

Croatia

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The Croatian Constitution enshrined gender equality in a Constitutional amendment in 2000 (Article 3). Gender equality is reinforced in Article 14 of the Constitution, which prohibits discrimination based on race, skin colour, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, education, social status or other characteristics¹.

The European Union (EU) gender equality acquis has been transposed into Croatian law as part of its accession to the EU. In anticipation of becoming an EU member, the Republic of Croatia invested significant effort in the promotion of gender equality through national policies to improve the position of women, such as the creation of a Gender Equality Commission as a government advisory body (1996–2004). The Commission produced the first National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality, taking the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) as a starting point.

In 2001, the Committee for Gender Equality was established in the Croatian Parliament, with the aim of mainstreaming gender equality in legislation, regulation and policy. In 2008, the Gender Equality Act was adopted, which is most relevant to the promotion of gender equality in Croatia. Article 3 of the Act refers to gender mainstreaming and stipulates that public bodies should – at all stages of the planning, adoption and implementation of legal acts, decisions and actions – assess their gender impact with a view to achieving genuine equality between women and men. Both the National Policy for Gender Equality 2011–2015 and the Gender Equality Act ensure the application of the equality principle in all aspects of national policy.

Legislative and policy framework

The Law on Gender Equality was approved in 2003 and consolidated in 2008 and 2017. As the legal framework for gender equality in Croatia, it establishes the protection and promotion of gender equality as a fundamental value.

The development of Croatian legislation on gender equality is closely linked to European integration and the country's 2013 accession to the EU. The European Directives regulating gender equality in occupation and employment[2] particularly influenced the Croatian body of legislation, as did the Directives on social services and security[3], with each transposed into national legislation.

The first National Policy for Gender Equality was developed and adopted for the period 2001-2005[4], followed by a plan for 2006-2010, and a final plan for 2011-2015[5]. As of 2019, the Office for Gender Equality is developing a National Policy for Gender Equality 2019-2022, in collaboration with other bodies of state administration, local and regional self-governments, and regional committees for gender equality. The previous National Policy plans aimed to redefine national priorities and to implement and introduce specific measures to reflect social and political circumstances and challenges. The strategic approach of these plans was also based on the commitments stemming from Croatia becoming a Party to the various international treaties on women's rights and gender equality.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, in its 2015 recommendations on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and, in particular, on the institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, recommended that 'the State party increase the human, technical and financial resources, including at the county and city

committee levels, allocated to the Office for Gender Equality and the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality in order to improve their effective functioning as the national machinery responsible for the advancement of women and the full implementation of the Convention'[6].

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Structures

Government responsibilities

Following the adoption of the BPfA in 1995, the Commission for Equality Issues was established in 1996 as the first government body with responsibility for gender equality policy, including monitoring and enacting relevant legislation. In 2000, the Commission was renamed the Gender Equality Commission, becoming the Office for Gender Equality in 2004.

The Office for Gender Equality is responsible for the development of national policy for the promotion of gender equality and supervision of its implementation, as well as oversight of compliance with laws and other regulations on gender equality in relation to international documents. It is also responsible for the preparation of national reports on the fulfilment of international standards.

The Office for Gender Equality has regional departments (Equal Opportunities Committees), organised at county, city and municipal level, that are responsible for promoting and coordinating all activities concerning gender equality and the advancement of women in society. There are a further 21 Gender Equality Committees at regional level, which are local advisory bodies tasked with promoting gender equality and implementing the Law on Gender Equality and the National Gender Equality Policy. Local Government Units may also establish municipal Gender Equality Commissions.

There is no specific cabinet minister with sole responsibility for the promotion of gender equality. Rather, the Office for Gender Equality consults and supports various ministries with tasks related to gender equality impact and policies.

Independent gender equality body

The Ombudsperson for Gender Equality was established in 2003 and is Croatia's independent body. It is appointed (and dismissed) by the Croatian Parliament, at the proposal of the government.

In addition to the government, county and city Committees for Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Ombudsperson, some other institutions and offices support and implement equal opportunities, policies and gender mainstreaming. These include coordinators appointed within state administration bodies, in compliance with the Law on Gender Equality (Article 27). According to this Law, state bodies, units of local and regional self-government, public legal entities and legal entities predominantly owned by the state, and units of local and regional self-governments are obliged, at all stages of the legal acts, to evaluate the effects on the position of women and men, in order to achieve real equality.

Parliamentary bodies

The Board for Gender Equality (established by parliament in 2000) is appointed (and dismissed) by the parliament, at the proposal of the government (Article 20 Law on Gender Equality), which shares this mandate with the parliament. The mandate of the Board corresponds to the election of parliament and it consists of 13 Members of Parliament (including the president and vice-president) and three external members (recognised by professionals and NGO members in the field of gender equality and selected

through a public competition procedure). The Board's scope includes determining and monitoring the implementation of gender equality policy. In the process of adopting laws and regulations, the Board has the right and duty to promote and monitor the implementation of gender equality in the legislation of the Republic of Croatia. In the process of enacting laws and other regulations, it has the same rights and duties as the main (parent) working body in the area with respect to the promotion and monitoring of the application of the principle of gender equality in the legislation.

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Methods and tools

Note: the methods and tools listed under this section were the focus of EIGE's 2018-2019 assessment. If certain methods and tools are not mentioned in this section, this does not necessarily mean that they are not used at all by Croatia.

The most relevant gender equality institutions generally undertake projects and develop handbooks aimed at promoting gender mainstreaming within government bodies, administrations and strategies. All of these actions form part of the policy framework for gender mainstreaming contained in the Government Programme 2016-2020.

The available guidelines for methods and tools chiefly concern gender analysis, gender indicators, gender monitoring, and gender statistics, but do not make sufficient reference to gender impact assessment and gender budgeting. These represent the main challenges for the future of gender mainstreaming policy implementation, particularly in light of Article 3 of the Law on Gender Equality (see above), requiring certain bodies to consider policy effects on the positions of women or men, in order to achieve real equality. These actors are also required to implement gender equality training for their employees.

Training and awareness-raising

In accordance with the National Policies for Gender Equality and the action plans of elected bodies, there have been many campaigns, projects and publications to raise public awareness of gender issues (women's position in the labour market, violence, rural women), as well as training on general gender issues and more specific training on gender mainstreaming. Almost 70 % of the Office for Gender Equality staff are engaged in such activities, with each member of staff spending some eight hours a year in voluntary training.

Gender statistics

According to Article 17 of the Law on Gender Equality, all statistical data and information on persons collected, recorded and processed by state authorities, bodies of local and regional self-government bodies, and legal and natural persons performing regulated activities must be reported by gender. These shall be made available to the public, in line with the regulations governing the protection of personal data and the provisions of a special law governing the area of official statistics.

The Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia (the main report of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics) presents all data as gender-disaggregated. The Bureau has also prepared special 'Women and Men in Croatia' reports since 2008⁷, which could be seen as promoting the production of gender-disaggregated data. Part of the data are also taken from other institutions, such as the Croatian National Institute of Public Health and the Croatian Employment Service.

Good practices

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Endnotes

1 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596803/IPOL_STU\(2017\)596803_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596803/IPOL_STU(2017)596803_EN.pdf)

2 Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and labour; Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the application of the principle of equal treatment for men and women who are self-employed; Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation; Council Directive 1992/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth.

3 Council Directive 2004/113/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in access to and supply of goods or services; Council Directive 79/7/EEC on the gradual implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security.

4 Parliament of the Republic of Croatia (2001). Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality with the National Policy Implementation Programem for the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Republic of Croatia from 2001 to 2005 (Nacionalna politika za promicanje ravnopravnosti spolova, s programom provedbe nacionalne politike za promicanje ravnopravnosti spolova u Republici Hrvatskoj od 2001. do 2005. Godine). Available in Croatian.

5 Government of the Republic of Croatia, Office for Gender Equality (2011). National Policy for Gender Equality for the period 2011- 2015. Available in English.

6 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2015). Concluding observations. CEDAW/C/HRV/CO/4-5, p. 3.

7 Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia (2008). [Women and Men in Croatia. Annual edition from 2008](#) (Žene i muškarci u Hrvatskoj, od 2008). Available in Croatian.