

Civic space in the EU: Mapping of national approaches to civic space monitoring, participation and protection

Croatia

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Contractors: Centre for Peace Studies, Human Rights House Zagreb

Authors: Sara Kekuš, Sara Lalić, Ivan Novosel

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1. MONITORING AND REPORTING ON CIVIC SPACE

1.1. Monitoring initiative from the side of the State

Has there been any initiative from the side of the State (government/parliament) to observe/monitor the restrictions/challenges/threats for civic space actors in your country in the last three years?

Croatia does not have any initiative from the side of the State to monitor the restrictions, challenges, and other issues affecting civic space actors in the country.

1.2. Other monitoring initiatives

Has there been any other actor/body/mechanism that has observed/monitored civic space restrictions/challenges/threats in your country in the last three years?

Several bodies and actors have monitored and observed Croatia's civic space for years.

1. Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia¹

The references to the civic space reporting:

Report of the Ombudswoman - Analysis of the State of Human Rights and Equality in Croatia 2021.²

Report of the Ombudswoman - Analysis of the State of Human Rights and Equality in Croatia 2022.³

Report of the Ombudswoman - Analysis of the State of Human Rights and Equality in Croatia 2023.⁴

¹ Croatia, Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia ([Pučka pravobraniteljica](#)).

² Croatia, Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, Report of the Ombudswoman - Analysis of the State of Human Rights and Equality in Croatia 2021 ([Izvešće pučke pravobraniteljice - Analiza stanja ljudskih prava u Hrvatskoj 2021.](#)).

³ Croatia, Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, Report of the Ombudswoman - Analysis of the State of Human Rights and Equality in Croatia 2022 ([Izvešće pučke pravobraniteljice - Analiza stanja ljudskih prava u Hrvatskoj 2022.](#)).

⁴ Croatia, Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, Report of the Ombudswoman - Analysis of the State of Human Rights and Equality in Croatia 2023 ([Izvešće pučke pravobraniteljice - Analiza stanja ljudskih prava u Hrvatskoj 2023.](#)).

The most relevant body is the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, a commissioner of the Croatian Parliament responsible for promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms, including civic space issues. She is independent and autonomous in her work. The Ombudswoman takes complaints and regularly reports to the Parliament. In her annual reports to the Parliament, the Ombudswoman has been reporting about the situation of civil society organisations. In addition, in the last three years, in the Annual Report 2021, she has started to report about civic space in the chapter “Human Rights Defenders”.⁵ In this chapter, the Ombudswoman has been reporting on various topics related to freedom of association, financing framework, participation and cooperation with authorities, and safe space and protection. In other chapters of the annual reports, the Ombudswoman reports about freedom of expression and information and freedom of peaceful assembly.

2. Human Rights House Zagreb⁶

The references to the civic space reporting:

- Access to Financing for organisations for Human Rights in Croatia: obstacles and recommendations.⁷
- Human Rights in Croatia: Overview of State for the Year 2022.⁸
- Human Rights Defenders: Challenges and Obstacles.⁹
- Human Rights in Croatia: Overview of State for the Year 2021 (*Ljudska prava u Hrvatskoj: pregled stanja za 2021. godinu*).¹⁰

⁵ Croatia, Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia (*Pučka pravobraniteljica*), Report of the Ombudswoman - Analysis of the State of Human Rights and Equality in Croatia 2021 ([Izvešće pučke pravobraniteljice - Analiza stanja ljudskih prava u Hrvatskoj 2021.](#)).

⁶ Croatia, Human Rights House Zagreb ([Kuća ljudskih prava Zagreb](#)).

⁷ Đaković, T. (2023), Access to Financing for organisations for Human Rights in Croatia: obstacles and recommendations, ([Pristup financiranju za organizacije za ljudska prava u Hrvatskoj: prepreke i preporuke](#)), Zagreb, Human Rights House Zagreb.

⁸ Human Rights House Zagreb (2023), Human Rights in Croatia: Overview of State for the Year 2022 ([Ljudska prava u Hrvatskoj: pregled stanja za 2022. godinu](#)), Zagreb, Human Rights House Zagreb.

⁹ Human Rights House Zagreb (2022), Human Rights Defenders: Challenges and Obstacles ([Branitelji ljudskih prava: izazovi i prepreke](#)), Zagreb, Human Rights House Zagreb.

¹⁰ Human Rights House Zagreb (2022), Human Rights in Croatia: Overview of State for the Year 2021 ([Ljudska prava u Hrvatskoj: pregled stanja za 2021. godinu](#)), Zagreb, Human Rights House Zagreb.

- REGIONAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS – challenges and obstacles in the work on the protection and promotion of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.¹¹

3. Centre for Peace Studies¹²

The references to the civic space reporting:

- Liberties Rule of Law Report 2024: Croatia.¹³
- Liberties Rule of Law Report 2023: Croatia.¹⁴
- Liberties Rule of Law Report 2022: Croatia.¹⁵
- A New Beginning: Basis for discussion on a new approach to positioning and activity of progressive human rights organisations in Croatia - summary.¹⁶

¹¹ Đaković T., Novosel I. (2024), [REGIONAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS – challenges and obstacles in the work on the protection and promotion of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia](#), Belgrade, Human Rights House Belgrade.

¹² Croatia, Centre for Peace Studies ([Centar za mirovne studije](#)).

¹³ Centre for Peace Studies (2024), [Liberties Rule of Law Report 2024: Croatia](#), Berlin, Civil Liberties Union for Europe.

¹⁴ Centre for Peace Studies (2023), [Liberties Rule of Law Report 2023: Croatia](#), Berlin, Civil Liberties Union for Europe.

¹⁵ Centre for Peace Studies (2022), Liberties Rule of Law Report 2022: Croatia, in: [Liberties Rule of Law Report 2022: Croatia](#), Berlin, Civil Liberties Union for Europe.

¹⁶ Miošić, N. and Lalić, S. (2022), [A New Beginning: Basis for discussion on a new approach to positioning and activity of progressive human rights organisations in Croatia - summary](#), Zagreb, Centre for Peace Studies.

4. Gong¹⁷

The references to the civic space reporting:

- Gong's Recommendations for Development of the Sustainability and Resilience Model of the Advocacy Civil Society Organisations.¹⁸
- Trends, Challenges and Opportunities of Support to Development of the Advocacy Civil Society Organisations.¹⁹
- Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPP) - a Tool of the Powerful to Silence Voices of Criticism.²⁰
- Associations at Risk of Illiquidity.²¹
- Civil Society 2030 – Under the Magnifying Glass.²²
- Missed Opportunities and Unfulfilled Promises: The "Croatian Model" of Support for Civil Society through the European Social Fund.²³

¹⁷ Croatia, [Gong](#).

¹⁸ Gong (2023), Gong's Recommendations for Development of the Sustainability and Resilience Model of the Advocacy Civil Society Organisations ([Gongove preporuke za razvoj modela održivosti i otpornosti zagovaračkih organizacija civilnog društva](#)), Zagreb, Gong.

¹⁹ Vidačak, I. (2023), Trends, Challenges and Opportunities of Support to Development of the Advocacy Civil Society Organisations ([Trendovi, izazovi i mogućnosti podrške razvoju zagovaračkih organizacija civilnog društva](#)), Zagreb, Gong.

²⁰ Pavić, S. (2023), Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPP) - a Tool of the Powerful to Silence Voices of Criticism ([Strateške tužbe protiv javne participacije \(SLAPP\) - Alat moćnika za ušutkavanje glasova kritike](#)), Zagreb, Gong.

²¹ Jurman Jakus, D., Sečkar, B. and Buković, N. (2023), Associations at Risk of Illiquidity ([Udruge u riziku od nelikvidnosti](#)), Zagreb, Gong.

²² Sečkar, B. and Buković, N. (2023), Civil Society 2030 – Under the Magnifying Glass ([Civilno društvo 2030 – Tražimo povećalom](#)), Zagreb, Gong.

²³ Buković, N. (2022), Missed Opportunities and Unfulfilled Promises: The "Croatian Model" of Support for Civil Society through the European Social Fund ([Propuštene prilike i neispunjena obećanja: „hrvatski model“ podrške civilnom društvu kroz Europski socijalni fond](#)), Zagreb, Gong.

2. PARTICIPATION

2.1. Rules on participation

Are there any binding rules in place in your country for the participation/consultation of civil society organisations for developing/implementing/monitoring laws and policies?

In Croatia, civil society organisations' participation in policy-making is primarily guided by the 2009 Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts.²⁴ This Code sets standards for public consultations, including their form and duration, methods of informing the public about ongoing consultations, and methods of providing feedback. However, it is important to note that this Code serves as guidance and is not legally binding. CSOs have criticized the participation practices and instances of involving civil society organisations in decision-making and consultation processes as often more formal than substantive, which weakens opportunities for participation and has a negative impact on the quality of public policies. e-Savjetovanja (online consultations) are almost always held only as a way to fulfil formal obligations, while numerous issues with this form of public consultation continue to raise concerns, including the shortening of the consultation period with a lack of justification.²⁵

The Act on the System of Strategic Planning and Development Management of the Republic of Croatia²⁶ establishes a system for strategic planning and development management, covering the preparation, adoption, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of strategic plans at national and local levels. While the law does not explicitly detail CSO participation, it is based on the principle of partnership, which implies cooperation between public authorities and CSOs in development planning.

The Rules of Procedure of the Croatian Parliament²⁷ allow working bodies to invite public, scientific, and professional experts and other individuals to provide opinions on issues under discussion. Up to six such experts may be appointed as non-voting working body members. Their selection process is initiated through a public call for nominations, which

²⁴ Croatia, Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts (*Kodeks savjetovanja sa zainteresiranom javnošću u postupcima donošenja zakona, drugih propisa i akata*), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 140/09.

²⁵ Human Rights House Zagreb (2022), Human Rights Defenders: Challenges and Obstacles (*Branitelji ljudskih prava: izazovi i prepreke*), Zagreb, Human Rights House Zagreb.

²⁶ Croatia, Act on the System of Strategic Planning and Development Management of the Republic of Croatia (*Zakon o sustavu strateškog planiranja i upravljanja razvojem Republike Hrvatske*), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 123/17 and 151/22.

²⁷ Croatia, Rules of Procedure of the Croatian Parliament (*Poslovnik Hrvatskog sabora*), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 81/13, 113/16, 69/17, 29/18, 53/20, 119/20, 123/20, 86/23.

can be submitted by expert institutions, professional associations, civil society organisations, and individuals.

Croatia has established a centralised platform called e-Savjetovanja (e-Consultations),²⁸ which serves as a one-stop shop for accessing all ongoing public consultations. This platform enables citizens and civil society organisations to participate actively in the legislative process by providing feedback on draft laws, regulations, and other acts. Users can view open consultations and submit their comments through the platform.

To use the e-Savjetovanja platform, as of May 2024, citizens must log in via the e-Građani (e-Citizens) system using some form of identification, such as a banking token. However, the civil society organisations had to use a high-security credential, which significantly complicated access. This meant that the organisation's legal representative had to activate their national ID card at the Ministry of the Interior, install and use a unique mobile application, and rely on a smart card reader or cryptographic device to access the system. This level of security was unjustified and created unnecessary administrative burdens, ultimately restricting CSO participation in decision-making processes. This requirement was changed in June 2024, but technical issues remain, and only the legal representatives of CSOs can comment on the e-Savjetovanja system.

The legal framework in Croatia enables participation at various stages of the policy-making process, including public consultations on draft laws, regulations, and acts. However, the accessibility of these opportunities is hindered by the complex security requirements for CSOs to access the e-Savjetovanja platform. This additional administrative burden may limit the participation of smaller or less-resourced CSOs and could exclude marginalised groups, including youth, persons with disabilities, and citizens with migrant backgrounds. While the system theoretically allows for broad participation, the practical barriers created by cumbersome access procedures reduce its effectiveness and inclusivity, making it harder for all citizens, particularly vulnerable groups, to engage in a non-discriminatory and accessible manner. Additionally, the growing problem is that almost all consultation processes are being conducted at the end of the drafting process of a policy or legislation/regulation instead of at the beginning, in the inception phase. This significantly negatively impacts the ability to provide ideas, suggestions, and proposals for problems a policy aims to resolve. Additionally, public consultations are being held almost exclusively online, via e-Savjetovanje, and not by other forms, e.g., public hearings, meetings, workshops, etc., negatively affecting the possibility of CSOs to participate in the decision-making processes meaningfully.²⁹

²⁸ Croatia, e-Consultations platform ([E-savjetovanja](#)).

²⁹ Human Rights House Zagreb (2022), Human Rights Defenders: Challenges and Obstacles ([Branitelji ljudskih prava: izazovi i prepreke](#)), Zagreb, Human Rights House Zagreb.

Public consultations are required to last for at least 30 days. This is specified in Article 11 of the Act on the Right of Access to Information,³⁰ which mandates that public authorities consult the public on draft laws, regulations, and other acts. However, this timeline is often violated, even when the Information Commissioner (*Povjerenik za informiranje*) intervenes.

After the consultation period ends, public authorities must inform the public about accepted and rejected comments and proposals. They must publish a report on the conducted consultation on their website and submit it to the Government of the Republic of Croatia. This ensures a degree of transparency in the consultation process. However, in practice, the quality and consistency of feedback can vary³¹.

2.2. Consultative/participatory bodies

Are there any consultative/participatory bodies in your country that ensure the participation of civil society in developing/implementing/monitoring laws and policies?

The **Government Council for Civil Society Development**³² (*Savjet za razvoj civilnoga društva*) is an advisory body to the Government of Croatia that facilitates cooperation between public authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs). It monitors public policies affecting CSOs, provides opinions on regulations, supports funding priorities for CSO projects, and ensures civil society participation in EU and national strategic planning. The Council comprises 37 members, including representatives from government bodies, CSOs, foundations, trade unions, employers' associations, and local government associations.

Participation: Participatory

Perception: Although the Council was seen as a platform for dialogue, it has faced criticism for being overly bureaucratic and not sufficiently inclusive of CSOs, as the Government representatives can easily outvote the CSO representatives. The decision-

³⁰ Croatia, Act on the Right of Access to Information ([Zakon o pravu na pristup informacijama](#)), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 25/13, 85/15, 69/22.

³¹ Centre for Peace Studies (2025), [Liberties Rule of Law Report 2025: Croatia](#), in [Liberties Rule of Law Report 2025: Croatia](#), Berlin, Civil Liberties Union for Europe.

³² Croatia, Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs (*Ured za udruge*), Government Council for Civil Society Development ([Savjet za razvoj civilnog društva](#)).

making process is viewed as sluggish, and the government's commitment to implementing the Council's recommendations is often questioned.³³

The **Monitoring Committee 2021-2027** (*Odbor za praćenje 2021.-2027.*) **for the Efficient Human Resources Programme** (*Program Učinkoviti ljudski potencijali – PULIP*)³⁴ is a permanent body overseeing the programme's implementation and progress. Established by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, it includes representatives from public authorities, social and economic partners, civil society, academia, and regional and local bodies. The committee meets at least twice a year to review financial and performance data and may involve external experts in an advisory role when needed.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: The committee is often criticised for its lack of transparency in decision-making and for not adequately responding to smaller CSOs that face challenges accessing funding³⁵.

The **Monitoring Committee for the Competitiveness and Cohesion Programme and the Integrated Territorial Programme 2021-2027** (*Odbor za praćenje PKK i ITP 2021.-2027.*)³⁶ oversees the implementation and progress of these two EU-funded programmes in Croatia. It includes representatives from government bodies, civil society, social and economic partners, local and regional authorities, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, and financial institutions. The committee monitors programme execution and goal achievement, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities.

³³ Centre for Peace Studies (2022), Liberties Rule of Law Report 2022: Croatia, in: [Liberties Rule of Law Report 2022: Croatia](#), Berlin, Civil Liberties Union for Europe.

³⁴ Croatia, European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) (*Europski socijalni fond plus*), Efficient Human Resources, Monitoring ([Praćenje](#)).

³⁵ SOS-NET Network, Civil society organizations for the reform of financing from the European fund ([Organizacije civilnog društva za reformu financiranja iz europskog fonda](#)), 28 October 2022

³⁶ Croatia, Ministry of Regional Development and Funds of the European Union (*Ministarstvo regionalnog razvoja i fondovna Europske unije*), EU Funds 2021-2027, Monitoring Committee for the Competitiveness and Cohesion Programme and the Integrated Territorial Programme 2021-2027 ([Odbor za praćenje PKK i ITP 2021.-2027.](#)).

Participation: Consultative

Perception: While the committee provides essential oversight, its effectiveness is hindered by the limited capacity for civil society participation in decision-making. Many smaller CSOs feel excluded from the process, and there are concerns about the body's ability to track and address the real-world impact of these programmes on vulnerable communities.

The **Government Council for Youth** (*Savjet za mlade VRH*)³⁷ is an interdepartmental advisory body responsible for shaping and monitoring public policies affecting young people in Croatia. It provides opinions on draft laws, tracks policy implementation, and fosters cooperation between state institutions, civil society, and youth organisations. The council has 33 members, including government representatives, local authorities, academia, and youth organisations, ensuring a broad, participatory approach to youth policy development.

Participation: Participatory

Perception: The Council has been criticised for a lack of representation from marginalised youth groups and local grassroots organisations. Critics argue that while the body encourages dialogue, it often lacks tangible outcomes, and youth voices are not always heard in decision-making processes³⁸.

The **Council for National Minorities** (*Savjet za nacionalne manjine*)³⁹ is the central body for national minorities in Croatia, established by the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities⁴⁰. Its role includes allocating state budget funds to national minorities for cultural autonomy programs, overseeing the use of these funds, and reporting to the Croatian Government and Parliament. The Council comprises members appointed for four years, including representatives from minority councils, cultural, scientific, and religious leaders, minority associations, and Members of Parliament from national minorities. The

³⁷ Croatia, Ministry of Demography and Immigration (*Ministarstvo demografije i useljništva*), Government Council for Youth ([Savjet za mlade VRH](#)).

³⁸ Croatian Youth Network, Imposing Amendments to the Law on Youth Councils ([Nametanje izmjena Zakona o savjetima mladih](#)), 24 January 2024

³⁹ Croatia, Council for National Minorities ([Savjet za nacionalne manjine](#)).

⁴⁰ Croatia, Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities ([Ustavni zakon o pravima nacionalnih manjina](#)), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 155/02, 47/10, 80/10, 93/11, 93/11.

Council aims to enhance minority participation in public life and ensure the full implementation of minority rights guaranteed by Croatian law and EU legal standards.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: The Council is crucial in promoting minority rights but has been criticised for its limited engagement with grassroots minority organisations. Some argue that political and institutional interests heavily influence it, and its decision-making processes are often opaque, undermining its credibility in specific minority communities⁴¹.

The **Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Plan for the Period 2021-2027** (*Povjerenstvo za praćenje provedbe Nacionalnog plana za uključivanje Roma, za razdoblje od 2021. do 2027. godine*)⁴² is a consultative body that oversees the execution of the National Roma Inclusion Plan. Its responsibilities include monitoring the implementation of projects and activities related to Roma inclusion, allocating funds for the preparation and execution of relevant projects, and ensuring alignment with the national goals for Roma integration. The Council meets regularly to approve funding allocations and to review progress on the plan's objectives. During its second meeting, the Commission for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma was established, and its members were appointed from the Working Group of the Council and representatives of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: Although the Council's objectives are commendable, its implementation has faced criticism for lacking transparency and accountability. Civil society groups working with Roma communities have raised concerns about the body's decision-making processes and its limited effectiveness in addressing the root causes of Roma exclusion⁴³. Despite its role in monitoring funding, the impact of these projects remains challenging to assess.

⁴¹ Faktograf, New criteria for financing cultural autonomy of minorities sent for public debate ([Novi kriteriji financiranja kulturne autonomije manjina poslani u javnu raspravu](#)), 7 October 2024

⁴² Croatia, Government's Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities (*Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina*), Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Plan for the Period 2021-2027 ([Povjerenstvo za praćenje provedbe Nacionalnog plana za uključivanje Roma, za razdoblje od 2021. do 2027. godine](#)).

⁴³ Roma Civil Monitor 2021-2025, Croatia, available at <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/countries/croatia/>

The **Standing Commission for the Integration of Foreigners** (*Stalno povjerenstvo za provedbu integracije stranaca u hrvatsko društvo*)⁴⁴ is a governmental advisory body that coordinates and monitors integration policies in Croatia. It comprises 16 members, including state institutions, local authorities, and civil society representatives. The Director of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities serves as its chair. The Commission ensures intersectoral cooperation and policy alignment to support the integration of foreigners into Croatian society.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: While essential for integrating foreign nationals, the Commission faces criticism for its inadequate mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of integration policies. Civil society organisations collaborating with migrants have raised concerns about the Commission's limited capacity to influence concrete, on-the-ground policies and its tendency to favour policy rhetoric over practical solutions. Moreover, there has been no Action Plan for Integration since 2019, hindering the implementation of coherent and sustained integration efforts⁴⁵. This deficiency has left numerous crucial areas of migrant integration without structured support or clear policy direction.

The **Intersectoral Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Gender Equality Plan 2021-2027 and the Action Plan 2021-2024** (*Međuresorna radna skupina za praćenje provedbe Nacionalnog i Akcijskog plana*)⁴⁶ is a coordinating body established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the measures outlined in the Action Plan for Gender Equality. The group is led by the Director of the Office for Gender Equality and ensures the effective execution of gender equality policies across various sectors.

⁴⁴ Croatia, Government's Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities (*Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina*), Integration of persons granted international protection into Croatian society ([Integracija osoba kojima je odobrena međunarodna zaštita u hrvatsko društvo](#)), Government's Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities (*Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina*), The information session of the Permanent Commission for the Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society was held ([Održana informativna sjednica Stalnog povjerenstva za provedbu integracije stranaca u hrvatsko društvo](#)) published on 23 December 2019 and Decision on amending the Decision on the establishment of the Permanent Commission for the implementation of the integration of foreigners into Croatian society ([Odluka o izmjeni Odluke o osnivanju Stalnog povjerenstva za provedbu integracije stranaca u hrvatsko društvo](#)), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 68/23.

⁴⁵ Human Rights House Zagreb (2023), [Human Rights in Croatia: Overview of 2022](#).

⁴⁶ Croatia, Government's Office for Gender Equality (*Ured za ravnopravnost spolova*), The first meeting of the Interdepartmental Working Group for monitoring the implementation of the National and Action Plan was held ([Održan prvi sastanak Međuresorne radne skupine za praćenje provedbe Nacionalnog i Akcijskog plana](#)), published on 31 October 2023.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: While the group is crucial for gender equality efforts, its effectiveness is often questioned by LGBTIQ+ advocates, who argue that the group does not sufficiently address issues specific to LGBTIQ+ individuals. There is a perceived gap in the group's ability to make real progress on issues like discrimination, healthcare, and legal recognition for LGBTIQ+ people in Croatia.

The **Government Commission of the Republic of Croatia for Persons with Disabilities** (*Povjerenstvo Vlade Republike Hrvatske za osobe s invaliditetom*)⁴⁷ is an advisory and expert body that provides the government with proposals and opinions on the status, protection, and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and their families. It consists of representatives from government bodies, academic institutions, and disability organisations carrying out activities to improve their rights and quality of life.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: The Commission is often viewed as ineffective in advocating for tangible changes for individuals with disabilities. Critics argue that it lacks urgency in addressing the systemic barriers faced by this group and that its advice and recommendations are frequently overlooked in favour of broader political agendas. Civil society groups in the disability sector have called⁴⁸ for more vigorous enforcement of its proposals.

The **Expert Advisory Council of the Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities** (*Stručni savjet pravobraniteljice za osobe s invaliditetom*)⁴⁹ gathers 15 members and 15 deputy members, representatives of persons with disability, their organisations, alliances, initiatives and representatives of academic institutions. The identified priorities of the Council's work include monitoring and promoting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and national strategic documents; addressing issues of significance for persons with disabilities; proposing measures to promote rights and improve the status of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Croatia; cooperating with institutions and

⁴⁷ Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy (*Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskoga sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike*), Government Commission of the Republic of Croatia for Persons with Disabilities ([Povjerenstvo Vlade Republike Hrvatske za osobe s invaliditetom](#)).

⁴⁸ Human Rights House Zagreb (2023), [Human Rights in Croatia: Overview of 2022](#).

⁴⁹ Croatia, Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities (*Pravobranitelj za osobe s invaliditetom*), Expert Advisory Council of the Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities ([Stručni savjet pravobraniteljice za osobe s invaliditetom](#)).

bodies to enhance protection, inclusion, and social engagement of persons with disabilities; advising the Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities on issues relevant to specific types of disabilities to help shape public policies, eliminate inequalities, and amend laws, regulations, and other acts and other matters necessary for the protection of the rights and interests of persons with disabilities.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: There are no specific data on the perception of this body.

The **Working Group for Monitoring Hate Crimes** (*Radna skupina za praćenje zločina iz mržnje*)⁵⁰ is an interdepartmental body under the Government's Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities. It coordinates the collection of hate crime data, monitors and analyses hate crime trends, facilitates inter-agency cooperation, and develops recommendations to improve the response system. The Croatian model, established through the 2011 Protocol on Hate Crime Procedures and further refined in 2021, is recognised as a good practice within the OSCE and the EU framework.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: The Working Group is widely recognised for enhancing hate crime tracking; however, its influence on policy change has been restricted. Civil society organisations active in this area observe that there remains a notable lack of political will to confront the deep-rooted issues that contribute to hate crimes. Furthermore, there is frustration concerning the Group's limited capacity to effect changes in law enforcement and judicial practices.

The **National Council for the Development of Social Policies** (*Nacionalno vijeće za razvoj socijalnih politika*)⁵¹ is an advisory and expert body of the Government of Croatia, established on 2 January 2025. Its role is to provide proposals, opinions, and expert

⁵⁰ Croatia, Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of Croatia (*Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina*), Combating Hate Crimes ([Suzbijanje zločina iz mržnje](#)).

⁵¹ Government of the Republic of Croatia, Office for Cooperation with NGOs (*Ured za udruge*), Public call for nominations of representatives of associations to the National Council for the Development of Social Policies ([Javni poziv za predlaganje predstavnika udruga u Nacionalno vijeće za razvoj socijalnih politika](#)), published on 4 February 2025 and Decision on the establishment of the National Council for the Development of Social Policies ([Odluka o osnivanju Nacionalnog vijeća za razvoj socijalnih politika](#)), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 2/25.

explanations to support the development of social policies, particularly in monitoring legislation, assessing social protection needs, proposing policy measures, and overseeing social service standards. The first call for member nominations was issued on 6 February 2025, inviting civil society organisations to propose representatives.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: As a newly established body, its impact has yet to be fully realised. There are concerns that it may devolve into another bureaucratic entity lacking the power to effect real change. Civil society groups representing economically disadvantaged populations hope their needs will be prioritised but remain cautious about the organisation's ability to overcome institutional inertia.⁵²

The **Human Rights Council of the Ombudswoman** (*Savjet za ljudska prava pučke pravobraniteljice*)⁵³ is an advisory body that examines and proposes strategic directions for promoting human rights and freedoms, ensures continuous collaboration in the field of human rights and freedoms between the Ombudsperson, civil society, academia, and the media, and discusses other matters of importance to the Ombudsman's work in the promotion of human rights and freedoms. The Ombudsperson appoints the Council members for four years from among civil society representatives, national minorities, academia, and the media. Members do not receive compensation for their work in the Council.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: The Council is generally considered an essential source of expert advice on human rights issues, but its impact on policy change is often questioned. While the Council raises important issues, its advisory role and lack of enforcement power limit its ability to push for concrete policy reforms.

The **Government Council on Human Rights** (*Savjet za ljudska prava Vlade Republike Hrvatske*)⁵⁴ is Council is an interdepartmental and advisory body of the Government of

⁵² Insights based on previous communication with other organisations.

⁵³ Croatia, Ombudsperson Act ([Zakon o pučkom pravobranitelju](#)), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 76/12.

⁵⁴ Croatia, Government of the Republic of Croatia (*Vlada Republike Hrvatske*), Decision on the establishment of the Council for Human Rights ([Odluka o osnivanju Savjeta za ljudska prava](#)), Official Gazette (*Narodne novine*) Nos. 136/2021.

the Republic of Croatia for human rights issues established in December 2021 with tasks to conduct continuous monitoring and analysis of public policies related to human rights, consideration of reports and periodic reports of international organisations on the state of human rights in Croatia, participation in programming and establishing priorities for the use of EU funds in the area of human rights protection rights, providing opinions to the Government of the Republic of Croatia on draft of policies and laws, monitoring the application of international instruments related to the protection and promotion of human rights, and other tasks. The Council is headed by the Vice President of the Government, who is in charge of human rights, and it is filled with members representing various ministries and three representatives of CSOs working on human rights.

Participation: Consultative

Perception: The Council was considered an example of good practice because it had regular sessions and discussed relevant issues for human rights in Croatia, e.g., drafts of national human rights policy and gender equality policy, implementation of the recommendations of the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, etc. Following the results of the 2024 elections, the newly formed Government de facto discontinued the Government Council on Human Rights functioning.

2.3.Awareness raising and capacity building on participation

Does your Member State fund or carry out meaningful awareness raising and/or capacity building to support participation in your country?

No, there are no awareness-raising or capacity-building activities to support participation.

3. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTION

3.1. Civil society strategy

Does your country have a general civil society strategy / civil society development strategy in place?

Croatia has been without a civil society strategy for nine years since the National Strategy for Civil Society Development expired in 2016. The latest attempt initiated by the Government's Office for Cooperation with NGOs to create the new National Plan for Civil Society Development, which started at the beginning of 2021, has yet to deliver a proposal for the policy.

The latest version of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Open Government Partnership Initiative⁵⁵ that expired at the end of 2023 had only one measure relevant to the CSOs (Measure 6—Improving transparency of operations and financing of programs and projects civil society organizations) under which the Government planned to develop a new information system for monitoring and evaluating the allocation of financial resources to CSOs, implement a training program for state and local civil servants on the criteria, standards and procedures for financing and contracting programs and projects, and conduct training on procurement procedures for those CSOs that are not subject to public procurement obligations to increase transparency in the use of public funds. In the 2024 Report on the implementation of the Action Plan⁵⁶, the Government states that these activities were implemented to a lesser extent, with only preparatory work being done on developing an information system in 2 years period.

3.2. Protecting an enabling environment

Is there a dedicated policy/framework (or support measures) in place in your country to enhance and protect an enabling environment for civil society to work on fundamental rights?

⁵⁵ Croatia, Government of the Republic of Croatia (*Vlada Republike Hrvatske*), Action Plan for the Implementation of the Open Government Partnership Initiative in the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2022 – 2023 ([Akcijskog plana za provedbu inicijative Partnerstvo za otvorenu vlast u Republici Hrvatskoj za razdoblje 2022. - 2023. godine](#)).

⁵⁶ Croatia, Government of the Republic of Croatia (*Vlada Republike Hrvatske*), Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Open Government Partnership initiative in the Republic of Croatia for the period 2022 – 2023 ([Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Open Government Partnership initiative in the Republic of Croatia for the period 2022 – 2023](#)).

Yes, as part of the Government of the Republic of Croatia's National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period from 2023 to 2027.⁵⁷

The National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination recognises the need to strengthen civil society's work on fundamental rights, which is stipulated therein as Specific objective 4: Improving cooperation with civil society organisations and the media in protecting human rights and combatting discrimination.

This Specific objective is operationalized by a specific measure (4.1. Encourage sustainable and long-term development of civil society organisations that protect and promote human rights under which the Government plans to implement activities aiming at promoting the visibility of civil society, increasing the capacities of CSOs at the local level for effectively addressing the needs of the local community, increasing the capacities of public servants to apply the standards of planning, implementation, and monitoring of the allocation of financial resources for CSOs, to improve the transparency of funding of civil society organisations from public sources, develop financing and sustainability models for projects and programs of civil-society organisations aimed at protecting human rights and to conduct research on civil society.

The National for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for 2027 does not specify which bodies will implement the measures.

The financial framework for the specific goals of the National for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027 projects 46,452 EUR for 2025 with the same amount projected for 2026 and 2027, respectively, for achieving the Specific Goal 4: Improving cooperation with civil society organisations and the media in protecting human rights and combatting discrimination.

3.3. Law on recognition and protection of defenders

Is there a dedicated law (and/or guidelines) in your country dealing specifically with human rights defenders' recognition and/or protection?

Croatia does not have a dedicated law or guidelines dealing specifically with the recognition and protection of human rights defenders.

⁵⁷ Croatia, Government of the Republic of Croatia (Vlada Republike Hrvatske), [National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027](#).

3.4.Support and funding for protection of defenders

Is there any dedicated support/funding by the State for the protection of (individual) human rights defenders in your country?

Croatia does not have dedicated support or funding provided by the State for the protection of human rights defenders.

4. PROMISING PRACTICE (OPTIONAL)

Please highlight one specific practice that you consider a promising practice on civic space in your country in the area of civic space - including monitoring, participation, enabling environment, and protection.

A promising practice in civic space in Croatia is the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, a commissioner of the Croatian Parliament responsible for promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms, including civic space issues. This institution represents a promising practice regarding monitoring, participation, and protection. The Ombudswoman has been reporting about the situation of civil society organisations. In the last three years, in the Annual Report 2021, she has started to report about civic space in the chapter "Human Rights Defenders."⁵⁸ In this chapter, the Ombudswoman has been reporting on various topics related to freedom of association, financing framework, participation and cooperation with authorities, and safe space and protection. In other chapters of the annual reports, the Ombudswoman reports about freedom of expression and information and freedom of peaceful assembly. In addition, the Ombudswoman encourages civil society participation by gathering the data from the CSOs for her Annual report, through mutual projects and other activities, and institutionally through the Human Rights Council of the Ombudswoman.

⁵⁸ Croatia, Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia (*Pučka pravobraniteljica*), Report of the Ombudswoman - Analysis of the State of Human Rights and Equality in Croatia 2021 ([Izvešće pučke pravobraniteljice - Analiza stanja ljudskih prava u Hrvatskoj 2021.](#)).