

Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy

**NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION RECOMMENDATION ON THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE
- IMPLEMENTATION REPORT -**

Zagreb, August 2024

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INTRODUCTION

At the EU level, relying on the European Pillar of Social Rights and the recommendation in the area of child poverty "Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage", on June 14, 2021, the Council of the European Union adopted the Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee, which complements the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021-2024 and strives for every child to have access to basic rights and services.

After the adoption of the EU Council recommendation, the European Commission highlighted the national action plans of the member states as key implementation documents that enable the collective monitoring of the recommendation, including multilateral discussions on related political challenges and reforms within the European Semester, and all EU member states were obliged to draft national action plans to be delivered during 2022.

Due to the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the deadline for submitting national action plans has been extended to 2023.

The European Commission published the national action plans on its website, and the member states received instructions and recommendations in the areas of key measures and activities in which improvement is needed, based on monitoring indicators that assess the progress of each member state in the implementation.

The Report on the implementation of the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Council of the European Union recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee (hereinafter: the Report) shows the progress in the implementation of existing and creation of new measures and policies for the protection of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, the successful implementation of measures in 2022 and 2023 in order to achieve general and specific objectives in the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Council recommendation on the European Child Guarantee (hereinafter: National Action Plan). In accordance with the Council Recommendation on the European Child Guarantee¹, member states are invited to report to the European Commission every two years on the progress achieved in the implementation of Child Guarantee, and the first reports of the member states were to be sent to the European Commission in 2024 in the default template with a schedule of chapters for national reports.

Since the national action plans in the member states were adopted in different time periods from 2022 to 2023, for further coordination and monitoring of common indicators at the EU level, with additional monitoring of indicators related to key measures and activities of each of the EU countries, which is related to monitoring progress and providing additional funds for implementation, member states were obliged to submit the first biennial report to the European Commission from the date of adoption of the recommendations of the EU Council, regardless of the date of adoption of the national document.

In this way, member states demonstrate the continuity of access to basic services for vulnerable children.

¹ Council recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee, Official Journal of the European Union, 2021/14, 22.6.2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1004>

In addition to the data for 2022 and 2023, some indicators also show data from 2021 for the purpose of comparison with the data that follow in the years after or as initial values, when they were available, and part of the announced activities and plans in 2024. , in order to present the overall positive context of the work of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on reducing the rate of poverty and social exclusion of children in the Republic of Croatia. With this approach, the instruction of the European Commission that the Report also shows the planned activities within the framework of the set general and specific objectives was implemented, thus emphasizing the implementation of measures in all state administration bodies that are involved in the implementation and monitoring of results. In accordance with the Council recommendation, the National Action Plan is open to possible changes and additions to the existing measures during the entire period of its implementation, while many measures are already included in certain acts of strategic planning of the relevant state administration bodies, which provides a guarantee of continuous work to combat poverty and social exclusion in children.

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, through an established framework for monitoring the implementation with indicators for general and specific objectives, that enable the evaluation of results, reports on progress in implementation once a year to the Government of the Republic of Croatia, every two years to the European Commission, and the EU Council every five years. On the basis of the first Report, the European Commission will provide all members with guidelines for further action and preparation of the next Report, as well as recommendations for standardizing procedures.

1. CONTEXT

A comprehensive national approach to the fight against child poverty and social exclusion

Indicators of poverty and social exclusion are regularly monitored at the national level so that targeted action can be taken to reduce the risk of poverty. The State Bureau of Statistics (hereinafter: CBS – Croatian Bureau of Statistics) regularly reports on indicators of poverty and social exclusion, which are obtained from data collected by the Population Income Survey. It is an annual CBS survey conducted on a sample of randomly selected private households, and is aligned with EU regulations and Eurostat's methodology prescribed for EU-SILC surveys. (*Statistics on Income and Living Conditions*).

Below is a comparison of at-risk-of-poverty rates from 2021 to 2023, according to the results of the CBS Population Income Survey. In 2021, the at-risk-of-poverty rate was 19.2%², in 2022 the at-risk-of-poverty rate decreased to 18.0%³, while the results of the CBS Survey conducted in 2023 recorded at-risk-of-poverty rate of 19.3%⁴.

As for the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children, it decreased compared to 2021: in 2021 it was 17.1%, in 2022 it was 16.0%, while in 2023 it was 16.1%. Below, from the mentioned sources of the CBS, the at-risk-of-poverty rate by age and gender in 2021, 2022 and 2023 is presented, separately for children. The attached table shows the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children aged 0-17 in 2021, 2022 and 2023.⁵

Age 0-17	
Year	At-risk-of-poverty rate
2021.	17,1%
2022.	16,0%
2023.	16,1%

Strategic measures, which contribute to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, and which are aimed at children, work to prevent children from becoming adults exposed to the risk of poverty or social exclusion. It is a direct link to the goal of reducing child poverty set in the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights⁶, which sets measures at the EU level with the aim of reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU.

² Indicators of poverty and social exclusion in 2021, State Bureau of Statistics CBS, Zagreb, 15/7/2022, <https://podaci.dzs.hr/2022/hr/29178>

³ Indicators of poverty and social exclusion in 2022, State Bureau of Statistics CBS, Zagreb, 28/4/2023, <https://podaci.dzs.hr/2023/hr/58287>

⁴ Indicators of poverty and social exclusion in 2023, State Bureau of Statistics CBS, Zagreb, 22/3/2024, <https://podaci.dzs.hr/media/iaiczno2/zudp-2024-1-1-pokazatelj-siroma%C5%A1tva-i-socijalne-isklju%C4%8Denosti-u-2023.pdf>

⁵ At-risk-of-poverty rate by age and gender, source: CBS, Indicators of poverty and social exclusion

⁶ The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, European Union, 2021

When looking at at-risk-of-poverty rate by household type (source: CBS), for households with dependent children it amounts to 15.1% in 2021, 14.2% in 2022 and 14.9% in 2023. It is noticeable that in the category of households with dependent children, the highest at-risk-of-poverty rates are present in households consisting of one parent with dependent children, for which the at-risk-of-poverty rate in 2021 was 37.5%, 24.9% in 2022, and 24.4% in 2023. There is also a higher at-risk-of-poverty rate in households with two adults with three or more children, for which it was 22.8% in 2021, 23.3% in 2022, and 20.5% in 2023. So, according to the data, single-parent families are a particularly vulnerable category of families where children grow up with a very high risk of poverty, followed by families with two adults and three or more children. Furthermore, the risk of children's poverty depends on the employment, education and health status of the parents, the type of settlement they live in, the type of family and the number of dependent children. For example, the at-risk-of-poverty rate according to household work intensity is highest for households with very low work intensity and for households with dependent children.

Particularly vulnerable groups of children are those from beneficiary families of the guaranteed minimum compensation, and the right to this compensation is acquired by families and individuals who live in deep poverty, i.e. have no income, and it is regulated by the Social Welfare Act⁷. Also, through the number of children's allowance beneficiaries, the trend in the number of children from families at risk of poverty can be monitored, which is regulated by the Child Allowance Act⁸. According to statistical data of the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute (CPII)⁹, in December 2021, 138,981 beneficiaries and 269,681 children were covered by the right to child allowance, in November 2022, 125,613 beneficiaries and 244,092 children were covered, while in June 2023, 109,127 beneficiaries and 215,442 children were covered.

The implementation of measures from the six general objectives of the National Action Plan corresponds to the implementation of the objectives from the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030, which is the highest act of strategic planning in the Republic of Croatia, and comprehensively and long-term guides the development of society and the economy in all matters of significance for the Republic of Croatia, and is based on recognized development challenges. The National Development Strategy envisages a reduction in the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion from the initial value of 23.30% in 2019 to <15% by 2030. The priority areas of public policies from the National Development Strategy include precisely the areas essential for achieving the objectives from the National Action Plan: the areas of early and preschool education, health, healthy nutrition, housing and social services, with the aim of ensuring equal opportunities for children and youth at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It is noted that the main purpose of the National Action Plan is to improve the access of vulnerable groups of children to key services covered by the Council Recommendation. Given that it is a comprehensive strategic national document, priorities from the following key strategic documents of the Republic of Croatia are integrated: National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030, National Reform Plan 2023, National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026. Many medium-term acts of strategic planning contribute to the fight against poverty and social exclusion of children in the Republic

⁷ Social Welfare Act, Official Gazette No. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23

⁸ Child Allowance Act, Official Gazette No. 94/01, 138/06, 107/07, 61/11, 112/12, 82/15, 58/18, 156/23

⁹ Monthly overview of the number of children's allowance beneficiaries, the number of children and the calculated amounts of the child's allowance, CPII

of Croatia, such as the following: National Plan for Children's Rights for the period from 2022 to 2026, which continues to create and implement policies for the improvement of children's rights, National Plan for the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period from 2021 to 2027, National Plan for the Development of Social Services for the period from 2021 to 2027, National Plan for Equalizing the Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities for the period from 2021 to 2027, National Plan for the Development of the Education System for the Period from 2021 to 2027, National Plan for the Development of Health Care for the Period from 2021 until 2027, National plan for the protection and promotion of human rights and suppression of discrimination for the period until 2027, National plan for the inclusion of Roma for the period from 2021 to 2027. The aforementioned acts of strategic planning form the basis for the implementation of measures and activities in key areas of intervention with an emphasis on intersectoral cooperation and joint action. The National Action Plan also contributes to the achievement of the target values of Specific objective 2. "Prevention and reduction of child poverty and social exclusion" of the Action Plan for the fight against poverty and social exclusion for the period 2021 - 2024, from the National Plan for the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion, where the target is to reduce severe material deprivation for children aged 0-17 from 5.7 to 4%, and the at-risk-of-poverty rate from 17.1 to 14.8%.

In order to reduce child poverty, continuous efforts are being made to increase the availability of all services to marginalized and vulnerable groups that are in a worse socioeconomic position, and to improve the availability of free programs and an integrated approach to child care. With systematic support, special care is taken to ensure the right to quality upbringing and education from an early age, and the provision of free meals for all children in primary schools particularly facilitates their situation.

Institutional context of implementation

National Coordinator and Committee for Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation

The process of creating the National Action Plan through the work of the interdepartmental working group was led by the National Coordinator and Director in the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, appointed by the European Commission. The Working group was composed of representatives of state administration bodies, international organizations, the scientific community and civil society organizations and other interested stakeholders: the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration, the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Croatian Union of Counties, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, the State Statistical Office, the UNICEF Office for Croatia, Ombudsperson for children, Association *Djeca prva* and Study Center of Social Work of the Law Faculty in Zagreb.

For the purpose of effective coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the National Action Plan, a separate body, the Committee for Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Action Plan, was established by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia dated 9 November 2023, along with an appointed National Coordinator with appropriate departments and mandate. In addition to the National Coordinator and Deputy from

the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the members of the Committee are directors in: Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property, Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation, Ministry of Finance, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, who are responsible for the implementation of measures and activities. Other partners and experts from interest groups and local governments, as well as representatives of children and youth, are involved in the work of the Committee as necessary. The work of the Committee is coordinated by the National Coordinator, and the Committee is responsible for the comprehensive coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the National Action Plan, as well as the creation of measures in accordance with the monitoring findings. Committee members monitor the implementation of activities from the National Action Plan based on the Implementation Monitoring Framework and collected data, and work on proposing measures to improve the existing ones. Namely, the Committee assesses the need to update and change certain measures from the National Action Plan by monitoring indicators, target groups and related activities. Through the work during the meetings of the Committee, a platform is created for exchanging information and providing an overview of the implementation of the National Action Plan, as well as establishing a system for monitoring implementation.

As pointed out, progress in the implementation of the National Action Plan activities is reported to the Government of the Republic of Croatia once a year, the European Commission every two years, and the EU Council every five years. Also, the National Coordinator and members of the Committee will report to the National Council for the Development of Social Policies, the Council for Children and the Committee for Family, Youth and Sports of the Croatian Parliament on the implementation of the National Action Plan, in accordance with the rhythm of submitting reports to the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The aforementioned competent bodies were established for the purpose of improving and developing policies, adopting political guidelines, proposing measures, activities and programs with the aim of strengthening the protection of children's rights and well-being. Their establishment also ensured independent monitoring by expert bodies, with the aim of improving the protection of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and in accordance with the adopted recommendations of the European Commission.

Consultations

Through cooperation with the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Croatia, a Framework for monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plan was created, which lists indicators, and through their monitoring it will be possible to evaluate the results of implemented measures and activities. Indicators at the level of general objectives refer to concrete results that are reflected in a change in the situation for children, and which are the result of the work of several systems and institutions. Indicators at the level of specific objectives refer to strengthening the capabilities of systems, institutions and individuals, including legislative and financial frameworks, in order to be able to achieve general objectives.

The National Action Plan, as an operational implementation document, consolidates the measures of existing strategic planning acts with defined general objectives based on the Council recommendations, as follows:

1. Improved access to early and preschool education,

2. Ensured access to education and support for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion,
3. Ensured access to quality nutrition for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion,
4. Ensured access to health services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion,
5. Ensured access to adequate housing for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion,
6. Improved availability of social services in the community aimed at children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

In accordance with the above, the National Action Plan is a "dynamic" document, which will be continuously updated during implementation, in order to achieve progress in all relevant systems, especially in the education system, the health system and the social welfare system, in order to more effectively fight against poverty and social exclusion of children.

Future evaluation

Croatia was one of the seven EU countries in which the Pilot Program 'Phase III Guarantee for Every Child' (hereinafter referred to as: Pilot Program) was implemented, and within which an in-depth analysis of the situation, policies, programs, services, budgets and mechanisms was carried out, those that deal with child poverty, social exclusion and access to services in the Republic of Croatia. Based on the analysis, recommendations were made with the aim of improving national policies, programs, key measures and activities aimed at reducing child poverty and social exclusion, as well as a proposal for their monitoring and evaluation. Plans for future evaluation are based on the development and improvement of monitoring frameworks and indicators, in order to effectively monitor implementation and evaluation possibilities, which will enable adaptation of measures to new circumstances.

The Pilot program was implemented in Međimurje County, which is one of the most developed counties in the Republic of Croatia, but at the same time with the highest rate of beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum benefit (2.6%), and it is noted that in this county members of the Roma national minority make up 80% of the beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum fees. The 2021 census recorded that 17,980 members of the Roma national minority live in the Republic of Croatia¹⁰. However, according to the latest available data from the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities obtained by mapping Roma localities, it is estimated that a total of 24,524 members of the Roma national minority live in the Republic of Croatia. The data were obtained in the framework of the project "Collection and monitoring of base data for the effective implementation of the National Strategy for the inclusion of Roma" and the research findings were published in the publication: Kunac, S., Klasnić, K., Lalić, S. (2018.): „Uključivanje Roma u hrvatsko društvo: istraživanje baznih podataka“¹¹ (in English: *Inclusion of Roma in Croatian society: research of basic data*). According to the rate of relative poverty, about 90% of the members of the Roma national minority in the Republic of Croatia are poor, while about 70% of the families of the Roma national minority live in poverty. Most Roma households below the poverty risk threshold are located in Central Croatia (97.5%), Slavonia (97.3%), Međimurje (96.4%) and Northern Croatia (94.9%), followed by Zagreb and

¹⁰ 38.7% (6,954) Roma live in Međimurje County

¹¹ Kunac, S., Klasnić, K., Lalić, S. (2018.): „Uključivanje Roma u hrvatsko društvo: istraživanje baznih podataka“, Centar za mirovne studije, Zagreb. The publication is also available at the link: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/>

surroundings (77.7%) and Istria and Primorje (76.8%)¹². In the examples of good practice in the rest of the Report, models of services and interventions developed within the framework of the Pilot Program are presented, in order to reduce the risk for the growth and development of children who are accompanied by poverty and social exclusion. After 33 months of implementation of the Pilot Program, funded by the EU, in Međimurje County, access to comprehensive child and family protection services has been improved, including the empowerment of parents and guardians and early childhood intervention services, and children who do not have access to kindergarten have been given the opportunity to learn through play. The project was implemented by the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Croatia in cooperation with 12 implementing partners on the ground, seven local and regional self-government units, Međimurje County and the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The conclusion of the project is that in order to improve living conditions and ensure better starting positions for every child at risk of poverty and social exclusion, high-quality intersectoral cooperation between different systems and bringing services closer to users is necessary.

2. TARGET GROUPS

In the Republic of Croatia, a reduction in the at-risk-of-poverty rate among children (age group 0-17) has been achieved¹³, in accordance with the presented statistical data, which indicates the effective implementation of strategic measures aimed at children.

The primary focus of the National Action Plan is on children at increased risk of poverty, with the inclusion of certain critical elements related to the broader concept of social exclusion. Some of the measures, especially in the field of social services in the community, are aimed at children receiving the guaranteed minimum benefit, which is an indicator of a priority intervention aimed primarily at providing support to those children who are at the highest risk, while some measures are planned to extend support to all children, including children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, who are not exclusively beneficiaries of this benefit.

In the Republic of Croatia, children in need and the obstacles they face have been identified in the following groups:

- children beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum benefit
- children of the Roma national minority
- children in less developed, especially rural areas
- children with developmental disabilities
- migrant children (unaccompanied children, asylum seekers, foreigners under subsidiary and temporary protection under the age of 18)
- children in alternative care

¹² Source: National plan for the inclusion of Roma for the period from 2021 to 2027, Government of the Republic of Croatia, Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, June 2021

¹³ A child is a person under the age of 18 (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)

- children from Ukraine and all other displaced children
- children whose parents are in prison

A particularly vulnerable group of children is from a family of benefits beneficiaries in the social welfare system, who cannot meet basic life needs with family income or assets. The social welfare system allows them to receive a guaranteed minimum benefit, a monetary amount to ensure that basic life needs are met. The basis for calculating the guaranteed minimum compensation is EUR 150.00¹⁴. To compare, according to the decisions of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the base in 2014 was HRK 800,00 ¹⁵ (106,18 EUR), and in 2022 it was HRK 1.000,00¹⁶ (EUR 136,15). The total amount of the guaranteed minimum benefit for each individual beneficiary differs depending on whether it is a single person or a household (two or more members), a person capable of working or unable to work, a child or an adult, a single parent and a child of a single parent, etc. For example, if there are two able-bodied persons and one child in the household, the amount of the guaranteed minimum compensation for each of them is 70% of the base (EUR 105,00), i.e. a total of 210% of the base (EUR 315,00) for a three-person household. For a household consisting of a single parent of working age and a child, the parent is entitled to 120% of the base (EUR 180,00), and the child is entitled to 90% of the base (EUR 135,00 euros), i.e. a total of 210% of the base (EUR 315,00). while for a household consisting of a single parent unable to work and a child, the parent will be entitled to 135% of the base (EUR 202,50), and the child will be entitled to 90% of the base (EUR 135,00), i.e. a total of 225% of the base (EUR 337,50).

In the social welfare system, a benefit for personal needs is also paid, which is granted to a child of primary and secondary school age, younger adult, an adult and an elderly person who is granted the right to accommodation or organized housing if his or her own income cannot ensure the satisfaction of personal needs on accommodation or organized housing. In accordance with the Social Welfare Act¹⁷ compensation for personal needs amounts to 50% of the base (EUR 75,00) per month for a child of elementary school age, an adult and an elderly person, or 70% of the base (EUR 105,00) per month for a child and a younger adult of high school age and another younger adult.

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy also recognizes the possibility of paying accommodation costs in a student dormitory. This benefit in the social welfare system is recognized for a child or a younger adult, a high school student if he is:

- of weaker financial condition and is not a member of the household that is the beneficiary of the right to the guaranteed minimum compensation
- placed in a foster family, and attends school outside the place of residence of the foster parent.

¹⁴ Decision on the basis for calculating the amount of the guaranteed minimum benefit, Official Gazette no.158/2023

¹⁵ Decision on the basis for calculating the amount of the guaranteed minimum benefit, Official Gazette no.114/2014

¹⁶ Decision on the basis for calculating the amount of the guaranteed minimum benefit, Official Gazette no.23/2022

¹⁷ Social Welfare Act, Official Gazette no. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23

Furthermore, the right to an inclusive allowance, in accordance with the new Act on Inclusive Allowance¹⁸, which regulates the levels of support required for persons with disabilities and the means for financing the inclusive allowance and other issues related to the inclusive allowance. Compensation is granted to an adult and a child with a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment who have been determined to have a second or third degree of disability - impairment of functional abilities according to the regulations on expertise and expertise methodologies, regardless of the status of the disabled person. According to the Decision on the basis for calculating the amount of the inclusive allowance of the Government of the Republic of Croatia,¹⁹, the basis on which the amount of the inclusive allowance is calculated is EUR 120,00.

The possibility of paying compensation for transportation costs due to education, which is recognized for a child with developmental difficulties and a person with a disability, as well as a high school student according to an appropriate program of upbringing and education or training for self-care, is also highlighted. The fee is also recognized for a student, a high school student placed in a foster family or a family home, who attends classes outside the place of residence, and a high school student who is a member of the household of a beneficiary of the guaranteed minimum benefit. The fee includes the costs of transportation on departure and return and is recognized at the lowest price for regular means of public transport for the shortest distance, and if the user uses a personal vehicle for transportation, it is recognized at the price of a public transport ticket.

As it has been pointed out, the trend in the number of children from families at risk of poverty can also be monitored by monitoring the number of beneficiaries of the child allowance, since the child allowance covers precisely the group of children receiving the guaranteed minimum benefit.

3. PROVISION OF SERVICES

3.1. Report on the implementation of measures in the National Action Plan

In order to better monitor the implementation of the measures and the effect of the achieved results on the achievement of the set general and specific objectives, the Monitoring Framework contains certain quantitative and qualitative indicators, through which the need to improve the National Action Plan for the future period and possible changes and/or adjustment of measures, given that the effectiveness of measures and activities for the achievement of objectives is reflected through the set indicators. Monitoring and reporting according to the set indicators is in accordance with the data obtained from the following bodies: Ministry of Labour, Pension

¹⁸ Act on Inclusive Allowance, Official Gazette, No. 156/2023

¹⁹ Decision on the basis for calculating the amount of inclusive allowance of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, Official Gazette, No. 05/2024

System, Family and Social Policy (MLPFSP), Ministry of Science, Education and Youth (MSEY), Ministry of Health (MH), Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation (MJADT), the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MTS), the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property (MSPCSP), the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities (OHRNM) and the National Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

Accordingly, the presentation of indicators for six general and related specific objectives follows in the second part of the Report.

3.1.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE 1. IMPROVED ACCESS TO EARLY AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND EDUCATION

Objective of the National Action Plan	Indicator	Initial value	Values by years		Target value in 2030	Source
			2022	2023		
General objective 1. IMPROVED ACCESS TO EARLY AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION	Share of children enrolled in kindergartens or other institutions where early and preschool education is provided in relation to the total number of children of preschool age (0-6)		2022: 22,10% 0-2, 72,7% 3-6	-	40% 0-3, 97% 4-6	MSEY
		Data from previous years for comparison: in 2020: 20.4%, 0-2, 54.4%, 3-6; in 2021: 21,6% 0-2, 68,9% 3-6				
	Share of children (ages 3-6) enrolled in kindergartens or other institutions where early and preschool education is provided	2021: 77,8% ²⁰	-	-		Eurostat
		Data from Eurostat for 2018, for comparison: 61.6%				
	Number of children of the Roma national minority included in preschool programs	2021: 1010	2022: 1185	2023: 1234	1500	MSEY
	Coverage of children of the Roma national minority aged 3-6 with preschool education	2018: 23%	n/a	n/a	54%	OHRNM

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_childhood_education_statistics

	Share of children of beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum compensation (3-6 years old) included in early and preschool education in relation to the total number of children of beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum compensation	-	-	-	-	MLPFSP*
	*It is not possible to track data on the children of beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum benefit between the ages of 3-6 who are included in early and preschool education, given that this is not a condition for recognizing the right to the guaranteed minimum benefit, and such data is not possible extract from the SocSkrb application. There is a possibility of monitoring if the Ministry of Health requests information from MLPFSP about children (with their Tax No. data), whose parents are beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum benefit, and regarding the possibility of using advantages when enrolling in kindergarten for children from vulnerable groups (Article 20 of the Act on Preschool Education, Official Gazette No. 10/97, 107/07, 94/13, 98/19, 57/22, 101/23).					
Specific objective 1.1. Guaranteed right of access to quality early and preschool education until 2030 for every child in the Republic of Croatia	Proportion of professional staff (educators and teachers, health staff, pedagogues, psychologists, social pedagogues, educational rehabilitators, etc.) to the total number of employees in kindergartens and other legal entities that implement preschool education programs and preschool programs	school year 2020/2021 69,38%	school year 2021/2022: 68,98%	school year 2022/2023: 68,03%	-	CBS ²¹

²¹ Kindergartens and other legal entities that implement preschool education programs, CBS

from the age of 3 until starting primary school	Average duration of the compulsory preschool program	2021: 120-150 hrs	2022: 150-250 hrs	2023: 150-250 hrs	550-700 hrs	MSEY
	Number of newly built and/or extended kindergartens (broken down by local and regional self-government units)	<i>There is no data available on the number of newly built kindergartens broken down by local and regional self-government units - qualitative explanation in the table below:</i>	-	-	300	MSEY*
<p>* The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth has announced two calls for investments in the construction, extension, upgrading, reconstruction and equipping of preschool institutions in order to ensure infrastructure and material capacities for increasing early and preschool education in the Republic of Croatia. Eligible applicants were local and regional self-government units in the Republic of Croatia, as possible founders of public institutions that perform early and preschool education activities in accordance with the Act on Preschool Education (Official Gazette No.10/97, 107/07, 94/13, 98/19, 57/22, 101/23).</p> <p>Within the first call, 248 projects are being implemented, which plan to increase the capacity by 16,236 additional places in early and preschool education, and the total amount of contracted grants is 162,975,439.14 euros.</p> <p>The second call was published in June 2023, in which 128 project proposals were submitted. The total allocation of the second call amounts to EUR 51,022,570.00 in grants, and the increase in capacity within the second call is expected to reach the planned increase in coverage to 96% in preschool education. In March 2024, 94 projects were contracted from the second call, which plans to increase the capacity by 5,080 additional places, the amount of granted grants is EUR 50.45 million.</p> <p>In total, from both calls there were 342 projects with a planned capacity increase of 21,316 additional places, with a total grant amount of 213.43 million euros.</p>						

Specific objective 1.2.: Improved budgetary and legislative framework that will ensure regionally uniform access to affordable and high-quality early and preschool education	Annual amount of funds provided for the fiscal sustainability of the kindergarten	0	0	2023: 18.594.365 € (3 months)	100.000.000 € (12 months)	MSEY
	Public spending on early and preschool education*	2020/2021 3.477.111,42 €	2021/2022 3.724.659,23 €	2022/2023 29.726.805,19 €	150.000.000 €	MSEY*
* The amount of funds used for co-financing children based on Article 50 of the Act on Preschool Education is presented for four activities monitored by the Department for Early and Pre-School Education in the MSEY, as follows: co-financing of children in the preschool program, gifted children, children with difficulties and children belonging to national minorities, for school year 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023.						
Specific objective 1.3.: Developed additional support mechanisms within the educational system and funding mechanisms aimed at ensuring access to early and preschool education for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families, especially children of lower socioeconomic status, in order to	Number of new and/or improved support mechanisms for children at risk and their families in order to facilitate access to attending early and preschool education		In May 2022, the Law on Amendments to the Law on Preschool Education was passed, extended with expanded Art. 20. in connection with the realization of benefits during enrolment - described below*			MSEY* MLPFSP**

<p>address the "hidden" costs of regular kindergarten attendance</p>	<p>Article 20, paragraph 4. <i>„As an exception to paragraph 1 of this article, if the kindergarten founded by local and regional self-government unit cannot enrol all registered children, after enrolling the children from paragraph 3 of this article, the children are enrolled in such a way that children of parents disabled from the Homeland War, children from families with three or more children, children of both working parents, children with developmental disabilities and chronic diseases who have a finding and opinion of a competent body from the social welfare system or a certificate from a chosen pediatrician or family doctor have priority for enrolment that the extent of developmental difficulties or chronic diseases is approximately in accordance with the list of impaired functional abilities, which is in accordance with the regulation regulating the methodology of expert examinations, children of single parents, children of single-parent families, children of persons with disabilities registered in the Croatian Register of Persons with Disabilities, children who have exercised the right to the social service of accommodation in foster families, children who have a place of residence or residence in the area of the kindergarten and children of parents who receive a child allowance or parents of beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum compensation“.</i></p> <p>**Within the framework of the Pilot Program, activities related to access to early and preschool education were carried out in relation to 3 target groups: children with disabilities, children and families living in a sensitive family environment, and children of minority racial or ethnic origin (especially Roma). In the area of Medimurje County, by March 2023, it was achieved that more than 300 children (who normally do not have access to kindergarten) use informal opportunities for play and learning at four locations of play hubs. Within the framework of the program, more than 210 educational workers and Roma assistants were educated for better application of inclusive principles in their work; students of the Faculty of Teacher Education did an internship with children who do not have access to kindergarten; 100 parents/guardians were empowered to support their children in the development of pre-reading and pre-math skills; the curriculum of student practice in preschool education was changed and more than 70 students did part of the practice in a multicultural environment with children from the Roma community. A Calculator for calculating the economic price of kindergartens was also created with the aim of improving the policy of financing the costs of preschool education and greater inclusion of children.</p>			
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="526 1037 1008 1276"> <p>Number of newly employed assistants for children with developmental disabilities or language and communication mediators or third educators in early and preschool education institutions</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1008 1037 2042 1388" rowspan="2"> <p>MSEY: According to Article 24.a of the Act on preschool education, assistants for children with disabilities are employed in the system. Their employment is carried out by kindergartens that are under the responsibility of their founders, not the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth. In view of what has been said, the MSEY does not keep the aforementioned data on assistants, because the joint electronic register of kindergartens does not provide for this possibility. After the new e-Register of Kindergartens is established, MSEY will be able to start monitoring this data at the national level. The E-Matica of Kindergartens is in the process of construction and its</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="526 1276 1008 1388"> <p>Number of children - users of the service per one assistant for children with developmental disabilities or</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Number of newly employed assistants for children with developmental disabilities or language and communication mediators or third educators in early and preschool education institutions</p>	<p>MSEY: According to Article 24.a of the Act on preschool education, assistants for children with disabilities are employed in the system. Their employment is carried out by kindergartens that are under the responsibility of their founders, not the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth. In view of what has been said, the MSEY does not keep the aforementioned data on assistants, because the joint electronic register of kindergartens does not provide for this possibility. After the new e-Register of Kindergartens is established, MSEY will be able to start monitoring this data at the national level. The E-Matica of Kindergartens is in the process of construction and its</p>	<p>Number of children - users of the service per one assistant for children with developmental disabilities or</p>
<p>Number of newly employed assistants for children with developmental disabilities or language and communication mediators or third educators in early and preschool education institutions</p>	<p>MSEY: According to Article 24.a of the Act on preschool education, assistants for children with disabilities are employed in the system. Their employment is carried out by kindergartens that are under the responsibility of their founders, not the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth. In view of what has been said, the MSEY does not keep the aforementioned data on assistants, because the joint electronic register of kindergartens does not provide for this possibility. After the new e-Register of Kindergartens is established, MSEY will be able to start monitoring this data at the national level. The E-Matica of Kindergartens is in the process of construction and its</p>			
<p>Number of children - users of the service per one assistant for children with developmental disabilities or</p>				

	language and communication mediator or third educator in early and preschool education institutions	commissioning is being prepared after passing the functional testing phase, and the exact date is not yet known.
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3.1.2. GENERAL OBJECTIVE 2. ENSURED ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Objective of the National Action Plan	Indicator	Initial value	Values by years		Target value in 2030	Source
			2022	2023		
General Objective 2. ENSURED ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION	Share of 15-year-olds with lower achievements in reading, mathematics and science literacy	2018: Reading literacy – HR: 21,6%; Mathematical literacy – HR: 31,2%; Science literacy – HR: 25,3%	2022: Reading literacy – HR: 475 points (OECD: 476); Mathematical literacy – HR: 463 points (OECD: 472); Science literacy – HR: 483 points (OECD: 485)	-		OECD PISA*
		*In the last survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) - PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) 178 secondary and two elementary schools with a total of 6,135 student participated in the Republic of Croatia in 2022. The research shows that the achievements of students in mathematics are positively correlated with the GDP of the participating countries and allocations for education. In the Republic of Croatia, the results of the PISA survey showed that Croatian students were around the OECD average for math, reading and science literacy.				

	<p>In mathematical literacy, they are around the average, and the Republic of Croatia is in 36th place out of a total of 81 participating countries, and the average number of points achieved by students in the Republic of Croatia on the mathematical literacy test is 463 points (OECD average is 472 points). In reading literacy, Croatian students showed average results and achieved an average result of 475 points (the average of OECD countries is 476 points). Looking at the positions on the reading literacy scale, the Republic of Croatia is in 26th place. At the same time, 23 percent of students solved the tests below the passing level, while the OECD average is 26 percent of students below the level. In the science literacy tests, the Republic of Croatia was in the OECD average, and took 31st place. In this part of the examination, students in the Republic of Croatia achieved 483 points, and the average of all students in OECD countries is 485 points.</p>					
	Share of young people of the Roma national minority aged 19-25 who have completed a four-year and/or five-year high school education	2018: 4,4%	n/a	n/a	≥10%	OHRRNM (National plan for Roma inclusion*)
	*The new data will be known in 2025 after the implementation of a repeated survey of the base data. It is a complex field research, and even in the National Plan for the inclusion of Roma, the possibility of collecting data on an annual level is not planned.					
	Share of young people (15-19) Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	2020: 9,1% (8.6% M; 9,6% Ž)	2021: 8,1% (8.8% M; 7,3% Ž)	2022: 8,7% (9.6% M; 7,9% Ž)	6,3% (6,3% M; 6,3% Ž)	Eurostat CBS
Specific objective 2.1. Affordable and free primary and secondary education for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion	Number of children at risk (children from foster families, children receiving the guaranteed minimum benefit, children with developmental disabilities...) who use compensation for additional costs in regular education	2020: 186	2021: 196	2022: 101	-	MLPFSP
	Public expenditure on education	2020:	2021:	-	5,9%?	World Bank*

		4,4%	5,2%			Eurostat**
		2019: 2.431,6	2020: 2.478,2	-	-	
<p>*World Bank, Government expenditure on education, https://databank.worldbank.org/source/gender-statistics/Series/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS</p> <p>**Eurostat, Public expenditure on education per pupil/student based on FTE by education level and programme orientation, online data code: EDUC_UOE_FINE09, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/educ_uae_fine09/default/table?lang=en</p>						
Specific objective 2.2. Promoting inclusive educational practice and building a culture of diversity	Number of educational institutions with a larger number of students belonging to the Roma national minority who were provided with additional support - help in learning/mentoring, training of teachers and professional associates who work in a multicultural environment	0	2022: 5	2023: 7	15	MSEY
	Number of children from vulnerable groups involved in extracurricular activities organized in schools	470	2022: 520	2023: 695*	840	MSEY*
	<p>*MSEY: The data entered refer to extracurricular classes for students belonging to the Roma national minority and students displaced from Ukraine.</p> <p>**OHRRNM will finance extracurricular activities through an open call, and currently there is no such indicator defined by the National Plan for Roma Inclusion, but during the implementation of projects financed through an open call, it will monitor the number of children involved in extracurricular activities.</p>					

	Number of children involved in sports activities *	2021: 50.000	2022: 170.000 (MTS: 120.000; MSEY: 50.000)	2023: 57.500 (MTS: 55.000, MSEY: 2.500)	310.000	MTS MSEY
<p>*It is an outcome indicator from the National Plan for Children's Rights in the Republic of Croatia 2022-2026, Specific Objective 1. <i>Suppression of discrimination and social exclusion of children</i>, within the framework of which it is envisaged as one of the measures: <i>Inclusion of children in sports and recreational programs and activities</i> in order to improve the quality of life of children, to encourage their inclusion in social life and thereby prevent social exclusion. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports, together with the Croatian School Sports Association and the Croatian Sports Association of the Deaf, implements programs that include children in sports and recreational activities of the Croatian School Sports Association, among which is the program for including students with disabilities in the school sports system. Furthermore, the Croatian Sports Association of the Deaf implemented the Universal Sports Program, a project of the Croatian Sports Association of the Deaf whose goal is to gather deaf children and encourage the youngest to play sports.</p>						

3.1.3. GENERAL OBJECTIVE 3. ENSURED ACCESS TO QUALITY NUTRITION FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Objective of the National Action Plan	Indicator	Initial value	Values by years		Target value in 2030	Source
			2022	2023		
General Objective 3. ENSURED ACCESS TO QUALITY NUTRITION FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION	Share of primary school children included in the free school meal program	-	60%	96,04% (school year 2022/2023) 89,6% (first semester of the school year 2023/2024 - number of students: 93 678)	100%	MSEY
	Proportion of children (age 8-9) with overweight	2019: 35% (37% boys; 33.1% girls)		The results of the research conducted in 2022 are planned to be published in 2024	-	WHO, CIPH, MH
	Share of exclusively breastfed children aged 0-5 months	2022: 19%	19%	<i>The data is not yet available</i>		CIPH, MH
Specific objective 3.1. A comprehensive system for promoting	Number of communication messages sent to encourage breastfeeding, in accordance with the World Health Organization's					MH* CIPH

<p>and encouraging breastfeeding at the national level has been developed</p>	<p>definition of nutrition for infants and young children, sent to the Central Health Information System of the Republic of Croatia</p>					
<p>* The Ministry of Health will be the holder of the mentioned activity, which will be called: Data on the nutrition of infants and young children aligned with the definition of nutrition of the WHO, to be included in the communication message that is sent from the activity for the health care of preschool children and the activity of family (general) medicine to the Central Health Information Center system of the Republic of Croatia (CHISC). The value should not be tracked numerically year by year, but only by principle: the system established YES/NO. The above activity is part of the National Program for the Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding for the period from 2024 to 2027.</p>						
<p>Specific objective 3.2. Provided nutritionally balanced school meals for a group of elementary school children at risk of poverty and social exclusion</p>	<p>Share of educational institutions that have functional school kitchens in accordance with appropriate standards</p>	<p>750</p>		<p>2023: 791</p>	<p>915</p>	<p>MSEY</p>
<p>Specific objective 3.3. Ensured access to regular and nutritionally balanced diet for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion</p>	<p>Number of children in families that received food aid through packages provided by humanitarian organizations</p>					<p>MLPFSP*</p>
<p>*The number of children in families that received food aid through packages provided by humanitarian organizations is not yet available, given that it refers to the call for tenders for the allocation of funds that will only be published in 2024.</p>						

3.1.4. GENERAL OBJECTIVE 4. ENSURED ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Objective of the National Action Plan	Indicator	Initial value	Values by years		Target value in 2030	Source
			2022	2023		
General Objective 4. ENSURED ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION	Number of children (0-7 years) included in early intervention services	2021 MURID: 152 (of which no. children of the Roma national minority: 67)	2022 MURID: 158 (of which no. children of the Roma national minority: 52)	2023 MURID: 130 (of which no. children of the Roma national minority: 46)	-	CIPH * MLPFSP** (MURID)
	<p>*CIPH can monitor diagnostic and therapeutic procedure - DTPs by age group, but from routine statistics it is impossible to monitor them by national status. It is necessary to define DTPs related to the indicated indicator, i.e. the methodology on the basis of which the initial value was determined.</p> <p>**MLPFSP collected data from the Center for Early Intervention in Childhood MURID in Čakovec. Namely, as part of the Pilot Program, activities related to 'Early Developmental Support' for children with developmental disabilities were carried out in the Međimurje County area. It is emphasized that as of June 30, 2024, MLPFSP recorded 176 services provided for children without adequate parental care in centers for the provision of services in the community, and 574 services provided in centers for rehabilitation, centers for education and community service centers for people with disabilities. On 31 December 2022 MLPFSP had 9 contracts for the provision of early intervention services with service providers in the network.</p>					
	Share of children aged 0-7 who have pediatric care in relation to the total number of children aged 0-7 (health care is provided in pediatric clinics)	2021: 233.032 of children destined for spec. ped. (90,26%)	2022: 230.956 of children destined for spec. ped. (90,52%)	2023: 227.570 of children destined for spec. ped. (90,80%)		

		contracted 283 PED teams	contracted 282 PED teams	contracted 284 PED teams		
	Share of children aged 7-18 years who passed screening aimed at early detection of mental health problems in relation to the total number of children aged 7-18 years					MH*
	<p>*School doctors conduct mental health risk screening as part of systematic examinations of students in the 8th grade of elementary school and 1st grade of high school. Screening is carried out by having students fill out an internationally validated YP CORE questionnaire. After filling out the questionnaire, there is an interview and clinical assessment by the school medicine doctor so that the school doctor can determine the need for further treatment and counselling. In the school year 2022/2023 risk in mental health was determined by school doctors in 5% of male and female students of the 8th grade (39,647 male and female students of the 8th grade of primary school were included in the screening, which is 43% of all male and female students of the 8th grade of primary school), and in 5% of male and female students 10% of female students of the 1st grade of secondary school (39,914 female and male students of the 1st grade of secondary school were included in the screening, which is 45% of the 1st grade of secondary school). This is a share of male and female students that corresponds to international estimates or is even slightly lower than the estimates that can be found in international literature, which is particularly positive considering that it is the first school year that has passed completely without any epidemiological measures related to pandemic.</p>					
	Number of medical professionals for early development					MH* MLPFSP** (MURID)
Specific objective 4.1. Availability of health services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion is ensured	<p>*MH: Data on occupations with employment in the healthcare system, according to the state in the database of the National Registry of Healthcare Providers as of March 15, 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pediatric specialists: 750, of which 45 are narrow specialists in pediatric neurology - psychologists: 457 - speech therapists: 324 - educational rehabilitators: 64 - physiotherapists: 4,256 - occupational therapists: 256 <p>**MLPFSP: As part of the Pilot Program, activities related to 'Early Developmental Support' for children with developmental disabilities were carried out in Međimurje County. By March 2023, the support of mobile teams for early development support</p>					

	<p>was achieved, which ensured direct support for more than 800 children and 780 parents/guardians, and indirect support for more than 1,000 children and 600 parents/guardians, while parents and guardians were provided more than 3000 services. More than 80 specialists have been trained in the areas of early detection of developmental deviations and provision of early developmental support to children with developmental deviations, risks or difficulties and their parents/caregivers. Online courses have been developed for professionals on early intervention, detection and support for children with developmental deviation, risk or difficulties and their parents/guardians. A draft action plan for early interventions in Međimurje County was prepared.</p> <p>Number of early development specialists in MURID: 2021: 14, 2022: 12, 2023: 10</p>					
	Number of mobile teams for the provision of health care					MH*
	<p>*The selected doctors have a contracted DTP procedure for the healthcare service of treatment in the patient's home. As independent activities in the field, the following operate: outpatient service with 872 nurses with a bachelor's degree and home health care with 1254 general care nurses. In addition, there is a number of physiotherapists determined by the network who also carry out physical therapy activities in the patient's home. For the time being, 44 mobile teams with palliative care specialists have been contracted to care for palliative patients regardless of age. There are also two mobile teams for mental health in the community at the Vrapče Psychiatry Clinic, which provide the mentioned activity to people over 18 years old.</p>					
Specific objective 4.2. Provided support for the protection of mental health of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion	Number of mobile teams to provide support in mental health care for children living in remote (rural) areas and on islands			Two (2) mobile teams for mental health in the community at the Vrapče Psychiatry Clinic, which provide the above activity		CIPH

				to people over 18 years of age		
Total number of training participants - experts who work with children to protect children's mental health at trainings in the field of children's mental health protection	-	2022: 3836	2023: 2.295	3.000	CIPH* (data related to the National Plan for Children's Rights)	
<p>*On the occasion of marking the European Mental Health Week in the premises of the Croatian Institute of Public Health on May 16, 2023, the Education for journalists and public employees was held on the topic of how to responsibly report on suicide; CIPH held the training "Strengthening parental competences in preserving mental health", both trainings were attended by 25 participants (on 11 October 2023).</p> <p>With the support of the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth and the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health and the Agency for Education, together with the City Office for Social Protection, Health, Veterans and Persons with Disabilities of the City of Zagreb, held in February and March 2023 in Rijeka, Osijek, Split and Zagreb expert meetings on mental health of children and young people for professional associates of schools. Renowned experts in this field presented with the aim of strengthening the capacity of professional associates of schools for early recognition and prevention of risks in the mental health of students, with around 300 participants in total.</p>						
Number of children of the Roma national minority included in programs for the prevention and protection of the mental health of children at risk						OHRRNM*
<p>*OHRRNM plans the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a systematic review of children belonging to the Roma national minority within the framework of the study Health image of Roma in the Republic of Croatia for 750 children; - preventive workshops on key health problems in Roma settlements for 150-300 children and - trainings related to combating discrimination in access to health services, which are planned with health workers (for 225-375 health workers). 						

3.1.5. GENERAL OBJECTIVE 5. ENSURED ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Objective of the National Action Plan	Indicator	Initial value	Values by years		Target value in 2030	Source
			2022	2023		
General Objective 5. ENSURED ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION	Household overcrowding rate at risk of poverty and social exclusion (below 60% of the median equivalent income, persons <18)	2021: 52,9% (HR) 42,1% (EU)	51,2% (HR) 41,5% (EU)	-	-	Eurostat CBS
	Percentage of children living in housing with a leaky roof, damp walls, floors or foundations, or rotten window frames or floors	2020: 8,1%	-	-	-	Eurostat CBS
	Rate of severe housing deprivation - children at risk of poverty and social exclusion (below 60% of median equivalent income, persons <18)	2020: 10,5%	-	-	-	Eurostat CBS
Specific objective 5.1. Ensured adequate housing for families with children at risk of poverty	Housing cost overburden rate, population <18, below 60% median equivalent income	2021: 14,3%	2022: 13,7%	-	-	Eurostat CBS
	Number of households and housing units with children who are beneficiaries of activities aimed at improving living conditions		2022: 522 families with children			OHRRNM*
*During 2022, the OHRRNM determined through an administrative check 522 families with children whose requests met the criteria and who exercised the right based on the Annual Program for the Improvement of Living Conditions of Members of the Roma National Minority, whose holder is the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property. The list of						

	persons/households who exercised the right to OHRRNM was submitted to the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property, which was responsible for implementation until the exhaustion of the State Budget funds secured in the position of the competent Ministry. Since the funds provided during 2022 were not sufficient to meet the requirements of all persons/households who met the criteria, the implementation of the Annual Program from 2022 was shifted to 2023. In 2022, 414 families exercised their right, while in 2023, 492 families exercised their right.					
Specific objective 5.2. Provided support for the protection of mental health of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion	Number of children/youth who have left care and are using organized housing with occasional support		2022: 36	2023: 34	-	MLPFSP
	Number of children/young people who had an active right (Decision) to recognize the accommodation service, and who, after the termination of the said decision, were recognized the right to the service of organized housing with occasional support		2022: 2628	2023: 3111	-	MLPFSP*
	Number of children/young people who had an active right (Decision) to recognize the service of placement in a foster family, and who, after the termination of the aforementioned decision, were recognized the right to the service of organized housing with occasional support		2022: 2473	2023: 2444	-	MLPFSP*
	Share of children/young people who use social housing services when leaving care					MLPFSP*

	Share of young people who leave care and use compensation for housing costs					MLPFSP*
*Amendments to the Social Welfare Act are underway, which will prescribe the social housing service for children/young people leaving care and the right to compensation for housing costs for young people leaving care. Adoption of the Act is planned for 2025, after which, in accordance with the changes, it will be possible to monitor the number of young people.						

3.1.6. GENERAL OBJECTIVE 6. IMPROVED AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY OF CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Objective of the National Action Plan	Indicator	Initial value	Values by years		Target value in 2030	Source
			2022	2023		
General Objective 6. IMPROVED AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY OF CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION	At-risk-of-poverty rate for children 0-17 years	<u>2021</u> 17,1%	<u>2022</u> 16%	-	14,8%*	CBS
				* In accordance with the set objective from the National Plan for the fight against poverty and social exclusion for the period from 2021-2027		
	Number of children in residential alternative care (accommodation with service providers and organized housing with comprehensive support)	<u>2020</u> 1260	<u>2021</u> 1453	<u>2022</u> 1279	-	MLPFSP
	Number of children in family alternative care (foster care and organized housing with occasional support)	<u>2020</u> 2271	<u>2021</u> 2041	<u>2022</u> 2116	-	MLPFSP
	Share of young people who are released from care or from the execution of a certain measure who are users of social mentoring services in relation to the total number of young people who are released from care or from the execution of a measure	-	-	7	21	MLPFSP*

	<p>*The social mentoring service is being established and the recruitment of social mentors is underway at the Croatian Institute for Social Work. It is planned to improve the monitoring of user data through the SocSkrb application from the second half of 2024, therefore this number of young people cannot be monitored at the moment. There is currently the possibility of monitoring data on users whose right to accommodation or organized housing ends, but data on the category of young people after the implementation of educational measures is not monitored.</p> <p>So far, not a single social mentoring service has been provided to young people whose right to accommodation or organized housing ends.</p>												
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="501 480 1016 651">Number of families of the Roma national minority with children who use the services of community service centers</td> <td data-bbox="1016 480 1227 651">0</td> <td data-bbox="1227 480 1435 651">n/a</td> <td data-bbox="1435 480 1644 651">n/a</td> <td data-bbox="1644 480 1839 651">2450</td> <td data-bbox="1839 480 2047 651">OHRRNM</td> </tr> </table>	Number of families of the Roma national minority with children who use the services of community service centers	0	n/a	n/a	2450	OHRRNM						
Number of families of the Roma national minority with children who use the services of community service centers	0	n/a	n/a	2450	OHRRNM								
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improvement of interdepartmental cooperation has been prepared, based on which a working group consisting of experts from practice, faculties and representatives of the ministry will draft a Protocol on interdepartmental cooperation in protecting the well-being of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2023, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy established a working group for drafting the Protocol, and the first meeting was held. Also, in 2023, the draft proposal of the Protocol on dealing with cases of violence among children and young people was prepared, which was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in April 2024..

**The Ministry of Health is working on the adoption of the National Strategic Framework for Early Intervention in Childhood with the technical support of UNICEF, and in accordance with the measure from the National Health Development Plan for the period from 2021 to 2027, an Operational Plan for the Integration of Health and Social Care will be drawn up by the end of the year, in part of which integrated services in the community could be defined in accordance with the needs of children at risk and their families.

Number of local and regional self-government units in which an effective system of social planning has been established

MLPFSP*

*By 2024, 7 counties had drawn up a social plan that lasted from 2014 to 2020, two counties passed the Decision on extending the implementation of the social plan for 2021, 2022 and 2023, 2 counties have a plan that is still valid, 10 counties integrated the social plan into the strategic document County Development Plan for the period 2022 to 2027.

- In accordance with the Law on Social Welfare (Official Gazette, No. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23 and 156/23), Article 241, the social plan is drawn up in accordance with the unique methodology for assessing needs prescribed by the rulebook brought by the minister.

- The Rulebook on a unified methodology for assessing needs (Official Gazette, No. 90/23) was adopted on 2 August 2023. The Ordinance stipulates that social plan for the area of the local and regional self-government unit, and the City of Zagreb, will be adopted for a period of three years.

- In order to provide support to local and regional self-government units, and the City of Zagreb in the development of social plans within the framework of the European Social Fund plus the Effective Human Resources Program 2021-2027. The call for submission of project proposals for the development of county social plans is open.

- The call for submission of project proposals Development of county social plans is open from 13 December 2023 (applications from 22 December 2023) to 28 June 2024. The deadline for the implementation of project proposals is from 6 to 12 months. The objective of the Call is to contribute to increasing the availability and balanced regional development of social services in the Republic of Croatia through the support of local and regional self-government units in the creation of social plans and to empower experts in social planning, implementation and monitoring of social plans.

<p>- By the end of 2024, draft proposals for social plans for the period 2024-2026 are expected. in accordance with the applicable legal regulations. Each plan should be accompanied by action plans on an annual level and evaluation reports (annual and three-year) which should be special documents on the basis of which future action and social plans are drawn up.</p> <p>- In 2025 and 2026, plans will be monitored and evaluated on an annual and three-year level, and progress in the form of introducing new services will be recorded annually, while after three years a thorough evaluation of goals will be carried out, which becomes the basis for creating a new social plan.</p>					
Existence of a comprehensive model of support for children whose parents are in prison, in accordance with the Recommendation of the Council of Europe concerning children with imprisoned parents		2022: 645 595 fathers, 50 mothers			MJADT* MLPFSP
<p>*In order to implement the measure on the development of a comprehensive model of support for children whose parents are in prison in accordance with the Recommendation of the Council of Europe concerning children with imprisoned parents, MJADT collects part of the requested data for the purposes of preparing the Annual Report on the condition and work of penitentiaries, prisons and correctional institutions, while for the year 2023 are not yet available. Therefore, in relation to the indicators, we submit data for the year 2022, during which 645 prisoners (595 fathers and 50 mothers) had contact with their children while serving prison sentences, juvenile prisons and the educational measure of referral to an educational institution, and during which a total of 4874 visits by children to their parents who are serving prison terms (4590 visits to fathers, 284 visits to mothers). Furthermore, a total of 130 prisoners and minors were included in the program to improve parental competences during 2022.</p>					
Existence of standardized differentiated programs and treatment interventions for children depending on the specific difficulties of the children					MLPFSP*
<p>*Ministry of Labour, the Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation, the UNICEF Office for Croatia and the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation of the University of Zagreb implement a program called: "ISKORAK" - Program for improving assessment and interventions for children and youth with behavioural problems. The program is aimed at children and young people with behavioural problems in social welfare and justice institutions. The goals and activities of the ISKORAK Program complement and build on the efforts of the Government</p>					

	<p>of the Republic of Croatia aimed at further improving services in the social welfare and justice system and represent an additional contribution to the processes of preventing institutionalization, deinstitutionalization and transformation of institutions, in this case those for children and youth with behavioural problems. The program is implemented with the professional and financial support of UNICEF, while the expert team from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation is responsible for the creation and implementation of the program, with the participation, monitoring and support of the Ministry of Labour, the Pension System, Family and Social Policy and the Ministry of Justice. administration and digital transformation. One of the key activities of the Iskorak Program is: Development and testing of two specialized interventions (for girls and intensive PUP), along with test application and training of experts in educational institutions for their application. One of the expected results is: Strengthened capacities of experts in organizations/institutions of social welfare and justice, through improvement of knowledge and skills of experts/employees of institutions for carrying out standardized assessment and providing comprehensive care and specialized interventions with specific groups of children/youth. (More on: https://skrb.hr/iskorak/)</p>				
	<p>Share of children whose parents and other family members are covered by professional work for the duration of the educational measure/while the child is in conflict with the law separated from the family in relation to the total number of these children</p>				<p>MJADT*</p>
<p>*In 2023, the number of developed individual treatment programs in correctional institutions is 81, and the same number of juveniles in conflict with the law actively involved in creating, reviewing and supplementing their individual treatment programs. In 2023, 4 officers were included in the training for the application of the new assessment instrument developed as part of the ISKORAK Program ("Questionnaire on the behaviour of children and young people"). Also, through two educational seminars, in September and November 2023, training on specialized approaches in interventions for children and youth with behavioural problems was conducted, in which 3 officials of educational institutes were involved..</p>					
	<p>Share of children whose parents are in prison who have access to comprehensive support services in relation to the total number of children whose parents are in prison</p>				<p>MLPFSP* MJADT</p>

*In order to implement comprehensive support services for children whose parents are in prison, it is necessary to establish a data exchange system between the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation and the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy. One of the activities that precedes the establishment of cooperation is the adoption of the Protocol on interdepartmental cooperation in the protection of the well-being of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. For the same purpose, in 2024/2025, it is planned to conclude a Cooperation agreement related to the protection and integrated access to children whose parents are in prison, after which the systematic provision of comprehensive support services to children whose parents are in prison will begin, and therefore the monitoring of the aforementioned data.

Share of children who, after a measure was imposed to their parents in order to protect the personal rights and well-being of the child, were granted the right to accommodation, placement in a foster family or organized housing in the number of children whose parents were ordered to take measures to protect personal rights and well-being of a child (Measure of professional assistance and support in the provision of child care, Measure of intensive professional assistance and supervision over the provision of child care; Warning of errors and omissions in the provision of child care; Urgent measure of separation and placement of a child outside the family)

2022:
5,74%
(total 493
children)

2023:
6,57%
(total 561
children)

MLPFSP

	Number of children whose parents are covered by the measure of family legal protection		2022: 8584	2023: 8536		MLPFSP
	The number of children who remained in the family after the implementation of the measure compared to the number of children who did not		2022: 8091	2023: 7975		MLPFSP
Specific objective 6.2. An expanded network of foster care services in the Republic of Croatia, ensuring a spatially evenly spread network, and ensuring quality support for foster parents in the care of children	Alternative care policy for children aligned with the UN Guidelines for alternative care for children from 2009 (scale 1-5)					MLPFSP*
	*Since the family is the natural environment for the growth, well-being and protection of children, efforts are made in the Republic of Croatia to enable the child to stay in the family or return to the care of the parents, of course when this is appropriate, or placement with other members of the immediate family. For children without adequate parental care or without parental care, the state ensures life in an environment that supports her/him, protects his rights, provides adequate alternative care, and decisions related to the child are based on the best interests of the child. In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the child's right to be consulted and to have his opinion properly taken into account in accordance with his developmental abilities and based on his access to all necessary information, in accordance with age and maturity, is respected. In the Republic of Croatia, comprehensive child welfare and protection policies are developed and implemented within the framework of the overall policy of social and human development, paying attention to the improvement of existing alternative care services, reflecting the principles contained in the UN Guidelines for Alternative Care for Children from 2009. When making a decision that regarding alternative care, it is taken into account that the child is placed as close as possible to his usual place of residence, in order to facilitate contact and potential reintegration with the family, and so as not to disrupt the child's educational and social life.					
	Number of foster parents for children	2021: 1294	2022: 1260	2023: 1095		MLPFSP
	The existence and application of legal regulations that enable foster parents					MLPFSP*

to receive leave for the adaptation of a child to foster care					
<p>*The regulation governing maternity and parental benefits, which entered into force on 1 January 2023, enables the use of the right to parental leave. An employed and self-employed foster parent for a child up to the age of seven has the right to the aforementioned leave for a continuous period of six months. In case of simultaneous accommodation of two or more children or a child with developmental difficulties, the foster care leave is extended by 60 days. While exercising the right to parental leave, the foster parent has rights from the mandatory pension insurance and the right to paid contributions according to special regulations. Also, the regulation regulating the amount of remuneration for the work of a foster parent makes it possible for a traditional foster parent to obtain an increase in the remuneration for the work of a foster parent by the amount of 600% of the base, i.e. by the amount of 480 euros, during the use of the right to foster care leave.</p>					
Existence and application of a standardized program of basic and additional training of foster parents for children					MLPFSP*
<p>*The Ordinance on the method and duration of training and additional training for foster parents prescribes the method and duration of training and additional training for foster parents, including the elements that training for foster parents and additional training must contain.</p> <p>Within the framework of the program "For a stronger family" launched by the Ministry of Labour, the Pension System, Family and Social Policy and UNICEF, the material for the basic and additional training of foster parents has been standardized, which contains a manual with the educational content necessary for the implementation of education and associated materials (video materials, PowerPoint presentations with each workshop, a manual for foster parents). The materials are available in the program owned by the Ministry (SocSkrb application).</p> <p>After the development of educational materials, twenty experts from the social welfare system, from different parts of the Republic of Croatia, were trained during the implementation of the Program to become trainers of experts from the social welfare system who will be in charge of conducting basic and additional training of foster parents. The experts were selected based on the Call for Applications, which contained certain selection criteria. The training lasted three days and was aimed at introducing the trainers to the educational materials and ways of using them, but also to collect feedback in order to improve and adapt the designed materials. After the training, the trainers conducted pilot trainings.</p>					
Existence and application of an effective framework of quality					MLPFSP*

	standards and monitoring of foster care for children					
	*The comprehensive goal of the project Support for the improvement of social services in Croatia, which was implemented during 2022 and 2023, refers to the reduction of territorial differences in the provision of social services in the Republic of Croatia and the comprehensive improvement of service provision, by providing support for the development of a new methodology for assessing needs in the area of social services. As part of the aforementioned Project, a revision of the methodology for the development of quality standards in the field of foster care was carried out, and the result was improved quality standards of foster care for children. Education on new quality standards was conducted, and in the coming period, the development of a monitoring framework and reporting tools is planned.					
Specific objective 6.3. Improved existing and developed new social support services for children leaving care	Number of counties in which the social service of social mentoring is available to young people whose right to accommodation or organized housing ends					MLPFSP*
	*The social mentoring service is being established and the recruitment of social mentors is underway at the Croatian Institute for Social Work. Practically, social mentoring services can be available in all counties, i.e. regional offices where social mentors are employed. So far, not a single social mentoring service has been provided to young people whose right to accommodation or organized housing ends. It is planned to improve the monitoring of user data through the SocSkrb application from the second half of 2024.					
	Existence of a comprehensive framework for monitoring poverty and social exclusion of children - comprehensive diagnosis of poverty and social exclusion					MLPFSP*
	*In accordance with the agreement between the World Bank and the European Commission, funds were provided from the Instrument for Technical Support for the implementation of the measure provided for in the National Plan for the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period from 2021 to 2027, whose holder is the Ministry of Labour, the Pension System, Families and social policies. It is about making a comprehensive diagnosis of poverty, which will apply to all vulnerable groups, especially children, and will enable equal access to quality services for children in vulnerable situations, the problem of homelessness, limited access to basic services and infrastructure, and the specific needs of vulnerable people of all ages, which					

	<p>is one of the conditions that enable the implementation of EU funds for the period from 2021 to 2027, which the European Commission has placed in front of the Republic of Croatia. This comprehensive diagnosis of poverty and social exclusion is also related to the implementation of measures from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2027 aimed at adequacy and transparency, i.e. consolidation of social benefits. It also addresses the EU Council recommendation for the European Semester, given that evidence-based poverty mapping enables better addressing of social benefits for the purpose of reducing poverty and social exclusion.</p>					
<p>Specific objective 6.4. Improving the system for collecting and monitoring data on poverty and social exclusion</p>	<p>Availability of regularly updated analysis of the situation of children's rights and well-being from national sources (scale 1-5)</p>	<p>2,5</p>			<p>4</p>	<p>MLPFSP*</p>
	<p>*The existing data infrastructure used to monitor indicators of poverty and social exclusion and to monitor the progress of the implementation of the social policy program for the Republic of Croatia is currently not sufficiently developed. Namely, the data system lacks standardization of data collection and has limited interoperability of existing administrative databases and IT systems. Also, there is currently no comprehensive system for monitoring the implementation of social policy measures determined by national strategic plans for the fight against poverty and social exclusion. This consequently leads to the fact that the management of anti-poverty policies involves a wide range of stakeholders and there is limited coordination among them, while responsibilities are sometimes fragmented or overlap. Therefore, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy will work on the development of the methodology for the poverty and social exclusion monitoring system and the methodology for the social policy monitoring system to monitor the progress of implementation. Through two project components, geo-reference databases for monitoring poverty and social exclusion indicators, a list of stakeholders, a proposal for bilateral legal agreements between this ministry and relevant institutions, an institutional and administrative structure of the implementation unit, a standardized protocol and guidelines for data analysis and reporting will be developed.</p>					

4. INDICATORS, OBJECTIVES AND MONITORING

Indicators in the monitoring framework are defined at the level of general and specific objectives, as shown in the table in the previous chapter. All authorities responsible for the implementation of measures monitor their implementation through the coordinated work of the Committee. The implementation of measures contributes to the achievement of objectives and goals, which facilitates the monitoring of indicators. Trends are monitored and progress is recorded over a certain period of time, and the effects are reflected in the improvement of the general situation for children from the target groups, which is the result of interdepartmental cooperation. Furthermore, the indicators at the level of specific objectives refer to the strengthening of systems, institutions and individuals. In accordance with the EU Council recommendation establishing a European child guarantee, the National Action Plan is a document open to possible changes and additions to existing measures during the entire period of its implementation, and for the purpose of adapting measures and activities to target groups of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and as such is open to possible new measures that will improve its implementation, regardless of the mechanisms and set deadlines. With regard to the possibility of changes and additions, in addition to predetermined target values, reporting on past, current and planned related activities is foreseen. Thus, the target values are planned in accordance with the availability of new relevant data and trends in the reporting intervals, and this approach is essential in order to provide the data necessary for monitoring in a timely manner and to create new activities related to evaluation.

Regarding the plans for further development of the national monitoring framework, with the Technical Support Instrument, work will continue to develop and harmonize a sustainable system for policy development, planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Work will be done on the development of a framework and methodological guide for monitoring indicators, coordination procedures and responsibilities, tools and time frames, which will be available to all competent authorities involved in implementation. Since the implementation of the National Action Plan requires coordinated interdepartmental efforts, Technical Support Instrument support will contribute to solving the analysed deficiencies expressed in the In-depth analysis. The shortcomings relate in particular to the difficulties in defining indicators and monitoring frameworks, data exchange and evaluation possibilities, which is necessary for the future adjustment of measures from the National Action Plan. Through support from the Technical Support Instrument, efforts will be made to strengthen interdepartmental cooperation and more active involvement of local and regional self-government units, but also end users - children and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

As the national action plans for the implementation of the European child guarantee in the member states were adopted in different time periods from 2022 to 2023, for the purpose of further coordination, monitoring of common indicators at the EU level, with additional monitoring of indicators related to key measures and activities of each of countries of the EU, and with regard to monitoring progress and providing additional funds for implementation, the

member states are obliged to submit the first biennial report to the European Commission from the date of adoption of the EU Council Recommendation, for the years 2022 and 2023, regardless of the date of adoption of the national document, and March 2024 is planned.

5. FINANCING

With the aim of improving the living conditions of the members of the Roma national minority, in 2022 and 2023, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities performed professional and administrative tasks related to the Annual Program for housing and improving the living conditions of the members of the Roma national minority (in 2022 914 decisions were made, of which 263 were for the allocation of different household appliances, 411 decisions were made for the allocation of carpentry, 163 decisions were made for the furnishing of the bathroom, while 77 decisions were made for the furnishing the floors), which is part of the Office's regular activities (financial indicator A681000 Administration and management). In addition to the above, the Office worked on the programming of EU projects, in accordance with the available human capacities, which are also part of regular activities, and the financial indicator in that part is exclusively related to A681000 Administration and management.

State Budget Activity - Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities	Funds spent in 2022 i 2023
A681000 Administration and management	Regular funds

In order to achieve the specific objective 2.1. *"Ensured affordable and free primary and secondary school education for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion"*, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth during the implementation of the measure: 2.1.2. *"Ensure financial support for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the primary and secondary school system"*, provided for the minimum provision of school supplies for students belonging to the Roma national minority. Namely, due to poverty and living in difficult conditions, often in families with unemployed parents, children of primary school age belonging to the Roma national minority do not have school supplies that ensure the smooth or easy fulfilment of school obligations. The above is confirmed by the schools attended by such students, mostly from isolated Roma settlements. The implementation of the activity ensures the funds allocated to the elementary school, which would provide the students involved with the necessary equipment and supplies. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth provided funds for didactic material and equipment to educational institutions with a large number of students belonging to the Roma national minority, in order to provide better educational conditions for all students with such targeted interventions. Ensuring quality and inclusive education for all further reduces social, economic and cultural inequalities.

State Budget Activity - Ministry of Science, Education and Youth	Funds spent in 2022 i 2023
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A767015 – Implementation of the Roma inclusion program	25.736,14 EUR
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It is also reported on the implementation of measures within the framework of specific objective 2.2. "Promoting inclusive educational practice and building a culture of diversity", and particularly measure 2.2.4. "Ensuring a greater number of out-of-school activities with greater coverage of school children and youth at risk of poverty and social exclusion of the Roma national minority, and following modern learning methods and the needs of children and youth of the Roma national minority". The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth ensures school daycare for members of the Roma national minority. The above is extremely important as a prerequisite for the successful completion of elementary school education for students of the Roma national minority, and an increase in the number of students involved in daycare is visible. With the implementation of daycare and extracurricular classes, significant progress of children was achieved in the area of language learning, acquisition of hygiene habits and children's socialization. The measure includes the implementation of activities to include students of the Roma national minority in daycare, extracurricular classes, providing additional assistance in learning the Croatian language, and including students in additional activities aimed at educational and social integration. Also, for students displaced from Ukraine during the reporting period, additional support was provided, which includes provision of daycare in elementary school, extracurricular classes, additional materials and equipment, accommodation in a student dormitory, etc.

State Budget Activity - Ministry of Science, Education and Youth	Funds spent in 2022 i 2023
A767015 – Implementation of the Roma inclusion program	737.377,21 EUR
A579072 – Support for students displaced from Ukraine	195.354,93 EUR

The Ministry of Health points out that funds have been secured from regular funds for the year 2024 for the implementation of measures in General Objective 3. "Ensured access to quality nutrition for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion", namely measure 3.1.1. to 3.1.7, which are related to the National Program for the Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding for the period from 2024 to 2027. Furthermore, for measures 3.2.1., 3.2.2. and 3.3.3., which are held by CIHI, the used financial resources are shown in the table.

State Budget Activity - Ministry of Health	Funds spent in 2022 i 2023
A884001 CIPH - State Budget - National program Living healthy (Measure 3.2.1.)	227.835,00 EUR
A884001 CIPH - State Budget - National program Living healthy (Measure 3.2.2.)	200.000,00 EUR
A884001 CIPH - State Budget - National program Living healthy (Measure 3.2.2.)	200.000,00 EUR

The Ministry of Health additionally points out that the National Strategic Plan for early intervention in childhood is being developed, which is important for measure 4.1.1. *"Establishment of an integrated system of early intervention for children with developmental difficulties or at risk for developmental deviations (0-5 years) and their families, due to biological risks and environmental and social risks, health, social and educational system and development of the service 'Team for early development in the community' with the aim of locating, early detection and support of children with developmental risk/deviation/difficulties in isolated (Roma communities) and rural communities"*, and funds will be provided accordingly.

As for further progress within General Objective 4. *"Ensured access to health services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion"*, and this is related to the implementation of measure 4.1.2. *"Improving the primary health care system for the provision of quality and integrated health care services in the home and local community, with an emphasis on children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and who live in remote (islands), rural and poorly developed areas"*, in April 2024 the Public Health Service Network (Official Gazette 49/2024) was adopted, which was planned for 2023, and which strengthened the network of pediatricians and primary care physicians. Funds are secured for 2024.

Additionally, in the description of the progress within the Specific objective 4.2. *"Ensured support for the protection of the mental health of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion"* related to measure 4.2.1. *"Adopt an Action Plan for the protection of the mental health of children and young people, within which special attention will be focused on children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and the prevention of violence among children and young people"*, it is pointed out that the preparation of the Action Plan for the protection of the mental health of children and young people is underway (in accordance with the Strategic Framework for the Development of Mental Health until 2030), while in the description of progress related to measure 4.2.2. *"Establishment of beds for child and adolescent psychiatry in the network of the public health service and increasing the capacity of ambulatory treatment and the availability of services of mental health specialists with the aim of increasing the quality of treatment of children with mental health problems"* highlights the importance of the Network of the Public Health Service, which determines the required number of health institutions, the required number of beds by activity, the largest possible number of health teams and private health workers with whom the CIHI concludes a contract on the implementation of health care. Furthermore, in December 2023, the Implementation Program for the Development of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in Hospital Health Care in the Republic of Croatia for the period 2023-2024 was adopted, and the planned deadline for the implementation of the set measures is 2024.

Regarding the progress in the implementation of measures under Specific Objective 6.1. *"Developed a comprehensive and integrated system of social services (universal, selective and indicated) in the community in accordance with the needs of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families"*, the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation reports that the implementation of measure 6.1.10. *"Develop and implement a comprehensive model of support for children whose parents are in prison in accordance with the Recommendation of the Council of Europe concerning children with imprisoned parents"*, collect data as indicators necessary for the preparation of the Annual Report on the condition and work of penitentiaries, prisons and correctional institutions (on the number of visits to

parents who are serving a prison sentence). Also, efforts are being made to include persons deprived of their liberty who have minor children in the program of improving parental activities, which is part of regular activities.

Regarding measure 6.1.11. *"Ensure professional work with the family, i.e. parents and other family members for the duration of the educational measure and while the child is separated from the family in conflict with the law"*, it is stated that the indicator of the measure is the number of created individual treatment programs in educational institutes and the number of juveniles actively involved in creating, reviewing and supplementing individual treatment programs, and these activities also belong to regular activities. It is further stated that in 2023, 4 officials were included in the training for the application of the new assessment instrument developed as part of the ISKORAK Program ("Questionnaire on the behavior of children and young people"). Through two educational seminars, held in September and November 2023, education was provided on specialized approaches in interventions for children and youth with behavioural problems, in which 3 officials of educational institutes were involved. In order to implement the activities of the Program, UNICEF provided financial resources.

In conclusion, the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation, the Directorate for the Prison System and Probation had no additional costs in 2022 and 2023 for the implementation of measures and activities from the National Action Plan.

Regarding the measures and activities for the achievement of General Objective 6. *"Improved availability of social services in the community aimed at children at risk of poverty and social exclusion"*, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy points out that the increase in the availability of social services is carried out in accordance with the Action Plan for development of social services for the period from 2021 to 2024, through ensuring a regionally more even distribution of non-institutional services, reducing the number of new users entering institutional care while ensuring support services in the community and increasing the number of foster families, especially in relation to children of the youngest age. With the aim of increasing the scope of the provision of non-institutional services, in 2023 a national call for applications for three-year programs of civil society organizations entitled *"Development and expansion of the network of social services for the period 2023 to 2025"* was published, aimed at children with developmental disabilities, family support and the promotion and protection of children's rights, support for adoptive parents and the development of foster care, provision of counselling and accommodation services for women and children victims of domestic violence.

State Budget Activity - Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy	Funds spent in 2022 i 2023
A734189 Associations in social care	575.000,00 EUR

For the implementation of measures within the framework of the Specific objective: *"Prevention and reduction of child poverty and social exclusion"* of the National Plan for the fight against poverty and social exclusion for the period from 2021 to 2027, EUR 13,454,292.06 was spent in 2023, according to Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the fight against poverty and social exclusion for 2023.

State Budget Activity - Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy	Funds spent in 2022 i 2023
T792013 Operational program for food and basic material assistance for the period 2014-2020 (FEAD); A578004 Preschool upbringing and education of children with developmental disabilities (co-financing); A579003 Education of students with developmental disabilities; A580004 Standard of students with special needs; A578045 Co-financing of teaching materials and equipment for primary and secondary school students; A 558043 One-time rights from the law and other benefits to Croatian veterans from the Homeland War; A583008 Civilian invalids from the Homeland War and A734189 Association in social welfare account	13.454.292,06 EUR

Prevention and reduction of child poverty, in accordance with the Action Plan to fight poverty and social exclusion, is carried out through measures aimed at increasing the availability of education and training for marginalized and vulnerable groups, which are in a worse socioeconomic position, as well as the improvement and availability of free programs and the improvement of integrated access care for children, thereby contributing to the realization of the right to quality upbringing and education from an early age and ensuring quality standards and resources to support children exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Also, by improving the availability of free meals to children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which represents added value to national programs, it contributes to alleviating the worst forms of child poverty.

In June 2023, the EU project "Support for the improvement of social services in Croatia" ended, within the framework of which a unique methodology for assessing needs was developed. After the adoption of the Rulebook on a unified methodology for assessing needs in August 2023, the ESF+ Call "Development of county social plans" was published in December 2023. As part of this Call, which was open until the end of June 2024, the total amount of EUR 1,500,000.00 is financed to support counties in the creation of county social plans based on a unique methodological approach.

State Budget Activity - Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy	Funds spent in 2022 i 2023
T877004 Program Effective human resources 2021-2027, Functional area 1090	Total according to the Decisions MLPFSP until 8 July 2024: 1.095.576,63 EUR, of which is the grant 1.007.226,92 EUR

6. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

In order to create better prerequisites for access to a healthy and balanced diet, especially in families with low incomes, the Government of the Republic of Croatia provided school meals for children at risk of poverty in 2021 and 2022 (school years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023) worth about 3.6 million euros for each school year. Through the contracted projects, in those two school years, free school meals were provided for 27,493 children, in 410 schools through securing the right to free school meals.

In accordance with the General Objective in the National Action Plan: Ensured access to quality nutrition for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, the Government of the Republic of Croatia decided to continue the implementation of financing or co-financing program for school meals, for all primary school students. Estimated cost of meals for the 2023/2024 school year per student is EUR 1.33 per day, and for students included in the experimental full-day school program, the meal is co-financed with 2 EUR per day. The estimated total cost for the implementation of this measure for the specified school year is EUR 29 million for the first semester (from September to December 2023) and EUR 40.2 million for the rest of the school year (from January to June 2024).

Within the aforementioned Pilot program, program activities were carried out in close cooperation with 11 implementing partners, public institutions and non-governmental associations, Međimurje County, the City of Čakovec and the municipalities of Mala Subotica, Nedelišće, Orehovica, Podturen and Pribislavec. Within the program, 3 models of services and interventions have been developed and implemented, with a focus on the early identification of children at risk and their families living in particularly deprived environments, in order to realize their potential and to reduce the risks to the growth and development of children that accompany poverty, and social exclusion:

1. Integrated child protection and family support services

This service model focused on integrated child protection and family support services, early identification of children at risk and their families living in unsafe and deprived environments, and promoting accessible, high quality, timely and appropriate family support and child protection interventions, which include services in communities with the greatest risk of poverty and social exclusion.

2. Quality preschool education

This service model was aimed at creating conditions so that all disadvantaged children between the ages of 3 and 6 have effective access to early and preschool education, in order to prevent social exclusion and early school leaving, through support for kindergartens near vulnerable community and 3 play hubs with toy libraries.

3. Integrated and coordinated early intervention services

The goal of this model is to improve access to integrated services for children aged 0 to 7 years at risk of developmental delays or disabilities and their families to early

intervention services. This includes the provision of coordinated and integrated quality early childhood intervention services, strengthened knowledge and skills of health, education and social care professionals, parenting support and improved data collection. Community-based early intervention teams are responsible for the early assessment and follow-up of children at risk of developmental delays or disabilities.

During the implementation of the Pilot Program in Međimurje County, services were provided for more than 5,350 children and 2,400 parents, capacities were strengthened and education was carried out with 870 experts and students of the social welfare, education and health systems with the aim of providing integrated services aligned with the needs of each individual child and families. This Pilot program provides for the provision of infrastructure in the form of the establishment of Centers for children and families/resource centers as place to provide integrated services and activities of experts from various sectors (social care, health, education, local communities, non-governmental organizations) in the community. As part of the Pilot program, four resource centers for children and families were built and equipped, and one was adapted and equipped, as well as four play hubs. The centers will ensure that all tested services for children and families at risk are provided in such a way that different sectors and other social service providers carry out their activities in a separate place of work. Considering the high risks of poverty, social exclusion and neglect of children, in 2023 the Center for the provision of services in the Međimurje community was established in Čakovec in Međimurje County, which, among other things, aims to expand the network of social services for children and young people at risk from poverty and social exclusion. This center will expand the spectrum of services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion for the purpose of integrated provision of services, especially with an emphasis on children of the Roma national minority. In its operation, the center uses infrastructure resources developed within the framework of the Pilot program. Furthermore, four facilities were built and equipped - resource centers in Roma settlements (Piškorovec, Podturen, Parag) or in their immediate vicinity (Orehovica) and one existing area (Pribislavec) was equipped. The mentioned facilities are owned by the municipalities, which transferred them to the Center for the provision of services in the Međimurje community for use for the purposes of performing its registered activity - the provision of social welfare services for children. Also, the establishment of centers for the provision of services in the community, whose founder will be the Republic of Croatia, is also underway in other counties in the Republic of Croatia. The results of the Pilot program are an example of good practice and strategic turn of the line ministries towards the targeted and evidence-based development of services in the community in accordance with the recommendations and priorities of the European Commission.

Related to encouraging the development of foster care and increasing the number of foster families for children within the framework of Specific objective 6.2. *"Expanded network of foster care services in the Republic of Croatia, ensuring a spatially evenly spread network, and ensuring quality support for foster parents in child care"*, Decision on the base for calculating the amount of compensation for the work of foster parents and the amount of provision for the

year 2023 of the Government of the Republic of Croatia²², the base was increased from 66.36 euros to 70 euros. The allowance for the foster parents' work is increased by the amount of 600% of the base for a child for whom the foster parent has exercised the right to foster care leave, for the time that the right to foster care leave lasts. With the aim of preventing the separation of children from their own families and ensuring support for children and families, so that family support services in the community are used as a priority, and accommodation is applied in cases of emergency measures for the separation of a child from a family where the child's health and safety are at risk, in 2023 there were 38 family associates in state homes for children educated and employed. Family associates will be employed in all counties with the aim of ensuring regional uniformity.

At the end of 2022, 42 experts working in family centers were trained with the aim of establishing a new social service of psychosocial treatment for the prevention of violent behaviour, and in 2023 this service was provided to 13 users.

In 2023, activities to improve the implementation of family legal protection measures (education and licensing of family outreach workers) were continued in order to improve the knowledge and skills of leaders of family outreach workers, and in 2023 total of 426 experts were trained for the implementation of family legal protection measures, i.e. so far a total of them 576 (of which 150 experts in 2022). Also, with the aim of raising the quality of the implementation of the measure of intensive professional assistance and supervision over the provision of child care, 34 leaders of intensive care and support measures were employed in state children's homes.

²² Decision on the basis for calculating the amount of compensation for the work of foster parents and the amount of maintenance for the year 2023, Official Gazette no.133/2022

7. CONCLUSION

The National Action Plan was adopted in July 2023, therefore it was possible to present quantitatively indicators in some measures, when monitoring the implementation, while sometimes the implementation was presented descriptively, using qualitative indicators. The conclusions and recommendations from the previously prepared in-depth analysis practically showed that the National Action Plan complements the already adopted acts of strategic planning, which show the effort of the Government of the Republic of Croatia to reduce the number of children living at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2030. The analysis and creation of the National Action Plan was preceded by the implementation of the Pilot Program, which was carried out in the Međimurje County, on the basis of which the network of social services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion continued to expand.

The result of the in-depth analysis is the identification of vulnerable groups of children and children in need, and the target groups towards which the measures are directed are defined. The conclusion is that especially vulnerable groups are children from families of beneficiaries who use benefits in the social welfare system, and who cannot meet basic life needs with family income or assets. In order to reduce inequality among children, starting in 2023, the state budget will finance one free meal for each student in primary schools in Croatia.

The National Action Plan consolidates the measures through the set objectives, and the need for further work on establishing the framework for monitoring the implementation, i.e. defining the indicators, is recognized. As it was pointed out, it is a document that will be continuously updated during implementation, in order to achieve reforms in all relevant systems, with the aim of combating poverty and social exclusion of children, and which will enable the evaluation process of the results of implemented measures and activities in the established period.

8. ABBREVIATIONS

CBS – Croatian (State) Bureau of Statistics

CHISC – Central health information system of the Republic of Croatia

CIHI – Croatian Institute for Health Insurance

CIPH – Croatian Institute of Public Health

CPII – Croatian Pension Insurance Institute

DTP – diagnostic and therapeutic procedure

EU – European Union

LRSKU – local and regional self-government units

MH – Ministry of Health

MJADT – Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation

MLPFSP – Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy

MSPCSP – Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property

MSEY – Ministry of Science, Education and Youth

MTS – Ministry of Tourism and Sports

OHRNM – Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities

SocSkrb – digital application in the social welfare system

WHO – World Health Organization