

# **Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental Rights implications National vaccine deployment**

**Croatia**

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## Table of contents

1	National vaccine deployment – planning and overview of priority groups.....	3
2	Vaccination rollout – communication, targeted outreach, registration, and administration of vaccinations.....	5
2.1	Channels, means and measures to inform about the national vaccination plan.....	6
2.2	What are the (pre-) registration channels for vaccination put in place? .....	6
2.3	How are the vaccinations administered? .....	6
3	Challenges and promising practices.....	7
3.1	Challenges.....	7
3.2	Promising practices .....	9

# 1 National vaccine deployment – planning and overview of priority groups

Please provide the title and hyperlink of the national vaccine deployment plan/s in EN and the national language/s and indicate the date of publication of the plan/s including any updates.

Please provide information on the planned phases of vaccination with respect to the groups to be prioritised for vaccination.

<b>Specific groups identified in the national vaccine deployment plan</b>	<b>Date of plan</b>	<b>Date of new/revised plans</b>
<i>older persons; indicate age groups specified</i>	23 December 2020	N/A
<i>persons with underlying health problems</i>	23 December 2020	N/A
<i>persons with disabilities</i>	23 December 2020	N/A
<i>key workers – health workers, persons working in care homes, teachers, specific work collectives (police and military workers, workers in tourism, journalists<sup>1</sup></i>	23 December 2020	N/A
<i>persons belonging to ethnic/national minorities</i>	Not specified as a priority group	N/A
<i>persons experiencing homelessness</i>	Not specified as a priority group	N/A
<i>persons with drug addiction dependencies</i>	Not specified as a priority group	N/A
<i>persons with low literacy levels</i>	Not specified as a priority group	N/A
<i>persons deprived of their liberty</i>	23 December 2020	N/A
<i>persons without residence or with insecure legal status (such as refugees, asylum</i>	23 December 2020	N/A

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<sup>1</sup> Novi list, 9 April 2021, available at, <https://www.novolist.hr/novosti/hrvatska/od-15-travnja-krece-cijepljenje-turistickih-djelatnika-evo-koja-jos-zanimanja-ulaze-u-prioritete/>

<i>seekers, and undocumented migrants)</i>		
<b><i>OTHER</i></b> – not specified above; e.g. ‘Persons living in crowded accommodation’; etc. Please insert . . .	N/A	N/A

Please briefly indicate here (not in the above table):

- the reasons behind major changes with regard to priority groups– as announced by the government.

In Croatia, vaccination is carried out according to defined priority groups in accordance with the National Vaccination Plan against COVID-19<sup>2</sup>. The start of vaccination of persons from specific priority groups depends on the availability of vaccines, the response to vaccination, but also the number of persons identified as belonging in these priority groups. The coronavirus vaccination officially started on December 27.

- the overall approach behind the definition of priority groups: please identify the main ground for identifying groups as priority group (vulnerability to infection; social vulnerability; multiple criteria).

According to the National Vaccination Plan, vaccination in Croatia is divided into three phases. The first phase of vaccination, which began in December 2020, targets healthcare workers, care home workers and care home residents, and was completed at the end of February 2021<sup>3</sup>. The second phase targets all persons over 65 years of age, persons with chronic diseases regardless of age, teachers and specific work collectives. The National plan does not specify which groups of workers constitute specific work collectives, but calls for vaccination were sent in late April to police and military workers, workers in tourism and journalists, concluding the second phase of vaccination and marking the beginning of the third phase, which targets the rest of the population<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> National vaccination plan, published at 23 December 2020, available at: [vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//2016/Sjednice/2020/Prosinac/32%20sjednica%20VRH//Prijedlog%20plana%20uvo%20C4%91enja,%20provo%20C4%91enja%20i%20pra%20C4%87enja%20cijepljenja%20protiv%20bolesti%20COVID-19%20u%20Republici%20Hrvatskoj.pdf](https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//2016/Sjednice/2020/Prosinac/32%20sjednica%20VRH//Prijedlog%20plana%20uvo%20C4%91enja,%20provo%20C4%91enja%20i%20pra%20C4%87enja%20cijepljenja%20protiv%20bolesti%20COVID-19%20u%20Republici%20Hrvatskoj.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Novi list, published on 18 February, available at: <https://www.novolist.hr/novosti/hrvatska/zavrsena-je-prva-faza-cijepljenja-od-ponedjeljka-se-gradani-mogu-prijavljivati/>

<sup>4</sup> The Government of Croatia, published 23 April 2021, available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/stozer-na-vrhuncu-smo-epidemije-pocela-treca-faza-cijepljenja/31935>

It is up to individual family physicians to assess priority among their patients, whom they know best, and whose medical history and state of illness they have insight into, as in such situations when they have an elderly person on the one hand and a younger person burdened with severe chronic disease.

Guardians of persons with disabilities if the person is completely dependent on that guardian are also included as a priority group.<sup>5</sup>

## **2 Vaccination rollout – communication, targeted outreach, registration, and administration of vaccinations**

*For each of the subsequent questions (2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) please indicate:*

*Languages: If information in different languages is available. Please list those languages in which information is available (e.g. languages of recognised national or ethnic minorities and immigrant communities; as well as English and other dominant international languages).*

Information is provided only in Croatian.

*Accessibility for persons with disabilities: If information is provided in accessible formats to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities (including easy read, in braille, sign language etc); are physical venues made accessible for persons with disabilities?*

Persons with disabilities, including blind and partially sighted people and deafblind people are informed by family doctors and through the media - radio and television. Croatian Radio Television (HRT) has news for deaf people that have been broadcast since 1997.<sup>6</sup> In addition, many blind people have a voice reader on their mobile devices through which they get information from online news portals.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Nacional vaccination plan, published on 23 December 2020, available at: [vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//2016/Sjednice/2020/Prosinac/32%20sjednica%20VRH//Prijedlog%20plana%20uvo%C4%91enja,%20provo%C4%91enja%20i%20pra%C4%87enja%20cijepljenja%20protiv%20bolesti%20COVID-19%20u%20Republici%20Hrvatskoj.pdf](https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//2016/Sjednice/2020/Prosinac/32%20sjednica%20VRH//Prijedlog%20plana%20uvo%C4%91enja,%20provo%C4%91enja%20i%20pra%C4%87enja%20cijepljenja%20protiv%20bolesti%20COVID-19%20u%20Republici%20Hrvatskoj.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Croatian Radio-Television, HRT, available at: [obljetnica.hrt.hr/leksikon/v/vijesti-za-gluhe-htv-a/](https://obljetnica.hrt.hr/leksikon/v/vijesti-za-gluhe-htv-a/).

<sup>7</sup> Croatian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, answer to direct inquiry via telephone on 16 April 2021.

## **2.1 Channels, means and measures to inform about the national vaccination plan**

*Please provide information on channels, means and measures taken by the government or public authorities to inform the public about the national vaccination plan, its rollout strategy and vaccination awareness raising campaigns; e.g. traditional postal letters; online information; telephone calls; public information campaigns etc.*

Citizens were informed about the national vaccination plan through various media outlets such as HRT, N1 television, NOVA TV, RTL, Telegram, Jutarnji list, Večernji list, Novi list, all Croatian radio stations etc., and through press conferences of the National Civil Protection Headquarters.

## **2.2 What are the (pre-) registration channels for vaccination put in place?**

- a) What registration channels for vaccination are in place e.g. websites, apps, hotlines/call centres, letters, via family doctors, etc.?

On Monday, 1 March 2021, the national system for the registration of citizens interested in vaccination against the disease COVID-19 was launched. Citizens can apply for vaccination via the website: [cijepise.zdravlje.hr](http://cijepise.zdravlje.hr), by reporting to their family doctor, reporting to the County Institute of Public Health or by calling the toll-free number 0800 0011.<sup>8</sup>

- b) Are any alternatives to digital access to vaccine registration in place e.g. appropriate support for those who need it (such as the elderly; those without access to the internet); physical locations for registration etc?

For those citizens who for various reasons cannot register themselves via the website, the operators in the call centre 0800 0011 fill in the application on the website.<sup>9</sup>

## **2.3 How are the vaccinations administered?**

- a) Where are the vaccinations administered e.g. vaccination centres, via mobile units, via family doctors, etc.?

Vaccination takes place in family medicine offices, in the County Institutes of Public Health and in designated places of mass vaccination.

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<sup>8</sup> Koronavirus.hr, published on 1 March 2021, available at: [www.koronavirus.hr/pokrenut-sustav-prijavljivanja-za-cijepljenje-cijepise-zdravlje-hr-i-0800-0011/898](http://www.koronavirus.hr/pokrenut-sustav-prijavljivanja-za-cijepljenje-cijepise-zdravlje-hr-i-0800-0011/898).

<sup>9</sup> Koronavirus.hr, published on 1 March 2021, available at: [www.koronavirus.hr/pokrenut-sustav-prijavljivanja-za-cijepljenje-cijepise-zdravlje-hr-i-0800-0011/898](http://www.koronavirus.hr/pokrenut-sustav-prijavljivanja-za-cijepljenje-cijepise-zdravlje-hr-i-0800-0011/898).

- b) For those being vaccinated - how is information about the actual vaccination process, the vaccine and any potential side effects provided?

Citizens are informed about the vaccination process by doctors on location. After the vaccination, they are given a flyer, which provides basic information about the vaccine and possible side effects. The information is provided in Croatian.<sup>10</sup>

- c) Are there any circumstances where fees are applicable for receiving the vaccine – e.g. for third country nationals?

In the Republic of Croatia, there are currently no circumstances where fees are applicable for receiving the vaccine. Citizens and residents can be vaccinated against COVID-19 free of charge, regardless of the type of health insurance they have. If a person does not have a family doctor, they can contact the competent county public health institute in their current place of residence for vaccination.<sup>11</sup>

## **3 Challenges and promising practices**

### **3.1 Challenges**

The Ministry of Health's platform, [cijepise.zdravlje.hr](http://cijepise.zdravlje.hr), which was put into operation in February 2021 and which was used by tens of thousands of citizens applying for vaccination, turned out to be technically flawed. The platform's system was full of errors, resulting in failed registrations and disorder during vaccinations. People were able to apply for vaccination several times on the platform [cijepise.zdravlje.hr](http://cijepise.zdravlje.hr) and the platform was not connected with the network of family medicine doctors. Most counties gave up on using the platform due to these difficulties, and the majority of the administrative burden was transferred to family physicians.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Croatian Institute for Public Health, answer to direct inquiry via telephone on 16 April 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Croatian Institute for Public Health, published on 9 February 2021, available at: [www.hzjz.hr/sluzba-epidemiologija-zarazne-bolesti/cijepljenje-protiv-covid-19-bolesti-najcesca-pitanja-i-odgovori/](http://www.hzjz.hr/sluzba-epidemiologija-zarazne-bolesti/cijepljenje-protiv-covid-19-bolesti-najcesca-pitanja-i-odgovori/).

<sup>12</sup> Telegram, published on 24 April 2021, available at: [www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/platforma-cijepise-je-krahirala-funkcionira-tako-lose-da-u-zagrebu-na-cijepljenje-narucuju-samo-preko-obiteljskih-lijecnika/](https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/platforma-cijepise-je-krahirala-funkcionira-tako-lose-da-u-zagrebu-na-cijepljenje-narucuju-samo-preko-obiteljskih-lijecnika/).

Persons who are not in a priority group have already been vaccinated, while some with chronic diseases are still waiting<sup>13</sup>. There is no control system, no monitoring of how people are vaccinated, no assessment of which person has been vaccinated<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, if someone wishes to be vaccinated against COVID-19, but falls into the under 65 category and does not qualify as any of the risk groups which have priority in vaccination, there is still a good chance that this person will succeed in being vaccinated with AstraZeneca. This is because this vaccine is still being declined on average by every third patient invited to be vaccinated, and if no candidate is found for vaccination or someone does not show up at the last minute, the doctor will call someone who is willing to be vaccinated and who does not ask for a specific vaccine<sup>15</sup>.

Therefore, based on conducted analysis, the Croatian Medical Chamber<sup>16</sup>, on 26 April 2021, proposed the following solutions to the health administration, with the aim of establishing an effective vaccination organization:

- urgent establishment of a fully functional national vaccination information platform,
- mass vaccination at centres in all counties and the establishment of a larger number of centres,
- establishment of a call centre in each county,
- involvement of doctors other than family physicians and epidemiologists in vaccination as well as involvement of other health professionals and
- establishment of appropriately equipped mobile teams to vaccinate immobile or disabled patients in each county.

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<sup>13</sup> Telegram, published on 13 April 2021, available at: [www.telegram.hr/komentari/kako-se-hrvatski-sustav-cijepljenja-rasuo-u-apsolutni-kaos-i-alanfordovske-improvizacije/](http://www.telegram.hr/komentari/kako-se-hrvatski-sustav-cijepljenja-rasuo-u-apsolutni-kaos-i-alanfordovske-improvizacije/).

<sup>14</sup> Index, published on 28 April 2021, available at: [www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/cjepivo-je-odavno-tu-ali-gdje-se-i-kome-prijaviti-ovo-je-za-poludjeti/2272191.aspx](http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/cjepivo-je-odavno-tu-ali-gdje-se-i-kome-prijaviti-ovo-je-za-poludjeti/2272191.aspx).

<sup>15</sup> Novi list, published on 25 March 2021, available at: [www.novolist.hr/novosti/hrvatska/astrazenecu-i-dalje-odvija-svaki-treci-pozvani-pacijent-pa-na-red-dolaze-i-mladi-svi-bi-htjeli-pfizer-ali-tog-je-cjepiva-jako-malo/](http://www.novolist.hr/novosti/hrvatska/astrazenecu-i-dalje-odvija-svaki-treci-pozvani-pacijent-pa-na-red-dolaze-i-mladi-svi-bi-htjeli-pfizer-ali-tog-je-cjepiva-jako-malo/).

<sup>16</sup> Croatian Medical Chamber, published on 26 April 2021, available at: [www.hlk.hr/hlk-probleme-u-organizaciji-cijepljenja-potrebno-rjesavati-u-dijaloqu-s-lijecnicima.aspx](http://www.hlk.hr/hlk-probleme-u-organizaciji-cijepljenja-potrebno-rjesavati-u-dijaloqu-s-lijecnicima.aspx).



## 3.2 Promising practices

At the end of April, the Croatian Medical Chamber issued a statement calling for the establishment of appropriately equipped mobile teams for the vaccination of immobile or difficult-to-move patients in each county<sup>17</sup>.

So far, mobile teams have been formed in Croatia, which conduct vaccinations of seriously ill and immobile patients once a week in only two counties: Splitsko-Dalmatinska and Vukovarsko-Srijemska<sup>18</sup>.

In order for the entire vaccination process to be completely transparent, well organized and clear, and to facilitate the patients' communication with doctors and epidemiologists, Međimurska County has established an online platform through which citizens can apply for vaccination that, unlike the failed national platform, works<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Croatian Medical Chamber, published on 26 April 2021, available at [www.hlk.hr/hlk-probleme-u-organizaciji-cijepljenja-potrebno-rjesavati-u-dijaloqu-s-lijecnicima.aspx](http://www.hlk.hr/hlk-probleme-u-organizaciji-cijepljenja-potrebno-rjesavati-u-dijaloqu-s-lijecnicima.aspx).

<sup>18</sup> Jutarnji list, published on 20 April 2021, available at: [www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/mobilni-timovi-proradili-samo-u-splitu-i-vukovarsko-srijemskoj-ako-nas-ministar-zeli-kritizirati-15066638](http://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/mobilni-timovi-proradili-samo-u-splitu-i-vukovarsko-srijemskoj-ako-nas-ministar-zeli-kritizirati-15066638).

<sup>19</sup> Međimurska County, published on 9 February, available at: [medjimurska-zupanija.hr/2021/02/09/gradani-medimurja-od-danas-mogu-sami-podnijeti-zahtjev-za-cijepljenje-protiv-covid-19/](http://medjimurska-zupanija.hr/2021/02/09/gradani-medimurja-od-danas-mogu-sami-podnijeti-zahtjev-za-cijepljenje-protiv-covid-19/).