

SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA – COMMITMENTS

Summary

From today's perspective as a modern, democratic European state, member of the EU and NATO alliance, Republic of Croatia is dedicated to improve nationally, as well as to promote and share internationally its experience and best practices from its own democratic transition, including in the three key areas encompassed by the Summit for Democracy initiative.

National Goals and Achievements

Croatia has established the necessary legislative and institutional framework in the scope of repressive action against corruption, as well as its prevention. In 2022, Croatia will continue to improve its overall anti-corruption framework. In the area of human rights (alongside the newly introduced legislation aimed to ensure more effective criminal protection of victims of sexual harassment), Croatia is committed to further strengthen the existing measures to protect the rights of children and vulnerable groups. New National Plan for Gender Equality is in the final phase of its completion, including a number of projects (national and international) in promoting women empowerment. Croatian Government will intensify activities aimed at countering violence and hate speech, especially towards the vulnerable groups and national minorities. Relying firmly on tools developed by IHRA, Croatia will work towards further advancing the education on Holocaust.

International Goals and Achievements

One of the most important foreign policy goals of the Republic of Croatia is a stable and secure neighbourhood. In that sense, Croatia is implementing a significant number of projects in the region of SEE, bilaterally or/and together with other EU/international partners in areas of fighting corruption, human rights protection, strengthening of institutional capacities, civil society development etc., with the aim to contribute to their long-term stability, prosperity and

democratization. Croatia is also determined to offer its expertise to other countries in need beyond our immediate neighbourhood (providing development assistance in Ukraine, Kenya and Tanzania). "Supporting the vulnerable populations in conflict, post-conflict and authoritarian societies - Building a democratic alternative" is a flagship project through which we would want to give a concrete contribution in 2022, hoping to present it and further discuss it with other Summit participants.

I. Fighting Corruption

- Within the framework of the implementation of current national strategic anti-corruption documents, Croatia has established the necessary legislative and institutional framework in the scope of repressive action against corruption, as well as its prevention. In order to better respond to the challenges and needs of practical anti-corruption action, Croatia remains dedicated to continuous improvement of the anti-corruption framework.
- In this respect, in line with the *National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030*, Croatia has prepared the *Strategy for the prevention of Corruption 2021-2030* which is currently in the adoption process in the Parliament. The Strategy sets the following specific objectives in strengthening preventive anti-corruption mechanisms:
 - strengthening the institutional and legislative framework for fighting corruption,
 - strengthening transparency and openness of public authorities,
 - improving the system of integrity and managing conflicts of interest in the public administration,
 - strengthening anti-corruption potentials in the public procurement system
 - raising awareness in harmfulness of corruption and the need of effective prevention and suppression of corruption.
- Each of the specific objectives is accompanied by a series of measures to manage corruption risks in priority areas such as public administration, political system, judiciary, economy, management of state property and public finances, and sectors

of agriculture, health, science, culture, education, sports, infrastructure, environmental protection, energy, transport and infrastructure, the private sector and other identified areas. Regarding the strengthening anti-corruption potentials in the public procurement system, it is planned to further strengthen the institutional and normative framework with the aim of improving efficiency, strengthen the legal protection system and improve oversight mechanisms as well transparency of public procurement procedures

- In 2022, the full implementation of the new Strategy will begin. It is planned for the Government to adopt the accompanying implementation document with the Strategy - *Action Plan for the period 2022-2024* (the first of the three planned implementation documents in this strategic period up to 2030), which will set the concrete activities for effective management of corruption risks in all priority areas.
- Croatia is currently in the process of improving the legislative framework in certain areas of corruption prevention, specifically drafting the new Law on prevention of conflicts of interest taking into account the recommendations of the GRECO's Fifth Evaluation Round Report, the findings of the European Commission's 2020 Rule of Law Report, and the Commission's Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the verification of the full implementation of the Schengen acquis, furthermore strengthening of the whistleblower protection framework in the context of harmonization of the national framework for the protection of whistle-blowers with Directive (EU) 2019/1937, following the enactment of the Law on Protection of Reporters of Irregularities and drafting of the legal framework in the area of lobbying.
- The area of Suppression and Prevention of Corruption is one of the components in the *National Plan for Recovery and Resilience 2021-2026 for Croatia*. In 2022, the implementation of investments in this framework will intensify, aiming to improve effectiveness of the overall preventive anti-corruption framework, primarily effective public information on the established normative framework, strengthen the capacities of preventive and repressive bodies in the anticorruption area and improving the legal protection system in public procurement.

- In 2022 Croatia will continue the implementation of the project entitled *Raising Awareness and Standards of Fighting Bribery in International Business Transactions* aiming to meet the standards in this area in the light of acceding to OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions and accession process to the OECD.

- The Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Embassy of the USA in the Republic of Croatia (ICITAP Office) implements the program “Partnership for Education” since 2013. The aim of the project is to strengthen regional police and prosecutor’s cooperation and to exchange knowledge and best practice in the field of combating transnational organized crime and corruption. In addition, the aim is to create and strengthen the network of SEE regional experts (police officers and prosecutors) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania and Northern Macedonia. In 2021 “Financial Investigations Practical Workshop” will be implemented and for 2022 following trainings are planned: “Financial Forensics”, “Public Procurement Frauds” and “Parallel Criminal and Financial Investigations”
 - a. Increase transparency in public procurement**
 - In 2022, Croatia will implement the twinning project “*Strengthening budget planning, execution and internal control functions*” in North Macedonia. The overall objective of this project is to improve efficiency and effectiveness of public spending through implementation of the Public Finance Management (PFM) Reform Programme. The specific objective of the project is to strengthen the PFM system through alignment of Macedonian public procurement legislation and practice with the Union acquis in order to improve efficiency and transparency of procurement operations.

II. Defending Against Authoritarianism

a. Uphold free, fair and legitimate elections

- Croatia will consider to enhance the participation in the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Missions as of the 2nd quarter 2022, by increasing the number of its observers in third countries, particularly in the Western Balkans to ensure free, fair and legitimate elections.

b. Support initiative such as the international Education and Resource Network

- Croatia is a partner in implementing technical assistance project “Innovation Lab for EU Association of Ukraine” launched in 2021 and it will continue until the end of 2023. The project aims to capacitate and empower key actors of EU Association in Ukraine for implementing the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement in a more coordinated and inclusive way, by strengthening the professional and managerial competences of national actors through horizontal and practice-oriented learning as well as through the institutionalisation of trainings on the fundamental topics concerning EU Association. This will provide involved specialist and managerial staff both with necessary professional knowledge on the EU-Ukraine AA coordination framework and relevant soft skills and competences, which are required to steer and to manage the horizontal coordination at the operational level. The institutionalised trainings will serve as a comprehensive basis for future measures.

c. Oppose Internet shutdowns

- In the period from 2021 – 2023, Croatia is implementing the twinning project „EU 4 Fight against Cybercrime in BiH” which will improve effective cybercrime deterrence. This project will prepare law authorities to be better prepared to fight against cybercrimes, improve internal and international cooperation in better fight against cybercrime and enhance cybercrime legislation by aligning it with the best European Standards.

d. Enshrine protections for civil society

- Throughout 2022, the Government Office for Civil Society Organisations will continue to encourage regional and international NGO’s in order to exchange knowledge and experiences of promoting the principles of good practice of normative, institutional and implementing framework related to

civil society development, as well as the role of civil society on accession process to the EU and other democratic processes.

e. Support the vulnerable populations in conflict, post-conflict and authoritarian societies – Building a democratic alternative.

- Through democratic transition from the socialist and later the war and post-war affected country, to the NATO and the EU membership, Croatia has acquired unique experience and knowledge that gives us a comparative advantage within the global community on building democracy and helping vulnerable societies through supporting inclusiveness and reconciliation.
- As a donor country, Croatia's model of development cooperation is very much concentrated on education, health, peace building and reconciliation.
- Understanding that education is a strong instrument to foster social progress, Croatia launched the project for protection of discriminated religious minorities, focusing on young Christians from developing countries through university scholarships.
- In 2022, we plan to support a project together with an international organization as a strong implementing partner and as acknowledgment to multilateralism, under the theme "*Supporting the vulnerable populations in conflict, post-conflict and authoritarian societies - Building a democratic alternative*".
- In this project, we plan to incorporate the reconciliation in a soft and sensitive way, using rehabilitation and education as the main tools. Target group will be persons in conflict, post-conflict and authoritarian societies.
- We consider families, especially children and women as the most sensitive groups in need of improving their well-being and safe integration in the society.
- “One Health” approach is another UN initiative strongly supported by Croatia. It interconnects the health of our planet, humans and animals. This approach, although not new, was mentioned for the first time in the UNGA Resolution coordinated by Croatia and Afghanistan.

III. Advancing Human Rights

a. Promulgating Global Best Practices that Promote Responsible Business Conduct

- In 2022, Croatia will implement the twinning project “*Assistance for implementing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement – The EU Services Directive 2006/123/EU*” aimed towards institutions in Kosovo, to improve the business environment through service sector reform.

b. Promoting Global Accountability for Human Rights Violations, Build More Accountable Law Enforcement Practices and Security Assistance Partnerships

- Within the UN, Croatia is a strong advocate of improving the prevention of mass crimes. Upon our initiative, UN General Assembly Resolution A/75/277 on “*The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity*”, was adopted.
- In 2021, amendments were introduced to the Criminal Code aimed to ensure more effective criminal protection of victims of sexual harassment and strengthening existing measures to protect the rights of children and vulnerable groups with regard to sexual abuse and exploitation.
- In 2022, the Government of the Republic of Croatia will adopt the *National Plan for Elimination of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, for the period 2022 to 2027* proposed by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy.
- The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy will implement an EU funded project in 2022 “*Stop violence against women and domestic violence - There is no justification for violence*”, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Administration and the Association for Victim and Witness Support - in providing a 24-hour telephone for victims of violence. This project includes:
 - Free 24/7 telephone line service- as of 25 November 2020, the operation of the National Call Centre 116 006 - 24 hours a day, seven days a week including weekends, holidays and public holidays, has been provided.

- Raising public awareness on the fight against violence against women and domestic violence, which is carried out through a media campaign, professional and public events with the aim of sensitizing the public about the harmfulness and unacceptability of violence.
- Strengthening the capacity of experts and improving cooperation in the field of prevention and protection against violence directed towards women and domestic violence.
- By the August 2022, the new Labour Law will be adopted (currently being drafted by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and social partners), which will provide a clear and modern legislative framework. This framework aims to enable fair working conditions, encourage the transition to forms of employment with an indefinite duration (open-ended contracts) and at the same time enable the use of flexible forms of work for a better balance of private and business life.
- In accordance with the *Operative Program for National Minorities for the period 2021-2024*, the Government will intensify activities aimed at countering violence and hate speech, especially towards the vulnerable groups and national minorities. It will continue to raise awareness that discrimination, public hate speech and incitement to violence are unacceptable and will be prosecuted, in accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Code and Anti-discrimination Act.
- In 2022, Croatia will implement the twinning project “*Building of the institutional capacity of the Investigative Centre*” in North Macedonia. The objective of the project is to support the fight against organised crime and corruption. The main initiatives of the project are the networking of investigation authorities in North Macedonia and their cooperation with international criminal investigation institutions, as well as the further training of members of public prosecutor’s offices, police, customs and tax investigation departments.
- In 2022, the Croatian Parliament will implement the twinning project “*Empowerment and Further support to the Parliaments of Bosnia and*

Herzegovina in EU integration tasks” that will improve cooperation and further development of an efficient and accountable public administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina and will focus on institutional building and strengthening of the policy making process. Project started in 2019 and it will be finalized in 2022.

c. Promoting Full and Equitable Access, Safety and Participation of all Persons, including Marginalised and Underrepresented Populations and Groups in Vulnerable Situations

- The National Plan of the Republic of Croatia for Gender Equality for the period 2021-2027 is in the final phase of its completion. The Nation Plan for Gender Equality will include seven critical areas of action during this period:
 - Promotion of women’s human rights and gender equality;
 - Improving the position of women in the labour market;
 - Combating violence against women;
 - Gender sensitive education;
 - Equality in places of political and public decision-making;
 - Introduction of the principle of gender quality in public policies, and
 - International policy and cooperation, within which we highlight the implementation of the policy of international development cooperation applying a gender-sensitive approach.
- In accordance with the *National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the period 2021-2027*, the Government of the Republic of Croatia will implement programs from 2022 to:
 - Reduce the gap between life expectancy between the Roma population and the general population;
 - Fulfil the conditions for systematic health monitoring of the Roma population, and
 - Increase reproductive health care for Roma women and girls.
- In accordance with the *Operative Program for National Minorities for the period 2021-2024*, the Croatian Government in 2022, will:

- Propose the adoption of media policy with aim to promote participation of members of minority communities in public and social life,
- Create in its next Agreement with Croatian Radio Television an editorial office for minorities (with representatives of minorities as well as journalists who have experience in reporting on specific minority issues),
- Continue (through the European Social Fund) to strengthen the capacities of Croatian National Minorities' Councils and representatives of national minorities with aim to improve their work at the local and regional level.
- In 2022, Croatia will implement following projects:
 - WWW-Wonderful World of Women in Kenya and Tanzania to strengthen disabled women in Songea;
 - *ZaŽene (ForWomen)* – linked by knowledge and experience in Serbia, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim to strengthen entrepreneurial skill of women in rural areas;
 - Bosnia and Hercegovina for a country of equal constitutive people, as well as national minorities and other citizens – no more no less to ensure equal participation of all;
 - *PreobraŽene (Educating Women)* in Bosnia and Herzegovina which aims to encourage women to get politically engaged in order to improve their position in society;
 - oPEN – Prevention and Education against family violence in Bosnia and Hercegovina through the development of programs whose goal is to promote gender equality, and
 - PRO-AKTIV: Encourage, exchange and strengthen women and children in Kosovo.
- Applying the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, Croatia will participate in the 8th round of the Department of State's (DoS) Development Cooperation Partnership (DCP) program in 2022, through a tailor-made project for Ukraine, in order to facilitate access to HIV prevention and treatment services during the pandemic.

- In terms of digitalization and women's rights, Croatia has committed to undertake measures and activities to encourage the active and important role of women in the digital society, and to contribute to the achievement of gender equality in the field of IT through cooperation with the public and private sector as well as the civil society.
- "Femicide watch" was initiated by our expert at both national and global level, with the aim of preventing gender-based violence towards women and it advocates for the reform of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.
- Croatia is also actively engaged in encouraging women in the media through cooperation on the portal of the Agency for Electronic Media zeneimediji.hr (Women and the Media). On policy level, the *National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Declaration on Commitment to Women in the Digital World* will be adopted in 2022.
- As part of Croatia's development cooperation, we will continue with our multi-year financial commitment targeting vulnerable Syrian population, primarily focusing on areas such as education, creation of safe and protective environment for children and socio-economic empowerment of women.
- As a State party to CEDAW and Istanbul Convention, Croatia will stay committed to fighting gender based discrimination and violence against women and girls.
- Croatia is currently finalising comprehensive *National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination 2021-2027*. With its two accompanying implementation documents, the *Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2021-2023* and the *Action Plan for Combating discrimination 2021-2023*, new National Plan will introduce measures for the following priority areas:
 - Effective protection against unequal treatment and promotion of equality
 - Combating all forms of intolerance
 - Equal opportunities in education

- Equal opportunities in the labour market and protection of workers' rights
- Improving health care for vulnerable groups
- Equality in access to housing and energy poverty
- The system of care for Croatian Homeland War veterans and members of their families, civilian victims of the Homeland War and members of their families, and resolving all cases of missing persons during the Homeland War, the Second World War and the post-war period
- Protection of citizens' rights and combating discrimination in crises
- Rule of law and equal access to justice
- Protection of the rights of persons deprived of their liberty
- Effective implementation of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
- Freedom of speech and fight against misinformation
- Gender equality and the promotion of equal opportunities
- Healthy living and environment
- Evidence-based policy to protect human rights and combat discrimination
- International and European human rights instruments
- Civil society in the protection and promotion of human rights
- Based on the *National Plan for the Development of Social Services 2021-2027* (which is in the final phase of the adoption), Croatia will develop services to meet the needs of socially vulnerable groups - victims of domestic violence, victims of trafficking, the homeless, people with addiction problems, the long-term unemployed and youth no longer covered by social security system, seekers of international protection and unaccompanied children.

The goal is to achieve equality and availability of quality social services for all groups in the social welfare system throughout Croatian regions, while supporting the idea of independent living in the community, as well as creating equal opportunities without discrimination. Specific measures will be included in the Action Plans 2021-2023/2024-2027.

- **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Presidency.** In March 2023, Croatia will assume the Presidency of IHRA. During this Presidency Croatia will continue to promote cooperation among IHRA member states, as well as its own commitment, in fighting antisemitism and Holocaust denial, as well as preventing all forms of intolerance and hate speech.
- Croatia will continue to implement projects and organize seminars on Holocaust education for teachers, expert associates, university professors as well as other experts involved in Holocaust education, in cooperation with Yad Vashem, Mémorial de la Shoah and USA Holocaust Memorial Museum, among others.
- Relying firmly on tools developed by IHRA, Croatia will work towards further advancing the education on Holocaust. In addition, we will continue to focus our efforts into raising awareness among primary and secondary school students of the horrors of Holocaust and crimes against humanity, including through state-sponsored organized visits to Jasenovac Memorial Site.
- **Special Advisor for Holocaust Issues.** Croatia will nominate a high-ranking official as Special Advisor for Holocaust Issues to raise awareness among citizens on the importance of fighting antisemitism and Holocaust denial.