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Replies of Croatia to the list of issues in relation to its second periodic report*, **

[Date received: 29 May 2024]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



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Abbreviations

CES	Croatian Employment Service
CHIF	Croatian Health Insurance Fund
CIoPH	Croatian Institute of Public Health
CSOFRH	Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing
DSM-IV	Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, fourth edition
EU	European Union
GMF	Guaranteed Minimum Fee
GRC	Government of the Republic of Croatia
HCV	hepatitis C virus (liver disease)
HIV	human immune deficiency virus
ICD-10	Internationally recognised statistical classification of diseases and related problems
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
LSGU	local self-government units – municipalities and cities
MC	medical centre
MCV	Ministry of Croatian Veterans
MFEA	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
MoLPSFSP	Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy
MoESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
MoPPCSA	Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets
MoSE	Ministry of Science and Education
MRDEUF	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds
NRRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plan
OFHRRNM	Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities
RC	Republic of Croatia
SPR-ICESCR	Second periodic report on the application of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
UN	United Nations

Methodological note

The Second Report on the Application of the ICESCR was made for the period from the Initial Report in 2001 till the end of 2019. That could not be seen from the title of the document, which was published on the UN website. In the content of the Second Report and the associated annexes, the last year under consideration was 2019.

The answers to the so-called “list of issues” of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights refer to the period from the end of 2019 to the beginning of 2023 or to specific data requested by Committee. Some of the data that was available at the time of writing this document is from 2023.

Annex 1 – Abbreviations

Annex 2 – Abbreviations of Regulations

Annex 3 – Main Macroeconomic Indicators

Annex 4 – Census_2021

Annex 5 – 2022 Free Legal Aid Report

Annex 6 – National Reform Programme 2022

Annex 7 – Statistical Information on Poverty and Taxes

Annex 8 – Hate Crimes

Annex 9 – CES Statistic

Annex 10 – Roma Population

Annex 11 – Occupational Injuries

Annex 12 – Data of the State Inspectorate

Annex 13 – Points 19 and 20 of the lists of issues

Annex 14 – Trafficking in Human Beings

Annex 15 – Additional Data Related to Right on Adequate Housing

Hyperlinks are embedded to those references that correspond to documents available online. Key passages in document are **bold** for ease of reference.

I. General information

Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues (E/C.12/HRV/Q/2)

1. The Judicial Academy (hereinafter referred to as 'the Academy') regularly educates judicial officials, advisers in judicial bodies and judicial officials on the rights contained in the ICESR. As a stakeholder in various national strategies and plans, the Academy regularly conducts education on the topic of combating trafficking in human beings, combating domestic violence and protecting and promoting human rights and combating discrimination.
2. During 2022, the following trainings on anti-discrimination legislation were held through the lifelong professional development program:
 - "Promoting the right to diversity and the fight against intolerance and hatred" – three one-day trainings for judges and court advisors of family and criminal law, as well as deputy state attorneys and state attorney's advisors from regional centres (Zagreb, Varaždin, Osijek, Split and Rijeka) – 27 participants;
 - "Labour law protection against mobbing and harassment with reference to the application of the Law on Amendment of Law on Civil Procedure" – three one-day trainings for judges and court advisors of general and county courts and state attorneys of the municipal level from regional centres Zagreb, Varaždin, Osijek, Split and Rijeka – 38 participants;
 - "Communication skills, prejudices and stereotypes" – in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities, six one-day workshops were held for judicial officials and judiciary advisors from regional centres – 57 participants.
3. A description of the implementation of the Committee's recommendations on the Initial report is comprised in the Second Periodic Report (hereinafter referred to as the SPR-ICESCR) under II. – Responses to concluding comments, main areas of concern and recommendations from the Committee's 2001 considerations, points 5–35, pages 3–10 and was drawn up by an interdepartmental group of state administration bodies and institutions within its competence as stated in the SPR-ICESCR Introduction.

Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues

4. Data on free legal aid have been published on the UN website on the occasion of the defence of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination CERD/C/SR.2988,¹ Items 28–31 and CERD/C/HRV/9-14² D, Paragraph 13. – Free legal aid – point 29 and 30.
5. In order to strengthen the free legal aid system regulated by the Law on Free Legal Aid³ (hereinafter referred to as the AFLA), the total funds for the provision of free legal aid in 2023 are planned in the amount of EUR 1,183,508, an increase compared to the previous year of 118%. Funding in 2023 for primary legal aid projects increased by 100% compared to 2022.
6. In accordance with the conditions of the Public Tender for financing projects of authorized associations and legal clinics for the provision of primary legal aid for 2023 (hereinafter: Public tender for 2023), a maximum amount of € 31,200 per year is foreseen for primary legal aid to providers with the greatest experience in the free legal aid system, which

¹ (under Consideration of State Report - Summary records)
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2659&Lang=en.

² (under State party's report)
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2659&Lang=en.

³ Official Gazette, No. 143/13, 98/19.

is an increase of 147% compared to the maximum amount that primary legal aid providers could achieve in previous years. Also, it has been determined that the preference in financing will be achieved by applicants who in their projects envisage the immediate provision of primary legal assistance to vulnerable social groups (elderly people, unemployed, members of national minorities, Roma, returnees and displaced persons, persons with disabilities, victims of violence, victims of domestic violence, beneficiaries in the social welfare system, etc.) and who will provide primary legal assistance, except in the headquarters, and in its subsidiaries, through mobile teams, field visits to earthquake-affected areas, areas with a lower level of development (areas of special state concern, islands, rural and less urban areas). Three-year financing of projects for the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025 is also foreseen, which should allow primary legal aid providers to stabilise and strengthen their capacities to adequately ensure the provision and availability of their services to beneficiaries.

7. GRC determined⁴ a point value for determining the secondary legal aid fee for 2023 in the amount of € 1.25 gross excluding VAT, an increase of 34.5% compared to the previous period.⁵ The same regulation stipulates how many points are recognized for individual litigation actions.

8. The IT system of free legal aid does not keep data on the number of applicants classified by ethnicity. However, below is provided a tabular overview of the number of beneficiaries of secondary legal aid sorted by gender.

Year	Number of beneficiaries of secondary legal aid	Gender of the user	
		Men	Women
2020.	3.442	1.204	2.238
2021.	3.425	1.168	2.257
2022.	2.726	917	1.808

9. For additional information and general overview see: Annex 5 – 2022 Free Legal Aid Report.

Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues

10. In addition to the regular protection of human rights, the Office of the Ombudswoman has gradually expanded its expertise to certain segments and is also: the Central Body for Combating Discrimination (2012 – following the recommendation of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance – ECRI); National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2015); and The Competent Authority for External Reporting of Irregularities (2022). Due to greater territorial accessibility, the Office of the Ombudsman also established three regional offices in Rijeka, Split and Osijek. In line with the growth of competences and functions, financing from the state budget increased and new professional staff were hired.

11. According to official data, as of December 31, 2022, 58 civil servants and one employee were employed in the Office. 2022 budget compared to the previous year was higher by 10.87% – HRK 16,215,780 (€ 2,152,200 – executed: 94.84%). The increase was mainly related to salary increases and employment due to the application of the Law on the Protection of Whistle-blowers.⁶

⁴ Regulation on the Value of the Amount for Determining the Fee for Providing Secondary Legal Aid for 2023, Official Gazette, No. 131/23.

⁵ The value of the point for the previous period was HRK 7.00 (€ 0.93).

⁶ Official Gazette, No. 46/22.

Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues

12. MFEA monitors the development of this legal field in question at the international level, and, through regular report of EU Delegation in Geneva includes activities *Open-ended Intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights – OEIGWG*, established within the Framework of the Human Rights Council. Pursuant to the Resolution 26/9,⁷ the OEIGWG has a mandate to ‘elaborate’ an international legally binding instrument regulating the activities of transnational corporations and other enterprises in respecting the rights of the ICESCR.

13. At the end of October 2023, the ninth round of OEIGWG negotiations was held in Geneva. In the formation of the EU position for this negotiation, Croatia previously participated in the discussion at COHOM in Brussels (Working Party on Human Rights of the Council of the EU). In its statements, the EU, in accordance with its actions: advocated respect for human rights in the working environment; expressed expectations that a binding legal instrument should strengthen global protection in the context of ICESCR infringements; and expressed satisfaction with the inclusion of a reference to right on a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

14. Also, the EU considers it important to adopt this instrument based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – which is the first international document that established standards for the prevention and elimination of risks of human rights violations in the context of business activity.

Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues

15. The RC has adopted strategic and planning documents that direct its development towards low-carbon development to mitigate climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions – Strategy of low-carbon development of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 with a view to 2050 (NUS)⁸ and the National Energy and Climate Plan of the Republic of Croatia for the period from 2021 to 2030 (NECP) (2019).

16. The RC contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions under the EU’s common climate goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 and achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

17. The newly adopted EU climate-energy legislation under the “Fit for 55” package will be incorporated into national development, strategic and legislative documents that will be regularly updated with new sectoral targets to ensure that the EU emissions reduction target is reached by at least 55%. The scenario for net zero emissions achievement will also be updated under the new defined commitments by 2030, in line with the new emission reduction effort allocation to Member States and new sectoral targets.

18. Member States implement the 55% emission reduction commitment at EU level jointly, through the Greenhouse Gas ETS Trading Scheme (EU ETS) and by obligations to maintain emissions from the non-trading sector (so-called non-ETS) up to the level of the annual quota allocated. For the EU ETS system, a common quota has been established at EU level with a target of reducing emissions of this sector by 62% by 2030, while for non-trading sectors each member state special emission reduction target has been set within span from 10 – 50% emission, compared to all emission from 2005 levels.

19. In accordance with the Regulation on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions in member states from 2021 to 2030,⁹ the RC during this period has an obligation

⁷ <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2FRES%2F26%2F9&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>.

⁸ Official Gazette, No. 63/21.

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2018/842 of the European Parliament and of the Council on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions by Member states from 2021 to 2030 contributing to climate action to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement and amending Regulation (EU) No. 525/2013, Official Journal of the European Union, L156, 19.06.2018., p. 26–42 and Regulation (EU) 2023/857 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 April 2023 amending Regulation

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from non-ETS sectors by 16,7 % compared to 2005. In Republic of Croatia 2021. Greenhouse gas emissions in the sectors included in the EU ETS decreased by 35% compared to 2005 levels, and in non-ETS sectors, which include less intensive industry, building, transport, agriculture, and waste, by 3.5%.

20. As a member of the EU, a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, Republic of Croatia regularly submits a report on greenhouse gas emissions and removals, the so-called “a greenhouse gas emission inventory” (NIR) that provides a comprehensive calculation of anthropogenic emissions and removal of greenhouse gas sinks by sources and economic sectors. National reports, policy and action reports and projection reports shall be produced periodically.

21. When calculating greenhouse gas emissions per capita in Croatia, they are less than the average per capita of 27 EU countries (source: Our World in Data); In 2022, they stood at 4.3 tCO₂ eq, which is lower than the EU-27 average of 6.2 tCO₂ eq.

22. The National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation in the Republic of Croatia for the Period up to 2040 with a view to 2070¹⁰ is the first strategic document that contains an assessment of climate change for the Republic of Croatia by the end of 2040 and 2070 – in two scenarios and in two spatial resolutions as well as an analysis of the impact and vulnerability on climate change on natural and social systems. It also contains a list of climate change adaptation measures for recognized vulnerable sectors such as energy, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, water management, biodiversity, health.

23. Measures in the field of spatial planning and measures for disaster risk reduction, as well as horizontal measures to strengthen investment in research and development for adaptation to climate change and information and education measures on climate change were also highlighted. Through the implementation of the measures, the goal is for the Republic of Croatia to be resilient to climate change and to have as little damage as possible from extreme weather events and climate change. In accordance with legal obligations¹¹, all national and regional self-government development documents should be aligned with the aforementioned National Strategy Adaptation, which ensures horizontal and vertical harmonization and coordinated action on the common goal of adapting to climate change.

24. In accordance with the obligations of the RC, it regularly reports to international and EU bodies on the implementation of policies and measures on adaptation to climate change, which are publicly available on the relevant UNFCCC¹² and EU¹³ portals in English.

25. The Directorate for Climate Action of MoESD, which is responsible for coordinating climate change adaptation policy, cooperates with the Directorate of Civil Protection at the MoI, which oversees implementing disaster risk reduction policy and coordinating civil protection.¹⁴

26. National Disaster Risk Management Strategy till 2030 is an example of a proactive approach, with the aim of achieving comprehensive, sustainable, and long-term justified disaster risk management, which implies all stages of disaster risk management, from prevention, preparedness to disaster response. The strategy consolidates and defines priority areas for disaster risk management, defines key intervention areas and sources of funding, and monitors overall investments in risk management as well as their impact.

27. As part of the Strategy, the first Disaster Risk Management Action Plan was developed, as a guideline for the implementation of the Strategy until 2024. A third national

(EU) 2018/842 on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions by Member States from 2021 to 2023 contributing to climate action to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement, and Regulation (EU) 2018/1999, Official Journal of EU, L111, p.1–13. 26.04.2023.

¹⁰ Official Gazette, No. 46/20.

¹¹ Law on Climate Change and Protection of the Ozone Layer – Official Gazette No. 127/19.

¹² <https://unfccc.int/reports>.

¹³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/climate-change/#:~:text=Under%20the%20European%20climate%20law,EU%20climate%20neutral%20by%202050>.

¹⁴ <https://civilna-zastita.gov.hr/en>.

disaster risk assessment is being developed with a new methodology, with more quality data for more precise results.

28. There is also present continuous work on raising awareness of citizens, especially the youngest, and educating about the need for disaster risk reduction and their role in this process, as well as strengthening disaster risk management, which is achieved through multisectoral cooperation and cooperation with the scientific community.

29. At the state level, the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia, appointed by the GRC, operates, and consists of management persons from the central bodies of the state administration, operational forces of the civil protection system and other legal entities of particular importance for the civil protection system of the RC. A total of 24 people was appointed, including the Chief of Staff.

30. Early warning systems and alerting and notification in case of an upcoming or imminent emergency have also been developed. The realization of the project “Early Warning and Crisis Management System” ensures fast and reliable communication for crisis management using modern technologies, with the aim of faster and more reliable distribution of credible information as an essential component of the complete system for early warning to the public.¹⁵

31. It is constantly invested in equipping and training units of the Directorate of Civil Protection of MoI with the aim of increasing the readiness and capabilities of the national disaster protection system for crisis response and further development of the national disaster management system. This includes the procurement of two multipurpose modular helicopters for the needs of the civil protection system, while the project of procurement of two firefighting aircraft (with delivery by the end of 2028) is in preparation.

Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues

32. GRC adopted the National Reform Programme 2022, which contains and has achieved the goals of the NPOO, as well as further plans to achieve economic, social, and cultural rights.

33. For more information, see: Annex 6 – National Reform Programme 2022.

34. See also the answer under point 19 in this document.

II. General provisions of ICESCR

Reply to paragraph 8 (a) – (e) of the list of issues

35. See Annex 7 – Statistical Data on Poverty and Taxes.

Reply to paragraph 8 (f) of the list of issues

36. Realizing that the corona virus pandemic will lead to significant negative socio-economic consequences, GRC used the created fiscal space for rapid and strong fiscal support during 2020 to maintain employment and overall economic activity. The total financial impact of the corona crisis on the general government budget was €3.8 billion between 2020 and 2023. Of these, around € 660 million was related to tax and contribution write-off measures, while almost € 3.2 billion was related to direct budget expenditure stipulated by the corona virus pandemic, in particular job preservation measures and additional costs in the health care system.

37. In this context, two packages of measures were adopted, intended primarily to help the economy and citizens, with several measures aimed at mitigating the negative consequences in individual sectors. Thus, amendments to tax regulations allowed that

¹⁵ <https://civilna-zastita.gov.hr/en>.

entrepreneurs, who had, or estimated to have, a decrease in income of more than 20%, were allowed interest-free deferral and instalments repayment of direct taxes and contributions. In addition, the April package of economic measures strengthened this measure and entrepreneurs with an annual income of less than € 1 million (of which 93%), with a decrease in income of more than 50%, were completely exempt from paying direct taxes and contributions due during April, May, and June 2020. In the same period, companies that generated revenues of more than €1 million, with revenues falling by more than 50%, were partially exempt from paying these taxes and contributions depending on the decline in revenue. During 2020, a total of direct taxes and contributions were written off for about 130 thousand taxpayers. Furthermore, the possibility of paying VAT on paid and collected invoices was introduced, all with the aim of ensuring additional liquidity for economic entities.

38. In order to preserve jobs in the most vulnerable sectors affected by the corona virus, a support measure was adopted in March 2020, which co-financed the cost of salary in the amount of € 431 per employee, and in April and May this amount have increased to € 531, with the cost of contributions for pension and health insurance borne by the state budget. A support measure was also introduced to reduce working hours. In addition, from December 2020 to August 2021, the measure of compensation of fixed costs was in force, namely to entrepreneurs whose work was prevented by the decisions of the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia to prevent the spread of coronavirus infection. These were the costs of rent, overhead and utility costs and the costs of bookkeeping services that entrepreneurs had regardless of the volume of business activity. Job preservation aid for this group of entrepreneurs amounted to € 531 or between € 265 and 464, depending on the decline in income/receipts. As of August 2021, employers were entitled to be supported for the preservation or retention of jobs, whose economic activity was reduced due to special circumstances, and whereby employers with 70 percent or more of workers had EU digital COVID-certificates. Those entrepreneurs were entitled to a full amount of support. This measure was applied in the sector of administrative and support service activities, i.e. in rental and leasing activities, event industry, travel agencies and nightclubs, translators, and interpreters, in occasional land transport of passengers and in some creative, artistic and entertainment activities.

39. To mitigate the consequences caused by the COVID-19 epidemic in 2021, 720,657 pension beneficiaries were paid a one-time receipt in the amount of HRK 400¹⁶, HRK 600, HRK 900 or HRK 1200, depending on the amount of pension income, i.e. a total of HRK 469,465,800 and an average of HRK 651 (€ 86) per beneficiary.

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues

40. The Anti-Discrimination Act¹⁷ (hereinafter referred to as the ADA) prohibits discrimination also on the basis of social status, which may also apply to “migrant status”.

41. The Law on International and Temporary Protection¹⁸ (hereinafter referred to as the LITP) and the Aliens Act¹⁹ (hereinafter referred to as the AA) guarantee duties for migrants in accordance with international and European instruments. New amendments to the AA are being prepared, which will improve the status of third-country nationals and prevent abuses.²⁰ Equality of all before the law and prohibition of discrimination is also contained in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia,²¹ Art. 14th.

42. The National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period up to 2027 (hereinafter: the National Plan) was adopted, as well as the Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2023 and the Action Plan against Discrimination for 2023. Two-year action plans for 2024–2025 are done, and

¹⁶ Fixed parity exchange rate is 7,5345 HRD for one € (euro).

¹⁷ Official Gazette, Nos. 85/08, 112/12 – hereinafter referred to as the ADA.

¹⁸ Official Gazette, Nos. 70/15, 127/127, 33/23 – hereinafter referred to as the LITP.

¹⁹ Official Gazette, Nos. 133/20, 114/22, 151/22 – hereinafter referred to as the AA.

²⁰ A public consultation on the proposed amendments was held from 28. February 2024.

²¹ Official Gazette, Nos. 56/90, 135/97, 08/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10, 05/14

sent in first quarter 2024 in reconciliation process. Additional data are at CERD/C/SR.2987²² point 46.–48.

43. The Action Plan against Discrimination for 2023 contains a specific objective: *“Improving mechanisms for combating hate crimes and raising awareness of the importance of combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, and encouraging a culture of remembrance for victims of genocide through effective coordination of interdepartmental cooperation, monitoring and analysis of the occurrence of hate crimes through the holding of meetings of the Working Group on Hate Crime and the publication of semi-annual data on cases of hate crimes committed because of race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, language, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other characteristics of another person”* – which may also apply to migrant status.

44. Through the collected contributions to the Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2023, it is clear that during 2023 a number of activities related to strengthening the capacities of public law bodies, training of civil and public servants and officials in local and regional self-government trough: (a) inclusion of content related to public law bodies, training of civil and public servants in local and regional self-government, (b) inclusion of content related to public law bodies combating discrimination in two e-learning programs – preparations for taking the state exam for newly admitted civil servants, (c) inclusion of content related to the ADA and the GEA in the state exam for civil servants and (d) the implementation of online seminars for social workers on non-discrimination and protection of the rights of particularly vulnerable groups. A total of 1,609 civil and public servants attended training on the topic of discrimination. The OFHRRNM organized an online professional course on non-discrimination and protection of the rights of particularly vulnerable groups in the social welfare system, which was conducted over a period of 12 months, and a total of 321 civil and public servants attended the course. The Ministry of Science and Education has implemented the activity *Building a system of professional support in schools for children who are victims of discrimination and peer violence*, which includes co-financing preventive programs in primary and secondary schools, co-financing the work of teams for psychological crisis interventions, implementation of the Program of resocialization of children and young drug addicts, awarding annual awards and recognitions for promoting tolerance and school without violence. For the purpose of implementing the measure, a Public Call for financing preventive projects of primary and secondary schools and student dormitories in the school year 2022/2023 has been announced, as well as a Public Call for proposals for the “Luka Ritz” award for the promotion of tolerance and violence-free schools for the school year 2022/2023. With the aim of improving mechanisms monitoring equality and human rights at the national level and analysing structures/forms of discrimination and/or inequality in society, the OFHRRNM has initiated the activity of establishing a data collection system within which individual public-legal bodies have appointed new coordinators for equality data. Also, two coordinators’ meetings were held where EU tools for mapping equality data and instructions for filling in tools were presented. The consolidated annexes of the competent authorities (completed tools) are addressed to the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights – Subgroup on Equality Data as part of the working materials for drafting materials/guides for collecting data on equality.

45. In order to increase the awareness of the business community about the prohibition of discrimination against groups protected by the ADA and the GEA, the implementation of virtual education on non-discrimination was organized during 2021 with an emphasis on anti-discrimination legislation, the occurrence of discrimination in employment and at work and examples of good practice in promoting equality. The aim was to inform and raise awareness of participants about their responsibility to create a work environment free from discrimination and the duty to protect the dignity of workers. The trainings were primarily intended for union employees providing legal assistance, human resources experts and company executives and workers’ representatives (commissioners for the protection of workers’ dignity, trade union representatives, members of workers’ councils).

²² (under Consideration of State Report – Summary records).
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2659&Lang=en.

46. An inclusive approach and partnership dialogue was also ensured during the process of drafting action plans for the period 2024–2025. Member of Working Group are relevant stakeholders from state administration bodies, civil society, independent institutions for the protection of human rights and academia.

47. Implementation of the National Plan by 2027 will focus on raising awareness of hate speech in the public space and on curbing discourse that encourages racial and ethnic discrimination and wider disinformation. The basis for action is art. 14 of the Law on Electronic Media, which: *‘prohibits incitement, favouring the incitement and spread of hatred or discrimination in audio and audio-visual media services on the basis of race or ethnicity or colour, sex, language, religion, political or other belief, national or social origin, financial status, trade union membership, education, social status, marital or family status, age, state of health, disability, genetic heritage, gender identity, expression or sexual orientation, and antisemitism and xenophobia, ideas of fascist, nationalist, communist and other totalitarian regimes’*. Measures aimed at raising awareness of the prohibition of discrimination among civil and public servants and the general public and increasing the effectiveness of sanctioning discrimination will be implemented. In order to ensure equal access to certain areas of life and to goods and services for all, and in particular those groups of disadvantaged citizens, measures aimed at education, work and employment, health and housing have been designed, as well as a specific objective aimed at strengthening the rights of national minorities.

48. Financial resources for the implementation of the National Plan, i.e. measures from accompanying action plans, will primarily be provided in the state budget of the Republic of Croatia in the total amount of € 49,763,272 (of which € 43,112,962 is allocated for the implementation of two action plans in 2023), and partly within the Framework of European Financial Instruments in the new EU financial perspective for the period from 2021 to 2027.

49. To adequately collect relevant statistical data, but also to delimit the obligations of individual institutions dealing with combating hate crimes, a new Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crime²³ (2021) has been drafted at the proposal of the OFHRRNM. The Protocol sets out in more detail: (a) the obligations of the competent authorities involved in the detection, proceeding, and monitoring of the results of hate crime proceedings; (b) the composition and competence of the Hate Crime Monitoring Task Force; (c) the manner and content of cooperation between competent authorities in the implementation of education on combating hate crimes.

50. See statistics and other relevant information on hate crimes in Annex 8 – Hate Crimes.

Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues

51. Data on the prevention, investigation and sanctioning of cases of discrimination against persons based on their affiliation to an ethnic or minority group and because of sexual orientation and gender identity can be found in – Annex 8 – Hate Crimes.

Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues

52. Results of the implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy: see CERD/C/SR.2988,²⁴ points 23, 34 and 35, CERD/C/SR.2987,²⁵ 56–58.

53. See also the answers under point 14. – Employment of the Roma national minority.

²³ Official Gazette, No. 43/21.

²⁴ (under State party's report)

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2659&Lang=en (under Consideration of State Report – Summary records).

²⁵ (under State party's report)

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2659&Lang=en.

54. Within the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion from 2013 to 2020, the CIOPH conducted a survey in 2019 and 2020 under the measure: 3.1.1. *“Improving health monitoring and social health determinants of members of the Roma national minority”*. By linking the data of the MoI with data in public health databases and registers of the CIOPH, it is possible to obtain indicators on the health of the Roma population, for the purpose of assessing the state of health and planning public health interventions for health promotion and disease prevention. CIOPH will introduce these activities under routine, to focus planned measures in the field of health on expertly based indicators and evidence.

Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues

55. See document CERD/C/SR.2988,²⁶ points 47, 48 and 53. CERD/C/SR.2987,²⁷ 43., 53.

56. Statistics of the Ministry of the Interior on the number of applicants for international protection can be found at the link: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234>.

57. In accordance with Art. 76th para. 5. LITP, OFHRRNM has approached coordinating the drafting of a proposal for a National Programme for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for the period 2023–2025.

58. Bearing in mind the legal basis for drafting the act, the established measures contribute to the improvement of procedures in the following areas: social welfare, health care, accommodation and housing, language and education, employment, interdepartmental and international cooperation, cooperation with local self-government units and persons granted international protection and persons of migrant origin, as well as sensitization of professional workers and the public about the rights and obligations of the integration system, and anti-discrimination legislation and practices.

59. In addition, OFHRRNM continuously carries out activities aimed at the integration of persons granted international protection, which is co-financed by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, which can be seen in more detail on the link with documents in Croatian and English.²⁸ The implementation of the project “SINERGY – ensuring a synergistic approach in the integration of third-country nationals” is underway, which aims to strengthen multilevel cooperation in the application of international and national standards of integration of third-country nationals in the Republic of Croatia, with an emphasis on persons granted international protection.

60. Amendments to the LITP provide applicants with faster access to the labour market by expiring three months from the submission of the application. This right is exercised without a residence and work permit or a work registration certificate.²⁹ Residence and work permits were issued to third-country nationals until 01.01.2021. in accordance with the previously valid AA (Official Gazette, No. 130/11, 74/13, 69/17, 46/18 and 53/20), based on the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the annual quota of permits for employment of foreigners and accompanying decision on permits outside the annual quota.

61. The reason for the adoption of the new AA is to change the model of employment of Third-country nationals, given that the number of residence and work permits was limited by the number of quotas, as well as specific activities and occupations. The current AA

²⁶ (under State party’s report)
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2659&Lang=en.

²⁷ (under State party’s report)
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2659&Lang=en.

²⁸ <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/projekti/fond-za-azil-i-integraciju-amfi/include-medjuresorna-suradnja-u-osazivanju-drzavljana-trecig-zemalja/938>.

²⁹ <https://mup.gov.hr/aliens-281621/international-protection/applicants-for-international-protection/281625>.

prescribes a new model of employment of foreigners. According to this model, employers are obliged to request the implementation of a labour market test for non-deficient occupations in order to determine whether there is a sought-after worker on the Croatian labour market. If there is no required worker on the Croatian labour market or it is a deficient occupation, the employer may apply for a residence and work permit for a particular Third-country national. This ensures flexibility in the employment of Third-country nationals in terms of their number, activities and occupations, as well as seasonal employment. In addition, employers are allowed to apply for residence and work permits through an online application.

62. A Third-country national may work and reside in the Republic of Croatia in accordance with the provisions of the current AA based on:

- Residence and work permits:
 - Residence and work permits based on the labour market test and the opinion of the CES;
 - Residence and work permits without a labour market test with the opinion of the CES (The Governing Council of the Croatian Employment Service makes a decision on deficient occupations, which will be published on the website of the CES);
 - Residence and work permits without labour market test and opinions of the CES (in the case of renewal of the stay and work permit for the same employer and the same Third-country national, seasonal employment in agriculture, forestry, hospitality and tourism up to 90 days during the calendar year, stay and work permits issued e.g. for key staff in companies, self-employment in a company/craft in which it has an ownership stake of at least 51%, the EU Blue Card, intra-corporate transferees, service providers, volunteers, trainees, vessel crews, etc.);
- Without a stay and work permit or a work registration certificate for Third-country nationals who have been granted a stay on the basis of which they can work in the Republic of Croatia, such as Third-country nationals who have been granted temporary residence for the purpose of family reunification or a life partnership with a Croatian citizen, a Third-country national on long-term residence, permanent residence, granted asylum or subsidiary protection in accordance with the regulation governing international protection, or have been granted asylum or subsidiary protection, or are applicants for international protection in accordance with the regulation governing international protection, and have been granted long-term residence or permanent residence;
- Certificate of work registration up to 90 days or certificate of work registration up to 30 days in the calendar year.

63. Working conditions and other issues related to UK nationals are specifically regulated.³⁰

64. On 28 February 2022, GRC adopted a Decision on the establishment of an Interdepartmental Working Group for the implementation of reception and care activities for the refugee population from Ukraine. As a member of the EU, Croatia follows the EU Directive on temporary protection,³¹ which, in the case of a large number of refugees from the crisis area ensures the right to work, housing, health care and education. Refugee children and students from Ukraine are included in the educational system. Every refugee child involved in the educational system is ensured: (a) participation in the preparatory teaching of the Croatian language without testing; (b) simultaneous inclusion in educational work in class

³⁰ <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/information-concerning-the-future-relations-between-the-united-kingdom-and-the-european-union/283273>.

³¹ COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for granting temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts by Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of the reception of those persons, Official Journal of the European Communities, L 212, 07 August 2001 p. 12–23.

departments in all subjects according to capabilities and abilities and (c) concluding grade and certificate at the end of the school year.

65. Based on the aforementioned Decision, the Minister of Science and Education adopted a Decision on financing textbooks for secondary schools and other educational materials for primary and secondary schools to students displaced from Ukraine in school year 2022/23. Textbooks are free for all elementary school students, including children from Ukraine. Two publications entitled *Schools of Togetherness* – a handbook for the integration of pupils from Ukraine into primary schools (Zagreb, September 2022), have been compiled as part of a project implemented in cooperation with the Forum for Freedom of Education and the UNICEF Office in Croatia with the aim of supporting schools attended by children from Ukraine.

66. In March 2022, Guidelines, instructions, recommendations and proposals for activities were developed for teachers and professional associates in primary and secondary schools for the inclusion of vulnerable groups of refugee students, which are aimed at raising awareness of the reception of such a vulnerable group and building socio-emotional skills in classrooms, in order to jointly create a peaceful environment in the classroom where children and young people learn to respect diversity. At the same time, such a document (Guidelines ...) was developed for the empowerment of children and young people for timely and effective response in crisis situations.

67. Every child of early and preschool age under temporary protection, for whom a parent or a caregiver, requests inclusion in the system of early and preschool education is allowed to be included in the institution that implements it.

68. The MoSE has adopted a Programme of Learning the Croatian language, history and culture for asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection in order to be integrated in Croatian society.

Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues

69. As far as the Directive 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council on strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay between men and women for equal work or work of equal value through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (of 10 May 2023)³² is concerned, the deadline for harmonisation of legislation is 07 June 2026. Furthermore, in Article 91. LA already prescribe pay equality for women and men.

70. During the period 2020–2022. The Ombudsperson for Gender Equality received a total of nine complaints (annually by three) citizens related to discrimination in wages between men and women. In one case, after the investigation, the Ombudswoman sent a warning and a recommendation to the employer, in one case only a recommendation, while in two cases no discrimination was established. In four cases, the parties dropped complaints, which is why the investigation was not conducted, while in one case it was a general inquiry of the party regarding this issue. During 2015, the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality acted on a complaint related to *unfavourable treatment of women regarding access to incentive severance pay* and after the investigation found that it was discrimination. The party subsequently initiated court proceedings, in which the Ombudswoman, in her capacity as interveners, successfully filed a revision against the rejecting second-instance verdict accepted by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia (PRS 01-03/15-18 case). The subject matter of the dispute was the applicant's request to determine that by paying severance pay in a smaller amount than paid in identical conditions to male employees, she was discriminated against based on sex.

71. Namely, referring to the conditions for retirement prescribed by the Pension Insurance Act³³ (hereinafter: PIA), the employer determined, by a decision on incentive measures, that workers who accept early retirement are entitled to an incentive severance pay for as long as

³² Official Journal EU, L 132, 17.5.2023. p. 21–44.

³³ Official Gazette Nos. 157/13, 151/14, 33/15, 93/15, 120/16, 18/18, 62/18, 115/18, 102/19, 84/21, 119/22 – hereinafter PIA.

they lack until the age of 65 for persons of the male sex, or until the age of 61 for persons of the female sex. The court of first instance took the position that the employer thereby discriminated against the plaintiff. However, the court of second instance reversed the judgment of first instance and rejected the claim, considering that the employer had correctly applied the provisions of the PIA concerning exceptions in relation to different ages for women and men as conditions for obtaining the right to a pension. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia accepted both revisions and remanded the case to the court of the second instance for re-adjudication, considering that the plaintiff made it likely that discrimination had occurred, and that the employer, for the purpose of proving that there was no discrimination, did not sufficiently explain the aspects of the disputed provision of the decision on incentive measures. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia expressed a legal opinion that this violated the provisions on the prohibition of discrimination and ordered the court of second instance to review the first instance decision, bearing in mind the commitment to the legal opinion expressed in the decision regarding the revision. In 2021, the second instance body ultimately rejected the defendant's appeal – the employer as unfounded and upheld the first instance judgment.

III. Specific provisions of the ICESCR

Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues

72. Active employment policy measures (hereinafter: AEP) between 2020 and 2022 focus on the integration of disadvantaged people in the labour market. Interventions shall target those groups of unemployed people who are disadvantaged on the labour market for a number of reasons, with a particular focus on young people, the elderly, the long-term unemployed, the low-skilled, inactive, and women. The AEP supports the transition from unemployment to work through: education, on-the-job experience, public works, support for the employment of certain groups or encouraging self-employment, in order that the unemployed person to increase their employment opportunities.

73. Refer to the data on the number of persons involved in AEP measures and the details of the unemployed population in – Annex 9 – CES Statistic, sheet 6.1.1.–6.1.8.

74. Average number of unemployed in the Republic of Croatia and the number of unemployed on 31.12. in the last 5 years, according to gender, in CES records, and their annual chain index showing an interannual change see Annex 9 – CES Statistic, sheet 6.1.8.

75. Statistical analysis of the total general unemployed population of Croatia by counties is shown in Annex 9 – CES Statistic, sheet 6.1.9.

Employment of the Roma national minority

76. In order to create the preconditions for increasing the employability of harder-to-employ groups of unemployed people, the CES pays particular attention to the Roma national minority, in particular those facing multiple restrictions on access to the labour market. All registered unemployed persons of the Roma national minority are included in the regular activities of the CES (individual counselling, job-search skills workshops, activation programme, occupational information and counselling activities, inclusion in AEP measures and various group outreach).

77. As the CES does not accompany unemployed persons according to nationality, the number of unemployed persons of the Roma national minority is assessed on the basis of their place of residence, knowledge of Roma language, and statements – if they wish to declare that they belong to a Roma national minority. Data are recorded in the application database of unemployed persons and the necessary reports on Roma unemployment and employment are produced. At the end of December 2022, 3,282 people of the Roma national minority were on the CES register (share of total unemployment 2.8 %). The highest number in the Osijek Regional Service (23.2 %) and the lowest in Šibenik, Gospić and Zadar offices. Their level of education is the main factor for their difficult employment.

78. See the employment and unemployed population of the Roma national minority, with updated data, in Annex 10 Roma Population.

79. Taking into account the specific needs of beneficiaries, the CES implements a range of active employment policy measures aimed at unemployed people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the labour market and employers in the context of job retention, and encourages employment, self-employment, education and inclusion in public works programs of specific target groups. The CES implements measures for the employment and training of Roma persons according to the national Roma inclusion strategy documents in force.

80. Between January and December 2022, the CES unemployment register employs a total of 630 people of the Roma national minority. Number of newly involved people of the Roma national minority in active employment policy measures per district services/offices in January–December 2022. (233 men, 239 women) is comprised in Annex 10 Roma Population, sheet 1.8.

81. Statistics from the CES on the inclusion of the Roma national minority included in active employment policy measures for the period 2020–2022, see Annex 9 – CES Statistic, sheet 6.1.6, disaggregated by age, gender and intervention.

82. While targeted government investment for Roma has slightly decreased in this area, better labour market conditions, which provide more jobs and opportunities, have also been reflected in the increase in Roma employment, but for some regular measures it was not possible to identify the exact number of Roma beneficiaries and related investments. Roma employment in public services remains extremely low and no complete information is available on measures funded by European Structural and Investment Fund³⁴ that include Roma. There are also Career Information and Advisory Centres located in 10 counties (see Paragraph 63 of SPR-ICESCR).

83. The CES carries out the following activities in relation to the Roma population:

- The adult literacy programme and the first training in the profession, funded by the MoSE. Support to this measure, are also provided by local authorities, some non-governmental organisations (Kali Sara) as well as the National Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Plan;
- Involving Roma pupils in professional information and career counselling and secondary programmes for final primary school students and advising them on labour market needs; (any follow-up activities are carried out by the CES);
- Research into the professional plans of pupils in the final grade of primary school;
- Providing professional counselling to young people who choose not to continue their education and defining a plan of activities with a view to continuing their education;
- Provide additional expert counselling activities for Roma pupils (in addition to CES'' regular activities), such as visits to potential employers, job fairs;
- Empowering and motivating Roma who are able to work on labour market integration;
- Cooperation between authorities, the civil sector and the local community with a view to fostering the social inclusion and employability of members of the Roma community;
- Provision of professional training programmes without employment;
- Co-financing the first recruitment of unemployed young Roma without work experience;
- Develop and implement active job-search workshops for Roma women;
- Defining and implementing educational training programmes for the long-term unemployed Roma;

³⁴ European Structural and Investment Fund – ESIF.

- Providing financial incentives to employers employing unemployed members of the Roma national minority;
- Organisation of public works programmes and inclusion of the long-term unemployed of Roma nationality;
- Implementing workshops on skills for active job search for members of the Roma national minority;
- Providing group information on self-employment and advice on starting a business;
- Co-financing of gross minimum wage for self-employed persons in the first two years of operation;
- Organising promotional activities for existing employment and self-employment measures for Roma (involvement of Roma associations in job fairs, visits to employers, promotion of employment measures, etc.).

84. The CES continuously collects the necessary data to determine the number (registration) of unemployed members of the Roma national minority and includes them in the regular activities of the CES, as well as activities dedicated exclusively to them (group information, individual counselling, and workshops). The CES also carries out activities aimed at creating a positive climate among employers, encouraging the recruitment of members of the Roma national minority more easily, while employment counsellors target employers and hold meetings with different stakeholders to improve employment and education opportunities for Roma.

85. Although the measures were changed in the reporting period and it is difficult to compare available data, see some implementation information in Annex 10 Roma Population.

86. Between 2019 and 2022, the project “*Roma inclusion – meeting the preconditions for the effective implementation of policies targeting national minorities (Phase I)*” was implemented by the OHRRNM, funded by the European Social Fund for a total value of € 1,440,449 (HRK 10,853,065). The project aimed to contribute to the inclusion of members of the Roma national minority in society and to advance the implementation of current national Roma documents by raising public and Roma awareness (a) on the importance of early childhood education; (b) the need to prevent drop-outs from secondary education, (c) the disadvantaged situation of women, children and young Roma; (d) strengthening the coordinating role of the OHRRNM, (e) strengthening the capacity of representatives of the bodies involved in the implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2013–2020 (hereafter: NRIS) and (f) improving the participation of Roma in the implementation of NRIS. 48 members of the Roma national minority participated in the project, for which 3 three-day training sessions and one youth seminar were organised to strengthen their competences to actively participate in the implementation of the applicable national Roma documents. The project also involved 30 experts, i.e. representatives of the OHRRNM and other bodies, who participated in the regional meetings of the Commission’s Task Force for Monitoring the Implementation of the NRIS, or in the sessions of the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the *National Roma Inclusion Plan 2021–2027*. (NRIP). The purpose of the sessions was to raise awareness of local problems and solve them, primarily in counties with large numbers of Roma, with the participation of representatives of local (regional) self-government units and other key stakeholders. In addition, two media campaigns aimed at raising public awareness, as well as raising awareness within members of the Roma national minority of the importance of early childhood education and care, urging the need to prevent drop-out from secondary education and pointing to the disadvantaged situation of women, children and young people belonging to the Roma national minority. The campaigns consisted of advertising in print media, displaying TV spots on national and one commercial television, jumbo posters, displaying promotional videos on the YouTube channel, displaying web advertisements and broadcasting radio spots at 22 local radio stations and two stations with national reach.

87. Eight calls for active participation were launched under *the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014–2020* with the aim of promoting equal opportunities, active participation and improving employability, and 26 contracts worth € 740,869 (HRK 5,582,075) involving 1,367 Roma and other national minorities were signed. Of these eight

calls, two were awarded directly with activities targeting 140 Roma and other national minorities, with a total value of € 5,605,008 (HRK 42,230,934).

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues

88. Occupational safety is implemented on the basis of the Occupational Safety Act and a series of by-laws, which can be found in Croatian at <https://uznr.mrms.hr/propisi/nacionalni-propisi/> and in Annex 2 Abbreviations of Regulation, sheet Regulation – Safety at work. The life, health and preservation of workers’ ability to work are of particular societal interest, and occupational protection as an organised systematic action is particularly important in preserving human resources and achieving the performance and strength of each organisation. Responsible relationships and investment in occupational safety, as well as the development of a culture of risk prevention in workplaces, contribute to the well-being of workers, employers, and society as a whole. A safe and healthy working environment can only be achieved through the consistent implementation of all prescribed occupational safety measures, rules and procedures, in order to also reduce economic and social losses and other costs. The MoLPSFSP adopted the National Plan for Work, Safety at Work and Employment 2021–2027³⁵ (hereinafter referred to as NPWSWE 2021–2027) with the primary objective of increasing employment rates, improving job quality and ensuring effective protection and safety of workers in workplaces. Based on the analysis of the situation priorities were set, proposed objectives and targeted activities in the areas of: (a) occupational safety and health protection with an aim to preventing occupational accidents, occupational diseases and work-related diseases affecting health; (b) risk reduction of hazard sources and harmfulness; (c) preservation of workers’ ability to work. One of the priorities of the National Plan is also “Safe and Healthy Workplace”. The prevention of accidents at work and occupational diseases is also continuously improved by eliminating and minimising new risks, such as nanomaterials, green and biotechnology and emerging risks, without neglecting existing risks.

89. Given the ageing of the workforce, the prevention of occupational diseases should also be improved through active and effective management of the occupational protection system in order to keep the world of work for as long as possible and prevent the loss of labour. It is important to focus on continuing practical support through workshops for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular through the development and availability of online practical risk assessment tools, in specific industries and sectors being developed with the support of EU-OSHA (OiRA tools). A total of 30 new OiRA tools have been developed free of charge and accessible to all employers and published on web site <https://uznr.mrms.hr/znr/oira-internetska-interaktivna-procjena-rizika/>. Standardising the development of risk assessments by area or activity is one of the priorities in the occupational safety system. Such tools are easy to use and help micro, small and medium-sized employers to make their own “good practices” risk assessment at no additional financial cost. It is such a tool, called RISKO, that the MoLPSFSP was created and published on its website and made available and free of charge to all employers.

90. The professional work of authorised persons to carry out occupational safety activities is important for the effective enforcement of regulations, preventive activities as well as for the improvement of the overall occupational safety system. Particular emphasis was therefore placed on the continuous and professional exercise of supervision and audit of the work of authorised persons by the Committee set up at the MoLPSFSP and the continuous development of the Occupational Safety Information System in which authorised persons are required to submit and enter the prescribed data and records. Over € 300,000 has so far been invested in the OSH information system and the system is accessible to users via the link – <https://isznr.gov.hr/>.

91. Furthermore, there is a growing trend for workers from musculoskeletal diseases and an expert study, based on the results of an online survey, on the assessment of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) was carried out and a pictorial manual showing the most common irregular movements of administrative workers during work showing the right

³⁵ Official Gazette, No. 131/21 – hereinafter referred to as NPWSWE 2021–2027.

movements (70 video-clips, including exercises to achieve and maintain proper body posture <https://uznr.mrms.hr/edukacijsko-preventivna-aktivnost-s-ciljem-sprjecavanja-misicno-kostanih-obiljenja/>). The same can be found on the MoLPSFSP website.

92. For the first time, a free-of-charge e-learning system in the field of occupational safety has been established in RC, consisting of educational materials (handbooks, audio-visual recordings, learning slides, online learning quizzes and assessment of future candidates applying for a professional exam for occupational protection professionals and an occupational safety coordinator).

93. The above-mentioned activities were carried out by the ESF-funded project “Development of e-learning, management and monitoring of occupational safety systems” worth HRK 5,046,422 (€ 668,985), which laid the foundations for quality management and monitoring of risks and measures in this area, is of particular importance for workers’ health but also for economic development.

94. The MoLPSFSP prepared a new project entitled “Strengthening enforcement of occupational safety measures” (value: approximately € 3 million). This project will improve the supervision of persons authorised to carry out these tasks and will allow employers to manage risks in the occupational safety system in an easy way, using free online tools. The professional exam for occupational safety professionals will also be digitalised. The e-learning system and educational materials will empower all stakeholders in this field, contributing to the achievement of the NPWSWE 2021–2027 and the NRRP.

95. The frequency, type, and cause of the occurrence of occupational diseases are good indicators of the presence of harmfulness and exertion in work processes, pointing to the adverse effects of work that causes damage to the health and impairment of workers’ ability to work. A Register of occupational diseases is kept, which includes all diseases recognised as occupational in Croatia’s health insurance system. Data is collected from the Report of Occupational Diseases submitted to the CHIF, which was the subject of an expert opinion. Accordingly, the record has been obtained.

96. See tables showing the number and rate of accidents at work with additional distribution by gender and economic activity in Annex 11 Occupational Injuries.

Reply to paragraph 16 and 17 of the list of issues

97. In 2022, amendments to the LA were adopted and the Law on Combating Undeclared Work³⁶ to sanction undeclared work.

98. In 2022, the labour inspectors of the State Inspectorate carried out 20.451 inspection work (in 2021. – 20.446; 2020. – 20.629), of which 12.812 were carried out in the field of labour relations (2021. – 12.917; 2020. – 12.982) and 7.639 occupational safety inspections (2021 – 7.529, 2020 – 7.647).

Labour inspection findings in the field of labour relations

99. See the number of labour inspection tasks and inspections in the field of labour and safety at work in Annex 12 Data of the State Inspectorate, sheet SI16.

100. Out of a total of 4.291 offences detected and prosecuted, the highest were from LA, PIA, AA, Compulsory Health Insurance Act³⁷ i Minimum Wage Act.³⁸

101. Most of the detected infringements comprised in LA concerned (*in descending order of frequency of detection*):

- Failure to issue to the worker a written confirmation of the employment contract concluded (where the contract has not been concluded in writing) or failure to submit

³⁶ Official Gazette, No. 151/2022.

³⁷ Official Gazette, Nos. 80/13, 137/13, 98/19, 33/23 – hereinafter CHIA.

³⁸ Official Gazette, Nos. 118/18, 120/21 – hereinafter MWA.

a copy of the application for compulsory pension and health insurance within the prescribed period (Article 229, para. (1), point (3));

- Failure to provide the worker with the calculation of wages due but not paid, remuneration or severance pay or severance payments, or calculations did not have the required content (Article 229, para. (1), point (34));
- Failure to keep records of workers and of working time or to keep them in an irregular manner (Art. 229, para. (1), point (1));
- Illegal overtime (Art. 229, para. (1) point (16));
- Unlawful conclusion of fixed-term employment contracts (Art, 228. para. 1., point 1);
- Making it impossible for workers to take their daily rest for the prescribed period (Article 228, para. (1), point (13));
- Failure to notify the worker of the reasoned termination of the employment contract in writing (Art. 229, para. (1), point (35));
- Making it impossible for workers to take weekly rest for the prescribed period (Art. 228., para. (1), point (14)); and
- Making it impossible for a worker to take annual leave in the prescribed manner and in accordance with the prescribed conditions (Article 228, para. (1), point (15)).

102. In 2022, labour inspectors *issued a total of 7.034 decisions (7.368 decisions were adopted in 2021, 6.384 decisions were adopted in 2020)*, most of which concerned:

- An interim measure to ensure the recovery of the obligation imposed by seizing and prohibiting the disposal of funds held by the employer in any account held with the bank, for an amount consisting of the multiplication of the prescribed minimum wage by the number of employees to whom the salary or remuneration for a given month has not been paid;
- Deciding on applications from legal representatives of persons under 15 years of age or persons aged 15 and over and under the age of 18 who attend compulsory primary education for authorisation to participate in activities (Art.7. Ordinance on the duties in which the minor may be employed and the activities in which he/she is authorised to participate);³⁹
- A temporary ban on the exercise of activities by employers (most often because of an established undeclared work in breach of the PIA or the work of foreigners in breach of the AA);
- Order the employer to propose to the worker with whom he has concluded an employment contract which does not contain all the elements required by the LA amend the contract containing the missing elements, that is to say, to supplement the employment contract certificate issued, which does not contain the ingredients required by the LA;
- An order for the employer to provide the worker with a pay list showing how the amount of the salary, salary compensation or severance payment paid has been determined, or a pay list with the prescribed content, or a calculation of the outstanding salary, remuneration or severance pay or severance pay, or to provide such a pay list with the prescribed content;
- Order the employer to provide to the body responsible for the management of the data of insured persons in accordance with the special pension scheme, by means, in content and within the time limit, with the information about the worker or changes that have occurred during the period of the employment relationship, to the electronic database;
- Order the employer to return to the worker, after termination of the employment relationship, all his documents and a copy of the deregistration from the statutory

³⁹ Official Gazette, No. 62/10.

pension and health insurance, or to issue him with a certificate attesting the nature of the work carried out and the duration of the employment relationship; and

- Order the employer to adopt and publish the work regulations, or to regulate, by means of a regulation, matters which must be governed by the rules of procedure, etc.

103. See data on undeclared work and irregular work of foreigners in Annex 12 Data of the State Inspectorate, sheet SI16 Undeclared work.

104. Due to the fact that they are employers (2022: –178 employers, 2021 –78 employers, 2020 –42 employers) in accordance with the provisions of Article 171, para (3) of the PIA, i.e. Article 240, para (3) of the AA decided to so-called “*Buy-back*” from the execution of the measure of temporary ban on the exercise of activities adopted on the basis of the above-mentioned provision, a total of HRK 6,060,000 (€ 804,300) was paid into the statutory account of the State Budget in 2022; during 2021 – HRK 3,530,000 (€ 468,512) and in 2020 – HRK 1,260,000 (€ 167,231).

105. See the number of criminal complaints against employers and responsible persons in Annex 12 Data of the State Inspectorate, sheet SI16 Undeclared work.

Findings of the State Inspectorate in relation to occupational safety

106. See the number of inspections and administrative, infringements and criminal measures imposed in Annex 12 Data of the State Inspectorate, sheet SI16.

107. As regards health and safety at work, laws and regulations were adopted during the reporting period, see – Annex 2 Abbreviations of Regulations, sheet Safety at work Regulations.

108. The problem is the Ordinance on jobs with special working conditions,⁴⁰ which is still in force in Croatia, as working conditions and technology have changed since 1984.

109. See the number of accidents and injuries at work broken down by different criteria in Annex 11 Occupational Injuries.

110. NPWSWE 2021–2027 defines a single National Occupational Safety and Health Policy. On the basis of an analysis of the situation, it prioritises, proposes objectives and guides activities in the field of occupational safety and health with a view to preventing occupational accidents, occupational diseases and work-related diseases that affect health arising from work, are related to work or occur during work, i.e. aiming to reduce the risks of sources of danger, harm and exertion inherent in the work environment in the workplace and to preserve workers’ ability to work.

111. By 2027, through networking, education and outreach to stakeholders will be improved safety and health protection at workplaces, occupational and work-related illnesses shall be reduced, and workers’ deaths shall be reduced. Overall, this will contribute to promoting the preservation of work capacity and thereby raising the culture of risk prevention at workplaces.

112. The Labour inspectorate of the State Inspectorate carries out inspections for serious injuries of workers and injuries of workers resulting in fatal outcomes, supervision over the legality of the work of persons authorised to perform occupational safety duties, tasks and inspection supervision of the implementation of occupational safety regulations in the field of construction in accordance with a special building regulation, and inspection tasks in connection with the implementation of other regulations where this is required by a special law. The Labour inspection participates in the work of the European Commission’s Senior Labour Inspectors Committee, its subcommittees, and expert bodies, and carries out the agreed joint activities of labour inspectors in the EU Member States. It also draws attention to shortcomings and problems in the implementation of the regulations that it is authorized to supervise contacting professional group/body for regulations preparation.

113. Monitoring the situation of accidents at work and occupational diseases and the number of workers fatalities will establish plans to target employers’ inspections in activities

⁴⁰ Official Gazette, No. 5/84.

that record an increased number of accidents at work and occupational diseases and the number of workers in fatal outcomes.

Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues

114. The GRC established the Economic Social Council as a tripartite body that is involved in shaping policies relating to the situation of workers and encouraging collective bargaining. The law prohibits discrimination against workers for trade union membership. Trade union commissioner in the firm is especially protected and his labour contract can only be terminated with the consent of the trade union or judicial decision on that matter.

Reply to paragraph 19 (a) of the list of issues

115. In 2022, according to the Decisions of GRC, depending on the amount of the pension, pension beneficiaries received one-off cash benefits of HRK 400, HRK⁴¹ 600, HRK 900 or HRK 1200:

- To mitigate the impact of the increase in energy prices, which amounted to HRK 449,423,900 for 690,055 beneficiaries, paid mainly in May 2022;
- To mitigate the impact of the price increase, which amounted to HRK 470,298,180 for 693,542 beneficiaries, mainly in October 2022;
- To mitigate the impact of the increase in the cost of living, which amounted to HRK 465,087,300 for 685,887 beneficiaries, mainly in December 2022.

116. In 2022, according to the Decisions of GRC, one-off cash benefits (SGA) were paid to mitigate the impact of the increase in energy prices to beneficiaries of the child benefit on two occasions amounting to HRK 300, HRK 500, HRK 700, HRK 900 or HRK 1.100 depending on the number of children, which were mainly paid in October (242,663 children) and December 2022. (242,712 children) for a total amount of HRK 121,363,000 or an average of HRK 500 per child.

117. With regard to social security referred to in Article 9 The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights should be noted that on 1 January 2021 the Law on National Elderly Compensation⁴² (hereinafter referred to as: LNEC) entered into force, which aims to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

118. The national allowance for elderly persons granted under the above-mentioned LNEC establishes basic social security for Croatian nationals who have reached the age of 65, with long-term continuous residence in Croatia immediately until the submission of the application, who have not received income from work during their lifetime, i.e. for persons who have no income or no income in old age. This institute provides old-age income as a contribution to the social security of long-term residents in RC, which aims to increase the quality of life of older people.

119. As of 1 January 2021, the national allowance for the elderly was paid at HRK 800 per month, which in 2021 was paid in the amount of HRK 44,811,199 and received an average of 4,994 beneficiaries, and in 2022 it was paid in the amount of HRK 59,918,192 and received an average of 6,071 beneficiaries in the amount of HRK 820 per month. As of January 2024, the national old-age benefit is € 150 and the conditions for granting it have been eased.

120. In the period up to the end of 2022, the GRC started reforming the social benefit system. This reform is defined in the NRRP 2021–2026 and the National Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2021–2027, through the implementation of the measure “Transparency and adequacy of social benefits in the welfare system”. The objective of the reform is initially to increase the adequacy of the main social benefit targeted at the most vulnerable groups of society and to allow reduction of inequalities, the administrative burden reduction and the transparency of the system, as well as faster and more efficient delivery of

⁴¹ The fixed exchange rate applicable to kuna amounts is HRK 7,5345 for EUR 1 (one euro).

⁴² Official Gazette, Nos. 62/20, 156/23.

benefits by bringing together existing social benefits intended to reduce poverty into a single benefit and by bringing together existing social benefits for persons with disabilities into one benefit, introducing indexation as a standard feature of the benefit.⁴³ The aim of this reform measure is to improve coverage and focus on the need, equality and adequacy in the exercise of rights, as the pooling of benefits between two households would, in the same economic circumstances, be treated in the same way in terms of achieving a minimum standard of living or impose the same conditions for the exercise of rights (censuses) in the same economic circumstances.

121. The adoption of a new Social Welfare Act⁴⁴ (hereinafter: SWA):

- The base for the guaranteed minimum benefit (hereinafter: GMF) has been increased from HRK 800 to HRK 1,000 / EUR 132,72⁴⁵ the equivalent scale has been amended, i.e. the percentage of the personal factor for certain categories of beneficiaries for the calculation of the GMF amount has been increased and the conditions for its recognition have been eased. In addition, the maximum amount of the GMF for households has been increased from 100 % to 150 % of Croatia's gross minimum wage.⁴⁶ The range of beneficiaries has been extended: homeless persons using shelters, victims of domestic violence and victims of trafficking in human beings who have been recognised as temporary accommodation in emergency situations receive 50 % of the amount of the GMF;
- The new SWA made changes to the reimbursement of housing costs and the reimbursement of heating costs, which are grouped into a single allowance – a housing allowance. The right to housing allowances shall be recognised by the local authorities in the amount of at least 30 % of the amount of the GMF granted to a single person or household;
- The amounts of benefits for the personal needs of beneficiaries of the right to an accommodation or organised housing service according to the needs of individual beneficiary groups have been increased (from the previous 20 % of the base for all beneficiaries to 50 % of the base for the primary school child, adult and older person and 70 % of the base for the child and young adult to secondary school pupils and other young adults);
- The range of persons eligible for the status of caregiver has been extended;
- The amount of compensation to parents is increased to 900 % of the basis for caregivers for a child with disabilities and a person with disabilities, who, due to their state of health, cannot be included in community-based programmes and services, and a parent with independent care for two or more children with disabilities, the allowance is further increased by 400 % of the base;
- Supply for children has been increased, depending on the age of the child, by 20 to 42 %, ranging from HRK 2,525 to 2,850 and up to 25 % for adults, ranging from HRK 2,250 to 2,500;⁴⁷
- The fees for the work of the traditional foster parent were increased by around 60 %, while the fees for foster parents engaged in foster care occupation increased from 15 to 60 %, amounting to between HRK 4,500 and HRK 7,000 for specialised foster parents for children and HRK 4,000 for standard foster parents. By increasing the remuneration for the work of foster parents and supply fee, more than 86 million HRK was additionally secured in the State Budget.

122. On 8 September 2022, the GRC adopted a Decision increasing the monthly fee for vulnerable energy customers and foster parents to HRK 500, providing a total of HRK

⁴³ Law on Inclusive Allowance (Official Gazette, No. 156/23) – hereinafter LIA.

⁴⁴ Social Welfare Act (NN Nos. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23) – hereinafter: SWA.

⁴⁵ The figure refers to 2022. By decision of the Government of 28 December 2023, the basis for the GMF is EUR 150,00 (one hundred and fifty).

⁴⁶ The minimum wage has been from 01.01. 2024. EUR 840 gross (eight hundred and forty euro gross).

⁴⁷ The amounts indicated in kuna correspond to those before the increase in the amount of the GMF in 2022.

13,836,000 for foster parents to implement a measure to reduce the impact of rising energy prices on foster parents. Furthermore, the coverage of users of the GMF has been increased, which also provides the cost of housing, municipal charges, heating and water services.

123. In December 2023, the Law on Inclusive Allowance was adopted (as mentioned), bringing together into an inclusive supplement the following four existing rights that beneficiaries derive from an established disability: (a) the right to a personal disability allowance and the (b) right to assistance and care allowances granted in accordance with the SWA, (c) the right to a child's allowance in excess of health, severe or severe disability in accordance with the Child Allowance Act,⁴⁸ (d) and the right to cash assistance for unemployed persons with disabilities granted under the Law on the Labour Market.⁴⁹

124. An inclusive allowance is a financial benefit intended for a person with a disability in order to overcome the various barriers which may hinder his full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. The law entered into force on 1 January 2024.

Reply to paragraph 19 (b) of the list of issues

125. The SWA defines the various benefits including the GMF, which is granted to a Croatian national residing in Croatia and to a foreigner permanently resident and long-term resident in Croatia, a stateless person with temporary and permanent residence and long-term residence in Croatia. A foreign national under subsidiary protection, an asylum seeker and a foreigner under temporary protection, as well as their family members legally residing in Croatia, as well as foreigners with established status as victims of trafficking in human beings, may receive benefits and services in the social welfare system under the conditions laid down in the SWA, the laws governing protection against trafficking in human beings and the law governing the status, rights and obligations of persons granted international protection.

126. The basis for the GMF shall be adopted by decision of the GRC. The decision on the level of the base was taken in February 2022 in the amount of € 132,72⁵⁰ on the basis of a new SWA, which entered into force on 17 February 2022. Art. 22, para. (1) SWA provides that the basis for calculating the GMF is to be determined annually, in order to be able to have a targeted and faster impact on poverty.

127. The GMF is a sum of money recognized as a single person or a household who does not have sufficient resources to meet their basic subsistence needs, under the conditions and in the amount laid down in the SWA. The amount of the GMF varies according to the composition of the household and the income of the applicant. The GMF is implemented through the regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, which operate at local level, and payment funds are provided in the central state budget.

128. For a single person, the GMF amounts:

- 100 % of the base for the person who is able to work = € 132.72;⁵¹
- 130 % of the base for older person and person totally incapacitated for work = € 172.54.

129. The household GMF is determined as the sum of the shares of members of the household and the share for the individual household member is:

- 70 % of the base for the adult person working-age who is able to work = € 92.91;
- 95 % of the base for the adult totally incapacitated to work and for the elderly = € 126.09;
- 120 % of the base for the single parent who is able to work = € 159.27;

⁴⁸ Official Gazette, Nos. 94/01, 138/06, 107/07, 37/08, 61/11, 112/12, 82/15, 58/18, 156/23.

⁴⁹ Official Gazette, Nos. 118/18, 32/20, 18/22, 156/23.

⁵⁰ By decision of the Government of 28 December 2023, the basis for the GMF is EUR 150,00 (one hundred and fifty EUR).

⁵¹ The amounts in kuna correspond to those before the increase in the amount of the GMF and represent data for year 2022.

- 135 % of the base for the single parent's total incapacity to work = €179.18;
- 70 % base for a child = € 92.91;
- 80 % of the base for a single-parent child in family with only one child= € 106.18;
- 90 % of the base for a single parent's child = € 119.45;
- 120 % of the base for the pregnant women and mother up to six months after giving birth = € 159.27.

130. The amount of the household GMF is capped at 150 % of the gross minimum wage (in 2023. – € 1,050).⁵²

131. Pursuant to the SWA, which entered into force on 17 February 2022, in the process of recognition of the right to a GMF, ownership of a registered vehicle with a value not exceeding 40 bases for the calculation of other social security benefits (€ 2654.46) is no longer an obstacle for granting of that right. A vehicle exceeding that value is also not an obstacle if it is used to transport a single person or a member of the household of the beneficiary due to a disability, the elderly and the person with serious difficulty to move or, according to the assessment of the professional worker, the vehicle is necessary because of traffic/spatial isolation.

132. A homeless person who is provided with accommodation or organised housing in a shelter shall be entitled to a GMF in the amount of 50 % of the amount of the GMF prescribed by the SWA, provided that he or she satisfies the conditions laid down in the SWA.

133. A victim of domestic violence and a victim of trafficking in human beings who has been granted an accommodation service in emergency situations shall be recognised as being entitled to an GMF in the amount of 50 % of the amount of the GMF prescribed by the SWA, provided that she/he fulfils the conditions laid down in the SWA.

134. If a single person or a member of the household who is a beneficiary of the GMF is employed for an uninterrupted period of at least six months, the amount of the GMF is reduced by 50 % of the amount approved for the first three months of employment. Entitlement to the GMF shall cease to a single person or to a household after three months of work if the average income in the last three months exceeds the recognised amount of the GMF for a single person or household. If a single person or a member of the household who is a beneficiary of the GMF is employed in public works, the entitlement to the GMF does not lapse, i.e. GMF will not be reduced for the income of the member of the household earned based on employment in public works.

Reply to paragraph 19 (c) of the list of issues

135. By monitoring available data, since March 2021, when the number of beneficiaries of the GMF is 56,905, according to the "SocSkrb" application, in April 2023, the total number of beneficiaries of the GMF was 46,186 (i.e. a decrease of 10,719 users), of which the number of single persons was 19,361 and the number of household members was 26,825.

136. Explanatory table for the decrease in the number of beneficiaries, see Annex 13 – Points 19 and 20 of the list of issues, sheet beneficiaries 19c.

Reply to paragraph 19 (d) and (e) of the list of issues

137. Reform measure NRRP 2021–2026 C4.3. R2 "Development of social mentoring services" will significantly increase the opportunities to improve the quality of life of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion through the strengthening of social networks, better social cohesion, and cooperation of all relevant stakeholders at local community level. The introduction of social mentoring (a) leads to an enhanced individualised approach that allows for self-activation of long-term unemployed users, persons with disabilities, victims of violence, young people out of care and persons after imprisonment, and (b) focuses on

⁵² Which in 2024, given that minimum wage is € 840 gross, amounts to € 1,260.

empowering beneficiaries and better motivating those most marginalised and furthest from the labour market by focusing on their abilities and potential. The social mentoring service is being developed with the help of a group of social workers who have received basic training in the field of social mentoring (21 professional workers from all counties and the City of Zagreb, or an additional 220 trained and employed professionals), thus ensuring the uniformity of service provision throughout Croatia.

138. Through reform measure NRRP 2021–2026 C4.3. R3 “Development of community-based services to prevent institutionalisation” in 2021, the National Plan for the Development of Social Services 2021–2027 and the Action Plan for the Development of Social Services 2021–2024 were adopted. An Action Plan for the Development of Social Services from 2025 to 2027 will also be drawn up.

139. One of the specific objectives of the Action Plan is: *Increasing the availability of social services* with concrete measures: *Increasing the volume of provision of non-institutional services in areas where these services are insufficient; Continuing the process of deinstitutionalisation and transformation of social service providers; Building eight centres for the elderly and fostering the development of foster care (increasing the number of foster families for children).* They ensure adequate services for older people and people in need of intensive care, including the provision of non-institutional support, and ensure sufficient accommodation capacity. Increasing access to social services contributes to reducing regional disparities in access to social services and empowering and promoting the social inclusion of all vulnerable groups, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status.

140. Furthermore, the National Plan for Equalising Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities⁵³ 2021–2027 recognised the need for regional equalisation of accessibility of services through the implementation of measures under the “Specific Objectives – *Improve access to services in the healthcare system for persons with disabilities; Deinstitutionalisation and prevention of the institutionalisation of persons with disabilities and Improving accessibility of the content of public life and strengthening security in crisis situations*”.

141. One of the investments of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026 is C4.3. R3-I4 “Construction and equipping of centres for older people”, according to which eight centres for institutional, home and community-based care for older people are planned to be built by 2026. The construction of infrastructure (elder’s centres) will create the preconditions for the provision of holistic care for older people, primarily by providing out-of-institutional services to older people living at home, and, exceptionally, accommodation services for older people who cannot meet long-term care needs even with the use of non-institutional services. The implementation of the measures started in 2022.

Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues

142. The MoLPSFSP collects data on violence against older people by the Regional Office of the Croatian Institute of Social Work. Data are currently being processed.

143. Data on criminal offences of MoI relating to the number of victims of the elderly who have suffered the most common violent crimes can be found in Annex 13 – Points 19 and 20 of the list of issues, sheet point 20.

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

144. Amendments to the CC⁵⁴ (in force since 1 January 2020) have supplemented the description of the offence of domestic violence by requiring, as an additional feature, the

⁵³ The Personal Assistance Act, in force since 1 July 2023, was also adopted. and is the regulatory framework for providing assistance to disabled people and supporting students with disabilities in teaching.

⁵⁴ Official Gazette, No. 126/19.

situation of long-lasting suffering in which the victim/injured person has been brought in serious violation of the rules on protection against domestic violence. As a result of the tightening of the criminal law policy, the special minimum was raised to one year's imprisonment.

145. Further amendments to the CC⁵⁵ amended Article 74, which provides for a security measure of removal from the common household, in such a way that, instead of the previous optional imposition, the imposition of a security measure for removal from the common household is mandatory, while maintaining a condition that high-risk jeopardy that the offender could reoffend violence against a member of the common household without the implementation of this security measure.

146. RC already adopted the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence⁵⁶ (hereinafter: LPDV) in 2017, which, in addition to the entry into force of new national criminal legislation, was also conditional on the need to transpose European and international instruments into national law, including the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.⁵⁷ This resulted in raising the legal standards of protection of the victim, strengthening her or his procedural position, preventing secondary victimisation and the urgency of action by all competent authorities. The subsequent amendments to that Act resulted from the need to revise the legislative solutions in force concerning manifestations of domestic violence and the need to enforce a legal tightening of misdemeanour penalties in relation to manifest forms of domestic violence punishable under the LPDV.

147. Furthermore, in order to align the national strategic framework with the requirements of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, a *National Plan to Combat Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period up to 2027* was adopted in December 2022, and the corresponding *Action Plan for the period up to 2024*. This is the first national document directly aimed at combating sexual violence and contains measures in the field of prevention of sexual violence and sexual harassment, protection and support for victims, and working with perpetrators of sexual violence and sexual harassment. The National Plan promotes a holistic approach with a view to comprehensive and coordinated action by the competent authorities.

148. In 2023, the drafting of a new *National Plan for Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period up to 2028* and its *2025 Action Plan* started. The National Plan focuses on measures to prevent gender-based violence, improve assistance and support services for victims of violence and improve the effectiveness of the intervention system vis-à-vis perpetrators of violence against women. The national plan responds to GREVIO's recommendations made in the Core Evaluation Report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence for the Republic of Croatia.

149. At the same time, with a view to bringing legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention, *amendments to the Family Act*⁵⁸ entered into force at the end of 2023, which, inter alia, further strengthen the protection of the child's interests as well as victims in cases of domestic violence. The amendments in question stipulate that family mediation is not carried out in cases of allegations of domestic violence. Furthermore, a provision has been introduced to the effect that if professionals of the competent authority, who carry out mandatory counselling, suspect that the rights and well-being of the child are threatened within the family or suspect domestic violence, the competent authority shall, of its own motion, determine the appropriate measure for the protection of the child under the jurisdiction of the Croatian Institute of Social Work, or propose that the court adopt another measure for the protection of the child within the jurisdiction of the court, and promptly initiate the relevant procedure in accordance with the special regulation governing the protection of domestic violence.

⁵⁵ Official Gazette, No. 84/21.

⁵⁶ Official Gazette, No. 70/17, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 36/24.

⁵⁷ Official Gazette – International Treaties No. 4/18 – so-called *Istanbul Convention*.

⁵⁸ Official Gazette, No. 103/15, 98/19, 47/20, 49/23, 156/23.

150. At the same time, in accordance with the provisions of the Family Act, the court will also take into account the existence of allegations of domestic violence when deciding with which parent the child will live, on the child's custody and personal relationships with the parents.

Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues

151. In 2018, 76 victims of trafficking in human beings were identified; 27 victims in 2019; 15 victims in 2020; 19 victims in 2021; 29 victims in 2022, and 21 victims in 2023. The highest number of victims are children and young people under the age of 30, mainly female, which is slightly higher than the male sex. The victims are predominantly Croatian nationals and considering victims of non-nationals they are mainly Third-country nationals (Taiwan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nepal, Brazil, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Serbia, the Philippines and Nigeria).

152. In Annex 14 – Trafficking in Human Beings are disaggregated data on the nationality and sex of victims of trafficking in human beings from the records of the MoI.

153. Between 2016 and 2020, the police handled a total of 82 police cases involving 154 reported perpetrators or suspects, but in only 37 % of cases the police opted for the qualification of trafficking in human beings in a criminal report or a general special report submitted to the State Attorney's service for prosecution, and for slavery in only 1 % of cases, still representing the largest share of 38 % of cases. Sexual delict is also the highest proportion of police qualifications (38 %), to the detriment of children, in 20 % of cases, and to the detriment of adults in 18 % of cases, sexual offences in 18 % of cases, and offences of child sexual abuse and exploitation in 20 % of cases. Among other offences, the police qualification of offences against marriage, family and children is equally frequent (with the most common violations of the child's rights under Art. 177 CC) and offences against personal liberty (where the threats referred to in Article 139 CC are the most common threats). – each of the above-mentioned Titles XIII and XVIII CC 8 % of the share of the cases analysed. However, in as many as 42 % of cases the State Attorney rejected the criminal complaint or suspended the investigation.

154. So far, only one third of final cases have been closed with a conviction (34 %). More than half of convicted offenders received an unconditional prison sentence (53.6 %), while more than a quarter of convicted offenders received suspended imprisonment (28.6 %). No specific obligation was imposed with a suspended sentence, nor with a partial suspended sentence, which was imposed in 7.1 % of the cases. In 14.3 % of cases, the proceeds of the amounts of HRK 700 to 70,000 were confiscated from the perpetrator.

155. In accordance with the envisaged measures in the National Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings 2018–2021, prevention, and repression of trafficking in human beings are being implemented, in line with the international instruments to which RC is a party.

156. As the author of the development of a new National Anti-Trafficking Plan for 2023–2030, the OFHRRNM decided to step up efforts in prevention and education. The new National Plan will provide an analysis of the legislative practice and the need to introduce a provision on impunity. Should the need arise, the amendment to the CC will be passed by introducing a provision on impunity.

157. Between 2016 and present time, only one identified victim of trafficking in human beings has brought a civil action for damages, in which she was awarded compensation at first instance by a judgment of Osijek Municipal Court. It is therefore one of the objectives of the new National Plan to regulate legislation and to provide continuous training for judges and prosecutors in order to obtain compensation in the same case as the offender's guilt. They have also been made more aware of the rights of victims of trafficking offences.

158. In 2022, the following training sessions took place on anti-trafficking:

- One two-day workshop in cooperation with the Police Academy for criminal judges of municipal and county courts, public prosecutors, deputies and advisers specialised in;

- The issue of trafficking in human beings, police, and officers of the Support Department for;
- Victims and witnesses at county courts; a total of 16 trainees;
- Two one-day workshops in cooperation with the OFHRRNM for criminal judges and municipal and county court's advisers; and county courts and deputy and public prosecutors' advisers for municipal and county authorities; a total of 33 trainees.

Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues

159. The National Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2021–2027 highlights four (4) specific objectives:

- Reducing poverty and social exclusion of vulnerable groups (9 measures);
- Prevention and reduction of child poverty and social exclusion (4 measures);
- Increasing the level of family and minimum pensions (2 measures) and
- Improve the life chances of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion (2 measures).

160. The specific objectives were developed through the measures defined in the first implementation programme, the *Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2021–2024*. – a total of 17 measures to ensure better living conditions for vulnerable groups in society, to be implemented through 53 actions:

<i>Outcome indicator</i>	<i>Initial value</i>	<i>Target value 2023</i>	<i>Achieved value, data year 2023</i>
Specific objective “Reducing poverty and social exclusion of vulnerable groups”			
Severe material and social deprivation by age and sex⁵⁹			
	4.6 % (PIS ⁶⁰ 2019)		
	4.4 % (PIS 2020)	3.2 %	2.8 %
At-risk-of-poverty rate			
	18.3 % (PIS 2019, PIS 2020)	16.8 %	19.3 %

⁵⁹ NOTE: The outcome indicator “Severe material deprivation by age and sex”, up to 2020, was part of the *Europe 2020 strategy* and related to the percentage of people living in households that cannot afford at least 4 out of 9 material deprivation items solely for financial reasons. As of 2021, this indicator is part of the *Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy* and is entitled ‘Severe material and social deprivation by age and sex’. The number of items has changed from 9 items of material deprivation to 13 material and social deprivation items.

The outcome indicator ‘Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion’ was part of the *Europe 2020 strategy* as of 2020, and was defined as ‘Persons at risk of poverty or severe material deprivation with 4 or more material deprivation items or living in a household with very low work intensity (0–59)’. In 2021, the indicator became part of the *Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy* with a new definition (calculation method): “Persons at risk of poverty or severe material and social deprivation with 7 or more material and social deprivation items or living in a household with very low work intensity (0–64).”

The outcome indicator ‘Severe material deprivation by age and sex (for children from 0 to 17)’ was part of the *Europe 2020 strategy* and related to the percentage of people living in households who cannot afford, for financial reasons alone, at least four out of nine material deprivation items. As of 2021, this indicator is part of the *Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy* and is entitled ‘Severe material and social deprivation by age and sex’. For the indicator itself, there was a change in the number of items from the current 9 items of material deprivation to 13 items of material and social deprivation. It is necessary to point out that, due to the above-mentioned changes in methodology, detailed monitoring on an annual basis is not possible in all three cases, while for the 2022 target the outcome indicators “Survivors’ pension share in average pension” and “Proportion of the lowest pension in average pension” were not set, as the results were only for 2023. Therefore, the relevant data will be reported in the coming years.

⁶⁰ PIS – population income survey.

<i>Outcome indicator</i>	<i>Initial value</i>	<i>Target value 2023</i>	<i>Achieved value, data year 2023</i>
At risk of poverty and social exclusion persons	20.8 % (PIS 2019) 20.5 % (PIS 2020)	18.7 %	20.7 %
Specific objective “ Prevention and reduction of child poverty and social exclusion ”			
Severe material and social deprivation by age and sex (for children from 0–17)	3.2 (PIS 2019) 3.0 % (PIS 2020)	2.7 %	1.8 %
At-risk-of-poverty rate for children 0–17	17.1 % (PIS 2019) 16.8 % (PIS 2020)	15.2 %	16.1 %
Specific objective “ Increasing the level of family and minimum pensions ”			
Share of survivor’s pension in average pension	81 %	91–96 %	84 %
Share of the lowest pension in average pension	65 %	66.5 %	68 %
Specific objective “ Enhancing the life chances of persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion ”			
Persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion	866 families and 116 persons	380 families and 60 persons	937 families and 3.779 persons
Number of households and housing units	80 housing units and 400 residential users	200 housing units and 600 residential users	133 housing units and 623 residential users

161. The proposed measures seem to be insufficient for a comprehensive focus on tackling poverty and social exclusion, however, a large number of measures covering a wide range of programme areas, including education, health, energy, macroeconomics, economy in general, etc., have been presented through the strategic documents of the holders of these areas in order to avoid overlaps.

162. Please refer to the statistics for the RC related to poverty in recent years at <https://podaci.dzs.hr/media/4qsdujvm/msi-pokazatelj-siroma%20i-tva-i-socijalne-isklju%20nosti.xlsx>.

163. In addition to the competent MoLPSFSP, the GRC works continuously to improve the social welfare system through day-to-day care and care for all citizens in a state of need. The rights of SWA-regulated beneficiaries are continuously improved, but also various innovative programmes are being developed in cooperation with civil society organisations and improving the accessibility of different social services.

164. One of the objectives is to consolidate social benefits and improve their impact on poverty reduction through the NRRP 2021–2026, namely the reform measure “*Transparency and adequacy of social benefits in the social protection system*”. As part of this measure, with a view to raising the standard of living of the poorest citizens, a new SWA entered into force in February 2022 (see point 19a) and laid down in more detail the conditions for the granting of the rights to the GMF and the obligations of working-age beneficiaries who are able to work.

165. In addition, given the risk of poverty of the most vulnerable groups of society, there has also been an increase in personal factors (percentage from the base) for children of single-parent families, individuals incapacitated for work and members of the household. For example, the personal factors used to determine the amount of the GMF for a single person of working age able to work are 100 % of the base and 130 % for a single person incapacitated

for work. For children, there was an increase from 40 % to 70 % of the base and for single-parent children from 55 % to 80 % of the base. In addition, homeless people who are accommodated in shelters can claim 50 % of the basis for entitlement to the GMF, and provisions have been introduced on the possibility of owning a car up to a value of HRK 20,000 (€ 2,654). The amount of the household GMF is capped at 150 % of Croatia's gross minimum wage, instead of the previous 100 %, preventing poverty of multi-person families with children. The SWA also defines the change relating to the housing allowance and the heating allowance, which are grouped into a single housing allowance. That right shall be recognised by the local authority in the amount of at least 30 % of the amount of the GMF granted to a single person or household. The new SWA also provides that the basis on which the amount of the GMF is calculated is to be fixed by decision once a year.

166. Furthermore, as part of the reform measure "*Transparency and adequacy of social benefits in the social protection system*", a professional-analytical basis has been developed for the normative regulation of the functional aggregation of benefits for people at risk of poverty and for persons with disabilities. The analysis focuses on a proposal for fees that can be functionally aggregated, performance requirements (censuses) with process simplification, harmonisation of the legislative framework and standardisation of criteria and indexation proposals as a standard feature of fees. Certain proposals for analysis have been adopted (in particular the removal of the requirement to register a claim in the land register in the immovable property of the beneficiary GMF).

Reply to paragraph 24 of the list of issues

Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing (CSOFRH)

- Implemented housing models (leasing a family house or a state-owned apartment; donation of state-owned building land and construction material for the construction of a family house; donation of construction material for renovation, upgrading and completion of the construction of a family house owned by the user; donation of building material for the construction of a family house on building land owned by the user; donation of an unusable state-owned family house and construction material for its renovation or reconstruction);
- Contributed to housing and improving the living conditions of members of the Roma national minority through the provision of furniture and white goods, the fitting-out of bathrooms and/or sanitary facilities and the allocation of external joinery, and the decoration of floors in existing, solid facilities;
- Participated in the implementation of the joint initiative of four partner countries of the Regional Housing Programme (RHP), based on the Agreement between the Republic of Croatia and the Council of Europe Development Bank, which aims to permanently address the housing conditions of the most vulnerable groups, returnees, displaced persons and refugees, i.e. former tenants (planned completion of the programme in 2023);
- It was involved in the implementation of the "National Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021–2027", the "National Action Plan for the implementation of the Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee", the "National Strategy for Protection from Domestic Violence 2017–2022", the "National Roma Inclusion Plan 2021–2027", as well as in the drafting of the "National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination 2022–2027" and the "Draft proposal for a strategy for demographic regeneration of Croatia to 2033", and administrative-technical cooperation in implementing the priority "Youth in rural areas".

167. With the entry into force of the Law amending the Law on the Organisation and Competences of the State Administration⁶¹, the MoPPCSA took over the tasks of the CSOFRH as of 22 February 2023.

⁶¹ Official Gazette, No. 21/23.

168. In relation to the measure “Creating an enabling environment for young people and families to stay and improve living conditions”, the *National Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021–2027* provides an overview of the data in the table:

<i>Implementation of measures and activities</i>	<i>2021.</i>	<i>2022.</i>	<i>2023.</i>
Number of lease contracts (family where applicable and former tenant rights holders)	-579 (family in need) -72 (former tenant rights holders)	-307 (family as appropriate) -46 (former tenant rights holders)	-403 rental contracts for families in need of which: 7 (former tenant rights holders)
Number of housing units (renovated and built housing units)	-42 refurbished houses -19 housing units built (Regional Housing Programme)	-48 refurbished houses -36 residential units built (Regional Housing Programme)	-27 refurbished houses (further clarification: this is a war reconstruction programme) * Regional Housing Programme completed in 2023 (total number of housing units throughout the programme: 382) **Publication: https://regionalhousingprogramme.org/croatia/
Number of household appliances and kitchen furniture supplied**	-235 pieces of white goods (39 refrigerators, 110 washing machines, 13 wood-fired stoves, 10 electricity cookers, 48 cookers combined, 15 wood cookers) -133 equipped bathrooms	-163 pieces of white goods (41 refrigerators, 143 washers, 50 cookers combined, four power cookers, 11 wood cookers, 14 wood stoves) -nine equipped floors -58 equipped bathrooms -(83 fitting-outs of outdoor joinery delivered in the first month of 2023)	External carpentry for 326 families, sanitary equipment, and bathroom decoration material for 102 families and floor coverings (laminat) for 65 families were delivered. *For the supply of outdoor PVC doors and windows, an additional survey of openings on the user's family houses was carried out on the grounds that, in most cases, it is an atypical dimension that needs to be made according to the actual dimensions of the holes rather than by standard dimensions, so that homeowners do not have to open up or reduce openings, causing additional problems and slowing down installation dynamics. This part of the programme is expected to be completed in January 2024. This model covers 326 user families. **For the fitting-out of bathrooms/sanitary facility, an on-site inspection was carried out, a test of fitting-out developed, specification of the required material for each family house and delivered necessary construction material and sanitary

<i>Implementation of measures and activities</i>	<i>2021.</i>	<i>2022.</i>	<i>2023.</i>
			<p>equipment for 102 bathrooms/sanitary knots.</p> <p>***The delivery to 65 families was carried out using this model.</p> <p>****Pursuant to the 2023 Annual Programme for the Improvement of Living Conditions of the Roma National Minority, and cooperation between representatives of the Housing Directorate with representatives of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, the Roma MP and Roma umbrella NGO “Kali Sara”.</p>
Number of families provided housing (victims of domestic violence and staff provided housing)	-17 (victims of domestic violence) -29 (staff provided with housing)	-15 (victims of domestic violence) -18 (staff provided with housing)	<p>-22 (victims of domestic violence)</p> <p>*Immigration has been achieved for 22 families of the victim of violence, i.e. immigration for 59 people.</p> <p>**There is no gender record for this housing model.</p> <p>***Internal records, forwarded for the purposes of the various activity reports.</p> <p>-30 (staff provided with housing)</p> <p>*It is estimated that around 90 people (three members per family) are covered through this activity.</p>
Number of providing housing for persons (persons with international protection)	-30 persons	10 persons	<p>-55 persons</p> <p>*19 immigration has been achieved for 19 families of persons with international protection, i.e. immigration for 55 people.</p>
Number of co-financing contracts (number of contracts awarded)	-24 contracts	-23 contracts	-38 contracts

* All data provided are internal data of the former Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing.

** Supplemented by the Decision with the fitting-out of bathrooms, the fitting-out of floors and the fitting-out of outdoor joinery.

169. The baseline for people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (2019/2020) was 866 families and 116 people. The value for 2021 was 687 families and 30 persons, and for 2022 404 families and 10 persons, in 2023 it amounted to 937 families and 3.779 persons. As regards the number of households and housing units, the starting value (2019/2020) was 80 housing units and 400 residential users, reaching 71 housing units and 155 residential users (2021) and 66 housing units and 184 housing for users (2022); 133 housing units and 623 residential users (2023).

170. The CSOFRH has continuously implemented an annual programme to improve the living conditions of members of the Roma national minority with the aim of ensuring basic living conditions in the households of the Roma national minority, through the provision of household appliances and kitchen furniture, white goods, the fitting-out of bathrooms, the fitting-out of floors and the fitting-out of outdoor carpentry, which reduces the share of residentially deprived persons of the Roma national minority. A further modification of the openings in the user's family houses was implemented and carpentry was made according to real dimensions, so that existing building openings do not have to be expanded or reduced.

171. In relation to the *Regional Housing Programme (RHP)*, a multiannual programme aimed at permanently addressing the housing needs of the most vulnerable categories of refugees and internally displaced persons, as a result of a joint initiative by partner countries: The objective of the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia was to provide a permanent and sustainable housing solution for the more than 11.000 most vulnerable families in all four partner countries by mid-2023. Croatia was approved to finance nine sub-projects through grants for housing 402 families. So far, a total of 382 families have been housed through this Programme, while 36 families have been housed in 2022.

172. As regards the development of assisted areas and areas with specific development features, the Grant Agreement for the project "Removal and construction of replacement housing units owned by Croatia in earthquake-stricken areas" was concluded on 26 May 2021 between the MRDEUF, the Central Agency for Financing and Contracting of EU Programmes and Projects and the then CSOFRH. The objective of the project was to construct a minimum of 200 replacement state-owned housing units in the earthquake-stricken areas, which will ensure the increase of the state-owned housing stock and create conditions to remain in the earthquake-affected area.

173. Also, the Grant Agreement for the project "Restoration of Croatian-owned family houses in earthquake-affected areas" was concluded on 26 May 2021 between MRDEUF, the Central Financing and Contracting Agency for EU programmes and projects, and the then CSOFRH. The project aims to renovate a minimum of 300 damaged state-owned family houses in earthquake-affected areas, which will ensure the increase of the state-owned housing stock and create the conditions to remain in the earthquake-affected area.

174. It is noted that neither built nor renovated housing units were recorded in 2022, as procurement activities and project documentation were carried out. The works are expected to be completed by the end of 2023.

175. With regard to the criteria, it is noted that the implementation programmes do not monitor the ethnicity of beneficiaries, nor do ethnic users enjoy a privileged or subordinate position. There are also no official records by age and sex. It is primarily the families of beneficiaries who are, as a rule, multi-member. Geographical location is primarily determined through classification as assisted areas (less developed areas), i.e. earlier special state care areas.

176. In the case of victims of domestic violence as well as programmes to improve living conditions of the Roma national minority, programmes are also implemented outside assisted areas. It aims to ensure the accessibility of buildings and newly built buildings contain mandatory accessibility and barrier-free access elements for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility at an equal level.

177. Concrete steps to adopt a comprehensive social housing policy are carried out through the preparation of the *National Plan for Housing Policy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030*. Coordinated housing policies and housing plans are the most important for the areas of

housing intervention, as its relevance and resolution contribute to quality of human life and social vitality. It collects data and analyses the situation of EU Member States' housing stock and housing systems for the purpose of drafting this document, which will address housing challenges and set the direction to address negative demographic developments, the continued rise in housing market prices, and guide the development of new housing models along the lines of good practices of EU countries. This will enable the population to be more mobile, competitive in employment, job-seeking, and the development of the internal market.

178. Improving the quality of housing for a wider range of citizens is also implemented through the Social Housing Support Programme – SHSP, which enables the construction and sale of dwellings under more affordable conditions than market terms in terms of interest rates and repayment terms, and allows for the renting of built-up dwellings with a purchase option. In addition to the SHSP programme, a scheme has been developed to subsidise housing loans for young people buying an apartment or house on the market and taking out housing loans from credit banks.

Reply to paragraph 25 of the list of issues

179. The Social Welfare Act defines the homeless as a person who does not have a place of residence or the means by which he/she could meet the housing costs, and who is either housed in a shelter or overnight accommodation, or who resides in public or other places not intended for housing.

180. In 2021, 561 homeless people (181 from the City of Zagreb) benefiting from the social welfare system (459 men and 102 women) were registered, but the actual number is higher (around 2000). Certain number of people are still on the street because they refuse assistance. Out of the total number of homeless people in 2021 benefiting from the social welfare system, 182 suffer from addiction, 180 suffer from mental disabilities and 28 homeless people are deprived of their legal capacity. The causes that led to homelessness are: 38 people have been evicted, there are 47 unresolved property-legal disputes, there are 74 people unresolved in housing after leaving institutions (social welfare institutions and penal institutions) and 404 people do not have sufficient resources to cover their housing costs. The age of homeless people ranges from 15 to 89 years. 84 homeless people are between 50 and 54 years old.

181. According to the type of service provided by the local community to the homeless, 234 people were placed in a shelter, 84 persons use the services of an overnight stay, while 31 persons use a half-day stay. The number of homeless persons exercising their rights in the social welfare system: 204 homeless persons are beneficiaries of GMF, 351 persons are beneficiaries of one-time cash assistance, 12 beneficiaries of personal disability allowance, 73 beneficiaries of assistance and care allowance and two beneficiaries of benefits until employment. The number of homeless people who receive compensation and support from the funds of local self-government units is 83. Most of the homeless people, 273 of them, are beneficiaries of soup kitchens.

182. Data on the employment status of homeless people; 10 people are employed, 471 are unemployed and 38 are retired. Among the unemployed, 185 are incapacitated for work, while 282 are able to work. According to the educational structure: there are 76 unskilled workers, semi-skilled workers are 31, there are 47 lower professional qualifications, 43 qualified workers, highly qualified workers are three, secondary education has 73, college education has six people, while higher qualification education has three people.

183. The SWA stipulates that the counties and the City of Zagreb are required to provide funds to carry out social welfare activities in accordance with the SWA and the legislation governing the financing of local and regional self-government units, in accordance with the social plan and the social services network in their territory. They also provide funds for the work of social welfare institutions because local and regional self-government units are their founder. Large towns and towns of counties are required to provide food services in people's kitchens, as well as the provision of accommodation in shelters or overnight accommodation for homeless people in the manner prescribed by SWA. Homeless care is therefore decentralised.

184. According to the latest figures, a total of 16 shelters and overnight centres for homeless people operate in 10 counties (Karlovačka, Varaždinska, Primorsko-goranska, Zadarska, Osijek-Baranjska, Šibenik-Kninska, Splitsko-Dalmatinska, Istria, Dubrovnik-Neretvanska and the City of Zagreb) with accommodation capacity for around 444 persons. The founders of reception centres are cities, NGOs, humanitarian, and religious-based organizations, where the founder and beneficiary regulate each other's relations. Services for homeless people are still not available in all counties and homeless people often gather in cities that have developed services. In areas where no shelter or overnight stays, homelessness is solved on a case-by-case basis and by the allocation of housing available to them. In the last few years, the MoLPSFSP, in cooperation with other stakeholders, develops an integrated plan on hosting homeless people in extreme winter conditions every year, containing data on providers of temporary accommodation and other services for homeless people.

185. The National Plan for the Development of Social Services 2021–2027, in the area of developing community-based social services, identified the need to develop social services for homeless people, and the accompanying Action Plan implements measures to increase the provision of non-institutional services for all vulnerable groups, and thus for homeless people, in areas where these services are insufficient, and to develop new services.

186. The National Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2021–2027 provides for the improvement of care for homeless people through the improvement of the GMF (partially through the improvement of the normative framework). The accompanying Action Plan defines several measures such as increasing the adequacy of social benefits and improving the coverage of the most vulnerable to health insurance coverage, developing and implementing programs aimed at reducing material deprivation and social exclusion of vulnerable groups, contributing to poverty reduction at regional and local level, etc.

187. The new Action Plans to be developed for both National Plans will provide for measures aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion, as well as equal opportunities and better inclusion in the homeless community. Please note that the members of the working groups are representatives of different government bodies, institutions and social partners, i.e. key stakeholders whose action is aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Reply to paragraph 26 of the list of issues

188. The Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection of the Ministry of Interior, in accordance with the LITP and the Ordinance on the Fulfilment of Material Reception Conditions,⁶² provides material reception conditions to all persons in the procedure for granting international protection at reception centres for applicants for international protection in Zagreb and Kutina. In particular, all persons accommodated in reception centres have access to accommodation, medical care, food, water, sanitation, hygiene and clothing until the end of the proceedings, regardless of procedure's outcome.

Reply to paragraph 27 of the list of issues

189. Measures of the *Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2021–2024* ensure access to adequate food. For example, the Programme aimed at tackling material deprivation and social exclusion of vulnerable groups provides food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including accompanying measures such as those below the relative poverty threshold. The Programme shall carry out activities relating to the purchase and distribution of food, the distribution of food collected through donations, the procurement and distribution of basic material assistance, as well as capacity building to ensure the administrative conditions for the provision of assistance as well as the conditions of the necessary equipment through technical assistance.

⁶² Official Gazette, Nos. 135/15, 61/19.

190. The measure *“Contributing to poverty reduction at regional and local level”* highlights as one of its objectives investment in the infrastructure of local and regional self-government units and civil society organisations, through which the operation and accessibility of people’s kitchens, social services, food warehouses and basic material assistance are ensured.⁶³

191. Also, the measure *“Improving the availability of free meals for children in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion”* aims to improve the availability of free meals for children at risk of poverty through EU funding, which contributes to alleviating the worst forms of child poverty. Providing non-financial assistance to children in poverty or at risk of poverty through the distribution of meals in public primary schools under FEAD and ESF+ is an added value to national schemes (which co-finance meals for school children). School nutrition for children at-risk-of-poverty shall be provided in the way school nutrition is normally organised in a particular school or by other appropriate means in line with the principles of equal opportunities.

Reply to paragraph 28 of the list of issues

192. The right of access to water for human consumption and the provision of water services is governed by the Water Act⁶⁴ (hereinafter: WA) and the Water Services Act⁶⁵. Article 97a WA regulates the right of access to water for human consumption and defines vulnerable and marginalised groups whose members need special care in terms of access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

193. Water/public water and public sanitation services are of general interest and are provided as a public service in such a way that all local authorities are required to organise their provision through public water operators, who are owned by them. Water services are provided under non-discriminatory and socially affordable conditions.

194. 94 % of the population has access to water for human consumption from public water systems, meaning that the coverage of this water service is very good. Other parts of the population (around 200.000 people) use water from local water or from their own abstraction points (wells, tanks, etc.). There are currently around 200 local water bodies which public water operators are gradually taking up for management. The state is making efforts to ensure that the remaining population has access to water for human consumption from public water systems, which is the safest way of public water supply.

195. In March 2023, a new Law on Water for Human Consumption⁶⁶ was adopted, which established a legal framework for the protection of human health from the harmful effects of any pollution of water intended for human consumption by ensuring its health safety and cleanliness. It defines the minimum requirements to be met by such water as the parameters of the health safety of water intended for human consumption, the minimum hygiene requirements for materials and particles that come into contact with water intended for human consumption, the minimum hygiene requirements for treatment chemicals and filter media coming into contact with water intended for human consumption; and the rights and obligations for water suppliers, as well as measures to ensure that water intended for human consumption is free from any micro-organisms and parasites and any substances which pose a potential danger to human health in certain numbers or concentrations and meets those minimum requirements.

196. The new Act introduces a new risk-based approach to water safety in terms of water safety, covering the entire supply chain, from the area of basin, abstraction, treatment, storage

⁶³ There are currently 142 intermediaries registered in Croatia in the food donation chain, including the Croatian Red Cross, its town and municipal companies, the Croatian Caritas, the Archbishopial and the County Caritas, civil society organisations, public institutions of a social nature, etc. Food donation is organized mainly through social self-services, people’s kitchens, and donated food warehouses.

⁶⁴ Official Gazette, Nos. 66/19, 94/54, 47/23.

⁶⁵ Official Gazette, No. 66/19.

⁶⁶ Official Gazette, No. 30/23.

and distribution to the point of compliance, which has not been the case with the previous legislative framework, which has not been the case so far, i.e. it includes risk assessment and basin risk management, risk assessment and risk management of the water supply network, as well as risk assessment and risk management of the domestic water supply network. Namely, long-standing water safety monitoring programs have shown that the home water supply network can affect the quality of water intended for human consumption, especially legionella bacteria, which causes the greatest burden in terms of health, and is transmitted by hot water systems by inhalation, for example during the shower.

197. Significant progress has also been made in ensuring access to public drainage systems. In 2022, around 60 % of the population has access to public sanitation, compared to only 43 % of the population in 2010. A large investment cycle is currently underway, which aims to ensure that most of the population have access to public sanitation systems, with the primary aim of ensuring the individual's right to health and to a clean and preserved aquatic environment and water.

198. Under the Operational Programme "Competitiveness and Cohesion" 2014–2020 60 eligible cost projects were funded for 60 water-utilities projects amounting to € 2.7 billion, of which € 1.9 billion in EU grants. Croatia's NRRP 2021–2026, totalling € 6.3 billion, provided € 697 million for the implementation of the Water Management Programme, of which € 539 million for public water and public sanitation development programmes. Investments under the NRRP are planned to ensure access to improved water supply for human consumption by 2026 through a public water supply system for over 45 thousand inhabitants and to ensure that wastewater is treated at an appropriate level for over 200 thousand inhabitants.

Reply to paragraph 29 (a) of the list of issues

199. As regards the measures taken to ensure health protection for applicants for international protection and refugees – persons under international protection, we would point out that the Act on Compulsory Health Insurance and Healthcare for Foreigners in Croatia⁶⁷ lays down, inter alia, the right to healthcare for applicants for international protection and persons under international protection. The funds shall be provided in the State budget.

200. In accordance with that Act, applicants for international protection are entitled to urgent medical assistance and essential treatment of illnesses and serious mental disorders, while persons under international protection – person which asylum is granted and a foreign national who is a family member of person which asylum is granted or a foreign national under subsidiary protection – are entitled to healthcare to the same extent as the insured person under compulsory health insurance.

201. The Rules on Standards of Health Protection for Applicants for International Protection and Foreign Nationals under Temporary Protection⁶⁸ lay down health protection standards for applicants for international protection and foreign nationals under temporary protection, as well as applicants for international protection and foreign nationals in need of special reception and/or procedural guarantees, in particular victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence.

202. Please note that a draft Rules of Procedure are currently being drawn up to regulate in detail the manner in which healthcare is to be provided to persons under international protection.

Reply to paragraph 29 (b) of the list of issues

203. A proposal of the Public Health Service Network for hospital health institutions is under development.

⁶⁷ Official Gazette, Nos. 80/13, 26/21, 46/22.

⁶⁸ Official Gazette, Nos. 103/20, 77/23.

Reply to paragraph 29 (c) of the list of issues

204. A priority challenge in primary healthcare is to ensure equitable access to effective and quality primary healthcare, especially in remote and deprived areas, and to ensure satisfactory primary care, especially in crisis situations.

205. This places particular emphasis on human resources – their specialisation as well as stimulus measures to keep them in small towns and villages. The MoH provided from the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014 – 2020, in the framework of the Call “Special Training of Doctors of Medicine”, around € 28,800,849 with 85 % ESF co-financing, and 15 % national co-financing, namely 212 specialisations in primary healthcare in 19 Croatian counties, and 5 deficient specialisations (family medicine, paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics, clinical radiology and emergency medicine).

206. The National Plan for the Specialist Training of Health Workers for the Five-year Period (2020–2024)⁶⁹ is based on the need to develop health care activities at primary, secondary and tertiary level, and the need of the health system for the appropriate specialities of health workers, the number, schedule, and age structure of healthcare workers. This identified the need for 503 specialisations in family medicine.

207. For the period 2018–2020, the MoH provided funding for medical equipment for specialist-consiliary healthcare through EU projects. Also, the co-financing of medical equipment for primary care was carried out under the EU project “*Improving access to primary care with a focus on remote and deprived areas through investments in the needs of healthcare providers at primary level*” and provided € 22,801,778 in grants (85 %) and 15 % co-financing from the county beneficiaries. The investments concern medical-technical equipment for health centres and primary care practices.

208. In the financial perspective 2021–2027, primary healthcare was prioritised through the NRRP 2021–2026, the Central Financing of Specialisations measure. The aim is to provide specialist training for doctors at the basic primary level of healthcare, (€ 67,688,632). This measure will further enable a balanced and sufficient occupancy of the public health service network, improve accessibility, compensate for the shortage of doctors due to retirement, and increase interest in working in rural areas, including islands.

209. In addition, the local authority units also implement stimulus measures to keep young doctors, especially in deprived areas, by ensuring a quality living environment for family life. An example is the provision of housing and a quality living environment for family life – kindergartens, work for husband/wife, additional activities for children, more favourable housing loans for doctors of medicine, but also for other deficit occupations.

210. The Act amending the Health Care Act⁷⁰ introduced the possibility of working under contract doctors up to 68 years without having to obtain a special MoH authorisation. It also allows for the introduction of a nurse counselling centre for basic care for certain chronic diseases, which will lead to the unburden work of doctors in general/family medicine practices.

211. The Regulation amending the Regulation on Job Titles and Complexity Coefficients of Public Service Jobs⁷¹ made it possible to equalise the coefficients of hospital and specialist in primary healthcare and outpatient specialist healthcare as an incentive measure to make work in primary healthcare more attractive.

Reply to paragraph 29 (d) of the list of issues

212. Pursuant to the NRRP 2021–2026, sub-component C5.1. – Strengthening the resilience of the health system, Improving the efficiency, quality and accessibility of the health system and investment in eHealth, and qualitative indicator – *until the end of Q4/2023*,

⁶⁹ Official Gazette, Nos. 103/20, 77/23.

⁷⁰ Official Gazette, No. 33/23.

⁷¹ Official Gazette, No. 46/23.

the waiting period for patients for diagnostic treatment will be reduced to 270 days by implementing the following activities:

- To the extent possible for individual hospitals, by opening additional appointments for tests/procedures for patients on the waiting list; procurement and engagement of additional personnel (workers, Tele-Cordis project, health centres and practice of family doctors, private polyclinics/hospitals) and techniques (equipment/devices);
- Developing and applying Guidelines for referencing the highest number of waiting patients and the longest waiting list (days) and introducing Guidelines into clinical practice;
- Announcing and, if necessary, initiating the suspension of authorisation to work outside working hours (privately) for hospital health professionals (where waiting lists exceed 250 days);
- A joint presentation of available appointments/procedures (for waiting lists) for all institutions (hospitals and health centres) in each county/City of Zagreb;
- Setting up a new operational body at the CHIF to continuously monitor waiting lists, draw up, supplement and apply the Guidelines;
- A recommendation to the Hospital Directorates to remind the patient (via sms, phone, mobile) 7 days before the date of the contracted search (when the patient drops out or is prevented from coming);
- Introducing a so-called “onco-referral” so that oncology patients do not wait for the service.

Reply to paragraph 29 (e) of the list of issues

213. The area of drug-related harm reduction has been regulated by strategic documents since 1996, and is covered by the new National Strategy for Action in the Field of Addiction for the Period up to 2030,⁷² which also lists as one of its specific strategic objectives the reduction of harms and risks associated with the use of addiction agents and addictive behaviours and an action to further strengthen existing harm reduction programmes already implemented, through:

- Reducing the spread of infectious sexual and blood-borne diseases, other concomitant diseases, deaths and preserving existing health among people who consume drugs and other means of addiction;
- Reducing recidivism and crimes committed by beneficiaries of harm reduction schemes;
- Including as many beneficiaries of harm reduction schemes as possible in counselling, treatment and re-socialisation programmes for social reintegration and recovery;
- Developing and deployment of innovative harm reduction programmes, medicines, and products for harm reduction.

214. Under the MoH-funded harm reduction programme the following activities are enabled: (a) the sharing of injection equipment (sparks and needles) and preservatives, as well as the (b) collection of infectious waste, the cleaning of the environment from discarded equipment, (c) the sharing of educational materials, counselling and giving information to people with drug addiction problems regarding the risk of overdose and protection against blood and sexually transmitted diseases. The targets focus on reducing health and social impacts, reducing drug-related deaths, reducing the number of crimes committed and recidivism, and including people with addiction in treatment and re-socialisation programmes.

215. Guidelines for drug-related harm reduction programmes were also adopted in 2015.

⁷² Official Gazette, No. 18/23.

216. The reduction of drug-related harms is also ensured through drug treatment systems. Addiction treatment means all structured interventions, pharmacological and/or psychosocial, aimed at reducing consumption or abstinence, and at helping people who use means of addiction or have developed some of the forms of behavioural addiction, with a view to improving their psychological, medical and social status.

217. Certain forms of psychosocial and rehabilitation treatment are carried out in the social care system, therapeutic communities, associations, and within prison and probation systems.

218. The basic form of organisation of addiction treatment is within the health system and is provided through outpatient treatment in mental health services, prevention and outpatient treatment of addiction diseases of the county public health service, and hospital treatment by specialised departments in general or psychiatric hospitals. Treatment with pharmacotherapy is also available to people with addiction problems. Substitution therapy in the treatment of addiction has been used since 1991 and has been free of charge for patients.

219. Since 2006, the Guidelines for the pharmacotherapy of metadone opioids and the Guidelines for the pharmacotherapy of buprenorfin opioids have been applied to standardise procedures and ensure appropriate substitution therapy. The type and form of substitution treatment is prescribed by specialist doctors while the treatment is given as part of primary care.⁷³⁷⁴

220. In addition, with a view to creating science-based and effective harm reduction programmes, a cohort study on mortality of people treated with psychoactive substances was carried out in 2021 between 2010 and 2019 and an assessment of the risk of overdose with (opioid) drugs in people with addiction problems, and in 2022 a survey of HIV prevalence, hepatitis C and risk behaviours in injecting drug users was carried out by sampling of controlled subjects and HIV and HCV prevalence survey on a random sample of injectable drug users.

Reply to paragraph 29 (f) of the list of issues

221. One of the most important MCV health protection programs is the Program of Preventive System Checks of Croatian Veterans, which aims to detect diseases early and increase their chances of healing. It has been implemented in cooperation with the MoH, the CIOPH and healthcare facilities throughout Croatia, with a total of 96.771 Croatian war veterans examined since the start of the program. In 2022, 1.214 Croatian war veterans were instructed to carry out medical rehabilitation, which is ensured on the basis of MHB's contractual cooperation with special hospitals.

222. The MCV has also implemented a National Programme of Psychosocial and Health Assistance for Homeland War participants and victims, which has been implemented continuously since 2014 with the aim of providing psychosocial and healthy assistance to participants and victims of the Homeland War.

223. The provision of continuous psychosocial and health care, works to improve the mental health of Croatian war veterans and victims, aims to reduce the number of suicides, raise the overall quality of living and psychosocial adaptation and functioning.

⁷³ There are several types of substitution programmes: (a) short detoxification (procedure to assist people with dependence to resolve abstinence syndrome after opioid cessation by gradually reducing the daily doses of opioid agonists for up to one month), (b) slow detoxification (procedure that facilitates the interruption of opioid agonists by slowing down the daily doses of opioid agonists for a period of one to 6 months or more), (c) short-term (temporary) maintenance of the same daily dose of metadone (procedure that facilitates maintenance of heroin abstinence with the required/adequate daily dose of opioid agonists that does not change over a period of 6 months or shorter duration), and (d) long-term maintenance – administration of appropriate daily doses of opioid agonist for a period longer than 6 months.

⁷⁴ The main indication for opioid agonist treatment (metadon, buprenorfin, etc.) is a confirmed diagnosis of addiction according to ICD-10 or DSM-IV criteria. Out of the total number of opioid addicts in the treatment system per year, over 80 % are involved in a form of pharmacological substitution therapy.

224. A total of 24,964 interventions were carried out in 2022 through the diagnosis, treatment and treatment of Croatian war veterans and victims in cooperation with the Regional Centres for Psycho Trauma and the National Centre for Psycho Trauma. In addition, there are 21 county psychosocial assistance centres, which operate stationarily (standby at the centre's premises on a daily bases) and mobile (team visits to homes). In this regard, 80,966 interventions were implemented in 2022 for a total of 69,346 beneficiaries and, by August 2023, a total of 48,528 stationary interventions for 41,911 beneficiaries and 402 mobile interventions for 388 beneficiaries and their families.

Reply to paragraph 29 (g) of the list of issues

225. The National Plan for Equalising Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2021–2027 and its Action Plan provides the measure *“Education and information of health professionals on communication with persons with disabilities and the rights under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”*. The CIOPH continuously provides training for health and non-health professionals on how to make appropriate contact and the specifics of healthcare for this vulnerable population.

226. Based on long-standing cooperation and the recognized needs to improve communication with persons with disabilities, the CIOPH, in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities and associations caring for persons with certain types of disabilities, published a brochure *“ways of achieving appropriate contact and the specificity of healthcare for persons with disabilities”*.⁷⁵ This brochure provides accepted terms and recommendations for the use of terms on persons with disabilities, as well as a comprehensive information on specific types of disability, advice and recommendations on communication and care for persons with disabilities.

227. In 2022, the MoH provided health institutions and healthcare providers at primary level with information on the difficulties encountered by people with autism spectrum disorders (hereinafter ASD) in carrying out medical interventions. On that occasion, a Protocol for the reception and health treatment of persons with ASD, drawn up by the Croatian Union of Autism Associations, was submitted to the handling and medical treatment of people with ASD. The MoH supports the Protocol, urges it to guide ASD patients and encourages additional organisational activities in identifying and adapting to the patient's needs, as well as working with the patient's escorts to prevent or at least minimise adverse events.

228. The Ordinance on norms and standards for the exercise of health activities⁷⁶ set out minimum standards and standards concerning the premises, workers and medical technical equipment for the provision of health services to be met by health institutions, healthcare workers performing a private healthcare activity and companies providing health services. It provides that, throughout its life, a building in which healthcare facilities are located must meet the basic requirements for the construction and other conditions laid down in the regulations on spatial planning and construction, which relate, inter alia, to safety and accessibility during use. It must also comply with the conditions laid down in the special regulation on ensuring the accessibility of buildings for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility (with the prescribed exception for buildings located in urban areas entered in Croatia's Cultural Property Register, which cannot ensure the required accessibility requirement). Health facilities are continuously investing, according to needs and opportunities, resources to remove construction barriers to ensure the accessibility of services in healthcare facilities, to provide information support for the deaf, blind and other persons with disabilities in healthcare facilities and to equip health facilities with the necessary functional aids, as well as to provide specific information relating to persons with disabilities.

⁷⁵ Brochure comprises various disabilities and guidelines for effective communication for patients with disabilities.

⁷⁶ Official Gazette, No. 52/20.

Reply to paragraph 29 (h) of the list of issues

229. In 2020 and 2021 1,139 suicide cases were registered (556 in 2020 and 583 in 2021). 662 cases (329 in 2020 and 333 in 2021) were recorded aged 0–65 and 477 cases aged 65+ (227 in 2020 and 250 in 2021).

230. An analysis by age group shows that the number and suicide rate are increasing with age. The 0–64 age rate is 10.3/100,000 in 2020 and 11.1/100,000 in 2021. For 65+ years, the rate is 26.3/100,000 in 2020 and 28.8/100,000 in 2021.

231. The analysis by sex shows a higher representation of the male sex in the total (882 men and 257 women).⁷⁷

232. The CIOPH is involved in the implementation of the actions of the Strategic Framework for the Development of Mental Health by 2030. (prepared in 2022). The European Joint Action has also started to be implemented (with: Joint Action – JA) “JA-ImpleMENTAL” of the European Commission project, which aims to support countries in improving mental health care. The project aims to support the EU Member States in implementing two good practices on mental health protection and suicide prevention: Mental health reform in Belgium and Austrian suicide prevention practice (so-called SUPRA). The CIOPH participates in this project as a partner and as leader of the Dissemination Work Package (WP2 Dissemination).

Reply to paragraph 30 of the list of issues

233. In November 2022, the Strategic Framework for Mental Health Development 2030 was adopted. The principles underpinning the Strategic Framework actions are:

- Territorial, temporal and economic accessibility;
- Justice and equity in the use of health services;
- Promoting and improving mental health in the field of work and education;
- The efficiency of health and social care systems;
- Improving the quality of medical work;
- The safety of patients and healthcare professionals; and
- Solidarity.

234. The areas of implementation are: preserving and improving mental health, prevention and early identification of mental health issues, increasing the availability of effective psychosocial interventions while respecting human rights, protecting community-based mental health, ensuring effectiveness, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Strategic Framework, and implementing the action plan and funding.

235. In 2020–2022, a Mental Health Literacy Programme for primary and secondary school teachers was implemented as part of the National Life *Healthy Programme*, the Health Education component.

236. The outcomes of the programme coincide with measures:

- 1.1. Raise awareness of healthy lifestyles and risk factors;

⁷⁷ Hanging is the most common way of carrying out suicide in both sexes. In the period under review, the most common methods of execution for 0–64 years are: hanging (56.3 %), self-harming with firearms (13.7 %), jump from height (9.4 %), self-poisoning (8.6 %) and self-harm with sharps (4.7 %). The methods of execution of suicide for the age of 65+ are registered with the following shares in the total for both sexes: hanging (59.3 %), self-harming with firearms (14.3 %), height jump (8.2 %), self-harm by drowning (6.1 %), self-poisoning (5.2 %), self-harm with sharps (3.8 %), self-harm (1.3 %), unspecified mode (0.8 %), jump or lie down in front of a moving objects (0.6 %), self-harm by fire/flame (0.2 %) and other unspecified mode (0.2 %).

- 1.2. Improve citizens' ability to read, assess and understand information related to mental health (health literacy) so that they can generate informed opinions;
- 1.3. Encourage activities that ensure a safe environment and reduce risk factors, and
- 1.4. Encourage activities that destigmatise mental illnesses and improve mental health in the general population, with a further focus on children's and young people's mental health.

237. Overall, over 2,612 educators were trained over the 2020–2022 period, at a basic level of programme, and an advanced level of mental health psychological first aid skills for 633 educational professionals in 17 counties.

Reply to paragraph 31 of the list of issues

238. In all hospital establishments engaged in gynaecology and obstetrics, the right to terminate pregnancy at the patient's request is ensured, and in accordance with the Law on Health Measures for Exercising the Right to Decide Freely on the Birth of Children.⁷⁸ In the case of a medical conscientious appeal, the hospital health institutions have secured this right in their institution or through contractual relations with staff who are not employees of that health institution or by cooperating with another health institution for the purposes of availability of that medical treatment.

Reply to paragraph 33 of the list of issues

239. See paragraph 211. SPR-ICESCR. The primary school leaving rate was 2.7 % in 2015.⁷⁹

240. The rate of early drop-outs from education and training is generally low and reading skills are good. At 2.3 % in 2022, the rate of early leavers from education and training is the lowest in the EU and far below the EU-level target of less than 9 %. Since 2012, this rate has decreased by 2.8 percentage points. The gender gap is also low at 1.3 pps and stable, with girls being less likely to leave education early. Pupils from rural areas are slightly more likely to leave education early (3.2 %) than those living in towns (2.2 %).⁸⁰

241. Investment in improving the relevance of vocational education and training (hereafter: VET) for the labour market. The employment rate of recent VET graduates was higher in 2022 than in 2021, but still below the EU average (75.9 % vs 79.7 %). By contrast, the share of students in secondary vocational education is one of the highest in the EU (70.0 % in 2021 vs the EU average of 48.7 %). In addition, the employment rate of low-skilled workers in 2022. (40.4 %) lags significantly behind the employment rates of medium-skilled (69.2 %) and high-skilled workers (84.7 %). This indicates that skills mismatches are still high among the most vulnerable low-qualified persons. To address this problem, new standards of qualifications and occupations are being developed and VET programmes are being modernised faster and aligned with these standards. However, a system of skills mapping and forecasting, involving continuous feedback from social partners, still needs to be developed. In 2022, 40 % of VET graduates (ISCED 3-4) participated in work-based learning during education and training (EU average 60.1 %). The Croatian ESF+ programme will invest in making VET more relevant to labour market needs and incentivising companies to implement work-based learning. National VET and lifelong learning objectives are to improve the relevance, quality and attractiveness of VET.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Official Gazette, Nos. 18/78, 31/86, 47/89, 88/99.

⁷⁹ European Commission survey, published at: https://studentski.hr/studenti/vijesti/hrvati-sve-vise-odustaju-od-studiranja#google_vignette.

⁸⁰ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Education and Training Monitor 2023 – Croatia, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2023/hr/country-reports/croatia.html> <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/24374>.

⁸¹ Ibidem.

242. In April 2020, the MSE adopted the language and culture curriculum of the Roma national minority in primary and secondary schools in Croatia (model C). The introduction of the language and culture curriculum of the Roma national minority is a significant step forward and progress for Roma people in preserving the language, tradition, and cultural identity.

243. Roma children participate in the educational process on an equal footing with others and are included in mainstream educational groups. The National Roma Inclusion Plan 2021–2027 aims to ensure that every child of early and pre-school age of Romani background attends a kindergarten free of charge. Furthermore, as the organisation of early childhood education and care is the responsibility of local (regional) self-government units, they also earmark additional funds for the upbringing and education of children belonging to national minorities. Also, an educational group attending a child of the Roma national minority may include a Roma facilitator whose role is to overcome the language barrier between a child of the Roma national minority and other children and educators, as well as provide comprehensive support. All children in the year before going to primary school must attend a pre-school programme, which currently stands at 250 hours per year.

Reply to paragraph 33 of the list of issues

244. The total number of students enrolled in higher education institutions in the academic year 2020/2021. was 155,627 – 89,187 female students (57.3%), and 66,440 male students (42.7%). In 2021, a total of 33,415 students graduated/completed their studies, 20,369 (61%) female students and 13,046 (39%) male students.

245. In the academic year 2021/2022, a total of 154,894 students were enrolled in higher education institutions, female students 89,270 (57.6%) and male students 65,624 (42.4%). In 2022, a total of 30,875 students graduated/completed their studies, 18,762 (60.8%) female students and 12,113 (39.2%) male students.

246. In the academic year 2022/2023, a total of 151,827 students – 87,969 female students (57.9%) and 63,858 students (42.1%) were enrolled.

247. The MSE implements a series of measures aimed at granting students who have been granted temporary protection in Croatia access to higher education in accordance with the LITP. The aim is to offer them the possibility to continue their studies in line with the free quota for full-time students and the available capacities of higher education institutions. In addition, on the basis of their registration in the Higher Education Information System (ISVU) and the Student Rights Information System (ISSP), students with temporary protection in Croatia are entitled to subsidised diets in accordance with the MSE Decision on granting aid to cover food costs and the Ordinance on the Conditions and Manner of Exercising the Right to Cover the Student's Meal Expenses⁸². MSE by means of specific decisions adopted in accordance with Article 5(3) of the Ordinance on the Conditions and Manner of Exercising the Right of Students⁸³ in Regular Status to Subsidised Housing is to ensure a place in student homes for students who have been granted temporary protection in Croatia.

Reply to paragraph 34 of the list of issues

248. UNICEF Croatia, the MSE, the OFHRRNM, the Croatian Roma Youth Organisation and seven primary schools provided targeted support to Roma pupils at increased risk of dropout due to irregular school attendance due to the earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, eleven mentors helped 286 Roma pupils improve their learning routines, have a more positive learning experience, improve educational outcomes, and broaden their educational aspirations. None of the pupils, who had the support of a mentor, repeated the

⁸² Official Gazette, Nos. 120/13, 8/14, 113/22.

⁸³ Official Gazette No. 68/23.

grade or left school. Roma children's mentors could rely on a support network led by two university professors and a Roma national minority advisor.⁸⁴

Reply to paragraph 35 of the list of issues

249. The rights of national minorities have also improved in the past period in most areas. The RC is constantly upgrading the system of protection of the rights of national minorities in the legislative field of law in constant dialogue with representatives of national minorities. The implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities also constitutes the implementation of obligations under international treaties to which the RC is a party. On 30 December 2020, as part of the Government Programme for the period 2020–2024, the GRC adopted a Decision adopting the Operational Programmes of National Minorities for the period 2021–2024. These Operational Programmes are a continuation of the ongoing work of the Croatian Government to improve the existing level of protection of the rights of national minorities and build on the National Minorities Operational Programmes for the period 2017–2020. The 2021–2024 Operational Programmes of national minorities contain activities relating to all national minorities listed in the source bases of the Croatian Constitution and specific operational programmes relating to individual national minorities, given their specificities and the need to improve their existing level of protection. Specific operational programmes were developed for Serbian, Italian, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Albanian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Macedonian, Slovenian, Roma, Austrian, German, Polish, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Jewish national minorities. A number of activities, both in general and in a specific part, are aimed at ensuring the exercise of the rights of national minorities in accordance with the Constitutional Law on the Law of National Minorities and other regulations. Those rights are, among others:

- The use of their language and script, both in private and in public use, and in official use;
- Education in their language and script;
- The use of its signs and symbols;
- Cultural autonomy by maintaining, developing and expressing one's own culture and the preservation and protection of its cultural goods and traditions;
- The right to manifest their religion and to form religious communities together with other members of that religion;
- Access to the media and the performance of public communication activities;
- (Receiving and disseminating information) in their language and script;
- Self-organising and association in order to achieve common interests;
- Representation in representative bodies at the state and local level and in administrative and judicial bodies;
- Participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public life and local affairs management through councils and representatives of national minorities;
- Protection against any activity which threatens or risks endangering their survival, the exercise of their rights and freedoms.

250. A total of € 258,982,153 was spent on the implementation of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities between 2021 and 2023. Further information on the reporting period can be found at the following links:

251. Sixth report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: – <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/croatia>

⁸⁴ Source: European Commission: Education and Training Monitor 2022 Croatia, Luxembourg: EU Bubikas Office, 2022, p. 09.

252. Seventh report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Minority or Regional Languages: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/reports-and-recommendations#%2228993157%22:\[3\]](https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/reports-and-recommendations#%2228993157%22:[3]).

253. Data received from the Electronic Media Agency on the allocation of the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media by the following categories:

	2020.	2021.	2022.	Total by category
National minorities in Croatia	HRK 1.788.506	1.687.231 HRK	HRK 1.645.626	HRK 5.121.364
Promotion of cultural diversity and fostering of heritage	HRK 3.728.932	HRK 4.016.361	HRK 3.808.314	HRK 11.553.607
Fostering specific cultural projects and events	HRK 2.026.436	HRK 1.432.408	HRK 1.438.760	HRK 4.927.605
Promotion of creative work in Croatian language dialects	HRK 1.538.097	HRK 1.290.235	HRK 1.188.505	HRK 4.016.839
Total by year	HRK 9.081.972	HRK 8.456.236	HRK 8.081.205	
Number of programmes in the National Minority category in Croatia in national minority languages per year	16	15	16	

Reply to paragraph 36 and 37 of the list of issues

254. See document CERD/C/SR.2988⁸⁵, paragraphs 36–38.

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255. One of the objectives of the 2023 National Reform Plan is to increase access to digital infrastructure and services among general population and firms, including the older population.

⁸⁵ (under Consideration of State Report – Summary records)
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2659&Lang=en.