

**NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE EU COUNCIL'S
RECOMMENDATIONS ON ESTABLISHING EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE**

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CONTENTS

PREAMBLE

INTRODUCTION

NATIONAL COORDINATOR

CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES WITH KEY MEASURES

FINANCIAL PLAN

APPENDICES

FRAMEWORK FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE HIERARCHY OF OBJECTIVES,
MEASURES AND ACTIVITIES WITH FINANCIAL INDICATORS

Abbreviation

ETTA – Education and Teacher Training Agency
ASHE – Agency for Science and Higher Education
CHEIS – Central Health Information System of the Republic of Croatia
CroCOSI – European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative
CSR – Country Specific Recommendations
t.v. – target value
SPS – State Pedagogical Standard of Preschool Education
Kg – Kindergarten
CBS – Croatian Bureau of Statistics
ECG – European Child Guarantee
EU – European Union
ESF+ - European Social Fund Plus
ESF – European Social Fund
EU-SILC – Eurostat methodology prescribed for the EU-SILC survey (*Statistics on Income and Living Conditions*)
FEAD – Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
HBSC – Health Behaviour in School-aged Children
CROQF – Croatian Qualifications Framework
CIPH – Croatian Institute of Public Health
CES – Croatian Employment Service
LGU – Local government unit
LRSGU – Local and regional self-government unit
JUPI – Equality, inclusion, participation, and integration of Roma
MINTS – Ministry of Tourism
MCM – Ministry of Culture and Media
MJPA – Ministry of Justice and Public Administration
MPPCSA - Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets
MH – Ministry of Health
MSE – Ministry of Science and Education
MRDEUF – Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds
MLPSFSP – Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy
National Action Plan - National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Council of the European Union on the Establishment of a European Child Guarantee
NCEEE – National Centre for External Evaluation of Education
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
NRRP – National Recovery and Resilience Plan
NRIP – National Roma Inclusion Plan
NRIS – National Roma Inclusion Strategy
ASTIPH – Andrija Štampar Teaching Institute of Public Health
Committee – National Action Plan Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPEHR – Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources

EHRP – Effective Human Resources Programme

i.v. – initial value

REACT-EU – European Regional Development Fund, Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe

RC – Republic of Croatia

ECEC – Early Childhood Education and Care

ŠeR – Školski e-Rudnik

CBSS – Community-based social services

CSODY – Central State Office for Demography and Youth

WHO – World Health Organisation

OHRNM – Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities

GMB – Guaranteed Minimum Benefit

PREAMBLE

The National Action Plan to implement the EU Council Recommendation on establishing a European Child Guarantee reaffirms the political commitment of the Republic of Croatia to achieving the objectives set by the European Union: breaking the cycle of poverty, combating the roots of inequality, and contributing to building a just, inclusive, and resilient society across the EU.

One of the key determinants of the social exclusion of children is unequal access to essential services crucial for their well-being and the development of their social, cognitive, and emotional skills. Children living in poverty or disadvantaged children are more likely to face barriers in accessing key services such as early childhood education and care, inclusive education, healthcare, healthy nutrition, and adequate housing. Intergenerational transmission of social exclusion threatens social cohesion across generations and leads to higher costs for the welfare state, thus undermining economic and social resilience. Improving equal access to key services for children in need is therefore an important way to strengthen efforts to prevent social exclusion and poverty.

Despite the accelerated efforts and development of services, programmes and interventions based on state and local budgets, as well as EU funds (ESF, ERDF, FEAD, etc.), further action is needed to ensure that every child at risk of poverty and social exclusion has access to free health care, free education, decent housing, adequate nutrition, and quality social services in the community regardless of where they live in Croatia.

The Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: the RC) is one of the countries where the pilot programme "Phase III -Testing the Child Guarantee in Croatia" is implemented with the aim of adequate access to integrated multidisciplinary, adequately funded services in the community. The Programme will contribute to strengthening the mechanism for monitoring the rights of the child and ensuring evidence and analysis crucial for the development of strategies related to combating poverty and social exclusion of children. This includes the National Action Plan to implement the EU Council's Recommendation on establishing the European Child Guarantee (hereinafter: the National Action Plan).

It is of utmost importance to enable access to services for children at greatest risk of poverty and social exclusion in the RC, and therefore these children in need are the focus of this National Action Plan.

In this regard, this comprehensive national implementation document, which consolidates key strategic documents of the Republic of Croatia, forms the basis for the implementation of measures and activities in key intervention areas, with an emphasis on coordinated intersectoral action and the provision of high-quality integrated services to children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy

INTRODUCTION

The European Union (hereinafter: the EU), together with its Member States, is fully committed to being a leader in implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including those relating to eradicating poverty, ensuring healthy lives, and promoting well-being, and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, given that nearly 18 million children in the EU are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

By investing in equal opportunities for children, the foundation is laid for sustainable and inclusive growth, supporting fair and resilient societies. This contributes to addressing the consequences of adverse demographic trends by reducing skills and labour shortages and ensuring better territorial coverage while leveraging opportunities arising from the green and digital transitions.

At the level of the EU, building on the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Recommendation on Child Poverty "Investing in children — breaking the cycle of deprivation", on 14 June 2021 the Council of the EU adopted a recommendation on establishing a *European Child Guarantee* (hereinafter: ECG). This recommendation is an addition to the EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2021-2024 and seeks to ensure that every child has access to basic rights and services. The emphasis is on free and effective access to quality services in early childhood education and care, education (including extracurricular activities) and healthcare, as well as effective access to healthy (school) nutrition, and adequate housing. The recommendation focuses mainly on children under 18, primarily highlighting children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. They envisage additional investment by the EU Member States in the development of children's services and additional support mechanisms aimed at children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The establishment of an adequate system for monitoring the rights of children and their access to services is also envisaged. For this purpose, the EU will make additional funds available to the Member States in the 2021-2027 programming period under the European Social Fund Plus (hereinafter: ESF+), where Member States recording rates of poverty and social exclusion of children higher than the EU average (in the 2017-2019 period) will need to direct 5% of funds towards tackling poverty and the social exclusion of children. Additional resources focusing on the development of services can also be sought within the European Regional Development Fund, the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (hereinafter: REACT-EU) initiative, the InvestEU programme, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the Technical Support Instrument, but also from the national budget.

Following the European Parliament's initiative, the European Commission has carried out several stages to establish a European Child Guarantee, including the adoption of an EU Council Recommendation obliging all Member States to develop and implement national action plans. That is, under Article 11 (c) of the EU Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee the Member States shall submit action plans on how they will implement the Child Guarantee. Action plans should cover the period until 2030 and take into account national,

regional, and local circumstances and existing policy measures and measures to support children in need.

The main purpose of the national action plans is to describe existing and planned national and sub-national policy measures aimed at improving the access of children in need to a set of key services covered by the European Child Guarantee.

Based on the mentioned recommendation and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021-2024, EU Member States were obliged to adopt national action plans.

The European Commission emphasises the national action plans of Member States as key implementation documents, enabling collective monitoring of the Recommendation, including multilateral discussions on related political challenges and reforms within the European Semester.

The National Action Plan is based on strategic documents and EU recommendations and commitments and as such forms a clear and coherent framework to ensure and enhance the rights and services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It aligns with key and strategic documents, such as, the National Reform Programme 2023, the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030, which is the basic strategic development document for this decade, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026 and all other strategic documents of relevant ministries responsible for ensuring access to basic services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The Republic of Croatia primarily uses the National Development Strategy until 2030, which is an umbrella document and a comprehensive act of strategic planning, to guide the development of society and the economy in the long term in all important issues and determine the framework for development in the next decade. The priority areas of public policies precisely cover the areas important for achieving the objectives of the ECG; early childhood education and care, health, nutrition, housing and social services, with the aim of ensuring equal opportunities for children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The main purpose of the National Action Plan is to describe existing and planned national and subnational policy measures aimed at improving access to key services for children covered by the Recommendation (EU).

As this is an operational implementation document that consolidates key strategic documents and serves as the basis for implementing measures and activities aimed at ensuring access to basic services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which covers several key departments, spanning several key sectors, and with 6 areas and 59 measures and numerous activities coordinated by state administration bodies, the European Commission recommends that the document be adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

The National Action Plan, in its contents, consolidates existing priorities related to the protection of children's rights already implemented by relevant bodies, thus continuing the implementation of the established policy of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, as expressed in strategic documents. Measures and activities in key areas of intervention are consolidated and substantively by units rounded into comprehensive units based on

recommendations and the given template of the European Commission used in the development of the National Action Plan.

In accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission, ensuring access to key services in all areas of Croatia, investing in service infrastructure and workforce, requires improving the effectiveness and relevance of related policies and combining preventive and corrective measures of key stakeholders. Therefore, the goal of drafting this document is to integrate all national strategies and plans of different departments (education, health, justice, construction, social welfare) in one place and to provide resources and funds for the implementation of key measures and activities.

RC was one of the seven EU countries where, as part of the Pilot Phase III of the Child Guarantee programme, an in-depth analysis was conducted on the state, policies, programmes, services, budgets, and mechanisms addressing child poverty, social exclusion, and access to services in the Republic of Croatia. Based on the analysis, recommendations were provided to improve national policies, programmes, key measures, and activities aimed at reducing child poverty and social exclusion, along with their monitoring and evaluation.

These recommendations complement the strategic documents already adopted, aligning with the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Croatia to significantly reduce the number of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2030.

The pilot project Phase III of the Child Guarantee was implemented in the area of Međimurje County, one of the most developed counties in the RC, but at the same time a county with the highest rate of guaranteed minimum benefit beneficiaries (2.6%), and low access to child protection and family support services. Roma make up 80% of the guaranteed minimum benefit beneficiaries in Međimurje County. The Roma population constitutes 6% of the general population of Međimurje, while the proportion of newborn Roma children is 25% of the total number of newborns in Međimurje, indicating the need for increased support for children in this county. Additionally, 38.7% (6,954) of Roma live in Međimurje County.

Through piloting, the aim was to demonstrate how integrated, coordinated policies and practices developed as part of the ECG can reach the most disadvantaged children and ensure their effective and free access to basic services.

Programme activities were carried out in close cooperation with 11 implementing partners, public institutions, and non-governmental organisations, including Međimurje County, the city of Čakovec and the municipalities of Mala Subotica, Nedelišće, Orehovica, Podturen and Pribislavec.

Within the programme, 3 service and intervention models were developed and implemented, focusing on the early identification of children at risk and their families living in particularly deprived environments to realise their potentials and mitigate the risks for a child's growth and development associated with poverty and social exclusion.

1. Integrated Child Protection and Family Support Services

This service model focused on integrated child protection and family support services, the early identification of children at risk and their families living in unsafe and deprived environments. It promotes accessible, high-quality, timely and appropriate family support and child protection interventions, including services in communities at highest risk of poverty and social exclusion.

2. Quality Preschool Education

This service model focused on creating conditions to ensure that all children in disadvantaged situations, aged 3 to 6 years, have effective access to early childhood education and care. The goal is to prevent social exclusion and early school dropout by supporting kindergartens near vulnerable communities and establishing three play centres.

3. Integrated and Coordinated Early Intervention Services

The aim of this model is to improve access to integrated services for children aged 0 to 7 years at risk of developmental deviations or difficulties and their families through early intervention services. This involves providing coordinated and integrated high-quality early intervention services in childhood, enhancing the knowledge and skills of healthcare, education, and social protection professionals, supporting parenting, and improving data collection. Community Early Intervention Teams are responsible for the early assessment and monitoring of children at risk of developmental deviations or disabilities.

During the implementation of the programme in Medimurje County, services were provided for more than 5,350 children and 2,400 parents. Capacities were strengthened and training sessions were conducted with 870 professionals and students from the social welfare, education, and health system. The aim was to provide integrated services tailored to the needs of each child and family.

As part of this pilot programme, infrastructure was established, including the creation of a Children and Family Centre/Resource Centres, serving as places for providing integrated services and activities involving experts from various sectors (social welfare, health, education, local communities, NGOs) in the community.

Four resource centres for children and families were built and equipped, and one was adapted and furnished. Additionally, four Play Centres were established.

These centres will ensure that all tested services from the pilot project for children and families at risk are provided in a way that different sectors and other providers of social services carry out their activities in a dedicated workspace.

To ensure sustainability and continuation of all activities and programmes developed within the pilot project, considering the high risks of poverty, social exclusion, and neglect of children, the establishment of a Community Service Centre is underway. The Republic of Croatia will be the founder, and it will use the centres for children and families among other premises to carry out its activities.

The results of the pilot programme are an example of good practice and a strategic shift by relevant ministries towards targeted and evidence-based community service development in line with the recommendations and priorities of the European Commission.

It is important to highlight that the priority orientation of the Government of the Republic of Croatia is creating better preconditions for access to healthy and balanced diet, especially in low-income families. In 2021, contracts worth HRK 25 million were finalised for providing school meals for children at risk of poverty (school year 2021/2022). Currently, 33 contracts are in progress for providing school meals for children at risk of poverty (school year 2022/2023), totalling EUR 3.6 million (HRK 27.4 million). Through these contracted projects, free school meals were provided to 27,493 children, in 410 schools, through the right to a free school meal.

Recognising the importance of ensuring access to at least one healthy meal each school day for all children, the Government of the Republic of Croatia enacted in December 2022 a Decision on the criteria and method of financing, i.e. co-financing the cost of food for primary school pupils for the second semester of the 2022/2023 school year, and the Act on Amendments to the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (OG No. 151/22), created the conditions for securing funds in the state budget for a free meal for pupils in primary education, which made the RC one of the six Member States that provided a free school meal to all pupils.

Through the continuous improvement of public policies, the RC demonstrates its support for all efforts in promoting and protecting children's rights. Through comprehensive action and strategic documents, the country encourages the protection of the rights of every child and their participation in civil society. It emphasises special care for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The ECG represents an additional opportunity for the RC to develop an integrated set of measures and policies focused on children and to prevent and eliminate numerous sources of inequality among children. In 2021, UNICEF prepared an In-depth Analysis of Policies, Programmes, Services, Funding Sources and Mechanisms aimed at Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion of Children in Croatia, commissioned by the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the European Commission. The basis for the Development of the National Action Plan is an In-depth Analysis which refers to the areas of public policies important for reaching the objectives of the ECG: i) early childhood education and care (ECEC), ii) education, iii) nutrition, iv) healthcare, and v) housing.

Additionally addressed is the area of vi) social services in the community (SSC) aimed at children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The emphasis of the in-depth analysis is on the organisation, structure, financing, and provision of services. Special attention is given to the indicators of the inclusion of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and structural and institutional barriers to accessing services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion with the aim of developing policies and institutional elements that are currently missing or insufficiently developed in the RC and are essential for achieving the ECG objectives.

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 area of social services in the community, target only children beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum benefit (hereinafter: GMB), which is an indication of a priority intervention aimed first at supporting those children who are at greatest risk, and some of the measures aim at extending support to all children, including children at risk of poverty and social exclusion who are not exclusively GMB beneficiaries.

The term "children" in the National Action Plan refers to all persons up to 18 years of age and are the target age group of the European Child Guarantee.

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

- Children of the Roma national minority
- Child beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum benefit
- Children in underdeveloped, especially rural, areas
- Children with developmental disabilities
- Children with a migrant background (unaccompanied children, children seeking international protection, asylum seekers, aliens under subsidiary and temporary protection who are under the age of 18)
- Children in alternative care
- Children from Ukraine and all other displaced children
- Children whose parents are imprisoned.

Taking into account the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the commitments from the Porto Summit to reduce the number of people at risk of social exclusion or poverty by at least 15 million, including 5 million children, ensuring an employment rate of at least 78% in the EU, which includes increasing the availability of childcare services (for children aged 0-5), reducing the rate of young people (aged 15-29) who are NEET ("not in employment, education, or training") from 12.6% in 2019 to 9% in 2030, and ensuring that at least 60% of adults attend courses each year, including reducing the school dropout rate, the National Action Plan recognises the need for a more comprehensive, targeted, and integrated strategic approach to specific groups of children within the European Child Guarantee.

In accordance with the recommendations of the EU Council on establishing the European Child Guarantee, the National Action Plan is a document open to potential changes and amendments to existing measures throughout its entire implementation period. The purpose is to adapt measures and activities to targeted groups of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It is also open to potential new measures that will enhance its implementation, regardless of mechanisms and set deadlines.

The National Action Plan contributes to achieving the targeted values of Specific Objective 2: *To reduce poverty and social exclusion among children* of the Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021-2024, National Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021-2027, aiming to reduce severe material deprivation for children aged 0-17 from 5.7% to 4%, and the risk of poverty rates from 17.1% to 14.8%.

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Policy is responsible for the drafting of the National Action Plan. The method of drafting the National Action Plan is participatory, involving a broad range of relevant and interested stakeholders to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach to further improvement in this area. This is essential as addressing the issues of social exclusion and child poverty requires an integrated and multidimensional approach. The involvement of this diverse group ensures effective prevention and supports the social inclusion of children.

To strengthen collaboration and coordination among various services at different levels, a working group has been appointed, composed of representatives from state administration bodies, international organisations, the scientific community, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders: Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Ministry of Justice and Administration, Central State Office for Demography and Youth, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Croatian County Association, Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care, UNICEF Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children, Association Children First and the Study Centre of Social Work, Faculty of Law in Zagreb.

The previously mentioned in-depth analysis served as the starting point for the development of the National Action Plan, determining areas of action, setting goals, and defining measures and activities aimed at reducing child poverty and social exclusion. For each area of action (ECEC, education, nutrition, health, housing, social services), targeted priority groups of children under the ECG were identified. Measures and activities were tailored to their needs in line with the recommendation requiring Member States to identify children in need based on national, regional, and local circumstances. In this way, the RC ensured targeted action towards those groups of children most in need of active state support.

All national stakeholders will receive technical assistance in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Action Plan, including technical support for the national coordinator to ensure effective coordination and monitoring of the implementation of all measures and activities planned by the National Action Plan. Funding will be provided from the ESF+.

In addition to monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plan, an external evaluation will be carried out every two years, starting in 2024, and the funds will be provided by ESF+.

NATIONAL COORDINATOR

The process of developing the National Action Plan was led by the National Coordinator, the director at the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family, and Social Policy appointed by the European Commission.

After the adoption of the National Action Plan, for the purpose of effective coordination and monitoring of its implementation, a separate body (Committee for the Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation of the National Action Plan) will be established, appointed by the

Government of the Republic of Croatia, and consisting of the appointed national coordinator with relevant responsibilities and mandate.

Namely, the EU Recommendation emphasises the importance of coordination, leading to the appointment of national coordinators. However, given that the National Action Plan encompasses 6 areas of General Objectives, 16 Specific Objectives, and 59 Measures, with numerous activities implemented by state administration bodies, there is a visible need to strengthen the capacity of the national coordinator and relevant state administration bodies for the coordination and integrated implementation of measures and monitoring their impact on children.

To ensure efficient implementation of the National Action Plan, a coordination system with clear decision-making powers and responsibilities at the decision-making level will be established, and thus, the Committee for the Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation of the National Action Plan (hereinafter: the Committee) will be formed. Its members will be the directors of administrations in the competent state administration bodies, but it is also necessary to establish a coordination system at the technical level.

In addition to the national coordinator, the deputy national coordinator, and representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family, and Social Policy, the Committee includes the directors general in the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction, and State Assets, and the Ministry of Justice and Administration. They are responsible for implementing specific measures and activities at the highest level of state officials.

Other partners (Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, Office of the Ombudsperson for Children), experts from interest groups, local self-government, and representatives of children and young people shall also be included in the work of the Committee, as appropriate.

The EU Council's recommendation also stipulates that Member States should develop a national framework for data collection, monitoring, and evaluation of the EU Recommendation. One of the barriers to effective monitoring of the National Action Plan relates to the inconsistency of data from different sources of official and administrative statistics, limited resources for ensuring data quality control, and insufficiently defined and operationalised mechanisms for their exchange among relevant policy makers and implementers.

The purpose of the Committee is to create a platform for information exchange, provide an overview of the implementation of the National Action Plan, and establish a system for monitoring the implementation and execution. Additionally, the Committee assesses the need for updating and amending specific measures and activities from the National Action Plan by monitoring indicators, target groups, and related activities.

The National Coordinator and Committee members 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 line with the reporting pace to the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

To develop the National Action Plan, the RC took into account the need to involve children and young people through consultations conducted in cooperation with the UNICEF Croatia Office. In this way, children and young people were provided with the possibility of active participation in the process of drafting a public policy document and given the opportunity to express their opinion on the European Child Guarantee.

Since the RC attaches particular importance to the active participation of children in the processes of formulating and implementing public policies, consultations with children will be organised on a bi-annual basis in the form of a round table and in other ways with the competent authorities, so that children and young people can be informed about the effects of the National Action Plan and so that they can express their opinion on the need to change the planned measures and activities.

Consultations with children and youth in the drafting of the National Action Plan were carried out in several related phases, including through a pyramidal approach that enabled the involvement of a greater number of children and young people. In addition, different groups of children and youth were able to participate, respecting the principles of inclusiveness and fairness.

Adolescents and youth – members of The Advisory Board for Children's Participation of the UNICEF Office for Croatia, UNICEF Youth Ambassadors for Children's and Youth's Rights and the youth from the Međimurje County who participated in UPSHIFT, the UNICEF programme for building 21st-century skills, discussed the proposal of goals and priorities defined in the draft National Action Plan. Following the consultations, the following activities were carried out:

A) Online survey via the ZABUM voice platform where young people were able to express their opinions

The online survey “Child Guarantee – What Children and Young People Think” was conducted by the UNICEF Office for Croatia in cooperation with the Youth Network Croatia in the period from 21 February 2022 to 27 February 2022, and it was fully completed by 183 persons aged 16–25.

Respondents were able to state their opinions on who vulnerable groups of children and young people in Croatia are; what the problems of children and young people in Croatia are in general today; what the problems of children and young people in their community, class, school or

neighbourhood are; what the problems and difficulties faced by children and young people with developmental difficulties are; what the problems and difficulties faced by children and young people growing up in conditions of poverty are; what the problems and difficulties faced by children and young people belonging to national minorities are; what the problems and difficulties faced by children and young people growing up outside their own home are, such as homes for children without adequate parental care, in a correctional facility, in foster care; they expressed their opinions on what the problems and difficulties faced by children and young migrants and refugees are and gave their opinions and proposals for concrete solutions to the problems of vulnerable groups of children and young people.

B) Consultations with different groups of children and young people through the UNICEF network of partners/collaborators

Consultations with children and young people were conducted during February and March 2022 through group discussions, with the facilitation and guidance of adult mentors/leaders using working materials for consultations. In the introductory part of the meeting, all groups of children and young people were informed about the Recommendation of the EU Council on the establishment of the ECG.

It is important to point out that some consultations with certain groups of children and young people focused on specific areas and topics that were particularly important to these groups of children and young people.

Children and young people were happy and very actively involved in the consultations, which further indicates the importance and necessity of their active participation in the creation of the National Action Plan, but also more broadly in advisory processes and public policy making.

Consultations took place during February and March 2022. 60 adolescents and young people aged 12 to 25 participated in the consultations.

Generally, the problems of children and young people are not sufficiently discussed in society, which is why all vulnerable groups are marginalised and at risk of social exclusion. They are exposed to discrimination and prejudice, which makes them even more vulnerable. Often, they are not accepted by peers, sometimes facing ridicule, harassment/bullying, and isolation. They do not get enough support from adults and often do not know who to turn to for help. For children and young people living in poverty, the problem is numerous expenses that their families cannot cover, which makes them feel labelled and excluded. Growing up in poverty brings about additional challenges, such as parental unemployment, the constant search for jobs, and low income, which make parents tense, stressed, or frequently absent. In turn, children do not receive the necessary attention, complicating family communication and increasing the risk of conflicts, including domestic violence. Through consultations, it has been evident that children and young people from vulnerable groups fear expressing their opinions, struggle to articulate their views, and are often excluded from society.

Consultations of the Ombudsperson for children with children and young people

In the process of participation of children and young people, the Ombudsperson for Children conducted consultations with the members of the 16+ Forum, i.e. children of high school age from Pazin, Rijeka, Velika Gorica, Šibenik, Zagreb and Split, who responded to the call for consultations. The most vulnerable groups of children in Croatia were identified in a conversation with the members of the 16+ Forum and all the difficulties encountered by children from vulnerable groups. Discussing how the state can help children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and children from vulnerable groups, Forum 16+ members made their suggestions: to provide them with accessible and possibly free accommodation in nurseries and kindergartens; to ensure better records of family needs when distributing assistance to the poor and to ensure that all those who really need it get it, for the different sectors to cooperate with each other in social welfare provision (e.g. social welfare and education) and to better connect with humanitarian organisations, to make an effort so that inequalities between pupils are not highlighted in school, to ensure healthy school meals – especially in primary school, and to regularly organise education sessions on accepting diversity, tolerance and cooperation. They also pointed out that it is important that each child can get support at school when they feel unwell or face problems, and it is necessary that school educators and psychologists are accessible and willing to support pupils on such occasions, as well as that teachers generally support children in growing up. The school should be a place where children are also informed about support services available outside the school. They pointed out that the protection of children's mental health is either taboo or stigmatised, so many are ashamed to ask for it, or it is difficult to access it, or there is a shortage of it. This is partly due to insufficient public information about free counselling facilities, but also due to insufficient capacities of health institutions for the protection of the mental health of children and young people, where there are long wait lists and services are often narrower in scope than necessary.

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES WITH KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Action Plan for the Implementation of the EU Council Recommendations on the Establishment of a European Child Guarantee is a comprehensive national document that forms the basis for the implementation of measures and activities in key areas of intervention arising from needs and development potentials related to combating child poverty and social exclusion, with an emphasis on cross-sectoral cooperation and joint action.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Council of the European Union on the establishment of the European Child Guarantee and the recommendations of the European Commission to the Republic of Croatia, general and specific objectives have been defined with the accompanying proposals for measures and indicators of specific objectives, as well as target groups, to improve public policies related to preventing poverty and social exclusion of children.

In accordance with the results of the analysed areas, six general objectives were defined:

1. Improved access to early childhood education and care;
2. Ensured access to education and support for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion;
3. Ensured access to quality meal 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 accessibility of social services in the community to children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Within the defined general objectives, specific objectives and associated activities were determined. The monitoring of indicators contains initial and target values, as well as proposals for measures and activities.

When drafting the National Action Plan, the RC also took into account the need to establish a practical and prompt framework of action for the protection of displaced children from Ukraine. In this context, on 28 February 2022, at its 104th session, the Government of the RC appointed an Interdepartmental Working Group to carry out activities for the reception and care of the refugees from Ukraine. The Interdepartmental Working Group has placed special emphasis on assessing the needs of refugee children and developing measures to ensure their registration, temporary and/or permanent accommodation, inclusion in the educational system and the provision of health and social care, whether it is transit or permanent reception. In cooperation with the private sector, the possibility of hiring parents/guardians to meet the material needs of refugee children and their effective integration into society has also been established. The RC plans to provide these activities continuously for the duration of the war events in cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the international community. To respond to the growing needs of 18,004 displaced persons from Ukraine, 6,267 of whom are children (18 May 2022) residing in the RC, the National Action Plan envisages a series of activities for the purpose of their effective access to high-quality pre-primary and primary education, activities in school and organised leisure, psychosocial assistance and child protection services and health services.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE 1

IMPROVED ACCES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

The ECEC system in the RC is an integral and fundamental part of the education system, which children are not obliged to attend. The only exception is the preschool program, which is compulsory and organised within the range of 150-250 hours in the year before starting primary school (at the age of 5 or 6). However, in practice, it is sometimes implemented with a minimal duration that is insufficient for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The ECEC system is fully decentralised, i.e., the responsibility for financing and providing regular ECEC programmes almost solely lies with municipalities/cities. At the central (national) level, pedagogical standards are set, guidance is given, and specialists are accredited, and the implementation of preschool programmes is monitored. Territorial fragmentation (556 municipalities/cities in the RC) is accompanied by weak fiscal capacities of certain environments and regional inequalities in the availability, affordability, and quality of

programmes. Investments from three years ago that came from EU funds were primarily justified as one of the demographic measures aimed at improving the availability of ECEC to employed parents to balance their family and professional lives and to revitalise rural environments, rather than assisting families at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Access to ECEC programmes will ensure the development of a spatially and evenly distributed network of quality and affordable services, particularly for children at risk, who face difficulties accessing ECEC programmes. Children of unemployed parents (especially single-parent families), children at risk of poverty and social exclusion from lower socioeconomic status families, children from the Roma minority, children growing up in less developed and populated areas, and children with developmental difficulties are at the highest risk of being unable to use ECEC services. It is important to point out that all these groups are generally associated with a lower family income status and an increased risk of poverty.

As part of the reform measure of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) C.3.1 R1 Structural reform of the education system with a total amount of EUR 592.8 million, measures are planned to focus on infrastructure investments in pre-tertiary education as stipulated by measure 1.1.1 and activity 2, through the construction of new facilities or expansion of existing capacities of preschools in areas where there is such a need.

It is noted that the "Resolution on the Strategic Framework for Cooperation in the Field of Education and Training towards the European Education Area and Beyond" added a target: by 2030, at least 96% of children aged three to compulsory primary education enrolment should participate in early childhood education and care. Based on this, the criterion for the inclusion of children in the NRRP was established. Improved access to early childhood education and care will be implemented through public calls. The first one was conducted during 2022, and the second one is in progress.

The first call for the allocation of grants for the construction, expansion, reconstruction, and equipping of preschool institutions resulted in contracts for investing in 250 facilities, creating an additional 16,368 places in preschool institutions, with a total value of EUR 163.66 million.

Amendments to the Act on Preschool Education (OG 57/22) enabled LSGUs to be financed from the state budget. A new preschool curriculum is under development, foreseeing a significant increase in the mandatory duration of preschool from the current 250 hours to a maximum of 700 hours.

The following groups of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion face the greatest obstacles in accessing ECEC services in Croatia:

- 1) Children of unemployed/one unemployed parent - 38.1% of children aged 0-14 in households with at least one nonworking adult, 7.7% in jobless households according to data from 2018 (OECD, 2021) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children).
- 2) Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion - 126,000 children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, or 18.4% of the total population under the age of 18, according to 2020 data. (Eurostat 2021a) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children).
- 3) Children of the Roma national minority - 12,920 children under the age of 16 according to 2018 data. (Kunac et al., 2018).

4) Children in rural (and less developed) areas - 8.8% of the population in rural areas at risk of poverty (compared to 4.2% in cities) according to 2020 data; data for children are not available (Eurostat, 2021b). Insufficient places in kindergartens (more noticeable in children at risk, e.g., children of unemployed parents, children with developmental disabilities)(Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children).

5) Children with developmental disabilities - 8.2% of children with disabilities (developmental disabilities) in the total population of children 0-19, or a total of 64,063 children as of 9 September 2021. (CIPH 2021) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children).

Starting from the General Objective of the ECG, i.e., to ensure that every child - especially children growing up at risk of poverty and social exclusion - has access to basic social services (including ECEC services), national strategic documents (National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026) the following three objectives stand out:

1. Ensured right of access to quality ECEC for every child in the RC from the age of 3 until the start of primary school by 2030
2. Improvement of the budgetary and legislative framework to ensure a regionally balanced approach to affordable and quality ECEC.
3. Development of additional support mechanisms within the education system and funding mechanisms aimed at ensuring access to ECEC for children at risk and their families, especially children of lower socioeconomic status, to address the "hidden" costs of regularly attending KG.

Specific Objective 1.1 Ensured right of access to quality ECEC for every child in the RC from the age of 3 until the start of primary school by 2030

MEASURES RELATED TO SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1.1

1.1.1 Provide prerequisites for gradually increasing the coverage of children in early childhood education and care,

1.1.2 Invest in infrastructure development and equipment in the form of constructing new and reconstructing and upgrading existing kindergartens, addressing the problem of regional differences in the availability of KGs, and developing innovative and efficient models of service provision in smaller areas with fewer children and taking into account the need to adapt the existing and new infrastructure to children with developmental disabilities,

1.1.3 Improve the quality of ECEC by adopting key policies on kindergarten educators, ensuring an adequate number of teachers, professional associates, and principals, strengthening their competencies and creating better conditions for their employment in areas that are below average in terms of the value of the development index.

Specific Objective 1.2 Improved budgetary and legislative framework to ensure regionally uniform access to affordable and high-quality ECEC

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1.2

1.2.1 Improve the funding model and strengthen the role of the central government in making a part of key decisions in ECEC.

Specific Objective 1.3 Developed additional support mechanisms within the education system and funding mechanisms aimed at ensuring access to ECEC for children at risk and their families, especially children of lower socioeconomic status, to address the "hidden" costs of regularly attending KG

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1.3

1.3.1 Increase the access to ECEC for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

1.3.2 Continuously monitor the reasons why children of the Roma national minority over 3 years of age are not in the ECEC system, establishing indicative categories of barriers to access (financial reasons, distance, insufficient places in kindergartens, parents not willing to enrol the child, kindergartens delaying enrolment because the child has developmental difficulties, language barriers, digital barriers – the parent not having access to e-enrolment).

1.3.3 Implement public awareness programmes on the importance of investing in ECEC (targeting local decision-makers) and the participation of the Roma children in the ECEC programmes (with special emphasis on rural areas and other physically and culturally isolated communities).

GENERAL OBJECTIVE 2

ENSURED ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Under the ECG, Member States are called upon to guarantee children in need (i.e., at risk of poverty or social exclusion) effective and free access to education and school activities. In doing so, all measures aimed at this goal should be equally accessible to minority groups, children with developmental disabilities and young people with disabilities and at socioeconomic disadvantage and must not lead to discrimination or segregation (Council of the EU, 2021). Within the European Semester in 2019, the EU Council, through its recommendations, emphasised that RC should undertake reforms in its education system in 2019 and 2020. The focus was on improving access to education and training at all levels, as well as enhancing the quality and relevance of education to the labour market. Although Croatian National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026 does not specifically highlight children at risk in the context of education, it does emphasise the importance of establishing equal educational opportunities

throughout the entire educational process. It is stated that the reform of education in RC should contribute to the construction of an educational system that enables each person, regardless of their socioeconomic origin, age and other circumstances, to acquire knowledge and skills relevant for personal development and successful labour market integration, which is in line with the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provides for inclusive, high-quality and equitable education and learning for all.

Education is recognised as one of the development priorities in the 2030 ECEC National Development Strategy. This document emphasises the reform processes aimed, among other things, at creating equal pedagogical conditions for the achievement of educational goals, respect for the right to education under equal conditions and inclusion of all in education. Some of the priorities in the field of education stated in this strategy are ensuring equal conditions for systematic education and care by gradually introducing full-time classes for primary school children, as well as developing comprehensive support for children and pupils and preventing dropping out of school and entering the NEET group, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups and children and pupils with developmental disabilities. Ensuring free education for all children is one of the key mechanisms for preventing poverty and social exclusion and is therefore one of the important measures advocated within the ECG, especially in relation to children at risk. It is emphasised that primary education should be free for all children, while secondary education should be free for children at risk of poverty. However, although in most EU countries, including the RC, compulsory schooling is free in terms of tuition fees, families still cover a number of education-related costs from their budgets, including books, school equipment, school trips, school meals, transport to school, etc.

With the amendment to the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette No. 151/22), conditions were created to secure funds in the state budget for free meals for pupils in primary school education. On 29 December 2022, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted a Decision on the criteria and manner of financing, i.e., co-financing of the costs of meals for pupils in primary schools for the second semester of the school year 2022/2023.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia's decision covers all pupils from 1st to 8th grade, ensuring at least one meal through school catering to children in primary schools, at a rate of EUR 1.33 per day. During the implementation of this decision, up to May 2023, a total of EUR 33,528,406.24 was disbursed from the state budget. This amount will be increased for the payment of pupils' meals for the month of June 2023. The funds were transferred to school founders, and the disbursements covered 919 main schools and 1,098 corresponding branch schools.

The following categories of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion experience barriers to quality education in the RC:

- 1) Child beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum benefit (hereinafter: GMB) – 13,977 children from GMB beneficiary families on 31 December 2020 (MLPSFSP, 2021a) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children)

2) Children of the Roma national minority – 12,920 children under the age of 16 according to 2018 data. (Kunac et al., 2018)

3) Children with developmental disabilities – 8.2% of children with disabilities (developmental disabilities) in the total population of children 0–19, or a total of 64,063 children as of 9 September 2021. (CIPH 2021) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children)

4) Children with a migrant background – 2,522 children of irregular migrants; 942 children of applicants for international protection; 385 unaccompanied children – foreign nationals who were granted the right to temporary accommodation in crisis situations (data from 2020). (Ombudsperson for Children, 2021)

5) Children beneficiaries of the child allowance – 268,436 children were covered by the right to the child allowance according to the data from November 2021. (The Croatian Pension Insurance Institute, 2021)

Based on the basic principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Recommendation on investing in children 2013/112, the European Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021–2024, and the sustainability study that accompanies the ECG, objectives are set to create a framework for ensuring free, affordable, and inclusive education for children at risk. The importance of establishing equal education opportunities throughout the education process is especially emphasised in two national documents: the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2021) and the 2030 National Development Strategy of the RC (2021). The latter document emphasises the priority of inclusion in the education process for all groups of children.

Accordingly, two key overarching objectives stand out:

1. Provide affordable and free primary and secondary education for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion
2. Promote inclusive educational practices and build a culture of diversity.

Specific Objective 2.1 Affordable and free primary and secondary education provided for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2.1

2.1.1 Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the hidden costs of participation in education for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which will analyse in detail the structure of financial and other material support for children at risk of poverty at the level of primary and secondary education, with special emphasis on various sources of funding and the structure of the “hidden costs.”

The mentioned measure is linked to measure 6.1.1: Develop a framework for vertical and horizontal collaboration in providing integrated social services to families and communities (universal, selective, and indicated), including a comprehensive analysis of barriers (spatial and financial) in accessing health services and a comprehensive analysis of hidden costs of children's participation in education at risk of poverty and social exclusion, standards, tools, and an integrated protocol for early detection, referral, support planning, and monitoring of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families according to their needs; Activity (3) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of barriers and hidden costs of children's participation in health services and education for those at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

2.1.2 Provide financial support for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the primary and secondary school system.

Specific Objective 2.2 Promoting inclusive educational practices and building a culture of diversity

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2.2

2.2.1 Professional development of teachers, professional associates and principals related to vulnerable groups in order to strengthen their competencies to ensure inclusive education.

2.2.2 Provide professional support to pupils and parents belonging to vulnerable groups to facilitate pupils' active participation in the school environment and community.

2.2.3 Promote positive and successful educational stories of pupils with disabilities, pupils living in poverty and pupils of the Roma national minority.

2.2.4 Provide more extracurricular activities with greater coverage of school children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion of the Roma national minority and leisure programmes that follow the modern learning methods and the needs of children and young people of the Roma national minority.

2.2.5 Improvement and availability of free programmes aimed at social inclusion of children and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion, while ensuring more extracurricular activities with greater coverage of school children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, as well as programmes that meet the leisure time of children and young people, follow modern learning methods and the needs of children and young people (e.g. learning support programmes, sports activities, foreign languages, information technology and robotics, sports, arts and others).

Purpose of measure 2.2.5 and description of contribution to goal implementation:

By providing access to social inclusion programmes for children and families at risk of poverty (e.g., cultural, artistic, sports, educational programmes, and trips), the measure aims to develop and direct the interests of children in these areas, strengthen personal competencies, and social

skills, with the goal of preventing social exclusion. Programmes will be provided for children and youth leaving care to empower them and prevent social exclusion.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE 3

ENSURED ACCESS TO QUALITY NUTRITION FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Access to quality nutrition is essential for the optimal development of children, starting from birth and continuing later during schooling. One of the key measures advocated within the ECG which can have multiple benefits for the welfare of children, and especially children at risk, is access to nutritional meals for all children. Research and experiences of EU countries suggest that access to quality nutrition organised under the educational system can nutritionally improve children's diets, boost their physical development and health (e.g. reducing malnutrition or obesity, fostering healthy eating), as well as educational outcomes (e.g. the possibility of better concentration and participation in the teaching process, and improved educational outcomes, preventing “dropping out” of the education system), but it can also reduce financial expenditures for families with children. Besides, additional efforts are necessary for children growing up in poverty to ensure that they have access to adequate nutrition within the family, while attending pre-primary, primary and secondary programmes, but also outside the school environment and during weekends and school holidays.

While the RC has a tradition of programmes aimed at promoting and encouraging breastfeeding, there are no mechanisms to ensure access to adequate nutrition for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in general, that is outside the educational environment. Adequate support in the field of nutritionally balanced diet in the system of organised primary school nutrition is lacking. In addition, secondary schools do not ensure the nutrition of pupils. Particularly disadvantaged are secondary school pupils living in conditions of poverty. The importance of a school meal for young people is also shown by the fact that just over 50% of pupils aged 11/13/15 have breakfast at home. The situation is significantly less favourable among 15-year-old schoolgirls who have breakfast the least (only 38%). As for 15-year-old boys, only 50% of them have breakfast (CIPH, 2020). The 2017/18 International HBSC Survey also showed that children/young people from families of lower socioeconomic status have worse eating habits and that the Republic of Croatia is one of the countries where children eat the smallest number of vegetables per day. In addition, the number of overweight children has increased continuously in the Republic of Croatia. The results of monitoring the state of child weight for 2018/2019 show that 33.1% of girls and 37% of boys aged 8–8.9 years are overweight or obese. At the national level, the problem of being overweight is higher in boys (17.8%) than in girls (11.9%), where the highest proportion of overweight and obese boys is recorded in the Adriatic region which has the lowest number of primary schools with a school kitchen. An increase in obesity is also indicated among older children (11/13/15 years), and the 2017/18 HBSC survey shows that 31% of boys and 21% of girls are overweight or obese. Adolescents from poorer

families are more likely to be overweight or obese and are significantly more likely to have a negative body image.

The existing regulatory and financial framework governing the issue of school nutrition, as well as the underdeveloped infrastructure within schools (e.g., the existence or equipping of school kitchens, staff shortages) are what primarily hampers access to adequate nutrition for children at risk of poverty. The risk of parents not being able to provide children with a regular and nutritionally appropriate diet increases in children outside of the educational system and in children exposed to multiple risk factors. Thus, the children at risk of poverty who are beneficiaries of GMB (children in extreme poverty), children in single-parent families, members of the Roma national minority or children with developmental disabilities are especially singled out. It is important to stress that while access to primary school nutrition is difficult for children growing up in less developed and less populated areas where the necessary infrastructure is more often missing (especially when it comes to district schools), the inability of parents at risk of poverty to provide children with adequate nutrition is more pronounced in urban areas. Since the primary risk to which all these groups of children are exposed is precisely poverty, the known barriers faced by these groups do not differ greatly.

Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion face the greatest obstacles in accessing quality nutrition in Croatia: 126,000 children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, or 18.4% of the total population under the age of 18 (Eurostat, 2021); 13,977 children beneficiaries of GMB (MLPSFSP, 2021a).

Starting from the General Objective of the ECG that each child needs to be provided with at least one nutritionally balanced meal per day, as well as the priority activities of “providing free school meals”, highlighted within the sustainability study accompanying the ECG, the following three objectives are set:

1. Develop a comprehensive system of promoting and encouraging breastfeeding at the national level.
2. Ensure free and nutritionally balanced school meals for the most vulnerable groups of primary and secondary school children.
3. Ensure access to a regular and nutritionally balanced diet for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

By developing the Draft Proposal of the National Programme for the Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding for the period 2023-2026, the RC continues its commitment to the protection, promotion, and support of breastfeeding. Also, following the plan to restore the status of "Baby-Friendly Hospital," Čakovec General Hospital was the first to be reassessed in 2022 and renewed the title "Baby-Friendly Hospital." The National Evaluation Team in the "Baby-Friendly Hospital" Programme and the "Children's Counseling Centre - Breastfeeding Friendly" Programme plans to reassess three public maternity hospitals during 2023.

Specific Objective 3.1 Developed comprehensive system of promoting and encouraging breastfeeding at the national level

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3.1

3.1.1 Develop national breastfeeding targets through the National Breastfeeding Protection and Promotion Programme 2022–2025, based on the World Health Organisation's 2025 Global Nutrition Goals.

3.1.2 Develop a system of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of all specific objectives of the National Breastfeeding Protection and Promotion Programme (in preparation) from 2022 to 2025.

3.1.3 Introduce monitoring of the percentage of exclusively breastfed children aged 0–5 months, in accordance with the definition of the World Health Organisation.

3.1.4 Adapt national legislation to ensure the consistent application of the International Code on Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes.

3.1.5 Re-evaluate and strengthen the network of Baby-Friendly Hospitals including the sustainability of the breastfeeding promotion programme in the health system (maternity wards and intensive neonatal care units) by developing binding measures, to ensure the consistent implementation of this initiative in the RC.

3.1.6 Establish a national reference centre for the planning, implementation, and coordination of the education of health professionals and parents during pregnancy, but also before a planned pregnancy, in connection with the nutrition (breastfeeding) of the youngest children.

3.1.7 Conduct a public campaign and develop educational materials on the importance and benefits of breastfeeding donated human milk, including materials in the Ukrainian language.

Specific Objective 3.2 Nutritionally balanced school meals provided for a group of primary school children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3.2

3.2.1 Within the school system, develop preventive programmes and work on raising the level of awareness among children, teachers, and parents about the importance of a healthy and nutritionally balanced diet.

3.2.2 Improve the quality of nutrition in educational institutions by implementing the National Guidelines for School Meals in Primary Schools in all schools.

Specific Objective 3.3 Ensured access to a regular and nutritionally balanced diet for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3.3

3.3.1 Provision of meals in primary schools for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including children displaced from Ukraine, as well as provision of meals (including at weekends and school holidays) through food packages distributions provided by humanitarian organisations.

3.3.2 Provision of meals for all children in all primary schools, including children displaced from Ukraine.

3.3.3 Raising awareness among future parents and especially pregnant women (within the framework of parenting support programmes and/or pregnancy courses) about the importance of a healthy and nutritionally balanced diet for the health of the mother and child.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE 4

ENSURED ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES TO CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Starting from the benefits of available and free access to child health protection throughout the entire period of growing up, the ECG Study on the Economic Implementing Framework (EC, 2021) highlights the need to create a national framework and draw up health policies, as well as implementing instruments within which children at risk of poverty and social exclusion can be provided with free postnatal examinations, home visits by community nurses, regular health checks during the first year of the child's life, the monitoring of children's health through systematic examinations, vision and hearing controls (including through the education system) and dental healthcare. Access to regular health checks and the availability of child health protection until the age of 18 ensures early detection of physical and mental health problems, chronic diseases, dental problems, risky lifestyle habits (diet, physical activity, addictions), speech difficulties, learning difficulties, neglect and exposure to domestic violence, prevention, and preserving future health.

In this sense, the healthcare system of the RC is based on compulsory health insurance thanks to which almost every citizen has access to primary healthcare. All children under 18 years of age, and older if they are included in the regular education system, have free access to health services and healthcare. Within the European Semester, the RC has received specific recommendations (CSRs, 2020) related to improving and adapting access to health services in new circumstances. The CSRs for Croatia point out that the COVID-19 epidemic was a test of the resilience of the Croatian health system. It indicated that although access to healthcare in the RC is generally good (based on the principle of universality), unmet health needs due to distance (unequal regional distribution of health services) are among the greatest in the EU. The recommendations stress that a more balanced geographical distribution of healthcare facilities and medical professionals would allow easier access to health services. The distribution of

responsibility for health facilities between the central government and county authorities leaves room for improvement. The use of e-health tools is particularly highlighted, as these allow for reducing direct contacts between healthcare professionals and patients, and also reduce the risk of infections. These challenges for the health system of the RC are embedded in the reforms defined in the National Healthcare Development Plan for the period 2021–2027 and are complementary to the strategic plans of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan from 2021 to 2026. The latter highlights, in particular, the objective of strengthening primary healthcare and pharmacy care to ensure the better availability of services throughout the territory of the RC, especially in isolated and rural areas, and strengthening the capacity of medical teams in primary care (Government of the RC, 2021).

Although the RC has effective and in principle free access to health services for children, there is scope for improving the health protection systems and ensuring equal access to health services, especially for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The healthcare system faces the challenges of a lack of healthcare professionals, especially paediatricians and specialist doctors, regionally unequal availability of primary and preventive healthcare, waiting lists for specialist examinations and treatments, insufficient accommodation in hospitals for treatment and/or medical rehabilitation, the underdevelopment of mental health protection services that primarily affect children in less developed areas and on islands and those at risk of poverty and social exclusion, the affordability of health services and medicines due to “hidden costs” (e.g. transport, non-prescription medicines) and complex administrative procedures in the case of a recognised right to health care without health insurance.

In addition to the lack of targeted interventions for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, there is a need to improve the system of prevention and protection of children's health, i.e., the universal system of protection of children's health, by introducing and expanding mandatory preventive examinations (e.g., hearing and vision). Compatible with this is the need to set up a system of early detection of developmental deviations in children of a young age (screening) using standardised instruments.

One of the General Objectives of improving the health system should be to improve the existing and collect new indicators for monitoring the state of children's health that will be more sensitive to sociodemographic characteristics and enable the creation of evidence-based measures and access to health services. This includes a system of monitoring children at risk at an individual level that allows timely early intervention if certain undesirable outcomes are detected.

To ensure the availability of healthcare services, amendments to the Health Care Act have laid the foundation for the introduction of new activities in health centres: speech therapy, psychological services, occupational therapy, physical therapy as the basis for dispensary activities for early intervention, as well as the organisation of nursing counseling centres and counseling centres for long-term care and complex patients. The development of a new Public Health Service Network is also underway, determining the necessary number of teams in the mentioned activities. Simultaneously, the Executive Working Group for Early Childhood Intervention at the Ministry of Health, composed of experts, is working on the development of

the professional basis of the National Strategic Framework and Plan for Early Childhood Intervention.

Furthermore, financial resources of approximately HRK 217,000,000.00 have been secured from EU funds for specialist training. This funding covers 51 healthcare institutions at the primary level of healthcare in 19 Croatian counties for financing 212 specialists in 5 deficient specialisations: family medicine, paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics, clinical radiology, and emergency medicine. Within the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020, a total of 35 specialisations in paediatrics are being implemented, and the project's implementation period is ongoing.

The National Plan for Specialist Training of Healthcare Workers for the five-year period (2020-2024), based on the need for the development of healthcare at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, identifies the need for 244 specialisations in paediatrics, including 81 specialisations for primary healthcare. The plan is being amended to include an additional 54 specialisations in paediatrics. The call for central financing of specialisations within the NPOO is ongoing (open until March 31, 2023), and it aims to finance 51 specialisations in paediatrics for primary healthcare. The planned number of specialisations for financing from ESF+ in the next financial period (2021-2027) is 45 specialisations in paediatrics for primary healthcare.

Considering the above, the Ministry of Health has secured funding for a total of 131 specialisations in paediatrics for primary healthcare by 2027, ensuring even more accessible healthcare for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Recognising the priority of expanding institutional and outpatient treatment capacities and the availability of mental health services, amendments to the Health Care Act came into effect on 1 April 2023. As a result, the process of adopting a new Public Health Service Network is underway, where the number of beds in hospital healthcare institutions in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry will be specified. There are also plans to increase the capacity of outpatient treatment and the availability of mental health services at the local community level (establishing mental health dispensaries at health centres with psychological counseling and organising mobile mental health teams in the community).

The following groups of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion face the greatest barriers to accessing health services:

- 1) Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion – 126,000 children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, i.e., 18.4% of the total population under the age of 18 (Eurostat, 2021a); 13,977 children of GMB beneficiaries according to 2020 data. (MLPSFSP, 2021a) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children)
- 2) Children of the Roma national minority – 12,920 children under the age of 16 according to 2018 data. (Kunac et al., 2018)
- 3) Children with developmental disabilities – 8.2% of children with disabilities (developmental disabilities) in the total population of children 0–19, or a total of 64,063 children as of 9 September 2021. (CIPH 2021) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children)

4) Children with a migrant background – 2,522 children of irregular migrants; 942 children of applicants for international protection; 385 unaccompanied children – foreign nationals who were granted the right to temporary accommodation in crisis situations according to 2020 data. (Ombudsperson for Children, 2021)

Starting from the fundamental principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017), Directive 2011/24/EU, EC Communications on Effective, Accessible and Resilient Health Systems (COM(2014) 215), on which the National Health Development Plan 2021–2027 and the strategic plan in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026 rely, as well as from EU Recommendations on investing in children 2013/112, the European Strategy on the Rights of Child 2021–2024, relied upon by the ECG (2020) and the sustainability study accompanying the ECG (EC, 2021), the following objectives aimed at improving the universal healthcare system and ensuring an adequate health framework and access to health services by children at risk of poverty and social exclusion are set:

1. Ensured access to health services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
2. Ensured support for the mental health protection of children at risk.

Specific Objective 4.1 Ensured access to health services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4.1

4.1.1 Establish an integrated early detection system of children (0–5 years of age) at risk of developmental deviations due to biomedical and social risks under the health, social and education systems, and develop the service “Team for Early Development in the Community” with the aim of locating, early detection, and support of children at risk of developmental risk/deviation/disabilities in isolated (Roma communities) and rural communities:

(I) Establishment of a national system of monitoring and early screening of children for developmental delay (0–5 years), due to biological risks and environmental and social risks, using a standardised developmental test for five developmental areas: communication, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, problem solving and personal-social development.

(II) Establishment of an integrated early intervention system for children aged 0–5 years at risk of developmental deviations due to biomedical and social risks under the health, social and education system, and ensuring regional availability of the services at home and in the local community.

4.1.2 Improve the primary health care systems to provide quality and integrated health services at home and in the local community, with an emphasis on children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and those living in remote (islands), rural and underdeveloped areas.

4.1.3 Conduct continuous training on reproductive health, especially for children and parents of the Roma national minority, to prevent teenage pregnancy and child marriage (monitor the trend of the number of teenage pregnancies).

4.1.4 Enhance the monitoring of health status and habits as well as the determinants of the health of children at risk in order to improve health outcomes and reduce inequality: the indicators collected by the CIPH, HBSC, ESPAD, CroCOSI are to be monitored and processed in the national context according to sociodemographic and socioeconomic features, and the findings are to be regularly updated.

4.1.5. Conduct a comprehensive analysis of barriers (spatial, financial barriers, and the quality of provided services) faced by children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in accessing healthcare services. This is aimed at contributing to better-designed programmes and interventions, considering the need for adapting existing and new infrastructure for children with developmental difficulties.

The mentioned measure is related to measure 6.1.1 – Develop a framework for vertical and horizontal collaboration in providing integrated social services to families and communities (universal, selective, and indicated), including a comprehensive analysis of barriers (spatial and financial) in accessing healthcare services and a comprehensive analysis of hidden costs of children's participation in education, standards, tools, and an integrated protocol for early detection, referral, support planning, and monitoring of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families according to their needs. Activity (2) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of barriers and hidden costs of participation of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in accessing healthcare services and education.

Specific Objective 4.2 Ensured support for the mental health protection of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4.2

4.2.1 Adopt an Action Plan for the mental health protection of children and youth, focusing particularly on children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and the prevention of violence among children and youth.

4.2.2 Provision of beds for child and adolescent psychiatry within the public health service network and increase the capacity of outpatient treatment and the availability of mental health professionals to enhance the quality of care for children with mental health issues.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE 5

ENSURED ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The ECG Study on the Economic Implementing Framework (EC, 2021) highlights the importance of general European recommendations and documents to ensure adequate housing and prevent the homelessness of children at risk, and emphasises the need to create a national framework and develop national policies aimed at improving the availability and affordability of quality housing for all, especially vulnerable groups of people.

The key characteristics of housing in the ECEC are characterised by a high share of private housing ownership and the absence of a systematic housing policy and social housing programmes. Based on the available data, individual groups of children at risk living in financial and hence housing deprivation are identified, as well as those children at risk who, due to specific circumstances, are at increased risk of homelessness (children leaving care, orphaned children who do not have secure housing, children with a migrant background, children living in extreme poverty, most often children of the Roma national minority, which is associated with precarious and inadequate housing).

The emphasis is placed on targeted interventions aimed at children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, but the basic precondition for the successful application of such interventions is the development of a comprehensive housing policy strategy. In accordance with the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia by 2030 foresees the adoption of the Housing Policy Strategy of the Republic of Croatia by 2030, which must focus significantly on social housing.

The following groups of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion face barriers to accessing adequate housing:

- 1) Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion – 126,000 children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, or 18.4% of the total population under the age of 18, according to 2020 data. (Eurostat, 2021a) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children)
- 2) Children from families of GMB beneficiaries – 13,977 children from families of GMB beneficiaries (as of 31 December 2020) (MLPSFSP, 2021a)
- 3) Children of the Roma national minority – 12,920 children under the age of 16 according to 2018 data. (Kunac et al., 2021)
- 4) Children leaving care – 3,487 children in care according to 2021 data (MLPSFSP, 2021b), i.e., 250–290 children per year leaving care (292 – 2015, 246 – 2016, 253 – 2017) (MLPSFSP, 2016, 2017, 2018)
- 5) Children with a migrant background – 2,522 children of irregular migrants; 942 children of applicants for international protection; 385 unaccompanied children – foreign nationals who were granted the right to temporary accommodation in crisis situations according to 2020 data. (Ombudsperson for Children, 2021)

Based on the basic principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Recommendation on investing in children 2013/112, the European Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021–2024,

which the ECG and the sustainability study accompanying the ECG rely on, the following objectives are set to create a framework for ensuring adequate access to housing for children at risk and for preventing homelessness:

1. Ensured adequate housing for families with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion
2. Ensured access to adequate housing for young people coming out of care

Specific Objective 5.1 Ensured adequate housing for families with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5.1

5.1.1 Conduct a comprehensive situation and needs analysis in the field of social housing for families and children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

5.1.2 Develop evidence-based measures aimed at social housing for families and children at risk of poverty and social exclusion as one of the areas of housing policy in the Republic of Croatia by 2030.

5.1.3 Ensure access to targeted energy poverty mitigation programmes for families with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

5.1.4 Create an incentivising environment for the stay and for improving the living conditions of young people and families (measure from the Action Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period 2021–2024).

5.1.5 Improve the living conditions and housing for members of the Roma national minority.

Specific Objective 5.2 Ensured access to adequate housing for young people coming out of care

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5.2

5.2.1 Improve and develop care outside one's own family as organised housing for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and young people leaving the social welfare system and the judiciary system after the implementation of the correctional measure, through organised housing with occasional support, with a simultaneous emphasis on increasing the overall and regional coverage, but also the staffing capacity.

5.2.2 Ensure housing allowance for children/young people leaving care for up to 1 year in accordance with their needs (the amount of allowance should be aligned with the current state of the housing rental market to provide them with an adequate standard of housing).

GENERAL OBJECTIVE 6

IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY TO CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social services in the community (hereinafter: SSC) broadly relate to health, correctional, educational, and social welfare services, as well as other services, when they are in the service of beneficiaries and contribute to the quality of life and inclusion in the community of people at risk. Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion are included in the social welfare system due to specific circumstances and needs, but they are primarily included in the education system and the health system.

One of the key areas for early identification of the risk of poverty and social exclusion is the education system, as all children aged 6/7 to 14 are enrolled in primary education in RC.

The education and early childhood education system should be a place where the needs of children at (potential) risk of poverty and social exclusion are comprehensively recognised. The entire child population is accessible within the primary school system, and in synergy with the social welfare and/or health system, preventive or other necessary measures can be taken to support and assist children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The provision of SSC in the RC is generally decentralised, while their financing is mostly centralised where the level of central government investment varies in their development and functioning. ECEC services are almost entirely fiscally decentralised, while the central government is more involved in funding the school, health, and social welfare systems. Local environments play an important role in planning, financing, organising, and providing services, but the investment is low and regionally uneven. Most local social expenditures are intended for monetary benefits (over 87%), and only a small proportion is intended for social services (less than 3% in municipalities and counties; about a tenth of social expenditures in cities). Most local expenditures are focused on family/child functions, with less developed areas having less developed services and lower benefits. Expenditures from the state budget in the social welfare system are equally focused on benefits and services, but the benefits can be used by all citizens under legally prescribed conditions, while the services are provided only to citizens in such communities where there are capacities. Funding for “new” services, in particular, services aimed at people at risk of poverty and social exclusion (e.g., teaching assistant/assistant services, learning assistance, parenting support) is predominantly provided by associations on a project basis.

Within the programme “Phase III: Testing the Child Guarantee in Croatia”, an assessment of the need for early childhood development services in Međimurje County has been developed, i.e. an assessment of the number of children aged 0–7 in need of early intervention services and the number of children to be closely monitored due to exposure to biomedical, social or environmental risks that can lead to developmental risks (such as teenage pregnancy, living in

poverty and social exclusion, or parental addiction). It has been shown that in the area of Međimurje County there are between 378 and 547 children at risk of developmental deviations or disabilities, or are at risk due to biomedical factors, while early development services cover between 250 and 300 children aged 0–7, i.e., only 50% of children. Estimating the number of children at risk of developmental deviations and disabilities due to social and environmental factors has been hampered by a lack of data. Therefore, the range of needs assessment is quite large, and a larger number of children certainly fall under more than one risk category.

Considering the high risks and the lack of support services for families at risk, more than 201 children have been exposed to neglect, abuse, or violence, with over 875 children having parents lacking sufficient parenting skills. Additionally, 1,640 Roma children live on the brink or below the poverty line. A significant portion of these children, whose parents are less familiar with service utilisation possibilities and face additional challenges such as lack of transportation, poverty, lack of information, and discriminatory practices, is not enrolled in any support system. The unknown level of coverage of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion by services also leads to the inability to monitor the developmental outcomes of these children by social and health services, preventing timely referrals to early childhood development services (early interventions) when needed.

In the previous period, positive steps have been taken in the development of social services for children, supported by allocated grants from structural and investment funds within the European financial perspective 2014–2020. A range of community-based services has been developed to support the deinstitutionalisation process and prevent institutionalisation. During this period, approximately HRK 75,927,157.37 (10,077,265.56 Euro) was secured from the European Social Fund to ensure additional needed professional staff for expanding the network of community support services for children, youth, and families at risk. Additionally, HRK 99,740,342.15 (13,237,818.32 Euro) was allocated for improving infrastructure conditions.

These grants facilitated the employment of around a hundred additional workers to expand the community service network, the establishment of approximately 20 mobile teams providing psychosocial support services to families at risk and foster families, and the complete departure of five service providers for children from institutional care. Spatial conditions for providing social services were enhanced, and business premises in smaller towns and municipalities were arranged to increase the availability of social services. Vehicles were procured to improve the mobility of professional workers and ensure support services in the homes of users. However, the resources available to social service providers still do not meet the overall needs in the local community. Regional disparities in the availability of social services persist, and efforts will continue in the upcoming period to expand the network of support services in the community using EU funds within the new EU programming period 2021–2027. This involves ongoing efforts to expand and increase the availability of services, prevent institutionalisation, and transform service providers.

In the upcoming period, activities are planned for the further development of social services for children, youth, and families at risk in areas where these services are insufficient or entirely unavailable. Expansion of organised housing services for children in residential units with

support from caregivers is planned, along with other non-institutional services aimed at supporting children, parenthood, and families, as well as preventing the separation of children and youth from their families (psychosocial support services for families at home through mobile teams, day-care services, and other empowerment programmes for families). To increase regional accessibility to community support services and reduce the number of users in institutions, an Operational Plan for Deinstitutionalisation, Prevention of Institutionalisation, and Transformation of Providers of Social Services in the Republic of Croatia from 2022 to 2027 has been adopted.

In December 2022, with the aim of preventing the separation of children from their families and ensuring support for children and families at risk, Family Support Action Standards were adopted. These standards were developed as part of the reform measure C4.3.R3 "Development of community services to prevent institutionalisation" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) office in Croatia. The standards aim to provide families at risk of child abuse, neglect, and social exclusion with access to community services focused on empowering families to function in their daily lives, ensuring practical support to enable children to grow up in a safe and stimulating family environment, and preventing the separation of children from their parents. Family support worker activities will be provided within the framework of the social service of psychosocial support to families or through measures for the protection of the rights and welfare of the child prescribed by the Family Act (OG 103/15, 98/19, and 47/20) in situations where low or medium risk for child development is assessed. Family support workers are intended for families with children at risk of separation from the family or the emergence of risks, as well as families planning the return of the child to the family after removal, with the aim of improving parenting skills for the everyday care of children. Family support workers will be provided in all counties to ensure regional balance, and approximately 40 family support workers are expected to be employed in state social care homes for children.

Additionally, ongoing activities include improving the implementation of family-legal protection measures (training and licensing of measure leaders) to enhance the knowledge and skills of measure leaders. With the goal of improving the quality of implementing measures of intensive professional assistance and supervision of childcare, the employment of measure leaders in state social care homes for children is planned, and Family Centre experts provide support services to families and implement various programmes to improve and strengthen parenting competencies. For children for whom, despite all measures taken, it is necessary to be separated from their families, the service of organised housing is continuously expanding, and residential units are being opened to prevent the institutionalisation of children, especially in counties where this service is not available or existing capacities are insufficient relative to needs.

Foster care as a form of out-of-institution care that provides care and support to the beneficiary in a stimulating and positive family environment has a long tradition in the Republic of Croatia. In the previous period, numerous positive steps and changes have been made in the field of foster care. Performing foster care as a profession, which includes standard foster care and specialised foster care for children, has been enabled. Foster parents engaged in foster care as a profession are entitled to maintenance allowances, foster care compensation, rights from

pension and mandatory health insurance, and rights during unemployment as employed individuals in accordance with special regulations. Specialised foster care for children has been made possible for foster parents who already perform foster care, have three years of experience in providing accommodation services to a child or a younger adult, and have completed high school education. The amounts of maintenance allowances and foster care compensation have been increased starting from 5 March 2022, and the base amount for calculating foster care compensation and maintenance allowances for 2023 has been raised. The compensation for the work of traditional and standard foster parents has increased by a total of 65-68% from 2021 to the present. Maintenance allowances for adults have increased by 9-30%, and for children by approximately 25-48%. The Act on Maternity and Parental Benefits has introduced a new time support for foster parents – foster care leave. Employed or self-employed foster parents are entitled to foster care leave lasting continuously for six months for the placement of a child up to the age of seven. Foster parents receive an increased amount of foster care compensation during the foster care leave, totaling EUR 609.

The following groups of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion face the greatest obstacles in accessing social and other services in the community:

- 1) Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion – 126,000 children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, i.e., 18.4% of the total population under the age of 18 (Eurostat, 2021a); 13,977 children of GMB beneficiaries according to 2020 data. (MLPSFSP, 2021a) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children)
- 2) Children of the Roma national minority – 12,920 children under the age of 16 according to 2018 data. (Kunac et al., 2018)
- 3) Children with a migrant background – 2,522 children of irregular migrants; 942 children of applicants for international protection; 385 unaccompanied children – foreign nationals who were granted the right to temporary accommodation in crisis situations according to 2020 data. (Ombudsperson for Children, 2021)
- 4) Children in alternative care – 3,487 children in care according to 2021 data. (MLPSFSP, 2021b)
- 5) Children in less developed, especially rural areas – 8.8% of the population in rural areas at risk of poverty compared to 4.2% in cities according to 2020 data; data for children are not available (Eurostat, 2021b) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children)
- 6) Children with developmental disabilities – 8.2% of children with disabilities (developmental disabilities) in the total population of children 0–19, or a total of 64,063 children as of 9 September 2021. (CIPH, 2021) (Proportion of a specific group of children in the total population of children)
- 7) Children whose parents are imprisoned – 1,135 minor children as of 31 December 2020; 2020: 1,320 averaged over the last five years.

Based on the ECG's General Objective of ensuring that every child – especially children growing up at risk of poverty and social exclusion – has access to basic social services, and the analyses presented here, and taking into account the perspectives of SSC experts, the following five objectives are set:

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.
2. Expanded network of foster care services in the RC by ensuring a spatially evenly distributed network and ensured quality support in childcare for foster parents.
3. Improved existing and developed new social support services for children leaving care.
4. Improvement of the system for collecting and monitoring data on poverty and social exclusion.

Specific Objective 6.1 Developed 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

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 6.1

6.1.1 Develop a framework for vertical and horizontal cooperation in the provision of integrated social services in the family and community (universal, selective and indicated), including a comprehensive analysis of barriers (spatial and financial) in accessing health services and an analysis of hidden costs of participation in the education of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, standards, instruments and integrated protocols for early detection, referral, support planning and monitoring of children at risk and their families according to their needs.

6.1.2 Establish a system of social planning and invest in the development of social services based on needs assessment and mapping of services for children in units of local (regional) self-government.

6.1.3 Expand the network of social services for children and youth at risk of poverty and social exclusion in areas with insufficient services based on the established system of social planning.

- I. Establishment/development of community service centres in counties with insufficient services: Bjelovar-Bilogora, Lika-Senj, Međimurje, Šibenik-Knin, Virovitica-Podravina, Osijek-Baranja, Brod-Posavina, Sisak-Moslavina.
- II. Development of integrated child protection services and family support, early childhood interventions, and quality inclusive education for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the Sisak-Moslavina, Brod-Posavina, and Osijek-

Baranja counties, with a higher proportion of the Roma population in the general population and low access to child protection services and family support.

6.1.4 Develop local communication strategies for promoting positive behaviours and addressing negative social norms and behaviours within the framework of social services in the community.

6.1.5 Develop and improve the availability of high-quality and evaluated parenting support programmes for parents/caregivers of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

6.1.6 Develop a competency framework for professionals in social welfare institutions and the establishment of training programmes, continuous training, specialisation, and professional support for working with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, as well as their families; the development of programmes for the prevention and cessation of violent behaviour and other unacceptable behaviours in children and youth.

6.1.7 Improve the capacity (knowledge and skills) of experts (including supervisory managers) in the social welfare system to ensure high-quality and timely early identification, referral, efficient case management, effective family interventions and the provision of services tailored to a multicultural environment, including supervision.

6.1.8 Improve the implementation of family legal protection measures through ensuring continuous training, supervision and increasing compensation for supervisory managers, and establishing a quality system for monitoring the success of measures.

6.1.9 Improve the digitalisation of social welfare systems and connect the Croatian Institute for Social Work and social service providers.

6.1.10 Develop and implement a comprehensive support model for children whose parents are imprisoned in accordance with the Council of Europe Recommendation on the children of imprisoned parents.

6.1.11 Ensure expert work with family or parents and other family members while the child is undergoing a correctional measure and while the child who conflicts with the law is separated from his or her family.

Specific Objective 6.2 Expanded network of foster care services in the RC by ensuring a spatially evenly distributed network, and ensured quality support in childcare for foster parents

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 6.2

6.2.1 Improve the quality of foster care conditions.

6.2.2 Improve the quality of training and education of foster parents.

6.2.3 Develop and improve the provision of support to foster parents and children placed in foster families.

6.2.4 Develop a system for continuous monitoring of the quality of the service provided, including the satisfaction of professionals from the Croatian Institute for Social Work, foster parents, and children in foster families.

Specific Objective 6.3 Improved existing and developed new social support services for children leaving care

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 6.3

6.3.1 Develop and implement social mentoring services for young people leaving care or completing corrective measures in all counties and improving the availability of programmes to strengthen knowledge and skills in teamwork, entrepreneurial spirit, innovation, practical knowledge, problem analysis, and resolution with mentorship support for young people.

Specific Objective 6.4 Improved system for collecting and monitoring indicators of material and social deprivation for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 6.4

6.4.1 Develop a comprehensive framework for monitoring child poverty and social exclusion – a comprehensive diagnosis of poverty and exclusion.

(National Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period 2021-2027, along with the corresponding Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period 2021-2024, Special Objective 1: Reduction of poverty and social exclusion of vulnerable groups, Measure 1: Comprehensive diagnosis of poverty and social exclusion)

APPENDICES:

FRAMEWORK FOR REPRESENTING THE HIERARCHY OF GOALS, MEASURES, AND ACTIVITIES WITH FINANCIAL INDICATORS

**FRAMEWORK FOR DISPLAYING THE HIERARCHY OF GOALS, MEASURES
AND ACTIVITIES WITH FINANCIAL INDICATORS OF THE NATIONAL
ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATION OF
THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
EUROPEAN GUARANTEE FOR CHILDREN**

Zagreb, 2023

MEASURES AND ACTIVITIES BY GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE EUROPEAN UNION COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE

To achieve the goals defined by the National Action Plan for the implementation of the EU Council recommendations on establishing a European Child Guarantee, measures have been elaborated, along with data on funding sources and the total cost of implementing these measures in the specified period.

The defined measures in this action plan will be financed by:

State Budget funds: EUR 353,385,279.00 (period from 2023 to 2025)

ESF+ funds: EUR 106,902,738.58 (period from 2023 to 2025)

NPOO funds: EUR 191,665,579.34 (period from 2023 to 2025)

OPULJP 2014-2020 funds: EUR 5,252.15 (period in 2023)

Breakdown by years is as follows:

2023:

State Budget: EUR 61,089,089.00

ESF+ funds: EUR 34,851,368.58

NPOO funds: EUR 43,936,213.27

OPULJP 2014-2020 funds: EUR 5,252.15

2024:

State Budget: EUR 144,440,546.00

ESF+ funds: EUR 40,041,834.00

NPOO funds: EUR 72,274,381.07

2025:

State Budget: EUR 147,855,644.00

ESF+ funds: EUR 32,009,536.00

NPOO funds: EUR 75,454,985.00

Overview by general objective for the period 2023-2025:

General Objective 1:

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025: EUR 310,613,647.00

General Objective 2:

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025: EUR 38,821,094.00

General Objective 3:

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025: EUR 228,355,217.00

General Objective 4:

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025: EUR 265,148.00

General Objective 5:

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025: EUR 28,426,426.00

General Objective 6:

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025: EUR 45,477,312.03

**Total estimated implementation cost of all general objectives for the period 2023-2025:
EUR 651,958,844.03**

OVERVIEW OF GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

General Objective 1: Improved access to early childhood education and care
<u>Specific Objective 1.1</u> Ensured right of access to quality ECEC for every child in the RC from the age of 3 until the start of primary school, by 2030
MEASURES: 1.1.1 Provide prerequisites for gradually increasing the coverage of children in early childhood education and care ACTIVITIES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Create preconditions for a longer preschool duration.(2) Enable children of older preschool age and children of vulnerable groups to have priority when enrolling in kindergarten, if there are no conditions for the coverage of all children.(3) Establishment of a mechanism to monitor the implementation of enrolment preferences for these children.(4) Develop a feasibility study of providing free ECEC for all children of early and preschool age, taking into account the primacy and specificity of the needs of vulnerable groups. RESULT INDICATOR(S): The number of children enrolled in the preschool education programme with an extended duration of the compulsory preschool programme HOLDER(S): MSE CO-HOLDERS: LRSGU Funding Source: K676071, NRRP Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

1.1.2 Invest in infrastructure development and equipment in the form of constructing new and reconstructing and upgrading existing KGs, addressing the problem of regional differences in the availability of quality KGs, and developing innovative and efficient models of service provision in smaller areas with fewer children, and taking into account the need to adapt the existing and new infrastructure to children with developmental disabilities

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Develop a plan for building new and expanding the capacity of existing kindergartens and identify alternative locations for preschool education, especially in the areas of local and regional self-government units that are below average in terms of development index.
- (2) Build new or expand existing capacities of kindergartens.
- (3) Take advantage of existing school facilities in LRSGU with fewer children of early and preschool age or sparsely populated areas that are below average in terms of development index in which there are no kindergartens, to improve spatial access to early childhood education and care.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

The number of upgraded/reconstructed kindergartens

The number of newly built kindergartens

HOLDER(S):

MSE

CO-HOLDERS:

MRDEUF

Funding Source:

K676067, NRRP

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 150,132,713.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 28,935,085.00

2024: € 56,480,151.00

2025: € 64,717,477.00

1.1.3 Improve the quality of ECEC by adopting key policies on kindergarten educators, ensuring an adequate number of educators, professional associates and principals, strengthening their competencies, and creating better conditions for their employment in areas that are below average in terms of the value of the development index

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Develop a human resource needs plan in the ECEC; including the possibility of reskilling or upskilling primary education teachers.
- (2) Make an analysis of the needs of hiring an assistant for children with developmental disabilities or a language-communication intermediary or a third educator.
- (3) Monitor the change in the proportion of children for whom an assistant for children with developmental disabilities or a language-communication intermediary or third-party educator is provided.
- (4) Design and implement activities to attract future educators to work in the areas of units that are below average in terms of development index values, including fast-track recognition of the employment rights of education workers displaced from Ukraine and their employment.
- (5) Propose standards of occupation/qualifications of educators and professional associates considering competences related to inclusive education in cooperation with higher education institutions and experts in the field of ECEC.
- (6) Organise, implement, and standardise professional development for educators and professional associates, including those related to inclusive education of vulnerable groups, especially children with developmental disabilities, children of Roma national minority and children displaced from Ukraine, and in the field of protection of mental health of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of newly employed education workers in the education system

Number of education workers covered by professional development activities

HOLDER(S):

MSE, LRSGU, ETTA

CO-HOLDERS:

ASHE, MSE

Funding Source:

A579000, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

Specific Objective 1.2

Improved budgetary and legislative framework to ensure regionally uniform access to affordable and high-quality ECEC

MEASURES:

1.2.1 Improve the funding model and strengthen the role of the central government in making a part of key decisions in the ECEC

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Develop a funding model to include the support of LRSGUs located in areas of units that are ranked below average according to the development index.
- (2) Increase the number of LRSGU using the unified methodology for calculating subsidies for the ECEC programme implemented by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the financing model of LRSGU.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

The number of LRSGU that have received financial support through the implementation of the new funding model

HOLDER(S):

MSE

CO-HOLDERS:

/

Funding Source:

K676071, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 149,713,955.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 14,599,509.00

2024: € 72,997,545.00

2025: € 62,116,901.00

Specific Objective 1.3

Developed additional support mechanisms within the education system and funding mechanisms aimed at ensuring access to ECEC for children at risk and their families, especially children of lower socioeconomic status, to address the "hidden" costs of regularly attending KG

MEASURES:

1.3.1 Increase the access of ECEC to children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Within the tenders related to the construction or upgrading of kindergartens, take care of the adaptation of the infrastructure to the needs of children with developmental disabilities.
- (2) Through tenders for kindergartens from various financial sources, ensure the possibility of purchasing didactic equipment adapted to the specific needs of children with developmental disabilities.
- (3) Through tenders for kindergartens from various sources of funding, consider the possibility of providing (in)direct costs of participation of children from families of lower socioeconomic status in ECEC programmes (e.g., costs of transportation to ECEC

institutions, costs of excursions/visits to theatres, etc., parental subsidies, costs of special programmes, etc.).

- (4) When developing the Human Resources Needs Plan in the ECEC, organising professional development (PC1, measure 3), take care of the need to strengthen the staff structure of the KGs, which are attended by a large number of children at risk of poverty, children of the Roma national minority, children with developmental disabilities and children displaced from Ukraine so that the KGs can respond to the specific needs of children and parents at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of kindergartens with adapted infrastructure for children with developmental difficulties

Number of contracted projects in which preschools implement activities related to the needs of children from vulnerable groups

HOLDER(S):

MSE

CO-HOLDERS:

LRSQU

Funding Source:

K676067, NRRP

K818050, SB, OPEHR 2014-2020

K733067, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 10.006.179.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 2.506.179.00

2024: € 3.500,000.00

2025: € 4,000,000.00

1.3.2 Continuously monitor the reasons why children of the Roma national minority over 3 years of age are not in the ECEC system, establishing indicative categories of barriers to access of children to kindergartens (financial reasons, distance, insufficient places in kindergartens, parents do not want to enrol the child, kindergartens delay enrolment because the child has developmental difficulties, language barriers, digital barriers – the parent does not have access to e-enrolment)

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Conduct of a repeated base data survey (which, among other things, verifies key barriers to access to services, including ECEC services)

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Developed research report

Number of printed publications

HOLDER(S):

OHRRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

MSE, LRSGU

Funding Source:

A513059 JUPI II, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 415,800.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 176,000.00

2025: € 239,800.00

1.3.3 Implement public awareness programmes on the importance of investing in ECEC (targeting decision-makers) and participation of Roma children in ECEC programmes (with special emphasis on rural areas and other physically and culturally isolated communities)

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Continuation of the implementation of the national campaign “Launch the Wheel of Knowledge” (“Pokreni kotač znanja”), national and regional professional gatherings with the aim of improving the understanding of factors contributing to positive educational outcomes, including the impact of the ECEC: educational regional activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of professionals for integrative work in the early and preschool education system.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of media posts
Number of events held
Number of educational activities
Number of participants

HOLDER(S):

OHRRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

LRSU

Funding Source:

A513061 JUPI O, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 345,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 90,000.00
2024: € 130,000.00
2025: € 125,000.00

General Objective 2:

Ensured access to education and support for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Specific Objective 2.1

Affordable and free primary and secondary education provided for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES:

2.1.1 Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the hidden costs of participation in education for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which will analyse in detail the structure of financial and other material support for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion at the level of primary and secondary education; with special emphasis on various sources of funding and the structure of the “hidden costs”

The mentioned measure is linked to measure 6.1.1: Develop a framework for vertical and horizontal collaboration in providing integrated social services to families and communities (universal, selective, and indicated), including a comprehensive analysis of barriers (spatial and financial) in accessing health services and a comprehensive analysis of hidden costs of children's participation in education at risk of poverty and social exclusion, standards, tools, and an integrated protocol for early detection, referral, support planning, and monitoring of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families according to their needs; Activity (3) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of barriers and hidden costs of children's participation in health services and education for those at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Elaborate the methodology of data collection necessary for the preparation of the analysis.
- (2) Election of an independent body for the preparation of the analysis.
- (3) Develop recommendations for securing funds to cover hidden costs based on the conclusions of the analysis and research.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Conducted comprehensive analysis of hidden costs of participation in education

HOLDER(S):

MSE, MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

Funding Source:

T877004

ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 4,000,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00
2024: € 2,000,000.00
2025: € 2,000,000.00

2.1.2 Provide financial support for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the primary and secondary school systems

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Provide other educational materials for primary school pupils and textbooks for secondary school pupils from the families of beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum benefit.
- (2) Provide funds for extended stay and extracurricular activities (e.g. school trips, schools in nature) for pupils at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (3) Through tenders for primary and secondary schools from various sources of funding, consider the possibility of providing so-called hidden costs of education for pupils at risk of poverty and social exclusion: equipment for art education, equipment for physical education, funds for extracurricular activities, visits to cultural and artistic institutions, computer equipment and the Internet for participation in distance learning, equipment for placement in secondary vocational schools, school transport, computers, etc.).

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of pupils for whom supplementary educational materials for primary school pupils and textbooks for secondary school pupils from families receiving GMB

Number of pupils belonging to the Roma national minority provided with extended stay and extracurricular activities

Number of contracted projects in which users from primary and secondary schools are involved, conducting activities, and covering expenses related to the needs of pupils at risk of poverty/members of vulnerable groups

HOLDER(S):

MSE

CO-HOLDERS:

MLPSFSP

Funding Source:

A578045, SB

A767015, SB

K733067, SB, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 31,572,902.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 1,821,636.00

2024: € 12,920,351.00

2025: € 16,830,915.00

Specific Objective 2.2**Promoting inclusive educational practices and building a culture of diversity****MEASURES:****2.2.1 Professional development of teachers, professional associates and principals related to vulnerable groups in order to strengthen their competencies to ensure inclusive education****ACTIVITIES:**

- (1) Organise professional training for educators working in a multicultural environment, including the importance of cooperation with parents.
- (2) Organise professional training on teaching methods and on the use of assisting technologies and other tools for working with pupils with developmental disabilities.
- (3) Conduct trainings in the field of mental health protection of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion for all educators on the growing challenges of mental health and the implementation of anti-stigma programmes to combat prejudices against children with mental health issues.
- (4) Conduct training to strengthen the capacity of teachers, educators, and support staff on the topic of inclusion and methodological adaptations to support children displaced from Ukraine, including adopting socio-emotional skills, addressing stress, trauma, and grief.
- (5) Deliver training to enhance the capacity of experts in the prevention of violence in children and the early identification of risks for all educational workers.

- (6) Implementation of the programme "For a Safe and Supportive Environment in Schools" and the prevention programme for electronic violence "Break the Chain - Stop Electronic Violence."
- (7) Develop and strengthen parenting skills through parent psychoeducation, following the example of the programme: "School for Parents," which will be conducted by ASTIPH - county institutes will conduct regular post-traumatic education in all mental health services.
- (8) Through interdepartmental cooperation with ministries responsible for social protection, education, and internal affairs, as well as other bodies of state administration and non-governmental organisations, public health institutes will conduct education for children from an early age, addressing the use of mobile networks and the potential dangers they may face.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of educational workers employed in schools with instruction in the language and script of national minorities who participated in professional training

Number of educational workers who participated in professional training for the use of assistive technologies and other tools for working with pupils with developmental difficulties

Number of educational workers who participated in professional training related to the prevention of violence in children and early identification of risks

Number of implemented violence prevention programmes "For a Safe and Supportive Environment in Schools" and the number of included children

Number of implemented programmes for the prevention of electronic violence "Break the Chain - Stop Electronic Violence" and the number of included children

Number of educational workers who participated in education on children's mental health (mental health literacy, recognition, and provision of psychological first aid to children with mental health problems in schools), as part of the implementation of the "PoMoZi Da" programme

HOLDER(S):

MSE

CO-HOLDERS:

MLPSFSP, ETTA, CARNET, ASTIPH, County institutes for public health, MI, MH, Family Centre, Non-Governmental Organisations, Chambers

Funding Source:

A767022, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 49,773.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 16,591.00

2024: € 16,591.00

2025: € 16,591.00

2.2.2 Provide professional support to pupils and parents belonging to vulnerable groups to facilitate pupils' active participation in the school environment and community

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Provide support to existing professional associates in schools for children belonging to vulnerable groups with the aim of early recognition and prevention of risks of abuse, neglect, violence, as well as poverty and social exclusion.
- (2) Establish legal prerequisites for the engagement of Roma assistants.
- (3) Provide additional support to educational institutions with a larger number of pupils belonging to the Roma national minority in the form of learning assistance/mentoring, training of teachers and professional associates.
- (4) Ensure timely access to/availability of learning the Croatian language for pupils who have the right to education in the RC but do not know or insufficiently know the Croatian language and Latin script.
- (5) Provide additional support to primary and secondary school pupils displaced from Ukraine, aimed at educational and social integration (providing school supplies, equipment, and other educational materials, extended stay, accommodation in student dormitories, extracurricular activities, etc.).
- (6) Encourage the inclusion of children from the Roma national minority, migrants, children displaced from Ukraine, and children with developmental difficulties in participation in pupil representative bodies, extracurricular activities, and other content in the school environment.
- (7) Promote the equipping of schools with innovative teaching and didactic tools to improve the learning of pupils with difficulties and non-native language pupils.
- (8) Conduct professional development on the topic of inclusive education to enhance the competencies of educational professionals working with children with developmental difficulties.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of children at risk of abuse, neglect, violence, poverty, and social exclusion who have received expert support from existing expert associates in schools

Number of educational institutions that have received additional support (related to working with target groups at risk of poverty/vulnerable groups)

Number of pupils displaced from Ukraine who have received additional support (extended stay, extracurricular activities, accommodation in student dormitories, etc.)

Number of provided supports for co-financing teaching materials and equipment for primary and secondary school pupils displaced from Ukraine

HOLDER(S):

MSE

CO-HOLDERS:

ETTA, ASOO; Association of Cities, Croatian Association of Municipalities, Croatian Association of Counties

Funding Source:

A767015, SB

A579072, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 1,619,468.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 643,156.00

2024: € 463,156.00

2025: € 513,156.00

2.2.3 Promote positive and successful educational stories of pupils with disabilities, pupils living in poverty and pupils of the Roma national minority

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Continuation of the implementation of the national campaign “Launch the Wheel of Knowledge” and promotion of positive and successful educational stories of pupils belonging to the Roma national minority through a competition for the best Roma pupils,

development of video materials on successful pupils, and continuation of the dissemination of the documentary film “Svoje.”

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of media posts

Number of promotions held

HOLDER(S):

OHRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

A513061 JUPI O, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 137,396.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 4,304.00

2024: € 65,374.00

2025: € 67,718.00

2.2.4 Provide more extracurricular activities with greater coverage of school children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion of the Roma national minority and leisure programmes that follow the modern learning methods and the needs of children and young people of the Roma national minority

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Financial support to educational institutions/LRSGUs/NGOs serves the implementation of creative sports and educational activities, including activities to strengthen personal skills such as learning a foreign language; information, financial and civic literacy; winter and summer integrated camps for children, etc., in communities with a larger Roma population.

(2) Financial support to educational institutions to ensure free and socialisation activities for children displaced from Ukraine, as well as extracurricular activities for pupils displaced from Ukraine.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of supported projects of educational institutions, LRSUGs, NGOs aimed at children belonging to the Roma national minority

Number of children belonging to the Roma national minority who are beneficiaries of services/activities, sorted by age

HOLDER(S):

OHRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

A681060 JUPI I, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 910,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 560,000.00

2025: € 350,000.00

2.2.5 Improvement and availability of free programmes aimed at social inclusion of children and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion, while ensuring more extracurricular activities with greater coverage of school children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, as well as programmes that meet the leisure time of children and young people, follow modern learning methods and the needs of children and young people

(e.g. learning support programmes, sports activities, foreign languages, information technology and robotics, sports, arts, and others)

Through the availability of social inclusion programmes to children and families at risk of poverty (e.g., cultural, artistic, sports, educational programmes and excursions), it will contribute to developing and

focusing children's interests in these areas, strengthening personal competences and social skills in order to prevent social exclusion. Children and young people leaving care will be provided with programmes to empower them and prevent social exclusion.

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Provision of extracurricular programmes with the aim of social inclusion of children and families at risk of poverty.
- (2) Implementation of cultural, artistic activities for children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (3) Implementation of sports activities for children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (4) Ensuring spatial and human capacities for participation of children with developmental disabilities in extracurricular activities.
- (5) Financial support to educational institutions for the purpose of providing leisure and socialisation activities for children displaced from Ukraine, as well as extracurricular classes for pupils displaced from Ukraine.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of children and young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion included in social inclusion programmes (by age and gender)

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

MSE, MINTS, MCM

Funding Source:

SB A734189 Associations in Social Care - Invoice (3811)

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 531,555.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 177,185.00

2024: € 177,185.00

2025: € 177,185.00

General Objective 3:

Ensured access to quality nutrition for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Specific Objective 3.1

Developed comprehensive system of promoting and encouraging breastfeeding at the national level

MEASURES

3.1.1 Develop national breastfeeding targets through the National Breastfeeding Protection and Promotion Programme 2022–2025, based on the World Health Organisation's 2025 Global Nutrition Goals

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Establish coordination teams for the implementation of the “Baby-Friendly Hospitals” programme according to the revised initiative from 2018 in each public maternity ward, as the bearers of activities and implementation of the programme in the institution.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Coordination teams for the implementation of the “Baby-Friendly Hospitals” programme formed according to the revised initiative from 2018

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

3.1.2 Develop a system of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of all specific objectives of the National Breastfeeding Protection and Promotion Programme (in preparation) from 2023 to 2026

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Monitoring of data on the number of re-evaluated maternity wards for the acquisition of the title “Baby-Friendly Hospital.”

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of re-evaluated maternity wards for the acquisition of the title “Baby-Friendly Hospital”

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

3.1.3 Introduce monitoring of the percentage of exclusively breastfed children aged 0–5 months, in accordance with the definition of the World Health Organisation

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Data on infant nutrition in line with the WHO's definition of nutrition, which should be included in the communication message “Report after each examination” sent from the health care activities of preschool children and family (general) medicine to CHIS.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Communication message “Report after each examination” sent from the health care activities of preschool children and family (general) medicine activities to CHIS

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

3.1.4 Adapt national legislation to ensure the consistent application of the International Code on Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes**ACTIVITIES:**

- (1) Appointment of a commission for drafting legal acts that would make the Code SZO fully part of the national legislation in accordance with resolution WHA 45.34 of the World Health Assembly.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

A Commission appointed to work on improving the legislative framework to ensure consistent implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

3.1.5 Re-evaluate and strengthen the network of Baby-Friendly Hospitals including the sustainability of the breastfeeding promotion programme in the health system (maternity wards and intensive neonatal care units) by developing binding measures, to ensure the consistent implementation of this initiative in the RC

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Monitoring the data on the number of re-evaluated JINL/JINJL - baby-friendly (neo-BFHI)" (*neonatal intensive care unit*)

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of JINL/JINJL for the acquisition of „JINL/JINJL —baby-friendly (neo-BFHI)“

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

3.1.6 Establish a national reference centre for the planning, implementation, and coordination of the education of health professionals and parents during pregnancy, but also before a planned pregnancy, in connection with the nutrition (breastfeeding and nutrition with donated human milk) of the youngest children

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Creating the conditions for granting the title of the reference centre for breastfeeding medicine to UHC Zagreb.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Most conditions for granting the title of the reference centre for breastfeeding medicine to UHC Zagreb have been met

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

CHIF

Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

3.1.7 Conduct a public campaign and develop educational materials on the importance and benefits of breastfeeding and donated human milk, including materials in the Ukrainian language

ACTIVITIES:

(1) Coordination and monitoring of the work of breastfeeding support groups in the RC.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Monitoring the work of breastfeeding support groups in the RC

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

Croatian Association of Breastfeeding Support Groups

Funding Source:

Croatian Association of Breastfeeding Support Groups, own funds

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Funds not coming from the government bodies

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

Specific Objective 3.2

Nutritionally balanced school meals provided for a group of primary school children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES:

3.2.1 Within the school system, develop preventive programmes and work on raising the level of awareness among children, teachers, and parents about the importance of a healthy and nutritionally balanced diet

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Develop a communication plan for the maintenance of preventive healthy nutrition programmes within the education system.
- (2) Give lectures to target groups within schools.
- (3) Develop educational materials on the importance of a healthy diet.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Marking of School Breakfast Week with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of school nutrition and developing habits of proper nutrition; by 2030, 8 national campaigns of School Breakfast Week on different topics held

Production, update, and distribution of educational materials of the “Healthy Living” programme with accompanying training of educational workers

HOLDER(S):

CIPH

CO-HOLDERS:

ETTA

Funding Source:

A884001, CIPH (SB, Healthy Living national programme)

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 721,014.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 227,835.00

2024: € 240,188.00

2025: € 252,991.00

3.2.2 Improve the quality of nutrition in educational institutions by implementing the National Guidelines for the Nutrition of Pupils in all primary schools

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Working group for the revision of the Pupil Nutrition Norms in Primary Schools was appointed.
- (2) Analysis of the state of implementation of the Pupil Nutrition Norms in Primary Schools.
- (3) National Guidelines for the Nutrition of Primary School Pupils were revised.
- (4) Trainings for school cooks and school nutrition teams.
- (5) Electronic database of school meals to facilitate the preparation of menus in line with the Norms and Guidelines.
- (6) Recommendation for schools on recommended food products in vending machines (products with the guarantee mark “Healthy Living as a Healthier Choice”) was updated and revised.
- (7) Establishment of an effective system of monitoring the implementation of the Pupil Nutrition Norms in Primary Schools.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Working group for the revision of Pupil Nutrition Norms in Primary Schools was appointed

National Guidelines for the Nutrition of Primary School Pupils were revised in accordance with the revised Norms

Trainings for school cooks and school nutrition teams

Electronic database of school meals to facilitate the preparation of menus in line with the Norms and Guidelines

Updated and revised Recommendation for schools on recommended food products in vending machines (products with the guarantee mark Healthy Living as a Healthier Choice)

HOLDER(S):

CIPH

CO-HOLDERS:

MH, ETTA, MSE

Funding Source:

A884001, SB, CIPH, Healthy Living national programme

A618207, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 600,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 200,000.00

2024: € 200,000.00

2025: € 200,000.00

Specific Objective 3.3

Ensured access to a regular and nutritionally balanced diet for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES:

3.3.1 Provision of meals in primary schools for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including children displaced from Ukraine, as well as provision of meals (including days of weekends and school holidays) through food package distributions provided by humanitarian organisations

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Preparation and publication of calls providing nutrition for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (2) Contracting of projects.
- (3) Monitoring the implementation of projects.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of children in families who have received food assistance (monitoring the number of children as an indicator of results from the year 2024)

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

MSE

Funding Source:

T877004, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 11,774,968.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 5,441,635.00

2025: € 6,333,333.00

3.3.2. Provision of meals for all children in all primary schools, including children displaced from Ukraine.**ACTIVITIES:**

- (1) Adoption of a Decision by the Government of the Republic of Croatia.
- (2) Amendment of the Law on Primary and Secondary Education.
- (3) Implementation and monitoring of subsidised meals in all primary schools.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Amended Act on Primary and Secondary Education

HOLDER(S):

MSE

CO-HOLDER(S):

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Source of financing:

A768072, SB, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 214,659,235.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 70,190,458.00

2024: € 72,234,389.00

2025: € 72,234,388.00

3.3.3 Raising awareness among future parents and especially pregnant women (within the framework of parenting support programmes and/or pregnancy courses) about the importance of a healthy and nutritionally balanced diet for the health of the mother and child

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Develop a plan for accessing prospective parents for invitations to created programmes.
- (2) Give lectures to future parents.
- (3) Develop educational materials for parents on the importance of a healthy and nutritionally balanced diet that will be distributed during the visit of the patronage service to families.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Marking the National Breastfeeding Week with the development of targeted educational materials and educating experts and health professionals on the promotion of breastfeeding

HOLDER(S):

CIPH

CO-HOLDERS:

MH

Funding Source:

A884001 CIPH (State Budget - Healthy Living national programme)

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 600,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 200,000.00

2024: € 200,000.00

2025: € 200,000.00

General Objective 4:

Ensured access to health services to children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Specific Objective 4.1

Ensured access to health services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES:

4.1.1 Establish an integrated early detection system of children (0–5 years of age) at risk of developmental deviations due to biomedical and social risks under the health, social and education systems, and develop the service “Team for Early Development in the Community” with the aim of locating, early detection, and support of children at risk of developmental risk/deviation/disabilities in isolated (Roma communities) and rural communities

- (I) Establishment of a national system of monitoring and early screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age), due to biological risks and environmental and social risks, using a standardised developmental test for five developmental areas: communication, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, problem solving and personal and social development.

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Adaptation or development of a standardised development test, development of protocols and guidelines for the implementation of the national monitoring system, early screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age) and referrals within the health system, as well as definitions of cooperation, role, and coordination with the educational and social system in the above process.
- (2) Defining and implementing training of health professionals for the implementation of the national system of monitoring and early screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age).
- (3) Improvement of the legislative and institutional framework, and financial resources for the establishment of a national system for early monitoring and screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age).
- (4) Establishment of an information system for early monitoring and screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age), and exchange of data with the educational and social system with the aim of planning timely and exemplary forms of support for children and their families – This activity is related to measure 6.1.1 Develop a framework for vertical and horizontal cooperation in the provision of integrated social and other services in the family and community (universal, selective, and indicated), including standards, instruments and integrated protocols for early detection, referral, support planning and monitoring of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and

their families according to their needs – Activity 6 Development of an integrated information system for data exchange.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Adopted protocol and guidelines for the implementation of the national system of monitoring and early screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age)

Training of health professionals for the implementation of the national system of monitoring and early screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age)

Improved legislative and institutional framework for the establishment of a national system for early monitoring and screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age)

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

MLPSFSP, MSE, LRSGU

Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

(II) Establishment of an integrated early intervention system for children aged 0–5 years with developmental disabilities or at risk of developmental deviations due to biomedical and social risks within the health, social and education system, and ensuring regional availability of the services at home and in the local community

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Improvement of protocols, guidelines, and standards for the implementation of integrated early intervention programmes in the home and community, and a single plan for support to the child and family, within the health, education, and social system.
- (2) Defining and implementing training of health, education, and social workers for the implementation of an early intervention programme.
- (3) Improvement of the legislative and institutional framework and financial resources for early intervention programmes for children with developmental disabilities or at risk for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age) and their families at home and in the community.
- (4) Establishment of an information system for the exchange of data between the health, social and educational systems with the aim of providing timely, integrated, and appropriate support to children with developmental disabilities or at risk of developmental deviations (0–5 years of age) and their families at home and in the community – This activity is related to measure 6.1.1 Develop a framework for vertical and horizontal cooperation in the provision of integrated social and other services in the family and community (universal, selective, and indicated), including standards, instruments and integrated protocols for early detection, referral, support planning and monitoring of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families according to their needs – Activity 6 Development of an integrated information system for data exchange.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Adopted protocol and guidelines for the implementation of the national system of monitoring and early screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age)

Training of health professionals for the implementation of the national system of monitoring and early screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age)

Improved legislative and institutional framework for the establishment of a national system for early monitoring and screening of children for developmental deviations (0–5 years of age)

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

MLPSFSP, MSE, LRSGU

Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

4.1.2 Improve the primary health care systems to provide quality and integrated health services at home and in the local community, with an emphasis on children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and those living in remote (islands), rural and underdeveloped areas

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Establishment of regional availability of primary and specialist-consultative health care in the local community, through the empowerment of a network of paediatricians and primary health care doctors, a network of school medicine teams, specialist-consultative health care (child psychiatry, physical medicine, and rehabilitation, etc.) and non-medical professionals (speech therapist, psychologist, rehabilitator, etc.), in accordance with the needs of the local community. Investing in infrastructure and increasing the number of staff and specialist development with the aim of providing quality, efficient and specialised health care services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, especially children living in remote (islands), rural and poorly developed areas, taking into account the need to adapt the existing and new infrastructure to children with developmental disabilities.
- (2) Education of primary health care workers, with an emphasis on early detection of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion through the provision of adequate and quality health care for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and especially children living in remote (islands), rural and poorly developed areas.
- (3) Development of new models for providing primary and preventive health care through mobile multidisciplinary teams, focusing on early detection of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and providing appropriate support to children, with a particular focus on children living in remote (islands), rural and poorly developed areas.
- (4) Improvement of the information system on the availability of the health system, primary and specialist-consultative health care, to children and families displaced from Ukraine.
- (5) Education of health professionals on the effect of stress and trauma on the early development of children displaced from Ukraine.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

An empowered network of paediatricians and primary health care doctors

Education of primary health care workers conducted, focusing on early detection of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and providing appropriate support to children through the provision of quality health care, especially for children living in remote (islands), rural and poorly developed areas

HOLDER(S):

MH

CO-HOLDERS:

CIPH, CHIF, MLPSFSP

Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

4.1.3 Conduct continuous training on reproductive health, especially for children and parents of the Roma national minority, to prevent teenage pregnancy and child marriage (monitor the trend of the number of teenage pregnancies)

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Implementation of regional and local educational activities on reproductive health of women and girls in Roma communities/localities.
- (2) Development of public health programmes in the field of promoting responsible sexual behaviour and protection of sexual and reproductive health, with the aim of increasing awareness, education and information of children and parents of the Roma national minority.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of regional and local educational activities

Number of members of the Roma national minority, broken down by age and gender

HOLDER(S):

OHRRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

MSE, MH, CIPH

Funding Source:

A513060 JUPI ZDRAV, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 100,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 50,000.00

2025: € 50,000.0

4.1.4 Enhance the monitoring of the health status and habits as well as the determinants of the health of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion of the Roma national minority in order to improve health outcomes and reduce inequality: the indicators collected by the CIPH, HBSC, ESPAD, CroCOSI are to be monitored and processed in the national context according to sociodemographic and socioeconomic features, and the findings are to be regularly updated

ACTIVITIES:

(1) Preparation of a health image of children belonging to the Roma national minority

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Research report produced; printed publication of findings

HOLDER(S):

OHRRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

MH, CIPH

Funding Source:

A513060 JUPI ZDRAV, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 80,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 40,000.00

2025: € 40,000.00

4.1.5 Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the barriers (spatial and financial barriers and the quality of services provided) faced by children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in accessing health services in order to contribute to the better design of programmes and interventions aimed at such children, taking into account the adaptation of the existing and new infrastructure to children with developmental disabilities

The mentioned measure is linked to measure 6.1.1: Develop a framework for vertical and horizontal collaboration in providing integrated social services to families and communities (universal, selective, and indicated), including a comprehensive analysis of barriers (spatial and financial) in accessing health services and a comprehensive analysis of hidden costs of children's participation in education at risk of poverty and social exclusion, standards, tools, and an integrated protocol for early detection, referral, support planning, and monitoring of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families according to their needs; Activity (2) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of barriers and hidden costs of children's participation in health services and education for those children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Elaborate the methodology of data collection necessary for the preparation of the analysis.
- (2) Election of an independent body for the preparation of the analysis.
- (3) Based on the conclusions of the analysis and research, develop recommendations to ensure easier access of children to all health services.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Comprehensive analysis carried out

HOLDER(S):

Research Institutes and Faculties

CO-HOLDERS:

MH, CIPH, UNICEF, OCD

Funding Source:

Funds not coming from the government bodies – funds of the research institutes

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

Specific Objective 4.2

Ensured support for the mental health protection of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES:

4.2.1 Adopt an Action Plan for the mental health protection of children and youth, focusing particularly on children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and the prevention of violence among children and youth

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Adopt an Action Plan for the protection of mental health of children and youth, with special attention focused on children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (2) Conducted training for healthcare professionals and specialists in the healthcare system on the integrated approach to health services for children, the specific needs of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including children displaced from Ukraine, and the

mental health of children and youth as part of the Action Plan for the protection of mental health of children and youth, aiming at early identification of difficulties and providing timely and effective support.

- (3) Implement regional educational activities on combating discrimination in access to healthcare services targeted at healthcare professionals.
- (4) Develop targeted programmes for the prevention and protection of mental health of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and create guidelines for work.
- (5) Strengthen monitoring – screening during enrolment examinations for primary and secondary school and during all systematic examinations of children.
- (6) Conduct training for school and adolescent medicine doctors and specialists in occupational and sports medicine involved in the implementation of professional orientation and medical examinations during enrolment in (vocational) secondary schools, with the mandatory involvement of trained psychotherapists; psychoeducation and education on risk recognition will be conducted.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Adopted Action Plan and conducted training for healthcare professionals and specialists in the healthcare system on the integrated approach to health services for children, the specific needs of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and the mental health of children and youth

Number of conducted regional educational activities (on the topic of combating discrimination in access to healthcare institutions)

Developed targeted programmes for the prevention and protection of mental health of children compared to prevention programmes in the field of substance abuse prevention for children and youth within the scope of the Service for Combating Drug Abuse

Number of systematic examinations of children

Number of conducted training sessions for school and adolescent medicine doctors and specialists in occupational and sports medicine

HOLDER(S):

MH, OHRRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

MLPSFSP, MSE, CIPH, MSE, County Institute of Public Health, Professional Associations of Helping Professions, CSO, Professional Associations – Croatian Society for School Medicine, Croatian Society for Occupational Medicine.

Funding Source:

A618207, SB
A513060 JUPI ZDRAV, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 85,148.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00
2024: € 42,574.00
2025: € 42,574.00

4.2.2 Provision of beds for child and adolescent psychiatry within the public health service network and increase the capacity of outpatient treatment and the availability of mental health professionals to enhance the quality of care for children with mental health issues**ACTIVITIES:**

- (1) Adoption of a Public Health Service Network with specified bed numbers in hospital healthcare institutions in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry.
- (2) Increase the capacity of outpatient treatment and the availability of mental health services at the local community level and develop activities (e.g., Improve the availability of child psychiatric services at all county hospital centres).
- (3) Strengthen mental health services in public health institutes by implementing health protection measures to protect mental health – strengthen teams through workforce expansion.
- (4) Establish mental health and addiction prevention services at the Croatian Institute of Public Health and form a network of mental health and addiction prevention services, including conducting education programmes.
- (5) Through counselling centres for children and parents for addiction prevention and mental health at public health institutes, conduct education for parents and education professionals, and enable children to come to counselling centres and mental health protection services without parental accompaniment; increase the number of anonymous psycho-counselling centres for children.
- (6) Organise networks of psychological counselling centres at health centres – mental health dispensaries within health centres will have centres for the protection of mental health of children and youth.
- (7) Establish mobile mental health teams – psychological support for families at home.
- (8) Rename the existing phone numbers for crisis situations and suicide prevention, such as 01 2376 335, to a three-digit number for recognisability and memorability and strengthen

the teams operating 24 hours at the Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine – Clinical Hospital Centre Zagreb, as well as regional teams for psychotrauma – Clinical Hospital Centres in Split, Osijek, and Rijeka.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

The indicated number of beds in hospital healthcare institutions in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry

Reduced waiting lists for psychiatrist/psychologist appointments

Number of expanded teams

Established mental health and addiction prevention services at the Croatian Institute of Public Health

Number of conducted education programmes for parents and professionals in education

Established network of psychological counselling centres at health centres

Number of mobile mental health teams

Established three-digit telephone number and ensured 24-hour duty

HOLDER(S):

MH, CHIF

CO-HOLDERS:

LRSKU, CIPH, County Institutes of Public Health, Health Centres, Healthcare Institutions

Funding Source:

Ministry of Health A618207

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

General Objective 5:

Ensured access to adequate housing for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Specific Objective 5.1

Ensured adequate housing for families with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

MEASURES:

5.1.1 Conduct a comprehensive situation and needs analysis in the field of social housing for families and children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Strengthen cooperation between relevant authorities in monitoring policies and quality services.
- (2) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the state and needs in the field of social housing for families and children at risk of poverty and social exclusion (interactivity from 2024).
- (3) Develop data sources for the analysis of the state and consider the impact of rising housing prices, wages, and the level of public investment (interactivity from 2024).
- (4) Elaborate on the share of expenditure on housing from the disposable income of low-income tenants and its impact on the quality of life (interactivity from 2024).
- (5) Elaborate on the impact of unsafe living conditions on the potential increase in health and safety risks (interactivity from 2024).
- (6) Conduct a case study comparing models of social housing in EU countries (interactivity from 2024).
- (7) Strengthen cooperation between relevant authorities in monitoring policies and quality services (interactivity from 2024).

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of analyses performed

HOLDER(S):

MPPCSA

CO-HOLDERS:

LRS GU

Funding Source:

SB MPPCSA A761075

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

5.1.2 Develop evidence-based measures aimed at social housing for families and children at risk of poverty and social exclusion as one of the areas of housing policy in the Republic of Croatia by 2030

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Enable consistency of housing policies at different levels.
- (2) Provide programmes that improve the standard of living.
- (3) Support for strategic investments for the availability of public services, transport connectivity and access to social facilities and utility infrastructure.
- (4) From the prepared analysis and conclusions, develop recommendations for the development of social housing models (interactivity from 2024).
- (5) Integrate measures into the Republic of Croatia's housing policy.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of development programmes

HOLDER(S):

MPPCSA

CO-HOLDERS:

MLPSFSP

Funding Source:

SB MPPCSA A761075

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

5.1.3 Ensure access to targeted energy poverty mitigation programmes for families with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Verify and analyse the validity and applicability of criteria that will place a household in the category of energy poor, that will be easily demonstrable so that the household can be eligible to receive appropriate assistance from a targeted programme to combat energy poverty.
- (2) Elaboration/analysis of household data by regions and/or counties where the energy necessary to ensure health and socially acceptable housing conditions is not available.
- (3) Elaboration/analysis of measures to ensure energy availability and elimination of system deficiencies due to physical unavailability of networks and connections.
- (4) Elaboration/analysis of reasons of energy poverty from the aspect of income poverty and poor housing conditions and establishment of a system of its monitoring (Energy Efficiency Act).

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of buildings

HOLDER(S):

MPPCSA

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

NRRP, A761078 (581)

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 18,560,291.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 9,269,693.00

2024: € 5,308,913.00

2025: € 3,981,685.00

5.1.4 Create an incentivising environment for the stay and for improving the living conditions of young people and families (measure from the Action Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period 2021–2024)

ACTIVITIES:

(1) Housing provided in appropriate conditions.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of households and housing units

HOLDER(S):

MPPCSA

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

K761064/3234, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 6,433,511.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 1,955,441.00

2024: € 2,219,126.00

2025: € 2,258,944.00

5.1.5 Improve the living conditions and housing for members of the Roma national minority

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Implementation of the programme Improvement of living conditions and housing of members of the Roma national minority.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of requests processed/approved

Number of eligible Roma national minority beneficiaries, classified by age and gender

Number of delivered furniture and appliances

HOLDER(S):

OHRRNM, MPPCSA

CO-HOLDERS:

Romani Union „Kali Sara“

Funding Source:

MPPCSA A761075, SB

(2023: 1.327.228, 2024: 398.168, 2025: 398.168)

OHRRNM A681060, JUPI I, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

(2023: 0, 2024: 240,000, 2025: 140,000)

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 2,503,564.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 1,327,228.00

2024: € 638,168.00

2025: € 538,168.00

Specific Objective 5.2

Ensured access to adequate housing for young people coming out of care

MEASURES:

5.2.1 Improve and develop care outside one's own family as organised housing for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and young people leaving the social welfare system. Along with the judiciary system with the implementation of the correctional measure, through organised housing with occasional support, with a simultaneous emphasis on increasing the overall and regional coverage, but also the staffing capacity

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Provision of housing units for the provision of services in the area of Osijek, Zagreb, Split and Rijeka.
- (2) Provision of social mentoring services for children and young people involved in organised housing.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of provided housing units

Number of users of organised housing services with occasional support

Number of approved and implemented social mentoring services for children and youth exiting care

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

MPPCSA providers of social services for children, Croatian County Association, Association of Cities, and Croatian Association of Municipalities

Funding Source:

ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

T795014

T795014.004

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 929,060.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 464,530.00

2025: € 464,530.00

5.2.2 Ensure housing allowance for children/young people leaving care for a period of up to 1 year in accordance with their needs

(the amount of allowance should be aligned with the current state of the housing rental market to provide them with an adequate standard of housing)

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Adopt the Social Welfare Act, to ensure the coverage of housing costs for children/youth leaving care for a duration of up to 1 year.
- (2) Develop an analysis that will show the average amount of the required monthly housing allowance for children/young people leaving care.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Completed analysis of the required monthly housing allowances for children/youth exiting care

Enhanced legal framework

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

LRSGU, MPPCSA

Funding Source:

SB

A854006 Administration and governance

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

General Objective 6:

Improved accessibility of social services in the community to children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Specific Objective 6.1

Developed 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

MEASURES:

6.1.1 Develop a framework for vertical and horizontal cooperation in the provision of integrated social services in the family and community (universal, selective and indicated), including a comprehensive analysis of barriers (spatial and financial) in accessing health services and an analysis of hidden costs of participation in the education of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, standards, instruments and integrated protocols for early detection, referral, support planning and monitoring of children at risk and their families according to their needs

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Develop a Protocol for interdepartmental cooperation in safeguarding the welfare of children, outlining clear roles and responsibilities in providing coordinated, comprehensive, and integrated services.
- (2) Develop a Protocol for dealing with violence among children and youth.
- (3) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of barriers and hidden costs of children's participation in health and education services, especially those at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (4) Establish a unified multisectoral network platform (web application) for data collection and exchange, as well as planning and delivering integrated programmes and services for children and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (5) Improve the capacities (knowledge and skills) of professionals working with children in the social care, police, health, education, and other systems to establish effective and quality intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration.

- (6) Monitor the number of social care institutions utilising the functionalities of the established network platform.
- (7) Provide technical assistance to all national stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Action Plan for the implementation of EU Council recommendations on establishing a European Child Guarantee.
- (8) Develop a monitoring framework (including initial and target values) and offer technical support to all bodies (measure holders) for its effective implementation.
- (9) Conduct an evaluation of the National Action Plan two years after its adoption.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Developed Protocol for interdepartmental cooperation

Conducted comprehensive analysis of barriers and costs related to access to healthcare and hidden costs in children's education participation

Established unified multisectoral network platform (web application) and intersectoral collaboration

Number of trainings and education of interdepartmental teams

Number of social care institutions utilising the functionalities of the established network platform

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

UNICEF, MH, MSE, MJPA, LRSGU

Funding Source:

T877004, SB, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 4,000,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 2,000,000.00

2025: € 2,000,000.00

6.1.2. Establish a system of social planning and invest in the development of social services based on needs assessment and mapping of services for children in units of local (regional) self-government

ACTIVITY:

- (1) Drafting of the Regulation on a unified methodology for assessing the needs for providing social services.
- (2) Development of county social plans with an investment plan for the development of the social services network in accordance with the missing services.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Developed Regulation on a unified methodology for assessing the needs for providing social services

Developed 21 county social plans based on the methodology for needs assessment

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

MJPA, LRSGU

Funding Source:

T877004, SB, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 100,000,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 1,000,000.00

2025: € 0.00

6.1.3 Expand the network of social services for children and youth at risk of poverty and social exclusion in areas with insufficient services based on the established system of social planning

- (I) Prioritise the establishment of community service centres in counties with insufficient services: Bjelovar-Bilogora, Lika-Senj, Međimurje, Šibenik-Knin, Virovitica-Podravina, Osijek-Baranja, Brod-Posavina, Sisak-Moslavina.
- (II) Develop integrated child protection services and family support, early childhood intervention, and quality inclusive education for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the Sisak-Moslavina, Brod-Posavina, and Osijek-Baranja counties, with a higher proportion of the Roma population in the general population and low access to child protection and family support services.

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Development of community service centres (child and family centres) and expansion of service providers offering a broader range of services for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in areas with insufficient services and in multidisadvantaged communities for the purpose of integrated service delivery.
- (2) Establishment and development of services for children and families within family centres, proportionally distributed across counties.
- (3) Establishment, operation, and evaluation of the work programme of resource centres for community services in Međimurje County – funding partially secured within the framework of the open restricted call OHRNM/ESF+ project Equality, Inclusion, Participation, and Integration of Roma – Pilot project for community services – JUPI PILOT.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Services for children and families according to needs implemented in all counties (21) - number of covered counties

Number of service providers expanding the range of services for children and families

Number of services for children and families provided by the Family Centre with regional units and the number of children covered by the services

Number of services targeted at children and youth at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and the number of children covered by the services

Number of established resource centres for children and families in Međimurje County

Number of implemented work programmes of resource centres for children and families in Međimurje County

Number of evaluation reports

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP, OHRRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

UNICEF, MI, MH, LRSGU, NGO

Funding Source:

T877004, SB, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027
A513058 JUPI PILOT

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 12,425,713.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 1,815,651.00
2024: € 5,305,031.00
2025: € 5,305,031.00

6.1.4 Develop local communication strategies for promoting positive behaviours and addressing negative social norms and behaviours within the framework of social services in the community

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Financial support to educational institutions/LRSGUs/NGOs for the implementation of activities that:
 - a) Strengthen the combat against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, stereotyping, anti-Roma rhetoric, hate speech and violence against Roma, as well as against incitement to perform the aforementioned acts, either through the Internet or outside of it, including activities aimed at combating Roma racism in schools, in the area of communities with a larger Roma population.
 - b) Activities promoting multicultural values, including awareness-raising campaigns at regional and local levels.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of supported projects

Number of communication strategies developed

HOLDER(S):

OHRRNM

CO-HOLDERS:

NGO, LRSGU

Funding Source:

Chapter 020, Section 87 OHRRNM, A681060 JUPI I

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 910,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2023: € 560,000.00

2025: € 350,000.00

6.1.5 Develop and improve the availability of high-quality and evaluated parenting support programmes for parents/caregivers of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion**ACTIVITIES:**

- (1) Development and evaluation of new parental support programmes.
- (2) Education and licensing of professionals in the social welfare and education system.
- (3) Employment of additional professionals in the Family Centres to increase and expand programmes and services to support families at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (4) Ensured organisational preconditions for the implementation, support and monitoring of the “Growing Up Together” programme (Growing Up Together – universal programme, Growing Up Together Plus –programme supporting parents of children with developmental disabilities, Growing Up Together and Us– for parents raising children in disadvantaged circumstances, Growing Up Together and Us Plus – parents of the Roma national minority, Father's Club) in the Family Centre and the inclusion of additional preschool institutions in the implementation of the programme.
- (5) Implementation of the “Growing Up Together” programme in all regional units of the Family Centre.
- (6) Development of parenting support programmes and services to prevent violence, especially violence among children.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Implementation of the "Growing Together and Us Plus" programme (support for parenting in Roma families)

Implementation of the "Growing Together and Us" programme (support for parenting for parents raising children in challenging conditions)

Implementation of the "Fathers' Club Growing Together" programme (support for involved fatherhood for fathers not living with their preschool children due to separation/divorce)

Implementation of the "Growing Together Plus" programme (support for parenting for parents of children with difficulties)

Number of programme users categorised by gender and age

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

MSE, OHRRNM (Cost for implementing the measure of OHRRNM expressed within the framework of General Objective 6, Measure 3)

Funding Source:

NRRP T797014

SB A792006

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 1,506,656.08

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 477,802.11

2024: € 990,604.22

2025: € 38,249.75

6.1.6 Develop a competency framework for professionals in social welfare institutions and the establishment of training programmes, continuous training, specialisation, and professional support for working with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, as

well as their families; the development of programmes for the prevention and cessation of violent behaviour and other unacceptable behaviours in children and youth

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Drafting the Regulation on Standards and Procedure for Licensing Professional Training Programmes for Professional Workers and Associates in the Social Welfare System, which regulates the standards and procedures for licensing professional training programmes for professional workers and associates in the social welfare system.
- (2) Standardisation of vocational training programmes.
- (3) Licencing of professionals.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Entry into force of the Ordinance on Standards and Procedure for Licensing Professional Training

Programmes for Professional Workers and Associates in the Social Welfare System, which regulates the standards and procedures for licensing professional training programmes for professional workers and associates in the social welfare system

Number of licensed professional training programmes based on the expert evaluation of the Committee for Professional Evaluation of Programmes Registered in the Register of Licensed Programmes

Number of professional training programmes for professional workers and professional associates in the social welfare system with the aim of strengthening competencies for working with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families

Number of professional workers and professional associates in the social welfare system - participants in licensed professional training programmes to enhance competencies for working with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their families, entered in the Register of implemented professional development programmes

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

LRS GU

Funding Source:

A854006, SB

A792006, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 23,158.17

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 9,954.21

2025: € 13,203.96

6.1.7 Improve the capacity (knowledge and skills) of experts (including supervisory managers) in the social welfare system to ensure high-quality and timely early identification, referral, efficient case management, effective family interventions and the provision of services tailored to a multicultural environment, including supervision

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Standardisation of educational materials and trainings for professional workers in social welfare institutions.
- (2) Training of the head of family-legal protection measures.
- (3) Organisation and implementation of training sessions for professionals in social welfare institutions (including case managers), responsible/management officers and managing bodies of social welfare centres.
- (4) Organisation and implementation of training and consultative supervisions for professionals in social welfare centres for the purpose of providing high-quality and effective services and interventions to children and families displaced from Ukraine.
- (5) Education of translators for Ukrainian language for translation in the advisory process and provision of translators for Ukrainian language to professionals in the social welfare system.
- (6) Development of standards of conduct of family associates and curriculum/professional training programme for family associates with the aim of introducing a new service of family associates.
- (7) Employment of family associates with social services providers for children in order to provide practical support or counselling assistance related to mastering the activities of daily living for families at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- (8) Organisation of training of family associates.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of trainings held

Number of trained professionals
Number of professionals involved in the supervision process
Developed standards of conduct of the family associates
Number of family associates employed
Number of trained family associates

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

NRRP T797014
A734190, SB
A734192,SB
A734194,SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 2,038,622.33

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 621,142.74
2024: € 621,142.74
2025: € 796,336.85

6.1.8 Improve the implementation of family legal protection measures, ensure continuous training, supervision and increase compensation for family outreach workers, and establishing a quality system for monitoring the success of measures

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Amendment of the Ordinance on Measures for Protection of Children's Well-Being in order to improve the availability of high-quality supervisory managers.

- (2) Employment of supervisory managers of intensive professional assistance and support measures with social services providers for children in order to implement measures to reduce risks and prevent institutionalisation.
- (3) Increase in compensation for the implementation of professional assistance measures and support to families in the provision of child care.
- (4) Standardisation of the training curriculum of the family-legal protection measures supervisory managers.
- (5) Organisation and implementation of training and licensing of family-legal protection measures supervisory managers.
- (6) Development and expansion of targeted and indicated support programmes for children beneficiaries of social care (children from families receiving social welfare, children of parents subject to family-law protection measures, children with behavioural issues) in collaboration with the Croatian Institute for Social Work, Family Centre, County/Regional Centres for Social Welfare, educational and healthcare institutions, and associations.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

110 supervisory managers of intensive professional assistance and support measures employed

Costs of standardising the curriculum of the family outreach worker of family-legal protection measures and the costs of organising the implementation of training, supervision and licensing of the family outreach worker of family-legal protection measures

Developed programme of targeted and indicated support for children beneficiaries of social welfare

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

MH, MSE, Croatian Institute for Social Work, LRSGU, NGOs

Funding Source:

NRRP T797014

A792006, SB

A734190, SB

A734192, SB

A734194, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 7,043,083.17

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 1,519,908.42

2024: € 2,759,954.21

2025: € 2,763,220.54

6.1.9 Improve the digitalisation of social welfare systems and connect the Croatian Institute for Social Work and social service providers

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Development of business (functional) and technical specifications of the information system for service providers.
- (2) Implemented software solution for social service providers.
- (3) Training of users who will use the information system for service providers in their work.
- (4) Applicative solution connected to the information system for social welfare centres or the Croatian Institute for Social Work.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Established information system for the exchange, monitoring, and analysis of data on users and social services

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

Croatian Institute for Social Work, providers of social services established by the RC and who have concluded a contract with the MLPSFSP, Family Centre

Funding Source:

NRRP K788006

Computerisation and maintenance of the social care system

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 497,710.53

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 19,908.42

2024: € 477,802.11

2025: € 0.00

6.1.10 Develop and implement a comprehensive model of support for children whose parents are imprisoned in accordance with the Council of Europe Recommendation concerning children with imprisoned parents

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Collection and exchange of data on prisoners who are parents of minor children, as well as the number of realised visits to parents who are serving their sentence.
- (2) Enable officers who regularly participate in visits of minor children to continue attending specialised trainings (conducted by the Directorate for Prison System and Probation).
- (3) Strengthening cooperation with the Croatian Institute for Social Work and civil society organisations.
- (4) Inclusion of persons deprived of their liberty who have minor children in the programme for the improvement of parental competencies.
- (5) Adopt a Cooperation Agreement with the Directorate for Prison System and Probation of the MJA and an arrangement on cooperation related to protection and integrated access to children whose parents are imprisoned.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of prisoners who, during the execution of prison sentences, juvenile imprisonment, and correctional measures, make contact with their children

Number of realised visits to parents who are serving their sentence

Number of prisoners and minors involved in the programme of improving parental competencies

Adopted Cooperation Agreement regarding protection and integrated access to children whose parents are imprisoned

HOLDER(S):

MJA

CO-HOLDERS:

MLPSFSP, Family Centre

Funding Source:

Regular funds from the State Budget allocated to the Ministry of Justice and Administration under the activity A630000

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

6.1.11 Ensure expert work with family or parents and other family members while the child is undergoing a correctional measure and while the child who conflicts with the law is separated from his or her family

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Ensure quality participation of children in conflict with the law in the entire process of designing, proposing, and implementing a correctional measure and developing an individual plan.
- (2) Involvement of parents in various support measures and programmes.
- (3) Development of differentiated programmes and treatment interventions for children depending on the specific difficulties of children.
- (4) Standardisation of programmes, trainings, and licensing of professionals.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of individual treatment programmes developed

Number of children, in conflict with the law, actively involved in the development, review and updating of individual treatment programmes

Number of family-legal protection measures imposed on parents of children in conflict with the law

Number of psychosocial counselling services provided through intensive individual and/or group work with family members of a child in conflict with the law

Number of conducted programmes for improving parenting skills or number of parents involved in programmes

Number of developed, standardised, and licensed treatment programmes/interventions in the social care system for children and youth in conflict with the law

Number of educated and licensed professionals in the social care system working with children and youth in conflict with the law

Number of educated professionals on the application of the new assessment tool developed within the ISKORAK Programme

Number of developed and licensed specific programmes for professionals working with children and youth with behavioural problems

Number of educated and licensed professionals for providing interventions to children and youth with behavioural problems

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP, MJPA

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

Regular funds from the State Budget allocated to the Ministry of Justice and Administration under the activity A630000

A734187, SB

A734190, SB

A734192, SB

A792006, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 73,249.75

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 35,000.00

2025: € 38,249.75

Specific Objective 6.2

Expanded network of foster care services in the RC by ensuring a spatially evenly distributed network, and ensured quality support in childcare for foster parents

MEASURES:

6.2.1 Improve the quality of foster care conditions

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Ensure the inclusion of a child placed in a foster family in preschool programmes throughout the whole year.
- (2) Provide foster parents with leave for the child's adjustment up to the age of seven when placed in a foster family.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of foster children who are included in the ECEC programmes during the calendar year,
Number of foster parents who used leave.

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

MSE and founders of preschool education institutions

Funding Source:

A734161, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

6.2.2 Improve the quality of training and education of foster parents

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Standardise basic and additional training programmes.
- (2) Improve the system of training of foster parents in accordance with the needs of foster parents.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Number of standardised programmes for foster parents' training (2 training programmes: one for foster parents for children and one for foster parents for adults)

Number of training plans based on the needs of foster parents at the level of SWCs on an annual basis

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

T877004, SB, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 300,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 300,000.00

2025: € 0.00

6.2.3 Develop and improve the provision of support to foster parents and children placed in foster families

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Elaborate and implement criteria for improving the performance of professional work in the field of foster care.
- (2) Ensure continuous supervision for foster parents in all areas of the RC.
- (3) Development of services in areas where they are not developed.
- (4) Expansion of services to areas where those services are insufficient.
- (5) Promotion of foster care at the national level and local levels.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Developed analysis of the needs for social services for children in the area of foster care (number)

Number of persons involved in foster care supervision

Number of beneficiaries of new social services by county

Number of campaigns at national and local level

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

MH

Funding Source:

T877004, SB, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 300,000.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 300,000.00

2025: € 0.00

6.2.4 Develop a system for continuous monitoring of the quality of the service provided, including the satisfaction of professional workers of the Croatian Institute for Social Work, foster parents, and children in foster families

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) A new framework of quality standards and monitoring for foster care was developed and training on new quality standards, monitoring framework and reporting tools for foster care was conducted within the project Support to Improvement of Social Services in Croatia (Structural Reform Support Programme SRSP, 2020–2023)
- (2) Development of the document: Quality Standards for Foster Care for Children.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Developed quality standards for foster care for children

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

SB A854006 Administration and governance – regular business activities

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 0.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 0.00

2024: € 0.00

2025: € 0.00

Specific Objective 6.3

Improved existing and developed new social support services for children leaving care

MEASURES:

6.3.1 Develop and implement social mentoring services for young people leaving care or completing corrective measures in all counties and improving the availability of programmes to strengthen knowledge and skills in teamwork, entrepreneurial spirit, innovation, practical knowledge, problem analysis, and resolution with mentorship support for young people

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Training of social mentors at the Croatian Institute for Social Work.
- (2) Employment of social mentors at the Croatian Institute for Social Work and its regional units - deadline December 2025.
- (3) Evaluation of the effectiveness of the social mentoring service for users - December 2025.
- (4) Organisational and financial support for the implementation of educational activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of young people for the development of 21st century skills designed according to UNICEF methodology.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Employment of 220 social mentors

Evaluation of the social mentoring service in 2025

Education for young people and mentoring training (UNICEF and UpShift).

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

LRSGU

Funding Source:

T797014 – NRRP

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 11,049,173.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 1,612,582.00

2024: € 4,180,768.00

2025: € 5,255,823.00

Specific Objective 6.4

Improved system for collecting and monitoring indicators of material and social deprivation for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion

6.4.1 Develop a comprehensive framework for monitoring child poverty and social exclusion – a comprehensive diagnosis of poverty and exclusion

(National Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021–2027, along with the corresponding Action Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021–2024, Specific Objective 1, Special Objective 1: Reduction of poverty and social exclusion of vulnerable groups, Measure 1: Comprehensive diagnosis of poverty and social exclusion)

ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Identifying the appropriate methodology, with an overview of the legislative and institutional framework, for the purpose of reporting on the social protection system (including international reporting).
- (2) Development of a methodological document with a description of the methodology (*description of the methodology*: clearly identifying the social benefits and services framework that make up the national social protection system, showing the national specificities of the social protection system), identified reporting units, benefits/services, their characteristics, and identified challenges.
- (3) Preparation of a comparative analysis of all relevant databases with recommendations of possible adjustments to existing databases.
- (4) Presentation and holding of workshops on the new methodology to relevant stakeholders.

RESULT INDICATOR(S):

Developed methodology for reporting on the social protection system

Comparative analysis of the legislative and institutional framework and bodies and other stakeholders identified in possession of administrative sources of data on social protection benefits and services provided and/or financed

Continuously holding educational presentations and workshops

HOLDER(S):

MLPSFSP

CO-HOLDERS:

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Funding Source:

T877004, SB, ESF+ EHRP 2021-2027

A854006, SB

Total estimated implementation cost for the period 2023-2025:

€ 4,309,946.00

Annual breakdown of the cost of implementing the measure:

2023: € 1,650,627.00

2024: € 1,650,627.00

2025: € 1,008,692.00