

# The prescribed role and obligations of Croatian cities and towns in the area of equality

## *Summary of desk research results*

Cities represent crucial elements in any effort aimed at the advancement of equality, as they are responsible for governing a wide array of key policy areas in places where people live and carry out the majority of their daily activities. The cities influence the attainment of equality through their multiple functions: those of regulators, service providers, employers, and others.

Despite that, there is little evidence of the recognition of this role of cities in the Croatian public space, and even less evidence of advance practices of diversity and equality management. The present research is to address this knowledge gap, in view of informing the subsequent research, capacity development, communication, and advocacy elements of the project.

Nineteen regulatory documents (laws, protocols, and instructions) were analyzed, along with seven policy documents (strategies, programs, and action plans), covering the following areas:

1. Protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. In addition to general protections, local self-governance units (LSGU, in Croatia they include counties and municipalities, in addition to cities and towns) are directly charged with the implementation of ten measures, pertaining mostly to the position of national minorities, and persons with disabilities. Responsibilities and reporting requirements are relatively well delineated for the measures identified.
2. Education. The measures under the jurisdiction of LSGU are directed primarily to financing the infrastructure, and secondary education, as elementary education is delivered centrally. The measures identified mostly pertain to ensuring access to poor students, students with disabilities, and the consummation of rights of national minorities.
3. Employment and work. In addition to general anti-discrimination requirements of LSGU as employers, their direct legal obligations pertain to the employment of proportionate numbers of representatives of national minorities, and persons with disabilities. In addition, policy puts them in charge of the promotion of employment of particularly vulnerable groups in their jurisdictions, and poses reporting requirements related to these policy objectives.
4. Housing and infrastructure. Three groups of measures under direct jurisdiction of LSGU are listed in the documents analyzed here: those directed at ensuring care facilities for the elderly, those directed towards accessible housing and physical public infrastructure for persons with disabilities; and measures directed towards the improvement of housing, infrastructure, provision of basic services/utilities and integration of Roma communities.
5. Social services. In addition to their role in the delivery of the national package of social services, the LSGU are directly charged with the organization and decentralized delivery of community services directed towards the elderly and persons with disabilities.

6. Health care. In addition to the participation in the delivery of the national package of health services and their funding of regional, city and municipal-level health care facilities, the LSGU are charged through various policy documents with advancement of health standards and the ability of various groups at risk to meet their specific health needs, primarily persons with disabilities.

7. Democratic participation. The LSGU are directly charged with implementation of measures directed at proportionate political representation, and the establishment, financing, and functioning of the consultative bodies of national minorities in their jurisdictions. They also have the obligation to support the establishment and functioning of youth advisory councils, to provide technical and other support that would ensure access to political participation to persons with disabilities, promote political participation of women, support civil society organizations, and encourage multi-stakeholder dialogue.

8. Cultural rights and diversity. The LSGU have the obligation to promote the cultural rights of national minorities, with specific obligations in jurisdictions where their presence exceeds the prescribed thresholds. The policy documents required them to promote access to cultural facilities and services to persons with disabilities and to members of socially vulnerable groups.

9. Other. The issues under the jurisdiction of LSGU, as discerned from the reviewed regulatory and policy documents include improving opportunities for all groups under threat of social exclusion, and particularly the development of physical infrastructure for persons with disabilities.

The information collected in the present analysis will be utilized: (a) for the development of survey of cities and towns on their current equality-related practices; (b) as the input into the development of the manual for equality and diversity management for cities and towns; and (c) as the input into the development of Cities for Equality Index and rating system.

The regulatory documents analyzed include: The Constitution of the RoC; The Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities; The Law on the Usage of the Language and Letters of National Minorities; The Instruction on the Consistent Implementation of the Law on the Usage of the Language and Letters of National Minorities; The Law on Sign Language; The Anti-discrimination Law; The Law on Gender Equality; The Labor Law; The Law on Local and Regional Self-governance; The Law on Public Servants and Employees in Local and Regional Self-governance Units; The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities; The Rules of Procedure on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities; Rules of Procedure for Determining the Quota for Employment of Persons with Disabilities; The Law on Social Welfare; The Law on Local Elections; The Law on the Rights of the Citizens of Other EU Member States in the Elections for Representative Bodies of Local and Regional Self-governance Bodies; The Law on the Register of Councils, Coordinating Bodies, and Representatives of National Minorities; The Law on Youth Councils; The Law on Elementary and Secondary school Education; The Protocol for Students with Developmental Disabilities.

The policy documents analyzed are: The National Program for Protection and Promotion of Human Rights; The National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities; The Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Combatting Discrimination; The Implementation Program for Strategy for Combatting Poverty and Social Exclusion; The Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy for Female Entrepreneurship; The National Strategy for Roma Inclusion; The Regional Development Strategy.