**In relation to your notice dated August 30, 2021 and the attached letter from the Chairperson - Rapporteur of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women and girls, Melisa Upreti, the Croatian authorities wish to share the following information:**

As a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Croatia ensures the right of all children, young people and women to express their views freely, without discrimination of any kind. There is also an obligation to listen to children, youth and women and facilitate their participation in all matters affecting them within the family, schools, local communities, public services, government policy, judicial procedures, etc.

Croatian laws and practice are consistent with the both Conventions.

The highest values of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia, one of which is equality, are prescribed in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. Furthermore, Article 14 of the Constitution declares that everyone has rights and freedoms irrespective of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other belief, national or social origin, property, birth, education, social status or other characteristics.

The Croatian Anti-Discrimination Act enshrines specific provisions which ensure protection against discrimination. Article 1, paragraph 1 prescribes 17 discriminatory grounds: race or ethnicity or color of skin, sex, language, religion, political or other belief, national or social origin, property status, union membership, education, social status, marital or family status, age, health, disability, genetic heritage, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation.

Article 5 of the Law on Gender Equality states that gender equality means that women and men are equally present in all areas of public and private life, that they have equal status, equal opportunities to exercise all rights, as well as equal benefits from the achieved results.

Croatia would like to share couple of ongoing examples of good practises in the field of children/youth activism.

**Junior ambassadors for the rights of children and youth of the European Union**

In March 2020, within the joint project of UNICEF and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, eleven young people aged 13 to 17 from different parts of Croatia were selected as junior ambassadors for the rights of children and youth of the European Union. During their term of office until the end of 2021, junior ambassadors are to participate in numerous initiatives, consultations and workshops on topics important to young people.

5 boys and 6 girls were selected as youth representatives. All 11 candidates stood out with their motivation, interests and desire to be the voice of their peers among decision makers, and through the selection process, they showed enviable communication and presentation skills and knowledge of current social opportunities and challenges.

Training of selected junior ambassadors for the rights of children and young people of the EU was held on children's rights, EU institutions and ways of decision-making in the EU, on the priorities of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and presentation and communication skills.

The basic idea of ​​this project is to encourage greater interest and involvement of young people in political processes and, through participation in events within the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, provide them with a platform where they can talk about problems and challenges that young people face every day as well as potential opportunities and possibilities.

In addition to these activities, cooperation is planned with the UNICEF Office for Croatia in developing UNICEF youth programs - from sharing their experiences and views, proposing activities and topics for discussion to proposing possible solutions.

The first event with youth representatives involved was held on March 11 2020, organized by the Croatian Youth Network, where junior ambassadors discussed ways to implement the Youth goals, responsibilities in the implementation process, possible obstacles and the development of indicators for their monitoring, as well as the EU dialogue with young people.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, other activities of young ambassadors within the Croatian presidency of the EU Council were postponed.

However, the more restrictive way of life forced by the coronavirus, as well as the earthquake that hit central Croatia, prompted junior ambassadors to take action in response to the new situation. With the aim of preventing the spread of coronavirus among their peers and preserving the mental health of young people during a pandemic, junior ambassadors engaged in spreading messages through the online platforms of UNICEF as well as [ZABUM – za budućnost mladih](https://zabum.hr/) platform. They regularly share personal stories about living in isolation, the experience of distance learning, sending messages about the importance of critical thinking and recognizing fake news during an infodemia, combating xenophobia, stigmatization and discrimination to reduce the negative impact of a pandemic on youth mental health.

**Advisory Council on Youth of the Government of the Republic of Croatia**

The Advisory Council on Youth of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (the Council) has been active since 2012. The Council’s main task is to monitor the activities of ministries and other state administration bodies in the implementation of policies on young people that fall within their scope of work, and to provide opinions and recommendations; to monitor the development of youth organisations and NGOs for young people, and to make recommendations to improve their work; to give recommendations for the development of policies on young people at local, regional, national and EU levels, and to follow and react to events in society of relevance to young people. The new convocation of the Council (starting in 2021) has a total of 32 members, of which 21 are young women. It also includes a larger number of representatives of youth and youth associations in order to enable them to make a significant contribution to the work of the Council. When electing the members of the Council, equal rights are given to young women and young men.

**Youth councils**

County, city and municipal youth councils are established as advisory bodies in the field of youth within local and regional self-government units. The main purpose of establishing youth councils is to involve young people in decision-making on public affairs and policies of importance to young people in local communities, their active participation in public life, information and counselling of young people. A member of a youth council may be any young person with permanent or temporary residence in the Republic of Croatia from the age of fifteen to thirty.

**UN Youth delegate**

In 2019 the Republic of Croatia has elected an official youth delegate to participate in the work of the UN. The young delegate represents the interests of Croatian youth and, through cooperation with delegates from other countries, participates in decision-making and policy solutions on issues important to young people at the international level. The election of the first Croatian young delegate represents a significant step forward in the active participation of young people at the international level. Regarding the public invitation for the election of a young UN delegate, both sexes were given an equal opportunity to apply.

**WE CAN EQUALLY – Children and youth for eliminating gender stereotypes**

The project “WE CAN EQUALLY – Children and youth for eliminating gender stereotypes” (co-financed by the Office for Non-Governmental Organizations of the Government of the Republic of Croatia; completed in August 2021) was implemented with the aim to support the education system in implementing gender mainstreaming policies, to ensure a fairer future for the boys and girls of the generations to come.

Focus of the project activities was on increasing awareness, informing and educating about gender equality, gender stereotypes (as permanent obstacle to the broader participation of women in various aspects of politics and society) and gender discrimination among primary and secondary school students and their teachers. Students and their teachers were encouraged to think critically about gender equality in the whole community.

With this project, we opened an important issue of gender stereotypes among young people and also the importance of school as a place where it is necessary to actively address this issue. Based on the results of this project, Croatia will continue to work on reducing gender stereotypes in education through a two-year European project “Encourage equality – equality in – stereotypes out: Teachers for future generations”.