

# Fundamental rights of children displaced in the EU following the Russian war of aggression

Croatia

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# 1. Children fleeing Ukraine

## 1.1. Data on children fleeing Ukraine

**Table 1 Children fleeing Ukraine**

Category of child	Registration system Y/N	Number of children (as disaggregated as possible) (as of 30 April 2023 unless otherwise specified)
Overall number of children		Not available
Arrived accompanied by mother, father or another legal guardian		Not available
Arrived without parents, but with other family members, neighbours or family friends		528 (410 boys and 118 girls)
Arrived unaccompanied		3 boys
Arrived within a group of children, as an organised evacuation from Ukrainian institutions or foster carers (with or without an appointed legal guardian)		10 unaccompanied children (5 girls and 5 boys; two girls were adopted during their stay in Croatia, based on the decision of the competent body in Ukraine)
Arrived within a group of children, through private initiatives, such as football clubs (with or without an appointed legal guardian)		Not available

Source: Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, email received on 4 July 2023.

In **Croatia**, the Law on International and Temporary Protection<sup>1</sup> defines an unaccompanied child as a citizen of a third country or a stateless person under the age

<sup>1</sup> Republic of Croatia, Law on International and Temporary Protection (*Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti*), Official Gazette [70/15](#); Law on Amendments to the Law on

of eighteen who came to the territory of the Republic of Croatia unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them, in accordance with the law or customs, as well as a child who remained unaccompanied after entering the Republic Croatia.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Ministry of the Interior, majority of unaccompanied children from Ukraine arrive to Croatia accompanied by family members or other persons caring for them based on parental consent (i.e. sport coaches), and these persons most often get appointed as their guardians. The Ministry of the Interior decides on the temporary protection status for all persons displaced from Ukraine through competent Police Administrations and Police Stations. All unaccompanied children from Ukraine, as an extremely vulnerable group, are urgently appointed a guardian and granted temporary protection, since it is in child's best interest to have their international protection status regulated as soon as possible, in order to ensure access to rights prescribed by temporary protection (education, healthcare, etc.).<sup>3</sup>

Unaccompanied children are under the full oversight of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy. The Ministry recorded 528 children who arrived to Croatia without parents or legal guardians, and thus were provided a special guardian by Local Offices of Croatian Welfare System. During the reporting period, 381 guardianships ended, 332 for boys and 39 for girls, due to turning 18 or leaving Croatia.

Until 25 June 2023, members of the Football Academy "Shakhtar" were accommodated in Hotel Zagreb in Split, 79 boys, 4 girls, 19 women and 16 men, but decided to return to Ukraine and departed in two groups. According to currently available information, Hotel Zagreb still accommodates 4 boys, 1 girl and 5 women from the Football Club "Chernihiv", as well as 8 boys, 5 girls, 8 women and 6 men from a sailing group.

On 3 June 2023, 24 Ukrainian citizens, including 15 children, were accommodated in Highschool Pupils' Home Zadar. In Sveta Nedelja, the CSO "Nešto više" accommodates 8 children (5 girls and 3 boys) without adequate parental aid evacuated from Ukrainian

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International and Temporary Protection (*Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti*), Official Gazette [33/23](#).

<sup>2</sup> Croatia, Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova*), email received on 28 June 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Croatia, Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova*), email received on 28 June 2023.

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institution, aged 7 to 16 (there were 10 children altogether but two girls were adopted based on the decision of the competent body in Ukraine).<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2. Crimes against children fleeing Ukraine and children going missing

**Table 2 – Serious crimes against children fleeing Ukraine and children going missing**

Issue / risk	Number of cases i) reported and ii) investigated
Violence, including domestic violence	Not available
Sexual abuse	Not available
Trafficking for exploitation	Not available
Children reported as missing	Not available
Other crimes against children fleeing Ukraine	Not available

Source: Ministry of the Interior, email received on 28 June 2023.

The Ministry of the Interior indicated that they don't have the requested data on the number of cases of crimes against children fleeing Ukraine or the number of children gone missing.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), email received on 4 July 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Croatia, Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova*), email received on 28 June 2023.

## 2. Child protection – legal, policy framework and procedures in place

### 2.1. Responsibilities of child protection authorities

In **Croatia**, Article 10 of the Law on International and Temporary Protection prescribes the principle of the best interest of the child. The best interest of the child is assessed considering: the well-being and social development of the child and his origin; protection and safety of the child, especially if there is a possibility that he is a victim of human trafficking; the child's opinion depending on his age and maturity; the possibility of reuniting with family and the like.<sup>6</sup>

Competent bodies in the treatment of unaccompanied children are the Ministry of the Interior, social welfare institutions and other social service providers, primary and specialist healthcare institutions, educational institutions, state administration offices, the city office for general administration, international organisations dealing with the protection of rights of children, refugees and migrants, civil society organisations dealing with the protection of the rights of children, refugees and migrants, and others who may be directly involved in working with unaccompanied children. Police administrations and police stations, once they determine that a child is unaccompanied, take action related to ensuring the identification process. Communication is established, followed by getting to know and informing the child about the country of arrival, child's guaranteed rights, the appointment of a special guardian, the procedures that follow after identification, the collection of personal data and other information about the unaccompanied child, the assessment of the needs of the unaccompanied child, and the handling of the expression of intention during the identification process.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Republic of Croatia, Law on International and Temporary Protection (*Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti*), Official Gazette [70/15](#); Law on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection (*Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti*), Official Gazette [33/23](#).

<sup>7</sup> Croatia, Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova*), email received on 28 June 2023.

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Regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work are in charge of all protection and temporary measures regarding children from Ukraine without a legal guardian, during their stay in Croatia, in accordance with Croatian legislation. Should a regional office be informed that a child from Ukraine is accompanied by or accommodated with a Ukrainian citizen with or without parental consent, it is required to inspect all circumstances and decide in accordance with the child's best interest, by appointing a special guardian/guardian. Furthermore, it is required to listen to the child, in accordance with their age and maturity and, if the circumstances allow, get in contact with child's parents (through the child, relatives, friends).<sup>8</sup>

In the procedures of family reunification, family members who wish to be reunited with temporary protection beneficiaries must meet all the conditions prescribed by the [Decision on the introduction of temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia for displaced persons from Ukraine](#) (*Odluka o uvođenju privremene zaštite u Republici Hrvatskoj za raseljene osobe iz Ukrajine*). This means that, if a family member did not reside in Ukraine on 24 January 2022 or "immediately before" as interpreted by the Ministry of the Interior, the person would not have a legal right to family reunification in accordance with the Law on International and Temporary Protection or in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Foreigners.<sup>9</sup>

Over the past two decades, Croatia has developed a broad formal and legal framework for working with unaccompanied children through various regulations, ensuring accommodation in social care institutions, appointment of guardians, health care, Croatian language learning, translator support, free legal aid, family reunification procedures and communication with the primary family. Pursuant to the Law on International and Temporary Protection, an unaccompanied child is provided with accommodation in reception centres for applicants seeking international and temporary protection, under certain conditions and when it is in the child's best interest. So far, three protocols on the treatment of unaccompanied children have been adopted. The third [Protocol on the treatment of unaccompanied children](#), adopted by Croatian Government in September 2018, came closest to the objective to operationalise as clearly and concretely as possible, as well as to gather all key provisions of numerous regulations from the field of internal affairs, social welfare, health and education.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), email received on 4 July 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Croatian Law Centre, [The Croatian Asylum System in 2022 – National Report](#), 15 June 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Centre for Peace Studies, Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma, [Policy brief on the protection of unaccompanied children in the Republic of Croatia](#), 2021.



However, the entire system in charge of caring for unaccompanied children still appears incoherent - partial solutions and measures are adopted discontinuously, resulting in the inconsistency and fragmentation of practical care for unaccompanied children. There is a lack of essential synergy and integrative effect of the provisions of the Protocol which must include the necessary establishment of a single database of unaccompanied children, separate alternative care with regulated procedures for assessing the needs and risks of unaccompanied children, regulation and improvement of guardianship for unaccompanied children, the development of foster care and quality health care, as well as the inclusion of unaccompanied children in the educational process, as a basis for more lasting solutions and integration of unaccompanied children who were granted an international protection in the Croatian society. Furthermore, when it comes to the wider area of the Republic of Croatia, it is impossible to ensure a sufficient number of educated professionals, availability of special guardians, legal protection, translators and health care services at short notice and on a continuous basis, the availability of education and relevant institutions, services and facilities, in order to provide unaccompanied children with timely protection and achieve more lasting solutions in relation to their life, legal status and various, specific individual needs.<sup>11</sup>

### **2.1.1. Individual children, including unaccompanied and separated children**

As indicated above, the competent authorities and procedures are the same for all unaccompanied children.

### **2.1.2. Children evacuated from Ukrainian institutions**

As indicated above, the competent authorities and procedures are the same for all unaccompanied children.

Children evacuated from Ukrainian institutions have been placed in alternative care in Sveta Nedelja in the premises of the CSO "Nešto više". The accommodation in Sveta Nedelja was initially home to 10 children aged 6-15 with one teacher (5 girls and 5 boys), but since two girls have since been adopted in the international adoption process, 8 children (3 girls and 5 boys) remained.

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<sup>11</sup> Centre for Peace Studies, Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma, [Policy brief on the protection of unaccompanied children in the Republic of Croatia](#), 2021.

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## 2.2. Safeguards and measures addressing risk of violent crimes against children fleeing Ukraine

In **Croatia**, in relation to all child victims of criminal offenses in the Republic of Croatia, the same standards of protection and support are applied, regardless of their citizenship. The Ministry of the Interior reports that in cases of criminal acts of criminal protection of children, youth police officers who are specially trained to recognize various forms of threats to the rights of children and provide support to child victims are involved, whereby special conditions are provided to the child victim, starting with the provision of specially equipped rooms adapted for interviews with children, the possibility of examining the child in the foster home, ensuring that, if the child wishes, a person of trust is present with him in addition to the guardian, the presence of an employee of the social care centre when the parent/guardian is unavailable or when he is a suspect, protection of the child's privacy, up to the secrecy of the investigation. All procedures in which there is a suspicion of abuse and exploitation of a child or other violation of a child's rights are urgent and carried out based on the postulates of the best interests of the child. This implies taking special care and ensuring further support for the child through the system of social and health care and civil society organisations for help and support for victims. Special attention is paid to cases of endangerment of children from vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied children or children placed in institutions, which is why children displaced from Ukraine are considered particularly vulnerable.

The Ministry of the Interior stresses that interviews with traumatized children are conducted in specially equipped rooms suitable for children by specially trained youth police officers who have undergone training on how to conduct informative interviews with children based on the principles of good practice of international police. Police officers carry out an individual assessment of the victim's condition in order to determine the specific needs of protection and, in accordance with the assessment, take measures to protect the victim, and submit the form on the assessment to the judicial body that conducts the procedure. For children of criminal acts and misdemeanours of domestic violence, it is always assumed that they need to be provided with protective measures.

Child victims of criminal acts of human trafficking enjoy special protection through the guaranteed additional rights of victims, about which they are specially informed both orally and in writing during the police procedure. Thus, in addition to other rights of the victim, child victims, and especially child victims of human trafficking, have and are

provided with rights and to: attorney at the expense of budget funds, secrecy of personal data, exclusion of the public, speaking with an advisor before questioning at the expense of budget funds, being questioned by a person of the same sex at the police and the state attorney's office and, if possible, to be questioned by that the same person in the case of re-examination, withhold answers to questions that are not related to the criminal offense, and refer to the strictly personal life of the victim, and demand that they be questioned via audio-video device if it is a victim over 14 years old (children under 14 years old must be questioned via audio-video devices). Child victims should be ensured to testify in a language they understand, and in which language the child will be informed of their rights.<sup>12</sup>

### **2.2.1. Safeguards to protect and defend children from crimes**

At any time and regardless of the type of official procedure involving unaccompanied and separated children, if a risk is recognized that a child is the victim of trafficking, the special guardian/guardian must send notice to the police officer specialising in trafficking or juvenile delinquency at the competent police department/police station. In any situation when an unaccompanied child goes missing, the special guardian/guardian is obligated to notice the competent police department/police station and they are in charge for further procedure.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.2.2. Support for children victims of crimes**

The court, the state attorney's office, the investigator and the police are obliged to treat the child victim of a criminal offense with special consideration, bearing in mind the age, personality and other circumstances in order to avoid harmful consequences for the upbringing and development of the child. When dealing with a child victim, the competent authorities will primarily be guided by the best interests of the child. If a child is a victim of a criminal act, in addition to the usual rights of the victim, he has additional

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<sup>12</sup> Croatia, Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova*), email received on 28 June 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Republic of Croatia, European Migration Network (*Europska migracijska mreža*), Protocol on procedures for unaccompanied and separated children (*Protokol o postupanju prema djeci bez pratnje*), August 2018, available [here](#).

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rights: to an attorney at the expense of budget funds; to confidentiality of personal data; to testify without the presence of the public.<sup>14</sup>

The Ministry of Justice and Administration provides a contact list of organisations providing psychosocial and legal support to victims of crimes, including children victims of crimes.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.3. Guardianship/legal representation arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children fleeing Ukraine

The Croatian guardianship system is regulated by the Croatian Family Act<sup>16</sup>, adopted on 22 September 2015 and amended during October 2019, and the Social Welfare Act<sup>17</sup>, in force since 2022. According to these legislations, Croatia has two types of guardianship systems, general guardianship and special guardianship in certain situations prescribed by the law.

A special guardian is appointed by the social welfare centre to be responsible for a child who is a third-country national or stateless person who finds himself or herself without a legal representative in the territory of the Republic of Croatia, and to represent that child in procedures or issues for which they were appointed as a special guardian. A guardian is appointed by the social welfare centre to be responsible for a child who is a third-country national or stateless person who has been granted accommodation in the Republic of Croatia, to represent, and to protect the rights and interests of that child. In cases of unaccompanied children from third countries, both types of guardians may be responsible for all 3 functions, but their tasks do not overlap because a guardian is appointed when a child has been granted accommodation in the Republic of Croatia, as a more permanent kind of guardianship. A special guardian is assigned in order to protect certain personal and property rights and interests of an unaccompanied child

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<sup>14</sup> Republic of Croatia, e-Citizen portal, Victims' Rights (Prava žrtava), available [here](#).

<sup>15</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Justice and Administration (*Ministarstvo pravosuđa i uprave*), Contacts of organisations that provide psychosocial and legal assistance (*Kontakti organizacija koje pružaju psihosocijalnu i pravnu pomoć*), available [here](#).

<sup>16</sup> Croatia, Family Act (*Obiteljski zakon*), Official Gazette 103/15, 98/19, 47/20, 49/23.

<sup>17</sup> Republic of Croatia, Social Welfare Act (*Zakon o socijalnoj skrbi*), Official Gazette 18/22, 46/22, 119/22.

before a child has been granted accommodation in the Republic of Croatia.

With the amendments to the Law on International and Temporary protection, a provision was added that the special guardian will take all necessary actions as soon as possible after submitting the request in order to locate family members and reunite the child with the family, which strengthened the role of the special guardian in the care of unaccompanied minors.<sup>18</sup>

### **2.3.1. Arrived unaccompanied**

Custody of unaccompanied children, including children from Ukraine who arrived unaccompanied by parents or legal representatives, is regulated by the Family Act. In accordance with the Family Act, in order to protect certain personal and property rights and interests of the child, the Regional Office of the Croatian Institute for Social Work appoints a special guardian for a foreign citizen or a stateless child who is unaccompanied by a legal representative on the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

A special guardian takes care of all the rights and interests of the child and represents the child in matters for which he was appointed and takes the necessary actions, with the aim of family reunification. The decision on the appointment of a special guardian is made by the competent Regional Office of the Croatian Institute for Social Work. The decision on the appointment of a special guardian determines his duties and powers. A special guardian was appointed by the Regional Office of the Croatian Institute for Social Work for all children who arrived from Ukraine and were not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.<sup>19</sup>

### **2.3.2. Arrived without parents, but with other family members, neighbours or family friends**

Regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work are in charge of all protection and temporary measures regarding children from Ukraine without a legal guardian, during their stay in Croatia, in accordance with Croatian legislation. Should a regional office be informed that a child from Ukraine is accompanied by or accommodated with

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<sup>18</sup> Republic of Croatia, Law on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection (*Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti*), Official Gazette [33/23](#).

<sup>19</sup> Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), email received on 4 July 2023.

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a Ukrainian citizen with or without parental consent, it is required to inspect all circumstances and decide in accordance with the child's best interest, by appointing a special guardian/guardian. Furthermore, it is required to listen to the child, in accordance with their age and maturity and, if the circumstances allow, get in contact with child's parents (through the child, relatives, friends).<sup>20</sup>

### **2.3.3. Arrived within a group, from Ukrainian institution or foster carers (with or without an appointed legal guardian)**

Same as above.

### **2.3.4. Arrived within a group, through private initiatives, such as football clubs (with or without an appointed legal guardian)**

Same as above.

## **2.4. Placement of unaccompanied and separated children fleeing from Ukraine**

**Table 3 – Placement of unaccompanied and separated children**

Type of placement	Number of children	Details
With adult relatives		No information available
With a foster family		No information available
With person who looked after the child when fleeing		No information available

<sup>20</sup> Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), email received on 4 July 2023.

In reception centres for unaccompanied children (all nationalities)	3	Boys who turned 18 soon after their arrival to Croatia.
In reception centres for children fleeing Ukraine		<i>The Republic of Croatia did not have such centres. The majority of people displaced from Ukraine are in private accommodation, so the majority of children from Ukraine, who are in the Republic of Croatia unaccompanied by parents or legal representatives, are in collective or private accommodation together with trusted persons with whom they arrived in the Republic of Croatia.</i>
Other placement		No information available

Source: Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, email received on 4 July 2023.

On 23 March 2022, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the [Decision on financing the costs of providing housing for displaced persons from Ukraine in individual housing](#) (*Odluka o financiranju troškova za stambeno zbrinjavanje raseljenih osoba iz Ukrajine u pojedinačnom smještaju*), which reimburses the owners of housing units who have ceded their real estate for use by displaced persons from Ukraine, based on rent agreements concluded with the Ministry of the Interior – Civil Protection Directorate. All persons who report to the Ministry of the Interior are checked in SocSkrb application of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy (whether there have been reports of domestic violence, whether they are beneficiaries of the social welfare system, etc.).

The majority of people displaced from Ukraine are in private accommodation, so the majority of children from Ukraine, who are in the Republic of Croatia unaccompanied by parents or legal representatives, are in collective or private accommodation together with trusted persons with whom they arrived in the Republic of Croatia. In accordance with the Social Welfare Act, an unaccompanied child may be entitled to the social service of temporary accommodation in crisis situations or organised housing services. Also, the Law on Foster Care foresees the possibility of placing an unaccompanied child in a foster family.

An unaccompanied child is placed in the nearest social welfare home in accordance with the provisions of the Social Welfare Act, a child under the age of 14 in a home for children without adequate parental care, and a child over 14 in a home for raising children and youth. An unaccompanied child over the age of 16 can be accommodated in a reception center in cases prescribed by the Aliens Act and in accordance with the Protocol on Treatment of Unaccompanied Children.

In April 2023, for two unaccompanied male children, citizens of Ukraine, born in 2006, the right to the social service of temporary accommodation in crisis situations was recognized.

The arrival of minor Ukrainian citizens, i.e. children who come accompanied by adult persons who are not their parents or legal guardians, but most often their family friends, persons with whom they are related or trusted, and who are accommodated together in collective accommodation or they go to private accommodation in their own organisation.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.5. Children evacuated from Ukrainian institutions

### 2.5.1. Institutional placements

Apart from children without adequate parental care who are placed in the area of Sveta Nedelja, there are no other children from Ukrainian institutions placed in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.5.2. Alternative care

In communication with the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and Social Welfare Centre Samobor, since May 2022, voluntarily, and later financed by the SOLIDARNA Foundation, FICE Croatia has been conducting group activities with this

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<sup>21</sup> Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), email received on 4 July 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), email received on 4 July 2023.



group of children from alternative care from Ukraine. The activities conducted were the following:

1. Work on Mylifejourneybook - a workbook created by experts in the field of alternative care from the Netherlands, which contains content created with regard to the situation with the war in Ukraine, in order to help children to cope with the current situation, to work through possible trauma, and to develop emotional and social skills that help them cope with the unpleasant emotions caused by war.
2. Polygon activities, various outdoor games, creative workshops, playing social games - based on the need's assessment showing that children require activities that provide them with relief, entertainment, encourage their mutual cooperation, connection and the development of group cohesion.
3. The FICE Croatia for Ukraine project included three key activities that are carried out with children from Ukraine in alternative care: Stay and group activities in cooperation with the Center for Community Services Izvor Selce; 3-day camp in Split together with children from Ukraine accommodated in Hotel Zagreb in Split; 1-day field trip to Rastoke for children from alternative care from Ukraine and their educators.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.5.3. Safeguards for children placed in institutional care settings

The Ombudsperson for Children especially monitored the stay of children from alternative care and children who did not arrive with their parents, but with a trusted person. The Ombudsperson for Children found that the children are being monitored by the competent centres, with the support of the local community, volunteers and associations, and that they have adapted to life in the new community.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> FICE Croatia, Centre for supporting communities, experts, families, young people and children for a better and more complete life (*FICE Hrvatska, Centar za podršku zajednicama, stručnjacima, obitelji, mladima i djeci za kvalitetniji i cjelovitiji život*), The last activity of the "FICE Croatia for Ukraine" project held ([Održana posljednja aktivnost projekta "FICE Hrvatska za Ukrajinu"](#)); Handbook for working with children in alternative care from Ukraine ([Priručnik za rad s djecom iz alternativne skrbi iz Ukrajine](#)).

<sup>24</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

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## 2.5.4. Access to local services and support

In **Croatia**, there is more than a thousand students from Ukraine currently enrolled in primary schools, and more than two hundred in secondary schools. Among other things, the students are co-financed with the costs of extracurricular classes, teaching and didactic materials and equipment, they are provided with free textbooks and other materials. They are also guaranteed to attend preparatory classes in the Croatian language and later supplementary classes in the schools that they attend.<sup>25</sup> CSOs have been reporting that some children under temporary protection are simultaneously attending online school programs in Ukraine and Croatian school programs which is detected as burdensome for the child.<sup>26</sup>

During the summer, as part of the UNICEF project “Support to the Most Vulnerable Children and Adolescents from Ukraine in Split-Dalmatia County” , where cooperation was established with the Centre for Social Care Split to provide timely and targeted services to the most vulnerable children, adolescents and parents/caregivers/guardians of refugees from Ukraine, including unaccompanied and separated children in the Split-Dalmatia County<sup>27</sup>, an analysis of children's needs, including educational needs, was carried out, followed by individualized psychological work through games and workshops.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Web portal Novi list, *U Hrvatskoj je oko 22 tisuće ukrajinskih izbjeglica, 70 posto je visokoobrazovanih*, published on 4 February, available [here](#).

<sup>26</sup> As reported for FRA SR 6 in March by the CSO SVOJA.

<sup>27</sup> UNICEF Croatia, How UNICEF in Croatia provides support to refugee children and families from Ukraine ([Kako UNICEF u Hrvatskoj pruža podršku djeci i obiteljima izbjeglicima iz Ukrajine](#)).

<sup>28</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

## 2.6. Child-friendly information and means to ensure participation of children from Ukraine

### 2.6.1. Child friendly information

UNICEF, in cooperation with the Forum for Freedom of Education, and under the auspices and in cooperation with the Agency for Education, conducted research on the needs of schools for the inclusion of displaced Ukrainian students and developed manuals for educational staff in primary and secondary schools. The manuals for primary and secondary schools provide an overview of the legal-administrative framework for the education of students displaced from Ukraine and deal in detail with guidelines in the areas of communication and language, socialization and relationships, teaching and evaluation, mental health of displaced students, and care for the mental health of teachers and assistants. Both manuals include teaching materials consisting of five teaching preparations designed with the aim of the highest possible integration of male and female students from Ukraine. The teaching preparations also contain bilingual worksheets that enable more active involvement of displaced students.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.6.2. Child participation

According to the information provided by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, when the Regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work inspect all circumstances and decide on appointing a special guardian/guardian in accordance with the unaccompanied child's best interest, it is required to listen to the child, in accordance with their age and maturity.<sup>30</sup>

The Centre for Missing and Abused Children organized the Children's Corner within the Day Centre for Displaced Persons, as well as activities for children of kindergarten and preschool age. The Croatian Red Cross and many non-governmental organisations

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<sup>29</sup> Republic of Croatia, Education and Teacher Training Agency (*Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje*), Schools of Unity, manuals for the integration of students from Ukraine into schools (*Škole zajedništva / Школи спільнот, priručnici za integraciju učenika iz Ukrajine u škole*), 23 September 2022, available [here](#).

<sup>30</sup> Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), email received on 4 July 2023.

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provide assistance, make suggestions for improving treatment and support, and facilitating adaptation, especially for children in alternative care.<sup>31</sup>

Waiting for additional information from the CSOs.

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<sup>31</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

## 3. Access to social rights

### 3.1. Access to health care

#### 3.1.1. Scope of medical care for children fleeing Ukraine

**Table 4 – Scope of medical care for children**

Scope of medical care for children	Y/N	Reference / details
Only emergency care/essential treatment of illnesses (Article 13.2 TPD)	N	Law on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection
Complete medical check -up / health screening	Y	According to the Doctors of the World, all children of school age have complete examinations by specialists during school enrolment but no information on availability of health screenings for all children.
Mental health screening (PTSD, depression, anxiety)	Y	According to the Doctors of the World, exclusively upon request and with parental consent. In the case of recognition of the need and referral, assessments could be organised at the Polyclinic for the Protection of Children and Toddlers of the City of Zagreb, the Psychiatric Hospital for Children and Youth, the Special Hospital for the Protection of Children

		with Neurodevelopmental and Motor Disabilities and similar competent institutions, depending on the need.
Vaccinations for children	Y	Protocol on procedures for unaccompanied and separated children
Mental health / psychosocial support		According to the Doctors of the World, upon request or in case of recognition of the need. Support was provided by Doctors of the World until the end of 2022, psychologists from Croatian Red Cross, Association for Psychological
Children with disabilities and those with chronic illnesses have access to the medical care needed	Y	Protocol on procedures for unaccompanied and separated children

Source: Republic of Croatia, Law on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection (*Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti*), Official Gazette [33/23](#); Protocol on procedures for unaccompanied and separated children (*Protokol o postupanju prema djeci bez pratnje*), August 2018, available [here](#). Doctors of the World, email received on 3 July 2023.

Children under temporary protection exercise the right to health care to the same extent as an insured person from compulsory health insurance. Health care costs are covered by the Ministry of Health, from budget funds.<sup>32</sup>

Unaccompanied and separated children exercise their right to healthcare to the same extent as persons insured from compulsory health insurance. However, this right does not mean the right to select a primary care physician, in conformity with the legislation governing the healthcare of foreigners in the Republic of Croatia. Primary health care is provided at the nearest contractual medical institution or in private contractual doctor's offices, or in the reception centre. The guardian takes care that the unaccompanied or

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<sup>32</sup> Republic of Croatia, Law on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection (*Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti*), Official Gazette [33/23](#).

separated child has received all necessary vaccinations and other forms of needed healthcare; ensures that the unaccompanied or separated child acquires the right to healthcare to the same extent as a person insured on the basis of compulsory health insurance further to his or her stay permit (the costs are borne by the Ministry of Health).<sup>33</sup>

### 3.1.2. Challenges in practical provision

General difficulties were detected in registering with general practitioners, finding doctors who enrol new patients, language barriers and a lack of translators, lack of information about the system itself and the possibilities of seeking care, long waiting lists, users located in different locations and therefore seeking support is exclusively left to themselves or limited resources of local communities (service providers do not have the opportunity to provide direct information except in collective accommodations), lack of organized transportation for people with reduced mobility when accessing hospitals and specialists for people in private accommodations. Also, despite the legislative framework that enabled full access to care equal to the rights of citizens of the Republic of Croatia, in practice a significant part of the medical staff was not informed about the rights and duties related to the provision of care and the rights of persons under temporary protection. It is also important to note that users located in Zagreb were generally able to get the necessary medical care more easily due to the centralization of highly specialized services (as is also true for citizens of the Republic of Croatia).<sup>34</sup>

According to the Ombudsperson for Children, translators are unavailable, without whom doctors do not want to conduct a specialist examination, and the capacities of paediatric surgeries are also insufficient. In addition to various educational activities on parenting in crisis, UNICEF, in partnership with Doctors of the World, established a [MED-info centre](#) that provided information on access and right to health services for 1,100 children and caregivers from Ukraine. In the period from May 2022 to the end of April 2023, the Doctors of the World informed persons under temporary protection from Ukraine about the legislative framework, rights and access to the health system, organized support for registrations with general practitioners and support for ordering specialist examinations.<sup>35</sup> The centre also organizes online workshops on the Croatian

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<sup>33</sup> Republic of Croatia, European Migration Network (*Europska migracijska mreža*), Protocol on procedures for unaccompanied and separated children (*Protokol o postupanju prema djeci bez pratnje*), August 2018, available [here](#).

<sup>34</sup> Doctors of the World, email received on 3 July 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Doctors of the World, email received on 3 July 2023.

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health and social system and access to services, which has increased the number of users of this service, especially those in private accommodation. This centre is also an access point for support in case of gender-based violence.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.1.3. Mental health and psychosocial support for children fleeing Ukraine

Children under temporary protection have the full scope of care and services related to mental health protection, as well as associated assessments and treatment. According to the Doctors of the World, there were no experts specialized in working with children in collective accommodation, nor was there a systematic assessment and 'screening' of children. Depending on the recognition of needs (mainly by parents), children could be referred to any of the institutions that provide support to children of citizens of the Republic of Croatia. In addition, have been Croatian Red Cross psychologists in collective accommodation, Doctors of the World staff in collective accommodation or online until the end of December 2022 and Association for Psychological Assistance for support and/or information and referral depending on needs. Furthermore, the challenges mentioned in the previous section also refer to the exercise of children's rights to mental health protection.<sup>37</sup>

UNICEF Croatia, in cooperation with the Society for Psychological Assistance, implements a program aimed at strengthening the key knowledge and skills of experts in the social care system responsible for interventions and support for children and families and providing psychosocial support to children and families. Children and parents are included in a series of workshops and through individual counselling. In addition, supervisory support is continuously provided to experts and translators in the social welfare system who provide daily support to children and parents.<sup>38</sup>

In order to support children, adolescents and parents/caregivers/guardians from Ukraine located in Split, UNICEF Croatia established cooperation with the Centre for Social Care Split to provide timely and targeted services to the most vulnerable children, adolescents and parents/caregivers/guardians refugees from Ukraine, including

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<sup>36</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Doctors of the World, email received on 3 July 2023.

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF Croatia, Ensuring mental health and psychosocial support for children and caregivers from Ukraine in Croatia (*Osiguravanje mentalnog zdravlja i psihosocijalne podrške djeci i skrbnicima iz Ukrajine u Hrvatskoj*), available [here](#).



unaccompanied and separated children in the area of Split-Dalmatia County. These efforts are additionally supported through a partnership with the Society for Psychological Assistance, and are aimed at strengthening the knowledge and skills of existing and newly employed professional workers of the Centre for Social Welfare Split and other experts in the social welfare system responsible for interventions and support for children and families. Funds are provided for children's organised free time, meeting key needs and necessities related to school obligations, health and hygiene supplies, etc. With the support of IKEA, a space is equipped where children can spend time playing and studying. The program is implemented from June 2022 until the end of June 2023.<sup>39</sup>

According to the Ombudsperson for Children, during the provision of psychosocial support services, adaptation problems, depression and post-traumatic stress disorders were generally observed. The children expressed strong emotions of fear, sadness and anger, difficulties with the language barrier and the need for greater understanding and help from teachers and for the organization of supplementary classes. That is why it is still important to include children in workshops in order to express unpleasant emotions and strengthen psychological resistance to stressful situations. The busyness of translators causes difficulties in holding workshops, and their lack is also evident in other segments.<sup>40</sup>

## 3.2. Access to education

### 3.2.1. Types of schooling

According to the Law on International and Temporary Protection, a child under temporary protection in Croatia has the same right to primary and secondary education as a child who is a Croatian citizen.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> UNICEF Croatia, Support for the most vulnerable children and adolescents from Ukraine in the Split-Dalmatia County (*Podrška najugroženijoj djeci i adolescentima iz Ukrajine u Splitsko-dalmatinskoj županiji*), available [here](#).

<sup>40</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Republic of Croatia, Law on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection (*Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti*), Official Gazette [33/23](#).

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An unaccompanied child has the same right to primary and secondary education as a child who is a Croatian citizen, with the aim of as successful integration into the educational system and Croatian society as possible. The guardian's obligation is to start the process of enrolling an unaccompanied child in school, no later than 30 days after submitting the application for temporary residence.<sup>42</sup>

[Inclusion of refugee children and students from Ukraine in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia](#), issued by the Ministry of Science and Education in March 2022, prescribes that every refugee child from the aggression-affected Ukraine who is included in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia in primary and secondary schools must be provided with: participation in preparatory classes of the Croatian language without testing; simultaneous involvement in educational work in class departments in all subjects according to their possibilities and abilities; and, at the end of the teaching or school year, final grades and a certificate.

According to the data of the Ministry of the Interior, by 31 December 2022, 7,443 displaced children entered the Republic of Croatia, many of whom had their education interrupted. According to the Ministry of Science and Education, children from Ukraine were included in the educational system throughout the whole of the Republic of Croatia, during the entire school year. Currently, 1,680 students are enrolled in educational institutions, of which 1,528 are in primary schools, 254 in secondary schools and 152 children in kindergartens.<sup>43</sup>

In April 2023, the Ministry of Science and Education issued the [Notice to schools on procedures that precede the end of the 2022/2023 school year, which refers to students, displaced persons from Ukraine under temporary protection in educational institutions in the Republic of Croatia](#) containing the information on the right to preparatory and supplementary classes and which outlines different procedures for students who wish to continue their education in Croatia based on how they attended classes in school year 2022/2023, as follows: (i.) students who were included in Croatian language preparatory classes and other teaching subjects in Croatian schools are issued with a certificate by the Croatian school provided that the students are able to receive grades for those teaching subjects; (ii.) students who were included only in the Croatian language preparatory classes and were not included in other teaching subjects will attend the same class in the next school year unless they were simultaneously included

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<sup>42</sup> Republic of Croatia, European Migration Network (*Europska migracijska mreža*), Protocol on procedures for unaccompanied and separated children (*Protokol o postupanju prema djeci bez pratnje*), August 2018, available [here](#).

<sup>43</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

in online classes from Ukraine in which case their certificate will be issued by the official institutions of Ukraine and the Croatian school where the student intends to continue their education is obligated to conduct a recognition process for continuation of primary or secondary school.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Science and Education adopted the [Decision on the enrolment of students displaced from Ukraine in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of high school in the school year 2023/2024](#) which regulates the high-school enrolment process for students displaced from Ukraine. The decision prescribes the possibility for students displaced from Ukraine to enrol in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of high school based on the signed parent's declaration in cases where they don't have the documentation on previous elementary education or if it is not possible to prove previous education based on the available documentation. Furthermore, the decision also anticipates the minister's decision for any specifics of the enrolment of students displaced from Ukraine in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of secondary school that could not have been foreseen by the decision.

**Table 5 – Enrolment and attendance of children fleeing Ukraine**

Types of schooling		Number of children enrolled	Number of children attending	Source
National formal educational system	Children in nursery	152		Ombudspers on for Children, according to the Ministry of Science and Education
	Children in primary education	1528		Ombudspers on for Children, according to the Ministry of Science and Education
	Children in secondary education	254		Ombudspers on for Children, according to the Ministry of Science and Education
Physical attendance of Ukrainian led school / educational setting				

Online attendance of Ukrainian led school / educational setting			
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Source: Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children, email received on 20 June 2023, data by 31 December 2022.

### 3.2.2. Support to integration in the formal educational system

In March 2022, the Ministry of Science and Education issued [Guidelines, instructions, recommendations and activity suggestions for teachers, teachers and professional associates in primary and secondary schools for the inclusion of vulnerable groups of refugee students](#), with the aim of raising the level of awareness of educators in schools about the reception of vulnerable groups, children and youth, refugees from war-affected areas, and building socio-emotional skills in classrooms to enable the joint creation of a peaceful environment in the classroom where children and youth learn to respect differences.

In order to successfully include children and students under temporary protection in the preschool and school system, the Ministry of Science and Education reported that they established a list of Ukrainian language teachers, as well as cooperation with relevant stakeholders. In addition, letters were sent to schools and kindergartens and county education offices, guidelines and manuals for working with refugee children were issued for teachers and professional associates, a student registration system via e-Matica was established, laptops were purchased and material and other conditions were provided for the successful inclusion of children in the education system, a system of national final exams was established for high school students outside of Ukraine for the purpose of entering universities.<sup>44</sup>

For the successful integration and understanding of the experiences of displaced children, there is a lack of support and empowerment of teachers and professionals, so the Ombudsperson for Children welcomes the implementation of education in the form of support for the well-being and mental health of students and the creation of an inclusive environment.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Croatian Law Centre, [The Croatian Asylum System in 2022 – National Report](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>45</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

### 3.2.3. Data on drop outs and NEETs (not in education, employment, or training)

No data on drop outs and NEETs was available, waiting for the response from the relevant authorities.

One of the main problems faced by adults displaced from Ukraine and their children is the unavailability of preschool education, especially in the area of the City of Zagreb. Mothers must provide a certificate of employment upon enrolment, and they cannot start working until the child starts kindergarten. On the other hand, when the children are included in the kindergarten, there is good cooperation between the kindergarten and the local government, without major problems regarding co-financing.<sup>46</sup>

Families accommodated in the Plitvice Motel in Zagreb had additional difficulties in enrolling pre-school children in kindergartens due to the isolated location of the collective accommodation. Therefore, the Ombudsperson for Children recommended to the City of Zagreb that children be allowed to enrol in the kindergarten in accordance with available capacities, but considering the possibility of transportation from and to this location. The City increased the number of bus lines that connect the mentioned location with other city areas, but the general issue of insufficient capacity in Zagreb's kindergartens has not yet been resolved.<sup>47</sup>

Adaptation to the education system is difficult primarily due to lack of knowledge of the language. Cycles of preparatory classes in the Croatian language are organized in schools, part of the students attend classes in Croatian and are included in regular school programs. However, part of the students also follows classes in Ukrainian. In order for children to maintain a connection with their language and education, in accordance with the request of the Ukrainian ombudsman for children, the Croatian Ombudsperson for Children recommended making available the Information Guide for children and parents with websites and school materials in English and Ukrainian, prepared by the Ukrainian Parliament. Classes take up a large part of the day for Ukrainian children and cause a lack of free time, and the material they learn in Croatian schools is different from the one they listen to online in Ukrainian. Many children are not involved in schools and follow only online classes, hoping to return home soon, although the school

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<sup>46</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Report of the Ombudsperson for Children for 2022, available [here](#).

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environment and extracurricular activities and socializing with peers could help overcome emotional difficulties.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.3. Access to social welfare – forms of social assistance related to children

On the basis of the Decision of the Council of the European Union and the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, Ukrainian citizens have been granted temporary protection, which enables the exercise of a number of rights that enable their inclusion in everyday life in Croatia.

The Law on Amendments to the Social Welfare Act, which entered into force on April 15, 2022, expanded the provisions of Article 19(2), so that it reads: "Foreigner under subsidiary protection, asylum seeker and foreigner under temporary protection". Displaced persons from Ukraine, who received the status of temporary protection, are given the opportunity to receive all benefits and services prescribed by the Social Welfare Act, under the conditions prescribed by the Law.

Families under temporary protection have access to the following social welfare services: the first social service, consultation, psychosocial counselling, accommodation (in accordance with the Social Welfare Act) and a one-time allowance of up to 460 EUR.<sup>49</sup>

The social welfare centre immediately appoints a special guardian for the unaccompanied child in order to protect the child's well-being and implement further procedures for the unaccompanied child. A special guardian takes care of all the rights and interests of the child and represents the child in matters for which he was appointed and takes the necessary actions, with the aim of family reunification.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova*), Croatia for Ukraine (*Hrvatska za Ukrajinu*), Social rights and assistance (*Socijalna prava i pomoć*), available [here](#).

<sup>50</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), Employment and social welfare for citizens of Ukraine, available [here](#).

## 4. Additional legal and practical barriers and challenges

### 4.1. General challenges

According to the Ombudsperson for Children, difficulties in collective accommodation are occasionally observed. For instance, families accommodated in Grad mladih in Zagreb were visited by the Centre for Social Care and Red Cross just occasionally, children had no organised free time or support in learning, children and parents had no psychological support. Families accommodated in motel Plitvice faced traffic isolation, unstructured free time, lack of adequate space for children to play, lack of psychosocial support for mothers. Most of the issues were resolved by the Ministry of the Interior and competent institutions after Ombudsperson for Children's recommendations. This form of accommodation enables mutual support for people in a similar situation, and on the other hand, it leads to complex interpersonal relationships, so organized accommodation shows the need for more intensive work. Also, collective accommodations are not suitable for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities. Ombudsperson was also aware of cases of domestic violence observed by certain organisations during the provision of legal and psychosocial assistance, as well as the need to relocate the violent parent with the help of civil protection officers. Due to the language barrier, the change in the environment and the lack of a social network, it is more difficult for the victim to decide to report violence, especially in private accommodation. This prevents the protection of the child's rights and interests. Therefore, the support of translators and their availability during psychological counselling or psychotherapy work is also important here.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Republic of Croatia, Ombudsperson for Children (*Pravobraniteljica za djecu*), email received on 20 June 2023.

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## 4.2. Challenges for children at multiple risk/disadvantage

No challenges regarding children at multiple risk/disadvantage were reported by relevant authorities.



## 5. Policies in place

### 5.1. Dedicated action plan and/or integrated measures

In Croatia, there is no national Action Plan for integration of persons granted international protection since 2019. Thus, there is no Action Plan for persons under temporary protection either.

On the local level, however, in January 2022, the City Assembly of the City of Zagreb adopted the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the integration of applicants for international protection and persons granted international protection for the year 2022. In May 2023, the City of Zagreb held a consultation with the interested public regarding the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities for 2023 and 2024. The general goal of the Action Plan is to encourage and implement the integration of international protection seekers, persons granted international or temporary protection and foreign workers residing in the area of the City of Zagreb into society, and to contribute to the development of the overall migration policy in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>52</sup>

The competent ministries and relevant services issued the following decisions, guidelines and instructions: Measures for protection against infectious diseases and content of the health examination of refugees from Ukraine by the Croatian Institute of Public Health dated 3 March 2022; note with instructions on providing health care to refugees from Ukraine sent by the Ministry of Health to contracted health institutions and contracted private practice offices and pharmacies on 1 March 2022, with additional note from 4 March 2022 and 14 March 2022, which extended rights of persons displaced from Ukraine; note on the inclusion of refugee children and students from Ukraine in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia to all primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia sent by the Ministry of Science and Education (hereinafter: MSE) on 4 March 2022; Decision of the MSE on conducting preparatory classes in the Croatian language was adopted on 1 April 2022; note of the MSE dated 16 March 2022 on the inclusion of children, displaced persons from Ukraine under temporary

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<sup>52</sup> City of Zagreb, Draft action plan of the City of Zagreb for the implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities for 2023 and 2024 (*Nacrt akcijskog plana Grada Zagreba za provedbu Povelje Integrirajućih gradova za 2023. i 2024. godinu*), more information available [here](#).

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protection in the system of early and preschool upbringing and education of the Republic of Croatia sent to all kindergartens and kindergarten founders; note from the MSE dated 18 March 2022 on the obligation to inform the competent school doctor about the inclusion of students in schools; note from the MSE to elementary and secondary schools from 31 May 2022 on the procedures that precede the end of the 2021/2022 school year and the MSE's letter dated 15 June 2022 on enrolment of displaced persons from Ukraine in secondary school for the 2022/2023 school year.<sup>53</sup>

## 5.2. European Child Guarantee

Croatian National Action Plan to Implement the EU Council Recommendation on Establishing a European Child Guarantee, among groups of children in need, lists children under temporary protection, as well as displaced children from Ukraine. There are six general objectives of the National Plan with associated measures: 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 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.

The National Action Plan also includes the framework of action for the protection of displaced children from Ukraine. In February 2022, the Government 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 National Action Plan also foresees a series of activities for the purpose of their effective access to high-quality early and

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<sup>53</sup> Croatian Law Centre, [The Croatian Asylum System in 2022 – National Report](#), 15 June 2023.

primary education, activities in school and organized leisure, psychosocial assistance and child protection services and health services.<sup>54</sup>

According to UNICEF's analysis of the ECG in Croatia, Croatia already has certain system characteristics that should be maintained and strengthened, such as universal access to public and free education and healthcare. Improvements are needed, however, to overcome the 'hidden' barriers that prevent children in need accessing these services, and to strengthen the support systems in the other three areas that are, at present, less developed: early childhood education and care, healthy nutrition and adequate housing.<sup>55</sup>

### 5.3. Budget

Apart from numerous budget lines designated for children within the Social Welfare System, there is one budget line designated precisely for supporting students displaced from Ukraine, in the amount of 99,542 EUR.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Republic of Croatia, National Action Plan to Implement the EU Council Recommendation on Establishing a European Child Guarantee, 2022, available [here](#).

<sup>55</sup> UNICEF Croatia, In-depth Analysis for the European Child Guarantee - Croatia (*Dubinska analiza za EU Jamstvo za svako dijete – Hrvatska*), March 2022, available [here](#).

<sup>56</sup> Ministry of Finance, 2023 State Budget, available [here](#).

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## Annex 1 – Research and data

**Table 6 – Research on experiences of children fleeing Ukraine**

Surveys or research studies on experiences of children fleeing Ukraine	
Name/title	
Main findings (max. 1000 chars)	
Highlight any findings re. gender, age, disability and diverse characteristics	
Methodology (for surveys/polls indicate sample size and sample method)	
Source	

**Table 7 – Research on experiences of children fleeing Ukraine**

Surveys or research studies on experiences of children fleeing Ukraine	
Name/title	
Main findings (max. 1000 chars)	
Highlight any findings re. gender, age, disability and diverse characteristics.	
Methodology (for surveys/polls indicate sample size and sample method)	
Source	

## Annex 2 - Promising practices

**Table 8 – Promising practice # 1**

Promising programme / practices aimed at providing protection and support to displaced children fleeing the war in Ukraine	
Name/title	Preserving mental health and providing psychosocial support to children and guardians from Ukraine in Croatia ( <i>Očuvanje mentalnog zdravlja i pružanje psihosocijalne podrške i djeci i skrbnicima iz Ukrajine u Hrvatskoj</i> )
Implementing body (public authority, CSO etc)	UNICEF Croatia, Society for Psychological Assistance
Funding body	SOLIDARNA - Fund “Solidarity with Ukraine”, UNICEF Croatia
Reference in EN and original language (incl. URL, where available)	Information provided by the Ombudsperson for children, email received on 20 June 2023. Information provided by the Society for Psychological Assistance, email received on 21 June 2023. Society for Psychological Assistance, Support project for children and guardians from Ukraine in Croatia ( <i>Projekt podrške djeci i skrbnicima iz Ukrajine u Hrvatskoj</i> ), available <a href="#">here</a> . UNICEF Croatia, Ensuring mental health and psychosocial support for children and guardians from Ukraine in Croatia ( <i>Osiguravanje mentalnog zdravlja i psihosocijalne podrške djeci i skrbnicima iz Ukrajine u Hrvatskoj</i> ) available <a href="#">here</a> .
Start / end date or ongoing	June 2022 – June 2023 (possibly will be prolonged until the end of 2023)
Main target group	children, young people and parents/guardians, refugees from Ukraine who are in temporary accommodation in Croatia
Scope (local/regional/national)	National: group program activities were carried out in the area of Varaždin County, Osijek-Baranja County, Split-Dalmatia County, Lika-Senj County, the City of Zagreb and Zagreb County; individual counselling was conducted online, so the service is available throughout the Republic of Croatia; group support programs were implemented in 23 schools (21 elementary schools and 2 secondary schools)

Objectives and outputs	<p>Objectives: provision of psychosocial support to children and guardians who live in Croatia and have fled the war in Ukraine; strengthening the capacity of experts who work with refugees.</p> <p>Outputs: webinars and leaflets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNICEF Croatia, Leaflet - Resilience and support: Leaflet for professionals working with refugee families from Ukraine (<i>Letak - Otpornost i podrška: Letak za stručnjake koji rade s obiteljima izbjeglima iz Ukrajine</i>), April 2023, available <a href="#">here</a> (in Croatian).</li> <li>• Leaflet for parents in Croatian and Ukrainian: Mental health of refugees, a short guide for parents and guardians (<i>Letak za roditelje na hrvatskom i ukrajinskom jeziku: Mentalno zdravlje izbjeglica, kratki vodič za roditelje i skrbnike</i>), April 2023, available <a href="#">here</a> (in Croatian and Ukrainian).</li> </ul>
Brief description (max. 1000 chars)	Direct assistance to refugees is provided, among other things, through the implementation of group workshops with school-age children in primary and secondary schools and collective accommodations, and group workshops for parents/guardians in collective accommodations, and all activities with children and parents/guardians are conducted in Ukrainian or with translation.
Highlight key elements of the programme/practice which makes it promising (sustainability, measurable impact etc) (max. 500 chars)	<p>Sustainability - strengthening the capacity of experts who work with refugees, through mobile teams within centres for social care and volunteers and translators, training translators for mediation in psychosocial counselling as well as supervision of workers who work with refugees;</p> <p>Measurable impact – 343 persons displaced from Ukraine, including 58 adults and 283 children were provided access to mental health support.</p>
Monitoring and evaluation and the bodies involved	The data of the evaluations carried out with the participants have not yet been processed.

**Table 9 – Promising practice # 2**

**Promising programme / practices aimed at providing protection and support to displaced children fleeing the war in Ukraine**

Name/title	FICE Croatia for Ukraine ( <i>FICE Hrvatska za Ukrajinu</i> )
Implementing body (public authority, CSO etc)	FICE Croatia, with the support of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and Social Welfare Centre Samobor
Funding body	SOLIDARNA - Fund "Solidarity with Ukraine"
Reference in EN and original language (incl. URL, where available)	FICE Croatia, Centre for supporting communities, experts, families, young people and children for a better and more complete life ( <i>FICE Hrvatska, Centar za podršku zajednicama, stručnjacima, obitelji, mladima i djeci za kvalitetniji i cjelovitiji život</i> ), The last activity of the "FICE Croatia for Ukraine" project held ( <a href="#"><i>Održana posljednja aktivnost projekta "FICE Hrvatska za Ukrajinu"</i></a> ); Handbook for working with children in alternative care from Ukraine ( <a href="#"><i>Priručnik za rad s djecom iz alternativne skrbi iz Ukrajine</i></a> )
Start / end date or ongoing	May 2022 – May 2023
Main target group	children from Ukraine without adequate parental care
Scope (local/regional/national)	National: Sveta Nedelja, Split, Selce, Rastoke
Objectives and outputs	The objective of this programme is to improve children's wellbeing and facilitate adaptation to life in Croatia, through work that will include various methods and techniques of psychosocial support, as well as activities that include trips and group activities with the aim of integration and preservation of identity.
Brief description (max. 1000 chars)	This project included organizing activities for children from Ukraine without adequate parental care accommodated in Sveta Nedelja, integration and implementation of activities together with local children without adequate parental care, cooperation with the Community Service Centre "Izvor" Selce, and integration and implementation of activities together with children from Ukraine who are placed in a home in Split with the aim of preserving their own national identity and getting to know Croatia, getting to know cultural customs and socialization and adaptation to life in Croatia. During these activities, an effort was made to contribute to the easier adaptation and integration of

	<p>children from alternative care from Ukraine to Croatia, through several elements that were woven through all the above-mentioned activities: through work on content related to the processing of unpleasant emotions regarding the war in Ukraine, work on integration through socialization, getting to know other children from alternative care, and with other children from Ukraine located in Croatia for easier integration, and through the provision of entertainment to relieve stress.</p>
<p>Highlight key elements of the programme/practice which makes it promising (sustainability, measurable impact etc.) (max. 500 chars)</p>	<p>Sustainability – through strengthening of group cohesion of children from Ukraine, connecting children with each other, with educators, but also with leaders and volunteers.</p>
<p>Monitoring and evaluation and the bodies involved</p>	<p>Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and Social Welfare Centre Samobor</p>