

**Government of the Republic of Croatia**

**Sixth Periodical Report of the Republic of Croatia  
on the Implementation of the Framework Convention  
for the Protection of National Minorities**

**Zagreb, March 2023**

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## INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Article 25 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter: the Framework Convention), the Republic of Croatia hereby submits its Sixth Periodic Report for the period from 2019 to 2022. The Government of the Republic of Croatia has carefully considered the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention as well as Resolution CM/ResCMN(2022)2 of the Committee of Ministers on the implementation of the Framework Convention, adopted on 23 February 2022 at the 1426th meeting of the Council of Europe. The Fifth Opinion has been translated into Croatian, published and distributed to all the stakeholders. For this purpose, a meeting focusing on the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee was held in Zagreb, on 23 May 2022, chaired by the deputy prime minister of Croatia Anja Šimpraga. 18 representatives of 14 national minorities, competent authorities, Ombudsman's Office and president of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee took part in the meeting. Having considered all remarks and proposals, the Government is resolute in its intent to fulfil its commitments and has continued pursuing its policy of advancing and safeguarding national minority rights, inter alia, with a view to complying with recommendations from the last evaluation report.

In the preceding period, national minority rights have improved in most of the fields. The Republic of Croatia continuously upgrades its system of protection of national minority rights in the field of legislation, through continuous dialogue with national minority representatives and by attempting to accord maximum consideration to their views. The implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities is at the same time fulfilment of commitments under international treaties to which the Republic of Croatia is a party, in particular, the Framework Convention.

The progress achieved in implementation of the Framework Convention has also been facilitated by seminars organised by the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities (OHRRNM), involving participation by representatives of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention. In order to express their views on the implementation of the Framework Convention, representatives of national minority associations and councils, national minority members of the Croatian Parliament, representatives of competent authorities and representatives of the Council for National Minorities took part in the discussions held at these meetings.

One of the objectives of the Croatian Government for its term in office from 2016 to 2020 and from 2020 to 2024 is to continue enhancing the existing level of protection of national minority rights. As part of the Government Agenda for its term from 2020 to 2024, at its session on 30 December 2020, the Croatian Government passed the Decision on the Adoption of Operational Programmes of National Minorities for the 2021-2024 Period. These Operational Programmes represent a continuation of consistent engagement of the Croatian Government with the advancement of the existing level of protection of national minority rights, and they follow the Operational Programmes for National Minorities for the 2017-2020 Period. The Operational Programmes of National Minorities for the 2021-2024 Period are among strategic planning

documents used to support the implementation of the strategic framework contained in the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia for the period until 2030.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://hrvatska2030.hr/>

## **OVERVIEW OF IMPROVEMENTS IN THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE REPORTING PERIOD**

The Government of the Republic of Croatia submitted its last Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention in April 2019. In the meantime, the active engagement of government bodies and national minority representatives has led to further improvements in the rights of national minorities and in the legislative framework governing their rights. In addition, a number of measures have been undertaken to encourage the best possible implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and other regulations. With a view to ensure the fullest possible exercise of national minority rights, the Government of the Republic of Croatia has provided the required implementing capacity in government bodies and increased, year after year, the funding allocated for exercising national minority rights.

In the previous period, the Croatian Government has dedicated particular attention to the implementation of the Framework Convention. On 10 December 2019, a conference focused on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was held in the premises of the Croatian Parliament, organized by the Government Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities. Representatives of the Croatian Parliament and Government, representatives of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia, national minority members of the Croatian Parliament, representatives of competent ministries, representatives of national minorities, representatives of the academic community and experts in this field took part in the conference. The Fifth Opinion has been translated into Croatian, published and distributed to all the stakeholders.<sup>2</sup> For this purpose, a meeting focusing on the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee was held in Zagreb, on 23 May 2022, chaired by the deputy prime minister of Croatia Anja Šimpraga. The topics discussed included, inter alia, recommendations contained in the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers, and a wide range of subjects: promotion of interethnic dialogue; combatting discrimination, hate speech, anti-minority rhetoric; access to the media, intercultural and inclusive education; use of minority languages and scripts; effective participation; and access to social and economic opportunities. 18 representatives of 14 national minorities, competent authorities, Ombudsman's Office and president of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee took part in the meeting.

Having considered all remarks and proposals, the Government is resolute in its intent to fulfil its commitments and has continued pursuing its policy of advancing and protecting national minority rights, inter alia, with a view to complying with recommendations from the last evaluation report. Overall, since the first seminar on monitoring the implementation of the Framework Convention, there has been significant progress in the improvement of national minority rights. At those seminars, persons belonging to national minorities had the opportunity to present their views and proposals and to point out the difficulties they encountered, which led to an improvement in the exercise of their rights. A particular area where progress has been

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/provedba-okvirne-konvencije-za-zastitu-nacionalnih-manjina/592>

achieved is the participation of national minorities in cultural and public life, their political representation and decision-making process, while significant investments have been made in areas with significant national minorities populations.

Each year the OHRRNM coordinates the preparation of the Report on Implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Spending of Funds Allocated in Central Budget of the Republic of Croatia for the Needs of National Minorities. In the period from 2019 to 2022, the funding for national minority purposes in the framework of the implementation of the Constitutional Act was allocated through the relevant ministries and the OHRRNM:

- in 2019, a total of € 25,019,295.54 (HRK 188,507,882.24) was spent,
- in 2020, a total of € 28,673,392.13 (HRK 216,039,672.98) was spent,
- in 2021, a total of € 39,092,672.77 (HRK 294,543,742.98) was spent,
- and for 2022, the data on the total amount spent will be known in June 2023, when the draft report for 2022 is expected to be adopted. The preliminary data indicate once more that the amounts allocated grew significantly, given that allocations for national minority associations, for example, were 66.7% higher in 2022 (€ 33,180,702.10 (HRK 250,000,000.00) in comparison with 2021 (€ 19,908,421.26 (HRK 150,000,000.00)).

Noticeable annual increases are a clear demonstration of the resolve of the Croatian Government to provide for an overall improvement in the position of persons belonging to national minorities, especially through the implementation of the Operational Programmes. It should be noted that the aforementioned amounts do not include significant funding spent in the framework of regular activities of the relevant bodies and at the local and regional levels. Furthermore, the monitoring data on the biggest portion of funding from ESI funds do not include information on ethnic affiliation and thus, some of the data presented in this report serve merely as an illustration of numerous activities contributing to the development of regions with significant national minority populations, and to an even greater cohesion of the Croatian society.

Within the framework of its competence and its regular activities relating to the implementation of the Constitutional Act, the OHRRNM has, in cooperation with the Council for National Minorities, continued to organise regular seminars for national minority councils and representatives in order to create and improve conditions for their effective participation in the decision-making process at the local and regional levels. The seminars involved participation by representatives of local and regional governments and provided forums for active elaboration of the forms of participation by national minority members in the decision-making process and for insisting on the creation of conditions for their effective work. In the reporting period, such seminars were held in Osijek on 10 October 2019, and in Split on 1 October 2021. These seminars contribute to the effectiveness of national minority councils and representatives, but also to raising the awareness of the general public about national minority rights, especially in local communities in which persons belonging to national minorities make up a significant share of population. Topics regularly discussed at such seminars also include problems encountered by persons belonging to national minorities, for example, official use of minority

languages and scripts, insufficient minority representation in administrative bodies at the national and local levels, and insufficient media coverage of minority topics.

In addition to seminars for national minority councils and representatives, the OHRRNM has regularly organized special seminars entitled “The Media and National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia – Protection of Minorities and the Role of the Media in the Democratization of the Croatian Society”. Such seminars were held in Opatija on 5 June 2019, and in Osijek on 6 July 2021. For national minorities, the exercise of their right to access the public media is of key importance for advancing the equality of minorities, fostering tolerance and promoting coexistence with the majority population, and for preserving their cultural identity. The media are duty-bound to contribute to the promotion and observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms, understanding, respect for diversity, democratic achievements and the development of a culture of dialogue, to ensure the acceptance of national minorities in the society as its equal members and active participants in social processes. The seminars provided an opportunity to discuss the issues pertaining to the presence of minority topics, that is, programmes produced and broadcast intended for persons belonging to national minorities, news content in national minority languages in radio and television programmes at the national, regional and local levels as well as the print media, and the importance of the media’s role in preserving the social and cultural values of minority identity. The main emphasis was placed on the importance of combating stereotypes and hate speech in the media and the development of tolerance, sensitivity to instances of discrimination and disrespect for the constitutional and legal rights of persons belonging to national minorities in Croatian society.

The Operational Programmes of National Minorities for the 2021-2024 Period include activities that regard all the national minorities listed in the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, and specific operational programmes that regard individual national minorities and take into consideration their specificities and need to improve the existing level of their protection. Specific operational programmes have been prepared for the Serbian, Italian, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Albanian, Bosniak, Montenegrin, Slovenian, Roma, Austrian, German, Polish, Rusyn, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian and Jewish national minorities. Both in the general and specific parts, numerous activities target ensuring the exercise of national minority rights in accordance with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and other regulations. These rights include:

- use of their language and script, for private and public purposes, and their official use;
- education in the language and script used by them;
- use of their emblems and symbols;
- cultural autonomy through the preservation, fostering and displaying their culture and preservation and protection of their cultural assets and traditions;
- right to profess their faith and establish religious communities together with other persons belonging to that faith;
- access to the public media and engaging in the activity of public communication (receiving and disseminating information) in the language and script used by them;
- self-organizing and setting up associations with a view to pursuing common interests;

- representation in representative bodies at the national and local levels, and in administrative and judicial bodies;
- participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public life and management of local affairs through national minority councils and representatives;
- protection from any activity that jeopardizes or could jeopardize their existence, exercise of their rights and freedoms.

Within its remit, the OHRRNM allocates funding to national minority associations for improving their working conditions and for the implementation of their programmes and projects aimed at further advancement of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and the protection and promotion of their cultural, national, linguistic and religious identities, in accordance with the Operational Programmes for National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The funding is allocated with a view to securing the stability of operation of national minority associations and enabling further enhancement of their work, and for the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at developing their national and religious identities, fostering and improving their languages and literary activity, developing cultural and artistic activities, preserving and fostering national, cultural and other traditions and customs of persons belonging to national minorities.

The OHRRNM also allocates funding to national minority associations aimed at the implementation of capital projects, that is, projects the aim of which is increasing and preserving the value of assets, investing in real estate and other fixed assets, for example, through purchasing or construction, upgrading, reconstruction or adaptation, energy-efficiency renovation, decorating and furnishing, and maintenance of community centres, sports clubs, cultural centres, heritage houses and similar facilities in which organized activities of persons belonging to national minorities take place. The funding allocated through the OHRRNM to the umbrella national minority associations has increased significantly on a year-to-year basis, and the upward trend is expected to continue in the future period: in 2018, € 5,375,273.74 (HRK 40,500,000.00), in 2019 € 7,366,115.87 (HRK 55,500,000.00), in 2020 € 9,954,210.63 (HRK 75,000,000.00), in 2021 € 19,908,421.26 (HRK 150,000,000.00), and in 2022 € 33,180,702.10 (HRK 250,000,000.00).

In the spirit of tolerance and pluralism, and acceptance of cultural and social diversity, the Croatian Government will continue to improve the existing level of protection of national minority rights. The policy of protection of national minority rights will be implemented in cooperation with national minority representatives and their members in the Croatian Parliament, with the aim of enhancing the contribution of national minorities to the development of the Croatian society.

One of the fundamental principles underpinning the overall political and legal system of the Republic of Croatia is the equality of all persons before the law. Article 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia provides that all persons in the Republic of Croatia enjoy rights and freedoms, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other conviction, national or social origin, property, birth, education, social status and other traits. Building upon the aforementioned provision, Article 15 guarantees equality to the members of all national minorities (paragraph 1) as well as the freedom to express their nationality, use their language

and script, and exercise cultural autonomy (paragraph 4). Further to this, and taking into consideration the periodical nature of population census, in the reporting period under consideration the population census was conducted in 2021. In areas with significant national minority populations, the proportional participation of census interviewers belonging to the same national minorities was ensured with a view to facilitating the correct interpretation and understanding of questions. Furthermore, during the census, questionnaires in national minority languages were available to everybody to make sure that questions are well understood. The Croatian Government supported publicly (through the media) minority associations' projects aimed at raising the awareness of persons belonging to national minorities about the census and the importance of declaring their minority affiliation, and it allocated the funding necessary for such activities. Persons belonging to national minorities who speak a national minority language were encouraged to apply for the position of census interviewer, and such notices were also published in minority media co-financed through the Council for National Minorities.

The National Plan for Combatting Discrimination in the 2017-2022 Period<sup>3</sup> is a strategic document which set objectives that were implemented in the framework of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Combatting Discrimination in the 2017-2019 Period.<sup>4</sup> These objectives include raising awareness about combating hate crimes targeting national minorities and improving data collection relating to hate crimes. At the national level, during 2021 and 2022, a draft National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the Period until 2027 was developed, as well as a draft Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2023 and a draft Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2023, where the proposed measures will complement the guidelines from the EU Anti-racism Action Plan for the 2020-2025 period.

One of the specific goals contained in the draft National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination is the improvement of mechanisms to combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, through raising the awareness about hate crimes and hate speech and fostering culture of remembrance of victims of genocide (including the Holocaust and Samudaripen). With a view to ensure the realisation of this goal, a range of measures will be developed aimed at combatting racial and ethnic discrimination. In line with the guidelines from the EU Strategic Framework, the implementation of measures aimed at combatting racial and ethnic stereotypes has been planned for the upcoming period, through the media and educational system, as well as the development of a system of collection of data segregated by racial or ethnic origin, and the implementation of a range of training sessions on hate crimes and hate speech for civil servants and judicial officials who are tasked with implementation of the legislation. The development of the system for monitoring data on hate crimes will also continue. In the field of employment, education and housing, measures will be

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<sup>3</sup><https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20borbu%20protiv%20diskriminacije%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202017.%20do%202022..pdf>

<sup>4</sup><https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Akcijski%20plan%20za%20provedbu%20Nacionalnog%20plana%20za%20borbu%20protiv%20diskriminacije%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202017.%20do%202019.%20godine.pdf>

developed aimed at combatting all forms of discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of a person's racial and ethnic affiliation.

At its session on 8 April 2021, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Conclusion on the Approval of the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crimes. The Protocol was published in the official journal of the RoC (*Narodne novine*) no. 43/2021 of 23 April 2021<sup>5</sup> and at the web page of the Government Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities. The Protocol contains obligations of competent bodies participating in the detection, persecution and monitoring of the results of proceedings conducted for hate crimes, provisions on the composition and scope of competence of the Task Force for Monitoring Hate Crimes, method and content of cooperation of competent bodies participating in the detection, prosecution and monitoring of the results of proceedings conducted for hate crimes, and other activities of competent bodies participating in the detection, prosecution and monitoring of the results of proceedings conducted for hate crimes, which regard training on combatting hate crimes. Pursuant to the provisions of the Protocol, the OHRNM is the central body in charge of collecting and publishing data on hate crimes. The Office is also in charge of enhancing the system for combatting hate crimes and cooperating with civil-society organizations and international organizations. The statistical data for the 2019-2021 period<sup>6</sup> show a rising trend in registered cases of hate crimes. Through its Judicial Academy, Croatia strives to provide judicial officers with training in the form of various workshops, seminars etc. to make sure they can distinguish between hate crimes and other criminal offences. The purpose of such activities is to raise awareness and build capacity of judicial officers to solve cases of hate crimes.

The public policy aimed at inclusion of persons belonging to the Roma national minority in the Republic of Croatia has been pursued continuously since 2003, when the Government adopted the National Programme for Roma. Continuing with its good practice, on 23 June 2021 the Croatian Government adopted the National Plan for Roma Inclusion from 2021 to 2027 and the accompanying Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for 2021 and 2022. On 30 September 2022, the OHRNM launched the procedure of development of a draft Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion from 2021 to 2027 for years 2023-2025.

Even under exceptional circumstances of epidemiological restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemics, significant achievements have been made in the field of education, improvement of housing conditions, sustainable employment, fight against discrimination, and preservation of historical memories, Roma traditions and culture. Taking into consideration the central budget allocations and funding from other sources spent for the implementation of the Action Plan in 2021 - € 5,930,552.02 (HRK 44,683,744.23) – it is clear that the level of expenditure remained the same as it was during the final two years of the implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy (€ 5,803,155.55 or HRK 43,723,875.52 in 2019 and € 5,859,667.98 or HRK 44,149,668.38 in 2020), which speaks of a

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<sup>5</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021\\_04\\_43\\_841.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_04_43_841.html)

<sup>6</sup> <https://hatecrime.osce.org/croatia>

continuous commitment of the Croatian Government to undertake activities aimed at improving the position of the Roma national minority and narrowing the still noticeable gap between the Roma community and the majority population. Furthermore, the aforementioned sums include only the amounts expended directly from the central budget for interventions targeting primarily Roma, while numerous investments coming from various sources were also made at the local and regional levels.

In the reporting period, the trend of improving the quality of programmes contributing to preserving the linguistic and cultural identity of persons belonging to national minorities continued, as well as those contributing to a better quality of their integration in the community in which they live. Marking the events significant to minority communities at the state level also continued, and enjoyed the support of the OHRNM and other relevant authorities at the national, regional and local levels.

In keeping with the Constitutional Act, persons belonging to national minorities may, in order to preserve, develop, promote and express their national and cultural identity, establish associations, trusts and foundations as well as institutions for the performance of media, cultural, publishing, museum, archival, library and scientific activities. The most important network of minority institutions is definitely that of central national minority libraries, which are continuously in the care of the Ministry of Culture. These libraries constitute important hubs of cultural life in their local communities as well as forums for international cultural cooperation.

The Ministry of Culture and the Media launches calls for proposals to carry out programmes meeting public needs in the field of culture, as part of which it co-finances programmes of national minorities in keeping with its remit and using its budget appropriations, whereby it fulfils its constitutional and legal obligation to preserve their national identity. The Ministry of Culture and the Media makes continued and systematic efforts to ensure and foster the cultural autonomy of national minorities, enabling their members to exercise their cultural and artistic freedoms through all aspects of creative expression and activity where they can develop and promote their cultural and national identity, but also make an active and equal contribution to cultural life in general. The co-financing of national minority programmes contributes to the presentation of rich cultural heritage of national minorities, preservation of their religious, national and regional identity and enhancement of intercultural communication.

In the following period, the Ministry of Culture and the Media will publish calls for proposals to carry out programmes meeting public needs in the field of culture, as part of which it will co-finance programmes of national minorities in keeping with its remit and using its budget appropriations, whereby it will fulfil its constitutional and legal obligation to preserve their national identity.

The Ministry of Culture and the Media believes that the institutional systematic approach should be the same when it comes to the cultural heritage, traditions and arts of all national minorities, with a view to preserving the rich and diverse heritage of Croatian national minorities, and also for the purpose of informing and educating the majority Croatian population about the cultural heritage of national minorities. This would contribute to a mutual

cultural and educational refinement, appreciation and respect, and consequently to a stronger integration of national minority communities in the Croatian multicultural and pluralistic society. A special treatment of national minority cultural heritage, history, language, script, tradition and culture is encouraged and considered justified. They should be preserved systematically and institutionally, and upheld through an active cultural policy aimed at preserving and developing arts and culture of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia. Overall, in the 2019-2022 period, the Ministry of Culture provided € 14,433,620.50 (HRK 108,750,113.65) for programmes meeting public needs in the field of national minority culture.

The Republic of Croatia has resolutely continued with thorough investigation and prosecution of war crimes perpetrated in Croatia from 1991 onward, regardless of the ethnicity or rank of the perpetrator. The criminal prosecution of war crimes is undertaken pursuant to clear and objective criteria, in compliance with the principle of legality. Impartiality in this process has been ensured by the legislative framework. In the reporting period, the same trend continued as regards the number of indictments filed for war crimes.

By concluding Agreements on Matters of Common Interest, the Croatian Government has created suitable conditions for the expression, preservation and development of self-identification of churches and religious communities of national minorities. The Act on the Legal Status of Religious Communities and agreements concluded with churches and religious communities guarantee the freedom to assemble, associate, express their opinions and profess their faith, establish institutions, organizations and associations, and offer spiritual guidance in hospitals, welfare institutions, prisons and other correctional facilities, and in the police and armed forces.

The Fund for Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in the Electronic Media, financed by payments from Croatian Radio-Television, is used to encourage production and broadcasting of programming important for the exercise of the right of citizens to public information, encouragement of cultural diversity and nurturing of heritage, the development of education, scholarship and the arts, promotion of creativity in dialects of the Croatian language, promotion of special cultural projects and events and of national minorities in Croatia, promotion of awareness-raising about gender equality, and other highest values of the constitutional order, promotion of awareness about the equality of gender identities and sexual orientations, encouragement of high-quality programming for children and youth aimed at furthering their well-being, awareness raising about capabilities and contribution of persons with disabilities and promotion and respect of their rights and dignity, including combatting stereotypes, prejudices and actions that are harmful to persons with disabilities, etc.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia has concluded an agreement with the Croatian Radio-Television (hereinafter: HRT) for the 2018-2022 period, which obliges HRT to broadcast, on its national radio channels, programmes aimed at providing members of national minorities with information in the Croatian language, and to use its regional channels in areas with significant national minority populations for broadcasting a series of additional programmes in national minority languages with specialised music content. HRT has

undertaken the commitment to ensure that the treatment of national minority themes will not be limited solely to programmes intended for national minorities as the target audience, but will be suitably presented in programmes for the general public with specific efforts to highlight examples of political, social and cultural coexistence between national minorities and the majority nation.

Pursuant to Article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian language and Latin script are in official use in the Republic of Croatia, while in certain local units, another language and the Cyrillic or other script may be introduced in official use in addition to the Croatian language and Latin script, in keeping with the criteria prescribed by law. Article 10 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities stipulates that persons belonging to national minorities are entitled to freely use their language and script both privately and publicly, and that they have the right to post signs, markers and other information in the language and script they use in compliance with law. As a signatory of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Croatia has undertaken the commitment to recognize, respect, promote and protect regional or minority languages. A growing trend has been noticed in the use of national minority languages and scripts that are in equal official use before first-instance judicial bodies in the 2019-2021 period, as well as a growing trend in the number of identity cards issued that are printed in a national minority language and script in the period from 2019 to 2021.

During the reporting period, the Croatian Government has continued with significant efforts to implement the Act on the Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities and other regulations. In the 2019-2022 reporting period, an increase can be observed in allocations for educational programmes and teaching in national minority languages and scripts. The number of children included in the system of early and pre-school education in national minority languages and scripts has risen, as well as the number of pupils belonging to national minorities in the primary education system. A slight decline has been observed in the number of secondary school students and of candidates for the school-leaving examination who took exams in their mother tongues. In comparison to 2020, funds intended for special forms of education for pupils belonging to national minorities and those for continued professional support provided in the form of professional development intended for all educational staff involved in the teaching in languages and scripts of national minorities have been absorbed more successfully. The Agency for Education and Teacher Training, supported by the Ministry of Science and Education, organizes professional seminars for all educational staff participating in the teaching in languages and scripts of national minorities. The work on the development, translation and printing of additional copies of textbooks and other teaching material, as well as the necessary funding for their co-financing has been significantly increase. Due to the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 the continued work was ensured of task forces charged with filming video lessons for pupils who are being educated in the Serbian language and Cyrillic script, and in the Czech language.

In 2021, all activities pertaining to education and stemming from the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period were implemented. It is worth underscoring that the number

of children and pupils included in pre-school education programmes and extended-day programmes has risen. Furthermore, significant improvements have been made to increase the amount of secondary education scholarship as of the 2021/2022 academic year. The number of students belonging to the Roma national minority in higher education has risen significantly, and the planned increase in the amount of monthly scholarship for students should additionally encourage secondary school students belonging to the Roma national minority to complete their schooling and enrol in an institute of higher education.

The Republic of Croatia guarantees to persons belonging to national minorities in the Republic of Croatia the right to be represented in the Croatian Parliament. Persons belonging to national minorities are entitled to elect eight members to the Croatian Parliament who are elected in a separate constituency that covers the entire territory of the Republic of Croatia. In the elections for the Croatian Parliament held on 5 July 2020, persons belonging to national minorities achieved the necessary representativeness. The members of the Parliament from among their ranks were elected in a separate (12<sup>th</sup>) constituency. In the regular local elections held on 16 May 2021, persons belonging to national minorities were guaranteed the right to elect 287 members to representative bodies in a total of 153 local and regional units, in line with the Local Elections Act and local charters. Following the elections, the representation of persons belonging to national minorities was not secured in representative bodies of 80 units of local and regional government. Because of this, by-elections were held on 3 October 2021, which resulted in the election of 87 members of representative bodies from among the persons belonging to national minorities, given that 9 candidatures in 72 local and regional government units were invalid.

Article 22 (1) of the Constitutional Act stipulates that the representatives of national minorities are entitled to representation in a local or regional executive body if they achieve proportional representation in the corresponding representative body. In 2021 local elections, persons belonging to national minorities elected 55 deputy mayors of towns and municipalities, and 12 deputy county prefects from among the persons belonging to national minorities, whereby their right to representation in local or regional executive bodies has been fully exercised.

Article 23 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities stipulates that, for the purpose of promotion, preservation and protection of the status of national minorities, persons belonging to national minorities elect their representatives to participate in public life and management of local affairs through national minority councils and representatives in local and regional government units. On 1 March 2019, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Act on the Election of National Minority Councils and Representatives (*Narodne novine*, no. 25/19), which regulates the elections of national minority councils and representatives in a comprehensive manner. In elections of members of national minority councils and national minority representatives in local and regional government units held on 5 and 19 May 2019, a total of 352 national minority councils and 108 national minority representatives were elected.

In reference to employment of persons belonging to national minorities in government administration bodies, staff services and offices of the government of the Republic of Croatia,

all government administration bodies publish their vacancy announcements in the official journal (*Narodne novine*), on their web pages and on the web pages of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration. The said ministry continually controls the legality of the vacancy announcements and recruitment postings it receives, and notifies government bodies of the obligation to cite the section of the text referring to the priority to hire persons belonging to national minorities when all other conditions are equal. In addition, persons belonging to national minorities are instructed that they are entitled to invoke their priority in hiring in compliance with Article 22(2) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, without the obligation to provide evidence of their nationality.

In the amendments of the relevant legislation, the Croatian Government thoroughly stipulated the conditions to acquire the status of returnee as well as the rights ensuing from this status (monetary assistance and healthcare). The resolution of such applications has been entrusted to the state administrative offices in the counties and the City of Zagreb as first-instance bodies, while the appeals body is the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing. In this manner, the Croatian Government has secured legal protection for persons seeking recognition of status and the right to appeal and other legal remedies. It is also stipulated that in the case of former tenancy right-holders and their family members who have submitted a request for housing and returned to the Republic of Croatia, the procedure to determine their returnee status is initiated automatically on an *ex officio* basis. In the 2019-2022 period, the reconstruction of housing units damaged or destroyed in the war continued, together with co-financing of repairs and construction of basic utilities and municipal social infrastructure, in the framework of available funding from the central budget and with the aim of completing the reconstruction and return programme and creating conditions for sustainable residence and life in formerly war-stricken areas. In the period under consideration, the goal of the Government of the Republic of Croatia was to complete the programme of reconstruction and repair of housing units damaged during the war, while simultaneously intensifying the housing programme, especially using the model of donated building materials for the repair, reconstruction or construction of family homes. Through the reconstruction and housing programme and donated building material model, in the period under observation a total of 3,184 family homes were repaired, reconstructed or constructed.

In the reporting period, the Republic of Croatia faced global challenges relating to the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with national efforts aimed at renovating the areas impacted by the earthquakes. More than a half of all those in need belong to vulnerable groups such as children, persons with disabilities, elderly, socially disadvantaged, unemployed and persons belonging to national minorities. The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced all aspects of life in Croatia, and persons belonging to national minorities, especially those belonging to the most vulnerable Roma national minority, have faced even greater challenges. In view of the strong negative impacts of COVID-19 on the economy, the Croatian Government adopted a range of measures aimed at preserving economic activities in order to facilitate the work of economic operators under new circumstances, enable the continuation of their operation and preservation of jobs. In addition, the Government adopted a range of measures to assist the most vulnerable groups: pensioners, socially disadvantaged and

unemployed, and especially persons belonging to national minorities, for example, through activities in the field of education and healthcare.

In addition to regular investments of relevant bodies at the national, regional and local levels, the balanced development of the Republic of Croatia is assisted – especially in areas with significant national minority populations – by the implementation of Operational Programmes, and particularly by the implementation of the Government Decision on the Implementation of the Programme for Funding Local Infrastructure and Rural Development Projects and Stimulating Entrepreneurship and Crafts in Areas Inhabited by Persons Belonging to National Minorities.

Thus, the Ministry of Regional Development and European Union Funds implemented a programme aimed at improving infrastructure in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities, with the aim of assisting the development of local communities in areas in which persons belonging to national minorities have also lived, but which have been degraded demographically, economically or socially and are currently significantly below the national average level of development. The programme provides assistance in the form of improvement in the availability of local infrastructure, and is also used to advocate the principle of equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development, as well as the participatory approach for stakeholders from a broader local community. The programme was developed in response to local-level development priorities and it supports the improvement of utilities, municipal social, public and economic infrastructure. Since 2022, the Ministry of Regional Development and European Union Funds has been implementing a programme aimed at improving infrastructure in areas inhabited by persons belonging to the Roma national community, with the goal of decreasing environmental and infrastructural disparities in Roma communities (localities) in comparison to communities inhabited by the majority population. It has provided support to local communities with significant Roma national minority population by securing better access to the local municipal infrastructure.

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development implemented the 2019 “Development of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship and Crafts in Areas Populated by National Minorities” programme, through which it awarded grants to economic operators registered in local or regional government units belonging to the first four groups of the least developed units according to the development index value and with a population share of more than 5% of persons belonging to national minorities.

The Ministry of Agriculture conducted a tender aimed at helping small farms in areas traditionally inhabited by national minorities in their transition to market-oriented production, sustainable development, inclusion of household members into farm activities and generating income sufficient for dignified life and stay in rural areas, which would contribute to a reduction in unemployment in the rural areas and social and economic empowering of national minorities. We would also like to highlight a programme by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy. In August 2018, the Ministry opened a standing invitation to tender entitled “Development and Implementation of the Programme for Social Cohesion and

Increased Employment in the Towns of Knin and Beli Manastir as well as the Municipalities of Darda, Benkovac, Petrinja and Vukovar” co-financed by the ESF<sup>7</sup>.

Activities in this field have also been supported by other programmes, and especially by the work of national minority associations directly supported by the Croatian Government, and they also enjoy strong support of cross-border cooperation programmes.

Through its Central State Office for Croats Abroad (hereinafter: CSOCA), the Government of the Republic of Croatia encourages the drafting of new international agreements on the protection of minorities and monitoring of the existing ones through intergovernmental mixed committees. The Republic of Croatia has thus far signed four agreements on mutual protection of national minorities – with Hungary, Republic of Serbia, Republic of North Macedonia and Montenegro – while it has signed the Treaty on the Rights of National Minorities with the Republic of Italy. During the reporting period, several meetings of intergovernmental mixed committees were held. The CSOCA undertook initiative relating to the recognition of Croats as a national minority in Slovenia. Additionally, upon a proposal by the CSOCA and on the basis of Operational Programmes for National Minorities for the 2017-2020 Period, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the decision to initiate procedure to conclude an agreement between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Czechia on the Protection of the Croatian National Minority in the Czech Republic and of the Czech National Minority in the Republic of Croatia.

At the same time, the efforts to address key challenges relating to the national minorities issues at the foreign policy level continued, together with the promotion of international standards of the protection of rights of national minorities. During the reporting period, the Republic of Croatia undertook all the necessary organizational and programming preparations with a view to taking over the one-year chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in March 2023.

Through the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs continually and actively participates in meetings of the Council of Europe working bodies, which discuss and make decisions concerning the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. At the global level, the promotion and protection of national minority rights is monitored in various UN forums. In this respect, Croatia supports and votes for all initiatives calling for the implementation of all aspects of the protection and promotion of national minority rights, as well as those advocating the fight against stigma, discrimination and hate crime.

The observations of national minority associations testifying to the high degree of integration of national minorities and a significant support they enjoy can be found in the appendix to this Report. In them, the minority associations also mention challenges such as the access to the

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<sup>7</sup> It refers to specific goal 9.i.2. Enhancing active inclusion through the implementation of integrated pathways to the regeneration of five deprived pilot areas in the Operational Programme “Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020.”

media, representation of numerically smaller national minorities, and the cooperation of local government units with local minority councils in some areas.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

### *With reference to Article 3*

*From the report of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities*

One of the fundamental principles underpinning the overall political and legal system of the Republic of Croatia is the equality of all persons before the law. Article 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia provides that all persons in the Republic of Croatia enjoy certain rights and freedoms, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other conviction, national or social origin, property, birth, education, social status or other traits. Building upon the aforementioned provision, Article 15 guarantees equality to the members of all national minorities (paragraph 1), as well as the freedom to express their nationality, to use their language and script and to exercise cultural autonomy (paragraph (4)).

The right to declare one's national identity is a private matter of each individual and no one can deprive any person of his/her right to declare him-/herself a national minority member. The criminal offence of violating one's right to express his/her national identity is regulated in Article 126 of the Criminal Code. Specifically, anyone who deprives a person belonging to a national minority of his/her right to express freely his/her national identity or the right to cultural autonomy, or restricts such rights, is liable to a prison sentence of up to one year. Paragraph 2 of this article stipulates that the same sanction also applies to anyone who, contrary to legislation governing the use of language and script, deprives a person of his/her right to use his/her language and script or curtails such right. The freedom to declare one's national identity is also stipulated in Article 7 of the Act on the Population and Dwellings Census of the Republic of Croatia, pursuant to which persons belonging to national minorities could freely declare their national and religious affiliation during the population censuses.

*From the Report of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics*

As regards the recommendations by the Advisory Board cited in the Fifth Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Implementation of the Framework Convention, it has been established that the Croatian Bureau of Statistics has complied with the recommendations. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics has stated that the legal basis for the 2021 Population, Households and Dwellings Census of the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: the 2021 Census) was the Act on the 2021 Population, Households and Dwellings Census of the Republic of Croatia (*Narodne novine*, nos. 25/20, 34/21), which stipulated all the organizational and financial aspects of the census implementation. The 2021 Census was conducted in two phases: self-responding by persons who used the census questionnaire in an electronic format, and personal interviews carried out by interviewers in the field.

In areas with significant national minority populations, the proportional participation of census interviewers belonging to the same national minorities was ensured; namely, of interviewers belonging to the Serbian, Italian, Bosniak, Czech, Hungarian and Roma minorities. In some

areas the number of interested persons belonging to national minorities was insufficient, or those who were interested did not meet the requirements for interviewers. In such cases, for example, in Roma settlements, interviewers working in the field were accompanied by persons belonging to national minorities who live in the area, in order to facilitate the correct interpretation and understanding of questions. Furthermore, during the census, questionnaires in national minority languages were available to everybody to make sure that questions were well understood. Representatives of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics took part in numerous television and radio programmes and explained in detail all the relevant issues relating to the 2021 Census, and they invited the population to participate in the 2021 Census.

The questions on the person's ethnicity, mother tongue and religious affiliation were voluntary and open-ended. The respondents could respond freely to the question on their ethnic affiliation. If a respondent answered by using his/her regional, religious or any other affiliation, the interviewer was obliged to record such a response. However, if a respondent was unwilling to answer, the interviewer recorded "not declared". The interviewers were strictly instructed to record the answer exactly as given by the respondent, and they could not influence his/her response in any manner whatsoever. The same applied to the question on one's religion, and the respondent could freely state their religious affiliation with the response being recorded in the questionnaire. If the respondent is agnostic, atheist, not religious or unwilling to answer, the exact response provided by the respondent was recorded in the questionnaire. Pursuant to international recommendations, the mother tongue is the language the person learned to speak in the early childhood, or the language the person considers to be his/her mother tongue where several languages were spoken in a household. The 2021 Census data on mother tongue are presented in such a way that data on the Croatian language are shown first, followed by those for languages of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia, and then other languages.

*From the Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities*

When developing implementing acts for the 2021 Census, the Government consulted national minority representatives, with a view to securing mechanisms and procedures needed for free declaration of national identity, language and script during the census. The engagement of a proportional number of census interviewers belonging to national minorities in towns and municipalities with historical presence of persons belonging to national minorities (examples are the County of Osijek-Baranja and County of Vukovar-Srijem). The census questionnaire was publicly available on the web pages of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, also in the minority languages and scripts.<sup>8</sup>

The Government supported publicly (through the media) minority associations' projects aimed at raising the awareness of persons belonging to national minorities about the census and the importance of declaring their minority affiliation, and it allocated the funding necessary for such activities. Representatives of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics took part in various

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<sup>8</sup> <https://popis2021.hr/popisni-upitnik-nacionalne-manjine.html>

meetings, round-table discussions and conferences organized by associations promoting national minority rights, where they provided all the relevant information about census-related activities to the participants. Furthermore, all the queries received from national minority representatives were answered in a timely manner.

National minorities in the Republic of Croatia also promoted the importance of the first-ever digital 2021 Population, Households and Dwellings Census of the Republic of Croatia in publications and the media that are published and broadcast with the support of the Council for National Minorities. Persons belonging to national minorities who speak a national minority language were encouraged to apply for the position of census interviewer, and such notices were also published in minority media co-financed through the Council for National Minorities.

Numerous minority organizations participated in the preparation of the census at all the levels, and were financed either by the central or local budget. For example, € 13,272.28 (HRK 100,000.00) was allocated from the central budget for the “Popis 21” (Census 21) project of the Serbian National Council – national coordinating body of the Serbian national minority in Croatia, while on 23 July 2021 the Commission on Monitoring the Implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion approved co-financing of a project of the “Kali Sara” Union of Roma in the RoC in a total amount of € 46,452.98 (HRK 350,000.00), which involved activities aimed at informing persons belonging to the Roma national minority about the population census and its importance, and informing persons belonging to the Roma national minority about the rights they could become entitled to depending on the size of the Roma national minority population.

*From the Report of the Council for National Minorities*

The Council for National Minorities has not received any complaint from national minority associations or members about actions of census interviewers. The results of the 2021 Census will have a direct impact on the implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities<sup>9</sup>, especially on the right to official and public use of the language and script of a national minority accounting for a third of the population in a local government unit, on the right to elect national minority councils and representatives, and the right to representation at the local and regional levels.

The analysis of the final results of the 2021 Census, published by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, shows that, in comparison to the 2011 Census, the population decreased by 9.64% (413,056 persons). The results of the 2021 Census reveal that Croats account for 91.63% in the ethnic structure of the population, Serbs 3.20%, Bosniaks 0.62%, Roma 0.46%, Italians 0.36% and Albanians 0.36%, while the share of persons belonging to other national minorities is smaller than 0.30% for each of the minorities. The share of respondents who declared their

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<sup>9</sup> Official Journal (Narodne novine) nos 155/02, 47/10: Decision and Ruling of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia; 80/10, 93/11 - 1981 Decision of the Constitutional Court and 93/11 - 1982 Decision of the Constitutional Court.

regional affiliation was 0.33%, and of those who were unwilling to declare their ethnicity 0.58%. While the share of Croats in the total population has risen over the past ten years from 90.42% to 91.63%, the share of persons belonging to national minorities in the Republic of Croatia declined from 7.47% in 2011 to 6.2% in 2021, that is, by 1.27%. The overall population has declined, including the number of persons belonging to 16 national minorities, while 6 national minorities have experienced growth in comparison to the 2011 Census. The number of respondents who declared that they were Serbs in the 2021 Census was as much as 33% lower than in 2011 Census: 186,633 in comparison to 123,892, that is, 3.2% in 2021 in comparison to 4.36% in 2011. As for religion, Catholics account for 78.97% of the population, Protestants for 0.26%, other Christians for 4.84%, Jews for 0.01%, Orthodox for 3.32 %, Eastern religions for 0.9%, other religions for 0.96 %, Muslims for 1.32%, agnostics and sceptics for 1.68%, non-believers and atheists for 4.71%, while 1.72% of respondents were unwilling to declare their religious affiliation, and for 2.14% of respondents it is unknown. As regards the mother tongue, 95.25% of respondents declared that their mother tongue was Croatian, and 1.16% that it was Serbian. The share of respondents whose mother tongue is another language is smaller than 1.00% for any language. Of the total population of the Republic of Croatia, 99.24% are Croatian citizens, while 0.74% are foreign citizens.

***With reference to Article 4***

*From the report of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities*

The National Plan for Combatting Discrimination in the 2017-2022 Period is a strategic document which set objectives that were implemented in the framework of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Combatting Discrimination in the 2017-2019 Period. These objectives include raising awareness about combating hate crimes targeting national minorities and improving data collection relating to hate crimes.

During 2021 and 2022, a draft National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the Period until 2027 was developed, as well as a draft Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2023 and a draft Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2023, where the proposed measures will complement the guidelines from the EU Anti-racism Action Plan for the 2020-2025 period.

One of the specific goals contained in the draft National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination is the improvement of mechanisms to combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, through raising the awareness about hate crimes and hate speech and fostering culture of remembrance of victims of genocide (including the Holocaust and Samudaripen). With a view to ensure the realisation of this goal, a range of measures will be developed aimed at combatting racial and ethnic discrimination. In line with the guidelines from the EU Strategic Framework, the implementation of measures aimed at combatting racial and ethnic stereotypes has been planned for the upcoming period, through the media and educational system, as well as the development of a system of collection of data segregated by racial or ethnic origin, and the implementation of a range of training sessions on hate crimes and hate speech for civil servants and judicial officials who are tasked with implementation of the legislation. The development of the system for monitoring data on hate crimes will also continue. In the field of employment, education and housing, measures will be developed aimed at combatting all forms of discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of a person's racial and ethnic affiliation.

At its session on 8 April 2021, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crimes. The Protocol contains obligations of competent bodies participating in the detection, persecution and monitoring of the results of proceedings conducted for hate crimes, provisions on the composition and scope of competence of the Task Force for Monitoring Hate Crimes, method and content of cooperation of competent bodies participating in the detection, prosecution and monitoring of the results of proceedings conducted for hate crimes, and other activities of competent bodies participating in the detection, prosecution and monitoring of the results of proceedings conducted for hate crimes, which regard training on combatting hate crimes. Pursuant to the provisions of the Protocol, the OHRRNM is the central body in charge of collecting and publishing data on hate crimes. The Office is also in charge of enhancing the system for combatting hate crimes and cooperating with civil-society organizations and international organizations.

In line with the dynamics of data collection prescribed in the provisions of articles 13 and 18 of the Protocol, and in accordance with the Form for Statistical Monitoring of Criminal Offences Relating to Article 87(21) of the Criminal Code in Appendix I, and Form for Statistical Monitoring of Hate-motivated Misdemeanours in Appendix III of the Protocol, the OHRRNM has collected the data pertaining to hate crimes committed in 2021. Once processed, the data will be publicly available on the OHRRNM's web pages.

Pursuant to Article 16(2) of the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crimes, the Task Force for Monitoring Hate Crimes was set up on 21 June 2021. The Task Force is charged with coordinating the collection of data on hate crimes, monitoring and analysing the occurrences of hate crimes, coordinating inter-ministerial cooperation in combatting hate crimes, and developing recommendations to improve the system of combatting hate crimes. The Task Force consists of a chairperson and 16 members. The chairperson of the Task Force is the director of the OHRRNM, while the members are representatives of bodies in charge of combatting hate crimes, representatives of the academic community and representatives of civil society from among the ranks of associations involved in monitoring and combating hate crimes, elected by the Council for Civil Society Development. They are: a representative of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of Croatia, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, a representative of the Ministry of the Interior, a representative of the Police Academy, a representative of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, a representative of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, a representative of the High Misdemeanour Court of the RoC, a representative of the Zagreb Municipal Criminal Court, a representative of the State Attorney's Office of the RoC, a representative of the Ombudsman's Office, a representative of the Law School of the Zagreb University, and five representatives of civil society organizations involved with monitoring and combating hate crimes (Serbian National Council, Zagreb – the national coordinating body of the Serbian national minority councils, "Kali Sara" Union of Roma in the RoC, Zagreb, the Zagreb Jewish Municipality, and Zagreb Pride). Three sessions of the Task Force have been held to date: on 2 July 2021, 21 January 2022 and 21 December 2022, and it is worth underscoring that the deputy prime minister of the Croatian Government in charge of social activities and human rights was present at the first session of the Task Force.

Additionally, the OHRRNM has initiated the procedure of setting up an e-database with statistical data on hate crime, aligned with the Form for Statistical Monitoring of Criminal Offences Relating to Article 87(21) of the Criminal Code, Form for Statistical Monitoring of Hate Speech and Form for Statistical Monitoring of Hate-motivated Misdemeanours, which are integral parts of the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crimes. The preparatory phase was used to develop technical and functional specifications for the future IT system for the collection, processing and publishing of data relating to hate crimes, which will serve as the basis for the development of an e-database on hate crime.

The OHRRNM has continued with awareness-raising activities focusing on hate crime and hate speech. Thus, on 24 May 2022, a seminar on hate crime was held in Vukovar, organized by the OHRRNM and the Judicial Academy. The seminar was intended for criminal and misdemeanour judges and judicial advisors at the municipal and county courts, deputy state attorneys and state attorney advisors in criminal departments at the county and municipal levels,

police officers and civil society organizations. The seminar was held as part of the implementation of the National Plan for Combatting Discrimination in the 2017-2022 Period. Furthermore, the OHRNM has continued with the ongoing cooperation and provision of data on hate crimes to the specialized OSCE Office (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights - ODIHR), which exchanges statistical data with a view of compiling its annual report on hate crime (*Hate crime reporting data*)<sup>10</sup>.

Representatives of the OHRNM participate regularly in the work of the EU High Level Group on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Intolerance, the name of which was changed in 2021 to the EU High Level Group on Combating Hate Speech and Hate Crime, and in the work of the EU Working Group on Hate Crime Training and Capacity Building for National Law Enforcement. The latter operates with the goal of mapping the existing training opportunities on hate crime in each of the EU member states. The representatives of the OHRNM also take part in the work of the newly set up Subgroup on the National Implementation of the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025). Furthermore, representatives of the OHRNM regularly participate in the work of the EU Working Group on Hate Crime Recording, Data Collection and Encouraging Reporting, while the Office director takes part in the work of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Hate Crime (PC/ADI-CH).

*From the Report of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration*

The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration has stated that Article 125 of the Criminal Code (*Narodne novine*, nos. 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19 and 84/21) provides for the criminal offence of *infringement of equality*, which is deemed committed by any person who, on grounds of a difference in race, ethnic identity, skin colour, sex, language, religion, political or other conviction, national or social background, property, birth, education, social status, marital or family status, age, health condition, disability, heredity, expression of gender identity, sexual orientation or such other characteristics, denies, restricts or conditions another person's rights to acquire goods or receive services, perform any activity or have access to employment or advancement, or any person who, on grounds of such difference, accords another person any privileges or favours with regard to the aforementioned rights (paragraph 1). Such a criminal offence is punishable by imprisonment for up to three years, and the same sentence will be used to punish anyone who persecutes individuals or organizations because of their commitment to equality among people (paragraph 2).

Discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic identity, skin colour, sex, language, religion, political or other conviction, national or social background, property, trade union membership, education, social status, martial or family status, age, health condition, disability, heredity, gender identity, expression or sexual orientation is prohibited in the framework of criminal proceedings. Any testimony obtained contrary to this prohibition cannot be admitted as

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<sup>10</sup> The data for 2021 for the Republic of Croatia are available at <https://hatecrime.osce.org/croatia>.

evidence in proceedings (Article 6 of the Criminal Procedure Act (*Narodne novine*, nos. 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19 and 80/22)).

Below are data on court cases relating to discriminatory practices and grounds for discrimination (racial or ethnic affiliation and national background) by which the cases are processed in civil, criminal and misdemeanour proceedings.

Criminal cases	2021	2020	2019	2018
number of new cases	18	5	10	5
national background	7	3	2	0
racial/ethnic affiliation	3	0	1	0
final judgement delivered	9	9	8	5

Civil cases	2021	2020	2019	2018
number of new cases	53	55	50	36
national background	1	0	2	2
racial/ethnic affiliation	0	0	1	1
final judgement delivered	41	31	48	54

Misdemeanour cases	2021	2020	2019	2018
number of new cases	105	81	106	81
national background	74	39	44	27
racial/ethnic affiliation	6	5	10	19
final judgement delivered	61	95	101	86

In keeping with its obligations stemming from the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crimes, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration fills in the Form for Statistical Monitoring of Criminal Offences Relating to Hate Crime and the single Form for Statistical Monitoring of Misdemeanours Specifically Identified as Motivated by Hate. The provision of such data is the responsibility of the courts.

In 2019, a total of 13 final judgements were pronounced: 1 conviction – race or skin colour; 1 conviction – ethnic affiliation; 3 convictions – sexual orientation; 3 convictions – religion; 4 convictions – national background; 1 conviction – other. In 2019, an acquittal was also rendered – national background. With regard to misdemeanour cases specifically identified as motivated by hate, a total of 48 such cases were recorded in 2019, which is a significant increase in comparison to 2018, when 8 such cases were registered. Neither in 2018 nor in 2019 any such charge was dismissed. 11 judgements of acquittal or dismissal were pronounced, which is an increase in comparison to the preceding year, when 3 judgements were rendered in such cases. The number of final judgements in 2019 was the same as in 2018: 11.

These are the data on final judgements rendered in 2020 for hate crimes: a total of 19 final judgements in criminal proceedings (*criminal offence committed because of characteristics listed in Art. 87(21) of the Criminal Code and criminal offence described in Art. 325 – public incitement to violence and hatred*): 12 convictions – national background; 2 convictions – religion; 2 convictions – sexual orientation; 1 conviction – gender identity; 1 conviction – national background and religion; 1 affirmative (insanity) – national background. Misdemeanour proceedings: the data available indicate that there were 8 final convictions.

These are the data on final judgements rendered in 2020 for hate crimes: a total of 12 final judgements in criminal proceedings: 16 convictions – national background; 3 convictions – religion; 1 conviction – sexual orientation; 1 conviction – racial affiliation/skin colour; 1 conviction – regional affiliation/membership in a supporters’ group. Misdemeanour proceedings:

National background	5
convictions	5
National background, gender, political affiliation	1
convictions	1
National background/ethnic origin	25
convictions	18
acquittals	6
decisions – suspension of proceedings	1
National background/ethnic origin, political conviction	1
convictions	1
Profession (police)	2
acquittals	2
Gender	1
convictions	1
Religion	1
acquittals	1
Total	36

*From the Report of the Judicial Academy*

With regard to the professional development of judicial officers, the Judicial Academy has reported that five one-day workshops for judges and judicial advisors involved with family and criminal justice, deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors were held in 2019, entitled “Promotion of the Right to Diversity and Combatting Intolerance and Hatred”. In cooperation with the OHRRNM five half-day seminars focusing on hate crime and hate speech were organized for judges at criminal and misdemeanour courts, judicial advisors at municipal and county courts, deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors at the county and municipal

levels, police officers and non-governmental organizations. In addition, five one-day workshops were held for misdemeanour judges and judicial advisors at municipal courts and the High Misdemeanour Court of the RoC, as well as deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors at the municipal level entitled “Misdemeanours Characterized by Hatred in the Field of Public Order and Public Safety”.

In the framework of the Judicial Academy’s international cooperation, Croatian judicial officials and advisors participated in the following relevant seminars: 2 seminars from the “EU Anti-Discrimination Law” series organized by the Academy of European Law, and 2 seminars from the “EU Gender Equality Law” series organized by the Academy of European Law.

In 2020, a one-day workshop entitled “Promotion of the Right to Diversity and Combatting Intolerance and Hatred” was organized for judges and judicial advisors involved with family and criminal justice, deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors. Moreover, six one-day workshops on “Misdemeanours Characterized by Hatred in the Field of Public Order and Public Safety” were held for misdemeanour judges and judicial advisors at municipal courts and the High Misdemeanour Court of the RoC, as well as deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors at the municipal level.

In the framework of the Judicial Academy’s international cooperation, Croatian judicial officials and advisors participated in the following seminars on anti-discrimination law: an “EU Anti-Discrimination Law” seminar organized by the Academy of European Law (ERA), an on-line seminar on “EU Anti-Discrimination Law” organized by the Academy of European Law (ERA), the “Linguistic Training on Judicial Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights Protection” on-line summer school organized by the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN); a “Human Rights and Access to Justice in the EU” seminar organized by the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), and the “Freedom of Speech” on-line seminar organized by the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN).

In 2021, two one-day training sessions entitled “Hate Crimes and Hate Speech” were held for criminal and misdemeanour judges and judicial advisors and for deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors. In addition, three one-day training sessions entitled “Promotion of the Right to Diversity and Combatting Intolerance and Hatred” were organized for judges and judicial advisors involved with family and criminal justice, deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors. In the framework of the Judicial Academy’s international cooperation, Croatian judicial officials and advisors participated in the seminar entitled “Antisemitism and Hate Crime” organized by the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), and an on-line seminar entitled “Discrimination and Hate Crimes. Conceptual Delimitation and Fundamental Aspects of their Investigation and Prosecution” organized by the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN).

In 2022, three one-day training sessions entitled “Promotion of the Right to Diversity and Combatting Intolerance and Hatred” were organized for judges and judicial advisors involved with family and criminal justice, deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors, as well as a one-day seminar focusing on “Hate Crime”, organized in cooperation with the OHRNM, intended for criminal and misdemeanour judges and judicial advisors at municipal and county courts, and for deputy state attorneys and state-attorney advisors at the county and municipal levels, police officers and non-governmental organizations

*From the Report of the Ministry of the Interior*

In accordance with the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Hate Crimes (*Narodne novine*, no. 43/2021), with regard to crimes committed because of a person's race, skin colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, language, disability, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, in 2021 the Ministry of the Interior recorded a total of 152 offences, and in 2022 a total of 109 offences. The Ministry of the Interior does not have the relevant data for 2019 and 2020. Furthermore, in the framework of implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Programme, events and phenomena with elements of violence relating to persons belonging to the Roma national minority are continuously monitored, and appropriate actions are undertaken with the aim of preventing violent behaviour targeting Roma, preventing violence within the Roma national minority and combating discrimination of Roma.

In all of its curricula at all educational levels (secondary-school level, basic-training level, life-long learning level), the Police Academy continuously teaches the police officers about the protection of fundamental human rights, principles of equality and prohibition and combating discrimination on any grounds. These topics have been incorporated into regular curricula of the Criminal Investigation and Public Security College, "Josip Jović" Police School that offers adult training course for the profession of police officer as well as the secondary-school programme (years 3 and 4) and various specialized seminars, courses and trainings. Additional activities and training sessions are organized throughout the year in the form of workshops or participation of experts of the Police Academy in seminars or study tours. Such activities are not continuous, but they are implemented every year, and their intensity depends of various projects organized by civil society organizations or other ministries.

Within the life-long learning programme, a course is provided for the border police, inter alia with the aim of them acquiring knowledge on cultural differences between citizens of various countries, the notions of culture, cultural standards, intercultural relations, multiculturalism, nation, ethnic affiliation, multicultural differences, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, hate crime and issues relating to trafficking in persons. In 2021, three courses were organized. Among other training sessions, it is worth underscoring an on-line training for police officers on the detection of and procedure in cases of hate crimes, organized in January 2021 in cooperation with the Human Rights House and the Embassy of the United Kingdom.

Important international memorial days are also regularly observed, such as the EU Anti-Trafficking Day, International Anti-Racism Day, International Roma Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Ministry of the Interior regularly implements a number of preventive projects: national preventive project "Living a Life without Violence", national preventive campaign "Together", national preventive project "I Have a Choice", national preventive project "Together We Can Do More", and the national preventive project "Together Against Hate Speech".

We would like to particularly underscore the activities implemented in the areas affected by the earthquakes. For example, in line with the Plan of Preventive Measures for the Earthquake-Affected Area in Sisak-Moslavina County, the following preventive measures and interventions were implemented in 2021, in full respect of all epidemiological measures, and in keeping with the effective National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period:

- in cooperation with the Ombudsperson for Children, and with the aim of monitoring the overall situation regarding the safety and protection of children by the Police Directorate and the competent Sisak-Moslavina Police Department, the Roma settlement of Maja was visited,
- the Police Directorate and Sisak-Moslavina Police Department implemented the preventive project “Living a Life without Violence” for students of senior grades of the Galdovo Primary School in Sisak.
- a working meeting was held with Mr. Zlatko Bogdan, representative of the Roma Community in the settlement of Palanjek, to discuss the monitoring of the overall situation regarding the safety and protection of children,
- the Roma settlement of Palanjek was visited, and on that occasion, preventive measures were implemented regarding traffic safety and preventive materials on traffic safety were distributed; the activity was assessed as very useful by the local population,
- a number of preventive activities were conducted and in cooperation with the Roma National Minority Council of the Town of Sisak, Braća Bobetko Primary School, Sisak-Moslavina County and the Croatian Red Cross the settlement of Caprag was visited with the aim of monitoring the overall situation regarding the safety and protection of children,
- with the aim of monitoring the overall situation regarding the safety and protection of children, the Roma settlement of Majske Poljane was visited and on that occasion, a number of preventive and training programmes were conducted.

Another prominent example is the Međimurje Police Department which has adopted the Implementing Programme of Preventive Measures Aimed at Increasing Safety and Enhancing Social Inclusion of Roma in the Territory of the Međimurje Police Department for the 2021-2022 Period, in line with provisions of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period. The Implementing Programme ensures the implementation of goals and measures falling within the remit of the police, in line with the strategic assessment of the Međimurje Police Department and the aforementioned National Plan. The situation assessment necessary for drafting the Implementing Programme was based on the statistical data on crimes and crime-related trends, and on public opinion about the citizens’ subjective feeling of safety, as well as on existing documents of Međimurje County and the Town of Čakovec, which indicate the need to join forces in stepping up activities aimed at including the Roma minority in the society. A number of preventive measures were carried out in the framework of the Implementing Programme. One of them was the establishment of an ad-hoc contact point for citizens, that is, of a Police Information Centre. The Police Mobile Preventive Centre was used in 2021 to set up a total of 142 information points in various localities in Međimurje County. On such occasions, diverse preventive activities stemming from national and regional preventive projects, programmes and actions were conducted. The places in which these activities were conducted had been selected on the basis of statistical data on crime and crime-related trends

in the territories of police stations. Over the year, the activities were implemented in all Roma settlements and other settlements in the territory of Međimurje County.

The Međimurje Police Department cooperates with local government units, which support the implementation of preventive activities and provide financial assistance for the production of various preventive materials. It is important to underline that we enjoy good cooperation with institutions and NGOs, that is, civil society organizations, and in 2021 we conducted a number of joint preventive activities. Thus, we have an excellent cooperation with the Social Welfare Centre, Public Health Institute of Međimurje County and other institutions and NGOs active in the territory of Međimurje County. In line with the measures stipulated in the Implementing Programme, preventive projects and actions were conducted such as the primary prevention aimed at eliminating bullying, vandalism, domestic violence, unsafe and socially unacceptable behaviour of children and youth, drug and other addictive substance abuse; reduction of the risk of trafficking and smuggling of persons; and promoting traffic culture (national and regional preventive projects).

In the territory of the Međimurje Police Department, there are six Prevention Councils. They are: Prevention Council of Međimurje County, Prevention Council of the Town of Čakovec, Prevention Council of the Town of Prelog, Prevention Council of the Town of Mursko Središće, Prevention Council of the Municipality of Mala Subotica, and the Prevention Council of the Municipality of Pribislavec. In 2021, the Međimurje Police Department had several contacts with representatives of these Councils in the form of short meetings where safety situation was discussed and cooperation and diverse joint activities were arranged. Thus, we can highlight that in 2021, the Prevention Council of the Town of Prelog and the Town of Prelog donated a laptop to the contact police of the Prelog Police Station for their work on crime prevention. Each year, the Međimurje Police Department develops various preventive and informative leaflets and brochures, either on its own or in cooperation with prevention councils, and procures diverse promotion materials such as reflective strips and vests, key chains, pens, bicycle lights and other. These materials are then distributed to citizens during the public preventive campaigns.

*From the Report of the Council for National Minorities*

With the aim of creating a positive societal environment, on 27 June 2019 the Council for National Minorities published a “Communication on the Increased Atmosphere of Intolerance and Occurrence of Ethnocentrism in the Croatian Society”, in line with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Declaration Against Intolerance and Ethnocentrism in Croatia of 14 May 2015, and the Council for National Minorities’ Communication on the Increased Atmosphere of General Intolerance in the Croatian Society and Occurrences of Ethnocentrism of 24 February 2016.

As in other years, in 2021 the Council for National Minorities made sure that possible complaints it received from persons belonging to national minorities about possible violations of the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitutional Act, or discrimination on grounds of national background, or hate speech with characteristics of discrimination on grounds of ethnic affiliation, were orderly and timely forwarded to government bodies, and local and regional

government bodies, and their comment requested, and also for information to the Ombudsperson.

With reference to the availability of data on incidence of discrimination relating to the participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural and media content, the Council disposes of certain data that are not complete, and the OHRRNM compiles such data through the National Plan for Combatting Discrimination for the 2017-2022 Period. In this strategic document, based on situation analysis, the Government of the Republic of Croatia sets priorities and puts forth objectives, and directs its efforts towards building an integral system for protection against discrimination in Croatia. Specifically, in the goal of “Increased Inclusion of Groups at Risk of Discrimination in the Production of and Participation in Cultural and Media Content”, the impact indicator is the increased presence and participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in the production of cultural and media content. The baseline is partial indicators given in relative reports by the Council for National Minorities, Agency for Electronic Media, Croatian Radio-Television and the Croatian Association of the Blind.

### Free Legal Aid

In 2019, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration paid a total of € 254,628.52 (HRK 1,918,498.62) for primary legal aid projects, and in 2020 the amount paid for such projects was increased by 10%. In 2021, the amount paid for primary legal aid project was reduced by 5.9% in comparison to 2020, while in 2022 the amount paid was 4.11% higher than in 2021. We should note that the majority of the primary legal aid providers who received financing anticipate that they would provide primary legal aid to persons belonging to national minorities and other vulnerable groups.

In addition to the provision of primary legal aid to vulnerable social groups, the projects involving the provision of primary legal aid in areas with a lower degree of development, or through field visits to areas with a lower degree of development are prioritized for financing. Thus, projects anticipating the provision of primary legal aid through field visits to rural and less developed areas populated by persons belonging to national minorities have been financed every year, for example, those implemented by the authorized NGOs: the Osijek Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights, the Sisak Civil Rights Project, Serbian National Council – national coordinating body of the Serbian national minority in Croatia, Information Legal Centre and others. We emphasize that in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration financed a project of the Serbian National Council focused on the provision of free legal aid to persons belonging to national minorities and other underprivileged citizens in Šibenik-Knin County and Zadar County, specifically, in towns and municipalities that were occupied during the Croatia’s Homeland War – in territories of the towns of Knin, Obrovac and Benkovac, and the municipality of Gračac. The project focused primarily on the provision of primary legal aid to persons belonging to the Serbian national minority in relation to the reconstruction of houses damaged during the war, provision of housing, recognition of their years of service during the Homeland War period and procedures to regulate their status whether as returnees who are Croatian citizens or returnees-foreigners who resided in the Republic of Croatia prior to 1991.

In 2019, a total of € 252,331.98 (HRK 1,901,195.29) was paid for secondary legal aid, that is, for representation by an attorney-at-law and court fees, and in 2020 the total amount paid for secondary legal aid was reduced by 18.7%. In 2021, the total amount paid for secondary legal aid was increased by 25.2% in comparison to 2020. We emphasize that in 2019, the value of a point used to establish the attorneys' fees was increased from € 0.66 (HRK 5.00) to € 0.93 (HRK 7,00) in order to ensure regular functioning of the free legal aid system. Since the free legal aid system was set up in 2009, the attorneys complained that the fees for secondary legal aid were insufficient, and in preceding years the number of attorneys-at-law available for the provision of secondary legal aid listed in registers of the Croatian Bar Association for territories of individual regional government units decreased, causing problems for county administrative bodies and the competent administrative body in the City of Zagreb when they had to appoint an attorney-at-law for beneficiaries of secondary legal aid.

*From the Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programmes*

The Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the 2020-2024 Period stipulates that the Croatian Government will continue promoting the culture of tolerance, implementing consistently the policy of the rule of law and rights of national minorities guaranteed by the Constitution, Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and other legislation. As stated above, a special contribution to this is the implementation of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities for the 2021-2024 Period, which define mechanisms to secure national minority rights and support the activities of their bodies, in keeping with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and other special legislation that will continue to protect and enhance human and minority rights. Specific deadlines and implementing agencies in charge of activities have also been defined. In addition, the highest ranking officials of the Croatian Government regularly take part in events that are significant for the minority communities, and on other occasions they also regularly send public messages of tolerance, importance and inclusion of minorities in the Croatian society.<sup>11</sup> For example, the prime minister of the Republic of Croatia Andrej Plenković regularly participates in celebrations of religious holidays organized by minority communities, opening ceremonies of important facilities, such as the opening of the Roma Educational and Cultural Centre and the Ukrainian House in Zagreb, Hungarian Media Centre in Bilje, opening of new extensions of the Jan Amos Komensky school and of the Ferdo Mravenec Czech kindergarten in Daruvar,

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<sup>11</sup> For example, on the eve of the Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving Day and the Day of Croatian Defenders, on 4 August 2020, the prime minister, Andrej Plenković, M.A., said: "This is the inclusive, tolerant Croatia, self-confident Croatia, which is aware of its worth, aware of its foundations, but also firmly convinced that – in the policy it pursues and for which we obtained support at the elections – minorities form an integral part of the Croatian society, that their representatives are our legal and political legacy from the last thirty years, and that this is the only way in which we can firmly root our values in what forms the foundations of Croatia, and that those are at the same time our European values".

<https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/plenkovic-snazna-demokratska-i-samopouzdana-hrvatska-salje-poruke-ukljucivosti-i-tolerancije/30072>

and the celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Italian Union in Rijeka. Other high-ranking officials also regularly send public messages about inclusion and tolerance.

### Inclusion of the Roma National Minority

The public policy aimed at inclusion of persons belonging to the Roma national minority in the Republic of Croatia has been pursued continuously since 2003, when the Croatian Government adopted the National Programme for Roma. Continuing with its good practice, on 23 June 2021 the Croatian Government adopted the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period and the accompanying Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for 2021 and 2022.

With the aim of drafting the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period, a working group was set up, composed of 46 members and 43 substitute members from among the representatives of state administration bodies, representatives of the Roma national minority, civil society organizations, academic community, ombudsperson, and special ombudspersons (for children, persons with disabilities, gender equality). The tasks of the working group members and substitute members were to analyse the situation pertaining to the protection of rights and improvement of the status of the Roma national minority in the Republic of Croatia; to define priority and horizontal areas for interventions in the draft National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period; to identify key needs within the priority and horizontal areas in the draft National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period. Furthermore, two working subgroups were formed, to deal with the area of prevention of anti-Roma racism and discrimination, and with the area of combatting poverty and social exclusion and enhancing civic participation of the Roma. The tasks of the working subgroups included: a detailed analysis of the proposed draft National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period, and drafting an opinion on the proposed draft National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period from the perspective of its contribution to the prevention of anti-Roma racism and discrimination, and from the perspective of its contribution to combatting poverty and social exclusion and enhancing civic participation of the Roma. A total of three meetings of the working group were held, as well as two meetings of each of the working subgroups. The content and procedure followed by the working groups, and all the decisions relating to their operation, including the minutes of their meetings and conclusions adopted are available on the official web pages of the OHRRNM.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, when the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period was drafted, attention was paid to the international treaties to which the Republic of Croatia is a party which, pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, form a part of its internal legal order. These are primarily the following international multilateral treaties for the protection of human rights, particularly relevant for the protection of the rights of national minorities: International

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<sup>12</sup> <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/izrada-nacionalnog-plana-za-ukljucivanje-roma-2021-2027-i-pratecih-akcijskih-planova/973>

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Guided by the findings of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, according to which more than 92% of the sustainable development goals, that is, the 2030 Agenda, may be directly linked to human rights and labour standards, and the identified “high degree of convergence between the sustainable development goals and provisions of the core human rights treaties and labour standards”, as well the European Commission documents confirming the implementation of the 2030 Agency and the relevant conclusions of the European Council, during the development of goals and indicators of outcomes of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion, appropriate consideration was given to its links to the sustainable development goals.

In addition, special attention was accorded to the harmonization with three key international treaties adopted within the framework of the Council of Europe: European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, and also to the harmonization with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women.

The National Plan sets a strategic framework for the development of equality, inclusion and participation of persons belonging to the Roma national minority in the Republic of Croatia until 2027. Its primary goal is to improve the overall integration of persons belonging to the Roma national minority in Croatia and to reduce the gap between persons belonging to the Roma national minority and the rest of the population in the key intervention areas that have been harmonized with the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation until 2030 and with the National Development Strategy. In line with the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation until 2030, the horizontal objectives of the National Plan include the area of discrimination, poverty and social exclusion, and participation, while sectoral objectives include the areas of education, employment, healthcare and social welfare, and housing. On top of specific objectives, the National Plan also defines measures within each specific objective, which will contribute to fulfilling the specific objectives, and proposes possible activities to be implemented with the aim of achieving the specific goals. The National Plan is accompanied by three Action Plans, the second of which is currently being drafted, and it regards the period from 2023 to 2025.

Even under exceptional circumstances of epidemiological restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, significant achievements have been made in the field of education, improvement of housing conditions, sustainable employment, fight against discrimination, and preservation of historical memories, Roma traditions and culture. Taking into consideration the central budget allocations and funding from other sources spent for the implementation of the Action Plan in 2021 – € 5,930,552.02 (HRK 44,683,744.23) – it is clear that the level of expenditure remained the same as it was during the final two years of the implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy (€ 5,803,155.55 or HRK 43,723,875.52 in 2019 and € 5,859,667.98 or HRK 44,149,668.38 in 2020), which speaks of a

continuous commitment of the Croatian Government to undertake activities aimed at improving the position of the Roma national minority and narrowing the still noticeable gap between the Roma community and the majority population. Furthermore, the aforementioned sums include only the amounts expended directly from the central budget for interventions targeting primarily Roma, while numerous investments coming from various sources were also made at the local and regional levels.

On 30 September 2022, the OHRRNM launched the procedure of development of a draft Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion from 2021 to 2027 for years 2023-2025. The Action Plan for years 2023-2025 is the second key short-term implementing act under the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period, given that its content will define the speed and feasibility of achieving objectives and target values from the National Plan. The drafting of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period for years 2023-2025 formally began with the formation of the Working Group for drafting the aforementioned documents, which includes members from among the representatives of state administration bodies, representatives of the Roma national minority, civil society organizations and academic community. In 2022, the Working Group met once and compiled the first version of the draft Action Plan. Further activities of the Working Group are expected in the first half of 2023: bilateral meetings, drafting the final version of the document, public consultation, and finally the adoption of the document by the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

The same policy continuity can be observed as regards monitoring of the implementation of the national policy for the Roma. The Government of the RoC has been establishing commissions for monitoring the implementation since 2005, and in the reporting period, the Government of the RoC passed the decision to set up the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for the 2013-2020 Period, with the aim of monitoring the implementation of the whole operational part of the NRIS. Traditionally, the Commission is chaired by one of the deputy prime ministers of Croatia, the deputy chairperson is the member of the Croatian Parliament representing the Roma national minority, while the members of the Commission are from among the representatives of the relevant government bodies and the representatives of the Roma national minority in the Republic of Croatia. The Commission's tasks are: to systematically monitor and coordinate the implementation of the NRIS; to propose measures for enhancing the implementation of the NRIS and the Action Plan; to develop recommendations, opinions, expert explanations and reports, as well as guidelines regarding to the implementation of the NRIS; to propose amendments to the NRIS; to monitor the timeline and spending of funds for the implementation of the NRIS, which are appropriated under the central budget; to allocate funding aimed at addressing problems and challenges in the life of persons belonging to the Roma national minority. The Commission has set up a Commission's Working Group charged with considering and improving the implementation of the National Strategy and the Action Plan, and preparing proposals and conclusions for the Commission's sessions. The Working Group is composed of the member of the Croatian Parliament representing the Roma national minority, the member of the Commission representing the OHRRNM, the substitute members of the Commission from among the representatives of the

institutions and the members of the Commission from among the representatives of the Roma national minority.

In 2019, the Commission held four sessions and discussed the programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, preparations for the draft Proposal of the Social Welfare Act, and the project “Creating Conditions for Effective Implementation of Policies Aimed at National Minorities – Phase I”, co-financed from the European Social Fund. The criteria for fixing the amount of financial assistance for the Roma national minority were improved. The adopted conclusions provided further support of the Commission to the implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for the 2013-2020 Period and the Operational Programme for the Roma National Minority. In 2019, the Commission allocated a total of € 194,520.89 (HRK 1,465,617.67) for co-financing the transport of children of pre-school age from Roma settlements to kindergartens, fitting a room for an inclusive group in a kindergarten, development of the standard design for a single-storey house, costs of adult education, costs of transport of adults participating in adult education programmes from Roma settlements to training facilities, support for talented students, organization of the 2020 Croatian Roma Youth Congress and a concert by the Europe Peace Orchestra planned for the opening of the Uštica Memorial Centre in 2020, as well as the fifth phase of construction of the Uštica Memorial Centre. On the basis of the Criteria for Fixing Financial Assistance for Improving Conditions and Quality of Life of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority in the RoC, the Commission regularly allocates funding for financial assistance to persons belonging to the Roma national minority, for purposes for which the need has been identified and for which regular financing mechanisms do not exist or cannot be set up.

In 2020, the Commission held four on-line sessions due to the epidemiological situation. At these sessions, the Commission, inter alia, gave consent for the Proposal of the 2020 Annual Programme of Improvements of Living Conditions of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority and approved the Draft Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for 2019. In keeping with the Criteria for Fixing Financial Assistance for Improving Conditions and Quality of Life of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority in the RoC, the Commission allocated a total of € 453,456.45 (HRK 3,416,567.59) in response to a total of 12 applications, which was an increase of 133.11% in comparison to 2019 (€ 194,520.89 or HRK 1,465,617.67), for co-financing the construction and completion of the Uštica Memorial Centre, costs of adult education, support for talented students, a road-improvement project in the Roma settlement of Bistrinci, and the removal of an illegal waste dump in the Roma settlement of Pribislavec. The Commission’s Working Group held six meetings.

With the adoption of the new strategic document, the Commission continued with its activities. In its new term of office, at the session held on 23 June 2021, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Decision on the Establishment of the Commission, in accordance with its long-standing practice of involving the key government ministries and representatives of the Roma community in monitoring the implementation of the public policy of integration of the Roma into the Croatian society. The Commission consists of 16 members, among whom seven are representatives of the Roma national minority, and nine are representatives of relevant authorities. The Government’s commitment to the inclusion of the Roma has been confirmed by the appointment of the deputy prime minister to the position of the Commission’s

chairperson, while the deputy chairperson is the member of the Croatian Parliament representing the Roma national community.

In 2021, the Commission held six sessions, and it approved six applications for (co)financing submitted by Roma national minority associations and councils on the basis of the Criteria for Fixing Financial Assistance for Improving Conditions and Quality of Life of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority in the RoC, including monitoring projects of the 2021 Population Census, “50 Years Since the First Roma Congress in 1971” exhibition, and the construction of the “Wall of Pain” memorial near the Roma Memorial Centre in Uštica; 10 applications for co-financing of tuition fees and fitting of school libraries, and 10 applications submitted by local and regional government units and NGOs regarding infrastructural improvements (reparation of a bus stop, improvement of roads, pavements, design and technical documentation for a road reconstruction, design for a road construction, sewage, street lighting), co-financing of costs of municipal waste collection, and the reconstruction of the Roma Educational and Cultural Centre. In keeping with the Criteria for Fixing Financial Assistance for Improving Conditions and Quality of Life of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority in the RoC, in 2021 the Commission approved the applications for financial assistance in a total amount of € 398,277.26 (HRK 3,000,819.99).

In 2022, seven sessions of the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period, and nine meetings of the Commission’s Working Group. In June 2022, the Commission adopted new Criteria for Fixing Financial Assistance for Improving Conditions and Quality of Life of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority in the RoC, which allowed for a clearer and more transparent allocations of budgetary funds. The new Criteria stipulate the possibility of allocating one-off financial assistance for natural persons who are in a disadvantaged position. The funds spent in 2022, in the amount of € 530,891.23 (HRK 4,000,000) were used for tuition fees requested in 11 applications, fitting of a school library, and 8 applications by local and regional government units. Among the selected applications for (co)financing, there were also 5 submitted by Roma national minority associations and councils, including a project of producing additional boards for the “Wall of Pain” memorial in Uštica, as well as 26 applications submitted by individuals.

In 2022, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities (OHRRNM) completed the implementation of the project “Roma Inclusion – Creating Conditions for Effective Implementation of Policies Aimed at National Minorities – PHASE I”, initiated in 2019. During 2022, three regional round-table discussions were held, dedicated to the education of Roma, with participation of representatives of state administration bodies, units of local and regional government, representatives and members of Roma national minority councils, and representatives of public institutions, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. The round-table discussions were held in Koprivnica, Sisak and Zagreb. The objective of the round-table discussions was to raise the awareness of the need for a synergy of all the stakeholders and for increased efforts in the field of education, as a key requirement for the inclusion in the labour market, economic emancipation and equal participation of persons belonging to the Roma national minority in social life of the wider community. Two rounds of discussion were held in Sisak and Osijek with parents belonging to the Roma national minority on the importance of education. The objective of these discussions was to raise the level of awareness

among parents belonging to the Roma national minority in the territory of Sisak-Moslavina County and Osijek-Baranja County about the importance of education for overall life outcome of a person, and about the rights and benefits for children belonging to the Roma national minority in the educational system. In parallel with these discussions, workshops were held for pre-school children aimed at a greater inclusion of Roma children in the pre-school education system by inciting their interest in attending kindergarten and primary school preparation programmes. The workshops were designed as a kind of “child-care” service during the discussions in which their parents took part. The activities in these creative workshops were targeted towards inciting interest in children to attend kindergarten, through diverse educational content that was offered and that is normally provided in pre-school education system. The workshop activities were adapted to the interests and needs of the participating children, and they supported the overall development of children and learning through play. In addition, two workshops were organized for children of the primary-school age (5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grades) in Sisak and Beli Manastir about the importance of education. The goal of the workshops was to stimulate, motivate, provide information and create a positive attitude to education in general, and to the continuation of the educational process after the completion of the primary school – secondary school (and university).

In 2022, the OHRRNM performed preparatory activities relating to six projects that directly regard the Roma national minority, within the Efficient Human Resources 2021-2027 programme. One of the projects is also related to the education of persons belonging to the Roma national minority, and the publication of the call is planned for 2023. The key project activities include the continuation of the popular “Spin the Wheel of Knowledge” campaign which includes raising the awareness of the wide public and professionals about the importance of education for persons belonging to the Roma national minority, and also stimulating an increase in the participation of persons belonging to the Roma national minority in pre-school education, and in secondary-school education and higher education. The campaign consists of a media campaign and motivational workshops for parents and children, as well as a competition for the best Roma students. The campaign also includes regional training sessions for Roma assistants, and national conferences aimed at enhancing the understanding of stakeholders of factors contributing to positive education outcomes, as well as a promotion of the existing best practice in the field of inclusive education at the national and EU levels. Furthermore, the project activities will include research activities linked to a detailed analysis of educational practices, including the effects of the distance learning, on educational outcomes of the Roma children during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as educational and publishing activities aimed at raising professional capacities for integrative work in the education system. During the implementation of the regional activities, the regional findings in the field of education presented in the analytical part of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion will be taken into consideration, both in respect of the Roma population and the majority population, and also the regional distribution of all the activities, to make sure that a relative proportionality of interventions in the areas/localities in need is achieved.

*From the Report of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration*

In 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration financed projects by primary legal aid providers whose priority fields of activity included the provision of primary legal aid to, among others, persons belonging to the Roma national minority. Those were projects of the Osijek Centre for Peace, Information Legal Centre, the Sisak Civil Rights Project, and the “Izvor” Women’s Association of Tenja. In its 2021 annual report on the provision of primary legal aid, the Sisak Civil Rights Project emphasized that about 10% of the primary legal aid beneficiaries were Roma, while the Osijek Centre for Peace, Information Legal Centre stated that they provided primary legal aid at the premises of the Roma Cultural Centre in Baranja.

*From the Report of the Croatian Employment Service*

In the area of employment and economic inclusion, the Croatian Employment Service (CES) estimates that a total of 3,003 persons belonging to the Roma national minority were registered as of the end of December 2019, while a total of 3,282 unemployed persons belonging to the Roma national minority were registered as of the end of December 2022. The increase in the number of the unemployed is a consequence of several factors: the global pandemics of COVID-19, economic crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, and a large influx of young persons belonging to the Roma national minority to the labour market.

The number of persons belonging to the Roma national minority who found employment in the open labour market in 2019 was nearly at the same level as in 2018, that is, 849 persons belonging to the Roma national minority found jobs. In 2020, that number was 593, in 2021 1,605, and in 2022 1,102 persons belonging to the Roma national minorities were employed, which demonstrates a significant increase in employment of persons belonging to the Roma national minority over the past two years.

The Croatian Employment Service has been implementing a range of activities aimed at employment of persons belonging to the Roma national minority, and the table here below shows the total number of persons of the Roma national minority involved in active employment policy measures during the 2018-2021 period.

Intervention	Total number of persons belonging to the Roma national minority included in AEP measures in the 2018-2021 period			
	year			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Public works	570	716	421	623

Education of the unemployed	/	/	0	320
On-the-job training	/	/	0	9
Self-employment support	7	12	6	15
Preservation of jobs in the textiles, clothing, footwear, leather and wood sector	/	/	/	5
Employment support	13	3	3	66
Permanent seasonal worker	/	/	0	5
Professional development support	/	/	0	3
Internship support	/	/	/	1
Professional development for work without employment contract	1	/	0	/
<b>In total</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>1047</b>

Other data on improvements in the integration of persons belonging to the Roma national minority are presented in chapters discussing specific articles of the Framework Convention.

## *With reference to Article 5*

### *From the Report of the Ministry of Culture and the Media*

In line with the Constitutional Act, persons belonging to national minorities may, in order to preserve, develop, promote and express their national and cultural identity, establish associations, trusts and foundations as well as institutions for the performance of media, cultural, publishing, museum, archival, library and scientific activities. The most important network of minority institutions is definitely that of central national minority libraries, which are continuously in the charge of the Ministry of Culture and the Media. These libraries constitute important hubs of cultural life in their local communities as well as forums for international cultural cooperation. The Ministry of Culture and the Media launches calls for proposals to carry out programmes meeting public needs in the field of culture, as part of which it co-finances programmes of national minorities in keeping with its remit and using its budget appropriations, whereby it fulfils its constitutional and legal obligation to preserve their national identity.

The Ministry of Culture and the Media makes continued and systematic efforts to ensure and foster the cultural autonomy of national minorities, enabling their members to exercise their cultural and artistic freedoms through all aspects of creative expression and activity, where they can develop and promote their cultural and national identity, but also make an active and equal contribution to cultural life in general. The co-financing of national minority programmes contributes to the presentation of rich cultural heritage of national minorities, preservation of their religious, national and regional identity and enhancement of intercultural communication.

In the following period, the Ministry of Culture and the Media will publish calls for proposals to carry out programmes meeting public needs in the field of culture, as part of which it will co-finance programmes of national minorities in keeping with its remit and using its budget appropriations, whereby it will fulfil its constitutional and legal obligation to preserve their national identity.

The Ministry of Culture and the Media believes that the institutional systematic approach should be the same when it comes to the cultural heritage, traditions and arts of all national minorities, with a view to preserving the rich and diverse heritage of Croatian national minorities, and also for the purpose of informing and educating the majority Croatian population about the cultural heritage of national minorities. This would contribute to a mutual cultural and educational refinement, appreciation and respect, and consequently to a stronger integration of national minority communities in the Croatian multicultural and pluralistic society. A special treatment of national minority cultural heritage, history, language, script, tradition and culture is encouraged and considered justified. They should be preserved systematically and institutionally, and upheld through an active cultural policy aimed at preserving and developing arts and culture of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia.

In 2019, the Ministry of Culture and the Media allocated € 1,935,665.70 (HRK 14,584,273.20), for the protection of sacral structures, operation of national minority libraries, publishing activities and programmes of national minority institutions, museum and gallery activities, fine arts, music and the performing and dramatic arts, including professional and amateur theatres.. In 2020, the allocations for the same purposes amounted to € 1,424,419.56 (HRK 10,732,289.17), in 2021 to € 2,891,573.11 (HRK 21,786,557.57), and in 2022 to € 1,133,431.63 (HRK 8,539,840.61), while in addition in 2022 € 7,048,530.51 (HRK 53,107,153.10) were secured for urgent protective interventions on cultural assets and the implementation of measures aimed at the protection of cultural assets damaged by the earthquake.

Overall, in the 2019-2022 period, the Ministry of Culture and the Media provided € 14,433,620.50 (HRK 108,750,113.65) for programmes meeting public needs in the field of national minority culture.

*From the Report on the Implementation of Operational Programmes of National Minorities*

Within its remit, the OHRNM allocates funding to national minority associations for improving their working conditions and for the implementation of their programmes and projects aimed at further advancement of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and the protection and promotion of their cultural, national, linguistic and religious identities, in accordance with the Operational Programmes for National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The funding is allocated with a view to securing the stability of operation of national minority associations and enabling further enhancement of their work, and for the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at developing their national and religious identities, fostering and improving their languages and literary activity, developing cultural and artistic activities, preserving and fostering national, cultural and other traditions and customs of persons belonging to national minorities.

The OHRNM also allocates funding to national minority associations aimed at the implementation of capital projects, that is, projects the aim of which is increasing and preserving the value of assets, investing in real estate and other fixed assets, for example, through purchasing or construction, upgrading, reconstruction or adaptation, energy-efficiency renovation, decorating and furnishing, and maintenance of community centres, sports clubs, cultural centres, heritage houses and similar facilities in which organized activities of persons belonging to national minorities take place. The funding allocated through the OHRNM to the umbrella national minority associations has increased significantly on a year-to-year basis, and the upward trend is expected to continue in the future period. For example, an amount of € 16,022,695.60 (HRK 120,723,000.00) from the 2022 central budget of the Republic of Croatia, budget line of the OHRNM, activity A513002 National Minority Programmes, was spent on improving the working conditions in existing premises used by national minorities and for their improvement and construction. A number of relevant activities implemented by national minority associations and/or their members using the funding allocated within the Operational

Programmes of National Minorities for the 2021-2024 Period are mentioned in the corresponding chapters of this Report.

With regard to the inclusion in social and cultural life during the period under review, we saw a continued trend in improving the quality of programmes conducive to preserving the linguistic and cultural identity of persons belonging to the Roma national minority as a whole and enhancing the quality of their integration in the community in which they live. Marking the events significant to the Roma community at the national level also continued, and enjoyed support of the OHRNM and other relevant bodies at the national, regional and local levels, including the observations of the International Roma Day, International Romani Language Day and International Roma Samudaripen/Holocaust Remembrance Day at the Uštica Roma cemetery within the Jasenovac Memorial Site. The OHRNM co-finances programmes to preserve traditional Roma culture through Roma minority associations and culture clubs and has continued to grant financial support for the implementation of programmes contributing to the preservation of traditional Roma culture. Thus, in 2019 and 2020, it co-financed seven proposed program with a total amount of € 13,272.28 (HRK 100,000.00).

We note that the Plomin NGO “Spod Učke” implements programmes for pre-school and primary school children (aged 3-14), in which it uses a holistic approach (conversations and games, nursery rhymes, stories, singing and dancing, acting and artistic expression) to teach children the Vlach language associated with the Romanian minority (“Istro-Romanian” is a seriously endangered language traditionally spoken in Šušnjeveca and its surroundings in Istria County, and in Žejane in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. The workshops of telling traditional stories in Istro-Romanian are organized for children, parents and all those interested.

*From the Report of the Council for National Minorities*

With regard to the implementation of cultural autonomy programmes of national minorities, enabled by co-financing national minority associations and institutions by means of central budget allocations through the Council for National Minorities, the chronological overview is provided here below for the years covered by the reporting period.

The following are the data for 2019: there were 1,035 applications submitted by 85 national minority associations and institutions and their 126 branches in response to the 2019 public call.

The following programmes were proposed:

- information dissemination: 57 programmes in the total value of € 2,521,401.60 (HRK 18,997,500.37)
- publishing: 68 programmes in the total value of € 302,625.26 (HRK 2,280,130.00)
- amateur cultural production: 434 programmes in the total value of € 2,241,246.96 (HRK 16,886,675.23)
- cultural events: 476 programmes in the total value of € 1,657,627.97 (HRK 12,489,397.97).

The amount of € 6,722,901.79 (HRK 50,653,703.57) was requested for the implementation of the aforementioned programmes, which is an increase of 5.8% in comparison to 2018, when the amount of € 6,356,104.89 (HRK 47,890,072.26) was requested for 1,080 programmes (45 more). The amount requested for the four types of programmes was by € 1,883,807.55 (HRK 14,193,548.00) greater than the funds planned for 2019 for the overall activity, with the planned budget line of € 4,839,094.43 (HRK 36,460,157.00). In addition to publishing, information dissemination, amateur cultural production and cultural events programmes, this budget line also includes programmes aimed at creating material conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of the Roma national minority, and programmes stemming from bilateral agreements and treaties.

In comparison to 2018, in 2019 the budget line for activity A732003 Council for National Minorities contained € 347,754.60 (HRK 2,620,157.00) or 7.74% more. The cultural autonomy programmes encompassed the following types of programmes in the amounts given below:

- 55 information dissemination programmes in the amount of € 2,505,355.41 (HRK 18,876,600.37)
- 67 publishing programmes in the amount of € 295,989.12 (HRK 2,230,130.00)
- 431 amateur cultural production programmes in the amount of € 2,239,919.73 (HRK 16,876,675.23)
- 480 cultural events programmes in the amount of € 1,669,214.68 (HRK 12,576,697.97)
- 4 programmes stemming from international agreements and treaties in the amount of € 366,978.57 (HRK 2,765,000.00)
- 6 programmes aimed at creating conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of Roma in the amount of € 111,487.16 (HRK 840,000.00).

In accordance with the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for the 2013-2020 Period, provisions of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Criteria for Contracting and Financing Cultural Autonomy Programmes of National Minorities and Methodology for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of the Financed Programmes, the Council allocates budgetary funds to minority associations and institutions for cultural autonomy programmes and programmes aimed at creating conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy, accorded with government authorities and local and regional government units. These programmes create material conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of national minorities, and they primarily provide assistance for the maintenance or construction of cultural centres, procurement of equipment and creation of spatial and other conditions for the work of associations and institutions. In 2019, a total of € 111,487,16 (HRK 840,000.00) were allocated to the following local government units:

- Municipality of Darda – € 26,544.56 (HRK 200,000.00) for the construction of a connector road in Darda
- Town of Grubišno Polje – € 19,908.42 (HRK 150,000.00) for the construction of the Community Centre
- Town of Kutina – € 23,890.11 (HRK 180,000.00) for the construction of the Community Centre

- Municipality of Nedelišće – € 17,253.97 (HRK 130,000.00) for the development of project documentation for a sports park with a playground and the Parag Cultural Centre, and for the creation of spatial and planning conditions in the cadastral district of Trnovec
- Town of Valpovo – € 10,617.82 (HRK 80,000.00) for the procurement of multifunctional and modern playground equipment and a sports field, and
- Town of Sisak – € 13,272.28 (HRK 100,000.00) for the design of a rainwater drainage channel and a bus station on the road passing through the settlement of Palanjek.

In 2020, 230 associations, unions and communities or their members responded to the public call and in their applications they requested a total of € 7,391,349.19 (HRK 55,690,120.45). The Council allocated the amount of € 5,759,506.27 (HRK 43,395,000.00) to 83 associations and institutions, as follows:

- for current monetary donations for cultural autonomy programmes: € 5,640,055.74 (HRK 42,495,000.00)
- for conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of the Roma national minority: € 111,487.16 (HRK 840,000.00)
- for current assistance from the general budget (the 2020 Lipovljani Encounters and the 2020 Evening of National Minorities in Bjelovar): € 7,963.37 (HRK 60,000.00).

This amount represents an increase of 20.5%, or € 980,800.72 (HRK 7,389,843.00) in comparison to 2019. Instead of the amount of € 5,759,506.27 (HRK 43,395,000.00) planned in the Decision, in 2020 € 5,773,395.76 (HRK 43,499,650.37) were allocated to national minority associations and institutions through the Council for National Minorities.

In 2020, the Council allocated € 111,487.16 (HRK 840,000.00) for creating conditions for the achievement of cultural anatomy of the Roma national minority, as follows:

- to the Town of Grubišno Polje, the amount of € 39,816.84 (HRK 300,000.00) for the construction of the Roma Centre in Grubišno Polje
- to the Town of Kutina, the amount of € 31,853.47 (HRK 240,000.00) for the continuation of the construction of the Community Centre in the Stjepan Radić Street, and
- to the Municipality of Nedelišće, the amount of € 39,816.84 (HRK 300,000.00) for co-financing of the construction of a connector road with rainwater drainage between the Roma settlement of Parag and the DC208 state road, and reconstruction of the Zrinski Street in the settlement of Gornji Kuršanec.

In 2021, the amount of € 6,316,875.71 (HRK 47,594,500.00) was allocated, which was an increase of € 557,369.43 (HRK 4,199,500.00) or 9.7% in comparison to 2020. In addition to publishing, information dissemination, amateur cultural production and cultural event programmes, the Decision encompassed programmes aimed at creating material conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of the Roma national minority, and programmes stemming from bilateral agreements and treaties:

- for current donations: € 6,131,063.77 (HRK 46,194,500.00) (cultural autonomy programmes of 88 associations and institutions: information dissemination, publishing, amateur cultural production and cultural events, a programme stemming from the bilateral agreement with the Republic of Hungary – the implementing agency was the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Croatia based in Bilje, and programmes stemming from the bilateral agreement

with the Republic of Italy – the implementing agency was the Rovinj Centre for Historical Research and the Italian Union of Rijeka)

- for assistance to budget beneficiaries of other budgets: € 66,361.40 (HRK 500,000.00)(a programme stemming from the bilateral agreement with the Republic of Italy – the implementing agency is the Italian Drama of Ivan Zajc Croatian National Theatre in Rijeka) conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of the Roma national minority: € 111,487.16 (HRK 840,000.00)

- for assistance from the general budget: € 119,450.53 (HRK 900,000.00) (for cultural events: the 2021 Lipovljani Encounters and the 2021 Evening of National Minorities in Bjelovar) a total of € 7,963.37 (HRK 60,000.00), and for programmes aimed at creating conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of the Roma national minority a total of € 111,487.16 (HRK 840,000.00).

The Decision on the Allocation of Funds for 2021 distributed the budget appropriations for co-financing to 993 cultural autonomy programmes of national minority associations and institutions proposed by 88 national minority associations and institutions (with 127 members), as follows: 63 information dissemination programmes, 69 publishing programmes, 407 amateur cultural production programmes, 454 cultural event programmes, 3 programmes pursuant to the bilateral agreements, 3 programmes aimed at creating conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of the Roma national minority, cultural events 2021 Lipovljani Encounters and 2021 Evening of National Minorities in Bjelovar, and financial assistance pursuant to the bilateral agreement with the Republic of Italy (beneficiary is the Italian Drama of Ivan Zajc Croatian National Theatre in Rijeka). A total of € 111,487.16 (HRK 840,000.00) were allocated for programmes aimed at creating material conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of the Roma national minority to the following units of local and regional government:

- Town of Slavonski Brod: € 39,816.84 (HRK 300,000.00) for co-financing the construction of a community centre in Novo Naselje in the Josip Rimac district, at the location of cadastral parcel no. 2987/69 in the cadastral district of Brodski Varoš,

- Town of Sisak: € 31,853.47 (HRK 240,000.00) for co-financing of the construction fo the community centre in Capraške Poljane, at the location of the cadastral parcel no. 2/24 in the cadastral district of Novo Selo,

- Municipality of Nedelišće: € 39,816.84 (HRK 300,000.00) for co-financing the construction of the Parag Cultural Centre, at the location of the cadastral parcel no. 1509/18, part 1510/1 an part 1509/19, in the cadastral district of Trnovec.

In conclusion, we note that a high degree of the implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities has been achieved through the implementation of cultural autonomy programmes of national minorities and creating conditions for the achievement of cultural autonomy of the Roma national minority.

***With reference to Article 6***

*From the Report of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities*

For the National Plan for Combatting Discrimination in the 2017-2022 Period and other relevant activities, please see the Report with reference to Article 4.

Numerous activities, and especially those mentioned in this Report with reference to Articles 4-9 and 12-15, implemented with support of national-level and local-level authorities, have contributed to a stronger integration of national minorities in the Croatian society and the greater cohesion of that society, bearing in mind the significant contribution of minorities and the cultural richness of the Croatian society. An example of this approach is the analysis of the educational policy with respect to the contribution of persons belonging to national minorities to the Croatian politics, culture, arts, economy, science and society in general, with the objective of having future curricular reforms incorporate the prominent names of persons belonging to national minorities in Croatian history, and the dates and facts tied to their contribution included into cultural, educational and other policies. For the purpose of ensuring the implementation of this analysis, the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia established the Task Force for the implementation of activity 2.2.13 in the Operational Programmes of National Minorities 2021-2024. Within the framework of the Task Force's work, research was conducted to analyse the visibility (quantitative representation) of national minorities and their portrayal and the qualitative context in which traditional national minorities are presented in primary and secondary school textbooks in the Republic of Croatia. The analysis was conducted of textbooks used in instruction in the Croatian language for the course subjects Croatian Language, Musical Culture, Musical Arts, Artistic Culture, Fine Arts, Nature and Society, History, Geography, Ethics, and Politics and the Economy. The Roma, Serbian, Italian and Hungarian national minorities were primarily analysed. The study provides recommendations in accordance with the European practice, aimed at state organizations, schools, publishers and the scientific community. The research results and the release of the study are anticipated in 2023.

*From the Report of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration*

**Prosecution of war crimes**

The Republic of Croatia resolutely continues the thorough investigation and prosecution of war crimes perpetrated in Croatia from 1991 onward, regardless of the ethnicity or rank of the perpetrators. The criminal prosecution of war crimes is undertaken pursuant to clear and objective criteria in compliance with the principle of legality. Impartiality in this process is further ensured by the legislative framework, which provides for the specialization of police officers, courts and public prosecutors. Furthermore, in order to secure uniform conduct in all cases, the State Attorney's Office of the Republic of Croatia has set forth guidelines (instructions) to prosecutors on the establishment of procedural standards, and the uniform

application of standards for the prosecution of all war crimes has been introduced. In addition to the aforementioned instruction on procedural standards and specialization of law enforcement bodies, non-discriminatory and impartial conduct in war crime cases is also reflected in the fact that competent state attorney's offices at the county level are continuing to prosecute the perpetrators of all war crimes, including members of the Croatian armed forces. A total of 3,766 persons have been prosecuted in the Republic of Croatia for war crimes. In 2019, 60 persons were reported for having committed this criminal offence, 27 persons were indicted, and in the same year, 29 persons received court rulings for this crime. In 2020, 18 persons were reported, 28 were indicted, and 24 persons received court rulings for war crimes. During 2021, criminal charges were pressed against 35 persons for war crimes, 25 persons were indicted, and the courts ruled in 28 cases regarding such criminal offences.

The prosecution of war crimes in Croatia is characterized by the unavailability of defendants, and very often also witnesses and material evidence. Hence the minister of justice of the RoC paid a visit to the minister of justice of the Republic of Serbia in March 2018, and, at the initiative of the Croatian side, it was agreed that two commissions would be set up to work on exchanges of lists of persons indicted or convicted of war crimes, and on a bilateral agreement that would regulate the issue of criminal prosecution and cooperation in war crime cases, especially as regards the issue of jurisdiction. On the basis of this agreement, the two Commissions were set up and they held several meetings. The Mixed Commission for the Exchange of Lists of Persons Indicted and Convicted of War Crimes met in April 2018, and on this occasion, the lists were again exchanged. During the meeting, it was pointed out to the Serbian side that the lists it provided were not complete, since the names of those prosecuted by the military prosecution of the former Yugoslav People's Army were not included in the list of persons indicted or convicted. The Croatian side has not received invitation for new meetings because the Serbian side considers them unnecessary.

The Commission for Solving the Issues of Criminal Prosecution and Cooperation in War Crime Cases was set up with the aim of concluding a bilateral intergovernmental agreement that would regulate the issue of jurisdiction and thus repeal the current Act on the Organization and Jurisdiction of State Organs in War Crime Cases of the Republic of Serbia which distorts the principle of universal jurisdiction by introducing some kind of a "quasi-universal" jurisdiction. The Commission held three meetings, in June and December 2018 and in July 2019. The principle of territoriality was proposed to the Serbian side, which would serve as the basic parameter to determine jurisdiction of criminal prosecution of war crimes. At the initiative of the Republic of Croatia, on 13 February 2019 a meeting of the minister of justice of the Republic of Croatia and the minister of justice of the Republic of Serbia was held in Zagreb. One of the topics discussed was the advancement of cooperation in the prosecution of war crimes, and the two sides agreed that the work of the two Commissions would be intensified.

Despite the agreement, only one meeting of the Commission for Solving the Issues of Criminal Prosecution and Cooperation of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia in War Crime Cases was held, on 10 July 2019 in Serbia. At this meeting, the Croatian side proposed that the final round of negotiations be held in Zagreb soon afterwards, and, subsequently, on 10 September the Croatian side sent an invitation to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia through the Embassy of the RoC in the Republic of Serbia to hold the final round of negotiations in October. The Croatian side has not received any feedback on whether the

proposed date was acceptable, nor has it received the text of the agreement with modifications agreed on at the last meeting of the Commission in July 2019 that was held in Serbia, or proposals of the Serbian side regarding the articles that had not been agreed.

After the new government of the Republic of Serbia was confirmed, the minister of justice and public administration Ivan Malenica sent a letter of congratulations to the newly appointed minister of justice of the Republic of Serbia Maja Popović in October 2020. In his letter, the minister invited his counterpart to intensify the dialogue and continue the work of the two Commissions, and he also noted that the invitation sent in September 2019 to continue the negotiations regarding the bilateral agreement on criminal prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes and restoration of the dynamics of work of the Commission for the Exchange of Lists was still open. No response to this invitation has been received to date.

In addition to the aforementioned activities, the State Attorney's Office of the Republic of Croatia continued its participation in regional prosecutors meetings. In May 2019, representatives of the State Attorney's Office of the Republic of Croatia took part in a regional conference of war crime prosecutors held in Belgrade (Republic of Serbia). At the conference, the regional prosecutions agreed that more criminal cases for war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia should be conducted, and that the cooperation among their offices was the key to achieve this task, but that it faced numerous challenges which had to be resolved. The regional prosecutions met again in December 2019 in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), at a conference dedicated to the cooperation in war crime cases.

The Criminal Code stipulates that "Public Incitement to Violence and Hatred" (Art. 325) is a self-standing criminal offence. With the criminalization of this offence, the Croatian criminal law has been harmonized with the requirements ensuing from the Council Framework Decision 2008/913/PUP of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law. This criminal offence belongs to general offences (*delicta communia*). In keeping with the Framework Decision, paragraph (1) stipulates that whoever in print media, through radio, television, computer systems or networks, at public gatherings or otherwise incites to, or makes available to the public any leaflets, images or other material calling for, violence or hatred against a group of people or any member thereof on grounds of their race, religion, national or ethnic identity, language, origin, skin colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or any such other characteristics will be punished by imprisonment for up to three years. In accordance with the ECRI recommendations for punishing organizers or leaders of groups inciting to violence and hatred by means of criminal law, the 2012 amendments to the Criminal Code introduced the incrimination in paragraph (2) of the activity of organizing or leading a group of three or more persons for the purpose of perpetrating acts from paragraph (1), and even the participation in such an association (paragraph (3)), which is in line with the relevant international documents (for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination). Paragraph (4) stipulates that whoever publicly approves, denies or grossly trivializes the crimes of genocide, crimes of aggression, crimes against humanity or war crimes, directed against a group of people or any member thereof on grounds of their race, religion, national or ethnic identity, origin or skin colour, in a manner that is likely to incite to violence and hatred against such a group or a

member thereof, will be punished by imprisonment for up to three years. Furthermore, paragraph (5) provides for punishment of attempts to commit criminal offences referred to in paragraphs (1)-(4).

*With reference to Article 7*

*From the Report of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration*

The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration notes that the Criminal Code, in its title XI, regulates criminal acts against human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The criminal offence of “violating one’s right to express his/her national identity” is regulated in Article 126 of the Criminal Code. Specifically, whoever deprives a person belonging to a national minority of his/her right to express freely his/her national identity or the right to cultural autonomy, or restricts such rights, will be punished by imprisonment of up to one year. The same sanction also applies to whoever, contrary to legislation governing the use of language and script, deprives a person of his/her right to use his/her language and script or curtails such right.

The criminal offence of “violation of the freedom of thought and expression”, regulated in Article 127 of the Criminal Code, is perpetrated by whoever denies or restricts the freedom of speech or public expression, the freedom of the press or other communication media, or the free establishment of mass media institutions, whoever orders or practices censorship or unlawfully denies a journalist the freedom to report or restricts such freedom, whoever unlawfully prevents the publication, sale or distribution of books, magazines, newspapers or other printed media, or the production and broadcasting of radio and television programmes, news agency programmes or the release of other media content. These offences are punishable by imprisonment for up to one year.

Article 128 of the Criminal Code regulates the criminal offence of “violation of the right to assemble and protest”. Whoever denies or restricts the right of assembly or the right to peaceful protest organized in accordance with the law, and whoever prevents, renders impossible or significantly obstructs, by force, serious threat or otherwise, public assembly or peaceful protest organized in accordance with the law, will be punished by imprisonment for up to one year.

The criminal offence of “violation of the right of association”, regulated in Article 129 of the Criminal Code, is perpetrated by whoever denies or restricts the right to form political parties, trade unions or other associations, to join their membership or from it in accordance with the law. This offence is punishable by imprisonment for up to one year.

*From the Report on the Implementation of Operational Programmes of National Minorities*

As stated above, numerous relevant activities implemented by minority associations and/or their members within the framework of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities 2021-2024, with financial resources that have increased significantly each year, are described in the relevant chapters of this Report.

*From the Report of the Council for National Minorities*

Numerous national minority associations receive support through the Council for National Minorities for the implementation of the amateur cultural production and cultural events programmes. In the 2019-2021 period, the following associations received support:

For persons belonging to the Albanian national minority, the financing of cultural activities continued through the Union of Albanian Communities in the Republic of Croatia as their umbrella organisation, Shkendija Albanian Cultural Society in Zagreb, Queen Teuta Club of Albanian Women, Forum of Albanian Intellectuals in Croatia, Drita Association of Albanian Women in Zagreb, Society of Albanian Artists in Zagreb, Mergimtari Albanian Theatre Society in Zagreb, Albanian Community of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Community of the Albanian National Minority of the Island of Krk, and the Albanian Community of Split-Dalmatia County. In the past period, the programme of amateur cultural production was carried out through Albanian communities organized at the county level, namely, those in the Counties of Zagreb, Istria, Primorje-Gorski Kotar, Zadar, Šibenik, Varaždin, as well as the newly established associations in the Counties of Split-Dalmatia and Osijek-Baranja. For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, Albanian national minority associations were granted a total of € 428,694.67 (HRK 3,230,000.00).

For persons belonging to the Bosniak national minority, cultural activities are carried out within 21 associations, and those are: the Preporod Cultural Society of Bosniaks in Croatia (Zagreb), Bosniak National Community of Croatia (Zagreb), Bosniak National Community of Croatia in Sisak-Moslavina County, Bosniak National Community of Istria (Pula), Bosniak National Community in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (Rijeka), Bosniak National Community of Croatia in the Vukovar-Srijem County (Vukovar), Bosniak National Community in the City of Zagreb and Zagreb County (Zagreb), Bosniak National Community of Zadar County (Zadar), Bosniak National Community of Pula and Istria County, Bosniak National Community of Buzet, Sabah – The Union of Bosniak Associations in Croatia (Zagreb), Kršćanski Ljiljani (*Christian Lilies*) Culture Club (Potpićan), Sevdah Culture Club (Zagreb), Bosna Culture Club of Istria County (Pula), Nur Bosniak Culture Club (Sisak), Behar Bosniak Culture Club (Gunja), Selam Culture Club (Dubrovnik), Đulistan Culture Club (Labin), Preporod Bosniak Cultural Union (Dubrovnik), Union of Young Bosniaks and Friends of the City of Rijeka and Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Preporod Bosniak Cultural Society (Split), Bosniak National Community (Rovinj), National Community of Bosniaks (Vodnjan), and the Ljiljan Bosniak Culture Club (Drenovci). For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, Bosniak national minority associations were granted a total of € 1,019,377.53 (HRK 7,680,500.00) during the reporting period.

The National Community of Bulgarians in the Republic of Croatia has been established in Zagreb to preserve and promote the cultural, linguistic and national identity of the Bulgarian national minority. The National Community of Bulgarians carries out its information-dissemination programme by printing the *Rodna reč* (*Native Word*) newspaper. As part of its publishing programme, it publishes books dealing with topics from the history of the Bulgarian national minority in Croatia. For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events

of the Bulgarian national minority, funds amounting to € 48,576.55 (HRK 366,000.00) were allocated during the reporting period.

For persons belonging to the Montenegrin national minority, cultural activities continued within the National Union of Montenegrins in Croatia, as well as through the Alliance of Montenegrins of Croatia (Rijeka). The National Community of Montenegrins in Croatia implements its programme of amateur cultural production and cultural events by organising art exhibitions and conferences, and by observing anniversaries important to the preservation of their cultural, religious and national identity. For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, Montenegrin national minority associations were granted a total of € 282,274.87 (HRK 2,126,800.00) during the reporting period.

As the umbrella organisation of the Czech national minority, the Alliance of Czechs in the Republic of Croatia (Daruvar), pools the efforts of 30 Czech cultural societies (*Češka beseda*) which, during the period under review, continued with the implementation of their programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events through the work of drama clubs, folklore groups for children and adults, choral and musical groups, and the observation of anniversaries important to the preservation of their cultural, religious and national identity. In addition to the Alliance, the Jednota Publishing House (Daruvar) is also active. A total of € 1,496,542.57 (HRK 11,275,700.) was allocated for their programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the Union of Slovaks (Našice) expanded its cultural activity through the establishment of two new regional community centres (*matica*). The Union of Slovaks presently pools the efforts of four cultural clubs and 16 Slovak community centres, which implemented their programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events through the work of musical, folklore, traditional and choral groups. In addition to the Union, the Slovak Cultural Centre (Našice) is also active. A total of € 649,678.15 (HRK 4,895,000,00). was allocated for their programmes in the fields of amateur cultural production and cultural events during the reporting period.

For persons belonging to the Hungarian national minority, programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events are implemented by the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Croatia (Osijek) as the umbrella organization which encompasses 30 cultural associations, as well as the Democratic Union of Hungarians (Bilje), Deak Ferenc Civic Centre (Lug), Ady Culture Club, Jozsef Attila Culture Club (Zmajevac), Darda Culture Club, Pelmonostor Hungarian Cultural Association (Beli Manastir), Ady Endre Hungarian Cultural Society (Zagreb), Nepkor Hungarian Cultural Society (Osijek), Stari Jankovci Association for Fostering Hungarian Traditions, Surduk Association for Fostering Hungarian Traditions (Zmajevac), Community of Hungarians of the Town of Bjelovar and the Community of Hungarians of Grubišno Polje (Grbavac). For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, the Hungarian associations listed above were granted a total of € 2,037,029.66 (HRK 15,348,000.00) during the reporting period.

During the period under review, the programme of amateur cultural production and cultural events for persons belonging to the Macedonian national minority was implemented through the Community of Macedonians in the Republic of Croatia (Zagreb), which carries out the said programme through the efforts of six Macedonian cultural societies. These are: Ohridski Biser (*Pearl of Ohrid*) (Zagreb), Ilinden (Rijeka), Braća Miladinovci (Osijek), Krste Misirkov Macedonian Cultural Society (Zagreb), Makedonija Macedonian Cultural Society (Split), Biljana Macedonian Cultural Society (Zadar) and Sveti Kiril i Metodij Macedonian Cultural Society (Pula). In addition to the Community, the Macedonian Cultural Forum (Pula) is also active. All cultural societies organize exhibitions and mark Ilinden and other important anniversaries from the history of Macedonians, and they organize Macedonian Culture Days. For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, Macedonian national minority associations were granted a total of € 351,980.89 (HRK 2,652,000.00) during the reporting period.

Persons belonging to the German and Austrian national minorities are organised around 7 non-governmental organizations registered in accordance with the Non-governmental Organizations Act. These are: the People's Union of Germans in Croatia, German Union/National Association of Danubian Swabians in Croatia (Osijek), Association of Germans and Austrians (Sirač), Association of Germans and Austrians (Vukovar), Community of Austrians in Croatia (Zagreb), Community of Austrians and Germans Union in Croatia (Osijek), and the Community of Germans in Croatia (Zagreb). During the reporting period, a total of € 348,539.02 (HRK 2,626,000.00) was allocated from Croatia's central budget to the associations of the German and Austrian national minorities for programmes aimed at exercising their ethnic rights, information dissemination, publishing, amateur cultural production and cultural events.

For persons belonging to the Polish national minority, the programme of amateur cultural production and cultural events has been implemented through the activities of the Mikolaj Kopernik Polish Cultural Association seated in Zagreb, which brings together members of the Polish national minority with a view to promoting Polish national and cultural traditions, fostering the Polish language and culture and organizing commemorations, celebrations of Poland's Independence Day, exhibitions and lectures. For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, the Polish national minority association was granted a total of € 61,848.83 (HRK 466,000.00) during the reporting period.

During the period under review, the programme of amateur cultural production and cultural events for members of the Roma national minority was implemented through 6 associations operating in the territory of several counties. These are: the Roma Resource Centre (Darda), Kali Sara Union of Roma in the Republic of Croatia (Zagreb), Association of the Baranja Roma (Beli Manastir), Bolja Budućnost Association of Roma Women (Zagreb), Sara Roma Association (Torjanci) and the Napredak Association of the Baranja Roma (Bolman). For programmes entailing dissemination of information, publishing and amateur cultural productions and cultural events of the Roma, a total of od € 271,285.42 (HRK 2,044,000.00) was allocated during the reporting period.

During the period under review, a programme of amateur cultural production was implemented under the National Community of Russians in Croatia, through the activities of the Ryabinushka Choir, and events and exhibitions were also organized to promote the language, culture and traditions of the Russian national minority. In addition to the National Community of Russians in Croatia and in conformity with the Non-governmental Organizations Act, four additional associations of the Russian national minority are active in Croatia, namely, the Katyusha Russian Cultural Association (Požega), Izvor Russian Cultural Society (Split, Gornje Sitno), SARUS – Association of the Russian National Minority in the Republic of Croatia (Zagreb), and the Kalinka Russophone Association in Međimurje (Čakovec). A total of € 133,320.06 (HRK 1,004,500.00) was allocated from Croatia's central budget for implementation of Russian programmes of cultural amateur production.

Along with the Union of Rusyns in the Republic of Croatia (Vukovar), which implements a programme of amateur cultural production and cultural events through the activities of folklore, music and choral groups, there is yet another association of Rusyns active in Croatia, namely, the Rusnak Society of Rusyns in the Republic of Croatia (Petrovci), whose goal is to promote, protect and enrich the identity and culture of the Rusyn national minority. For the implementation of the programme of amateur cultural production and cultural events, the associations of the Rusyn national minority was granted a total of € 335,324.18 (HRK 2,526,500.00) during the reporting period.

The Ukrainian Community in the Republic of Croatia brings together the highest number of persons belonging to the Ukrainian national minority in Croatia, with the aim of promoting, protecting and enriching the identity and culture of the Ukrainian national minority. In addition to this association, there are two others: the Ukrainian Culture Society (Zagreb) and the Kobzar Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Society (Zagreb). For the implementation of the programme of amateur cultural production and cultural events, the associations of the Ukrainian national minority were granted a total of € 15,847.10 (HRK 119,400.00) during the reporting period.

The Ukrainian House in Zagreb was inaugurated on 24 August 2022. On that occasion, the Croatian prime minister Andrej Plenković sent messages of support and solidarity of Croatia with Ukraine. The Mayor of the City of Zagreb and the President of the Verhovna Rada Ruslan Stefanchuk were also present at the inauguration. The Ukrainian House was immediately accepted and became a kind of home for the ever growing population of Ukrainian refugees, who will, together with other people, join in the efforts to implement various activities in the Community with a view of preserving and fostering the Ukrainian culture, traditions and language.

For persons belonging to the Slovenian national minority, cultural activities are implemented through the Union of Slovenian Associations in the Republic of Croatia (Rijeka), which pools the efforts of the earlier established Slovenski Dom Slovenian Cultural Society (Zagreb), Bazovica Cultural and Educational Society (Rijeka), Triglav Slovenian Cultural Society (Split), France Prešern Slovenian Cultural Association (Šibenik), the Lipa Slovenian Cultural Society (Zadar), Istra Slovenian Cultural Society (Pula), Snežnik Slovenian Cultural and Educational

Society (Lovran), Stanko Vraz Slovenian Cultural Society (Osijek) and the Slovenski Dom Slovenian Cultural Society (Karlovac). For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, associations of the Slovenian national minority were granted a total of € 346,141.08 (HRK 2,608,000.00) during the reporting period.

During the period under review, the Prosvjeta Serbian Cultural Society (Zagreb) implemented activities of amateur cultural production and cultural events which are vital to the preservation of the culture, traditions and language of the Serbian national minority. The Society promotes and fosters the cultural identity of Serbs by implementing programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events through 52 sub-committees. The following associations of the Serbian national minority have been established: the Serbian National Council – national coordinating body of the Serbian national minority in Croatia (Zagreb), Joint Council of Municipalities (Vukovar), Serbian Democratic Forum (Zagreb), Privrednik Serbian Society for Economic Development (Zagreb), Čuvari Srpskog Identiteta (*Guardians of the Serbian Identity*) (Vukovar), Đurđevdan Serbian Cultural and Spiritual Club (Drežnica), Uranak Association of the Serbian National Community (Varaždin), Srpski Kulturni Centar (*Serbian Cultural Centre*) Institution in the Field of Culture (Zagreb). The Serbian National Council in Zagreb is the umbrella organization for members of the Serbian national minority, which implements programmes aimed at building civic trust and culture and regularly publishes a weekly news magazine Novosti. For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, culture societies and associations of the Serbian national minority were granted a total € 4,616,895.61 (HRK 34,786,000.00) during the reporting period.

For persons belonging to the Italian national minority, cultural activities are implemented through Centre for Historical Research (Rovinj), EDIT Publishing House (Rijeka), and the Italian Union (Rijeka). For programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, associations of the Italian national minority were granted a total € 3,156,812.00 (HRK 23,785,000.00) during the reporting period.

For persons belonging to the Jewish national minority, cultural activities are carried out through the Jewish Community (Zagreb), Cendo Research and Documentation Centre (Zagreb), Bet Israel in Croatia (Zagreb), Association of Holocaust Survivors (Zagreb) and the Bet Israel Jewish Religious Community in Croatia. For their programmes of amateur cultural production and cultural events, the associations of the Jewish national minority were granted a total of € 354,948.17 (2,674,357.00) during the reporting period.

***With reference to the Article 8***

*From the Report of the Office of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities*

Pursuant to Article 15 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, persons belonging to national minorities may establish associations, trusts and foundations for the purpose of preserving, developing, promoting and expressing their national and cultural identities.

According to Article 2 of the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Communities (*Narodne novine*, nos. 83/02 and 73/13), religious communities freely and independently determine their internal organization; managing bodies, their hierarchy and responsibilities; the bodies and individuals representing the religious community and its organizational forms; the content and manner of professing their faith; the maintenance of relations with their central authority and other religious communities; association with other religious communities; and other matters concerning their activities in compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. When upon a request by a religious community, and unions of religious communities, religious communities and their organizational forms are entered in the Register of Religious Communities in the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: Register) maintained by the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, in compliance with the Ordinance on Registration Forms and the Method of Maintenance of the Register of Religious Communities in the Republic of Croatia (*Narodne novine*, nos. 9/03, 12/03, 24/04, 144/10, 124/12 and 21/20). The Register is maintained in electronic form and the data on registered legal persons are public and accessible online. The establishment and operation of associations are governed by the Non-governmental Organizations Act (*Narodne novine*, nos. 74/14, 70/17 and 98/19) and the Ordinance on the Content and Method of Maintenance of the Register of Associations of the Republic of Croatia and the Register of Foreign Associations in the Republic of Croatia (*Narodne novine*, no. 4/15 and 14/20).

In compliance with the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Communities, the Croatian Government has concluded Agreements on Matters of Common Interest, which encompass churches and religious communities of national minorities. The Republic of Croatia has thus created suitable conditions for the expression, preservation and development of their self-identification in the sense of the Framework Convention. The churches and religious communities of national minorities which have concluded Agreements on Matters of Common Interest with the Croatian Government are: the Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia, the Islamic Community in Croatia, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Croatia, the Macedonian Orthodox Church in Croatia, the Coordinating Committee of the Jewish Communities in the Republic of Croatia and the Bet-Israel Jewish Religious Community in Croatia.

Thus, the rights of national minorities ensuing from the Framework Convention are not only secured by the Constitution and the Act on the Rights of National Minorities, but are also

elaborated further in the aforementioned agreements. The Act on the Legal Status of Religious Communities and the agreements concluded with churches and religious communities guarantee them the freedom to assemble, associate, express their opinions and profess their faith, establish institutions, organizations and associations, and offer spiritual guidance in hospitals, welfare institutions, prisons and other correctional facilities, and to the police and armed forces. It is noteworthy that regular financial support from the central budget, the right to provide pre-school education in kindergartens and religious instruction in primary and secondary schools, as well as the conclusion of marriages in religious ceremonies with the same status as civil-law marriages have also been secured.

Below are data on the amounts of regular financial support allocated from the central budget and on support provided through the Office of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities in the 2019-2022 period:

		2019	2020	2021	2022
1	Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia	€ 1,410,110.43 (HRK 10,624,477.00)	€ 1,457,363.39 (HRK 10,980,504.48)	€ 1,516,241.99 (HRK 11,424,125.28)	€ 1,580,328.57 (HRK 11,906,985.63)
2	Islamic Community in Croatia	€ 429,747.96 (HRK 3,237,936.00)	€ 444,148.79 (HRK 3,346,439.04)	€ 462,092.74 (HRK 3,481,637.76)	€ 481,623.89 (HRK 3,628,795.20)
3	Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Croatia	€ 23,128.81 (HRK 174,264.00)	€ 23,903.84 (HRK 180,103.49)	€ 24,869.57 (HRK 187,379.81)	€ 25,920.73 (HRK 195,299.74)
4	Macedonian Orthodox Church in Croatia	€ 99,230.07 (HRK 747,649.00)	€ 102,555.19 (HRK 772,702.07)	€ 106,698.50 (HRK 803,919.83)	€ 111,208.29 (HRK 837,898.89)
5	Coordinating Committee of the Jewish Communities in the Republic of Croatia	€ 80,577.74 (HRK 607,113.00)	€ 83,277.90 (HRK 627,457.32)	€ 86,642.39 (HRK 652,807.08)	€ 90,304.48 (HRK 680,399.10)
6	Bet-Israel Jewish Religious Community in Croatia	€ 59,687.17 (HRK 449,713.00)	€ 61,687.33 (HRK 464,783.20)	€ 64,179.55 (HRK 483,560.80)	€ 66,892.21 (HRK 503,999.33)

In 2019, 2020 and 2022, the gross base for the calculation of salaries paid to government officials and civil servants was increased, and the amount of financial support for each religious community was increased accordingly.

*From the Report of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration*

Article 130 of the Criminal Code regulates the criminal offence of “violation of the freedom of religion”. Whoever denies or restricts the right to the freedom of conscience and religion, the right to manifest publicly one’s religion or other belief, will be punished by imprisonment for up to one year. The same punishment will be imposed on whoever denies a religious community operating in conformity with the law the right to equality with other religious communities in the Republic of Croatia, or denies or restricts a religious community’s right to perform publicly religious services, to establish schools, educational institutions, social and charitable institutions and to manage them.

Article 16(12) of the Act on the Execution of Prison Sentence (*Narodne novine*, no. 14/21) stipulates that every detainee has the right to religion and conversation with an authorised religious representative. This right is further regulated by Articles 101 and 102 of the same Act. The detainees and minors are entitled to manifest their religion using their own religious literature and religious objects, and they are also entitled to contact the authorized representative of a religious community entered in the Register of Religious Communities in the Republic of Croatia. For the most numerous religious communities, manifesting religion and provision of spiritual guidance are regulated by contracts on spiritual guidance concluded by those religious communities and the Government of the RoC in keeping with international treaties and the Act on the Execution of Prison Sentence. For other religious communities (entered in the Register of Religious Communities in the Republic of Croatia), the interested detainee or minor is allowed to contact the appointed representative of the religious community.

*From the Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities*

The Government of the Republic of Croatia has secured funds for the renovation of those national minority religious structures that have the status of cultural monuments through the Operational Programme for the protection and enhancement of the current level of rights of all national minorities. In parallel, the Croatian Government cooperates with representatives of religious communities with the aim of accelerating the procedure for the restitution of property confiscated during the Yugoslav communist rule to all identified legal and natural persons, with due attention paid to the equality of persons entitled to property restitution, including religious communities.

Furthermore, the Government has secured additional funding, by means of a public call, for the renovation of religious structures that are important for the identity of national minorities, which have the status of cultural monuments, in line with the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Communities and the Act on Financing Public Needs in the Field of Culture. For example, in 2021, the Ministry of Culture and the Media allocated € 989,979.43 (HRK 7,459,000.00) for programmes aimed at the protection and preservation of immovable cultural property of the

Serbian national minority, and a total of € 145,995.09 (HRK 1,100,000.00) for programmes aimed at the protection and preservation of immovable cultural property of the Hungarian national minority. Other relevant data can be found under Article 5 of this Report.

Consultation of the database of the Register of Associations of the Republic of Croatia shows that 695 NGOs active in the field of “protection of national minority rights” were registered as active on 15 December 2022.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <https://registri.uprava.hr/#!udruge>

*With reference to Article 9*

*From the Report of the Ministry of Culture and the Media*

In the context of further recommendations, we note that the Media Act and the Electronic Media Act prohibit the publication of content that incites, or is conducive to the incitement and spreading of hatred or discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic identity, skin colour, sex, language, religion, political or other conviction, national or social background, property, trade union membership, education, social status, marital or family status, age, health condition, disability, heredity, gender identity, expression or sexual orientation, as well as antisemitism, xenophobia, and ideas of the fascist, nationalist, communist and other totalitarian regimes. The publication of such content is punishable pursuant to the provisions of the Criminal Code, and if the perpetrator is a media-service provider of audio and audio-visual content, the regulatory body (Electronic Media Council) may withdraw its concession either temporarily or permanently, and this has been done in practice on several occasions.

*From the Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities*

The support for national minority associations includes significant amounts of investment in the relevant minority associations' infrastructure, programmes and activities. For example, in April 2019, the construction of the Media Centre of Hungarians in Croatia in the Municipality of Bilje was completed. The project was financed from the central budget and the Media Centre was inaugurated by prime ministers of Croatia and Hungary, Andrej Plenković and Victor Orban, which demonstrates that the Croatian national minority in Hungary and the Hungarian national minority in Croatia enjoy a very high level of minority rights, in line with the highest international standards, which is an example of a particularly good practice in Europe. Following a period of 23 years during which the Media Centre operated from rented premises, it now enjoys contemporary and well fitted facilities in which television and radio programme, as well as print media, in the Hungarian language are produced. A significant financial contribution for the furnishing of the studio and editing room was also provided by the Hungarian Government.

The support provided to other minority associations is mentioned under other chapters of this Report. Much of that support was directed towards the media and publishing, especially through the Ministry of Culture and the Media, Council for National Minorities and the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities.

*From the Report of the Agency for Electronic Media*

Pursuant to Article 71 of the Electronic Media Act (*Narodne novine*, no. 111/21) and the Ordinance on the Fund for Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in the Electronic Media (*Narodne novine*, no. 84/22), the Council for Electronic Media conducts procedures to allocate resources from the Fund for Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in the Electronic Media. The procedure for the allocation of funding is conducted by means of a public call for proposals, and in compliance with the aforementioned legislation and subordinate legislation, and the Fund's Allocation Programme approved by the Ministry of Finance (high-value grants). The source of the funding consists of payments from Croatian Radio-Television, which pays 3% of the monthly sum of collected subscription fees to the Fund's special account.

The Fund's financing encourages production and broadcasting of programming. It also stimulates the production and broadcasting of audio-visual and radio projects, programmes and content by television and/or radio broadcasters at the local and regional levels, non-profit television and radio broadcasters, non-profit media service providers pursuant to Articles 26 and 92 of the Electronic Media Act, electronic publication providers with the exception of electronic versions of newspapers and magazines, electronic publications of television and/or radio broadcasters and electronic publications of media service providers licenced to perform activities regulated by Articles 26 and 92 of the Electronic Media Act, non-profit producers of audio-visual and/or radio content of public interest which is particularly vital for: exercise of the right of citizens to public information; encouragement of cultural diversity and nurturing of the heritage; the development of education, scholarship and the arts; promotion of creativity in dialects of the Croatian language; promotion of special cultural programmes and events of national minorities in Croatia; promotion of awareness-raising on gender equality and other highest values of the Constitutional order; promotion of awareness-raising on the equality of gender identities and sexual orientation; encouragement of high-quality programming for children and youth aimed at furthering their well-being; promotion of awareness-raising on the abilities and contribution of persons with disabilities, and promoting and respecting their rights and dignity, including the fight against stereotypes, prejudices and harmful treatment of persons with disabilities; historically credible presentation of the Croatia's Homeland War; the development and encouragement of programming focusing on media literacy, environmental protection, health promotion and stimulating a culture of health.

In 2019, the Council made three decisions on the allocation of finances from the Fund and allocated a total of € 474,117.45 (HRK 3,572,237.95) for programmes/broadcasts in the "National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia" category for 2019 and 2020.

In 2021, the Council also made three decisions on the allocation of finances from the Fund and allocated a total of € 223,934.04 (HRK 1,687,231.03) for programmes/broadcasts in the "National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia" category for 2021.

For examples, in 2021 € 95,570.81 (HRK 720,078.30) were allocated for a total of 28 radio broadcasts dedicated to this topic, € 24,286.04 (HRK 182,983.18) for four pieces of electronic-publication content relating to national minorities, € 100,759.11 (HRK 759,169.55) for five television broadcasts, and € 3,318.07 (HRK 25,000.00) for the content by a non-profit producer of audio-visual programming, focusing on national minorities.

In 2022, too, the Council made three decisions whereby it allocated a total of € 218,412.14 (HRK 1,645,626.26) for programmes/broadcasts in the "National Minorities in the Republic of

Croatia” category for 2022. A total of € 916,463.63 (HRK 6,905,095.24) was allocated to the Fund beneficiaries over the 2019-2022 period for programmes/broadcasts in the “National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia” category.

In addition, a study entitled *The Analysis of Social Impact of the Fund for Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in the Electronic Media* has been made available at the web pages of the Agency (<https://www.aem.hr/nekategorizirano/iz-tiska-izasla-analiza-drustvenog-utjecaja-fonda-za-poticanje-pluralizma-i-raznovrsnosti-elektronickih-medija/> ).

Furthermore, in 2021 the Agency for Electronic Media continued with the implementation of the project encouraging journalistic excellence by providing grants to journalists for their broadcasts and investigations of topics that are of public interest, in the areas of culture, health-care, local issues, ecumenism and religion, human rights, women’s status in the society, topics of interest for minorities in the society, children and youth, education, sports, the economy, international relations and the European Union. The project’s special goals are related to journalists’ additional efforts and thorough investigation of topics that are of public interest, strengthening of electronic publications’ critical capacity and social influence, expansion of the number of topics and relevance of content present in the electronic publications, truthful reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 Zagreb earthquake, professionalization of journalistic and creative work in electronic publications, awarding and motivating journalists for top-level creative work and strengthening of the journalist’s autonomy.

In 2021, the Agency for Electronic Media continued with its educational activities and promotion of media literacy. The fourth Media Literacy Days, planned for April 2021 and organized by the Agency and the UNICEF Office in Croatia, in cooperation with numerous partners and under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and the Media and the Ministry of Science and Education, were for the large part held online. Nearly 30 teaching materials prepared during the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> iterations of the Media Literacy Days are still available for download at the [medijskapismenost.hr](http://medijskapismenost.hr) portal. The materials, which have been downloaded more than 435,000 times, can be used for online workshops, classes in media literacy for kindergarten children, primary and secondary school students, and some materials are also intended for parents and guardians. Within the Media Literacy Days, a film competition was also organized for primary and secondary school students by the Agency for Electronic Media and UNICEF, in cooperation with the Croatian Film Association.

#### *From the Report of Croatian Radio-Television*

In the 2019-2022 period, Croatian Radio-Television (hereinafter: HRT) continued producing and broadcasting programmes for national minorities on its television and radio channels, and in broadcasts of its regional radio centres.

Under the Croatian Radio-Television Act (*Narodne novine*, nos. 137/10, 76/12, 78/16, 46/17, 73/17 and 94/18), HRT is, in pursuing its programming principles and obligations, obliged to

produce and/or broadcast programmes dedicated to informing persons belonging to national minorities in the Republic of Croatia.

In accordance with the Agreement concluded by the Government of the Republic of Croatia and HRT for the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2022, HRT is obliged to broadcast, on all its national radio channels, programmes aimed at providing persons belonging to national minorities with information in the Croatian language, and to broadcast on regional channels in areas with significant national minority populations additional programmes in national minority languages (Pula and Rijeka – in Italian; Osijek – in Hungarian and Slovak), including specialised music content. The Knin and Dubrovnik regional channels broadcast programmes in the Croatian language, dedicated to the Serbian and Bosniak national minorities. On its national television channels, HRT airs programmes dedicated to informing national minorities, partly in national minority languages. In its news programmes of regional significance HRT covers issues and problems specific to those national minorities that are present in a given region.

HRT has undertaken the commitment to ensure that the treatment of national minority themes will not be limited solely to programmes intended for national minorities as the target audience, but will be suitably presented in programmes for the general public with specific efforts to highlight examples of political, social and cultural coexistence between national minorities and the majority nation. With regard to programming content, the Agreement stipulates that programmes should deal with minority rights and their violation, political participation, employment, activism and education in minority languages, with special focus on preserving and documenting the cultural and traditional customs of national minorities in order to present, in the best possible way, the authentic identity of each of the 22 national minorities in the Republic of Croatia, as well as showcasing work with children belonging to national minorities. Content involving children belonging to national minorities as well as that targeted at them should be presented as part of both radio and television programmes for children and youth.

HRT's legal obligation to produce and broadcast programmes dedicated to informing national minorities is mostly met through its programmes called *Prizma (Prism)* and *Manjinski mozaik (Minority Mosaic)* as well as its daily news programmes. Croatian Television has been broadcasting *Prizma*, every week in a duration of 45 minutes, for 25 years (without changing its time slot), which has definitely contributed to creating an affirmative environment for national minorities and breaking down deep-rooted prejudices against minorities in the Croatian society. Over many years of its broadcasting, the show has achieved high viewer ratings, which suggests it is regularly followed by the majority population as well. Topics covered by the show have been mainly the protection of minority rights, promotion of tolerance and understanding in respect of members of minority communities, warnings about an increasing occurrence of intolerance and hate speech in the Croatian society, and the culture of remembrance as an exceptionally important segment of activity of some minority communities in light of a strong polarization of the Croatian society as regards issues relating to the recent history. The show has presented portraits of prominent, inspiring and interesting persons belonging to national minorities and youngsters whose activities are related to minority communities or whose esteem in the field of their activity contributes to the prominence of their minority. The *Prizma*

programme pays particular attention to the education and inclusion of children belonging to the Roma national minority in the schooling system, and follows the activities of minority associations in which children take part. In the clips included in the broadcast, children belonging to national minorities speak minority languages, if they can, with subtitles in Croatian.

To ensure that national minority members are provided with as much content as possible in their native languages, Croatian Television has continued to broadcast *Manjinski mozaik* – a 15-minute documentary programme fully broadcast in the language of a particular minority. The topics covered by the programme include those relating to the minority identity, culture and tradition. Its production is funded by HRT.

Topics relating to national minorities have also been covered by other programming departments: the Culture Department (in particular, its Popular and Traditional Culture Desk), the Religious Department, the Children and Youth Department, the Science and Education Department and, to a lesser extent, the Entertainment Department. Croatian Television presents the work and creative endeavours of national minorities through different television formats and genres, music shows, overviews of events and festivals, reportages, documentaries, and in live or delayed television feeds.

In line with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Croatian Radio-Television Act, Croatian Radio produces and broadcasts information and programmes for national minorities without using funds from the central budget of the Republic of Croatia. The programme *Multikultura (Multiculture)* is aired on Croatian Radio's Channel One and it is intended to provide information to national minorities. The programme is conceived as a magazine programme, which means that each show consist of, on average, five to six different topical items, mainly focusing on issues relating to various minority communities. By taking account of the radio format and, in the first place, the attractive content which is – from the editorial and journalistic perspective – considered interesting to listeners, *Multikultura* presents topics and content related to the activities of the Croatian Government's Council for National Minorities, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, and the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, as well as other governmental agencies in charge of minority issues and minority associations and institutions as bodies implementing activities and programmes.

Minority issues are not only covered in specialized programmes, but also in regular news programmes and the daily broadcast *U mreži Prvoga (In the Network of Channel One)*, as well as the weekly shows, *Isti i različiti (The Same and Different)* and *Civilno društvo (Civil Society)*. Particularly noteworthy are programmes produced by the Religious Department, which fully implement the Agreement on Representation of Non-Catholic Religious Communities on Croatian Radio. Croatian Radio's News Department dedicates great attention to systematic reporting on the lives, problems and activities of representatives of national minorities in Croatia and tries to raise public awareness about these issues and help develop a multi-ethnic and tolerant society. In addition to regular specialised programmes, the widest possible range of different programmes – from contact shows to news programmes – have dealt with minority issues, in order to avoid ghettoization of topics and attract as many listeners as possible. The

regional radio centres have promoted the principle of equality in a number of programmes, and have covered topics relating to national minorities.

Also, in the 2019-2022 period, HRT has continued devoting attention to the training of journalists belonging to national minorities, and journalists and editors who speak national minority languages and work on programmes for national minorities.

In line with the HRT mission and mission goals, the HRT Academy continuously endeavours to raise the level of competence and awareness about the importance of enhancing measures relating to the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights, freedoms and the anti-discriminatory legislation as well as gender equality in public speech and the media, and to raise public awareness about persons with disabilities. These topics are always included in internal training modules for journalists.

In 2019, the Ombudsperson held a workshop for journalists and editors of public media services focusing on the protection of national minority rights. Activities of the Ombudsperson were presented at the workshop, from the institutional mechanisms and the legislative framework, to competencies and topical activities of the Ombudsperson's office. An analysis was also conducted of the produced and broadcast programmes in this field, with instructions and guidelines relating to the regular reports submitted by HRT to the Ombudsperson, with a special emphasis on the influence of the media on the civic education of children, with a view of them growing up to be members of the society who will encourage, respect and protect diversity.

Due to the specific situation caused by the SARS-Cov-2 virus and the epidemiological measures in force, in 2020 and 2021 the majority of the planned training programmes were held online.

The work also continued on the development of the internal HRT's e-learning system, with a particular emphasis on enhancing content in the field of Media Ethics and Human Rights module, with a view of eliminating stereotypical, insulting and degrading media portrayal of individuals or groups on any discriminatory grounds. The system is located on HRT's internal web pages and its advantage lies in the fact that it is available all the time to all HRT's employees, who can browse through theoretical training materials. The successful cooperation with ombudspersons' offices also continued, as they are allowed to actively participate in the creation and amending of the content already uploaded to the HRT's e-learning module with new material and publications produced by them.

Due to the specific situation which affected the whole world in the early 2020, the HRT Academy launched a continuous cooperation with the ombudspersons' offices in the RoC, whereby it receives materials and instructions (publications) for the training of journalists and editors from all the ombudspersons, which are then uploaded to the HRT's internal e-learning platform. This year, the "Discrimination Identification Guide" and the analyses "Conscientious Objection: Legal Sources and Standards" and "Police Use of Force: Regulations and Controls" have been uploaded, all produced by the Ombudsperson's Office.

As part of the strategic partnership with the EBU Academy, in December 2021, the online workshop entitled "How to Incorporate Diversity when Creating TV, Digital and Radio Content" was held. During the workshop, the participants could learn about various challenges

editors and journalists of the European public broadcasting companies face when attempting to create content that deals with the recognition and respect of diversities, development of equal opportunities and protection from discrimination, and also providing equal access, opportunities and resources to everybody, irrespective of their sex, health-related limitations, race, age or any other factor. The workshop was also recorded and the recording was available over several months to all editors and journalists.

*From the Report of the Council for National Minorities*

The Council for National Minorities met on 27 June 2019 to discuss this topic and it concluded, inter alia, that the implementation of the Operational Programmes for National Minorities of the Republic of Croatia for the 2017-2020 Period was unsatisfactory, because activities pertaining to the public media service were not implemented in 2019.

Furthermore, the Council stated that greater effort of the Programming Council was needed in reaction to some revisionist content, and that journalists and editors in charge of such content should be sanctioned. The Council also concluded that in 2019, the programmes produced and broadcast for national minorities was insufficiently present in the overall programmes of Croatian Radio-Television, as regulated under the Agreement of the Croatian Radio-Television and the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

According to the Council's assessment, the conclusions of the Council for National Minorities defining HRT's obligation to organize consultative meetings of representatives of the Council and the Management Board and HRT's Programming Council have not been implemented.

The Council for National Minorities commends all efforts of the Government of the Republic of Croatia aimed at combatting various forms of discrimination, but it also points to the fact that minority and human rights do not depend primarily on the Constitution, legislation and declarations, but rather on the moral readiness and worldview of the community in which they should be exercised.

The live transmission of the marking of the International Roma Genocide Remembrance Day, held on 2 August at Uštice near Jasenovac, is a praiseworthy example. With regard to programmes in Hungarian on HRT's national television channels, the Council notes that nothing has changed, that is, the "temporary" status from 1991 when broadcasts in national minority languages produced by HRT's regional studios were cancelled is still ongoing. The situation of other national minorities who enjoyed this right prior to 1991 has not changed either. The Hungarian national minority has partly solved this problem by renting media space from the Slavonia and Baranja Television in Osijek, whose operation is co-financed by the Council for National Minorities under the Act Ratifying the Agreement of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Hungary on the Protection of the Hungarian National Minority in Croatia and the Croatian National Minority in Hungary (*Narodne novine – International Treaties*, no. 8/95). Since 2002, Slavonian Television airs a weekly half-hour programme in the Hungarian language with subtitles in Croatian (Saturday, 18:30h), created and edited by contributors of the editing board of the Democratic Union of Hungarian in Croatia seated in Osijek. Slavonian Television can be viewed throughout Croatia via a cable television service. For many years, and even in the period prior to the conclusion of the new Agreement between HRT and the Government of

the Republic of Croatia, Radio Osijek has aired a programme in the Slovak language every Sunday at 19:30h. The central news programme in Italian, aired by Radio Rijeka, has a duration of 15 minutes and is edited by the Italian department. It covers the most important events in the City of Rijeka, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Republic of Croatia and the world, and goes on air every day at 16:00h except on Sundays.

This clearly shows that radio programme meets HRT's programming obligations under the law and Agreement with the Government of the Republic of Croatia to a large degree. The Council especially notes HRT's failure to fulfil the set obligations of providing information in national minority languages, including programmes in national minority languages for children.

On 16 June 2021 the Council for National Minorities held its 95<sup>th</sup> session (teleconference). The agenda included the following item: *Adoption of the Proposed Conclusions on the Croatian Radio-Television Reports on the Produced, Co-produced and Broadcast Programmes Intended to Provide Information to Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia in 2019 and 2020*. Pursuant to Articles 18 and 35 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, the Staff Service of the Council for National Minorities received the Croatian Radio-Television Report on the Produced, Co-produced and Broadcast Programmes Intended to Provide Information to Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia in 2019 on 11 March 2020, and the Croatian Radio-Television Report on the Produced, Co-produced and Broadcast Programmes Intended to Provide Information to Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia in 2020 on 3 March 2021.

In 2019, the Croatian Television aired 5,673 minutes and 13 seconds of content intended for persons belonging to national minorities, which constitutes 1.079% of its total air time. In view of the minimal increase of 1,054% in comparison to 2018, it is clear that minorities are still insufficiently present in HRT's programmes. The obligations of radio and television stations at the national, regional and local levels relating to the representation of national minorities in their broadcasts are regulated in Article 18 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Agreement of the Croatian Radio-Television and the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2022. Of the total duration, 52 hours, 29 minutes and 54 seconds was in news and current affairs programmes, as follows: reports in the midday news bulletin (47 minutes and 6 seconds), reports in the central evening news bulletin (141 minutes and 26 seconds, that is, 2 hours, 21 minutes and 26 seconds), reports in the late evening news bulletin (36 minutes and 27 seconds), Tema dana (*Today's Topic*) (46 minutes and 16 seconds), and reports in the regional news bulletin (40 minutes and 31 seconds). The largest part of the content produced belongs to the Prizma programme (2,253 minutes or 37 hours and 33 minutes), and the Manjinski Mozaik programme (584 minutes and 4 seconds, or 9 hours, 44 minutes and 4 seconds).

In 2020, the Croatian Television aired 5,494 minutes and 14 seconds of content intended for persons belonging to national minorities, which constitutes 1.045% of its total air time. Of the total duration, 42 hours, 32 minutes and 43 seconds was in news and current affairs programmes, as follows: reports in the midday news bulletin (47 minutes and 42 seconds), reports in the central evening news bulletin (113 minutes and 16 seconds, or 1 hour, 53 minutes and 16 seconds), reports in the late evening news bulletin (52 minutes and 30 seconds), Tema

dana (Today's Topic) (54 minutes and 11 seconds), and reports in the regional news bulletin (67 minutes and 18 seconds, or 1 hour, 7 minutes and 18 seconds). The largest part of the content produced belongs to the Prizma programme (1,838 minutes or 30 hours and 38 minutes), and the Manjinski Mozaik programme (379 minutes and 36 seconds, or 6 hours, 19 minutes and 36 seconds). The radio programme meets HRT's programming obligations under the law and Agreement with the Government of the Republic of Croatia to a large degree.

One of the comments on the Croatian Radio-Television Reports regards the duration presented in the Report, which, in the Council's assessment, includes content that should not be described as programme intended for persons belonging to national minorities (Nedjeljom u 2 (*On Sunday at 2*), Romano Bolković – 1 na 1 (*One on One*), Ni da ni ne (*Neither Yes nor No*), Peti dan (*Fifth Day*) etc.). Furthermore, according to the Council's assessment, the obligation to present national minority topics in programmes intended for general audience, stipulated in Article 47 of the Agreement with the Government of the Republic of Croatia, has been neglected. The goal of this provision was to attract a wider audience by selecting a more attractive time slot or by airing minority content at prime time.

The Council persists in encouraging further training of editors and journalist with the aim of reporting objectively and raising the public's awareness of adverse consequences of hate speech and spreading of stereotypes and prejudices. The public media have a duty to contribute to the promotion and respect of the fundamental human rights and freedoms, understanding and respect for diversity, and inclusion of minority issues in all of their programmes, in order to contribute to the development of a culture of dialogue between the majority and minorities as equal actors of the political, cultural and social life.

The Council repeats its invitation to respect the provisions of Article 47 of the Agreement of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and Croatian Radio-Television, and Article 9 of the Croatian Radio-Television Act, which stipulate the obligation to provide information in national minority languages, including programmes in national minority languages for children, and the obligation to hold periodical consultative meetings with the Management Board and the HRT Programming Council.

On those grounds, and in accordance with Article 35(2)(3) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, the Council proposed the adoption of the Conclusions on the Croatian Radio-Television Reports on the Produced, Co-produced and Broadcast Programmes Intended to Provide Information to Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia in 2019 and 2020, in which:

1. It established that in 2019 and 2020 the programmes produced and broadcast for national minorities was insufficiently present in the overall programmes of Croatian Radio-Television, and that the presence of such programmes is guaranteed by Article 18 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Agreement of the Croatian Radio-Television and the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2022.

2. It established the obligation of the Croatian Radio-Television to hold periodical consultative meetings of the Council and the Management Board and Programming Council in order to secure a continual exchange of opinions on the exercise of national minority rights, that is, on the content and share of programmes intended for national minorities in the overall programmes, on information dissemination in national minority languages, on how to solve the problem of the lack of training of journalists working on minority issues, and on issues pertaining to the representation of minorities in all programmes of the Croatian Radio-Television.

The Conclusions were adopted unanimously. Furthermore, the Council members authorized the president of the Council to arrange, on behalf of the Council, a meeting with an HRT delegation, on their premises, to discuss the aforementioned reports, and to report to the Council members on the outcomes of that meeting.

At the aforementioned seminar entitled “The Media and National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia – Protection of Minorities and the Role of the Media in the Democratisation of the Croatian Society”, organized by the Council for National Minorities in cooperation with the OHRRNM in Osijek on 6 July 2021, the main emphasis was put on the Croatian Radio-Television Reports on the Produced, Co-produced and Broadcast Programmes Intended to Provide Information to Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia in 2019 and 2020.

Just as the Council for National Minorities and the OHRRNM have persisted for years in encouraging the training of editors and journalists, the crucial importance of objective public information, enhancing professionalism and attaining higher standards of media activity aimed at raising the public awareness of adverse consequences of hate speech and spreading of stereotypes and prejudices was also emphasised at the seminar.

***With reference to Articles 10 and 11***

*From the Report of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration*

The Republic of Croatia has undertaken the commitment to recognize, respect, promote and protect regional or minority languages, also as a signatory to both the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention.

Equality in the official use of national minority languages and scripts is regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts. Pursuant to Article 12 of the Constitution, the Croatian language and Latin script are in official use in the Republic of Croatia, while in certain local units, another language and the Cyrillic or other script in addition to the Croatian language and Latin script may be introduced in the official use, in keeping with the criteria prescribed by law.

Article 10 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities stipulates that persons belonging to national minorities are entitled to freely use their languages and scripts both privately and publicly, and that they have the right to post signs, markers and other information in the language and script they use in compliance with law.

Furthermore, Article 12 of the Constitutional Act provides for the exercise of equality in the official use of a national minority language and script in a local government unit in which persons belonging to a national minority comprise a minimum of one third of the population. This same article stipulates that equality in the official use of a national minority language and script is also exercised when so mandated by international treaties which, pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, form a part of the internal legal order of the Republic of Croatia, or when so stipulated for by the charter of a local or regional government unit in compliance with the provisions of a special legislative act on the use of national minority languages and scripts in the Republic of Croatia.

As already stated above, this piece of legislation is the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Croatia, which thoroughly regulates the remaining criteria for the official use of the languages and scripts used by persons belonging to national minorities. The provisions of Articles 8, 9, 10 and 11 of the aforementioned Act regulate the following: the operations of municipal and city councils and county assemblies in the Croatian language and Latin script and national minority languages and scripts that are in equal official use; bilingual and multilingual composition of the texts of seals and stamps in the same font size; composition of sign boards of representative, executive and administrative bodies of municipalities, towns and counties, and legal persons vested with public authority in the same font size and the composition of official document letterheads in the same font size; delivery of bilingual or multilingual materials for sessions to a councillor and to a member of a municipal executive body; compilation of minutes and public posting of conclusions and publication of official notifications and summons of the representative, executive and administrative bodies

of these units; issuing of public (bilingual or multilingual) documents to citizens and printing of forms for official purposes; composition of (bilingual or multilingual) traffic signs and other traffic markers, and street and square names and designations of geographic sites; and the right of persons belonging to national minorities to use the language and script that is in equal official use in first-instance and second-instance proceedings before the administrative bodies of municipalities, towns and counties.

Articles 12-19 of the aforementioned Act stipulate, inter alia, the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to equal official use of their national minority languages and scripts in procedures before first-instance state administrative bodies with offices and branch offices in municipalities, towns and counties where both the Croatian language and the Latin script and a national minority language and script are in equal official use, and they also stipulate that first-instance state administrative bodies with offices and branch offices in municipalities, towns and counties where both the Croatian language and the Latin script and a national minority language and script are in equal official use, at the request of a citizen, must issue bilingual or multilingual public documents and printed forms for official purposes, and that such first-instance state administrative bodies with offices and branch offices in municipalities, towns and counties where both the Croatian language and the Latin script and a national minority language and script are in equal official use, must compose bilingual or multilingual texts of seals and stamps in the same font size, officials signs and official document letterheads in the same font size.

Furthermore, we stress that, in compliance with the Instructions for Consistent Implementation of the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts, which was adopted in March 2012, municipalities and cities in which persons belonging to a national minority account for a minimum of one third of the population and which, pursuant to the Act, are obliged to ensure that their charters stipulate and regulate the right to equal official use of a national minority language and script throughout their territories, are obliged to thoroughly regulate the exercise of said right and explicitly specify each individual right the exercise of which in the territory of these units is guaranteed by the Act.

After the partial official data from the 2021 Population Census were officially published in September 2022, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration conducted the appropriate analysis of the data and compiled a list of local government units in which the members of specific national minorities account for a minimum of one third of the population and which, pursuant to Article 12(1) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, are obliged to regulate in their charters the exercise of the right to equal official use of the minority language and script in their territory. Based on this analysis, it was ascertained that persons belonging to specific national minorities account for at least one third of the local populations in a total of 24 local government units, as follows: members of the Serbian national minority in 20 units and members of the Czech, Hungarian, Italian and Roma national minorities in one unit each. Thus, in compliance with Article 12(1) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, the right of the Serbian national minority to equal official use of their language and script is guaranteed in the municipalities of Biskupija, Borovo, Civljane, Dvor, Erdut, Ervenik, Gračac, Gvozd, Jagodnjak, Kistanje, Krnjak, Markušica, Negoslavci, Plaški, Šodolovci, Trpinja, Udbina, Vojnić, Vrhovine and Donji Lapac; the exercise of this right is

guaranteed to persons belonging to the Czech national minority in the Končanica Municipality; to persons belonging to the Hungarian national minority in the Kneževi Vinogradi Municipality; to persons belonging to the Roma national minority in the Orehovica Municipality and to persons belonging to the Italian national minority in the Grožnjan/Grisignana Municipality.

MINORITY LANGUAGE	TERRITORY (MUNICIPALITIES AND TOWNS)	SHARE OF NATIONAL MINORITY IN UNIT'S POPULATION
Czech language	Končanica Municipality	46,04%
Hungarian language	Kneževi Vinogradi Municipality	38.7%
Roma language	Orehovica Municipality	33.68%
Serbian language	Biskupija Municipality	81.9%
	Borovo Municipality	90.69%
	Civljane Municipality	73.68%
	Dvor Municipality	67.26%
	Erdut Municipality	53.68%
	Ervenik Municipality	96.96%
	Gračac Municipality	43.37%
	Gvozd Municipality	62.63%
	Jagodnjak Municipality	62.87%
	Kistanje Municipality	51.89%
	Krnjak Municipality	58.03%
	Markušica Municipality	90.24%
	Negoslavci Municipality	96.85%
	Plaški Municipality	39.76%
	Šodolovci Municipality	78.06%
	Trpinja Municipality	87.81%
Udbina Municipality	42.65%	
Vojnić Municipality	38.45%	
Vrhovine Municipality	47.63%	
Donji Lapac Municipality	79.21%	
Italian language	Grožnjan/Grisignana Municipality	35.82%

The greatest reduction in the share of persons belonging to national minorities in the aforementioned units in comparison to the 2011 Population Census has been recorded in the Vrhovine Municipality, where the share of persons belonging to the Serbian national minority decreased from 80.23% (2011 Census) to 47.63% (2021 Census). A significant decline has also been recorded in the Krnjak Municipality, from 68.61% (2011 Census) to 58.03% (2021 Census). In the Orehovica Municipality, the share of persons belonging to the Roma national minority increased from 18.29% (2011 Census) to 33.68% (2021 Census).

*From the Report of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities*

With regard to exercise of the right to equal official use of the Czech language and script in the Dežanovac Municipality, the Council of the Czech National Minority in the Dežanovac Municipality submitted a letter to the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, the Council for National Minorities and the mayor of the Dežanovac Municipality on 15 December 2021 wherein it seeks from the relevant authorities to establish that minority rights had been violated and assess the provisions of the Dežanovac Municipal Charter adopted at the session of the Dežanovac Municipal Council on 10 December 2021 as contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Croatia.

We note that the OHRRNM received a letter from the Dežanovac Municipality on 19 March 2021, thus prior to adoption of the new Dežanovac Municipal Charter, which sought an opinion of the Office on the draft Dežanovac Municipal Charter. In its letter dated 22 March 2021, the Office put forth its opinion that it is necessary to retain the existing level of rights to equal official use of the Czech language and script in the Dežanovac Municipality. The Office backed its opinion also by the fact that the Dežanovac Municipality was cited as a positive example of the exercise of the right to use of a minority language and script in the Fifth Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Implementation of the Framework Convention (2019) and in the Sixth Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (2019), which the Republic of Croatia submitted to the Council of Europe for adoption.

*From the Report of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration*

Use of minority languages and scripts in the justice system

With regard to Article 10(1) of the Framework Convention, we point to the aforementioned Article 126 of the Criminal Code.

With regard to Article 10(3) of the Framework Convention, we point to the fact that Article 8 of the Criminal Code stipulates the use of the Croatian language and Latin script in criminal proceedings, unless use of another language or script has been introduced by law in specific areas. Decisions, summons and other written documents are issued by the body conducting the proceedings in the Croatian language and Latin script. Lawsuits, appeals and other motions are

submitted to the court in the Croatian language and Latin script. If another language or script has been introduced by law in a specific court territory, motions may be submitted to the body conducting the proceedings also in that language or script. Parties and other participants in proceedings are entitled to use their own language. If the proceedings are not conducted in a language that the person speaks and understands, interpretation of what that person and others say and of written documents and other written evidence presented in the court shall be secured. The person shall be apprised of the right to interpretation prior to the first interrogation.

A defendant who cannot speak nor understand the language in which the proceedings are being conducted is entitled to interpretation. The instruction on rights, the decision on detention, the decision to conduct an investigation and the order to conduct evidentiary actions, the indictment, private lawsuit, summons, court decisions after indictment up to the final conclusion of the proceedings and in extraordinary legal remedies proceedings shall be translated in writing for the defendant. If the aforementioned documents are not available in a language spoken and understood by the defendant, they will be orally interpreted for the defendant, and then delivered in the briefest possible time to the defendant in written form in a language that he or she speaks and understands. The body conducting the proceedings may rule on its own or at the written request of the defendant that an evidence or a part thereof be translated in writing if necessary for the exercise of the procedural rights of the defence. In exceptional circumstances, oral interpretation or oral summary of evidence may be provided instead of written translation if this does not violate the procedural rights of the defence, and the defendant has a defence counsel. The defendant is entitled to appeal the ruling that rejects the defendant's request for written translation of evidence or a part thereof which the defendant deems necessary for exercise of the defence's procedural rights. The defendant is also entitled to translation of conversations and correspondence with the defence counsel necessary in order to prepare a defence, submit a legal action or remedy or undertake other actions in the proceedings, if required for use of the defence's procedural rights. Translation shall be secured at the defendant's request. A court decision may not be made on the basis of evidence obtained through violation of the right to translation. A defendant deprived of freedom may file submissions in his/her own language to the body conducting the proceedings. Consequently, pursuant to Article 64(1)2 of the Criminal Procedure Act, the defendant is entitled to use his/her own language or a language he or she speaks and understands, and to the services of an interpreter if he or she does not understand the Croatian language.

According to Article 51(1)1 of the Criminal Procedures Act, the plaintiff is entitled to use his or her own language and to the assistance of an interpreter if said plaintiff does not speak or understand the Croatian language. Consequently, pursuant to Article 51.a of the Criminal Procedures Act, the plaintiff who does not speak or understand the language in which the proceedings are being held is entitled to have – at his/her own request, and financed from the Central Budget – written translation provided for him/her in a language he/she understands of the data essential to exercise of the rights of a plaintiff in criminal proceedings, particularly the final decision in a criminal proceedings, including the statement of reasons or summary thereof, except in cases when the decision does not include a statement of reasons in compliance with this Act. In exceptional circumstances, oral interpretation of the aforementioned data will be provided to the plaintiff insofar as this does not impede the plaintiff in the exercise of his/her

procedural rights. The plaintiff is entitled to submit a reasoned request for certain documents or other written evidentiary materials to be deemed essential and translated into a language he/she understands. The body conducting the proceedings, insofar as it accepts the plaintiff's request, will provide translation of the entire document or other written evidentiary material or just those parts that are essential to enable the plaintiff to actively participate in the proceedings. The body conducting the proceedings will issue a ruling to determine whether interpretation or translation into a language understood by the plaintiff will be secured, taking into account that interpretation does not impinge upon the exercise of the plaintiff's procedural rights. The plaintiff is entitled to appeal the ruling that rejects interpretation or translation.

Article 87 of the Misdemeanour Act (*Narodne novine*, nos. 107/07, 39/13, 157/13, 110/15, 70/17 and 118/18) stipulates that the Croatian language and Latin script are used in misdemeanour proceedings, unless use of another language or script has been introduced by law in specific areas. Parties, participants in cases, witnesses and other persons who participate in proceedings are entitled to use their own language. If a proceeding or individual action within a proceeding is conducted in a language other than the language of the person, at his/her request interpretation of what that person and others declare and of documents and other written evidentiary materials will be provided. If the person does not understand the language in which the proceedings are conducted, interpretation will be provided in all situations. Interpretation will be provided by a court interpreter. Summons and decisions are issued by the court in the Croatian language and Latin script. Motions to indict, appeals and other submissions are filed to the court in the Croatian language and Latin script. If another language or script has been introduced by law in official use in a specific court territory, motions may be submitted to the court in that language or script. The defendants held in custody and persons serving sentences will receive summons, decisions and motions translated in the language they use in the proceedings. A foreign citizen detained on suspicion of perpetrating a misdemeanour or held in custody, investigative prison or in prison for perpetrating a crime, or deprived of freedom for other reasons may lodge submissions to the court in his or her own language from the commencement of the proceedings until their conclusion. Such a person will be apprised of the right to interpretation prior to the first interrogation.

On the basis of data collected by the courts, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration keeps records on court proceedings regarding the application of Article 12 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities. Subsequently, it established the relevant database. The data provided below show the use of national minority languages and scripts introduced in equal official use before first-instance judicial bodies for the 2019-2021 period.

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS THAT WERE HELD OR COULD HAVE BEEN HELD IN A MINORITY LANGUAGE from 1 Jan. 2019 to 31 Dec..2019															
MINORITY LANGUAGE	TYPE OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDING												TOTAL HELD	TOTAL PARTLY WAIVED RIGHT	
	CRIMINAL		CIVIL		EXTRAJUDICIAL		PROBATE		LAND REGISTRY		MISDEMEANOR				
	HELD	PARTLY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTLY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTLY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTLY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTLY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTLY WAIVED RIGHT			

ITALIAN	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	12	15	12
HUNGARIAN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
CZECH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SLOVAK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RUSYN	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
UKRAINI AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SERBIAN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	25	27	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>37</b>							

From the submitted data it may be concluded that in 2019 a total of 47 proceedings were conducted in national minority languages, which is an increase in comparison to 2018, when 17 proceedings were held in national minority languages. The total number of cases in which a party waived this right is 37, which is also an increase in comparison to the preceding year, when there were 13. To maintain these data, funds were secured in the budget of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration within the framework of its regular operations. No special funding was required.

A total of 22 proceedings (11 criminal and 11 misdemeanour) were held at municipal courts in 2020, and in them 15 parties waived the right to have the proceedings conducted in a minority language (1 criminal and 14 misdemeanour). 3 proceedings were conducted in the Italian language, while in 4 cases the parties waived the right to have the proceedings conducted in the Italian language. In the Sisak Municipal Court, 2 criminal proceedings were held, while in the Pula/Pola Municipal Court 1 misdemeanour proceeding was held, while in 4 misdemeanour proceedings the parties waived this right. Only one criminal case was heard in the Hungarian language, at the Sisak Municipal Court. At this court, 4 criminal proceedings were conducted in the Rusyn language and 4 criminal proceeding were conducted in the Ukrainian language. Most proceedings were held in the Serbian language, and these were misdemeanour proceedings at the Vukovar Municipal Court – a total of 10, while in 10 misdemeanour proceedings the parties waived this right. At the Požega Municipal Court, the party waived the right to have the proceedings conducted in the Serbian language in one criminal case.

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS THAT WERE HELD OR COULD HAVE BEEN HELD IN A MINORITY LANGUAGE from 1 Jan. 2020 to 31 Dec..2020															
MINORITY LANGUAGE	TYPE OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDING												TOTAL HELD	TOTAL PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	
	CRIMINAL		CIVIL		EXTRAJUDICIAL		PROBATE		LAND REGISTRY		MISDEMEANOUR				
	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT			
ITALIAN	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	4
HUNGARIAN	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
CZECH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SLOVAK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

RUSYN	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
UKRAINI AN	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
SERBIAN	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	10	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>15</b>							

A total of 5 cases were held in municipal courts in 2021, all criminal cases. In 9 cases, the parties waived the right to have the proceedings conducted in a minority language (3 criminal and 6 misdemeanour). 1 case was conducted in the Italian language, and in 6 cases the parties waived the right to have the case conducted in the Italian. Thus, 1 criminal proceeding was conducted at the Sisak Municipal Court, while at the Pazin Municipal Court in one criminal case a party waived the right to have the case conducted in the Italian language. At the Pula/Pola Municipal Court, in 5 misdemeanour cases the parties waived the right to have them conducted in the Italian language. Only 1 criminal case was conducted in the Czech language, at the Sisak Municipal Court. Also at the Sisak Municipal Court, 3 criminal cases were conducted in the Ukrainian language. In a total of 3 cases, in two criminal cases at the Pazin Municipal Court and 1 misdemeanour case at the Vukovar Municipal Court, the parties waived the right to have the proceedings conducted in the Serbian language.

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS THAT WERE HELD OR COULD HAVE BEEN HELD IN A MINORITY LANGUAGE from 1 Jan. 2021 to 31 Dec..2021															
MINORITY LANGUA GE	TYPE OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDING												TOTAL HELD	TOTAL PARTY WAIVE D RIGHT	
	CRIMINAL		CIVIL		EXTRAJUDICI AL		PROBATE		LAND REGISTRY		MISDEMEANO R				
	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT	HELD	PARTY WAIVED RIGHT			
ITALIAN	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	6
HUNGARI AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CZECH	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
SLOVAK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
RUSYN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
UKRAINI AN	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	
SERBIAN	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	

### Status of exercise of rights

According to reports in the e-System (Ministry of Justice and Public Administration), challenges in the practical exercise of the rights granted by the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Croatia still exist in certain local/regional

units (for example: bilingual or multilingual letterheads on official documents in the same font size; delivery of bilingual or multilingual materials to an individual councillor or citizen for sessions of municipal or town councils or county assemblies; issuing of bilingual or multilingual public documents; composition of bilingual or multilingual traffic signs and other traffic markers in the same font size; composition of bilingual or multilingual street and square names in the same font size; composition of place and geographical site names), which has been excused by individual units as due to a lack of interest on the part of persons belonging to national minorities, technical inability and insufficient finances. It is once more underscored that citing technical inability or, in particular, insufficient finances cannot be accepted as an explanation for the failure to ensure exercise of rights. These difficulties are among the key problems that impede full implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities.

With regard to the use of national minority languages and scripts in proceedings before the administrative bodies of local and regional government units, Istria County has reported that its officials have notified parties of their right to have proceedings conducted in the Italian language in 65 cases, while the parties exercised this right only in a single proceeding in the regional government unit. Furthermore, the Town of Rovinj/Rovigno has reported that its officials have notified parties of their right to have proceedings conducted in the Italian language in 3,540 instances, and that 1,620 administrative proceedings were conducted in the Italian language, while the Town of Buje/Buie reported that 3 proceedings were conducted in that same language. The Municipality of Negoslavci reported that 64 administrative proceedings were conducted in the language of the Serbian national minority. Parties were similarly notified of their right to use the national minority language in other units as well, however, the parties opted not to exercise this right.

#### Personal identity cards in national minority languages and scripts

Article 9(2) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights National Minority stipulates that the members of national minorities are entitled to have the personal identity card form printed and completed in the language and script that they use. Pursuant to Article 7(2) and (3) of the Personal Identity Card Act (*Narodne novine*, nos. 62/15, 42/20 and 144/20), when stipulated by special legislation or international treaties, the personal identity card form for a person belonging to a national minority is also printed in the national minority language, and is completed in both the Croatian language and Latin script and in the language and script of the person belonging to a national minority.

Data on the number of issued personal identity cards printed in a national minority language and script for 2021 (data for 2020 are also shown for comparison):

Table 2

National minority	Year personal identity card in national minority language and script issued	
	2020	2021
	No. of issued personal identity cards	
Italian national minority	2,585	3,638
Serbian national minority	93	131
Hungarian national minority	36	50
Czech national minority	41	47
Slovak national minority	3	4
Rusyn national minority	3	3
T O T A L	2,761	3,873

In overall terms, the number of issued personal identity cards printed in a national minority language and script in 2021 increased in comparison to 2020, so based on the comparative data it is apparent that in 2021 as many as 1,112 more personal identity cards were issued than in 2020. The highest number of bilingual personal identity cards, as in the preceding periods at the annual level, were requested by members of the Italian, Serbian and Hungarian national minorities. Persons belonging to the Italian national minority had 1,053 more personal identity cards issued to them in 2021 compared to 2020, while 38 more were issued to persons belonging to the Serbian national minority and 14 more to persons belonging to the Hungarian national minority.

In the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, the Istria Police Department, with its subordinate police stations, issued a total of 314 bilingual certificates in the Italian language, while the same police department issued 315 of these certificates in the period from 1 January through 2020 to 31 December 2020. There are no records of bilingual residence certificates issued in the other police departments with their accompanying police stations.

No administrative proceedings were conducted in a national minority language and script in police departments and their subordinate police stations in 2021.

*From the Report of the Council for National Minorities*

Based on the report of the Council for National Minorities, it follows that no significant progress was made in the field of exercise of the right to official and public use of national minority languages during the reporting period.

With regard to exercise of the right to official and public use of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script, the following data may be put forth: according to the 2011 Census, Serbs constituted the largest national and ethnic minority in the Republic of Croatia, as there were 186,633 of them and they accounted for 4.4% of the population. Pursuant to the official results of the 2011 Census, the legal grounds for the introduction of equal official use of a national minority language and script were met, from the Serbian community's standpoint, in 23 local

government units: in the towns of Vukovar and Vrbovsko, and in the municipalities of Krnjak, Vojnić, Donji Lapac, Vrhovine, Udbina, Šodolovci, Jagodnjak, Erdut, Dvor, Gvozd, Donji Kukuruzari, Biskupija, Civiljane, Kistanje, Ervenik, Markušica, Trpinja, Negoslavci, Borovo, Gračac and Plaški. Of the 23 aforementioned local government units, the provisions of effective laws are being observed only in the settlement of Donji Lapac (not in other settlements), the centre of the Donji Lapac Municipality, so that bilingual sign boards have been posted at the entrances to and exits from the settlement. However, bilingual sign boards have not been posted at all entrances to the settlement. According to information received from local officials and residents of this municipality, posting of such sign boards was only allowed at the ancillary entrances to the settlement of Donji Lapac. In the Biskupija Municipality, sign boards were destroyed on the very evening after they were posted and thereafter the municipal leadership did not want to post them again. Despite meeting the legal criteria (45% of residents of the Gračac Municipality are members of the Serbian national minority), even in 2021 this municipality did not align the provisions of its charter on use of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script in compliance with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, nor did it put bilingual signs on the municipal building in compliance with law. On the other hand, the Town of Vrbovsko (35.22% of residents are members of the Serbian national minority) and the Donji Kukuruzari Municipality are examples of units that have charters fully aligned with law, but these charters are not enforced in practice. Bilingual signs have not been put on the municipal building in either unit, which means that they have only formally fulfilled the obligation to align their charters with law, but are not applying the rights in practice. The Plaški Municipality has aligned its charter with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities as regards the use of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script, which is certainly a step forward in finding grounds for dialogue. But bilingual signs for municipal bodies have not been posted on the municipal building. A particular problem is the fact that the names of municipalities and localities at the entrances to these municipalities and localities are still written only in the Croatian language and Latin script, despite the provisions of law and municipal charters stipulating the use of minority language and script.

This problem was considered at a thematic session of the Committee for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities held in 2020. It was established that in charters of some of the local government units the right to use national minority languages and scripts was regulated contrary to the provisions of the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts and the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities. In its decision of 9 July 2019, the Constitutional Court recalled the order in its decision no. U-VIIR-4640/2014, which it issued to the Croatian Government, to initiate a procedure to amend the Act on the Official Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts (*Narodne novine*, nos. 51/00, 56/00), whereby a suitable legal mechanism should be set up for cases in which representative bodies have failed to fulfil the obligations ensuing from this act.

According to the results of the 2011 Census, persons belonging to the Serbian national minority accounted for a third of the total population in the City of Vukovar, and thus they were entitled to official use of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script. Despite the fact that on 2 July 2019 the Constitutional Court issued its Decision no. U-II-1818/2016 assessing the alignment to the Constitution and legislation of the Charter of the Town of Vukovar and the Charter-level Decision on the Exercise of Equal Official Use of the Language and Script of the Serbian

National Minority in the territory of the Town of Vukovar, this right was not regulated in compliance with law during the 2019-2021 reporting period.

Article 5 of the Charter-level Decision amending the Charter of the Town of Vukovar, CLASS: 012-03/09-01/01, REG.NO.: 2196/01-01-15-47 of 17 August 2015 stipulates that in compliance with Article 8 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and with reference to Article 6(2) of the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Croatia, the individual rights of citizens who are members of the Serbian national minority in the Town of Vukovar guaranteed by this act are to be gradually secured by the special Charter-level Decision on the Exercise of Equal Official Use of Languages and Scripts in the territory of the Town of Vukovar.

Article 61(3) of the Charter of the Town of Vukovar (as published in the town's official journal, *Službeni vjesnik Grada Vukovara*, nos. 4/09, 7/11, 4/12, 7/13, 7/15, 1/18 and 2/18 – consolidated text) stipulates that in October of each year the Vukovar Town Council must consider the achieved level of understanding, solidarity, tolerance and dialogue among the citizens of Vukovar as specified in paragraph (2) of that same Article (the Charter-level Decision is deemed to be an integral part of the Charter with the special status of a charter-level bill of understanding, solidarity, tolerance and dialogue among Vukovar's citizens, members of the Croatian people and members of the Serbian people). Then, in compliance with the deliberated and adopted conclusions, it makes a decision on the potential or need to expand the extent of secured individual rights of persons belonging to the Serbian national minority who live in the Town of Vukovar with new rights from the catalogue of rights foreseen by the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Croatia. Acting in compliance with these adopted amendments to the Charter, at its 25<sup>th</sup> session held on 18 October 2019, 34<sup>th</sup> session held on 28 October 2020 and 3<sup>rd</sup> session held on 26 October 2021, the Vukovar Town Council adopted the Conclusion, by a majority vote, establishing that the achieved degree of understanding, solidarity, tolerance and dialogue among the citizens of the Town of Vukovar, the members of the Croatian people and members of the Serbian people, was at a level that allowed for cooperation and coexistence, and that the conditions for the expansion of the extent of secured individual rights and the stipulation of collective rights for members of the Serbian national minority living in the Town of Vukovar and amendments to the Charter-level Decision recognizing new rights to members of the Serbian national minority living in the territory of the City of Vukovar had not been met.

The Conclusion was adopted with the explanation that, when considering the need to expand the individual and collective rights of members of the Serbian national minority from the catalogue of rights foreseen by the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Croatia, it was necessary to take into account Article 8 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities (*Narodne novine*, nos. 155/02, 47/10, 80/10, Decision of the Constitutional Court 93/11-1981 and Decision of the Constitutional Court 93/11-1982). Article 8 stipulates that the provisions of this Constitutional Act and special legislation governing the rights and liberties of persons belonging to national minorities must be interpreted and enforced for the purpose of respecting the persons belonging to national minorities and the Croatian people, nurturing understanding, solidarity, tolerance and dialogue between them. The explanation contains the assertion that the extent of recognized rights is at a level that allows for mutual tolerance, cooperation and coexistence.

The fact is that in its decision the Constitutional Court invited dialogue, with the aim of creating the conditions for implementation of the decision on expansion of rights. The Vukovar Town Council did not proceed in compliance with the order from the Constitutional Court's Decision because the conditions had not been met. By adopting the aforementioned Conclusion, the Town of Vukovar only formally fulfilled its obligation imposed upon it by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia in its previously cited Decision.

The Conclusion of the Town of Vukovar on the achieved level of understanding, solidarity, tolerance and dialogue among citizens of the Town of Vukovar who are members of the Croatian people and the Serbian people in 2021 was somewhat more reserved in the way in which it was rendered than in preceding years. However, the result was ultimately the same, as the Conclusion was adopted by a majority vote.

According to the results of the 2021 Census, 29.73% of the population of the City of Vukovar are persons belonging to the Serbian national minority, which does not allow for exercise of the right to official and public use of the national minority language and script.

Furthermore, in compliance with Article 32(2) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, on 17 December 2021 the Czech National Minority Council in the Municipality of Dežanovac sent a letter to the Council for National Minorities in which it sought from the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration that it establish a violation of minority rights, specifically that it assess the provision of the Dežanovac Municipal Charter adopted at the session of the Dežanovac Municipal Council held on 10 December 2021 as violating the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Croatia. Based on the attached documentation, it is apparent that Article 109 of the new Dežanovac Municipal Charter lacks paragraphs (2) and (3) of Article 101 in the previously valid Charter, which stipulated equal official use of the Czech language together with the official Croatian language in the settlements of Dežanovac, Golubinjak and Donje Sređane, and which is exercised, among other things, by posting signs with names of the localities in the Croatian and Czech languages.

Article 12(2) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities stipulates that equal official use of the language and script of a national minority is exercised when required by the charter of a local government unit. Article 4(3) of the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Croatia stipulates that equal official use of a national minority language and script is exercised when required by the characters of municipalities and towns, while in Article 2 stipulates that this Act does not alter or revoke the right to use a national minority language and script acquired under regulations applied until this Act's entry into force. Furthermore, the Instructions for Consistent Implementation of the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and Scripts, issued by the minister of public administration, Class: 016-01/10-01/63, Reg. no.: 515-02-01-02/1-12-01, of 1 March 2012, stipulate that local government units in which the right to equal official use of a national minority language and script is exercised in their entire territory or, exceptionally, in a part thereof is introduced by their charters, are obliged to explicitly stipulate in their charters the extent of exercise of this right, and explicitly stipulate each individual right to which exercise of the equal official use of a national minority language and script pertains.

Consequently, the Council for National Minorities deems that, contrary to all aforementioned effective regulations, the Dežanovac Municipal Charter of 10 December 2021 deprived the the Czech national minority of their acquired right to equal official use of their language, given that the previous provisions on its equal use in the settlements of Golubinjak, Dežanovac and Donji Sređani were left out.

***With reference to Articles 12, 13 and 14***

*From the Report of the Ministry of Science and Education*

During the reporting period, new curricula were developed for instruction in the languages and scripts of national minorities, and those were: Czech language (models A and C), Hungarian language (models A and C), Slovak language and culture (model C), Serbian language (models A and model C), Italian language (model A). Moreover, in 2020 the Curriculum for the Course Subject Roma National Minority Language and Culture in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (model C) was adopted, whereby the Roma national minority has been integrated into the education system for the first time, and learning their mother tongue has been made possible, equally for both modules (Bayash and Romani chib). The adoption of this curriculum is a major step forward and progress for members of the Roma national minority in the preservation of their language, traditions and cultural identity.

All programmes that are currently used for instruction under Model C for 16 national minorities in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia have received a positive assessment from the Agency for Education and Teacher Training, which means that they have passed through the approval procedure. Until the adoption of new curricula for the education of national minority pupils under Model C, instruction will be held in compliance with existing programmes. The conditions are being created for the continuation of curricular reform through the inclusion of this activity in the National Plan for the Development of Education System for the 2021-2027 Period for those national minorities which did not develop their curricula in the preceding period. Consequently, as in the preceding period of development of national minority curricula, the practice of including persons belonging to national minorities in the preparation of these documents will continue.

It is important to state that persons belonging to national minorities propose and select the model and programme by themselves in compliance with the existing law, and based on the interest of pupils and available staff and organizational capacities of educational institutions. The Ministry of Science and Education continually grants consent for the organization of instruction in national minority languages and scripts. All models and forms of schooling are in Croatia's standard education system and 16 national minorities are encompassed by one of the education models (A, B and/or C).

Furthermore, all national minorities that expressed the need were encompassed in the production of video lectures, which in 2021 ensured the continuation of the functioning of working groups on the recording of video lectures for pupils who are educated in the Serbian language and Cyrillic script as well as in the Czech language. The recorded video lectures cover content of the following course subjects: Serbian Language and Culture and Czech Language and Culture. Examples of annual curriculum templates were developed in order to facilitate the implementation of courses. All video lectures and annual curriculum templates are available free of charge on the platform of the Ministry of Science and Education, <https://i-nastava.gov.hr/>. Video lectures are also regularly shot for the course subjects Orthodox Religious Teaching and Islamic Religious Teaching.

At a meeting with the publishers of minority textbooks in July 2019 it was proposed that suitable teaching materials be developed and incorporated into the digital repository, thereby simplifying the incorporation of course content relevant for national minorities into the course subjects of history, geography and musical culture and arts.

As part of the development of digital course materials within the framework of remote teaching, representatives of the Serbian national minority produced four video lectures entitled “Prominent Serbs in Croatia”, available on the YouTube channel with course content. There are also supplements in textbooks on the importance of and contributions made by persons belonging to national minorities. The Ministry co-financed research (ongoing) which also resulted in the development of the manual for teachers and instructors entitled “Roma in the Second World War in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945.” In March 2020, the Ministry made the Decision on co-financing for the project “Research into the History of the Roma National Minority in the Republic of Croatia.”

As part of the Operational Programmes for National Minorities, measure 2.2. Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities, activity 2.2.13 was defined whereby the Croatian Government undertook the commitment to conduct an analysis of educational policy with regard to the contribution of persons belonging to national minorities to the Croatian politics, culture, arts, economy, science and society in general, with the objective of having future curricular reforms incorporate the prominent names of persons belonging to national minorities in Croatian history, and the dates and facts tied to their contribution included into cultural, educational and other policies. For the purpose of ensuring the implementation of this analysis, the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia established the Task Force for the implementation of activity 2.2.13 in the Operational Programmes of National Minorities 2021-2024. Within the framework of the Task Force’s work, research was conducted to analyse the visibility (quantitative representation) of national minorities and their portrayal and the qualitative context in which traditional national minorities are presented in primary and secondary school textbooks in the Republic of Croatia. As part of the research, an analysis was conducted of textbooks used in instruction in the Croatian language for the course subjects Croatian Language, Musical Culture, Musical Arts, Artistic Culture, Fine Arts, Nature and Society, History, Geography, Ethics and Politics and the Economy. The Roma, Serbian, Italian and Hungarian national minorities were primarily analysed. The study provides recommendations in accordance with the European practice, aimed at state organizations, schools, publishers and the scientific community. The research results and the release of the study are anticipated in 2023.

*From the Report of the Ministry of Science and Education*

Education in national minority languages and scripts

Education in national minority languages and scripts is an integral part of the overall educational system, and thus the fundamental educational policy documents apply to this segment of the educational system as well. The right of persons belonging to national minorities to education in their languages and scripts is guaranteed first and foremost by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (*Narodne novine*, nos. 56/90, 135/97, 8/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10 and 05/14), the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities (*Narodne novine*, nos. 155/02, 47/10, 80/10, 93/11) and particularly the Act on the Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities (*Narodne novine*, nos. 51/00 and 56/00). The Ordinance on Completion of School-Leaving Examination (*Narodne novine*, nos. 97/08, 127/10 and 1/2013) provides for the possibility of taking this examination in a national minority language and script, that is, in the language and script in which the person belonging to a national minority was educated. At its session held on 23 June 2021, the Croatian Government adopted the Decision Approving the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period for years 2021 and 2022. In 2020, the Croatian Government also adopted the Operational Programmes of National Minorities for the 2021-2024 Period, which will specify mechanisms to ensure the rights of national minorities and support the activities of their organizations, in line with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and other special regulations.

#### Minority languages and their representation in the instruction in national minority languages

The education of persons belonging to national minorities is implemented in pre-school, primary-school, secondary-school and higher-education institutions that provide instruction in national minority languages and scripts in compliance with the criteria specified in the Act on the Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities and other regulations governing education.

The languages in which instruction is conducted may, according to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Resolution Ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, be classified as either territorial (regional) or minority languages, or as non-regional minority languages.

Instruction is conducted in the following regional or minority languages: Italian, Serbian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, Rusyn, and Ukrainian.

The territories where these languages are used in various forms of education are:

- Istria County: Italian
- Primorje-Gorski Kotar County: Italian, Serbian
- Bjelovar-Bilogora County: Czech, Slovak
- Osijek-Baranja County: Serbian, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Rusyn
- Vukovar-Srijem County: Serbian, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Rusyn, Slovak
- Lika-Senj County: Serbian.

Non-regional minority languages used in one of the regular or special forms of education are: Albanian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Hebrew, Macedonian, German, Romani, Russian, and Slovenian.

The Italian national minority has a curricular structure in which the minority language is learned as the language of the local community.

The members of the Roma national minority have special programmes for incorporation into the educational system.

### Models and forms of education in national minority languages and scripts

The education of national minorities in their languages and scripts is conducted according to special curricula and models, which, pursuant to the aforementioned Act, the Ministry of Science and Education adopts and approves individual forms of education in cooperation with national minority representatives.

There are three models for the organization and implementation of education in national minority languages in the Croatian educational system, and these are:

a) Model A – all instruction in national minority languages and scripts, that is, all instruction is conducted in the minority language and script with mandatory learning of the Croatian language with the same number of school hours as for the minority language. This model is implemented in special educational institutions where all instruction is provided in a national minority language or in special classrooms in Croatian-language institutions.

b) Model B – bilingual instruction, in which subjects from the field of natural science are taught in the Croatian language, while subjects from the field of the social sciences are taught in a national minority language. This model is implemented in special classrooms in Croatian-language educational institutions.

c) Model C – instruction of a minority language and culture (fostering), with regular instruction in Croatian, supplemented by the instruction on the national minority language and culture provided in the national minority language in two to five school periods each week, encompassing learning of the national minority language and literature, geography, history, music and art.

Special forms of education (summer/winter schools, correspondence/consultative courses, remote learning, and others) are organized primarily for pupils for whom there is no possibility of organizing regular instruction according to models A, B or C. The Ministry of Science and Education co-finances the organization and implementation of special forms of education.

The curriculum for regular instruction according to models A, B and C is adopted by the Ministry of Science and Education after receiving opinions from minority associations pursuant to Article 6 of the Act on the Education in National Minority Languages and Scripts.

Persons belonging to national minorities propose and select a model and curriculum in keeping with the law, and according to the interests of pupils and the available human resources.

## Application of models and forms of education in national minority languages and scripts

Under Model A, primary and secondary education is provided for the Italian, Serbian and Hungarian national minorities, and only primary education for the Czech national minority.

Under Model B, the Czech, Hungarian and the Serbian national minorities are educated in primary schools and the Czech national minority in secondary schools.

Under Model C, primary education is provided for the Albanian, Czech, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Hungarian, Macedonian, German and Austrian, Ukrainian, Rusyn, Russian, Jewish and Polish national minorities, while secondary education is provided for the Czech, Macedonian, Hungarian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Serbian, and Italian national minorities.

In the 2019/2020 school year, organization of education under Model C was approved in four primary schools: courses on the Bosnian language and culture in Borovje Primary School in Zagreb, courses on the Russian language and culture in Jabukovac Primary School in Zagreb, courses on the Slovenian language and culture in Klana Primary School in Klana and courses on the Ukrainian language and culture in Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević Primary School in Zagreb. Furthermore, in the 2020/2021 school year, organization of education under Model C was approved in one primary school, for the first time the course subject Roma National Minority Language and Culture in Jagodnjak Primary School in Jagodnjak was introduced. In the 2020/2021 school year, organization of education under Model C was approved in three secondary schools: the course subject Czech Language and Culture in the Daruvar Classics Gymnasium in Daruvar and the Požega Classics Gymnasium in Požega, and Bosnian Language and Culture in the Dr. Ahmet Smajlović Islamic Gymnasium in Zagreb. In the 2021/2022 school year, organization of education under Model C was approved in six primary schools: the course subjects Albanian Language and Culture in Bijaći Primary School and Fran Krsto Frankopan Primary School in Krk, Serbian Language and Culture in Ivan Gundulić Primary School and Prečko Primary School in Zagreb, Russian Language and Culture in Selnica Primary School, and Bosnian Language and Culture in Turnić Primary School in Rijeka. Organization of education under Model C was also approved in one secondary school: the course subject Slovenian Language and Culture in the First Sušak Croatian Gymnasium in Rijeka.

### Overview of education of children and pupils belonging to national minorities in the Republic of Croatia

In the 2021/2022 school year, education in primary and secondary schools in national minority languages and scripts under all models (A, B and C) encompassed a total of 8,349 pupils (3,981m/4,368f) in 241 educational institutions, in 1,001 classes/groups with 1,298 pre-school/primary/secondary school teachers.

In the same school year, Model A in primary schools encompassed 3,570 pupils in 32 main and 26 branch primary schools, in 313 classes with 747 teachers. Model A in secondary schools encompassed 1,074 pupils in 11 secondary schools in 134 classes with 379 teachers.

Model B was applied in three (3) main and two (2) branch primary schools in the 2021/2022 school year, with 45 pupils in 10 classes with 30 teachers. Model B was also applied in one secondary school with 6 pupils in one class with two teachers.

Model C in primary education in the 2021/2020 school year encompassed 3,368 pupils in 106 main and 42 branch primary schools, in 492 educational groups with 117 teachers. Instruction was organized for pupils belonging to fifteen (15) national minorities: Albanian, Bosnian, Czech, Hungarian, Macedonian, German, Austrian, Polish, Russian, Rusyn, Slovak, Slovenian, Serbian, Ukrainian and Jewish. Education under Model C was conducted in 18 secondary schools, in 51 educational groups, encompassing 286 pupils and 23 teachers. In five schools instruction under Model C was provided in two or more national minority languages. Instruction under Model C was organized for pupils belonging to ten (10) national minorities: Albanian, Bosnian, Czech, Hungarian, Macedonian, Slovenian, Slovak, Serbian, Russian and Italian national minorities.

Data on education in national minority languages and scripts for the 2021/2022 school year

#### Czech national minority

- 185 children in pre-school, 2 kindergartens, 8 educational groups, 16 pre-school teachers
- 279 pupils, 6 primary schools, 24 classes, 40 teachers (Model A)
- 366 pupils, 23 primary schools, 60 educational groups, 12 teachers (Model C)
- Models A and C in primary schools encompassed a total of 645 pupils
- 6 pupils in 1 secondary school, 1 class, 2 teachers (Model B)
- 45 pupils in 4 secondary schools, 5 educational groups, 3 teachers (Model C)
- Models B and C in secondary schools encompassed a total of 51 pupils
- A total of 881 were encompassed in the educational system at all levels.

The Jednota publishing company responds to the needs of the Czech national minority. There is a Czech language and literature department at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. Teachers' professional development courses are provided in the Czech Republic and Croatia.

#### Hungarian national minority

- 106 children in pre-school, in 4 kindergartens, 8 educational groups, 11 pre-school teachers
- 173 pupils, 8 primary schools, 26 classes, 68 teachers (Model A)
- 35 pupils in 3 primary schools, 7 classes, 25 teachers who work with them (Model B)
- 595 pupils, 34 primary schools, 113 educational groups, 20 teachers (Model C)
- Models A, B and C in primary schools encompassed a total of 803 pupils
- 30 pupils in 1 secondary school, in 10 classes, 27 teachers who work with them (Model A)
- 21 pupils in 3 secondary schools, in 7 educational groups, 2 teachers who work with them (Model C)
- Models A and C in secondary schools encompassed a total of 51 pupils
- A total of 960 were encompassed in the educational system at all levels.

Students can enrol in the *Hungarian language* undergraduate course at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, and also enrol in the *Hungarian language and literature* graduate programme (specializing in teaching or communications). Students may also enrol in the *Hungarian studies* undergraduate and graduate courses at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science of the University of Zagreb. Textbooks for the needs of instruction in the Hungarian language are printed by Hungarian Educational and Cultural Centre in the Republic of Croatia in Osijek.

#### Serbian national minority

- 562 children in pre-school, in 6 kindergartens, 30 educational groups, 50 pre-school teachers
- 1,478 pupils, 27 primary schools, 147 classes, 325 teachers (Model A)
- 10 pupils, 2 primary schools, 3 classes, 5 teachers (Model B)
- 612 pupils, in 38 primary schools, 111 educational groups, 29 teachers (Model C)
- a total of 2,100 pupils in primary schools under Models A, B and C
- 500 pupils, 6 secondary schools, 58 classes, 206 teachers (Model A)
- 39 pupils, 3 secondary schools, 10 classes, 5 teachers (Model C)
- a total of 539 secondary schools under Models A and C
- a total of 3,201 pupils in the educational system at all levels.

The Prosvjeta Serbian Cultural Society provides for the needs of the Serbian national minority, while textbooks for the needs of education in the Serbian language and Cyrillic script are printed by the Zagreb-based publishing company Prosvjeta.

#### Italian national minority

- 1,194 children in pre-school, 15 kindergartens, 74 educational groups, 146 pre-school teachers
- a total of 1,640 pupils, 17 primary schools, 116 classes, 314 teachers (Model A)
- 544 pupils, 4 secondary schools, 66 classes, 146 teachers (Model A)
- 9 pupils, 1 secondary school, 4 educational groups, 1 teacher (Model C)
- a total of 553 pupils in secondary schools under Models A and C
- a total of 3,387 pupils in the educational system at all levels.

The Edit Publishing House, which fulfils the requirements of this national minority, prints newspapers, magazines and other publications in the Italian language, as well as textbooks for the needs of education in the Italian language and script, as well as bilingual pedagogical documents.

#### Albanian national minority

- 200 pupils, in 16 primary schools, 34 educational groups, 9 teachers (Model C)
- 12 pupils, in 1 secondary school, 2 educational groups, with 1 teacher (Model C)
- a total of 212 pupils in 16 primary schools and one secondary school.

#### Macedonian national minority

- 78 pupils, in 6 primary schools, 11 educational groups, 5 teachers (Model C)
- 24 pupils, in 3 secondary schools, 6 educational groups, 3 teachers

- a total of 102 pupils in 6 primary schools and 3 secondary schools.

#### German and Austrian national minority

- 291 pupils, in 3 primary schools, 17 educational groups, 10 teachers (Model C)

#### Polish national minority

- 23 pupils, in 1 primary school, 4 educational groups, 1 teacher (Model C)

#### Rusyn national minority

- 74 pupils, in 4 primary schools, 14 educational groups, 3 teachers (Model C)

#### Russian national minority

- 300 pupils, in 7 primary schools, 26 educational groups, 6 teachers (Model C)
- 19 pupils, in 1 secondary school, 4 educational groups, 1 teacher
- a total of 319 pupils in 7 primary schools and 1 secondary school.

#### Slovak national minority

- 390 pupils, in 18 primary schools, 55 educational groups, 9 teachers who work with them (Model C)
- 21 pupils, in 2 secondary schools, 5 educational groups, 2 teachers (Model C)
- a total of 411 pupils in 18 primary and 2 secondary schools.

#### Slovenian national minority

- 182 pupils, in 7 primary schools, 14 educational groups, 3 teachers (Model C)
- 76 pupils, in 3 secondary schools, 6 educational groups, 3 teachers (Model C)
- a total of 258 pupils in 7 primary and 3 secondary schools.

#### Ukrainian national minority

- 74 pupils, in 5 primary schools, 9 educational groups, 3 teachers (Model C)

#### Jewish national minority

- 101 pupils, in 1 primary school, 8 educational groups, 2 teachers (Model C).

#### Bosnian national minority

- 82 pupils, in 8 primary schools, 16 educational groups, 5 teachers (Model C)
- 20 pupils, in 2 secondary schools, 2 educational groups, 2 teachers (Model C)
- a total of 102 pupils in 8 primary and 2 secondary schools.

*From the Report on Implementation of the Operational Programme of National Minorities*

Besides the aforementioned activities of the Ministry of Science and Education, the relevant bodies continually finance infrastructural projects. Thus, for example, funds in an amount of €

1,349,149.06 (HRK 10,165,163.63) were spent for the construction of a student dormitory at the Hungarian Educational and Cultural Centre in Osijek in 2019. The construction was completed on 28 November 2019 and the dormitory was inaugurated. The annex to the Jan Amos Komenský Czech Primary School and the Ferda Mravenec Czech Kindergarten in Daruvar were inaugurated on 16 March 2021. In the preceding period, € 172,539.65 (HRK 1,300.000.00) were spent for these newly-constructed facilities through the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities.

In 2021, a total of € 889,868.78 (HRK 6,704,716.34) was spent from the central-budget line of the Ministry of Science and Education for budgetary activity K 676064 – Leonardo da Vinci Secondary School, Buje – reconstruction and expansion, for the capital project of reconstruction and expansion of the Leonardo da Vinci Secondary School in Buje. Out of the aforementioned sum, Istria County provided co-financing in an amount of € 256,155.02 (HRK 1,930.000.00). The Ministry of Agriculture is implementing a series of measures, through the Rural Development Programme, aimed at increasing the competitiveness of agriculture, forestry and processing industry, and also improving living and work conditions in rural areas. Since the commencement of the Rural Development Programme's implementation, which includes leisure and cultural activities and the associated infrastructure, five projects have been contracted for the construction, reconstruction and furnishing of pre-school institutions, in an amount of € 3,534,781.34 (HRK 26,632,810.00) in local and regional government units in which the members of the Czech and Slovak national minorities account more than 5% of the population (all projects were approved prior to the reporting period).

*From the report of the Ministry of Science and Education*

At institutes of higher education in the Republic of Croatia, students can enrol in the university courses of national minority languages, university programmes conducted in national minority languages and scripts, and university courses which offer content narrowly tied to learning languages, scripts and culture of national minorities.

<b>TYPE OF UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME DESIGNATION</b>
<b>Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences</b>	
Undergraduate study	Hungarian language and literature (double major)
	German language and literature (double major)
	German language and literature (single major)
Graduate study	Hungarian language and literature
	German language and literature (double major)
	German language and literature (single major)
<b>Juraj Dobrila University in Pula</b>	
Undergraduate vocational study	Pre-school education (in the Italian language) in Pula
	Pre-school education in the Italian language in Umag
Undergraduate study	Culture and tourism and Italian language and culture (double major)

	Early and pre-school education and learning in the Croatian and Italian languages
	Italian language and literature (double major)
	Italian language and literature (single major)
Graduate study	Italian language and literature (double major)
	Italian language and literature (single major)
Integrated undergraduate and graduate study	Teacher training study in the Croatian and Italian languages
Specialist postgraduate study	Translation within framework of Croatian-Italian bilingualism
<b>University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka<sup>14</sup></b>	
Undergraduate study	German language and literature (double major)
	Italian language and literature (double major)
Graduate study	German language and literature (double major)
	Italian language and literature (double major)
<b>University of Split, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences</b>	
Undergraduate study	German language and literature
	German language and literature (double major)
	Italian language and literature (double major)
Graduate study	German language and literature (double major)
	Italian studies (double major)
<b>University of Zadar</b>	
Undergraduate study	Croatian studies and South Slavic philology (single major)
	German language and literature (double major)
	Russian language and literature (double major)
	Italian language and literature (double major)
Graduate study	Croatian studies and South Slavic philology
	German language and literature (double major)
	Italian studies for translators (double major)
	Italian studies for translators (single major)
	Russian language and literature (double major)
	Russian language and literature (single major)
	Contemporary Italian philology (double major)
	Contemporary Italian philology (single major)
<b>University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences</b>	
Undergraduate study	Hungarian studies (double major)
	Judaic studies (double major study course)
	South Slavic languages and literatures (double major)
	Romanian language and literature (double major)
	Russian language and literature (double major)

<sup>14</sup> A Slovenian language instruction section also operates the University of Rijeka.

	Slovak language and literature (double major)
	Italian studies (double major)
	Italian studies (single major)
	Ukrainian language and literature (double major)
Graduate study	Hungarian studies (double major)
	Judaic studies (double major)
	South Slavic languages and literatures (double major)
	Roma studies
	Roma studies (double major)
	Romanian language and literature (double major)
	Russian language and literature (double major)
	Slovak language and literature (double major)
	Italian studies (double major)
	Italian studies (single major)
	Ukrainian language and literature (double major)
Specialist postgraduate study	Intercultural German-Croatian business communications

#### Roma national minority

Implementation of measures and activities aimed at achieving the objectives of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for the 2013-2020 Period and the National Plan for Roma Inclusion Plan for the 2021-2027 Period resulted in significant progress in the field of education of children belonging to the Roma national minority, by incorporating them at all levels of the educational system. The Ministry of Science and Education continually makes efforts to implement the defined tasks and measures, bearing in mind the complexity and comprehensiveness of the set objectives to improve the education of persons belonging to the Roma national minority, including the early-childhood education, and also primary, secondary and higher education, and the education of adults.

Activities pertaining to the education of children belonging to the Roma national minority were implemented in the preceding period with the objective of raising the quality and effectiveness of education of children belonging to the Roma national minority and ensuring their acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills which will facilitate the personal development of pupils, as well as the completion of primary education with the aim of continuation their schooling and reducing the discrepancies between educational outcomes of children belonging to the Roma national minority and the average level of educational outcomes of all pupils in primary schools in the Republic of Croatia. The measures correspond to the need to ensure access to a high-quality and inclusive educational system in early childhood, with the aim of reducing initial inequalities, eliminating discrimination, reducing the challenges encountered by children from vulnerable social groups and promoting the emotional, social, psychological and physical development of all children.

Further progress was made during the reporting period in the area of inclusion of children and pupils of the Roma national minority at all levels of the educational system. Inclusion in pre-school education programmes has been secured for children belonging to the Roma national minority in order to bridge the gap between the socio-economic situation in which Roma children live and the opportunities for their successful integration during their mandatory primary education.

Since 2013, implementation of the activities and measures aimed at fulfilling the aims of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for the 2013-2020 Period and the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 Period has notably achieved significant positive progress in the field of education of persons belonging to the Roma national minority. The increase in the number of children included in preschool education/school-preparation programmes has yielded sound results and indicates the obligation to organize preschool educational groups for all children of the Roma national minority. The growing number of pupils included in secondary education inevitably points to the conclusion that the success of pupils in primary education has increased, that the awareness of continuing education has also grown and that sustainable measures in education must be continued.

All measures undertaken with the aim of including members of the Roma national minority are rooted in social inclusion policy, which means securing the conditions for the full integration of children, adolescents and adults in line with their needs and abilities. Children and pupils belonging to the Roma national minority, like all other children, have the right to education, health care, life in the family environment and conditions that incentivize their development and progress, the right to use their language, and the right to their cultural identity. The vulnerability of children and families belonging to the Roma national minority has also been recognised in the recent national strategies and recommendations from international documents. With the objective of including and retaining them in the educational system, the Ministry of Science and Education is implementing a series of activities at all levels of the educational system (co-financing kindergartens and pre-schools, and securing extended-day programmes, extracurricular activities, secondary school and university scholarships, accommodation in dormitories, etc). In April 2020, the Ministry of Science and Education adopted the Curriculum for the course subject Roma National Minority Language and Culture in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C). The introduction of the Roma national minority language and culture curriculum constitutes a significant step forward and progress for members of the Roma national minority in the preservation of their language, traditions and cultural identity. Furthermore, for the purpose of promoting the implementation of various national minority programmes, the Ministry of Science and Education regularly posts the Public Call for co-financing of various special national minority programmes (vocational training of pre-school educators and school teachers who provide instruction in national minority languages and scripts in primary and secondary schools, organization of literary, theatrical and other extracurricular activities and other forms of schooling in national minority languages in primary and secondary schools, competitions for pupils belonging to national minorities in primary and secondary schools (writing, art, etc.), events to observe important dates for national minorities, printing of magazines, brochures and books that help promote national minority languages and are used in teaching in primary and secondary schools.

At the beginning of 2018/2019 school year, a total of 993 (535m/458f) children were encompassed in pre-school programmes, at the beginning of 2019/2020 there were 1,171 (620m/551f) children, and in 2021/2022 the total number of children encompassed in pre-school education programmes and schools-preparation programmes was 977 (480m/497f), of whom 414 (197m/217f) were in pre-school programmes and 563 (283m/280f) in schools-preparation programmes. At the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, a total of 5,407 (2,550m, 2,497f) and at the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year 4,716 (2,372m, 2,344f) pupils of the Roma national minority were encompassed in primary education. The data on the number of pupils who leave primary education after multiple attempts to complete a grade show that the completion of primary education is at a low level. Thus, during the 2020/2021 school year, 107 (59m/48f) pupils dropped out of primary education. The total sum of those who ended their schooling includes pupils who reached the age of 15 and did not complete primary education. There are 24 Roma teaching assistants (12m/12f) employed in primary schools. Their work is financed from the central budget. The vocational training of Roma teaching assistants and associates in primary schools with the aim of raising the quality and effectiveness of the education of children belonging to the Roma national minority continued during the reporting period. Through their training, teachers, pedagogy experts and teaching assistants in primary schools are equipped with the knowledge and methods whereby they can manage diversity in classrooms more successfully, become familiar with various anti-discriminatory approaches to teaching, be able to plan measures within the framework of school curricula to render support to pupils at risk of premature school leaving, master strategies for the use of inclusive methods in order to prevent premature school leaving, recognize and analyse the functioning of relationship dynamics in different types of families with emphasis on the specificities of cooperation between the pedagogy expert and dysfunctional families, foster partnerships between parents and schools, and define forms of cooperation with the staff of Social Welfare Centres. The Ministry of Science and Education provides learning of the Croatian language, i.e., it finances overtime work for classroom teachers and teachers of the Croatian language to provide special assistance in learning the Croatian language for pupils who do not know or have limited knowledge of the Croatian language, and who work with Roma pupils. Ensuring after-school care is exceptionally important since this is a prerequisite for the successful completion of primary education by Roma pupils, and significant progress has been made in the areas of language learning, acquisition of hygienic habits and socialization of children.

The growing trend in the number of Roma students incorporated into the secondary education system continued in the preceding period. Even though the number of students who continue their education in three-year secondary school programmes is higher than those in four-year programmes, growth in the number of students enrolled in the first year of four-year schools is noticeable. It is also apparent that students are departing from school, i.e., dropping out of secondary education. Total enrolment of students belonging to the Roma national minority at the beginning of the 2018/2019 school year was 760 (401m/359f), at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year 721 (368m/353f), and at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year 772 (382m/390f). The Ministry of Science and Education provides scholarships to all full-time Roma secondary school students. In 2020/2021, the amount of the monthly secondary school scholarship was € 92.91 (HRK 700.00), € 106.18 (HRK 800.00) in 2021-2022 and € 132.72

(HRK 1,000.00) in 2022-2023. The monthly scholarship amounted to € 39.82 (HRK 300.00) for students repeating a grade. With the objective of providing further support, since 2020 the Ministry of Science and Education has secured funding for one-off monetary assistance for Roma students to complete their secondary education..

Besides the one-off assistance, secondary school scholarships and accommodation of students in dormitories, the Ministry of Science and Education secures accommodation in dormitories and scholarships for Roma university students. The increase in the number of beneficiaries of this measure has been apparent during the reporting period. Thus, 26 students received scholarships in 2018/2019, 31 students received scholarships in 2019/2020, while the Ministry of Science and Education secured scholarships for 46 students in 2020/2021. As of the 2021/2022 academic year, the amount of the monthly scholarship was increased to € 172.54 (HRK 1,300.00). In 2021/2022 scholarships were secured for 52 students.

In addition to the aforementioned activities, during the 2018/2019 school year, the Ministry of Science and Education secured the funding to implement the project entitled Programming, Professional and Financial Support for the Education of Children and Students of the Roma National Minority via the Efficient Human Resources Operational Programme (ESF) 2014-2020. By means of these projects, transportation for students and after-school care was secured, as well as other activities: organization of additional and supplemental instruction and extra-curricular activities, organization of summer camps and/or extra-curricular activities aimed as the social integration of Roma pupils, additional vocational training of teachers/educators and teaching assistants and procurement of equipment and didactic aids.

Major challenges are still seen in ensuring the acquisition of knowledge and skills required to complete primary education in order to continue with schooling, developing a network of schools and enrolment areas and striking a balance between the number of Roma and other pupils, including the overall infrastructure which relies on education as well as further motivation for inclusion in secondary education, while promoting the continuation and completion of schooling. Since 2013, there has been a visibly significant increase in funding to achieve and implement national policy measures and activities for Roma education at all levels of the educational system. The table below shows the funds allocated from the budgetary line of the Ministry of Science and Education.

Central budgetary funds allocated by the Ministry of Science and Education National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2013-2020	
2019	€ 1,579,334.71 (HRK 11,899,497.36)
2020	€ 1,849,706.23 (HRK 13,936,611.59)
Central budgetary funds allocated by the Ministry of Science and Education National Plan for Roma Inclusion 2021-2027	
2021	€ 2,175,228.18 (HRK 16,389,256.73)

## Special forms of education (summer schools) and implementation of other special programmes of national minorities

For the purpose of preserving the ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity of pupils belonging to national minorities, the Ministry of Science and Education continually co-finances the implementation of special forms of education (summer schools) for the needs of pupils who belong to national minorities in the Republic of Croatia. Each year, the Ministry posts the Public Call for the co-financing of special programmes for national minorities in the Republic of Croatia. One of the primary objectives of the scheme is to implement programmes that will allow pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills, in equal collaboration with national minority associations active in the field of education of national minority pupils belonging to national minorities. Preference in participation in special forms of learning about national minority languages and cultures (summer schools) is accorded to those pupils belonging to national minorities who, due to the objective reason of the location of their residence, are unable to participate in the already established educational models (A, B and C). The general objective of the call is to encourage care for the education of all pupils belonging to national minorities in the Republic of Croatia and increase opportunities for pupils belonging to national minorities to acquire knowledge and skills outside of the standard educational system in compliance with their interests and aptitude. Approximately 650 pupils belonging to national minorities participate in summer schools every year.)

During the reporting period, funding in a total amount of € 271,075.83 (HRK 2,042,420.84) was secured to implement special forms of education (summer schools). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Ministry of Science and Education made the decision to cancel the Public Call for implementation of special forms of education (summer schools) for pupils belonging to national minorities in the Republic of Croatia in the 2019-2020 school year.

Furthermore, for the purpose of encouraging the implementation of various national minority programmes, the Ministry of Science and Education regularly posts the Public Call for co-financing of various special national minority programmes in the Republic of Croatia (vocational training of pre-school teachers and school teachers who provide instruction in national minority languages and scripts in primary and secondary schools, organization of literary, theatrical and other extracurricular activities and other forms of schooling in national minority languages in primary and secondary schools, competitions for pupils belonging to national minorities in primary and secondary schools (writing, art, etc.), events to observe important dates for national minorities, printing of magazines, brochures and books that help promote national minority languages and which are used for instruction in primary and secondary schools). In the period from 2019 to 2022, funding in an amount for € 175,592.28 (HRK 1,323,000.00) was secured for 120 different national minority programmes.

## Textbooks for instruction in national minority languages and scripts

Pursuant to Article 15 of the Act on the Education in National Minority Languages and Scripts, schools offering education in national minority languages and scripts use textbooks from native countries primarily for learning a mother tongue (Czech, Hungarian, Serbian, and Italian

languages, but also for other subjects), with the approval of the Ministry of Science and Education.

Pursuant to Article 16 of the same Act, the funds needed to co-finance the publication of textbooks for education in national minority languages and scripts are provided so that the price of textbooks is the same for the parents of children who are educated in national minority languages and scripts as the price of textbooks for the parents of children who are educated in Croatian.

In the preceding four-year period (2019-2022), the Ministry of Science and Education allocated € 1,678,959.47 (HRK 12,650,120.16) to cover the costs of financing textbooks and accompanying lecture materials for primary and secondary school pupils who are educated in national minority languages and scripts..

National minority	Minority publisher	Disbursed in 2019	Disbursed in 2020	Disbursed in 2021	Disbursed in 2022 (until September)
Czech national minority	Jednota Daruvar	€ 41,429.98 (HRK 312,154.21)	€ 31,232.16 (HRK 235,318.70)	€ 99,662.32 (HRK 750,905.74)	€ 73.949,01 (HRK 557,168.83)
Hungarian national minority	Hungarian Educational & Cultural Centre, Osijek	-	-	€ 212.356,49 (HRK 1,600.000.00)	€ 109,884.97 (HRK 827,928.28)
Serbian national minority	Prosvjeta, Zagreb	€ 42,330.71 (HRK 318,940.70)	€ 313,847.14 (HRK 2,364,681.30)	€ 280.191,48 (HRK 2,111,102.73)	€ 247,005.15 (HRK 1,861,060.29)
Italian national minority	EDIT, Rijeka	-	€ 185.811,93 (HRK 1,400.000.00)	€ 5,042.34 (HRK 37,991.53)	€ 36.215,79 (HRK 272,867.85)
	TOTAL	€ 83,760.69 (HRK 631,094.91)	€ 530.891,23 (HRK 4,000.000.00)	€ 597.252,64 (HRK 4,500.000.00)	€467,054.91 (HRK 3,519,025.25)*

\* The specified sum (for 2022) was spent on textbooks up to the end of September 2022.

#### Teaching plans and programmes and curricula

Within the framework of the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform, with which implementation of the Education, Science and Technology Strategy (as published in *Narodne novine*, no. 124/14) commenced in 2015, expert working groups were set up to develop the curricula for instruction in national minority languages and scripts. As part of the Comprehensive

Curriculum Reform for early and pre-school, primary and secondary education, in 2019 the following curricula were adopted:

- Curriculum for the Czech language course subject for primary and secondary schools with instruction in the language and script of the Czech national minority in the Republic of Croatia (Model A),
- Curriculum for the Czech language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C),
- Curriculum for the Serbian language course subject for primary and secondary schools with instruction in the language and Cyrillic script of the Serbian national minority in the Republic of Croatia (Model A),
- Curriculum for the Serbian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C),
- Curriculum for the Italian language course subject for primary schools and Italian language and literature for secondary schools with instruction in the language and script of the Italian national minority in the Republic of Croatia (Model A),

and in 2020 the following curricula were adopted:

- Curriculum for the Language and Culture of the Roma National Minority course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C),
- Curriculum for the Hungarian language and literature course subject for primary and secondary school with instruction in the language and script of the Hungarian national minority in the Republic of Croatia (Model A),
- Curriculum for the Hungarian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (model C),
- Curriculum for the Slovak language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (model C).

The setting up of 11 expert working groups was planned for the end of 2022 to develop the following curricula: Curriculum for the Rusyn language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the Ukrainian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the German language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the Albanian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the Bosnian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the Hebrew language and Jewish culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the Macedonian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the Polish language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the Russian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary

schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), Curriculum for the Slovenian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C) and Curriculum for the Italian language and culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C).

### Teacher training

The professional development of primary and secondary school teachers for instruction in national minority languages and scripts is continually implemented, and the training of teachers is under the purview of the Agency for Education and Teacher Training. At the level of pre-school, primary and secondary education, the Agency for Education and Teacher Training organizes and implements – among other things – the training aimed at professional development of teaching staff, provides assistance and issues instructions to teaching staff.

During the reporting period from 2019 to 2022, the Agency for Education and Teacher Training organized 93 seminars for 3,066 teachers who provide instruction in national minority languages and scripts, as follows: 39 seminars and 12 consultative visits in 2019 for over 954 pre-school and school teachers who provide instruction in national minority languages and scripts; a total of 18 seminars in 2020 for 587 participants; and a total of 36 seminars in 2021 for 1,525 participants.

The funding for the implementation of seminars was secured in collaboration of the Agency for Education and Teacher Training, the Ministry of Science and Education and the school founders, which refunded the costs of teacher participation in seminars to the schools.

### Overall financial indicators

Over the preceding four-year period (2019-2020), a total amount of € 8,639,942.66 (HRK 65,097,648.00) was allocated from the central budget of the Republic of Croatia for the needs of educational programmes and instruction in national minority languages and scripts, specifically to finance the following activities:

	Disbursed in 2019	Disbursed in 2020	Disbursed in 2021	Disbursed in 2022 (up to October)
A 578003 – Education of children belonging to national minorities	€ 201,838.21 (HRK 1,520,750.00)	€ 213,186.01 (HRK 1,606,250.00)	€ 217,167.70 (HRK 1,636,250.00)	€ 130,181.17 (HRK 980,850.00)
A 577131 – National minority education incentives	€ 83,760.69 (HRK 631,094.91)	€ 530,891.23 (HRK 4,000.000.00)	€ 597,252.64 (HRK 4,500.000.00)	€ 467,054.91 (HRK 3,519,025.25)

A 577137 – Special education programmes for implementation of national minority programmes	€ 147,402.32 (HRK 1,110,602.77)	€ 86,333.15 (HRK 650,477.09)	€ 127,959.45 (HRK 964,110.45)	€ 158,950.03 (HRK 1,197,609.02)
A 767003 – Secondary school scholarships for Roma pupils	€ 499,595.20 (HRK 3,764,200.00)	€ 554,356.63 (HRK 4,176,800.00)	€ 756,891.63 (HRK 5,702,800.00)	€ 452,518.42 (HRK 3,409,500.00)
A 767015 – Implementation of Roma inclusion programme	€ 727,546.27 (HRK 5,481,697.36)	€ 818,935.33 (HRK 6,170,268.22)	€ 854,691.32 (HRK 6,439,671.73)	€ 786,308.47 (HRK 5,924,441.20)
A 679066 – Grants for Roma studies and Roma university students	€ 16,046.19 (HRK 120,900.00)	€ 52,624.59 (HRK 396,500.00)	€ 103,410.98 (HRK 779,150.00)	€ 55,040.15 (HRK 414,700.00)
TOTAL	€ 1,676,188.87 (HRK 12,629,245.04)	€ 2,256,326.94 (HRK 17,000,295.31)	€ 2,657,373.70 (HRK 20,021,982.18)	€ 2,050,053.15 (HRK 15,446,125.47)

#### Assessment of current situation

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Science and Education continued to make significant efforts to implement the provisions of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, the Act on the Education in National Minority Languages and Scripts and other regulations. The Ministry of Science and Education includes the National Minorities Directorate, which performs administrative and expertise-based tasks pertaining to the planning, monitoring and improvement of pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education, adult education and education in national minority languages and scripts, as well as other tasks under its purview.

During the reporting period from 2019 to 2022, there has been a noticeable increase in allocations for educational programmes and instruction in national minority languages and scripts, but it should be noted that the funding for 2022 is shown until October. An increase in the number of children included in the system of early and pre-school education in national minority languages and scripts is evident (2,048 children in 2021 in comparison to 1,952 in the preceding year) as well as an increase in the number of pupils in the primary school education (6,983 pupils in 2021 in comparison to 6,841 in the preceding year). A slight decline is visible in the number of secondary school pupils (1,366 in comparison to 1,374 in the preceding year) as well as the number of those taking the school-leaving examination who took the mother tongue exam (206 in comparison to 225). In comparison to 2020, the absorption of funds earmarked for special forms of education of pupils belonging to national minorities and the

continuation of rendering professional support through the organization of professional development aimed at all teaching staff providing instruction in national minority languages and scripts were more successful. Also noteworthy was the state-level seminar organized by the Agency for Education and Teacher Training with the support of the National Minorities Directorate of the Ministry of Science and Education, which was aimed at all professionals who provide education in national minority languages and scripts. The co-financing of the development, translation and supplemental printing of textbooks and other educational materials for the needs of instruction has continued and increased, and considerable progress has been made in this field to increase planned budgetary funds in comparison to earlier periods. Due to the circumstances that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic, during 2021 the continuity of operation of working groups tasked with filming video lectures for pupils educated in the Serbian language and Cyrillic script and in the Czech language was ensured. During 2021, the Ministry of Science and Education undertook all activities provided for in the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027 period in the portion pertaining to education. The visible increase in the number of children and pupils encompassed in pre-school learning programmes as well as after-school care is also noteworthy. Moreover, considerable progress has been achieved in increasing the amount of secondary school scholarships for the 2021-2022 school year. In higher education, there has been a notable increase in the number of Roma students, and in the coming period there are plans to increase the monthly sum of scholarships in order to additionally encourage the completion of secondary school programmes and enrol a higher number of students belonging to the Roma national minority in institutions of higher education. Furthermore, during 2021, the Ministry of Science and Education participated in the preparation of projects for the new 2021-2027 financial period, in which the implementation of various activities for persons belonging to the Roma national minority has been planned, as well as programming, professional, and financial support for the education of children and pupils belonging to the Roma national minority. Additional activities pertaining to support for schools with a higher number of persons belonging to the Roma national minority have also been foreseen in the Draft National Plan for the Development of the Educational System for 2021-2027 Period, and the 2021-2023 Action Plan.

In connection with the adoption of the Curriculum for the Roma National Minority Language and Culture course subject in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C), interest in the introduction and implementation of the Roma National Minority Language and Culture course subject was expressed by the Jagodnjak Primary School, where pupils and their parents have expressed a desire for the pupils to participate in this course. Subsequently, the Ministry of Science and Education granted consent for the organization of instruction and the hiring of teachers as of the 2020/2021 school year. Progress has been made in the alignment of the charters of primary schools in which instruction is conducted in the Serbian language and Cyrillic script under Model A, founded by Vukovar-Srijem County, with the Act on Amendments to the Act on Primary and Secondary School Education (*Narodne novine*, no. 68/18).

In the coming period, the implementation of existing activities and further funding increases projected in the central budget will continue. The development of new curricula for instruction in national minority languages and scripts will be intensified, as well as work on the

development, alignment and refinement of the legal framework, and the development of education in national minority languages and scripts as whole.

## ***With reference to Article 15***

*From the report of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration*

### Representation of national minorities in the Croatian Parliament

Article 16 of the Croatian Parliamentary Elections Act stipulates that Croatia (*Narodne novine*, nos. 116/99, 109/00, 53/03, 69/03 – consolidated text, 44/06, 19/07, 20/09, 145/00, 24/11, 93/11 – CCRC Ruling, 120/11 – cons. text, 19/15, 66/15 – cons. text, 104/15 – CCRC Ruling and 98/19) specifies that the Republic of Croatia guarantees persons belonging to national minorities in Croatia the right to representation in the Croatian Parliament. Persons belonging to national minorities in Croatia are entitled to elect eight members to Parliament who are elected in a separate electoral unit that covers the entire territory of the Republic of Croatia.

Furthermore, Article 17 of the same law stipulates that persons belonging to the Serbian national minority elect three members to Parliament in compliance with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, the Hungarian national minority elects one member to Parliament, the Italian minority elects one member to Parliament, the Czech and Slovak minorities jointly elect one member to Parliament, the Austrian, Bulgarian, German, Polish, Roma, Romanian, Russian, Rusyn, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vlach and Jewish national minorities jointly elect one member to Parliament, and the Albanian, Bosniak, Montenegrin, Macedonian and Slovenian national minorities jointly elect one member to Parliament.

The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (*Narodne novine*, no. 85/10 – consolidated text, and 5/14 – Ruling of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia) defines the Republic of Croatia as a democratic state in which authority ensues from the people and belongs to the people as a community of free and equal citizens who exercise authority through the election of their representatives and by direct decision-making. The people, Croatian citizens who are 18 years of age and older (voters), exercise authority by electing their representatives who have a constitutionally guaranteed free term of office in the representative body of citizens, the Croatian Parliament, based on general and equal suffrage. It is vital to underscore that all Croatian citizens, both those who are members of the Croatian nation and those who are members of national minorities, compose the people in the sense of constitutional provisions.

Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Croatian Parliament who are elected by the members of several national minorities represent all members of the national minorities who elected them, that is, whose representatives they are, and not only the national minority to which they ethnically belong. Such MPs have exactly the same term of office in the sense of the extent and content of representative authorizations as well as the rights, obligations and duties as MPs elected as the candidates on the slates of political parties registered in the Republic of Croatia and MPs elected from the independent candidate slates of voters.

With reference to the possibility established by Article 15(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, we stress that besides general suffrage, under the law the special right to elect their representatives to the Croatian Parliament may also be secured for the persons belonging to national minorities.

In conclusion, we can state that thanks to regulations pertaining to the field of national minority rights, including those governing the electoral law, a very high degree of integration of national

minorities into Croatian political system has been achieved (one of the more recent examples that may be noted is that a member of the most numerous national minority in the Republic of Croatia holds the post of deputy prime minister of the Republic of Croatia in charge of social affairs and human rights).

#### Representation of national minorities in the representative bodies of local and regional governments

The Act on Amendments to the Local Elections Act (*Narodne novine*, no. 144/20) among other things effected changes pertaining to ensuring the adequate representation of national minorities in the representative bodies of local and regional governments. Article 107 of the Local Elections Act was amended to stipulate that in order to achieve the adequate representation of national minorities in representative bodies, the Croatian Government will arrange for supplemental elections for national minority representatives within a period of 90 days after a given unit's representative body is constituted, in which case the number of members of the representative body may be even. These changes in securing the representation of members of national minorities in the units' representative bodies were applied to the regular local elections held in May 2021. The legal solution to hold supplemental elections if the adequate representation of national minorities in the completed local elections was not achieved was incorporated in the legislation as a result of acceptance of the amendments by MPs from the ranks of national minorities – the MP club of the Independent Democratic Serbian Party, MP Furio Radin and MP Robert Jankovics – submitted during the procedure to enact the Amendments to the Local Elections Act in December 2020.

Namely, the 2001 Act on the Election of Members of Representative Bodies of Local and Regional Government Units stipulated that if the adequate representation of national minorities in a unit's representative body is not attained in elections, the number of members of that representative body would be increased by the number necessary to achieve that representation, and that those members of a given minority nominated as candidates on slates who did not get elected would be deemed elected in the order of the relative success of each slate in the elections. Supplemental elections would only be held if the application of this rule failed to achieve adequate representation of national minorities in a unit's representative body. Thus, this aforementioned law stipulated the so-called drawing from candidate slates. Furthermore, this rule was altered, or rather supplemented, by enactment of the Local Elections Act of 2012. As noted above, this rule was once more amended in 2020, so now, if adequate representation of national minorities is not attained in a representative body, there will no longer be the so-called drawing from slates, rather supplemental elections are immediately organized. In order to achieve adequate representation of national minorities in representative bodies, the Croatian Government will set a date for the supplemental elections for national minority representatives within a period of 90 days after the relevant unit's representative body is constituted.

At the regular local elections held on 16 May 2021, pursuant to the Local Elections Act and in compliance with local charters, the persons belonging to national minorities were guaranteed the right to elect a total of 287 members of representative bodies in a total of 153 local and

regional government units. Broken down by minority groups, the Serbian minority was guaranteed the right to elect a total of 185 members to representative bodies of local and regional governments; the Italian minority 38 members; the Hungarian minority 16 members; the Bosniak and Roma minorities 13 members each; the Czech minority 11 members; the Slovak minority 6 members; the Rusyn minority 3 members; and the Albanian and Ukrainian minorities one member each. Representation of national minorities upon the completion of the regular local elections on 16 May 2021 was not attained in the representative bodies of 80 local and regional units, for 96 members of representative bodies from the ranks of national minorities. Consequently, on 3 October 2021, supplemental elections were held. Out of the aforementioned 96 elections for members to the representative bodies of local and regional governments from the ranks of national minorities, a total of 87 members of representative bodies from the ranks of national minorities were elected, given that 9 candidacies were not legally valid (8 were not submitted, and one was not accepted). The aforementioned total number of 87 members of representative bodies from the ranks of national minorities were elected in 72 local and regional government units.

#### Representation of national minorities in the executive bodies of local and regional governments

Article 22 (1) of the Constitutional Act stipulates that representatives of national minorities are entitled to representation in the executive body of a local or regional government, if they have achieved proportional representation in the corresponding representative body. Thus, persons belonging to national minorities in the municipalities and towns in which they account for more than 15% of the population, as well as in those counties in which they account for more than 5% (right to proportional representation in local representative bodies), are entitled to representation in the executive bodies in those units. With regard to deputy chief officials of executive bodies in these units, the right to a deputy chief official from the ranks of national minorities is ascertained prior to holding elections, such that this deputy chief official is elected simultaneously with municipal mayors, county prefects and their deputies. They are elected at the same time, but not jointly in the same ballot with the municipal mayor or county prefect, but rather separately in a separate ballot for which only voters from the ranks of the relevant national minority, or the Croatian people, vote. Given that they are elected in the same elections, simultaneously, in the same manner and according to the same procedure as the municipal mayor, or county prefect, there is no need to hold supplemental elections in order to ensure representation in executive bodies since that representation is ensured in regular elections.

At the local elections held in 2021, in compliance with the aforementioned Act and local government units' charters, the persons belonging to national minorities were entitled to nominate and elect candidates for a total of 67 municipal mayors and deputy county prefects in a total of 66 local and regional government units, specifically in 55 municipalities and towns and in 11 counties. Broken down by minorities, the members of the Serbian national minority were entitled to nominate candidates and elect 39 deputies; the Italian minority 13 deputies; the Czech and Hungarian minorities 4 deputies each; the Bosniak, Roma and Rusyn minorities 2

deputies each; and the Slovak minority one deputy or representative in the executive body of a municipality, town or county. A total of 55 deputy municipal mayors and 12 deputy county prefects from the ranks of national minorities were elected in these elections, whereby the right to representation in executive bodies has been fully attained.

#### Representation of national minorities in the administrative bodies of local and regional governments

Article 22(3) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities stipulates that national minorities are ensured representation in administrative bodies of local and regional governments pursuant to the provisions of a special law that regulates local and regional governments and other laws governing employment policy and in compliance with the acquired rights. Article 22(4) stipulates that priority is accorded, under equal conditions, to persons belonging to national minorities when filling posts in the administrative bodies of local units. Article 56a(1) of the Local and Regional Government Act (*Narodne novine*, nos. 33/01, 60/01, 129/05, 109/07, 125/08, 36/09, 36/09, 150/11, 144/12, 19/13, 137/15, 123/17, 98/19 and 144/20) stipulates that persons belonging to national minorities who, pursuant to the provisions of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, have the right to proportional representation in representative bodies of local and regional government units, also have the right to representation in the corresponding local and regional administrative bodies. Article 56a(2) of that same Act stipulates that the local and regional governments specified in paragraph (1) are obliged to implement a policy for recruiting new civil servants, or civil servants who fill vacancies, in a manner that will ensure respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Furthermore, Article 9 of the Act on Local and Regional Civil Servants and Public Employees (*Narodne novine*, nos. 86/08, 61/11, 4/18 and 112/19) stipulates that the civil service recruitment plan shall ascertain the current level of occupancy of posts in local administrative bodies, the necessary number of full-time civil servants and public employees for the period to which the plan pertains and the number of trainees with adequate qualifications and vocations. The recruitment plan specifies, among other things, the filling of posts in administrative bodies by persons belonging to national minorities and specifies the hiring of the required number of persons belonging to national minorities with the aim of achieving representation in line with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the law that regulates the system of local and regional government. Article 19(9) and (10) of the same Act stipulates, among other things, that when announcing vacancies, local governments with administrative bodies in which representation of national minorities has not been achieved in compliance with the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities are obliged to indicate this in the text of their announcement. The candidates entitled to priority over other candidates based on special legislation are obliged to invoke that right in their applications, and they are entitled to priority over other candidates only under equal conditions. It should be stressed that, when adopting recruitment plans, the obligation to employ persons belonging to national minorities in administrative bodies of local units, pursuant to the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, applies to those municipalities and towns in which persons belonging to minorities account for more than 15% of the population, as well as those counties in which

minorities account for more than 5%, that is, to units that have the obligation to ensure a proportional representation of persons belonging to minorities in their representative body.

The effectiveness of hiring of persons belonging to national minorities, along with the adoption of recruitment plans by units, also depends on the number of applications of persons belonging to minorities for vacancy announcements, the number of invocations of priority in employment (there is no obligation to specify the candidate's ethnicity), fulfilment of the requirements for the job position to be filled, the results of their testing and personal interview. In compliance with the Act on Local and Regional Civil Servants and Public Employees, candidates who have priority in hiring according to special legislation, including persons belonging to national minorities, have such priority over other candidates only under equal conditions, which means that, besides meeting all formal criteria from the vacancy announcement, they must achieve the same number of points as the candidate with the highest number of points after the completion of testing and interview.

According to the records of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, on 31 December 2021, there was a total of 16,691 civil servants and public employees working in local and regional administrative bodies, of whom 497, or 2.98%, were persons belonging to 22 national minorities, 519, or 3.11%, were unknown, 20, or 0.12%, were undeclared, and 6, or 0.04% declared themselves as Muslims. For the sake of comparison, on 31 December 2020, the total number of civil servants and public employees in local and regional administrative bodies was 16,655 civil servants and public employees, of whom 487 or 2.92% belonged to one of 22 national minorities, 527 or 3.16% were unknown, 20 or 0.12% were undeclared and 6 or 0.04% declared themselves as Muslims. Out of the 497 civil servants and public employees from the ranks of national minorities, the most, 282, were Serbs, followed by 67 Italians, 48 Bosniaks, 29 Hungarians, 24 Czechs, 8 Montenegrins, 7 Macedonians, 7 Slovenes, 5 Rusyns, 4 Albanians, 4 Slovaks, 4 Roma, 3 Germans, and 2 Russians, as well as one each from the ranks of the Romanian, Ukrainian and Jewish national minorities.

Here it should be noted that individual local governments do not submit data on the nationality of its civil servants and public employees, for in the absence of the obligation of individuals to declare their nationality, the question of nationality is not even posed, and there is thus no information on the state of employees based on nationality (City of Pula/Pola, City of Zagreb). The City of Pula/Pola reported that in the absence of the legal obligation for individuals to declare their nationality, the question of nationality was not posed, keeping in mind the General Personal Data Protection Regulation (General Personal Data Protection Regulation Implementation Act, *Narodne novine*, no. 42/18) and it therefore has no information on the employment of members of national minorities. Similarly, with reference to the maintenance of data on hiring members of national minorities, the City of Zagreb reported that the nationality of the 519 civil servants and public employees in the city's administrative bodies is not known given that, pursuant to Article 9 of the General Data Protection Regulation, the processing of data that reveals racial or ethnic origin is prohibited, so not a single document of a more recent date contains data on nationality.

As a result of this and the fact that, pursuant to the Ordinance on the Content and Methods for Maintaining Employee Records (*Narodne novine*, no. 73/17), data on nationality are not mandatory in employee records, an increasing number of units do not include these data in their

employee records, which, as apparent in the aforementioned examples, may lead to a reduction in the presented number of employees belonging to national minorities in the administrative bodies of local and regional governments.

The data on invocation of the priority in hiring, collected from local and regional governments via the e-System for Monitoring the Implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, are as follows: during 2021, 78 local and regional governments obliged to hire members of national minorities posted a total of 243 public vacancy announcements and recruitment notices (147 public vacancy announcements and 96 recruitment notices) for 338 posts (172 for permanent employment and 166 for fixed term assignments), and for 349 individual staff members (177 for permanent employment and 172 for fixed term assignments). Out of the total of 24 candidates who invoked hiring priority on the basis of their national minority affiliation (14 for public vacancy announcements and 10 for recruitment notices), 5 candidates were hired: one member of the Italian national minority and four members of the Serbian national minority (3 via public vacancy announcements and 2 via recruitment notices). Under the annual recruitment plans in 78 local and regional governments in which there is a legal obligation to hire members of national minorities, hiring of a total of 22 members of national minorities was foreseen for 2021.

#### Representation of national minorities in the civil service

During civil service recruitment planning for state administrative bodies, staff services and the offices of the Croatian Government, data are sought from the aforementioned bodies on the occupancy of posts by persons belonging to national minorities and on the planned recruitment of persons belonging to national minorities in the civil service in relation to the total planned recruitment during the course of the year. Over the entire reporting period, from 2019 to 2022, regulations were in force that halted new recruitment of civil servants and public employees in state bodies, staff services and the offices of the Croatian Government, which had an impact on the possibility of hiring civil servants in general, and thus also on hiring persons belonging to national minorities.

As at 31 December 2021, state administrative bodies, staff services and offices of the Croatian Government employed 47,501 civil servants and public employees, of whom 1,439 or 3.03% were persons belonging to national minorities. The data broken down by nationality of those employed who belong to national minorities show that in these bodies at the end of 2021, most of these employees were Serbian, 920, who accounted for 1.94% of the total number of those employed; followed by Bosniaks, 79, or 0.17% of all those employed; Czechs, 79, or 0.17%; Hungarians, 78, or 0.16%; Italians, 77, or 0.17%; Slovenes, 32, or 0.07%; Albanians, 28, or 0.06%; and 12 Roma, or 0.03%; while 134 civil servants and public employees, or 0.28% of the total number of civil servants and public employees, declared their affiliation to other national minorities.

A comparison of the data on the number of persons belonging to national minorities in state administrative bodies, staff services and offices of the Croatian Government on 31 December 2020 shows that the total number of recorded members of national minorities in these bodies at the end of 2021 was 32 less than at the end of 2020.

As at 31 December 2020, state administrative bodies, staff services and offices of the Croatian Government employed 47,947 civil servants and public employees, of whom 1,471 or 3.07% were persons belonging to national minorities. The data broken down by nationality of those employed who belong to national minorities show that in these bodies at the end of 2020, most of these employees were Serbian, 946, who accounted for 1.97% of the total number of those employed; followed by Italians, 83, or 0.17% of those employed; Hungarians, 80, or 0.17%; Bosniaks, 80, or 0.17%; Czechs, 74, or 0.15%; Slovenes, 38, or 0.08%; Albanians, 26, or 0.05%; and 11 Roma, or 0.02%; while 133 civil servants and public employees, or 0.28% of the total number of civil servants and public employees, declared their affiliation to other national minorities.

As at 31 December 2019, state administrative bodies, staff services and offices of the Croatian Government employed 50,026 civil servants and public employees, of whom 1,579 or 3.16% were persons belonging to national minorities, which was a small reduction in percentage in comparison to 2018, when they made up 3.24%. The data broken down by nationality of those employed who belong to national minorities show that in these bodies at the end of 2019, most of these employees were Serbian, 1,025, who accounted for 2.05% of the total number of those employed; followed by Italians, 88, or 0.18%; Hungarians, 87, or 0.17%; Bosniaks, 86, or 0.17%; Czechs, 82, or 0.16%; Slovenes, 39, or 0.08%; Albanians, 26, or 0.05%; and 11 Roma, or 0.02%; while 135 civil servants and public employees, or 0.27% of the total number of civil servants and public employees, declared their affiliation to other national minorities.

Furthermore, all state bodies are obliged to post public vacancy announcements for full-time employment in the civil service in the official journal of the Republic of Croatia, *Narodne novine*, on their own web-sites and on the web-site of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration. Notification of public vacancy announcements are also submitted to the relevant employment service. Announcements for fixed-term assignments to the civil service are posted on the web-sites of the bodies that publish them, the web-site of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration and via the relevant employment service. The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration conducts oversight of the legality of the posted texts of vacancy announcements and recruitment notices, and notifies state bodies of the obligation to cite the section of the text tied to the priority in hiring granted to persons belonging to national minorities when all other conditions are equal. Furthermore, persons belonging to national minorities are instructed that they are entitled to invoke their priority in hiring in compliance with Article 22(2) of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, without the obligation to provide evidence of their ethnicity. The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration notifies persons belonging to national minorities of this right via responses to queries and posts on its own web-site. In adhering to the provisions of regulations which govern recruitment to civil service, during the process of planning of recruitment to the civil service, particular attention is accorded to the representation of national minorities in the total number of employees in state administrative bodies, staff services and the office of the Croatian Government.

During 2021, state administrative bodies, staff services and offices of the Croatian Government posted a total of 303 public vacancy announcements and recruitment notices (180 for full-time

employment and 123 for fixed-term assignments) for 1,044 posts (745 for full-time employment and 299 for fixed-term assignments), and for 1,386 individual staff members (963 for full-time employment and 423 for fixed-term assignments). In applications submitted in response to public vacancy announcements, 50 candidates invoked the right of priority based on their national minority status, of whom 5 were hired: 3 candidates on the basis of the highest possible testing and interview score and 2 on the basis of invocation of the right to priority based on their national minority status.

Judicial bodies posted 547 public vacancy announcement and recruitment notices (356 for full-time employment and 191 for fixed-term assignments) for 536 posts (367 for full-time employment and 169 for fixed-term assignments) and for 890 individual staff members (599 for full-time employment and 291 for fixed-term assignments). In applications submitted in response to public vacancy announcements, 66 candidates invoked the right of priority based on their national minority status, of whom 9 candidates were hired: 7 candidates on the basis of the highest possible testing and interview score and 2 on the basis of invocation of the right to priority based on their national minority status.

Out of the total 116 candidates who invoked the right to priority based on national minority status in state administrative bodies, judicial bodies, staff services and the offices of the Croatian Government, 13 candidates did not specify the national minority to which they belonged, while 103 candidates declared their status as members of the following national minorities:

- 49 candidates of Serbian nationality,
- 23 candidates of Bosniak nationality,
- 9 candidates of Slovak nationality,
- 5 candidates of Czech nationality,
- 4 candidates of Italian nationality,
- 4 candidates of Hungarian nationality,
- 3 candidates of Rusyn nationality,
- 2 candidates of Albanian nationality,
- 1 candidate of Macedonian nationality,
- 1 candidate of Ukrainian nationality,
- 1 candidate of German nationality, and
- 1 candidate of Roma nationality.

Out of the 14 hired candidates who had invoked the right to priority based on their national minority status, 2 were employed in the Ministry of the Interior, one in the Ministry of Labour, the Pension System, Family and Social Policy, one in the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets, one in the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing and 9 in judicial bodies. Out of these, in state administrative bodies 3 candidates were hired on the basis of highest test and interview scores, while 2 candidates were hired on the basis of invocation of the right to priority; in judicial bodies 7 candidates were hired on the basis of highest test and interview scores, while 2 candidates were hired on the basis of invocation of the right to priority. Data are not given on the number of times the right to priority was invoked for public vacancy announcements and recruitment notices posted in 2021 but still in progress due to the legal recourse procedures.

## Recruitment planning

Given the moratorium on new hiring, the last Civil Service Recruitment Plan for State Administrative Bodies, Staff Services and Offices of the Croatian Government (hereinafter: Recruitment Plan) was adopted in 2019 (*Narodne novine*, no. 73/19). Under this Plan, 48 persons belonging to national minorities were to be hired in the civil service.

We also note that under the Operational Programmes for National Minorities for 2017-2020, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration established a methodology for monitoring exercise of the right to priority in hiring of persons belonging to national minorities in the civil and public services and at the level of local and regional governments, with the aim of monitoring the implementation of Article 22 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities.

### Representation of national minorities in judicial bodies

The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration continually monitors statistics on judicial officials and civil servants, public employees and interns belonging to national minorities in judicial bodies. The recruitment procedure for admitting civil servants is independently implemented by judicial bodies. Namely, Article 50 of the Act on the State Judicial Council (*Narodne novine*, nos. 116/10, 57/11, 130/11, 13/13, 28/13, 82/15, 67/18, 126/19 and 80/22) and Article 53 of the Act on the State Attorney's Council (*Narodne novine*, nos. 67/18, 126/19 and 80/22) stipulate that during the appointment of judges and deputy state attorneys, due consideration must be accorded to the representation of judges and deputy state attorneys belonging to national minorities in compliance with the provisions of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, and to the fact that persons belonging to national minorities who apply for a posted vacant judicial seat or deputy state attorney post are entitled to invoke the right guaranteed to them by the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities. Finally, Article 108(4) of the Courts Act (*Narodne novine*, nos. 28/13, 33/15, 82/15, 82/16, 67/18 and 21/22) stipulates that when hiring civil servants and public employees in the courts, due consideration must be accorded to the representation of members of national minorities among their ranks. Below is a table showing data pertaining to the number of persons belonging to national minorities employed in judicial bodies on 31 December 2021.

Table 5. Judiciary – public employees in courts – consolidated table as at 31 December 2021<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> **Note:**

\* State-level courts – Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia, High Criminal Court of the Republic of Croatia, High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia, High Commercial Court of the Republic of Croatia, High Misdemeanour Court of the Republic of Croatia

\* Others – brief explanation (3-Montenegrin, 1-Macedonian, 2-Undeclared, 1-Rusyn, 1-Slovak)

Brief analysis of the situation in comparison to 2020 (difference +/-): The total number of public employees in the courts increased from 1,675 to 1,680, while the number of persons belonging to national minorities (hereinafter: PBNM) decreased from 50 to 48. The number of public employees in state-level courts increased from 112 to 121, while the number of PBNM remained the same at 1. The number of public employees in county

	Total		State-level courts		County courts		Municipal courts		Commercial courts		Administrative courts		Comp. to 31 Dec. 2020 (+/-)
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
Serbs	33	1.96		0.00	11	2.97	21	2.06		1.00	1	2.04	-5.71
Bosniaks	3	0.18		0.00	1	0.27	2	0.20		0.00		0.00	0.00
Italians	2	0.12		0.00		0.00	2	0.20		0.00		0.00	0.00
Hungarians	1	0.06		0.00		0.00	1	0.10		0.00		0.00	0.00
Slovenes	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Albanians	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Czechs	1	0.06		0.00		0.00	1	0.10		0.00		0.00	0.00
Roma	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Others	8	0.48	1	0.83	2	0.54	5	0.49		0.00		0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.680</b>		<b>121</b>		<b>370</b>		<b>1.019</b>		<b>121</b>		<b>49</b>		<b>0.30</b>
<b>of this PBNM</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>-4.00</b>

Judiciary – public employees in state attorney’s offices – consolidated table as at 31 December 2021<sup>16</sup>

	Total		State Attorney’s Office of the RoC		Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organized Crime		County State Attorney’s Office		Municipal State Attorney’s Offices		Comp. to 31 Dec. 2020 (+/-)
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
Serbs	14	2.20		0.00		0.00	7	4.32	7	1.69	7.69

courts decreased from 378 to 370, and the number of PBNM also decreased from 15 to 14. The number of public employees in municipal courts increased from 1,015 to 1,019, while the number of PBNM decreased from 33 to 32. The number of public employees in commercial courts remained the same at 121, as did the number of PBNM, which is 0. The number of public employees in administrative courts remained the same at 49, as did the number of PBNM at 1.

<sup>16</sup> **Note:**

\* Others – brief explanation (1-Montenegrin, 2-Macedonian, 1 -Undeclared, 1-Ukrainian)

Brief analysis of the situation in comparison to 2020 (difference +/-):

The number of public employees in state attorney’s offices decreased from 639 to 635, while the number of PBNM increased from 21 to 23. In the State Attorney’s Office of the Republic of Croatia, the number of public employees decreased from 26 to 25, while the number of PBNM remained the same at 1. In the Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organize Crime, the number of public employees remained the same at 33, as did the number of PBNM, which is 0. The number of public employees in county state attorney’s offices increased from 161 to 162, while the number of PBNM remained the same at 10. The number of public employees in municipal courts decreased from 419 to 415, while the number of PBNM increased from 10 to 12.

Bosniaks	1	0.16	1	4.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Italians	1	0.16		0.00		0.00	1	0.62		0.00	0.00
Hungarians	1	0.16		0.00		0.00	1	0.62		0.00	0.00
Slovenes	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Albanians	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Czechs	1	0.16		0.00		0.00		0.00	1	0.24	0.00
Roma	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Others	5	0.79		0.00		0.00	1	0.62	4	0.96	25.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>635</b>		<b>25</b>		<b>33</b>		<b>162</b>		<b>415</b>		<b>-0.63</b>
<b>of this PBNM</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6.17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>9.52</b>

Table 6. Judiciary – civil servants, public employees and interns in the courts – consolidated table as at 31 December<sup>17</sup>

	Total		State-level courts		County courts		Municipal courts		Commercial courts		Administrative courts		Comp. to 31 Dec. 2020 (+/-)
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
Serbs	94	1.45		0.00	13	1.68	74	1.55	6	1.07	1	0.96	-8.74
Bosniaks	21	0.32		0.00		0.00	18	0.38	3	0.53		0.00	-4.55
Italians	14	0.22		0.00		0.00	14	0.29		0.00		0.00	0.00
Hungarians	8	0.12		0.00	1	0.13	5	0.10	2	0.36		0.00	-11.11
Slovenes	3	0.05		0.00		0.00	2	0.04		0.00	1	0.96	0.00
Albanians	4	0.06		0.00		0.00	4	0.08		0.00		0.00	0.00

<sup>17</sup> **Note:**

\* State-level courts – Supreme Court of Republic of Croatia, High Criminal Court of the Republic of Croatia, High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia, High Commercial Court of the Republic of Croatia, High Misdemeanour Court of the Republic of Croatia

\* data refer to both open-ended and fixed term employment

\* Others – brief explanation (7-Montegrin, 2-Macedonian, 1-Muslim, 22-Undeclared, 3-German, 1-Rusyn, 3-Slovak, 4-Ukrainian)

Brief analysis of the situation in comparison to 2020 (difference +/-):

The total number of civil servants, public employees and interns in the courts decreased from 6,581 to 6,492, while the number of PBNM decreased from 200 to 199. The number of civil servants, public employees and interns in state-level courts increased from 254 to 270, while the number of PBNM remained the same at 1. The number of civil servants, public employees and interns in county courts decreased from 790 to 773, while the number of PBNM decreased from 20 to 18. The number of civil servants, public employees and interns in municipal courts decreased from 4,868 to 4,784, while the number of PBNM remained the same at 164. The number of civil servants, public employees and interns in commercial courts decreased from 567 to 561, while the number of PBNM increased from 13 to 14. The number of civil servants, public employees and interns in county courts increased from 102 to 104, while the number of PBNM remained the same at 2

Czechs	12	0.18		0.00		0.00	12	0.25		0.00		0.00	-7.69
Roma	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Others	43	0.66	1	0,37	4	0.52	35	0.73	3	0.53		0.00	34.38
Total	6,492		270		773		4,784		561		104		-1.35
of this PBNM	199	3.07	1	0,37	18	2.33	164	3.43	14	2.50	2	1.92	-0.50

Judiciary – civil servants, public employees and interns in the state attorney’s offices – consolidated table as at 31 December 2021<sup>18</sup>

	Total		State Attorney’s Office of the RoC		Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organized Crime		County State Attorney’s Office		Municipal State Attorney’s Offices		Comp. to 31 Dec. 2020 (+/-)
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
Serbs	22	1.80	1	1.92	1	1.61	6	1.96	14	1.75	-4.35
Bosniaks	5	0.41		0.00		0.00	1	0.33	4	0.50	0.00
Italians	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Hungarians	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Slovenes	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Albanians	1	0.08		0.00		0.00	1	0,33		0.00	0.00
Czechs	1	0.08		0.00		0.00		0.00	1	0.12	100.00
Roma	0	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00
Others	7	0.57	1	1.92	2	3.23	1	0.33	3	0.37	75.00
Total	1.222		52		62		306		802		2.95
of this PBNM	36	2.95	2	3.85	3	4.84	9	2.94	22	2.74	9.09

<sup>18</sup> Note:

\* data refer to both full-time and temporary employees

\* Others – brief explanation (5-Undeclared, 1-Slovak, 1-Ukrainian)

Brief analysis of the situation in comparison to 2020 (difference +/-):

The total number of civil servants, public employees and interns in state attorney’s offices increased from 1,187 to 1,222, while the number of PBNM increased from 33 to 36. In the State Attorney’s Office of the Republic of Croatia, the number of civil servants, public employees and interns increased from 50 to 52, while the number of PBNM remained the same. In the Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organized Crime, the number of civil servants, public employees and interns increased from 40 to 62, and the number of PBNM also increased to 3. In the county State attorney’s offices, the number of civil servants, public employees and interns increased from 300 to 306, while the number of PBNM remained the same at 9. In municipal state attorney’s offices, the number of civil servants, public employees and interns increased from 797 to 802, while the number of PBNM remained the same at 22.

## National minority councils and representatives

Article 23 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities stipulates that, with the aim of promoting, preserving and protecting the status of national minorities in society, persons belonging to national minorities elect their representatives to participate in public life and management of local affairs through national minority councils and representatives in local and regional government units. Article 24 of the Constitutional Act stipulates the requirements for the election of national minority councils and representatives. Thus, persons belonging to a national minority may elect their national minority council in those local government units in which their national minority accounts for a minimum of 1.5% of the total population, in those local government units in which more than 200 persons belonging to their national minority live, and in those regional government units in which more than 500 persons belonging to their national minority live. In cases where at least one of the stated conditions for election of a national minority council is not met and a minimum of 100 persons belonging to a national minority live in the territory of the local or regional government unit, a national minority representative is elected. The Constitutional Act also specifies the number of members of national minority councils: 10 members are elected to national minority councils in municipalities, 15 members are elected to national minority councils in towns/cities, and 25 members are elected to national minority councils in counties. It further stipulates that candidates for members of national minority councils or national minority representatives may be proposed by national minority associations or a minimum of 20 persons belonging to the national minority in the territory of a municipality, or 30 in the territory of a town/city and 50 in the territory of a county. To determine the number of persons belonging to national minorities in order to implement the aforementioned provisions, the population census is taken as authoritative, corrected (increased or reduced) by the number of voters who were registered or deleted from the voter rolls compiled for the election of members of the representative bodies of local units.

On 1 March 2019 the Croatian Parliament passed the Act on the Election of National Minority Councils and Representatives (*Narodne novine*, no. 25/19) which comprehensively regulates elections for national minority councils and representatives. Pursuant to the Decision to Call Elections for National Minority Councils in Local and Regional Government Units (*Narodne novine*, nos. 32/19 and 37/19) and the Decision to Call Elections for National Minority Representatives in Local and Regional Government Units (*Narodne novine*, no. 32/19), a total of 515 elections for national minority council members and 144 elections for national minority representatives were organized. In the elections for members of national minority councils and representatives held on 5 and 19 (run-offs) May 2019, a total of 352 national minority councils and 108 national minority representatives were elected in local and regional government units. With reference to the aforementioned Register, after entry of the new national minority councils and representatives and the changes that ensued after the election of new national minority councils and representatives of 5 and 19 May 2019, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration regularly enters the newly-emergent changes of the registered seat and designation of councils, the persons authorized to represent the councils and other data in the Register of National Minority Councils, Council Coordinating Bodies and National Minority

Representatives. Pursuant thereto, on 31 December 2021, 103 national minority representatives, 344 national minority councils and 12 coordinating bodies of national minority councils and representatives were entered in the Register of National Minority Councils, Council Coordinating Bodies and National Minority Representatives.

Overview of the funds allocated from the budgets of local and regional governments for the functioning of national minority councils and representatives for the 2018-2021 period:

Year	Total funds allocated in € (HRK)
2018 <sup>19</sup>	€ 3,397,025.38 (HRK 25,594,887.73)
2019 <sup>20</sup>	€ 3,359,597.40 (HRK 25,312,886.58)
2020 <sup>21</sup>	€ 2,985,562.35 (HRK 22,494,719.55)
2021 <sup>22</sup>	€ 3,119,218.83 (HRK 23,501,754.27)

In connection to these numerical sums, and with regard to the functioning of national minority councils and representatives in local and regional government units, a high number of units submitted the information that in 2019, the activities of national minority councils and representatives diminished due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was reflected in the funds expended for their activities as well as the implementation of programmes by these councils and representatives.

*From the Report of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities and the Council for National Minorities*

<sup>19</sup>

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/pdf/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20provedbi%20Ustavnog%20zakona%20o%20pravima%20nacionalnih%20manjina%20%20za%202018.pdf>; Appendix 8., p. 126.

Overview of planned, allocated and expended funds for the functioning of national minority councils and representatives in local and regional government units in 2018

<sup>20</sup>

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20provo%C4%91enju%20UZPNM%20za%202019..pdf>; Appendix 8., p. 126. Overview of planned, allocated and expended funds for the functioning of national minority councils and representatives in local and regional government units in 2019

<sup>21</sup>

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20provo%C4%91enju%20UZPNM%20za%202020..pdf>; Appendix 8., p. 121. Overview of planned, allocated and expended funds for the functioning of national minority councils and representatives in local and regional government units in 2020

<sup>22</sup>

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20provo%C4%91enju%20UZPNM%20za%202021..pdf>; Appendix 8., p. 131. Overview of planned, allocated and expended funds for the functioning of national minority councils and representatives in local and regional government units in 2021

Within the framework of its competence and its regular activities relating to the implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, in cooperation with the Council for National Minorities, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities continued to regularly organize seminars for national minority councils and representatives with the aim of improving and fulfilling the conditions for the effectiveness of their participation in decision-making processes at the local and regional levels. Representatives of local and regional governments were included in these seminars. A method for the participation of persons belonging to national minorities in decision-making processes was elaborated at these seminars, and emphasis was put on the creation of conditions for their effective work. During the reporting period, seminars were held in Osijek on 10 October 2019 and in Split on 1 October 2021. These seminars contribute to the effectiveness of the work of councils and representatives, and also raise public awareness of national minority rights, particularly in local communities with a high share of minorities in their populations. These seminars are also an opportunity to discuss the problems confronted by persons belonging to national minorities, such as the official use of minority languages and scripts, the inadequate representation of minorities in administrative bodies at the state and local levels, and the coverage of minority themes by the media.

In the forthcoming period as well there are plans to implement the education of persons belonging to national minorities about their rights, the role and function of national minority councils and representatives and the enhancement of cooperation with local governments and other stakeholders, while their infrastructure will be further reinforced through the implementation of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities.

In 2020, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities drafted the Operations Summary for the project “Creating Conditions for Effective Implementation of Policies Aimed at Minorities, Phase II,” which had as its objective the inclusion of persons belonging to national minorities in Croatian society and the improved implementation of the legislative and public policy framework aimed at the protection and promotion of national minority rights in the Republic of Croatia. Project activities have included, among other things, the improvement of participation of national minority councils and representatives in the implementation and monitoring of the implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and Operational Programmes for National Minorities. At the proposal of the OHRRNM, there are plans to implement and also supplement the activities planned in the earlier approved project summary within the Efficient Human Resources 2021-2027 Programme; contracting is anticipated during 2023.

## ***With reference to Article 16***

### Return, reconstruction and housing for former tenancy rights holders

The Amendments to the Displaced Person and Refugee Status Act (*Narodne novine*, no. 51A/13) and the Regulation on the Criteria for Confirmation and Loss of Refugee, Displaced Person and Returnee Status (*Narodne novine*, no. 133/13) thoroughly stipulated the conditions for the acquisition of the status of returnee as well as the rights ensuing from this status (monetary assistance and health-care), and the decision of such requests has been entrusted to the state administrative offices in the counties and the City of Zagreb as first-instance bodies, while the appeals body is the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing. In this manner, legal protection for persons seeking recognition of status has been secured, as well as their right to appeal and other legal remedies. The Regulation also stipulates that in the case of former tenancy right-holders and their family members who have submitted a request for housing and returned to the Republic of Croatia, the procedure to determine their returnee status is initiated automatically on an ex officio basis, so that the parties need not submit a request for the confirmation of status. Furthermore, it must be stated that persons for whom the status of returnee is recognized have the right to monetary assistance during the six months following the date of their return (corresponding to the duration of returnee status) and the right to health-care. During the period under observation, i.e., from 2019 to 2022, 33 applications for the recognition of returnee status for a total of 56 persons were filed. Returnee status was granted to 20 persons, on which basis HRK 9,515.88 in monetary assistance was disbursed during that period.

Furthermore, recognition of the status of former tenancy right-holders and their family members and the criteria for assignment of housing to them in areas of special state concern and outside of these areas are regulated by the Regulation on Establishment of the Status of Former Tenancy Right-holders and Their Family Members and the Criteria and Procedure for their Housing (*Narodne novine*, no. 133/13), adopted in 2013, pursuant to Article 12a(9) of the Act on the Areas of Special State Concern (*Narodne novine*, nos. 86/08, 57/11, 51A/13). Article 13(1) of this same Regulation stipulates that applications for housing of former tenancy right-holders received pursuant to the Conclusion on the method for the provision of housing for returnees who do not own a house or a flat and who lived in state-owned flats (former tenancy right-holders) in areas of Croatia outside of areas of special state concern (*Narodne novine*, no. 100/03), the Croatian Government's Conclusion of 9 December 2004 (*Narodne novine*, no. 179/04), the Croatian Government's Conclusion of 30 June 2005 (*Narodne novine*, no. 79/05), the Decision concerning housing for returnees/former tenancy right-holders outside of areas of special state concern (*Narodne novine*, nos. 29/11 and 139/11) and the Decision concerning housing for returnees/former tenancy right-holders outside of areas of special state concern (*Narodne novine*, no. 42/13), which were not resolved by the entry into force of this Regulation (14 November 2013), will be resolved by the county-level state administrative office with local jurisdiction or the administrative body of the City of Zagreb with jurisdiction, in compliance with the provisions of this Regulation-

Consequently, as regards the procedure and criteria for the exercise of rights by former tenancy right-holders, a single regulation is applied, which has contributed to legal certainty and more effective resolution of applications for housing by these beneficiaries.

Setting forth from the preceding report, in which it is noted that according to the records of the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing at the beginning of 2018 there were 1,121 pending housing applications from former tenancy rights holders, in that same year 452 applications were resolved, leaving 669 applications unresolved, of which:

- 544 were resolved in 2019,
- 56 were resolved in 2020,
- 9 were resolved in 2021,
- 44 were resolved in 2022 up to the present, leaving a total of 16 unresolved.

Based on an inspection of the records of the Central State Office in relation to the issuing of lease contracts for former tenancy right-holders in the period from 2019 to 2022, we herewith submit data on lease contracts per year: (2019) 41 lease contracts; (2020) 64 lease contracts, (2021) 68 lease contracts, (2022) 33 lease contracts..

#### Reconstruction and repair of housing damaged or destroyed during the war

In the period from 2019 to 2022, implementation of the reconstruction and repair programme continued for housing units damaged or destroyed in the war, as well as co-financing of the reconstruction or new construction of the basic utilities and municipal infrastructure, within the framework of available central budget funds for the purpose of completion of the reconstruction and return programme, and the creation of conditions for sustainable residence and life in formerly war-stricken areas.

In the period under observation, the objective was to conclude the programme of reconstruction and repair of housing damaged during the war, with the simultaneous intensification of the housing programme and model, particularly the model of donating building materials for the repair, reconstruction or construction of family homes.

Through the reconstruction and housing programmes and donated building material model, in the period under observation a total of 3,184 family homes were repaired, reconstructed or newly built, of which over 1,951 family homes were encompassed by the reconstruction and repair model for war-damaged housing and approximately 1,233 family homes were encompassed by the donated building material model.

Records of the beneficiaries of these programmes are not broken down by ethnicity, and thus no information can be provided on the number of persons belonging to national minorities who exercised the right to reconstruction, repair or construction of family homes nor is there a breakdown of individual nationalities, nor on the number of them belonging to each of the national minorities.

Annual programmes for the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma national minority, 2019-2022

For the purpose of improving the living conditions and housing of members of the Roma national minority, the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing implements the Annual Programme for Housing and Improvement of Living Conditions for the Persons belonging to the Roma National Minority since 2019, in cooperation with the OHRNM, the MP in the Croatian Parliament representing the Roma national minority, the Kali Sara Alliance of Roma in the Republic of Croatia and other interested stakeholders.

In 2019, the Annual Programme was implemented using two models, the allocation of household appliances and furniture and the allocation of construction materials. The Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing executed 889 decisions whereby beneficiaries were granted the right to household appliances and furniture and 13 decisions by the Commission whereby the right to receive construction materials was established. The total amount of public procurement was established at € 217,752.28 (HRK 1,640,654.56).

When developing the Annual Programme for 2020, use was made of the experiences and best practices from the implementation of the 2019 Annual Programme. The Annual Programme focused on the delivery of household appliances and complete kitchen sets consisting of six elements, while individual pieces of furniture such as wardrobes, beds, tables and chairs were excluded. In 2020, 712 individual decisions went into execution, while in addition to the initial € 199,084.21 (HRK 1,500,000.00) in a separate line item, the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing increased the funding secured earlier by approximately € 17,253.97 (HRK 130,000.00) with the intention of encompassing the highest possible number of beneficiaries.

The implementation of the 2021 Annual Programme for Housing and Improvement of Living Conditions for the Persons belonging to the Roma National Minority (hereinafter: Annual Programme) encompassed the furnishing of bathrooms/toilets together with delivery of the necessary construction materials and plumbing equipment as well as delivery of household appliances. Field inspections, the compilation of a study for furnishing and specification of the materials needed for each family home had to be done to equip the bathrooms/toilets. At the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group of the Commission Monitoring the Implementation of the National Plan, held on 22 December 2021, the Working Group unanimously adopted the Criteria for rating applications for exercise of the right to improve living conditions by members of the Roma minority, developed in collaboration with the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing, the OHRNM and the Kali Sara Alliance of Roma in the Republic of Croatia. In comparison to the criteria for 2021, the documentation necessary to earn points on the basis of disability or disability of a household member is more precisely delineated (confirmation from the Disabled Persons Register kept by the Croatian Public Health Institute or certificate from the relevant Social Welfare Centre testifying to exercise of the right to assistance and care supplement or personal disability pension), and additional points have been introduced for persons who were not beneficiaries of previous Annual Programmes in order to ensure that the priority is accorded to their applications. According to the Decisions of the Commission on the Improvement of Living Conditions for Members of the Persons belonging to the Roma National Minority received from the OHRNM, the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing delivered the necessary construction materials and plumbing equipment for 133 bathrooms. As regards the delivery of household appliances, 235 decisions

were received and the appliances were delivered in response to all of them: 39 refrigerators, 13 wood stoves, 110 washing machines, 10 electric ranges, 48 dual fuel ranges and 15 wood-burning cook-stoves, in the total value of € 174,770.53 (HRK 1,316,808.53) was spent.

During 2022, implementation of the 2022 Annual Programme for the Improvement of the Living Conditions for the Persons belonging to the Roma National Minority continued. The Annual Programme was implementing using four models, of which two were new. As in the preceding years, household appliances were allocated and furnishing of bathrooms/toilets was done, while the newly-prescribed models entailed the allocation of external joinery and installation of flooring. During the implementation of the Annual Programme, 914 decisions were made, of which 263 involved the allocation of household appliances, 411 pertained to the allocation of carpentry, 163 pertained to the equipping of bathrooms and 77 pertained to the installation of flooring. The amount of € 398,168.43 (HRK 3,000,000.00) was secured for the execution of 413 decisions, while the remaining decisions will be executed during 2023.

### Regional housing programme

The Joint Regional Permanent Housing Solutions Programme for Refugees and Displaced Persons is a joint initiative of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, that is, partner countries, based on the Joint Declaration signed by the foreign ministers of the partner countries in Belgrade in 2011. The regional housing programme consists of four national housing programmes. The objective of the programme is to secure permanent housing solutions for 74,000 persons, i.e., 27,000 families over a five-year period, from the date of signing of the Framework Agreement, and the funding required for its implementation is € 584 million. The programme is managed by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), which established the Regional Programme Fund through which donor funds will be allocated to the partner countries for projects within the framework of their national programmes.

Within the framework of the Regional Programme, nine projects have been planned in Croatia, To date, in the course of their implementation, 382 housing units have been constructed or purchased. By mid-2022, all projects have been concluded, except for project HR9, which has continued into 2023. An example of projects implemented during the reporting period is the construction of a multi-unit residential building for 21 families in Vukovar, for which the Grant Agreement was signed in November 2018. The value of the project is € 1,262,436.00, of which the donation amount was € 859,499.00 while the state grant was € 402,937.00. This project secured housing for 21 families who met the social vulnerability criterion under the Regional Housing Programme. Under the project entitled “Renovation, Reconstruction or Construction of up to 25 Family Homes,” reconstruction was conducted and housing was secured for 18 families. The Grant Agreement was signed in December 2019, and the value of the project is € 1,062,646.00 (donation value € 714,521.00, state grant € 348,125.00). The final ongoing project is the “Purchase of up to 38 Flats in the Republic of Croatia.” The Grant Agreement was signed in December 2019. The total project value is € 1,620,320.00, of which the donation value is € 1,130,320.00, while the state grant was € 490,000.00. Thus far, 18 housing units have been purchased, and project completion date is 30 June 2023, 1.062.646,00 EUR.

In conclusion, we note that in the period from 2019 to the present, € 9,785,887.66 (HRK 73,731,770.60) was spent for Reconstruction and Construction of Housing Damaged in the War, while € 20,575,142.20 (HRK 155,023,408.87) was spent for Housing activities

*From the Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities*

Besides regular investments by the relevant authorities at the central, regional and local levels, implementation of the Operational Programmes, particularly the Croatian Government's decision on implementation of the Programme of Financing of Local Infrastructure, Rural Development and Incentivisation of Entrepreneurship and Trades Projects, contributes to a more balanced development of the Republic of Croatia and especially of areas with larger national minority populations.

The Ministry of Regional Development and European Union Funds thus conducted the Infrastructure Improvement Programme in areas in which persons belonging to national minorities live, with the aim of rendering assistance to the development of local communities historically populated by national minorities but which are considerably below average in terms of demographic, economic or social development. The programme renders assistance through improving accessibility of local infrastructure, and it advocates for an approach that promotes equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development and a participatory approach by stakeholders in the wider local community. The project was conceived as a response to the developmental priorities at the local level and constitutes support to the improvement of utilities, social, public and economic infrastructure. In 2019, funding from the central budget was allocated to co-finance 100 projects in the fields of utilities, public, social and economic infrastructure in an amount of € 2,121,734.16 (HRK 15,986,206.01). In 2020, 104 projects in the fields of utilities, public, social and economic infrastructure were co-financed in an amount of € 2,282,832.30 (HRK 17.2 mil.), while in 2021 100 projects with a value of € 3,543,698.98 (HRK 26.7 mil.) were financed. In compliance with the Public Call, 93 projects were financed in 2022, with a value of € 3,491,000.00 (HRK 26.3 mil.). The Ministry of Regional Development and European Union Funds also conducted the Infrastructure Improvement Programme in areas populated by persons belonging to the Roma national minority in 2022. Within the framework of this Programme, 20 projects intended to improve infrastructure in areas populated by Roma were financed in 2022 in a total amount of € 470,635.07 (HRK 3,546,000.00) for activity K680054 – Infrastructure Improvement Programme in areas populated by persons belonging to the Roma national minority.

Besides these programmes aimed exclusively at areas in which persons belonging to national minorities live, other programmes intended to facilitate access to utilities and social infrastructure are also implemented.

The Ministry of the Economy and Sustainable Development implemented the programme entitled “Development of Small and Medium-size Businesses in Areas Populated by Members of National Minorities” for 2019, on which basis non-refundable grants were conferred to businesses registered in areas of local and regional government units that are in the first four

groups according to the development index value and with a share of national minorities in their populations higher than 5%. Funding was approved for the advancement of production, development of new products and services, adaptation, equipping and improvement of business premises and production plants, marketing activities, entry on new markets and training of both owners and employees. In 2019, the amount of support per beneficiary was between € 6,636.14 (HRK 50,000.00) and € 26,544.56 (HRK 200,000.00) and 99 grants were conferred in an amount of € 2,156,682.86 (HRK 16,249,527.00). As a result of the disaster caused by the destructive earthquakes that hit in the territory of Sisak-Moslavina County on 28 and 29 December 2020, threatening the health and lives of many people, their property and the environment and impeding the regular conduct of economic activities, the Ministry of the Economy and Sustainable Development directed all available budgetary funds for the purpose of securing the basic conditions for the continuation of economic activities by implementing the “Programme for the Conferral of Small Sum Assistance to Small Business Micro-entities for Alleviation of the Consequences of the Earthquakes in Sisak-Moslavina County” and was consequently unable to implement the targeted project that would have ensured the conferral of aid to economic entities in areas populated by national minorities. Given that the territory of Sisak-Moslavina County, which according to the development index is in the first and second groups, is largely populated by members of national minorities, the implementation of the Programme contributed to completion of the measures planned under the Operational Programme of National Minorities for 2021-2024, tied to incentives for entrepreneurship and trades. Under the aforementioned Programme, a total of 678 grants were conferred in a total amount of € 2,324,873.13 (HRK 17,516,764.15), of which 270 grants were conferred in areas populated by national minorities in a total amount of € 856,356.07 (HRK 6,452,214.79). In 2022, an amount of € 1,327,228.08 (HRK 10,000,000.00) was secured to implement Activity Programme A648087 “Competitiveness Incentives for Entrepreneurship and Trades”. Funding is granted at a level of up to 100% of total acceptable costs, and the lowest sum of aid which could be conferred was therefore € 6,636.14 (HRK 50,000.00), while the highest was € 13,272.28 (HRK 100,000.00). In line with effective provisions, administrative verification and verification of acceptability were conducted for the 207 applications received for participation in this Programme, and administrative procedures relating to concluding contracts with grant recipients.

The Ministry of Agriculture posted a tender with the aim of assisting small family farms in assisted areas traditionally populated by national minorities in their transition to market-oriented production, sustainable development, involving members of the farm in farm work and earning sufficient income for a dignified life in rural areas, thereby contributing to lower unemployment in rural areas and the socio-economic empowerment of national minorities. In 2019, 262 family farms benefited from the Decision on Allocation of Grants, in a total amount of € 2,084,178,78 (HRK 15,703,245,00). In July 2020, 232 beneficiaries receive the Decision on Allocation of Grants, in a total amount of € 1,845,749.15 EUR (HRK 13,906,797.00). Due to the high number of applicants in the Tender, the Ministry increased the allocation and grants were conferred to 65 family farms in an amount of € 516,553.19 (HRK 3,891,970.00). The Ministry of Agriculture has continued financing projects based on the Programme of Rural Development Assistance for Small Farms for the 2021-2023 period, and thus in 2021 grants

were conferred to 496 beneficiaries in a total amount of € 3,545,868.09 (HRK 29,716,343.13). Under the Decision on Allocation of Grants from October 2022, and the Decision amending the Decision on Allocation of Grants, grants were conferred to 560 beneficiaries in an amount of €4,411,756.31 (HRK 33,240,377.95).

Since it began implementing the Rural Development Programme 2013-2020 within the framework of Measure 7 – “Basic Services and Village Renewal in Rural Areas” – in the territories of local and regional government units with a share of national minorities in their total population higher than 5%, the Ministry of Agriculture has conferred grants for the following projects:

- operation type 7.1.1. “Compiling and Updating Local Government Unit Development Plans”; 109 requests for assistance submitted by local and regional government units with the objective of compiling and updating their developmental plans were approved: € 1,421,397.04 (HRK 10,709,516.00);

- operation type 7.2.1. “Investment in Construction of Public Water Supply, Sewage and Wastewater Treatment System”; 31 projects for investments in the construction of public water supply, sewage and wastewater treatment systems were contracted: € 12,190,302.48 (HRK 91,847,834.00)

- operation type 7.2.2. “Investment in Construction of Uncategorized Roads”; 63 projects for investments in the reconstruction of uncategorized roads were contracted: € 25,423,844.71 (HRK 191,555,958.00);

- operation type 7.4.1. “Investment in the Initiation, Improvement or Expansion of Basic Local Services for Rural Populations, including Leisure and Cultural Activities and the Associated Infrastructure”; 103 projects for the construction, reconstruction and furnishing of community-use structures (community centres), kindergartens, open-air markets, etc. were contracted: € 67,371,498.31 (HRK 507,610,554.00).

Here we should also highlight the programme of the Ministry of Labour, the Pension System, Family and Social Policy, which posted a permanent open call in August 2018 for “Development and Implementation of Social Cohesion and Increased Employment Programme in the Towns of Knin and Beli Manastir and the Municipalities of Darda, Benkovac, Petrinja and Vukovar”, co-financed by the ESF. The Ministry of Regional Development and European Union Funds furthermore reported that within the framework of the “Programme of Integrated Physical, Economic and Social Regeneration of Small Towns in War-stricken Areas (Specific Objective 9b1, OPKK 2014-2020) it is implementing “Houses in the Roma Community” project in the municipality of Darda. This project, in which the construction of 87 housing units has been planned, was contracted in September 2019 and € 4.6 million (HRK 34.68 million) of non-refundable EU funds were conferred for it. The project is ongoing and as at 31 December 2022, € 4.05 million (HRK 30.48 million) of non-refundable money was disbursed under budgetary activity K680034, of which € 0.87 (HRK 6.54 million) were disbursed during 2022.

Pursuant to the activities under 3.6. Utility Infrastructure Renewal of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities, that is, *Taking all measures to restore and construct a*

*water supply network in areas affected by wartime damage and destruction so that all areas of Croatia develop uniformly and all citizens of the Republic of Croatia have equal access to potable water*, the national water management company Hrvatske vode secured funding in its Investment Plan for 2021 to reconstruct or construct water infrastructure facilities for a series of projects foreseen under this activity. Funding for a project for a water main in Dvor worth approximately € 2,123,564.93 (HRK 16 million) was secured, while in 2021 it was co-financed with € 451,257.55 (HRK 3.4 million) of Hrvatske vode funds. In Benkovac, a project was launched to construct a feed pipeline and local network for the community of Islam Grčki with a total value of € 2,057,203.53 (HRK 15.5 million), and in the past year over € 265,445.62 (HRK 2 million) were spent. In Drniš, the project in the community of Tepljuh-Biočić worth approximately € 265,445.62 (HRK 2 million) was completed. In Glina, a water main along the Glina-Maja-Dragotina route is being constructed. The project is worth € 1,990,842.13 (HRK 15 million), and in 2021 over € 265,445.62 (HRK 2 million) was spent. In Topusko, a water supply system for the community of Gređani worth €398,168.43 (HRK 3 million) has been constructed, and the local networks in Vojnić and Donji Lapac are in the construction phase. In 2021, a sewage and wastewater treatment facility system for the communities of Končanica and Daruvarski Brestovac has been contracted, and the technical solution, environmental impact study and preliminary design have been drafted. The value of the design and technical documentation was € 26,279.12 (HRK 198,000.00), wherein Hrvatske vode provided € 21,023.29 (HRK 158,400.00), and the company Darkom vodoopskrba i odvodnja d.o.o. provided € 5,255.82 (HRK 39,600.00). The continuation of development of the necessary planning documentation has been foreseen in 2022, and there are plans to draft the master project for the sewage and wastewater treatment facility system at an estimated value of HRK 200,000.00. The beginning of construction of this sewage and wastewater treatment system may be realistically anticipated by the end of 2024.

The national road management company Hrvatske ceste d.o.o. is conducting the reconstruction and new construction of road infrastructure in areas and settlements populated by national minorities pursuant to programmes and plans for the construction and maintenance of public roads and within the framework of budgetary constraints.

Within the framework of the activities specified under 3.6.3. of the Operational Programme, measures are being taken to finalize the electrification of areas that were beset by wartime damage and destruction so that all citizens of the Republic of Croatia have uniform conditions in terms of the electrical energy infrastructure, particularly the low-voltage grid in areas of return by displaced persons and refugees. According to the data of the national electric company Hrvatska elektroprivreda (HEP), to date 20 calls for payment to HEP d.d. have been submitted for a total amount of € 5,123,675.09 (HRK 38,604,330.00).

The distribution system operator (Operator distribucijskog sustava d.o.o.) is continually developing the network and connecting new grid users in the territory of Croatia, including the electrification and connection of new users in Roma communities, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Economy and Sustainable Development which secures the necessary funding pursuant to the Contract on Financing the Programme of Connection of Households in the Roma

Settlements to the Electrical Grid within the framework of the Operational Programme for the Roma National Minority of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

With the aim of improving the physical planning system, the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State-owned Assets regularly posts calls for the physical planning of areas populated by the Roma for the purpose of securing and financially supporting the preparation of documentation, i.e., preliminary designs and master projects, necessary to obtain the construction permits and licences. For example, in 2022 the following contracts were concluded:

- 1) Preparation of master project for a Roma community access road (UPU 18 – Kutina) in an amount of € 32,848.90 (HRK 247,500.00). Applicant/Beneficiary: Town of Kutina
- 2) Preparation of preliminary design for routing street corridors in the Roma settlement of Kuršanec in amount of € 9,539.45 (HRK 71,875.00). Applicant/Beneficiary: Town of Čakovec
- 3) Preparation of master project for bus turnaround, car park, sewage and public lighting near the community hall in the Roma settlement in Kutina in amount of € 14,516.56 (HRK 109,375.00). Applicant/Beneficiary: Town of Kutina
- 4) Master project for roads in the settlement of Kuršanski Lug/Kuršanec in amount of € 14,201.34 (HRK 107,000.00). Applicant/Beneficiary: Town of Čakovec.

Overall, during 2022, € 71,106.24 (HRK 535,750.00) was spent for the purpose of securing financial support for drafting documentation, that is, preliminary designs and master projects, in order to obtain the necessary construction permits for physical planning construction works in areas populated by Roma. The implementation of these activities will continue in 2023, and for this purpose funding in an amount of €132,722.81 (HRK 1,000,000.00) has been allocated in the central budget.

Moreover, with regard to legalization of buildings for which the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State-owned Assets has financed the preparation of legalization documentation, the finalization of the legalization process was monitored during the 2018-2020 period, given the observed difficulties in payment of the legalization fees the beneficiaries are required to pay prior to issuance of legalization certificates. On 23 May 2018, the Croatian Government's Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy from 2013 to 2020 issued the Conclusion on Continuation of the Legalization Process in Roma Communities and Areas Populated by Roma in the Republic of Croatia, in compliance with the Operational Programme for the Roma National Minority, which will be operationally conducted by the Ministry, with the prior consent of and in coordination with the relevant local and regional governments and other bodies and in cooperation with the Roma national minority MP, for the Roma communities and areas populated by Roma specified in the Conclusion. Pursuant to this Conclusion, during 2018, this Ministry paid in a total of € 240,470.17 (HRK 1,811,882.46) for physical planning to local and regional governments on behalf of beneficiaries to cover fees for retention of unlawful Roma housing structures and water management contributions. This enabled the continuation of the procedure to legalize Roma residential structures, and at this point there is information that by the end of the reporting period 456 executive legalization rulings were issued, which is 60% of the total of 765 filed

legalization applications for which the Ministry has financed the preparation of the necessary documentation.

***With reference to Articles 17 and 18***

*From the report of the Central State Office for Croats Abroad and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs*

Pursuant to the Act on the Relations of the Republic of Croatia with Croats Abroad (*Narodne novine*, nos. 124/2011, 16/2012), in 2012 the Croatian Government established the State Office for Croats Abroad as the administrative body responsible for relations between the Republic of Croatia and Croats living abroad. In October 2016 its name was changed to the Central State Office for Croats Abroad (CSOCA).

Within the scope of its operations, the CSOCA encourages the preparation of new international treaties on the protection of minorities and monitors the implementation of the already existing ones through the intergovernmental mixed committees (hereinafter: IMCs). The Republic of Croatia has thus far signed four agreements on the mutual protection of minorities: with Hungary in 1995 (*Narodne novine*, International Treaties, no. 8/1995), the Republic of Serbia in 2004 (*Narodne novine*, International Treaties, no. 3/2005), the Republic of North Macedonia in 2007 (*Narodne novine*, International Treaties, no. 3/2008) and Montenegro in 2009 (*Narodne novine*, International Treaties, no. 9/2009), on which basis intergovernmental mixed committees have been established to monitor compliance with the aforementioned agreements, and which in their work consider current issues of interest to national minorities in the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian national minority in those other aforementioned states. On the Croatian side, the CSOCA is the authority responsible for all matters tied to the preparation and holding of IMC meetings for the protection of national minorities, and the co-chair of all IMCs is the state secretary in charge of the CSOCA.

The Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Italy have concluded the Treaty on Minority Rights in 1996 (*Narodne novine*, International Treaties, no. 15/1997), which does not foresee the establishment of an Intergovernmental Mixed Committee to monitor the implementation of said Treaty, so we emphasize the importance of redefining and improving the Treaty, particularly taking into account the importance of stressing the historical presence and survival of Croats in the north-eastern part of Italy, in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region. It should be underscored that the CSOCA actively participates in the work of the Coordinating Committee of Ministers of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Italy (hereinafter: CCM), which held its fourth meeting in Zagreb on 30 November 2020. On that occasion, the Joint Declaration was signed, whereby the two states emphasized the vital role of the indigenous Croatian and Italian minorities who live in the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Italy, and their contributions to the cultural development and economic growth of this region. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to supporting further progress in the implementation of national, European and international laws to the benefit of both minorities. In 2021, the CSOCA participated in the drafting of the Executive Programme of Cooperation in Culture and Education between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Republic of Italy for the 2021-2025 period.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the fifth session of the IMC of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of North Macedonia on the protection of national minorities was held successfully in Skopje on 9 November 2021. All members of the IMC, both Croatian and Macedonian, concluded that both sides have a positive stance and good will, and that Macedonians in the Republic of Croatia exercise a very high level of rights, which can still not be said about the Croats living in the Republic of North Macedonia. However, an encouraging fact is that the Macedonian side has made specific positive progress and begun to support projects by Croatian associations in the period since the resumption of work by this IMC four years ago. The Macedonian side intends to do something deemed particularly vital to the Croatian side – the specification of the Croats in the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia – the next time that the constitution is amended. We should note that during the session, a Cooperation Agreement was signed between the national broadcasters of both countries, Croatian Radio-Television and Macedonian Radio-Television. At its session held on 10 February 2022, the Croatian Government adopted the Conclusion endorsing the recommendations from the Minutes to the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Mixed Committee of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of North Macedonia on the Protection of National Minorities. According to plans, the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the IMC is to be held in Croatia in 2023.

The preceding, 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the IMC of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of North Macedonia on the protection of national minorities was held in Zagreb in July 2019. Although both sides expressed openness to enhancing communication and cooperation, the imbalance in the level of achievement of minority rights in the two states was apparent. Representatives of the Macedonians living in Croatia have expressed satisfaction with their status in the Republic of Croatia and the level of minority rights, and representatives of institutions of the Republic of North Macedonia shared their opinion. On the other hand, representatives of the Croats expressed dissatisfaction because the Croats are not mentioned in the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, and they furthermore have little support from the Macedonian side for efforts to preserve and develop their linguistic, cultural and religious identity. Immediately after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the IMC (held in Skopje on 18 June 2018) the Macedonian side secured certain funds from several sources to cover the Croatian community's cultural programmes and expressed readiness for further concrete action and more significant improvements, and this continued into 2019. Additionally, during the 4<sup>th</sup> session held on 8 July 2019, the delegation of the Republic of North Macedonia was received by the then Croatian deputy prime minister and minister of foreign and European affairs Marija Pejčinović-Burić. At its session held on 4 October 2019, the Croatian Government adopted the Conclusion endorsing the recommendations from the Minutes to the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Mixed Committee of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of North Macedonia on the Protection of National Minorities. Preparations are under way for the IMC's 6<sup>th</sup> Session, which should be held by the end of 2023.

During the reporting period, the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the IMC of the Republic of Croatia and Hungary on the protection of national minorities was held in Zagreb on 12 December 2019. Besides key minority questions, which were the session's main topic – right to free expression, preservation

and development of national, cultural, linguistic and religious identity, right to maintain and develop education and media in minority languages and scripts and representation of national minorities in representative and executive bodies of government – special emphasis was accorded to the development of better transport connections and joint action inside the European Union. At its session held on 7 May 2020, the Croatian Government adopted the Conclusion endorsing the recommendations from the Minutes to the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Mixed Committee of the Republic of Croatia and Hungary on the Protection of National Minorities. The 16<sup>th</sup> session of the MIC was held in Budapest on 7 December 2022. The two sides agreed on further recommendations for activities on general matters, education, culture and dissemination of information.

Here we shall place particular emphasis on the fact that only two years after the groundbreaking ceremony, the Pupil Dormitory in the Hungarian Cultural and Educational Centre in Osijek was inaugurated in November 2019 in the presence of both countries' prime ministers, Andrej Plenković and Viktor Orban, which clearly demonstrates the high-quality attitude toward national minorities and the importance of national minorities in the overall social and political life of both countries.

During the reporting period, the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia held one session of the Intergovernmental Mixed Committee on the protection of national minorities, and the most recent, 8<sup>th</sup> session was held in Zagreb and Pakrac on 12-13 March 2019. This session was held a year after the 7<sup>th</sup> session, organized on 30-31 January 2018 in Belgrade and Monoštor in the regularly scheduled term, which indicated the commitment to the promotion of human rights by the governments of both countries. At its 8<sup>th</sup> session, the IMC examined the implementation of recommendations from the 7<sup>th</sup> session and discussed the most important problems and challenges, but also activities and achievements by representatives of the Croatian and Serbian minorities living in both states. Despite the frequently divergent views on numerous open matters, both sides expressed openness to establish constructive dialogue with the aim of improving the status of minorities and thereby the furtherance of relations between the two countries. Positive progress on both sides has been apparent, but there are still open issues, among which the unresolved question of direct representation in representative bodies from the local to national levels is crucial to the Croatian national minority, while the Serbian minority placed emphasis on the fields of dissemination of information and education. Participants in the session concluded that the most optimum solutions for quality living and development of minority communities must continue to be sought, particularly when speaking of the application of legal regulations, education in minority languages and scripts, preservation of cultural heritage and inclusion of legitimate representatives of minorities in socio-political life and participation in cross-border projects. The two co-chairs, in communication with the IMC's members, who are primarily representatives of national minorities and also of the relevant state bodies, concluded that further talks are needed to consider several new proposals that representatives of both minorities put forth at the 8<sup>th</sup> Session. Upon the completion of the session, the sides continued with efforts to reach an accord, wherein the Croatian side had in mind the realistic possibilities of achieving this. Unfortunately, for now the Minutes have still not been aligned, and thereby not signed. It should nonetheless be stated that the IMC has been a successful tool in furthering the status of the Croatian national minority in the Republic of

Serbia, and of the Serbian national minority in the Republic of Croatia. However, in our opinion the Republic of Serbia should work more intensively on implementing the recommendations aligned at bilateral sessions and adequately incorporate them into the legislative framework, so that the aforementioned positive progress does not simply remain an expression of momentary good will.

Moreover, according to plans, the next, 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the IMC was supposed to be held in Republic of Serbia in 2020, which due to the COVID-19 pandemic could not happen even if all other prerequisites had been met. In June 2020, parliamentary elections were held in the Republic of Serbia, and according to unofficial information there was a change of the Serbian co-chair of the IMC, although we have not as yet received official notice of the name of the person who will co-chair the IMC on the Serbian side. Therefore, no progress has been made in continuing the alignment of the Minutes to the 8<sup>th</sup> Session.

The Republic of Croatia and Montenegro did not hold a single session of the Intergovernmental Mixed Committee on the Protection of National Minorities during the reporting period. After the 1<sup>st</sup> session held in Podgorica on 28 April 2015, the 2<sup>nd</sup> session held in Zagreb on 24 May 2017 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> session held in Podgorica on 27 September 2018, the 4<sup>th</sup> session has thus far not been held. The reason is that the Minutes to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session have still not been signed. Even though relations between the two states are notably friendly and the Republic of Croatia, as a member state of the European Union, endorses Montenegro's path to the European integration, particular attention has been accorded to the matter of the possibility of joint nomination of the Boka Navy cultural asset for registration in the UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Unfortunately, the Montenegrin Government did not want to make a joint nomination and due to the impossibility of reaching an accord on the matter of the Boka Navy, the Minutes to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Croatian-Montenegrin IMC have not been signed. An informal meeting of the co-chairs of the IMC was held in Zagreb on 4 April 2019 and the subsequent signing of the Minutes is still anticipated after the accord has been reached concerning this matter. However, following the parliamentary elections held in Montenegro on 30 August 2020, after which two governments have been formed, a new IMC co-chair has not yet been appointed, so that during 2021 and 2022 the CSOCA has not had anyone with whom to communicate and foster cooperation within the framework of this IMC.

We would like to stress that the CSOCA has taken the initiatives in relation to the recognition of the Croats as a national minority in the Republic of Slovenia and established the Commission for the Resolution of the Status of Croats in the Republic of Slovenia in order to systematically undertake coordinated activities of Croatian institutions and the Croatian community in Slovenia. The Commission began working in February 2018 and thus far it has held six sessions. Two sessions were held in 2019, the second in the Croatian Embassy in Ljubljana in December of that year in order to ensure that the Commission's activities are more visible to the Slovenian public. Croatia expressed robust support for its co-nationals living in the Republic of Slovenia. Due to the unfavourable epidemiological situation that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic, not a single session of the Commission was held in 2020, although a meeting of between of the representatives of the CSOCA, the Croatian Embassy in Ljubljana and the representatives of the Alliance of Croatian Associations in Slovenia (a part of the Commission's

members), and the Žumberak Natives and Friends Society and the Žumberak Culture Club was held in Nove Mesto in January 2020. The latter two organizations operate in the territory of White Carniola, where Croats have been an indigenous people for many centuries. The Commission's sixth session was held in the CSOCA premises on 7 October 2021, and on that occasion, the improvement of political relations between Croatia and Slovenia was underscored as a positive development, raising hope that an adequate solution will be found for this crucial issue for Croats living in the Republic of Slovenia. At the end of the session, an agreement was reached on specific activities and the Action Plan of the Commission for the Status of Croats in the Republic of Slovenia for 2022 and 2023 was adopted.

By the same token, at its session held on 14 May 2020, the Croatian Government made the Decision to initiate procedures for the conclusion of a Treaty between the Czech Republic and the Republic of Croatia on the protection of the Croatian national minority in Czechia and the Czech national minority in Croatia, at the Central State Office's proposal and in line with the Operational Programmes for National Minorities for the 2017-2020 Period (activity 5.1.1.). The draft Treaty was forward to the Czech side on 29 June 2020. Furthermore, pursuant to Article 5 of the aforementioned Decision, a delegation of the Republic of Croatia was formed to conduct negotiations with the Czech Republic, headed by a representative of the CSOCA, with members from other relevant state bodies. The Croatian delegation held a meeting with a delegation from the Czech Republic in Zagreb on 23 June 2022 to discuss the Croatian proposal to conclude this Treaty. At the meeting, the Czech side declared that they were not prepared to conclude a binding agreement due to certain objective circumstances, but that they would gladly sign a declaration or memorandum of understanding with Croatia, for which they presented an informal version at the meeting, while a diplomatic note was sent soon afterward. Although the Croatian side was not satisfied with the Czech response, it is aware that ultimately it will be possible to secure a sound document which will be very useful for both minorities. Above all, the declaration should be signed at the level of the two governments. The relevant state bodies are currently holding further consultations on its draft.

The CSOCA is coordinating and conducting numerous activities aimed at improving the status of members of Croatian minority communities with those states with which the Republic of Croatia has not signed bilateral treaties on the protection of national minorities.

*From the Report of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs*

In the period from 2019 to 2022, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs continued its efforts to address key challenges pertaining to national minorities at the foreign policy level and by promoting international standards in the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Furthermore, representatives of the Ministry take an active part in the work of international organizations that deal with human rights, particularly the rights of national minorities. The promotion and protection of minority rights, including those of the Roma national minority, are continually in the focus of Croatia's bilateral relations with other countries, including the neighbouring countries. In addition, the efforts to regulate this area are

always in the focus Croatia's bilateral relations with other countries, in particular neighbouring countries. The Ministry also regularly coordinates the compilation of national reports to international bodies on activities undertaken which pertain to the exercise of national minority rights.

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, through the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg continually and actively participates in the meetings of the Council of Europe's working bodies which deliberate and make decisions on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

In addition, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs takes an active part in the efforts of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and, at the regular annual Human Dimension Implementation Meetings (HDIM) held in Warsaw, presents the progress made by Croatia in aligning its legislation with different EU policies in the field of promoting and protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

At the global level, the efforts made to promote and protect the rights of national minorities, including the Roma national minority, are followed at the UN forums. In this respect, Croatia upholds and votes for initiatives inviting the implementation of all aspects of the protection and promotion of national minority rights, as well as those advocating the fight against stigmatisation, discrimination and hate crimes.

It is particularly noteworthy that during the period in question the Republic of Croatia has undertaken all necessary organizational and programmatic preparations to assume the one-year chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in March 2023. The preparations included setting up a special task force that will coordinate the activities pertaining to the IHRA chairmanship, consisting of representatives from numerous governmental departments, because this is a project that will proceed at the local, national and international levels. The primary activities will entail the organization of two plenary sessions (May/June in Dubrovnik, November/December in Zagreb) and the organization of various activities at the national level (seminars, round table discussions) and at the level of IHRA member states, as well as intensive contacts with the IHRA Permanent Office, partner states and institutions, and distinguished Jewish organizations.

*From the Report of the Ministry of Culture and Media*

Within the framework of international cultural cooperation, in 2019 the Ministry financed 11 programmes worth € 22,629.24 (HRK 170,500.00): 6 programmes for the Roma and 2 each for the Slovaks and Czechs and one for the Montenegrin national minority. In 2020, 8 international cultural cooperation programmes worth € 8,812 (HRK 66,394.00) were approved, while 4 programmes worth € 4,393.92 (HRK 33,106.00) were implemented. Funding was secured for 5 programmes pertaining to the Roma national minority, and for one programme each pertaining to the Slovak, Jewish and Montenegrin national minorities. In 2021, funding was allocated for a programme of the Centre for the Promotion of Tolerance and Holocaust Remembrance: Stolperstein // stone of contention // installation of commemorative "stumbling stones" in Zagreb in 2021 in an amount of € 2,654.46 (HRK 20,000.00).

### Cross-border cooperation

Given that the Republic of Croatia borders a number of the mother countries of national minorities, according to the data available to the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, the improvement of the status of national minorities gains considerable impetus from the implementation of programmes and projects within the framework of European territorial cooperation programmes, that is, numerous cross-border, transnational and interregional programmes co-financed from the EU funds.

## **APPENDIX**

### **From the reports of national minority associations and institutions on implementation of the Framework Convention**

#### *Union of Albanians in the Republic of Croatia*

The Union of Albanians in the Republic of Croatia, as the umbrella association for the Albanian national minority, stated in its report that during the reporting period from 2019 to 2022 there was an improvement of national minority rights in most areas. The Republic of Croatia continually enhances the system of protection of national minority rights in the legislative field and accords maximum appreciation to the views of representatives of all national minorities. It stressed that a great contribution to this was made by the seminars and conferences organized by the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, which, besides representatives of associations, also included the participation of members of national minority councils, representatives of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee and representatives of the Council for National Minorities. The Union presented its opinions and proposals in its report and underscored the difficulties which they confront on a daily basis.

In the period from 2019 to 2022, the Union came to the conclusion that it will be necessary to enhance the monitoring of social and developmental achievement in order to devise a better status for national minorities in the Republic of Croatia. Education in mother tongues through supplemental schooling and strengthening of cultural and artistic associations remain the greatest challenge in implementing the Framework Convention.

The Union stresses that better implementation of the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in practice will require sound cooperation between members of various national minorities, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, the Council for National Minorities and other relevant international and European bodies and institutions.

It further points out that the frequent support on major dates for national minorities, cultural events and various anniversaries contribute to a better understanding between different national minorities and the Croatian people and improve their relations and contribute to better implementation of the Framework Convention, and better implementation of the Framework Convention also contributes to a better understanding between the mother countries of national minorities and institutions of the Republic of Croatia.

Such better relations between states present the Republic of Croatia in a positive light among other European Union member states, which serves as a good example for the development of interethnic relations.

#### *Community of Macedonians in the Republic of Croatia*

The Community of Macedonians in the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: CMRC), as the umbrella association of the Macedonian national minority, continually monitored the status of the Macedonian national minority in Croatia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CMRC,

which consists of Macedonian cultural associations based in the larger cities in Croatia (Zagreb, Split, Osijek, Pula, Rijeka and Zadar) has insight into the status and implementation of the Framework Convention by Croatia with reference to the Macedonian national minority.

In its report, the CMRC stressed the importance that the Croatian Government demonstrated even in this pandemic period from 2019 to 2022 and continued its ongoing financing of all national minorities, including the Macedonian, through the Council for National Minorities of the Republic of Croatia with the aim of preserving and fostering cultures, traditions, languages and scripts of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia. They conveyed particular gratitude to the Croatian Government for a monetary donation which led to the recent completion of the first Macedonian Orthodox Church of St. Zlata of Meglen in Zagreb.

The Community of Macedonians proposes greater media involvement, particularly in coverage of the theme of the Anti-discrimination Act, either by the print media or public forums at which the members of all national minorities would be invited without exception depending on the percentage recorded in the most recent 2021 Census. It emphasizes that this is essential given the increase in intolerant attitudes toward national minorities noted in recent period.

The CMRC stated that the procedure to secure and acquire Croatian citizenship is excessively complicated, while the same does not apply to Croats who return to the Republic of Croatia, which they consider to be an ethnically-based inequality. The exercise and acknowledgement of the right to select the surname of a spouse of the Macedonian national minority (ending in –ski, -ska) continues to be a major problem when obtaining personal identity documents in the Republic of Croatia. Also controversial is the obligation to renounce citizenship of the mother country as a condition for receiving Croatian citizenship, which in some situations creates additional costs for the members of national minorities.

The CMRC points out that nothing has been done to amend the Act on the Elections of Members of the Croatian Parliament where this concerns the election of national minority representatives. It proposes the introduction of the “rotation” principle or the formation of a body for representatives of minorities to meet with elected MPs in the Croatian Parliament in order to resolve current problems. Also necessary is the inclusion of representatives of national minorities in the Croatian Parliament, so-called “new and small” minorities, such as the Macedonians, Montenegrins and Slovenes, based on the proportional principle, because otherwise there is not even a theoretical possibility of a representative of, e.g., the Macedonians, Montenegrins or Slovenes to enter the Croatian Parliament alongside representatives of the Bosniaks or Albanians.

The CMRC noted that there has been a small visible step forward, but it holds that the national minority councils do not fulfil their purpose in most local governments, partially due to insufficient regulation, and partially due to the administrative practices pertaining to the financing and facilitation of their work. It maintains that the obligations of local governments vis-à-vis the financing of the work of councils, the method for determining the rate of funding necessary for their work and other improvements to cooperation between national minority councils and local government councils should be specified by law. The CMRC also recorded the problem of individual national minority representatives in local or regional government units, meaning their inability to obtain the legal status of national minority representative with a separate PIN, which is guaranteed by the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National

Minorities, and which has been pointed out to the Council for National Minorities on numerous occasions.

*Alliance of Czechs in the Republic of Croatia, Daruvar*

The Czech Alliance in the Republic of Croatia, as the umbrella organization of the Czech national minority, gathers all Czech cultural clubs, Czech besedas, and Czech institutions, for a total of 37 members.

The Alliance has expressed satisfaction with the financial support for national minorities allocated through the Council for National Minorities and the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities. The Alliance particularly emphasizes the importance of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities for the 2021-2024 Period, adopted by the Croatian Government, since the implementation of the Programme contributes greatly to the enhancement and exercise of national minority rights. The embraced approach has resulted in a major improvement in the implementation of cultural autonomy, and the Czech Alliance is very pleased with it. In the past period, they implemented projects in the fields of culture, dissemination of information, publishing, education, and improved facilities in which their associations operate.

Furthermore, the report mentions that the right to use the Czech language and script in the Republic of Croatia is applied almost completely. Only the provisions of the Dežanovac Municipal Charter – those regarding bilingual signs in some villages based on the acquired right – still need to be implemented.

In recent years, progress has also been achieved in the field of education in the language of the Czech national minority, and the Alliance has expressed its satisfaction with the implementation of all legal provisions concerning the education of members of national minorities.

The members of the Czech national minority in the Republic of Croatia are satisfied with what has been achieved and hope for the further successful implementation of legal provisions pertaining to the achievement of national minority rights.

*Union of Slovaks, Našice*

The Union of Slovaks, as the umbrella association of the Slovak national minority, reports that major and significant improvement in the enhancement and exercise of rights of the Slovak national minority has been achieved in all the fields since their last report in 2019. The improvement has been based on some concrete steps undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Croatia, and especially the adoption of the Operational Programmes of National Minorities for the 2021-2024 Period.

The report states that the use of the Slovak national minority language and script is fully applied in the Republic of Croatia. In some communities, the minority representatives and councils in local or regional governments should enhance access to education on the manner of applying use of the Slovak national minority language and script.

With regard to education in the language and script of the Slovak national minority, some small progress has been visible, despite a lower number of children. The Union stresses that the Ministry of Science and Education has undertaken a series of measures aimed at creating

conditions for teaching and providing instruction in the Slovak language in communities in which members of the Slovak minority live. The project aimed at the re-establishment of the Slovak Studies Department at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science of the University of Osijek has not been successful.

The Union expressed dissatisfaction over the failure to implement the renovation and energy efficiency project at the local school in Markovac Našički and the failure to construct the kindergarten in Jelisavac. The Union is also dissatisfied with the planned teaching of their language from the preschool age, because the newly-opened kindergarten, which is a branch of the Zvončić Kindergarten of the Town of Našice, did not open a Slovak group.

As part of the Operational Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the 2021-2024 period, the Union stresses that the opening of branch kindergartens with Slovak departments in Josipovac Punitovački and Markovac Našički was not achieved. The new kindergarten in the Punitovci Municipality was opened in June 2022, while the project application for the construction of a kindergarten in Markovac Našički (as part of the Zvončić Kindergarten of the Town of Našice) did not receive enough points in the tender, but they believe that even these planned projects from the Operational Programme will be carried out during its implementation period.

Members of the Slovak national minority participate in public and political life of communities in which they live, where they do not only work as minority representatives or members of minority councils, but also take part in local councils, municipal and city councils or county assemblies either as representatives of minorities or as members of political parties. In some municipalities, they also hold positions of deputy mayors.

The Union of Slovaks points out that progress has also been achieved in the field of cultural autonomy. It mentions that in the period under review a number of projects have been implemented which are very important for enhancements in the fields of culture, publishing, information, education, cultural events, and especially those regarding the improvement, refurbishing and construction of necessary facilities for the continuous operation of its associations and institutions, which have enjoyed full understanding and financial support of the Croatian Government.

The Union of Slovaks has expressed its dissatisfaction with the presence of the Slovak minority in all radio and television broadcasts of the Croatian Radio-Television. It believes that all national minority members should be given greater and continuous access to the public media at the national, regional and local levels, with the aim of contributing to the presentation and informing the public about the role of national minority representatives and councils in local and regional governments.

### *National Union of Montenegrins in Croatia*

The National Union of Montenegrins in Croatia is the umbrella organization of the Montenegrin national minority in the Republic of Croatia with the basic task to work on the preservation of the cultural and national identity of the Montenegrin community in Croatia. In the report for the 2019-2022 period, the Union expressed its dissatisfaction with the implementation of the provisions of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and other legislation

that regulate and guarantee space for the exercise of national rights, particularly emphasizing the activities and work of the Council for National Minorities and the financial support for the exercise of cultural autonomy with the aim of preserving cultural and national identity.

Dissatisfaction was expressed with the implementation as well as the very adoption of the Operational Programmes for National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, because it did not lead to notable progress in the achievement of the Montenegrin national minority's rights. The Union pointed out that in comparison to the previous reporting period nothing had changed significantly.

Croatia and Montenegro signed the Bilateral Agreement on the Protection of the Croatian National Minority in Montenegro and the Montenegrin National Minority in the Republic of Croatia, but after the initial burst of activities, there was a complete stall in implementation, which is reflected in the fact that since the first session in 2015 only three sessions of the Intergovernmental Mixed Committee were held to date, the third in 2018 at which the Minutes were not even signed. After this all activities in applying the Agreement have been put "on hold."

The National Union of Montenegrins in Croatia is not satisfied with its presence in the public media and the approach of the public media to all activities conducted by them with the aim of achieving the basic purpose of the existence and activity of ethnic associations. Events continue to be treated as "a matter of national minorities," which basically leads to media ghettoization. A cultural event organized by a given minority community is a cultural event of the community in which it is held, and not just a matter of that specific minority community.