



**Report submitted by Croatia
pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1
of the Council of Europe Convention
on preventing and combating violence
against women and domestic violence
(First thematic evaluation round)**

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GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

**REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON PREVENTING
AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE**

1st Thematic Evaluation Round

“Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice”

Zagreb, 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as: the Convention) in relation to the Republic of Croatia entered into force on 1 October 2018.

By signing and ratifying the Convention, the Republic of Croatia expressed its interest and joined the efforts of the member states of the Council of Europe and the European Union in taking the necessary measures to create conditions for combating violence against women and domestic violence. At the same time, a continuing commitment was expressed to take measures aimed at promoting equality between women and men, as well as combating all forms of discrimination and violence against women, including domestic violence. Although the legislation of the Republic of Croatia was already largely harmonised with the provisions of the Convention, its confirmation created further legal preconditions for consistent and more effective application of domestic legislation and the Convention itself.

After the entry into force of the Convention, following its commitments, the Republic of Croatia submitted its first report on the implementation of the Convention in February 2022. After the evaluation visit in October 2022, Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as: GREVIO) published, in the autumn of 2023, its Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in respect of the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter referred to as: Baseline Evaluation Report in respect of the Republic of Croatia), together with the comments of the Republic of Croatia on GREVIO's recommendations.

In December 2023, the Committee of the Parties to the Convention issued recommendations to the Republic of Croatia regarding its further implementation.

Acknowledging the fact that the baseline evaluation process, which provided an overview of the implementation of the full range of provisions of the Convention, has been completed in almost all States Parties, GREVIO launched the first thematic evaluation round on the theme "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice". Consequently, in March 2026, the Republic of Croatia, through an appointed representative in the Committee of the Parties, received the GREVIO Questionnaire.

The aim of the first round of the thematic evaluation is to obtain information on the implementation of certain articles of the Convention, contained in the GREVIO Questionnaire, considering the progress since the submission of the Baseline Evaluation Report in respect of the Republic of Croatia in February 2022.

The preparation of this report was coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, as the central state administration body responsible for the protection of children and families, which is designated by the Law on the Ratification of the Convention

as the body responsible for the coordination, implementation, supervision and assessment of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Convention.

The report was prepared in cooperation with the state authorities responsible for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, namely the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets, the Croatian Employment Service, the Academy of Social Welfare, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

The report was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

I: CHANGES IN COMPREHENSIVE AND CO-ORDINATED POLICIES, FUNDING AND DATA COLLECTION IN THE AREA OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Article 7: Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies

- *Political priorities and national strategic planning acts*

Combating gender-based violence, especially violence against women and domestic violence, ranks high among the priorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

This is also evidenced by the fact that the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the mandate term of 2024 – 2028, explicitly includes, within Priority 3, A just Croatia, Objective 3.3., Combating violence against women, children and domestic violence.

In order to better coordinate, implement, supervise and assess policies and measures to prevent all forms of violence, the Government of the Republic of Croatia has prescribed the establishment of an independent organisational unit in the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy as one of its activities. Following this, in April 2025, by adopting the Regulation on the Internal Organisation of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the Government of the Republic of Croatia established an internal organisational unit, namely the Service for the Development and Coordination of Policies to Combat all Forms of Domestic Violence, Violence against Women and Peer Violence. This Service is responsible for performing the tasks of the coordinating body for the implementation of the Convention. The prescribed tasks of the Service, include performing all activities at the national level related to the development of policies to combat gender-based violence, coordinating the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, as well as activities at the international level, which include, inter alia, cooperation with the GREVIO Secretariat and the Committee of the Parties to the Convention. Until the establishment of the Service in question, the activities of the coordinating body were performed within the Service for Children and Family Policies.

With particular regard to the need to include experts with in-depth knowledge of the provisions and requirements of the Convention, as well as the area of protection against gender-based violence, a Ministry official who has been working on the development of policies to combat domestic violence and violence against women, i.e. gender-based violence, since 2003, and has also continuously represented the Republic of Croatia on the Committee of the Parties since the ratification of the Convention, was appointed Head of the Service.

Since protection against violence should be addressed on an interdepartmental basis, all competent state authorities take measures within their competence and, during 2025, coordinators of the implementation of the Convention were appointed within the competent state authorities.

To ensure the conditions for consistent implementation of all measures, the Government of the Republic of Croatia has adopted several strategic documents aimed at the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of victims of violence, as follows:

- National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027
- National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period until 2027
- National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027
- National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029
- National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period up to 2030

National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027

In March 2023, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027*¹ and the associated *Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan for the period until 2024*². The National Plan contains 7 priorities as follows: 1. Promoting women's human rights and gender equality; 2. Improving the position of women in the labour market; 3. Combating violence against women; 4. Gender-sensitive education; 5. Improving the position of women in places of political and public decision-making; 6. Principles of gender equality in public policies; 7. Promoting gender equality in international politics and cooperation. At the same time, specific objectives arise from the priorities in question, in particular, Specific Objective 3. "Creating preconditions for the elimination of gender-based violence". The purpose of this National Plan is to create conditions for a society of equal opportunities for all citizens.

For the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the National Plan, in July 2023, an Interdepartmental Working Group was established, consisting of representatives of the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, including representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Ministry of Health, Ministry

¹<https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/NPRS%202027%20APRS%202024//Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20ravnopravnost%20spolova,%20za%20razdoblje%20do%202027..pdf>

²<https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/NPRS%202027%20APRS%202024//Akcijski%20plan%20za%20ravnopravnost%20spolova%20za%20razdoblje%20do%202024..pdf>

of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Ministry of Demography and Immigration, Education and Teacher Training Agency, Agency for Vocational Education and Adult Education, Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development, State School for Public Administration and Judicial Academy.

The implementation of the measures set out in the National Plan, from its adoption through the end of 2025, demonstrated overall progress, with positive developments recorded in key areas, such as the position of women in the labour market, the reconciliation of work and private life, the strengthening of systems for preventing and eliminating violence against women and of the education system, the creation of conditions for greater participation of women in public life, the strengthening of the gender equality perspective in public policies, and the increased visibility of the Republic of Croatia at the international level in the area of gender equality. Numerous trainings, campaigns and awareness-raising activities have been carried out that have contributed to a greater understanding of the problem and improved the perception of the state's effectiveness in combating discrimination.

In addition to monitoring the implementation of the measures of the National Plan, the Interdepartmental Working Group is also in charge of developing a new Action Plan for the implementation of the ongoing *National Plan* for the period until 2027.

National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period until 2027

The Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination in March 2023,³ as well as two related action plans – the Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2023 and the Action Plan for the Suppression of Discrimination for 2023.

With the expiration of these action plans, new action plans for the coming years have been developed. During 2025, a Working Group was established to develop the Draft Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2026 - 2027 and the Draft Action Plan for the Suppression of Discrimination 2026 - 2027.⁴ The purpose of the National Plan is to ensure, through multiannual planning, coordinated action of state administration bodies in the field of human rights protection and anti-discrimination, to supplement the relevant existing sectoral policies and to raise the level of knowledge and awareness of equality in order for all citizens to exercise their rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and international instruments for the protection of human rights.

³<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20ZPLJP%20razdoblje%20do%202027.pdf?vel=1552914>

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacional%20Plan%20for%20the%20Protection%20and%20Promotion%20of%20Human%20Rights%20and%20Combating%20Discrimination%20for%20the%20period%20to%202027.pdf?vel=1552892>

⁴ <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/nacionalni-plan-zastite-i-promicanja-ljudskih-prava-i-suzbijanja-diskriminacije-za-razdoblje-do-2027-godine/989>

The national plan contains two priorities. The *Protection and promotion of human rights* priority includes improving the effectiveness of public administration and the judiciary in the area of human rights protection, raising awareness of instruments for the protection and promotion of human rights among citizens and institutions, facilitating access to justice and public bodies, as well as strengthening the mechanisms for monitoring and implementing the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities. The *Prevention and suppression of all forms of discrimination* priority includes improving the prevention of discrimination and providing support to victims of discrimination, enhancing mechanisms for combating hate crimes, raising awareness of the importance of combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, as well as fostering a culture of remembrance of victims of genocide.

The monitoring of the implementation of the measures set out in the National Plan shows regular and continuous activities in protection and promotion of human rights and combating discrimination. Several new EU initiatives have raised common standards in areas of direct relevance to the rule of law, related to the specific objectives of the National Plan, in particular the protection of freedom and pluralism of the media online and offline⁵, the strengthening of independent bodies such as national equality bodies⁶, the promotion and protection of an enabling space for civic action⁷ in which both citizens and active and independent civil society have at their disposal adequate conditions and resources for constructive participation and engagement. The progress of the Republic of Croatia was also noted in the European Commission's Rule of Law Report for 2024⁸.

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

In December 2022, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027*,⁹ and the *Action Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2024*¹⁰. With the expiration of the Action Plan in question, a new action plan for the period until 2027 has been developed and is expected to be adopted soon. The purpose of the National Plan

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act) and Directive (EU) 2024/1069 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation'). Work continues the 2021 Recommendation on the safety of journalists (C(2021) 6650, 16 September 2021) and the proposals protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation', C(2022)2428, 27 April 2022).

⁶ Directive (EU) 2024/1500 on standards for equality bodies and Council Directive (EU) 2024/1499 on standards for equality bodies

⁷ Commission Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes (C(2023) 8627).

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9abb25c0-0dfe-4006-8753257844de834e_hr?filename=28_1_58065_coun_chap_croatia_hr.pdf

⁹ https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Dokumenti/NACIONALNI%20PLAN%20ZA%20SUZBIJANJE%20SEKSUALNOG%20NASILJA%20I%20SEKSUALNOG%20UZNEMIRAVANJA%20DO%202027.g_final.pdf?vel=1380401

¹⁰ <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Dokumenti/AKCIJSKI%20PLAN%20ZA%20SUZBIJANJE%20SEKSUALNOG%20NASILJA%20I%20SEKSUALNOG%20UZNEMIRAVANJA%20DO%202024.%20g.pdf?vel=1119188>

is to achieve a coordinated societal response to sexual violence and sexual harassment, ensure effective action to protect victims, promote their rights, and raise public awareness of the unacceptability and harmfulness of such conduct.

The national plan contains two priorities. The *Creating the conditions for a life free from sexual violence and sexual harassment* priority includes the prevention of sexual violence and sexual harassment. The *Achieving a higher quality of life and greater social inclusion of victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment* priority includes improving care and ensuring the availability of support services for victims of sexual offences, as well as ensuring an appropriate response to perpetrators of sexual offences.

The measures of the National Plan emphasise the strengthening of the prevention of sexual violence and sexual harassment through the development and implementation of specialised prevention programmes and gender equality programmes in educational institutions, the introduction of content on combating sexual violence and working with victims in study programmes at higher education institutions that train professionals to work with victims, the development of child protection policies within national sports federations, the education of children on the dangers and risks of using the internet, mobile phones and other communication networks. Additional emphasis is placed on the need to train tourism sector employees on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children at tourist destinations, the interdepartmental training of professionals who come into contact with victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment (professionals working in the police, social welfare, healthcare, education and judicial systems), and the education of professionals working with children in the education system to recognise and understand victimisation and to ensure the protection of child victims of sexual violence.

Special emphasis is placed on the establishment of a network of specialised services for victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment, while ensuring a coordinated system of support for victims of sexual violence, with clearly developed criteria for the provision of services and clearly defined types of services.

Regarding child victims of sexual violence, particular importance is attached to the measure aimed at establishing a Children's House, based on the Barnahus model, as an interdisciplinary and multisectoral centre for child victims and witnesses. In addition, particular emphasis is placed on the measure aimed at establishing a Centre for the Treatment of Perpetrators of Sexual Violence against Children at the Vrapče Psychiatric Clinic in Zagreb, thereby further strengthening services for perpetrators aimed at raising awareness of the harmfulness and unacceptability of sexual violence and preventing future violence against children.

Monitoring of the implementation of the measures set out in the National Plan, from its adoption until the end of 2025, demonstrated continuity in the efforts of the competent state authorities to implement the policy for the protection of victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment, with an emphasis on strengthening prevention, raising public awareness, improving interdepartmental cooperation and enhancing the capacity of competent institutions to identify, report and prosecute these criminal offences in a timely manner. This progress is reflected in

activities aimed at raising public awareness of the unacceptability of sexual violence and sexual harassment, improving the educational media programme and providing training for various groups of professionals and stakeholders. The successful implementation is also supported by activities aimed at preventive work with children and young people, strengthening institutional capacities for the detection and prosecution of offences and the provision of support to victims, enhancing interdepartmental cooperation, further improving the availability of specialised support services for victims, and developing treatment programmes for perpetrators.

National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period up to 2030

Since 2002, the Government of the Republic of Croatia has been developing a system for combating trafficking in human beings and has made sustained efforts to promote and protect human rights, paying particular attention to the rights of victims, especially their need for integration into society, as well as sanctioning perpetrators.

The National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period until 2030¹¹ and the Action Plan for the Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings for the period from 2024 to 2026¹² were adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in October 2024. These documents are aimed at developing and upgrading the national referral system of trafficking in human beings, with particular emphasis on prevention, victim identification, and strengthening assistance and protection for victims of trafficking in human beings. For the purpose of full implementation, it is necessary to improve cooperation at regional and international level.

National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029

Since 2004, the Republic of Croatia has been systematically implementing activities and measures aimed at protection against domestic violence, contained in the previous four national strategic documents in the area of protection against domestic violence.

The National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029¹³ and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the period until the end of 2026¹⁴, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in December 2025 represent a continuation of the systematic interdepartmental action of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and competent state authorities aimed at the prevention and protection of victims of domestic violence, especially women victims of gender-based violence.

The purpose of the National Plan is to achieve a timely and effective social response to violence in order to ensure appropriate actions to protect the victim. An additional purpose of this

¹¹<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20suzbijanja%20trgovanja%20judima%20do%202030.pdf>

¹²<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Akcijski%20plan%20suzbijanja%20trgovanja%20judima%202024-2026.pdf>

¹³<https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Strategije/Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20od%20nasilja%20nad%20zenama%20i%20nasilja%20u%20obitelji%20do%202029.pdf?vel=1530845>

¹⁴<https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Strategije/Akcijski%20plan%20za%20provedbu%20nacionalnog%20plana%20za%20od%20nasilja%20nad%20zenama%20i%20nasilja%20u%20obitelji%20do%20kraj%202026.pdf?vel=741599>

document is to promote the victims' rights and to develop public awareness of the unacceptability of violent behaviour towards any person, especially women as the most common victims of gender-based violence. The National Plan covers 2 public policy priorities. The *Reducing the risk of new cases of gender-based violence* priority includes the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence. The second priority, *Achieving a higher level of response to crisis situations*, includes the area of improving protection and support for victims of violence, as well as improving the effectiveness of the intervention system in relation to violence perpetrators.

The National Plan provides responses to the GREVIO recommendations made in the framework of the Baseline Evaluation Report in respect of the Republic of Croatia and each measure is based on one or more GREVIO recommendations. The measures of the National Plan are aimed at strengthening prevention and the protection and support of victims, with particular emphasis on measures aimed at raising public awareness of the unacceptability of all forms of violence against women, domestic violence and gender-based violence through the implementation of a media campaign, as well as raising awareness among students of the harmful effects of gender-based violence and possibilities to protect their rights through educational activities in educational institutions. Additional emphasis is placed on measures aimed at educating a greater number of people who come into contact with victims of gender-based violence in the course of their work, namely county representatives on the possibilities and advantages of introducing gender-responsive budgeting, media representatives on reporting on cases of violence against women, and professionals working in the healthcare, education, police, judicial and social welfare systems on gender-based violence, thereby creating the conditions for the timely identification of violence and a more effective response to victims. Special emphasis is placed on the training of professionals of the Croatian Institute for Social Work in order to ensure a more effective application of family legislation in the context of victims' rights and more effective responses to cases of gender-based violence. An important component of the training is the application of the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, as well as family legislation in the context of the rights of victims of violence; understanding trauma; coercive control; post-separation violence and femicide; recognising the harmful effects of applying the pseudo-concept of alienation as a continuation of domestic violence; as well as topics of manipulation of children and non-cooperation of victims of violence. Strengthening the capacities of professionals responsible for implementing family-law protection measures within the social welfare system is important for further raising awareness of the rights and needs of victims of gender-based violence and creates the conditions for more effective intervention and professional practice. Training for Family Centre staff is a prerequisite for further strengthening the system of support for child victims and witnesses of violence and for providing more effective assistance to women victims through psychosocial counselling (psychotherapeutic and psychosocial support).

Strengthening interdepartmental cooperation is particularly emphasised through the measures of the National Plan and includes interdepartmental training of members of county and city/municipal teams for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic

violence and other threats that act in cases of violence (representatives of the police, social welfare, healthcare, education and judicial systems, as well as civil society organisations). Strengthening the role of the coordinating body for the implementation of the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is one of the set measures, and it refers to providing the necessary human resources, specifically trained in the area of gender-based violence, as well as strengthening the cooperation among all authorities responsible for implementing the provisions of the Convention. Additional development of services intended for victims of gender-based violence is a special task of the National Plan and includes providing assistance to victims through counselling services, accommodation and support for victims in shelters, employment of victims, housing for victims after they leave shelters and improving the position of migrant women and female applicants for international protection who are victims of gender-based violence through training programmes for police officers. Work with perpetrators, aimed at reducing recidivism and helping perpetrators change their behaviour, focuses on the implementation of psychosocial treatment programmes for perpetrators of violence within the judicial and healthcare systems.

The implementation of the National Plan during 2025 shows significant progress in strengthening the comprehensive system of prevention of violence against women and domestic violence, with the results pointing to the strengthening of institutional capacities, the development of professional services and the improvement of interdepartmental cooperation, with visible improvements in the availability and quality of protection, support and prevention measures. Emphasis is placed on the contribution of systematic investment in professional knowledge and competences of professionals working in the judicial, education, social welfare, healthcare and police systems, thereby ensuring a more consistent, professional and sensitive response to cases of violence. Progress is particularly evident in the increased availability of support services and the development of measures aimed at the social and economic inclusion of victims. At the same time, public prevention activities and educational campaigns have contributed to raising awareness of the unacceptability of violence, encouraging reporting of violence and creating a social environment that promotes equality and respect for human rights.

- *Definitions of violence against women and domestic violence*

In addition to strategic documents, legislation that was further improved after the entry into force of the Convention in relation to the Republic of Croatia is of particular importance.

The Act on Amendments to the Criminal Act of 2024¹⁵ introduced the definition of gender-based violence against women¹⁶, in accordance with Article 3(d) of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. In addition to defining gender-based violence against women, the Criminal Act¹⁷ also provides a

¹⁵, Official Gazette, No. 36/24

¹⁶ Article 87(32)

¹⁷ Official Gazette, No. 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 114/23, 36/24 and 136/25

legal basis for a stricter sentencing policy where the criminal offence of violence committed disproportionately affects women.

Furthermore, these amendments to the Criminal Act also amended the legal definition of the criminal offence of intrusive behaviour¹⁸ by removing the requirement that such conduct be persistent and continue over a prolonged period of time. This amendment was carried out in accordance with the Baseline Evaluation Report in respect of the Republic of Croatia, which recognised that the period in question ("persistently and for a long time") was interpreted by individual competent courts as a period of at least three months, which is why GREVIO considered that a certain number of victims of this criminal offence remained without criminal protection.

Furthermore, the aforementioned amendments to the Criminal Act of 2024 revised the criminal offence of sexual harassment¹⁹ in such a way that, in addition to repeated sexual harassment, one act of sexual harassment is sufficient for the existence of criminal liability, provided that it is a case of gross harassment. In this way, the shortcoming pointed out by GREVIO in the Baseline Evaluation Report in respect of the Republic of Croatia in relation to the practice in the application of this criminal offence is also eliminated.

Also, in order to strengthen the protection of victims of sexual harassment in intimate relationships, sexual harassment was removed from the Protection against Domestic Violence Act²⁰ as a form of domestic violence constituting a misdemeanour. Sexual harassment of a close person has been explicitly included within the scope of the criminal offence under Article 156 of the Criminal Act, and a more severe penalty is provided for it. Thus, the sexual harassment of a close person or a person who is particularly vulnerable due to age, illness, disability, addiction, pregnancy, or severe physical or mental impairment has been established as an aggravated form of the criminal offence²¹, punishable by imprisonment for a term of up to three years.

The 2024 amendments to the Criminal Act, with a view to more clearly distinguishing the blanket criminal offence of domestic violence²² from the misdemeanours prescribed by the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, clarified in the statutory definition of the criminal offence what constitutes a serious violation of the regulations on protection against domestic violence. By introducing the elements "gross" and "repeated" in the legal definition of the criminal offence, it is indicated that a serious violation of the regulations on protection against domestic violence may relate either to the severity of the conduct or to its frequency or continuity. Considering that physical violence referred to in Article 35 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence also includes violence resulting in the death of the victim, a new criminal offence, Aggravated

¹⁸ Article 140

¹⁹ Article 156

²⁰ Official Gazette, No. 70/17, 129/19, 84/21, 114/22 and 36/24

²¹ Article 156(2)

²² Article 179a

Murder of a Female Person²³ (Femicide), has been introduced into the Criminal Act. This criminal offence is punishable by imprisonment of at least ten years or long-term imprisonment, which, in accordance with Article 46, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Act may not be shorter than twenty-one years nor longer than forty years. This criminal offence provides for the non-obsolence of criminal prosecution and the non-obsolence of the execution of the sentence.

In addition to the introduction of a new criminal offence of aggravated murder of a woman, the criminal offence of aggravated murder²⁴ was also revised on the same occasion. The amendment consists in the fact that for this criminal offence it is sufficient that the murder was committed against a close person (whose meaning of the term is prescribed in Article 87, paragraph 9) or, alternatively, to any other person who has previously been abused by the perpetrator (it is not required that the perpetrator has also been convicted of previous physical or psychological abuse). Therefore, the two aforementioned circumstances are no longer considered cumulatively, as was previously the case (when, in view of the victim of the offence, the qualifying circumstance for aggravated murder was the murder of a close person whom the perpetrator had previously abused), but alternatively. This broadens the scope of criminal-law protection, as a greater number of situations may be classified as a criminal offence of aggravated murder, which carries a more severe penalty (at least ten years in prison or long-term imprisonment) than the criminal offence of murder²⁵ (imprisonment for a term of five to twenty years).

The aforementioned amendments to the Criminal Act also introduced a stricter statutory sentencing policy for a number of criminal offences by prescribing new qualified forms or by increasing the imposed penalties for existing forms of criminal offences. Thus, for the criminal offence of rape²⁶ (the basic form of rape not involving the use of force or threats), the prison sentence was increased from one to five years to three to eight years. This has precluded the possibility of substituting a prison sentence with community service for this criminal offence. For the aggravated form of the criminal offence of rape²⁷ (involving the use of force or threats), the prescribed prison sentence was increased from three to ten years to five to twelve years.

For aggravated criminal offences against sexual freedom²⁸, the prescribed prison sentence was increased from three to ten years to five to twelve years.

Committing a criminal offence against a close person, out of hatred, or against a person particularly vulnerable due to age, severe physical or mental disability or pregnancy has been established as an aggravated form of the criminal offence of violent conduct²⁹, punishable by a prison sentence of six months to five years.

²³ Article 111a

²⁴ Article 111

²⁵ Article 110

²⁶ Article 153(1)

²⁷ Article 153(2)

²⁸ Article 154(1)

²⁹ Article 323a(2)

In the case of the criminal offence of participation in an affray³⁰, the commission of the offence out of hatred or against a close person or a person who is particularly vulnerable due to age, severe physical or mental impairment or pregnancy has likewise been established as an aggravated form of the criminal offence, punishable by a prison sentence of six months to five years³¹, or by a prison sentence of one to ten years where the offender is the organiser or leader of a group of three or more persons, or the organiser of the affray or attack³².

Within the criminal offence of grievous bodily injury resulting in death³³, an aggravated form of the offence has also been introduced, punishable by a prison sentence of five to fifteen years, where the offence is committed out of hatred or against a close person³⁴.

The remaining amendments to the 2024 Criminal Act related to the improvement of the legislative framework for protection against violence against women and domestic violence include the following:

The provision on sentencing³⁵ has been amended to explicitly include the consequences suffered by the victim as one of the circumstances to be considered by the court when determining the sentence. In each individual case, the court will assess the significance of this circumstance for the determination of the sentence.

A minimum distance has been prescribed which the court may impose on a convicted person when ordering the security measure prohibiting the person from approaching, harassing or stalking, and within which the convicted person must not approach the victim, another person or group of persons, or a place specified by the security measure. The minimum distance may not be less than 100 meters³⁶.

The list of criminal offences for which the security measure of protective supervision following the full execution of a prison sentence is to be imposed on the perpetrator, regardless of the length of the prison sentence imposed, has been expanded to include criminal offences under Title XVIII. Criminal offences against marriage, family and children, a title which includes the criminal offence of domestic violence³⁷.

Further improvements to the legislative framework for protection against violence against women and domestic violence will be pursued through the work of the Working Group for the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, established on 3 March 2026 by a decision of the Minister of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation. The aim and tasks of this Working Group are to prepare a Draft Proposal for the Act on Amendments to the Criminal Act and to adopt

³⁰ Article 122

³¹ Article 122(2)

³² Article 122(4)

³³ Article 120

³⁴ Article 120(2)

³⁵ Article 47

³⁶ Article 73(1)

³⁷ Article 179a

conclusions on the necessary amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act³⁸. In addition to representatives of the academic community and judicial officials, the Working Group also includes representatives of civil society organisations directly involved in working with victims of violence against women and domestic violence, as well as a representative of the Office of the Ombudswoman for Gender Equality.

- *Rights of women and women victims of violence at the heart of public policies*

Policies to combat violence against women in the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027*, the *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027* and the *National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029* are based on an approach that recognises violence as a serious violation of women's human rights, emphasising the need to protect and empower women through legislative and institutional frameworks, as well as through specific measures for prevention and support for victims.

The empowerment of women is ensured by strengthening legal protection, enhancing victims' rights, training professionals (including the police, judiciary, social welfare system and other stakeholders), raising public awareness and, in particular, involving civil society organisations in the implementation of all measures. The intersectionality of policies is strengthened by identifying the needs of particularly vulnerable groups of women (for example, women with disabilities, members of minorities, migrant women, LGBTIQ persons) who are exposed to multiple forms of discrimination and by implementing measures to protect them and prevent violence. In addition, interdepartmental cooperation and coordination between different institutions has been established and further encouraged, ensuring a comprehensive and integrated approach to the protection of women and combating violence.

The competent state authorities promote the application of a gender equality perspective in the development of public policies and, consequently, in the measures for implementing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, on which various public policies are based. An example of this treatment is certainly the new *National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029*.

Pursuant to *the Gender Equality Act*³⁹, state administration bodies and legal entities predominantly owned by the state are obliged to develop action plans for the promotion and establishment of gender equality (Art. 11). Several measures in individual Action Plans provide for action by the competent authorities in response to various forms of gender-based violence, such as harassment, sexual harassment or sexual violence.

Furthermore, the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the period up to 2027* provides for a measure aimed at strengthening county gender equality commissions as working and advisory

³⁸ Official Gazette, No. 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 80/22, 36/24, 72/25 and 13/26

³⁹ Official Gazette, No. 82/08 and 69/17

bodies of county assemblies, with the purpose of ensuring continuous communication, cooperation and training for members of county commissions, thereby increasing their visibility, highlighting their importance and enabling their competent participation in the development of gender-sensitive policies at county level.

In addition, by-laws, such as the Protocol on Procedures during Voluntary Return of Victims in Human Trafficking⁴⁰, the Protocol on the Integration/Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings⁴¹, the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Domestic Violence⁴², the Protocol for the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crime⁴³ and the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence⁴⁴ prescribe a victim-centred approach and ensure that victims have timely access to information.

The Protocol on Procedures during Voluntary Return of Victims in Human Trafficking (2017) is a key national document defining interdepartmental cooperation in the Republic of Croatia with the aim of ensuring a humane, dignified and safe return of victims to their country of origin or place of residence. The purpose of the Protocol is to establish the procedures to be followed and to designate the authorities responsible for fulfilling the relevant obligations in the voluntary return of victims. The protocol prescribes the obligation to apply a gender-conscious strategy and to take into account the interests of the child.

The Protocol on the Integration/Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (2019) regulates the comprehensive treatment of victims of trafficking in human beings and aims to determine the manner of treatment and holders of obligations when integrating/reintegrating victims of trafficking in human beings into society. The Protocol takes into account the specific health and other needs and risks of victims of trafficking in human beings, with due regard to the victim's sex, age, disability, pregnancy, maternity or paternity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

⁴⁰ The Protocol stipulates that the victim shall be provided with information in their mother tongue or another language they understand.

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Protokol%20o%20postupanju%20pri%20dobrovoljno%20i%20sugurnom%20povratku%20%C5%Bertava%20trgovanja%20ljudima.pdf>

⁴¹ The Protocol stipulates the obligation to ensure access to information on relevant judicial and administrative proceedings in a language that victims understand, from the moment of first contact with the competent authorities. If the victim is a foreign national, integration also includes learning the Croatian language.

https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/protokoli/Protokol%20o%20integraciji_reintegraciji%20%C5%Bertava%20trgovanja%20ljudima.pdf

⁴² Under Chapter I, Conduct of the Competent Authorities, the Protocol provides, among other obligations, for the mandatory provision of advice to victims, in a manner they can understand, concerning their legal rights, particularly the rights of the child.

<https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/MDOMSP%20dokumenti/PROTOKOL%20O%20POSTUPANJU%20U%20SLUČAJU%20NASILJA%20U%20OBITELJI.pdf>

⁴³ Official Gazette, No. 43/21

⁴⁴ The protocol prescribes the obligation to inform the victim of the existence of institutional and non-institutional bodies providing assistance and support (regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social work/ former social welfare centres, specialised civil society organisations providing assistance to victims of sexual violence, etc.).

<https://ravnoopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Protokol%20o%20postupanju%20u%20slučaju%20seksualnog%20nasilja/2023/Protokol%20final.pdf>

The Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Domestic Violence (2019) aims to ensure the timely and effective implementation of existing regulations on the protection of victims of domestic violence, in accordance with the powers of the competent authorities, to improve cooperation, and to contribute in the long term to combating and reducing violent behaviour while enhancing the safety of victims. The Protocol lays down procedures to be followed by the competent authorities and bodies – the police, healthcare institutions, judicial authorities, regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work (formerly social welfare centres), educational institutions, civil society organisations whose programmes are aimed at protecting victims of violence, and the media, as well as the forms, methods and content of cooperation among all competent authorities.

The Protocol for the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crimes (2021) aims to protect victims of hate crimes and their fundamental human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and international documents. The purpose of the Protocol is to provide the conditions for the effective and comprehensive work of the competent authorities involved in the detection of hate crimes, their handling and the monitoring of the outcomes of proceedings conducted in relation to such crimes, in order to improve the prevention, prosecution and statistical monitoring of hate crimes.

The Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence (2023) is one of the most important steps in ensuring standardised and effective assistance and support to victims of sexual violence during reporting and prosecution. It contains the obligations of the competent authorities and other factors involved in detecting and combating sexual violence and providing assistance and protection to persons subjected to sexual violence, as well as the forms, methods and content of cooperation between the competent authorities. It also contains novelties in the procedural steps when victims of sexual violence are children, as well as an elaboration of procedures for sexual harassment. In 2023, the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the Protocol was established, comprising 11 members representing state administration bodies, the Office of the Ombudswoman for Gender Equality, institutions and civil society organisations.

Article 8: Funding

- *Financial resources for the implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes*

Financial support for the implementation of measures set out in strategic planning acts, i.e. national plans and associated action plans, is mostly provided by the state budget.

Financial resources are planned for the implementation of the given measures as follows:

- National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027 - a total of EUR 4,851,250.65 is planned (EUR 3,833,409.78 from state budget funds and EUR 1,017,840.87 from extra-budgetary beneficiaries)
- National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period until 2027 - a total of EUR 49,763,272 is planned, including budgetary and extra-budgetary funds
- National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027 - a total of EUR 2,395,041.74 is planned from the state budget

- National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence until 2029 - a total of EUR 31,811,900 is planned (EUR 28,532,113 from the state budget and EUR 3,279,787 from EU funds)
- The National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period until 2030 - a total of EUR 1,287,577 is planned (EUR 742,644 from the state budget and EUR 544,933 from EU funds).

In addition, it should be noted that a new activity *A877016 Coordination of the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* has been introduced in the state budget of the Republic of Croatia since 2024, in which EUR 200,000 has been provided. These financial resources are allocated for the implementation of activities falling within the remit of the coordinating body for the implementation of the Convention.

- *Financial support for specialised projects*

In relation to other financial resources, it should be noted that the majority of the costs of working with victims of domestic violence and violence against women are covered by the state budget through the ministries' operating costs/regular budgetary allocations, as well as through funds allocated for the work of the police, healthcare institutions, social welfare institutions, bodies within the judicial system, educational institutions, etc. As a result, we are unable to provide a separate breakdown of these financial resources.

In addition, the State also provides financial support for the implementation of projects and programmes of civil society organisations that provide assistance and support to victims of gender-based violence.

In the period from 2022 to 2025, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy continuously provided financial support to the work of counselling centres and shelters for victims of violence. For the purpose of the operation of the counselling centre, a total of EUR 2,873,703 was provided (2022 – EUR 398,168, 2023 – EUR 685,410, 2024 – EUR 790,125, 2025 – EUR 1,000,000), with an increasing tendency.

In addition, a total of EUR 2,373,526.32 was provided for projects aimed at supporting victims of violence through the *Development and expansion of the network of social services* call (2022 – EUR 298,626.32, 2023 – EUR 550,000, 2024 – EUR 663,000, 2025 – EUR 861,900).

In relation to the work of the shelter for victims of violence, particular emphasis should be placed on the continuous financial support provided for their operation, for which a total of EUR 10,807,568.24 was spent in the period from 2022 to 2025 (2022 – EUR 3,239,106.27, 2023 – EUR 3,780,111.56, 2024 – EUR 1,820,670.41, 2025 – EUR 1,967,680). The difference in the amount of financial resources, i.e. the lower amounts in 2024 and 2025, does not represent a reduction in funding for shelters, but rather reflects the completion of the ESF Call UP.02.2.2.11 "Ensuring a Support System for Women Victims of Violence and Victims of

Domestic Violence”⁴⁵, under which shelters were established in Krapina-Zagorje, Koprivnica-Križevci, Lika-Senj, Virovitica-Podravina, Požega-Slavonia and Dubrovnik-Neretva Counties. A total of EUR 7,300,000 was provided for this purpose, of which EUR 6,168,502.53 was spent. Following the completion of the ESF project concerned, the shelters continued to receive financial support from the state budget under contractual arrangements with the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy.

Furthermore, it should be noted that in May 2026 a new ESF+ call entitled “*Support for Shelters Providing Assistance to Victims of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence and Their Children – Safe Houses*”⁴⁶ was launched, with a total value of EUR 9,700,000. Eligible applicants are all shelters on the territory of the Republic of Croatia. The general objective of the call is to strengthen the system of prevention, protection and support for victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence and their children. The specific objectives are aimed at improving the capacity of professionals who work and/or come into contact with victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence and their children, as well as ensuring the provision of services to victims with the aim of their empowerment and reintegration into the community and the labour market.

In addition, in order to implement the measure of the National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027, which refers to the establishment of a network of specialised services for working with victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment, in July 2026 the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy issued a public call for expression of interest of civil society organisations for inclusion in the network. Following the completion of the call, a decision on the establishment of the network was adopted, and the activities of the organisations included in the network will be supported by funding from EU funds, as well as the state budget. Please see the reply to Article 25 for further information.

For the operation of the National Call Centre, which operates the harmonised EU helpline number 116 006 for victims and witnesses of criminal offences and misdemeanours, specifically to cover its activities during the night shift from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. and on a 24-hour basis on weekends, non-working days and public holidays, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy allocated a total of EUR 745,750.99 between 2022 and June 2026 (2022 – EUR 211,106.16; 2023 – EUR 345,443.04, 2024 – EUR 19,394.96, 2025 – EUR 87,998.74, 2026 – EUR 81,808.09). The remaining funding for the operation of the National Call Centre between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. is provided, under a contractual arrangement, by the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation, which spent EUR 278,900.97 for this purpose during the reporting period (2021/2022 – EUR 39,816.84, 2022/2023 – EUR 39,816.84, 2023/2024 – EUR 53,089.12, 2024/2025 – EUR 58,089.12, 2025/2026 – EUR 88,089.05).

⁴⁵ <https://www.esf.hr/natjecaji/socijalno-ukljucivanje/10529/>

⁴⁶ <https://esf.hr/esfplus/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Upute-za-Prijavitelje-1.pdf>

Furthermore, in relation to further improving the effectiveness of the implementation of the security measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment imposed in criminal proceedings (Article 70 of the Criminal Act) and protective measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment imposed in misdemeanour proceedings (Article 15 of the Act on Protection against Domestic Violence) as a sanction for perpetrators, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation provides financial resources.

By a decision of the Minister of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation, the remuneration payable to providers of psychosocial treatment was increased by 30% as of January 1, 2026. It is expected that the increase in the remuneration of licensed providers of psychosocial treatment will encourage more licensed providers of psychosocial treatment to enter into contracts with the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation for the provision of psychosocial treatment. At the same time, it is expected to further improve the effectiveness of the implementation of psychosocial treatment, reduce recidivism among perpetrators of domestic violence and, consequently, further improve the protection of victims.

Furthermore, since 2017, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation has been systematically funding the work of the “Network of Support and Cooperation for Victims and Witnesses of Criminal Offences”, coordinated by the Women’s Room – Centre for Sexual Rights. The Network comprises 11 partner civil society organisations that provide assistance and support to victims of all criminal offences across 18 counties. Organisations involved in the Network's programme provide victims and witnesses with emotional and practical support, technical and practical information and information on rights, psychological and legal counselling, accompaniment to court by a person of trust, and assistance at information desks located on court premises. Furthermore, through the Network, victims are provided with accompaniment when participating in proceedings before the competent institutions (the police, the state attorney’s office, regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work and other institutions), both in the locality where the Association is based and in the field outside its headquarters during the institutions’ working hours, as well as with telephone counselling from Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. An important activity of the Network is also raising public awareness of victims’ rights and the victim and witness support system in the Republic of Croatia (through leaflets, brochures, posters, and media and promotional activities), as well as cooperation with the competent authorities. The funding required for the operation of the Network is provided by the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation. Beginning in 2022, the Ministry provided a total of EUR 2,409,835.14 (2022 – EUR 424,712.99, 2023 – EUR 437,985.27, 2024 – EUR 451,136.88, 2025 – EUR 473,000.00, 2026 – EUR 623,000.00).

Furthermore, through its call for applications for association programmes in the area of psychosocial support, the Ministry of Health provides funding for programmes run by associations whose activities are aimed at supporting victims of violence. Following the call for applications, annual funding of EUR 20,000 was secured for the Women’s Room for the period

from 2026 to 2028 for the implementation of the programme “A Comprehensive Approach to Improving the Mental Health of Victims of Sexual Violence”.

Article 11: Data collection and research

- *Data collection by categories*

Data collection falls within the scope of competent state authorities that provide support and protection to victims of domestic violence and violence against women, i.e. the police, social welfare, justice, healthcare, science and education.

Pursuant to the Ordinance on the Manner of Collecting, Processing and Submitting Statistical Data and Reports from the scope of application of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act⁴⁷ adopted in accordance with the provisions of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act,⁴⁸ the police, the state attorney's office, the court, regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work (formerly social welfare centres), health institutions and educational institutions are obliged to keep records of actions taken. The records contain data, for example, on the sex and age of the victim and the perpetrator, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly, previous convictions, the number and type of precautionary measures, the number and type of proposed protective measures, the number of defendants against whom an indictment has been filed, the number of reported perpetrators of domestic violence that officials learned about while performing their duties, the number of submitted proposals for imposing protective measures, and more.

Pursuant to the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, the Commission for Monitoring and Improving the Work of the Bodies of Criminal and Misdemeanour Proceedings and Execution of Sanctions Related to Protection against Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as: the Commission) was established at the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation. The Commission is tasked with monitoring trends and manifestations of domestic violence and reporting on developments in this area. The Commission has 17 members who are elected from the ranks of judges, state attorneys, lawyers, civil servants of the ministry responsible for internal affairs, for judicial affairs, for social welfare affairs, for health affairs, for education affairs, representatives of the Ombudsperson, the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, the Ombudsperson for Children and the Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities, and representatives of the academic community and representatives of civil society organisations dealing with the issue of domestic violence. The tasks of the Commission are to collect reports from the competent authorities on the application of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act and the Criminal Act. The Commission prepares an annual activity report for each individual year, and it also contains statistical data submitted by the competent authorities based on the Protection against Domestic Violence Act and the aforementioned Ordinance. The Commission's activity reports are available on the website of the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation⁴⁹. The Commission's monitoring of

⁴⁷ Official Gazette, No. 31/18

⁴⁸ Official Gazette, No. 70/17, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22 and 36/24

⁴⁹ <https://mpudt.gov.hr/izvjesce-o-radu-povjerenstva-za-pracenje-i-unaprjedjenje-rada-tijela-kaznenog-i-prekrasnog-postupka-i-izvrsavanja-sankcija-vezanih-za-zastitu-od-nasilja-u-obitelji/26212?lang=hr>

the manifestations of domestic violence is not limited to providing precise statistical data. Rather, the information gathered on the prevalence and trends of domestic violence serves as a basis for proposing measures aimed at improving policies in this area. In order to formulate policies to combat violence against women and domestic violence on the basis of comprehensive and comparable data, amendments to the Ordinance on the Manner of Collecting, Processing and Submitting Statistical Data and Reports from the scope of application of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act are planned for the fourth quarter of 2026. The proposed amendments will also integrate the requirements of Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence and thus ensure the comparability of national data on the prevalence of incidental forms of domestic violence with data from other EU Member States. The described institutional mechanism will result in objective and equally measurable data on the manifestations of violence against women and domestic violence in all Member States and, as such, will provide a quantitative evidence base for the development of further European Union policies on protection against violence against women and domestic violence.

Furthermore, it should be noted that, within its respective area of competence, each competent authority also keeps separate statistics on cases of violence against women and domestic violence. Every two weeks, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy collects statistical data on the occupancy of shelters for victims of domestic violence, monitoring the number of adult beneficiaries and the number of children placed in shelters. According to the data submitted by the shelter, in the last two years, capacity occupancy has been around 50% of occupancy, while the highest occupancy was recorded during the COVID pandemic (67%). Furthermore, statistics are also collected according to the rights from the social welfare system, which is also gender-disaggregated⁵⁰.

Furthermore, the Croatian Bureau of Statistics publishes statistical indicators covering various areas of life on its website⁵¹, including sex-disaggregated data on adult and juvenile perpetrators of criminal offences by type of decision, reports, indictments and convictions, as well as data on misdemeanour perpetrators.

The Ministry of the Interior monitors the issue of violence against women and domestic violence in the Republic of Croatia through criminal offences as more serious punishable acts prescribed by the Criminal Act and misdemeanours as milder punishable acts prescribed by the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, the Gender Equality Act and the Minor Offences against Public Order and Peace Act⁵². Gender-discriminated statistical data are also published on the official website of the Ministry of the Interior,⁵³ where there is also a link entitled the

⁵⁰ Annual statistical report on applied social welfare rights in the Republic of Croatia in 2025

<https://mrosp.gov.hr/strategije-planovi-programi-izvjesca-statistika/4165>

⁵¹ <https://www.podaci.dzs.hr/hr/>

⁵² Official Gazette, No. 41/77, 52/87, 41/89, 55/89, 05/90, 30/90, 47/90, 29/94, 114/22 and 47/23

⁵³ Statistics of the Ministry of the Interior and Road Traffic Safety Bulletins

<https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-mup-a-i-bilteni-o-sigurnosti-cestovnog-prometa/283233>

Calendar of Violence⁵⁴, where the public is daily informed about committed criminal offences and misdemeanours of domestic violence.

Furthermore, the healthcare system also collects data on the health consequences of domestic violence, while psychiatric institutions, institutions with psychiatric departments, public health institutes and health centres keep records of the number of cases in which victims and perpetrators of domestic violence have been referred for outpatient or inpatient psychiatric care. Furthermore, the Croatian Health Insurance Institute keeps records of the number of reports submitted by healthcare professionals concerning injuries suspected to have resulted from domestic violence, the number of victims of domestic violence referred for treatment for bodily injuries, and the costs of medical treatment provided to victims of domestic violence.

Regarding the collection of data on cases of gender-based violence, special emphasis is placed on the *National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029*, which, as previously pointed out, bases its measures on GREVIO's recommendations given in the Baseline Evaluation Report in respect of the Republic of Croatia. In this regard, particular emphasis is placed on the measure aimed at harmonising procedures for collecting sex-disaggregated data on all misdemeanours and criminal offences of violence against women and domestic violence. The development of a framework for the collection, processing and exchange of sex-disaggregated data on all misdemeanours and criminal offences of violence against women and domestic violence across several relevant systems in order to enable transparent statistical analysis is an important prerequisite for further improving the system of protection against domestic violence and violence against women. This will contribute to the development of good practices to produce objective, reliable and timely official data on misdemeanours and criminal offences of violence against women and domestic violence in the Republic of Croatia, as well as to the consolidation of such data. In this regard, particular emphasis is placed on the need to ensure that data can be disaggregated by sex, age, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, geographical location, and the different forms of violence covered by the Convention, as well as to collect data on the presence of children who are victims and/or witnesses of violence. These data will provide a high-quality and harmonised official statistical basis, enabling the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policy measures and their continuous improvement, as well as harmonization with the requirements of the EU statistical system in relation to the types of statistical indicators, methods of publication and the application of appropriate methodologies.

Furthermore, the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027* places the human rights of victims at the centre of its approach and, through the chapter "Violence against Women", takes into account the disproportionate impact of violence on women, which is ultimately reflected in the measures set out therein. The National Plan covers various forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and sexual harassment, domestic violence,

Ministry of the Interior Statistics Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
<https://mup.gov.hr/ostalo-48/online-prijave/zastita-djece-i-obitelji/nasilje-u-obitelji-281678/stanje-kretanje-i-pojavni-oblici-nasilja-nad-zenama-i-nasilja-u-obitelji/294251>

⁵⁴ <https://mup.gov.hr/kalendar-nasilja/283308>

femicide, war-related sexual violence, online violence and violence among the younger population. For the purpose of addressing and measuring the phenomenology of gender-based violence, the National Plan includes measures and activities for the collection of various data on victims of crimes of gender-based violence, disaggregated by sex, thereby shifting the exclusive focus, within the judicial system, from perpetrators to victims. This significantly contributes to a deeper insight into the phenomenology of gender-based violence and into the planning and implementation of targeted measures.

- *Research*

Murders of women in the Republic of Croatia committed in the period 2016 - 2024, is a research conducted by the Ministry of the Interior, and the results of which are presented in the monograph "Murders of women in the Republic of Croatia 2016–2024" published by the Ministry of the Interior as the publisher. The monograph is also available in digital form on the Ministry's website⁵⁵. The aim of the research was to gain insight into certain criminological characteristics of murders, aggravated murders and aggravated murders of women committed against female victims in the Republic of Croatia between 2016 and 2024, to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. For the purpose of the research, a very extensive set of research instruments was applied, enabling the collection of a substantial amount of precise data on the circumstances of the homicides, as well as on the characteristics of the victims and perpetrators. The research provided insight into a number of specific criminological characteristics of murders, aggravated murders and aggravated murders of women committed against female victims. The results of the research provide a basis for the introduction of more effective preventive measures and programmes aimed at the timely identification and elimination of certain risk factors that can lead to serious consequences of violence against women.

*The Assessment of Attitudes towards Gender and Minority Issues of Participants of the Adult Education Program for the Profession of Police Officer*⁵⁶ is a study conducted at the Police Academy "Prvi hrvatski redarstvenik" in November 2020 and September 2021, and the results were published in 2024. The aim of the research was to examine the attitudes of future police officers on gender equality, women's rights, LGBT persons, national minorities, migrants and asylum seekers. The research was conducted using a survey method at two points in time (N = 732 and N = 706), based on a questionnaire covering the following areas: gender equality;

⁵⁵<https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nasilje%20u%20obitelji/izv.%20prof.%20dr.%20sc.%20Mirjana%20Kondor-Langer,%20Anita%20Matijević,%20Suzana%20Kikić%20Ubojstva%20žena%20u%20Republici%20Hrvatskoj%202016.%20–%202024.,%20Rezultati%20istraživanja,%20Zagreb,%202025..pdf>

⁵⁶ Balgač, I., Cajner Mraović, I. and Borovec, K. (2024) Gender Equality from the Police Recruits' Perspective: Does Their Gender Make the Difference?

In: Meško, G., Kutnjak Ivković, S. and Hacin, R. (ed.), The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Provision of Security, Responses to Crime and Security Threats, and Fair Criminal Justice Systems (str. 305–329).

Maribor: University of Maribor

<https://press.um.si/index.php/ump/catalog/book/>

violence against women; homosexuality and the LGBT population; national minorities; migrants and applicants for international protection; and childhood and growing up. The research identified the participants' attitudes on the aforementioned issues, as well as overall differences among respondents across individual areas. The results indicate generally positive attitudes towards vulnerable groups, while highlighting the need to further improve educational content, and serve as guidelines for enhancing education and professional development programmes.

Equality on Hold – Attitudes, Knowledge and Perception of Gender Equality in Croatia 2013–2024 is a scientific study conducted by the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, partly in cooperation with the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The research was conducted within the framework of the International Social Survey Programme: Family and Changing Gender Roles and included a detailed analysis of long-term trends, social attitudes and factors shaping perceptions of gender equality in the Republic of Croatia. The results of the research indicate the need to restore the visibility of legal rights and protection mechanisms, focus attention on rural areas, economically vulnerable and politically disengaged groups, present equality as an issue relevant to everyday life, the need to invest in education and the local community, and expand strategies aimed at strengthening democratic participation. The research findings were publicly presented in December 2025 to mark International Human Rights Day on 10 December.

A research project on gender-based cyberviolence in Croatia, Spain and Portugal is being conducted by the Office of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality within the framework of the project “Raising Awareness of Gender-Based Cyber Violence against Girls and Women and Creating a Safer Online Environment (bE-SAFE)”. The project is being implemented in partnership with the Institute for Social Research and civil society organisations from Croatia, Spain and Portugal, with the support of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth. The research covered children and their parents in all three countries, as well as young people up to the age of 27, and the research findings were presented at the “bE-SAFE = Like for Safety, STOP Violence” conference in July 2026.

Furthermore, building on the findings of the 2018 baseline data study, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia has prepared a new comprehensive study to be conducted in 2026. The aim of the study is to provide up-to-date and detailed insights into the situation and needs of vulnerable groups in society through the collection of baseline data, analysis and recommendations for public policies concerning Roma, extending beyond the current National Plan for Roma Inclusion 2021–2027. This upcoming research will place particular emphasis on women and children, recognising their increased exposure to various forms of discrimination and social exclusion. The new analysis seeks to inform evidence-based policymaking and ensure that public policies and measures are better adapted to the real and changing needs of these groups. By doing so, the Republic of Croatia continues to strengthen its data-driven approach to equality and inclusion, ensuring that specific and intersectional vulnerabilities, especially those affecting Roma women

and children, are systematically addressed through targeted interventions and improved institutional coordination.

In addition, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy has prepared the necessary documentation for conducting a longitudinal survey on all forms of violence against women, covering the prevalence of violence in different age groups and in different victim groups, including victims at risk of multiple discrimination its impact on their future lives. Furthermore, the research will focus on the attitudes of social welfare professionals towards gender-based violence and violence against women, as well as the impact of such attitudes on the assessment of parental competencies. The research findings will provide a basis for the further development of policies in this area.

II: INFORMATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTED PROVISIONS IN PRIORITY AREAS IN THE FIELD OF PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND PROSECUTION

Article 12: General obligations

- *Awareness-raising, information and media campaigns*

Systematic investment in the field of prevention and suppression of all forms of violence against women is one of the strategic goals of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. Accordingly, considerable efforts have been invested in preventive measures, particularly in raising public awareness, providing continuous information and conducting media campaigns aimed at changing mindsets and attitudes towards gender-based violence, especially violence against women. Awareness-raising is systematically included in national strategies, with activities aimed at raising public awareness and promoting zero tolerance for violence.

State authorities, in cooperation with civil society organisations, continuously organise expert debates, conduct public campaigns and carry out other activities to mark national and international days dedicated to human rights and combating violence against women. In addition, they publish information and content on public services and ongoing activities on their websites. The websites also contain the available strategic and legislative framework, i.e. legal acts, national and international documents in the field of protection against violence, current news, and other useful information, various databases, as well as information on relevant research that has been conducted.

International scientific conference “Future of Women's Rights”: Marking the Anniversaries of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention” was held in April 2026 under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth and the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, organised by the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb and the Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik. The conference forms part of the activities of the institutional research project “Norms, Institutions, National and International Frameworks for the Protection of Women’s Rights” (NINA), which is implemented at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb. The aim of the conference was to discuss the reach and challenges of two key international treaties in the protection and promotion of women's rights: *the United Nations Convention on the*

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The conference brought together high-ranking state officials, national and international scientists, representatives of the diplomatic community, as well as representatives of Croatian institutions and civil society organisations.

The preventive project "Lily" is a multi-year project that the Ministry of the Interior has been continuously implementing since 2019 in all counties of the Republic of Croatia. The aim of this preventive project of a multimodular character is to network all competent state authorities, civil society organisations, legal entities and other socially responsible entities, to find a common response in the prevention of all forms of violence against women. In addition, through its components, the project includes activities targeting men, aimed at raising their awareness of gender equality and promoting the rejection of all forms of violent behaviour. Within the project, thematic public events are organised to raise public awareness of the importance of society's response to eliminating violence, producing videos and websites, creating multimedia audio-video content, thematic educational theatre performances, cross-sectoral cooperation and training for professionals (police, social welfare professionals, the judiciary, non-governmental organisations, etc.).

The *Women and Media*⁵⁷ portal was launched by the Agency for Electronic Media, as part of the project "Women and Media" within the activities of the Gender and Media Working Group of the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (MNRA). The aim of the portal is to strengthen appropriate media representation of women and reduce harmful stereotypes. The portal is dedicated to empowering and informing women, as well as educating and raising awareness among all citizens, public figures, public policy makers, civil society, and particularly the media about issues concerning the status of women in society. The portal's mission is to promote important topics in the public space, increasing media coverage of women who have achieved significant results in their respective fields, providing support to young women at the beginning of their careers, increasing the visibility of women in news programmes in general, and reducing gender stereotypes in the media and public space. The mission further includes drawing attention to sexism, stereotypes and discrimination as causes of gender inequality, promoting adherence to high standards of professional reporting on gender-based violence and domestic violence, raising public awareness of national and international legislation and policy frameworks concerning women, and other related activities. By conducting campaigns, media content analyses and the publication of relevant materials, the portal contributes to raising awareness among the public and the media of the importance of achieving full equality for women in society. Recognising the importance of this portal, several state authorities, other institutions and civil society organisations have supported its continued operation by signing a Cooperation Agreement.

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy conducted a *national media campaign under the slogan #empatijasada (#emaphynow)* as part of the EU-funded project "Let's Stop Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – There Is No Excuse for

⁵⁷ www.zeneimediji.hr

Violence”, which ran until November 2023. The media campaign was aimed at raising public awareness of the harmful effects and unacceptability of violence against women and domestic violence, the importance of preventing violence against women and domestic violence, emphasising the obligation to report violence and promoting the service of the National Call Centre (24-hour telephone lines – EU harmonised number 116 006) as part of the system for preventing violence and protecting victims of violence. The campaign focused on the experiences of victims of violence at its core and focused on raising awareness of the harmful effects of violence against women and domestic violence. The campaign was aimed at encouraging victims of violence to seek help, encouraging victims and witnesses to report violence, and encouraging perpetrators to change their behaviour. As part of the campaign, videos were broadcast on national television to mark the National Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Furthermore, as part of the EU-funded project *NO to Gender-Based Violence*, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy plans to launch a new national media campaign by the end of 2026 or in early 2027. The campaign will focus on raising public awareness of the needs and rights of victims, preventing new cases of violence, and promoting the importance of men’s role and responsibility in combating gender-based violence. Stressing the role of men in combating violence against women and gender-based violence will contribute to raising awareness of the needs and rights of women victims of violence, especially those who are discriminated against or at risk of multiple discrimination.

- *Celebration of national and international days*

To mark International Women’s Day on 8 March, in 2023 the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia organised a public presentation of the Croatian edition of the *Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls*, as well as the leaflet “Information for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers”. The leaflet was translated and printed in 11,000 copies, while the Recommendation was printed in 500 copies. The leaflet was distributed to services working on the reception of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Croatia, and was printed in Croatian and English, as well as seven other languages (Farsi, Urdu, Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Ukrainian and French). The printing of these publications contributes to the implementation of the *National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, and Related Resolutions for the Period 2019–2023*.

Furthermore, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2023, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia publicly presented the printed edition of the *National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027*, together with the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the period until 2024* and the *Protocol on Procedures in Cases of Sexual Violence*. Likewise, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2024, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia organised

the broadcasting of a radio spot entitled “Prašina” (“Dust”) on stations of the Croatian Radio network, including Croatian Radio Channels 1 and 2 and Radio Sljeme. The broadcast lasted from November 22 to 25, and the video was aired a total of 48 times. The aim of the radio spot was to point out the need to report gender-based violence. At the same time, the Office provided the county gender equality commissions with a link to the relevant radio spot, requesting that, where possible, they distribute it to local radio stations with a view to further raising public awareness.

- Printing and publication of promotional and information materials

In the period from 2022 to 2026, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia distributed a number of publications such as the *Gender Equality Act*, the *National Plan for Gender Equality* and the accompanying *Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Gender Equality for the Period up to 2024*, the *United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the *Budget for Gender Equality* of the European Women's Lobby, the *Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on gender mainstreaming in education* and the accompanying *Explanatory Memorandum*, the *Council of Europe Publication Women and Journalists First*, the *Council of Europe Handbook on Good Practices Gender Equality in Sport – Access for Girls and Women to Sport Activities*, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 – Prevention and Combating Sexism*, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls*, *United Nations General Recommendation No. 34 on women's rights in rural areas* and copies of the *Beijing Declaration – Beijing +20* leaflets. Publications and leaflets were distributed to state administration bodies, civil society organisations for the purpose of holding meetings, promotions and education. All publications are also available in electronic form within the *ONA* subcategory on the Office's website⁵⁸.

Furthermore, in 2023, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia produced and printed posters entitled “Stop Sexual Violence” as part of the implementation of Measure 5 under Specific Objective 1. of the *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027* in a print run of 5,000 copies. The posters in question contain phone numbers for reporting violence and are primarily intended for social welfare institutions and healthcare institutions and have been submitted to the competent ministries for further distribution.

Furthermore, during 2025, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia initiated the translation of *General Recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems* adopted by the United Nations

⁵⁸ <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/arhiva/biblioteka-ureda/83>

Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. The recommendation is available on the Office's website⁵⁹.

- *Projects and programmes*

Umbrella organisations of national minorities, particularly organisations representing the Roma and Serb national minorities, funded from the state budget as part of the implementation of the Operational Programmes for National Minorities 2020 - 2024 and 2024 - 2028 carry out relevant activities. The primary objective of the project "Educated Roma Women, Empowered Roma Communities!" implemented by the Roma Association in the Republic of Croatia "Kali Sara" is the systematic promotion of education among Roma men and women, with special emphasis on increasing the number of young Roma women completing primary and secondary education. Through the project, 200 young Roma women from six counties were empowered through various activities and educated about women's human rights, especially the right to life without violence, sexual and reproductive rights and health, and were further motivated to continue education.

Furthermore, with the aim of preventing and protecting Roma women from all forms of gender-based violence, the Member of the Croatian Parliament representing the Roma national minority and representatives of the City of Sisak, the Roma Association in the Republic of Croatia "KALI SARA", the Council of the Roma National Minority of Sisak-Moslavina County, the Sisak Police Station, the Croatian Institute for Social Work – Sisak Regional Office, and the Adela Women's Centre signed an Agreement on Intersectoral Cooperation in February 2024. Similar agreements have been signed in other counties.

The initiative of the "KALI SARA" association to include Roma customary law on the UNESCO list of intangible heritage is also important. The purpose of the activities is, among other things, to develop recommendations for the preservation, documentation and study of Roma customary law, its compatibility with modern legislative frameworks, and to highlight the role of young people and women in customary law, with the aim of their greater involvement in decision-making processes.

Other initiatives also contribute to this objective, such as the "Roma Women – A House for Us" project, organised to mark International Women's Day on 8 March and dedicated to addressing gender-based violence against Roma women. The objectives of the project are to contribute to raising awareness, education and prevention of gender-based violence, with special emphasis on violence against Roma women, while specific objectives are aimed at informing Roma women about available protection and support mechanisms, encouraging open dialogue between Roma women and experts, strengthening trust between the Roma community and institutions, reducing stigma and encouraging reporting of violence, and increasing the visibility of the problem of violence against Roma women in the public space.

⁵⁹ <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/arhiva/biblioteka-ureda/opca-preporuka-br-40-2024-o-jednakoj-i-ukljucivoj-zastupljenosti-zena-u-sustavima-donosjenja-odluka-3800/3800>.

A conference held in 2025 was also of international significance, and its main topics included the economic empowerment and employment of Roma women – discriminatory versus emancipatory practices / Roma women in EU economic policies, the prevention of gender-based violence against Roma women, activism and Roma women as leaders of social change, the importance of Roma women's political participation in achieving the defined objectives, as well as the (in)visibility of Roma women within the EU policy framework and financial instruments.

Likewise, the umbrella organisation of the Serb national minority funded from the state budget within the framework of the implementation of the Operational Programmes for National Minorities 2020 - 2024 and 2024 - 2028 carries out relevant activities. Within the framework of the “Women from the East” project, women's associations from rural municipalities in eastern Croatia organise workshops, including on women's leadership in minority communities, as well as a series of eight (8) educational and informational workshops on inheritance and family rights in local communities, rights in marital and non-marital unions, divorce, and inheritance.

Also important is the “Kata School for the Socio-Political Development of Women”, which implements a programme throughout Croatia aimed at helping to address the insufficient social and political participation of women, particularly within minority communities, women's insufficient awareness of their own position both within the family and in society, especially in rural areas, and the insufficient connection and networking of women active in local communities with stakeholders outside those communities. The consequences of these problems include the lack of women's voices in political processes, the underrepresentation of women, the loss of potential and talent, and declining public trust in political institutions. This is especially important in minority communities where such phenomena are particularly visible due to the small number of members of a particular ethnic community.

Furthermore, with the aim of combating multiple discrimination, the Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities – SOIH, through the project “SOIH Training – Network of Women with Disabilities”, empowers women with disabilities to combat gender-based violence and educates participants on the provisions of the Convention. Based on the commitment taken under the *National Plan for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities for the period until 2027*, i.e. its measures aimed at conducting education and promoting the active implementation of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2022, 2023 and 2024, the project is financially supported by the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

Professional training for a broad range of professionals, including police officers and professionals working in the social welfare, judicial, education and healthcare systems, is an essential component of efforts to strengthen the prevention of gender-based violence and advance gender equality as one of the highest values of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia. Accordingly, state authorities pay particular attention to the regular training of their staff on the latest developments in the area of gender equality, the issues and challenges related to gender-based violence, and examples of good practice from other countries. The obligations

of state authorities responsible for measures of several strategic planning acts in human rights protection and the rights of victims of violence are also listed.

Article 14: Education

- *Educational and prevention programmes, materials and initiatives*

To prevent violence, it is necessary to develop educational programmes from the earliest age, up to higher education. The adoption of the Act on Textbooks and Other Educational Materials for Primary and Secondary Schools⁶⁰ in December 2018, as well as the Ordinance on the Textbook Standard and the Members of the Expert Committees for the Evaluation of Textbooks and Other Educational Materials⁶¹ in January 2019, prescribes the requirements that each textbook or other educational material must meet in order to be used in Croatian schools. In addition to scientific, pedagogical, psychological, didactic-methodological and language requirements, ethical requirements are also mandatory. According to these requirements, textbooks must be based on modern scientific and educational standards important for the full and harmonious development of the personalities of children and young people. In addition, textbooks must present information in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner, in accordance with the criteria established by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, European Union law and international law, including the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Accordingly, the textbooks promote: the dignity of the human person, emancipation, freedom, equality, justice, patriotism, national identity, social equality, dialogue and tolerance, work, honesty, peace, preservation of nature and the environment, and other democratic values. Furthermore, the textbooks also promote intercultural understanding, racial, national, ethnic, sex, gender, religious equality of individuals and social groups, and raise awareness of the right to diversity; gender equality, in an appropriate manner using in equal proportion illustrations of characters of both sexes and using nouns of both genders, especially in the appointment of titles and occupations, without violating the communication level and naturalness of the Croatian language. In addition, the textbooks promote awareness and respect for the values of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia, as well as those of other peoples and cultures in Europe and worldwide and foster the cultural and social development of children and young people belonging to minorities within the education system.

In January 2019, decisions were adopted on the introduction of curricula for primary schools, grammar schools and four-year vocational schools. In addition to the new subject curricula, decisions were also adopted introducing seven cross-curricular themes, the implementation of which is mandatory across all subjects and in all grades at all levels of education. Furthermore, in 2025, decisions were adopted introducing curricula for general education subjects and curricula for vocational modules for vocational schools at levels 4.1 and 4.2. When adopting the new curricula for primary schools, grammar schools and secondary schools, due consideration was given to the inclusion of topics relating to equality, non-stereotypical gender roles, mutual respect and non-violent conflict resolution. The curricula promote the values of

⁶⁰ Official Gazette, No. 116/18, 85/22, 92/24 and 105/25

⁶¹ Official Gazette, No. 9/19

human rights: responsibility, ethics, morality, family values, human dignity, freedom, equality – both national and gender equality – and solidarity. The contents related to the prevention of violence, gender equality and the protection of human rights are integrated primarily through cross-curricular topics such as Civic Education, Health and Personal and Social Development, thus equipping and empowering students to participate actively and effectively in their social and broader societal environment. Within these frameworks, students are taught about the recognition of various forms of violence (including psychological, physical, sexual and digital violence) and the development of non-violent communication, respect for gender equality, protection of personal boundaries and dignity. Furthermore, certain content is included in subject curricula (such as Biology, Ethics and Sociology), where topics such as gender roles, stereotypes and social relations are addressed. In January 2025, recommendations for the implementation of cross-curricular themes were also adopted in order to establish clearer links with subject curricula and areas of education.

Furthermore, each school and/or the founder may offer additional opportunities for learning content in the areas of digital literacy and online safety as part of the implementation of the school curriculum, in accordance with the needs and interests of students and the requests of parents. The Informatics curriculum covers topics such as online safety, data protection, cyberbullying and managing one's digital reputation. This course develops the necessary skills and attitudes necessary for responsible, competent, creative and reliable participants in the digital society. Students identify and analyse different forms of cyberbullying and select appropriate preventive measures for different cases of cyberbullying, demonstrate empathy towards persons experiencing cyberbullying, and learn about institutions, organisations and services that can provide assistance in cases of cyberbullying. Students are taught how to protect themselves against cyberbullying, how to recognise it, how to prevent it, actively oppose it, and how to find a solution and who to turn to for help. Within the framework of teaching the cross-curricular theme Use of Information and Communication Technology, teachers' responsibilities and duties also include ensuring the well-being and protection of children (protection of their personal data and privacy, prevention of violence, protection of their health, and similar matters). By using safe digital environments, teachers reduce the possibility of exposing students to unnecessary risks, so this is one of the more important roles of teachers in teaching this cross-curricular topic.

By accepting diversity as a feature of each individual's identity, students develop sensitivity to others differently and overcome stereotypes and prejudices. The long-term goal of education is to respect diversity based on the universal values of human rights, as well as to develop a system of their effective protection. Students are taught to promote gender equality and to critically point out stereotypes about men and women in everyday life and the media, and to prevent all forms of violence, including violence against women.

Also, the “SNEP – Sexual Violence: Educational and Prevention Programme”,⁶² approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth and the Education and Teacher Training Agency, has been implemented continuously in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of

⁶² <https://zenskasoba.hr/seksualno-nasilje-edukacijski-i-prevencijski-program/>

Croatia since 2018. The main goal of this project, designed and implemented by the leading civil society organisation in the area of combating sexual violence in the Republic of Croatia, is the prevention of sexual violence against children. As part of the project, a sexual violence prevention programme for the upper grades of primary school – SNEP2 Junior – was also developed. The programme uses a modern approach through the SNEP Online Tool platform intended for students and professionals, and video lectures and materials are provided for parents with instructions on how to recognise signs of violence and provide support to the child.

In addition, to strengthen prevention, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth issues an annual *Public Call for Funding Preventive Projects in Primary and Secondary Schools and Student Dormitories*. The purpose of the Call is to provide financial support for the implementation of prevention projects within schools' School Prevention Strategies, to improve the quality, sustainability and effectiveness of preventive interventions implemented within the education system in accordance with evidence-based recommendations, and to encourage the development of additional specific forms of support for students. Under this Call, primary and secondary schools and student dormitories may submit prevention projects aimed at developing social-emotional and life skills that will enable students to successfully cope with the challenges of growth and development, prepare them for future situations in which they will make healthy and prosocial decisions and choices, and equip them to establish and maintain positive relationships with others. In December 2025, preventive projects for the 2025/2026 school year were funded in 419 primary and secondary schools and student dormitories in the total amount of EUR 617,800.17. All preventive projects are aimed at empowering students to recognise and oppose any form of violence, including gender-based violence, sexual violence and violence against women. Schools use the funds for preventive projects aimed at violence prevention, addiction prevention, media literacy and projects aimed at strengthening students' resilience and protecting their mental health. Schools can implement projects in partnership with associations, institutes and other partner organisations.

Furthermore, as part of the Call for Proposals for the Award of Grants to Projects of Associations in the Area of Non-institutional Education of Children and Young People, in the 2025/2026 school year, The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth has funded a total of 7 projects of associations that include activities aimed at non-violent conflict resolution. The total amount of allocated financial resources is EUR 101,618.94.

In addition to the implementation of already existing programmes in educational institutions, the National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029 and the National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027, within the specific objectives aimed at the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence and sexual harassment, introduce the obligation to further develop and implement programmes of education on gender-based violence, specialised programmes for the prevention of sexual violence, as well as programmes of gender/sex equality.

In addition, the National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027 introduces the obligation to carry out preventive activities to combat sexual violence and sexual harassment at higher education institutions in order to create a safe educational and working environments for all students and teaching and non-teaching staff. At the same time, higher education institutions that educate and train professionals who work with victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment are required to introduce and further develop existing educational content on combating sexual violence in their study programmes. This primarily applies to higher education institutions offering study programmes in the areas of criminal investigation, law, medicine (including nursing and community nursing, family medicine, psychiatry, paediatrics, traumatology and gynaecology), social work, psychology, pedagogy, early childhood and preschool education, and education.

Article 15: Training of professionals

Initial professional training

- **Police officers**

The “Prvi hrvatski redarstvenik” Police Academy provides continuous training for police officers in the area of human rights, particularly violence against women and domestic violence, through all of its curricula and at all levels of education and training (higher education, basic police training and lifelong learning).

Basic training for police officers is delivered through two educational programmes in which the training focuses on developing the knowledge and skills required for lawful, professional and victim-centred policing. *The Adult Secondary Education Programme for the Occupation of Police Officer* covers topics relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence, procedures for dealing with victims and vulnerable groups, and the lawful and professional exercise of police powers. The adult secondary education programme was completed by 488 participants in the 2022/2023 school year, 332 participants in the 2023/2024 school year, 488 participants in the 2024/2025 school year, and 669 participants in the 2025/2026 school year.

The two-year secondary education programme for the occupation of police officer (enrolment in the third year of the “Josip Jović” Police School) includes educational content on human rights, gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence, procedures for dealing with vulnerable groups, and professional and ethical standards. The two-year secondary education programme was completed by 154 participants in the 2022/2023 school year, 198 in 2023/2024, 244 in 2024/2025, and 274 in 2025/2026.

Additional professional development

- **Education professionals**

The Education and Teacher Training Agency provide professional development programmes for teachers and professional associates, often in cooperation with civil society organisations and international institutions. Since 2022, a number of professional conferences and training activities have been conducted, focusing, for example, on teaching about the impact of

stereotypes on the education process in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, the impact of trauma on the lives and mental health of children and young people, cross-curricular topics such as financial and media literacy and gender equality, the impact of gender stereotypes on education in STEM fields, the prevention of trafficking in human beings, the integration of persons under international protection; the mental health crisis among children and young people, gender socialisation and the prevention of gender-based violence, and online safety. During 2022, the trainings included a total of 4333 participants (of which 3877 online), during 2023, 1610 participants (426 online), during 2024, 4810 participants (156 online) and during 2025, 1597 participants. During 2026, trainings continue to be held.

An important area of professional development implemented by the Education and Teacher Training Agency concerns the School Prevention Strategy, which forms an integral part of each school's Annual Work Plan and Programme and encompasses prevention programmes. In accordance with the Act on Primary and Secondary School Education,⁶³ schools are required to create conditions conducive to pupils' physical and psychological development and social well-being, and to prevent unacceptable forms of behaviour. In addition, from 2022 to 2025, training activities were held at national, inter-county and county levels, covering the systematic implementation of scientifically evaluated prevention programmes in educational institutions, the promotion and protection of the mental health of pupils and staff in educational institutions, and training on the impact of stereotypes on the education process.

- Police officers

As part of the additional professional training of police officers, the Police Academy continuously conducts courses and workshops as follows:

The 36-hour *Course on Managing Police Response in Domestic Violence Cases* covers criminological aspects of domestic violence, international standards of victim protection (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence), human rights protection, risk assessment, police treatment and interdepartmental cooperation. In 2022, 123 participants completed the course over seven cycles; in 2023, 147 participants completed it over eight cycles; in 2024, 155 participants completed it over eight cycles; and in 2025, 130 participants completed it over seven cycles. In 2026, the training is planned to be delivered in eight cycles, involving a total of 160 participants. By June 2026, two cycles had already been completed, involving a total of 40 participants.

The 250-hour *Specialist Course on Juvenile Delinquency and Crime against Youth and the Family* covers topics including domestic violence and violence against children, the protection of vulnerable groups, gender-based violence, and the prevention and identification of risky behaviours. During 2022, the specialist course was completed by 19 participants, in 2024 by 24 participants, in 2025 by 23 participants, while 24 participants were planned for 2026.

⁶³ Official Gazette, No. 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14, 07/17, 68/18, 98/19, 64/20, 151/22, 155/23 and 156/23

Workshops for police officers and judicial officials are carried out in cooperation with the Police Academy and the Judicial Academy for the purpose of professional development and training of police officers, state attorneys, criminal judges, misdemeanour judges and probation officers. The trainings are aimed at successfully understanding, monitoring and analysing the provisions of domestic and European legislation and their application in preliminary inquiries, criminal investigations, criminal and infringement proceedings, the development and improvement of procedures and practices, as well as interdepartmental cooperation in preventing and combating domestic violence and protecting victims. During 2022, one workshop was held with the participation of 7 police officers, during 2023, 5 workshops were held with the participation of 55 police officers, during 2024, 3 workshops with the participation of 30 police officers and during 2025, 5 workshops with the participation of 28 police officers. In 2026, a total of seven workshops are planned for 64 police officers, five of which have already been held, with the participation of 44 police officers.

- *Judicial officials – judges and state attorneys*

Since 2022, the Judicial Academy has conducted a series of workshops on combating gender-based violence, domestic violence and violence against women, intended for judges, state attorneys, judicial and state attorney's advisers, and other officials. In 2022, 84 participants participated in the workshops/trainings in question, in 2023 565 participants, in 2024 997 participants, in 2025 a total of 705 participants (247 judges, 114 state attorneys, 249 court and state attorney advisers, 95 officials). By June 2026, 185 participants participated in the trainings (48 judges, 32 state attorneys, 42 court and state attorney advisers, 28 officials and 35 other participants).

- *Social workers*

According to the Social Welfare Act, professional workers in the social welfare system have the right, duty and obligation to be professionally trained in the social welfare activity to improve professional competences and skills for efficient, standardised, responsible and high-quality performance of social welfare duties. The Ordinance on measures for the protection of personal rights and well-being of the child⁶⁴ prescribes the completion of professional training under a licensed programme for the implementation of measures of professional assistance and support in the exercise of care for the child, as well as intensive professional assistance and supervision of the exercise of care for the child. In accordance with the provisions of this Ordinance, a professional employed by a regional office of the Croatian Institute for Social Work may be appointed to implement the measure of professional assistance or the measure of intensive professional assistance and supervision of the exercise of care for the child, provided that they have not previously been involved in the case concerned. A professional employed by another social welfare institution, or another person from outside those institutions who meets the prescribed requirements, may also be appointed. This can be a social worker, psychologist, social pedagogue, educational rehabilitator or, exceptionally, an expert of another academic profession (helping professions) whose competences correspond to the specific needs of the family and have knowledge in the field of working with children and families at risk.

⁶⁴ Official Gazette, No. 123/15 and 87/22

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy has conducted the procedure of licensing this professional development programme on the basis of the provisions of Article 263 of the Social Welfare Act⁶⁵ on the basis of a public call, and in accordance with the Ordinance on Standards and the Procedure for Licensing Professional Development Programmes for Professionals and Professional Associates in the Social Welfare System⁶⁶. Following the completion of the licensing procedure, the professional development programme for professionals responsible for implementing measures for the protection of the rights and well-being of the child, developed by the Croatian Association of Social Workers, was licensed (CLASS: 131-0/24-01/23, REG.NO.: 524-09-01-02/4-24-5)⁶⁷. The 40-hour training curriculum for professionals responsible for implementing the measures, delivered over five days, comprises 10 thematic modules: The legal framework and standards of practice in social welfare for children; Assessment tools and concepts in the protection of children subject to professional assistance measures; The role of the professional responsible for implementing the measure in protecting the child's well-being; Understanding relationships and resolving family conflicts; Motivating changes in parental behaviour; Evaluation and reporting on the implementation and effects of the measure; Implementation of measures in situations of high-conflict separated parenting; Violence and coercive control in intimate partner relationships and measures for protecting the child's well-being; Children's participation in the implementation of child protection measures; Implementation of measures for protecting the rights and well-being of children exhibiting behavioural problems; Differences between the roles of the professional responsible for implementing the measure and the case manager, and their mutual cooperation; and Implementation of measures in situations where parents experience mental health difficulties.

Until the beginning of the work of the Academy of Social Welfare in 2024, the education was carried out by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy. The establishment of the Academy of Social Welfare⁶⁸ created the preconditions for the organisation and implementation of training of professional and other workers in the social welfare system, and the implementation of standardisation of training programmes.

A total of 958 participants completed the licensed professional development programme for professionals responsible for implementing measures for the protection of the rights and well-being of the child between 2023 and the end of 2025. Currently, 226 new participants are included in the training programme.

Furthermore, during 2025, five eight-hour sessions of the professional development programme entitled "Gender-Based Violence and Coercive Control" were held for professionals from the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the Family Centre, and social service providers established by the Republic of Croatia. In 2025, 110 professionals (social workers, lawyers, psychologists

⁶⁵ Official Gazette, No. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23 i 61/25

⁶⁶ Official Gazette, No. 58/22

⁶⁷ <https://husr.hr/web/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Potvrda-o-ispunjavanju-standarda-za-licenciranje-programa-strucnog-usavršavanja-LICENCA.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://asosk.hr/>

and social pedagogues) participated in the training programme. In 2026, four additional training sessions are planned. The professional development programme is designed to address specific objectives through a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical skills that are essential for the effective prevention of and response to cases of gender-based violence. The approach based on the legislative, psychological and institutional framework has enabled participants to acquire a holistic view of the issue, improve their competencies and become more active participants in the protection of victims and the prevention of violence. The objectives of the professional development programme include developing a basic and advanced understanding of the forms, causes and consequences of gender-based violence and its social context, gaining detailed insight into the legal frameworks for the protection of victims at the national and international level, developing competences for effective interinstitutional cooperation in the protection of victims, providing practical knowledge of the steps that institutions should take in accordance with the applicable protocols, emphasising the importance of victims' autonomy and their role in decision-making, and understanding the link between coercive control as a form of psychological violence and the risk of escalation of violence to femicide.

In addition, the Academy of Social Welfare also provides a professional development programme entitled "Training for Professionals Responsible for Implementing Measures to Protect the Rights and Well-Being of the Child". The programme is intended for participants from various professional backgrounds, such as social workers, psychologists, lawyers, social pedagogues, educational rehabilitation specialists, teachers, preschool teachers, and nurses/medical technicians who have expressed their willingness to implement measures for the protection of the rights and well-being of the child but have not completed the professional development programme for professionals responsible for implementing such measures. In 2024, one training programme term was held that included 23 participants, while in 2025, five terms were held that included 114 participants. By the end of June 2026, 19 training sessions had been held, involving approximately 535 participants. The implementation of the professional development programme will continue from September 2026 onwards. The aforementioned training programme was designed at 40 hours, through 10 modules. Upon completion of the training programme, participants acquire knowledge and skills relating to the legal framework and standards of conduct within the social welfare system for the protection of children's rights and well-being; assessing the needs, safety and developmental risks of children subject to measures for the protection of their rights and well-being; the role of professionals responsible for implementing such measures in safeguarding children's well-being; motivating changes in parental behaviour; children's participation in the implementation of child protection measures; implementing measures to protect the rights and well-being of children with behavioural problems; implementing measures in situations of high-conflict separated parenting; understanding family relationships and resolving family conflicts; domestic violence and gender-based violence; providing care to traumatised service users and professionals experiencing secondary trauma; and evaluating and reporting on the implementation and effects of the measures.

In addition, the Academy also implements professional development programme entitled *Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Older Persons, with an Emphasis on Protection from*

Neglect and Abuse, intended for professionals of the Croatian Institute for Social Work and social service providers. In 2025, four sessions of the professional development programme were held, attended by 82 professionals. The objectives of the programme are to improve knowledge and skills on national and international regulations on the protection of the rights of the elderly, respect for the dignity of the elderly, work with the elderly in the social welfare system, communication skills and access to work with the elderly and the recognition of forms of abuse and neglect.

In addition, the Academy of Social Welfare also organises supervision for experts of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the Family Centre, the Centre for Special Guardianship and Social Welfare Homes, and family mediators. The first cycle of supervision was conducted from October 2024 to June 2025, and the second cycle began in October 2025 and is planned to last until June 2026. Approximately 810 professionals participated in both cycles. The Academy plans to conduct the third cycle of supervision from September 2026 to June 2027 for 404 professionals. The evaluation of the first supervisory cycle in the social welfare system has shown an extremely positive effect on professionals. As many as 86% of participants believe that supervision suited their professional needs and allowed them to move away from everyday work. Positive effects, such as emotional relief, reduced professional isolation and reduced work-related stress, were also reported by a high percentage of participants (77%). The same percentage of participants also reported that supervision contributed to a better understanding of complex cases encountered by professionals in their daily work, greater confidence in working with service users, and the application of new skills. More than half of the respondents also state the improvement of relations with colleagues and the clarification of their own role in the organisation. Supervision has proven to be a valuable tool for professional development, emotional support and strengthening competencies in working with customers and the team.

- Healthcare professionals

Healthcare professionals are professionally trained to perform their duties, and their professional development is carried out in accordance with the regulations on professional development, as well as the provisions of professional chambers regarding continuous education for each individual activity. The professional development is carried out by health institutions, professional associations, chambers and other organisers.

The National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029 and the associated Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the period until 2026 envisage the measure *Strengthening the Capacity of Healthcare Professionals on Gender-Based Violence, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, including planned training for healthcare professionals.

- Other interdepartmental training

In addition, it should be noted that the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy conducted a series of trainings aimed at strengthening and developing the capacities of experts in the area of prevention and protection against violence against women and domestic violence through the EU project *"Let's Stop Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – There Is No Excuse for Violence"* from 2020 to the end of 2023. The training programmes

included representatives of county teams for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; civil servants, in order to raise awareness and ensure action in accordance with the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence; professionals from the social welfare system providing psychosocial treatment services for the prevention of violent behaviour; and professionals representing all relevant stakeholders in the area of protection against violence against women and domestic violence who are not members of county teams. A total of 1,000 people participated in all trainings, of whom in the period 2022 – 2023, 430 participated. In addition to other experts, the training programmes were delivered by representatives of civil society organisations whose programmes focus on the protection of victims of gender-based violence, with regard to their established expertise and professional knowledge in the area of protecting women from violence.

As part of the new project *NO to Gender-Based Violence*, a new cycle of training activities is planned, including training for county representatives on the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting, with particular emphasis on budgetary funds allocated to protection against gender-based violence, as well as training for media professionals aimed at improving their understanding of gender-based violence and ensuring appropriate reporting on cases of violence. Furthermore, the trainings will be directed to the employees of the Family Centre in order to conduct psychosocial counselling and therapy of victims of violence, as well as to the employees of the Croatian Institute for Social Work for more effective application of family legislation in the context of victims' rights and more effective treatment in cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence. A particularly important component of the training shall be the application of the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, as well as family law in the context of the rights of victims of violence, understanding trauma, coercive control, post-separation violence and femicide, recognising the harmful effects of applying the pseudo-concept of alienation as a continuation of domestic violence, and addressing issues concerning the manipulation of children and the perceived non-cooperation of victims of violence. In addition, interdepartmental training will be provided to members of county and city/municipal teams for preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and other threats who deal with cases of violence (professionals from the police, social welfare, healthcare, education and judicial systems, as well as civil society organisations), with a view to ensuring a more effective and victim-sensitive response to cases of violence. These training programmes are planned at two levels: basic and advanced. The training programmes are planned to be implemented from the end of 2026 and throughout 2027, with an additional 1,000 professionals expected to participate.

Article 16: Preventive intervention and treatment programmes

- *Preventive interventions and treatment programmes for offenders*

The Social Welfare Act⁶⁹ provides for psychosocial treatment for the prevention of violent behaviour⁷⁰ as one of the social services. It is a counselling, therapeutic and psychoeducational service aimed at stopping and preventing violent behaviour within the family by involving service users in a structured treatment programme designed to stop violence between partners and domestic violence. Based on an assessment by the professional team of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, this service may be granted to an individual who has not been subject to a court-ordered measure of mandatory psychosocial treatment, but who has been assessed as being at risk of violent behaviour and as requiring inclusion in treatment in order to ensure the safety of family members and/or due to a risk to the well-being of the child. It lasts for six months and comprises two individual sessions and 12 to 16 group sessions, depending on the specific needs of the group, and may also be provided on an individual basis. In addition, based on an assessment by the professional team, this service may also be provided to partners and/or parents who have not been ordered by a court to undergo mandatory psychosocial treatment, where there is a risk of mutual violent behaviour and a risk to the child's well-being and development, without an established victim – perpetrator relationship. Treatment provided to partners or parents is delivered through 10 to 16 sessions with partners between whom no violence has occurred, with some sessions conducted jointly and others separately. This social service is provided by professionals from the Family Centre who have undergone additional specialised training for the provision of the service. It should be noted that the Family Centre has 42 professionals who have received additional training to provide psychosocial treatment services, while a further 15 professionals attended the professional development programme provided by the Academy of Social Welfare during 2025 and 2026. It should also be noted that, between 2023 and 2025, a total of 152 service users participated in psychosocial treatment at the Family Centre, receiving a total of 976 units of service.

The Protection against Domestic Violence Act⁷¹ prescribes the possibility of imposing a protective measure of mandatory psychosocial treatment to the perpetrator of a domestic violence offence⁷² in order to eliminate their violent behaviour or if there is a danger that they could repeat domestic violence. In addition, pursuant to the provisions of the Criminal Act⁷³, the court may impose a security measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment⁷⁴ on a perpetrator who has committed a violent crime if there is a risk of committing the same or a similar act, and this security measure is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance on the execution of psychosocial treatment imposed on a perpetrator of a criminal offence with the characteristic of violence⁷⁵. Psychosocial treatment is provided within the

⁶⁹ Official Gazette No. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23 and 61/25

⁷⁰ Article 89

⁷¹ Official Gazette, No. 70/17, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22 and 36/24

⁷² Article 15

⁷³ Official Gazette No. 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 114/23, 36/24 and 136/25

⁷⁴ Article 70

⁷⁵ Official Gazette, No. 103/18

judicial system and, for perpetrators of violence with a history of psychiatric disorders, in healthcare institutions.

Programmes, i.e. structured interventions aimed at perpetrators of domestic violence, other violent crimes and sexual offences, carried out within the judicial system, namely in the prison system and the probation service, are based on prescribed standards and professional methodologies and are aligned with current scientific knowledge, relevant research and professional literature in the field of treatment of perpetrators of violence. They are also based on international standards, including Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States regarding the assessment, management and reintegration of persons accused or convicted of a sexual offence, adopted on 20 October 2021 at the 1415th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. Psychosocial treatment of perpetrators of violent crimes is carried out in accordance with the Ordinance on the execution of psychosocial treatment imposed on the perpetrator of a criminal offence with the characteristic of violence and the Standards adopted by the competent Expert Committee. In the Probation Service, licensed legal and natural persons conducting the treatment must also meet the criteria prescribed by the aforementioned Standards and Regulations.

- *Programmes for working with perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence with a view to protecting victims*

The programmes for working with perpetrators of violent criminal offences, implemented in the Republic of Croatia by the Directorate for the Prison System and Probation of the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation with the aim of resocialising perpetrators of a criminal offence and preventing recidivism, are the following specialised treatment programmes:

- NAS (Treatment of Prisoners perpetrators of violent crime offences) is a cognitive-behavioural programme aimed at perpetrators of violence, including domestic violence, conducted in the prison system.
- MID (You can do it differently) is a cognitive-behavioural programme conducted by the Probation Service with perpetrators of gender-based violence
- KUP (A Step Towards Change) is a cognitive-behavioural programme designed for violent offenders involved in probation
- PRIKIP (Prevention of Recidivism and Control of Impulsive Behaviour) is an intensive cognitive-behavioural programme intended for perpetrators of criminal offences against sexual freedom, which is carried out in the prison system. It is carried out in the form of structured group work for 10 months in penitentiaries.

The NAS, MID, KUP and PRIKIP programmes are based on a structured, psychoeducational and cognitive-behavioural approach and are focused on taking responsibility, developing insights, changing violent patterns of behaviour, developing self-control and preventing relapse.

The security measure of psychosocial treatment in the prison system is carried out through a structured NAS programme (Treatment of Prisoners perpetrators of violent crime offences). This programme is aimed at stopping and preventing violent behaviour, developing insight into

one's own behaviour and taking responsibility for it, gaining control over emotions and behaviour, adopting non-violent patterns of behaviour, and changing attitudes and beliefs that support violence. In addition to prisoners to whom the security measure referred to in Article 70 of the Criminal Act, the programme is, according to the assessment of the expert team of the criminal authority, also implemented towards other prisoners and juveniles who manifest violent behaviour, when necessary to achieve the purpose of imprisonment and reduce the risk of recurrence of violence.

According to data from the prison and probation information system, the prison system continuously records a significant number of prisoners who, in addition to a prison sentence, have been ordered to undergo the security measure of mandatory psychosocial treatment pursuant to Article 70 of the Criminal Act. It is predominantly a male population, with a smaller proportion of female prisoners. There is a continuous influx of new prisoners with measure imposed, as well as its continuous enforcement, and it should be noted that, for some prisoners, the measure is implemented over a longer period of time, depending on the length of the prison sentence and the stage of its execution.

In relation to perpetrators of criminal offences of a sexual nature, a special programme PRIKIP (Prevention of Recidivism and Control of Impulsive Behaviour) is implemented in the prison system for adult male perpetrators of sexual offences. The programme is implemented in the penitentiaries in Glina and Lepoglava, where there are sufficient numbers of perpetrators for it to be delivered in a group setting. Within the programme, work with perpetrators focuses on changing attitudes towards the sexual offence committed, developing an understanding of the unacceptability of such behaviour, developing empathy towards the victim, identifying risk factors, controlling impulsivity and aggression, and developing a relapse prevention plan.

The inclusion of prisoners in special treatment programmes in the prison system is determined within the framework of an individual prison execution programme, in accordance with Article 75 of the Enforcement of Prison Sentences Act⁷⁶, based on risk and treatment needs assessment. In this regard, participation is not exclusively voluntary. Rather, it constitutes a treatment intervention based on an individual professional assessment and the objectives of the execution of the sentence. At the same time, additional motivational work is carried out prior to participation in specialised programmes, as compulsory participation in specific psychosocial programmes would be ineffective and could have a counterproductive effect. It should be borne in mind that some prisoners are serving long-term or multi-year prison sentences, which is why some underwent treatment in previous years, while others will undergo treatment at a later stage, depending on the stage of sentence enforcement and the assessment of their treatment needs. Furthermore, for some prisoners, the prison sentence imposed or the remaining term of imprisonment after the judgment becomes final is not sufficient to allow them to participate in and complete the full programme, while in a certain number of cases prisoners refuse to participate in the specialised programme.

⁷⁶ Official Gazette, No. 14/21 and 155/23

Within the probation service, which also operates as part of the Directorate for the Prison System and Probation of the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation, the implementation of the security measure of mandatory psychosocial treatment is organised and supervised when it is imposed in conjunction with a fine, community service or a suspended sentence. In addition, the obligation to undergo psychosocial therapy is organized and supervised to eliminate violent behaviour without leaving the family community or with the suspect's consent to leave the family community for the duration of the therapy, in accordance with Article 206.d(1)(6) of the Criminal Procedure Act⁷⁷. It is important to clarify that this does not constitute therapy in the medical or clinical-psychological sense, but rather psychosocial treatment implemented in accordance with the same fundamental principles as treatment imposed as a security measure. Within the probation service, the security measure of mandatory psychosocial treatment is implemented through structured programmes aimed at addressing violent behaviour: MID (You Can Do It Differently), intended for perpetrators of criminal offences involving domestic violence and gender-based violence, and KUP (A Step Towards Change), intended for perpetrators of various criminal offences involving violence. The treatment can be carried out in groups or individually in the probation office and can also be organised with licensed legal or natural persons or in a health institution, depending on the assessment of needs and characteristics of the specific case.

The number of available treatment interventions is being increased primarily through the continuous strengthening of the system's capacity to implement such programmes. Within the prison system, the security measure is implemented on an individual basis in almost all penal institutions employing professionals trained to deliver the NAS programme, while in larger penal institutions it is also delivered in a group setting. This includes regular training for new NAS programme facilitators in order to ensure continuity in the programme's implementation across penal institutions and to mitigate the effects of staff turnover among specialised personnel. In 2025, the prison system had a total of 46 staff members trained to implement this measure, deployed across 21 penal institutions. During March 2026, an additional 14 staff members were educated.

Within the probation service, additional training provided in 2025 for the implementation of the MID and KUP programmes resulted in treatment programmes becoming available in 13 of the 14 probation offices, while the number of trained programme providers increased to 51. This increased the territorial availability of treatment programmes and strengthened institutional capacities for their implementation.

In relation to the number of trained providers of the PRIKIP programme, there are currently 19 professionals employed in the treatment departments of penitentiaries and prisons who have received additional training for working with perpetrators of sexual offences. The most recent training was conducted in 2021, when nine professionals from the prison system completed training for the implementation of the PRIKIP programme. Consequently, there was no need to

⁷⁷ Official Gazette, No. 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 130/20, 80/22, 36/24, 72/25 and 13/26

organise additional training during the previous period. However, it will be planned and conducted should a need for it be identified.

In both the prison system and the probation service, an additional quality assurance mechanism is provided through regular professional supervision meetings for programme facilitators, as well as continuous efforts to adapt and improve programmes for specific categories of perpetrators in line with current professional knowledge and changing social circumstances.

Furthermore, the monitoring of the implementation and results of these programmes is ensured on several levels. Within the prison system, participation in treatment, the course of implementation, the prisoner's level of cooperation and the achievement of treatment objectives are monitored as part of the individual programme for the execution of the prison sentence and through the records of the prison and probation information system. Aggregated data are also kept on the number of security measures imposed and implemented, the number of cases in which the application of the measure was ruled out, and the number of cases in which the measure was not completed.

Of particular importance are the continuous efforts to adapt and improve the programmes. To this end, in 2023, the NAS and PRIKIP specialised programmes were evaluated by an external organisation, the Croatian Association for Behavioural-Cognitive Therapies, thereby further contributing to ensuring the quality and professional evidence base of the programmes. The results relating to the implementation of the NAS programme indicate that participation in the programme leads to positive changes among prisoners, particularly increased motivation to change, improved self-control, and a stronger sense of personal responsibility and control over future behaviour. Furthermore, the results of the implementation of the PRIKIP programme indicate positive effects in terms of increased prisoner engagement, greater insight into their own behaviour, and strengthened responsibility and control over risky behavioural patterns, with both participants and programme providers consistently assessing the programme as useful and relevant. At the same time, with regard to both programmes, due to the limitations of the existing evaluation data, especially concerning long-term outcomes, the effects on reducing recidivism cannot yet be conclusively established, which points to the need to further improve the methodology for monitoring outcomes and to systematically evaluate the programmes' long-term effects.

In relation to the protective measure of psychosocial treatment of perpetrators of domestic violence, which is carried out within the judicial system by specialised real and natural persons who have concluded a contract with the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation on its implementation, it is worth pointing out that during 2022 this measure was implemented by 32 persons, during 2023 by 31 persons, during 2024 by 42 persons, in 2025 by 38 persons and in 2026 by 40 persons. Furthermore, in 2022, a total of 237 perpetrators were referred to the providers of the protective measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment, of which 181 persons completed the protective measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment in its entirety (136 men and 45 women). In 2023, a total of 219 perpetrators were referred to providers of the protective measure of mandatory psychosocial treatment, and the measure was

completed in full by 163 of them (44 women and 119 men). In 2024, out of 162 perpetrators referred to the implementers of the protective measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment, 115 of them completed the treatment (28 women and 87 men). In 2025, a total of 208 perpetrators were referred to the providers of the protective measure of psychosocial treatment, while the measure was fully implemented for 163 perpetrators of domestic violence (78%), of which 32 were women. In the period from 2022 to 2025, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation spent a total of EUR 466,392.92 in order to implement the protective measure of psychosocial treatment (2022 - EUR 126,086, 2023 - EUR 92,374.15, 2024 - EUR 101,842.91, 2025 - EUR 144,089.60). Also, by 1 June 2026, a total of 69 persons were referred to the implementer of the protective measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment, of which according to 54 perpetrators, the protective measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment was fully implemented.

For the remaining perpetrators, the protective measure was not implemented due to their failure to meet the eligibility requirements for participation in psychosocial treatment, particularly the professional criteria for treatment, as well as due to limited capacity, health-related circumstances (most commonly addiction or mental illness), or the absence of patterns of violent behaviour, as determined during the initial assessment conducted by the treatment providers. Some individuals may present with multiple contraindications to participation in psychosocial treatment, such as impaired cognitive functioning, reduced emotional capacities, impulsive and immature behavioural patterns, emotional instability, insufficient cognitive-emotional integration, and inadequate contact with reality. Sufficient cognitive-emotional capacity to acquire and assimilate new knowledge and skills is a fundamental prerequisite for participation in psychosocial treatment, as assessed by the treatment providers during the initial assessment. In addition, in some cases, the protective measure was not implemented or completed because, following initial sessions with the treatment providers, the individuals were referred for further treatment but subsequently discontinued treatment of their own accord, or because continuation of treatment could not be ensured due to health-related reasons, such as illness, addiction or other difficulties preventing continuous participation.

Furthermore, 94 professionals carry out the protective measure of psychosocial treatment of perpetrators of violence who have a psychiatric history in health institutions. In 2025, a total of 264 perpetrators of violence with a psychiatric history were involved in the implementation of a protective measure in health institutions. In addition, this protective measure is implemented by 47 treatment providers across 11 public health institutes, with 77 perpetrators participating in the measure during 2025. Consequently, it should be noted that psychosocial treatment is provided in 29 institutions/medical practices by 141 professionals, with 341 perpetrators of domestic violence with a psychiatric history participating in the implementation of the protective measure of psychosocial treatment in healthcare institutions.

- *Victim safety and cooperation with specialised victim support services*

Victim safety is ensured through several interconnected mechanisms. Treatment work with perpetrators systematically focuses on identifying and reducing the risk of repeated violence,

developing perpetrators' sense of responsibility, and adoption of non-violent patterns of behaviour. In the prison system, the assessment of the cooperation of prisoners in the implementation of an individual programme, including participation in special treatment programmes, is taken into account when assessing the successful execution of the prison sentence, when deciding on privileges, and when preparing opinions for conditional release proceedings. Refusal to participate in treatment may be relevant as an indicator of an increased risk of reoffending by committing the same type of criminal offence, while the decision on whether to grant conditional release is made by the court.

The Ordinance on Notifying Victims of the Unaccompanied Release of Prisoners or Offenders⁷⁸ establishes a mechanism whereby penal institutions notify the Victim and Witness Support Service of the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation of prisoners' temporary release and release from custody, for the purpose of subsequently informing the victim where the relevant conditions are met. All information on the victim support system in the Republic of Croatia, including information on the procedure for notifying victims of the release of prisoners or offenders, the rights of victims of criminal offences, including financial compensation for victims, and all relevant contact details, is available on the website of the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation⁷⁹.

In the Republic of Croatia, there is also a Network of Support and Cooperation for Victims and Witnesses of Criminal Offences⁸⁰, which consists of 11 civil society organisations that provide assistance and support to victims and witnesses of criminal offences and misdemeanour offences involving domestic violence across 18 counties. The purpose of the Network includes providing emotional and practical support, information on victims' rights, psychological and legal counselling, and accompaniment to court, the police, the state attorney's office and/or regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work. Services for victims and witnesses are available regardless of whether the crime or misdemeanour has been reported and are available for a certain period after the end of the court proceedings.

Article 18: General obligations

- *Interdepartmental cooperation*

State authorities attach particular importance to developing interdepartmental cooperation with all relevant authorities and civil society organisations working on issues related to violence against women and domestic violence and continuously undertake all necessary activities in line with current standards and practices. Back in 2018, after the entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in relation to the Republic of Croatia, an Agreement on interdepartmental cooperation in combating violence against women and domestic violence was signed between the competent ministries, and a National Team and county teams were established to combat violence against

⁷⁸ Official Gazette, No. 81/23

⁷⁹ <https://mpudt.gov.hr/o-ministarstvu/nadleznost-ministarstva-pravosudja-uprave-i-digitalne-transformacije/iz-pravosudnog-sustava-6372/podrska-zrtvama-i-svjedocima/6156?lang=hr>

⁸⁰ <https://mrezapodrskeisuradnje.com/>

women and domestic violence. In addition, in 2020, the Agreement on Interdepartmental Cooperation and Coordination in the Area of Prevention of Violence and other Endangering Behaviours at the local level was signed, based on which local, i.e. city (municipal), teams for the prevention and combating of violence and other threats were established. The purpose and scope of interdepartmental cooperation and coordination are to facilitate the exchange of information on risk factors and on prolonged, complex or specific circumstances or situations that may endanger citizens' life, safety, health or well-being. The purpose also includes especially high-risk situations involving threats, domestic violence and the criminal-law protection of children and vulnerable groups, as well as the protection of public officials who, in the performance of their official duties, may become potential victims of attacks by persons dissatisfied with the outcomes of official proceedings. Particular emphasis is placed on the active involvement and participation of representatives of civil society organisations in these teams.

Furthermore, to ensure a systematic interdepartmental approach in the preparation of national strategic documents and other regulations, state authorities strongly encourage cooperation between competent authorities and civil society organisations. For example, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy includes representatives of all competent authorities and sectors (police, healthcare, education, social welfare and the judiciary), as well as civil society organisations, initiatives, citizens' associations, professional associations and social partners, in working groups tasked with drafting national strategic documents and/or implementing prescribed measures. Civil society organisations are an indispensable partner of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy in providing support services to victims of gender-based violence, especially shelter and counselling services for victims of violence. It should be particularly noted that, of the 26 shelters for victims of violence operating in the Republic of Croatia, 15 are run by civil society organisations, including organisations working in the area of women's human rights. Professional and financial support for the work of the shelter is provided by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy. Close cooperation with civil society organisations is also based on national strategic documents, in particular the National Plan for Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until 2029, the National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027, the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and the Suppression of Discrimination for the period until 2027, and the National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027, in which civil society organisations are listed as co-creators of the implementation of measures, i.e. partners to state authorities.

Furthermore, in order to systematically inform victims about their rights and the support available to them, the police provide victims of punishable offences with written information on their rights, accompanied by a list and contact details of civil society organisations providing victim support and protection within the area of the respective police administration, victim and witness support departments at county courts, the National Call Centre for Victims of Criminal Offences and Misdemeanours, and state administration bodies from which victims may obtain specific forms of assistance. Also, police officers conduct an individual assessment of the

victim's protection needs. These forms have been digitised, and the list and contact information of these institutions/organisations are regularly updated.

Pursuant to the Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation, the Ministry of the Interior and the Victim and Witness Support Service, and as a continuation of the pilot project (which was launched in 2022 in six police administrations), the OPT-IN referral system has been implemented throughout the Republic of Croatia, in cooperation with all police administrations, since 1 April 2026. The purpose of the programme is to establish an advanced referral system whereby police officers, when informing all victims of criminal offences of their rights, ask whether they give their written consent for their contact details to be forwarded to the Association/National Call Centre – 116 006 (hereinafter referred to as: NCC) via a secure e-mail address. After that, the NCC proactively contacts the victims by phone, within 48 hours to determine the needs of the victim and provide the necessary assistance and support. After the interview, victims are referred to relevant organisations according to their needs to provide additional forms of assistance and support. Victims who consent will also be contacted by telephone by the NCC after two months. Victims may also contact the NCC again themselves if they require additional information. This activity is extremely important because most of the victims who contact the NCC via the free helpline 116 006 are victims of domestic violence, which is also reflected in the statistics on calls made to victims through the above-mentioned advanced OPT-IN referral system.

Building on the established good practice of referring adult victims under the aforementioned project, the Ministry of the Interior concluded a Partnership Agreement and a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Brave Phone association for the implementation of the My Follow Up pilot project, which is being carried out in the areas of three police administrations (the Zagreb Police Administration, the Sisak-Moslavina Police Administration and the Krapina-Zagorje Police Administration). The pilot project implies obtaining parental consent for police officers to provide the Brave Phone association with the contact details of the child victim and/or the parent, after which the Association's staff contact the child victim and/or the parent/guardian within two working days in order to provide timely support to the traumatised child.

In addition, it should be noted that in October 2025, the Interdepartmental Commission for the development and monitoring of the implementation of action plans in the area of mental health and the development of a protocol of action and communication to strengthen interdepartmental cooperation, which operates at the Ministry of Health, agreed on the Protocol of Action and Communication to strengthen interdepartmental cooperation in the implementation of policies aimed at mental health⁸¹. The implementation of the protocol includes all departments that will contribute to the strengthening of interdepartmental cooperation through their activities. The protocol enables faster and better response in crisis situations and therefore special attention is paid to communication channels and information exchange. Health professionals at all three levels of healthcare, primary, secondary and tertiary, as well as healthcare associates who have

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https://zdravlje.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/2025_Objave/Protokol%20postupanja%20i%20komunikacije%20za%20jaccanje%20meduresorne%20suradnje.pdf

not completed formal education in a healthcare field but are involved in the provision of certain aspects of healthcare, are also expected to contribute to the prevention of domestic violence. Healthcare professionals are obliged to recognise violence and even report the suspicion of violence to the police or the state attorney's office. If a victim presents at a primary healthcare facility, following examination and the provision of emergency medical care, where sexual violence is suspected, the physician notifies the police and, in coordination with the police, refers the victim to an appropriate healthcare institution. Healthcare institutions are obliged to provide the victim with urgent and comprehensive healthcare.

Article 20: General support services

- *Social welfare*

Pursuant to the Social Welfare Act of 2022⁸², victims of domestic violence and victims of trafficking in human beings accommodated in crisis situations (shelters) were granted the right to 50% of the guaranteed minimum benefit. Amendments to the Social Welfare Act of 2025⁸³ increased the coefficient for victims of violence from 50% to 100% of the corresponding amount of the guaranteed minimum benefit⁸⁴.

- *Employment of victims*

In relation to the employment of victims, it should be pointed out that unemployed persons identified as victims of domestic violence within the Croatian Employment Service are provided with services of individual counselling and consultation, professional guidance, inclusion in active employment policy measures and activation programmes. Furthermore, female counsellors have been appointed as coordinators in all regional and local offices of the Croatian Employment Service, serving as contact persons to whom other institutions or organisations may refer victims of domestic violence. In their work, they apply the principles of confidentiality and a victim-sensitive approach and assist victims in preparing for employment by strengthening their employment potential and enhancing their competencies for active job seeking. To improve the work of female counsellors acting as coordinators for victims of violence, training is provided in cooperation with civil society organisations.

Furthermore, the work with employers is aimed at eliminating prejudices and informing them about the possibilities of using active labour market policy measures, as well as raising awareness of the potential that victims of violence bring to the labour market. To increase employers' awareness and willingness to employ victims of domestic violence and, ultimately, facilitating their employment, representatives of the Croatian Employment Service actively participate in various activities. Activities include holding round tables, conferences, trainings, forums and seminars for employers, as well as presentations of active employment policy measures.

⁸² Official Gazette, No. 18/22

⁸³ Official Gazette, No. 61/25

⁸⁴ Article 28(3)

The number of victims of violence who exercised their rights as unemployed persons through the Croatian Employment Service is shown in the following table.

Year	Total number of unemployed victims of violence registered with the Croatian Employment Service (HZZ)	Number of victims of violence involved in career guidance activities	Number of unemployed victims of violence involved in workshops for acquiring skills required in the labour market	Number of victims of violence included in active employment policy measures	Number of victims of violence included in the activation programme	Number of employed victims of violence	Number of employers receiving incentives for employing victims of violence
2022	120	26	/	16	/	38	/
2023	171	22	/	8	4	47	/
2024	172	16	10	21	16	73	6
2025	171	21	27	51	7	40	13
I.-VI. 2026	121	11	/	16	7	21	/

- *Housing for victims*

Housing for victims of domestic violence is regulated by Article 45 of the Act on Housing Care in Assisted Areas⁸⁵, which regulates the provision of temporary accommodation for persons recognised as victims of domestic violence throughout the Republic of Croatia.

Beneficiaries may submit an application for housing throughout the year (with no time limit for submission) to the competent county administrative body or the competent administrative body of the City of Zagreb, which, following the relevant procedure, issues a decision granting the victim of domestic violence the right to housing for a maximum period of two years and forwards the decision to the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets for implementation. Housing for victims of violence is provided in state-owned housing units forming part of the housing stock under the Ministry's responsibility, which is administered and managed by the Directorate for Housing. Permanent housing is available exclusively in areas covered by the Act on Housing Care in Assisted Areas and subject to the conditions laid down in that Act.

In addition, if there are no available state-owned housing units in a certain area, there is also the possibility of housing in privately owned housing units. Funding for the accommodation costs of female beneficiaries is provided from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia under the Ministry's budget allocations. In this case, the Ministry settles the overhead costs and the costs

⁸⁵ Official Gazette No. 106/18, 98/19, 82/23 and 151/25

of monthly rent in residential units owned by private persons, and in state-owned housing units, the beneficiaries are exempt from paying the monthly rent while the Ministry settles the overhead costs.

Amendments to the Act on Housing Care in Assisted Areas have made certain improvements. Thus, the amendments to the Act of 2023⁸⁶ made it possible, upon expiry of the initial two-year period and at the beneficiary's request, to extend the granted right to housing assistance for an additional two years where the circumstances on the basis of which the original decision was issued continue to exist. Furthermore, the amendments to the Act of 2025⁸⁷ improved the conditions for exercising the right to housing for the benefit of beneficiaries. Access to the measure has also been broadened, in particular by abolishing the obligation to submit a certificate of total income and receipts and by allowing eligibility to be established on the basis of either a final or a non-final court judgment in criminal or misdemeanour proceedings. In the event of non-final judgments, clear mechanisms for monitoring the procedure are envisaged, i.e. the obligation of the beneficiaries to submit certificates on the course of the procedure to the competent administrative body of the county every six months has been established, and upon the finality of the judgment, a certificate on its finality. If the beneficiary fails to comply with this obligation, the competent county administrative authority reviews her entitlement and issues an appropriate decision. Furthermore, if, after the right to housing has been granted, the non-final judgment is set aside and the case is remitted for retrial, the beneficiary retains the right until the proceedings are concluded, but for no longer than four years. These changes are particularly significant given the length of court proceedings and the fact that by abolishing the obligation to provide evidence of financial status, access to the measure becomes more accessible to victims who cannot provide adequate housing conditions on their own. Accordingly, an increase in the number of favourable decisions is expected in 2026, for which EUR 885,000 has been allocated in the state budget under the Ministry's budget allocations.

Since the implementation of the Act on Housing Care in Assisted Areas from 2019 (the first solutions began to arrive in 2020), a total of 140 female beneficiaries were provided with housing in accordance with final/positive solutions. Of this number, 23 beneficiaries were provided with permanent housing through the rental of State-owned housing units, 19 of them during the period from 2022 to June 2026.

- *Healthcare for victims*

In the Republic of Croatia, every person, regardless of age, gender or any other characteristic, including women victims of violence, has the right to healthcare and to the possibility of achieving the highest possible level of health, in accordance with the provisions of the Health Care Act⁸⁸, the Compulsory Health Insurance Act⁸⁹, the Act on the Protection of Patients' Rights⁹⁰, the Protection of Persons with Mental Disorders Act⁹¹ and numerous other laws and

⁸⁶ Official Gazette, No. 82/23

⁸⁷ Official Gazette, No. 151/25

⁸⁸ Official Gazette, No. 100/18, 125/19, 147/20, 119/22, 156/22, 33/23, 36/24 and 102/25

⁸⁹ Official Gazette, No. 80/13, 137/13, 98/19, 33/23 and 105/25

⁹⁰ Official Gazette, No. 169/04 and 37/08

⁹¹ Official Gazette, No. 76/14

by-laws. According to Article 3(2) of the Compulsory Health Insurance Act, all persons insured by the Croatian Health Insurance Institute are provided with the rights and obligations arising from compulsory health insurance, based on the principles of mutuality, solidarity and equality, in the manner and under the conditions laid down in Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004⁹² as last amended by EU Regulation No. 1224/2012⁹³ and Directive 2011/24/EU⁹⁴.

The provisions of the Act on the Protection of Patients' Rights regulate patients' rights and the manner of protecting and promoting those rights. In this regard, every patient is guaranteed a general and equal right to high-quality and continuous healthcare appropriate to their state of health, in accordance with generally accepted professional standards and ethical principles, in the patient's best interests and with due respect for their personal views. The Act also provides for the patient's right to participate in decision-making, which includes the right to be informed and the right to accept or refuse any individual diagnostic or therapeutic procedure. The patient's right to participate in decision-making may exceptionally be restricted only when justified by the patient's state of health, in the cases and in the manner specifically prescribed by this Act. All necessary rights arising from compulsory health insurance, which constitute the right to healthcare and the right to financial benefits, are granted to all insured persons of the Croatian Health Insurance Institute, depending on their medical indications, health status needs, existing medical indications and other relevant circumstances in the manner and under the conditions prescribed by the Act.

The conduct of healthcare professionals in general, including in cases of domestic violence and sexual violence, is governed by a range of the above-mentioned and other legal instruments, including the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Domestic Violence, the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence, the Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Abuse and Neglect of Children, the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Violence amongst Children and Youth, and the Protocol on Procedures and Communication for Strengthening Interdepartmental Cooperation in the Implementation of Mental Health Policies. The relevant protocols, which healthcare professionals are required to follow, set out the basic procedures described above, including the collection of forensic evidence and documentation, the clear communication of supportive messages to victims, and referral to appropriate specialised support services within the framework of interdepartmental cooperation. Particular emphasis is placed on the process of identifying children exposed to any form of violence and providing further support. In addition, to collect, record and preserve evidence, healthcare professionals are required to act

⁹² REGULATION (EC) No. 883/2004 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32004R0883>

⁹³ Commission Regulation (EU) No 1224/2012 of 18 December 2012 amending Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the coordination of social security systems and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32012R1224>

⁹⁴ DIRECTIVE 2011/24/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 9 March 2011 on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011L0024>

in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Act on Data and Information in Healthcare⁹⁵ and the Act on Medical Practice⁹⁶.

Healthcare institutions ensure the availability of trained and qualified staff 24 hours a day to provide victims of violence with prompt and comprehensive healthcare in accordance with current standards and practices, regardless of when the violence occurred. The aim of the response by healthcare professionals in cases of violence is to provide prompt and comprehensive healthcare to victims of violence, as well as to other persons involved and witnesses, in order to treat the resulting injuries and psychological trauma, facilitate physical and psychological recovery, and preserve their physical and mental health. The treatment of victims of violence must comply with the applicable healthcare legislation and be carried out within the scope of responsibilities of the healthcare institution to which the victim turns, whether at the primary, secondary or tertiary level of healthcare.

The diagnosis and treatment of victims of violence are based on high ethical and moral norms, and are guided by scientifically based knowledge, guidelines and recommendations. Clinical guidelines prescribe algorithms for the treatment of a particular diagnosis (diagnosis, therapy), and they are applied to standardise and harmonise healthcare. Professional guidelines for carrying out specific procedures (diagnosis and treatment) are most issued by professional associations and are continuously updated and improved. It should be emphasised that guidelines constitute recommendations rather than legal obligations and that, when making decisions, due consideration must be given to the patient's individual needs and their right to participate in decisions concerning their own care, treatment and procedures, possible comorbidities and other relevant factors.

Within the hospital system, various specialist services are organised through clinics, services, institutes, departments and outpatient units, covering all necessary areas of healthcare in which victims of violence are provided with comprehensive healthcare according to medical indications. This includes triage (screening), emergency medical care, forensic examinations, support for experienced trauma as well as emergency, short-term and long-term psychological help.

In the event of a personal injury, the doctor is obliged to fill in the form – form *Report of injury/illness*⁹⁷ of the Croatian Health Insurance Institute and mark the Report with a number containing the hour, date, month and year of the injury and examination and keep it in the medical documentation. The application is submitted to the regional office of the Croatian Health Insurance Institute according to the insured person's place of residence. In accordance with the applicable provisions of the Act on Medical Practice⁹⁸ and the Dental Medicine Act⁹⁹, a doctor or a dentist is obliged to file a report to the police or the state attorney's office when they suspect that a person's death or bodily injury occurred violently during the performance of

⁹⁵ Official Gazette, No. 14/19, Article 4

⁹⁶ Official Gazette, No. 121/03 and 117/08, Article 23

⁹⁷ https://hzzo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Prijava_Ozljede_Bolesti-1.pdf

⁹⁸ Official Gazette, No. 121/03 and 117/08

⁹⁹ Official Gazette, No. 121/03, 117/08, 120/09 and 46/21

activities and in situations when they suspect that a minor or disabled person's health condition is seriously endangered by neglect or abuse. If the victim arrives unaccompanied by the police, healthcare workers are obliged to call the police without delay, and if the victim is a child, the need to inform parents, guardians, or the person entrusted with the care of the child is prescribed, unless it is suspected that they are the perpetrators of sexual violence in which case a professional worker of the Croatian Institute for Social Work is called, i.e. outside the working hours of the on-call professional. They are also required to maintain accurate, comprehensive and dated medical records in accordance with the regulations governing healthcare records, ensuring that sufficient information on the patient's state of health and treatment is always available. They are required to provide such documentation, upon request, to the ministry responsible for health, state administration bodies in accordance with special regulations, the competent professional chamber, or the judicial authorities. At the request of the state attorney's office, healthcare institutions are required to immediately provide all documentation relevant to the investigation and proof of criminal offences, except for documentation protected by law as confidential.

In the context of access to healthcare services, particularly in the area of mental health, a network of teams for mental health, prevention and outpatient treatment of addiction operates within county and teaching institutes of public health in the Republic of Croatia. These services are available to all persons, including women victims of violence, regardless of their status or personal circumstances. The Croatian Institute of Public Health also operates a Mental Health Counselling Centre, which is available to all age groups, with information and appointments available by telephone or email. As part of the Counselling Centre, mobile outreach teams have also been established, operating, among others, within the Vrapče Psychiatric Clinic and the "Dr. Andrija Štampar" Teaching Institute of Public Health. These services are provided free of charge and without the need for a referral, while through mobile outreach teams and direct contact, administrative and financial barriers are further reduced and access to care is improved for particularly vulnerable groups, including migrant women, women with disabilities and women who face barriers in accessing institutional services.

Furthermore, in relation to the provision of healthcare for foreigners, it should also be noted that certain categories of persons referred to in Article 19 of the Act on Health Insurance and Health Care of Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia¹⁰⁰ exercise the right to health care to the prescribed extent (depending on the category of persons to which they belong). The costs of their healthcare are reimbursed from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia. For example, a female applicant for international protection, as well as a female foreign national staying illegally in the Republic of Croatia, is entitled to emergency medical assistance and essential treatment, while every foreign national, particularly victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, is provided with appropriate healthcare¹⁰¹.

The Ordinance on Health Care Standards for Applicants for International Protection and

¹⁰⁰ Official Gazette, No. 80/13, 15/18, 26/21 and 46/22

¹⁰¹ Article 20 and Article 24

Foreigners under Temporary Protection¹⁰² provides for the right to appropriate healthcare, as well as the right to psychosocial support and assistance in appropriate institutions, for persons deprived of legal capacity, children, unaccompanied children, elderly and infirm persons, seriously ill persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, persons with mental disorders, victims of trafficking in human beings, and victims of torture, rape or other forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation. Although in the Republic of Croatia there are no harmful practices of female genital mutilation for non-medical reasons, cases caused by migratory movements from countries where this practice is carried out are possible. Furthermore, pregnant women and women who have recently given birth are entitled to healthcare related to pregnancy monitoring and childbirth to the same extent as persons covered by compulsory health insurance, while children under the age of 18 are guaranteed the right to comprehensive healthcare in accordance with the legislation governing healthcare entitlements under compulsory health insurance. Asylum seekers, foreign nationals under subsidiary protection and foreign nationals under temporary protection, members of their families, as well as unaccompanied children and foreign nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings, are entitled to healthcare to the same extent as persons covered by compulsory health insurance, although they do not acquire the status of an insured person.

In addition, it should be noted that the Act on the Protection of Patients' Rights contains specific provisions concerning the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities as patients. Article 8 prescribes the Right to Information, whereby patients with disabilities have the right to receive information in an accessible form. Furthermore, Article 13 prescribes the right to be informed also to a patient with impaired reasoning ability, in accordance with age, i.e. physical, mental and psychological condition.

Furthermore, in order to provide healthcare professionals with additional training and information on the specific illnesses and conditions of persons with disabilities and on the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the competent Croatian Institute of Public Health organises annual training for healthcare professionals on appropriate methods of communicating and interacting with persons with disabilities and on the specific aspects of disability-related care. This obligation is also prescribed by the National Plan for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities for the period from 2021 to 2027 within the *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* measure. It should also be noted that, subject to available financial resources, healthcare institutions continuously implement plans to remove physical barriers in order to ensure accessibility of services, invest in information and communication support for deaf and blind persons and other persons with disabilities in healthcare facilities, provide the necessary assistive devices, and ensure the availability of specific information relevant to persons with disabilities.

Regarding the measures aimed at facilitating the identification and care of victims of violence

¹⁰² Official Gazette, No. 28/20

against women in institutions for persons with disabilities and older persons, it should be noted that, in order to align with the new Social Welfare Act and introduce more modern principles for the protection of vulnerable groups, a new Ordinance on Social Service Quality Standards has been in force since 2023¹⁰³.

The quality standards include 17 universal quality standards with associated indicators, guidelines for their introduction and criteria for determining compliance with social service quality standards. The same applies to all social services regardless of the type of service, target group of users or organisational type of social service provider. Quality standards focus primarily on service users, promoting the independence and autonomy of users, their participation in normal life in the natural social environment and, in particular, respect for their human, civil and social rights.

To ensure an environment free from neglect, abuse, intimidation and exploitation, and in which the legally guaranteed rights of service users are respected, social service providers are required to comply with the prescribed standard “Safety from Exploitation”. The fundamental principle underlying this standard is that every person has the right to live in a safe and secure environment.

Therefore, the social service provider must have a comprehensive safeguarding policy in place, including measures, clearly defined guidelines and operational procedures that protect the integrity of both service users and the service system. This includes the prevention of such risks, their mitigation and risk management, as well as an appropriate monitoring system.

The quality indicators of this standard are as follows:

1. A written policy of the service provider setting out detailed measures and procedures for safeguarding service users and preventing the abuse and exploitation of social service users.
2. An approach to service users based on understanding, respect, and clear professional and personal boundaries.
3. Each service user is provided with opportunities to develop and improve social, emotional and communication skills, as well as the skills necessary for independent living.
4. Living in a healthy environment with an adequate quantity of nutritious food provided, while taking into account the wishes and needs of service users.
5. Access to appropriate health services that meet the individual needs of users.
6. Prescribed procedures for service providers aimed at reducing the risk of violence and physical, psychological and sexual abuse, regardless of whether the service is provided in a setting organised by the service provider, within the family or in the community.
7. Application of appropriate measures to mitigate the risk of misappropriation or abuse by employees, volunteers and others who come into contact with service users, with written rules and procedures in place for cases where the service provider or employees have access to and responsibility for managing service users’ money, other funds and property.
8. Prescribed methods for reporting and investigating suspicions of physical, psychological and sexual abuse, and staff, volunteers, service users, families, service

¹⁰³ Official Gazette, No. 31/23

providers and other professionals at the service provider are familiar with these methods.

9. The service provider's obligation to organise training on the prevention and recognition of abuse, appropriate responses in cases of suspected or identified abuse, and awareness of policies and measures for the protection of service users.

In the event of situations where restrictive procedures need to be applied in order to protect health and safety or avoid risks to users, and in order to apply the same protection measures and promote their well-being, the Ordinance also includes the standard "Restrictive Procedures". According to the aforementioned standard, procedures such as the use of physical restraint, administration of drugs or isolation must be applied to the minimum extent possible and only when the user behaves in such a way as to threaten injury to themselves or others and only as a last resort when all other means of control have already been exhausted. When applying such procedures, the principle of using the least restrictive measures for the shortest possible period of time must always be observed. Restrictive procedures must never pose a risk to service users or cause pain.

The Service Provider must have written guidelines of agreed and approved restrictive procedures or restrictions, as well as possible alternatives and ways to ensure maximum protection of users' rights. Users and their families, guardians or representatives should be familiar with the methods used. The application of restrictive procedures should be regulated in the code of ethics or code of professional conduct of personnel. Staff should be very familiar with these procedures and should receive training on the application of restrictive procedures to ensure that all methods used are safe and proportionate to the situation and do not in any case involve intentionally causing pain as a means of control. At the operational level, it is necessary to establish mechanisms that will closely monitor the application of such procedures and ensure the compliance of procedures with policies that contain comprehensive measures to protect the rights of users, as well as the adopted procedures and protocols of the organisation.

In general, compliance with an individual social service quality standard within the meaning of the aforementioned Ordinance is measured using quality indicators, based on evidence demonstrating compliance with the requirements of the relevant quality standard. Depending on the evidence available to the service provider, compliance for each individual standard is expressed in three levels. The first level of compliance requires the existence of written and systematically organised documentation on procedures and methods of practice, as well as on other activities undertaken by the service provider to achieve the established goals and objectives in accordance with the requirements of the relevant standard. The second level of compliance builds on the requirements achieved at the first level and requires evidence demonstrating that working practices comply with the requirements of the relevant standard. The third level of compliance builds on the requirements achieved at the first and second level and requires evidence demonstrating that the service provider consistently monitors and analyses outcomes and working practices in order to continuously improve the quality of the social services provided.

Article 22: Specialist support services

- **Shelters for victims of violence**

In response to the demands placed before the Republic of Croatia by the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in the area of direct assistance to victims of domestic violence and violence against women, six new shelters were established by the end of 2020 in counties where they had not existed before. With the establishment of six new shelters in the Republic of Croatia, a total of 26 shelters for victims of domestic violence run by a total of 25 service providers. In 2020, there were 352 beds available, while in 2026, a total of 409 beds were available in all shelters in the Republic of Croatia. It is important to emphasise that accommodation services for victims of violence are available in all counties of the Republic of Croatia, thereby ensuring balanced regional coverage. Customer service is free and shelter addresses are secret. Out of a total of 26 shelters for victims of domestic violence, shelters at 8 locations are run by women's non-governmental organisations / autonomous women's shelters, at seven locations of civil society organisations, at five religious institutions, and the other six by other accommodation providers, i.e. the Red Cross and homes/institutions. All shelter service providers in the Republic of Croatia receive financial support for their operations through the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy or local (regional) self-government units, i.e. from the state budget and the budgets of cities and counties. In the period from 2022 to 2025, a total of EUR 10,807,568.24 was allocated from the state budget for the operation of the shelters. The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy monitors the occupancy of accommodation capacities of all shelters on a bi-weekly basis and data from 2022 onwards show the occupancy of accommodation capacities up to a maximum of 67% in February 2022. In the past three years, from 2023 to 2026, the occupancy of the shelter capacity is about 50%.

- **Mental health protection**

Within the hospital system in the Republic of Croatia, and in order to protect the victim and their health and providing appropriate support, the victim is, where necessary and accompanied as appropriate, referred to a mental health unit for support and to mitigate the effects of the traumatic event. There are also specialised medical institutions – special psychiatric hospitals to which victims can be referred in case of need. Likewise, the victim is informed about the existence of institutional and non-institutional bodies for assistance and support (regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, specialised civil society organisations that provide assistance to victims of sexual violence, etc.).

Mental health protection of victims of violence is provided as part of mental health protection activities/services. Contact with a qualified professional from the mental health unit (e.g. a psychologist or psychiatrist) is ensured in order to provide support to the victim and prevent the development of trauma-related reactions.

Where necessary, the victim is provided with therapeutic interventions within the mental health unit and is informed about the available forms of assistance and support. In healthcare institutions, a designated professional contact person for cases of sexual violence has been appointed within mental health units in order to expedite and coordinate the provision of the

necessary mental health support and protection.

With regard to the provision of specialised support to children, it should be noted that, within the healthcare system, specialists in child and adolescent psychiatry, psychiatrists with a subspecialisation in child and adolescent psychiatry, and psychologists provide professional support to children who are victims and/or witnesses of domestic violence and violence against women.

- *Psychological counselling*

Victims of violence may receive psychological counselling through counselling centres for victims of violence operated by civil society organisations in the Republic of Croatia. Civil society organisations receive financial support for the operation of counselling centres through approved projects selected under a public call for financial support for counselling projects for victims of domestic violence and victims of sexual violence.

In the period from 2022 to 2025, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy spent a total of EUR 2,873,703 for the operation of counselling centres through a public call.

In addition, the social service of psychosocial counselling¹⁰⁴ for victims of violence is provided under the Social Welfare Act and is delivered by a professional of the Family Centre who has completed additional training in counselling and/or therapeutic work and is authorised by the competent professional chamber to practice independently in accordance with the specific regulations governing the activities of counselling therapists and psychotherapists. Amendments to the Social Welfare Act of 2025 enable victims of domestic violence and victims of gender-based violence to use this service for as long as the need persists, i.e. without a time limit¹⁰⁵.

- *Legal advice*

In the Republic of Croatia, the Free Legal Aid Act is in force¹⁰⁶, which regulates the provision of legal aid in civil and administrative matters as primary and secondary legal aid. Primary legal aid can be provided in the form of legal advice and general legal information (which is most often used) and representation and writing of submissions in proceedings before public law bodies (state administration bodies, bodies of local and regional self-government units, etc.)¹⁰⁷. Primary legal aid is provided by county administrative authorities, authorised associations and legal clinics. It is important to note that it can be provided in any legal matter under the prescribed conditions¹⁰⁸ and that the procedure for obtaining it has been simplified to the greatest extent possible, i.e. beneficiaries directly contact primary legal aid providers¹⁰⁹, while eligibility for primary legal aid is assessed on a discretionary basis.

¹⁰⁴ Article 83

¹⁰⁵ Article 84

¹⁰⁶ Official Gazette, No. 143/13 and 98/19

¹⁰⁷ Article 9

¹⁰⁸ Article 10

¹⁰⁹ Article 11

Some authorised associations financed in accordance with the Free Legal Aid Act in their programme objectives are specifically focused on working with victims of crimes of violence, domestic violence, women victims of violence as vulnerable groups, members of national minorities, victims of discrimination, applicants for international protection, asylum seekers, foreigners, irregular migrants and more.

In 2023, measures were taken to strengthen the free legal aid system and the funds for financing projects of authorised associations and legal clinics for the provision of primary legal aid were significantly increased. The Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation conducted a tender for the provision of free legal aid for the three-year period from 2023 to 2025, and at the end of 2025 a new tender for the financing of projects of authorised associations and legal clinics for the new three-year period from 2026 to 2028. The total value of the new tender is 41.82% higher than the total funds paid in the previous three-year period.

Secondary legal assistance includes representation by a lawyer in court proceedings and exemption from payment of court proceedings costs and court fees¹¹⁰. In order to receive secondary legal aid, beneficiaries must meet the financial eligibility criteria prescribed by the Free Legal Aid Act, and it is granted without an assessment of financial circumstances where the applicant is a victim of a violent criminal offence in proceedings for the exercise of the right to compensation for damage caused by the commission of that offence¹¹¹. Secondary legal aid may be granted only in certain types of proceedings (family relations, employment relations, proceedings concerning rights in rem, enforcement proceedings, amicable settlement of disputes, and other administrative and civil court proceedings where the need for such assistance arises from the beneficiary's specific life circumstances)¹¹². Applications for secondary legal aid are decided upon by the competent county administrative authorities.

In 2023, the fees paid to lawyers providing secondary legal aid were increased by 69%. At the same time, the fee was further increased again in 2025.

At the end of 2023, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation launched an awareness campaign on the free legal aid system and leaflets and posters were printed. During 2024, they were distributed to institutions that citizens approach in order to exercise certain rights, namely courts, regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, county administrative authorities, authorised associations and legal clinics. Information activities, intensified at the end of 2025, included a spot on the free legal aid system, and the distribution of brochures, leaflets and posters continued in 2025 and 2026. Furthermore, in 2025, training on the free legal aid system was provided to 79 employees of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute and the Croatian Health Insurance Institute.

¹¹⁰ Article 12

¹¹¹ Article 15

¹¹² Article 13

In relation to the improvement of the legislative framework, it should be noted that amendments to the Free Legal Aid Act are planned for the fourth quarter of 2026, with the aim of increasing access to free legal aid and improving the effectiveness of funding for free legal aid providers. The conditions for granting free legal aid will be adapted to the changed economic and social circumstances. In addition, the procedure for allocating financial resources to primary legal aid projects will be revised to enable continuous funding of such projects, while the procedure for paying fees to lawyers will be simplified.

- Outreach services

Outreach services within the system of the Croatian Institute for Social Welfare represent a form of non-institutional care and professional work aimed at early identification, prevention and direct support to beneficiaries. The services are provided through visits by professionals (social workers, psychologists and social pedagogues) to beneficiaries' homes and are aimed at persons at increased risk of social exclusion. They focus on providing professional assistance and identifying hidden risks, such as cases of domestic violence or the neglect of children or frail older persons, before more serious consequences occur.

- Telephone helplines

Telephone helplines or active 24-hour on-call services are available on a total of 9 SOS phones in the Republic of Croatia. The helplines are operated by women's non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and other service providers that also run shelters for victims of violence and receive financial support from the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy. SOS helpline services are free of charge, anonymous and available to all users regardless of their place of residence. Through SOS helplines, users can receive psychosocial and counselling support, as well as legal information.

Since 25 November 2020, a 24-hour service has also been available through the harmonised EU number (116 006) of the National Call Centre, operated by the Victim and Witness Support Service. Funding for their operation is provided through projects supported by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation. The scope of the National Call Centre includes providing information on the rights of victims and witnesses of criminal offences and misdemeanours, providing emotional support, referring users to relevant civil society organisations and institutions, and assisting them in completing applications for financial compensation. The National Call Centre helpline is available in Croatian and English, and its number is included in the information on rights provided by the police to victims when they report criminal offences or misdemeanours. Support is free of charge and anonymous for everyone throughout the Republic of Croatia.

Furthermore, an EU harmonised number for victims of violence against women was established in September 2023 (116 016) run by the Autonomous Women's House. The helpline is available from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition, within the healthcare system, national and regional centres for psychological trauma operate at clinical hospital centres in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka and Osijek. They are available to victims of criminal offences and provide regional coverage for all counties of the Republic of Croatia. Likewise, the University Hospital Centre Zagreb operates a Crisis and Suicide Prevention Centre, whose telephone helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to persons in need of assistance.

For the purpose of preventing trafficking in human beings, a free telephone SOS line (0800 77 99) is available for all citizens who have certain knowledge about trafficking in human beings, where telephone calls are received by representatives of civil society organisations. The SOS line is available every day from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

- Other forms of support

With regard to programmes for the socio-economic empowerment of victims, it should be emphasised that, pursuant to the Social Welfare Act¹¹³, victims of violence are entitled to a range of rights and services within the social welfare system. For example, the available services include counselling¹¹⁴, psychosocial counselling¹¹⁵, individual psychosocial support¹¹⁶, supported housing¹¹⁷ and accommodation in crisis situations¹¹⁸, while among the rights available under the social welfare system, particular emphasis should be placed on the right to the guaranteed minimum benefit¹¹⁹.

In addition, victims may participate in empowerment programmes during their stay in shelters for victims of violence, as shelters implement a range of programmes aimed at the psychosocial and socio-economic empowerment of victims. They receive most of the financial support for the implementation of these programmes from the state budget and from the budgets of the cities or counties in which they operate.

Furthermore, in line with new trends in the development of digital technology, it is important to highlight efforts to protect victims from threats posed through the internet and social media. In order to *strengthen the support system for victims of online violence*, the “Red Button” app¹²⁰, located on the official website of the Ministry of the Interior, is intended for reporting child abuse, domestic violence and inappropriate content on the Internet. In 2022, the police received a total of 250 reports through this app, 49 of which concerned domestic violence or violence between close persons. In 2023, of a total of 353 reports received, 123 concerned domestic violence/violence between close persons. In 2024, of a total of 1,567 reports, 140 concerned domestic violence/violence between close persons, while in 2025, a total of 561 reports were received, of which 140 concerned violence between close persons.

¹¹³ Official Gazette No. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23 and 61/25

¹¹⁴ Article 81

¹¹⁵ Article 83 and 84

¹¹⁶ Article 94

¹¹⁷ Article 106 and 107

¹¹⁸ Article 112 and 113

¹¹⁹ Article 28(3)

¹²⁰ <https://redbutton.gov.hr/online-prijava/7>

Also, the Help4U platform,¹²¹ which provides safe and reliable assistance, is intended for children and young people exposed to inappropriate behaviour or abuse on the internet. The platform is available in 10 languages and contains a button to quickly exit the page without a trace. These data point to the significant role of digital tools in enabling accessible, anonymous and timely reporting of violence and confirm the importance of further strengthening and expanding the support system for victims of online violence.

- *Children victims and/or witnesses of domestic violence*

General and specialist support services provided to women victims of domestic violence, including services for their children, take into account the rights and needs of child witnesses, with due regard for the best interests of the child.

The Protection against Domestic Violence Act requires all authorities dealing with cases of domestic violence to treat a child victim of domestic violence with particular care, taking into account the child's age, personality, and personal and family circumstances, in order to avoid adverse consequences for the child's upbringing and development, and to be guided by the best interests of the child.

In accordance with the Police Duties and Powers Act¹²², specially trained criminal police officers who are required by law to deal with children, minors and young adults may obtain information from a child or minor while safeguarding their best interests. Informative interviews with child victims/witnesses of criminal acts are conducted by a police officer who has undergone training in conducting interviews with a child according to the PEACE (planning and preparation, engage and explain, account, clarification & challenge, closure, evaluation) model. Interviews are conducted in 60 official rooms that are equipped with appropriate child-friendly furniture.

Support for child victims and/or witnesses of domestic violence is provided within the healthcare system. The healthcare component is based on the network of resources of the Croatian Institute of Public Health, comprising 22 institutions within the Public Health Service Network, with the necessary conditions in place to provide professional support to children who are victims and witnesses of domestic violence and violence against women. Mental health and addiction prevention teams have been established in each county. In addition, 69 health institutions are operating at the level of the Republic of Croatia, employing specialists and residents of child and adolescent psychiatry, which makes a total of 89 institutions with relevant professional capacities. The system comprises a total of 66 specialists in child and adolescent psychiatry and psychiatrists with a subspecialisation in this area, as well as 523 psychologists, representing a key resource for the timely identification of needs and the provision of professional support to children who are victims and witnesses of violence, as well as to other vulnerable groups. It should also be highlighted that children who are victims or witnesses of violence may receive psychological support at the Family Centre and in shelters for victims of

¹²¹ <https://www.help4u-project.eu/>

¹²² Official Gazette, No. 76/09, 92/14 and 70/19

violence, where they are accommodated together with their mothers and receive professional support aimed at helping them overcome traumatic experiences. During 2025, Family Centre professionals provided psychological assistance to 83 child victims and witnesses of violence, while 296 children accommodated in shelters for victims of violence together with their mothers received professional support aimed at helping them overcome traumatic experiences.

- *Migrant women and female applicants for international protection*

The response to the special needs of migrant women and asylum seekers is provided through the International and Temporary Protection Act¹²³. This Act lays down provisions ensuring a gender-sensitive interpretation of the forms of persecution referred to in Article 1.A(2) of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and recognises vulnerable groups, including victims of trafficking in human beings, victims of torture, rape or other forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation¹²⁴. At the same time, the Act prescribes special procedural, and acceptance guarantees that provide appropriate support to applicants with regard to circumstances, including gender, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, mental health or the consequences of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence¹²⁵. This Act provides migrant women with residence, i.e. temporary residence, which also provides a direct response to the requirements of the Council of Europe Convention. Autonomous residence may be granted for a period of up to two years, provided that the person has previously held a temporary residence permit for the purpose of family reunification for three years. In cases of termination of marriage and other relationship, the Foreigners Act¹²⁶ provides for the granting of temporary residence for serious, justified reasons of a humanitarian nature¹²⁷. The possibility of filing a claim does not depend on the duration of the marriage or relationship nor the previous legal status of one of the parties. Furthermore, the law provides for the possibility for women who have been taken to another country for the purpose of forced marriage to apply for temporary residence on humanitarian grounds upon their return to the Republic of Croatia.

Please see the reply to Articles 49 and 50 for further information.

Article 25: Support to victims of sexual violence

Regarding the issue of the availability of referral centres for referring victims of sexual violence, it should be noted that the Health Care Act¹²⁸ provides that a Ministry referral centre may be a healthcare institution or part thereof, or another legal entity or part thereof that provides healthcare services in accordance with specific legislation and meets the norms and standards for providing the most complex forms of healthcare. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, only one reference centre may be designated for the same medical area¹²⁹. However, it

¹²³ Official Gazette, No. 70/15, 127/17, 33/23 and 17/25

¹²⁴ Article 4(14)

¹²⁵ Article 15

¹²⁶ Official Gazette, No. 133/20, 114/22, 151/22, 40/25. and 55/26

¹²⁷ Article 79

¹²⁸ Official Gazette, No. 100/18, 125/19, 147/20, 119/22, 156/22, 33/23, 36/24 and 102/25

¹²⁹ Article 143

should be noted that an ordinance governing the establishment of centres of excellence is currently being drafted.

Regarding the procedure for collecting forensic evidence, it should be noted that in the Republic of Croatia biological traces are collected in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Act¹³⁰ and the Ordinance on the Manner of Collecting Biological Samples and Conducting Molecular Genetic Analysis¹³¹, adopted on the basis of Article 327a(6) of the Criminal Procedure Act. The Ordinance lays down the procedures for collecting biological material samples for the purposes of molecular genetic analysis, the conditions for the storage and preservation of biological material samples, the conditions for the storage, processing and retention of data obtained through molecular genetic analysis, and the supervision of the storage, processing and retention of the data collected.

Examinations of victims of sexual violence are performed in general hospitals and clinical health institutions – clinics, clinical hospitals and clinical hospital centres. In cases of rape, samples are collected using a biological evidence collection kit provided by the police (samples of blood, hair, pubic hair, swabs, fingernails and other), while healthcare institutions are required to enable police officers to conduct the criminal investigation without obstruction during or following the physical examination, in order to avoid unnecessary repetition of procedures (undressing the victim, photographing injuries for evidentiary purposes, collecting items of clothing, traces, swabs and reference samples, requiring the victim to attend police premises, and other). To ensure the effective conduct of these procedures, the response is coordinated by a police officer trained in handling cases of sexual violence, the state attorney, and the specialist physician on duty. The victim must give written consent after prior explanation of the purpose of the proceedings. In the event that the victim cannot give their consent for objective reasons, the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Act shall apply. In order to protect the victim and their health and providing appropriate support, the victim is, where necessary, informed about available institutional and non-institutional bodies and services providing assistance and support (institutes, specialised civil society organisations helping victims of sexual violence, and others).

In order to ensure the availability of the necessary services to victims of sexual violence with the *National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027* a measure has been set aimed at ensuring the availability of specialised services for working with victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment. The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy is responsible for implementing this measure, in cooperation with civil society organisations. The purpose of the measure is to ensure a coordinated system of support for victims of sexual violence, with clearly established criteria for the provision of services and clearly defined types of services, thereby creating the necessary conditions for the highest possible quality and timely recovery of victims.

¹³⁰ Official Gazette, Official Gazette, No. 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 80/22, 36/24, 72/25 and 13/26

¹³¹ Official Gazette, No. 120/14

To realise these tasks, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy has prepared an analysis or assessment of the needs and conditions for the establishment of a network of specialised services for working with victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment. In order to collect data, a questionnaire was prepared and submitted to 180 e-mail addresses (civil society organisations throughout the Republic of Croatia, regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work and regional services of the Family Centre). The findings of the analysis highlight the need to ensure highly specialised assistance and support services for victims of sexual violence, given that sexual violence can result in severe physical and emotional trauma for victims. At the same time, services should be available to everyone, regardless of gender, age, religion, racial or ethnic origin, social status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or other factors. The work of specialised services for working with victims of sexual violence must be based on the principle of confidentiality and include working with victims on trauma, counselling and long-term monitoring of the victim, with full respect for her needs and potential, as well as providing psychological support until her final recovery, especially taking into account the legality of a holistic approach. In addition to advisory work with the victim, the work of specialised services also includes providing legal representation and, if necessary, providing support to close persons of the victim.

Given that sexual violence may have consequences not only for the victim's mental health but also for their physical health, a multidisciplinary approach to supporting the victim is particularly important, especially cooperation with healthcare institutions. In doing so, special emphasis should be placed on the need to ensure a quality approach to working with victims of sexual violence and to ensure a high level of knowledge and practical skills among professionals providing support to victims of sexual violence, as a particularly vulnerable category of victims. Working with victims of sexual violence requires a sophisticated approach, based on special knowledge and skills, which is why it is necessary to ensure a high level of awareness of this issue as well as a high level of staff expertise through continuous education. A high level of professional competence, in-depth knowledge of the complexities of sexual violence, and a thorough understanding of victims' rights and needs reduce the risk of retraumatisation and provide a foundation for building a relationship of trust between the victim and the professional, which is particularly important, almost crucial, for their full recovery.

In order to establish a network of specialised services, in July 2026 the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy has published a *Public Call for Expressions of Interest from Civil Society Organisations to Join the Network of Specialised Services for Victims of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment*. The public call provides for a transparent procedure for selecting the most qualified civil society organisations working with victims of sexual violence and sets out selection criteria that include the range of direct support services provided, experience in implementing projects and programmes, cooperation with relevant institutions within the system for the protection of victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment, and the geographical accessibility of specialised services. Based on this Public call, a Decision on establishment of the Network of Specialised Services for Victims of Sexual Violence and Sexual

Harassment in four regions, i.e. in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka and Osijek was made¹³². The financial resources necessary to ensure the preconditions for the Network's operation will be provided through EU funds (European Social Fund +) in the amount of EUR 1,000,000. In the coming period, in accordance with the identified needs, it is planned to expand the network of specialised services to other cities in the Republic of Croatia.

Article 31: Custody, visitation rights and safety

- *Deciding on parental rights in the context of domestic violence*

The existence of domestic violence is a decisive criterion that is taken into account when deciding on the right to custody and/or the right to see children. In particular, it is emphasised that all proceedings are conducted in accordance with the fundamental principles of the best interests of the child, the child's right to maintain personal relationships, and the protection of the child from violence and harmful influences.

Family Act¹³³ explicitly stipulates that the court must take into account the existence of domestic violence before making a decision on which parent the child will live with, a decision on parental care and the personal relations of the child with the parent¹³⁴. Consequently, domestic violence constitutes a particularly serious violation of the principles of solidarity, mutual respect and mutual assistance among all family members¹³⁵.

A child is considered a victim of violence not only when it is directed directly at the child, but also when it witnesses violence among family members. In all such cases, the competent authorities are obliged to act with particular consideration and primarily to protect the interests of the child.

Under Croatian national law, domestic violence constitutes a relevant circumstance that may lead to the restriction or deprivation of the right to exercise parental care or maintain personal relations with the child. The child's well-being and safety shall take precedence over the of the parent's right to custody and to maintain personal relations with the child. This stems from the fundamental principle of family legislation on the primary protection of the child's best interests¹³⁶.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Family Act, professionals of the Croatian Institute for Social Work are required, in cases of domestic violence committed by a parent who does not live with the child, to carefully consider whether it is necessary to adopt a decision prohibiting that parent from having contact with the child in order to protect the child's health and other important interests, or a decision prohibiting the parent from approaching the child without authorisation

¹³²

<https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/Natje%C4%8Daji//Odluka%20o%20uspostavi%20Mre%C5%BEE%20specijaliziranih%20servisa%20za%20rad%20sa%20%C5%BETvama%20seksualnog%20nasilja%20i%20seksualnog%20uznemiravanja.pdf>

¹³³ Official Gazette, No. 103/15, 98/19, 47/20, 49/23. and 156/23

¹³⁴ Article 416(1)(4)

¹³⁵ Article 4

¹³⁶ Article 5

at specified locations or within a specified distance, as well as from harassing the child¹³⁷. The Croatian Institute for Social Work will inform the parent who is not abusing the child thereof, as well as the child, in an appropriate and considerate manner, and shall ascertain the child's opinion and take them into account, if they are not contrary to the child's best interests. In doing so, the child's need for protection from further violence will be particularly appreciated, and an opinion and recommendation of an appropriate expert will be obtained. The Family Law explicitly stipulates that in all proceedings in which a child's right or interest is decided, the child has the right to find out the important circumstances of the case in an appropriate manner, to receive advice and express his opinion, and to be informed of the possible consequences of respecting their opinion. The opinion of the child is taken into account in proportion to their age and maturity, and always within the framework of the assessment of the child's best interests¹³⁸. This also includes procedures for making a decision on parental care and maintaining personal relationships with the child.

Family Act explicitly stipulates that parents have the right, duty and responsibility to take care of the child¹³⁹, and state intervention is allowed only if it is strictly necessary to protect the rights and well-being of the child. When intervening in family life, due regard must be given to the principle of proportionality, meaning that only measures that are necessary and proportionate to the aim pursued may be taken. A non-violent parent who is capable of caring for a child has priority over a foster family. The removal of a child from their family may be ordered only where the child's rights and well-being cannot be adequately protected by any less restrictive measure¹⁴⁰.

In the case of knowledge of a violation of the child's rights, including witnessing domestic violence, the Croatian Institute for Social Work is required to conduct an expert assessment and take measures to protect the rights and well-being of the child¹⁴¹. Furthermore, under the Protocol on Procedures in Cases of Domestic Violence, the Croatian Institute for Social Work is required, inter alia, to report the case to the police urgently and without delay, promptly establish contact with the victim and take measures to stop the violence and protect the victim's safety, inform the victim of their rights and available protection options, develop a safety plan together with the victim, offer and provide safe accommodation for the victim and their children, conduct an initial assessment of the victim's needs and, depending on that assessment, provide psychological, legal and/or financial assistance, and, in cases of violence against a child or violence witnessed by a child, conduct a specific assessment of the child's risk/safety.

- Cooperation of courts with other relevant authorities in decision-making procedures

Pursuant to the provisions of the Family Act, municipal courts decide on matters concerning parental responsibility, contact with the child, and child maintenance. In proceedings in which the court decides on parental responsibility and contacts with the child, the Croatian Institute for Social Work plays a key role by carrying out professional assessments of the family,

¹³⁷ Article 154

¹³⁸ Article 86(2) and Article 360

¹³⁹ Article 6

¹⁴⁰ Article 129

¹⁴¹ Articles 131 and 132

providing the court with its opinion and recommendations and, where necessary, intervening by imposing measures to protect the rights and well-being of the child. The Croatian Institute for Social Work is also required to include data on domestic violence, which ensures that data on violence are entered into the civil procedure file. The police assess the risk of recurrence or escalation of violence, while the Croatian Institute for Social Work conducts a professional assessment of the risks to the child's safety and well-being. Therefore, in cases involving both domestic violence and child protection issues, courts consult professionals who possess the necessary expertise and assessment tools to evaluate the risk of recurrence or escalation of violence, as well as risks to the child's safety and well-being. Also, if necessary, the court in the proceedings may order the presentation of evidence by psycho-psychiatric expertise by court experts. It is particularly emphasised that the safety of the child and the victim of violence takes priority in proceedings concerning parental responsibility and contact with the child.

If there is a risk to the child or parent victim of violence, the court may adopt temporary measures governing the exercise of parental care and personal relations with the child. Such measures may include the restriction or prohibition of personal relationships¹⁴², the establishment of personal relationships under supervision¹⁴³, the imposition of special conditions for the takeover and return of the child,¹⁴⁴ and other measures necessary to protect the safety of the child and parents. Supervised contact, including visits and other forms of contact, takes place in the presence of professionals designated by the Croatian Institute for Social Work, most commonly social workers, psychologists or other trained professionals, in safe and child-friendly settings, such as the Family Centre.

In cases where a child has been exposed to violence or witnessed violence, special attention is paid to assessing their safety and emotional state. Provisional measures shall last until the conclusion of the proceedings or until a new decision of the court is made and may be amended depending on the assessment of the best interests of the child.

Furthermore, in cases where a parent abuses or grossly violates parental responsibility, duty and rights Family Act provides for the possibility of making a decision on the deprivation of parental custody. In addition, the Family Act expressly provides that the court may deprive a parent of parental responsibility if the child is exposed to violence between adult family members or if, according to the report and assessment of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the child's return to the family following the implementation of a measure to protect the child's rights and well-being would pose a serious risk to the child's life, health and development. Accordingly, it should be emphasised that the Croatian legal system provides for the deprivation of parental responsibility as a measure of last resort, which may be imposed even before a criminal conviction, for example in cases of violence, abuse or serious violations of parental responsibilities, duties and rights¹⁴⁵, where other measures are insufficient to protect the child.

¹⁴² Article 123

¹⁴³ Article 124

¹⁴⁴ Article 122

¹⁴⁵ Article 170 and 171

In civil procedures, the court may establish facts relevant to the protection of the child on its own initiative, request the case file from misdemeanour or criminal procedures, and take into account any protective measures imposed, such as a restraining order or the removal of the perpetrator from the shared household, and assess them in the context of the child's safety. Cooperation and communication between family courts and other authorities and professionals are ensured through laws, subordinate legislation and other relevant instruments, including the Family Act, the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, the Criminal Procedure Act and the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Domestic Violence. The Protocol explicitly stipulates the continuous cooperation of all competent authorities (police, social welfare, healthcare, education, victim support organisations), exchange of information and joint action to protect victims.

In order for judges, experts and other legal professionals to have sufficient knowledge and understand the dynamics of intimate partner violence, psychological effects and special vulnerability of children who witness violence, professional training programmes are continuously implemented, and a multidisciplinary approach is applied.

In relation to the need to inform professionals about the lack of a sound basis for the concept of “parental alienation” or similar concepts used to obscure the violence and control exercised by perpetrators of domestic violence over women and their children, it should be noted that, in September 2023, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy issued guidance to all regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the Family Centre and the Centre for Special Guardianship. The guidance prohibited the use of the pseudoscientific concept of “parental alienation”, as well as any approach or principle whereby mothers who have survived male violence are regarded as uncooperative or incompetent. The aforementioned authorities were required to start applying this instruction immediately and to inform all professionals of the institutions about it.

Article 48: Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing

- Criminal law

Regarding the prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution procedures for criminal offences provided for by the Convention, it is pointed out that according to the Criminal Procedure Act¹⁴⁶, the parties can negotiate the terms of admission of guilt and agreement on punishment and other measures (judicial admonition, suspended sentence, partially suspended sentence, special obligations, protective supervision, confiscation of objects and costs of proceedings). However, such communication is not obligatory, but optional. In the case of criminal offences against life and limb and against sexual freedom punishable by a term of imprisonment exceeding five years, the state attorney must obtain the victim's consent before entering into a plea agreement¹⁴⁷. On the basis of such an agreement, the court delivers a judgment.

¹⁴⁶ Official Gazette, No. 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 80/22, 36/24, 72/25 and 13/26

¹⁴⁷ Article 360

With regard to safeguards applied to ensure the victim's free and informed consent to voluntary alternative dispute resolution procedures for criminal offences covered by the Convention, as well as measures aimed at preventing direct or indirect pressure on the victim, it should be noted that, after obtaining the consent of the victim or injured party, the state attorney may, by decision, conditionally defer or discontinue criminal prosecution. This is possible, although there is a reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence subject to *ex officio* prosecution has been committed and is punishable by a fine or imprisonment of up to five years, provided that the accused undertakes certain obligations. Once those obligations have been fulfilled, the state attorney will dismiss the criminal complaint or withdraw the charges¹⁴⁸.

- Civil law

The latest amendments to the Family Act¹⁴⁹, which is now aligned with the provisions of the Convention, further protect the rights and interests of victims of violence, including children who are victims of domestic violence or are exposed to witnessing violence by an abusive parent. In this regard, it should be noted that the obligation to attend an initial family mediation meeting before initiating divorce proceedings has been abolished, thereby ensuring spouses' unhindered access to the court regardless of their participation in family mediation. Family law explicitly stipulates that family mediation is not carried out in cases of claims of domestic violence¹⁵⁰, i.e. when, according to the assessment of the professional team of the Croatian Institute for Social Work or the family mediator, domestic violence prevents the spouses from participating in the mediation process on an equal footing. Furthermore, in mandatory counselling proceedings, where the authority responsible for conducting family counselling is aware of the existence of domestic violence, separate interviews are conducted with the parties, which ensures their safety while allowing them, through mandatory counselling and on the basis of their own decisions, to regulate their relations and reach an agreement. In addition, the Family Act also stipulates the court's obligation to take into account any allegations of domestic violence when making a decision regarding which parent the child will live with, as well as decisions concerning parental custody and the child's personal relations with their parents¹⁵¹.

Articles 49 and 50: General obligations and immediate response, prevention and protection

- Capacity to Respond to Cases of Violence against Women

The possibility of reporting violence against women, in addition to the usual telephone call for emergency police intervention and e-mail address: policija@mup.hr, includes anonymous online reporting of a criminal offence through the Red Button online application and the Ministry of Interior – Security and Trust app¹⁵².

¹⁴⁸ Article 206.d

¹⁴⁹ Official Gazette, No. 156/23

¹⁵⁰ Article 332(1)(1)

¹⁵¹ Article 416(1)(4)

¹⁵² <https://policija.gov.hr/aplikacije-za-e-dojave-sumnjivih-dogadjaja/172>

With regard to police human resources for investigating all cases of violence against women, it should be noted that the Republic of Croatia has specially trained juvenile police officers who conduct criminal investigations into offences committed against children and close persons, including women, who are the most frequent victims of this type of criminal offence.

When conducting criminal investigations, police officers act in accordance with the provisions of national legislation, namely the Criminal Act, the Criminal Procedure Act, the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, the Misdemeanour Act and the Police Duties and Powers Act. By-laws, such as the Ordinance on the Manner of Conduct of Police Officers¹⁵³, the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Domestic Violence, the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence, etc. are also important for acting. Furthermore, the General Police Directorate issues instructions and guidelines to police administrations to provide further clarification on specific procedural measures and actions. In addition, particular attention is devoted to strengthening competencies for combating gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, while general police officers regularly participate in workshops addressing these issues, as well as topics related to combating discrimination. General police officers receive continuous training on domestic violence and violence against women through specialised courses organised by the Police Academy. The topics of the lecture are adapted to the issue, and the case law is continuously monitored and the best forms of police treatment and approach to this issue are developed.

The Public Order and Security Directorate of the General Police Directorate also devotes particular attention to violence against women and domestic violence, as demonstrated by the establishment, within all police administrations and the General Police Directorate, of new posts for independent police officers specialising in misdemeanour cases involving domestic violence and in combating discrimination. Their obligation is to monitor criminal investigations into misdemeanours, including domestic violence, misdemeanours involving elements of hate and discrimination, and misdemeanours committed against vulnerable groups, identifying the most appropriate methods for investigating such offences, and independently coordinating, directing and supervising the work of police stations while providing them with professional guidance and support. In addition, the obligation also includes studying and proposing the most effective forms of prevention of violations in these categories, implementing best domestic and international practices in criminal research and ensuring their application in the work of organisational units within the system. In order to effectively address violent behaviour and hate crime, police officers coordinate their work with other organisational units and cooperate with other ministries, state authorities, the competent ombudspersons and civil society organisations. They also participate in the preparation of professional information, reports and other analytical materials and independently collect data from open sources (websites, portals, social networks, etc.) using available methods and tools, with the aim of identifying and documenting relevant information for further action and prevention. Emphasis is placed on a professional police approach to misdemeanours under the Protection against Domestic Violence Act and on presenting prosecution motions before the competent courts. Furthermore, supervisors are required to be involved in all domestic violence misdemeanour cases.

¹⁵³ Official Gazette, No. 20/22

In relation to the issue of the existence of state attorney services responsible for investigating and prosecuting violence against women, it should be noted that the Act on Amendments to the State Attorney's Office Act¹⁵⁴ requires state Attorneys, when preparing the annual allocation of duties, to take into account the aptitude of deputy state attorneys and civil servants in state attorney's offices, their specific specialist knowledge and their regular professional training in particular areas, including, in particular, the area of domestic violence¹⁵⁵. In this way, an even workload of individual deputy state attorneys is ensured, preconditions are created for the efficient work of the state attorney's office, considering the need to ensure specialization and the highest possible level of competence for working on certain types of cases.

- *Police Treatment of Migrant Women and Female Asylum Seekers*

The Ministry of the Interior, Border Directorate, continuously conducts inspections at police stations at the external border, to determine whether police officers treat migrant and asylum seekers in a legal and professional manner. Special attention is paid to ensuring full respect for their human rights in accordance with national legislation, the Protocol on the Treatment of Unaccompanied Children, and the Standard Operating Procedures for the Treatment of Applicants for International Protection.

Since 2021, the *Standard Operating Procedure on the Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Reception Centres for Applicants for International Protection* has been applied. This document has been produced in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Croatian Red Cross (HCK), the Medecins du Monde-Belgique (Doctors of the World, MdM-BE), the Croatian Law Centre, the Jesuit Refugee Service Croatia and the Society for Psychological Assistance. The Standard Operating Procedure constitutes a formalised and coordinated framework that establishes clear steps, roles and responsibilities for the various authorities and sectors (police, healthcare and social welfare) in responding to gender-based violence. In addition, it contains the guiding principles of treatment in cases of sexual and gender-based violence in reception centres in the Republic of Croatia, defines service providers or persons in charge of prevention, detection and treatment in cases of sexual and gender-based violence and contains a list of categories of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as a list of service providers and their contact information in order to act in cases of violence as quickly and efficiently as possible. The standard operating procedure encourages women and girls to report violence because it increases trust in the system by standardising treatment. It also ensures that every victim receives the same level of support and protection, regardless of which authority they first approach, thereby reducing the risk of secondary victimisation and mistrust of institutions. At the same time, it guarantees confidentiality and security by mandating urgent protection measures, including the relocation of the victim to safety and the removal of the perpetrator, which gives victims the courage to report. Furthermore, the procedure defines clear referral mechanisms between different services, which enables the provision of psychosocial, legal and medical assistance through coordinated actions, thus facilitating the reporting process

¹⁵⁴ Official Gazette, No. 136/25

¹⁵⁵ Article 90

itself. The Standard Operating Procedure also includes staff training on identifying the specific needs of victims, thereby helping to prevent victim-blaming and encouraging victims to engage in confidential conversations. Finally, through this mechanism, victims receive clear and accurate information about their rights and further proceedings, which directly reduces uncertainty and fear. In applying the Standard Operating Procedure in their daily work, reception centre staff are primarily responsible for prevention and, where gender-based violence or domestic violence occurs or is detected, are required to act in accordance with the provisions of this document. An important role in this process is played by coordinators for sexual and gender-based violence working in reception centres. They are social workers trained to work with children and are appointed by the Ministry of the Interior.

In June 2021, the Republic of Croatia established the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for the Protection of Fundamental Rights in the Actions of Police Officers of the Ministry of the Interior in the Area of Border Protection, Illegal Migration and International Protection¹⁵⁶, which comprises several civil society organisations in the Republic of Croatia, thereby ensuring its independence. The Ministry of the Interior does not participate in the implementation of the activities of the Mechanism in question but exclusively has a role as an object of supervision. The establishment of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism marked the introduction of an impartial, independent and expert dialogue with the Ministry of the Interior aimed at identifying the normative, institutional, systemic, operational, technical and human factors that contribute to or cause unlawful practices in the areas of border protection, irregular migration and international protection.

In April 2025, the Coordination Committee of the Independent Supervision Mechanism adopted a decision on the adoption of the consolidated text of the Agreement¹⁵⁷, establishing the mechanism for a period of 24 months, and it is automatically extended. The Agreement regulates the operation of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism, whose purpose is to contribute to respect for fundamental rights by monitoring the conduct of police officers in the areas of border protection, irregular migration and international protection, with particular emphasis on compliance with the principle of non-refoulement, the prohibition of collective expulsion, and the prohibition of torture or other forms of ill-treatment. Observers of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism shall be granted access to the case file selected for monitoring (for example, medical documentation and similar records), permitted to attend any interview or hearing of irregular migrants and applicants for international protection, and allowed to inspect detention facilities and interview irregular migrants and applicants for international protection, provided that the person concerned consents, and such interviews shall take place in a private and confidential setting without the presence of the police. Based on individual observers' reports, the Coordination Committee prepares an annual report, which is published on the website of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism and on the websites of the civil society organisations that are signatories to the Agreement. The Ministry of the Interior undertakes to prepare an Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations from the

¹⁵⁶ www.nmn.hr

¹⁵⁷ www.nmn.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Pročišćeni%20tekst%20Sporazuma%20o%20suradnji%20usvojen%2029.04.2025..pdf?vel=212889

published annual report of the Coordination Committee within 30 days from the date of its publication.

- *Discontinuation of Proceedings in Cases of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*

Furthermore, in addition to the efforts undertaken to determine all factors contributing to the abandonment of proceedings in cases of violence against women and domestic violence, the provisions of the Act on Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act of 2024, i.e. Articles 235, 236 and 285. These provisions regulate the taking of witness testimony that may subsequently be used (read out) at trial if a witness who is exempt from the obligation to testify later decides that they no longer wish to testify. They also abolish the previous restriction whereby such a witness could be examined at an evidentiary hearing only if there were grounds to believe that they would not testify at the hearing. Consequently, after these amendments to the Act, a witness who has been released from the obligation to testify shall be examined at an evidentiary hearing and without the existence of this danger. This amendment addressed a problem identified in practice concerning privileged witnesses who subsequently withdrew testimony given during the pre-trial proceedings, but not at an evidentiary hearing because the conditions for their examination at such a hearing had not been met, even though such testimony was often the only or key evidence in the case.

Article 51: Risk assessment and risk management

- *Standardised and mandatory risk assessment tools*

The risk assessment is carried out within the framework of the criminal procedural institute of the individual assessment of the victim regulated by Article 43a of the Criminal Procedure Act and the Ordinance on the manner of conducting the individual assessment of the victim¹⁵⁸.

The individual risk assessment is based on an individualised approach to the victim. When conducting a risk assessment, each authority involved in the pre-trial and criminal proceedings (police officers, state attorneys and judges), from the initial inquiries until the proceedings are finally concluded, determines whether there is a need to apply special protection measures in respect of the victim, as well as measures to ensure the victim's safety and, if so, which measures should be applied. This includes, for example, measures to protect the safety of the victim, a special method of questioning the victim, the use of communication technologies to avoid visual contact with the perpetrator, and other measures prescribed by law. When a victim of a crime is a child, it is assumed that there is a need to apply special protection measures and it is necessary to determine which special protection measures should be applied.

The 2024 Act on Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act introduced legislative improvements to the individual assessment of victims. In this sense, the amendment to the criminal legislation provided a clear response to the need to further strengthen the protection of victims of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against close persons during criminal prosecution. The authorities responsible for conducting the individual assessment of

¹⁵⁸ Official Gazette, No. 106/17

the victim (the police, the state attorney's office and the court) are also required to determine whether measures to protect the victim's safety are necessary, taking into account risk factors for the recurrence of violence, as well as the results of any previous assessment of the victim's needs.

In addition to the pre-trial and criminal proceedings, the assessment of criminogenic factors is also relevant at the final stages of the proceedings when deciding on the type and severity of the criminal sanction to be imposed. Pursuant to the Probation Act¹⁵⁹, the court may, inter alia, request the competent probation office to assess the defendant's criminogenic risk¹⁶⁰, and such an assessment, based on the risk-of-harm assessment system, provides information on the likelihood of the defendant reoffending and the risk of causing harm to others. An existing risk of the recurrence of violence at the time of the court ruling may, reflecting the dual nature of criminal sanctions, result in the imposition of one or more security measures, not only for the purpose of special prevention by addressing factors that may contribute to the commission of a further criminal offence, but also, more broadly, the protection of victims from perpetrators of such offences. Under the 2024 Act on Amendments to the Criminal Act, in relation to the security measure prohibiting approaching, harassing or stalking¹⁶¹, the court is required, when determining the minimum distance that the convict must maintain from the victim, another person or group of persons, or a specified place, which may not be less than 100 metres.

A special preventive supervision mechanism aimed at protecting society from dangerous perpetrators of serious and violent criminal offences following the full execution of a prison sentence is implemented through protective supervision after the full execution of the prison sentence¹⁶². The purpose of its application is not only special prevention, but also a form of so-called post-penal assistance or rehabilitation of convicted perpetrators of offences, including intentional criminal offences with characteristics of violence for which a prison sentence of two years or more has been imposed. The 2024 Act on Amendments to the Criminal Act extended the application of the security measure of protective supervision following the full execution of a prison sentence to criminal offences under Title XVIII (criminal offences against marriage, family and children), in addition to those already covered under Title XVI (criminal offences against sexual freedom) and Title XVII (criminal offences of sexual abuse and exploitation of children).

With regard to the management of identified risks on the basis of individual safety plans that also take into account the safety of child victims, it should be noted that, in addition to systematically conducting individual assessments of victims' protection needs, police officers, assess the risk of repeated violent behaviour and/or escalation to more serious forms of violence. Such risk assessments are mandatory in all cases of violence against close persons and in cases of violence against women.

¹⁵⁹ Official Gazette, No. 99/18

¹⁶⁰ Article 11

¹⁶¹ Article 73

¹⁶² Article 76

The risk assessment form was developed because of systematic monitoring of murders of close persons and women in the Republic of Croatia. It was created based on the analysis of case files, the study of relevant scientific literature, the analysis of risk assessment patterns used by the police of other countries, as well as the results of the 2014 "Homicides in the Family" research. Also, the findings of the analysis of all cases of murders of women, which the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia has been continuously conducting since 2016, were used in its preparation. In cases involving criminal offences, the form is completed electronically and stored in the police information system.

- *Analysis of cases of gender-based murders of women*

In the Republic of Croatia, these cases are analysed in the context of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women by the monitoring body for comprehensive monitoring, data collection, analysis of cases of killings of women and reporting – Femicide Watch, with a view to identifying possible shortcomings in the response of the competent authorities and preventing such acts in the future. Femicide Watch was founded by the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality back in 2017.

Until 2026, Femicide Watch comprised representatives of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, the ministries responsible for the interior, justice and social welfare, scientific institutions, civil society organisations and independent experts. In 2026, the composition of Femicide Watch was expanded to include representatives of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, the Faculty of Law of the University of Rijeka and the County Court in Zagreb. The task of this body is to monitor and analyse cases of violence against women, particularly all cases of femicide committed by men (who are close to and/or intimate partners of the victims). The Femicide Watch body takes an in-depth look at every female homicide case. Based on the analysis of individual cases and the examination conducted, the Ombudsperson draws the attention of the competent authorities to possible shortcomings in interventions and assessments, as well as to opportunities to prevent femicide through a proper understanding and recognition of the mechanisms and patterns that lead to it, which are almost always similar.

Article 52: Emergency barring orders

In relation to the measures taken to introduce and/or amend the legal framework governing emergency barring orders to comply with the requirements of Article 52 of the Convention points out that Croatian procedural legislation is familiar with the institute of precautionary measures and remand prison. In the event that there are circumstances that would justify ordering remand prison, or where remand prison has already been ordered, the court and the state attorney shall, taking into account the results of the individual assessment of the needs of the victim and persons close to the victim, as well as the need to protect the victim, impose one or more precautionary measures if the same purpose can be achieved by such measures¹⁶³. In the structure of precautionary measures in criminal cases of violence against women and

¹⁶³ Criminal Procedure Act, Article 98

domestic violence, a special place is occupied by the precautionary measure of removal from home.

The Act on Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act of 2024¹⁶⁴ as well as the Act on Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act of 2026¹⁶⁵ strengthened the protection of victims of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against close persons. The Act provides that, before issuing a decision imposing, extending or revoking a precautionary measure, the court and the state attorney are required to hear the victim regarding any risk to their personal safety or the safety of their family members and close persons, and to take into account the victim's views and the results of the individual assessment of the victim. In this regard, it should be noted that the victim may be heard using information and communication technologies or by other appropriate means.

In addition, the criminal-law response to non-compliance with precautionary measures has been strengthened by introducing a stricter and expedited procedure for dealing with a suspect or the accused who breaches such a measure, and, accordingly, the police are required to bring an arrested person who is reasonably suspected of having breached a precautionary measure imposed on them before the competent court within 24 hours of the arrest. The court will, without delay, decide whether it is necessary to impose remand prison against the detainee for violating the precautionary measure¹⁶⁶.

Also, the victim of the criminal offence of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against close persons may file an appeal against the decision imposing, extending or revoking the precautionary measure.

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of victim protection, the aforementioned should be considered in conjunction with the pre-existing legislative provisions under which, where grounds for ordering remand prison exist but the remand prison time limits have expired, the court may impose precautionary measures as stand-alone measures¹⁶⁷. In the Republic of Croatia, violation of security measures, as well as independent precautionary measures, shall be sanctioned as an independent criminal offence of non-enforcement of a court decision referred to in Article 311 of the Criminal Act.

In addition, it should be noted that by the decision of the Minister of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation of 3 March 2026, a Working Group was established to transpose Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence. The tasks of this working group include, inter alia, adopting conclusions on the necessary amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act and on the need to align the legislative framework with the Directive. In addition to representatives of the academic community and judicial officials, the Working Group also includes representatives of civil society organisations directly involved in working with victims of violence against women and domestic violence, as well as a representative of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality.

¹⁶⁴ Official Gazette, No. 36/24

¹⁶⁵ Official Gazette, No. 13/26

¹⁶⁶ Article 101

¹⁶⁷ Article 98a

Article 53: Restraining or protection orders

In accordance with the response concerning Article 52 of the Convention, reference is made to the institution of precautionary measures and, in criminal cases involving violence against women and domestic violence, in particular to measures prohibiting the accused from approaching a specified person, establishing or maintaining contact with a specified person, stalking or harassing the victim, visiting a specified place or area, or accessing the internet. The Act on Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act of 2024 stipulates that the distance under which the defendant may not approach a particular person may not be less than 100 meters.

On the determination of these measures, the treatment of the detainee for violation of precautionary measures and the possibility of filing an appeal, please see the above explanations given under Article 52 of the Convention.

In addition to precautionary measures, in accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Act¹⁶⁸, the court may impose security measures¹⁶⁹ that are enforced once the judgment becomes final¹⁷⁰. Supervision of the execution of certain precautions, as well as certain security measures, is carried out by police officers.

In relation to the precautionary measures referred to in Article 98 of the Criminal Procedure Act, imposed in cases of criminal offences committed against close persons, the table shows data on the number of controls carried out on precautionary measures and violations of the imposed measures:

Precaution measure	2024		2025	
	Number of inspections carried out	Number of recorded violations	Number of inspections carried out	Number of recorded violations
prohibition of approaching a particular person	2556	284	2581	221
prohibition of stalking or harassing the victim or another person	455	54	617	66
prohibition of establishing or maintaining a relationship with a particular person	2573	390	2655	299
removal from home	965	100	922	70

¹⁶⁸ Official Gazette, No. 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 114/23, 36/24 and 136/25

¹⁶⁹ Article 65

¹⁷⁰ Article 67a

In relation to the security measures referred to in Article 65 of the Criminal Act, imposed in cases of criminal offences committed against close persons, the table below presents data on the number of monitoring activities carried out by police officers in relation to such security measures:

Security measures	2024	2025
removal from the common household	22	38
prohibition of approaching, harassing or stalking	204	223

Article 56: Measures of protection

Pursuant to the Criminal Procedure Act¹⁷¹, the general catalogue of victims' rights contains the right for the victim to be informed, without undue delay, about the release of the detainee, the abolition of detention or remand prison, the escape of the defendant and the release of the convict from imprisonment, as well as the measures taken for the victim's protection, unless the victim waives this right, the right to confidentiality of information, the disclosure of which could jeopardise their safety or the safety of victims close persons, the right to propose that they be interrogated via an audio-video device.

The specific catalogue of rights afforded to victims of criminal offences against sexual freedom, victims of trafficking in human beings, and victims identified as having specific protection needs includes, in addition to the right to confidentiality of personal data, the right to request that the public be excluded from the trial, the right to refuse to answer questions unrelated to the criminal offence that concern the victim's strictly private life, and the right to be examined by means of an audio-video device, unless the victim requests to be present in the courtroom while giving testimony. The aforementioned legislative framework of general and special catalogues of victims' rights is the result of the Act on Amendments to the to the Criminal Procedure Act of 2024, which further expanded the rights of victims¹⁷².

Under the aforementioned Act, the general catalogue of victims' rights has been extended in such a way to provide victims, immediately after the commission of a criminal offence and for as long as necessary, with the right to easy, confidential and free access to victim support services. It is expressly stipulated that the victim has the right to be accompanied by a trusted person, of their own choice, from the reporting of the criminal offence to the final conclusion of the criminal proceedings. In addition, a new general right of victims to the confidentiality of information whose disclosure could endanger their safety or the safety of persons close to them has been introduced. Victims' rights to receive information, which were previously exercised "upon request", are now regulated on the presumption that the victim wishes to receive the

¹⁷¹ Official Gazette, No. 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 130/20, 80/22, 36/24, 72/25 and 13/26

¹⁷² Article 43

prescribed information unless the victim expressly waives that right. The right to be notified shall be extended to the notification to the victim of the release of the detainee¹⁷³.

The victim and the injured party have the right, after two months have elapsed from the filing of a criminal accusation or the reporting of a criminal offence, to request information from the state attorney on the actions taken in response to the criminal accusation or report. The state attorney shall inform them of the actions taken within a reasonable time, and no later than thirty days from the receipt of the request, unless this would jeopardise the efficiency of the procedure. They are obliged to inform the victim and the injured party who requested this information about the refusal to provide the information. If the state attorney has failed to inform the victim or the injured party, or if they are dissatisfied with the information provided or the actions taken, they have the right to lodge a complaint with the Senior State Attorney. The senior state attorney will check the allegations of the complaint and if he finds that the complaint is well founded, he will order the junior state attorney to take the actions that should have been taken within a reasonable time. If the senior state attorney finds that the conduct of the Junior State Attorney has violated the rights of the complainant, they shall notify the Junior State Attorney thereof, specifying the right that has been violated. The victim and the injured party may request further information on the actions taken after six months have elapsed since their previous request for such information, unless they have lodged a complaint with the higher state attorney pursuant to Article 206b(2) of the Criminal Procedure Act¹⁷⁴.

It is also pointed out that, in accordance with Article 285 of the Criminal Procedure Act, exempt from the obligation to testify:

- 1) a person who is married to or cohabiting with the accused
- 2) the accused person's relatives in the direct line, collateral relatives up to and including the third degree, and relatives by affinity up to and including the second degree
- 3) adoptee and adoptive parent of the accused
- 4) notaries, tax advisers within the statutory obligation of secrecy

The authority conducting the proceedings is required to inform such persons, before examining them or as soon as it becomes aware of their relationship with the accused, that they are not required to testify. It will also be noted that if they decide to testify, regardless of their later decision, their testimony can be used as evidence. A child who, due to their age and social development, is unable to understand the meaning of the right not to testify may not be examined as a witness. However, information obtained from the child by professionals, relatives or other persons who have been in contact with the child may be used as evidence. In conclusion, these categories of persons cannot refuse to testify if it is a criminal offence of criminal legal protection of children.

A witness who is placed in a shelter as a victim of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against close persons shall be summoned through the competent social welfare body or the victim and witness support department¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷³ Article 8(3)

¹⁷⁴ Article 206a

¹⁷⁵ Article 287

The specific catalogues of rights afforded to victims of criminal offences against sexual freedom, victims of trafficking in human beings, and victims of criminal offences committed within the family include the right, when examined as witnesses, to give evidence via video link, unless the victim expressly requests to be present in the courtroom while giving testimony. Such a witness may only exceptionally be re-examined if the court deems it necessary. In this way, a victim who has been identified as having specific protection measures pursuant to Article 43a of the Criminal Procedure Act shall also be examined, if they so request.¹⁷⁶

It is also important to highlight special provisions on additional protection of the rights of child victims of crime¹⁷⁷.

Furthermore, according to the Protection against Domestic Violence Act,¹⁷⁸ the catalogue of victims' rights¹⁷⁹ contains, inter alia, the right to be informed without undue delay of the release of the arrested person, the termination of detention or the escape of the accused, the revocation of a decision imposing protective measures, the revoking of precautionary measures ordered for the victim's protection, or the release of the convict from serving a prison sentence, unless the victim has waived this right. Furthermore, these rights include the right to confidentiality of information whose disclosure could endanger the safety of the victim or persons close to them, the right to request the exclusion of the public from court proceedings, and the right to request to be examined by means of an audio-video device.

The existing catalogue of victims' rights contains legislative solutions of the Act on Amendments to the Protection against Domestic Violence Act¹⁸⁰ aimed at strengthening the procedural position of victims of domestic violence offences. These amendments stipulate as a new right of a victim of domestic violence to propose to be examined via an audio-video device. The right of the victim has been extended in such a way that they have the right to easily accessible, confidential and free access to support services for victims of domestic violence immediately after the commission of the offence and for as long as necessary. The right of the victim to be accompanied by a trusted person has been supplemented in such a way that it is explicitly stipulated that the victim has the right to be accompanied by a trusted person of their own choice, from reporting the misdemeanour to the final completion of the misdemeanour proceedings. Victims' rights to receive information, which were previously exercised "upon request", are now regulated on the presumption that the victim wishes to receive the prescribed information unless the victim expressly waives that right.

The tasks of notifying the victim or the victim's family of a prisoner's release from serving a prison sentence pursuant to Article 8(3) of the Enforcement of Prison Sentences Act¹⁸¹ and the Ordinance on Notifying Victims of the Unaccompanied Release of Prisoners or Offenders¹⁸²,

¹⁷⁶ Article 292(4) and (6)

¹⁷⁷ Article 44

¹⁷⁸ Official Gazette, No. 70/17, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22 36/24

¹⁷⁹ Article 6

¹⁸⁰ Official Gazette, No. 36/24

¹⁸¹ Official Gazette, No. 14/21 and 155/23

¹⁸² Official Gazette, No. 81/23

such notifications are provided by the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation through the Victim and Witness Support Service. The Ordinance prescribes the procedure for notifying the victim of a criminal offence or misdemeanour, or members of the victim's family if the victim is deceased, of the unaccompanied release or escape of a person serving a prison sentence for a criminal offence or misdemeanour committed against the victim. Furthermore, it ensures that victims and victims' families are informed in a timely manner about the prisoners' unaccompanied release from prison, whether it is a regular release, conditional release, interruption of the execution of the sentence, escape or other release from prison.

In addition, 16 victim and witness support departments operate in 14 county courts (County Court in Zagreb, Osijek, Sisak, Vukovar, Zadar, Split, Rijeka, Pula, Varaždin, Šibenik, Karlovac, Velika Gorica, Bjelovar, Slavonski Brod) and 2 municipal courts (Municipal Court in Split and Municipal Criminal Court in Zagreb).

Before, during and after criminal proceedings, Victim and Witness Support Departments provide:

- emotional support for victims and witnesses
- information on victims' rights
- practical and technical information related to testimony that facilitates the stressful situation of testifying and being in court
- information about available organisations and services that provide additional forms of assistance and support
- support in county courts and competent municipal courts and misdemeanour departments (for domestic violence offences)
- facilitating the stressful situation of testifying and staying in court
- at the request of the authorities conducting an individual assessment of the victim, providing the necessary data and recommendations to those authorities in accordance with the ordinance governing the procedure for conducting individual victim assessments
- participation in the interrogation of the victim as a trusted person
- proactively contacting victims and witnesses of war crimes to help organise their arrival to court (four competent courts dealing with the prosecution of organised crime and war crimes – county courts in Zagreb, Split, Osijek and Rijeka), while transport is provided by the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation.

Employees of the Victim and Witness Support Departments are members of county teams for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, as well as city/municipal teams for preventing and combating violence and other threats, who hold coordination meetings at which information relevant to the actions of multiple competent authorities and services is exchanged.

In addition, it should be noted that police officers, in accordance with the provisions of Article 99 of the Police Duties and Powers Act and the provisions of Articles 171 to 176 of the Ordinance on the Manner of Conduct of Police Officers, they may implement protection measures. Measures for the protection of a victim or another person who has provided or may

provide information relevant to criminal proceedings, or a person close to them, in the event of a threat posed by the perpetrator, include physical protection, technical protection and the placement of the person at risk in a safe shelter.

Furthermore, in order to systematically inform victims about their rights and the available support services, and to ensure consistency in the practices of all organisational units, the Ministry of the Interior has developed standard information forms for victims of criminal offences. These include forms for victims of criminal offences, victims of criminal offences against sexual freedom, victims of trafficking in human beings and victims identified as having specific protection needs, child victims of criminal offences, and child victims of criminal offences against sexual freedom or trafficking in human beings. The forms in question contain notices on victims' rights and are provided to victims by police officers, together with a list and contact details of the Victim and Witness Support Departments at county courts, the National Call Centre for victims of criminal offences and misdemeanours, as well as the contact details of state administration bodies and civil society organisations providing victim support and protection within the area of the respective police department.

Police officers are required to inform the victim in an understandable manner about their rights, as well as about the manner of exercising them, and to hand them the form in question. Likewise, police officers are obliged to inform the victim about the escape of the perpetrator, as well as about their release, and to ensure the protection of privacy data confidentiality.

Furthermore, in order for the rights and interests of victims of gender-based violence, as well as other users of the social welfare system, to be adequately taken into account, the regularity of work and treatment of beneficiaries is determined by the implementation of administrative supervision, and in addition by civil supervision through the Commission for Handling Complaints in the Social Welfare System. Beneficiaries who are not satisfied with the actions of a person in the social welfare activity or believe that a failure to act has been committed may file a complaint with the Commission concerned. Pursuant to the Social Welfare Act¹⁸³, the Commission is appointed and dismissed by the Croatian Parliament, and is composed of five representatives of citizens who, following a public call, are either nominated by civil society organisations or apply in their personal capacity.

A member of the Commission may be a person who enjoys a professional and personal reputation in public and has the prescribed length of experience in the area of family law protection, working with victims of domestic violence, or social welfare¹⁸⁴. The Commission was appointed by the Decision of the Croatian Parliament in November 2022 and submits an annual report on its work to the Croatian Parliament.

¹⁸³ Article 150

¹⁸⁴ Article 152

III: EMERGING TRENDS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- *The digital dimension of violence against women*

With regard to emerging trends in violence against women and domestic violence, it should be noted that, although women of all age groups may become victims, certain groups are at particularly high risk, including young women and girls, who are particularly exposed to digital violence and violence in the early stages of intimate relationships; economically dependent women and older persons, who are more frequently exposed to economic and psychological violence within the household; and women with disabilities, who are recognised as a particularly isolated group at high risk of multiple victimisation.

Digital violence has a special impact on violence against women, which today, with the rapid advancement of digital technology, gives the opportunity to develop various platforms and social networks.

That is why it is important to place emphasis on educating children from an early age about the possible harms that the development of modern technologies entails, strengthening the digital literacy of women and girls as the most common victims, conducting awareness campaigns on various forms of violence against women in digital form, as well as on the support services available to victims. At the same time, it is important to provide training for professionals across different sectors on the digital dimension of violence, its detection and prosecution, and a victim-sensitive approach that avoids secondary victimisation and retraumatisation, and to ensure specialised counselling and psychosocial support for victims, as well as strong interdepartmental cooperation and coordinated action across all relevant systems.

Preventive programmes for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia¹⁸⁵, designed by an organisation that has been active in the area of protecting children from online sexual violence for many years, stand out as a good example of prevention or education of children. The programmes, approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, contain modules aimed at strengthening digital resilience and digital competences, preventing cyberviolence and various forms of harmful online behaviour, promoting balanced and responsible video gaming, and preventing risky online sexual behaviour and online harassment. The modules are adapted to primary and secondary school students and are developed on the basis of several years of research. It is also worth highlighting the #Boljionline platform¹⁸⁶, which provides a range of information on online safety, the responsible use of technology, the prevention of cyberbullying, recognising signs of online violence, and other related topics.

In addition to educating children, the education of adults is also of great importance. The National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027 envisaged a measure aimed at strengthening the competencies of civil servants and experts of various systems that provide assistance and support to victims of sexual violence and

¹⁸⁵ <https://cnzd.org/category/vijesti/centar-za-sigurniji-internet/>

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.a1.hr/boljionline>

sexual harassment. One of the trainings, which is regularly carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation and the National School of Public Administration, includes workshops on security in cyberspace. The workshops are aimed at enhancing the knowledge and competencies of civil servants in identifying and understanding cyber-threats, including various forms of online violence, particularly sexual violence and sexual harassment in the digital environment, as well as understanding the key steps required to protect against these forms of violence in cyberspace.

In addition, since Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence has recognised the impact of information and communication technologies on the commission of crimes of violence against women, it should be noted that in the upcoming period, criminal law protection against violence in the digital environment will be further expanded and improved by transposing its provisions. For this purpose, a working group has been established at the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation, which conducts a detailed analysis of the requirements of the Directive and a comparison with the applicable national legal framework, in order to find solutions that can fully adopt the implementation requirements.

- Migration

New trends in the protection of women victims of violence, especially in the context of asylum and international protection, are increasingly being directed towards a gender-sensitive approach and the recognition of gender-based violence as a legitimate reason to seek asylum.

In 2024, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that women, as a whole, may be regarded as members of a “particular social group” (according to the Geneva Convention), thereby enabling them to qualify for refugee status where they are exposed to physical or psychological violence, including domestic or sexual violence, in their country of origin. At the same time, in May 2024, Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence was adopted, requiring Member States to better identify gender-based violence, including in asylum procedures. The emphasis is on the protection of women who have survived sexual and domestic violence, genital mutilation or forced marriage.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence also applies in asylum procedures. Since October 2023, the EU has been formally bound by the Convention, requiring Member States to take gender-based violence into account when assessing the need for international protection and when applying the principle of *non-refoulement* (the prohibition of forced removal or return). The new measures, which are part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, encourage gender-sensitive interviews, ensuring the presence of women officials and interpreters, and provide for vulnerability assessments immediately upon submission of an application. The aim is to recognise violence in the country of origin as a key factor in granting asylum.

Where the conditions for refugee status are not met, women who are victims of violence may be granted subsidiary protection if it is established that, upon return to their country of origin, they would face a real risk of being killed or subjected to serious violence by family or community members (for alleged breaches of cultural or religious norms). National regulations aimed at protecting against violence against women therefore also include strengthening cooperation between the authorities responsible for international protection.

- *Allocation of Financial Resources by State Authorities*

In relation to the distribution of financial resources from the state budget and other sources, such as the funds of the European Social Fund, it is important to point out the efforts of state bodies, especially the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, to increase the amount. For example, as stated earlier in Article 8 – Financing, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy increases the annual amounts intended for financial support to the work of counselling centres and provides additional financial resources from EU funds.

IV: ADMINISTRATIVE DATA AND STATISTICS

Statistical data from the scope of work of the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation

The latest available data on misdemeanour offences involving domestic violence and the criminal offence of domestic violence relate to 2023 and 2024 and are contained in the Reports on the Work of the Commission for Monitoring and Improving the Work of Criminal and Misdemeanour Proceedings Authorities and the Enforcement of Sanctions Related to Protection against Domestic Violence for 2022¹⁸⁷, 2023¹⁸⁸, 2024¹⁸⁹ and 2025¹⁹⁰.

¹⁸⁷ 2022 Report

<https://mpudt.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Strategije,%20planovi,%20izvješća/Izvješće%20o%20radu%20Povjerenstva%20za%202022.%20godinu..pdf>

¹⁸⁸ Report for 2023

<https://mpudt.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Pravo%20na%20pristup%20informacijama/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87a/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20radu%20Povjerenstva%20za%20pra%C4%87enje%20i%20unaprje%C4%91enje%20rada%20tijela%20kaznenog%20i%20prekr%C5%A1ajnog%20postupka%20i%20izvr%C5%A1avanja%20sankcija.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ Report for 2024

<https://mpudt.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Pravo%20na%20pristup%20informacijama/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87a/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20radu%20Povjerenstva%20za%20pra%C4%87enje%20i%20unaprje%C4%91enje%20rada%20tijela%20kaznenog%20i%20prekr%C5%A1ajnog%20postupka%20i%20izvr%C5%A1avanja%20sankcija.pdf>

¹⁹⁰ 2025 Report

<https://mpudt.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Pravo%20na%20pristup%20informacijama/Izvješća/Izvješće%20o%20radu%20Povjerenstva%20za%202025.godinu.pdf>

Table 1. Criminal Offences Reported in 2024, in Total and Those Committed against Close Persons - by Sex of the Victim

Title of the Criminal Act / Article of the Criminal Act and the name of the criminal offence	Total criminal offences in the Republic of Croatia	Criminal Offences Committed against Close Persons	Victim	
		2024	M	F
X. Offences against life and limb				
Art. 110 Murder	11	2	2	-
Art. 110 Murder (attempted)	62	5	5	-
Art. 111 Aggravated murder	17	8	4	4
Art. 111 Aggravated murder (attempted)	43	21	13	8
Art. 111a Aggravated murder of a woman	9	8	-	8
Art. 111a Aggravated murder of a woman (attempted)	10	9	-	9
Art. 117 Bodily Injury	1,951	1,651	470	1,181
Art. 118 Serious bodily injury	662	130	50	80
Art. 118 Serious bodily injury (attempted)	328	68	32	36
XIII. Criminal offences against personal freedom				
Art. 139 Threat	7,531	4,108	1,091	3,209
Art. 140 Intrusive behaviour	688	376	48	328
XIV. Offences against privacy				
Art. 144a Abuse of sexually explicit recordings	38	24	1	23
XVI. Offences against sexual freedom				
Art. 153 Rape	259	141	1	140
Art. 153 Rape - attempted	21	8	-	8
Art. 155 Lewd acts	146	23	3	20
Art. 156 Sexual harassment	103	14	1	13
XVIII. Offences against marriage, family and children				
Art. 179a Domestic violence	2,601	2,601	366	2,235

Table 2. Criminal Offences Reported in 2025, in Total and Those Committed against Close Persons - by Sex of the Victim

Close Persons by Sex of the Victim				
Title of the Criminal Act / Article of the Criminal Act and the name of the criminal offence	Total criminal offences in the Republic of Croatia	Criminal Offences Committed against Close Persons	Victim	
		2025	M	F
X. Offences against life and limb				
Art. 110 Murder	10	1	1	-
Art. 110 Murder (attempted)	42	2	1	1
Art. 111 Aggravated murder	19	14	6	8
Art. 111 Aggravated murder (attempted)	32	21	16	5
Art. 111a Aggravated murder of a woman	10	10	-	10
Art. 111a Aggravated murder of a woman (attempted)	10	10	-	10
Art. 117 Bodily Injury	1,750	1,469	389	1,080
Art. 118 Serious bodily injury	634	114	35	79
Art. 118 Serious bodily injury (attempted)	318	67	31	36
XIII. Criminal offences against personal freedom				
Art. 139 Threat	7,196	3,912	1,079	3,010
Art. 140 Intrusive behaviour	776	422	56	366
XIV. Offences against privacy				
Art. 144a Abuse of sexually explicit recordings	47	37	3	34
XVI. Offences against sexual freedom				
Art. 153 Rape	310	179	-	179
Art. 153 Rape – attempted	19	5	-	5
Art. 155 Lewd acts	171	23	-	23
Art. 156 Sexual harassment	94	21	-	21
XVIII. Offences against marriage, family and children				
Art. 179a Domestic violence	2,600	2,600	372	2,228

APPENDIX 1

Table 1: Initial training (education or vocational training)

Professionals	Do they benefit from initial training on violence against women and domestic violence?	Is this training required?	Is the training supported by guidelines and protocols?	Who funds the training?	Please describe the content and duration of the training
Police officers	Yes	Yes	Yes	State budget	The Adult Secondary Education Programme for the Profession of Police Officer. The programme covers topics relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence, procedures for dealing with victims and vulnerable groups, and the lawful and professional exercise of police powers. Basic education focuses on the development of knowledge and skills necessary for the lawful, professional and victim-centred conduct of police officers.
Police officers	Yes	Yes	Yes	State budget	Two-Year Secondary Education Programme for the Occupation of Police Officer (enrolment in the third year of the “Josip Jović” Police School) The programme includes teaching content related to human rights, gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence, treatment of vulnerable groups, professional and ethical standards. Basic education focuses on the development of knowledge and skills necessary for the lawful, professional and victim-centred conduct of police officers.

Table 2: Professional training

Professionals	Number of professionals involved in training	Is this training required?	Frequency	Is the training supported by guidelines and protocols?	Please describe the content and duration of the training programme
Judges, state attorneys, police officers, judicial and state attorney advisers	84	NO	Ongoing	YES	2022 The Judicial Academy held one two-day workshop entitled “Domestic Violence” and five one-day workshops entitled “Individual Assessment of Victims”.
Judges, state attorneys, police officers, judicial and state attorney advisers	565	NO	Ongoing	YES	2023 The Judicial Academy held five two-day workshops entitled “Domestic Violence”, five one-day workshops entitled “Individual Assessment of Victims”, six one-day workshops entitled “Taking Victim Statements and Interviewing Victims, with Particular Emphasis on Vulnerable Groups, Especially Victims of Domestic Violence, Violence against Children and Women, and Sexual Violence”, five one-day workshops entitled “Ordering Remand Prison and Precautionary Measures for the Protection of Victims”, a single one-day workshop entitled “Entering Data on Victims and Individual Victim Assessments into the e-spis System”, five one-day workshops entitled “Distinguishing between the Statutory Definitions of the Criminal Offence of Domestic Violence and Misdemeanour Offences under the Protection against Domestic Violence Act”, four one-day workshops entitled “Sentencing and Imposition of Security Measures in Domestic Violence Proceedings”, and two one-day workshops entitled “Protection of the Rights of Victims of Criminal Offences”.
Judges, state attorneys, police officers, judicial and	997	NO	Ongoing	YES	2024 The Judicial Academy held three two-day workshops entitled “Domestic Violence”, three one-day workshops entitled “Individual Assessment of Victims”, two one-day

state attorney advisers					workshops entitled “Gender Perspective in Criminal Justice: Stereotypes and Prejudices, with Emphasis on GREVIO Recommendations”, five one-day workshops entitled “Taking Victim Statements and Interviewing Victims, with Particular Emphasis on Vulnerable Groups, Especially Victims of Domestic Violence, Violence against Children and Women, and Sexual Violence”, three one-day workshops entitled “Rights of Victims of Criminal Offences and Misdemeanours in the Area of Domestic Violence”, five one-day workshops entitled “Criteria for Imposing Security Measures and Protective Measures in Domestic Violence Cases”, five one-day workshops entitled “Participation of Victims in Decisions on the Application of Precautionary Measures”, four one-day workshops entitled “Ordering Remand Prison and Precautionary Measures for the Protection of Victims”, and three one-day workshops entitled “Essential Elements of the Criminal Offence of Misuse of a Sexually Explicit Recording referred to in Art. 144a of the Criminal Act, as well as the Essential Features of the Criminal Offence of Sexual Harassment Referred to in Art. 156 of the Criminal Act”, three one-day workshops entitled “Entering Data on Victims and Individual Victim Assessments into the eSpis System”, four one-day workshops entitled “Distinguishing between the Statutory Definitions of the Criminal Offence of Domestic Violence and Misdemeanour Offences under the Protection against Domestic Violence Act”, four one-day workshops entitled “Sentencing and the Imposition of Security Measures in Domestic Violence Proceedings”, four one-day workshops entitled “Psychological Violence as a Form of Domestic Violence, with Emphasis on Distinguishing between Criminal and Misdemeanour Legislation”, and two one-day workshops entitled “The Criminal Offence of Rape, with Emphasis on the Definition of Consent referred to in Art. 153 (5) of the Criminal Act” and five one-day workshops “Amendments to
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					the Criminal Act”.
Social workers and senior advisers employed at the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb and Kutina	1	NO (as applicable)	One-time	Yes	Organised by Victim Support Europe - Intercultural Approach to Prevent Harmful Practices (IAPHP). The workshop focuses on how to support victims of harmful practices (such as early/forced marriages, female genital mutilation - FGM or “honour” based violence) using an intercultural approach.
Social workers and senior advisers employed at the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb and Kutina	3	NO (as applicable)	One-time	Yes	Organised by EUAA - Online Practical Guide on applicants with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). The workshop presents guidance on how to ask questions in a manner that avoids retraumatisation and stereotyping (avoiding questions about “sexual practices” in favour of questions concerning identity and fear of persecution).
Social workers and senior advisers employed at the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb and Kutina	5	NO (as applicable)	One-time	Yes	Organised by MDM Training "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender-Based Violence and a Gender-Sensitive Approach". The workshop links personal attitudes with the broader frameworks of human rights and protection from violence. The focus is on understanding how gender inequalities directly shape the health and safety of individuals.
Social workers and senior advisers employed at the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb and Kutina	2	NO (as applicable)	One-time	Yes	In the organisation of the MDM Workshop "Raising Awareness of Values for Action and Change", a key methodology for working on topics related to reproductive health and abortion. The aim of this workshop is not to impose particular views, but to encourage participants to explore their own beliefs and recognise how these may influence their professional practice and their interactions with female patients/clients.

Police officers	595	Yes	Ongoing	Yes	Course on police management in domestic violence cases The 36-hour course covers the criminological aspects of domestic violence, international standards for the protection of victims (the Istanbul Convention), human rights protection, risk assessment, police procedures and interdepartmental cooperation.
Police officers	90	Yes	Ongoing	Yes	Specialised course on juvenile delinquency and crime against youth and family The 250-hour course covers domestic violence and violence against children, protection of vulnerable groups, gender-based violence, prevention and recognition of risky behaviours
Professionals in the social welfare system: professionals of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the Family Centre, and service providers established by the Republic of Croatia	110	No (recommended)	Ongoing	Yes	In 2025, the professional development programme entitled Gender-Based Violence and Coercive Control was delivered on five occasions, with each session lasting eight hours. The programme schedule consisted of the following activity blocks: 1. Concept and understanding of gender-based violence and forced control 2. International and national legislation aimed at protecting victims 3. Implementation of the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence with special reference to the obligations of all relevant departments and their coordination 4. Interview with the victim of domestic violence and the victim's right to choose 5. Practice examples and exercises 6. Femicide
Persons who have expressed their willingness to implement measures for the protection of	637	Yes	If necessary, in accordance with the expression of interest	Yes	The professional development programme Training for Professionals Responsible for Implementing Measures to Protect the Rights and Well-Being of the Child comprises 40 hours (five days) and is structured into 10 modules. In 2024, one session of the professional development

the rights and well-being of the child but have not completed the professional development programme for coordinators of child rights and well-being protection measures					programme was held, followed by five sessions in 2025 and 18 sessions in 2026 by the end of May. Programme participants acquire knowledge and skills relating to the legal framework and standards of conduct within the social welfare system for the protection of children's rights and well-being; assessing the needs, safety and developmental risks of children subject to measures for the protection of their rights and well-being; the role of professionals responsible for implementing such measures in safeguarding children's well-being; motivating changes in parental behaviour; children's participation in the implementation of child protection measures; implementing measures to protect the rights and well-being of children with behavioural problems; implementing measures in situations of high-conflict separated parenting; understanding family relationships and resolving family conflicts; domestic violence and gender-based violence; providing care to traumatised service users and professionals experiencing secondary trauma; and evaluating and reporting on the implementation and effects of the measures.
Professionals of the Croatian Institute for Social Work (social workers, lawyers, psychologists and social pedagogues)	82	No	Ongoing	Yes	Professional development programme Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Older Persons, with a Focus on Protection from Neglect and Abuse In 2025, four sessions of the professional development programme were held, attended by 82 professionals. The objectives of the training programme are to improve knowledge and skills on national and international regulations on the protection of the rights of the elderly, respect for the dignity of the elderly, work with the elderly in the social welfare system, communication skills and access to work with the elderly and the recognition of forms of abuse and neglect.

Professionals of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the Family Centre, the Centre for Special Guardianship and social welfare homes, as well as family mediators	810	No		Yes	Supervision for professionals of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the Family Centre, the Centre for Special Guardianship and Social Welfare Homes, as well as family mediators The first cycle of supervision was conducted from October 2024 to June 2025, and the second cycle began in October 2025 and lasts until June 2026.
Judges	247	NO	Ongoing	YES	In 2025, six one-day workshops entitled “Taking Statements from and Interviewing Victims, with Particular Emphasis on Vulnerable Groups, Especially Victims of Domestic Violence, Violence against Children and Women, and Sexual Violence”, five one-day workshops entitled “Ordering Remand Prison and Precautionary Measures for the Protection of Victims”, five two-day workshops entitled “Domestic Violence”, and two one-day workshops entitled “Essential Elements of the Criminal Offence of Misuse of Sexually Explicit Recordings under Article 144a of the Criminal Act, as well as the Essential Features of the Criminal Offence of Sexual Harassment Referred to in Art. 156 of the Criminal Act”, six one-day workshops entitled “Rights of Victims of Criminal Offences and Misdemeanours in the Field of Domestic Violence”, three one-day workshops entitled “Criteria for Imposing Security Measures and Protective Measures in Domestic Violence Cases”, four one-day workshops entitled “Promoting the Fundamental Rights of Victims in the Practice of Croatian Courts and the Case-Law of the European Court of Human Rights (with Particular Reference to Violence against Women and Domestic Violence)”, three one-day workshops entitled “Individual Assessment of Victims”, six one-day workshops entitled “Victim Participation in Decisions on the Application of Precautionary Measures”, and two one-day workshops
State attorneys	114	NO	Ongoing	YES	
Judicial and state attorney advisers	249	NO	Ongoing	YES	
Officials	95	NO	Ongoing	YES	

					entitled “Gender Perspective in Criminal Justice: Stereotypes and Prejudices”. The workshops are primarily intended for judicial officials and advisers in judicial authorities. Four one-day workshops entitled “Entering Victim Data and Individual Assessments into the eSpis System” were held for judicial staff.
Judges	48	NO	Ongoing	YES	In 2026, the following workshops were held: a two-day workshop entitled “Domestic Violence”, a one-day workshop entitled “Gender Perspective in Criminal Justice: Stereotypes and Prejudices”, a one-day workshop entitled “Promoting the Fundamental Rights of Victims in the Practice of Croatian Courts and the Case-Law of the European Court of Human Rights (with Particular Reference to Violence against Women and Domestic Violence)”, and a one-day workshop entitled “Examination of Victims of Violence as Witnesses in Criminal Proceedings”.
State attorneys	32	NO	Ongoing	YES	
Judicial and state attorney advisers	42	NO	Ongoing	YES	
Officials	28	NO	Ongoing	YES	In 2026, a two-day workshop entitled “Domestic Violence” and a one-day workshop entitled “Entering Victim Data and Individual Assessments into the eSpis System” were held.
Others	35	NO	Ongoing	YES	In 2026, a two-day workshop entitled “Domestic Violence” and a one-day workshop entitled “Promoting the Fundamental Rights of Victims in the Practice of Croatian Courts and the Case-Law of the European Court of Human Rights (with Particular Reference to Violence against Women and Domestic Violence)” were held.

APPENDIX 2

Relevant articles of Croatian legislation in relation to the articles of the Convention presented in the Report

Criminal Act (Official Gazette, No. 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 114/23, 36/24 and 136/25)

Long-Term Imprisonment – Article 46 (excerpt from the article)

(1) The term of long-term imprisonment shall not be shorter than twenty-one years or longer than forty years.

Sentencing – Article 47

(1) When choosing the type and measure of punishment, the court shall, taking into account the degree of guilt and the purpose of punishment, assess all circumstances affecting whether the punishment should be more or less severe in terms of its type and measure (mitigating and aggravating circumstances), in particular the severity of the threat to or violation of the legally protected interest and the consequences suffered by the victim, motives for having committed the criminal offence, degree to which the perpetrator's duties have been violated, manner of commission and the inculpatory consequences arising from the commission of the criminal offence, perpetrator's prior life, his or her personal and pecuniary circumstances and his or her conduct following the commission of the criminal offence, relationship to the victim and efforts to compensate for the damage.

(2) The severity of punishment shall not exceed the degree of culpability.

Types of Security Measures – Article 65

Security measures include: compulsory psychiatric treatment, compulsory treatment for addiction, compulsory psychosocial treatment, prohibition from performing a particular duty or activity, prohibition from driving a motor vehicle, prohibition from approaching, harassing or stalking, removal from the shared household, prohibition of internet access, protective supervision following the full execution of a prison sentence, and prohibition on keeping and acquiring animals.

Beginning of the course of security measures – Article 67a

Security measures take effect when the judgment becomes enforceable.

Mandatory psychosocial treatment – Article 70

(1) The court shall impose the security measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment upon a perpetrator who has committed a criminal offence with elements of violence if there is a risk that he or she will again commit the same or similar offence.

(2) The measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be executed in a penal institution, medical institution, at a legal person or physical person specialising in the treatment of violent behaviour under the conditions specified in a special regulation.

(3) The measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article may last until the completion of the prison sentence or community service, the expiry of the probation period under a suspended

sentence, or the expiry of the prison sentence corresponding to the imposed fine but not longer than two years.

(4) The court shall notify the competent probation authority of a judgment imposing the measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article together with a fine, community service or a suspended sentence, for further action in accordance with the relevant special law and the implementing regulations adopted pursuant to that law.

Prohibition of Approaching, Harassing or Stalking – Article 73

(1) The court shall impose the security measure of prohibition from approaching, harassing or stalking the victim, another person or a group of persons, or from approaching a particular location, when there is a danger that the perpetrator might again commit any of the above criminal offences against these persons or at these locations. In a judgment imposing the security measure prohibiting approaching, harassing or stalking, the court shall specify the minimum distance that the convict must maintain from the victim, another person or group of persons, or a particular location, which may not be less than 100 metres.

(2) The measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be imposed for a period of one to five years. For a perpetrator sentenced to imprisonment, where the sentence has not been suspended or replaced by community service, the measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be imposed for a period extending from one to five years beyond the imposed prison sentence.

(3) At the expiration of half of the duration of the security measure imposed on the basis of paragraph 1 of this Article, the court may stop its execution on a proposal from the convicted person if it has established that the danger referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article no longer exists. The convicted person may resubmit his or her proposal but no sooner than one year after the previous review.

(4) The provision of Article 71(5) of this Act shall apply accordingly to the restraining order.

(5) The court shall inform the police of the judgment imposing the measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Protective Supervision after Serving a Full Prison Sentence – Article 76

(1) The court shall impose the security measure of protective supervision following the full execution of a prison sentence where the perpetrator has been sentenced to imprisonment for five years or more for an intentional criminal offence, or for two years or more for an intentional criminal offence involving violence, or to imprisonment for another criminal offence under Titles XVI, XVII or XVIII of this Act, provided that the sentence is served in full because the convicted person has not been granted conditional release.

(2) Immediately after release from prison, the perpetrator shall be subjected to protective supervision in accordance with Article 64 of this Act and to special obligations referred to in Article 62(2), items 6 to 9, if imposed under protective supervision.

(3) When delivering the judgment, the court may determine that protective supervision shall not be implemented if it has reasons to believe that the person will not reoffend by committing a criminal offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, even without its implementation.

(4) The period of probation shall last from one to three years, unless the criminal offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article was committed against a child, in which case the period

of probation shall last from one to five years. The court may extend the period of probation before its expiration for another year at the proposal of the competent probation authority if, in the absence of protective supervision, there would be a risk of the person reoffending by committing any of the criminal offences referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

(5) After the first year from the commencement of protective supervision, and at least once a year thereafter, the enforcing court shall review the need for its continued implementation and issue a decision accordingly. At the request of the competent probation authority or the convicted person, such a review may also be conducted earlier, but not before six months have elapsed since the previous review. The court may discontinue protective supervision if there are grounds to believe that the convict will not reoffend by committing a criminal offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, even without its continued implementation.

Article 87 (excerpt from the article)

(9) Close persons include family members, former spouses or cohabiting partners, former life partners or informal life partners, current or former intimate partners, persons who have a child together, and persons living in the same household.

(32) Gender-based violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. Such conduct shall be considered an aggravating circumstance unless this Act expressly provides for a more severe penalty.

Murder – Article 110

Whoever kills a person, shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than five years.

Aggravated murder – Article 111

A punishment by imprisonment for not less than ten years or long-term imprisonment shall be imposed on whoever:

1. murders another in a cruel or treacherous manner;
2. murders a person who is especially vulnerable due to his or her age, a severe physical or mental disorder or pregnancy;
3. murders a close person or a person whom he or she has already abused;
4. murders another out of greed, ruthless revenge, hatred or other base motives;
5. murders another in order to commit or cover up another criminal offence;
6. murders an official person in relation to his or her performance of official duties.

Aggravated Murder of a Woman – Article 111a

(1) Whoever commits a gender-based murder of a woman shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than ten years or long-term imprisonment.

(2) When determining whether the criminal offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article has been committed, account shall be taken of whether the offence was committed against a close person, a person previously abused by the perpetrator, a vulnerable person, or a person in a relationship of subordination or dependency, whether it was committed in circumstances involving sexual violence or because of relationships that place women in an unequal position, or whether other circumstances indicate that the offence constitutes gender-based violence.

Serious Bodily Injury Resulting in Death – Article 120

- (1) If the criminal offence referred to in Articles 116(1) and (2), Article 118(1) or Article 119(1) of this Act results in death, the perpetrator shall be punished by imprisonment from three to fifteen years.
- (2) If the commission of a criminal offence referred to in Article 116(3), Article 118(2), or Article 119(2) and (3) of this Act results in death, the perpetrator shall be punished by imprisonment from five to fifteen years.

Participation in an Affray – Article 122

- (1) Whoever participates in an affray or an assault by several persons which results in the death or serious bodily injury of one or more persons, for mere participation shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding three years.
- (2) Whoever commits the criminal offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article out of hatred or against a close person or a person particularly vulnerable due to age, serious physical or mental disability or pregnancy shall be punished by imprisonment of six months to five years.
- (3) Whoever organises or leads a group of three or more persons who participate in an affray or assault referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article or organises such an assault or affray shall be punished by imprisonment from one to eight years.
- (4) Whoever organises or leads a group of three or more persons who participate in an affray or assault referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article or organises such an assault or affray shall be punished by imprisonment from one to ten years.
- (5) There shall be no criminal offence referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article if a person was drawn into an affray without his or her fault or if he or she only defended himself or herself or was separating other participants in the affray.

Stalking – Article 140

- (1) Whoever follows or spies on another, attempts to establish or establishes unwanted contact with another, or intimidates another in some other way and by doing so provokes anxiety in him or her or causes him or her to fear for his or her safety or the safety of persons close to him or her shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding one year.
- (2) If the offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article is committed against a close person or a child, the perpetrator shall be punished to imprisonment not exceeding three years.
- (3) The criminal offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be prosecuted upon request.

Rape – Article 153

- (1) Whoever engages in sexual intercourse or an equivalent sexual act with another person without this person's consent, or whoever induces another person to engage without his or her consent in sexual intercourse or an equivalent sexual act with a third party or to perform without his or her consent a sexual act equated to sexual intercourse upon himself or herself, shall be punished by imprisonment from three to eight years.
- (2) Whoever commits the offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article by using force or threatening to directly attack the life or body of the raped person or another person shall be punished by imprisonment from five to twelve years.

(3) A perpetrator who was avoidably mistaken as to the existence of consent referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding three years.

(4) A perpetrator who was under an avoidable mistake as to the existence of the consent referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article shall be punished by imprisonment from one to five years.

(5) Consent referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall exist if the person decided of his or her own free will to engage in sexual intercourse or an equivalent sexual act and was capable of making and expressing such a decision. It shall be deemed that no such consent exists in particular if the sexual intercourse or the equivalent sexual act was performed by the use of a threat, by fraud, by abusing one's position towards a person who is in a situation of dependence with respect to the perpetrator, by exploiting a person's condition due to which the person was unable to express his or her refusal or if it was performed against a person unlawfully deprived of liberty.

Serious Criminal Offences against Sexual Freedom – Article 154

(1) The punishment of imprisonment from five to twelve years shall be inflicted on whoever commits the offence referred to in Article 153(1) of this Act:

1. against a close person;
2. against a victim who is particularly vulnerable due to age, illness, addiction, pregnancy, disability, or severe physical or mental impairment;
3. in an especially cruel or especially humiliating manner;
4. out of hatred;
5. together with one or more perpetrators, with several acts of sexual intercourse or equivalent sexual acts being committed against one and the same person;
6. by using weapons or dangerous instruments;
7. in such a manner that it resulted in serious bodily injury or pregnancy of the raped person.

(2) Whoever commits the offence referred to in Article 153(2) of this Act under the circumstances referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, shall be punished by imprisonment from five to fifteen years.

(3) If the criminal offence referred to in Article 153(1) or (2) of this Act results in the death of the raped person, the perpetrator shall be punished by imprisonment not less than five years.

Sexual Harassment – Article 156

(1) Whoever sexually harasses or grossly harasses another person who is their subordinate or who is in a situation of dependence with them shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding two years.

(2) Whoever commits the criminal offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article against a close person or a person who is particularly vulnerable due to age, illness, disability, addiction, pregnancy, or severe physical or mental impairment shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding three years.

(3) Sexual harassment shall mean any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which aims at or effectively constitutes a violation of the dignity of a person, which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment.

Domestic Violence – Article 179a

Whoever grossly, repeatedly or otherwise seriously violates the regulations on protection against domestic violence and thereby causes a family member or another close person to fear for their own safety or the safety of persons close to them, or places them in a degrading position, where such conduct does not constitute a more serious criminal offence, shall be punished by imprisonment from one to three years.

Non-Enforcement of a Court Decision – Article 311 (excerpt from the article)

(1) An official or responsible person who fails to enforce a final court decision which they were required to enforce, where such conduct does not constitute another criminal offence punishable by a more severe penalty, shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding two years.

(2) Whoever violates a security measure imposed on them by a final judgment shall be punished by the penalty referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

(3) Whoever fails to comply with a stand-alone precautionary measure imposed on them by a court decision shall be punished by the penalty referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Bullying – Article 323a

(1) Whoever, by means of violence, abuse, ill-treatment or other particularly brazen conduct in a public place, places another person in a degrading position, where such conduct does not constitute a more serious criminal offence, shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding three years.

(2) Whoever commits the offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article out of hatred, against a close person or a person particularly vulnerable due to age, serious physical or mental disability or pregnancy shall be punished by imprisonment from six months to five years.

Criminal Procedure Act (Official Gazette, No. 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 130/20, 80/22, 36/24, 72/25 and 13/26)

Article 8(3) (excerpt from the article)

(3) The parties and other participants in the proceedings have the right to use their own language, including sign language used by deaf and deaf-blind persons. If an action in the proceedings is not conducted in a language which the person speaks and understands, oral interpretation shall be provided of what that person or others state, as well as translation or sign-language interpretation for deaf and deaf-blind persons of documents and other written evidence presented in the proceedings. The record shall indicate that the participant was informed of this right and shall record the participant's statement in that regard. The right to interpretation or interpretation or interpretation by sign language of deaf and deaf-blind persons shall be taught before the first examination.

Article 43

(1) A victim of a criminal offence has, according to this Act:

1) the right to easily accessible, confidential and free-of-charge access to crime victim support services, from the moment the crime is committed and for as long as needed,

- 2) the right to effective psychological and other professional assistance and support from bodies, organisations, or institutions for assistance to victims of domestic violence in accordance with the law,
 - 3) the right to protection against intimidation and retaliation,
 - 4) the right to protection of dignity during the questioning of the victim as a witness,
 - 5) the right to be heard without undue delay after filing a criminal complaint, and to have further questioning carried out only to the extent necessary for the purposes of the criminal proceedings,
 - 6) the right to be accompanied by a chosen person of trust (Article 202(2)(38) of this Act), during all procedural actions in which the victim participates, from the moment of reporting the crime to the final conclusion of the criminal proceedings,
 - 7) the right to have medical interventions against the victim taken to a minimum and only if they are strictly necessary for the purposes of criminal proceedings,
 - 8) the right to file a proposal for prosecution and a private lawsuit in accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Act, the right to participate in criminal proceedings as a victim, the right to be informed of the rejection of criminal charges (Article 206, paragraph 3 of this Act) and withdrawal of the state attorney from criminal prosecution and the right to take over criminal prosecution instead of the state attorney,
 - 9) the right to be notified by the state attorney of the actions taken in connection with his or her report (Article 206a of this Act) and to file a lawsuit with the senior state attorney (Article 206b of this Act),
 - 10) the right to confidentiality of data the disclosure of which could jeopardise the safety of the victim or the victim's close persons
 - 11) the right to be informed without undue delay of the release of an arrested person, the termination of detention or remand prison, the escape of the accused, and the release of a convicted person from serving a prison sentence, as well as of any measures taken for the victim's protection, unless the victim has waived this right,
 - 12) the right to be informed of any legally binding decision terminating criminal proceedings, except where the victim waives the right,
 - 13) the right to suggest being questioned using audio-visual equipment,
 - 14) other rights prescribed by law.
- (2) A victim of a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment for up to five years, if he or she suffers serious consequences of the criminal offence, shall be entitled to professional assistance of counsellors at the expense of budgetary funds when submitting a property claim.
- (3) The victim of a criminal offence of violence committed with intent shall be entitled to pecuniary compensation from the state budget in accordance with a special law. If the victim has previously realized a property claim, the amount will be taken into account when determining the pecuniary compensation, and the court will do the same when awarding the property claim if the victim has previously obtained pecuniary compensation from the state budget.
- (4) The court, the state attorney's office, the investigator and the police shall be obliged to inform the victim in a manner understandable to him or her when taking the first action in which he or she participates
- 1) on the rights referred to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this Article and Article 44 of this Act.

2) on the rights he or she has as an injured party.

(5) The bodies referred to in paragraph 4 of this Article shall treat the victim with consideration and ensure that the victim understands the given notice on rights. With regard to the rights referred to in paragraph 1, points 11 and 12 of this Article, the authorities referred to in paragraph 4 of this Article shall record the victim's statement as to whether he or she wishes to exercise those rights in the information on rights or in the record and shall inform the victim that he or she may amend that statement at any time during the proceedings.

(6) The bodies referred to in paragraph 4 of this Article shall instruct the victim in an understandable manner on the meaning of participation in the proceedings in the capacity of the injured party. The record will include the notice given and the victim's statement as to whether he or she wishes to participate in the proceedings as an injured party.

(7) The rights referred to in paragraph 1, items 8, 9 and 11 of this Article shall also belong to the legal person to whose detriment the criminal offence was committed. The provisions of this Act which regulate the exercise of the aforementioned rights by the victim of a criminal offence shall apply mutatis mutandis to the legal person to whose detriment the criminal offence was committed.

Article 43a

(1) Prior to the questioning of the victim, the body conducting the questioning shall, in cooperation with the bodies, organisations or institutions for assistance and support to victims of criminal offences, conduct an individual assessment of the victim. The individual assessment of the victim includes determining whether there is a need for special protective measures in relation to the victim and, if so, which special protective measures should be applied (special questioning of the victim, use of communication technologies to avoid visual contact with the perpetrator and other legal measures prescribed by law). When the victim of a crime is a child, it shall be assumed that there is a need to apply special protective measures and determine which special protective measures should be applied.

(2) In undertaking an individual assessment of the victim, special account shall be taken of the personal characteristics of the victim, the type or nature of the criminal offence and the circumstances of the commission of the criminal offence. Special attention is paid to victims who have suffered significant damage due to the gravity of the criminal offence, victims of criminal offence committed due to a personal characteristic of the victim, and victims whose relationship with the perpetrator makes them particularly vulnerable.

(3) When conducting an individual assessment relating to victims of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against close persons, in addition to the circumstances referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, special consideration shall be given to the risk factors for the repetition of violence as well as the results of the previous assessment of the needs of the victim.

(4) For the purposes of paragraph 2 of this Article, the individual assessment of the victim shall appropriately include, in particular, victims of terrorism, organised crime, trafficking in human beings, gender-based violence, intimate relationship violence, sexual violence and sexual exploitation or hate crimes, as well as victims with disabilities.

(5) The individual assessment of the victim shall be carried out with the participation of the victim and considering his or her wishes, including the wish not to use special protective measures prescribed by law.

(6) The body conducting the proceedings shall reduce the number of questionings of the victim for whom a special need for protection has been determined. The state attorney may propose that such a witness be questioned at an evidentiary hearing.

(7) The minister competent for judicial affairs shall, with the prior consent of the minister competent for the interior, issue an ordinance on the manner of conducting the individual assessment of the victim referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Article 44

(1) A child as a victim of a criminal offence has, in addition to the rights that belong to the victim in accordance with this Article and other provisions of this Act, also the right to:

- 1) proxy at the expense of budget funds,
- 2) confidentiality of personal data,
- 3) exclusion of the public.

(2) The court, the state attorney's office, the investigator and the police shall treat the child as a victim of a criminal offence with special consideration, taking into account age, personality and other circumstances in order to avoid harmful consequences for the child's upbringing and development. When treating a child victim, the competent bodies will primarily be guided by the best interests of the child.

(3) If the age of the victim is not known, it shall be presumed that it is a child if there is a probability that the victim has not reached the age of eighteen.

(4) The victim of a criminal offence against gender liberty and a victim of the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings shall have, in addition to the rights that belong to a victim in accordance with Article 43 of this Act, the following rights:

- 1) before the questioning, to talk to the advisor, at the expense of budgetary funds
- 2) to the proxy at the expense of budgetary funds,
- 3) to be questioned by the police and the state attorney's office by a person of the same gender and, if possible, to be questioned by the same person in case of re-questioning,
- 4) refuse to answer questions that are not related to the criminal offence, and relate to the strictly personal life of the victim,
- 5) request to be questioned by means of an audio-visual device (Article 292, paragraph 6 of this Act), unless the victim requests to be present in the courtroom while giving testimony,
- 6) the confidentiality of personal data,
- 7) demand the exclusion of the public from the proceedings.

(5) A victim in respect of whom special protection needs have been identified in accordance with Article 43a of this Act has, in addition to the rights that belong to the victim in accordance with Article 43 of this Act, also the following rights:

- 1) before the questioning, to talk to the advisor, at the expense of budgetary funds,
- 2) to be questioned by the police and the state attorney's office by a person of the same gender and, if possible, to be questioned by the same person in case of re-questioning,
- 3) refuse to answer questions that are not related to the criminal offence, and relate to the strictly personal life of the victim,
- 4) request to be questioned by means of an audio-visual device (Article 292, paragraph 6 of this Act), unless the victim requests to be present in the courtroom while giving testimony,
- 5) the confidentiality of personal data,

6) demand the exclusion of the public from the proceedings.

Article 98

(1) In the event that there are circumstances referred to in Article 123 of this Act due to which it is possible to order remand prison or remand prison has already been determined, taking into account the results of the individual assessment of the needs of the victim and persons close to the victim, as well as the need to protect the victim, the court and the state attorney shall, if the same purpose can be achieved, determine the application of one or more such measures. At the same time, the accused will be warned that in case of non-compliance with the imposed measure, it will be replaced by remand prison

(2) Precautionary measures are:

- 1) prohibition on leaving the place of residence,
- 2) prohibition on visiting certain places or areas,
- 3) the obligation to report routinely to a specified person or government agency,
- 4) prohibition on approaching a certain person,
- 5) prohibition on establishing or maintaining contact with certain people,
- 6) prohibition on performing certain business activities,
- 7) temporary confiscation of travel and other documents for crossing the state border,
- 8) temporary revocation of the licence to drive a motor vehicle,
- 9) prohibition on stalking or harassing the victim or other people,
- 10) removal from home,
- 11) prohibition of access to the internet.

(3) Before issuing a decision imposing, extending or lifting a precautionary measure, the court and the State Attorney shall, in cases involving violence against women, domestic violence or violence against close persons, hear the victim regarding any risk to their personal safety or the safety of their family members and close persons, and shall take into account the victim's views on the proposed precautionary measure and the results of the individual assessment of the victim's needs. The victim may also be heard using information and communication technologies or by other appropriate means.

(4) Precautionary measures may not restrict the accused's right to his or her own home and the right to unhindered relations with family members, spouses or parents, parents, children, adoptees or adoptive parents, unless the proceedings are conducted for a criminal offence committed to the detriment of one of those persons. Prohibition on performing business activity may also include legal professional activity if the proceedings are conducted due to a criminal offence committed within that activity

(5) Precautionary measures may not restrict the right of the accused to unhindered communication with the defence counsel.

(6) Precautionary measures may be ordered before and during criminal proceedings. Prior to the indictment, the precautionary measure is determined, extended and revoked by a decision of the state attorney and the investigating judge when deciding on remand prison. The state attorney or the investigating judge who ordered the measure is competent to extend or revoke it. After the indictment has been filed until the verdict becomes final or until the convicted person is committed to serve the prison sentence, the measure is determined, extended and revoked by the court. Where an imposed precautionary measure is breached, the investigating

judge shall decide on its replacement by remand prison before the indictment is filed, while after the indictment has been filed, the decision shall be made by the court. If the court is unable to issue a decision within the time limit prescribed by Article 101(3) of this Act due to the end of working hours, a public holiday or a non-working day, the decision on replacing the precautionary measure with remand prison shall be made by the investigating judge of the competent county court or of the county court having jurisdiction over the area of the municipal court that imposed the precautionary measure on the accused.

(7) Precautionary measures may last as long as necessary, and until the judgment becomes final or until the convicted person is committed to serve the prison sentence, where such a sentence has been imposed, in the case of precautionary measures ordered on the grounds referred to in Article 123(1), points 1, 3 and 4 of this Act; or no longer than until the judgment becomes final, in the case of precautionary measures ordered on the grounds referred to in Article 123(1), points 2 and 5 of this Act. Every two months, counting from the day the previous precautionary measure becomes final, the body that determined the precautionary measure before the indictment or the court conducting the proceedings will examine *ex officio* whether there is still a need for the precautionary measure and extend or suspend it if required. If the precautionary measure is specified as a condition of the guarantee, the control of the extension of the measure will not be carried out

(8) The parties and the victim of a criminal offence involving violence against women, domestic violence or violence against close persons may file an appeal against the decision ordering, extending or suspending the precautionary measure, which shall not delay the execution of the measure. The investigating judge or out-of-court council decides on the appeal until the indictment is filed.

Article 98a

(1) In the event that there are circumstances referred to in Article 123 of this Act, and the periods of remand prison referred to in Article 133 of this Act have expired, the court may order precautionary measures as independent precautionary measures. In doing so, the court will warn the defendant that non-compliance with the imposed independent precautionary measure is a criminal offence.

(2) The parties may file an appeal against the decision ordering, extending or revoking the precautionary measure, which does not delay the execution of the decision.

Article 101

(1) The body that ordered the precautionary measure may order a check of its execution and request a report from the police or another body that executes it. The body implementing the precautionary measure will immediately carry out the ordered checks and immediately notify the competent authority.

(2) The body that executes the precautionary measure immediately informs the competent authority about the defendant's actions contrary to the ban or failure to fulfil the obligation imposed by the precautionary measure.

(3) The police shall bring the detainee referred to in Article 107, point 4 of this Act before the competent judicial authority referred to in Article 98(6) of this Act within 24 hours of the arrest. The delay must be explained separately. The competent judicial authority will, without delay,

decide whether it is necessary to impose remand prison against the detainee for violating the precautionary measure.

(4) the investigation judge may, by a special decision, prohibit a person other than the defendant from activities that violate precautionary measures against the defendant. If that person acts contrary to the decision, they will be fined up to EUR 6630.00.

Article 206.d

(1) The state attorney may, after obtaining the prior consent of the victim or injured party, conditionally defer or discontinue criminal prosecution by a decision, notwithstanding the existence of reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence subject to *ex officio* prosecution and punishable by a fine or imprisonment not exceeding five years has been committed, provided that the suspect or accused undertakes one or more of the following obligations:

- 1) the commission of any act for the purpose of repairing or compensating the damage caused by the criminal offence,
- 2) payments of a certain amount for the benefit of a public institution, for humanitarian or charitable purposes,
- 3) payment of due legal maintenance and proper payment of due liabilities,
- 4) performing community service,
- 5) undergoing treatment or rehabilitation for drug or other addictions in accordance with specific regulations,
- 6) undergoing psychosocial therapy to eliminate violent behaviour without leaving the family household, or, with the suspect's consent, to leave the family household for the duration of the treatment.

(2) The state attorney shall specify in the decision the deadline within which the suspect or defendant must fulfil the obligations assumed under paragraph 1 of this Article, which may not exceed one year.

(3) The decision referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be delivered by the state attorney to the suspect or defendant, the victim and the applicant of the criminal complaint, with the instruction to the victim that they can exercise their civil claim in the lawsuit. No appeal shall be allowed against the decision of the state attorney.

(4) If the suspect or accused fulfils the obligation within the time limit referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, the state attorney shall, by decision, dismiss the criminal complaint or withdraw the charges and shall inform the court accordingly.

(5) The single judge shall terminate the criminal proceedings by a decision if the state attorney declares that the prosecution is being conditionally discontinued.

Article 235

(1) The evidentiary hearing is conducted by the investigative judge at the proposal of the state attorney, the injured party as plaintiff or defendant.

(2) Evidence from Article 236 of this Law may be conducted at the evidentiary hearing.

Article 236

(1) An evidentiary hearing shall be held if:

- 1) it is necessary to examine the witness referred to in Articles 292 and 293 of this Act,

- 2) it is necessary to examine the witness referred to in Article 285(1), points 1 to 3 of this Act,
- 3) the witness will not be able to be examined at the hearing,
- 4) the witness is exposed to an influence that calls into question the truthfulness of the statement,
- 5) no other evidence will be able to be produced later.

Article 285

(1) The following are exempted from the obligation to testify:

- 1) a person with whom the defendant is married or cohabiting,
- 2) relatives of the defendant in the direct line, relatives in the lateral line up to the third degree inclusive, and in-law relatives up to the second degree inclusive,
- 3) adopted child and adoptive parent of the defendant.

Article 287(4) (excerpt from the article)

A witness who is placed in a shelter as a victim of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against close persons shall be summoned through the competent social welfare body or the victim and witness support department.

Article 292 (excerpt from the article)

(3) Witnesses who cannot respond to the summons due to age, health or disability, may be examined in their apartment or other place where they live. These witnesses can be examined through audio-video devices operated by an expert. If the condition of the witness requires it, the examination will be conducted so that the parties can ask questions without being present in the room where the witness is. If necessary, the examination will be recorded with an audio-video recording device, and the recording will be sealed and attached to the record.

(4) At their request, a victim of a criminal offence against sexual freedom, a victim of trafficking in human beings, or a victim of a criminal offence committed within the family shall be examined as a witness in the manner prescribed in paragraph 3 of this Article. Such a witness may only exceptionally be re-examined if the court deems it necessary. A victim who has been identified as having specific protection needs pursuant to Article 43a of this Act shall also be examined in the manner prescribed in paragraph 3 of this Article, if they so request.

(6) Interrogation as a witness of a victim of a criminal offence against sexual freedom, a criminal offence of trafficking in human beings, a criminal offence of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against close persons and a victim in relation to whom special protection needs have been established in accordance with Article 43a of this Act shall be conducted through audio-video devices handled by a professional, without the presence of a judge or the parties in the room where the victim is located. The examination will be recorded with an audio-video recording device, and the recording will be sealed and attached to the record. Such a witness may only exceptionally be re-examined if the court deems it necessary. The examination shall not be conducted in this manner if the victim requests to be present in the courtroom while giving testimony.

Article 360

(1) The parties may negotiate the terms of admission of guilt and agreement on the penalty and other measures referred to in Article 360(4)(3) of this Act. The accused must have a defence attorney during the negotiations.

(2) The Council may postpone the session for a maximum of fifteen days in order for the parties to complete the negotiations.

(3) Before the commencement of the session of the indictment panel, the state attorney, the defendant and the defence attorney shall submit to the indictment panel a signed statement for the delivery of a judgment based on an agreement between the parties.

(4) The statement from paragraph 3 of this article contains:

- 1) description of the criminal offense that is the subject of the charge,
- 2) the statement of the defendant on the admission of guilt for that criminal act,
- 3) agreement on the type and measure of punishment, judicial admonition, suspended sentence, partially suspended sentence, special obligations, protective supervision, confiscation of objects and costs of the proceedings,
- 4) the defendant's statement regarding the claim for damages submitted by the injured party,
- 5) the defendant's statement accepting the state attorney's proposal for the imposition of a security measure and the confiscation of proceeds obtained through the criminal offence,
- 6) signature of the parties and the defence counsel.

(5) After signing the statement referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article, the state attorney informs the victim or injured party thereof.

(6) In the case of criminal offences against life and limb and against sexual freedom punishable by a term of imprisonment exceeding five years, the state attorney must obtain the victim's consent before entering into a plea agreement. If the victim has died or is incapable of giving consent, consent shall be requested from the persons referred to in Article 55(6) of this Act.

Protection against Domestic Violence Act (Official Gazette, No. 70/17, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22 and 36/24)

Article 6

(1) A victim of domestic violence has the following rights:

1. the right to easily accessible, confidential and free-of-charge access to domestic violence victim support services, immediately after the commission of the misdemeanour and for as long as needed
2. the right to effective psychological and other professional assistance and support from a body, organisation or institution providing assistance to victims of domestic violence
3. the right to protection against intimidation and retaliation
4. the right to protection of dignity during the questioning of the victim as a witness
5. the right to be accompanied by a chosen person of trust, during all procedural actions in which the victim participates, from the moment of reporting the crime to the final conclusion of the criminal proceedings,
6. the right to be informed without undue delay of the release of the arrested person, the termination of detention or the escape of the accused, the revocation of a decision imposing protective measures, the lifting of precautionary measures ordered for the victim's protection,

or the release of the convicted person from serving a prison sentence, unless the victim has waived this right

7. the right to confidentiality of information the disclosure of which could endanger his or her safety or the safety of persons referred to in Article 8, paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Act, and the right to demand the exclusion of the public in court proceedings

8. the right to a proxy in the proceedings

9. the right to be informed of the actions taken on the application and the outcome of the procedure, except in the case of waiver of the said right

10. the right to be questioned without undue delay after reporting the perpetrator, the right to request to be questioned in court proceedings and the right to have further questioning carried out only to the extent necessary for the purposes of the misdemeanour proceedings

11. the right to be questioned by the police by a person of the same gender

12. the right to avoid contact with the perpetrator before and during the proceedings, unless to the extent necessary for the purposes of the misdemeanour proceedings

13. the right to accommodation in an appropriate institution in accordance with a special law

14. the right to police protection and security, by order of a court, for the purpose of unhindered collection of personal belongings when leaving a shared household

15. the right to request to be examined by means of an audio-video device

16. other rights prescribed by the law governing criminal proceedings, except for those rights which, by the nature of things, can only be enjoyed by the victim of a criminal offence.

(2) Bodies acting on domestic violence are obliged to inform the victim in an understandable manner of all rights he or she has in accordance with the provisions of this Act and the law governing criminal proceedings when taking the first action in which the victim participates.

(3) The bodies referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article shall be convinced that the victim has understood the given notice of rights. With regard to the rights referred to in paragraph 1, points 6 and 9 of this Article, the bodies referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article shall record the victim's statement as to whether they wish to exercise those rights in the information on rights or in the record and shall inform the victim that they may amend that statement at any time during the proceedings.

(4) In the event that it is necessary to question a child victim of domestic violence, the bodies referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article shall question the child victim in accordance with the provisions of the law governing criminal proceedings on special questioning of children.

(5) If a child is a victim of domestic violence and the interests of the child are in conflict with the interests of the parents, the competent body shall invite the competent social welfare body to appoint a special guardian. The special guardian is authorised to make all statements and take all actions to which the victim is authorised. Exceptionally, a child victim of domestic violence who has reached the age of 16 may independently make statements and take actions in the proceedings.

(6) If the victim of domestic violence is a child, the information referred to in paragraph 1, items 6 and 9 of this Article shall be given *ex officio*.

Mandatory Psychosocial Treatment – Article 15

- (1) A protective measure of mandatory psychosocial treatment may be imposed on a perpetrator of domestic violence in order to eliminate his or her violent behaviour or if there is a danger that he or she could repeat domestic violence.
- (2) The measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article may be determined for a period of at least six months.
- (3) The minister competent for judicial affairs shall prescribe by an ordinance the manner and place of implementation of the measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Enforcement of Prison Sentences Act (Official Gazette, No. 14/21 and 155/23)

Victim's right to Information – Article 8(3) (excerpt from the article)

- (3) Upon receipt of the notification referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article concerning a request by the victim of a criminal offence or misdemeanour, or the victim's family, the penitentiary, prison or the Diagnostic Centre in Zagreb shall, prior to each unaccompanied temporary release or in the event of the prisoner's escape, notify the victim and witness support unit of the ministry responsible for justice, so that the victim or the victim's family, and where necessary other state authorities, may be informed accordingly.

Prison Term Enforcement Programme – Article 75

- (1) In order to fulfil the purpose of the enforcement of a prison term, an enforcement plan shall be drawn up for each prisoner. The enforcement plan consists of psychosocial, social-pedagogical, educational, work-related, occupational, healthcare and security interventions tailored to the prisoner's risks, needs and characteristics and aligned with the capacities of the penitentiary or prison.
- (2) The enforcement plan for each prisoner shall be adopted by the prison governor upon the proposal of the professional team of the penitentiary or prison.
- (3) The prison governor shall review the enforcement plan at least once every three months for a prisoner serving a prison sentence of more than five years.
- (4) The prisoner is encouraged to participate actively in the development and implementation of the enforcement plan.
- (5) The enforcement plan and any amendments thereto shall be entered in the prisoner's personal file.
- (6) The prisoner shall be informed of the enforcement plan, any amendments thereto, the assessment of progress, and the type and extent of privileges granted. The prisoner shall not be informed of the content of those parts of the enforcement plan relating to risk assessments, security assessments and security procedures.
- (7) The content of the enforcement plan and the procedure for its adoption, the risk assessment procedure, the implementation of the sentence plan and the procedure for assessing the effectiveness of its implementation, as well as the procedure for deciding on prisoners' privileges, shall be prescribed by the ordinance referred to in Article 27(9) of this Act.

Gender Equality Act (Official Gazette, No. 82/08 and 69/17)

Article 11

- (1) Public administration bodies and legal entities predominantly owned by the state are obliged to implement special measures and adopt action plans for the promotion and achievement of gender equality.
- (2) Every four years, the bodies referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall adopt action plans within their areas of competence, based on an analysis of the position of women and men, identifying the reasons for introducing special measures, the objectives to be achieved, the manner of implementation, and the methods for monitoring implementation.
- (3) An integral part of the action plans for the promotion and achievement of gender equality shall be an implementation plan for activities related to the measures set out in the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality that fall within the competence of the bodies and the activities of the legal entities referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.
- (4) The action plans referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be pre-approved by the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.
- (5) Local and regional self-government units, legal persons vested with public authority, other legal persons, and tradespeople employing more than 20 employees are required to incorporate into their general acts statutory anti-discrimination provisions and measures aimed at achieving gender equality.
- (6) Social partners are required, in collective bargaining and collective agreements at all levels, to comply with the provisions of this Act and with measures aimed at achieving gender equality.

Social Welfare Act (Official Gazette, No. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23 and 61/25)

Amount of the guaranteed minimum benefit for a homeless person, a recipient of the regular study allowance, a victim of domestic violence and a victim of trafficking in human beings –

Article 28(3) (excerpt from the article)

- (3) A victim of domestic violence or a victim of trafficking in human beings who has been granted accommodation service in crisis situations shall be entitled to a guaranteed minimum benefit amounting to 100% of the guaranteed minimum benefit referred to in Article 27(2) and (3) of this Act, provided that they meet the conditions prescribed by this Act.

COUNSELLING

Content, method of provision and provider of consulting services – Article 81

- (1) Counselling is a service in which an expert in direct contact encourages the user to develop new ways of looking at the life situation with the aim of overcoming difficulties, creating conditions for the preservation and development of personal opportunities and the responsible attitude of the individual towards himself, his family and society.
- (2) The counselling service includes individual work with the user and/or his family members to overcome difficulties that can be solved with short-term interventions of up to three meetings, and exceptionally up to five meetings according to the expert's assessment.

(3) The counselling service is provided by an expert worker of the Institute, the Family Centre, the social welfare centre and other service providers from Article 162, points 3 and 4 of this Act.

PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELLING

Content and method of providing psychosocial counselling services – Article 83

(1) Psychosocial counselling is a service in which a professional person in direct contact, special professional procedures and activities helps the user eliminate difficulties in functioning in different areas of life with an emphasis on behavioural, emotional, interpersonal, social, educational, developmental and organizational aspects of life.

(2) Psychosocial counselling is based on a therapeutic relationship and a process during which work is done on reducing current difficulties and finding the best solution or overcoming crisis situations in accordance with the needs of the user.

(3) The psychosocial counselling service includes intensive individual and/or group work with the user and/or his family members.

Duration, psychosocial counselling service provider – Article 84

(1) The psychosocial counselling service is approved after a risk assessment of strengths and needs in accordance with an individual change plan or intervention plan, lasting up to six months.

(2) As an exception to paragraph 1 of this article, if due to the positive changes achieved, according to the Institute's assessment, further provision of the service is necessary, the psychosocial counselling service may be approved for another two months after the deadline from paragraph 1 of this article has expired.

(3) The service of psychosocial counselling is provided by an expert worker of the Family Center, social care home and other service providers from Article 162, points 3 and 4 of this Act, who has additional training in the field of counselling and/or therapeutic work and approval of the competent chamber for independent work according to special regulations regulating the activities of counselling therapists and psychotherapists.

Psychosocial Treatment for the Prevention of Violent Behaviour

Content, user of psychosocial treatment service for the prevention of violent behaviour – Article 89

(1) Psychosocial treatment for the prevention of violent behaviour is a counselling-therapeutic and psychoeducational service aimed at stopping and preventing violent behaviour in the family, by including the user in a structured treatment aimed at stopping violence between partners and/or in the family.

(2) The service of psychosocial treatment for the prevention of violent behaviour is approved, based on the assessment of the Institute's expert team, to an individual who has not been ordered to undergo mandatory psychosocial treatment by court, and who has been assessed as having a risk of violent behaviour and who, due to the safety of family members and/or risks for the well-being and development of the child need to be included in the treatment.

(3) The service of psychosocial treatment for the prevention of violent behaviour in the family is approved according to the assessment of the Institute's expert team to partners and/or parents

when there has never been a court order of referral to mandatory psychosocial treatment, and there is a risk of mutual violent behaviour and a risk to well-being and development child, without an established victim-abuser relationship.

Psychosocial support service for individuals – Article 94 (excerpt from the article)

(1) The service of psychosocial support to an individual is approved for the purpose of overcoming difficulties and empowering the individual in connection with difficulties in development, disability, old age, crisis situations, domestic violence, inclusion in the daily life of the community, overcoming treatment experiences, behavioural problems and in other unfavourable circumstances.

(2) The psychosocial support service is granted to an individual based on an assessment of risks, strengths and needs in accordance with the individual change plan.

ORGANISED HOUSING

Content of the organised housing service – Article 106

(1) Organized housing is a social service that provides persons from Article 107 of this Act with housing in a housing unit with permanent or occasional professional and other assistance and support in ensuring basic life needs and social, work, cultural, educational, recreational and other needs in order to establish and maintain their social roles, equalize their opportunities, improve the quality of life, encourage active and independent living and social inclusion, depending on the needs of the users.

User of organized housing service – Article 107 (excerpt from the article)

The right to an organized housing service is recognized:

- 9. to victims of domestic violence
- 10. to a victim of human trafficking

Accommodation service in crisis situations – Article 112 (excerpt from the article)

(1) Crisis situations are situations in which the life, health or well-being of a person is threatened.

(2) The right to accommodation service in crisis situations is recognized:

- 7. to victims of domestic violence
- 8. to a victim of human trafficking

Duration of the accommodation service in crisis situations – Article 113 (excerpt from the article)

(2) As an exception to paragraph 1 of this article, the accommodation service in crisis situations can last up to one year if it is about:

- 5. victims of domestic violence
- 6. to a victim of human trafficking

Commission– Article 150

(1) A Commission shall be established to decide on the merits of the complaint of the applicant who is not satisfied with the response of the Ministry.

- (2) The Commission referred to in paragraph 1 of this article consists of five representatives of citizens who, upon public invitation, were proposed by civil society organizations or who personally responded to the public invitation.
- (3) The members of the Commission referred to in paragraph 1 of this article are appointed and dismissed by the Croatian Parliament on the proposal of the Committee for Health and Social Policy of the Croatian Parliament.
- (4) Decisions on complaints do not include decisions in administrative procedures.

Special conditions for the election of a member of the Commission – Article 152 (excerpt from the article)

- (1) A member of the Commission referred to in Article 150 of this Act is a person who enjoys a professional and personal reputation in the public and has at least five years of experience in the field of family law protection, work with victims of domestic violence or social welfare.

Professional training and advancement of professional workers – Article 263

- (1) Professional workers in the field of social welfare have the right, duty and obligation to permanently improve their skills according to the annual education plan adopted by the Academy.
- (2) Continuous professional development means individual and organized professional development in the field of social work, law, social pedagogy, psychology, speech therapy, educational rehabilitation, occupational therapy, upbringing, information and communication technologies, advisory work, management, social policy and other areas important for efficient and quality work in social care.

Act on Medical Practice (Official Gazette, No. 121/03 and 117/08)

Obligation to Report – Article 22

A physician is required to report the matter to the police or the state attorney's office if, in the course of practising medicine, they suspect that a person's death or bodily injury was caused by violence.

A physician is also required to make the report referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article where they suspect that the health of a minor or a vulnerable person has been seriously endangered as a result of neglect or abuse.

Maintenance and safekeeping of medical records – Article 23 (excerpt from the article)

A physician is required to maintain accurate, comprehensive and dated medical records in accordance with the regulations and record-keeping requirements in the field of healthcare, which must at all times provide sufficient information on the patient's state of health and treatment. A physician is required, upon request, to provide such documentation to the ministry responsible for health, state administration bodies in accordance with specific regulations, the Croatian Medical Chamber, or the judicial authorities.

Dental Medicine Act (Official Gazette, no. 121/03, 117/08, 120/09 and 46/21)

Obligation to Report – Article 28

A Doctor of Dental Medicine is required to report the matter to the police or the state attorney's office if, in the course of practising dental medicine, they suspect that a person's death or bodily injury was caused by violence.

A Doctor of Dental Medicine is also required to make the report referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article where they suspect that the health of a minor or a vulnerable person has been seriously endangered as a result of neglect or abuse.

Health Care Act (Official Gazette, No. 100/18, 125/19, 147/20, 119/22, 156/22, 33/23, 36/24 and 102/25)

Title XI REFERENCE CENTRE OF THE MINISTRY

Article 143 (excerpt from the article)

(1) A reference centre of the ministry (hereinafter: the reference centre) may be a healthcare institution or a part thereof, or another legal entity or a part thereof that provides healthcare services and meets the norms and standards required for the provision of the most complex forms of healthcare.

(7) Only one reference centre may be designated for the same field of medicine.

Compulsory Health Insurance Act (Official Gazette, No. 80/13, 137/13, 98/19, 33/23 and 105/25)

Article 3(2)

(2) Compulsory health insurance provides all persons insured by the Institute (hereinafter: insured persons) with the rights and obligations arising from compulsory health insurance, based on the principles of mutuality, solidarity and equality, in the manner and under the conditions laid down in Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004 as last amended by EU Regulation No. 1224/2012 (hereinafter: European Union regulations), Directive 2011/24/EU, this Act, a special law and regulations adopted on the basis of this Act.

Act on the Protection of Patients' Rights (Official Gazette, No. 169/04 and 37/08)

Right to be Informed – Article 8

The patient has the right to be fully informed about:

- their state of health, including a medical assessment of the results and outcome of a particular diagnostic or therapeutic procedure,
- the recommended examinations and procedures, as well as the scheduled dates for their performance,
- the possible benefits and risks of performing or not performing recommended examinations and procedures,
- their right to decide on recommended examinations or interventions,
- possible alternatives to the recommended procedures,

- the course of procedures when providing healthcare,
- the further course of healthcare provision,
- the recommended lifestyle,
- rights arising from health insurance and the procedures for exercising those rights.

The patient has the right to receive information in a manner that is understandable to them, taking into account their age, level of education and mental capacity.

Patients with disabilities have the right to information in an accessible form.

Article 13

A patient with diminished decision-making capacity also has the right to be informed in a manner appropriate to their age and physical, mental and psychological condition.

Act on Data and Information in Healthcare (Official Gazette, No. 14/19)

II. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTION, USE AND PROCESSING OF HEALTH DATA AND INFORMATION

Article 4

The collection, use and processing of health data and information shall be carried out in accordance with the principles of lawfulness in the collection and processing of health data and information; originality and directness; authenticity, accuracy and reliability of health data and information; standardisation of processing and interoperability of health data; traceability and currency of health data; accessibility and protection of health data and information; and efficiency, data minimisation and storage limitation in respect of health and other personal data.

Act on Health Insurance and Health Care of Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, No. 80/13, 15/18, 26/21 and 46/22)

Article 19

(1) The Republic of Croatia shall provide funds in the state budget for healthcare for:

1. applicants for international protection
2. foreign nationals under temporary protection
3. asylum seekers
4. foreign nationals – family members of an asylee, if compulsory health insurance or healthcare is not provided to them on another basis
5. foreign nationals under subsidiary protection
6. foreign nationals - family members of a person under subsidiary protection, if compulsory health insurance or healthcare is not provided to them on another basis
7. foreigners – victims of trafficking in human beings; foreign minors who have been abandoned, are victims of organised crime, or for other reasons have been left without parental protection, guardianship or accompaniment
8. foreign nationals staying in the Republic of Croatia at the invitation of its state authorities
9. foreign nationals suffering from cholera, plague, viral haemorrhagic fevers or typhoid fever
10. foreign nationals staying illegally in the Republic of Croatia in respect of whom a return

decision has been issued.

(2) Funds for the healthcare of foreign nationals referred to in paragraph 1, items 1 to 6 of this Article shall not be provided from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia if compulsory health insurance or healthcare is provided to them on another basis.

(3) In addition to the persons referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, funds shall also be provided from the state budget to cover the costs of emergency medical care referred to in Article 8(2) of this Act provided to a foreign national who was required to bear the costs of such healthcare, where those costs cannot be recovered from that person within the time limits prescribed by this Act or cannot be recovered at all.

(4) Funds for the healthcare of foreign nationals staying in the Republic of Croatia at the invitation of local or regional self-government authorities shall be provided from the budget of the respective local or regional self-government unit.

International Protection Applicant– Article 20 (excerpt from the article)

(1) An applicant for international protection is entitled to emergency medical care referred to in Article 8(2) of this Act and to essential treatment of illnesses and serious mental disorders.

(2) An applicant for international protection has the right to a first medical examination.

(3) Appropriate healthcare shall be provided to an applicant for international protection and a foreign national in need of special reception and/or procedural guarantees, particularly victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence.

(4) The costs of healthcare referred to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this Article shall be paid from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia, from the budget allocation of the ministry responsible for health.

Foreign National Staying Illegally in the Republic of Croatia – Article 24 (excerpt from the article)

(1) A foreign national referred to in Article 19(1), item 10 of this Act shall be entitled to emergency medical care under this Act and to essential treatment.

(2) The costs of healthcare referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be borne by the foreign national, unless they cannot be recovered in accordance with the provisions of this Act, in which case the costs shall be paid from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia, from the budget allocation of the ministry responsible for healthcare.

Act on Housing Care in Assisted Areas (Official Gazette no. 106/18, 98/19, 82/23 and 151/25)

XI VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Article 45

(1) A victim of domestic violence shall submit an application for housing care to the competent administrative body of the county or the City of Zagreb responsible for carrying out delegated state administration tasks relating to housing care.

(2) The conditions for exercising the rights referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article are:

- a final or non-final court judgment delivered in criminal or misdemeanour proceedings concerning domestic violence committed against the applicant

- the person referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article does not own or co-own another habitable family house or apartment in the territory of the Republic of Croatia

- a recommendation from the competent social welfare institute on the need for housing care of victims of domestic violence

(3) The administrative body of the county or the City of Zagreb responsible for carrying out delegated state administration tasks relating to housing assistance shall issue a decision granting housing care to a victim of domestic violence for a maximum submit it to the Ministry for implementation.

(4) The Ministry shall decide on the appeal against the decision referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article.

(5) Only the provisions relating to the rental of housing units shall apply to the beneficiaries referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, except for Articles 23(3), (4) and (5) of this Act.

(6) Funds for the costs of accommodation of beneficiaries referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article are provided from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia in positions of the Ministry.

(7) Upon the beneficiary's application, the validity of the decision referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article may, after the expiry of the two-year period, be extended for a further two years if the circumstances on the basis of which the decision was issued continue to exist, as determined in proceedings before the competent administrative body of the county or the City of Zagreb.

(8) Based on the same judgment concerning domestic violence, the right to housing for the period specified in this Article may be exercised only once.

(9) If, after the right to housing care has been acquired, the non-final judgment referred to in paragraph 2, subparagraph 1 of this Article is set aside and the case is remitted to the court of first instance for retrial, or if the first-instance judgment is varied, the acquired right shall be retained until the court proceedings are finally concluded by a judgment dismissing the charge, a judgment finding the accused guilty, or a judgment acquitting the accused, but for no longer than four years.

(10) If, after the right has been acquired on the basis of a non-final judgment, it is established by a final judgment that no violence was committed against the beneficiary, the decision granting the right shall be revoked by a decision of the competent administrative body of the county or the City of Zagreb, on the basis of which the tenancy agreement shall be terminated.

(11) A beneficiary who has acquired the right under this Article on the basis of a non-final judgment shall, within 15 days of its occurrence, notify the competent administrative body of the county or the City of Zagreb and the Ministry of any change affecting the exercise of the right under this Article and shall, within 15 days of the judgment becoming final, submit a certificate confirming its finality.

(12) If the beneficiary fails to comply with the obligation referred to in paragraph 11 of this Article, the competent administrative body of the county or the administrative body of the City of Zagreb shall revoke the decision establishing the right to housing care, and the beneficiary shall be obliged to compensate the damage.

(13) If the judgment becomes final after the right to housing acquired under this Article has been exercised through the rental of a housing unit for a period of four years, or if the judgment becomes final while that right is being exercised through the rental of a housing unit for a maximum period of four years, the right may not, following confirmation that the judgment has become final, be extended for an additional two or four years. Rather, the period during which

the housing unit was used on the basis of the right acquired pursuant to the non-final judgment shall be included in the four-year period referred to in paragraph 7 of this Article.

(14) An appeal lodged against a decision referred to in paragraph 3 and/or paragraph 7 and/or paragraph 10 of this Article shall not stay its enforcement.

Free Legal Aid Act (Official Gazette, No. 143/13 and 98/19)

II. PRIMARY LEGAL AID

Forms of primary legal aid – Article 9

Primary legal aid includes:

- a) general legal information
- b) legal advice
- c) drafting submissions before public law bodies, the European Court of Human Rights and international organisations in accordance with international treaties and the rules governing the work of those bodies
- d) representation in proceedings before public law bodies
- e) legal assistance in the amicable out-of-court settlement of disputes.

Prerequisites for Obtaining Primary Legal Aid – Article 10

Primary legal aid may be provided in any legal matter:

- a) if the applicant does not have sufficient knowledge and ability to exercise their right independently
- b) if the applicant's rightful assistance is not provided on the basis of special regulations
- c) if the submitted request is not manifestly unfounded and
- d) if the material circumstances of the applicant are such that the payment of professional legal aid could jeopardise the maintenance of the applicant and members of the household.

Procedure for Obtaining Primary Legal Aid – Article 11

(1) The procedure for obtaining primary legal aid is initiated by direct contact with the provider of primary legal aid.

(2) Primary legal aid shall be provided if the conditions referred to in Article 10 of this Act are met.

III. SECONDARY LEGAL AID

Forms of Secondary Legal Aid – Article 12 (excerpt from the article)

(1) Secondary legal aid includes:

- a) legal advice
- c) preparation of submissions in court proceedings
- d) representation in court proceedings

(2) Secondary legal aid also includes:

- a) exemption from payment of court costs
- b) exemption from court fees.

Prerequisites for Obtaining Secondary Legal Aid – Article 13 (excerpt from the article)

(2) Depending on the type of proceedings, secondary legal aid referred to in Article 12(1) of this Act may be granted in the following proceedings:

- a) proceedings concerning rights in rem, except land registry proceedings
- b) proceedings arising from employment relations
- c) proceedings concerning family relations, except proceedings for divorce by mutual consent where the spouses have no minor children in common or adopted children, or children over whom they exercise parental responsibility after the children have reached the age of majority
- d) enforcement proceedings and proceedings for interim measures where they concern the compulsory enforcement or securing of a claim arising from proceedings in respect of which legal aid may be granted under the provisions of this Act
- e) proceedings for the amicable settlement of disputes
- f) exceptionally, all other administrative and civil court proceedings where such a need arises from the specific circumstances of the applicant and members of their household, in accordance with the fundamental purpose of this Act.

Article 15 (excerpt from the article)

(1) Secondary legal aid shall be granted without an assessment of the applicant's financial circumstances where the applicant is:

B) a victim of a violent criminal offence in proceedings for the exercise of the right to compensation for damage caused by the commission of the criminal offence.

International and Temporary Protection Act (Official Gazette, No. 70/15, 127/17, 33/23 and 17/25)

Term Meaning – Article 4(14) (excerpt from the article)

(14) Vulnerable groups mean persons divested of legal capacity, minors, unaccompanied minors, elderly and infirm persons, seriously ill persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, persons with mental disorders and victims of trafficking in human beings, victims of torture, rape or other psychological, physical and sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation

Special Procedural and Reception Guarantees – Article 15

(1) Through special procedural and reception guarantees, appropriate support shall be provided for seekers in relation to their personal circumstances, amongst other things their age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, serious illness, mental health or consequence of torture and rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, for the purpose of exercising the rights and obligations referred to in this Act.

(2) The process of identifying the applicant's individual circumstances referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be carried out continuously by appropriately trained police officers, Ministry staff and staff of other competent authorities, from the moment the intention to apply for international protection is expressed until the decision on the application is served.

(3) The provisions of Articles 41 and 42 of this Act shall not apply to requests of seekers in need of special procedural guarantees, in particular to victims of torture, rape or other severe forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, if adequate support cannot be provided.

Foreigners Act (Official Gazette, No. 133/20, 114/22, 151/22, 40/25 and 55/26)

Temporary Stay for Humanitarian Reasons – Article 79 (excerpt from the article)

(1) Temporary stay for humanitarian reasons shall be granted to a third-country national in the following cases:

5. for serious legitimate reasons of a humanitarian nature

Family Act (Official Gazette, No. 103/15, 98/19, 47/20, 49/23 and 156/23)

Principle of Solidarity, Mutual Respect in Helping Family Members – Article 4

(1) Solidarity is a fundamental principle of family life. All family members must respect each other and help each other.

(2) Domestic violence is a particularly serious violation of the principles referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article. Prevention, suppression and sanctioning of all types of domestic violence is regulated by a special law. solidarity, mutual respect and helping all family members

Principle of the Primary Protection of the Child's Well-Being and Rights – Article 5

(1) Courts and public-law bodies conducting proceedings in which decisions are made, directly or indirectly, concerning the rights of a child shall give primary consideration to protecting the child's rights and well-being.

(2) A child has the right to maintain personal relations with both parents, unless this is contrary to the child's well-being.

Principle of the Primary Right of Parents to Care for Their Child and the Duty of the Authorities to Provide Assistance – Article 6

Parents have the primary right, duty and responsibility to live with and care for their child, and assistance shall be provided and intervention undertaken only where necessary.

The Child's Right to Express an Opinion – Article 86(2) (excerpt from the article)

(2) In all proceedings in which a decision is made concerning any right or interest of a child, the child has the right to be informed, in an appropriate manner, of the relevant circumstances of the case, to receive advice, to express their views, and to be informed of the possible consequences of giving due weight to those views. The opinion of the child is taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity.

Agreement, Review of the Agreement and Confirmation of Enforceability – Article 122

(1) Parents, relatives and other persons referred to in Article 120 of this Act may enter into an agreement on maintaining personal relations with the child.

(2) The agreement referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be made in writing and shall contain detailed provisions on the manner, time and place of the handover and return of

the child, the possible presence of the other parent or a third person, and the allocation of costs associated with maintaining personal relations with the child, where necessary in view of the circumstances of the case.

(3) Article 107(1) and (2) of this Act shall apply, as appropriate, to an agreement on maintaining personal relations with the child.

Restriction or Prohibition of Personal Relations with the Child – Article 123

(1) In the decision referred to in Article 413(1) of this Act, or in non-contentious proceedings instituted upon the application of the child, a parent or the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the court may, exceptionally, restrict or prohibit the right to maintain personal relations with the child where this is necessary to protect the child's well-being.

(2) When making the decision referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, the court shall:

1. examine whether less restrictive measures for protecting the child's well-being are available
2. ensure that the restriction or prohibition is proportionate to the need to protect the child's well-being and
3. justify the necessity of the restriction or prohibition

(3) The decision referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article may restrict or prohibit the maintenance of personal relations with the child for a definite or indefinite period of time.

Realization of Personal Relationships with the Child under Supervision – Article 124

(1) In the decision referred to in Article 413(1) of this Act, or in non-contentious proceedings instituted upon the application of the child, a parent or the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the court may order that personal relations between the child and a parent be maintained under the supervision of a professional appointed by the Croatian Institute for Social Work.

(2) In the decision determining the measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, the court shall determine the time and place of the child's personal relations with the parent, which must be appropriate for the child, and may also order the presence of the other parent or another adult person referred to in Article 120 of this Act.

(3) The measure referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article may be ordered only temporarily, for a period of up to six months from the date on which the Croatian Institute for Social Work appoints the person responsible for supervising the maintenance of personal relationships.

(4) In exceptionally justified circumstances, the measure of supervision of personal relations with the parent referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article may be extended for up to six months and, where this is of particular importance for the protection of the rights and interests of the child, for an additional five months.

(5) Based on an enforceable court decision ordering that personal relations with the child be maintained under supervision, the Croatian Institute for Social Work shall, by decision, appoint a professional (supervisor) under whose supervision personal relations between the child and the parent shall take place.

(6) The Croatian Institute for Social Work shall, by decision, dismiss the supervision officer if they fail to duly perform their duties and shall appoint a new supervision officer.

(7) An appeal against the decisions referred to in paragraphs 5 and 6 of this Article may be

lodged with the ministry responsible for social welfare. An appeal shall not stay the enforcement of the decision.

(8) The professional responsible for carrying out the supervision referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be entitled to compensation for performing the supervision, as well as reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses incurred in connection with such supervision.

Removal of a Child from the Family – Article 129 (excerpt from the article)

(1) The removal of a child from the family shall be ordered only where the child's rights and well-being cannot be protected by any less restrictive measure.

(2) The purpose of removing a child from the family must be to protect the child's life, health and development, to ensure appropriate care for the child outside the family, and to create the conditions for the child's return to the family or, alternatively, to prepare another permanent form of care for the child.

General Prerequisites for Determining Measures for the Protection of the Child – Article 131 (excerpt from the article)

(1) Measures for the protection of the rights and well-being of the child shall be imposed on the basis of a professional assessment where it is established that the child's rights and well-being have been violated or that the child's rights, well-being and development are at risk.

(2) The rights of the child are considered to be at risk if the care provided to the child is inadequate or if the child has psychosocial difficulties that are manifested through behavioural, emotional, school-related or other problems affecting the child's development, or where there is a likelihood that they may arise.

Duty to Report and Co-operate for the Protection of the Child – Article 132 (excerpt from the article)

(3) Upon receipt of the report referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, the Croatian Institute for Social Work shall immediately examine the case, take measures to protect the child's rights, and inform the person who submitted the report accordingly.

(5) Upon receipt of the report referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, the Croatian Institute for Social Work shall immediately examine the case, take measures to protect the child's rights, and inform the person who submitted the report accordingly.

Prohibition of Approaching a Child – Article 154 (excerpt from the article)

(1) In non-contentious proceedings, the court may prohibit a parent, grandparent, sister or brother, half-sister or half-brother, another family member who does not reside with the child, or other persons referred to in Article 120 of this Act from approaching the child without authorisation at specified places or within a specified distance, or from otherwise harassing the child, for example by establishing unauthorised contact with the child or by stalking.

General Presumption for the Determination of a Measure - Article 170

The court shall deprive a parent of the right to exercise parental responsibility in non-contentious proceedings when it finds that the parent has abused or seriously violated their parental responsibilities, duties and rights.

Specific Presumptions for the Determination of a Measure – Article 171

Except in the case referred to in Article 170 of this Act, the court may, in non-contentious proceedings, deprive the parent of the right to exercise parental responsibility in the following cases:

1. if they abandoned the child
2. if the child is exposed to violence among adult family members
3. if it follows from the report of the Croatian Institute for Social Work that the parent does not comply with the measures, decisions and instructions previously issued by the Croatian Institute for Social Work or the court in order to protect the rights and well-being of the child
4. if on the basis of the report and assessment of the Croatian Institute for Social Work it follows that the return of the child to the family after the implementation of the measure for the protection of the rights and well-being of the child would pose a serious danger to the child's life, health and development
5. if the parent's mental capacity is impaired to such an extent that they are permanently unable to exercise any aspect of parental responsibility, thereby endangering the child's well-being.

Non-Implementation of family mediation – Article 332(1)(1) (excerpt from the article)

(1) Family mediation shall not be carried out:

1. in cases of claims of domestic violence

Expression of the Child's Opinion – Article 360 (excerpt from the article)

(1) In proceedings concerning the personal and property rights and interests of a child, the court shall provide the child with an opportunity to express their views, unless the child objects to doing so.

(2) The court shall enable the child to express their views in an appropriate setting and in the presence of a qualified professional if it considers this necessary in view of the circumstances of the case.

(3) The court conducting the proceedings is not required to ascertain the child's views where there are particularly justified reasons for not doing so, which must be stated in the reasons for the decision.

(4) The child referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article must be informed of the subject matter, course and possible outcome of the proceedings in a manner appropriate to the child's age and maturity, provided that this does not pose a risk to the child's development, upbringing or health.

Establishment of Facts and Taking of Evidence – Article 416(1)(4) (excerpt from the article)

(1) Before making a decision on which parent the child will live with, on the child's parental care and personal relations with the parent, the court shall:

4. take into account the existence of domestic violence

State Attorney's Office Act (Official Gazette, No. 67/1, 21/22 and 136/25)

Annual work schedule – Article 90 (excerpt from the article)

(2) The state attorney shall assign deputy state attorneys and civil servants to work on certain types of cases, taking into account their preferences for working on certain types of cases, the necessary specialist knowledge and regular professional training in a particular field, especially in the areas of domestic violence and computer and economic crime.

Probation Act (Official Gazette, No. 99/18)

Assessment of Criminogenic Risk and Treatment Needs – Article 11

In order to perform probation tasks, the probation office shall prepare an assessment of criminogenic risk and treatment needs for every person subject to probation who has been placed under protective supervision, as well as for other persons subject to probation deemed necessary on the basis of the probation office's professional assessment.

Police Duties and Powers Act (Official Gazette, No. 76/09, 92/14 and 70/19)

Protection of Crime Victims and Other Persons – Article 99

Unless otherwise prescribed by a special law, for as long as justified grounds exist, the police shall provide appropriate protection to a victim and any other person who has provided or may provide information relevant to criminal proceedings, or to a person close to them, where they or persons close to them are at risk from the perpetrator or other persons in connection with the criminal proceedings.

Ordinance on the Manner of Conduct of Police Officers (Official Gazette, No. 20/22)

Article 171

(1) As long as there are reasonable grounds for doing so, the police shall protect the victim or another person who has provided or may provide information relevant to the criminal proceedings or a person close to them, if they are threatened by the perpetrator or other persons, by the establishment of appropriate measures.

(2) The protection measures referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be:

1. Physical protection
2. Technical protection
3. Placing the vulnerable person in a safe shelter.

(3) The basis for making a decision on the provision of protection is the assessment of the threat to the person, prepared by the organisational unit that received the report or otherwise became aware that the person was at risk.