20isklju%C4%8Denosti%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202021%20do%202027.pdf>

*Action Plan for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion for the Period from 2021 to 2024*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Glavno%20tajni%C5%A1tvo/Godi%C5%A1nji%20planovi%20i%20strate%C5%A1ka%20izvje%C5%A1%C4%87a/Akcijski%20plan%20borbe%20protiv%20siroma%C5%A1tva%20i%20socijalne%20isklju%C4%8Denosti%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202021%20do%202024.pdf>

*National Plan for Development of Culture and Media from 2023 to 2027*

- [https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20razvoja%20kulture%20i%20medija/Nacionalni%20plan\\_objava.pdf](https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20razvoja%20kulture%20i%20medija/Nacionalni%20plan_objava.pdf)

*Action Plan for Development of Culture and Media for the period from 2023 to 2024*

- [https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20razvoja%20kulture%20i%20medija/Akcijski%20plan\\_objava.pdf](https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20razvoja%20kulture%20i%20medija/Akcijski%20plan_objava.pdf)



*National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination until 2027*

- <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20ZPLJP%20razdoblje%20do%202027.pdf>

*Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2023*

- <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/National%20Plan%20for%20the%20Protection%20and%20Promotion%20of%20Human%20Rights%20and%20Combatting%20Discrimination%20for%20the%20period%20to%202027.pdf>

*Action Plan for Combatting Discrimination for 2023*

- <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Akcijski%20plan%20suzbijanja%20diskriminacije%202023.pdf>

*National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2027*

- <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/NPRS%202027%20APRS%202024//Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20ravnopravnost%20spolova,%20za%20razdoblje%20do%202027..pdf>

*Action Plan for Implementation of the National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period until 2024*

- <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/NPRS%202027%20APRS%202024//Akcijski%20plan%20za%20ravnopravnost%20spolova%20za%20razdoblje%20do%202024..pdf>

*Action Plan in the field of addiction for the period up to 2026*

- <https://zdravlje.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/2024%20Objave/Akcijski%20plan%20djelovanja%20na%20podru%C4%8Dju%20ovisnosti%20za%20razdoblje%20do%202026.%20godine.pdf>

*National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026*

- <https://planoporavka.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Plan%20oporavka%20i%20otpornosti%20srpanj%202021..pdf?vel=13435491>

*2021-2027 National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Glavno%20tajni%C5%A1tvo/Godi%C5%A1nji%20planovi%20i%20strate%C5%A1ka%20izvje%C5%A1C4%87a/Nacionalni%20plan%20izjedna%C4%8Davanja%20mogu%C4%87nosti%20za%20osobe%20s%20invaliditetom%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202021%20do%202027.%20godine.pdf>

*2021-2027 Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Glavno%20tajni%C5%A1tvo/Godi%C5%A1nji%20planovi%20i%20strate%C5%A1ka%20izvje%C5%A1C4%87a/Akcijski%20plan%20izjedna%C4%8Davanja%20mogu%C4%87nosti%20za%20osobe%20s%20invaliditetom%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202021.%20do%202024.%20godine.pdf>

*National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period to 2027*

- [https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Dokumenti/NACIONALNI%20PLAN%20ZA%20SUZBIJANJE%20SEKSUALNOG%20NASILJA%20I%20SEKSUALNOG%20UZNEMIRAVANJA%20do%202027.g\\_final.pdf](https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Dokumenti/NACIONALNI%20PLAN%20ZA%20SUZBIJANJE%20SEKSUALNOG%20NASILJA%20I%20SEKSUALNOG%20UZNEMIRAVANJA%20do%202027.g_final.pdf)

### *National Plan for Labour Safety at Work and Employment for the period from 2021 to 2027*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Glavno%20tajni%C5%A1tvo/Godi%C5%A1nji%20planovi%20i%20strate%C5%A1ka%20izvje%C5%A1%C4%87a/26.11.Prijedlog%20Nacionalnog%20plana.pdf>

### Protocols

#### *Protocol on Actions in the Case of Sexual Violence*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Protokol%20o%20postupanju%20u%20slu%C4%8Daju%20seksualnog%20nasilja.pdf>

#### *Protocol on Actions in the Case of Violence Among Children and Youth*

- <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Protokol%20o%20postupanju%20u%20slu%C4%8Daju%20nasilja%20me%C4%91u%20djecom%20i%20mladi%20ma.pdf>

### Reports

#### *Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

- <https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/2016/Sjednice/2023/Lipanj/229%20-%20sjednica%20VRH/2%20CRO%20VNR%202023%20HR.pdf>

#### *Report of the Chief State Attorney of the Republic of Croatia on the work of state attorneys' offices in 2022*

- <https://dorh.hr/sites/default/files/dokumenti/2023-04/IZVJE%C5%A0%C4%86E%20DORH-a%20za%202022..docx>.

#### *Performance Audit of the preparedness of the Republic of Croatia to implement the Sustainable Development Goals from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

- [https://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/focus\\_areas/SDG\\_atlas\\_reports/Croatia/Croatia\\_2021\\_E\\_prep\\_Sum.pdf](https://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/focus_areas/SDG_atlas_reports/Croatia/Croatia_2021_E_prep_Sum.pdf)

### Other documents

#### *Declaration on Commitment on women in digital*

- [https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/SDURDD-dokumenti/Deklaracija%20o%20posvecenosti%20pitanju%20zena%20u%20digitalnom%20svijetu\\_prijevod.pdf](https://rdd.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/SDURDD-dokumenti/Deklaracija%20o%20posvecenosti%20pitanju%20zena%20u%20digitalnom%20svijetu_prijevod.pdf)

#### *Croatian guidelines for psychosocial treatment of drug addiction in the health, social and prison system*

- <https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Smjernice-za-psihosocijalni-tretman-ovisnosti-o-drogama-u-zdravstvenom-socijalnom-i-zatvorskom-sustavu-2014..pdf>

*Agreement between the Government of Croatia and Croatian Radiotelevision for the period from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2022*

- <https://api.hrt.hr/media/ce/8a/prijedlog-ugovora-s-vladom-rh-za-razdoblje-2023-2027-verzija-za-javnu-raspravu-20220429105045.pdf>

*Decree on the possibility of civil servants working at a separate place of work, remote work and part-time work (Official Gazette, 141/2023)*

- [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023\\_11\\_141\\_1921.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_11_141_1921.html)