**Response of the Croatian Authorities regarding the Human Rights Council Resolution 37/16 “Right to work”**

1. ***Detailed information on challenges and good practices in relation to the right to work and enjoyment of all human rights by young people, with an emphasis on their empowerment***

Considering that the population of Croatia is characterized by declining fertility, natural depopulation (negative natural growth rate), migration depopulation and extreme aging of the population, the present generation of young people is becoming increasingly burdened and their future is uncertain due to the accelerated aging of the population and the high level of youth unemployment. In this respect, two demographic processes are particularly negative: long-lasting natural population decline and emigration of young people and educated people. It is important to emphasize that the adverse effects of aging of the population and emigration of the population are fully visible at the local level. The trend of young people leaving small towns and rural areas and immigrating to larger cities leads to the depopulation of rural areas, the disappearance of small towns and excessive centralization, which, consequently, causes uneven development and has negative consequences on economic growth.

Demographic renewal is the foundation of economic, regional, rural and total development of Croatia. It is the strategic challenge of modern Croatia and its future. The Government of Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: GoC) has, so far, taken certain measures with the aim of demographic revitalisation and helping young families, starting from increasing the amount of exemption of the income tax which increases proportionally with the number of children, from passing the Act on Subsidization of Housing Loans, to Amendments and Supplements of Maternity and Parental Assistance Act, to passing the Act on Amendments and Supplements to the Child Care Act and continues to develop further measures. Particular emphasis should be put on reducing the differences between rural and urban environments and provide equal opportunities for young people regardless of where they live. In addition to opportunities for education and employment, the availability of all information and the possibility of inclusion in content that is mainly accessible to young people in larger, urban areas, needs to be ensured to the young people from rural areas. We see working with young people as an important work which can contribute to reducing unemployment and social exclusion of young people in rural environment. Youth work has a particularly long tradition in Croatia through the work of youth and for the youth associations and, and it needs to be further developed and encouraged. Therefore, it is necessary to support youth activities in local communities, in those areas where young people live. The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, in this regard, recognises the importance of working with young people and the need to build skills and professional development of youth workers and is focused on creating a framework for professionalizing working with the youth.

**Good practices – early intervention**

Croatian Employment Service (CES) provides lifelong career guidance activities and support to all unemployed people who need help in their career. Special attention and focus in providing career support is directed to young people in their transitional career points – from one level of education to the next and from education to employment. Early intervention activities are focused on pupils in elementary and secondary schools, especially those with health and developmental obstacles, who might have difficulties in entering labour market. Pursuant to The Rules of Procedures on the Elements and Criteria for the Selection of Candidates Entering Secondary Schools, adopted by the Ministry of Science and Education, pupils with  difficulties are entitled to special criteria which facilitate them entering secondary school, based on CES career guidance expert team assessment and recommendation, taking into account  labour market needs.  Special attention is also given to unemployed people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.

In new National Strategy of Equalization of Possibilities for Persons with Disabilities from 2016 till 2020, career guidance is recognised as a tool for increasing availability of secondary education to pupils with difficulties.

1. ***Detailed information on the legislative and policy measures adopted by your country to ensure that young people have equal opportunities for productive and gainful employment in the open labour market***

The GoC adopted **National Youth Program** (hereinafter: National Program) for the period from 2014 to 2017, as a comprehensive strategic document aimed at improving the activities of governmental bodies and public institutions that contribute to meeting the needs of young people and raising their quality of life for their full social integration. In line with the EU Youth Strategy- Investing and Empowering, for the period 2010-2018, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy has defined eight thematic areas within National Program: Education, professional training and training in context of life-long learning, Employment and entrepreneurship, Health and health care, Social protection and inclusion, Volunteering activities, Active participation of young people in society and politics, Youth in the European and global context, Youth and culture. In the area of education, the following measures have been undertaken: educating young people for active citizenship and non-violence, strengthening the culture of non-violence in schools with an emphasis on combating violence in digital environment. In addition, awarding of scholarships for the professional development of young researchers and post-graduate students contributed to boost the competitiveness of youth in the labour market. In view of the outstanding problem of unemployment, the Croatian Employment Service (CES) is conducting youth employment activities, including measures for recruitment of special groups of young people, youth with disabilities, young members of the Roma minority and numerous programs of individual and group work (individual counselling, employment counselling, professional employment plans, workshops for active job search, employment clubs, career information and counselling centres, topic-related lectures, and so on). The national youth policy has been aimed at facilitating the integration of young people into the labour market by providing conditions for young people to learn on-the-spot in the workplace, detecting vulnerable groups of young people, strengthening the key youth policy stakeholders in the area of education, employment, health and social protection, improving the work of multi-purpose youth counselling centres, providing support to associations of youth and for youth. It should be emphasized that young people from all over Croatia participated actively and frequently in the development of the National Program.

The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy is currently preparing a new National Program for the period 2018 - 2024, in which young people shall again play a significant and active role, along with other stakeholders. The aim of the new strategic document is to present the analysis of the situation of young people in the Republic of Croatia as well as measures aimed at improving the activities of state administration bodies and public institutions which contribute to meeting the needs of young people and raising the quality of their lives. The main areas of the new National Program are: Employment and entrepreneurship; Education and lifelong learning; Active participation of young people; Social inclusion; Health and sports; Youth in rural areas; Youth and sustainable community development; Culture; Working with young people; Youth in the European and global context.

In order to promote easier employment of young persons, **Contributions Act** (Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, Nos. 84/08; 152/08, 94/09, 18/11, 22/12, 144/12, 148/13, 41/14, 143/14, 115/16) entitles an employer to mandatory contributions reliefs for a certain period if they are employing a young person:

* For a period of 1 year if the employer employs young person with no work experience;
* For a period of 5 years if the employer employs young person on an open-ended contract or if the employer re-establishes young person’s fixed-term contract as an open-ended contract

This measure aims to encourage employment of young persons with no work experience in order to ease the education-to-work transition and to increase the number of open-ended contracts with a view to promote long-term employment of young persons.

**The Act on Employment Mediation and Unemployment Rights** (Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, No. 16/2017), Articles 34-36, regulates the Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) measures within the competence of the Croatian Employment Service (CES) (employment/training aid, financing of education of unemployed persons, employment in public works and other measures within CES competence). Concrete measures and activities are developed based on the analysis of the situation and labour market trends, as well as relevant European and Croatian strategic documents addressing employment, most relevant of which are **The Guidelines for Development and Conduction of Active Labour Market Policy in the Republic of Croatia for 2018 – 2020 Period** (adopted by the Government of Croatia in December 2017.). The Guidelines devote 2 specific targets to bettering the position of youth:

- raising the employment rate of youth aged 15-29 and

- raising awareness of inactive youth in NEET status with an aim to activate them.

Active labour market measures are then developed and conducted in line with the **yearly terms and conditions for conducting ALMPs**, which are adopted by the Governing board of CES. In 2018, a young person can be included in one of total 9 ALMP measures:

1. Employment aid;

2. Specialization subsidy for (newly) employed;

3. Self-employment aid;

4. Education programmes for unemployed (Training for the unemployed), in line with labour market demand;

5. On-the-job training (for maximum 6 months) which is certified;

6. (a) Occupational training without commencing employment (a training-type measure developed with an aim to alleviate school-to-work transition for youth without relevant work-experience and those who need to pass specific exams or acquire certificates for independent work);

6. (b) Employment aid for first-time work experience/traineeship (a measure introduced in 2018. with an aim to support employment of youth without work experience relevant to their field of education);

7. Public works (fixed-term work contract, lasting for 6 to max 9 months, with an aim to activate vulnerable groups, i.e. youth with disabilities, long-term unemployed youth, youth coming from Roma background, etc.);

8. Job retention aid (for shortening the working hours or education of workers);

9. Aid for seasonal workers.

**Act on Employment Promotion** (Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, Nos. 57/12, 120/12 and 16/17) takes the ALMP measure of Occupational training without commencing employment (*Stručno osposobljavanje bez zasnivanja radnog odnosa* – SOR) and further regulates some of its specifics, such as: age limit for inclusion in the measure, minimum remuneration given to the young person (which is aligned with the minimal wage), maximum duration of the measure and the level of education a young person must have to be included in this measure. This act stated that an unemployed young person who is up to 30, that is registered with CES for a minimum of 30 days and has less than 12 months of work experience in his occupation (of secondary or tertiary level) can be included in the measure of SOR with an aim to gain relevant work-experience or formal conditions for taking the professional/master craftsman’s exam, or with an aim to acquire new and practical knowledge and skills in accordance with their level of education.

Also, Republic of Croatia is implementing **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) in effect for the 2017 – 2018 Period** (adopted by the Government of Croatia in June 2017) in line with the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee. This is the third update of the YGIP, and it gives an overview of measures to be conducted in order to facilitate school-to-work transition and re/entrance into education, employment or training in line with the Recommendation.

In addition, Croatia is implementing the **Strategy for lifelong career guidance 2016-2020**, adopted in October 2015, which is also considered as a preventative measure to avoid future labour market mismatch and school drop-out.

1. ***Information on the affirmative action programmes, incentives and other measures, if any, that your country has developed to promote employment opportunities for young people, including measures to increase employment opportunities for young people belonging to vulnerable groups (for example young persons with disabilities, young persons belonging to a specific minority group)***

In the design and implementation of the National Youth Program Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy has engaged the widest range of expert associates thus ensuring that the problems and needs of young people are precisely identified and targeted. In all National Program areas, special attention has been paid to vulnerable groups of young people, and in Croatia, these are primarily unemployed young people and young people of lower educational and economic status living in less developed areas. Civil society organizations played an especially important role in the design and implementation of the National Program along with the interested ministries, agencies, institutes and employers' associations. Associations of youth and for youth are partners in implementing the national youth policy in all thematic areas of the Program. For example, in an effort to facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market, youth organizations were active in measure related to empowering of associations of youth and for youth as stakeholders in the labour market. In developing measures for long-term unemployed young people, they participated in determination risk categories for social exclusion of young people and in ensuring adequate support. The youth organizations have also been involved in the strengthening of multi-purpose youth counselling centres within the healthcare system, particularly in the field of active youth participation in society where young people are educated for the active citizenship role in society, in encouraging youth for self-organization through volunteering and in cultural programs aimed at young people. Civil society organizations are often an entry point to young people entering social and active citizenship and then further affirming them. However, young people in Croatia are a heterogeneous group living in a transitional society in the conditions of the economic crisis, which is also one of the major challenges in cooperation with young people and associations of youth and for youth. We are facing the problem of lack of systematic investment in infrastructure for the work and active performance of young people. On the other hand, the increasing passivity of young people in social and political participation is largely a result of a not simulating environment for young people and lack of material conditions for the design and implementation of activities aimed at informing, education, rising awareness and organizing of young people. The so-called virtualization of social interaction, spending free time in commercial spaces, preoccupation with content that does not require a particular intellectual and physical engagement, also contributes to the inactivity of young people. For this reason, a major role in national youth policy have clubs and youth centres as incubators of various ideas and initiatives from cultural and sports to socio-political issues that, inter alia, relate to the protection of human rights, including gender equality and the protection against violence of women and girls.

There are several important measures or activities aiming to promote employment opportunities for young people:

* **Employment aid**

Promoting employment of persons by co-financing the employer's cost of salaries (up to 50% of the annual cost of gross II salary of a worker or 75% for persons with disabilities) for target groups:

1. Persons without work experience (pensionable service), who are registered as unemployed.
2. Persons with previous work experience (pensionable service), who are registered as unemployed, such as long-term unemployed; persons who have not completed secondary education and are registered as unemployed; young people, persons with disabilities, children and spouses of killed and missing Homeland War Veterans, parents with four or more minor children, widowed parents and parents of a child with the other parent not registered, persons who have returned from serving a prison sentence, persons on probation, rehabilitated drug addicts, victims of human trafficking, victims of domestic violence, asylum seekers, young people who have left the system of state care.

* **Employment aid for first-time work experience/traineeship**

Employment aid for acquiring first work experience may be granted to employers as a state employment aid if they are engaged in an economic activity or to public services in the form of an incentive which has no elements of state aid for employment. The incentive for public services covers the total labour costs, i.e. 100%, corresponding to the amount of trainee salary. Acquiring of the first work experience means first-time employment, where the job description corresponds to the person’s educational qualifications.The duration of the contract between the employer and the employee must be at least 12 months.

* **Self-employment aid**

Self-employment aid has been harmonised with the Commission Regulation (EC) 1407/2013 on *de minimis* aid. The aid is awarded to unemployed persons to cover the costs of setting up and running a business. Prior to awarding this aid, a person is supported by specialized self-employment counsellor who can provide assistance in further development and elaboration of their business idea. Persons may use this aid to set-up new business entities or acquire existing business entities. For the duration of the measure, persons who were granted this aid may also use occupational training for up to two additional persons. The duration of the measure is 12 months and the maximum amount of the subsidy is 55.000 HRK or 70.000 HRK if used together with the occupational training.

* **Public works**

Public work is a community service carried out within a limited time-frame that offers employment and full financing (100% of the gross minimum wage is subsidised) for the employment of youth 15-29. A public work program must be based on community service initiated by the local community and civil society organizations. Public work must be non-profit and must not compete with the existing economy of the area. Priority is given to programs targeting social welfare, education, environment, maintenance and utility works.

Target groups are as following: long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum benefit, people disadvantaged in the labour market, young people registered as long-term unemployed and who lost necessary skills and competencies during the period of unemployment.

* **Other measures for people with disabilities**

**The Act on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with disabilities** (Official Gazette Nos. 157/13, 152/14 and 39/18) and present bylaws, have introduced a number of benefits for employment of persons with disabilities in the open labour market. In accordance with the Act, an employer who hires a person with disability or persons with disabilities who are self-employed may be entitled to tax relief and to incentives, based on the contract signed by persons with disabilities and different stakeholders, such as the Institute for Expert Evaluation, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with disabilities.

In the implementation of active labour market policy measures aimed at unemployed persons with disabilities (including young PWD-s) CES applies a flexible approach: long-term unemployment is not a requirement for their participation, only requirement is their registration in unemployment record. Also, this target group is allowed to cumulate several active policy measures.

CES also participates in the **Project of social reintegration of former addicts** who completed one of detox programmes and rehabilitation in the therapeutic community or in the penalty system and drug-addicts that are treated in community based services and for longer time maintain stable abstinence and prescribed forms of curing. Activities of HZZ include implementation of vocational training and employment of former addicts through activities of vocational guidance, professional mediation and co-financing of their participation in training programmes and employment.

Also, the Republic of Croatia has established a **NEET mapping system** in 2017, which will now be used for developing evidence-based measures focusing on vulnerable youth.

1. ***Information on measures your country has introduced to enable programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training***

CES provides training opportunities for the unemployed in line with labour market demand. Professions needed in the labour market are identified by using comprehensive approach which includes data on vacancies, employment/unemployment rate related to the sector/occupation, Annual Employers’ survey, including needed competencies/qualifications, etc. The selection of participants is made by each regional/local office. One or two years agreements between training institutions and CES are signed. The whole process of trainings is monitored, as well as the employment rate after concluding training programmes. The agreements between CES and adult VET institutions include quality control aspect before, during and after providing services (including on-line ways of communication with the customers, face-to-face, as well as evidence-based analyses, monitoring and evaluation. CES also provides education measures for employees at risk of losing their jobs due to lack of skills and competencies and education for unemployed people.

ALMP training measures include:

* Training for the employed - for newly recruited workers or workers at risk of losing their jobs due to lack of professional knowledge and skills, aimed at increasing their competitiveness.
* Training for the unemployed - increasing the level of their employability by occupational training, retraining and further training courses in required professions and in line with labour market needs. The duration of the measure is maximum 6 months.
* On-the-job training - The aim is to train unemployed people to acquire practical knowledge and skills required to perform a specific job. The target groups are as following:
  + Unemployed persons with a high school degree without prior experience in the field of occupation to be trained for. The duration of the measure is up to 6 months.
  + Long-term unemployed (12 months or more). The duration of the measure is up to 3 months.
* Occupational Training Without Commencing Employment – youth without relevant work-experience with the aim of gaining experience/formal conditions for taking the professional/master craftsman’s exam, or training in jobs that will enable them to acquire new knowledge and skills in accordance with their level of education. While under contract, the participants in occupational training may be included in short term education activities, where appropriate. The target group are unemployed persons up to 30 years of age who have no more than 12 months of service in the profession for which they were educated.

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)**

Before enrolling VET programs, elementary school students can access the professional guidance programs provided by the Croatian Employment Service.

The Vocational Education Act provides regular VET students possibility for vertical and horizontal mobility, meaning that students can continue their education for a higher level of qualification or change the education program.

VET System Development Program 2016-2020 includes measures to strengthen excellence and attractiveness of VET through the following: promotion of VET students’ skills, modernization and promotion of VET and skills; support innovations and VET schools projects aimed at strengthening capacities and ensuring relevant, creative and modern VET in partnership with companies and the wider community; improving the career guidance system; incentives for programs and projects supporting the inclusion of all groups at risk from early school leaving.

**ADULT EDUCATION**

**The Youth Guarantee**

**Measure:** Through educating to higher employability

The Youth Guarantee is an approach to solving the problem of youth unemployment, which seeks to prevent the entry of a young person into the NEET status (Not in Employment, Education or Training), or to encourage the establishment of such a support system in all member states which will allow, in accordance with the EU Council Recommendations on the Establishment of a Youth Guarantee: "All young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education."

As part of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (2017-2018), the Ministry of Science and Education will implement the above-mentioned measure by offering young people the opportunity to train and gain full and / or partial qualifications in order to increase competitiveness in the labour market.

The planned activities will include the education of members of the NEET group with an inadequate or low level of education. When suggesting the adequate educational programs to students, the needs of the labour market will be taken into consideration, but also the needs of the individual in order for the person to focus on the best quality offer. The costs of education, transport and the equipment needed to participate in the program will be funded to the participants.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

According to the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, enrolment into a study programme shall be carried out based on a public competition so everyone can access higher education under equal conditions. The competition is transparent and must include: enrolment criteria, enrolment quota, procedure, information on required documents, and closing dates for the competition and enrolment.

The Republic of Croatia participates in the programme Erasmus+ and, as regards students, trainees, apprentices, young people and volunteers, mobility activities of the Programme are meant to enhance the employability and improve the career prospects of these participants, as well as to increase their sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. An extensive survey among participants was performed and the results were as follows: HE students and VET learners who spent a period of time in traineeships answered a questionnaire about their prospects of finding a better job after spending time abroad. Among VET learners, 78,4% considered their chances of finding a new or better job very positive, 17,9% declared their chances positive, 3% declared their chances unchanged, and 0,2% perceived their chances of finding a better job as negative. Among HE students, there is also a positive perception of future employment prospects after mobility: 60,6% have very positive expectations and 30,4% have positive expectations, while 7,4% of students consider their chances unchanged and 0,4% consider their chances negative. Although the number of beneficiaries in the Programme is increasing every year, the scope of the programme in terms of reaching the target groups is still limited by the budget, and by its often being insufficiently inclusive for groups that could benefit the most from participation in programme activities.“

1. ***Please provide recent statistical data on the number of young people employed in the public and private sector, disaggregated based on age and sex***

*Data on persons employed from the Unemployment register (HZZ)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Gender**  **Year** Age | Employed on work contract basis |
|
| **Men** |  |
| **2017 (I-XII)** | **37 324** |
| 15-19 | 6 959 |
| 20-24 | 16 353 |
| 25-29 | 14 012 |
| **2018 (I-VI)** | **19 117** |
| 15-19 | 2 785 |
| 20-24 | 8 897 |
| 25-29 | 7 435 |
| **Women** |  |
| **2017 (I-XII)** | **39 409** |
| 15-19 | 4 667 |
| 20-24 | 15 681 |
| 25-29 | 19 061 |
| **2018 (I-VI)** | **20 666** |
| 15-19 | 2 093 |
| 20-24 | 8 737 |
| 25-29 | 9 836 |
| **Total** |  |
| **2017 (I-XII)** | **76 733** |
| 15-19 | 11 626 |
| 20-24 | 32 034 |
| 25-29 | 33 073 |
| **2018 (I-VI)** | **39 783** |
| 15-19 | 4 878 |
| 20-24 | 17 634 |
| 25-29 | 17 271 |

1. ***Detailed information on international cooperation programmes related to the promotion of work and employment opportunities for young people. Please describe the ways the programmes are inclusive of and accessible to young people.***

EURES Croatia took part as a partner in the project **Your first EURES Job 4.0/5.0**, with Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as a lead partner. Your first EURES job is a Targeted Mobility Scheme which aims to help young nationals in the 18-35 age bracket  of any of the EU28 countries + Iceland and Norway (EFTA/EEA countries) to find a work placement (job or traineeship) in another EU EFTA/EEA country. It also helps employers to find the workforce they need for their hard-to-fill vacancies. In order to participate in YfEJ, young jobseekers are expected to register on EUJOB4EU Platform. At the moment, there are 587 young jobseekers from Croatia registered on EUJOB4EU Platform.

The Republic of Croatia successfully implements Erasmus+ programme from 2014. This programme is proven to improve prospects of young people for a successful career by raising their competences and gaining needed experience. The volunteering activities under this programme are transferred and together with jobs and traineeships form a new programme called European solidarity corps / ESC. The ESC aims also to complement the efforts made by Member States to support young people and ease their school-to-work transition under the Youth Guarantee by providing them with additional opportunities to make a start into the labour market in the form of traineeships or jobs in solidarity-related areas within their respective Member State or across borders. The European commission published first call for proposal under this programme on 10th August 2018. The implementation of ESC programme in Croatia designated to the Agency for Mobility and EU programmes, the same agency that is implementing also the Erasmus+ programme.