

The principal results of the survey on the existing equality practices of Croatian cities and towns

The survey was carried out in May of 2018. by the Croatian Law Centre and the Association of Cities in the Republic of Croatia within the context of the Cities4Equality Project, financed by the European Commission through Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme.

The purpose of the summary was to investigate what Croatian cities are doing to promote equality among their citizens. The information on the role of cities in preventing and suppressing discrimination is very scarce, as are the potential advanced practices that cities themselves have developed to advance equality. The present research aims to provide insight into the priorities recognized by the cities in this area, and into their current activities.

The information collected through the research will be utilized in the development of the best practices compendium, of the manual for cities that aim to improve their practices, and for the development of the Cities4Equality Index, whereby the cities will be able to compare their performance with that of their peers, and compete for the title of the best.

The survey was carried out on-line. Out of the total 128 cities and towns in Croatia, 57 have responded, bringing the response rate to 44.5%.¹

The principal results of the survey are the following:

The most widespread ground for identification of the groups in need of anti-discrimination protections is disability (identified by 76,8% of cities), followed by poverty (67,9% cities), and health status (62,5% cities). In terms of groups who are the actual recipients of measures directed towards the protection from discrimination and the promotion of equality, in large majority of cities in the year preceding the survey they were mostly: the poor (85,7% of responses); children (83,9%), youth (82,1%), and persons with disabilities (75%).

In terms of the management practices employed by the cities to this end, there are formal decisions in 25 cities (44,6%) regarding protection from discrimination, equal opportunities, or affirmative action directed towards groups at risk. In most of those, these decision pertain to various social support measures, and to short-term financial support grants, such as grants for the newborn and infants, or scholarships for high school and university-level students. A much smaller number of cities have formally established specialized committees, such as Gender Equality Committee, or committees with a somewhat wider human rights mandate.

In two thirds of the surveyed cities (66.1%), the general city strategies, plans, or programs include measures directed at protection from discrimination and at promotion of equality, while less than one third of the cities (30.4%) have strategies, plans, or programs that are specifically dedicated to ensuring the equality of groups at risk. In most cities, their strategies for social development are the general documents incorporating the measures directed at vulnerable groups. Out of the cities that do possess specific strategies, plans, or programs, those are mostly strategies for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, and local programs for the

¹ The cities and towns participating in the survey are: Beli Manastir, Benkovac, Biograd na moru, Buje – Buie, Crikvenica, Čakovec, Čazma, Daruvar, Delnice, Donja Stubica, Donji Miholjac, Drniš, Dubrovnik, Duga Resa, Dugo selo, Đurđevac, Gospić, Hrvatska Kostajnica, Ilok, Imotski, Ivanec , Kastav, Kaštela, Komiža, Korčula , Krapina, Kutina, Ludbreg, Mursko Središće, Novi Marof, Novi Vinodolski, Opatija, Orahovica, Osijek, Otok, Pakrac, Pazin, Popovača , Požega, Prelog, Pula, Rab, Rijeka, Senj , Solin, Šibenik, Varaždin, Vinkovci, Virovitica, Vodice, Vrbovsko, Vrlika, Zabok, Zagreb, Zlatar, Županja.

young people. However, in the majority of the respondent cities (67,9%), the anti-discrimination measures are being implemented as a part of the implementation of the relevant national strategies.

Departments or officers charged with anti-discrimination are present in 11 cities only. Nine cities have a designated time for intake of citizens' complaints, and 10 cities have committees or working bodies that monitor the protection of groups at risk. Only 65 cities have codices, guidelines, or rules of procedure in place that define the conduct towards persons at risk. Ten cities train or offer mentorship programs for the newly employed that include the training on the provisions of the public employees' ethical code.

Eight cities have reported on special anti-discrimination and equality provisions in the contracts on subventions, grants, and/or public procurement contracts.

In the majority of cities, the measures benefiting the groups at risk of discrimination are adopted at the suggestion of the relevant city administration departments; in some cities this process is somewhat more inclusive, as Centers for Social Welfare or Employment Office are consulted beforehand. A smaller number of the respondent cities carry out wider consultations that include civil society organizations.

Although the respondent cities report that they are including the civil society and vulnerable groups' representatives in the decision-making processes (62.5%), the CSOs are mostly involved in preliminary consultations, before the measures are enacted (in 44% of cities). Eighteen (31,6%) cities involve CSOs and the representatives of vulnerable groups in the process of strategy development, and in 15 cities (26,3%) CSOs are implementation partners. A small part of the respondents practices public consultations before adopting key decisions.

In the area of education, most cities direct their efforts towards children at risk of poverty (80, 4% of the sample), children with developmental disabilities (75%, and persons with disabilities (58, 9%). The most frequently reported measures directed towards children at risk of poverty include: subsidies for kindergarten costs, subsidized or free meals, subsidized or freed public transport, co-financing of the purchase of school books and materials, and scholarships for elementary schools, high schools, and universities.

In the area of employment, the most frequent measures are directed towards women (35,1%), long-term unemployed (35,1%), and persons with disabilities (19,6%).

In the area of housing and the access to public services, the most frequent measures are those for persons and families at risk of poverty (43,9% of cities), for persons with disabilities (31,6%), and single parents (19,3%).

The social policy measures directed towards groups at risk are defined in the city regulations on social services. Out of 57 surveyed cities, 56 have enacted the city regulation on social services, and the large number of cities have some form of social council, or a working body charged with the implementation of the local social policy measures. Thirteen cities have or plan the adoption of the city level social services action plan. The social policy measures are primarily directed towards individuals or families at risk of poverty (94% of cities), towards seniors and retired persons (74%), towards persons with disabilities (66%), and single parent households (54%).

Eleven best practice examples were self-reported by respondents, and will be taken into account in the next steps of the project.