**Response of the Authorities of the Republic of Croatia**

**The Ministry of Labour, Pensions System, Family and Social Policy of the Republic of Croatia**

With reference to the UN Special Rapporteur's questionnaire on sexual and reproductive health and the rights of women and girls in situations of crisis Croatian Ministry of Labour, Pensions System, Family and Social Policy (hereinafter: the Ministry), within the scope of its authority, submits answers, as follows:

**Questionnaire**

Concept/definition of crisis

1. Please provide information on the legal and policy framework used by your State to manage situations of crisis and on how the concept of “crisis” has been defined or framed.
2. Please list the type of situations that would fit the concept of “crisis” in your State and indicate what situations are excluded.
3. What institutional mechanisms are in place for managing a crisis and how are priorities determined?

Challenges and good practices

1. Please highlight any challenges faced in the provision of SRH services and good practices in ensuring women’s and girls’ SRHR in situations of crisis, including, for example, measures concerning timely access to the the following types of services and aspects of care:
2. Access to non-biased and scientifically accurate information about sexual and reproductive health matters and services;
3. Access to medical professionals and health service providers, including traditional birth attendants, with adequate provision for their training and safety including personal protective equipment;
4. Access to essential medicines as prescribed by the WHO, equipment and technologies essential for the quality provision of sexual and reproductive health services;
5. Prevention of HIV transmission, post-exposure prophylaxis and treatment for HIV/AIDS as well as the prevention and treatment of sexually transmissible infections;
6. Pregnancy-related health services, including pre- and post-natal care, assistance during child-birth, and emergency obstetric care;
7. The full range of modern contraceptive information and services, including emergency contraception, as well as family planning information and services related to the number, timing and spacing of pregnancies and infertility treatments;
8. Safe abortion services including surgical and non-surgical methods of termination of pregnancy and humane post-abortion care, regardless of the legal status of abortion;
9. Treatment for pregnancy-related morbidities such as obstetric fistula and uterine prolapse, among others;
10. Screenings and treatment for reproductive cancers;
11. Menstrual hygiene products, menstrual pain management and menstrual regulation;
12. Prevention, investigation and punishment of all forms of gender-based violence, and access to timely and comprehensive medical interventions, mental health care, and psychosocial support for victims and survivors;
13. Measures to prevent and prohibit practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage;
14. Legal and policy safeguards against abuses and delays in the provision of SRH services for example in relation to confidentiality, referrals, informed consent, conscientious objection, and third party consent requirements;
15. The affordability of SRH services especially for those in situations of vulnerability; and
16. Other pertinent information that may affect the availability accessibility, affordability, acceptability and quality of SRH services and information.

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| **ANSWER:**  Review of the legal and strategic basis for the protection of sexual and reproductive health and the rights of women and girls in the Republic of Croatia:  The National Strategy for Children’s Rights in the Republic of Croatia for the period 2014-2020 states that health care for children comprises of a system of social, group and individual services, measures and activities for preserving and improving health, prevention and early detection of disease, timely treatment, and health care and rehabilitation. Appropriate health services for children and young people include an integrated approach to reaching the full potential of child development. A child-friendly health system should ensure equal access to health care based on the principles of openness, availability, accessibility, equity and multidisciplinarity.  Vulnerable groups of children and young people includes children with health problems, children with disabilities, children in institutions, children without adequate parental care, children from economically disadvantaged families, and children who have suffered abuse. Specific health care should be provided for children and young people with disabilities and health problems. In the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: Croatia), at the level of primary health care for children up to the age of 18, health care is performed by pediatric specialists, medical practitioners and family medicine doctors. Preventive health care for children is provided by school medicine specialists. Preventive measures, as well as health education, and counselling activities for children and young people of school age and students are implemented through the activities of preventative and educational health care measures for school children and students, as well as the activities of mental health care, prevention and outpatient treatment of addiction in public health institutions and the "Dr. Andrija Štampar " Institute of Public Health.  **Reproductive health** is mentioned as one of the priority areas when improving services for children in the health care system in Croatia. Croatia has been experiencing a population decline for a long period of time, and thus reproductive health care is of multiple importance. As the act of contracting marriage is postponed to an ever later age, and the age of physiological maturity determined by the age of menarche has not changed significantly in recent decades, the period in which risky sexual behaviour may occur is getting ever longer.  Prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections, as well as the adoption of responsible sexual behaviour is carried out by applying measures of primary and secondary prevention and health promotion. Primary prevention includes informing on health and education of the population and/or population groups. Attention in the implementation of secondary prevention is focused on early detection of the disease, including screening programs and effective and timely treatment. Due to the particularly sensitive area of human sexuality and the stigma associated with sexually transmitted infections, the whole area requires sensitivity and appropriate forms of protection and interventions. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of vulnerable groups, such as those who have experienced sexual or relationship violence, and young people with disabilities.  Area B, 4. of the aforementioned Strategy - **Reproductive Health** contains following **goals and measures**:  - Objective B, 9.: Reduce the incidence, prevalence and immediate and long-term consequences of sexually transmitted infections  - Measures: B, 9. 1.: Continuously implement primary prevention measures; and B, 9. 2.: Improve early detection of infected persons and prevent complications.  The Convention on the Rights of the Child pays special attention to the protection of the rights of mentally or physically disabled children, inter alia with the aim of ensuring effective access to education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development (Article 23). Croatia is also one of the first countries in the world to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and to adopt the Act on Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Convention emphasizes, inter alia, the need to respect the developmental abilities and the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identity. Although the rights of children with disabilities in the context of this Convention are highlighted in numerous articles, Article 7 stands out, aiming to protect the best interests and rights of children with disabilities to freely express their views on all matters affecting them, as well as Article 23 which emphasizes the right of these children to the protection of family life. In relation to the international framework, it is necessary to emphasize the Recommendation of the Council of Europe on the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Promotion of the Rights and Full Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Society (2006-2015).  Croatia has also adopted a number of national strategies, plans and programs aimed at protecting the welfare of children with disabilities. In this context, the National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2017-2020 stands out. The general objectives of the aforementioned National Strategy are respect for human rights, non-discrimination, creation of equal opportunities, full civic participation, full participation in community life, and inclusion in world and European policies for persons with disabilities.  The National Strategy contains one of the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the field of **action 1., Family**: the State party shall take legal and practical steps to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their parental rights and adopt children on an equal bases with others. The Committee also recommends that the State Party provide accessible information on the sexual and reproductive rights of all persons with disabilities, as well as ensure access to adoption and community support services for parents with disabilities.  **Goals and expected outcomes for the period from 2017 to 2020** are also stated:  - Strengthening society's awareness of the right of persons with disabilities to relationships, marriage, parenthood and family.  - Raising awareness of the need to respect the right to family life, as well as the importance of quality family life for children and persons with disabilities.  - Providing accessible information on sexual and reproductive rights to all persons with disabilities in order to encourage the fulfilment of their parental rights.  Under **Measure 1.**, Provide accessible information on sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities in order to encourage the fulfilment of their parental rights, the following activities are also listed:  1. Ensure the provision of information on sexual and reproductive rights to all persons with disabilities in order to encourage the fulfilment of their parental rights in an accessible and age-appropriate form (in Braille, on websites in an accessible form for all persons with disabilities, through lectures / workshops with the provision of the Croatian sign language interpretation).  2. provide additional education on sexual and reproductive health for professionals working in marriage and family counselling centres, social welfare institutions, civil society organizations, as well as for parents of children with disabilities.  **Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities regarding health care**:  (a) the adoption of urgent amendments and modifications to the Acts unconditionally prohibiting the sterilization of boys and girls with disabilities and adults with disabilities without their personal, fully informed and free consent  (b) Persons with disabilities should be provided with support in making informed choices and decisions regarding medical procedures and interventions, and  (c) Healthcare professionals should be trained in accessible and alternative communication techniques in order to be able to communicate with persons with intellectual, mental and sensory impairments.  The Committee recommends to undertake further efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities, who do not have mandatory health insurance, have access to health facilities. The Committee further recommends to make the access to regular health care and sexual and reproductive health services accessible to persons with disabilities, especially in rural areas. It also recommends to urgently educate health professionals in the regular health service on the adequate provision of services to persons with disabilities, as well as on the respect for the rights provided for in the Convention.  The National Strategy in **area 8., Legal Protection and Protection from Abuse** contains recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In continuation are highlighted some of the Committee's recommendations contained:  - To take measures, in consultation with organizations representing women with disabilities, to promote the development and empowerment of women with disabilities in the fields of education and employment, and to take immediate steps to protect women and girls with disabilities from violence, including sexual violence.  - To adopt legislative measures in such a way as to abolish the practice of substitute decision-making, in accordance with the Committee’s General Comment No. 1 (2014), and to adopt a wide range of measures aimed at respecting the autonomy, will and wishes of a person with disabilities, including the right of a person to independently give and withdraw individual informed consent to treatment, access to justice, voting, marriage, full parental rights and work.  It is important to mention the cooperation of the Ministry with the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences of the University of Zagreb within the framework of the implementation of specific measures of the National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities from 2017 to 2020, which resulted in the publication of „Podrška osobama s intelektualnim i drugim razvojnim teškoćama u ostvarivanju partnerskih odnosa, roditeljstva i drugih prava na području spolnosti“ (“Support to persons with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in achieving relationships, parenting and other rights in the field of sexuality”). In the aforementioned publication, a special chapter covers the thematic unit “Sex education, training and counselling”. Furthermore, the cooperation was focused on ensuring the availability of information related to reproductive rights and preparation of persons with disabilities for parenthood and family, and systematic education of employees in the social welfare and family protection system on the rights of persons with disabilities to make decisions on family planning, etc. Regional educational seminars were also organized for professional teams of Family Centres and their external associates to improve their professional competencies and interdisciplinary cooperation in counselling and active support in building relationships, achieving parenthood and fulfilling other rights in the field of sexuality of persons with intellectual and other disabilities.  In addition to the above, the Government of the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: GoC) has adopted a number of programs and protocols that contribute to and promote the protection of children and youth from sexual violence: the Protocol on Treatment in Cases of Abuse and Neglect of Children, the Protocol on Treatment in Cases of Domestic Violence, the Protocol on Action in Cases of Children and Youth Violence, the Protocol on Action in Cases of Sexual Violence and **the National Youth Program**.  At the end of 2012, GoC adopted the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for the period 2013-2020. The Strategy is based on the provisions of international agreements on human rights and the rights of national minorities to which Croatia is a party and with whom she reconciled the identified needs and challenges related to social inclusion of Roma at all levels: local, regional, national and European.  One of the areas of the Strategy is **Health Care**, in which the general goal is aimed at improving the health of the Roma population and the quality and availability of health care.  Some of the specific objectives that accompany the above general objective are the following:  - Improve health insurance coverage of the Roma population. Achieving this goal implies the establishment of mechanisms for systematic information and encouragement of the Roma population to resolve status issues that will enable their fulfilment of the right to health insurance. It is also necessary to ensure the systematic and coordinated action of different public authorities and services in order to achieve a synergistic effect.  - Improve the availability of health services to the Roma population with emphasis on the elderly, persons with disabilities, other difficulties or special needs as well as mobile Roma groups, by establishing mechanisms that will enable access to health services for members of the Roma national minority, with special emphasis on marginalized and socially excluded groups through increased community activity.  - Raise the level of awareness of the Roma population about the responsibility for their own health, where it is necessary to inform and educate members of the Roma population about the importance of responsible behaviour towards their own health and ways to prevent disease.  - Improve the protection of women's reproductive health, the health of pregnant women and children and reduce the number of minor pregnancies by informing and educating Roma women, but also the wider Roma community, about reproductive health and pregnant women's health and risks associated with minor pregnancies.  - Reduce the incidence of diseases associated with low hygiene standards, as well as vaccine preventable diseases by providing a combination of measures that will improve the hygienic housing conditions of the Roma population, increase vaccination and educate and inform the Roma population about hygiene habits, achieve a reduction in the incidence of diseases associated with low hygiene standards and vaccine preventable diseases.  The Strategy area regarding **Social welfare** has as its general goal to reduce the poverty of the Roma population and improve the quality of social and community services. Some of the specific objectives that accompany the above general objective are the following:  - Raise the quality, accessibility and promptness of social and community services, with special emphasis on women, children, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to strengthen the capacities of existing services, social care centres and family centres, in relation to providing social services to the Roma population in Roma settlements, as well as marginalized Roma settlements, and to encourage and empower Roma to exercise their rights. Moreover, it is necessary to form mobile teams composed of professionals and educated and trained Roma mediators, with the purpose of providing daily social services in Roma communities.  - Strengthen the local Roma community to identify the risks of exposure to trafficking, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence with a focus on women and children.  Definition: To reduce the risks of exposure of the Roma population, especially women and children as the most vulnerable groups, to trafficking people, sexual exploitation and various other forms of violence, it is necessary to systematically work on raising awareness, education, information and empowerment of members of the Roma population, especially women and children, about the potential risks of exposure to these phenomena, and existing protection mechanisms. |

Experiences of crisis

1. Please list the situations of crisis experienced by your State in the last five years.

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| **ANSWER:**  During 2020, Croatia faced two situations of crisis: the COVID-19 pandemic and the earthquake in Zagreb on 22 March 2020 (ML = 5.5). |

1. What was the impact of those crises on women and girls? Please provide information in particular on the following aspects:
2. Which groups of women and girls were most affected and how, taking into account different factors, such as age, geographic location (including urban and rural areas), ethnic and social origin, disability, marital status, migratory status, citizenship status or other status?
3. What was the impact on their SRHR? Were any specific risk factors and needs identified? Do you have data and/or qualitative information disaggregated by the factors listed under question 6(a)? If not, please explain why.
4. What were the main obstacles encountered by the State, if any, in identifying and addressing the impact of the crisis on women’s and girls’ SRHR?
5. What measures were adopted during and after the crisis to ensure women and girls’ access to sexual and reproductive health services? Please indicate which SRHR services are recognized as essential services in the health policy or laws of your State and are funded through the health system. What steps were taken to ensure the continuity of services and access during the crisis?
6. What other protocols or systems were put in place to prevent adverse reproductive and sexual health outcomes due to the common risks triggered by crisis including, for example, gender-based violence and child marriage? Were any special measures adopted for specific groups of women and girls?

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| **ANSWER:**  During the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Ministry established a crisis headquarters that provided continuous professional support to social care centres and social care homes, ensured daily communication with the responsible persons of social care centres and social care homes, and general written instructions on actions, as well as instructions on resolving a particular situation. Instructions and recommendations were given in accordance with the recommendations and instructions of the Civil Protection Directorate of the Croatian Institute of Public Health and the Ministry of Health, as well as the Decision of the Civil Protection Headquarters on the Introduction of a Special Work Organization of Social Welfare Institutions.  The Ministry forwarded in a timely manner the Instruction on temporary accommodation in crisis situations to all social care centres and homes (in which a certain number of children with disabilities are accommodated), dated March 20, 2020, throughout the territory of Croatia. The Instruction states the obligation of emergency accommodation, in crisis situations, when the user is at high risk due to which his/her life or safety is threatened. In addition to the above, social welfare centres are also obliged to timely and continuously submit to the Ministry data on emergency measures for children and adults for the purpose of monitoring data and providing assistance and support in the implementation of this measure.  Social welfare institutions have also received recommendations on action or specific protection measures from the Croatian Institute of Public Health in relation to COVID-19. On 11 April 2020, the Ministry and the Croatian Institute of Public Health drafted and published instructions for the prevention and suppression of the COVID-19 epidemic for social service providers in the social welfare system.  Social welfare centres (hereinafter: SWC) in the territory of Croatia which have numerous families with children in their jurisdiction, members of the Roma national minority, recognized their rights in the social welfare system in accordance with the Social Welfare Act (OG 157/13, 152/14, 52 / 16, 16/17, 130/17, 98/19, 64/20) to provide them with various forms of material assistance, with the aim of alleviating poverty and social exclusion of children, and providing information on the provision of hot meals in soup kitchens, as well as on the work of other institutions for the fulfilment of certain rights.  Most SWC report recognizing one-off benefits for food and other groceries and hygiene supplies, settling debts for water and energy overheads, in order to improve living conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic for families belonging to the Roma national minority. |

1. Were women’s rights organizations[[1]](#footnote-1) involved in the needs and impact assessments and the recovery policies? If not, please indicate why.
2. Which actors or institutions played a role in the provision of emergency responses? Please describe their role and explain what roles were played, if any, by national women’s rights or human rights mechanisms, or other similar bodies as well as civil society organisations.
3. How were the emergency responses funded and to what extent did they rely on foreign aid or assistance, if any? Please also indicate how in your State adequate financing of women’s sexual and reproductive health is ensured more generally on an ongoing basis.
4. What obstacles have civil society organisations encountered in their efforts to deliver sexual and reproductive services?
5. Could you identify any lessons learned? Please indicate if and how these lessons have been applied in preparedness strategies or in subsequent situations of crisis.
6. If your State has humanitarian aid programmes, please indicate whether SRHR are explicitly covered in the humanitarian aid strategy and how priorities on SRHR are set.

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| **ANSWER:**  During the COVID-19 pandemic, a major part of SWC in Croatia reported on the activities of the Red Cross, which prepared and distributed leaflets on the proper hand washing procedure, packages and hygiene supplies in Roma settlements. On the other hand, along with the aforementioned activities, the Red Cross of the City of Čakovec also provided psychosocial support for 20 families and 117 children belonging to the Roma national minority involved in the project "Roma support" through regular telephone contacts and a number of customized visits with the aim of informing and advising families with children. During the pandemic, the Bedem ljubavi Association (“Wall of Love”) in Varaždin also continuously carried out its usual activities with members of the Roma national minority.  In Croatia, within the Call for proposals for projects aimed at preventing violence against and among children and youth for 2018, financial support was approved for a total of 34 projects in the total amount of HRK 3,865,000.00, of which 6 projects were aimed at preventing sexual violence in the amount of HRK 670,000.00, while for the same call in 2019, financial support was approved for 90 projects in the amount of HRK 7,520,000.00, of which 12 projects were aimed at the prevention of sexual violence in the amount of HRK 970,000.00. |

1. Please indicate the main challenges, if any, encountered by women and girls to access justice and obtain reparations for violations of their SRHR, including any procedural barriers, and the types of assistance available to access legal and other remedies. Please also indicate the groups of women and girls most affected. Where applicable, please indicate the role played by a national truth and reconciliation commission (or a similar body) in ensuring the recognition of human rights violations in relation to women’s and girls’ SRHR and reparations.

Preparedness, recovery and resilience

1. Is there any preparedness or risk management strategy/plan/policy in your State? If so, please provide information on the following aspects:
2. To what crisis does it apply? What situations are excluded?
3. Does it contain a definition of crisis? If so, please indicate the definition used.
4. Does it include measures concerning women and girls’ SRHR? If so, please describe the measures included and any special measures envisaged and/or adopted for specific groups of women and girls concerning both preparadeness and recovery.
5. How were the risks related to women and girls’ sexual and reproductive health and rights, in urban and rural areas, identified and assessed?
6. Were women’s rights organizations involved in: i) the development of the strategy/plan/policy; ii) assessment of the risks concerning SRHR; iii) the design of the measures implemented; and iv) the monitoring of the strategy/plan/policy? Please indicate the steps taken to ensure their participation and to include a gender-perspective in crisis preparedness, management and recovery.
7. Please indicate if the strategy/plan/policy has undergone any assessments to date. If so, what were the main findings and recommendations concerning women’s and girls’ SRHR?
8. If your State does not have a plan that can immediately go into effect in a time of crisis, please explain why it is so.
9. Are there specific ways in which international human rights mechanisms can support States in their efforts to address a crisis?

**The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration of the Republic of Croatia**

**4. Please highlight any challenges faced in the provision of SRH services and good practices in ensuring women’s and girls’ SRHR in situations of crisis, including, for example, measures concerning timely access to the following types of services and aspects of care:**

**k. prevention, investigation and punishment of all forms of gender-based violence, and access to timely and comprehensive medical interventions, mental health care, and psychosocial support for victims and survivors;**

The Criminal Code (Official Gazette numbers 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18 and 126/19, hereinafter: the CC) prescribes criminal offenses and criminal sanctions for those behaviours which violate or endanger personal freedoms and human rights and other rights and social values guaranteed and protected by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and international law so that their protection could not be achieved without criminal coercion. In its general part, the CC prescribes hate crime as a criminal offense committed due, among other things, to the gender identity of another person. Any such conduct shall be taken as an aggravating circumstance unless the law expressly provides for a more severe punishment. We point out that Chapter X of the Criminal Code prescribes criminal offenses against life and perpetrators, which, when it comes to the motive of hatred, prescribe more severe punishment.

Criminal Procedure Code (Official Gazette 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17 and Hereinafter: the CPC), it is prescribed that everyone is obliged to report a criminal offense for which the procedure is initiated ex officio, which has been reported to him or which he has learned about. When there is a reasonable suspicion that the defendant has committed a criminal offense, for which is prescribed a fine or imprisonment for up to five years and there are no legal obstacles to prosecute that person, the public prosecutor may conduct or order the investigator to conduct evidentiary actions. In the case of a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding five years, an investigation shall be conducted and an indictment shall be filed against the perpetrator in the further course of the proceedings under legal conditions.

Furthermore, a Victim and Witness Support Service has been established in the Ministry of Justice and Administration. This Service carries out activities for the development and coordination of the victim and witness support system in the Republic of Croatia, in accordance with the National Strategy for the Development of the Victim and Witness Support System in the Republic of Croatia for the period from 2016 to 2020, including the accompanying Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Victim and Witness Support Systems for the period up to 2020, which includes international and inter-institutional cooperation and monitoring of the application of international instruments in victim and witness support issues and participation in drafting regulations concerning the rights of victims and witnesses. Furthermore, it carries out tasks of providing support and information to victims and witnesses and carries out tasks of informing the victim, injured party or the victim's family about the release of prisoners from serving a prison sentence. It refers victims to civil society organizations and other institutions that provide psychosocial and legal assistance. For this purpose, the Directory of Civil Society Organizations and public institutions in the Republic of Croatia that provide free psychosocial and legal support and other forms of assistance has been prepared and published on the official website of the Ministry of Justice. It finances programs and projects of associations in the field of support to victims and witnesses with available funds from the part of revenues from games of chance and performs other tasks within its scope. It cooperates with the National Team for Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and with the competent county teams. It is involved in the work of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the operational team of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

The bodies of criminal and misdemeanour proceedings (police, state attorney's office, courts) are obliged to inform the victim of her rights and refer her to support services. When reporting a crime, the police provides victims with a victim rights form (special forms have been developed for victims of crimes against sexual freedom and victims of trafficking), which also contains information on services and organizations that provide free assistance and support.

The Law on Financial Compensation to Victims of Criminal Offenses regulates the right to financial compensation to victims of criminal offenses of intentional violence. The compensation is provided by the Republic of Croatia according to the principles of social solidarity and justice. Compensation is granted to a victim who is a citizen of the Republic of Croatia or has a residence in the Republic of Croatia as well as a citizen of a Member State of the European Union or has a residence in a Member State of the European Union and if she has suffered serious bodily injuries or serious health damage as a result of a criminal offense. Compensation to victims of criminal offenses is realized for health care costs in the amount of health standard, lost earnings up to HRK 35,000.00, loss of legal maintenance up to HRK 70,000.00 for close relatives of the deceased victim and funeral expenses up to HRK 5,000.00 for the person who paid them.

Support and assistance to victims and witnesses in the courts is provided by departments established in the County Courts in Zagreb, Vukovar, Osijek, Zadar, Split, Sisak and Rijeka, and the purpose of the department is to provide emotional support to victims and witnesses, informing them about rights, providing information on criminal and misdemeanour proceedings, as well as alleviating stressful situation of testifying and staying in court. The victim will also receive information and support in cases where she has not reported the crime. Departments also refer victims and witnesses to specialized institutions and civil society organizations depending on their needs. Victims and witnesses can contact the departments by telephone, e-mail or they can come in person with prior notice. At the request of the body conducting the individual victim assessment the support departments provide the necessary information.

In addition to support departments, especially in areas where they are not established, victims are assisted by numerous civil society organizations in the Republic of Croatia that provide them with practical assistance, protection, advice and information. In order to expand the victim and witness support system and provide support to citizens throughout the Republic of Croatia, the establishment and financing of the "Support and Cooperation Network for Victims and Witnesses of Criminal Offenses" was encouraged in counties where victim and witness support departments have not been established. Funding for the partner network of civil society organizations that provide support to victims and witnesses of criminal offenses and misdemeanours is provided through funds financed partly from the income from games of chance. This network of organizations provides victims and witnesses with emotional and practical support, technical and practical information and rights information; free psychological and legal counselling, escort to court and escort when participating in the actions of competent institutions (police, state attorney's office, social welfare centres and other institutions) in addition to telephone counselling, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

In order to further complement the system of support for victims of crime and misdemeanours, the Ministry of Justice and Administration ensures the work of the National Call Centre for Victims of Crime and Misdemeanours - 116 006. The National Call Centre (NCC) was established in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Victims and Witnesses Support Association and UNDP, in accordance with the Decision of the European Commission of 15 February 2007 on the reservation of the national numbering range starting with '116' for harmonized numbers of services of social importance (2007/116 / EC). The mentioned National Call Centre is the only such centre that operates in the entire territory of Croatia. By calling the toll-free number 116 006, the National Call Centre provides citizens with information on the course of criminal proceedings, information on the rights of victims and witnesses, emotional support, practical information and referrals to institutions and organizations where victims can receive additional professional assistance.

Also, in cooperation with the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, the work of the national counselling SOS line dedicated to victims of partner violence will be ensured. This line will operate from 0 to 24 hours and will provide its services through the toll-free number 116 006 of the National Call Centre for Victims of Crime and Misdemeanors.

**4. l. Measures to prevent and prohibit practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage;**

The CC prescribes the following criminal offenses:

Female genital mutilation

Article 116

(1) Whoever completely or partially removes or permanently changes a woman's external sexual organ, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term between one and eight years.

(2) Whoever encourages or assists a woman to undergo the acts referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years.

(3) Whoever commits the act referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article out of hatred, towards a child or a close person, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term between three and ten years.

Enabling illicit marriages

Article 168

An authorized person before whom a marriage is concluded who enables the conclusion of a marriage, even though all legal preconditions for the existence and validity of the marriage have not been met, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years.

Coercion to marry

Article 169

(1) Whoever forces another person to enter into marriage, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term between six months and five years.

(2) Whoever lures a person to a state other than the one in which he resides in order to force him to enter into marriage, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years.

Enabling extramarital life with a child

Article 170

(1) An adult who lives with a child under the age of sixteen, and thus does not commit any other criminal offense for which a more severe punishment is prescribed, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years.

(2) The punishment referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be imposed on anyone who allows a child under the age of sixteen to have an extramarital life with another person or induces him to do so without committing any other criminal offense punishable by a heavier sentence.

(3) Whoever commits the act referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article out of self-interest, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term between six months and five years.

**6. What was the impact of those crises on women and girls? Please provide information in particular on the following aspects:**

**e. what other protocols or systems were put in place to prevent adverse reproductive and sexual health outcomes due to the common risks triggered by crisis including, for example, gender-based violence and child marriage? Were any special measures adopted for specific groups of women and girls?**

Within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and Administration, no specific measures have been adopted for certain groups of women and girls to prevent harmful reproductive and sexual health outcomes, and due to the usual risks posed by the crisis, such as the Covid-19 epidemic.

**Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Croatia**

In the last few years, the Republic of Croatia has made significant efforts to improve the system for the protection of victims of sex-based and domestic violence and other forms of violent behaviour, setting up the minimum standards for the protection and assistance to victims, informing victims about their rights, implementing individual assessment of victims' needs, investing in capacity building, intensive and continuous education of police officers, changes in the information system, facilitation of the process of reporting violence, development of new regulations and conducting scientific research and a large number of implemented preventive activities.

In order to systematically inform victims about their rights and possibilities of obtaining support, the police have created forms for notification about the rights of victims of criminal offences, as well as for notification about the right of victims of domestic violence (for domestic violence misdemeanours) which they provide to victims along with the list and contact details of victim support and witness support departments of county courts, the national Call Centre for victims of criminal offences and misdemeanours, and contact details of state administration bodies and civil society organizations which provide support and protection to victims in the area of individual police administration.

During the police proceeding, individual assessment of the victim is carried out in accordance with the Regulation on the manner of conducting individual assessment of victims, and in all cases the police delivers filled out form about the conducted procedure of individual assessment of the needs of the victims for protection and the form notifying victims of their rights to the competent State Attorney's Office as integral part of the file in order to ensure timely exchange of information and enable a comprehensive assessment of the needs of the victim in each individual case. In addition to criminal cases, police officers also conduct individual assessment of special victim protection measures in domestic violence misdemeanours. Child victims of domestic violence offences and misdemeanours are always presumed to be in need of protection measures.

In order to make it easier for citizens to report violence, there are the usual hotlines for urgent police intervention (192 and 112) and the e-mail address [policija@mup.hr](mailto:policija@mup.hr), and it is also possible to make an online report, including an anonymous one, through the Red Button application that can be found on the official website of the Ministry of the Interior. The website contains advice on domestic violence, child sexual abuse and exploitation and other violations of the rights of the child, as well as the calendar of violence application that enables the general public to monitor the occurrence of domestic violence misdemeanours and criminal offences.

In addition to the repressive role in the implementation of laws and regulations obliging the police to combat sex-based violence and domestic violence and protect victims of these types of punishable behaviour, the Ministry of the Interior is undertaking a number of preventive activities aimed at suppressing and preventing violence against women and domestic violence. Particularly important are: the multi-modular project LILY, aimed at sensitising citizens about the importance of preventing violence against women, and the project of prevention “Living Life Without Violence” implemented by the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Education and civil society organisations since 2010, primarily aimed at combating domestic violence and violence against women and preventing violence among young people. We would like to emphasize that the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with Polyclinic for the Protection of Children of the City of Zagreb and the digital agency Degordian, launched a “Behind the door” campaign aimed at increasing social response and recognizing violence against children, including sexual violence and violence in the digital environment during the COVID-19 pandemic and at encouraging citizens to report suspicion of abuse immediately to the police. In addition to the above mentioned initiatives, there were also the national preventive projects “I have a choice11, “Support for victims of crime and misdemeanours”, “Together against child trafficking” and “Together against hate speech”. The Republic of Croatia is also focusing considerable efforts on the implementation of educational activities in the field of prevention and investigation of sex-based violence and all forms of child abuse, which include active participation and organization of education at national and regional levels. This includes education of police officers during their basic training, higher police school programmes, basic courses for police officers working at police stations on handling cases of violence against women and domestic violence, specialist course on juvenile delinquency and crimes against youth and family, professional training of chiefs and assistant chiefs at police stations, regular additional professional training in police directorates and during the service at police stations and supervision activities.

We consider it extremely important to maintain inter-departmental cooperation in this area, which the Ministry of the Interior encourages and achieves through the participation and engagement of representatives from all competent ministries and administrative authorities, local and regional self-government, judicial bodies, civil society organizations and other institutions, as well as all professional persons dealing with domestic violence and victim protection, in joint education, seminars, round tables, panels, conferences and other expert gatherings for the purpose of more efficient suppression and prevention of sex-based violence and domestic violence and providing help to victims of such types of criminal behaviour.

In addition, the Ministry of the Interior conducted scientific research into the causes of severe domestic violence in 2013, and the 2018 Femicide Watch, in order to identify high risk factors for the commission of serious forms of violence and look into the phenomenology of violent relationships.

The Ministry of the Interior has not recorded any cases of mutilation of female reproductive organs, as described in Article 116 of the Criminal Code.

Conclusion of forced marriages and related illegal behaviour (forced labour and service, establishment of slavery, sexual exploitation, etc.) in the Republic of Croatia are primarily processed through the modalities of the criminal offences of 'Trafficking in human beings11' described in Article 106 of the Criminal Code. In addition, some related illegal behaviour can lead to criminal offences within the scope of criminal law protection of children, such as “Enabling the conclusion of an illegal marriage” (Art. 168 of the Criminal Code), “Coercion to marriage” (Art. 169 of the Criminal Code) and “Enabling out-of-wedlock life with a child” (Art. 170 of the Criminal Code).

Furthermore, these threats may result in a wide range of sexual offences which as prescribed by the criminal legislation of the Republic of Croatia, for example: “Prostitution” (Art. 157 of the Criminal Code), “Sexual abuse of a child under the age of fifteen” (Art. 158 of the Criminal Code), “Prostituting a child” (Art. 162 of the Criminal Code), “Exploitation of children for pornography” (Art. 163 of the Penal Code), and of the crime of “Violation of child's rights” (Art. 177 of the Criminal Code).

In order to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, especially in women and children, a coordinated treatment of youth police officers and police officers specialised in combating trafficking in human beings was established. Youth police officers are specially trained for recognising different forms of endangerment for children's rights and providing support to child victims, starting with specially equipped rooms adjusted for children's interviews, possibility to question a child at home, ensuring that - if the child wishes so - a trusted person is present besides the custodian, the presence of social welfare centre employees when the parent/custodian is unavailable or a suspect, protection of child’s privacy, and confidential investigation.

All proceedings in which there is suspicion of child abuse and exploitation are urgent and are conducted in the child's best interest. This means special careful treatment and ensuring continued child support through the social and health protection system and civil society organisations for victim assistance and support.

Aware of the fact that the early entry of a young person into a marriage also carries a risk for the establishment of slavery or a similar relationship, forced labour or service, sexual exploitation, prostitution or other sanctioned activities, when conducting criminal investigations into suspected perpetration of a criminal offence, particular attention is also paid to these circumstances. In criminal investigations, the methods of committing criminal offences such as recruitment, coercion and exploitation of children by parents, adoptive parents, guardians or other persons to whom a child is entrusted for upbringing and care (begging, burglary, shoplifting, etc.) or other behaviour detrimental to the child's development is specified in the context of the criminal offence “Violation of child's rights” referred to in Article 177 of the Criminal Code.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Protocol on procedures in case of sexual violence which sets additional standards of proceeding in the protection of child victims of sexual violence.

1. The expression women’s rights organizations should be understood as encompassing organizations of women of different ages, backgrounds and identities. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)