

II. Trafficking in women and girls (A/RES/73/146)

The Republic of Croatia strongly supports and has actively participated in all international activities aimed at developing multilateral approaches to combating trafficking in persons. One of the first activities in 2002 was the ratification of the **UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols** (Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the so-called “Palermo Protocol” and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, sea and air). The Republic of Croatia has ratified the **Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography**. Also, in 2007 the Republic of Croatia ratified the **Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings**, as one of the top 10 countries. Furthermore, an important document at the EU level is the **Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims** (replacing the Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA). This Directive envisages, among other things, stricter sanctioning of the offence of trafficking in human beings, and the confiscation of the proceeds of crime from persons against whom a final conviction for trafficking in human beings has been pronounced. **The provisions of the aforementioned international documents are incorporated into the normative framework of the Republic of Croatia.**

The **national anti-trafficking system** in the Republic of Croatia consists of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons, the Operational team of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons and the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons (the national coordinator is the Director of the Governments Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities).

The anti-trafficking system established in the Republic of Croatia includes the active work of a large number of state administration bodies and non-governmental organizations. The bodies involved in combating trafficking in human beings are: in addition to the Governments Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities as the coordinating body, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Demography, Family, Social Policy and Youth, Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Defence, Croatian Employment Service, State Attorney's Office of the Republic of Croatia, Labour Inspectorate, Croatian Red Cross and the network of associations “PETRA” - a network of non-governmental organizations that promote women’s human rights are included.

With regard to the national measures to intensify efforts in combating trafficking in persons and all its forms of human exploitation, the **National plan of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period from 2018 to 2021** was adopted in 2018. The Plan covers all of the areas encountered so far in national documents aimed at combating trafficking in persons and takes into account the experience of all competent authorities of the state administration, civil society organisations and international organisations. The National plan places particular attention on the further strengthening of cooperation in criminal procedures in cases of trafficking in persons between the State Attorney’s Office of the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, enhancing identification methods of human trafficking victims and protecting the best interest of human trafficking victims.

Furthermore, in 2017, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the new **Protocol on identification, assistance and protection of victims of human trafficking and the Protocol on the procedures during voluntary return of victims of human trafficking**. In 2019, the Government adopted the **new Protocol on the integration/reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings**. In March 2019, MDFYSP drafted the **Standard Operational Procedures of the MDFYSP in Proceeding with Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings** thus regulating areas of identification of children victims of trafficking in human beings, mobile teams, housing/accommodation, assistance and protection and return of children of foreign nationality. Also, a New Protocol on the exchange of data on identified victims of trafficking is currently being drafted.

Efficiency and effectiveness of investigations and prosecutions have been insured by envisaging deadlines for the decision on the crime report and to finish the investigation, relevant for further prosecution, as prescribed by the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA). Regarding relevant techniques for criminalising those who use the services of victims, Special Evidentiary Actions are prescribed by Article 332 of the CPA providing for the possibility to issue a written reasoned warrant by the court, which enables actions restricting certain constitutional rights of citizens, and can be issued in case of criminal offences listed in the Article 334 of the CPA, namely for Trafficking in human beings.

During 2018, the competent state attorneys' offices in the territory of the Republic of Croatia received criminal reports in which 13 persons were reported for committing the criminal offense of Trafficking in Human Beings referred to in Article 106 of the Criminal Code. The charges were filed against 12 male persons, 9 citizens of the Republic of Croatia and 3 foreign citizens and against one female person, a citizen of the Republic of Croatia. In relation to persons reported in 2018, 4 persons were charged with the criminal offense of Trafficking in Human Beings under Article 106 of the Criminal Code.

During 2019, the competent state attorney's offices in the territory of the Republic of Croatia received 13 criminal charges, 26 of which were reported for the commission of the criminal offense of Trafficking in Human Beings referred to in Article 106 of the Criminal Code. The charges were filed against 19 male persons, 16 of whom are citizens of the Republic of Croatia, 3 persons are foreign nationals and 7 female persons (6 citizens of the Republic of Croatia and 1 foreign citizens). From the newly received application in 2019, 3 persons have been charged with the criminal offense of Trafficking in Human Beings under Article 106 of the Criminal Code. The indictment alleges that one defendant is charged with sexual exploitation and 2 defendants with forced labour. As in some of the cases where the charges was received in 2019, the investigation is still ongoing, the final decisions in the cases have not yet been reached. The most common forms of exploitation are labour and sexual exploitation, with the highest percentage being women, followed by children, while men are the least represented.

In 2018, the Judicial Academy, in cooperation with the Police Academy, organized two two-day **seminars on the „Prevention of human trafficking“ for criminal judges and advisors at county courts, deputy state attorneys and advisors** specialized in THB cases and police officers (a total of 74 participants). In 2019, the Judicial Academy, in cooperation with the Police Academy, organized two two-day seminars on the „Prevention of human trafficking“ for criminal judges and advisors at county courts, deputy state attorneys and advisors specialized in THB cases and police officers (a total of 107 participants).

Victim and Witness Support System in the Republic of Croatia is established on three levels: Service for Victim and Witness Support of the Ministry of Justice, Victim and Witness Support Departments at the courts and civil society organizations financially supported by the Ministry of Justice.

Besides mentioned organizations providing general victim support services, there are also other public institutions and civil society organizations providing specialist support. All forms of support provided by the general victim support services are also available to victims of trafficking in human beings. All mentioned services are available for both male and female victims of crime. In case of need for additional support, services cooperate with other institutions and organizations and refer victims to specialist support.

Service for Victim and Witness Support of the Ministry of Justice is a central body for coordination of development of the victim and witness support system in the Republic of Croatia. It also provides direct forms of support, such as informing victims about the release of the offender from serving the prison sentence (according to the Enforcement of the Prison Sentences Act) and providing information and emotional support. Representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Service for Victim and Witness support, are members of National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking and Operative Team of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking.

Victims and Witness Support Departments (VWSD) are established at seven county courts (in Zagreb, Osijek, Sisak, Vukovar, Zadar, Split and Rijeka), and they provide support at municipal courts. VWSD provide support to victims and witnesses in pre-trial, criminal, and misdemeanour proceedings. The support is also provided after the end of the proceedings and to victims who have not reported the crime. Victims and witnesses can turn to them regardless of the status of the proceedings for detailed information on their rights, emotional support, information on criminal and misdemeanour proceedings, practical help (which includes accompanying victims and witnesses through the court) and practical information, assistance in applying for compensation, with special consideration for the needs of vulnerable or intimidated witnesses.

Victims and witnesses can contact departments by telephone, e-mail or in person. VWSD provide information to victims about institutions and organizations that offer professional psychosocial support and legal assistance in order to address their specific needs. They also provide the required data about the victim at the request of the bodies that are conducting an individual assessment. In carrying out their support activities, employees in the departments cooperate with the police, the state attorney, the Ministry of Justice, units of local and regional self-government, public institutions and civil society organizations, and experts who promote the rights of and provide assistance to victims. Support is provided by department's employees and volunteers.

Information on victim and witness support services are provided to victims from the first contact with the competent authority. The police provide victims with information about their rights in a written form. That includes contact information of the court support departments. Victims are also informed about the departments by the State Attorney's Office, courts (court's subpoena), personally upon arrival at the court, by the National Call Centre, as well as social welfare services and other institutions and civil society organizations with which they cooperate in providing support to victims and witnesses.

National Call Centre for Victims of Crime and Misdemeanour 116 006 (standardized European telephone number) is established in cooperation of NGO Victim and Witness Support Service Croatia and the Ministry of Justice. It is a help-line for general support to all victims of crime. Call Centre is an anonymous, confidential and toll-free number which provides emotional support, legal and practical information to victims, witnesses and their family members and referral to institutions and organizations that offer professional psychosocial support and legal assistance. The service is available in both English and Croatian.

In order to provide support to citizens throughout the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Justice funds the activities of a **partner network of civil society organizations - Network of Support and Cooperation for Victims and Witnesses of Criminal Offences**, which provides support and assistance to victims and witnesses in those counties where there are no victim and witness support departments at courts. The Network provides information on the rights of an emotional support and psychological and legal counselling for victims, and they provide escorts to courts and other relevant institutions. The police provide victims with information about their rights in a written form which includes contact information of the organizations included in the Network and the National Call Centre.

Services are not time-limited and conditional, support to victims and witnesses is provided in pre-trial, criminal, and misdemeanour proceedings, after the end of the proceedings, and also to victims who have not reported the crime. All mentioned services are free of charge and confidential. More information is available on the website of the Ministry of Justice.

Regarding participation at the trainings specifically related to supporting victims of trafficking, Service for Victim and Witness Support delivered a lecture on providing support to victims at the **workshop: "Combating Trafficking in Human Beings"**, which was held in March 2018 and 2019 and organized by the Police Academy and the Judicial Academy.

In order to combat human trafficking, a **free telephone SOS line** 08007799 has been in operation for ten years, intended for all citizens who have some knowledge of human trafficking, where telephone calls are received by representatives of civil society organizations and which is financed from the state budget. Through this line, it is possible to seek help and obtain the necessary information or report cases suspected to be trafficking in human beings.

Assistance and protection for victims of trafficking in human beings in the Republic of Croatia was established through **mobile teams** (Zagreb, Rijeka, Split and Osijek). The mobile team coordinator is responsible for implementing and coordinating activities for each individual case of adult trafficking. If the trafficking victim is an adult then the activity coordinator is a representative of the Croatian Red Cross or other non-governmental organization. When the victim is a child then the activity coordinator is a representative of the centre for social welfare. Within the jurisdiction of the social welfare system, assistance and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings includes the provision of information on rights from the social welfare system and the procedures for exercising those rights, as well as the placement service and other rights in accordance with the regulations of the social welfare jurisdiction. Regional coordinators are required to inform both the adult victim of trafficking and the child about the assistance and protection program. The Centre for Social Welfare, together with the Regional Coordinator, develops an Individual Plan for Life Changes, Victim Behaviours, based on a comprehensive assessment of needs, difficulties and resources to overcome adverse life circumstances, in consultation with the beneficiary and family members.

Safe accommodation for victims of trafficking is provided at a secure national shelter for victims of trafficking. Shelters are run by non-governmental organizations dealing with combating trafficking in human beings and the funds for their work are provided by the MDFYSP, in 2018. in the amount of HRK 609.055,95 and in 2019. in the amount of HRK 983,736.61. The National Shelter for Adult Victims is run by the Red Cross and is located in Rijeka and the Children's Shelter is run by the Breza Association in Osijek.

Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities is considering activities related to COVID-19 crisis relevant in context of trafficking in persons. The new National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking is also to be drafted in the upcoming period. New measures relevant in the context of the COVID-19 crisis as well as consequences arising from the impact of pandemic on protection of victims of trafficking, especially for women and children, will be included in the new document. Meanwhile, all protection and safety measures have been taken regarding the risks of COVID-19 in national shelter for victims of trafficking.